Surrey Constabulary History
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William Biddlecombe

No1 Nominal Role

Chief Superintendent Surrey Constabulary

Surrey's first detective

"By dint of perseverance and exertion he attained the position which he had the honour of holding in the Surrey Constabulary" (Biddlecombe 1858 upon retirement)

Introduction

History has not been kind to the memory of those who policed the county in the days before the professional and recognisably modern constabulary established in 1851. The image of the doddery watchman and totally incompetent parish constable may have been true in some places but not everywhere. There are numerous examples of good policing given the constraints of the time, the lack of knowledge, medical or scientific support, little obvious means of communication and almost no available transport beyond the horse although during the period being discussed, the evolution of the train and telegraph were to become critical in the detection of crime. Yet, if there was a serious crime such as the double murder at Fetcham in 1826, the robbery and murder on the road through Banstead in 1834, or the work undertaken in 1850 following the murder of the vicar of Frimley, there was a very practiced response identifiable to the modern professional as police work. Detailed examinations of the body by the parish police officers, by the coroner, a local medical man and frequently the newspaper reporter in situ; the bodies often not moved until viewed by the jury. A meticulous report

of findings was always made frequently published in the local newspaper in all its graphic detail. A search of the scene and of the local area was undertaken with information posted widely within hours, on bills offering rewards for information, and often containing details of suspects with their descriptions with a list of stolen property. Coroners, magistrates, judges all asked the hard questions of the police and ensured they stayed within the rules that were evolving. Some judges found the new police, independent of the magistrates a difficult concept to grasp and complained and threatened when officers interviewed suspects and took statements when in their view, this was the responsibility of the magistrate. As now class and education were the fundamental to the relationships between the evolving professionalism of the police and the county and judicial establishment. Police officers were not of that class although the county chief constable was a former army officer. The borough chief officers were career police officers and had no social links with the county or borough leaders although they came to be highly regarded and respected.

One of the most respected of the early members of the Surrey Constabulary was William Biddlecombe one of the first paid constables in Godalming relieving the volunteer parish constables of their onerous duties. Godalming was a very small borough police force formed in 1836 with two or three men where under Biddlecombe's leadership, felony reports were reduced to nil and his expertise sought across Sussex and Hampshire where he had previously served. Biddlecombe's reputation ensured he was summoned by the Frimley magistrates to the scene of the murder of the Reverent Hollest in 1850. There was no local police and the parish officials were out of their depth and recognised that fact, not too proud to seek help. Working alongside Biddlecombe was a detective sergeant from the Metropolitan Police and the superintendent or head constable from Guildford Borough, Hollington, a friend and rival of Biddlecombe. The antagonism was not just about professional pride but about significant rewards received for arrests for serious crime and the Frimley murder was to prove troublesome to their relationship.

Biddlecombe, in the words of the newspapers was "extremely active" and amassed a wealth of experience, which allowed once he became the first officer of the new constabulary in Surrey, to undertake some of the early major enquiries. The term "active" was used for what today would be called detective work. At this time the term detective had not been devised.

William Henry Biddlecombe the Head Constable of Godalming Borough Police, on the 1 January 1851 became Number 1 on the roll for the newly formed Surrey Constabulary with the position of superintendent. (Regularly referred to as chief superintendent) Biddlecombe was described as being 36, 5ft 10 tall, fair complexion, blue eyes, light brown hair, good build. He was born in Gatecombe, Newport, on the Isle of Wight serving in the Hampshire Constabulary before moving to Godalming. He was to serve in the Surrey Constabulary until 1 May 1858 when he resigned to become the licensee of the Swan Inn at Chertsey, setting a trend followed by many ex-police officers. There is no reference in the County Police Committee minutes for 1858 to Biddlecombe and why he left. It is not a surprise that this is the case as then, as now, police authorities were more concerned with finance, capital projects and the maintenance of the estate including sinking a well at Guildford police station. So it is not known why Biddlecombe left the Surrey Constabulary. It could be just a fall out with the chief constable, which was and still is, an easy thing to do. However it could be he had enough! When you get to read about some of the cases he was involved in during the 1850s, the sheer horror of a string of child killings may well have all been too much. It could have been he just wanted to be his own boss and make some money!

In addition to being a licensee who rented out horses and carriages, Biddlecombe was clerk of the course at Chertsey racecourse and became a private detective, again establishing a future trend being the first generation of ex-police officers to move into the security industry. Biddlecombe worked on some influential cases including being retained by Titchbourne family to find the true identity of the claimant (Orton). Biddlecombe identified the true identity of the false claimant but was unable to convince Lord Onslow.

There are some bald facts about his life that can be found within the family history indexes and the records of the Hampshire Constabulary:[1] William Biddlecombe served in the Isle of Wight Constabulary and Southampton Police before joining Hampshire on 18th March 1840. His combined service in IOW and Southampton was 4 years.[2] His Hampshire service was for just under six months as he resigned on the 14th September 1840 'having been appointed High Constable and Inspector of Police at Godalming in Surrey'.[3] (Godalming Borough Police was formed in January 1836 and incorporated within the county in 1851. The Force was re-established in1858 and again amalgamated with the Surrey Constabulary on the 1 April 1889.) When joining Hampshire, Biddlecombe was posted to Petersfield on the 3rd May 1840

In the 1841 census, taken on 6 June 1841, William Bidelcome (sic) is living in Ockford Road, Godalming. He is shown as a policeman, living with his wife, Harriett, both aged 25 years.

The 1851 census, taken on 30 March 1851, has William H. Biddlecombe living on Reigate High Street with his wife, daughters Kate 6, Mary 4 and son Alfred John 1, all born in Godalming. Living with them are Ruth Biddlecombe, his 67 year old mother, and Esther Trigg their 15 years old housemaid. He is shown as 'Chief Supt of Surrey Constabulary" born in Gatcombe, Hants. His wife and their maid were both born in Liss, Hants. (There was an Alfred Biddlecombe who joined the Surrey Constabulary in 1858 retiring in 1890 – not the son as he would only be 9 when he joined!)

In the 1861 census he is innkeeper of the Swan, Windsor Street, Chertsey aged 45 and living with his second wife, Elizabeth, 34 born at Araton, Isle of Wight. Daughters Kate and Mary are still living at home together with their 7 year old sister Alice, who was born at Reigate.

The death index for the second quarter of 1855 records the death of Harriett Biddlecombe. This is probably the right one but without the death certificate, it is not possible to be certain.[4]

Biddlecombe the policeman

Much of what follows has been discovered through a variety of sources but is nowhere near the full picture of the professional life of Biddlecombe. He was an active man and so where there are gaps it is most likely the author has so far not read a source for that period. It should be understood that all superintendents were required, along with their inspectors, to investigate the more serious crimes. Not all crime, as it was recognised the men had to learn and at least on one occasion the chief constable reminded superintendents of their responsibility to ensure their juniors were given the experience of crime investigation. The term "robbery" was a catch-all term for many crimes. Even the most minor crimes were considered to be serious and the punishments could be by modern standards, severe.

[1] John Molyneux February 2011
[2] Ch. Inspector Clifford Williams Hampshire Constabulary8 June 2011 – email to author
[3] Ch. Inspector Clifford Williams Hampshire Constabulary8 June 2011 – email to author
[4] Chertsey, book 2a, page 17

Operationally Biddlecombe was very effective and from all the evidence it is clear that he was highly regarded, an able man and a careful, successful detective. The persistent reference to chief superintendent may have been because he was! Not only number 1 on the nominal role, very experienced and successful, with an in depth knowledge of the county and policing issues, the chief constable with no designated deputy or assistant at times may have turned to him for support and help.

In the time just before Biddlecombe arrived in the county, Godalming Borough Police were responsible for an area larger than the town and included villages as distant as Shere where **sheep stealing was rife** during the decade 1830 to 1840. The amateur, annually appointed parish constables were unable to cope and additionally horses and sheep disappeared in the south of the county of which most found their way to London. One of the gang's meeting places was The White Horse Inn, Shere and it was not uncommon to see a great deal of poached game on the premises as the men enjoyed themselves. They appeared immune from punishment but then two of the gang took to **housebreaking at a large house at Wonersh** after Biddlecombe had been sworn in locally**.** A constable from Godalming believed to be Biddlecombe traced the men concerned to an inn in Sussex. Enlisting the help of local harvesters they came across the suspects and joked with them and somehow Biddlecombe persuaded them to allow him to handcuff them. Once handcuffed the men were arrested for breaking into Squire Spark's house, taken to Guildford where they were convicted.

The first murder so far traced in the records involving Biddlecombe occurred on the **28 March 1844** when a **gamekeeper at Wonersh was murdered**.[5] At the Surrey Spring Assizes in Kingston on the 27 March, James Elsley was charged with the wilful murder of James Edwards a gamekeeper, in Wonersh by the Wey and Arun Canal. The body was discovered in the canal the following morning and the alarm was raised. Good local information was soon proffered leading to Charles Jenkins a parish constable described as an Inspector of Police stationed at Shere accompanied by Chief Constable of Godalming William Biddlecombe, went to the home of the suspect. He was detained and taken to the Jolly Farmer at Bramley. The officers returned to the house and searched it recovering a newly washed smock with what appeared to be blood on it and other clothing. (At this time blood could not be positively identified) Both the officers undertook a detailed examination of the prisoner and could find no evidence of him having been involved in a fight. The jury took twenty minutes to find the prisoner not guilty of murder but manslaughter and this married man a father of five or six children was transported for life.

The reporting of ranks is arbitrary and confusing not just for the reader but also for newspaper reporters and those who have undertaken research since. It just has to be accepted that ranks and titles are interchangeable and often make little sense.

Burglary was not that rare but when large houses or prominent people were involved the press wrote in great detail about the crime and the resulting enquiry. In **1845** such a burglary occurred in Lewes: The hunt for the so called Sussex burglars caused considerable excitement in Lewes particularly when news broke on the 12 March of their arrest in Hampshire by Biddlecombe and their return to Godalming. The prisoners were conveyed in handcuffs from Godalming police station by cart to Guildford, coach to Redhill before taking the train to Brighton followed by transfer to a fly for the final part of the journey to Lewes.

On March the 19th 1845 the men were found guilty of burglary and transported for ten years. The two women accomplices received prison sentences with hard labour. Biddlecombe was commended by the

[5] The Morning Post (London, England), Thursday, March 28, 1844; Issue 22841. 19th Century British Library Newspapers: Part II.

judge for showing great zeal and activity in the case and was rewarded twenty shillings in addition to his expenses and the two constables who assisted him in the pursuit of the prisoners should each receive five shillings.[6] It is not clear why the police chief from Godalming was arresting burglars in Hampshire for Sussex!

It is worth understanding that burglary then as now hit the poor as well as the better off. It was not uncommon for houses to be broken into by tramps and itinerants as the workmen were in the fields and their few clothes and limited food stolen. A cruel example of this type of crime took place in 1870 on August 13 in Wonersh on a Tuesday in broad daylight "some vagabond fellow entered a cottage at Wonersh Common in the absence of the occupants, a labourer named Stedman and his family, and stole £11.10s 6d, the hard earned savings of years, a gold ring and other articles. The thief got clean off with his booty." [7]

The Hollest Murder at Frimley

On the **26th September 1850** the Reverend George Hollest was murdered in the bed he shared with his wife at Frimley vicarage. Burglars, members of an extended gang, entered the house at night and shot the vicar and he died later that day.[8] However George Hollest was able to fire at the fleeing burglars with a loaded pistol he always kept close to his bed at night because of the fear of burglars. In a future Surrey Constabulary History Journal the activities of a large and dangerous gang of burglars who operated at this time across Surrey and Sussex will be explored and in another Journal greater detail of the Hollest case.

As there was no local police force Superintendent Biddlecombe was brought in to help the magistrates. Superintendent Hollington of the Guildford Borough Police who was one day to hold a similar rank in the Surrey Constabulary arrested four men. Two of the four were acquitted and two men hung in Southwark. It is clear from the careful actions of Biddlecombe at the scene that he was aware of the evolving principles established by Vidocq a French former criminal who was the founder of the French Sûreté who valued data and records and is credited with encouraging early studies in fingerprinting, ballistics and crime scene analysis. In 1845 Vidocq's book "Memoirs" in English translation had been the talk of London and it is most likely that his work had an influence on an ambitious detective such as Biddlecombe. Vidocq wrote:

> "The minute exactitude had been observed in removing the body. Nothing had been neglected which might lead to the discovery of the assassins. Accurate impressions were taken of the footmarks, buttons and fragments of paper dyed in blood were carefully collected."

Such was the outcry over the murder that just a few weeks following this horrendous crime on the 25 October 1850 the Rural Police Committee met at Reigate taking evidence from Superintendent Biddlecombe and the chief constable of Hampshire. Biddlecombe covered an area of 28,940 acres with a population of ten thousand one hundred and twenty six with only one felony in his district over the last twelve months, stealing faggots to the value of sixpence. However he had been sent for to deal with twelve burglaries in surrounding districts in the last six months. There had been no cases of felony in Godalming itself during the last five years.

[6] The Morning Post (London, England), Thursday, March 20, 1845
[7] 1870 August 13: The Surrey Advertiser and County Gazette
[8] See the paper on the Isaacs Gang on www.surrey-constabulary.com

Acting at high speed the new Surrey Constabulary was established on the 1 January 1851 and incorporated the smaller forces within the county and covered all parts of Surrey not within the Metropolitan Police District.

William Henry Biddlecombe was appointed to the new force as one of five superintendents, designated chief superintendent and in March 1851 Biddlecombe and his family were living in Reigate but there is a General Order dated 10 July 1851, Superintendent Biddlecombe is posted to the Chertsey Division.[9] The force appointment book shows: "1 Jan 1851: Superintendent at £170 per annum, including forage for the county horse and allowance for clothing." There are examples of Biddlecombe riding when involved in arrests and of him using the divisional police cart.

Superintendent Biddlecombe was to continue with the Hollest murder trials and consequences together with the extended enquiry in what the author refers to as the Isaacs Gang. There was a whole raft of trials at Assizes and magistrates courts that kept Biddlecombe and Hollington soon also to be a superintendent in the Surrey Constabulary, in close contact and competition that their friendship could not survive.

Friends no more – the letter

In 1851 the Surrey Constabulary was established and incorporated the Guildford Borough in June of that year, though Hollington and Biddlecombe became colleagues before that date. Old enmities soon come to the surface as the aggrieved former chief officer of the Borough took exception to Biddlecombe receiving credit from the courts where he thought it was not due. The criminals and crimes on trial are all a part of the outrages of the Isaacs Gang. Interestingly, Hollington refers to Biddlecombe as "detective" in a letter he wrote that was published by The Times:

To The Editor, The Times: 1851 24 April from Superintendent Charles Hollington, Superintendent of the Guildford Borough Police: Mr Hollingsworth felt aggrieved that "that the whole credit of breaking up the "Frimley Gang" was due to Mr Biddlecombe." Hollingsworth asserted he arrested six of the men. "Levi Harwood. James Jones alias Burbage (hung for the murder of Mr Hollest) Samuel Harwood, Hiram Smith alias Trowler (the approver (Note: informant) in the Frimley case) Thomas Toots alia Morgan and John Hillyer – the two latter were transported for life for the Uckfield burglary. These men I arrested entirely on my own suspicions. "How is it the whole credit is due to Mr Biddlecombe that he did not apprehend some of them as it was well known that one of the rendezvous of the Uckfield gang was Hindhead a little below Godalming where Biddlecombe was located?

The man Levi Harwood I had convicted nine years ago; he then had one year's hard labour; since which time I have had several summary convictions against him for assaulting the police etc. I also apprehended Jones on March the 13th 1850 on suspicion of a burglary at Mr Horne's linen draper Guildford (whose house was broken into on the 14th February in the same year) and found property belonging to Mr Horn's housekeeper upon him. He was committed to the Guildford borough sessions, but owing to a month having elapsed between the burglary and apprehension, and the prisoner stating he had bought the property, the jury ignored the bill. At the same time I apprehended a man named George Brisk, a companion of both Levi Harwood and Jones, and found property in his house the produce of several burglaries in the county. He was committed to the assizes at Kingston, where he was tried and sentenced to seven years transportation.

[9] Surrey Constabulary General Orders Book 1 1851-

By inserting this you will greatly oblige your most obedient servant Charles Hollington

Superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary and late Superintendent of the Guildford Borough Police, Superintendent's office Chertsey April 24[10]

Evidence at the Assizes Hollington v Biddlecombe

In evidence at the Assize court at Kingston where the trial was held for the Hollest murder Superintendent Charles Hollington said: "In September last I was superintendent of the Guildford police. I heard of the burglary at Mr Hollest's the next morning and immediately made some enquiries about Levi Harwood, Jones and Smith. I saw Jones about the middle of the day in High Street, Guildford. I and Biddlecombe went on Sunday morning to Mr Hollest's and when we returned we took Smith, Jones and Levi Harwood into custody. I told them I wanted them on suspicion of burglary at Mr Hollest's at Frimley and asked them to account for their time on the Friday night as I had learned they were out.

Harwood said he went to London that night and Jones said he went up on the Downs to set a few wires to catch a rabbit. On the 30 September I took Samuel Harwood into custody and on this day Levi Harwood told me he would account for his time on Friday night and he said that he came down from London. I told him he was right about that and that he arrived at about eight o'clock to which he replied, "You know as much as I do." I searched the prisoners at the station. Upon Levi Harwood I found two sovereigns, one shilling, a sixpence and a knife. Upon Smith I found half a crown, a tobacco box, a knife and a piece of string. Upon Jones I found a cloth, a piece of sealing wax, and the token penny, which has been produced. I afterwards searched Levi Harwood's lodgings and found a pair of stockings, on the foot of one of which there was a mark of blood and also a "stony" marble. I had previously examined Levi Harwood's feet. And found that the right one was cut in several places and there was blood between the toes.

After Levi Harwood was in custody I examined his shirt and found some marks of gravel upon his left sleeve. On the 2nd October I searched Samuel Harwood's lodgings at Hyfield-green and found a box at Mrs Catt's, which belonged to him and from which I took a corduroy jacket. I had seen Levi Harwood wear a similar jacket. It appeared to me as though it had been recently washed. Levi Harwood afterwards claimed the jacket to be his.

On questioning: I was not engaged on the matter. I engaged myself. I don't remember having heard of any paper or wadding which was supposed to have been discharged from the pistol, being found by the side of the bed. I may have heard of such a thing but I don't recollect it. I don't know that any paper was compared with any paper found in possession of some of the prisoners. There was **a little rivalry between me and Biddlecombe** upon the subject of the case and we have never acted together since. I did not give the prisoners any caution before I put the questions to them. Smith made a statement to me and I have no doubt he told me that it was their intention to have done the robbery on the Tuesday. What he said was "We arranged to commit the robbery on Tuesday." I believe a person named Macy was examined as a witness before the magistrates. I cannot say if he has been before the Grand Jury or not. I heard some man state that Smith had said something about the person being a tight fit, and that he would not give him any "chuck." Some persons named Penny, Blackman and a broom maker were also examined I believe. I don't know if any of these persons are here today. **Biddlecombe and I used to be friends and we have quarrelled about this case**. I wanted all the

[10] The Times on line Article CS50889882

prisoners and Biddlecombe wanted them too but I thought I had the best right to them. I am on very good terms with Biddlecombe now because we never speak (laugh). I know there is a reward of £150 offered on the case, which is to be paid on conviction of the parties. Smith asked me the meaning of the word accomplice and I believe he also asked me if I thought they would fulfil the promise contained in the bills if he was to "peach?" I have no doubt he used the word "peach". The prisoners were not allowed to have any professional advice until after Smith had made a statement of which he represented to be the circumstances of the robbery.

A move to Chertsey

1851 July 1: GO 53: Superintendent Biddlecombe is posted to the Chertsey Division to take over from Hollington, from Reigate where he is to remain for the rest of his service.

Biddlecombe's Chertsey Division covered the northern area of the county of Surrey outside the Metropolitan Police District, from Esher across to Chobham, Bagshot and what there was then of Camberley. Woking was also a part of the area although then just a very small town or large village. There were major routes to the south and west, the Thames and miles of heath and military land**.** To cover his ground the superintendent was provided with a horse and an allowance for feeding it. This was the premier appointment in the Surrey Constabulary and no doubt appropriate to his rank of chief superintendent.

Biddlecombe's role meant he was at the scene and heavily involved in the investigation and detection of crime on his division. Although he was responsible for his division he did investigate crime elsewhere in the county although this was not the norm. Some of Biddlecombe's cases have been traced through the newspapers:

Attempted burglary Addlestone; Two men were indicted for attempting to break into the house of an old lady, who lived alone near the Addlestone railway station. On a Saturday October 18 1851 in she went to bed and after about three hours heard the sound of breaking glass and got out of bed and struck a light and went to the window where she saw some faces. One of the men called out "Give us some money or it will be the worse for you." She told them to go about their business but they refused to do so and they started to force the door open. She put a piece of iron against the door to prevent them breaking it open. She noticed a knife coming through the shutter and took up a candlestick and pushed against it to stop it coming any further. With one hand she held the candlestick and with the other the shutter. She told them to remember the Frimley murder and to go about their business. They again demanded a sovereign, a half sovereign or half a crown and she told them she had none but offered a shilling if they would go away. Mrs Willis threw out a shilling and some bread and cheese and they eventually went away.

Walter Ayling one of the Surrey Police said he watched the prisoners from a beer-shop and went to the back of the house where he followed them and hid in an outhouse close by from where he could observe all their actions. He then saw then trying to break open the door when Mrs Willis came to the window and asked them what they wanted. "Money and if she would not make a noise they would not hurt her." They then broke several pains of glass when the old lady told them to go round and she would give them some money. The police officer followed them and with the assistance of Biddlecombe he chased and captured two of them.

Superintendent Biddlecombe examined the old lady's house afterwards and found the back door broken very much as if the thieves intended to force the lock back by wrenching it off the bottom

board. The shutters were also very much cut and the marks corresponded with the knife found on Collier. The verdict of Guilty was returned. And one sentenced to 10 years transportation and the other prisoner to 12 months hard labour. [11]

The last dual in England: Within Biddlecombe's division there was to be a case that attracted international publicity and shows a level of co-operation between police forces that some might find surprising for the time. On the 17 October 1852 there was to take place the last duel in England. On Tuesday on Priest Hill walking towards Egham, Dr Hayward of Egham passed a number of Frenchmen. One directed the doctor to a friend who had been shot "in an accident." The dying man was taken to the Barley Mow Inn where he later died.

William Biddlecombe arrived and on searching the body found a pistol ball. Searching the friend who had alerted the doctor, Edmund Allain, a Frenchman, he found a powder flask, nine bullets and some percussion caps. The Metropolitan Police went to Waterloo Station as requested by the Surrey Constabulary using the telegraph. At Waterloo they found a group of French émigrés who were aware of the duel. Police detained three passengers off the train who were Frenchmen, along with two swords, a pistol case and knife on which there appeared to be blood. The pistols were eventually recovered – they had been hired. Four Frenchmen appeared at Kingston Assizes where they were found guilty of manslaughter. One of the Frenchmen was a few years later hung after committing two murders. The victim Courner was buried in Egham Churchyard.[12]

The second murder enquiry for Biddlecombe on the Chertsey Division was a more difficult affair but was to give grounding for a greater tragedy during the following year. On the 21 March 1853 The Times reported that Mary Ann Temple aged thirty six was charged with the wilful murder of her female illegitimate child by suffocating it. When the child was born she tried to have a Mrs Humphries take over the child but she was unhappy with the story given by Temple and said "No". Biddlecombe became aware of the attempt to part with her child and visited Temple and found the child dead. She was found guilty of manslaughter and transported for fifteen years. The Judge said when sentencing, "The crime of infanticide was greatly on the increase; judges go to any county and find two or three cases on their list." Therefore he sentenced her more harshly. There had been another murder of a child from Albury in Guildford during April 1851 when the father of the illegitimate child was hung professing his innocence and the guilt of the mother.

1853 21 May: Chertsey Petty Sessions: James Bath was charged on the information of Chief Superintendent Biddlecombe with playing a game of chance, pitch and hustle on the highway from Bagshot to Chobham. The superintendent said he was riding from Chertsey to Chobham on the 8th inst., at about 4 pm when he saw the defendant and seven other men with a crowd around them. Biddlecombe went over to Bagshot because Inspector Burridge had informed him that complaints had been made of this nuisance but officers in the immediate neighbourhood being well known, could not get near them. A fine of 14s penalty and costs [13]

The Metropolitan Police on aid to the Surrey Constabulary

In most unusual circumstances the Metropolitan Police came on aid to Surrey during a major military exercise. This was a few months before the Crimean War. Throughout the period 1850-1900 there

[11] Daily News Tuesday October 21 1851:
[12] Janaway P 83 and Durrant page 13
[13] 1853 21 May Windsor and Eton Express

were significant military in and around Surrey and included a large number of the Surrey Militia. Desertion was high as was, not surprisingly drunken violence, both requiring police action.

1853 June 14 The Morning Post reported that the Metropolitan Police were moving on to **Chobham Common.** "Yesterday morning instructions were received by the Commissioner of Police from the Home Office to send a number of efficient constables immediately to Chobham to perform duty near the military camp now forming in that locality. In consequence of such instructions the superintendents of the various divisions received orders to send without delay 20 men and two sergeants from the reserve force of each division who will be under the direction of three inspectors. The men mustering at one o'clock yesterday afternoon with all their clothing and necessaries at their respective station houses and after being inspected by their superintendents marched off to the South-Western railway station where a special train was in readiness to take them to Chertsey from which station they were taken to Chobham in covered vans.

Lodgings have been procured for the men and temporary police stations erected around the encampment so that every precaution has been taken to prevent the light fingered corps from following their avocation with much success. On field days and review extra men belonging to the detectives will do duty with them. The Secretary at War has issued orders that all men so employed shall have extra pay. The inspectors 4 shillings a day the sergeants receiving two shillings and the constables one shilling a day in addition to their regular pay. They will remain on duty at Cobham until the encampment is broken up. The **Surrey Constabulary under Mr Superintendent Biddlecombe** attached to that district will also be reinforced and assist the Metropolitan Police in preserving order and protecting property. A number of mounted police will patrol both day and night. (Note: There was to be a large gathering of the army on Chobham Common and was going to be a great public spectacle that would draw large crowds which in turn would attract the villain as they always were to public and sporting events.)

Egham races

Egham races: Biddlecombe has a further mention in the national press in a report on the **25 August 1853** covering the races at Egham. For some years policing the races was to remain a cause of some difficulties because of the number of men required and the level of potential disorder and villainy. This particular report was favourable: "The course was well kept by a small detachment from the Surrey Constabulary under the direction of Superintendent Biddlecombe and Inspector Holmes".[14] This was not always so and over the years the races at Egham and Chertsey were the source of considerable problems for the police both on the sites and in neighbouring towns. A significant proportion of the small number of police available was deployed. There were not many given the area to be covered. They had no time off and worked for as long as was necessary.

The number of officers available was extremely limited and given the high turnover experience was often limited. **1855 February 17: Letter from Chief Constable to the press:** There are in the Surrey Constabulary 1 Chief Constable 7 Superintendents 5 Inspectors 70 Constables total 83; Guildford 11 constables, Reigate 11 and Dorking 11. It is not true that the ratepayers of the parish of Woking pay £228 per annum for the services of one constable there being two resident in the parish, one of whom lives in the town of Woking; in addition to which there are no less than six other constables, who meet and patrol together in pairs almost nightly throughout the different portions of the parish, thus

[14] The Morning Post (London, England), Thursday, August 25, 1853; pg. 5; Issue 24860

affording every protection to the parish. I can give my assertion -- the amount of crime not only in the parish of Woking but throughout the county generally having greatly decreased since the establishment of the "rural police system".

At the Surrey Adjourned Sessions on **September 13 1853** Superintendent Biddlecombe said in evidence following a trial said that William Pantlin aged 22 years convicted of stealing wood, that he was a very bad character and was sentenced to six months. [15]

Arson

1853 December 17: Fire: PC Collett Surrey Constabulary, was on his rounds in **Esher** when he saw **flames in the farmyard** occupied by Mr Woodhatch. The officer with the assistance he procured succeeded in releasing a quantity of fat beasts and pigs confined on the premises, which had they remained a few minutes more would have been destroyed. The estimated damage is between £3-400 and it would have been greater if not for the timely arrival of the parish engine and one from Claremont. From enquiries made by Mr Biddlecombe it appears this was an act of incendiary. We are sorry to say this is the second incendiary fire in Surrey in the last ten days. [16]

A possible third case of arson in Esher arson on **Boxing Day 1853** when there was a very large fire at the **Royal Paper Mills in Esher** close to the station causing the trains to be stopped. Damage of £100,000 pounds was caused and 250 people thrown out of work. Mr Superintendent Biddlecombe and Inspector Murtell with a body of police rendered great assistance by keeping the idlers out of reach of danger. [17]

Robbery at Farnham

Although stationed at Chertsey Biddlecombe became involved in the investigation of a **robbery in Farnham** on the **13 March 1854.** Reported from the Spring Assizes Kingston on 28 March 1854 Frederick Mathews was indicted for highway robbery with violence in Farnham upon Caroline Payne and stealing a gold watch, £5 banknote, a gold chain and silver money of the value of £2 15s 9d.The injured person was walking in Farnham Park not far from the town when she received a blow with a stick rendering her unconscious and whilst in that condition was robbed. The prisoner was seen going towards the park not long before the robbery and Superintendent **Biddlecombe and Inspector Everett** searched the suspect's room and found the stolen property. The man was arrested found guilty and sent to prison for fifteen years.

The most horrible murder enquiry for almost 125 years in the Surrey Constabulary area

The most horrific murder to take place in Surrey that was not to be supplanted before the 1974 murders by the IRA in Guildford, and arguably not even then, took place in the quiet village of Esher. Most police officers attend some horrendous crimes during their service but few can match the horror that awaited Biddlecombe at Esher on the 10 June the first multiple murder enquiry undertaken by the Surrey Constabulary when a mother murdered her six children.

[15] 1853 September 13: The Standard
[16] 1853 December 17: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[17] The Morning Post (London, England), Monday, December 26, 1853; pg. 4; Issue 24965

George Brough announced to Mary Ann his wife and mother of his children that he was leaving her because he suspected she had been cheating on him. He also said he intended to take their children away from her, setting into motion a series of terrible events. On June 10, the day after her husband confronted Mary Ann, a man walking by their home spotted a bloody pillow in the window. He raised an alarm and neighbours found Mary Ann inside, still alive, but with her throat slit. Bodies of six of her children lay scattered throughout the house their throats cut open. Mary Ann survived and was charged with six counts of murder. She confessed, telling investigators that she had used a razor on each child, one at a time. One child had protested and another had struggled, but she killed them all before attempting suicide.

On the 13 June 1854 before a coroner and jury at The Chequers Tavern, West End an inquest was held to enquire into the deaths of the six Brough children. Mr. Biddlecombe, chief superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary said following information from Inspector Martell he went to the house of Mrs Brough. On entering the back door and going into a room he found under the table a pair of woman's boots and bloody stockings. He went to the door and found that the bolt on the inside was all over blood as if handled with a bloody hand. He went upstairs and found a boy aged seven years on the bed with his face covered with blood. He was dead and his throat was cut. The wound was extensive and incised. There were lying at the foot of the bed Harriet and George both dead each with incised wounds to the throat. He passed to another room and found three more dead children with extensive wounds to the throat. In a third bedroom he saw Mrs Brough in bed and attended by a medical man. He could not speak with her but a few days later Mrs Brough called him back and he took her statement. [18]

Confession Of The Murderess: The following confession was made by the murderess, to Mr. Biddlecombe, chief superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary: "On Friday last, I was bad all day; I wanted to see Mr. Izod, and waited all day. I wanted him to give me some medicine. In the evening I walked about, and afterwards put the children to bed, and wanted to go to sleep in a chair. About nine o'clock, Georgy (meaning Georgiana) kept calling me to bed. I came up to bed, and they kept calling me to bring them some barley water, and they kept calling me till nearly 12 o'clock. I had one candle lit on the chair. I went and got another, but could not see, there was something like a cloud, and I thought I would go down and get a knife and cut my throat, but could not see. I groped about in master's room for a razor. I could not find one; at last I found his keys, and then found his razor. I went up to Georgy, and cut her first; I did not look at her. I then came to Carry, and cut her. Then to Harry, he said, 'don't mother.' I said, 'I must' and did cut him. Then I went to Bill. He was fast asleep. I turned him over. He never awoke, and I served him the same. I nearly tumbled into his room. The two children here, Harriet and George were awake. They made no resistance at all. I then lay down myself." The miserable woman signed this statement. J. Harkness, Printer, 121, Church Street, Preston.[19]

Mary Ann Brough was found not guilty by reason of insanity and was detained during her Majesty's Pleasure.[20]

1861 March 23: Inquest on Mary Brough Esher mother who killed her six children: The coroner for the City of London and Southwark held an inquest at the Bethlehem hospital on the body of Mary

[18] 13 June 1854 The Times
[19] Source: Curiosities of Street Literature, London, Reeves and Turner, 196, Strand, 1871.
[20] The Encyclopaedia of Mass Murder

Ann Brough nurse to the Prince of Wales who was acquitted on the grounds of insanity on the charge of murdering her six children at Esher in June 1854 and sent to Bethlehem in August 1854. On admission she was in good health but her behaviour indicated that she had some organic disease in the brain and that had been so for some time. On the 4th December 1854 following an attack of apoplexy followed by paralysis chiefly affecting the mouth and tongue. On 27 September 1859 she had another attack, which affected the legs, and she almost lost the use of them, and her mind became much weaker after this third attack. On the 30 January 1861 she had another slight paralytic attack and very soon after she became so weak that she was unable to sit up and a waterbed was provided for her. She remained in this condition until the 17th inst., when she lost all consciousness and died on the morning off the 18th. At the time of her trial there was not a great deal of evidence to prove insanity yet there was no doubt that even then the brain was diseased and she committed the act while under the influence of insanity. Especially so as it was proved some years before the trial she was attacked with paralysis of one half of the hemisphere of the brain by which the brain itself would too some extent be affected. She had lucid interval that allowed her to enter into conversation but as her mind was very depressed it was not thought she had any consciousness of the enormity of her crime. She was aware of the reason why she had been sent to the hospital but in consequence of her weak and depressed state, if she had said she was the greatest sinner that ever lived, from the state of her mind it was doubted if any confidence could be placed as to her consciousness of what she said. After some further evidence the jury returned a verdict of "Natural death." Mrs Brough was about 50 years of age. [21]

Concealment of birth

As the horrors of the Brough murder continued to occupy Biddlecombe yet another case involving the death of a child took place in **1854 on August 8**. The charge became one of **concealment of birth** of an illegitimate child: Ann Berryman a well-dressed genteel looking young woman lived with her father near Chertsey where she earned a living as a dressmaker. In May it was thought by neighbours that she was in the family way and then she was back to normal. **Superintendent Biddlecombe** became aware and spoke with the woman who admitted having a child prematurely and she did not murder the child but had burnt the body. Biddlecombe made a search of the garden where he found the partly burned body of the child, which were examined by Mr Sherlock a surgeon who thought the baby to have arrived at maturity. There was discussion as to whether the child was born alive and this led to a not guilty verdict by the jury after a short discussion. [22] This was not an uncommon event as young women, away from home, living often as servants became pregnant, told no one and gave birth often it seems after serving dinner. Alone in their room, or in the privy, desperate women gave birth to their children, which were either born alive and killed or born dead. Juries and judges were very sympathetic and against the odds many children were found not to have had an independent existence or they were found guilty of trying to conceal the body of the child.

A London gang of burglars

Burglary remained a significant issue in back then as now**.** In 1855 on August 9 at Bucks County Police Court Thomas King was charged with burglaries at Iver and in other places. PC C Dickman 103 one of the horse patrol apprehended the prisoner near the George Inn, Colnbrook and was committed by the magistrates for trial at the spring assizes. Mr Biddlecombe the Superintendent of the

[21] 1861 March 23 Surrey Comet
[22] The Standard (London, England), Tuesday, August 08, 1854; Issue 9361

Surrey Constabulary at Chertsey said he could adduce some evidence to connect the prisoner with eight different burglaries. The said they could not hear him as the offences were outside the county. Biddlecombe persisted and said that property found on the defendant came from a burglary at the Wheatsheaf Inn, Esher. Biddlecombe could prove that the footmarks in the garden correspond to with the prisoner's shoes. [23]

On December 4 that year Thomas King and a group of other criminals appeared at the Hertford Assizes. Sarah Baker alias White 47, Ann Williams alias White 26, her daughter, John Williams alias Goodenough 23, described as a hawker and Thomas King 25, labourer, were charged with burglary in the dwelling house of Edward Webb and stealing money and other property. The two women were also charged with receiving. The prisoners were believed to be a part of a gang of London thieves who are in the habit of travelling about the country committing offences of this description. Another woman Catherine Hawkins was included in the indictment but she was admitted as a witness for the Crown. The prisoner King pleaded guilty.

The gang left Blackfriars for Hertford where they committed the burglary. Eventually they were arrested, two by superintendents of the Bucks police, Thomas and Adams, when stolen property was found in their possession. Also there was a chisel, which fitted the marks from the burglary. At the Assizes the prisoners were found guilty, Goodenough was sent for 15 years transportation and the others to six years penal servitude. Goodenough was taken into custody for another burglary in Surrey and committed for trial. He told the court that he was innocent and that **Biddlecombe had got up the case,** because he told him that he should like to have his neck stretched for him. As he left the dock he shook his fist at the officer and in the most threatening tone he said "I only wish I may live to come back for your sake." This was not to be the last contact Biddlecombe was to have with Goodenough. (See April 1864 below)

Manslaughter in Chertsey

Following a quarrel on the 3 February 1856 between John Beauchamp a publican of the Coffee House in Chertsey and his wife, she was struck unconscious and later died. After the quarrel the defendant went and saw a chemist who came to the house and found Mrs Beauchamp deeply unconscious. Superintendent Biddlecombe was summoned to the house on the 5th February where he saw the prisoner and his unconscious wife and when he asked why a doctor had not been called he was informed that Mrs Beauchamp was frequently drunk and unconscious. A surgeon was called and examined her and she was still unconscious. After she died a PM revealed organ damage indicating that she was addicted to spirits. The jury after a short deliberation found the defendant guilty of manslaughter and the judge thought this was the right verdict particularly as it was known he had struck his wife before and would be sentenced to four years penal servitude. [24]

Theft at Byfleet

1856 April 15 at Surrey Quarter Sessions, Mary Ann Strip 18, a spinster was charged with stealing at Byfleet a cash box containing about £10 in gold and silver monies, and also three petticoats the property of James Holroyd. Mary was in service with the Holroyd family and Mrs Holroyd went into Mary's bedroom and looked into her box and some of the alleged stolen property was found. Superintendent Biddlecombe was called and the room searched more carefully and Mrs Holroyd

[23] 1855 August 9: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[24] The Times March 20 1856

found more of her property. PC 9 Edwin Colville Moore, Surrey Constabulary deposed that on Friday 20 March the prisoner was in custody at Chertsey police station and said she wanted to see Mr Biddlecombe and wished to make a statement in which she admitted the thefts and if she was taken to her to her mother's shed she would point out where the property was. Biddlecombe cautioned the girl and PC Moore who was standing by the cell door heard it being given. Biddlecombe in evidence said that on March the 20th he received information and went with Inspector Murtell to the prosecutor's house searching inside and Murtell the outside. Something transpired and Biddlecombe went to the prisoner's mother's house and apprehended the prisoner. Inspector Murtell gave evidence of finding the cash box in Mr Holroyd's coal cellar covered in coals. Strip was found guilty but the jury recommended mercy on account of her affliction of numerous fits and her youth. The chairman said they were about to pass a sentence of pure humanity rather than strict justice and he hoped the public would not misunderstand it. He hoped she would get the better of the physical infirmity under which she laboured and her moral character would improve. Sentenced to one month's imprisonment.[25]

Biddlecombe's collarbone in the news

1856 June 28: On Friday afternoon of the 20 inst., an **accident of a serious nature** occurred to Mr Superintendent Biddlecombe, Surrey Constabulary, Chertsey. He had occasion to get out of his cart near Walton and while in the act of getting in again some person discharged a gun in the neighbourhood which caused the mare he was driving, a spirited animal, to start, throwing Mr Biddlecombe on his shoulder and breaking his collarbone. We are happy to say he is progressing favourably.[26]

Broken bones or not Superintendents were very busy men covering a wide area with a number of functions other than what today would be considered a police role**.** In 1840 the Home Office gave guidance on the appointment of senior officers that included: Inspectors must be a man of education and capable judgement; the public must feel a firm reliance on him as such. Took charge of a sub-division – spent a great deal of time in court – commonly inspector of weights and measures, assistant relieving officer for vagrants, supervised common lodging houses, reported on highways and bridges and any outbreak of cattle disease. 1840 HO rules: Superintendent "Must be a man of general intelligence able to read and write well, and keep accounts." [27] These additional duties required some involvement in the realities of vagrancy and working closely with the workhouse. Another onerous responsibility was for weights and measures as many shops and points of sale including licensed premises had to be visited and scales and measures tested.

1856 June 28: Chertsey Petty Sessions: James Ellis a grocer was summoned by Superintendent Biddlecombe, inspector of weights and measures, with having several weights not to the imperial standard so a fine of 1s, with costs and forfeiture of the weights. Robert Diz a butcher of Weybridge was summoned for a like offence. Three beer retailers had quart and pint measures not stamped and being less than the imperial measure a penalty of 5s with 17s costs.[28]

[25] 1856 April 15: The Sussex Advertiser, Surrey Gazette
[26] 1856 June 28: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[27] A History of Police in England and Wales TA Critchley 1967 page 155
[28] 1856 June 28: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

The range of police activity continues

1856 July 19: Robbery: On the 8th inst., a horse, cart and harness was stolen from Dunford Mills, Chertsey overnight and the thieves were able to get clear of the county of Surrey not withstanding the exertions of Superintendent Biddlecombe Surrey Constabulary, to prevent their escape. He however, put himself in communication with the police of surrounding counties and ultimately succeeded in tracing them into Bedfordshire. The horse, cart and harness are now in the custody of the police in that county.[29]

1856 August 2: Chertsey Petty Sessions: William Turner of Chertsey was charged on the information of Superintendent Biddlecombe with trespassing in pursuit of rabbits. The defendant did not appear and on proof of service of the summons being given by PC King he was convicted in his absence with a penalty of £2 with 10s costs. A warrant was issued for his apprehension.[30]

Surrey was full of military from 1853 -1856 the Crimean War ensuring large-scale recruitment and mobilization of the Militia. Not everyone was keen to be a soldier and deserters were arrested almost on a daily basis. 1856 August 9: Chertsey Petty Sessions: John Meakin, Thomas Salisbury and John Rennie were charged by Superintendent Biddlecombe Surrey Constabulary, with deserting from the 95th Regiment of Foot and were sent to Horsemonger Lane Gaol. [31] 1856 August 16: Egham: James Healey and James McNaughton deserters from 19th and 82 Regiments of Foot at Aldershot apprehended by a police officer taken before the court and committed to Horsemonger Lane Gaol.[32] The chairman of the magistrates commented that the number of deserters apprehended by the police is said to be surprising much more so the numbers who escape detection. One of these men stated 130 men were absent from his regiment without leave at the time he left.[33]

1856 August 16 at Chertsey Petty Sessions, Emma Jones and Eliza Jones, mother and daughter were charged with feloniously setting fire to a shed at Bagshot causing £70 of damage. Mrs Jones was arrested and taken to Chertsey police station where the female searcher deposed that on Monday evening 4 August the prisoners were brought there by Superintendent Biddlecombe directed she be searched and placed in the female cell. Mrs Jones admitted to her that she had set fire to the shed. Superintendent Biddlecombe deposed that he took Emma Jones into custody and charged her with setting fire to Mrs Burchett's shed. She said she knew nothing about it. He directed PC Lambert to take the daughter into custody. The mother was sent to the next Assizes and the daughter discharged.[34] 1857 28 March: Surrey Spring Assizes, Kingston: Eliza Jones a fresh-coloured girl aged 11 was charged with maliciously setting fire to an outbuilding the property of Margaret Burchett at Windlesham. The prisoner when called on to plead said "I done it." When the prisoner was told the charge meant she intended to injure the prosecutrix she said she had no such intention so a plea of not guilty was entered. Superintendent Biddlecombe first took the mother into custody and then the prisoner. The mother denied all knowledge of the fire. At the police station the mother said her daughter had been cleaning some potatoes and went to the ditch to rinse them. The jury found the

[29] 1856 July 19: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[30] 1856 August 2: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[31] 1856 August 9: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[32] 1856 August 16: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[33] 1856 August 16: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[34] 1856 August 16: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

prisoner guilty of the act but without the intent so the judge said that is "Not Guilty" and the jury returned the verdict of not guilty.[35]

The races; what a commitment

1856 30 August: Windsor and Eton Express: Egham Races: The light fingered gentry were looked after by Superintendent Biddlecombe and a division of the Surrey Constabulary who were on duty at the course, and Inspector Bent from Waterloo station who was on the alert at Egham Station so these gentlemen were compelled to be cautious in their vocations.[36]

1856 September 13: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette: Although ever reluctant to censure the police when they deserve blame we are equally ready to justify them when their conduct is such as to warrant our so doing. All persons who have any knowledge of the difficulties of "keeping clear the course" and of discharging other duties as upon the police force engaged upon such occasions must know the labour attended upon carrying out those duties, more particularly just on the eve of the races. At Ascot the A Division of the London police manage their duties to perfection but then they are picked men and accustomed to such peculiar work. At Egham, Superintendent Biddlecombe and a body of the Surrey Constabulary were engaged and, we believe, not more than half a dozen of the men had previously performed similar duties, consequently such perfect carrying out of their instructions as by men who are fully trained for the work was not to be expected.

On the first day some complaints were made that the course was not well kept, in other words, the police were not sufficiently active in preventing the public from crossing and re-crossing it when a race was about coming off. On the second day a fracas occurred between the police and an offender by the former doing their duty. A person in running across the course having evaded snatches by one or two policemen was at last caught fast by one of the force just as he had crossed and managed to dart under the ropes. Here there was a scuffle, the man got on his legs, one of the police was struck twice, other police went to his assistance, the offender received a blow from the policeman's truncheon and in endeavouring to pull him into the course to escort him back from whence he came he fell over the ropes, whereupon there was a great cry of "Shame" against the police. But the man was eventually taken back to the side from whence he started to convince him he had no right to cross, and there he was very pugnacious and evinced a great desire to give Superintendent Biddlecombe a taste of his fistic powers. However more discreet friends that he had on the opposite side prevented him committing a second assault and thus the matter ended.

From these circumstances the turf reporter of the Sunday Times has made the following very unfair attack upon the police:

"The only unpleasant incident which occurred to mar the satisfactory character of the proceedings was the brutal violence displayed by the local police who, in certain instances exceeded their duty so shamefully as to excite the indignation of the spectators. On Thursday so brutal attack did they make on an unfortunate fellow who was crossing the course that yells and execrations assailed from all sides and so threatening became the mob that a serious riot seemed inevitable. Had the people taken the law into their own hands and soundly thrashed the "peeler" guilty of the outrage they would have been fully justified. The slightest opposition to the authority of the police caused truncheons to be

[35] 1857 February 21: The Sussex Express, Surrey Standard Weald of Kent Mail, Hants and County Advertiser
[36] 1856 30 August: Windsor and Eton Express: Egham Races

used with the most savage ferocity. Armed with their formidable weapons the fellows seemed to forget they were employed to preserve peace and order but they hustled unfortunate wights[37] (sic) most roughly and laid about them right and left. If their duty was to smash heads without distinction they unscrupulously discharged it. The inspectors were much to blame that they did not interfere to restrain the violence of their men."

Our attention was drawn to the remarks last week and we in addition to giving the foregoing description of the affair obtained from an eye witness, in justice to the police, subjoin the following reply to our inquiries from an Egham correspondent:

" I consider the extract from the Sunday Times embodies an unfounded attack upon the police, and abounds also in gross misrepresentation. The police have arduous duties to perform in addition to the prevention and detection of crime, it is indispensible to "clear the course" and to keep it clear for the mutual safety of the jockeys, horses and the public and their instructions upon this point are explicit and peremptory. Some persons are ever too prone to frustrate their efforts by crossing the course at uncertain periods and at irregular intervals after the bell has rung and this unbecoming and dangerous practice having attained its climax at our last meeting a corresponding effort was made to abate the evil. A "gentleman sportsman" having offended in this particular and having resisted the entreaties of the police to return to the *locus in quo*, accompanied with a blow, this functionary retaliated in self-defence. The mob, resentful of interference, sympathised with the culprit, who received the chastisement, which his own foolish conduct provoked and they hooted accordingly. There was not the slightest ground for apprehending a riot, in fine, the committee feel the police acted throughout with commendable forbearance, which would be politic upon all occasions in the public to reciprocate. [38]

More straightforward police duty

1856 November 30: Old Bailey: Theft of a horse valued at £18 from George Leggat by Alfred Dowers. Police Superintendent W H Biddlecombe gave evidence that he was riding a horse from Egham and saw the prisoner about a quarter of a mile from the field where the horse was stolen. He later went to the house of detention at Osborn where he pointed out the prisoner from 140-150 others. The prisoner responded by saying that Biddlecombe "has sworn false". The prisoner was found guilty and sentenced to 18 months. [39]

1857 July 11 Chertsey: On Sunday morning last Alfred Burton for who a reward of £2 was offered for **stealing a watch and money** belonging to a fellow Chertsey workman, was apprehended at Enfield and on Tuesday **Superintendent Biddlecombe** went there to bring him to Chertsey. On their arrival at Chertsey on the half past nine train, upward of a 100 persons were assembled at the station and accompanied him to the police station, and so strong was the feeling against the prisoner although guarded by the superintendent and two constables they had much trouble in preventing the mob from exercising "Lynch-law' on him. Their questions "Where is the watch?" The prisoner did evidently not relish "What o'clock" and similar queries. On Wednesday he was committed for trial. None of the

[37] Wight is a Middle English word, from Old English wiht, and used to describe a creature or living sentient being. It is akin to Old High German wiht, meaning a creature or thing
[38] 1856 September 13: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[39]http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t18570615-708&div=t18570615-708&terms=biddlecombe#highlight

property or money has been found but two new suits of clothes, a new parasol and a formidable life preserver found in his possession.[40]

1857 August 8 Summer Assizes: Robbery by a letter carrier at Egham: John Baverstock 42 a letter carrier pleaded guilty to stealing three post letters to property of the Post Master General at Egham. In consequence of numerous complaints of the non-arrival of letters an investigation led to the prisoner who was taken into custody and Biddlecombe on searching the prisoner's house discovered 29 letters and several newspapers, which the prisoner had abstracted. The prisoner pleaded mercy on the grounds of previous good character and his large family. His lordship spoke of the enormity of the offence and he sentenced the prisoner to 4 years penal servitude.[41]

1858 April 17: Walton on Thames Serious case of the death of a child (Manslaughter?) An inquest was held at the Crown Inn respecting the death of Anne Redford aged 7 years. Anne lived with her father and stepmother and three other children. Mrs Redford came home at twenty to two in the morning and told her husband she had lost poor Anne. He understood that she was saying the child was dead and she asked" Will you get up and go with me after her?" He told her "I should not" and he then asked where the child was and she said in Chertsey Meadow. At this time he did not know if the child was dead nor did he ask but he sent his son Henry to go for a policeman to find the child. Mrs Redford went with Henry and returned at quarter to three with the body of Anne. Later that afternoon the wife told the Walton Inspector that she thought the child had died falling from a stile.

Inspector George Benge Whenam Surrey Constabulary stationed Walton on Thames. Between 9 and 10 am he received information about the death and went to the child's home. He looked at the dead child and saw some slight bruises on her face. He spoke with the mother who described where she had been and that she had bought two pennyworth of rum at Chertsey, giving the child some in water. They then went to Shepperton Range; she passed the stile, leaving the child behind her when she heard her call out that she had fallen and hurt herself. She lifted the child up and they walked on but after a short distance the child became insensible. The mother sat and held the child for some hours but the child remained insensible. Mrs Redford took off her petticoat and shawl and wrapped the child in them and went to inform her husband. She had to leave the child, as she was too heavy to be carried. PC James Middleton who was present during the interview then detained the mother. The post mortem found slight scratches and bruising but nothing to indicate violence. There may have been concussion of the brain. The coroner expressed his disapprobation that the police had removed the woman from the county of Surrey to a Metropolitan Police Court before the inquest and by this means preventing her appearance at the inquiry to answer on her own behalf. The mother was not at the inquest as she was detained at the Clerkenwell House of Detention and an application was made for her to appear.

Adjourned Inquest: Evidence from the public house and passers by was given and **Superintendent Biddlecombe** said he saw the child after death; there were some marks on the face, which I did not recognise **when I saw it lying on the ground in the meadow.** (Note: This is odd as the mother said with her son they took the child home during the night so how did Biddlecombe see the child in the meadow?) A **Metropolitan Police officer** PC V45 Lawn based in Shepperton met the mother walking home and spoke with her but she did not mention the child. Mrs Mary Ann Redford alias Tucker was present and said her head was confused and did not speak on her own behalf. Mr C Mott a

[40] 1857 July 11: The Sussex Express, Surrey Standard Weald of Kent Mail, Hants and County Advertiser
[41] 1857 August 8 Surrey Comet Kingston, Richmond and Epsom Gazette

surgeon who undertook the examination and post mortem said he found neither injury nor disease. He was of the opinion that the under nourished body, the deficiency of fat, the scanty clothing, the fact that they had walked several miles, the child had fallen from a stile, and was subsequently exposed for several hours on the open range at Shepperton on a very windy and cold night, she had no power to with stand the effects of such exposure and died as a consequence. Superintendent Biddlecombe examined the stile and took a range of measurements, which he gave to the court. The child would naturally step on a bank to go over the stile and the construction of the stile in the dark may have led to the scratches and may even have fallen from the 4 foot 6 inches height into the ditch. On the bank of the ditch there were some old nettle stumps that might have caused the scratches on the face.

The jury after deliberating for an hour returned the verdict " That the deceased died form exposure to the cold and from physical inability of the mother." The Coroner gave the woman a suitable admonition and told her she could go, but trusted this occurrence would be a warning to her in future particularly as to her conduct to the other step children.[42] Was this death of yet another child the final straw for Biddlecombe in his police career?

Biddlecombe leaves the Surrey Constabulary

Biddlecombe's resignation is recorded in 1858 May 5 in General Order 140.[43] It is not known why this should be. No papers have been seen from the archives, no mention is made in the national media when a great deal about the police is, and nothing reported in police committee minutes. It is unlikely that he fell out with the chief constable as he was in his new career as a publican to provide horse and fly for the HMI during his visits to the county and there was contact with the force through his work as clerk of the course at Egham races. It is possible that the chief constable felt he had been at Chertsey long enough and tried to move him and he did not want to move. Conceivably the owners of The Swan made him an offer he could not refuse given the growing family responsibilities; it may have been he liked his horses and the opportunity to be a clerk of the course was too good to pass over. Maybe he sought a little freedom and being able to benefit from his own enterprise. It can be no more than speculation unless some information from the time is revealed. Having resigned, crime did not disappear from his life.

1858 May 25 Surrey Adjourned Quarter Sessions: Court House Newington: On the magistrates assembling the Clerk of the Peace said in consequence of Mr Biddlecombe late Superintendent of the rural police having taken an inn at Chertsey, Mr Murtell Superintendent at Godstone had been removed to Chertsey and Mr Alfred Bungard from Guildford was appointed in Mr Murtell's place at Godstone, but it was necessary for the court to appoint him as Inspector of Weights and Measures for the Godstone Division. Mr Bungard was accordingly sworn in.[44]

The police officers of the Chertsey division gathered on a Thursday in early June at the Swan Inn for the purpose of presenting a silver snuff box as a testimonial to their late Superintendent, Mr W.H. Biddlecombe who has now become the landlord of that establishment. At four o'clock the men walked into the bowling green and having invited Mr Biddlecombe to accompany them they formed a circle and PC Miller on behalf of his comrades presented the box. He dwelt on the deep feelings of attachment with which the force regarded their late superintendent, on account of his uniform kindness and in the manner in which he had instructed them in the performance of their duties. He

[42] 1858 April 17: Surrey Comet:
[43] Surrey Constabulary General Orders Book 1 1851-
[44] 1858 May 25 The Sussex Advertiser and Surrey Gazette

believed they performed those duties in a manner satisfactorily to the chief constable. Many men in this force, but not in this division, would have contributed to the object had they an opportunity of doing so. He could assure Mr B that much regret had been felt at his leaving the force. After further expressing their good wishes of the force the officer presented the box which bore the following inscription: " Presented to W.H. Biddlecombe, June 3 1858 by the Chertsey Division of the Surrey Constabulary as a token of their respect to him, their late superintendent."

Mr Biddlecombe in returning thanks said it was with much pleasure that he had accepted the handsome token of respect. Kindness had a greater effect on cowing a man than any usage of a different character. Knowing nothing of their intention until ten minutes ago, he felt quite overpowered by their kindness. Originally he was a plain police constable like themselves but by dint of perseverance and exertion he attained the position which he had the honour of holding in the Surrey Constabulary which, he hoped he left in no way discreditable to himself. His rule had been to obey those under whom he served. His advice to them was to do likewise. Let them not be dissatisfied with their position but if they felt aggrieved let them appeal to their superiors and never let them throw themselves out of a situation before they had another. It afforded him pleasure to let him know that some of those men who served so faithfully under him had received some good appointments. He felt great pleasure in stating that this was the third tribute he had received since he filled the office of superintendent.[45]

Crime was still in Biddlecombe's life

There was a villain who chose the wrong place and the wrong man to try and con! The astute former superintendent was barely used to not having a uniform to wear when The Morning Post of the 1858 August 4 reports that at Guildford Assizes, Edward Morton was charged with obtaining money by false pretences, a sovereign, from Mr Biddlecombe of the Swan Inn formerly a very active police superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary. Simply, the man came to the inn pretending to be a vicar, said he was short of cash and Biddlecombe lent him the money. After his trial the jury immediately found the con man guilty and he was sentenced to 12 months hard labour.[46]

1858 November 13: Biddlecombe remained the licensee of The Swan and on this date a court report appears where his ostler at The Swan was a witness in a case of dog stealing[47]

1859 August 6: Surrey Summer Assizes Croydon: Henrico Hamilton age 30 was charged with uttering one forged £10 Bank of England note at Woking and another to Henry Longhurst and another to William Henry Biddlecombe both of Chertsey with intent to defraud. The prisoner using a military rank called at the Albion Hotel, Woking and made enquires after a military man. Having spun a yarn he had lunch and offered the £10 in payment, which the landlord was reluctant to accept. The prisoner endorsed the note "H. Hamilton, Stoke Park, Berks." The landlord gave the change £9 17s 2d and he left in a gig. The next day the landlord gave the note to Superintendent Murtell.

The fly driver drove the prisoner to Chertsey where he visited a drapers and bought some white kid gloves, **uttered the £10 note** and change was given. Mr Biddlecombe came to the shop afterwards and he showed me another £10 note and I handed to him the one I had taken from the prisoner. After Biddlecombe left I saw the prisoner standing close to The Swan. Biddlecombe and I followed him

[45] 1858 June 8: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[46] The Morning Chronicle (London, England), Wednesday, August 4, 1858; Issue 28565
[47] The Morning Post (London, England), Saturday, November 13, 1858; pg. 3; Issue 26491

into a yard when the draper asked if he had just handed him a £10 note, which he said he was. Biddlecombe asked the prisoner to go to the Swan with them, which he did. There was a scuffle with Biddlecombe when the prisoner trying to get his hand into his waistcoat pocket and Biddlecombe trying to prevent him. Evidence was given from a waiter at The Swan who received a £10 note from the prisoner, which he gave to Biddlecombe.

Mr **Henry Biddlecombe** said he kept The Swan Inn at Chertsey; the prisoner where he had lunch and paid with a £10 note, which the waiter brought to me. Later when he met the prisoner he told him he would have to return with me, as there was something wrong with the £10 note. There was a scuffle at the Inn when a porte-monnaie (a purse) fell from his pocket. This was opened in the presence of the police and found to contain money.

PC Fowler Surrey Constabulary went to the commercial room at the Swan where he found Biddlecombe and the draper holding down the prisoner. The prisoner admitted passing the notes but he did not know they were bad. Superintendent James Murtell Surrey Constabulary made enquiries into the background of the prisoner.

Found guilty and sentenced to six years penal servitude.[48]

1859 December 3: Chertsey Petty Sessions: On Saturday last William Collier absconded from the services of WH Biddlecombe having embezzled sundry sums of money which he had taken as driver. He was taken before the magistrate on Wednesday and remanded until Saturday for Mr Biddlecombe to produce other witnesses.[49]

Biddlecombe now clerk of the course for Egham Races

As clerk of the course for Egham races Biddlecombe had to seek approval from the chief constable to have police officers on duty for crowd control and to prevent crime. This was vital as without the men there would be chaos and money he invested in the meetings would be lost. The races would fall into disrepute and Biddlecombe and his sponsors would loose their investment. The following was such an occasion when the police failed to turn up as agreed.

1864 May 14: The Late Chertsey Steeple Chase – The Welchers and the Police: May 9 Guildford County Court Mr WH Biddlecombe of the Swan Hotel, Chertsey sued Captain Henry Cadogan Hastings chief superintendent (should read chief constable) for £19 19s. Mr Biddlecombe was the promoter of the Chertsey Steeplechases on the 23 and 24 March and obtained the patronage of several influential noblemen and gentlemen as stewards. The races were open and Mr Biddlecombe who took the whole responsibility and cost, depended on gate money and ring tickets for is repayment of the added money and of course anticipated a remunerative return for his outlay. He applied to Captain Hastings the Chief Constable for the services of 12 constables to protect the money takers, and also to keep the ring clear from those pests of racecourses, the "welchers" and pickpockets, who always gather in force at similar meetings. Captain Hastings agreed to grant the services of the police but they did not appear and in consequence some hundreds of persons got onto the ground without paying. The ring was broken into and lawlessness and blackguardism became triumphant. The course was blocked

[48] 1859 August 6 The Surrey Comet
[49] 1859 December 3: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

up so much in one of the races when Lord Charles Ker was riding one of his own horses the animal bolted in consequence of the crowd rushing in when it was winning easily. The consequence was his lordship and his friends laid the blame on Mr Biddlecombe and probably would not again lend their countenance to the steeplechases. On the second day the police were in attendance and due order and regularity prevailed.

Action was taken in the civil court to recover damages consequent on the non-fulfilment of the contract by Captain Hastings that the police should attend as contained in the letter as follows from the Deputy Chief Constable to Mr Biddlecombe:

Guildford March 17 1864 to Mr Biddlecombe from police HQ in Guildford: "Sir, In reply to your letter of the 16th inst., I am directed to acquaint you that you can have the services of 12 constables as requested on 23 and 24 inst., for the purpose of keeping the course." On the 20th March Captain Hastings wrote "I was extremely vexed to hear that the constables whom I had ordered to be at Chertsey on the morning 23 inst., in compliance with your request did not receive their instructions to that effect in sufficient time to enable them to attend at the hour specified."

For the defence it was urged that that the defendant was not liable as being the agent of the magistrates and that in any event the plaintiff ought to have had experienced persons as money-takers and ring-keepers, and even if there was a contract which was argued there was not, it was only to "keep the course" and the defendant was not liable for damage or loss arising from persons getting on to the ground or into the ring without paying. The jury awarded in favour of Biddlecombe [50]

Burglar Goodenough re-appears from the 1850s

At the Police Court in Bristol on April 16 1864 some six years after his retirement and eight years after seeing him convicted, Biddlecombe is again to meet up with the hardened burglar Goodenough. This time he had been arrested for a murderous attack upon a constable. John Smith alias Goodenough a middle aged, swarthy complexioned man of medium stature, but possessing a most villainous cast of countenance was charged with resisting his lawful apprehension under a warrant charging him with having committed a burglary at Alverstoke in the county of Southampton and stolen property of Samuel Wheeler and also with violently assaulting PCs 51, 199 and 200 with intent to do them grievous bodily harm. (A six shot revolver was involved) The Superintendent from Southampton had arrived in Bristol with a warrant for the arrest of the prisoner who he had been seeking for several months for five very clear cases of burglary. He now sought to take him to Southampton.

The bench wanted to keep the prisoner because of the serious assault charges and the Superintendent asked that he take his companion Stewart to Gosport and if he was discharged he would be brought back to Bristol. Mr Hollington Superintendent of Chertsey (Surrey Constabulary) said he would take the responsibility upon himself. (Note: It seems as if the Surrey Constabulary wanted their hands on Goodenough who in the past had committed number of burglaries in the county).

Mentioned also in the report, which gives graphic information on the assault of the three officers, is Biddlecombe, late chief superintendent, Surrey Constabulary. He said 8 years (1858) ago he had 25 cases of burglary against the prisoner. He was tried at Hertford and sentenced to 10 years transportation. He had been out 8 or 9 months and believed he had committed about 25 burglaries in his neighbourhood. He had broke out of more gaols than any other man in England. The prisoner was

[50] 1864 May 14 Bell's Life in London

handed over to the police authorities to be conveyed to Gosport. Other men were then charged with trying to rescue the prisoner from PC199.[51] One can only assume that the man was also wanted for the burglaries in Surrey and this was "a joint operation" with Southampton. Long retired Biddlecombe was most likely there to identify the prisoner and prove he had convictions, as there was no other method.

The Goodenough case is also mentioned in the local papers for Surrey. The Surrey Advertiser reports on 16 July 1864 that readers will remember the capture by the late superintendent of police Mr Biddlecombe of a clever burglar living quietly in Bristol under the name Captain Smith who made a desperate escape at Chertsey shortly before his capture. At Winchester Crown Court John Goodenough alias Smith alias Williams was charged with five burglaries in Hampshire and being at large before his fifteen years sentence to transportation had expired. The Judge said he would deal with the matter himself at the Central Criminal Court.[52] From this report it seems that Biddlecombe may have had a more prominent part to play in the arrest. It is so that Biddlecombe became a private detective working with other experienced men.

Back to being a publican

On the 27 March 1865 the Dundee Courier & Argus reported that Biddlecombe seems to have entered into something of a scandal or difficulty involving royalty: "Mr. W. H. Biddlecombe, landlord of the Swan Hotel, at Chertsey, and clerk of the course at the recent steeple-chases there, contradicts the statement that the Prince of Wales lost his watch." Nothing else but it is intriguing. [53]

1865 December 23 Biddlecombe listed as a witness at the inquest on a boy who was run over in Chertsey also 30 December 1865. The nine-year-old named Hawkins should have been at school but was hit by a fly with a grey horse that did not stop at the scene. Sergeant Cornelius Bundy made enquiries but no offender was caught. Biddlecombe had this type of vehicle and rented them. [54]

Billeting soldiers in Chertsey was causing concerns to licensees including Biddlecombe and it was reported in 1865 on 2 September in the Surrey Advertiser. Biddlecombe, who applied to the bench in hoping that Quarter Sessions would offer some relief. No matter how busy their public houses and stables were, whenever soldiers were in the district the publicans had to provide billets and the allowances led to the making of a loss. [55]

1866 23 June and 25 June 1866 there are references to Biddlecombe Swan Inn- and also as landlord of The New Line, Addlestone [56]

Biddlecombe could not avoid crime but what he was doing working with the superintendent of the Windsor Borough Police in 1866 on the 21 September investigating a fraud it is difficult to fathom unless he was being paid for his skills. Biddlecombe, reported as of the Swan Hotel and former superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary along with the chief superintendent of the Windsor Borough police were on the track of a fraudster who they found fishing in the middle of the Thames between Chertsey and Weybridge and took him into custody at Windsor. The fraudster was an ex

[51] 1864 April 16 The Western Daily Press
[52] http://www.newspaperdetectives.co.uk/surreyindex.htm
[53] The Dundee Courier & Argus (Dundee, Scotland), Monday, March 27, 1865; Issue 3630
[54] http://www.newspaperdetectives.co.uk/surreyindex.htm
[55] 1865 on 2 September Surrey Advertiser
[56] http://www.newspaperdetectives.co.uk/surreyindex.htm

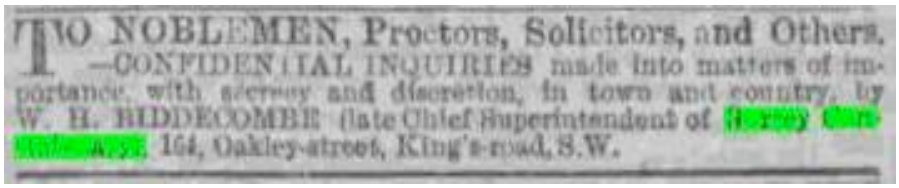
army officer cashiered in 1865 moving to a hotel in Paris where he adopted a new name and the rank of captain. After cashing false cheques he decamped back to England where after a number of adventures and frauds he ended up before the bench in Windsor. Quite what the responsibility of Biddlecombe was is hard to judge. [57] A simple explanation is Biddlecombe was working in his new role as a private investigator and if that is the case he was involved on behalf of a client.

1867 10 August: Biddlecombe v Gilkes solicitor Haynes. There had been a disturbance in the Swan and as a result Biddlecombe hurt his leg and tore his trousers and at the Chertsey County Court he was seeking £3.10s compensation. He was awarded ten shillings. [58] This is not as odd as first it may seem. The Victorians loved the County Court and endless cases of claims and counter claims; assaults and failure to pay appear in most editions of the local papers. For Biddlecombe if there was a failure to pay – go to court.

1872 3 February: In a case Smith v Mayor of Godalming and others known as The Wharf case involving a claim that land was in the ownership of one person and the local authority were claiming rights over it. Biddlecombe was brought from retirement to recall when he was superintendent of police he collected tolls for use of the land.[59]

The Private Detective

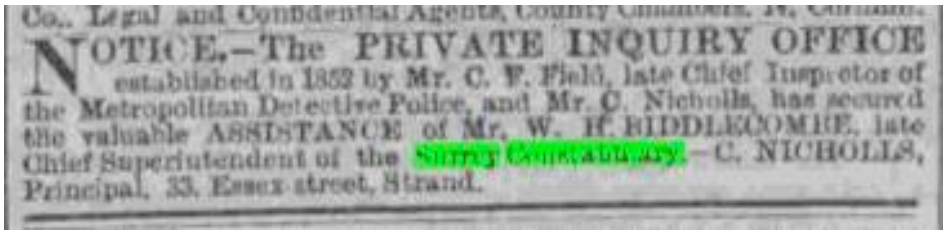
1873 11 August: In the Standard newspaper Biddlecombe advertises for work as a private investigator when living off the King's Road in south west London which is likely to mean he has departed from the licensing trade and gone back to being a detective a job he did well.


TWO NOBLEMEN, Proctors, Solicitors, and Others.
—CONFIDENTIAL INQUIRIES made into matters of importance, with secrecy and discretion, in town and country, by W. H. BIDDECOMBE (late Chief Superintendent of Surrey Constabulary), 164, Oakley-street, King's-road, S.W.

Biddlecombe (name spelt wrongly in advert) began to advertise in The Standard during 1873 and 1874 when he joined forces with retired Chief Inspector Charles Field late of the Metropolitan Police and one of the most famous detectives of his day.[60] In 1855 Charles Dickens visited a group of detectives at Scotland Yard long before they became a part of the new CID. He was very impressed and wrote about the officers including Field who he referred to as Inspector Wield: " --a middle aged man of a portly presence with a large moist, knowing eye, a husky voice, and a habit of emphasising his conversation by the air of a corpulent fore-finger which is constantly in juxtaposition with his eyes or nose."[61]

Dickens was to use Field as his model for Inspector Bucket in his novel Hard Times[62] and was well placed to establish himself as a private enquiry agent it being probably very beneficial for both Field and Biddlecombe to come together.

[57] The Hull Packet and East Riding Times (Hull, England), Friday, September 21, 1866; Issue 4261
[58] Surrey Advertiser 8 October 1867
[59] Surrey Advertiser 3 February 1872
[60] 07 October 1873 The Standard et seq.
[61] The Scotland Yard Files Paul Begg and Keith Skinner 1992 page 43
[62] The Invention of Murder Judith Flanders 2010 page 178



NOTICE.—The PRIVATE INQUIRY OFFICE established in 1852 by Mr. C. F. Field, late Chief Inspector of the Metropolitan Detective Police, and Mr. C. Nicholls, has secured the valuable ASSISTANCE of Mr. W. H. BIDDLECOMBE, late Chief Superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary.—C. NICHOLLS, Principal, 33, Essex-street, Strand.

larger premises, 16, CORNHILL (next door to Birch's).

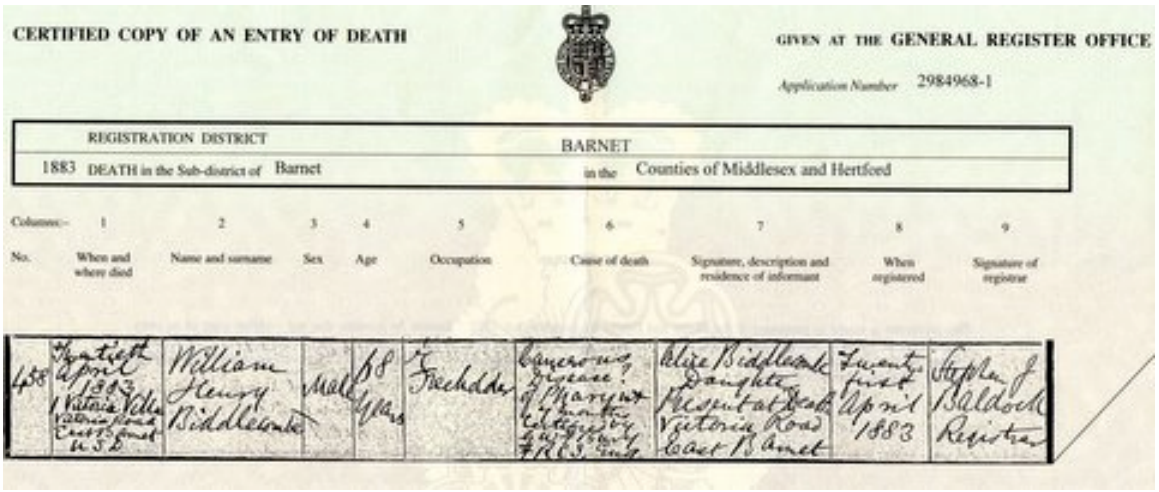
NOTICE.—The SERVICES of Mr. W. H. BIDDLECOMB (late Chief Superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary) have been ADDED to the PRIVATE INQUIRY OFFICE, established in 1852 by Mr. C. F. Field, late Chief Inspector of the Metropolitan Detective Police, and Mr. C. Nicholls.—Offices removed from Devereux-court to 33, Essex-street, Strand.

(Tope advert the name is spelt correctly but again the bottom is wrong)

At present nothing is known of the work undertaken with Field and Mr C Nichols other than the Tichborne case of the career of Biddlecombe as a private detective but given the company he kept it was likely he was involved in a number of significant cases.

Family History

Biddlecombe's death certificate gives an occupation of freeholder, which is a surprise as it could be expected to say "Active former police chief superintendent". Death Certificate Barnet 20 April 1883, 1 Victoria Villa, Victoria Road, East Barnet. Daughter Alice present at death, which was caused by cancer of the pharynx at the back of the mouth, aged 68. Occupation given as freeholder



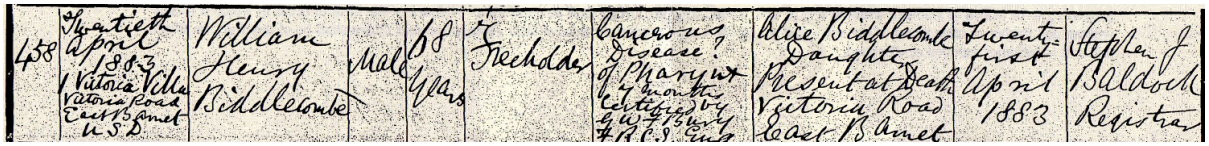
CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 2984968-1

REGISTRATION DISTRICT		BARNET	
1883	DEATH in the Sub-district of Barnet	in the	Counties of Middlesex and Hertford

Columns:—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
458	Twentieth April 1883 1 Victoria Villa Victoria Road East Barnet	William Henry Biddlecombe	Male	68 years	Freeholder	Cancerous disease of Pharynx Certified by A. Hard F.R.C.S.	Alice Biddlecombe Daughter Present at Death Victoria Road East Barnet	Twenty first April 1883	Stephen J. Baldock Registrar



458 | Thirtieth April 1883 | Victoria Villa Victoria Road East Barnet U.S.D. | William Henry Biddlecombe | Male | 68 Years | Freeholder | Cancerous Disease of Pharynx 4 months Certified by [illegible] | Alice Biddlecombe Daughter Present at Death Victoria Road East Barnet | Twenty-first April 1883 | Stephen J Baldock Registrar

Afterthought

When a police house-building programme was begun in the 1950's one was built for the Weybridge Superintendent and its first occupant, 'Dutchy' Holland had it named Biddlecombe after Surrey's first appointed officer.[63]

[63] Copy of death certificate from Mr Christopher Atkins QPM 15 February 2011 also the afterthought