



Richard Bowen

Best of 2007 (1)







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The original blog can be found at
<http://bestof20071.wordpress.com/>



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Contents

Best of 2007(1) 1







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Wednesday, September 21, 2011

16-11-2006 My First Post!

Gosh! I'm getting desperate!

I'm an OAP who spent half a lifetime in the Police and now I feel totally "out" of "it"! Know what I mean?

Left the Force before qualifying for a pension, so I'm not even a Retired Officer.

Too far to travel to get-togethers – thank-you breathalisers.

Former mates falling like flies or retiring to Ossieland or Spain. Lucky sods.

Too far to the right to have many friends in this socialist stronghold of Swansea.

I like the English, having spent most of my life working with them, and don't mind being called Taff. Both of which tend to marginalise me in nuLabour's Britain.

Now, bearing in mind that I want to finish my days where I started them – in Mumbles – I wonder what I need to do to re-enter society. Trouble is, I don't think I really want to, despite my son's insistence that I do.

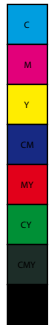
I tried voluntary work – welllllll, I did take Mission to Seamen's envelopes around the neighbourhood. Snag with that is my dislike of collectors coming to my door so Yea. If the cap fits.

I did go to the metropolis to attend a couple of re-unions but – guess what? I hardly knew anybody there and most of those who I did know did not seem to remember me! Blimey! What an impression I must have made. But that's for another time.

I can see that u r dozing off so will take my seat for now.

Aneverwas. (Know what I mean?)

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Ol' Pals 30-11-2006

Decided that the answer to my increasing pains is to get more exercise. "More exercise" is, of course, relative and, wellllll, relative to nothing is, of course, a little! So, instead of going to my 'local' – which is 3 minutes saunter at my old Police gait – I walked last night, to the next pub. 15 minutes away. Well, a little at a time! And so it was that I met ol' pals again.

First I bumped into Geoff. I like Geoff. He was born & bred in the village, as was I. When we were kids – in the '40s & early '50s, his claim to fame was that he always turned up in the local park – Underhill Park – fully turned out in an Arsenal kit. (Do u remember those old brown football boots with the solid toecaps?) Show-off. Lost touch when we left school but one night, I think in 1963, when I was a P. C. at Shepherds Bush, Geoff turned up as the night-duty C. I. D. Officer. Ended up on Scotland Yard Serious Crimes Squad. Retired now and walks around the village like Clint Eastwood. You know, full-length, beltless mac, and a big hat, like a fedora. Seems he has as many aches and pains as I do, so no good looking to him for advice!

In the pub, I sat with Texas. Another ol' village man. Tex is Emeritus Professor of German History (or something like that!) at Cambridge. Tex has just lost his wife which kind of sobers up the conversation. She was from Austria. Puts my aches & pains into perspective! Tex was Mumbles Rangers FC goalkeeper when we were kids. I always reckoned that he was their worst ever keeper!! Their best 'keeper was Muzzo – Murray Crook. Generally reckoned to be the best Welsh keeper never to play for Wales. Seems that Muzzo has just – this week – passed away. Has been living in France apparently. Another ol' pal gone.

The other one in the pub was Don. Me ol' mate. In the morning, he had done a right technical job for me. He screwed-in a shelf in a cupboard which had fallen, so I owed him a pint. Don't laugh, it wasn't an easy job! Don comes from a long, well-established local family, and I've known them all my life. He's worked abroad a lot, and all over the place. Now one of "us". i.e. Retired and returned to the village. You don't need me to tell you that his back's 'gone'! You can't be perfect to join us.

Think I'll stick to my own local next time. Get too depressed at the other!

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Xmas Day 2006





Hi folks! Compliments of the Season to u all. Even if u don't deserve it. On the radio, they keep saying about sparing a thought for all those who are working today. Perhaps we should spare a thought for those who cannot get work. My son recently graduated with a B. Sc.(Hons). in Sports Conditioning and Coaching. He can't get a University place for the Teachers Certificate for love nor money, so to speak. One Uni told him that they have just 12 places, and over a hundred applicants. Don't make much sense to me. When he tried to get into Bath Uni to do his Degree Course, they said that they had 40 places, and were expecting over 1,000 applications. I bet someone gets paid a very good wage for planning all this!

And talking about planning, what r u doing about New Year's Resolutions? My major resolutions r 2 go for a walk every day, to eat less, and limit my nightly visits to the "local" to 3 per week. 3 visits @ 3 pints = 18 units per week. That's 3 units under the maximum recommended. Good thinking? Yea, but is it just that – "thinking". We'll see.

Xmas always makes me think back on previous Xmas's, some good, some not so good. I think that the best were when we were kids. Strange isn't it? We were broke, it was during the war, with all it's hardships, and my Mum was struggling to bring 6 of us kids up on her own. (The old man was in the desert!!). Yet Xmas was always marvellous. I think the worst was 1957. I was doing my National Service in the RMP in Hong Kong, and I was Early Turn Duty NCO. I was woken up at 0500, to learn that 2 very good mates had been killed in an accident on The Peak, Hong Kong, and another good mate was very seriously injured. A horrible, horrible time. Can't believe that that was nearly 50 years ago. Blimey. (I still think of my mates at Xmas time).

Well, I'm orf 2 my local now 4 a Xmas lunchtime drink. Cheers 2 u all 4 now.



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Fast Driving and Chasing

On Extraspecial's blog recently, he has done an article on fast driving. I have to wonder just how many people really know what they are talking about on this topic. I well remember the introductory talk given to us on the first day of the Advanced Driving Course at Hendon, back in the early '60s. The Driving School Chief said, "I have to tell you that there are two things about the British Man, that must not be criticised. One is his driving





ability, and the other is his prowess in bed with a woman. I can also tell you, that we are bloody hopeless at both”.

I believe that he was a wise old man.

He also stated another truth; that a good driver up to 70 mph, might very well be a very poor driver at really high speeds.

This, of course, only becomes apparent when driving at high speed. Which, really, is why it is necessary for police drivers to train at those speeds in advance of having to use them operationally. I accept that it is difficult to convince the ‘righteous’ brigade of this, simply because they are in no position to know that, and the days are long gone when they will simply take our (expert) word for it.

And another thing; police drivers are taught to drive only as fast as is safe. Certainly able to stop within the distance that they can see the road surface to be clear, having due regard to all of the circumstances. This is all very well, but what joe public does not know, is that the police driver, as a normal part of his training, has to give a commentary, and it very quickly becomes clear as to whether he is considering ALL of the circumstances. e.g. weather, road surface condition, nearby pedestrians/animals, hazards such as road junctions, traffic-lights, other vehicles, etc. etc. God alone knows how the ordinary driver equates this with speaking on the phone, lighting-up his fag, not to mention fiddling with the radio/cassette, talking to passengers, etc.

There can never be any guarantee that an accident will not happen, and this applies equally to normal driving. But – I do know that only the best available people drive police cars fast, and that they have (?had) the best possible training.

To chase or not to chase? This should be a matter of judgement for the expert on the spot. i.e. the fully-trained police driver. Only in truly exceptional circumstances should it be necessary to over-rule him, though this must remain an option.

Note for cynics; Yes, it was a long time ago BUT, the cars we had still did 120 mph!

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Voluntary Duty

Hi folks.

Seems really odd, don’t u think, that another country can actually learn from us, how to deal with football hooliganism. I mean, it’s not very long ago





that we had truly the worst reputation in Europe for football disorders. Now, the serious situation in Italy, including the murder of a Police Officer during football riots, necessitates them to seek our advice on how to deal.

All of this took me back to my experiences with duty at football matches – clearly before we got our act together!

I hated duty at Stamford Bridge. (Chelsea). We would parade at the ground and be briefed. We’d then be given a little wooden stool, just like a milking-maid’s stool, and take up our allotted position around the touchline. The ‘game’ for the local (and not-so-local) erks, was to ‘skim’ one of the old penny-pieces at us. Although nobody ever actually got me, I can still assure you that this was definitely not funny.

Duty at Stamford Bridge was on overtime usually, and this was described as “Voluntary Duty”. You had to put your name in a book if you wanted to volunteer.

At first, I volunteered. For 2 reasons;

1. I like watching football, and to do so from the touchline and get paid for it seemed too good to be true.
2. I noticed that invariably the first names in the book were the “9 – 5”ers. These were the PCs who did all those cushy little jobs. You know, Process Section (typing out Cautions, Summonses, etc.), Enquiries, (obtaining Witness Statements for other Forces, etc), Plan Drawers, Light-Duties (Yes. True!), Superintendents’ Clerks, etc., etc.

Now, I reasoned that if that lot did it, then by gosh it must be a doddle. What a fool I was! It didn’t take long to realise that the deployment at the ground was done by a Sergeant – who was also a 9 – 5 er. Yea, you’re right. They had all the cushy jobs, usually around the Players Tunnel, and we had the rest.

At Loftus Road, (Q. P. R.), one Superintendent had the idea of placing us along a line, halfway back into the crowd, at about 20 yard intervals. This would deter hooliganism. Hmmmm. Obviously no Risk Assessment done.

After the match, I remember one of my mates parading for dismissal. His back was absolutely covered in phlegm! The same Superintendent could spot anyone wearing a scarf at about 120 yards! Good, really, considering that he wore a WHITE SILK scarf with his uniform!

One day, I was on duty at Loftus Road, standing on the touchline alongside my mate Bill Crisp. Bill was a dour Scotsman. Just before kick-off, the players were having a warm-up near us, and a ball rolled towards Bill. Rodney Marsh came after the ball, and Bill took just one stride, – no, it





must have been two, – then kicked the ball towards Rod. Unfortunately, the ground was muddy? Yes. Yes. Yes. Bill’s feet went up in the air until his body was horizontal, at which point he dropped onto his back like a ton of bricks. Well! The crowd erupted. Greatest applause of the day. Bill got to his feet, back covered in mud, face absolutely scarlet, whereupon Rod Marsh came over, rolled the ball back to Bill and shouted, “‘Ave anuvver go, mate”. I did me best to console Bill but I’m afraid that there was nowhere to hide.

Voluntary Duty was not really for me, though I have had many memorable moments at Premiership games. Perhaps we’ll look at them again.

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Copper Ward

Copper Ward

I bumped into my old boyhood mate this week. He was Frank. Our gang leader. We used to play, in the street, all day and every day, when we were not at school. This was during the ‘40s, both during and after, the war. Frank would decide what we would play each day, and there were 5 of us urchins. I liked most of our ‘activities’, and well remember them;

Dens. This was a great favourite. We had all sorts of dens, ranging from ones built out of unused Anderson Bomb Shelters, to ones built in amongst the gorse bushes. Very prickly to get into, so nobody ever found them. Some would be in our neighbourhood, whereas others might be a couple of





miles away – down the valley, as we would say. Nothing like hiding in the den listening to the wind and rain outside. A great place for ‘learning’ the way of the adult world outside. Nobody would dare to enter our dens!

Guns. Yea, another great favourite. We would play Cowboys and Injuns, having two sides, and each having his own gun. We would all assume the identity of our favourite cowboy – mine was invariably Gene Autry as the other boys were bigger than me, so they were Roy Rogers, Tom Mix, etc. We usually played guns in the church grounds. Well, we were all choirboys, so felt that we were, well, like, the guardians of the church. Choir practice on Friday evenings; Sundays we had Holy Communion at 8a.m. (we were Altar Boys as well!), Morning Service at 11a.m., Sunday School at 2p.m., and Evensong at 6.30p.m. Almost owned the church!

The Park. Often we would go to the local park and play football or cricket. Trouble was, Frank was so much better than us that it would get a bit boring. He would ‘bat’ for about an hour, as we couldn’t get him out. Then, when we did, he would get us out in 5 minutes, so that he would be back ‘in’ again. Not fair. And anyway, if we had enough for 2 teams, he would pick the best players for his team. Lousy creep. That’s forgiven now, though.

Games. Mainly played at night, in the street.

Sometimes football. (Weren’t any cars on the roads then!)

Hide and Seek. Yea, you’ve guessed. We could never find Frank, so had to ask him to ‘give up’. (We reckoned that he used to go home and hide!!!)

Bet you can’t remember the game we played; “L-O-N-D-O-N London.” Any ideas?

And a game called ‘knock me down’, where 2 of us would bend down forming a ‘back’, up against a wall. All of the others had to leapfrog onto our backs and, when all were aboard, would jump up & down like mad, trying to collapse us, to the count of 10.

Anyway, I digress from my main point. As I say, Frank was our leader, and it was generally accepted that any and everything that happened in the neighbourhood was our fault. You know what things I mean?





Apples scrumpled. (also brussel sprouts, swedes from the farmer’s field, gooseberries, etc.) Well, be fair. This was during the war and we were bloody starving.

Street lamps being shot out by airguns.

Kids jumping onto the rear platform of the bus as it slowed down for a steep hill.

Nearly setting the church-hall on fire. Well, it wasn’t like it sounds. It was a freezing cold day and 3 of us entered the trapdoor which led under the church-hall stage, trying to keep warm. There was some dried grass there and Wiss Hixson had some matches, so we set fire to the grass to get warm. Unfortunately, in the confined space, we were nearly choked, and had to beat a hasty retreat, coughing and spluttering. And it was there that the Vicar happened upon us!

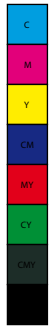
So, what did Frank say after not seeing each other for about 53 years? Well, he said that he can never forget the look on the face of our local Police Officer – affectionately known as Copper Ward – each time he knocked on his front door, or saw us in the street. Apparently Frank’s mother – a lovely God-fearing woman with 7 kids, living next-door but one to me – always started her conversation with Copper Ward with the words; “Well, was he the only one?”

I, also, will never forget that face, or the look on it. So, imagine my utter astonishment when I entered the Swansea Borough Police website and saw that face, and that look, staring at me. After all this time.

Anyway. You can see that face, and the look, above. Just as we did all those years ago.

Police Constable Ward. Good on yer mate. You never did us any harm.

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More Happy Days!

Well, the photograph was taken just as we were leaving, to return home after 3 years in Hong Kong. We were chuffed and yet, since then, I have very much regretted leaving this fascinating place. At least, it was in the '50s. We went there as young 18 year olds, and returned as aged 21 year olds!

Memories;

- Innumerable slightly-tiddly squaddies stopped whilst pulling rickshaws at high speed with the rickshaw driver thereon, begging us to intervene.
- Myriads of U. S. sailors of the 7th Fleet coming ashore for R & R. (For Deb, Rest & Recreation!) and being most reluctant to return to ship at the 2300 hours curfew. Boy, the fun and games there. Hire a wallah wallah boat to return with them to their ships, anchored out in the harbour, and then having to climb up onto it!
- Hush-hush anti-vice enquiry working directly under the D. A. P. M. (Alright Deb, Deputy Assistant Provost Marshall!) Enjoyed this.





- The fun of learning to drive, and ride motor-bikes.
- Duty at the Hong Kong Bisley. (Rifle-shooting competition, usually won by the incomparable Ghurkas). Held at Kai Tak, where we were on-duty from early a.m. until everybody had left at late p.m. by which time we would be burnt to a cinder and dying of thirst!
- The bad boys of the Lancashire Regt., the Green Howards, etc. (I told you lads, He who laughs last, laughs longest).
- Did I mention the chinese girls? Lovely! All of 'em.

And what spoilt all of this? Try – *an R. S. M.*

So, that (he) was why leaving Hong Kong was one of my happiest days.

There were bad times, of course, and I have previously mentioned the death of my good mate, Johnny Hider, and colleague Barry Deluchi (RAF Police) in an accident.

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I Met Mike Tyson

Honest.

I was sat at my PC, glancing out of the patio doors at our cat, who was eating her food. The garden looks idyllic, as I had just cut the grass, re-arranged the gnomes and garden lights, put fresh water in the bird-baths, etc., the sun was shining and I was generally feeling pretty good.

All of a sudden, the cat takes off. Bounds under the hedge and looks, growling.

I go out (sorry – to this readership, I investigated), and there, sat on the wall, was Tyson!

He's basically white, though arguably black and white due to the dirt; has a matted coat; one and a half ears; heavily scarred face; is thin; and has a real mean look.

I completely fell for him. Poor, hungry, under-nourished, unwanted, and totally neglected.

I immediately put our cat's food on the wall, for Tyson. He looked at me mightily suspiciously, crept up to the food, sniffed at it, and proceeded to ignore it.





The penny dropped. I got some fresh catfood, and put it on the wall. Tyson inspected it and – Yeeeessss. Started to quell his hunger pangs. I sat back, well pleased with myself. How can anybody turn out an animal. Total cruelty.

Tyson had his fill and then moved off. Job done.

Must say that our cat, Angelica, looked at me a little oddly.

Talking to one of my friends, Barry, who lives just up the road, I mentioned Tyson. Barry laughed like a good ‘un. It seems that Tyson belongs to somebody down the street, and just seems to look – well – like he does. Apparently he’s well cared for, and, like me, is just naturally scruffy. His owner is always moaning about the amount of food that is given to him, though how on earth he knows this, I do not know.

Seems that my charity was somewhat misplaced and Barbara is now demanding that I re-imburse her for the catfood!

No more Mr. Nice Guy. Back to normal for me.

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People Who Have Influenced My Life

Don’t know about you, but I once read a book about ‘5 People You Will Meet In Heaven’. (or something very similar). I shall not say anything about the book because I hope that you will one day have the opportunity to read it, and I don’t want to divulge anything. Buuttttt!

It has made me wonder just what 5 people have had most affect on my life, thus far. I’m not too sure whether one is supposed to include immediate family, as if so, then my 5 would probably be consumed right there! So, supposing that under normal circumstances family are excepted, mine would probably include;

1. Canon W. J. Hickin. B. A.

‘Walter John’, as he was affectionately called, was parish priest of St. Peter’s Church (C.of E.), Newton, Mumbles, Swansea. He lived in the vicarage at 26 St. Peter’s Road – opposite the church. I met him when I decided to join the church choir in 1943, at the age of 5! I would see him at choir practice on Friday evenings, then on Sundays, Communion at 0800, Morning Service at 1100, Sunday School at 1400 and Evensong at 1830. There would, of course, be other times, like during Easter, etc. when we had extra services – not to mention weddings, etc. I suppose you could say that we saw a lot of each other! I well remember sometimes being the only choirboy at a service! I ended up as Head Boy, and left the church when I





went to London to join the Police Cadets in 1954. As if this was not enough, 26 St. Peter’s Road was on my newspaper delivery round!

Walter John was very strict. I remember him saying that, ..”saying that you are a Christian does not make you one”. I must confess that, greatly though I admired and liked him, I am definitely not looking forward to reviewing my life with him when next we meet! Don’t think he’ll be very keen on it! I must devote a future blog to Walter John – he is worth it, and there are so many tales that I can recall.

2. R. S. M. E. Geary. R. M. P.

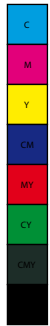
Funny thing about Ernie (I love calling him that. Wouldn’t have dared to, to his face!), I think that I admired him almost as much as he disliked me! He was i/c our Military Police Unit in Hong Kong for the second half of my tour of duty there. I was quite ‘well in’, as I was doing some special anti-vice enquiries for our Officer Commanding, Major Davies, as well as assisting our Special Investigation Branch (Sgt. Bob Gooding) with other criminal enquiries. As so often happens when we are young, I fell foul of ‘the system’ in the army, and u-know-who jumped on me from a great height! He was OK to me, but his actions certainly ensured that I would not be signing-on for any extended tour in the army. Pity really, as I secretly looked upon him as a bit of a role-model. (Years later, he told some of my Police colleagues that I had been one of his best men!!!) Being polite, I expect.

3. Sir George Abbiss.

Can’t really say anything about Sir George as I had never heard of him until that day in 1959. I had just come out of the army and was looking forward tremendously to joining the Hong Kong Police. (as it was then). Came the interview at Crown Agents in Millbank, London, and it was a boiling hot day – so was most of 1959. Cut a long story short – as I have recalled this in another blog – Sir George, the interviewer, was very hot and very irritable, because ‘his room’ did not have a fan. I was his first interview of the day and briefly went;”You were a Metropolitan Police Cadet. Why aren’t you joining the Met? Don’t you think you owe them something for training you?” Didn’t need ‘my sort’ in Hong Kong. His irritability forced me to change the entire course of my life so he is well worth a mention.

4. Stephen Phillips.

Stephen was M. D. of a Security Company with countrywide branches, owned by a family Cleaning Company. He was a family friend of the owning family, and was brought-in to provide business acumen in a company





that had been founded and built, by former police officers. (working for the family). I was Regional Director for branches in Swansea, Cardiff, Bristol, Basingstoke, Fareham, Birmingham and Northampton. Cut a long story short again, Stephen decided that I would not be a part of his company so – redundancy. At age of 52, with little qualifications, but a large mortgage and a 4 year-old son! Yuk! Yes, Stephen had a massive say in my life.

5. Derek Bryer.

Derek – known as DTB – was Managing Director of Welsh Brewers Cardiff Brewery, part of Bass Brewers. He and my predecessor, the late E. J. T. (John) Aplin, (God bless you, John.) was responsible for saving my life. At least, as far as I am concerned. Between them, they were responsible for giving me a really good, well-paid job, when all seemed doomed. Resurrected.

I gladly did my ‘time’ with Bass until I retired, at that age, in 2003. So, I had 13 years of tidy living, thanks to DTB. It’s no coincidence that DTB was also the best boss imaginable. But by golly, don’t fall foul of him if you can avoid it!

Well. There you go. It seems that, mostly, the people were connected with ‘work’.

So how about you? Answers *not on a postcard* please.

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Self-Defence for Police – For Us!

Seems that there is always a lot of talk about ‘Arming Police’, CS or Pepper Sprays, Tasers, etc., etc. Must say that defence of Officers has come a long way since my day.

When I was a kid, you either became a good street-fighter, (not, I may add, by today’s extreme definition), or you simply had to be able to run rather fast. Being neither, I fell into that bloody awful category of being ‘fodder’! Wasn’t too bad, and I had the consolation of being a better fighter than many younger blokes, so I had my turn!!! However, I digress.

When I spent some time in the old Swansea Borough Force (about 250 Officers all told) in 1964, having transferred down from the Met, I very quickly spotted that, whereas I was just under 6 feet tall, most of my colleagues were 6’2” upwards and built like a brick-built s—house! One, in particular, who





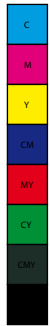
I had the great pleasure of working with, was a certain Hubert Thomas. Hubert is, put simply, the strongest man I have ever met. I'm reliably told that he came 3rd in the Mr. Universe contest one year, and I can well believe it. (Hubert is still around, living nearby and writing to the Evening Post about anything that annoys him!) One night, I was told to be outside the Embassy Club at turning-out time, to prevent drunken rowdyism. I stood in a doorway opposite the club and kept an eye on the riffraffclub-goers leaving. Pretty soon, an argument developed between a bunch of them. Pretty big blokes. Miners, I'd guess. Anyway, before a lead-footed Dickiebo could move, the local police-car – would you believe, a MORRIS MINOR!!! – arrived. Out got Hubert and walked up to the mob. They really didn't want him involved, and were silly enough to say so! Well, it really is something that I shall always remember. All Hubert did, was to pick-up one rather large erk – by putting his arm around his waist and lifting him onto his hip – and point out to the others the error of their ways, and that they must desist forthwith. Sure did have the desired effect, whereupon Hubert gently returned his 'capture' to the ground and normal service was resumed. Such strength, and without any effort at all.

Now, I knew that I was never going to be a Hubert, and running was rather out of the question for an Officer of the Law, so I had to make a tough choice. Leave the Job? Out of the question. This was my entire life. Become a 9-5er? You clearly aren't paying attention. The Police is my life, not a ruddy office job. Take up weight-lifting? Far too tough and takes too long. Boxing? Nah, I like my features, even if you don't. So then I got it. Become a Police Marksman, and take-up Kung Fu. So, I did. I became a Marksman and I well remember my Instructor looking at my 'shoot' saying, "You can come out with me any bloody time". Step 1 completed.

I studied Kung Fu under the legendary **Baron Omid** for many years before becoming a Black Belt, then Instructor, before finally having my own clubs, where I was Chief Instructor. Step 2 completed.

Now, all of this was because the Police Force did not provide us with the 'necessary'! We had a truncheon, and a whistle. That's it. No radio, of course, no Spray, no handcuffs, no Taser, etc. Nowadays, Officers mercifully have most of these, and take them for granted.

My point? Simply this; as technology makes newer defences available, they must be utilised in the defence of our 'front-line' troops. i.e. Police Officers,





and not left rotting on the shelf whilst our boys are being outgunned. (Figure of speech).

Not all our Officers are Huberts, just as I wasn't, and our 'public', thanks mainly to mass immigration and asylum-seekers, are getting ever more violent. Remember; on the streets, there can only be one guv'nor. Do we want that person to be a Police Officer – or an unmitigated thug?

Answers on a postcard please.

P.S. Sweeney. No I didn't fight Jackie Chan, but did have a good time with Susie Chan when I was in Hong Kong!

.....

That's Ol' Bill!

I was born & bred in a very small village, long ago, when everybody knew everybody and, more importantly, everybody actually spoke to everybody!

We kids went 'out to play' first thing, immediately after our 'paper-rounds', and only went home for meals during the day. Weren't any cars about, and no paedophiles or other queer folk. We would play in Dick Woollacott's farm, raid his fields for swede, scrump apples from gardens (we had a list of 'most desirable' apples!), pinch brussel sprouts or peas, play 'guns' usually in St. Peter's Church grounds, go down the 'cliffs' or to the beach – Caswell Bay mainly, as it was sorta our meeting-place, build dens, or, perhaps, a straightforward game of footers or cricket, down Underhill Park, and so on.

Now and then the air-raid siren would disturb our play and we would high-tail it home in case the German Bombers got us! Anyway, my brother Bill, who is 2 years my junior, was one of the 'gang', and unlike me, was a bit of a toughie. Because of that, he was also a sort of respected member of the gang in an adjoining area – the Newton gang.

Now Bill, apart from National Service in Cyprus, never left the area. He really did do his growing-up in this area; met his wife – a local girl; played for local soccer teams; frequented the local hostelry – the Newton Inn & the Rock & Fountain; sings in the world-renowned Morriston Orpheus Choir; and is an Artist of note.





My father, also Bill, was a ‘local’, being born & bred in the village, and was also a bit of a tearaway. He was a good heavyweight boxer and rugby-player, and totally addicted to Evan Evans & Bevan’s brewery products! Well, he was saved by World War 2, as he went into the army and took-out his violent streak on the hun. He was a member of the Long Range Desert Group and despite his weak spots, ended up a Sergeant Major. He then returned to the village where he spent his daytimes working for a local firm of Insulation Engineers, and his evenings in – yea, you’re ahead of the story, – the Newton Inn.

Well, I left the area at the age of 16, to join the Metropolitan Police Cadets, and never really returned until 1988, at the age of 50. So I hadn’t seen most of the locals for 34 years, and that was a long time bearing in mind that most of my mates were only 16 when last we met! Now, what tickled me was peoples’ memories. I was talking to one of my old mates who continually referred to me as Bill, so I let him do so. ‘Twas OK until he asked, “How is your brother who joined the Police Force?” Yea OK. But, with a well-known father – Bill – and a well-known bro – Bill – I didn’t stand a chance. I really, honestly, don’t mind going through life as Bill, but I must say that it totally pisses-off both Barbara and Nick.

Anyway, ’twas the last straw when I was talking, just the other day, to some lads in the Newton. One was a good pal from yesteryear. As I went to the bar to get a drink, one of the group said something to my mate, and I distinctly heard him say, “That’s Bill”. Now even I can’t take that from my own mate, so I remonstrated with him. He looked suitably embarrassed, and muttered, “I was telling him that you were ‘Old Bill’ in London”!!!! Oh dear, Oh dear. Do you ever get the feeling that you’re a loser!

Signed:- **DICKIE**bo.

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Copper Ward

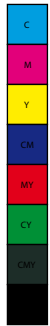
Happy Days – Are You Kidding?

OK! Regular readers will know that this is Copper Ward. He who ruled the world in the 1940s. AND he has ‘that’ look on his face.

Anyway, to start at the beginning. Just ‘cos I have gone on a bit about my marvellous, carefree childhood, some are of the opinion that we only remember the good times – that the bad times are strangely forgotten. Or, perhaps, there were no bad times. You kidding? There were bad times, though I don’t think of them very often, as there’s no point. We learn from them, and move on. But.....

Some of you will recall that brother Bill, Wiss Hixson and self, all but set fire to St. Peter’s Church Hall, were seen by Walter John (Canon W. J. Hickin. B. A.), and confronted at home by the said clergyman and my Mum. A bad time!

I was in the public telephone kiosk outside the very same church hall, doing the usual when I was bored. I would dial 100 for the Operator, and when she answered, I would say, in a pathetic voice, “Can you tell me the time, please?” She would say, “Put 1 penny in and dial TIM”. “I haven’t got any money”. “Then you cannot dial TIM”. “That’s why I’m calling you”. etc., etc. Anyway, as I was talking to her, I saw that a 1 penny piece was in the slot, but hadn’t gone right in. So, out came my penknife, inserted it into the slot, and had just started to prise the coin out when I heard, “Caught you





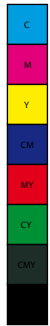
red-handed.” Yea, yea. Copper bloody Ward. I really didn’t like the way that he told me, yet again, to ‘get off home, out of it’. Kinda threatening, I thought. My God, I was right. Later that night, I was in bed, when I heard my father come in, from the pub. Nearly hysterical. “I was dragged out of the pub, in front of everybody by the Police. Told me that ‘my son’ had been caught stealing. Where is he?” Wow. Another bad, bad time.

There was this girl, Heather, who I quite fancied, and I think she fancied me. We must have been all of 14. She had her own horse and I was horse-mad. Anyway, we were just beginning to get on, when Mrs. Toomey had her annual gymkhana. All the boys went and we were standing watching the jumping, when we were joined by Heather. A bit of banter and before you know where you are, she reckoned that she could ‘fight’ me. The lads made a contest unavoidable. First one to the ground loses. Crikey, she came at me like a lumbering oaf! Walked straight into a hip-throw, and that was that. The ground shook as she landed plumb on her back. Another romance nipped in the bud. But, ‘twas a bad time! Honest. May have been this that set me back with the girls. Its OK, though, I caught up later!!

All of 10 years of age when I walked in front of the swings, down Underhill Park. They carried me home. Me Mum, of course, was out at work, so they (‘they’ being the do-gooders who took me home) filled my mouth with sugar, apparently to ‘cleanse the wounds’! When Mum saw the state of my mouth she was not amused. But when she found out that I had sucked-away 2lbs of sugar! Not a good day, I can tell you.

Tom Brace owned the ponies that we took onto the beach to give rides, 6p a go. One of his favourite ponies was Champ, who developed a nasty rash at the bottom of his leg. Tom and my ol’ man were good mates, as both spent the vast majority of the time in the pubs. Tom wanted me to go to the vet, Mr. Pugh, in Swansea, to get some very expensive lotion for Champ. I reckoned that if I went on my bike, I would save the 3p bus fare, then I could buy some sweets with it. So I did. BUT.....on the way back, the bottle fell from my pocket and smashed. Very expensive lotion + one poor, extremely irate friend of my father = Bloody bad news!

My first cigarette; I must have been about 10 or 11. On my newspaper round, I tried a Park Drive, from a packet of 10 that I had somehow obtained. I can still remember sitting on these concrete steps at the top of Caswell Avenue, my mate Frank Bowen saying, “Suck it (the smoke) right down”. I





did! Was I ill. Went home and straight to bed. No good trying to fool Mum. She could smell it. Bad time. I'd had the foresight to hide the remainder of the cigs in the wall of Mrs. Harris's opposite my home, behind a telegraph-pole. Didn't help. It poured down that night!

One more!!! We were down Caswell Bay and the tide was full in. As usual, we were diving into the sea from the rocks, about 150 yards from the beach, keeping away from the 'trippers'. (Holidaymakers from the ruddy valleys!). I wasn't much of a swimmer, though I could swim a bit. Anyway, when I tried to get back onto the rocks from my swim, the waves were too rough, and I was being swept into the rather sharp rocks. Survival mode kicked in, and I tried the impossible; swim to the shore. If I did. I was knackered. My arms weren't even coming out of the water, and I was taking about 3 breaths for every stroke. My arms were like lead and the beach was a little dot in the distance. (To me!). I knew I was done for. Then I heard it. My sister Pat, on the rocks with her boy-friends. She would make them save me – they were, after all, some 4 – 5 years older than me. Then I actually heard what she was shouting; "I'm telling Mammy when I get home. Showing off!" God! How I made it I'll never know. I went home in a daze, carrying about 2 gallons of sea-water in my stomach. I went straight to bed – "Not feeling well, Mam", and when Pat got home, I heard the whole sorry tale recounted to my Mum. Not a good day.

How come I could write this saga forever, whereas my 'Happy Days' only took a few paragraphs?

Answers on a postcard.

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Unforgettable Characters

So many of my ol' mates in the Force were real characters that it is hard to decide which were the most memorable. I'm not suggesting that Hammersmith was top-heavy with characters – but, it was. The LPP (London Police Pensioner) magazine recently mentioned two, both of whom I knew very well.

1. Sam. Sam was P.S.74F Taylor, now sadly no longer with us. He really was a Dixon of Dock Green, and actually looked just like him. Sam was, for many years, the duty Sergeant at FD. Most of us, at some time, went to





see him to try and get our duties changed. With his pencil always behind his ear and his eraser to hand, he would give a knowing smile and then, dependent upon his pleasure, he would either grant our request, or not! He wielded so much power that we christened him God. Matters came to a nice climax one Xmas, when some of the lads sent him a Birthday Card!! Tis rumoured that he had it on the wall of his office for years thereafter.

2. The Penguin. aka SPS Noel Earle. Noel was well over 20 stone, biggish moustache – grey – and a right grumpy old sod. But I liked him. When he was at FD as SPS, he was well known for his mood swings! One minute he would be raving at you, the next moment he would be like your favourite aunt. One day when he was Station Officer (I don't think he liked that duty), I had the misfortune to walk through the station office en route to the Comms room. The secret was to get through without attracting his attention. As usual, I failed miserably and when I was about halfway through, he turned and saw me. With an enormous roar (cos he guessed that I had been trying to avoid him), he picked up GO's and threw them at me. (GO = General Orders, and was an extremely large, very thick book). Anybody will know that this is no mean feat, for they are a goodly weight. I didn't stop to find out what condition the GO's were in, and there was just a puff of smoke as I disappeared into Comms. He followed me into the Comms room, put his arm around my shoulders and, with a huge grin said, "Taff, you like trying to annoy me, don't you?"

He was well over 20 stone and used to come to work on a tiny moped – riding kinda side saddle. We always said that he was a massive endorsement for the moped makers. He would approach Hammersmith Broadway from Beadon Road and what happened there would be anybody's guess. There would invariably be heavy traffic on the one-way system, not to mention a pedestrian crossing, and we all knew that he couldn't stop, as, if he did, then he would not be able to get mounted again. I'm not aware that he ever collided with anybody but I can't vouch for roadside property!

A measure of his popularity was the attendance at his 'farewell' function at Ravenscourt House. Many rather unusual people were there, for an SPS, including almost his entire relief, and many Senior Officers – including Sir Hugh Anneslie. Perhaps I'll say a bit about Sir Hugh some other time!





















