

**Author's note**

This is the original article written by me, and published in The Journal of the Police History Society (Number 8) 1993 [ISBN 0269-8617].

It is unchanged in any respect, except that the scanned documents have been enhanced using technology which was unavailable at that time.

I believe the original Grid O/B remains in the archives of Vestry House Museum in Walthamstow.

The copyright remains mine. Please feel free to quote any part, but acknowledge the source.

I hope it may be of interest to someone.

Peter Pleydell August 2017. Email [peter\\_pleydell@hotmail.com](mailto:peter_pleydell@hotmail.com)

### **The Special Constabulary in Walthamstow (1940 - 43)**

I am a serving Special at Walthamstow. Like many other people in the Metropolitan Police, I am trying to get used to the new style Sector Policing. In preparation for this, members of the Metropolitan Special Constabulary have been allocated to Sectors, with the ultimate aim of attaching us to teams. We have lost the use of the office previously allocated to us, and now work from the Sector offices with our Regular colleagues.

I was not present on the day when our belongings were re-sited. As would be expected, a great deal of waste accumulated over the years was disposed of as confidential rubbish. One item which was not disposed of was placed in my locker for me to find on my return, in the knowledge that it would interest me. It is a large, buff coloured book. On the spine it is labelled MSC <sup>(i)</sup> JW <sup>(ii)</sup> Occurrence Book 55. The book contained a number of loose inserts, some of which go back to the 1920's. I have included four of these relating to the Second World War as Appendices to this article.

The book contains an alphabetical list of names of Officers and their details, including whistle numbers. It also contains lists of Leave Teams for 1940. Each Officer was attached to one of seven leave teams. The rotas for these are shown. Each team would have, on average, one day off duty each week. In some weeks, however (approximately one in four) they would have two consecutive rest days, followed by a full week without leave.

The body of the book begins on 10th April 1940, and runs clearly up until the beginning of 1944, when it becomes less informative, being more or less a record of correspondence in and out.

In the early part of the book, each double page has on the left a daily list of Officers on duty, with the times they were physically in the station and the reason (typically shown as 'Office' - presumably Station Officer, 'Refreshment' or 'Records'). The opposite page is headed 'Occurrences', and is ruled off at the end of each day, opposite the corresponding duty list on the left page.

From the contents of these pages, it is possible to discern something of the people named on them, their sense of purpose and direction, and the conditions under which they served.

Much of the contents are mundane, such as the notes regarding expense claims and the weekly entry 'D.O. <sup>(iii)</sup> received'. What interested me more was the feeling of camaraderie which comes through the official language, and the slow but sure changes in organisation which reflected the progression of the War.

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<sup>(i)</sup> Metropolitan Special Constabulary

<sup>(ii)</sup> Walthamstow

<sup>(iii)</sup> Divisional Orders

## Sports

At the beginning of the book, there are fairly frequent references to sporting activities:

Wednesday 24th April 1940

Darts match played off with Claybury. Walthamstow winners.

Thursday 16th May

Message received from JS <sup>(iv)</sup> 8.45pm. Darts Match to be played at Leytonstone on Tuesday 7/5/40. Team as before.'

Friday 17th May 1940

Message received from S/Inspr Cogswell re/ next round of divisional darts to be played at Mitre Hotel, Stamford Hill, High St. sent DHQ 7.45pm.'

Saturday 18th May 1940

Darts match cancelled for 8pm Monday to be played on Wednesday 8pm Roberts Sports Club, Wadham Rd., E.17.

Wednesday 22nd May 1940

Darts Final played at Roberts SC 8pm between this station and JC <sup>(v)</sup>. JC winners.

As the year progressed, and the reality of the Blitz loomed ever more imminent, there is less mention of such activities - until we reach an entry for Monday 31st March 1941.

JW lost to JC at Billiards. JW beat JD <sup>(vi)</sup> at darts.

(It would seem that Walthamstow MSC were better at darts than billiards.)

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<sup>(iv)</sup> Leytonstone

<sup>(v)</sup> Chingford

<sup>(vi)</sup> Ilford

## Strength and Equipment

In the early part of the book there are weekly statements of the strength of the MSC unit at Walthamstow.

Sunday 14th April 1940

Station Strength	Inspr	Sergt	Constables	
Full time	1		2	20
Part time			1	15
Off pay				1
Not available				4
				2

Total strength 46

As could be expected, as the War progressed men were continuously leaving to enlist in HM Forces. There are numerous references to such reasons for resigning.

Saturday 27th April 1940

SC Hodge joins HM Forces Sunday 28/4/40. Off pay as from midnight Sunday.

The last such reference was regarding Special Inspector Coe, whose name appears so many times in the early pages of the book.

Monday 1st November 1943

Inspr Coe informed Staff Inspector that he would be resigning from Full Time Service as from midnight Monday 8th November 1943, as he will be joining Royal Navy on 9th November 1943.

Presumably for reasons of men enlisting in the Forces, the number of MSC Officers continued to decline throughout the latter part of 1940 and onwards.

Sunday 16th February 1941

Station Strength	Inspr	Sergt	Constables	
Full time	1		2	18
Part time			1	13
Not available	1 Sub Insp			

Total strength 36

By 14 November, the total strength had fallen to 14.

The dedication of members of the Special Constabulary comes across in the following entry:

Monday 27th May 1940

S.C. Murphy reports inability to undertake duty at the moment owing to working 7 days a week on Government work. This man will, however, report if required during non-working time. Present working hours 8 am - 8 pm aprox.

Apparently though, it was not only for reasons such as this that duties were not being performed. Some Specials were considered not to be fulfilling their obligations to the full.

Tuesday 27 August 1940

Letters written to 4 S/Cs re/ non-performance of duty.

Wednesday 5th November 1941

Report sent to DHQ re men who have not performed a minimum of 104 hours duty over a period of 13 weeks.

There were opportunities too for transfer between part and full time service.

Monday 24th June 1940

N.B. Part time Special Constables over 30 years of age may make application on Form 730, through O/C and SC Insp, for transfer to M.S.C. full time strength. Appointments to F.T. service will be subject to Station requirements from time to time. This order does not apply to men who are already in reserved occupations.

There was a dilemma to be faced regarding prevailing standards of recruits, and the need to maintain the required strength.

Monday 29 September 1941

Phone conversation with Staff Inspector re/ acceptance of men who continuously wear spectacles. Decision re spectacles cannot be altered. 2 applicants to be informed.

The nature of the dilemma is clearly seen in the relationship with the War Reserve PCs who applied to join the MSC.

Tuesday 18th June 1940

PS Head 9<sup>J</sup> interviewed WRPC Hook at Walthamstow. Unsuited for entry into MSC owing to height.

Obviously, Sergeant Head's assessment of the candidate was not considered satisfactory by Inspector Coe, for two days later the following entry occurs:

N.B. Any War Reservist or others making application for part time service, who does not conform to M.S.C. standards must be seen by Insp Coe + not turned away.

And sure enough, on 3rd July Forms A & B were noted as having been sent to Divisional Headquarters regarding two War Reservists. The entries follow their progress into the ranks of the Metropolitan Special Constabulary.

Sunday 18 August 1940

4 MPWRs now attested as S/Cs shown as not yet supplied with uniform on form L.W.

Wednesday 21st August 1940

DHQ notified of Identity N<sup>OS</sup> issued to four new S/Cs.

Thursday 22nd August 1940

Equipment received for all 4 S/Cs.

It was important that resources should not be wasted on training and equipping recruits who would see little or no service before being conscripted into military service.

Monday 29 September 1941

Future part time recruits must be between 41 + 55 years of age, unless they are definitely in a reserved occupation. See latest reserved list before accepting any new recruit.

There would appear to have been shortages of equipment in the early stages. Particularly difficult to obtain, so it would seem, were greatcoats. Typical of the entries is the one following the duty return for 12 May 1940.

Without greatcoats 1 full time 2 part time.

Equipment more specifically designed for War use was also in short supply.

Sunday 19th May 1940

SC Insp informed all Helmets + Respirators at JC now ok. Only shortages on sub-division are 15 Eye Shields + 21 Field Dressings.

Of course, Officers had to be instructed in the use of War equipment.

Friday May 3rd 1940

All Ranks to note new process for use of anti-dim on Respirator eye pieces. See notice on lockers.

More mundanely, three days later an entry records:

Box key issued to SC Lawer 181<sup>J</sup> for Traffic Point. SCs Lawer 181<sup>J</sup> + Lissamore 182<sup>J</sup> issued with white Traffic Gauntlets for month from MP store.

### **War Duties**

As 1940 progressed, the reality of War became more apparent.

Thursday 25th April 1940

Phone call from Chief Insp at DHQ. All men, both full + part time, must carry Steel Helmet. JC informed.

Thursday 30th May 1940

4 copies of War Duty Hints and 4 S/C Lapel Badges received from S/Inspr Clow.

It is evident that all Special Constables were expected to gain proficiency not only in First Aid, but also in Air Raid Precautions and the use of firearms.

Saturday 11th April 1940

Notice sent to SCs re/ First Aid + ARP lectures. ARP lectures to be held in Decontamination Room on Tuesday + Wednesday of next week between 7.45 + 9.30 pm.

Wednesday 4th September 1940

To DHQ: - Particulars of non-instruction in arms.

Sunday 23rd February 1941

Pistol Instruction - Whipps Cross Drill Hall.

It is possible that there was a reluctance on the part of some Specials to attend, since two days later was another entry regarding firearms.

Memo from DHQ

"All part time Special Constables must report to the Rifle Lounge, Whips Cross Drill Hall at 10.30 am on Sunday 2nd or 9th March for Revolver Instruction.

That the non-firearms part of their training was put to use is not in doubt.

Sunday 13th October 1940

In future on Form LW all Air Raid duties must be shown in Column D in red ink.

Although it is not stated that the damage recorded below occurred in an air raid, it would seem likely that this was the case.

Friday 1st November 1940

Respirator container + steel helmet together with covering letter re/ damage in fire received from S.C. 395 Ruston and forwarded to Commandant for directions.

On 12 December, there is an entry regarding a death. The book makes no mention of whether this was the result of enemy action, or some other cause.

Memo received re/ death of S/Inspr King. 2/- donation forwarded to Commandant.

Specials were encouraged to make contributions to the War Damage Police Fund, which presumably was intended as a mutual fund to assist wounded Officers, and the families of any dead.

Monday 18th November 1940

Notice received re/ Part Time Constables War Injuries.

Wednesday 11th December 1940

£2.11.0 paid re War Damage Relief Fund.



Saturday 29th March 1941

N.B. Ref P.O. 27/3/1941. All new recruits are to be informed of Met. Police War Damage Police Fund. They are eligible for the Fund on payment of 1/- and any further subscription asked for by the Commissioner. Subscriptions will commence again from April 1st at the rate of 3<sup>D</sup> per week.

It is notable too that, despite the War, people were still able to travel for their holidays. Places as diverse as Northampton and Cornwall are entered as holiday addresses.

### **Callout Procedure**

It is evident there were emergency callout procedures in existence. Appendix 1 to this short article indicates that 'System A' relied upon each man informing another before making his way to the Station. The Appendix refers to a practice callout for a date which I am unable to ascertain from the Occurrence Book. However, on Thursday 31 July 1941, there was a practice callout for part time MSC Officers. The reported result was 1 Inspector, 1 Sergeant and 8 Constables attending the Station for duty. The ensuing report to the Commandant observed that men should be told

that chin straps may be worn at the back of head when respirators in the alert position.

The report made a further observation.

Confirmation that JC & JA <sup>(vii)</sup> system was in operation was not obtained because in actual emergency I would not waste Police time phoning, but would visit both stations.

In conclusion, I have found the Occurrence Book to be an invaluable source of information for this article, and cannot fault the words written in the Book by the Chief Commandant when he visited Walthamstow Police Station on 16 May 1940.

Visited and all correct. The methods of recording the duties of Officers is very commendable.

Peter JE Pleydell      October 1992

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<sup>(vii)</sup> Waltham Abbey

## Particulars of calling-out trial under system "A".

Information received at Station: +  
 Insp. Coe Informed at :-  
 F.S.C. at Chingford Informed at :-

Left Station to call on men at: - 7.30 am

Returned to Station at: - 8.0 am

	Time	Time			Arrived at Station.	Means of traveling.	Other Particulars.
		Informed	left Home.	Called next man.			
Monk Gilbert.	5 min	7.34					
Sergt. Smith.	5 min	7.38	7.45		7.50	Cycle.	
S/C. Morton.	5 min	7.44	8.50	8.10	8.20	Cycle	
S/C. Weaver.	10 min	8.10	8.20	8.26	8.40	Cycle.	
S/C. Hartridge.	10 min	8.25	8.30		8.45 9.15	Walking	
S/C. Granlick.	10 min	7.46		7.55	8.00	Walked	
" Dunning.	10 min	7.55	8.12		(8.35) 9.10	"	
" Meynard	15 min	8.20		8.30	9.40 (cont)	Waded.	
" Garratt.	X						
" Tomlin.	20 min	8.10	8.20		9.40		
" Pesce.	10 min	8.27	8.40		8.50	Walked.	
" Teylor.	X						
" Clarke.	10 min	9.00			9.10	Walked	
" Baldwin.	20 min	7.54	7.59	8.20	8.38	Walked + Saw.	
" Hale.	15 min	8.20	8.20		8.38	Walked + Saw	
Sergt. Buckingham	20 min	7.56		8.15	8.46	Walked.	
S/C. Stent.	X						
S/C. Resker.	15 min	8.15	8.20	8	7.40	Walked.	Relayed

## Appendix 1

## Record of Trial Callout

(Date unknown)

Rank, Name	Size in Respirator	Respirator
1st Lieut. Coe	N	Chas. 9
1st Lieut. Borman	N	L. Borman
Lieut. B. L. Head	N	B. L. Head.
Buckingham	N	L. Buckingham 208
Pepper	N	L. Pepper
R. Schmidt	N	L. Schmidt
Sp. Laver	N	W. Laver
Atkinson	N	Atkinson
Watson	N	W. Watson
S. A. W. Resber	N	S. A. W. Resber
L. C. Lonsdale	N	L. C. Lonsdale
S. B. Resber	N	S. B. Resber
Berry	N	S. Berry
A. J. Clarke	N	Sp. A. J. Clarke
Batstone	N	S/C W. Batstone
Bartram	N	S/C W. Bartram
Miller	N	S. Miller
Stump	Large	S. Stump
Stent	N	J. H. Stent
Worsell	N	E. Worsell
White	N	A. L. White
Taylor	N	T. Taylor
Dunning	N	J. E. Dunning
Merritt	N	W. Merritt
Hodge	N	J. Hodge
Plant	N	Plant
<del>Smith</del>	N	
Greenfield	N	S. Greenfield
Kissam	N	Kissam

Appendix 2

Officers' Respirator Sizes

(Date unknown)

M.S.C. Part Time Walthamstow. Times when S/Cs' are available

	<u>Monday to Friday.</u>	<u>Weekends.</u>
S/Insp. Clow.	7pm.-8am.	5pm.Saturday - 8am. Monday.
Sergt. Smith.	6pm.-8.30am.	6pm. Friday - 8.30am. Monday.
" Buckingham.	8pm.-8am.	same as week-days.
S/C. Baldwin.	8pm.-7am.	3pm.Saturday - 7am.Monday.
" Dunning.	4pm.-5am.	4pm. " - 5am. "
" Granlick.	8pm.-8am.	
" Gilbert.	Managing own business available almost any time.	
" Hartridge.	7.30pm.-8.30am.	2pm. Saturday -8.30am.Monday.
" Monk.	5.30pm.-9am.	12.30pm. " - 9am. "
" Morton.	7pm. - 7.30am.	10pm. Friday - 7.30am. "
" Neale.	4pm. - 6.am.	5.30pm. Saturday- 6am. Monday.
" G. Rosker.	7pm. - 8.am.	5.p.m. " - 7am. "
" Pesce.	10pm. -10.am.	10.p.m. " - 10am. "
" Stent.	6pm. - 5.am.	4.p.m. " - 5am. "
" Taylor.	7pm. - 5.am.	2.p.m. " - 5am. "
" Tomlin.	8pm. - 8.am.	2.p.m. " - 8am. "
" Weaver.	7.30pm. 8.am.	5.p.m. " - 8am. "
" Clarke.A.J.	7.30pm.-8.30am.	10.p.m. " - 6-30am. "
" Maynard.	7.p.m. -7.am.	2.p.m. " - 7.am. "
" Garrett.	8.p.m. - 8.am.	8.p.m. " - 8.am. "

## Appendix 3

## Part Time Specials - Availability

(Date unknown)

Equipment issued to Part Time Special Constables.  
on Walthamstow Sub-division.

	Field				
	<u>Helmets.</u>	<u>Respirators.</u>	<u>Eyeshields.</u>	<u>Dressings.</u>	<u>Protective Clothing.</u>
J.W.	20	20	19	15	20
X J.C.	17	15	3	2	11 X
J.A.	2	2	N11	N11	N11
<u>Actual shortage.</u>					
J.W.	N11	N11	1	5	N11
J.C.	N11	1	15	14	5
J.A.	N11	N11	2	2	2

## Appendix 4

## Equipment Inventory

(Date unknown)