

POLICE NOTEBOOK

RUMOURS AND HINTS from the Home Office suggest that the Home Secretary is seriously considering a round of police force amalgamations based simply on the size of the forces. Press speculation suggests that the proposals might revolve around the notion that police forces below 3,300 in strength are not viable. This would involve the abolition of more than half the 43 forces in England and Wales. Many county police forces would disappear, although Thames Valley is unlikely to be changed as their present strength is around 3,000 officers.

Evidence shows that small forces are able to produce a better quality of service for their citizens at a lower cost, but policing obviously varies considerably around the country, and good forces can be found in various sizes. It is surely realistic to tailor the size and structure of a police force to the needs of a particular area.

The effectiveness of policing depends crucially on the support of the public, the level of resources provided, the effectiveness of management and the morale of the staff. The Thames Valley Police was formed in 1968 by the amalgamation of the following five forces, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxford City and Reading Borough. How successful has this been?

Certainly day to day contact with the police has deteriorated with the introduction of centralised control rooms. There now appear to be less bobbies on the beat, and some police stations are not continually manned.

However, could the original police forces have managed with their own specialised departments such as traffic, drugs and special branch? As more and more demands are placed on the police service, then it must be in a position and strength to react. If amalgamation does go ahead, then let's hope the minimum force size does not get larger than ours.

CRIME BUSTERS REVIEW

Between 23.00hrs on Tuesday 31st August, and 05.00hrs on Wednesday 1st September 1993, a burglary occurred at F.W.P. Matthews Mill, Shipton. Two Imago computers, one with a coloured monitor, one with a mono monitor, were stolen together with a Hewlitt Packard Deskjet 500 printer, a Brother M-1918 printer and a British Telecom fax machine. Do you know anyone setting up an office?

Between 16.30hrs on Wednesday 1st, and 09.00hrs on Thursday 2nd September 1993, a burglary occurred at Macintyre Tall Trees, Shipton, where a quantity of garden equipment was stolen, including a Harrier Hayter mower, Mountfield PRO 37 strimmer and a Bosch electric planer. If you have been offered such items please contact me. Thanks to information passed, several drug detections have been possible, and two thefts solved.

Chipping Norton court has now closed, and most of the cases in our area will go to Witney court.

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