

Gone But Not Forgotten

Stanley Hicks - Last Village Bobby

Stanley Hicks was the last Police Constable to truly live and work in the Wychwoods and seems to have been held in high esteem by all who knew him.

Stanley was born in Marlborough Road, Oxford on 12th October 1914 and was educated locally. He went through a variety of jobs including selling ice cream and fish and chips before joining the Oxford Constabulary in 1936. His first posting as 'village bobby' was at Yarnton, then Standlake. He moved to Shipton in 1955 when he swapped places with P.C. Claude Restorick.

Figure of Authority

Stan was a tall, imposing figure in his helmet and police cape. Although the youngsters of the village would often get up to pranks behind his back they respected his authority and did as he told them. On checking a pub in Stanton Harcourt after closing time, he found a group of regulars there, still with beers on the table. On enquiring whose they were, no one laid claim, for obvious reasons. Stan said that as they didn't belong to anyone, it wouldn't matter if he drank them, which he promptly did and walked out!

If he caught youngsters riding two to a bike he would stop them with; "How



many saddles are there on that bike?" When they replied "One" he would say; "Then I only want to see one of you riding it."

Coming across Milton 'ton-up' boys at Ascott, Stan found that, despite only

having Provisional licences, they all had pillion passengers. Instant justice was meted out when he made them push their motorbikes back home. He even stopped them sitting on their bikes when it was downhill; maybe some of our readers can recall this episode?

Unconventional Methods

It was Stan's proud boast that he never drew his truncheon, but as his son David commented, his methods for dealing with problems would today, be regarded as politically incorrect. Whilst 'on parade' at Chipping Norton Police Station the Inspector commented that Stan had not made many arrests. His swift reply was; "Settled on site Sir." On another occasion he decided to wear a medal for a special parade, like everyone else. When asked what the medal was for he replied; "The Ascott Troubles."

Rodney Case's father was a great friend and drinking partner of Stan. They would travel from one village pub to the next in Mr Case's A35 van, the station keeping in touch through the pub phones! Stan enjoyed a pint, so would remove his

helmet as he entered the pub; then he felt that he was not on duty.

He Liked His Pint

His superiors were well aware that he liked a pint and were determined to catch him drinking on duty. They came into the 'Wychwood Arms' at Ascott, not realising that he was drinking in the other bar. When the landlord 'tipped him the wink' Stan tried to creep past the window with his motorbike but was spotted. His answer was to bribe the level-

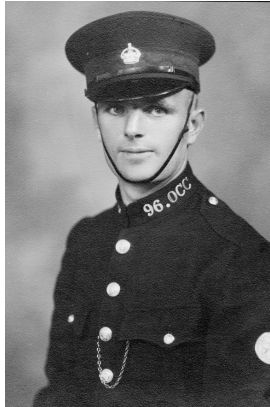
crossing attendant to shut the crossing gates after him so that he could make his get away. Thus his superiors were unable to prove that he had indeed been drinking on duty!

A crowd of lads coming out of the Lamb in Shipton one night thought it would be a bit of a lark to take the sign from outside and leave it at the Red Horse. It was set in a block of concrete; they had only got it as far as Bradley's Garage when they heard Stan's voice telling

them to get it back where it belonged.

Aah Those Memories!

Basil Pratley, well known for touring the outlying villages with his well-stocked van of goods from the hardware shop in Milton High Street, remembers that he had to buy a licence to sell shotgun cartridges from Stan. The boxes of cartridges sold at 6d each and the licence cost 6d as well, so he had to sell two before he started making a profit! Stan was on duty at Bladon for the funeral of Sir



Winston Churchill and was photographed by the 'Oxford Times' at the gate to the churchyard. After retiring in 1967 Stan moved to Fifield and is now living at Castle View Residential Home in Chipping Norton.

Christine Halliday

Since this article was written Stan's son, Daniel, let us know that Stan died in Horton Hospital, Banbury on 14th July

So Who is Patrolling the Wychwoods Now?

We have recently been informed that our area beat officer based in Carterton is no longer covering us and that area control has been changed from Carterton to Chipping Norton. Only five years ago, the Wychwoods were covered by Chipping Norton and somebody, in their wisdom, decided to change the coverage to Carterton.

Fifteen years prior to this we were covered by Witney police area and prior to that Carterton covered Shipton and

Milton whilst Chipping Norton covered Ascott.

As a Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator it does not inspire me with confidence that any police officers will really know the area, or that the inhabitants of these villages will get to know their area beat officer. Why all this change? It is not as if we notice any improvement in service. Who knows, perhaps we will be covered by Stow on the Wold in the future?

Bob and Shirley Salmon