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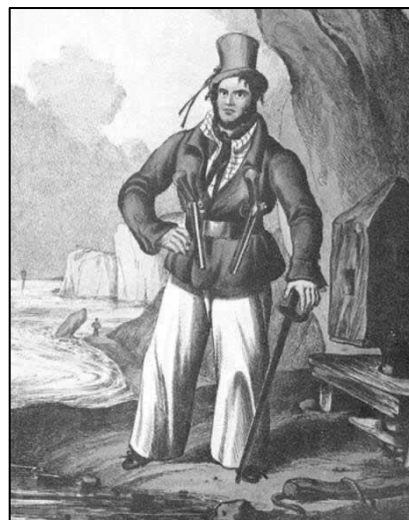
Honiton Borough Police 1848-1857

In 1848, the market and lace town of **Honiton** in east Devon was made a 'municipal borough' by virtue of the *Municipal Corporations Act 1835*. A clause in the Act permitted the formation of a Police Watch Committee responsible for overseeing a paid and uniformed police force in the town. **John Treby** was appointed as chief constable with seven officers under his command. Treby was an excellent thief-taker; one of the first cases prosecuted after the formation of the police in Honiton was that of a young boy caught stealing a silver spoon from his master. He was sentenced to a week's hard labour, during which he was to be 'privately whipt.' In 1857, the Devon Constabulary took over the policing arrangements in Honiton and the town's small independent police force was consigned to the history books.



Image: all that remains of the Honiton police force is these ornate truncheons. (Image © Allhallows Museum)

Policing Piracy



The above illustration depicts a so-called **preventiveman**, an early coastguard responsible for tackling smuggling. The preventiveman's job was often frustrated by the significant collusion between the smugglers and the magistrates on land who often benefited from the services the smugglers provided. Tea, brandy, sugar, cotton... all could be found cheaper abroad and smuggled to Devon and Cornwall's many isolated coves, where they would be sold on at low prices and without paying duty to the customs officials. The work of the preventivemen often went hand-in-hand with land based **riding officers**, who had limited constabulary powers to arrest smugglers, seize contraband and prosecute offenders. The job of the riding officer was a thankless one; there was no government funding and each riding officer had to pay his own court fees. The duties of the preventivemen, riding officers and customs officials are in the present divided between the Maritime Coastguard Agency and Border Force.

Helmet Badges of Devon and Cornwall's Police Forces

Note: the traditional custodian police helmet was introduced in the late 1870s, therefore for those forces abolished before the helmet was widely used (they wore top hats instead) there was no need to issue badges. Some wore a force crest on the upper sleeve, invariably made from metal or leather, of which there are no known surviving examples.



Tiverton Borough Police (1845-1942)



Great Western Railway Police (1835-1949)



Devon County Constabulary (1857-1966)



Plymouth Borough Police (1836-1927)



Devonport Borough Police (1838-1914)



Devon & Cornwall Police (1967-Present)



Falmouth Docks Police (1871-Present)



Penzance Borough Police (1836-1947)



Barnstaple Borough Police (1836-1921)



Devon & Exeter Police (1966-1967)



Exeter City Police (1836-1966)



Plymouth City Police (1927-1967)



Truro City Police (1836-1921)



Bideford Borough Police (1836-1889)



Cornwall County Constabulary (1856-1967)



St Austell Parish Police button



Torquay Parish Police button

Did You Know...?

The dockyard police force at **Devonport** issued police whistles to its officers in the 1860s, over twenty years before the Metropolitan Police did.

The first ever all-white police car in the south west was used in **Exmouth** in May 1963.

The black and white chequered band on the police flat caps and bowlers was the brainchild of Chief Constable Percy Sillitoe from **Glasgow City Police**. The design was inspired by the glengarries worn by the Scottish regiments of the British Army, and was introduced in Glasgow in 1932 to put an end to the problem of bus drivers, milkmen and postmen being mistaken for police officers. The pattern was adopted by most of the other UK police forces from 1972.

*The last ever dispute settled by duel in the UK took place at Haldon Racecourse, near **Exeter**, on 10th May 1832. **Sir John Jeffcott**, a High Court Judge, discovered that a local physician named **Dr Peter Hennis** had been spreading malicious rumours around town about him, namely that he was "...an amoral coxcomb, a vapid man terrified of the gutter and the poorhouse." After an earlier confrontation, both men met at the racecourse, each armed with two pistols, and took their ground at fourteen paces distance. A shot rang out, and Dr Hennis fell to the ground. He was conveyed, in agony, back to Exeter where he died a week later. Jeffcott was sought by the local magistrates for murder, but escaped justice by fleeing to Sierra Leone. The pistol that fired the fatal shot was recovered and remained in the care of the local police until disposed of during a firearms amnesty in 1966.*

Thomas Mercer (pictured below), the chief constable of **Tiverton** 1902-1926, held multiple official titles concurrently during the First World War, causing the press to speculate on what he did with his spare time. The titles included:

- Chief Constable
- Fire Brigade Captain
- Inspector of Mildew in Gooseberries
- Inspector of Food & Drugs
- Inspector of Explosives
- Inspector of Petroleum
- Inspector of Meat
- Inspector of Weights & Measures
- Shops Inspector
- Inspector under the Fabric (Misdescriptions) Act
- Common Lodging House Inspector
- Assistant Relieving Officer
- Inspector of Wart Disease in Potatoes
- Inspector of Cattle Disease
- Inspector under the Sheep Dipping Order



Respects Paid to Tiverton Policeman Killed in WW1



On 13th December 2019, a group of retired police officers visited Sanctuary Wood Cemetery in Ypres, Belgium, to pay respects to **PC Frederick James BEER** who died on 5th November 1914 fighting in service with the 2nd Battalion Coldstream Guards. Beer was a native of Moretonhampstead and served in the **Tiverton Borough Police** force. He was recalled to the colours on 4th August 1914 and departed England on 26th September. He was killed by enemy gunfire at Rentel Woods and in the heat of battle was hastily buried where he fell. For many years he was named on the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing until his body was located by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in 1927 and given a proper burial at Sanctuary Wood. The delay in locating PC Beer's body and the gradual amalgamation of police forces from 1921 to 1967 likely contributed to his accidental omission from the Devon & Cornwall Police war memorial. It was not until 2016 that he was formally recognised as a police war casualty and his name added to the force war memorial plaque.

A wreath was laid at PC Beer's grave with a handwritten message from Chief Constable Shaun Sawyer. Those in attendance toasted a glass of port in his memory, and promises were made to return to the grave in the near future. PC Beer lies amongst 1,988 other war dead from the armies of Great Britain, Australia, Canada, Newfoundland, Germany, New Zealand and South Africa. A significant proportion of the remains interred at Sanctuary Wood are unidentified.

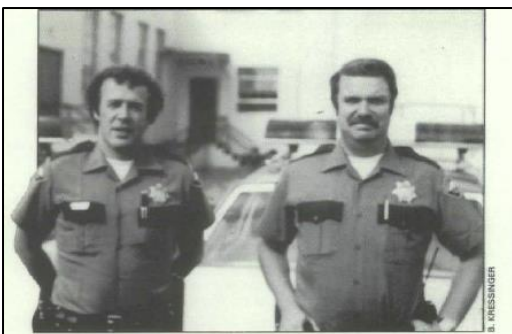


PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Chief Constable John Cottingham Alderson (right) takes over the reins from **Chief Constable Lt. Col. Ronald Berry Greenwood CBE** (left) at Middlemoor in 1973. Greenwood was the first chief constable of Devon & Cornwall Police after the 1967 amalgamation of the south-west's police forces. Greenwood was previously the chief constable of Devon & Exeter Police (1966-1967), Devon Constabulary (1961-1966) and before that was the chief constable of Dorset Constabulary.

Foreign Exchange



In 1981, a special arrangement saw Detective Inspector Barry Kressinger (pictured left – gentleman with the moustache) from **Devon & Cornwall Constabulary** swap places with Sergeant Dennis Chaney from the **Multnomah County Sherriff's Office** (Oregon, USA.) Kressinger was sworn as an American lawman and was partnered with Deputy Sherriff Jim McNelly. It was far from a vacation for Kressinger, who ended up taking part in one of the largest drug operations in the Pacific North West of

America, went undercover and posed as an arms dealer, and faced several gunmen during the six month attachment. He was given full police powers, body armour, uniform and a handgun, and his duties took him as far as Hawaii. During a prisoner escort, he travelled some 4,000 miles by road and by air through Colorado and North Dakota to Cheyenne, Wyoming. Whilst visiting California, he worked alongside the F.B.I. and Drug Enforcement Agency, followed by further attachments to the police forces and highway patrols of San Francisco and Palo Alto. Back in the UK, the American Sergeant Chaney worked alongside detectives in Exeter, went on the beat in city and rural areas, performed traffic duties and flew on the force helicopter.