AN OXFORD POLICEMAN'S LOT 1948–1973

The following is a brief history of my service as a police officer in the Oxford City Police, Cyprus Police (UK) Unit, and Thames Valley Police over a period of 25 years.

I have not kept a diary: therefore everything written here is almost entirely from memory. Events will not have occurred in chronological order and I have put similar related events together.

Oxford 45 years ago was quite a lot different from what it is today. I have therefore decided to give a brief description of Oxford and its citizens in 1948, when I commenced my career as a Constable in the Oxford City Police.

The first thing that I think would strike anyone who looked at a map of the City of Oxford and its surroundings in 1948 is the fact that the ring road round Oxford did not exist. There was the Southern by-pass which during the war was used as an ammunition dump and had a battery of anti-aircraft guns located there. There was also the Northern by-pass which was in use for traffic. This was a three-lane road. The middle lane was for vehicles to overtake and this was the cause of many fatal and serious accidents.

All vehicles travelling North to South came down the Woodstock or Banbury Roads through the City centre, over the narrow Red Bridge at the bottom of the Abingdon Road, to Hinksey Hill and through the centre of Abingdon.

Traffic travelling to Swindon in the West came along the old A40, through Headington through the City Centre and up Cumnor Hill. There was no Cumnor by-pass at that time. There was no Donnington Bridge or road. You could walk or cycle over the weirs at Weirs Lane to the Donnington footbridge. Cyclists were banned from using this; many did and were prosecuted. The far side of the bridge was Donnington Lane, later renamed Donnington Bridge Road when the road bridge was built.

The Marston Ferry Link Road did not exist. The only link between North Oxford and Marston was a footpath which led from the Oxford City and County Bowls Club in Marston Ferry Road to a ferry across the River Cherwell by the Victoria Arms public house.

In the centre of Oxford, Cornmarket Street was paved with rubber blocks. I understood that this was an experiment to stop the effect of traffic vibration damaging the old buildings. Just a shower of rain would cause many accidents on what became a slippery surface.

Another big alteration today is the bus station at Gloucester Green. In 1948 one half of this area was a public car park surrounded by a wire fence. This was entered at the Gloucester Green end. In the middle of the Green was a café with adjoining public toilets.

I believe the toilets were originally the City Mortuary. At one side of the café was a coach booking office. Between the café and wire compound of the car park was a wide roadway in which coaches used to come in and pick up their passengers. On the opposite side of the café was the main bus station with its covered parking bays for country buses. These were usually single-deckers. Most buses in those days had conductors, or conductresses who were known as ‘clippies’.

The entrance to Gloucester Green from New Road was via Worcester Street which was a narrow winding road which went over a hump back bridge over the Oxford Canal where Nuffield College now stands. Entry to the Green was via Dispensary Road past the old Dispensary. Behind this was the Greyhound public house. Just behind this was the ‘One Way’ exit from the bus station. Near this on the far side of Gloucester Green from the Ritz Cinema was a waiting room for bus passengers which used to be an old school building. The rest of the side of the Green consisted of very old buildings including a garage and the Hole in the Wall Café. At the side of the Ritz Cinema were the St John Ambulance Headquarters, Fire Station, the Welsh Pony public house and some old houses.

Before the War, council housing estates had been built at Wolvercote, Marston, Rose Hill and Cutteslowe. With regard to the latter, roads were built connecting with Wentworth and Carlton Roads, which were on a private housing estate and led through to the Banbury Road. Due to objections from private residents, walls were built across both roads, sealing them off from the Cutteslowe Estate. These became known as The Cutteslowe Walls.

During the War some council residents persuaded the crew of a Canadian Army tank to knock down one of the walls. I cannot remember the full story, but it was rebuilt and was the object of bitter argument for many years until both walls were eventually removed in 1959. At Rose Hill a council estate was built but the road connecting it to Iffley Village was fenced off near the church. Another road connecting further down the village called Tree Lane has a barrier across it.

After the War came the extension of building at Rose Hill Estate. Mainly at first with prefabricated houses and also similar houses were built at the village of Barton at Headington, which became Barton Estate.

The first type of prefabs as they came to be called were made of aluminium in a factory and then transported and assembled on to a prepared base with water, sewage and

electricity supplies etc. I quote a rhyme which was popular in those days ‘Living in a jungle, living in a tent, better than a prefab, no rent’. At New Marston there was a council estate and this was joined by Northway Estate. Also built were Town Furze, Wood Farm, Cowley Airfield and then Blackbird Leys Estates.

I worked at Morris Motors during the War on War Production. On one side of the Works was open countryside; this was turned into an airfield. Spitfires, Hurricanes and Tiger Moths were repaired and test flown daily. I can remember that one pilot was killed at Boars Hill when his Spitfire crashed.

The Barracks of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry were in Hollow Way and a short distance up the road in The Slade was Slade Camp, which was a large area of wooden huts around a parade ground. After the War this site was given to the City Council and was used to house the homeless. Gypsies also moved on to the site and for many years there was considerable friction, very often leading to violence.

I cannot remember in which year the demolition of St Ebbe’s, The Friars and St Thomas’s began, together with the re-housing of their occupants. These large communities in the middle of Oxford, with many years of friendships and a whole way of life, were split up and moved into these new council estates as the houses were built. They were moving from very old houses into new housing stock, which was a great improvement. However, because of the piecemeal movement of people, this led to a great deal of loneliness and unhappiness. There is no doubt, however, that by destroying all these houses and altering the whole of that area the Council prevented any so-called Inner-City problems arising in Oxford, as has happened in so many other cities. I believe there were 800 houses and 30 public houses in The Friars, which should give some idea of the movement of people.

With the War ending, everyone thought how marvellous things would be. How wrong they were. The country was bankrupt and relying mainly on the United States of America for aid under Lease Lend etc. Rationing continued until 1953–4. Coal supplies were short and virtually everyone had a coal fire. The Army, Navy and Air Force were not immediately demobilised. Servicemen were demobilised in groups, as others were conscripted to fill their place. The result was that it was some time after the War that all those who had been conscripted and had been in action were released. As there was a shortage of male labour in various jobs during the War these had been taken by women, many of them married.

As the servicemen returned home expecting to resume life where they left off, in many cases they were deeply disappointed. Women wanted to continue their new-found freedom and didn’t want to be tied to the kitchen sink. Many had had affairs, very often with servicemen from foreign countries, which was difficult to keep quiet with neighbours and families. Probably the worst off were the returned Prisoners of War,

particularly those who had been taken by the Japanese and badly ill-treated. These men came home with little or no counselling and there were enormous problems with lots of families.

I have mentioned these social problems because, walking around our beat, we would often be approached by people for advice and we became a form of Marriage Guidance Counsellor, Citizens Advice-cum-Welfare Officer. Apart from giving out advice to the best of our ability, we were often called to domestic disputes between husbands and wives, which could become very violent. We just had to use our experience, which we gained daily in the job, and common sense.

At this time there became two different groups of what was called the working class. There were those who worked in shops and offices, Colleges, Police, Fire Brigade, Ambulance Service, and many more occupations. Then there were those who worked at Morris Motors and the Pressed Steel Company factories. The workers there, who worked very hard on what was called piecework, were paid far higher wages – probably three times higher, than other workers in Oxford. As a result some employers such as the City of Oxford Motor Services had to advertise for staff all over the country. They built a hostel for housing these workers next to their bus garage on the Cowley Road.

In those days there were no self-service stores or supermarkets. Both the large stores – Marks & Spencer and Woolworth – had large rectangular counters grouped in fours with the sales assistant in the middle of each group. The tills were mechanical and the staff had to count out the change, which was in pounds, shillings, and pence.

Most men wore hats, usually trilbies or cloth caps. There was the odd deerstalker or bowler hat. The late Inspector Thacker told me a story of how the then Chief Constable Charles Fox issued an order that all police officers off duty must wear hats. Apparently they all went out and bought berets and walked around looking like French or Spanish onion-sellers. He soon rescinded his order.

There were still a number of Carriers using horse wagons for local deliveries, and the rag-and-bone men were a familiar sight with their horse and cart.

If any road resurfacing work was done in the City, a policeman would be deployed to direct traffic as long as the job lasted. At night any roadworks would be protected by red optic paraffin oil lamps, which were looked after by a night watchman who had a little sentry box. He would have a coke-burning brazier to keep him warm and to brew up his cup of tea.

Most people did not have a watch and relied on the various clocks which were on church towers. In the city centre there were clocks on the Carfax Tower, City Chambers in Queen Street, and the Post Office in St Aldate’s.

In those days nearly every house had a coal fire, and in certain weather conditions the smoke from these, combined with the smoke from the Gas Works in St Ebbe's and the Electricity Generating Station at Botley, could create a fog which was called a 'pea-souper'. This was so thick that you could hardly see your hand in front of your face. Noises became muffled and, of course, a good deal of coughing was to be heard.

The average person, although poor, I found to be very cheerful. People accepted their lot and there was certainly none of the envy and viciousness that is seen today.

I joined the Oxford City Police on 2nd April 1948 after being demobilised from the Parachute Regiment after nearly three years' service. I was sent to the Police Training School for a period of 13-weeks' training. With me on my course were PC 44 Phillip Knight-Archer and PC 74 Edward Hancock.

The No 5 District Police Training Centre at Eynsham Hall was a very large old country house situated near the village of North Leigh in Oxfordshire. It had extensive grounds and a large lake. A long driveway led to the main road by the village.

We spent nearly all day listening to various lectures and taking copious notes, which we were expected to swot up on during the evenings after the classes had finished. At various times we had Physical Training classes in the park, and at other times drill parades on the courtyard at the front of the Hall.

Our training at that time was based on what was called the policeman's Bible – Moriarty's Police Law. This was an excellent book which translated the gobbledegook of the law as written by our legislators into plain English which we could understand. We had to memorise large numbers of definitions relating to the law and frequently had to quote them and answer questions in examinations.

At lunchtime and the early part of the evening all the students wandered around the lake muttering away at various definitions, desperately trying to memorise them for the next day's lectures.

I will quote one which I still remember after all these years - the definition of a Pedlar:

> A pedlar is any hawker, pedlar petty chapman, tinker, caster of metals, mender of chairs, or other person who without horse or other beast bearing or drawing burden, travels or trades on foot, and goes from town to town or other men's houses, carrying for sale or exposing for sale any goods wares or merchandise, immediately to be delivered, or offering for sale his skill in handicrafts.

I well remember this definition, as many years later, following a complaint, I arrested a Pedlar. I later found that he had a bicycle. He was, therefore, a pedaller and not a Pedlar and I had to apologise and let him go.

Food at the Training Centre was not very good, and as we were of course still on rations this probably had something to do with it. We were all ex-servicemen and I suppose expected something better. I know we had fish-paste for tea every day and in the end I was a member of a deputation to the Camp Commandant over this. My reward was to lose most of what were called demeanour marks for our behaviour. This was, of course, sent to my Chief Constable on my return. Strangely enough he never mentioned it when he interviewed me – perhaps he didn't like fish paste.

On my return from the No. 5 District Police Training School at Eynsham Hall I reported to the Central Police Station in St Aldate's Street in Oxford. This station had been built in 1937 just before the War and was ultra-modern by most police standards.

As I entered the police station through the large front doors, I faced a solid oak counter, on the other side of which was a large room. In the middle was a square of waist-high dark green metal cabinets. To the left of these was a large table which was the preserve of the Reserve Constable. On this were two large books, one for 'Lost Property' and one for 'Found Property', also books for Lost and Found Dogs, a register for Unoccupied Houses, and smaller books to carry these details on the Beat.

To the right was a large desk with baskets and files for the use of the Station Sergeant. To the bottom left of the room was a door leading to the Parade Room. In the middle at the bottom of the room, a door led to the Charge Office: off this were the cells and a door which led out in to the station yard at the rear. This was the route for prisoners being brought to the station. This door was kept locked by an electrically controlled bolt which was operated from the Station Sergeant's office. To the side of the door leading into the Charge Room was a small frosted-glass window, in front of which was a stand-up desk. On this desk were kept a supply of Charge Sheets and the Station Duty State. Prisoners when being charged were stood in a railed enclosure in the Charge Office looking through the window which had been opened. They were then cautioned and charged by the Station Sergeant in his office. To the right of this door was a small cubicle with a telephone.

Also in the Station Sergeant's office was a key in a locked glass case which was for the Firearms Store, and also for a humane killer, a gun with a captive bolt which was used for destroying badly injured animals. Entry to the office was through a door to the left of the counter through a small interview room. Access could also be gained to the right through a door into the telephone room in which was a sit-up-and-beg PBX. This had many cords and switches including a battery of them for signalling to all the police flashing pillars throughout the City.

I was directed upstairs by the Station Sergeant to see the Chief Constable's secretary, Inspector Crisp. He was also the head of the Administrative Department which consisted of PC Scarsbrook and a female clerk, Marie Brown.

Scassie, as he was known, issued me with my full set of equipment and uniform. I had already been issued with a tunic of the button-up-to-the-neck type, no collars and ties. The trousers, which can only be described as baggy, had a vee-shaped piece at the back. There were buttons on which to fasten my braces (no one wore belts), and the buttons also held up my waterproof leggings. There were no such things as zip flies, and, with the materials being plain wool (no man-made fibres), a lot of time was spent pressing creases in them.

I was issued with two helmets together with two helmet-plates. One was for night duty, this was a dull colour and had the initials OCP together with my number 65. The other, for day duty, was a bright chrome badge with the crest of the City of Oxford with the motto 'Fortis Est Veritas'. Our motto was 'Semper Vigilans' (Ever Watchful).

I was then given white cotton gloves for summer and white wool gloves for winter, an overcoat, a cape made of wool, and rubberised leggings. I was also issued with a truncheon and handcuffs, whistle and chain, pocket book cover, and three booklets. One was numbered and was for writing notes, evidence etc, and there was also a yellow one for recording details of wanted persons, and a pink one for details of stolen vehicles. In the back of the cover was a pocket for keeping things like HO/RT/1s to issue to people to produce their driving documents. There was also another form for the production of Identity Cards.

We were all issued with Identity Cards at the outbreak of the War in 1939 and I remember that my number was DXAX 129/3. I had to hand this in when I was called up into the Army, when I was issued with an AB 64 for identification purposes. On being demobilised in 1948 I was issued with another Identity Card with a different number from my original one. None of these means of identification carried a photograph and therefore it was not difficult to use someone else's ID. If we stopped someone and asked for their ID Card and they could not produce it, we issued them with a small form for them to produce it at the Police Station within 24 hours. We wrote the details of their name and address in our pocket book and gave the details to the Station Sergeant. We did not have radios, and telephones were very few and far between. There were very few in private houses. We had very little chance of checking the details given with a street directory named Kelly's and, of course, this did not give a record of people living in lodgings etc.

I was also issued with an ex-American Army torch in which the head was at right angles to the body. This was quite an innovation as we could clip it in our pocket and with the light shining forward we had both hands free for writing etc.

I had been told by the Chief Constable, Charles R Fox, at my interview that as my father was the Manager and Licensee of the Crown & Thistle public house in Market Street, Oxford, I was not allowed to live on licensed premises and would have to live in the single men's quarters on the top floor of the Police Station. I was not too happy about this, having spent three years away from home in the Army, including one year under canvas in Palestine. It was a case of either I obeyed the regulations or I did not join.

I was given the key to one of the small rooms which contained a single bed, chest of drawers and a wardrobe. I put my kit, which I had just been issued with, in the room and then read a list of rules which were on the back of the door.

> *Anyone on early-turn duty 5.45am–2.00pm must be in by midnight. Permission in writing had to be obtained for staying out for example on holiday or going away on my day off.*
>
> *No civilians could be invited to my quarters at any time.*
>
> *There must be no noise or rowdy behaviour at any time.*
>
> *The Mess Room must be kept clean and tidy at all times.*

I cannot remember all the rules but that is a fair sample, and breaking one of these rules led me into trouble at a later date.

Another rule was that if you wished to get married, you had to apply for permission from the Chief Constable and supply full details of your future wife. They would check on her background and decide on her suitability to become the wife of a police officer.

Off duty we were not allowed to be in the Bar of a public house for more than half an hour at a time in case we became friendly with the Licensee. This apparently did not apply to the CID who seemed to spend most of their time in these places.

If two policemen in uniform were seen talking together this was called Idling and Gossiping, unless there was a very good excuse.

Drinking on duty was a serious offence, and even drinking a cup of tea meant being off your beat and was not allowed.

If you were married, your wife was not allowed to own a business such as a shop, and could not run a club e.g. Littlewoods Catalogue.

Attached to the Single Men's Quarters was a mess room and a kitchen. There were lockers in which we could store our food. We, of course, had to do our own catering and

cooking. There were no refrigerators and food was still on ration as it had been during the War.

My first tour of duty was on nights, which commenced at 9.45pm and finished at 6.00am. We did a month on night duty followed by two months on day duty. The day duty was a fortnight on late turn, 1.45pm–10.00pm followed by a fortnight on early turn, 5.45am to 2.00pm. This meant that on the finish of night duty at 6.00am, we had to be back on duty at 1.45pm the same day. At the finish of late turn at 10.00pm, we had to be back on duty the following morning at 5.45am. If, of course, you were busy dealing with a prisoner or accident etc., you had very little time between shifts to get any sleep.

Later, due I think to a lot of sickness, the Police Surgeon decided that a month on night duty, particularly in bad weather, was not good for our health and, thank goodness, it was changed to a fortnight each shift.

We were entitled to one day off a week, and this was a progressive system of Monday, followed by Tuesday until we got to Saturday/Sunday which was the only weekend leave. This, of course, meant working seven days to get one day off.

I went down to the Parade Room for my first tour of duty, and some of the PCs who were already there introduced themselves. Most were Ex-Servicemen although there were a few old hands who had served in the City Police from before the War.

The Parade Room was a long rectangular room with a long row of coat hooks down one side for hanging our overcoats, capes, and helmets. At the ends of the room were small wooden lockers. There was a door at either end, one leading to the Station Sergeant's office, the other to a passage which led to the Recreation Room and Bar, rear doors, and stairs to the upper floors including the Single Men's Quarters. Also along the passage was a room for drying our capes. This had electric fans blowing hot air from rows of hot-water pipes.

In the middle of the room was a stand up desk and alongside it a large table. On this was a book in which was recorded vehicles which had been stolen locally. It was kept up to date by the Reserve PC. There were also books of photographs of local criminals, which was supplied by the CID. We were instructed to keep looking at these so that we would know who to keep an eye on when we were out on the beat. The other wall had windows which looked out on to a well in the building. The whole inside décor was of green-painted woodwork and cream-painted walls. You must remember that this was before emulsion paints with their variety of colours were available. Most public buildings, and houses for that matter, used a combination of brown and cream, or green and cream.

All Policemen had to travel to and from their duty in their uniform, which increased the presence of Policemen to be seen on the streets, and they had to deal with any matters

that came to their attention whilst travelling. Few could afford to buy or run a motor car, although the odd one had a motorcycle or combination. As you can gather, the sight of Policemen on pedal cycles was the norm.

I copied the details of stolen vehicles into the pink part of my pocket book and then stood in a long line with the other constables facing the desk as the Patrol Sergeant entered the parade room from the front office.

He checked that we were properly dressed and then, standing behind the desk, he read out from the duty sheet what postings were and which Beat/Patrol we were to cover. The most coveted was the Carfax Patrol: more of this later.

When the Sergeant had finished his postings he returned to the front office, whence he returned accompanied by the duty Inspector. We had, as soon as the Sergeant returned, taken our truncheons from our right trouser pocket, and our handcuffs from our left pocket. The Sergeant instructed ‘Produce Appointments’. We raised our truncheons and handcuffs high in the air. The Inspector glanced along the line and the order was given ‘Replace Appointments’, and we stowed them away.

We then waited whilst the Inspector read out full details of crimes that had been committed, mostly in our area. Only serious crimes were recorded from elsewhere. Description and names, if known, of wanted persons were recorded in the yellow part of our pocket book. After a pep-talk or rollicking (depending on what mood the Inspector was in) the Parade was dismissed.

We then put on our overcoats or capes, depending on what time of the year it was. If it was dry, we carried out capes on our shoulder if walking; otherwise it was over the handlebars of our cycles.

Those who were on City Centre patrols and those who had a North Oxford beat were marched in a single line up to Carfax by the patrol Sergeant. This was to ensure that everyone went straight out on duty instead of messing about in the Station, which occurred much later when this system was discontinued. The shift on duty were not allowed to return to the Station until the next relief were out on duty. As the night duty left the Station, they flashed their torches in the direction of Carfax so that the late turn who were hanging about round corners waiting to come in and finish their duty could do so.

I had been attached for training purposes to PC Harold Grindley, a senior constable. This was not a rank or title, but meant that he had sufficient service and experience to pass this on to a recruit.

Our Beat (I cannot remember the number) was the Botley Road from Mill Street to the Seacourt Bridge and the boundary with Berkshire, and return via Binsey where one had to check the Treacle Mines – this is an old Oxford joke, origin unknown.[1] We walked from the Police Station across the road to Speedwell Street, past Wigmore's Dairy into an area called The Friars.

I think at this point it might be of interest to include the names of various streets in the district direct from my old Beat Book. Most of them are gone, some are still in their original position, others have been changed when the area was rebuilt and renamed:

> Paradise Street, Paradise Square, Pensons Gardens, Princes Street, Kings Terrace, Bridge Street, Charles Street, Orchard Street, Wood Street, Norfolk Street, New Street, Abbey Place, Union Street, Sadler Street, Bridport Street, Dale Street, Pike Street, Trinity Street, Blackfriars Road, Commercial Road, Preachers Lane, Friars Wharf, Gas Street, Albion Place, Littlegate Street, Rose Place, Clarks Row, Cambridge Terrace, Albert Street, Cambridge Street, Luther Street, Cromwell Street, Speedwell Street, Thames Street, Isis Street.

There were row after row of terrace houses with the front door opening on to the footpath, little yards where they kept their tin baths, and the lavatory was outside. There was a single lead water pipe, and no hot water. The house would be heated by a coal fire and some people might have had a gas copper for washing; otherwise it was a coal fire one. Washing was usually done with a bar of yellow soap and a scrubbing board and brush. For those who could afford it there were soap flakes. (Detergents, washing up liquid, etc. were not about at that time.) Usually the kitchen table was made of solid wood with a scrubbed top. As far as I can remember, the front door led straight into the room, without having a hall or passage. Sacks of coal were either tipped down into a coal cellar for those with larger houses, or into a cupboard between the front room and kitchen, or in a bunker in the backyard for those who had one.

We could never trust some of the coalmen as there were so many fiddles, the most common of which was to remove a piece of coal from each sack, which would then go to fill an extra sack. If there was plenty of coal already there in the bunker then they delivered one short and this would not be noticed. I know when we had a coal delivery that we used to count the number of sacks being carried in and listen to the noise of them being emptied. Spot-checks were carried out on the coal lorries to see that they were carrying the correct weights in their bags. This was done by the Weights & Measures Inspector, who was a member of the Oxford City Police and, at that time, was called Inspector Dust.

[1] This must in fact be a reference to St Margaret's Well at the church in Binsey, which Lewis Carroll referred to in *Alice in Wonderland* as a treacle well.

As you can imagine, this was a backbreaking job for those employed as coalmen. The coal was delivered to the coal-yard down by the old LMS Station by train from the coal mines in the North of England and Wales. It then had to be transported to the various firms' yards where they then had to load the coal into sacks of 112 lbs, which were weight individually. These were then loaded on to the lorries or horse and carts and delivered. Nearly everyone relied on coal fires so you imagine it was a massive undertaking, especially as there was no mechanisation. Before the advent of the steam train, the coal was delivered by horse-drawn barges using the canal which ran close to the same spot.

We walked through The Friars with its streets ill lit by gas lamps, pools of light surrounded by dark shadows. There seemed to be a public house on every street corner. There was the sound of laughter, sometimes an oath, the playing of a piano accompanied by the singing of old songs. *Nellie Dean* was a favourite at turning-out time. This was of course the time we were commencing our Beat and people would soon be spilling out on to the road singing and shouting. A quiet word from the Constable of 'Move along there' or 'Quieten it down lads' was usually sufficient.

The Oxford Gas Works was in this area, one of the streets being Gas Street. There were two gasometers, and the gas was produced from coal by burning it in the coke ovens. There was always a strong smell of sulphur in the air.

We continued through the Oxpens, where the cattle market was held every Wednesday, into the district known as St Thomas's: the people living here were in similar conditions to those in the Friars. There were some very large brick buildings on the left of the Oxpens, just past the entrance to the cattle market. They were on the left-hand side of the road and backed on to the railway goods yard. At a later date, when I was walking this Beat on my own, I remember hearing strange noises coming from this building. I crept round there in the dark with my torch expecting to surprise a gang of thieves, only to find this was where the old GWR kept their delivery horses. These were large cart-horses which carried, with a box-type van, all the deliveries in the Oxford City Centre. I well remember when I came on day duty and was on patrol in Cornmarket Street, that I came across one of these delivery vans. It was parked at the side of the road by J. Lyons, and the horse between the shafts had both feet on the pavement: this, together with its head, completely blocked the pavement and people had to walk around it into the road. I had never had any dealings with horses before and, as I approached it, I remember it appeared to get larger and larger and had very big teeth which it was chomping away with.
I reached up and took hold of the harness covering the horse's head and, with a great deal of pulling, I managed to get the horse's two front feet off the pavement and on to the road. I spoke very kindly to the horse explaining that it was not to block the pavement.
I then moved back and, in one swift instant, the two front legs were back on the pavement. I looked at the horse and the horse looked at me. I decided discretion was the better part of valour and left.

Returning to my story of my first tour of duty: we continued past the old GWR stables and a very large tenement building called Christ Church Buildings. I believe it was called this because a lot of property and land in Oxford are owned by various colleges and this building belonged to Christ Church.

We then entered the railway goods yards; this was the wonderful era of the steam locomotive. The smell of smoke from the smokestack and clouds of steam are something I will always remember. We crossed over the main Oxford to London railway line by a footbridge, making sure that a train was not passing underneath, otherwise we could have ended up looking like chimney sweeps. The bridge led up into Mill Street. At the top end of this street was Munsey's Flour Mill: if I remember correctly, there were people working there at night. We then walked down Mill Street to the Botley Road, checking shops and lock-up property as we went. There was a Police pillar on Osney Bridge and we rang the Police Station to see if anything was happening. It must be remembered that back in 1948 not only did policemen on the Beat not have a radio, neither did the Police cars. The only means of communication were by public telephone or the Police pillar system. The latter could also be used by members of the public by opening a door and speaking into a grille.

A few years later I can remember being on day duty when I came across a crowd of people on Osney Bridge looking down on a cabin cruiser which was trying to get under the bridge but could not because recent heavy rains had raised the water level too high. We solved the problem with myself and a number of bystanders climbing down the bank and boarding the boat until it was low enough in the water to pass under the bridge. After this short trip we disembarked and the boat sailed off.

In the street on our left, Russell Street, just before we got to Osney Bridge, was the Electricity Generating Station for Oxford. There was a constant hum from the generators, and hot water from the steam turbines went into the river in Osney Town. This straight stretch of river alongside the power station was reckoned to be a very good fishing spot due to the rise in the water temperature.

We walked round Osney Town and along the Botley Road checking a public house, the Reform Club, and St Frideswide's Church. We then went down Ferry Hinksey Lane, where the electricity switch station and pylons were connected to the generating station. The most important property on our Beat was down there, and, apart from our visit on the Beat, it was also visited by the motor patrol. This was the Co-op Tea Store. Tea was on ration and we had three main tea stores. Another was on the Botley Road Beat at Lamarsh Road, and another at Glanville Road, Cowley. I believe these belonged to Lyons and Brooke Bond.

Beats in the early days were fixed-time working. We had a Beat Book in which was typed the fixed route of each Beat, including a fixed point every half hour. At the fixed point we had to wait for five minutes in case the Sergeant or Inspector came to visit us. These points were usually at a Police pillar, Police box or at a telephone kiosk. The City Police Station number was Oxford 2211. The old red telephone boxes were fitted with an A and B pay system. You put 2*d.* in slot A and as soon as your call was answered pressed button A, which allowed the conversation to proceed. If you couldn't through you pressed button B to get your money back. We always checked all telephone boxes to see that the coin containers were ok and pressed button B and sometimes gained 2*d.* which someone else had forgotten to do. We checked Post Office pillar-boxes, and Ladies and Gentlemen's toilets, in case anyone had collapsed. Sometimes we would find someone sleeping rough. People genuinely down on their luck we would help, sometimes with a few coppers for a cup of tea or their bus fare home. Mind you, our own pay was so low we really couldn't afford it.

Tramps and roadsters we would direct to the nearest Spike or Hostel, which was either at Banbury or Newbury. Sometimes they were given a lift out of town to help them on their way. By this means we kept Oxford clear of beggars and robbers. It was not long, however, before someone found out what was happening and we had to stop. Soon drunks and beggars began to arrive. They took over the railway coaches parked in the sidings at Mill Street at night and wandered around begging and threatening by day. This was a very gradual process, which we managed to contain by use of the Vagrancy Act.

A group of people, I believe including Cyrenians, took over a hut in Mill Street by the railway, which they called the Simon Hostel. They provided food and accommodation for these unfortunate people.

To continue, we walked to the boundary of Botley Road with Berkshire at the Seacourt Bridge. We then walked back towards the city centre on the other side of the road. There was the Botley Road police house with a box, from which we rang the Police Station. Further down the road, just before we came to Binsey Lane, was the site of the Oxford Ice Rink which was a failure before the 1939–1945 War. It became the Majestic Cinema and, during the War, was used as a hostel for evacuees from London. It was later taken over by Frank Cooper's Marmalade Factory when it moved from Park End Street. This later closed and for some years now has been an MFI store.[2]

We then visited Binsey but I could find no trace of the world famous Treacle Mines. The only place there was a public house called The Perch.

Apart from the Co-op Dairy in Henry Street, there was little of consequence back to the start of our beat at Mill Street. We then went through The Friars and St Ebbe's, back to St Aldate's Police Station for our meal break.

[2] The site has been occupied by the Botley Road Waitrose since 2015.

On night duty we took our refreshments in the Police clubroom where there were comfortable seats and an electric fire in the Memorial Fireplace. This was dedicated to four members of the Oxford City Police who gave their lives in the 1914–1918 War and four members who gave their lives in the 1939–1945 War. This memorial is now St Michael's Church in Cornmarket Street. Hanging on the wall of the clubroom was a cartoon drawn by Alan Course, a former member of the Oxford City Police. It showed the disposition of all members of the Force who were serving in His Majesty's Forces during the War. The most famous of these was Major John Howard, a former Police Constable. He led the glider-borne assault on the bridge over the Caen River in Normandy prior to D-Day. He and his men were therefore the first of the invasion forces to land. They were members of the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, now amalgamated into the Royal Greenjackets. The bridge they captured is named Pegasus Bridge in recognition of Airborne Forces.

We had to book into the station Sergeant when we came in for our meal break and were allowed 30 minutes, and then we had to book out on the Beat again. Our meals usually consisted of sandwiches and a piece of cake, usually home-made. There was a small kitchen where we brewed up our cup of tea. On one of the outlying beats at North Oxford, the PC used to have his meal break in the porch of SS Phillip & James's Church on the Woodstock Road. This venue had just been changed when I joined and we were using a small room in the Radcliffe Infirmary on the Woodstock Road. The room was just off the driveway through the hospital and was for use by the ambulance crews. All it contained was a table, chairs, sink, and gas stove. There was no heating, so we used to light the gas oven and leave the door wide open when it was cold. I used to make this my first port of call, leaving my bag with my food in there ready for my meal break. One night someone pinched it and I had to go hungry; but at least I had a cup of tea. There was no connecting door between this room and the hospital, so we didn't see any of the nurses. In any case, the Matrons and Sisters in those days did not encourage any fraternising with their staff.

Later this room was demolished when they built a new Casualty Department, and I think we then used the OutPatients Waiting Room. Meal breaks were also taken at the Police Box attached to the police house at the Banbury Road roundabout. Brown enamel tins of tea were taken to these places by the Reserve PC in what was called The Tilly, a Morris 10. He also took tea to other boxes at Cowley and Headington. A special privilege was a can of tea dropped off to the Carfax PC. At the end of our meal break, we reported to the station Sergeant and then went back to our Beat on the Botley Road.

If we booked anyone or had any occurrence to report, we had to get permission to come in early, and the time allowed usually meant we were still writing half an hour or so after we should have finished duty. All reports were addressed to the Chief Constable and started 'Sir, I beg to report' and always finished with 'Your obedient servant'.

Having been shown the Botley Beat, I was then shown the Abingdon Road Beat, which meant walking the length of the road as far as the Red Bridge Garage. The City boundary finished there with Berkshire, as at Botley. I can remember that William Press, a company which worked for the Gas Board, had a depot behind the garage for many years. A very nice old watchman lived in a caravan on the site and we always had a chat and a cup of tea.

There was another Beat which covered St Ebbe's, The Friars, Park End Street, and also Hythe Bridge Street. In those days motor cycles were very popular with those who had a bit of money. Park End Street was well known for its motor cycle showrooms, of which Kings of Oxford were nationally advertised and attracted many visitors. They had a very big display of Triumphs and Ariels, and I remember on many a night duty shining my torch on these bikes lined up in the windows with their beautiful paintwork and gleaming chrome. I was very envious of those who could afford those beautiful machines. All I could afford, on hire purchase, was a top of the range pedal cycle, a Humber with twin front forks, 4 speed with trigger control on the handlebars – a new idea from having it on the cross bar – steering lock, full covered chaincase, Sturmey Archer dynamo hub lighting with even a battery system which automatically took over when the cycle was stationary. The only drawback was that it was rather heavy, but I would say, it was far superior and better value for money than the bicycles available today.

Also in Park End Street were firms like Laytons, on the corner of which was Titmouse Lane which was later altered to Tidmarsh Lane. In this Lane was the Malt House of either Morrell's or Hall's Brewery, both of which were in the vicinity. Just at the end of the street was the famous Quaking Bridge by the ruins of Oxford Castle. Also the river over which, when frozen, Queen Matilda escaped from Oxford Castle.

Back to Park End Street, there was another well-known motor cycle dealer, Temples of Oxford. A very large furniture store, Wards of Park End Street, run by a local family, was also well advertised and was there for many years.

I can remember one evening, whilst on duty, I saw a man running down Park End Street fairly fast. I wondered if he had been up to no good and was running away. I stopped him and he promptly fell flat on the ground. I bent down and found that he was drunk, incapable of standing. He said something about being a sailor and trying to catch his train back to the base. I hauled him to his feet and gave him a push in the direction of the railway station. I had a bike with me at the time and I remember cycling fast down to the bottom of the street by the Royal Oxford Hotel. There were no traffic lights there in those days, but public toilets in the middle of the road. Anyway, I jumped off my cycle and held up the traffic as the sailor came charging down the street, still running full pelt across the junction, and I last saw him careering up the station approach towards the ticket barrier.

On night duty we had to check all trains stopping at Oxford station to see who was getting on board and who was in the waiting room. The PC covering Gloucester Green patrol also had to check all coaches stopping at the bus station during the night. There was one called Crossville which ran from Liverpool to London every night. There were also South Midland and United Counties.

I believe the old LMS station at the bottom of Hythe Bridge Street had closed down at this time. Round the back were all the coal yards for the various coal merchants. This was a very good spot for thieving as with most people very poor, a few knobs of coal kept them warm and there wasn't the Social Security that they get today. I can only remember there being perhaps a couple of Welfare Officers.

The Oxford Canal went under a hump back bridge by Worcester Street and parallel with New Road as far as the old County Hall. There was a wartime British or Municipal Restaurant on this site. The first break-in I ever discovered was in this building. These restaurants were supplied by either the government or local authority to provide reasonably priced meals, mainly for the lower paid. It was demolished and later rebuilt in Gloucester Green. The canal was filled in and Nuffield College was built on the site. There was another restaurant which lasted for many years in York Place, St Clement's.

Another walking Beat I well remember started outside the Randolph Hotel in Beaumont Street, down Beaumont Street to Worcester Street, Walton Street, Worcester Place, all around Jericho, Kingston Road, Bainton Road, past Morris Radiators factory, then back down the Woodstock Road to the Police Station. I can well remember walking this at 6am, as with other Beats, walking back to the Station, cooking my breakfast, eating it, washing up the plates and frying pan, and then reporting back to the Station Sergeant at the end of my half hour break. We were then posted usually to a Patrol in the City Centre from 9am to 2pm.

There were no such things as yellow lines, no-waiting areas, or traffic wardens as there are today. The motor patrol paraded with the street duty patrols at the beginning of each shift. They then had to fill all the police vehicles, motor cycles, Inspector's car, CID car, and Black Maria with petrol from the pump in the Station yard. This had to be fully recorded. The van was then filled up with heavy steel fold-over 'No Parking' signs plus some large upright 'No Parking in This Street' signs. These were painted yellow with black lettering. The motor patrol had to go round all the City Centre streets putting out the signs. The 'late turn' motor patrol had to collect them in the evenings. During the War they also ran the City Ambulance, as there was no Ambulance Service as such apart from the St John Ambulance.

Road safety and cycle training were given to schools. The patrol cars at this time were MG two-seaters with a soft-top for wet weather. They were fast and were good for

catching speedsters who were followed and paced over so many tenths of a mile. There were no such things as radar speed traps. We used to say that anyone reported for speeding should be booked for driving without due care and attention as they obviously never used their mirrors or they would not have been caught. All police vehicles were painted black unlike the multi-colours of today. The only snag with these cars was that if the driver made an arrest he had to ring into the Police Station. The Reserve PC had to go out with the Black Maria to bring the prisoner in. Despite this, things seemed to run efficiently and later they were to be equipped with Wolseley saloons.

We were not allowed to handcuff women and juveniles – and some of the women could be more vicious than men, especially those with very long nails. Men had to be handcuffed with their hands in front of them; if they fell over they had no means of protecting themselves with their hands behind their back. I say this as a certain PC on traffic patrol arrested and handcuffed a man who he put in the rear seat of a Wolseley patrol car. In Hythe Bridge Street the prisoner put his handcuffed hands around the officer's throat, causing him to mount the pavement and, I believe, narrowly miss some pedestrians.

The motor patrol or the Reserve PC were responsible for attending any accident in which animals were badly injured and would use the humane killer to dispatch them. There were very few veterinary surgeons and there was always the question of cost. The PDSA were very helpful, but kept office hours only and animals had to be taken to them.

We used to have a large number of accidents, particularly on the Northern by-pass which was a three-lane road. Parts of it were in the City, and parts in the County which came under the jurisdiction of the Oxfordshire Constabulary. Headington was in the City and had a cycle track. This finished at Marston in the County area where there was no cycle track. As you came nearer to North Oxford you came back into the City, again with a cycle track. I believe when the road was built the County refused to pay for the track in their area. By this means we knew where the boundaries were, although we dealt with all accidents irrespective of areas. There were two black spots where we dealt with a number of fatal and serious accidents. There were at the Marston Turn and The Fox. The road is, of course, now a dual carriageway and the Marston Turn is no more. The Fox public house was demolished and rebuilt on the Barton Estate.

To get back to my early turn shift, when I said we cooked our breakfast and then went out on patrol…. Just before 9am we were marched up to Carfax, four of us for the four patrols at this time. One covered Queen Street, New Road, and top of St Ebbe's area. One covered High Street down to Catte Street. Another covered Cornmarket Street as far as the George Street traffic lights from Carfax. The other covered George Street and the Gloucester Green area.

When I first started, the Cornmarket Patrol had to walk in the middle of the road from Carfax to the George Street traffic lights. We were not allowed on the pavement except to deal with anything such as marshalling bus queues. There were by-laws which said if there were 12 or more people at a bus stop they had to form a queue, and that was one of our jobs.

By walking up and down the middle of the road, motorists passing either side of you could stop and ask questions. We could also stop the traffic to allow pedestrians to cross the road.

Both Woolworth's and Marks & Spencer stores were in Cornmarket Street at this time, as was the Clarendon Hotel, since demolished together with its garage. There was a lot of pedestrian activity across the road, and Saturday really kept us on our toes. Most people were paid in cash on a Friday. Very few had bank accounts: therefore Saturday was the day most people went out to do their shopping.

We were paid in cash in a small brown envelope which we had to collect and sign for from the Administrative Department every Friday between 12 noon and 4pm. I earned the equivalent of £5.50 a week. This was all right while I was living in single men's quarters, but later, when I was married and had to cycle three miles from home and the same back when on night duty, and then back again for start of duty at 10pm, it was no joke, particularly in bad weather. I can remember my dear wife virtually waiting on the doorstep for the housekeeping money on a Friday as we were out of money and had very little food left for ourselves and the children.

Apart from Cornmarket Street, the High Street patrol had to operate by walking in the middle of the road, mainly stopping obstructions by lorries delivering to the Covered Market. As the traffic rapidly increased together with the size of the lorries this patrolling in the middle of the road was quite hazardous. I was in the middle of High Street outside the Covered Market when my helmet was knocked off by the overhanging sacks of a passing coal lorry. I am glad to say that someone realised the danger we were in and we were then allowed to walk on the pavement. This still meant five hours, for example, walking backwards and forwards between Carfax and George Street traffic lights breathing in far worse pollution than is being complained about today.

When I joined the Oxford City Police it consisted of a total strength of 161 men and two women. This included the Chief Constable, Mr C R Fox, and all ranks. We were, for most of the time, seriously under strength, yet all Beats and Patrols were covered, sometimes doubled up. There was no cry of lack of resources or shortage of men. It meant that everyone worked harder.

The Chief Constable was the complete autocrat. He ruled Oxford with a rod of iron and yet, I believe, he was fair. He was originally a PC in the Portsmouth City Police and

worked his way up through the ranks. There were no Bramshills for him or the other Chief Constables, who appeared to be mainly retired Army or Naval officers. The trouble with Mr Fox was that he knew all the dodges, having done them himself.

I well remember the annual St Giles Fair. He would walk around the stalls early in the day with his Superintendent, Leonard Quelch. Mr Fox would check if there were any gambling stalls. He didn't like rolling the penny down a slide on to a square and would close it down. He would demand to check the size of the rings on the hoop-la and, if he didn't consider there was sufficient clearance for someone to have a fair chance of winning, he would close it down. Those in charge of the coconut shies would be made to put more sawdust under the coconuts so they were not wedged in the wooden cups.

As the Chief Constable he was also the City Marshall. Undergraduates had to obtain permission to bring a motor car into Oxford, and those granted permission had to display a green light. Any that we caught without green lights were reported to the Proctors who dealt with them for a breach of University rules. The University had their own Police who walked around wearing bowler hats and were responsible to the Proctors.

We, as Constables, were told that even the Chief Constable could not order us to make an arrest or do anything which we didn't think was right in our office as Constable.

Everyone who went out and patrolled any Beat or Patrol was in charge of that area. No one broke the law without being jumped on, booked or arrested. By this means the law being rigidly applied was, in the main, obeyed with respect by members of the public who knew we were doing our job. Operating on our own, walking into a public house with a large scale fight in progress, although outnumbered but by not showing fear and using the authority of our uniform, we could quell the disturbance or come out with a prisoner without aggravation. I have always found that people respect you for 'having a go'. Go to an incident with one or more other officers, and the attitude changes.

Also at this time there was the USAF Police. They used to come to our Station and use the motor patrol office as their base. In charge was a black sergeant who was known as the Town Marshall. They were very smart in their uniforms and wore white belts and gaiters. The name of the sergeant was Willie Porter. He was a very friendly person and would help us out if he or his men saw us in any difficulty on the streets, regardless of whether American servicemen were involved.

At this period in time, before television took over, there were a large number of dance halls which were usually crowded on Saturday nights. There was the Carfax Assembly Rooms in Cornmarket Street, the Town Hall, the Forum in High Street, Co-op Assembly Rooms on the Cowley Road and, in Headington, the Holyoake Hall on the London Road and also a dance hall attached to Laytons Garage in Old High Street. There were also, of course, numerous dances held in Church and Community Halls.

The Carfax Assembly Rooms was the favourite haunt of American servicemen as there were always plenty of girls looking for would-be husbands. Most of the films were from America and just showed the glamorous side of life with plenty of money. However, the servicemen, in the main, were only looking for a good time. There was often trouble with jealous English boyfriends finding their girls going in a group to dance with the Americans.

I can remember one night being in Cornmarket Street opposite the entrance to the Carfax Assembly Rooms when an American serviceman, I should think about 5' 8" tall, was dragged out into the street by two Air Police who were well over 6 feet tall. They had very long riot sticks in their hands and their prisoner was wearing a white shirt which was rapidly turning red with blood which was pouring from his head. He was obviously drunk. They tried to force him into their vehicle, and I remember how he kept his feet wide apart, wider than the door and they were bending him like a concertina, but he would not go. More blows were struck and suddenly the small guy kneed one of the Air Police in the groin, who collapsed on to the pavement, and he then banged the other one's head against the wall. At this point I decided there was enough mayhem going on in my Patrol so I intervened. I spoke to the prisoner, who was bloody and unbowed, and persuaded him that if I took him prisoner I would protect him and see that no further harm came to him. Things were very heated at this time with quite a crowd from the Assembly Rooms, including many servicemen who were the worse for drink. Anyway, he agreed, and I took him away from the Air Police and walked him down St Aldate's to the Police Station, where I filed my report. He was later handed over to more Air Police and that was the last I saw of him. The next day I was called before the Superintendent and given a rollicking for interfering with the American Authorities and the Visiting Forces Act. Whatever we did in those days we could not win.

It is very difficult to keep from memory a chronological sequence of events, but most of what I am writing occurred between 1948 and 1959 whilst I was still on street duty as a Police Constable.

Every year on November 5th (Guy Fawkes Day) was the annual riot or near riot. In the beginning it was Students versus Police and, on the whole, was good-humoured. There were hundreds of students and townspeople who had come to see the fun. This usually consisted of throwing fireworks, mainly bangers, at the police or anyone that took their fancy. They attacked the Randolph Hotel with all kinds of fireworks, including rockets. The Hotel garage gates were locked and Policemen guarded this and the main entrance. A Mrs Stewart was the manageress and looked after us with the odd cup of tea. Then the cry would go up 'To the Taj!' This was an Indian restaurant in Turl Street. Hundreds would jam this narrow street, hurling fireworks, and then it would be the turn of the Mitre Hotel in High Street and the Golden Cross in Cornmarket Street.

Although there was a power of arrest under Section 80 of the Explosives Act, we used to report individuals for Summons provided we could ascertain their identity. I remember one night I reported 25 people for throwing fireworks. I thought this was a record until I found the Chief Inspector had reported more than me.

When you are in a crowd trying to report someone for an offence, quite naturally, everybody is against you. They try to drag the offender away, pull off your helmet etc. The only solution I found was to lead the offender into a shop doorway and pen him or her in whilst writing details in my pocket book. The only trouble with this is that you and the person you are dealing with are then bombarded with bangers which, exploding in a confined space, left me shaky for some time afterwards and may well have contributed, together with my military service, to the type of deafness from which I am now suffering.

On another November 5th we were operating from the old Police Station in Blue Boar Street at the back of the Town Hall. The City Magistrates Court and also Quarter Sessions were held there. In the building were cells we could use until we transferred the prisoners to the Central Police Station down the road.

It had been quite a battle and I believe seven Police Constables had lost their helmets. The Chief Inspector, Fred Warwick, gave them a tongue-lashing but was later seen sneaking in minus his cap.

I did not lose mine as, after previous experiences, I had a button sewn on the back of my tunic. This was attached to a piece of black elastic which went through my helmet band where it was fastened with a clip. People behind me in the crowd would knock my helmet upwards and this fell forward, disengaging the chinstraps we always wore. Others around you saw the helmet coming forward, grabbed it and then threw it high into the air into the crowd, from where it disappeared. With my invention the helmet checked its motion and landed on my shoulder. I then turned round and aimed a blow, which they always dodged, at the person who did it, then replaced my helmet.

On one occasion in the late 1950s we were using the wooden hut inside the Randolph Hotel Garage as a place to put our gear. We had been issued with rubberised mackintoshes at this period. This was in the early part of the evening and, together with another PC, I walked into the hut, which was unoccupied. There was a wooden shelf at eye level with a couple of cup hooks sticking out of the edge and books on top. Anyway, this PC hung his mackintosh on the cup hook and I hung mine on top. We then turned and were walking out of the door when there was a strong smell of burning rubber. We turned around and flames were shooting up our Macs. We pulled them off and beat out the flames on a wooden table. We then realised that on a ledge under the shelf was an electric fire. We had to think up some story to cover the damage to our uniform, such as burnt by fireworks etc. In the meantime we left our Macs on the table folded up, covering the burnt bits.

We had gone round the corner into Magdalen Street when a short time later fire engines roared up George Street with bells clanging. This was, of course, before sirens. Bells were used by Police, Fire and Ambulance. The fire engines came to a halt outside the Randolph Hotel garage and we watched in horror as firemen raced inside with their hoses. Our hearts sank at the thought of the trouble we were in, as obviously, we had not fully extinguished the fire in our macs. We were worried to death whilst we were battling away with the usual riot.

Motorists drove into St Giles and the other city centre streets and were then confronted with these very large crowds, who very often they took hold of each side of the vehicle and then started to rock them with the terrified occupants screaming inside. I know when I first saw this I was on my own in the middle of a crowd of hundreds of people and I dragged people off one side of a car then went round the other side and started battling with them. Meanwhile they were back on the other side. You could see the frightened women and children in the car and it seemed hopeless. Suddenly one of the older experienced sergeants appeared alongside me, attracted by the screams. He told me what to do, which was for us to stand either side of the front of the car. We then did a shoulder charge at those holding on to the vehicle and knocked them flying into a heap on the ground behind the car. The driver was then able to drive off. Very often cars were tipped over completely and I remember a police Wolseley which had the police sign ripped off the roof and the tyres let down.

When we had dispersed the crowds we returned to the station to learn our fate about the Randolph Hotel fire. We learned that a Chief Inspector had gone into the hut and hung his raincoat on the same cup hook and, yes, it had caught fire and burnt the office and our macs were completely destroyed! They said that all that remained of the Chief Inspector’s mac were the buttons lying on the floor. Anyway, we kept our mouths shut and were issued with new macs.

As things got more violent, due to the local yobs joining in, we had what was called Mutual Aid, when other police forces supplied men to help us out.

Several times I was in plain clothes and had my clothes ripped, and on one occasion, following information from a civilian, I followed a man through the crowd and arrested him for indecently assaulting women. He was subsequently convicted at Oxford City Quarter Sessions.

On another occasion there was an attempt to climb the Martyrs Memorial, which could have caused a great deal of damage. We pulled people off and were then ordered to stand in a circle on the top step guarding it. We were subjected to a violent attack in which I believe it was Inspector Nash who ended up on the ground being trampled by the crowd. This was the only time I ever used my truncheon or peg, as we called it. We went

shoulder to shoulder flailing with our pegs. As far as I remember I didn't hurt anyone. The crowd compressed against the Randolph Hotel and we rescued the Inspector.

When we joined the police force we were put on probation for a period of two years. During this time we went through a good deal of extra training in a variety of subjects and this, together with the way we had conducted ourselves as a police constable on the Beat, with assessment reports from what were known in those days as superior officers, meant we were either fully appointed to the rank of Constable or we were sacked.

This training was weekly and we went either in duty time or our own time, according to what shift we were working.

After my month on night duty I then commenced this training. The first priority seemed to be a Post Mortem. This consisted of a talk by the Police Surgeon and the Coroners Officer, a police sergeant. There was a group of us standing round a porcelain type of table. On this was the naked body of a dead man. There was a label tied to his right big toe, which gave details of his identity. The body was lying on its back with the head supported by a wooden block with a curve in it, which was a sort of pillow. We learnt that any death we dealt with we had to bring the body to the mortuary, which was at the rear side of the police station. We had to undress it and remove any rings, earrings etc. We had to put these possessions into bags, which were secured and make the appropriate records. We found that dead people lose control of their bodily functions and therefore are quite messy. We had to wash the bodies down on the porcelain slab, which had a drain hole, and then lift the body on to a form of stretcher, which we pushed into a row of refrigerated compartments. Rubber gloves were supplied and it was a boon if you smoked, as the smell of death can be very strong, as sometimes happened when a body had not been found for some time.

Having given a talk the police surgeon, using a scalpel, sliced right down the front of the body, exposing the insides. He removed various organs, which were put into bowls and glass jars. The scalp was then sliced and pulled right from the back and over his eyes. A metal frame was fitted over the skull and this was sawed through so that the top of the head was lifted off like a cap. The brain was then removed for examination. After the various bits and pieces were examined, bits were put back inside. The body was then sewed together. There were lots of green faces and most of us felt sick during this operation.

I lost count of the number of bodies I dealt with during my career of 25 years: suicides by drugs, hangings, gassings, shootings, road accidents, sudden deaths, cot deaths. I can remember seeing the mummified body of a baby which was found on the ledge in a chimney in a railway hostel down by the station.

Despite all this, the smell of death, the body cold and stiff, the grief, the loss to someone, never made me callous and always made me upset. Of course, not only had we finished up with the body but sometimes we had to deal with grieving relatives and did our best to make things as easy as possible.

I remember being asked to inform the parents of a young man who had been killed in a road accident. He had crashed his car on a bend. This was late at night and ended up with the father having a heart attack. After rendering first aid and calling the doctor, I was there for some time.

In another case, I was asked to tell a woman that her husband had died in hospital in London. I went to neighbours to ascertain whether the woman was on her own as breaking bad news to someone on their own, especially late at night, can create problems. Having been assured that there was a grown-up daughter living there, I went to the house. Despite asking the wife who answered the door if I could come in as I had some bad news for her, she refused. I told her of the message I had from the London hospital about her husband dying there. She jumped in the air saying something like ‘Serve the bastard right!’ and seemed quite joyous at the news. I left. I presume they didn’t get on together.

We went on classes learning by-laws which, of course, are different in various parts of the country and were therefore not taught at the Police Training School, which had recruits from so many Forces training there. One I have previously mentioned was regarding bus queues. Another was street trading within 300 yards of Carfax, another about noisy loudspeakers, which could be heard on the street.

We had to learn local knowledge for the benefit of the many tourists who visited Oxford. There was no Council Information Bureau. Many years later, when one was set up in Oxford, it was run by retired Inspector Dunkley of our Force and was in High Street by Carfax. We had to take examinations on what we had learned and I can remember such questions as:

1. Where is the painting called *The Light of the World*?
2. Where is Guy Fawkes’ Lantern?
3. Where is St Sepulchre’s Cemetery?
4. Who is the Headmistress of Milham Ford School?
5. What is the colour of the scarf worn by undergraduates at Oriel College?

Also, of course, every road was not only covered, as with alleyways, as we worked the Beat, but we had to learn the location of all these for the benefit of the public who were constantly stopping us and asking such questions.

We also had swimming/life-saving lessons every year at Temple Cowley Swimming Baths, with Inspector Dust as the instructor.

Although the War was over there was now a threat from the USSR, so for many years we had lessons in Civil Defence. I had had three years of this whilst a Civil Defence and Police Messenger during the War, also three years in the Army and now, yet again. There was an old sand bagged shelter on the right just inside the gate to the Central Police Station. This was used for gas training. We were issued with a gas mask, went into the shelter and sat down on wooden benches. The doors were then sealed and the instructor released a canister of tear gas which filled the shelter. We sat there for some time to test how effective the masks were. Then, as had happened to me so many times before in many placed, we removed our masks so that we could test what tear gas was like. The door was opened and we stumbled out into the fresh air with our eyes red and raw and streaming with tears, whilst coughing and choking and near vomiting with the effects of the gas.

The Civil Defence training was under Inspector George Phillips. He was a real enthusiast and had made model roads and houses on a large board. We had little model vehicles and he would explain some scenario where bombs had dropped on certain houses, roads were blocked, gas or water mains hit etc. We used to have a little model ambulance and would run it along what we thought was the best route to rescue someone. Inspector Phillips was a stickler for realism so you said ‘ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling’ to represent the bell as you moved the ambulance around the board.

We would get to a certain point when the Inspector would suddenly deposit a small amount of sawdust in front, saying ‘Bang!’, which would represent a bomb now blocking the road. We had to go in reverse saying ‘ding-a-ling’ and try a different route.

We progressed from this to practical experience with the Civil Defence Corps, and then to Atomic Warfare. We learnt how to use personal dosimeters, Geiger counters etc. There was a secret film which was made by the Ministry of Information and we went to the Regal Cinema to see it. We were not allowed to discuss it with members of the public. As far as I can remember, there were Civil Defence personnel there. The reason for the secrecy was the fact that following an atomic explosion we would have to come in with our radiation-testing equipment and, when it reached a certain radiation level, would go no further. We would just have to leave anyone in that zone who appeared to be even slightly injured, but trapped, to die, even your own family. It was quite frightening at the time to see what the results could be.

Another course of training was First Aid. We had to go on courses regularly throughout our service with the St John Ambulance Brigade, who are a fine bunch of people. A lot of the training always consisted of using large triangular bandages which did everything. The only snag was that when we attended an accident there was no sign of these bandages and we had to make do with what was to hand. It was surprising how things kept changing with every course we went on. The previous system they had taught

became harmful, and you had to do something else. Never mind, those triangular bandages will go on forever!

When our two years' probationary training was over, we then had to study, mainly in our time, to pass promotion exams.

During the War most iron railings were melted down to make munitions. All the signposts in the country were removed at the start of the War to stop any invading army knowing where they were going, and these were slowly being replaced. The signs in those days consisted of a central post from which arms projected pointing towards various roads at junctions and cross-roads. They were painted white and had black lettering giving the name of the town or village together with the mileage. These were usually higher than the beam of car lights, so at night time it was a case of stopping the car at a junction in the country, getting out and shining a torch at the sign. I well remember a cartoon showing a man without a torch climbing up a white painted post at the top of which was a sign saying 'Wet paint!'

Everyone had to cover their windows at night during the War because of the blackout. They were glad to rip these heavy blinds or boards down when peace came but, of course, with material on ration most ended up with far from satisfactory curtains. This, in turn, led to complaints about 'Peeping Toms' or 'Pikers' hanging about in various places. We had complaints from ladies' colleges and nurses' homes in particular. Most of the trouble was that they did not draw their curtains at all. I remember one PC was checking the rear of a nurses' home when he saw a girl undressing. By walking backwards along the rear lawn it was surmised that, having reached the best viewing point, this would coincide with the position of any Peeping Tom. Unfortunately walking backwards, with his eyes fixed on the window, he fell into the garden pond.

I remember one particular nurses' home in North Oxford where they requested us to check, which I did, and then became the victim of booby traps they had set without telling us.

When we patrolled the Beat we had to note any extinguished streetlights, gas or electric. Both of these systems just gave a pool of light surrounded by very dark shadows. I can remember the electric lamps on the bottom half of the Cowley Road consisted of a single ordinary lamp in a sealed case, which was suspended on a wire running across the road. This lamp just gave a pool of light in the middle of the road and would swing about in a strong wind casting shadows everywhere. All the lights were on time switches and most went off at midnight, except those at major road junctions. The reason for this was to save fuel, as the country was virtually bankrupt.

This, as you can gather, made it pretty dark, and you rarely saw women walking about at night as you do today. I remember one nurse who stopped me on the Marston Road late

at night, making her way to Pollock House Nurses Home in Pullen's Lane. She was frightened to go up Harberton Mead, which was in pitch darkness. I walked, pushing my bike all the way up there and saw her into the Home. This put me back somewhat in time for doing my property checks but women were just as nervous of being attacked in those days as they are today. All extinguished streetlights were reported for repair to the Electricity and Gas Boards early the following morning; a better service than you get today.

We also had to note any overhanging trees or shrubs which obstructed the pavements and report them to the City Council on a memorandum.

All cars left on the highway all night were reported for obstruction. If they hadn't got their lights on they were reported for this as well.

If the lights on any traffic island or street bollard were out, we had to go to the Police Box and collect a red lamp, making sure it was filled with paraffin. We would take it to the spot, light the wick and keep an eye on it for the rest of the night. The same would apply to a pile of sand or heap of bricks left on the highway. If we were on a walking beat or patrol, then we rang the station and either the Motor Patrol or the Reserve PC would bring out the oil lamps. The safety of the public was paramount.

The extinguished lights on the refuges would be reported to the Electricity Board the following morning. Enquiries would be made of any others obstructing the road with piles of sand etc and not making it safe with lighting. They would be reported for this offence.

The pavements were for the safety of pedestrians. Anyone cycling, driving or obstructing with their cars, or shopkeepers with their goods were reported and usually prosecuted. In the City Centre most undergraduates had pedal cycles and they very often parked them on the pavement, leaving little room for pedestrians. The City Council would provide a lorry and these cycles would be loaded up and taken to the Police Station. When the undergraduates found their cycles were missing they went to the Station where they found they had not been stolen, but were in the Store. They identified their cycles and then had to pay a charge, which deterred them from blocking the pavements again. Today the same pavements are jammed with cycles.

During the summer holiday period we also carried the Unoccupied Houses book for that particular Beat. Persons going on holiday would write to the Chief Constable giving their address, dates they were away and the address of a keyholder. The Reserve PC would be responsible for keeping this up to date. When I first started it was the large detached houses which were on the list. As time went on and the pay increased at the Cowley factories more and more people went on holiday. It didn't matter whether your house was in a wealthy area, such as North Oxford in those days, or a council housing estate; all

houses received the same attention. Eventually there were so many that at peak times extra policemen were rostered just to cover unoccupied houses.

Later on there was a scheme devised by the Council in which old persons living alone had a flashing light installed in their window. As far as I remember, they had to press a button once a day to prevent the light from flashing. If they collapsed then a period of no more than 24 hours could elapse before this light summoned help. We had a list of all the houses with device, together with keyholders, next of kin etc.

Very often, when patrolling our Beat, the Pillar would flash and a passing member of the public would tell us. We would ring in and we could be given details of a crime that had just been committed, a stolen vehicle or deliver an urgent message to someone. As I have said before, very few private houses had telephones, so urgent messages about someone being seriously ill, for example, would be passed to us. The only other system was by telegram but this was much slower.

On night duty a lot of our time was spent going to the addresses of keyholders to business premises which had been found either to be insecure, broken into or had left unusual lights on. It is surprising how difficult it is to wake people up at night. I used to start by ringing the bell, then knocking on the door with my truncheon and finally hitting the drain pipe, which was usually metal, and this rattled and echoed along the guttering eventually getting the required result. Sometimes we woke people up either side of the one we wanted and had to apologise. Almost without exception it was the poor lady of the house who answered the door in her dressing gown to find out what we wanted.

I remember the Lamb & Flag public house in St Giles in the early hours of one morning. There was a passageway along the side and I walked along there trying the door. It opened and I walked into the bar and saloon. I checked the tills; the drawers were open with no cash. This was usual, as it stopped thieves from damaging them to find nothing. As I moved round with my torch I noticed the reflection of a pair of eyes of a very large black dog. My heart gave a jump, but the dog just looked and made no sound or movement. I found an internal door, obviously leading to the living quarters above the pub. This was secured by a Yale lock. I banged with my truncheon as hard as I could. No answer. I went outside and banged every drainpipe. No answer. I found the key was on the inside of the mortice lock on the unsecured door. I took it out, locked the door from the outside and pushed the key through the letterbox. I put in a memo, as we did with all incidents we dealt with, to the CID.

I finished duty at 6.00am and was dragged out of bed at 10.00am for further information on what had occurred as the Lamb & Flag had been burgled. Apparently the dog had been doped and they left by unlocking the side passage door which I had found open. They had apparently got in through a grating in the passageway which was covered by a door mat. None of us knew it was there.

It was the regular thing in those days that if there was a break-in on our Beat, we were always woken up and sometimes had to go to the station to the CID to give more details.

When I joined in 1948 the Oxford City Police was being run in the same way as before the War. Times and attitudes were changing. There was a large glass case in the recreation room which contained a number of trophies for, I believe, rowing, tug of war, etc.

The post-war policeman was not particularly interested in these sports and they died out. There was a cricket team which played college sides and sometimes other Forces. At one time there was quite a good boxing section, and also a very good rugby team, which later combined with the Oxfordshire Constabulary and became very well known. A very good life-saving team was also formed for many years.

It was some years before the Angling team came into being. Doug Jeakins, Inspector North, PC Groom, and myself won the No 5 District Police Angling Championships on one occasion and our team came third on another. Following our success in these championships someone suggested that we entered for the No 5 District Sea Angling Championships. This seemed like a good idea at the time. I managed to get hold of a short sea fishing rod, feel with about 50 lb breaking strain line, and metal paternoster with heavy weights. I had never been sea fishing before and the match was held in Southwold in East Anglia. This was such a long way in those days that it was decided we would have to stay bed and breakfast somewhere, and this was arranged. Of course, on a long journey like that, we had to stop the car at frequent intervals to let the engine cool down. Inspector George Phillips, who lectured on Civil Defence, became a member of the team and took us in his car. There was also Doug Jeakins and myself. I cannot remember who the other team member was.

We arrived at the venue after our night’s stay and walked on to a wooden jetty or pier. The local police supplied the bait, which we had previously paid for. There were some smooth worms and some fierce looking ones which, I think, were called ragworms.

Anyway, we stood in a long line each side of the pier and I fixed my hooks, weights, line etc and then tried to impale the worms on my hooks. They kept breaking and the chap next to me took me in hand and showed that these were different from garden worms and they had to be put on lengthways. Having mastered this, I was the last to start fishing and I heaved these heavy weights out to see, nearly taking my neighbour’s head off. There was a strong wind blowing from behind when we started and this became gale force. The organisers decided that, as those with their backs to us could not cast out, they would join us on our side. As a result we were stood shoulder to shoulder. I thought I had a bite and started hauling my line in. Others thought the same and were none too happy when I reeled my line in mixed up with theirs.

A lot of them wanted to know where I came from and, when I said Oxford, there was a lot of bad language and remarks that I ought to go back there. For the rest of the match I just lowered my tackle over the side and hoped for the best. This match lasted for five hours in the howling gale. At one period Doug Jeakins and I took a large firework, which had been confiscated at a 5th November celebration in Oxford a week or so before. We tied a piece of string to it, lit the fuse and lowered it through a crack in the wooden boards of the pier. We resumed our positions and, despite the gale, there was a hell of a bang which shook that part of the pier and livened things up. When the match ended I reeled in and found a small dab was hanging on my hook. My son had it for his tea and was probably the most expensive fish he is every likely to eat.

As pre-war, there was the annual Sports Day which was held at various college sports grounds. I can remember three-legged races, sack races, egg and spoon races, veterans. half-mile, etc. This lasted just a few years then died out through lack of interest.

Every year there was the annual Christmas Party for the children and later, when I was married and had two children, I used to take them. It was very well organised, with decorations done by the policewomen. There was a fake chimney from which, with a small explosion and a puff of smoke, Father Christmas would appear, to the cheers of the bright-eyed happy children. I think it was Plum Warner, dressed up as Father Christmas one year, who emerged from the chimney with his beard on fire.

There was also the adults' party, which was spoilt with people getting into cliques; Traffic here, CID there, 'A' Relief here etc. There was also a Whist Drive for the police pensioners before the actual dance part began. They could stay on, of course, depending on how they felt. When I, of course, became a police pensioner the Oxford City Police was no more, and the Thames Valley Police, who took over, were not interested.

Today, of course, if the police wish to trace the registered owner of a motor vehicle following some crime or accident, they use a computer connected to the DVLC at Swansea. Back in the old days each County and County Borough Council held records of all vehicles registered in their districts. The last two letters of the registration number could be compared with a list which told us to which Council the vehicle was registered. During working hours we, of course, could telephone these authorities. However at night, weekends and Bank Holidays we had to do the detective work ourselves. We had a key to the City Chambers in Queen Street, Oxford. The County Constabulary had a key for their County Office. If, for example, some police force rang us for an urgent registered owner check on a vehicle with an Oxford numberplate, we would take the key and go to the office. The first time I did this I went into a strange office full of files and drawers of cards and had to fathom out how the system worked. Having found the appropriate file we sometimes found that it contained a slip of paper saying that the documents had been transferred to another registration office, because the vehicle had been sold to someone

living in other County. This information was then passed on to the originator, who then had to call out the police somewhere else. These urgent checks were often the result of serious or fatal road accidents where the driver was not carrying any form of identification. Obviously it was urgent to trace and inform relatives.

I can remember some years later being told to deliver an urgent message that someone was seriously ill in the Osler Hospital at Headington. The Inspector's car, at that time, was a new one called a Morris Isis. It had a steering column gear change which I had never used before. It was the only vehicle available so, after a lot of cranking of the gear lever, I managed to get going and drove St Aldate's to Barton Estate. I delivered the message and, as this was late at night and the poor woman had no transport, I took her to the hospital. I drove into a parking bay up against one of the buildings and saw the woman safely to the ward. I then got back into the car, cranked the gear lever into reverse, as I thought, except that I advanced nearer to the wall. I kept moving the lever to every possible position until I was against the wall and sweating as well. In the finish I had to put the car in neutral, squeeze round the front and push it up a slight slope until I could drive forward and out. I have never felt so exhausted as it was a very heavy motor car.

Whilst I am on the theme of hospitals, I was once waiting at the police Pillar at the top of Margaret Road by Headington Quarry on a Point. It was after midnight and all the lights were out. I heard a slight clanking noise approaching and shone my torch straight on to a girl riding a pedal cycle without lights. She gave a scream of terror and stopped as she was blinded by my torch. I then told her it was all right and turned the torch on myself so that she could see who I was. I asked her why she was riding a pedal cycle without lights and she expressed surprise that her lights were not working as they had been when she started out on her journey back to the Nurses Home at the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre. I said I would do what I could to mend the lights and ran my torch over the frame. I found there was a dynamo headlight, a rub on the tyre type of dynamo and a rear light. Nowhere were there any wires that would convey electricity from the dynamo to the lamps. I asked her if she was sure that the lights were working when she started out. She told me she was. I then pointed to the lack of wiring, at which point she admitted to borrowing the cycle. I let her go for her cheek.

To return to the early days, I have several times mentioned the Carfax PC. This was at first only on night duty. We stood on Carfax keeping an eye on the city centre. At midnight we would make a note on our clipboard of every motor vehicle which crossed Carfax all night long. We had columns in which we wrote down the make of the vehicle, index number, direction e.g. East/West or South/East. We worked in conjunction with the PC, covering the bottom part of High Street, for meal breaks etc. This list of vehicles was put to the CID every morning for checking purposes. I could never see the point of the exercise as local criminals knew what we were doing and avoided Carfax.

Of course, as you were just at Carfax, you were able to shelter in the doorway of Wyatts, a shop on the corner of St Aldate's and High Street. This was better than walking in the rain. The Reserve PC always dropped off a can of tea as he passed on his way to the various places where the PCs had their meal break. A very important job in the morning was to collect the newspapers. Van drivers from W.H. Smith and Malletts went to the railway station to collect the early morning papers, which they took to their depots for distribution to newsagents throughout the city. The Inspector and Sergeants would tell you which paper they wanted and you sorted these out from the small bundle you were given by the van drivers. If you failed to do this properly, you would find the next night that you were on a Beat and not at Carfax.

The Carfax PC would also carry with him the keys to the Covered Market. At a designated time you or the lower High Street PC would meet the Patrol Sergeant and check the Covered Market, which runs between High Street and Market Street. The High Street frontage consisted of one big store called Webbers, not lots of small shops as today. We would lock ourselves inside the market and start checking, one on each side of the Avenues, flashing our torches and checking the doors. Fruit shops such as Durhams were wide open with plenty of fruit and vegetables on show. One of the reasons two of us checked the market was to prevent allegations that we had helped ourselves to these goods. We checked all the Avenues and, at the bottom end by Market Street, we used to go down the narrow passageways and cellars under the market. This was the banana store. The bananas were in big bunches and were green in colour. There were gas jets burning every few feet which heated up the store and ripened the fruit. There would be rats and mice scuttling about and sometimes some fearsome spiders.

Of course no one in Britain saw a banana during the War, and these cellars were at one time used as an air raid shelter. I can remember being in Cornmarket Street at the early part of the War, when I was 12 years old. We heard the sound of the air raid siren and I was directed down into this shelter. It was a false alarm and we were glad to hear the All Clear.

On the Queen Street patrol, the PC would carry the keys to the Brewery Yard in St Ebbe's Street. This we checked on our own. There were large wrought iron gates held together by a thick chain and padlock. We locked ourselves in and checked the Yard, which had a spirit store, and we could check the backs of the shops at the top of St Ebbe's. There was an iron staircase which was quite slippery in the winter. By climbing this, we found ourselves on the top of the City Chambers, where we checked windows and skylights. We then moved over and were standing on the roof of the Electra Cinema. I was always a bit apprehensive going in there because, having locked yourself in, no one would know you were there. If attacked, or injured in a fall it would be some time before anyone found you.

I remember one night in the early hours I was stood on Carfax and I saw a lone cyclist coming up St Aldate's. The front light was working and it seemed to me that he saw me standing there and jumped off his cycle and pushed it across the road towards Blue Boar Street which is a one way street, No entry from that direction. I wondered why anyone would want to walk all round there to King Edward Street instead of cycling past me. I ran down the road and into Blue Boar Street and questioned him. I was not satisfied with his answers and arrested him on suspicion of stealing the cycle. He later confessed that he was a soldier stationed, I believe, in Hampshire who was confined to barracks, known as CB in the army. He broke camp and stole a bicycle to go, I believe, to Old Marston to see his wife, who he was worried about. It seemed terrible that he had cycled all that distance and was nearly home when I arrested him. If he had cycled around Carfax I would probably have wished him goodnight.

I think I should mention at this point the Cycle Registration Scheme. Very few people had motor cars but nearly everyone had a cycle. One of the first things undergraduates did when they came up to Oxford was to buy a bicycle, either new or second hand. If they lost their cycle, for identification purposes we needed the frame number. Hardly anyone knew their number so a system was evolved in which people were encouraged, free of charge, to register their cycle with the police. They were given a green card which had their name and address, make and frame number of their cycle, and the date of registration.

Whenever we reported a cyclist for any offence we had to check the cycle, find and note the frame number, and subsequently write these details on the bottom of the Offences Report. This was passed to the CID who checked with the stolen cycle files and the registration system.

I stopped a man in Catte Street for riding a cycle without lights. Having written down the details he had given me I then crouched down with my torch in my left hand shining on the frame number and also holding up the cycle. I had my pocket book balanced on my knee whilst I was writing the details in it. The next minute I had the bicycle smashed down on top of me, sending me sprawling whilst the offender ran off along Brasenose Lane toward Turl Street. I extricated myself and gave chase as far as Turl Street but had to give up. The cycle, of course, was stolen and the details given to me were false. This, of course, was not infrequent but without a proper system of identity cards with photographs there was very little we could do about it.

I remember one Inspector who always had to query whatever you had written in your report. I had booked someone for riding a pedal cycle without front or rear lights. Back came the report with the query 'Was there a reflector fitted?' I replied 'Sir, if not I would have reported him for this offence also'. Back came the report 'Do not be facetious!' And so it went on.

I was on the Cornmarket Street Patrol one evening and was standing near Carfax, when a man came running up to me saying ‘One of your mates is in trouble in the Agricola. This was a restaurant in George Street opposite the New Theatre. I ran down Cornmarket Street and charged into the Agricola. I was then in trouble. I was puffed from my exertions and was facing what appeared to be a raving lunatic. Anyway, this man was throwing tables and chairs about, including at me. Having ducked one such missile, I grappled with him and after a furious struggle pinned him to the floor. Other policemen then arrived and helped to hold him down until we got an ambulance.

We went to the Radcliffe Infirmary with all of us pinning him face down in the back of the ambulance. A doctor met us there and shoved a hypodermic needle through his trousers into his backside and tranquillised him. I found out afterwards that he was an ex-boxer who had become ‘punch drunk’. When he had a few drinks this is how it affected him.

During my career I met many people who were violent because of their mental state. We realised this and, though they might be biting, kicking or punching hell out of you, we did not retaliate in kind but had to try and restrain them and see they got medical help.

One that did not come into this category was when I walked into the police station for my meal break at about 6.00pm and reported to the station sergeant that I was in to tea. The’ phone rang and the sergeant then shouted after me, ‘65’. We were always referred to by number, never names, even off duty at a party or function etc it was still numbers. To repeat, he said ‘65, get over to the Church Army, the captain’s having trouble with someone.’ In those days they would never dream of sending two of you, so off I went across the road to the Church Army Hostel in Cambridge Terrace. This was a very old building with stone floors. I walked in the front door and saw the Captain climbing out of his office through a fanlight window over the door. I and another inmate helped him down. He complained that an Irishman, who he had had trouble with before, had come in drunk and demanded a bed for the night. When the Captain, who was sitting at his very old oak desk, refused to let him have a bed he heaved the desk up and tipped it on top of him. He then went out and slammed the door so hard that it shifted the frame in the brickwork and jammed the door. I was told that the offender had gone upstairs to the dormitory. With some trepidation I went there and found this man. He was a labourer and built like a barn door. I told him of the allegations that had been made and that I was arresting him for assault. He refused to come with me so I put on what in police training was called a hammerlock and bar. This meant using both hands to twist your prisoner’s arm up behind his back. It is painful if the prisoner resists and therefore he should be submissive and come with you. I remember holding his one arm by using all my strength with both arms. Slowly, with just his one arm, he forced both of mine down and then he was free. It is difficult to describe how you feel in such a position. I know I felt fear but could not back down. We fought from top to bottom of the stone stairs until we got into the hall, and I thought I was in for a good thrashing. He suddenly stopped, looked at me

then walked quietly alongside me to the police station where he was charged. Strangely enough, I never thought of using my truncheon. Somehow when you are fighting man to man it wouldn't seem right, or that's how I looked at it.

In the centre of Oxford, spread over quite a large area, is the University of Oxford which consisted of a large number of colleges for men and a smaller number for women. American visitors to Oxford were always confused because when they asked us where the University was, we pointed out to them that it was a large number of different colleges scattered throughout the city and not a group of buildings on a campus as they had back in their own country.

Oxford always had, like Cambridge, the reputation of attracting its undergraduates from amongst the wealthy people of the country, most of them having been to public schools such as Eton and Harrow. The less well-off went to what were called red-brick universities. The result was that a fair percentage of those at the University were there for a good time as opposed to studying very hard. These students would be involved in boisterous parties which sometimes got out of hand and involved the presence of the Bulldogs (University Police) and Proctors, and sometimes us. A favourite lark was climbing buildings and monuments: the Martyrs Memorial was one such target. Very often a chamber-pot was left on top as proof of their exploits. Apart from this being very dangerous for the climber, it also caused a lot of damage to the carvings and stonework of the buildings.

If we caught them behaving badly but not criminally, we were supposed to mark them into their college and hand them over to the duty porter. Very often, late at night, we would catch them trying to climb into their college. Like me in single men's quarters, they were limited to what time they had to be back in college. We, of course, were in sympathy with them and used to help them get back into their rooms.

I have already covered their exploits on fireworks night, but I did not mention that sometimes they made their own more powerful fireworks in their laboratories, which used to make a really big bang.

There was the annual Oxford & Cambridge Boat Race with dark blue rosettes being sported around the University and, in those days, a lot of townspeople wore them as well. The May Eights was a very popular event years ago. This was a race between the various colleges and they would row along a stretch of the Isis (as the River Thames is called in Oxford). The races went on for a week and the police had to patrol the towpaths to see everything was in order. When clothes rationing had ended the ladies used to dress in all their finery with large summer hats. The undergraduates wore their blazers with college badges. As the boats were racing along the river their coaches would be pedalling along the towpath shouting instructions through a megaphone. How they avoided knocking people over or ending up in the river I shall never know.

I cannot remember what year it was but I had just finished a 6.00pm to 2.00am duty. I was late because of writing reports, and it was about 2.30am when I was cycling on my trusty Humber 4-speed down the High Street. I was probably half asleep but I became aware of a zebra crossing across the width of the road outside University College. There was a street refuge in the middle and I noticed a man with a bucket crouching on the island. At the same time a man started running down High Street from the side of the crossing. It was quite dark as most lights went off at midnight. I gave chase and he was obviously well prepared as he was wearing a tracksuit and plimsolls. He ran down the High Street and then turned right into Merton Street, which was really dark. I raced after him and nearly came off when I ran into the cobbled part of the road. He doubled back past me and back up High Street and into Queens Lane. It was pitch black there and, luckily, I had my torch and caught him hiding behind a parked car.

Having gone to all this effort I racked my brain as to what to do. As far as I knew it was not an offence to make a false zebra crossing. There was no power of arrest but I had to do something otherwise we could have had crossings everywhere.

I took him to his college and marked him in. I then had to collect the bucket which contained whitewash and a broom which was in the bucket. I then had to write a report covering the circumstances and, by this time, I might just as well as worked a full night shift as well. The powers that be examined my report and evidence and concluded that as a constituent part of whitewash was lime, that the offender should be charged under the Highways Act which made it an offence to put lime on the highway.

When he appeared in Court he was, I believe, fined £2 amidst much hilarity from a Court filled with fellow undergraduates. It made a television news item and a mention in the Oxford Mail.

One of the dangers of this 6.00pm to 2.00am shift was that, having booked off duty, nobody would know if you had then become involved in dealing with a crime and been injured. It would only become apparent when your wife awoke and reported you missing.

Once a year there was a match at the Oxford University Rugby Ground on the Iffley Road between a Major Stanley’s XV and Oxford University. There was always a large crowd in attendance and this required the presence of several policemen. We also had to put out ‘No Parking’ signs around the vicinity of the ground.

Every year various colleges held what were called ‘Commem’ Balls. These were held in marquees in the college grounds. When amplifiers came into use at the events the noise could be heard both at Headington and Marston, some two miles away, and this led to frequent complaints as the noise went on into the early hours of the morning.

Cycling to work on early turn duty following one of these Balls you would see undergraduates walking along High Street from the direction of Magdalen Bridge, where they had been down on the River Cherwell in punts hired at the bridge. They would be wearing evening dress and their female companions were usually wrapped in a blanket. Later down at Oxford Railway Station we would see groups of these ladies waiting for the London train. We understood many of them had been hired for the evening.

There was the Encaenia every year, when there was a procession of all the senior members of the University to the Sheldonian for the granting of degrees. In another part I write about the trouble we had with the presentation of a degree to Edward Heath.

One of the most famous events takes place every May morning (the first of May). Hundreds of people get up early and go to Magdalen Bridge to hear the Magdalen College Choir singing from the top of Magdalen College Tower. The policemen on duty there used to get a free breakfast in the college.

When we were on duty in the city centre one of our jobs was to find out when the performances at the New Theatre started and finished. Whoever was on that patrol had to see the patrons in and out of the New Theatre by holding up the traffic in George Street. Sometimes the officer would be late finishing his shift if, for example, the show finished at 10.00pm, which was before the night duty relief arrived. The same would apply to the Playhouse if, on the odd occasion, there was a well-attended show. Cinemas were not bothered with as their performances were continuous, and probably there were not so many influential people attending as at the Theatre.

The only Police Pillar left in Oxford, as far as I know, is the one at Carfax. This is of a different design from all the others as, originally, it was deemed a hazard to install one there. It was thought that the flashing amber light on the top, which alerted the PC that he was wanted on the telephone, would confuse motorists observing the Carfax traffic signals. For many years our only means of such communication in the city centre was in the High Street outside Brasenose College, Littlegate Street, St Giles and outside Worcester College. The latter had to be painted grey to merge with the college, the rest were Police Blue.

When Clem Burrows took over as Chief Constable, he insisted that he and anyone else coming to work at peak time in the morning were not held up by traffic. PCs used to cover most traffic signals, particularly George Street and Carfax, and make sure the traffic kept moving. The Chief lived at North Oxford.

Before the yellow line system came into operation, we had to deal with complaints of obstruction. One of these roads was Worcester Street and parking outside Worcester College. I had been along a line of cars noting the time and marking their tyres in case they moved and came back. I returned and was busy affixing my pink tickets to the cars

and booking them. The college porter rushed out and said that a car I was ticketing belonged to the Chief Constable of Oxfordshire who was at the college playing tennis. I remembered taking some oath about without fear or favour. On went the ticket. I was given the nickname ‘Pinky’ because of the number of pink tickets which I used and I achieved a kind of notoriety because of this. I was extremely unpopular with the Reserve PCs who had to deal with my irate customers when they produced their tickets at the station and had to take down their explanations. No, the Chief Constable did not end up in Court, but I have no doubt that my name was noted.

Having been shown around the beats East of Magdalen Bridge, it was some time before I was posted to one which covered the Iffley Road area. I was on night duty and my memory told me that there was a turning right at the bottom of Bedford Street. There was a thick fog and it was about 5.00am. I remember freewheeling down Bedford Street, which is a hill, and that the road was wet with the fog as I went down at a fair pace. All of a sudden right across the road in front of me was a barrier. My memory was faulty: the turning was half way down the hill. As this barrier loomed out of the fog I applied both brakes, nothing happened as they were wet with the fog. There was a terrific crash and I hurtled through the darkness over the barrier into a drop down into Meadow Lane, which was all shingles. I remember lying there when an ‘angel’ in a dressing gown came from a nearby house and rescued me. They sent for an ambulance and I was taken to the Radcliffe Infirmary to have half my ear stitched back on.

For some reason there was an increase in the number of recruits who filled the single men’s quarters. Surprise, surprise, I, who was not allowed to live at home in licensed premises was suddenly told that I now could as they wanted my room for someone else.

As I have previously mentioned about the rules concerning these quarters, I used to finish duty at 10.00pm then walk up the road to my parents’ home in the Crown & Thistle in Market Street, have my supper and then walk back to the station to be in before midnight. I would then get up and walk home in the morning to have breakfast, and later dinner, collect my sandwiches and walk back to the station to start duty at 1.45pm. As you can gather, this was a bit of a bind and I got in the habit of sleeping at home. About 11pm one evening I was at home when I received a call from a PC who also lived in quarters that he had seen the station sergeant sneak into my room. After he left he went in and found a note saying that I was to see him before I went to bed about a report I had done. I went back to the station and reported to the sergeant, who really hadn’t anything much to say about a report, especially as this was in my own time. It was obvious that it was a trap to catch me out and charge me for being absent from quarters.

Unfortunately I was caught out on another occasion and was handed a report headed ‘Absent from Quarters without Permission’. In this the night duty station sergeant reported that he had left me a note for me to see him before I went to bed. I did not do this so he visited my room after midnight several times and again just before 6.00am and

reported me absent. As a result I was put on a charge and received a Caution. This meant I had to be very careful or I would be sacked.

The next time I was on night duty I was on the Woodstock Road, just past Bevington Road. It was the middle of the night and my old friend and colleague PC 74 – Ted Hancock – was covering the Beat on the other side of the road through to the Banbury Road. On seeing me he crossed the road and we stood talking for some time. We then heard the Inspector's car travelling up the road from the direction of St Giles. You may find this hard to believe but, for some reason, we could identify certain police vehicles by their noise. We were both on probation, I had just been in trouble, and now Ted was off his Beat and we were both 'Idling and Gossiping' on duty. We were standing by a public house; I think it was the Horse & Jockey. By the forecourt there was a low wall and I dived over this and lay flat on my back. The wall was so low that I had to turn my head sideways lest the peak of my helmet showed above the wall. I heard the car the car pull up and Hancock came to attention as we did in those days, plus, of course, saluting Inspectors and above. It was most uncomfortable and I lay there whilst they had a long conversation about everything under the sun. I was just a few feet away and was sweating the someone would come along and report to the Inspector that there was a dead policeman lying the other side of the wall.

Certain inspectors and sergeants would hang about on the extremities of our Beat to catch us out for taking a short cut. There was a cul-de-sac in Garford Road in North Oxford which consisted of just houses. You could look down this street quite clearly and see if there were any cars dumped there. At the bottom on the left was a large tree, the patrol sergeant would cycle down there and hide behind the tree. As you were fixed-time working, he knew what time you should be there. When you didn't appear he would cycle on to the next point and, seeing you waiting there, he would question you as to how you worked your Beat. Having quoted your Beat Book, which included doubling Garford Road, he would then jump on the PC saying that he had been there and you had not appeared. He would then threaten us with telling lies and not working the Beat properly.

In later years I got caught out for walking up Frenchay Road and back to my point by missing out Bainton Road. This was on early turn duty. The sergeant, of course, had stood at the junction of Bainton Road and Woodstock Road and knew I hadn't passed him. I got a good telling off. He went off on his bike and I had to walk all the way back to the station and, after breakfast, face another five hours walking up and down Cornmarket Street.

I have previously mentioned that Cornmarket Street had a road surface which consisted of rubber blocks. Whenever it rained we usually ended up with accidents of one sort or another. The following are two which stick in my mind.

It was a Saturday afternoon when the street was crowded with shoppers. I was in Ship Street when I heard a crash, followed a short time later by another crash. I ran round the corner and found that two cars had collided on the slippery surface. They then skidded down the road and struck a third car which was the second bang. Although everyone in the street must have heard the noise and turned and watched the second collision, there were no independent witnesses. No one saw a thing.

The second was when an ambulance taking a seriously ill child from Radley to the Radcliffe Infirmary roared up St Aldate's ringing its bell. It crossed Carfax, hit the wet rubber road and spun like a top knocking a man off his bicycle near Market Street. It then careered through the window of Twining's Shop on the corner of Market Street. We extricated the ambulance, which carried on with the injured child. I had to send for another ambulance (no radios) and render first aid to the injured cyclist who was lying on the set road. It was pouring down and I put my cape over him to keep him dry.

When we were allowed to patrol Cornmarket Street by walking on the pavement instead of the middle of the road, I used to meet a lot of friendly old ladies. Of course they were quite used to me taking their arm and helping them across the busy road and having a friendly chat. Sometime we were probably the only person they had a conversation with all day. This was even more so when we patrolled outlying Beats.

I would walk along with my white-gloved hands behind my back. I would feel a little tickle in my palm and look round and see a dear old lady who smiled at me as she pressed a sweet into my hand. I would say thank you as she walked on and then unwrap the sweet and eat it.

One day this happened and I popped the sweet into my mouth and slowly sucked it. I was at a point opposite Market Street when I had enough of sucking this particular sweet and started to chew it. The next moment I thought I was going to die. I started to choke, I couldn't breathe. I fell on my hands and knees fighting for breath. I don't know what all the shoppers around me were thinking of my behaviour. After a while I slowly recovered and regained my breath. I think it was some kind of sherbet-filled sweet which fizzed up when I bit it. I still thanked the little old ladies but put their sweets in my pocket for later. I never wanted to go through that indignity again.

We were not allowed to have a cup of tea whilst on duty, and certain sergeants and inspectors took great delight in trying to catch us. I can remember walking down George Street one morning when I saw the patrol sergeant come out of the Fire Brigade canteen, which was a Nissen Hut on the opposite side of the road to the Fire Station. He was wiping his moustache and realised I had caught him out. He muttered something about he needed that and passed on by. When we booked off duty at 2.00pm we heard that the same sergeant had reported a PC for having a cup of tea in the same place. I believe he appeared before the Chief Constable and was fined 10/-.

We didn't let these things deter us and we used to look round like criminals to make sure the coast was clear before heading for our favourite tea place. I used the Ross Café and Hotel on Carfax, Lyons Tea Shop in Cornmarket, a dress shop in Queen Street, and a dress shop in Broad Street. I became friendly with the girls in both shops by having a button fall off my tunic and going in and asking to borrow a needle and thread. They said take your tunic off and we will do the repair and would you like a cup of tea while you are waiting. Then when I left they told me to come back any time during their tea breaks. These tea places had the sergeants completely fooled as they were watching the cafés. I also used the Fire Station canteen, Gloucester Green Café and the St Giles Hotel.

On night duty it was possible sometimes to get a cuppa at the Mitre Hotel and the Eastgate Hotel. Dolly Gray, the night watchman at the *Oxford Mail* offices in New Inn Hall Street, was always welcoming. I also had a special one at the Ritz Cinema in Gloucester Green. There were two very nice men employed there all night to clean the cinema. I used to tap on the main entrance doors with a coin: this was the only way to attract their attention. They used to unlock the door and then lock me inside whilst they brewed up.

When checking public toilets, we used to creep in very quietly and look along the line of doors to see that they all showed the vacant sign. Those who regularly slept rough would not put the engaged sign on as it would give their presence away. We would then crouch down and look under every door looking for a pair of feet. If, of course, they heard you coming, they would climb on to the seat, removing their feet from view.

If we were suspicious it cost us a penny to get into the next cubicle, where we would climb on the seat and look down on the hapless individual who was hiding next door.

I can remember at about 2.00am one morning checking the women's toilets, which were underground in Magdalen Street East. I had heard a faint noise when I went down the steps and knew someone was there despite all the cubicles showing vacant. I hammered on the door, which was eventually opened by a middle-aged woman. She had several bags and, I remember, two fur coats. I questioned her and it turned out that she had a monthly allowance. She stayed at the Randolph Hotel across the road and tried to make her allowance last. For some reason she had overspent and was sleeping rough in the toilets for a couple of nights until her allowance came through and she would then move back to the hotel again. According to what she said this wasn't the first time she had done this.

Rubbish from the New Theatre would be dumped in sacks in a recessed doorway in George Street. Ashtrays were emptied into paper bags and these were placed on top of the sacks. Certain old-age pensioners used to come along early and collect the bags to take home and make into their roll-up cigarettes. This was, of course, before filter tips

became common use. We would often see old men walking along and bending down to pick up what we called ‘dog ends’ from the gutter.

We never knew from one day to another where we would be on duty. It was only when we booked off that we were told where to book on for duty the following day. It could be Cowley Road Box, East Oxford Box, Headington Box, Banbury Road Box or the Central Police Station. Much later of course it included the Cowley Police Station when it was built.

I can remember working the patrol in East Oxford from Morrell Avenue, along St Clement’s, round The Plain and up the Cowley Road to the Regal Cinema in Magdalen Road. It was a winter’s night and I was freezing cold. It was about 5.30am and I was in St Clement’s Street and I decided to have a run to keep myself warm. I ran down St Clement’s, round the Plain and up round the Cowley Road. I was going at quite a fair lick when I heard a lot of shouting behind me. I looked around and saw the early turn sergeant pedalling madly up the road towards me and doing the shouting, I stopped and he came to a halt beside me puffing and panting. ‘Where is he?’ he gasped. ‘Where is who?’ I asked. He replied ‘Who are you chasing?’ When I replied that I wasn’t chasing anyone he got very upset. Apparently he had seen me in the distance in St Clement’s running along and gave chase. Of course by the time he had cycled to the station to post his Relief he was late, and I wasn’t popular with him for some time.

Another time, in East Oxford in the middle of the night, I had to make a point at the junction of Marston Street and the Iffley Road. I was standing there looking towards Magdalen Bridge when I saw a horse trotting over the bridge towards me. I thought I had better capture it so I waited for some time. As it did not appear, I thought that it might have gone up the Cowley Road instead. I went back through Marston Street to the Cowley Road, no trace. I returned to my point and found the patrol sergeant waiting. He asked me why I was late on my point and I told him that I had been there but was looking for the horse. He looked at me with disbelief, probably thinking it was the best one he’d heard yet. Just then there was a pounding of hooves. We turned around and galloping up the Iffley Road and past us was the horse. Riding bareback and hanging on for dear life around its neck was the PC from the St Clement’s patrol who had captured it. Anyway they disappeared at a fast pace towards Iffley. The PC concerned survived his ordeal as he turned up for meal break after leaving the horse in a field.

I have mentioned The Plain several times and I think I should say here that The Plain in the period of time I am talking about was a lot different from what it is today. It was a different shape and was not a roundabout. It was a graveyard with all the old gravestones. There was a large statue of a soldier wearing a pith helmet.[3] There were very tall trees in the graveyard and when it was very quiet you could hear a nightingale singing there.

[3] The Boer War Memorial, later moved to Headington and now at Dalton Barracks in Abingdon: see http://www.headington.org.uk/history/misc/boerwar.htm

Traffic coming over Magdalen Bridge split into lanes to go up either the Cowley or Iffley Roads. Traffic coming the other way from the Cowley Road and St Clement's then cut across this traffic. It was a very good accident spot.

During the War I spent 2½ years serving with the Police Messenger Service in Oxford. We paraded at St Aldate's Police Station once a week, where we were given our letters to deliver on our cycles, or went out with the police ambulance. Our main task was to report for duty every time the air raid siren sounded and go to our various posts. Mine was Iffley Road Police Box, which was opposite what is now Donnington Bridge Road. There was a sandbagged air raid shelter and allotments to the rear. When there were heavy air raids on London we could look across and see tiny pin pricks of light in the sky, which were the shells of anti-aircraft guns bursting high in the air.

When they were bombing the Midlands, i.e. Coventry and Birmingham, it was reckoned that they followed the River Thames as far as Oxford as a navigational aid. We would be called out of bed by the siren and cycle to our posts. My father was a Special Constable and went to a different post from me. We would listen to the sound of the German bombers flying over and then we would get the 'All Clear'. We would go back to bed and then the sirens would go again and we got up and rushed to our posts and listened to the German bombers flying back again from the Midlands to their bases in Germany. It seemed to us that it didn't occur to the authorities that the enemy would have to return over the same area once they had finished their bombing run. This happened many times and, although we were tired going to work the next morning, at least we were not suffering from the terrible bombing that was going on.

We were out on one alert when we heard the sound of a low-flying twin-engine aircraft. Its navigation lights were on and it flew over us by Howard Street. Suddenly there were vivid flashes and the crump of exploding anti-aircraft shells bursting overhead. We stood watching this in fascination until we realised that the various zinging noises we heard were from shrapnel flying round us. We hastily made for the shelter. One Civil Defence Messenger who was on the Cowley Road arrived at his post with a piece of shrapnel through the rim of his helmet. We heard afterwards that this was a training aircraft which forgot its recognition signals and we understand it crashed somewhere near Didcot.

I have talked about my service with the Messengers to bring in the next part of my story, which is how I met my future wife, who was also a Police Messenger. I always thought she was very pretty but unfortunately I was a very shy person with no experience of girls, having two brothers. I therefore admired her from afar until I was called up into the Army.

After I joined the Police Force I then saw her again, looking very smart in a Firewoman's uniform in George Street by the Fire Station. We had a bit of a chat and that was that.

I later made enquiries as to where she lived and went there and invited her to the Police Station Annual Party. She accepted and we went on from there.

I would meet her in town after she travelled by bus and we would go the pictures or, of course, to my home. I would then escort her back to her house in East Oxford at the end of the evening and stand chatting at the door. Her parents would have gone to bed. Although she was in her twenties there would be no inviting boyfriends in without a chaperone and before we had been at the door very long there would be a call from upstairs that it was time for her to go to bed. Usually the last bus had gone and it meant walking all the way back home. It was always considered the norm in those days that if you took a girl out you were responsible for her and you always escorted her home. After a while the rules were slightly relaxed and I did get a foot in the door, but not for too long.

The only time we could go out together was on my one day off a week or on early turn duty. There was also a further complication in that it had to fit in with her duties.

Having become engaged, we arranged for the Banns to be called in our two parishes, that of SS Mary & John in East Oxford and at St Michael at the North Gate, where we were getting married.

No doubt, due to walking the Beat all day and then walking back from East Oxford to the Crown and Thistle public house, where I was now living, I became overtired and one night overslept and was late for early-turn duty. I was called before the Superintendent, who ordered that, as there was now a single room available at the Police Station due to someone having recently got married, I was to move back in there. I pointed out that the Banns were being called in our respective parishes and that I was required to live in the Parish of St Michael at the North Gate. This was to no avail and I was forced to move back into the Police Station, which was in the Parish of St Aldate's.

My fiancée approached the City Rector, Canon R. R. Martin, who managed to iron out the problems that being caused.

The next thing was notification from Detective Inspector Swann that I was to attend the Oxford City Quarter Sessions to give evidence that I had found a window broken in Market Street and items stolen from the shop. I explained that I was getting married and had arranged our honeymoon in Ilfracombe, which would coincide with my appearance at the Quarter Sessions. He intimated that that was my hard luck. I appealed to the Superintendent and he said that police duty came before personal considerations and there was nothing he could do. My fiancée spoke to Canon Martin about the matter and he soon contacted the Recorder, a Mr Diplock, who arranged that my evidence could be heard early and so as not to interfere with our marriage plans.

I married Dorothy May Frost on 26th May 1951 at St Michael at the North Gate and the reception was held in the Carfax Assembly Rooms.

We went by train to London, staying the night at a small hotel, and the following day continued our journey by train to Ilfracombe in North Devon. The weather was quite cold but we were lucky to get this late date in May for our holiday. The holiday dates in those depended on your length of service. I believe it started in March and ended in October. Those with 25 years' service got the July/August dates.

We then moved into the house of my wife's parents at 15 Essex Street. Hardly anyone used the front room of their house in those days. It was the best furnished room in the house but was only used for Christmas, Christenings, Weddings, Funerals etc. Anyway, we were given the use of the front room and also the front bedroom. We knew it would be a long time before we could managed to get a police house allocated so it would give us a chance to save.

We had bought bedroom furniture i.e. bed with springs, small and large wardrobes, and dressing table. We were a bit short of money, so Dorothy borrowed money off an Aunt to buy a mattress for the bed. Her parents had given us a dining-room suite which consisted of a table, four chairs, and a sideboard. My parents gave us a radio and a Westminster chime clock. This, together with wedding presents from relatives and friends, were a start to building up a home.

As I was now living in East Oxford I was generally getting posted to Beats in that area. It wasn't long before I fell out with a certain sergeant over something and he showed his displeasure when I was on early turn duty by posting me to North Oxford, parading at the Banbury Road Box, which was on the Banbury Road roundabout. This took another half hour's cycling, which of course meant getting up that much earlier.

As I have mentioned before, there was a lot of this pettiness which caused bad feeling between most constables and certain sergeants and inspectors. This, in fact, produced an 'esprit de corps' amongst the men, which has lasted to this day.

Everyone was posted from a document called a Duty State, and on this was space for recording visits. Every patrol sergeant had, together with the inspector, to visit all the PCs on their Beats and make a record of this on the Duty State. This document was checked the following day by the Chief Inspector or Superintendent to check that they were doing their job of supervising us.

The sergeant in the early days travelled by bicycle and would cut through the Beat to give us a visit instead of waiting for us to make our official point. Those sergeants who were giving us a hard time had a very difficult job finding us. We used to see them in the distance and would hide until they had gone past, forcing them to ride round and round

until we made our point. This mucked up any plans they may have had of getting their visits over quickly and spending more time in the station, particularly if it was bad weather. This was, of course, petty but it was one of the few ways we could get our own back. I must admit it gave me a glow of satisfaction.

We had only been married a few months when, much to our surprise, we were allocated a police house at 19 Halliday Hill on the Northway Estate. We went there and found the estate was only partly built with hard-core pavements and roads. It was to be a year before they were surfaced. We were given a date to move in, and hired a van to bring our few bits and pieces. The house had concrete floors covered with brown Marley tiles. There was a front room, dining room, and kitchen with larder and a built-in cupboard. I remember that if anyone left the drawer of this cupboard unit even slightly open it projected in front of the door from the dining room, preventing it from opening.

There was a gas stove and a gas copper fitted in the kitchen. We had a back boiler in the front room fireplace and even a built-in gas poker. There was a radiator in the dining room and, as well as the usual airing cupboard, there was another for drying my cape.

We bought some sacks of coal, which were delivered to the coal store outside the back door. We bought a small mat to put on the floor in front of the fire but had nothing to sit on except dining room chairs. I went to a shop down the Cowley Road and bought two fireside chairs on hire purchase. We had scraped together some curtains and I remember we sat there in front of a roaring fire, which was burning our legs, and there was a terrible draught freezing our backs. When we could scrape together enough money we bought some thick material and made a door curtain.

It was a semi-detached house and the other half was occupied by PC Philip Gould and his wife Joyce.

There was a police box (a sizeable room) built on to the side of my house, but it was never furnished or used. Of course, we had no telephone.

The garden was just a mound of clay and the house, having been built on a corner, was open front and side. There was just a low wall running round what was to be a garden. It took a long time and much hard work levelling the garden, which sloped with the hill. I did the large side garden in two sections. I grassed the top one and planted potatoes in the bottom one as I had been told that this was good for breaking up the clay. I also tried ash, sand, and seaweed mixture, but to no avail.

As my potatoes came up in their neat rows ready for hoeing up I started to work with the hoe. As I rammed it into the hard clay and heaved lumps of clay up something had to give. The hoe broke and I had to complete the task with a spade. The potatoes grew and grew and time came for harvesting. This meant digging up a large gooey mess as we had

had a lot of rain at that time, squatting down and extricating every individual potato by hand. By the time I had finished I decided that I would rather buy them from the shop than go through this back-breaking exercise again.

I bought a lorry load of soil quite cheaply as they were still clearing and building the estate. I spread this all over what used to be my potato patch. I then bought grass seed and spread it all over and waited for the grass to grow. A fine lawn appeared and then the potato season, up through the lawn came potato plants which I mowed down. This occurred for two years and was a standing joke.

Council housing was mainly on the basis of how many children people had, and this meant that every council house estate as it was built was full of young children who, in time, would become teenagers, some of whom later on would become a big problem.

Not long after moving in I received complaints that small children were wandering out through the hedge on to the Northern by-pass. I reported this to the Chief Constable and, within a very short period the City Council closed off the estate from the A40 with the erection of iron railings. Lots of trees were planted on the estate and it was a full-time job, both on and off duty, preventing these from being damaged. We were all very pleased with the survival of the very large chestnut tree which was planted as a sapling on the roundabout opposite our house.

Quite a large number of police houses were built as a means of helping police recruitment. They were of course tied houses, which meant that if you left the Force you had to leave the house. This is why in various parts of my memoirs you might think why put up with this or that? The reason was we had nowhere else to go as we did not have enough money to put down a deposit on a house. As I have previously mentioned, council houses were allocated to those with the most number of children, and there was a very long waiting list.

My son, Alan, was born in September 1952 at home in the police house at 19 Halliday Hill with the midwife in attendance. I say this because very few went to the maternity department at the Radcliffe Infirmary in those days. Due to complications, my wife ended up in the Slade Isolation Hospital as this was the only place with a bed.

My daughter, Carol, due to my wife’s previous problems was born in September 1954 at the Churchill Hospital.

I subsequently arranged for her Christening at St Andrew’s Church, Old Headington on my one Sunday off. I have previously said about the day-off system, which meant one Sunday off every seven weeks. Everything was arranged, invitations sent out far and wide. A week before the Christening a note came out that all leave was cancelled on the Sunday as a Civil Defence Exercise had been arranged covering the whole of Oxford.

I went to the Superintendent and told him about the Christening and all the arrangements that had been made. It made no difference. We had to cancel the Christening and notify all those who were attending. I spent that day at East Oxford Box doing nothing.

For some reason our house became the village police house with one major difference, we had no telephone. Everyone who came knocking at my door when I was off duty I had to deal with. When I was on duty my wife was suffering abuse when callers found I was not at home, and she was being involved in all sorts of disputes. I know of one occasion when she threatened to hit a caller at the door with the children's cricket bat because he was being abusive.

I remember a man in Stainfield Road calling one evening and saying that he couldn't get into his house because there was an Alsatian dog sat on his front door step. I told him to get hold of its collar and drag it away. He said it might bite him and I remember asking why he thought it wouldn't bite me. He said 'You're the policeman aren't you?' This was the general attitude with some people.

I was called out of bed in the middle of the night once to round up gypsies' horses that were running around the estate. My wife was involved on another occasion with PC Gould from next door in rounding up stray cattle. I was even knocked up at 1.00am one morning by a woman who had lost her purse.

One day I was off sick with influenza, and was just getting over it when I was called to a house in Stainfield Road where a man had committed suicide. I went in there and found a man sitting at the table, slumped forward with his head on his hands. Resting on the table in front of him were his war medals. In the dining room was a poor old budgerigar upside down with its feet in the air. The place was full of gas, which was lethal in those days before the changeover to North Sea gas. On another occasion I was called out over the fields off the estate where the dead body of a man was by a tree. He had shot himself with a pistol.

I had either to cycle down to Marston or get someone else to do it to contact the Police Station. I think we eventually got a telephone installed in about 1959 or 1960 following what could have been a serious assault on my wife on our doorstep, when she was rescued by two men living on the estate.

As our two children grew up they were subjected to a lot of abuse and harassment because I was a policeman. Our children used to invite others into our garden to play. On one occasion my wife heard a woman shouting out her daughter's name and telling her to get out of the garden and stop playing with those 'bloody copper's kids'. Any minor thing our children did was reported to us as though it were a serious crime. Virtually anything was complained about. I often wonder how much they had to put up with because of my doing my job. I know when my son was at the Oxford School and a

number of boys were found out for being involved in drugs, it was alleged that he had informed on them as his father was a policeman.

When we first moved into the house there were two concrete clothes line posts in the back garden, but no path. We could not afford the materials to make a concrete path so I used the clinkers from the coal fire to make a rough one.

One of the Chief Inspector's jobs was to inspect the police houses periodically. There was obviously a flaw in the cast-iron fire basket, which had split, and I put in a memo to the Chief Constable for it to be replaced. Along he came, looked at the fire basket, and accused my wife of causing the damage by not raking out the ashes properly from underneath the fire basket. He then spotted my cinder path and told my wife that she was wasteful and that his wife always sieved the ashes and put the clinkers back on the fire.

Later when the bottom of the cheap dustbin, which the police had supplied, had rusted through, along he came to inspect it and accused my wife of burning rubbish in the bin, which she had never done. These are just a few examples of the attitude whenever I reported any fault to the property.

Once every year the Chief Constable would go round with the Policewoman Sergeant and Superintendent or Chief Inspector and inspect all police houses from top to bottom. It was not unknown for them to open cupboards and drawers. If the house was not considered to be up to standard in cleanliness and tidiness, then it would be the job of the Policewoman Sergeant to give your wife the necessary tuition.

On one occasion the Chief Inspector came to our house unexpectedly to ask our opinion about a garage being erected by the City Council for a disabled driver living in Stainfield Road to park his invalid carriage. He stood by the armchair in the front room and rested his hand on the top. He suddenly let out a yell as our cat, which had been asleep in the chair, leapt up and clawed his hand. I don't think he was amused, although we had a smile about it afterwards.

In addition to the annual inspection of police houses, there was the annual church parade when everyone paraded in their best uniforms, boots highly polished, creased trousers, white gloves. This was at St Aldate's Police Station. The Special Constables were also on parade and we marched up St Aldate's to the City Church which was in the High Street at the junction of Turl Street. It is now no longer a church and is used as a college library.

After the service, which was attended by the Lord Mayor and Corporation, we marched back to the police station behind the Salvation Army Band. We lined up in the station yard for inspection and presentation of long service medals to those regulars and specials who were entitled to them.

Every year there was an inspection by Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary. Every book and report was double-checked. Records of prisoners and found property came under close scrutiny. Any PC who had made a good arrest during the year was picked to tell his story to HMI.

There was a full parade in the station yard with everyone smartly dressed. All police cars and motor cycles, which were always black in colour, were washed and highly polished and stood in lines. The CID was all lined up wearing trilby hats, and the motor patrol with their breeches and gaiters.

After the general inspection we had to go upstairs to the gymnasium, where we sat in rows facing the HMI and Chief Constable. They had a habit of going through books and finding some event, would call out the name and number of the officer involved, and expect them to give an account of their actions.

Very often, due to annual leave, sickness, or a drop in recruitment, we were short of men and this meant doubling up some Beats and working harder.

I had a cycle and was checking the shops on one side of Walton Street. To save time, as there was no-one about, I cycled slowly along the pavement flashing my torch over the windows and doors to check any sign of a break-in, then leaning over into the doorways, which were recessed, to try the door handles. I was about half way along the row of shops and leant over and turned the handle of a shop door, which wasn't locked. The result was that the door flew open, and I dived off my cycle through the open door and landed with a thud, while my cycle hit the shop window with a loud crash. I got up and was relived to find that there was no damage to the window. I decided that this system wasn't viable after all.

After moving to Northway Estate I began to get a lot of duty postings to Headington. I paraded at Headington Police Box, which was attached to a police house occupied by Inspector, and later Superintendent, Len North. This was on the London Road opposite Headley Way. It had a police flashing light, like most Police Boxes.

There was a small gas fire with a gas ring on top at the far end of the Box. This room was narrow, with just a wooden bench and a chair with a built-in desktop for writing. The first thing I learned about this Box was that in winter if you bent down in front of the gas fire, turned it on, and struck a match there was a loud bang and you lost your eyelashes.

If ever we showed a recruit round the Beat in Headington in winter, we always let them light the fire and, for some reason, thought the subsequent reaction to be quite funny. The more experienced of us would turn it on and stand back whilst throwing lighted matches at it until it lit.

You could sometimes get two or three PCs squeezed into this little Box for their meal break in the middle of the night. The conversation and laughter could, at times, get quite loud which would wake up the occupants of the house who, understandably, would be quite annoyed. I have said this to explain part of my next story.

A certain PC who lived at Marston had bought a very large Alsatian dog which, I gather, bit every member of his family including him, but he still kept it. I believe on occasions he took it unofficially on night duty, which is why the dog knew where the Headington Box was.

At about 1 am I went to the Police Box for my meal break. I had wheeled my cycle past the old air raid shelter, a legacy of the War, and put it in the covered cycle rack. I had just started eating my sandwiches when there was a scratching noise at the door. I opened it and found a very large Alsatian dog trying to get in. I told it to clear off, but it started whining. I shut the door and it made such a din that I was forced to open the door and let it in otherwise it would have woken the Superintendent. The dog sat there enjoying the warmth of the gas fire and staring at every mouthful I ate. In the finish it had half my sandwiches. When my meal break was over I rang in and received my posting for the second half of my shift and went outside, accompanied by the dog. I pulled my cycle out of the rack, turned and was about to wheel it past the Box when the dog grabbed my front wheel with its teeth and wouldn't let go. I called it all the names under the sun and struggled until it eventually let go. It then raised its head and gave the loudest barks you could possible imagine. I grabbed my cycle and ran down the garden path into the darkness of Brookside, from where I heard the front bedroom window open and a lot of shouting.

On another occasion I was checking the Oxford United Football Ground one night and I found a small gate open leading into Cuckoo Lane. The wind caught it out of my hand and it blew shut with a bang. It was, of course, very dark in there and I was coming back past the stand when I heard a scuffling noise a few yards away and a dark figure ran away across the ground. I was paralysed with fear at first, and then gave chase. I eventually caught up with my fugitive, who turned out to be Freddy Fullwood, PC 49 as ever was. He was on 7 Patrol at Headington, when he heard a noise from the football ground and went down there to investigate. He saw my torch flashing around and decided to teach me a lesson for banging the gate. He had hidden in the grounds and then simply ran when I was near him. The net result was that I lost both my cycle trouser clips.

Later I was on duty at a football match at the same ground when a dog ran on to the pitch amongst the players. Without thinking, I went on to the field to shoo the dog off. As I got to it the dog bared its teeth and snarled. I stopped and then, in unison from several thousand supporters came the cry 'Bite him!' I realised that the crowd were not on my side and I was on a hiding to nothing. I moved again towards the dog, hoping for the best. Luckily it turned and ran back amongst the crowd.

Another doggy story was that of a red setter belonging to PC 76 Cottrell, which used to get out and wander round at night with him. It was a strange dog in that every time you got near it, it leaned on you. One morning I was near Headington Carfax, talking to Peter and his dog, when along came a chap we knew as Brummie. He used to wait about there and help the newspaper distributors with their papers. He hadn't seen the dog before and seeing it was with us asked if it was a police dog. We knew he was a bit naïve so Peter told him it was a crowd-control dog. He looked a bit blank so he was told to stand by the dog. He did so and the dog immediately leaned against his leg. We told him that was how it kept the crowds back, and he was most impressed.

I well remember one night duty in the early 1950s. It had been snowing hard all day and it was laying several inches deep. I put on a couple of pullovers over my vest and shirt, an old pair of pyjama trousers on top of my pants, and then, of course, my trousers, tunic, overcoat, and cape. I also had a thick pair of socks and my wellington boots, which I used for gardening. On top of this lot was my helmet.

I dragged my cycle through the snow from my shed and carried it down the front path to Halliday Hill. The snow nearly came up to the axle. There were so few cars about at that time that the snow was only being flattened on the main roads and there was little or no gritting.

It was impossible to use my cycle so I returned it to my shed and tramped my way up the hill and to my point of duty at Headington Box. I lit the gas fire and rang through to St Aldate's Police Station to report my duty and get my posting.

I thought that, due to the conditions and impossibility of using a pedal cycle (particularly on the side roads), that I would spend my tour of duty in the Police Box by the telephone ready to go out on an emergency call.

I found that the Patrol Sergeant's viewpoint was entirely different from mine. He told me to work the Middle and Marston Beats which were two cycle Beats put together. I told him what the weather conditions were like and that I could not use a cycle. He told me that he knew what the weather was like, that I had two legs, and that I could walk it.

I trudged my way up the London Road to Windmill Road and then down this road to what was known as the Wingfield roundabout, which was near the Wingfield Morris Hospital, later to be renamed the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre. I crossed the road and walked into The Slade. On the left was a large builder's compound where they were building the Wood Farm Estate. I checked the gates and padlocks and walked on past Whites Farm, where we had a pound for keeping stray dogs. I checked the shops in Cinnaminta Road, the Corner House public house and adjoining nursery school. I continued into Hollow Way and then turned right into Crescent Road past the Morris

Motors Club House, down to the Cowley Road. Turning right a short distance along here by the Cowley Marsh was the Cowley Road Police Box. I went inside and rang the Police Station to see if anything was happening and put on the single bar electric fire for about ten minutes.

I then resumed my walk along the Cowley Road, checking property on the right-hand side as far as Southfield Road: then up this road to Hill Top Road, Divinity Road to Warneford Lane, and then Cheney Lane, which was like being in the middle of the country. There was no street lighting, and this was before the school and college were built there.

I can remember struggling through snowdrifts out into the Headington Hill and then down the hill turning right at the bottom into the Marston Road. I went along the Marston Road checking various properties until I reached the Croft Road Police Pillar. Anyone passing would have thought that there were two snowmen standing together.

As there was still nothing happening following my call from the Police Pillar I continued into Cherwell Drive, where I checked a row of shops and then into Copse Lane, through Northway Estate up into Dunstan Road, past the piggery, and then turned right into Manor Road. I went past the Osler Hospital (since demolished). Manor Road was later renamed Osler Road. I turned right at the end of this road past Ma Blackburn's Cattery and what was then the Headington United Football Ground, to where I had started at Headington Box.

I was completely and utterly exhausted. If there had been an emergency when I rang in to report that I was at the Box for my meal break, I don't know how I would have managed to get to wherever.

As car production at the Cowley factories rapidly increased, so did the numbers of workers. People came from all over the country and, because of the shortage of accommodation, were forced to become squatters in old Army and RAF camps, some even in what used to be prisoner of war camps.

Many thousands used to pour in and out of the factory gates at their starting and finishing times. If you were driving towards Cowley along the Oxford or Garsington Roads at coming out time, you stopped. There were cyclists 15–20 abreast taking up the whole road. Because of such large numbers of people on the roads at the same time there were lots of accidents.

Every morning on early turn duty we did point duty at Between Towns Road and Oxford Road, Oxford Road and Hollow Way, Hollow Way and Salegate Lane, Garsington Roundabout, Horspath Roundabout, Roman Way, and 18 Gate Garsington Road. The first two were taken over by traffic signals at a much later date.

I can remember Jim Brand, who was no lightweight, doing point duty in Hollow Way at the junction in Salegate Lane one cold and frosty morning. He put his arm up to stop the hundreds of cyclists racing down Hollow Way so that traffic could come out of Fernhill Road. The next moment they skidded on the icy road and I understand he was stood there with a cyclist draped round his neck and a whole pile of bikes and bodies around him.

I was on point duty at the junction of Oxford Road and Hollow Way one day and was stood in the middle of the road holding up the traffic coming from Hollow Way. I had signalled the traffic from Garsington and Oxford Roads to proceed when I heard shouts from cyclists behind me to my right. I turned round on my heel to see what was the matter when I felt a blow in my back and heel. I then realised that a lorry and trailer had come from Garsington Road turning right into Hollow Way. The side of the trailer hit me and the rear wheel tore the leather strip at the back of my boot off.

On one of the Beats in East Oxford, we left the Box at 6am, and tried shop doors on the Cowley Road until it was time to get a bike out and cycle up to Cowley to do one of the point duties I have mentioned. Having finished there we cycled to the Iffley Road by Howard Street and did the only school crossing point in Oxford at that time. We then went to East Oxford Box for our meal break. Of course, the late turn relief had to cover the same duties in the afternoon.

East Oxford Box was situated at the corner of the grounds of the Cowley Road Hospital (formerly the Workhouse). It was fairly large and square-shaped with a long wooden seat on one wall, built in desk top with a couple of chairs, and telephone with flashing light. There was an old ceramic sink next to an ancient gas stove. The oven part did not work. The sink and draining board were underneath a large window with frosted-glass panes which opened outwards. Behind the Box was a locked toilet which contained a can of paraffin and red lamps, which I have spoken about earlier. Behind this was a large cycle rack with a roof.

With all the point duties at Cowley, there were a number of us parading there together and it was always assumed, quite rightly, that we didn’t always go rushing out of the Box dead on the stroke of six and might idle our time away chattering.

The Chief Inspector, who had these suspicions, would at odd times appear at St Aldate’s Police Station for early turn duty and would then jump into his car and race off to Headington or Cowley to catch us out. The PC on the switchboard who knew this would, as soon as he had gone, flash Headington, East Oxford, Cowley Road and Banbury Road Boxes to warn us. By the time we got the message we could hear his car coming up the road and knew that he would see us coming out of the door. We opened the window over the sink and would clamber out, one after another. The last one shut the window. We

would run into the hospital grounds and hide amongst the bushes. We would hear his car stop, the Box door slam, and off he would go again.

The problem with East Oxford Box was that, quite rightly, it was treated as a police station. This was all right, except that having just come in for breakfast, probably out of the pouring rain, you had stood there at the stove frying your breakfast and were just about to eat it when there would be a knock at the door. You were then involved with someone wanting to report this or that, and your breakfast would become cold and greasy. Many times I had just sat down to eat when the phone would ring and I would chuck my breakfast in the dustbin while I went off to deal with an accident.

There was one incident when I was having my breakfast when a PC came in the door talking about the honesty of some young boy who had handed him a purse with money in it which he had found on the Cowley Road. He was about to report the details and ring the Reserve PC for it to be recorded in the Found Property Book when there was a knock at the door. He opened it and there stood a woman with a pram and a small child. She said she had lost her purse and gave an exact description of the purse and its contents. The PC told her she was lucky and, without thinking, gave it to her and off she went. About ten minutes later there was a knock on the door and another woman said she had lost her purse. She gave the exact description of the purse and contents which had just been handed over. I think there were three of us scouring East Oxford for the woman and pram, and I believe the PC found her in Morrell Avenue.

It appears that the first woman was standing near him in the Cowley Road whilst he was checking the contents of the purse with the boy, and could see it in his hand. She followed him up the road, waited a few minutes, then claimed it. She was subsequently convicted of the crime. One thing it did was to teach us to always go by the book and trust no one.

Another duty we had in those days was the Cattle Market, which was held in the Oxpens Road every Wednesday. There were two PCs involved all day, one inside the actual market, counting the number of store pigs and which pens they were in. We had a little wooden office which contained a book of licences, which we had to fill in and issue to farmers. The other PC had to patrol the Oxpens Road to prevent obstructions and help people across the road to the part where all the market stalls were.

Sometimes, following a spate of thefts of purses and handbags, I would do plain clothes duty. I remember once I obtained an old purse, to which I attached some fishing line. I persuaded a woman who was doing her shopping to let me tie this to her basket and leave her purse on top in plain view. I followed at a discreet distance all around the market, but did not get a bite.

I remember one night I was patrolling the Oxpens Road when what appeared to be a light aircraft came circling low over the centre of the City. I presumed it was lost and was trying to find an airfield to land. Oxford is, of course, surrounded with aerodromes. I pointed my torch at the aircraft and continually signalled OXFORD in Morse code as it flew round. I presumed the pilot would have a map and could work out a landing site once he knew his location. Of course I never knew whether he received my signals or what happened.

I cannot remember what year it was but there were a large number of complaints from women that, because prostitutes had begun operating in the City Centre, they were being pestered by men, especially kerb-crawlers.

A Vice Squad was formed, of which I was a member. We covered what was known as the Bunny Run. This was Queen Street, Cornmarket Street, Magdalen Street, Beaumont Street, Gloucester Street, George Street, and New Inn Hall Street back to Queen Street.

I not only tried to catch them, I tried to convert them. As a result, very often when I was shopping in Woolworth's with my wife, these ladies, whose profession was obvious from their make-up and clothes, would push up close to me calling me darling etc, basically baiting my wife. She fortunately knew what I was involved in but it could be a bit embarrassing, especially if I saw people I knew at those times who did not understand the situation.

One even I was on the Vice Squad duties and saw two girls operating at the corner of Beaumont Street and Gloucester Street. I had not seen them before and knew that they would not know me. For some strange reason there were always one or two men hanging round that corner watching what was going on, so I thought my best cover would be to stand by them. I did so and was made an offer, which I politely refused. I said I was waiting for another of the girls whom I had not seen operating that week. Men came driving up in their cars making offers, and the girls at various times accepted and went off in the cars. This went on all evening until after midnight. I was hoping to arrest both girls but one did not return from a late trip. The other girl spoke to me, as we had been on and off during the evening, and said she had had enough and was going to the Hole in the Wall Café for a coffee and then going home. I walked along Gloucester Street with her and then said that I was a police officer and that she would realise that I had been keeping her under observation for the last few hours. I arrested her for loitering for the purposes of prostitution. We walked to the Police Station, where I charged her with the offence.

She was worried about the case getting into the newspapers as she came from up North, and her mother thought she was working in an office in Oxford. I would estimate that 200 prostitutes were being arrested nightly in London as a routine, apart from everywhere else, and therefore assured her that there would be little publicity, except perhaps in the local paper the *Oxford Mail*. How wrong can you be?

The girl pleaded guilty before Oxford Magistrates Court and my evidence was read out to the magistrates. The Chairman, Sir Basil Blackwell, turned to Superintendent North, who was prosecuting, and said that it would seem from the evidence given by the Constable that the men were importuning the woman, and not the other way round. Could we not do anything about these men? There was a great thumbing through of books by the Superintendent and the Magistrates Clerk and it was realised that the law applied to both sexes. The girl received a small fine but, because of the remarks made by Sir Basil Blackwell, this small case resulted in a report in the *News of the World*, which was read by the girl's mother amongst many others.

Because of this case policewomen, very attractively dressed, wandered round the Bunny Run where they were propositioned by male car drivers, who were quickly arrested by officers of the Vice Squad. I believe that there were questions in Parliament about this.

This case, and subsequent activity, drove most of the prostitutes out of Oxford, apart from one or two who continued to operate from public houses.

I have not mentioned that in my earlier period with the Oxford City Police there was a concert called the 'Bits and PCs'. They went round the old people's homes and hospitals and were very popular. Inspector Crisp, Freddy Mynheer and his wife, and Horace Caselton put on a good show, which was greatly appreciated. I am not sure whether Doug Jeakins and Jim Brand were in the show but I remember them performing at the annual party.

Another event was the Iffley Swim. All the keen swimmers swam from Folly Bridge to Iffley Lock. Others, including me, paddled one of a number of punts which were there in case of difficulty.

I was on duty in Queen Street one day when a woman came up to me and complained about a man indecently exposing himself to her, and she wanted him arrested. I went to the front of the Fifty-Shilling Tailors, where there used to be a small arcade. There was an old tramp trying to hold up his trousers which had fallen down due to the piece of string, which he used as a belt, breaking. I went into the shop and obtained enough string to last him for months and sent him on his way.

I tell this story because my grandmother told me about a headline in a London newspaper about my grandfather (who was in the Metropolitan Police and died before I was born). It said 'Pins and Politeness' and referred to him going to the aid of a woman whose knicker elastic broke and he gave her a safety pin. I don't think anyone wanted the lady arrested, but there lies the difference in attitudes.

I have already mentioned how we battled every November 5th, but I think I should mention that with the night duty parading early, and early turn coming back on duty, we were rarely able to have a bonfire and fireworks with our children. It was left to the wives: my wife and Joyce Gould from the police house next door would have to do all this.

Christmas was another time which affected us duty-wise. If you were on early turn or late turn shifts, you could have either Christmas Day or Boxing Day off. This meant that there was only half a shift on duty. Night shift worked as normal. As my mother's birthday was on December 26th, when we had a family get together, I always worked Christmas Day.

Working late turn on Christmas Day would evoke sympathy from local folk. They would see you wandering along your lonely Beat with hardly a soul about. They would offer you brandy, whisky, mince pies, etc. and it was very difficult to refuse their genuine kindness.

I had cycled up the London Road to Green Road roundabout when a saw a PC, who shall remain nameless, cycling round and round the roundabout on the inside, following the kerb. He had obviously given way to temptation with all the offers of drink and just couldn't get away from the kerb. The roundabout was much smaller in those days and there was very little traffic on Christmas night. I managed to get him off the roundabout and took him to his home. Fortunately we had no visits from the Sergeant or Inspector so I was able to cover for him.

I remember one very quiet night I was making a point at the junction of Iffley Road and Howard Street. I just stood there in the dark when I was suddenly grabbed from behind. I just stood there petrified, my heart was thumping and I could hardly breathe. I then felt warm fur against my cheek and heard a purring noise. A cat had run up my back and sat on my shoulder.

Another thing about patrolling in the dark is the number of people who talk to themselves. I began to wonder if I was doing it myself. When you stood back in the darkness of a shop doorway you could hear some people even arguing with themselves.

In the early hours of the morning, you would usually only see train drivers cycling down to the railway station and postmen to the sorting office in Beckett Street. Sometimes I found that because of not talking to anyone, my mouth had dried up and someone would say good morning as they cycled past and, by the time I had got my voice working they had gone. They probably thought what a miserable person I was, but that was not the case.

Walking the Beat at night, wandering around trying property, and going round the backs as well as the fronts, can be somewhat hazardous. There was a corner shop in Bullingdon Road which had a side garden and gate. Shining my torch at the window of the side of the shop I saw that it was partly open. I shone my torch over the garden and saw there was nothing to fall over. I walked over to the window to check whether it was fixed or could be opened and the next minute I was down a basement which was under the window. As a result of this I ended up with torn ligaments, and was eventually listed as four per cent disabled as an Industrial Injury.

I should mention with regard to Christmas how different it was from today. We could only afford a chicken once a year, and this was in the form of a capon. It came, complete with feathers, from the butcher's shop. We used to sit down together with a large bowl and pluck all the feathers. There were no refrigerators or freezers, so everything in the meat line had to be bought just before Christmas Day otherwise it would not keep.

Other things like jellies, iced cakes, tinned fruit, etc. were a treat for birthday parties or Christmas. When we were still on rations it was very difficult indeed.

I used to make most of the children's toys from odd pieces of wood. I made trains, aeroplanes, forts, farms, etc. There were no plastic toys in the shops. They were either tin-plate or wood. There were lead soldiers and farm animals. The Christmas stocking for the children was usually a large sock filled with an apple and orange and a few nuts and sweets.

I went to Woolworth's store in Cornmarket Street, where I bought a last, strips of leather and nails and blakeys. I became the family cobbler as my father had done before me. The Army had taught me how to darn socks, so, as you can see, I had my uses.

In the early hours of one morning I was making a point at Rose Hill Pillar when, after a car had passed, I noticed a rabbit lying in the road. I picked it up and as it was warm and had fleas in its fur I concluded that it had been hit by the car. I put it on the back of my bike and took it home at 6am. My dear wife had to skin it and gut it, but it made a very good meal.

One of our tasks, when on night duty, was to check people moving about. The chances of catching a burglar actually committing a crime is very slight but, of course, the criminal has to get from his home to the property he is going to break into and then return home with his loot. Quite a few good arrests were made this way despite the fact that we had very limited powers and could not force anyone to reveal their identity. Identity Cards were abolished in 1952 but, prior to this, our use of these powers under the Defence Regulations was restricted. It was all a question of bluff and a form of sixth sense which you develop as a police officer.

Of course we always had the ‘Do I look like a criminal?’ objectors. When we pointed out that burglars did not wear a cloth cap and scarf and carry a bag marked ‘swag’, they were not interested and insisted on their rights. I wonder how many got away with their crimes because they knew the law and had the backing of various organisations. At least twice we were warned about individuals who put themselves deliberately in suspicious circumstances so that an officer would take a chance and they would then sue for wrongful arrest.

I have mentioned the sort of petty discipline that we were subjected to and it reached a climax, as far as I was concerned, over my treatment by a certain officer. I put a memo to the Chief Constable requesting a personal interview. Everyone I knew was aghast when I told them what I was going to do, and said it wouldn’t do me any good and would only make matters worse. The Chief Constable, Clem Burrows, heard what I had to say and made no comment. From that day onwards things improved for everybody.

I cannot remember which year it was, but a vacancy occurred at the Police Training School for a drill instructor. Doug Jeakins decided to put in for it and suggested I had a go as it would keep him company, and we would both have a day off the Beat. We went to Eynsham Hall on the appointed day and were shown out to the front of the Hall where there were two squads of recruits waiting. There were a number of applicants from various Forces. We had to take turns drilling these squads, one at each end of the Hall. When we finished our allotted time we took turns to put the two squads together and then send them marching down the drive into the far distance. We then gave them the order to about turn to bring them marching back. I believe this was to test the range of our voices.

One of the candidates drilled his squad unmercifully: I would think he had been used to putting the fear of God into raw recruits. The only trouble was that he was drilling ex-National Servicemen who, no doubt, had had enough of the Forces and drilling and didn’t like his attitude.

When he had finished drilling his one squad, he then joined them up with the other and then sent the combined squads marching down the drive. A peculiar thing then happened. When he shouted the order to about turn, half the squad turned about and the rest carried on. He then panicked and shouted ‘About turn’ at them again. They heard him this time and turned about. Also, of course, the group marching back towards us turned about and they marched into each other.

After all this we had an interview with a panel of Chief Constables, at which neither Doug nor myself was successful. There is no doubt that the candidate they chose was the best one.

I can remember being on duty in the Central Police Station one day when a man with his wife and three children came to the counter and reported that their car had been stolen

from the St Giles car park. I took down all the necessary details and they told me that they lived in the North of England and were on their way to Bournemouth for their Summer holiday. Their route was through the middle of Oxford and they decided to stop there for lunch and have a quick look at the city. All their belongings were locked in the boot of their car.

Here was a nice hard working family of five now stranded in the middle of Oxford miles from home and miles from their destination. It was finally decided that it was better to return home, as without their clothes etc, especially for the children, they would find it difficult to manage. We took them to the railway station to catch a train to their home. This would cost them five train fares and probably a taxi out of their holiday savings. I will always remember the look and tears of disappointment on those children's faces when they were told that their holiday had been cancelled.

When abandoned or stolen cars were found in the City they were brought to the car pound at the back of the station for safe-keeping. This was considered to be the responsibility of the police in the same way as found property. In later years we had an Austin Gypsy with a small crane on the back to assist in towing these vehicles to the station pound.

When we were pounding our Beats or Patrols at weekends we would often by met by the Patrol Sergeant or Inspector and taken on pub visits. Most licensed premises consisted of a public bar and saloon bar. We would walk into both bars and get the usual banter. 'Look out, the coppers about' and 'Have a drink mate' which was always in good humour. These visits, together with any comments, were recorded in the Licensed Premises Register. It was difficult to catch teenage under-age drinkers, as without identity cards we had no proof of age and we could only trip one or two up by asking trick questions.

As car production increased at the Cowley factories so did the grip of the trade unions. There were frequent walkouts, stoppages, and strikes. We would be transported up to the Works to man all the factory gates. There would be large crowds of strikers shouting and screaming 'Scab' or 'Blackleg' at fellow workers who did not wish to be on strike. Things would get very nasty with those going into work being punched and kicked if the strikers got through us, which was quite often. Any lorries or workers in cars trying to get through the mob had them kicked and dented. Using screwdrivers to scratch them was a common occurrence. Sometimes things got very violent, and the hatred on the faces of people is something you cannot forget.

Just for a change, we would be subjected to the same abuse and violence in the centre of Oxford by left-wing students who did not believe in free speech unless it was what they wanted to hear. There used to be near-riots by the Oxford Union. One of the worst demonstrations was during a visit by Enoch Powell.

A lot of our time was spent escorting various dignitaries around, including members of the Royal Family. We had a programme of events and would rush madly from one part of the city to the other, according to whatever places were being visited.

The American Evangelist Billy Graham, after his first visit to Oxford, was the only person who ever came up to me, shook my hand and thanked me for my assistance during this visit.

During the 1950s there was a great change in the police force. The new Chief Constable, who was appointed in 1956, was full of modern ideas and, with the help of the Watch Committee and the Home Office, who controlled the purse strings, things rapidly improved.

New uniforms with collars and ties, saloon patrol cars, and police wireless – at first jointly with the Oxfordshire Constabulary. Most of the petty discipline disappeared. As time went on – perhaps into the 1960s – we were one of the first Forces with a Drug Squad. We had four police dogs and handlers. These, I believe, were the first to experiment with the use of transporting them by small helicopters with containers underneath. We had a Firearms and Aliens Department, Warrant Department, and Stolen Cycles Squad. There was also a large administrative department with an Inspector in charge with civilian staff: this was separate from Inspector Crisp as the Chief's secretary.

A five-shift system was introduced, which meant extra coverage on the three main shifts by having 10am–6pm and 6pm–2am duties.

The County Police were the first to have a radio system and they were combined with the Oxfordshire Fire Brigade. The police call sign was 'HH' and the Fire Service was 'HHF'. The Police controlled the radio but had to give priority to calls from the Fire Brigade. When we were linked into this system in 1952 we became 'HHR' and the City Fire Brigade 'HHRF'. The radio was installed at the Central Police Station on a small table in the room with the telephone switchboard. There was a stand-up microphone, a card with printed instructions, and a small clock with a hook on it to hang on the window at eye-level for the operator. It was time for the system to go live.

Chosen for this momentous occasion was a long service Constable by the name of John Cope. Like most people, he was very nervous at the thought of using a microphone, and he sat there in front of the Chief Constable, Superintendent, Traffic Inspector, and any other who could get into this little room.

He stared at the card and began: 'Hello HH. Hello HH. Message for HHR32. HHR over'. The County Controller replied 'Hello HHR. Go ahead with your message to HHR32. HH over'. John said 'Hello HHR32. Message for you HHR over'. The driver of car call

sign HHR32 then replied ‘Go ahead with your message HHR. HHR32 over.’ John then read out details of a vehicle stolen from Oxford. At the end of this he had to say ‘Message ends. Time now …’. For some reason while John was broadcasting, the Chief had taken hold of the clock and was examining it behind the operator’s back. Poor John, having gone through this nerve-wracking experience and having said ‘Time now...’ had no clock. Without thinking, and still using the microphone said ‘Who’s pinched the f…… clock?’ This was broadcast to all stations and poor John never lived it down.

The Assize Court was held in the County Hall building next to the Oxford Prison in New Road. The Judge’s Lodgings, where the Judge stayed during the period of the Oxfordshire Assizes, was a building in St Giles Street. Every day of the Assizes the Judge would be picked up from his lodgings in a black Rolls Royce. He would then be escorted by a police car, and there would be PCs outside his lodgings and every road junction. He was not allowed to be held up in any way. When the Court finished for the day all PCs were informed and had to carry out the same procedure in reverse.

When I joined the Oxford City Police, King George VI was on the throne. When he died and was succeeded by Queen Elizabeth II we had to be issued with a new helmet and cap badges, as the type of Crown worn by the Sovereign was changed.

I was on duty one day in Headley Way near its junction with the Marston Road.
I watched a man on a motor cycle combination driving down Headley Way. He turned quite sharply left into the Marston Road, which is a dual carriageway at this point. He was going too fast and, as a result, it tipped up throwing him off. With his hand no longer on the throttle this closed and slowed the machine down. It continued on its own, chugging along the whole length of the carriageway until it hit the street refuge in the middle of the road by The Friar public house. The engine then stalled. The funny part was the rider, who had got to his feet and was running like made after his runaway machine.

Towards the late 1950s I bought a moped second hand from a fellow PC: it was of French manufacture and, I believe, it was called a Velo. It had a switch in the middle of the handlebars which, in a central position, meant that the machine was in neutral and when turned to the left it would be in gear. At the rear nearside, the engine was started by pulling a toggle on the end of a cord, an identical system to outboard motors on boats.
I went on early turn duty with it to East Oxford Box. When I finished duty I wheeled it on to the Cowley Road, pointing in the direction of Oxford. I was standing in the road, holding the handlebar with my left hand whilst giving sharp pulls on the cord with my left hand. The engine burst into life and the machine careered off. I couldn’t reach the throttle on the other side of the handlebar or reach the brake. I ended up in the middle of open-mouthed spectators and motorists who made emergency stops as I did two circles in the Cowley Road before I hit the kerb and fell over the machine, barking my shins.

Later I drove this machine on full throttle, about 29mph, along the Marston Road. I tried to close the throttle at the junction with Cherwell Drive and nothing happened. Luckily nothing was coming as I banked sharply over and shot round the corner. I found that the wire cable was linked with a screw, which had come out of the top of the tube in which it was housed and then locked tight on top of the tube keeping the throttle open. I soon got rid of this machine before it was third time unlucky.

In 1958 a call was made by the Government for 300 UK policemen to volunteer to go to the aid of the Cyprus Police, as there was a real threat of Civil War breaking out between the Greek and Turkish populations who lived on the island.

Cyprus was a Crown Colony and had its own police force under a Colonial Administration. The Greek population wanted ENOSIS (Union with Greece) which, of course, the Turkish population did not want. Historically, neither Turkey nor Greece were very friendly to each other.

The Greek Cypriots had formed a terrorist organisation under the command of a General George Grivas and his political head Archbishop Makarios. They were busy murdering policemen, Turkish civilians, British soldiers and civilians, and sometimes, of course, some of their own people.

Together with PC Eric Boxall I volunteered to go to Cyprus for a variety of reasons. I had been on anti-terrorist duties in Palestine against the Jewish Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern Gang. I loved flying, and here was the chance of a free flight and three months in the sunshine. I could never conceive in those days of ever being able to afford to go abroad for a holiday.

I could not, of course, leave my wife and young children on their own on the Northway Estate, but by this time, my wife’s mother had died at the early age of 50 years from cancer, and, as my wife was an only child, we brought her father to live with us. This meant that he was able to look after the family whilst I was away.

Eric and I had to go to London to a Government office, where we were interviewed with lots of other volunteers, and were accepted.

In early August we flew from London Airport in a Constellation aircraft non-stop to Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus. I remember it was very hot and we were taken to a camp which had tin huts with dormitory type accommodation.

The following day we were interviewed and given a briefing on what was expected of us. We had our photographs and fingerprints taken and were later issued with a plasticised identity card sealed in with our photograph and thumbprint.

We were issued with a .38 revolver as a personal weapon, and taken to a rifle range for practice. As we were in the main ex-servicemen, we did not need a lot of training. We also had a go with a Sterling sub-machine gun, which was similar to the Sten gun I had used in the Army. We were issued with 12 rounds for our revolver. It was loaded with five of the rounds, with the firing pin against an empty chamber as a safety measure.

The Cyprus Police in Nicosia consisted of a mixture of Greek and Turkish Cypriot policemen. Our Superintendent was Turkish and our Sub-Inspector was Greek. Over them were Colonial Superintendents (British) and there were a number of British Sergeants serving in the Force. We were all promoted to the rank of Sergeant for our period of service. On patrol duty in Nicosia we went in a group of three UK Sergeants with two or three unarmed Greek and Turkish PCs.

The PCs could all speak English as well as their native tongue, but the Greeks did not speak or read Turkish, or vice versa.

Another complication was that the British Colonial officers told us to be careful and not to trust anyone as you could never tell who was on the side of EOKA, which was the terrorist organisation I mentioned earlier.

I had only been there a few days when I was driven out into the countryside and dropped off to guard a gateway one evening. I was told not to let anyone in until I was relieved a few hours later. The Land Rover drove off and I realised that I did not know where I was and that, as the night was pitch black, I was a prime target standing in a pool of light from a lamp over the archway. This gateway was in the middle of a high stone wall. I stood there, armed with my .38 and a Sterling sub-machine gun, feeling increasingly nervous. I had been there for some time, moving in and out of the shadows, when I heard a faint rustling noise inside the wall. I slipped through the gate and found that the sides of the driveway were covered with bushes. I heard more noises getting nearer in the shrubbery. I had already cocked my Sterling and was crouched in a firing position. In these sort of situations you do not shout ‘Halt, who goes there?’ as before you finish the word ‘Halt’ you could be a dead man. The person was almost on top of me, coming through the bushes when I saw the glint of a silver cap badge in the light from the gate. I took a chance and made a challenge. I then found that I was pointing my gun at a patrol of British soldiers who were carrying out a sweep patrol of the grounds of the Governor’s Residence. Nobody had told me about this, and there could have been tragic consequences.

The Nicosia Police Station was in the Turkish Quarter of the city and, after parading there, we went out on patrol, which was usually the centre of the city along two one-way streets – Ledra Street and Honisegura Street. This was known as the ‘Murder Mile’ because of the numbers of killings that had occurred there. I cannot remember the exact

geography after all these years but on this Beat we also patrolled Metaxus Square and Luna Park.

When we left the Police Station we walked along in a group chattering away to each other until we reached what was called the Mason–Dixon Line. This was a barbed wire barrier separating the Turkish Quarter from the Greek Quarter. I could never work out what happened to the other half – pun.

When we walked through this barrier by means of a wide gateway, this led into a market place which was always busy during the working week. Once through there and into the main centre, we took up our patrol positions. One Sergeant would stand with his back to a wall scanning every aspect of the street, paying particular attention to rooftops. Most buildings had flat roofs, which were good vantage points for snipers. Satisfied that it was safe, the next Sergeant would patrol between the two, accompanied by the unarmed Turkish and Greek Constables. We would all be carrying Sterling sub-machine guns as well as our revolvers.

I usually went with the PCs and I used to get them an average of 20 offences a day. I don't know whether they were pleased with all this plus subsequent appearances at Court, but those were our instructions, to get them working. Because of the constant threat of terrorism, law and order had practically collapsed. We complained at first that we didn't volunteer and fly thousands of miles to book people for parking offences etc. We were soon put in our place and informed that it was not up to any police officer to pick and choose which laws he was going to enforce. His job was to deal with all breaches of the law, whether they were minor ones or not.

There were various Emergency Laws, such as riding a bicycle between certain ages – I think it was 16 to 60 – but cannot be sure. Anyone we caught was arrested and taken to the Police Station and charged. Apparently EOKA terrorists of all ages were in the habit of cycling quickly and silently along a street and either throwing a bomb or taking a quick shot. They would then be away up narrow passageways where pursuit by Security Forces was impossible.

We could never feel safe in the Greek Quarter as we never knew who to trust. We had been told of two UK Sergeants who, prior to our arrival, had been to a camera shop to buy a part for their camera. The shopkeeper said that he had not got it in stock and would order it for them. When they returned on the date and time stated they bought whatever it was and, as they walked out into the street, were shot dead by EOKA terrorists lying in wait. Somebody had tipped them off.

It was always drummed into us. Do not make appointments. Do not travel the same route or at the same time. Do not get involved in affairs with Greek women. Be alert at all times.

I remember walking round on this Patrol and, as I came round the corner there were a load of EOKA leaflets scattered on the pavement. I told the PCs to pick them up. They flatly refused. When I began to get a bit heavy with them one said ‘It is all right for you Sergeant. I have a wife and children here. You go back to England then what happens to us’. This just shows the effect that terrorism has on what I would call thoroughly decent police officers. I picked up the leaflets myself.

On another occasion, I think it was outside the railway station, there was an old woman begging. I told the PCs to tell her to move on, which they did, obviously telling her that it was on my instructions. She let forth what I can only assume was a torrent of abuse, which left the Constables quite agitated. They informed me that she had put a terrible curse on me. They wouldn’t explain what it was but it seemed to frighten them.

I do not like beggars. When I was in Cairo with the Army they kept tugging my arm, pestering all the time. Liquid shoe polish was thrown over my trousers because I wouldn’t have my boots polished every few yards. There were children deliberately crippled by their parents, with their limbs twisted and deformed, so they could become beggars. When I was finally robbed at knifepoint by a gang of them in the back streets of Cairo, that was the last straw.

As I patrolled round with my Turkish and Greek PCs I asked them why they called themselves either a Turkish Cypriot or a Greek Cypriot. They were both born in Cyprus so why not call themselves Cypriots and speak a common language – they already had English as a common language? It seemed obvious to me – after all we don’t go round calling ourselves Celts, Saxons, Angles, Romano-British, etc. It seemed it wasn’t that simple though.

On night duty the streets were practically deserted, as there was usually a curfew. The Greek Sub-Inspector would give us our patrol instructions in the Ledra Street area, and what points (rendezvous) to make. In the whole time I was there I never managed to make one point, always finding some excuse or operational difficulty. He was probably all right, but I didn’t know whether to put complete trust in him. It was not unknown for terrorists to threaten the families of police officers. If you made a point in the dark, at a certain place and time, who knows what might happen. Fortunately this did not become too much of a problem as our duties were varied.

One day I was posted to the Nicosia General Hospital to guard a terrorist who was in there. He was virtually in a cage, and had most of his limbs missing. He had apparently been blown up by his own bomb as he was on his way to plant it.

The hospital was surrounded by barbed wire, with soldiers guarding the entrance. At a junction in the main corridor was an emplacement made with sandbags, guarded by soldiers.

I did hear of a case where one of the patients in bed in the old dormitory style ward was shot dead by EOKA and none of the other patients, nurses or doctors saw what happened. Fear is a dreadful thing, and witnesses who come forward know that they are likely to get the same treatment.

On another occasion on night duty, I had to guard a captured terrorist in a military hospital. I remember seeing lying in one of the beds there a British soldier connected to a drip. At the top of his left shoulder were four bullet holes close together in a straight horizontal line. It looked as though he had been pierced with a pencil, as the holes were about that size. I understand that he was shot accidentally with a Sterling sub-machine gun by one of his patrol.

When we did our patrols in the Murder Mile area we went through the barbed-wire fence of the Mason–Dixon Line into the Greek Quarter. We did a complete circuit of the area and then dodged back through the line to a Turkish café for our break, where we used to drink Nescafé. The local Turkish coffee was so thick you could stand your spoon up in it, and it was very sweet. The proprietor used to lend us two packs of playing cards and we would play Turkish Rummy. We would patrol like this all night, which must have been not only confusing for any EOKA group planning an ambush, but also to our Greek Sub-Inspector. Greeks were not safe in the Turkish Quarter at night and we were therefore never disturbed.

One night we were patrolling Ledra Street when we saw one of the British Colonial Superintendents strolling along swinging his cane, completely alone. We had quite an interesting conversation and then he wandered off into the darkness, which we thought was quite strange. We were in threes, armed to the teeth, together with our PCs, and yet he was wandering about like that.

It is sad to relate that a few weeks later he was visiting shops in either Ledra Street or Honisegura Street, where shopkeepers had been threatened by EOKA for selling British goods. He had a Greek Chief Inspector with him, who was driving the car. I understand that the Superintendent had just stepped out of the front passenger door of the car, when a pistol was put against the back of his head and he was killed. The Greek Chief Inspector said he heard shots and threw open his door and rolled out into the road, drawing his revolver, but he did not see who did the shooting. Neither of course did the many shoppers and shopkeepers in the vicinity.

Arson was a big thing out there with EOKA. I would think in the three months I was there I saw more major fires than the average firemen back in England saw in as many

years. Any shop which sold British goods of any description was likely to be a target and, of course, there was plenty of extortion going on. I can remember one saw mill which had been set ablaze. About 25 yards from it was a lovely fir tree. I watched it turn from green to brown and then it went up in flames like a torch. I then found a hole burnt through the top of my shirt from a floating ember.

Apart from the guard duties and foot patrols, we also went out on sector patrols. This was a patrol which covered different sectors of the outlying parts of Nicosia. We had a police Land Rover. The floor of the open back was covered with sand bags as a precaution in case the vehicle hit a land-mine. We would have a police driver and another constable in the back, together with two British solders armed with rifles. I would draw from the armoury the following equipment: Sterling sub-machine gun with two magazines, tear-gas shotgun and satchel containing shells, and a long riot stick. We didn't have bullet-proof jackets in those days.

I would sit with the driver in some comfort, whilst the others, due to the presence of the sandbags, had to hang on precariously in the open back. We would carry out an eight-hour patrol of our sector. There was no street lighting and it was pitch black. The thing I can remember out there was the incessant noise of the cicadas.

One night in the pitch dark of an outlying district, we heard the most blood-curdling screams from the upper floor of a house. We thought a woman was either being raped or murdered. We braked to a halt and found the building tightly bolted and barred. I ran round the back where there was an outhouse with a chimney and a sloping roof leading up to where the terrible screams were coming from. I climbed on to a window ledge and heaved myself up to lower roof level. The whole lot gave way and I crashed to the ground, together with a sizeable portion of the outhouse.

I think the building was old and possibly made of mud bricks, but I couldn't see very well in the dark. Whilst I was extricating myself from this, the owner opened the doors to the others, and it turned out that they were goldsmiths and they had disturbed an intruder. I would have thought the woman's screams would have frightened him to death. We found no one in the vicinity.

Shortly after we had arrived in Cyprus we were moved from the tin huts into some very nice flats in the middle of Nicosia near the Ledra Palace Hotel, where we had to go for our meals. The only thing I can remember about that was having to say 'Aspro' for white coffee.

In the evenings that we were not on duty, we would go to Turkish restaurants, bars or clubs. It was unsafe to go to Greek establishments. There were stories of Greek girls giving police and soldiers the glad eye, and enticing them to their flat where an EOKA squad would be waiting to execute them.

We used to drink Keo beer and Cyprus wine and have very good evenings watching the entertainment, usually a plump belly-dancer who swayed more bits than you thought were possible. Of course, we had to carry our personal revolver with us at all times, on or off duty. At night we slept with it under our pillows, which was not very comfortable. It was a serious crime to lose your weapon.

On a day off we would go to Kyrenia, which is a lovely place with a fort with lots of rocks in the water, and where we could swim in the sea. Here again we were armed, and one person at a time had to stay on the beach guarding the clothes and weapons.

I went on a trip to the wireless station at Mount Olympus in the Troodoss Mountains. It was beautiful scenery, but we had to be alert every bit of the way as it was ideal ambush country.

I decided to telephone my wife and therefore , in one of my many letters home, I asked her to find someone with a telephone and to let me know the number, and I would arrange a time and date. She did this and I booked a call from the Nicosia General Post Office. It worked out all right and it was a very clear line. This was before satellite communications and, when you think of it, there was a wire stretching thousands of miles across the world from me in Cyprus to my wife in Oxford.

One day we heard that one of the UK officers had had a lucky escape in another part of the island. Apparently EOKA had buried a steel pipe in a stone wall at the side of the road. It had been filled with a charge of explosives and lots of bits of metal, bolts, nails, nuts etc. As they drove past this was detonated and acted like a giant blunderbuss. The blast struck just in front of the passenger and driver, hitting and wrecking the engine.

We formed a habit together with the other Sector patrols of going to the printing works of one of the daily papers just before finishing duty at 6am. I cannot remember whether this was the *Times of Cyprus* or the *Cyprus Mail*. Both papers were printed in English.

One of the patrols was there one morning when they heard a thud as a hand grenade bounced off the Land Rover. It was believed to have been thrown from the roof of the building. Of course they all baled out and took cover and then made a search. Fortunately the hand grenade did not explode. They called out the bomb squad, who removed it. The story goes that when they got back to the station and it became daylight they found they still had another grenade in the back of the Land Rover. This had landed on the sandbags, which deadened the sound of it landing. This grenade was also removed by the bomb squad, who found that they were British Army Type 36 grenades which, no doubt, had been stolen. They had been taken from a Store as they were packed with grease, which prevented the plunger from striking the detonator.

We didn't bother with free papers after that. It did prove the point that what becomes a habit is extremely dangerous in those circumstances.

One of the most remarkable things I remember about my trip to Cyprus was watching a thunderstorm in the direction of Turkey. The night was pitch-black and suddenly, in a brilliant bluish white light, a whole cumulous cloud was illuminated. This lasted a fraction of a second and then, following in rapid succession, clouds were lit up and then disappeared. It was one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen. There was no thunder and, apart from the cicadas, was very quiet.

In November our three months of duty came to an end, and we boarded a Vickers Viking prop aircraft for our flight home. We made two landings in Ankara and Rome before our final landing at London Airport in thick fog. Eric Boxall and I were met by our wives, who had been driven there by our old friend and colleague Harry Hall.

I was entitled so some leave, and this was one of the very few times I was able to let off fireworks with my children. We went round to my youngest brother Stanley and his family who lived on the Blackbird Leys Estate. I remember we had sausages and jacket potatoes around a blazing bonfire.

On returning to duty I reverted to the rank of Constable and continued working various Beats and Patrols. Things were improving rapidly in the Force and, with the advent of radio communications, were more efficient. I believe our first civilian telephone/radio operator was Margaret Sims, who transferred from the Fire Brigade where she had served with my wife.

Around 1960 it was decided that the sharing of one radio between two police forces and two fire brigades was somewhat cumbersome, if not inefficient. The Home Office allocated another radio frequency to Oxford City, and we then shared this with the Oxford City Fire Brigade. Years later we were separated and had our own systems.

At the same time it was decided to have a proper Information Room, later called the Control Room. One of the offices at the front of the building was taken over. Several desks and the radio with a stand-up mike were installed in there. Sergeant Madew was put in charge, and he was given the job of creating an efficient control centre. I came in to assist shortly afterwards as PC, and several girls were recruited as staff to work shifts of 8am–4pm and 4pm–midnight, both in the Information Room and on the telephone switchboard. All female staff on the late shift were taken home, as there was no public transport and also for their own safety.

I think it was the Traffic Inspector George Miller who saw a layout, I believe in the Birmingham City Police, where there was just the one large table with cut-outs for people

to sit round it, complete with telephones and radios. He decided to adopt it and two Constables, Fred Joyce and Ray Castle, built it.

The GPO fixed special telephone handsets that worked in conjunction with the main microphone. There was a red warning light for 999 calls, which had priority. Direct links to the Fire Brigade and Ambulance Services were planned but never connected because of disagreement over the cost of the line.

The centre of the table consisted of a map of the City of Oxford in a glass frame. On the wall by the main operator's position was another map of Oxford, which had been glued to a sheet of mild steel. Round-headed magnets were purchased and these had the call-signs of all our vehicles, which were equipped with radios. These were placed on the wall map if they had reported that they were mobile.

At this time I was doing a variety of jobs from Beat Work to assisting in the Information Room and then finally I was one of four PCs permanently working in there covering the three shifts.

With the formation of this room a lot of work was lifted off the Station Sergeant's shoulders. Action would be taken immediately by the staff and he would be kept informed of what was going on. Of course, he could take over responsibility at any time, but rarely did so.

Everything that occurred was recorded in a large book called the Master Log. This was typed on separate pages, with the name and address of the caller, brief details of complaint or information and, if a 999 call, underlined in red ink. All emergency calls had a TOD (time of dispatch) of patrol car, call sign and TOA (time of arrival) of the mobile. The permitted time for attending any emergency within the city boundary was four minutes, otherwise the Chief Constable who read the book every morning wanted to know why.

Messages from the CID, as well as being typed into the Master Log, had to be typed yet again on flimsies with carbon papers, two lots of five for the ten copies necessary for circulation to various departments and Police Boxes. Sometimes, having typed with our two fingers a whole page of foolscap, we discovered that we had put the carbon paper in the wrong way. The air would be blue and we would have to do it all over again. No, we did not have photocopiers, only worn out manual typewriters which we inherited from the Administration Department.

Later it was decided that the Force should have a telex machine. The office next door to us was taken over for this purpose and, for some time, we were working under extreme difficulties as a large arched doorway was cut through the wall. The telex was installed in this room and a woman from the GPO came down to train us how to use it. Nearly

everybody had to have instruction as they never knew who might be posted for duty in the Control Room. Fortunately the machine was fitted with a paper tape on which we could take our time with our two fingered typing, without costing transmitting time. The typing punched holes in the paper tape, which represented words and numbers. When we had finished we tore the tape off and fed it into the machine for transmitting. We dialled the number of the Force we wanted and this would print their code number. Ours was CityPol Oxford. Having checked we had the right number, we then put it on transmit and away it would go. At the end of the message we pressed a key which brought back their code number again. This proved that they had received the whole message.

I had been promoted to Sergeant and took charge of the Information Room in about 1961 when Sergeant Madew returned to his administrative duties. Improvements were taking place as experience was gained and technology improved.

I can remember a 999 call from an old man who slept rough in a shelter by the canal near Frenchay Road. He was breathless when I answered his call and said ‘She’s pinched my sausage’. I queried this and it appeared that he had his little brazier going and had cooked a sausage or sausages when some woman appeared, took it and ran off with it. It turned out to be a woman who lived in the area and suffered from mental illness. We had had previous reports over the years of her running about naked and under the influence.
I have told this story as when you answer a call from a man who says that someone has pinched his sausage, the mind boggles.

A woman rang me one night on 999 and said she could hear a noise in her flat. I asked her what sort of noise. She said a crackling noise, like fire. I sent the Fire Brigade, as her flat was, in fact, on fire.

As we now had our own radio, we lost some efficiency. Before, when an All Stations Message was broadcast, both City and County received it together. Now we had to ring them and they wrote down the details and re-broadcast it, or vice versa. Someone had the bright idea, as we both had monitors for each other’s radios, which were left on at a low level, of using a door chime before such a broadcast. Hearing the chime we would lift up our microphone to their monitor, or vice versa, and both would get the same message. This may appear a Heath Robinson idea, but it worked perfectly.

I was on duty one night when I received a 999 call from a man that there had been a smash and grab raid on the jewellers at the bottom of High Street near Queen’s Lane.
A two-tone coloured car was involved and this had driven off in the direction of Magdalen Bridge. The man was calling from a telephone box at the bottom end of Catte Street, which meant he had run some three to four hundred yards to call us.

Any car driven in the direction of Magdalen Bridge could go one of three ways – London, Cowley, or Henley. I immediately put out All Stations Message on the limited

information I had, and sent a traffic car in pursuit. As soon as I stopped broadcasting I had a call from the County Controller telling me that one of their cars was at the Green Road roundabout when they heard the message. A two-tone car had passed them a few minutes before, travelling from Oxford towards London, and they were going to give chase.

I immediately rang Aylesbury, where the Control Room for the Buckinghamshire Constabulary was located. They promised to put a road block on at Stokenchurch. A few minutes later I had a call that the car had been stopped by the Bucks Police, the thieves arrested, and the jewellery recovered. I have told this story to show how quickly three separate police forces can work together very efficiently.

A lot of people probably did not realise that an Oxford City Police Constable was also deemed to be a Constable in Berkshire, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire. When all these Forces were amalgamated in 1968 it did not make a great deal of difference to certain aspects of the job.

Boars Hill, which until 1974 was in Berkshire, was in the Oxford telephone area. Because of this all 999 calls to the Police from this area and Cumnor came to us and not to the Berkshire Constabulary. Unless we knew that they were in the vicinity and could respond more quickly, we always attended and handed the job over to them when they arrived. Their nearest stations were Cumnor and Abingdon.

In 1965 we received a number of calls about an aircraft crash somewhere near the Cowley factories. We sent patrol cars there and informed the Oxfordshire Constabulary of the reports we had received. Our crews reported back that this was a Hastings aircraft of the Royal Air Force stationed at RAF Abingdon.

At that time it was the Parachute Training School, and the aircraft, fully laden with trainee paratroopers, was flying to the dropping zone at Weston on the Green. The aircraft dived into a field at the village of Toot Baldon, killing all those on board, both RAF and Paras. A long time later we learned that the cause of the crash was a bolt in the rear elevator which had broken because of metal fatigue. There is a plaque with all their names in the nearby church. A remembrance service is held every year, attended by relatives of those killed and members of the RAF and Parachute Regiment Association.

In the Information Room we had a carousel or revolving-index system which contained the name and address of every shop, church, factory, school etc. together with the names and addresses of their keyholders. As these were usually employees the list was constantly changing. Keeping the system up to date was a very big task, which our girls did very well. Although I use the term girls, of course, some of them were married.

We also had our own list of wanted or suspected persons, who were all listed on separate cards and then placed in alphabetical order in a large green cabinet. All the details of these persons were obtained from such publications as the *Police Gazette, South Western Crime Information*, etc. These references were, of course, put on the card along with the suspect's name, and all the details were cross-referenced. We used a colour card system for each year, which enabled a clear-out of the system when it was overloaded. The permanent records were, of course, kept at the Central Index at New Scotland Yard.

I have previously mentioned checking people wandering about at night, but of course, this could and did happen at any time of the day. Without having proper identification cards this meant that some people gave false names and addresses and ages. Consequently when they were checked the PC would be informed there was no record when, in fact, the person in question was wanted under a different name all over the country.

I have been given many false names and addresses. I had one who produced his brother's driving licence. I had another who answered the door three times when I was trying to execute a warrant, each time saying that his brother, who was named on the warrant, was in town having a drink. I became suspicious and found out that he had no brother and he was the one I wanted.

It is twenty-two years since I retired and still we have no identity cards. Perhaps the Chief Constables Association or the Police Federation should put pressure on the government over this matter.

After the Information Room had been in operation for some time it was noticed that the map on the wall, to which magnets denoting vehicles were affixed, was turning brown. On investigation it was found that the effect of the glue on mild steel had created rust, which was destroying the map. It was arranged that a sheet of stainless steel should be purchased to overcome this problem. I believe it was quite expensive. This metal sheet duly arrived and we glued a new map on to it. After it had dried out we went to use it and found that it was non-magnetic and we were back to square one.

I then suggested the use of models which could be used on the map in the centre of the table. I purchased a number of cars and motor cycle combinations made by Matchbox Toys. They were die cast and I repainted them, putting a call sign on each one to match our vehicles. I sawed the sidecars off the motor cycles and painted them with call signs. I then mounted them on pieces of wood to keep them upright. I bought a van for the Black Mariah, then fire engines, ambulances, and lorries.

With this system, an ambulance model would be placed at the scene of an accident together with which car or motor cycle was in attendance. The same went for a fire engine attending a fire. The lorry models were used on the ring roads to denote the

position of heavy lorries which had broken down and become a danger. There would be constant physical checks to make sure that the lorry would be removed as quickly as possible and that, if darkness intervened, warning lights were displayed.

When I was promoted to Sergeant I normally worked days, but would cover any shift where the PC was sick or on holiday etc.

I can remember one evening we had every PC on the Beat and mobiles engaged on something or other. The Station Sergeant had to send his Reserve PC out. This left him and me plus the female telephonist and my radio operator as the only ones in the Station.

A call came from the Fire Brigade that they were attending a chimney fire in a house in North Oxford. We had no one immediately available that I could send. In those days it was an offence to allow your chimney to catch fire and burn. The police had to attend all such fires, and ascertain from the householder when their chimney was last swept, and by whom. They were then reported for the offence. Later a check would be made with the chimney sweep to see whether the details given were true. If the chimney had been recently swept, the offender would get a caution. If not, he or she would be prosecuted.

I can remember reading in the paper many years ago that the PC at Didcot Police Station reported himself and was prosecuted for allowing the station chimney to catch fire.

As I have said, we were absolutely snowed under what with the telephone and radio going full blast. My operator was typing with one hand and answering calls with the other. At midnight it was time for her to leave and, after it quietened down, I went through the Master Log where everything we had been doing was recorded. There was the entry from the Fire Brigade about the chimney fire and underneath, where we put ‘Action’ she had typed ‘No PC available’. Well, of course, by now the Fire Brigade had gone back to their station. The householders had gone back to bed. There was little I could do.

The next day I was called before the Chief Constable Clem Burrows. I stood to attention in front of his desk. ‘Don’t you date tell me that there are no policemen available in my Police Force’ he shouted. ‘Send the Reserve PC.’ I pointed out that the PC in question was out dealing with an incident. He replied ‘Get them out of the offices’. I replied that we hadn’t anyone in the offices at that time of night. ‘Send the CID’ he shouted. Here I made the mistake of saying that you couldn’t send the CID to a chimney fire. I could have added that we didn’t have any of them either. This got him on the raw and he went nearly purple. ‘They are policemen aren’t they?’ he shouted. ‘Get out!’

I tell this story because I feel very bitter today to hear policemen of all ranks saying we can’t do this or we can’t do that because of lack of resources; or the other one about

having fewer policemen per head of population than somewhere else. I would think that Clem Burrows, who I deeply respected, must be turning in his grave listening to them.

It gradually became realised that it was inefficient with one PC struggling very often on his own to run the Control Room. With an increase in the establishment of the Force, other Sergeants were promoted and I became one of the shift Sergeants. I was teamed up with a very nice young Constable named Conrad Adams. We worked very well together until the amalgamation into the Thames Valley Police in April 1968.

In 1966 the Oxford City Police was split into two Divisions following the building of the Cowley Police Station.

There was a modern canteen, where meals could be bought at breakfast, lunch and tea times. A room was converted at the St Aldate's Police Station giving the same facilities. There had been a big increase in civilian staff and traffic wardens at about this time, and I think this was the main factor for the provision of canteens.

The Chief Constable decided that I should spend a period of 12 months back on duty on the streets to qualify me for promotion. No, this was not to do with our clash in his office. I had to spend six months as a Patrol Sergeant, three months on the CID, and three months as a Traffic Sergeant.

During this period as a Patrol Sergeant I served under Inspector Jack Sheldon and had my old friend Gomer Williams as Station Sergeant.

I was patrolling in a police car one night when I received a report that the Fire Brigade were attending a fire in a public house on the Cowley Road. I put my foot down and was there first. Smoke was billowing out of the lower Bar windows of the pub and from a door at the front on the left-hand side of the building people were emerging carrying suitcases. Apparently they were staying on a bed and breakfast basis. I went to this door, which had been left open. I could see through the smoke a flight of stairs. I went up the stairs and on to a landing and passage. As I walked along, every door on my left was wide open with the lights on. I had a quick look to see they were empty. I then retraced my steps to check doors on the other side. One door was locked. I shouted 'Fire' and banged loudly with my truncheon on the door. I heard a muffled reply and knew someone was inside. The smoke was getting thicker and I was beginning to choke. I kept banging on the door. Eventually the door opened and an elderly man peered round the edge of door and asked what the matter was. I pointed to the smoke and told him the place was obviously on fire and he was to get out. He came out in front of me and we walked towards the stairs. I asked him if there was anyone else in the building and he said 'Only the wife.' I asked him where he was and he said she was in the room he had just come from. I had to go back coughing and choking and drag her out of bed. When I

got downstairs I found that the Fire Brigade had arrived and discovered a smouldering settee downstairs.

On another occasion, I was patrolling with the Relief Inspector when we received a call to a school in Blackbird Leys. Apparently someone living near the school had heard the sound of breaking glass in the direction of the school. We posted PCs around likely escape routes and waited a few minutes for the duty Dog Handler to appear.

This was a system which we had brought to a fine art following the installation of direct-line burglar alarms to the Control Room in St Aldate's. We had plans, which indicated escape routes, for all premises, and these were covered by PCs before an attempt was made to go into the premises after the intruder.

With these escape routes covered, the Relief Inspector, the Dog Handler, a PC and myself advanced on the school, which was a large sprawling building. This was at about eleven o'clock at night and we went round checking windows until we found the window of the Headmaster's office standing wide open, with glass broken. This was a very large window which went down to almost ground level.

The Dog Handler shone his torch inside and found there were several pieces of broken glass lying on the carpet inside the window. To protect his dog's feet he picked up all this broken glass. He then put the dog through the window on its lead and he followed. The Inspector was next and I then climbed in and, as it was a bit crowded, I moved to the right of the window to allow room for the PC to climb in. It was pitch dark in there and as I moved to the side of the window I felt I was up against something soft and yielding. I switched my torch on upwards and to the right and found that I was rubbing shoulders with the burglar. To say that my heart missed a beat is no exaggeration. From that time onwards I lost all faith in police dogs.

One of the most unusual things I was involved in was the search for Glenys Jewell. This young girl was missing from her home in Oxford in October 1963 and I believe that the CID had some information that she may have been murdered. The *Oxford Mail* advertised on behalf of the Chief Constable for as many volunteers as possible to turn up at Gloucester Green Bus Station on Sunday 3rd November 1963. There were groups from the Army and RAF and civilian volunteers. They were split up into a sufficient number of groups to search the whole of Oxford. I was in charge of a detachment of Gurkhas who were staying at RAF Abingdon whilst they completed a parachute training course. We had an area of East Oxford including St Mary's Road to search. Later that day the search was called off when the poor girl's body was found in the allotments at Holywell Ford.

The system of policing in Oxford had long been changed from direct Beat working with points every half-hour, to a system of discretionary working with a smaller number of points. This meant that we had to cover all the streets on the Beat according to our Beat

Book but how we liked. The points we had to make were variable. All Beats were now on a pedal cycle, whereas the Patrols were still on foot. There were a total of 13 Beats and eight Patrols, which covered every road within the City boundary. These were normally fully manned but could be doubled up in cases of sickness.

Carfax was the hub of the City Centre and, apart from being permanently visited on a point system, each patrol having to wait there for ten minutes either on the hour, quarter past, half past or quarter to the hour. There was also Sergeant Douglas Jeakins who was posted there for many years and became known as the Chief Constable of Carfax.

Every morning for years during the peak traffic period the traffic lights at Carfax were switched off and two policemen stood opposite each other, usually under the supervision of the Patrol Sergeant, and directed the traffic.

Now that I was a Patrol Sergeant, I of course had to go up to Carfax according to what shift I was on and perform this onerous task. I saw that the major problem was that because there was a continuous stream of traffic travelling from Cornmarket Street across to St Aldate's, this prevented traffic from St Aldate's from turning right into the High Street. This in turn prevented traffic in the same single-line stream continuing over to Cornmarket Street.

One evening I did not turn the traffic lights off and just stood holding up the Cornmarket Street traffic against a green light to let the flow from St Aldate's have a fair run. After a while I found that it was working perfectly.

My heart sank when I saw across the road the figure of the Chief Constable in full uniform glaring at me and banging his stick. I walked across the road and stood to attention and saluted him. He demanded to know why I had not switched the traffic lights off, and I explained in great detail my theory about traffic movements. I pointed out that the traffic which would normally extend from Carfax past the Police Station ended just past the Post Office, a short distance down St Aldate's. It was a case of using my initiative instead of obeying orders. He didn't say anything and went away.

A few months later the traffic signals were re-phased with an early cut off, as I had suggested, and there was no more peak-hours point-duty at Carfax.

A law had been passed allowing local authorities to appoint patrols under the School Crossing Regulations. The City Council recruited both men and women as school crossing patrols and we were responsible for training them. If any of them were ill and unable to cover their crossing point, we were responsible for covering the crossing and looking after the safety of the school children.

When I first did the crossings there was one at Howard Street and another in North Oxford. These then rapidly increased to 42 sites.

I have mentioned traffic signals for which we were responsible if any faults were reported. We had a list of all signals together with their maintenance depots. On receiving a report of a traffic signal fault, a PC would inform the Station Sergeant who, during working hours, would inform the City Engineers Department, who would be responsible for informing the manufacturers. The PC would stay at the signals, performing point-duty, until relieved. The only exception was during the hours of darkness, when it was too dangerous for such duty.

Before the installation of traffic signals at the junction of the London Road and Headley Way at Headington, it was decided that at peak periods point-duty would be performed there. At that time we used a white plastic mac over our uniform to make us more visible. To save the time of PCs it was decided to use traffic wardens to carry out this duty. The law had been amended making it legal for the traffic wardens to perform this task, but no one had the intelligence to make it an offence to disobey the warden's signals. For some reason a number of motorists had become aware of this and I had several complaints from traffic wardens on point duty that they were being ignored, and this was creating a danger to other road users.

Being a rather devious person, I took them off the point duty and replaced them with PCs wearing flat caps and plastic macs. Numerous prosecutions followed. If the offenders had looked carefully they would have seen that the traffic wardens had a yellow band around their caps whereas policemen had a chequered band.

Later the law was amended to give traffic wardens the same powers as police constables.

Another duty we had to do each Thursday was to do with the movement of large amounts of money. Nearly everyone was paid weekly in cash, and therefore large sums of money were being drawn from the banks and being taken to shops and factories etc.

The largest amounts went to the Cowley factories where thousands of people were employed. The cashier came from Cowley in an ordinary saloon motor car with plain clothes Works Police, as they were known in those days. They drew the money from Barclays Bank in Cornmarket Street. A unformed PC stood outside until they drove back to the Cowley Works escorted by one of our CID cars.

I am sure that because of our high level of security there were never any wage snatches, hold ups, or bank robberies during my period of service.

The Policewomen's Department had greatly expanded by this time and we were now getting the odd one or two out patrolling the streets. They were not covering Beats or

Patrols but were giving an extra presence on the streets. Usually, unless they were under training, they would be on their own. The Chief Constable did not like police officers patrolling in pairs, as this could be two officers patrolling in two different places, being a deterrent and upholding the law.

They did a very good job dealing with complaints of rape or indecent assault. They also dealt with juveniles. They had to escort female prisoners to Holloway Prison in London. Oxford Prison was for men only and could not be used.

In the early days, if it was too late to take a female prisoner to London, they were detained in the female cells for the night. There was a civilian Matron, a Mrs Kelleher, who was called out to stay the night in the station to look after the prisoner's needs. Later on there were enough policewomen to cover this shift themselves and look after prisoners.

During this period of time away from the Control Room, I was also posted to the CID. I was involved in quite a few cases, but probably the most tragic was a case of indecent exposure. We had received a complaint from two groups of girls attending Edmund Campion School in Iffley Turn that a man of West Indian appearance had indecently exposed himself to them on two separate occasions in Iffley Turn from near a lane which ran round the back of a row of houses. I took statements from the girls and, on making enquiries in the area, found that a man who answered the description lived in one of these houses which gave access to the lane.

I made further enquiries and found that my suspect worked at what used to be Morris Motors: I believe at this time it was called the British Motor Corporation. Further enquiries elicited which gate of the works he used. I took my witnesses up to Hollow Way and they identified my suspect out of the thousands pouring out of the factory at leaving time.

I arrested this man, named Romain, at his home and found that he was living with a white woman who had small child by him. She had other children prior to this liaison and they were in the care of Social Services. She would not believe that he had committed these offences. He was subsequently convicted by Oxford City Magistrates.

Some time later I heard that his body had been found hanging from a tree in Florence Park. My old friend and colleague PC 47 Fred Joyce attended and cut the body down. When other officers went to the house in Cripley Road, where he was now living, they found the bodies of his mistress and child, whom he had murdered.

Whilst I was on uniform duty I was patrolling East Oxford in a patrol car and was accompanied by a PC. We received a call to go to a house in East Avenue where assistance was required. On going to the house we were informed by a woman that her

daughter was in labour and could we help? I went upstairs to where the poor girl was lying half-naked on a bed. The mother was wringing her hands and saying that she didn't know what to do. I told her to boil up lots of hot water. I delivered the baby, which had its umbilical around its neck. I had freed this, when two ambulance men appeared and one started massaging her stomach saying we had to get rid of the after birth. Then a midwife appeared and said I had done very well but that it was advisable to put a double tie at each end of the cord. I believe she then put clamps on and produced a pair of scissors, which she gave to me and said I could finish off the job. I cut the cord and was splattered with blood, which I didn't expect. I never did find out what I needed the hot water for.

I think one of the greatest aids we had for keeping law and order was the local Press. The *Oxford Mail* and the *Oxford Times* were of the greatest assistance to the Police Service; not so today.

A police officer holding a Warrant under the Crown to keep the Queen's Peace was a respected member of the community of the City of Oxford. There would be write-ups about promotions, retirements or deaths.

Cases, even of a minor nature, at the Oxford City Magistrates Court, were reported together with the offender's name and the policeman involved. Most people did not like their names appearing in Court cases so this was an obvious deterrent to breaking the law. The name of the policeman being given made him known to the public, and the cases which appeared before the Court reminded the public that the police were pretty hot on prosecuting offenders.

In other words, the public knew that the Police, for which they were paying out of their taxes, were out there working. Dare I say that we had the respect of the public, grudging though in some cases it might be.

We had three newspaper reporters who I knew quite well. They would come to the Police Station every morning and were allowed to read the Master Log. Only in exceptional circumstances would they be asked not to publish something or other for operational reasons.

There was John Owen who, in later years wrote a marvellous series about places around Oxford; Gordon Kitching, who later became a broadcaster with Radio Oxford; and finally, Colin Fenton, who was a freelance reporter and was also involved with Radio Oxford.

In about 1965 we experimented with American Motorola portable radios, which could be carried by the PC on the Beat. They were of the same wavelength as the radio being used

by the patrol cars and it meant that the man on the Beat was able to know everything that was going on. The main drawback was that they were quite heavy.

Later on I received an invitation from Chief Inspector Miller, who was head of the Traffic and Communications Department, to accompany him to the Pye Radio factory at Cambridge to see an exhibition of the new Pye Pocketphone. We had a very nice meal and I was sat opposite the Chief Constable of the Oxfordshire Constabulary, Lt Col Rutherford.

Following the exhibition, and no doubt after pressure from the Home Office, we switched over to the Pye system, which consisted of two separate pieces – the transmitter and the receiver. Lighter in weight, they were on a UHF frequency which meant that they were not compatible with our other radio system, which was in VHF. They were fitted with rechargeable batteries and we had the responsibility of recharging them in the Control Room. All needed different charging times, according to use, and could end up being cooked and ruined. This was a real headache and one we could well do without.

Following some high level plan from the Home Office, a Panda system was introduced together with Area Constables as they could all communicate now with the new portable radios. This all came together with the amalgamation of the Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Reading Borough and Oxford City Police Forces on 1st April 1968. This was one year short of our Centenary and was masterminded by the then Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins.

After the amalgamation, the headquarters of the new Force, to be known as the Thames Valley Constabulary, was sited in the buildings of the former Oxfordshire Constabulary at Kidlington.

When the amalgamation was announced it was said that the rights of Police Officers in the various Forces would be protected and non-one would be forced to move from one county to another. What happened, however, was that if anyone wanted promotion they would be expected to move anywhere within the Thames Valley. By this means the City gradually lost a lot of its original manpower. Some moved on promotion, others to avoid some kind of blacklisting.

Now that I was back again on street duty I could fully appreciate the difference in the type of recruits we were getting. Most of the policemen after the First World War were ex-servicemen used to discipline, and most of them joined because it was the only job they could get, this was particularly so during the 1920s. As we joined and took over from them after the Second World War we continued to get ex-service recruits until National Service was abolished in the 1950s.

The new recruits were a cross section of a society which was rapidly changing. Some of them were former Police Cadets. Whereas my generation left school at the age of 14 years, these lads were leaving at the ages of 16–17 years, becoming Cadets and then Policemen, but with no real experience of the outside world. Other recruits would have had some experience of working and mixing with the community at large, and would be able to see the fiddles and various goings on at their places of employment.

Another change was the tendency to promote people earlier in their careers. In the Oxford City Police it would take an average of 13–15 years to gain promotion to Sergeant. This had two main advantages in that people did not hold the rank too long, giving more chances of promotion, and that those who were keen to be promoted had to give of their best for a much longer period of time before realising they had been passed over.

As far as I could judge, promotions were mainly from the CID which meant that these Sergeants were not interested in general police work, but tended to concentrate on crime. This would have been all right but for the fact that as patrolling the Beat and checking property were discontinued, there was a smaller chance of a uniformed policeman catching criminals. The general things such as pavement obstructions, cycling on footpaths, etc. were ignored, and yet were a big cause for annoyance to the general public.

As an example, I spoke to a Constable who was obviously not doing his job in relation to these summary offences. I asked him why not? He replied that it was his job to catch criminals. I asked him how many criminals he had caught during the previous 12 months and the answer was none. I began to take some of these young Constables out to places where I knew the law was being broken and get them to deal with the offenders. It was like Cyprus all over again.

When the Panda and the Area Beat System was introduced, I understood that there would be a PC allocated to a certain area drawn on a map. He would work what hours were considered necessary for that district. There would be a Panda car with 24-hours-a-day coverage covering every two Areas. The Panda driver would drive to a busy area, park his car in a prominent position, and would then patrol on foot, generally dealing with law enforcement. It was expected that members of the public would wait by the car if they wanted to see the policeman. The Panda car was therefore also a mobile police station. The Panda driver would be in contact by radio with his two Area Constables if either of them happened to be on duty, and with his local Police Station, who were now operating the radio independently. The headquarters at Kidlington had the main radio-base, which was for operational vehicles only.

The Area Constables, now called Community Policemen, of course only worked eight hours a day, five days a week. They naturally favoured working Early Turn or 9am–5pm

duties as opposed to Late Turn and Night Duty. This meant that for most of the time their Area was only covered by one Panda car. Some of the Panda car drivers, if it was cold or pouring with rain, found that it was best to park in out-of-the-way places and sit in the warmth of their cars rather than patrolling on foot.

Oxford City became 'H' Division of the Thames Valley Constabulary, and the old City boundaries disappeared as far as the boundaries of the new Division were concerned. With fewer men the area to be covered became larger, and this continued until, as today, the area stretches as far as Banbury.

Prior to the amalgamation we had on night duty each side of Magdalen Bridge (in other words the two Divisions) the following number of personnel and motor vehicles. There were PCs covering 38 Beats, either on foot or on pedal cycles, covering the whole of the City of Oxford. On each Division there were two patrol cars (Traffic Department); Morris commercial van (Black Mariah), which had a crew of two PCs; an Inspector's car, which was sometimes used by the Patrol Sergeant; a CID car 6pm–2pm comprising a crew of one Detective with one PC off the night duty shift from 10pm–2am; and one or two suburban Beat motor cycles, according to manpower. Both Divisions came under the one Control Room and were not confined to their Divisions or the City Limits.

As I have mentioned before, the average response time for a 999 call in the City of Oxford was four minutes, or six minutes covering the Oxford telephone area.

I was posted to Cowley Police Station in charge of Area Constables and Traffic Wardens East of Magdalen Bridge. Instead of PS 23 I now became PS 1765. The Traffic Wardens worked three areas, namely East Oxford (parading at East Oxford Box); Cowley (parading at Cowley Police Station); and Headington (parading at Headington Box). They were under the control of a Senior Traffic Warden who was responsible for allocating their duties and checking their fixed-penalty tickets (another innovation). I had overall control to see that they were working efficiently, checking and signing their pocket books and giving them advice and encouragement.

I would also be sent with a number of Area Constables as well as others to cover duties at Royal Ascot, State visits to Windsor, the Isle of Wight Pop Festival, Murder enquiries in Reading, anti-Apartheid demonstrations, Greenham Common CND demonstrations, Chief Constable's representative at the Oxford City Quarter Sessions, Sergeant in charge of security at the Oxfordshire Assize Court, firearms training, and on duty at nearly every home match of the Oxford United Football Club.

As you can see from the above, someone somewhere had decided that at the age of 40 years I had had too easy a life and they were determined to get their money's worth out of me for the last five years of my service.

I normally patrolled the area East of Magdalen Bridge on a police cycle until I retired. If I decided to work evenings I would borrow a car and pick up one of the Area Constables. I would either take him on Public House visits or take the Warrant File with me and try and execute some of the growing number of Warrants, mainly for non-payment of fines or maintenance arrears. Sometimes I would have to take over as Patrol Sergeant or Station Sergeant if the normal reliefs were short-handed.

I was covering the Station Sergeant's duties one day on the 2pm–10pm shift and was riding my pedal cycle from my home in Headley Way, to where I had moved a few years previously from the police house in Halliday Hill. I was cycling down the Headington Road towards Gypsy Lane. This was at about 1.30pm and I had a civilian jacket over my police shirt. I was travelling at my usual 5–10mph when a received a violent blow to my right arm and elbow, and both I and my bike accelerated to more than 30mph! I had been hit by the left-hand door mirror of an overtaking van. The cycle scraped along the kerb and I did a somersault over the top, luckily on to a grass verge. There is absolutely no truth in the story that as I was flying through the air I produced pen and pocket book and took down the offender's number. I had hurt my ankle rather badly, but luckily no bones were broken.

I was taken to the Radcliffe Infirmary and, after having x-rays taken, I was released. As I was already covering the job of Station Sergeant because they were short-staff, I was honour-bound to get transport to Cowley Police Station and finish my shift.

The accident was witnessed by a taxi driver, and the van-driver who hit me said he didn't see me. Visibility was good, but that's how it goes.

I remember one day the Superintendent sent for me and said that he had had a complaint that there was a strike at the car factory, and hundreds of workers were blocking the Garsington Road and the roundabout on the Eastern by-pass. If they wanted to hold a meeting they were to be told to go to Phipps Road car-park. I went there on my cycle and, as had been reported, the road was completely blocked by hundreds of people. I walked up to them and asked who was organising the meeting. There was a lot of laughter and ribald remarks and I was told I could organise it if I liked. I walked into the middle of these hundreds of workers asking for an organiser, but it appeared there wasn't one and, in fact, nobody knew why they were out on strike.

In my best parade-ground voice, with a bit of humour, I informed them that they could not continue to block the road and that they were to hold their meeting at the Phipps Road car park. There were shouts of 'Lead the way mate!' and I walked, pushing my cycle along the Garsington Road followed by all these people. As we walked past the factory gates all but about 20 went through them and returned to work. I took the others to the car park and left them there.

I remember one night attending a farm fire out by Cuddesdon. Suddenly, running out of the blaze of a barn, past us and the firemen, came dozens of little piglets who were all badly scorched and squealing with pain and terror as they disappeared into the darkness.

Another memorable incident whilst on patrol one night was when I heard various Pandas being sent over the radio to a hospital as assistance was required. Eventually I received a call to attend. When I arrived I found four or five policemen having trouble with an individual who was obviously mentally disturbed, and had been brought to and left at the hospital. This was in the middle of the night, and the female nurses were unable to cope as he had become violent.

I had a conversation with the gentleman, who told me that he wanted to speak to a member of the government. I promised to arrange this for him. I went away and after a suitable length of time I told him that I had made arrangements for him to see the Minister, and would he follow me. We walked down a glass-lined corridor, the nurse was in front, I was on his left and another PC was on his right, with two more behind him. He must have suddenly realised that he was being conned and went completely berserk. I was holding one arm, with another PC holding the other. A PC was also holding him from behind. I was pushed or thrown through the toughened glass window and, as it broke, the nurse put her hand over my face as I went through. She, of course, cut her hand. We managed finally to hold him down and the gentleman was tranquillised.

One day I was called into the Superintendent's office to meet a member of the City Council's staff. He complained that various shopkeepers on the London Road at Headington had taken over the pavement as part of their premises, and were obstructing the footpath with their goods. I was instructed to deal with this as soon as possible.

This was a typical example of how, once you removed the patrol from an area, and the responsibility for it from the officer on that patrol, people take advantage.

I went round warning all the shopkeepers of the complaint and the law relating to obstruction of the pavement. As this made no difference, I put PCs on this daily and they were ordered to book any offenders. As a result, I became very unpopular in the area in which I did my shopping. At one greengrocer's in particular my wife was blacklisted and they refused to serve her.

Another strange thing about the new Force was the paperwork. I could understand that five different Forces had five different systems and report forms. I would have thought that the logical answer would be to have a working committee to go through all the forms and adopt the best from each of the five now defunct Forces.

I believe a special department was set up, whose members sat down thinking up bigger and better forms. Where forms did not previously exist, they were now invented. anyone

who knows anything about the average policeman will know that he hates writing. The more forms, the more writing. This leads to a disinclination to get involved in report writing, which leads to less work effort. This is only a personal view of mine but I would be very surprised to find I was wrong.

Matters which would be formerly dealt with by our Firearms and Aliens Department were now being sent out to PCs on the streets, increasing the workload again paper-wise. Warrants that I have mentioned dealing with were formerly the job of our Warrants Department, but that no longer existed.

On one day a week I would very often be assigned to a Panda and either given a check-point to cover or be a first-response vehicle when there were large collections of cash from banks in the City for the payment of wages.

I was still working every Christmas Day, and I remember I worked early turn to give myself most of the day off. During the morning I was sent to a house where there was a sudden death.

I found the body of a woman half in and half out of bed. I checked that she was dead and that the family doctor had been sent for. She did not live in Oxford, but had come to stay for Christmas with her daughter and family. The daughter, on waking up, had gone to take her mother a cup of tea, and found her in that position. The doctor arrived and officially certified that she was dead but, as she was not his patient, could not issue a certificate. I then arranged for the undertaker to attend and remove the body to the mortuary.

I told the people in nearby houses what was going on, as with a large number of children around showing off their presents, it could have been distressing to see a body being carried out. They kept their children out of sight. After the hearse had gone I later resumed patrol and I was sent to a serious domestic incident.

The wife alleged that her husband had been out drinking with a member of his family. They had come home together and he had handed over half the dinner she had cooked. A fight took place and she alleged that her husband had tried to drown her in a bath of water. I had a hell of a time in there trying to sort that little lot out. I eventually got home at about 2.30pm for my Christmas dinner. I think you will understand that despite the excellence of my wife’s cooking I did not really enjoy it.

At the time of Royal Ascot I was told to parade at the Cowley Police Station at a certain time, together with a number of mainly Area constables, to be taken by coach to the Ascot racecourse.

The coach started off from Banbury, it then picked up more policemen at St Aldate's Police Station, and then finally us. We got straight on board and arrived at the rendezvous point, where everybody was already on parade. I marched the coach load in and was promptly shouted at by a stick waving Assistant Chief Constable. He dressed me down in front of the parade, which I thought was bad form. He gave me a rollicking for being late. I told him I had simply boarded the coach, and if he wanted us there earlier he had better make arrangements for the coach to start earlier. I think he realised he had gone too far with me and, giving a glare, stalked off.

The coach was rearranged, and we arrived earlier for the rest of the week which, no doubt, kept him happy.

I used to be posted to duties in what was called the Silver Ring. I am not interested in horse racing or gambling and found the whole event a bit of a bore. There was, of course, the Royal Family driving down the course in open carriages. After that, it was just horses galloping past.

On one occasion when I was at Royal Ascot, it was a bitterly cold day with a vicious wind blowing straight across the course into the Stand. It was June but it really was cold. There was a young woman, very pretty in her summer dress with short sleeves, sitting in a wheelchair amongst a party of disabled people. Her arms were full of goose-pimples and she was shivering. I went off to the First Aid office to see if I could borrow some blankets. I was informed by a woman that it was the responsibility of people bringing disabled or other persons to the racecourse to make sure that they were dressed properly for the weather, and that on no account could a borrow their blankets. I went back and told them there was nothing I could do. The poor girl was now blue with cold so I gave her my uniform coat.

During my period of 25 years' service I went on a refresher course to Eynsham Hall whilst a PC, then two refresher courses whilst a Sergeant, one at Chelmsford and one at Aylesbury.

During my last five years in the new Force we had to attend a series of meetings to discuss various aspects of police work. One of these meetings was after I had completed 22 years' service and, with one or two others, we were to be presented with our Police Long Service and Good Conduct Medal (in the Army a similar type of medal was known as 22 years of undetected crime).

The time of the meeting had come to an end and the Assistant Chief Constable who was to present the medals had not arrived. Everyone was asked to hang on to see the presentation and after nearly half an hour the ACC arrived and I was called up to the front to receive my medal. He said 'I've seen you somewhere before haven't I?' I replied

‘Yes sir, it was at Royal Ascot when you gave me a rollicking for being late.’ He gave me my medal and that was that.

I think it was in 1970 that I was instructed to take a group of PCs to the Isle of Wight Pop Festival. This was something new which was happening in various parts of the country. I believe it was largest at that time with some 250,000 people attending over the few days of the Festival.

We left Oxford by coach and went to Gosport near Portsmouth to HMS Dolphin, which is a shore-based establishment of the Royal Navy for submariners. We were billeted there and we were then taken by ferry to the Isle of Wight. We were then transported by buses to the Festival site.

Our main duty was to keep the peace amongst the many thousands of young people who were there, not only from Britain but from many foreign countries. All these people were mainly sitting on the grass: many were smoking hemp, but we did not interfere and left it to the Drug Squad who were operating in plain clothes amongst them.

This was the new era of loud amplified music, which could be heard miles away. Topless girls enjoyed the sunshine and we enjoyed the view. We had no problems with all these young people who were obviously enjoying themselves.

The main thing I remember was that on the final day hundreds of us were on a ferry taking us back to the mainland. One senior officer ordered draw whistles. We took our whistles out and, as we sailed close by another ferry full of civilians travelling in the opposite direction, we put our whistles to our lips and on the order ‘Blow’ gave the loudest whistle blast heard in British waters, or for that matter anywhere else. We had friendly waves, two fingered responses and cheers in reply.

I went with a party of PCs to Gloucester to help them under what is called Mutual Aid. As far as I can remember it was a rugby match involving a South African team. There was a big anti-apartheid demonstration and an attempt to stop the match.

I had to go to Greenham Common RAF Station where the CND were causing trouble about American Cruise nuclear missiles being stationed there. This was a frequent occurrence which cost millions of pounds of the tax-payers’ money and a drain on police manpower.

Twice I had to lead teams to Reading, one over a series of serious crimes in which we were involved in house to house enquiries in the Early District. We also kept observation on all telephone kiosks to try and catch the offender, who made a series of telephone calls. The other was when a young Reading detective was murdered and we spent some time on that enquiry.

I was a designated officer for the carrying of firearms in case of an emergency. The weapons we used were Walther 9mm automatic pistols. We went to a range for practice where we used .22 ammunition in specially adapted Walthers to save money. I think we were allowed to fire ten rounds of 9mm as the handling characteristics are entirely different.

Several times I went with teams of PCs to cover State Visits to Windsor. We were mainly lining the route for protection purposes as the Royal Family and invited guests went past us up to Windsor Castle in their open carriages: all this accompanied by the Household Cavalry. The main thing I remember was the amount of horse dung and the pong.

Every Saturday that there was a home game at Oxford United I was on duty from 10am to 6pm. Large numbers of the away fans arrived early by train or coach and then wandered around Headington, usually causing trouble. They went into the local public houses at lunch time and had consumed several pints before the kick-off at 3pm. This could sometimes become a problem as very often walking around in large groups they were able to intimidate people, especially shopkeepers.

I had just been home for lunch one Saturday and was cycling up Headley Way near Woodlands Road. I was stopped by a motorist who alleged that one of a group of 30 youths in Woodlands Road had sprayed the name of their football club right across the end wall of his house and shop in Lime Walk. This had just recently been snowcemed in a cream colour, and was now ruined.

He identified the youth responsible, and I went into the middle of these trouble makers and arrested him. Despite a certain amount of abuse from the others, there was no trouble although they could have prevented the arrest by sheer weight of numbers.

As I have said before, if you are on your own and show no fear, you get a grudging amount of respect and this sees you through. At least this was true in my experience.

When I searched the youth I found a fair amount of new articles bearing the Oxford United Club logo. I radioed for transport and took my prisoner to Cowley Police Station. I then found out that a group of these away supporters had gone into the Oxford United shop at Headington. By sheer weight of numbers they had terrorised the assistant, who was a young woman, and had helped themselves to anything they wanted. At least I had got one of them.

When the gates of the football ground opened, then came the task of frisking the supporters for offensive weapons and any missiles they might be carrying. The late Robert Maxwell would very often stand by the London Road entrance keeping an eye on things.

The thing that always amazed me was that even in the Cyprus Police we were not able to search women without a policewoman, even though it was well known that women were carrying the weapons for the killers. We, of course, were unable to do this in England. Yet very often there were, and still are, policewomen standing at the gates of football grounds frisking men. Perhaps the men don't complain.

Kick-off was normally 3pm, and after the crowd had gone in I would enter the ground and take up position in the London Road stand where all the trouble-makers gathered. We clamped down on the chanting of obscenities and warned anyone we caught. If they continued I would arrest them under Section 5 of the Public Order Act. Fighting would very often break out between rival supporters, either in the Stand or round the back, and sometimes could get quite nasty.

I used to stand in the middle of the top of the Stand so that I could look down and see if anyone was throwing missiles on to the pitch or at the players. This could very often be coins, which can cause nasty injuries if thrown with some force.

One day, near the top of the Stand, a furious fight broke out between two rival supporters, and I was forced to intervene. I pulled them apart and, with a head under each arm, I forced my way down the steps of the Stand to the bottom. On the way down I was kicked, punched and spat upon. I was unable to retaliate but had the satisfaction of heaving my two prisoners over the wall on to the pitch, and then round the back to the holding vehicles.

If there were a number of prisoners they would be transported to the Police Station and put in the cells. The vehicles, usually Ford Transits at this stage, had replaced our Black Marias. They would return to the ground for the next load of prisoners. The match would normally finish at 4.40pm and everyone would stream out of the ground. Frequently there would be running battles between two groups of supporters and I, on different occasions, made a number of arrests outside the ground following matches.

We would marshal all those away supporters who had come by train to Oxford Railway Station and escort them as far as The Plain, where we would hand them over to other policemen waiting there for the last stage of their long walk. Escorting vehicles went the whole distance and consisted of transit vans with a number of PCs inside.

Other groups of policemen would have escorted those who came by coach to the coach parking point in Franklin Road. There were very often fights and scuffles in that area.

Having handed over the football supporters at The Plain I would then cycle up the Cowley Road to Cowley Police Station. This would be about finishing time 6.00pm. I would then have to start work with my prisoners. First I would have to identify them to

the station sergeant and obtain all their details. If there was no absolute proof of identity, which was usually the case, I had to contact the police at their home town for enquiries to be made to establish their identity. If they were juveniles their parents had to be informed and arrangements made for their collection when they were bailed. I had to write my reports, and report for summons, or charge and bail the prisoners. If there were a large number of prisoners then they could only be charged one at a time and this could take hours.

I often used to wonder why I as a Sergeant should penalise myself so often by making all these arrests, as I was now in my forties and sometimes it could be a bit of a battle.

Whilst I was at the Isle of Wight Pop Festival I was pretty rough, and on my return, despite seeing my doctor, I lost two stones in weight. It was eventually diagnosed that I had a duodenal ulcer. I ended up in the Radcliffe Infirmary having two stomach operations.

When I returned to duty I was warned that I had to be very careful to avoid getting kicked or punched in the stomach. I gave up going into the main stand at football matches and used to stand on the corner watching whatever was going on.

One Saturday I was standing at the corner of the ground when, just a few yards from me, two football supporters starting knocking hell out of each other and both ended up on the ground. Without thinking I dragged the one off on top and told him he was under arrest. I marched him round the back of the stand to where our holding vehicles were. A PC who was near me had arrested the other youth. I opened the rear door of the vehicle and put my prisoner inside and was walking away when, believe it or not, the PC who had just arrested the other youth then put him in the same van. The next minute there was a hell of a shindig and I dived in the vehicle to separate them. I found that was a very difficult task in a confined space. I eventually got out in a rather dishevelled state, holding one of the prisoners to put in a separate vehicle.

A Chief Superintendent was standing there when I emerged and he said I should have left it to the younger ones. I agreed with him as I had forgotten about protecting my stomach and was very exhausted.

Another battle I remember was the Encaenia at Oxford University when Edward Heath was presented with a Degree by the University. There is always a long procession with all the University dignitaries wearing their mortar boards and very colourful gowns as they wend their way to the Sheldonian Theatre where the awards take place. There was a very large mob of left-wing students, including many girls who obviously hated Edward Heath and the Conservative Party. When I say hate I mean just that. I found the girls were some of the worst and their violent attack on Heath and their demeanour and

language were terrible. I dragged two girls back who had almost reached their intended victim. We were very lucky that Edward Heath did not get seriously assaulted.

When you are in the middle of a disturbance of that sort, you cannot immediately make arrests because you can no longer help to prevent further assaults. Only when the safety of your charge is assured can you turn around, identify the offender, and take the necessary action. My intention was to arrest the two girls I have previously mentioned and I hoped they would get their just desserts. Unfortunately one of the Inspectors made an arrest and, pulling rank, dumped his prisoner on me to take care of. I couldn't see any PCs in the vicinity at that time so I was forced to make my way towards Broad Street, from where I radioed for transport to meet me.

I then came upon a large group of students who had been driven back during the violent assault. I could see there was a great risk of me losing my prisoner so I sought sanctuary in a nearby college. The college porter did not like this, but I refused to follow the rules about not entering colleges without receiving permission, and went in there.

There were a couple of Royal visits I remember, in particular during my last five years' service. One was a visit by Prince Charles to the Oxfam building on the Banbury Road. I was stood outside in front of a crowd of people and the Prince was by my side. A man rushed from behind at Prince Charles. I went to grab him but saw a member of the Special Branch shake his head. At the same instant I saw that the man had a piece of paper in his hand. He made some remarks about something or other happening in, I believe, it was India. I will give the Prince his due. He gave as good as he got and then moved on. I was practically standing on the intruder's feet.

Afterwards an American standing in the crowd was full of admiration for the way things had been handled, and compared it with what would have happened had this man tried the same thing with the President of the United States of America. I didn't admit that the whole thing had caught me a bit on the hop. It is surprising how quickly something can happen.

The second occasion was when Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother came to Oxford to open the Florey Building in St Clement's. As far as I can remember, there was a platform which had a door opening on to it. The Queen Mother had gone into the building and would be coming through this door.

There was a Press photographer messing about there, getting the right angles etc for his photograph. Part of his camera fell off and it rolled across the platform towards the door. I quickly walked forward and bent down to pick up the piece of equipment. Because the Thames Valley Constabulary had stopped the wearing of chin straps, my helmet fell off as I bent down and, at the same instant, the Queen Mother walked through the door and

surveyed by balding head and undignified posture. Nothing was said, but probably a lot was thought.

Many years later I was reading an article in the *Oxford Mail* in which a Press photographer who had decided to emigrate to Canada was recounting his experiences. He told the story which I have just written, saying that it was the funniest thing he had seen, and that he was so busy laughing he forgot to take his photograph of the Queen Mother.

I have mentioned my responsibility with regard to the Traffic Wardens at Cowley. They were a fine bunch of people and most of them were very hardworking. I am always annoyed when I hear people criticising the wardens and calling them 'Little Hitlers' etc. I will repeat here for future generations who may read my memoirs a very common joke: 'Why do Traffic Wardens have yellow bands around their caps?' Answer: 'To stop motorists parking on their heads.' This joke illustrates the attitude of a lot of people who, rightly, are very frustrated and angry at their inability to park where they want without receiving a fixed penalty ticket.

I would have to point out that all the 'No Waiting' areas are decided by the local authority. Having decided in which areas they wish to prevent motorists parking their vehicles they make a Traffic Regulation Order. Yellow lines are painted on the road and plates are fixed to posts to inform motorists of the extent and hours of the parking restriction. The local authority then employs Traffic Wardens to enforce these regulations.

Trying to explain to the average motorist that 'No Waiting' means no waiting at all, and not no waiting longer than five minutes or half an hour or whatever, is an uphill task.

I can remember when I was on duty at Oxford United whilst the fans were going in, that a car drew up and parked on double-yellow lines quite close to the ground. Four men got out and I told them it was a 'No Waiting' area. They replied 'That's all right mate, you can book it'. They then walked off. The fixed penalty was £2 at that time, so they didn't mind sharing the cost between the four of them to save a long walk.

I visited Traffic Warden Evans one day and walked along with him, pushing my bike along the Cowley Road. I saw a number of cars parked outside a row of shops and told him to book them. I then went off on my cycle and, returning a short while later, I saw TW Evans waving his arms to attract my attention. There was a man with him and the TW said that he had accused him of hiding in the doorway of a shop and waiting until he had parked his car and then dashed out and put a ticket on it. I asked which car it was and found that it was one of those I had instructed the TW to report. I told the motorist who had repeated the allegation to me that he was telling untruths and I did not like people trying to get my Traffic Wardens into trouble. If he had any further complaints he was to go to the Police Station. I gave him my number.

I have told this story as it is not uncommon for members of the public to make unjust or false allegations.

Although I have every sympathy with disabled people I cannot understand why motorists are banned from parking in any street, when disabled people driving exactly the same size and type of cars can park for two hours without causing an obstruction. This is what I mean when I say people are rightly frustrated and angry at these regulations.

In places like Oxford these regulations are simply to try and stop people from going into the City Centre by motor car. Where they provide car parks they make exorbitant charges to deter people from using them.

I had one particular traffic warden who, every time I went to check and sign his pocket book, had merely the date, places of duties, meal breaks, etc written in his book. I would ask him why he hadn't booked anyone. He would say that he always kept busy and warned everyone and that he didn't believe in issuing a lot of tickets.

The traffic wardens changed their areas every three weeks. After this period of time those motorists who had realised that they were not getting reported by this particular TW would take advantage and park all over the place. At the change round of areas the new shift would be overworked booking all those who thought they were on to a good thing. The TWs were not very happy with him.

During my duties at the old Oxfordshire Assizes, which were held in the County Hall (next to Oxford Castle and Prison), I spent a lot of time patrolling the waiting area with its stone floor and good acoustics. Dozens of people would be there sitting or standing about. Some were witnesses, some the accused with their Barristers and Solicitors, Police and members of the public.

There were a number of trestle tables in a long line down one side of this large hall, and the WRVS would be busy serving tea and refreshments. As you can imagine, this led to a great deal of conversation which steadily increased in volume to the annoyance of the Judge in the court room next door. I had to shout every few minutes 'Quiet please!' to hush them. It had an effect but then would start all over again.

The noise was so plain that one Judge complained about the rattle of tea spoons and these had to be replaced with plastic ones.

The Oxford City Quarter Sessions were held in the court room at the Town Hall. The main Recorder during my time as the Chief Constable's Representative was Brian Gibbens. He later became a judge and I had a good working relationship with him.

Sitting in Court all day, listening to many and varied cases, I was not impressed with the judicial system. The Judges or Recorders with the Barristers wearing their wigs and gowns gives, I think, an intimidating air to the Court, which I think has an adverse effect on the members of the public appearing before it.

The Barristers, mainly with their Oxbridge accents, are very clever and articulate, usually a distinct contrast to those appearing before them, whether witnesses or accused. The favourite ploy of Barristers is to force a witness to answer ''Yes' or 'No' to a question, knowing full well that the answer is not going to be entirely truthful and will assist their case.

There is also the 'beyond reasonable doubt argument' to the Jury, It would be difficult in most cases not to have some sort of doubt, and they play this to the full.

I have seen many witnesses leave the witness box shaking and upset and I have heard them say that, whatever happens in the future, they will refuse to be a witness. Very often these were victims of crime, people who had been attacked, had their property stolen or their home burgled. They have often been humiliated and verbally abused in an attempt to discredit their evidence.

The jury are very often taken in by these tactics and reach their verdict. Whether justice has been served is open to doubt. Later the two Barristers who had given such an impressive display of animosity towards each other in court would be having a drink together as old friends. The distressed witnesses, the victim, who cares?

In May 1973 I decided to retire after completing 25 years' service. During this time I had been PC 65 and PS 23 in Oxford City. PS 2806 with the Cyprus Police and PS 1765 with the Thames Valley Constabulary.