



POLICING THE HOLY LAND

The Palestine Police Force
1920 – 1948



Published by the British Palestine Police Association
to mark the centenary of the formation of the Force



Ralph Cairns 1938

Acknowledgements

This booklet has been compiled by Ralph Cairns with text by John Cope, layout and graphics by Paul Kearney and a great deal of assistance from others.

The Roll of Honour of the Force is at www.policerollofhonour.org.uk/forces/colonial/palestine/bpp_roll.htm Two Centenary Articles written by Dr Séan William Gannon of Dublin University and Anne Blackman are published on the website of the Association with this book alongside earlier items on the history: www.britishpalestinepolice.org.uk .

The definitive book on the history of the Palestine Police is ‘A Job Well Done’ by Edward Horne BEM a former member of the Force published in 1982 and this booklet draws heavily on that. Other members of the Force who have written books about their experiences include Douglas Duff, Robin H Martin and Colin Imray. We have also drawn on the reminiscences of former members of the Force in the Association Newsletters and those of the predecessor Palestine Police Old Comrades Association, particularly in Part Four.

Official Papers from the time include the Palestine Blue Books 1926-45 and the Peel Royal Commission Report Cmd 5479 and other Inquiry Reports. They are published by HMSO and available at the Public Records Office.

A large amount of original material on the subject is archived at the Middle East Centre at St. Anthony’s College Oxford. There are relevant articles in the Police Journal.

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Foreword

by Lord Cope of Berkeley

Joint Patron of the British Palestine Police Association

The Holy Land has rarely been peaceful throughout recorded history, given the strength of the powerful religious emotions its history generates. From 1920 to 1948 the British struggled to govern Palestine under the Mandate she was granted by the League of Nations following the defeat in World War 1 of Ottoman Turkey, which had ruled there for over 450 years. The intention of the Mandate was to bring the country to independence with the existing largely Arab inhabitants and special arrangements for Jews. Given the conflicting promises we had made and the conflicting aspirations of Arabs and Jews for the territory, this was always a huge challenge and ultimately proved impossible. The Palestine Police were in the middle of the resulting struggle as they tried to contain the political forces released.

Initially the intention was that the Palestine Police should be mainly locally recruited Arabs (both Muslim and Christian) and Jews with some British Officers in command. As the years went by more and more British of all ranks were recruited to try and maintain neutrality. Quasi-military action was needed to maintain law and order and to defend the public and themselves in the face of increasingly murderous violence.

In the end Britain gave up the struggle to reconcile the two sides. The British retreat from the Mandate was an ignominious episode in our long history of governing other people. With the army in charge the British burned their vehicles and dumped arms into the sea as they boarded the last evacuating ships at Haifa. United Nations Resolutions were not accepted by those concerned on either side and were ignored. The inevitable and bitter Arab/Jewish war burst out into the open and resulted in the creation of the State of Israel and the dismemberment of Palestine. In the seven decades since then the problems have continued without resolution.

British and international policy may have failed, but the fault did not lie with the Police. Their honour was admired and their bravery and sacrifice recognised by King George VI's speech at the last parade of the British Palestine Police at Buckingham Palace. The Association exists to carry out The King's wish that "their sacrifice will not be forgotten".

This booklet published by the Association marks the centenary of the creation of the Force. The first part describes the political background and the organisational responses developed to deal with the violent, often lethal, threats to law and order and to the police themselves. The second part describes aspects of the lives of the British members of the Force. The third part summarises what happened to them afterwards, the fourth part reproduces some extracts from the interesting Association Newsletters over the years and finally we reproduce His Majesty the King's summing up in his speech in 1948.

Given its provenance this booklet is mainly about the British members of the Force but we place on record our abiding debt to the Arab and Jewish members who served alongside them with the same commitment.

John Cope

Part One

Policing Palestine under the Mandate 1920 to 1948



Occupied Enemy Territory

In 1917 when the British and Empire forces captured Palestine and adjacent countries from Ottoman Turkey who had sided with Germany in World War One, they first installed a British Military Governor and staff known as the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA) to take over the government temporarily until an internationally recognised arrangement could be agreed. One of their first problems was policing.

General Allenby entering Jerusalem 11 December 1919



Ottoman rule over Palestine and much of the Middle East had lasted for over 450 years. In 1917 there were small “municipal police” detachments in the towns totalling about 69 members and a “gendarmerie” of about 410 spread over the rural areas which could provide back-up when needed. Criminal investigations were carried out by the Public Prosecutor’s office and the Mukhtars (town mayors) dealt with minor offences. This system had been reasonably effective pre-war, when there was little organised crime or political disaffection, but strains were growing.

In the second half of the 19th century fierce persecution and expulsion of Jews from Russia and later Eastern Europe led them to want a country of their own. Increasingly those known as “Zionists” dreamt of Palestine and some went there. Zionist immigration and particularly the stated intention of some of the incomers to take over the country, led to the first growth of anti-Zionism in Palestine.

The Two Promises

During World War One self-determination had been promised to the Arabs in 1915-16 in public letters to Hussein, Emir of Mecca, in exchange for their help against Turkey. Subsequently Britain sought Jewish support and issued “The Balfour Declaration” in 1917 promising to support a “Jewish National Home” in Palestine “without prejudice to the rights of the existing (Arab) communities”. This deliberately vague wording was impossible if “National Home” was interpreted to mean “Jewish State” as it was by Zionists.

Meanwhile the 1916 “secret” Sykes-Picot agreement between the British and French (leaked by the Bolsheviks) proposed, if they were victorious, to divide the Turkish empire in the Arab Middle East into British and French Protectorates (effectively colonies). After WW1 was over these possibilities led to an upsurge of politically motivated violence.

The Beginning of the Palestine Police

On capturing Palestine and adjacent countries the British restructured and reformed the Turkish police under British military command. On 1 July 1920 the military OETA was replaced by the civilian government and the Palestine Police came into being under the Commandant of Police and Prisons Percy Bramley a former police officer from India who as a Lieutenant Colonel had been Director of Public Security of OETA. There were 15 British officers under Bramley with 55 Palestinian officers and 1144 other ranks mostly Arab (Muslim and Christian) with about 10% Jews.

Top left: General Allenby, Bishop MacInnes, Sir Malcolm Murray, Duke of Connaught, General Shea, General Chauvel, General Chetwode. Mount of Olives.c1917

Top Right: Camels at ? (place needed) from Mc Arthur collection which other photos stated ‘Jerusalem and East Mission’



The Mandate

Following the Versailles Peace Conference the League of Nations gave Britain, with effect from September 1923, the Mandate to prepare Palestine for independence and the legal basis of British rule was formalised. The population, which was at that time about 600,000 Arabs and 80,000 Jews, had not been consulted. British policy envisaged a joint Arab/Jewish state, but the desire of Jews was to have a state of their own and it strengthened over the 1930s as Nazi persecution built up towards the “Holocaust”. Increasingly the Arab Palestinians could see they had no place in the Jewish state that was planned and objected.

Top: Major McConnell and Major Faraday

Arab Unrest

As the sectarian unrest on both sides grew the policing problems grew too. On 1st May 1921 a violent clash in Jaffa between rival Jewish organisations escalated into a wider anti-Zionist riot and in a week there were 47 Jews and 48 Arabs killed. Some Arab and Jewish policemen were unwilling to stem the rage of their own people and some joined in the violence themselves on their respective sides. The army had to be brought in to help restore order.

The Gendarmeries

The British Government response was to set up the Palestine Gendarmerie in 1921 to be a reserve force in emergency of 20 officers (mainly British) and 500 other ranks. It was intended to be ethnically mixed and by 1922 was half Arab (Muslim and Christian) one third Jewish and the rest Druze and Circassian. Their training was tough and they proved remarkably free of religious or racial feelings. However over the years they were increasingly used for border duties against smuggling and for controlling rural gangs.

To deal impartially with the violence the 760 strong British Gendarmerie was created in 1922 for service in Palestine. Initially it was largely recruited from the Royal Irish Constabulary and its Auxiliary which were being wound up on the creation of the Irish Free State. They had tough training and a tough reputation which proved a deterrent and in practice its use in emergencies was rare in the four years of its existence. The few remaining British Army in Palestine could also assist the police in dealing with public order and inter-communal conflict.

The British Section

In 1926 in the interests of rationalisation and economy the two gendarmeries were incorporated into the Palestine Police which was divided into a Palestine Section and a newly created British Section. The multi-ethnic CID was also strengthened.

Many of the Palestine Gendarmerie transferred to the newly formed Trans Jordan Frontier Force across the river. Initially the British Section was 220 strong, but in subsequent years it was increased in strength in response to the rioting in 1929 and the Arab Revolt of 1936-39. This and the increasing violence of Zionist terrorism saw the British Section by 1946/47 increase to over 4,000 strong.

It remained official British policy to build a joint Arab/Jewish country with safeguards for both communities. Joint patrols of Arab, Jewish and British policemen were used and training emphasised normal police work. However this programme stuttered under the strain of events and in 1937 Sir Charles Tegart began to reverse the process. The “Tegart Forts” – fortified centres to replace outlying stations - were one result. Another was the creation of the Mobile Police Striking Force, a paramilitary force of three units each 50 strong. In 1944 this evolved into the 2,000 strong Police Mobile Force (PMF).

Arab Revolt

The 1931 census counted 174,610 Jews in a total population of 1,035,911. In 1936 Arab anger at British policy and the influx of Jewish refugees some openly determined to take over the country, led to a General Strike and shops and businesses closed for months.

Riots took place and were contained with difficulty and casualties on all sides. It became known as the Arab Revolt and lasted until 1939.



Peel Commission

A Royal Commission was set up under Lord Peel to consider the disturbances. It was independent but authoritative and the 'Peel Report' (Cmd 5479) in 1937 made clear that the policy of creating a united country for both communities was not working.

For the first time they proposed what is now known as the "Two State Solution" – the division of Palestine into two separate countries one Arab and one Jewish. The idea, but not the boundaries proposed, is still British and UN policy. It was (and remains) however deeply unpopular on both sides. Arabs did not see why Jews, with whom they had lived peacefully for generations should come in such large numbers and take over their country and rejected the plan.

When considering British policy of creating the new country including the "National Home" one should bear in mind that the history of the Jews in biblical times was well known in Britain (and in America) at that time. The British were church and chapel going people whose Protestant liturgy then included regular readings of

the Old Testament (the "first lesson"). So people knew in outline about the wanderings of the Hebrew people, their battles for the land of Canaan, the Kingdom of David and Solomon and later down to the Romans. Most British people had no comparable understanding of the great trading history of the Arabic speaking peoples who developed our mathematics and science and kept alive the knowledge of Greek culture and literature.



Zionist Terrorism

During World War Two Arab troubles subsided, but Zionist terrorism, inflamed by the persecution of Jews in Europe, increasingly aimed at destroying the British regime and creating a Jewish State. Some Jews had been armed by the British for the self-defence of isolated settlements. So there came into being the Haganah (which was to evolve into the Israeli Army after 1948) with the Palmach as its Special Forces and the freelance breakaway terrorist organisations Irgun Zvai Leumi and the smaller Lehi (or "Stern Gang") which specialised in

Top left: Al Bassa Tegart Police Post

Top right: Jaffa Riots 1921

Bottom left: Riot at the New Gate 1937/8



assassination. These terrorist organisations particularly targeted police intelligence gathering and some Jewish policemen secretly belonged. CID officers were specially attacked and several senior officers assassinated. These included Ralph Cairns and Ronald Barker (1939), Tom Wilkins (1944), Thomes Martin (1946) and Albert Conquest (1947). In November 1944 the Stern Gang killed Walter Guinness, Lord Moyne in Cairo. He was a former soldier, MP and the Cabinet Minister serving as Minister Resident in the Middle East.

In September 1948 they assassinated Count Bernadotte the Swedish diplomat appointed as a high-level mediator by the United Nations, but the UN proved toothless.

Throughout its existence the force tried hard to build traditional policing skills. The PMF and the Gendarmeries were largely paramilitary, but the main British Police operated with joint patrols particularly of Arab and British police. However the situation became increasingly fraught and the British Army became heavily committed in support. Protest marches, of either Arabs or Jews, quickly evolved into riots and then became wrecking mobs with danger to the lives and property of the opposite ethnicity. The Inspector-General, Brigadier John Rymer-Jones, said later that by February 1948 the Palestine Police “had necessarily largely abandoned police work as it was understood in Britain”.

The Dismemberment of Palestine

Under the intense pressure of events in May 1948 Britain finally handed the Mandate to the United Nations, the British and their Army withdrew with such dignity as they could manage and the Palestine Police were stood down. The “Twice Promised Land” was engulfed in the fierce Arab-Jewish war which resulted in the dismemberment of Palestine and creation of the State of Israel. For the British policemen their final parade was at Buckingham Palace with HM King George VI on 1st July 1948. His speech honouring their service is reproduced on page 22.

Top left: Bren-gun and crew try to locate a sniper; Old City, Oct 38

Top right: Troops and police at Damascus Gate during the occupation of the Old City, October 38. Sgt. Craig in foreground

Part Two

British Lives in the Palestine Police

Many of the British men who joined the Palestine Police were ex-army and it necessarily always had a paramilitary air. It offered exotic, dangerous adventure in a strange country with a warm climate. Most of the senior officers were ex-army and some had police service in India and elsewhere. Standards were high and in general morale was good and the comradeship, forged in tough circumstances that few at home understood, lasted long after service ended.

James Mackenzie

Early on there was an event which resonated. On 15 April 1922 District Commandant James Mackenzie, a young veteran of the Somme, was patrolling on horseback in Galilee with Inspector Ibrahim Effendi Oweida and six Arab Constables. It was very hot and they stopped by the river Jordan which was in flood. Inspector Oweida, seeking to water his horse, sank into the soft mud and fell from his horse into the swirling river. Mackenzie immediately went in to rescue him, but both men were swept away and drowned. The circumstances of this first British death in the force were widely known. It was said among the Palestinians “These Inglisi will sacrifice their lives for us”.



*Left: James Mackenzie sits in the front row with his dog
Right: James Mackenzie's Grave, Protestant cemetery Jerusalem 1922*



Rioting

Intercommunal violence was always waiting to break out on any perceived provocation. In 1928 there was trouble at the “Western Wall” where the Jews go to pray as it is the remaining part of the outside wall of the Second Jewish Temple built by Herod the Great on the site of King Solomon’s Temple and destroyed by the Romans in 70AD.

The whole Temple area is also sacred to Muslims and includes the El Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock two of their most beautiful and important shrines. Once violence started it soon escalated when it became known that a few extremist Jews wanted to rebuild the Temple which would mean destroying the Muslim shrines.

Over the months the problems were multiplied by rumours and in 1928/29 the few police had to try and control large mobs of both Arabs and Jews particularly in Jerusalem, Hebron, Nablus, Jaffa and Safed. The Arab and Jewish police were inevitably sometimes inhibited in dealing with their respective co-religionists and there were a total of 120 British police in the whole country and no military units. In one week 133 Jews and 110 Arabs died. In 1929 British military reinforcements in the form of sailors, marines and RAF personnel had to be rushed in from Egypt and Trans-Jordan.

Top: Farewell photograph of senior officers, taken at the time of departure of A.S. Mavrogordata Esq. the commandant, circa late 1931, early 1932



Rising Tension

It was difficult to back up the thinly spread British members of the force. For example Hebron, where the grave of Abraham is sacred to Muslims and Jews, is a Muslim town, but there was a small long established Jewish community. In August 1929 the Jews were violently attacked by a mob of several thousand Arabs and stoutly defended by the only British policeman Raymond Cafferata (later Superintendent) and a handful of local Arab constables from 9.0am until reinforced at 2.0pm by six British constables who had come from Jerusalem through road blocks and sniper fire. Over 60 Jews were killed there and much Jewish property destroyed.

The behaviour of the Police during the 1928/29 riots won them praise, but they were few at that time.

The official enquiry into the disturbances (the Shaw Report, published March 1930) set out the problem: “A National Home for the Jews, in the sense in which it was widely understood, was inconsistent with the demands of Arab nationalism, while the claims of Arab nationalism, if admitted, would have rendered impossible the fulfilment of the pledge to the Jews.”

Jewish Immigration

The 1930s initially saw a reduction in tension, but as the decade went on ships full of Jewish refugees escaping from appalling persecution arrived to settle and some Jews made no secret of their intention to take over the country. Arab leaders pressed the British government to limit immigration and immigration control became a hot political topic and a big policing problem.

In April 1936 a General Strike was called by Arab leaders, shops closed and angry demonstrations were organised which looked certain to end in attacks on Jewish property and lives. The police had to try and control the situation mainly armed only with batons and makeshift shields. But the situation got worse. In 15 months from 1 January 1938 236 Jews were killed by Arabs and 435 Arabs were killed by Jews.

During and after World War Two there was greatly increased yearning among Jews everywhere for a place of refuge as their appalling persecution in Europe became apparent and many sought refuge in Palestine. The British Government tried to limit the number of Jewish immigrants, realising they would make a jointly run Arab/Jewish Palestine impossible. So Jewish terrorist efforts were devoted to trying to drive the British out and control the country themselves and to illegal immigration on a large scale. From 1939 onwards Jewish terrorism became the main problem.

Top left: King David Hotel 1946

Top right: Palestine Police recruitment poster 1940's



Jewish Terrorism

On Boxing Day 1945 an Irgun gang shot their way into the Russian Hospice, where the CID headquarters were, and placed a large bomb which killed Assistant Superintendent George Smith in his office. Constable Noel Nicholson was killed by automatic fire trying to prevent their escape with his revolver. Constable Edward Hyde, who was off duty in the street, challenged the gang and Assistant Superintendent Denis Flanagan did separately. Both were shot dead. All three policemen were awarded the King's Police Medal posthumously.

The prestigious King David Hotel was built in 1930 and in July 1946 one wing was being used as offices by the Government. The Irgun, led by Menachem Begin, managed to smuggle milk churns full of explosive into the service entrance and the resulting explosion killed 91 men and women, of whom a third were actually Jews, and wounded many others. It was the worst single incident. While it was not a police office three Palestine Police officers there, two British and one Arab, died in the blast.

This atrocity was condemned by Ben-Gurion, the Zionist leader, and other Jews, but it also had an effect in encouraging the British to contemplate withdrawal.

Mounted Police

Mounted police were initially mainly Arabs from the former Ottoman police force, but from 1929 onwards they were increasingly British, usually from a cavalry or Royal Horse Artillery background. They policed in rural and hill districts and at one stage in columns 40 strong against determined gangs. They were regarded as the elite of the force and also provided ceremonial escorts to Judges and other VIPs. Equestrian and other standards were high.

Edward Horne in his history of the Force "A Job Well Done" quotes an anonymous recruit with a squad travelling from Egypt by train to join the force: "At Gaza we halted for a quarter of an hour and we looked out upon the Arab town with all the bustle of the market place. . . the small boys scampered to get out of the way and I saw one of the smartest men I'd ever seen in my life. A British Palestine Policeman rode slowly through the crowd on a beautiful horse. Every button and every piece of saddlery gleamed in the sunshine. He seemed superbly indifferent to the world around him and yet somehow aware of everything in sight. . . We were thrilled to think we were joining such a force." He goes on to tell of the sweat and curses they were to expend to reach these standards.

Top left: King David Hotel 1946

Top right: The Mounted Section



Maritime Police

The Port and Maritime Section came fully into being following the building of a proper Harbour in Haifa in 1933. For a period during WW2 the policemen involved were all transferred to RNVR in case of their capture when far out to sea. They helped commando troops fighting the Vichy French in Lebanon. At one stage there was a threat of Turkish invasion, so the white ensign flew on a police launch on the Sea of Galilee. The Section was particularly involved with immigration control and this made them a special target for Jewish terrorists. In 1940 the SS Patria was in Haifa Harbour full of Jewish immigrants who had been refused permission to land and were due to sail to Mauritius when it was blown up and sunk by Jewish terrorists to prevent her sailing. Two British policemen drowned trying to rescue people and 240 Jews died in the water.

Camels, Traffic, Dogs

There was plenty of variety in the aspects of policing which were covered. Apart from horses the Palestine Police also had camel patrols in the Neqeb (now Negev) desert to the South and most of the police there were recruited from the Bedouin.

The Traffic Section grew from 1929 onwards with the growth of road traffic. They had responsibility for licensing and inspection of vehicles as well as road safety. The Dog Section was started by Inspector General Spicer in 1934 and two Doberman Pinchers soon had great success in tracking and identifying suspects. As a result the Section was increased.

Prisons

The police were also responsible for prisons and prisoners both in the jails for long serving prisoners and for short sentence prisoners held in local police station lock-ups. Most prisoners learnt trades in prisons and much useful work was done. Some female staff ("Women Searchers") helped with female prisoners and Violet Graham, the "Matron in Charge" at Bethlehem, was sworn as a constable – becoming the only woman who was a full member of the Palestine Police.

*Top left: The Dog Section
Middle: The Camel Section
Top right: Violet Graham*

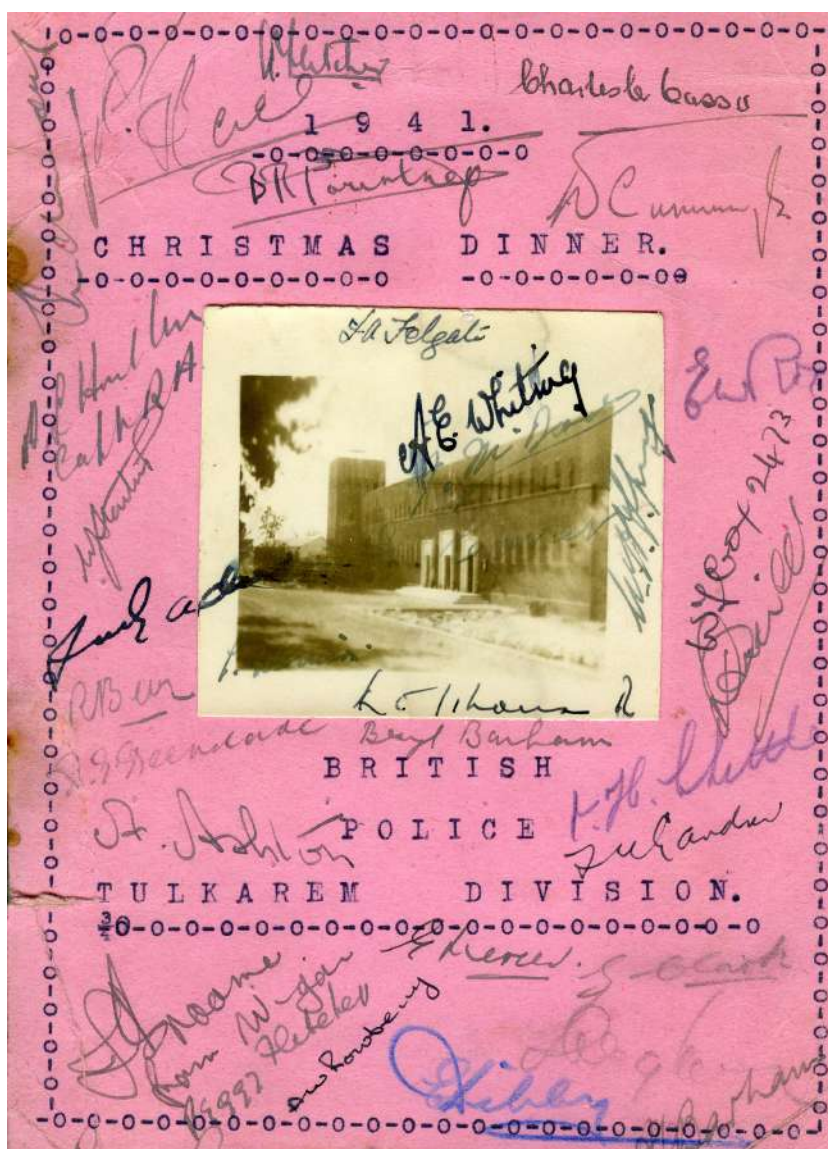


The Police Band

From 1921 to 1948 there was a fine Police Band which was good for morale and public relations, but whose members did normal tough police duty when necessary for which they were also fully trained. In October 1938 Arab rebels barricaded the Old City and closed the gates. For four days the rebels controlled most of the Old City within the Crusader era walls until a determined, well organised attack by Police, the Coldstream Guards and the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers retook control. But throughout this time the Jewish Quarter alone had remained in police control valiantly defended against fierce attack by the members of the band under the Bandmaster. They too had their share of casualties.

Sport

Life in the Palestine Police was not all duty. Sport was encouraged in the force from the first as part of team building and personal development, particularly soccer, shooting, boxing and mounted gymkhana sports including those with sword and lance. Photographs show an array of silver cups which were awarded at Sports Days and for inter unit matches. Field sports were encouraged including game shooting of grouse and partridge, 'pig-sticking' (hunting wild boar on



Top left: The Traffic Section
Top right: Police Band 1940's



horses with lances as in India) and fox and jackal hunting with the Ramleh Vale Hunt which was police organised including a Point to Point meeting. Rugby football, cricket and hockey started later but were played to a high standard.

High Standards

Throughout its existence the Palestine Police were often in the forefront of policing innovation and a high standard was achieved. The basis was a high standard of training. For example square bashing was often under former guardsmen and it paid dividends later in showing discipline while controlling hostile crowds.

The Force was fortunate to have no shortage of recruits until the closing stages and successive Commanders who were open to innovation. The result was that when the end came in 1948 former Palestine policemen went on to be welcomed in other forces world-wide and many achieved high rank.

Part Three

Afterwards

Moving On

When the remaining British Police ended their service on Stand Down in 1948 many went to other colonial police forces and some achieved high rank. 450 went to Malaya, where about 90 of them died in the emergency, 200 to Kenya to fight the Mau Mau, 100 to Libya, 80 to Cyprus, 60 to Egypt, among other places. Some took jobs with the Iraq Petroleum Company, BOAC or shipping companies.

The Metropolitan Police and other home forces also recruited and many rose to high rank. Athelstan Popkess became Chief Constable of Nottingham.

British Constable 2536 K. Newman had joined the Palestine Police from war service in the RAF in the Far East. In 1948 he became a Constable in the Metropolitan Police and rose up the ranks until he became successively Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, Commandant of the Police Staff College and in 1982 Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. He retired in 1987 as Sir Kenneth Newman GBE QPM with a reputation as one of the most experienced and thoughtful policemen this country has known.

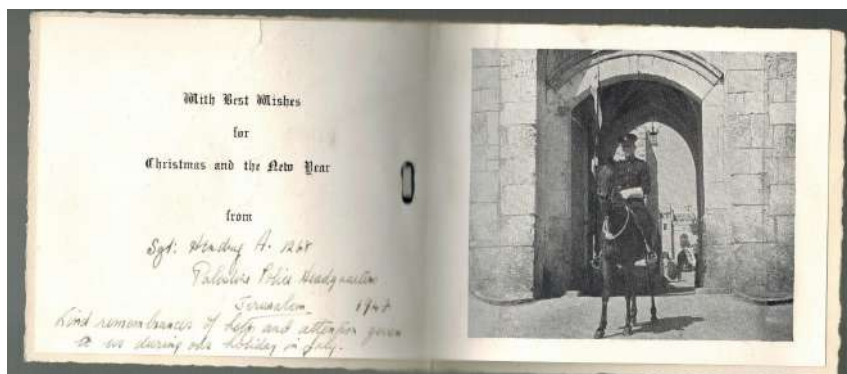
Left Behind

On leaving we left behind the graves of 340 British Palestine Policemen who had died since 1920 (9 died in Britain after repatriation because of injury or illness suffered in Palestine) and also those of the 276 Arab and Jewish colleagues in the Force who were killed. Many of the British graves are in the beautifully kept Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries such as those in Jerusalem, Ramleh and Haifa and others in other cemeteries such as the Protestant cemetery on Mount Zion with a fine view over the Old City of Jerusalem. They are listed on the Roll of Honour (see the Association web-site) and local friends of the Association help ensure they are all properly kept and assist with visits as necessary.

Old Comrades

In 1948 there was already a thriving Old Comrades Association with branches in many overseas territories and all over the UK and reunions were organised regularly. With the passing of the years there were fewer former members of the Force able to attend and in 2014 the Palestine Police Old Comrades Association morphed into the British Palestine Police Association.

One of the founders of the BPPA was Margaret Penfold and she was the energetic editor of the Newsletter until she died in 2018. It is a mine of information on the history of the Palestine Police. We reprint



some extracts on pages ... She also told the story of Palestine during the Mandate through her four novels. She was born in 1933 in London and went to Palestine age three. She lived there with her parents until 1948 except for a period evacuated with her mother to South Africa 1942-45. So she grew up surrounded by the beauty and the troubles of Palestine, a land she loved. Her father survived the bombing of the King David Hotel and much else. After University she lived in Leicester. Her first book was *Struggling Free* about an Arab woman of the Greek Orthodox community in the Holy Land - the original Christians. Her trilogy *Land of Broken Promises* tells the stories of three women, one English, one Muslim and one Jewish, giving their different perspectives and interwoven lives.

Membership is open to former Palestine Policemen, to their descendants and relatives and to anyone else interested.

It exists to keep alive the memory of that special group of policemen who served faithfully in the Holy Land with their Arab and Jewish colleagues.



Top left: Margaret Penfold

Top right: Palestine Police Christmas Card 1947

Middle Right: Palestine Police Plot - Festival of Remembrance 2019

Bottom Right: Palestine Police cutlery



**PALESTINE POLICE
OLD COMRADES'
ASSOCIATION**

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NEWS LETTER



**Happy Christmas
To All Our
Readers**



No. 125 PUBLISHED QUARTERLY DECEMBER 1981

Top Left:
Top Right:
BottomRight:

Part 4

The Experience

These notes by former British Palestine Policemen about their experiences are taken from the Newsletters published over the years originally by the Palestine Police Old Comrades Association and now by the British Palestine Police Association.

The newsletters are a treasure trove of information on what it was like for British men sent to police Palestine, a country superficially familiar from the Bible, on which most of them had been brought up, but which was real, foreign and with acute tensions. The rural peasants mostly lived a hard life in villages surrounded by harsh, barren country, but beautiful in spring when covered in wild flowers.

The townsfolk were educated Levantines, wily after many centuries of being under a succession of conquerors, of whom the British were the latest. They were used to living at the junction of Europe, Asia and Africa on the shores of the Mediterranean and doing business with all. Some had been Christian long before the British but the majority were Muslim. Traditional hospitality flourished. A few Jews had always lived there in pious poverty, but increasingly there was an influx of Westernised Jews fleeing from terrible persecution after centuries of doggedly maintaining their religion and firmly keeping themselves separate. They were fiercely determined to seize the chance to have their own country, while the indigenous majority saw their promised self-determination snatched away before their eyes.

The British were officially supposed to help both sides live peacefully together in the Holy Land, but in practice they found themselves viciously, sometimes fatally attacked by belligerents from both sides.

Three Constables – The First Murders (1923)

Eugene Quigley – Deputy Commandant (1920-32)

Ralph Cairns – C.I.D. (1930-39)

John M Tyrrell – Memories (1945-48)

Jeff Smith – Daily Duty (1947-48)

Ron Pont – Recurring Mistaken Identity (1947-48)

Terry Shand – Leaving Jerusalem (1948)

Three Constables

The First Murders (1923)

In 1923 British Gendarmerie Constables 790 Edward Davies, 466 John Albert Loydall and 539 Joseph Edward Purvis became the first to be murdered on duty when their mobile patrol was ambushed. They were buried in the small Protestant Cemetery in Nazareth, but after the British withdrawal in 1948 their burial place became abandoned, forgotten and lost.

Between 10th and 14th June 1923 the British High Commissioner, HE Sir Herbert Samuel, was due to visit Metullah, the northern most Jewish colony, and Banyas (Dan) prior to the transfer of the area from French Lebanon to British Palestine control. On the afternoon of Sunday 10th June, twelve members of No 6 Company British Gendarmerie (BG), stationed at Nazareth, comprising a Sergeant and ten Constables under the command of Lieutenant R.B. Parker, in two police vehicles were detailed to escort the High Commissioner's party from Rosh Pina to Metullah. At 14:35 hours the BG escort party was joined by the HC's party in one car with an outrider and the whole moved to Metullah arriving at 17:00, when the security was handed over to the Palestine Gendarmerie. At 17:45 the BG escort left Metullah and took a different route to return to Rosh Pina.

The escort now consisted of two Gendarmerie vehicles: a Ford Touring Car containing Lieutenant Parker and Constables Golden (driver) Davies and Loydall, and a Ford Tender containing Sergeant McMahon and six Constables including Constable Purvis. About 19:00 hours at Wadi Hindush (or Hindaj) near Ain-el Mellahah, North-West of Lake Huleh, Lt. Parker in the leading car saw 8 men in front acting suspiciously. He ordered his driver to stop and got out, revolver drawn, to see what was happening, when they were immediately fired on from their front and side. Lt Parker returned fire but the three constables in his car were all hit. Loydall, was killed outright and Parker ordered the two wounded constables to fall back on the Tender about 50 yards behind. As they did so Davies was hit again and mortally wounded. Meanwhile the tender had also come under fire from both sides.

Constable Croy had been wounded and then became cut off from his colleagues and got lost in the confusion. Purvis had been hit twice and was fatally wounded. The remaining officers continued to engage their attackers for some 20 minutes when it began to get dark and fire slackened. Golden volunteered to retrieve the car, which he did and all except Croy who could not be found, left the scene in the two police vehicles. During the exchange of fire five constables were wounded, three fatally. They drove to the village of Yesod Hamaala to seek medical assistance, Constables Davies and Loydall, were already dead and Constable Purvis died from his wounds there the following morning. Croy made his way back to Jahala village and sent for police. The next day all returned to Nazareth. The HC's visit was terminated early, his party returning on 12th.

The escort thought there were as many as twenty or more attackers at the ambush. Parker stated that he saw eight in the road ahead and they were also fired at from the flanks. The Touring car has 16 bullet holes and the Tender had 12. Their occupants had 8 gunshot wounds. Four of the assailants were arrested on 12th by French authorities near the Lebanon border in possession of Loydall's rifle and under interrogation implicated a fifth man. They were identified as members of a notorious gang of Arab bandits responsible for several attacks and murders on the Lebanon roads in recent months.

Constables Davies and Loydall, were buried with military honours on 11th June and Constable Purvis on 12th, side by side in Nazareth Cemetery. Davies was aged 20 and was originally from Warwickshire.

He had been secretly married on joining (the force taking only single men). He was survived by his wife and baby son who received a police pension and child allowance. He was appointed to the force on 28th April 1923. Constable Loydall, was aged 35 and a single man from Kent. He had been in the force since 30th March 1922 having been a labourer, a soldier and a Constable in the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). Constable Purvis was also single and from Northumberland. He was appointed 31 March 1922 and was a former surveyor. He had also been a Constable in the RIC during which he had been awarded the Constabulary Medal for Gallantry.



One of those present at the Nazareth funerals was Constable Michael Higgins who had joined the Gendarmerie in 1922 and retired in 1947 as an Inspector in the Palestine Police. His son Martin Higgins found a photograph of the funeral and instituted a search for the graves in 2011. Through the work of Michael Gottschalk and Dr Norbert Schwake in Israel, together with Revd. Emad Diabes of the Anglican Christ Church the three graves were found, headstones abandoned, broken and sunk in the soil. With funding from PPOCA new headstones were inscribed and put in position, together with those on two other graves of Constables Grieve and Goodright who died off duty in 1935. A ceremony of rededication was organised in 2012 by Michael Gottschalk and attended by the Mayor of Nazareth, Mr Ramiz Jaraisy and Mr Paul Price the head of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in Israel. The PPOCA was represented by Anthony Rae. This is an example of the work done and the help the Association receives in looking after PP graves.

Eugene Quigley M.C.

Deputy Commandant (1920-32)

Eugene Quigley was born in 1889, the son of an agricultural labourer in rural County Sligo. He started work as a Railway Clerk, but at age 19 he followed an uncle and joined the Royal Irish Constabulary as a Constable. In December 1914 when World War One started he joined the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and in 1915 was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant. He won the Military Cross in 1916. At the end of the war he transferred as a Captain to the Royal Fusiliers. He married the American born Lillie in 1918 and was posted to Palestine under General Allenby and worked in the Department of Public Security in the military government. They lived in Palestine for 14 years and started their family there – a daughter and a son.

When the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration gave way to civilian government Quigley left the army, joined the newly created Palestine Police and was put in charge of the new Criminal Investigation Department.

Quigley did a good job creating the new CID but the Arabs' disillusion with the allies' decisions promising their land to Jews led to countrywide riots that started in Jaffa. The police had to be helped by the army to put down the riots and the subsequent Hayworth Commission of Inquiry revealed that intelligence had not provided sufficient prior warning although no blame fell on Quigley. He was promoted Superintendent of the Jaffa District. After the Arab riots of 1929 intelligence gathering and surveillance of political elements was added to police functions and Special Branch was established. Quigley was promoted to Deputy Commandant of the Palestine Police and his command included the expanded CID including Special Branch.

Among other contributions he recruited a bandmaster, Aubrey Silver, from the Royal Fusiliers to launch the Band of the Palestine Police (no doubt recalling the well known RIC Band in Dublin) which became valuable for public relations and morale as well as their police duties.

Quigley retired because of declining health in 1932 and died in London in 1939. His son Godfrey Quigley was a pilot in the RAF and later became an actor.

Based on an Article by Margaret Penfold in the BPPA Newsletter 10, 2017.

Ralph Cairns

C.I.D. (1930-39)

Ralph Cairns was born in Greenock, Scotland in 1907. His father, a lithographer, volunteered for the army in World War One and was invalided out in 1917 with the rank of sergeant. Ralph was always close to his younger brother, known as Jock. They went on holidays together on a motorbike in the UK, Switzerland and Germany and Ralph learned German and found a facility for languages. He worked at first as a salesman but in 1931, lured by the prospect of adventure, he joined the Palestine Police. He soon became fluent in Arabic and was the first British policeman to become proficient in Hebrew. His

language ability soon resulted in his transfer to the CID and to promotion to sergeant. He mixed readily in both Arabic and Jewish social life helped by his ability to play the piano.

At a dance he met Marianna, a German girl who was working as governess to a Scottish family in Haifa, where he was posted, and they fell in love. In 1936 he was posted to Jaffa but they stayed in contact. In April 1938 an explosion on a Jaffa to Haifa train killed two Arab women. Sergeant Walter Medlar and Constable Michael Ward were killed by a booby trap when investigating the bomb. Sergeant Cairns was sent to investigate the murders which were unusual in that the original attack was aimed at women and children, there being few Arab men on the train. Using his contacts he came across a new name Abraham Stern a Polish Jew, the leader of a terrorist cell operating independently of the known terrorist groups Haganah and Irgun.

Cairns' work by this time was increasingly more of intelligence gathering than largely criminal matters. It included many dangerous assignments such as one he told his brother about in a letter home. He was under cover posing as a Bahai/Christian Arab at a desert trading post when he was recognised as a policeman. He immediately invited himself as a guest and relied on the ingrained hospitality of the Arabs for two days, knowing that he was safe as long as he was a guest, but once he left others lying outside would see he did not return to relate what he had seen. He then took advantage of a visit by a police armoured car to escape safely.

In 1938 he was promoted to Inspector (age 29) and transferred to CID HQ in Jerusalem. Marianna contrived to get a new job looking after the family of a British administrator in Jerusalem. At Christmas 1938 by coincidence both Ralph and Jock gave each other cufflinks. Each of them were engraved T.O.H. meaning 'The Other Half' which is how they signed their letters to each other.

Increasingly the situation in Palestine was deteriorating. Arab and Jewish terrorists were attacking traffic and settlements and the police were the target of both. The CID used the ambivalence of many Jews towards the particularly ruthless methods of the Stern Gang to gain intelligence and increased the pressure on them. The Stern Gang issued a leaflet saying that Inspector Cairns was to be killed for torturing Jews. Two different factors were involved – improved interrogation techniques (far short of any definition of torture now or then). Also one of the CID informers on the inside of the Stern Gang called Binyamin Zeroni was arrested by a beat bobby stealing fertiliser for use in explosives. This posed a problem for CID. If he were released he would have been exposed as an informer and killed by the Stern Gang and if he remained in custody he was no use to CID. He was carefully "roughed up", his escape was contrived and he survived his interrogation by the Stern Gang. Unfortunately Zeroni was picked up again in a group raid by the Police and Army. This time his escape looked too easy and he was sentenced to death by Irgun but he managed to escape to USA.

In early 1939 Ralph and Marianna got engaged. In summer they were walking together arm in arm through the Old City when the pillion rider on a moped opened fire on them. Marianna found herself pushed to the floor and when she got up a man was lying on the floor with Ralph standing with his revolver in his hand. A second later attempt at assassination also failed when the bullet was deflected by an armour plate which Ralph was wearing under his coat.

The wedding was planned for August in Switzerland as their parents did not want to travel to Palestine and Marianna returned to Germany to make arrangements. It was there that she discovered she was

pregnant! They exchanged letters and there was talk of Ralph taking a police job in Nigeria or Kenya. Marianna heard on the radio that two police officers had been killed in Jerusalem. She knew in her heart that it was Ralph and that was confirmed on the telephone.

A bomb of 30lbs of gelignite surrounded by nails coated with a substance to cause infection in wounds was planted under the path to the house. It was exploded by remote control by a 16 year old male with a female of the same age acting as lookout. Ralph died instantly and his friend Inspector Ron Barker died from infected wounds 24 hours later. Ralph was wearing the cufflinks that Jock had given him and a watch Marianna had given him as an engagement present. It was 26th August 1939.

The fact is that neither the Stern gang nor Irgun could afford to leave the investigative talents of Cairns or, later, his colleague Deputy Superintendent Wilkin untouched. Wilkin was shot by an Irgun assassin in September 1944.

A week after Ralph was killed Britain and Germany were at war, but Marianna remained married to him in her heart and soul. Every year of her long life she would take a wreath and a candle to her local church even at the age of 90. Their daughter was born on 21st March 1940 and named Ralpa. One morning Marianna opened the door to a man in uniform who knew she had been in Palestine. He was from the Gestapo and she had to prove that Ralpa was not the daughter of a Jew or they would both be arrested. Fortunately she was able through the Swiss consulate to get confirmation that Ralpa was the child of a deceased British officer.

Jock 'The Other Half' took ten years to get over his brother's murder, but eventually he married and they had a son. There was only one possible name and Ralph Cairns is now a lawyer and Treasurer of the British Palestine Police Association.

John M Tyrrell,

Memories (1945-48)

In the early months of 1945 aged 19, I was waiting my call up for air crew duties with the RAF. I had been working for Flying Control Staff at South Marston near Swindon, where I received instructions to report for an army medical.

My Father who was a serving Police Officer in Bristol, drew my attention to an advertisement in the press for the Palestine Police. I applied to Millbank, London and had an interview with the Crown Agents, followed by a medical at Harley Street. Within two weeks I received instructions to report to the Blythswood Hotel in Glasgow to be kitted out in uniform, prior to boarding a troopship in the Clyde. We sailed in convoy to Gibraltar then Malta and finally Port Said. Then by train to Haifa. There followed three weeks of entrance training, including a tour of the country and firearms practice at an isolated spot in the hills.

I was transferred to Shafa Aram at the end of training. Most of my duties were patrolling the Haifa district at night in a personal vehicle.

I later applied and was accepted as a Traffic Constable in Jerusalem. After a short period I fell ill with appendix followed a complication of the bowels. It was decided to send me home for a month. Whilst at home I had a poignant meeting with an old school friend Reginald Bonfield (PP #2449) who was very interested in my job, and unknown to me joined the force and was subsequently was posted to Haifa. I'm saddened to say that on the night of the 29th September 1947 whilst asleep he was killed by a bomb catapulted from a lorry by the Irgun.



When I returned to Palestine I continued as a Motorcyclist working around Jerusalem. On Sundays three of us escorted the High Commissioner to church as his outriders. A senior Constable left the traffic office and was sent home to act as an official at the Empire games and I filled his place. My duties included acting as prosecution at the Magistrates Court. I had an Arab Policeman acting as interpreter.

Conditions in Palestine were deteriorating and eventually all systems of control were lost. We knew we were leaving by the 15th May 1948.

Jeff Smith

Daily Duty (1947-48)

In January 1947 I arrived in Mount Scopus in Jerusalem at Police Training College. Part of the training was attending the spectacular Easter celebrations at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and also duty at the Wailing Wall.

After training I was posted to Lydda Police Station (near Tel Aviv) and introduced to the 8-hour shifts which were 6 to 2, 2 to 10 and 10 to 6. We did a week at a time then changed to another shift. Duties were town patrol – checking hotels, traffic duties, general police duties – in the night duty 10 to 6 we usually ended up sleeping on the flat roof of the Arab PC's house. Station duty was either on the entrance desk or guard duty in the station. Guard duty in the Tower meant locking the entry to make sure the station sergeant didn't find you dozing off.

On town duty one day I found the locals were building a road block on the main Jerusalem road through Lydda to stop Jewish traffic going through. The 2 Arab PCs and I shouted and ran towards them and most of them cleared off and we cleared the road block. Previously a car with a Jewish butcher and family were stopped outside the town and burnt to death in their car.

Day duties also meant escorting Arab orange grove workers to the groves which were next to a Jewish settlement and overlooked by Jewish guards. We also had to escort explosives to quarries to make sure that the 10 sticks of dynamite delivered meant 10 detonations occurred.

There were always a lot of armed robberies on the main Haifa Road, and we had a week of driving an unmarked car up and down, hoping to be robbed – but never were.

One day the station sergeant told me to take a Jordanian illegal immigrant back to Jordan across the Allenby Bridge. The Jordan Police in town refused to take him as he had no documents and so I started back across the desert area – after a few miles I turfed him out into the desert. He was happy, I was happy and the station sergeant would have been unhappy if I had returned with him. Obviously I never did mention it.

After a few months I transferred to the Mounted Section which was based at Beisan in the Northern Jordan Valley. I had never sat on a horse before. The 3 months' course there was brilliant, and as the depot was winding down we kept our own school horses at the end of the course. Dan Scullion and I were posted to Qalquilia Police Station in Tulkarm District, having ridden most of the way there. There were 4 British mounted constables and about a dozen Arab mounted ones with a British sergeant. A day patrol was one British and 2 Arab constables or 2 British and 4 Arabs. We visited isolated villages and Bedouin camps, seeing the local headman and having a coffee or a meal. The Bedouin were good hosts, but I managed to avoid eating the proffered sheep's eyes.

Things were getting quite het up in the country as everyone knew we were leaving in May '48. Guns were everywhere, you could stop a taxi or car at a checkpoint and find rifles on the back seat. The only sensible thing to do was ignore them. On a mounted patrol visit to a village headman I took my rifle off the saddle and kept it with me and had a coffee. After a while the Arab PC whispered to me that the crowd outside were going to take my rifle. We made a quick exit, got on our horses and pushed through the throng. We were aware that a colleague had been stabbed in Gaza and his rifle taken.

R. H. Pont

Recurring Mistaken Identity (1947-48)

The Mounted Section ribbed the pair of us as they rode back into the Tegart fort from a routine patrol. The security of a large area of West Bank of the Jordan was the responsibility of this police post at Jisr-el-Majami, where the river Yarmuk joins the Jordan, at the Roman bridge a couple of miles south of the Sea of Galilee. 'So you were the two with pistols in their belts thought to be Jews checking out Arab farmlands!' During their mounted patrol they had been accosted by fellaheen, Arab farmers, complaining of a couple of armed men in western civilian dress, walking purposefully through their lands, obviously up to no good.

It was early summer 1947, and a couple of us, fresh out of training depot at Sarona, decided we'd do a trek on our day off from Nazareth back to the police post. Hitching a lift at six a.m. on the police truck which went up to Nazareth for stores every fortnight, we dropped off before the town itself at the foot of Mt Tabor at about eight o'clock. A strenuous rough track to the top brought us to the monastery, Tabor being the Mount of the Transfiguration of Christ 19 centuries ago. The ever-hospitable monks showed us round, finishing in the refectory where, to our surprise, they provided a loaf and carafe of wine. Visitors were few those days, and this was their customary hospitality to all who made the climb.

Off again easterly, guided by the sun for we only had a road map, no footpaths marked, down goat tracks to sparsely cultivated foothills. By now mid-day, with splitting headaches from the wine which was good

(being young, we had finished it), and the sun on uncovered heads, the stony paths down wadis, dry stream beds, became an obstacle course. Then afternoon brought us to a tiny, heaven sent spring beside the path; to slake our thirst, cool our heads, replenish water bottles. Evening approached and still no sign of the Jordan valley; the familiar hills we had expected to guide us home looked different, unfriendly, when approaching from the west. As dusk closed in, finally rounding the shoulder of a hill, down in the distance the shape and lights of the police post lifted our spirits. We had calculated for 17 miles, but, blistered and leg-sore surely completed twenty as we hobbled through the gates. Militant armed Jews indeed! A couple of feckless lads.

‘I’ll get at you – you b****y Jewish b*****d!’, shouted the badly injured squaddie being carried down the railway embankment, restrained as he struggled to get off the stretcher. It was the autumn of 1947 when the Irgun Zvai Leumi were at their peak of malice against the Mandate Power, and I was on duty in mufti, (civilian dress) on the daily Cairo to Haifa train. Somewhere between Khan Younis and Lydda a huge bomb had been concealed in a culvert. The front portion of the train passed over it safely. It was detonated under the three rear coaches reserved for our troops. Absolute carnage everywhere, body parts, wrecked carriages thrown into the orange groves, twisted rails on the destroyed embankment. Fortunate to have been in the forward coaches, I just escaped clobbering by a justifiably furious British soldier. That smell of cordite, smoke and destruction still wafts back at times, seventy years since, as it must do for all who have been through violent war zones.

After the Jordan Valley I had been posted to al-Quantara in Egypt on the Suez Canal, and this sort of mistaken identity was a daily occurrence. ‘Just who is this schoolboy in civilian clothes, asking questions in basic Arabic, checking our passports?’

Recurring identity issues came about thus: at the close of the three months training in the Sarona depot all recruits filled in a form for their preferred branch of future service. I was writing down ‘Mounted Section’, when a drill sergeant looked over my shoulder; ‘Oh no you don’t, Constable Pont. You’ve had a proper education. Write CID!’ Glum obedience. It worked out well, I was in the Frontier Control Section of the CID, a really interesting job. Issued with a ‘plain clothes allowance’ I don’t think I ever wore uniform again, until the final embarkation convoy to Haifa at the Mandate’s end.

Within three weeks of leaving school I was in Palestine, still only eighteen. No blame to those countless passengers who wondered, during my 30,000 miles (more than the world’s circumference) backwards and forwards across the Sinai desert on the Cairo- Haifa train ‘Who is this kid?!

Terry Shand

Leaving Jerusalem (1948)

Jerusalem was the last place to be evacuated. Theoretically it had special status as an international city under UN administration, so the evacuation plans were not kept secret. However, even as the convoy was taking police from the Depot at Mount Scopus the Arabs and Jews were already fighting for control of Police Headquarters in the Russian Compound.

British Constable Terry Shand wrote in an Australian magazine of his thoughts:

It started as all other days in early summer, as a beautiful morning with wisps of white clouds hovering below the blue Mediterranean sky. The faint smell of honeysuckle mixed with the earthy tang of parched soil came to life with the dew of spring. Down below lay the mediaeval walls of old Jerusalem around the Dome of the Rock and countless minarets and towers, while further afield one could see the tall tower of the YMCA masked by all that was left of the King David Hotel. All was the same; and yet not the same. No longer did the vaulted streets of the Old City echo to the sound of British voices as British lads made their way to the Wailing Wall Post, the Rawdat Billet past the Holy Sepulchre. There was no longer the banter of British humour as Jack passed Taffy with “Abbie says you owe him fifty bob”. No curses as the night patrol came off duty and the walad sets down one cold egg, one piece of bacon before a thirteen stone and slightly wild-looking Irishman in Generali Billet. Instead there was the ghostlike appearance of a city without lights but with barbed wire, sandbags and destroyed buildings. This was the Holy City.

Suddenly a new smell filled the nostrils and tarnished the air, so cutting off the memories and thoughts that filled five hundred heads. The smell of petrol and oil as line after line of vehicles roared into life, each emitting a vapour that misted across the air and faded the scene below them. The men were no longer part of Jerusalem, yet were loath to lose it as they paid attention to the Superintendent issuing final orders for dispersal and evacuation in the trucks now ticking over on the roadway beside the Depot Square. The sunlight caught the cap badges on the blue background of Police caps mirroring and magnifying the letters PP. The last time in Jerusalem these letters would be seen except in one small patch under green olive trees where they would remain as a perpetual reminder to those who live in the country that once they did serve and belong to this land.

A hush fell, which was only interrupted by the harsh throb of the armoured car engines as the Union Jack was slowly lowered from its flagstaff at the corner of the Depot building. A thousand eyes watched it come down. It was the end of an era, the end of yesterday, and the drill squads; of the patrols through the Old City as well as the New City outside the gates; of soccer and hard-fought rugby matches; of Tug-o'-War and athletics; nights at Spinneys; nights reloading Lewis guns. All these thoughts, multiplied a thousand times, crossed the thoughts of those watching the flag lowered from the mast.

Then came the shattering order “Fall out and get aboard”. Swiftly and agilely, everyone clambered into the waiting three tonners, rifles in hand, Tommy-guns passed up, foot after foot left the ground, each taking with it the last particle of the dusty earth that had helped to make the history through four thousand years. Finally the tail boards were up and the drivers walked to the front of the vehicles. Slowly they gazed back at the Eternal City from which they would now depart as they negotiated with care the winding roads to Haifa. Door after door slammed shut and the sun now caught the silver braid of the Superintendent's cap as he signalled the convoy to start. There was a crescendo of power as vehicle after vehicle moved forward swirling the dust into a voluminous cloud which obscured the view, preventing the click of many a camera shutter held in so many hands as the owner strove to capture the last memory of years spent. The pennant on the aerial of the leading armoured car fluttered proudly into the breeze and the engines settled into an even hum. The soft lilt of a Welsh voice in one truck broke into ‘The Holy City’, to be followed one by one by more voices until the whole air vibrated with the sound of song above the noise of engines.

Already some men had settled down to reading a book, while others played cards, but the vast number look back to whence they came, silently contemplating each building on the landscape. Seeing the

grey city and noticing the colour of stones and rocks, the treeless and uncompromising countryside, but knowing there had been many happy hours as well as hours of danger and misunderstanding. As the distance between city and convoy increased they saw a camel train crossing a wadi, the Arab drover as languid as ever seemed to sense the moment of contemplation and he raised his hand in salute as well as farewell. The men waved back in return holding their hands high as if they were not just waving farewell to him but also to all those left behind. As the convoy curved its way around the bend they lost sight of him and Jerusalem.

Embarkation

At Haifa all our transport, which included dozens of Canadian built armoured cars and a miscellaneous selection of other vehicles, were taken to a secure location and destroyed by fire. All our firearms were handed in and these together with firearms from other sources were loaded in barges and dumped into the sea.

Haifa was now in the hand of Jewish groups. Our position was perilous. To protect us a complement of Royal Marines was on hand. They would see us safely to our ship moored out to sea. (It was considered unsafe to dock in harbour). We were taken to the ship in barges where we climbed aboard with kit bags via a rickety rope ladder – not too easy. Weigh anchor and away!

This article by Terry Shand in BPPA Newsletter 9, 2016, was reproduced from the PPOCA Newsletter 1977, which was itself taken from 'Taht el Taht', 1962 Sydney NSW.



His Majesty Sums Up

The final parade of the Palestine Police on disbandment was held by command of His Majesty King George VI at Buckingham Palace on 20 July 1948 in the presence of The King and Queen and the Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret. About 650 British members of the Force attended with many relatives and friends.

HM The King said:

“I am happy to have this opportunity of inspecting a detachment of the British section of the Palestine Police and of presenting medals to members of the Force in recognition of their gallantry and meritorious service.

I am glad to be able to mark the respect which we in this country feel for the manner in which you have done your duty in Palestine. The conflict between Arab and Jew made it necessary that there should be in the British section of the Palestine Police an impartial force to maintain law and order and to assist in carrying out the heavy task laid upon us by the Mandate. This has meant that the British police have had to face calumny and provocation as well as murderous attack.

I have admired the forbearance and courage with which you have met the difficulties and dangers of service in Palestine. Many of your comrades have given their lives and many others have been injured in that service: their sacrifice will not be forgotten.

Your task in the Palestine Police is now completed and you can look back on a job well done. You will soon be turning to employment elsewhere and, wherever your future may lie, I wish you every success.”

