

## It could only happen at Barnes

For those who have never visited our Police Garage near the Thames, let me quickly give you an idea of the layout. We have an establishment which used to be, long long ago, a milk depot where the horses were stabled, and we now park our sleek white cars and motorbikes. We also have a repair section and just outside the workshops, there is a small yard with a tin hut at one end - this is the River Police office and it's drying room and across the yard we have the Front Station or the 'foot duty' department.

The river usually gently laps the wall across the road from the nick and on sunny summer days, when there is nothing to do, the Station Officer can be seen looking out of his window, watching those who enjoy playing with little boats on the river.

The tale I tell is a true one, which happened one night last Autumn, not far away from the nick, in fact these events could all be seen from the front station. It was night duty and all the bikes were back, the last convoy had come in and everyone had 'booked off' on time. The night duty reserve man (whom we have never met before in this journal) is here in a little episode entitled 'Man Overboard' and will be described as the Fat One. He was sitting at the switch board reading his latest set of amendments to his I.B. when the telephone started to ring and roused him from his thoughts.

The conversation went something like this .....

"Front Station here mate .....can you help us pull a Mini off the foreshore up near The Ship?"

"Sorry friend, I am on my own, trying to ring Oscar!"

"O.K . g'night."

.....and so peace once again settled over the garage.....but not for long.

Again the phone went, this time it was Oscar himself who instructed the over corpulent officer to take himself together with a Land Rover to the vicinity of The Ship Inn, which was a nice little pub along the waterside, near the Beer Factory which trades under the name of Watney. The pub is so near the river, that when there is anything like a high tide, the area used to park cars on, is often under water.

This night had been such a night and the owner of the Mini had returned only to find that his vehicle had forsaken the tar-macadam road and had taken to the water. Actually, it had drifted some way down river and was a long way out from the bank.

The river had by now gone down and the luckless Mini could be seen sitting rather forlornly in a large stretch of best quality river mud. The 'foot duty' had been called and had in turn called for help, which arrived in the shape of our large friend and his white Land Rover. Out across the mud drove our friend and he deftly swung the vehicle around, reversed up to the Mini and stopped.

Being a wise man, he had before leaving the garage, donned a pair of rubber knee-high boots and as he leapt out of the driving seat, he wished he had put on a pair of rubber thigh-high boots - as a large amount of best river mud slid down into his socks. He slurped his way round to the Mini and deftly fixed the tow rope to the front. He then jiggled open the car door to let the hand-brake off, only to get his feet again wetted, as the water hastily flowed out from inside the Mini. Muttering pleasantries to himself, he floundered back to the Land Rover, gently let the clutch in and looked hopefully towards the way he had come.

There was a lot of whirring from the rear, but no forward movement, and in less time than it takes to tell, the rear hubs were level with the mud and still sinking.

Our Hero at once grasped the situation, and roused Oscar from his slumbers by asking for more help to get him and the Mini off the mud but before Oscar could reply, there was a lot of good, but not very useful advice given by several phantom units who must have been listening in on that channel.

“Stand by” said Oscar,

“Not likely”, said our friend, “I have already got a boot full!”

So he sat in the cab and waited, listening to the gentle sounds from the river and breathing in the night scented air.

Another Land Rover soon came on the scene and made its way across the mud and stopped. These officers being far from simple, sat tight, so the Fat One had to get out once more and hook up the tow rope. Engines roared, tow ropes strained, wheels spun, but no forward movement, only downward movement, this time by both the Land Rovers.

The noise of this rescue attempt had disturbed the Landlord and his wife from the pub, many of their friends and neighbours from the nearby houses and the night duty brewers in the Beer Factory, who were all watching from a very safe distance and no doubt fortifying themselves against the night air with liquid refreshment.

It was at this point that another complication arose.

It does not seem very important now but at the time, our large friend thought it was of the utmost urgency.....the tide was coming in.

Only slowly at first, hardly noticeable in fact, then suddenly the Mini was bobbing about on the end of the tow rope and our friend was marooned in the cab of his Land Rover, pleading to Oscar to “Come and get me out of this!”.

Another Land Rover was sent for and in due course arrived and hooked up on to the muddy pair, once more tow rope strained, engines pulled and once more everything remained firmly stuck in the mud.

By this time the night duty van from Richmond had arrived to watch the rescue and was pressed into service, as was the Thames launch which had come along to claim Salvage rights in case the Land Rover was abandoned. They hooked up a long line to the first Land Rover and at the signal to begin, pulled upstream with the propellor thrashing the murky Thames into a froth whiter than white. At last slowly, oh so slowly, and with a loud squelch they started to move in the right direction across the foreshore (which by now was almost under water) and finally onto the dry land beside The Ship. Here the tow ropes were taken off and the whole convoy of very muddy vehicles made their way into the garage to wash away the traces of their night’s work.

Our friend, by now feeling much better at the sight of firm ground, was kept very busy making cups of strong tea for those who had helped get him out of the mud, and although this happened some time ago now, he still goes pale at the mention of 'going on the foreshore’.

As I said in the beginning - it could only happen at Barnes!

Reg Humphries  
TDB

## The Horse

This is a true story which happened long before I joined the job, and was told to me by an old Sergeant, known to us all as 'Uncle Ted', (behind his back).

The location of the story was at a place known to the locals as 'The Jubilee Nick' or North Fulham Police Station, long since pulled down to make way for a block of Police Flats.

It stood at the junction of Purcell Crescent and Lillie Road in Fulham.

One night a PC found a horse wandering along the road, somewhere in his brain the words 'Green Yard or Pound' stirred themselves and taking hold of the horse, he proudly marched it off to the Police station, where it was duly booked in and tied up in the yard at the rear of the station. The large double gates were securely locked, barred and bolted. while the horse happily munched some of the issue horse feed - the PC resumed his lonely walk around his beat.

All was quiet again.

It was in the early hours, that a bleary eyed, coster-monger made his way into the station to report his horse absent without leave and bemoaning his hard luck that he would not get to the market that day. His face lit up with delight as the Sergeant showed him the horse safely tied up in the yard, and almost at once clouded over again, when he was asked for a shilling storage and fodder fee. After some argument the fee was paid, Book 18 duly noted, a receipt issued and the Property Book signed and all the owner had to do, was take the horse back to his stable, harness it up, and off to market.....or so he thought, for this is where the story became interesting.

The key to the back gates of the nick were not on the correct hook on the key board.

A closer look revealed that the key was not even *on* the key board. The reserve man was told to check the key board - pockets were turned out, drawers turned out, cupboards searched. Several things which had been given up in the past as lost, were found, but the key did not come to light.

(I can hear some of our current removal experts saying, "We'd 'ave soon jiggled it out", but this craft was unknown in those days.)

However, in spite of a most diligent search the key could not be found. The station cyclist was disturbed from his ancient craft of tea making and sent out to find the PC who had brought the horse into the station. This was before the days of such things as Police Boxes or Personal Radios, and like all good policemen, he could not be found; he was probably keeping 'observation' somewhere warm.

As the time was slowing ticking by, the owner of the horse was getting more and more irate. All sorts of suggestions were made as to how they could get the horse out of the yard, but it was too old to jump the gate, and the gates were too big and heavy to be lifted off the hinges. The only suggestion that seemed to be the answer to the problem was to take the horse through the charge room and out the front door. This would have been easily done if the horse had been circus trained, as its first obstacle was three steps up to the yard door, then through the charge room, down a short passage with a right hand turn in it and then out through the front doors.

The first part was managed with a little help in the rear, by the Station Officer and his staff as the horse had as much desire to see the inside of the charge room as most of our customers have, but finally they got the animal in through the door.

As soon as the door was shut, the horse let fly with both both front and rear ends. The more they tried to quieten it, the more it reared up, it managed to put its hooves through the floor, door panels and even the old charge room desk came in for the same treatment as it was sent flying across the room. The noise of this private rodeo, accompanied by such discreet shouts as "Whoa you beast!", or something similar from the owner and the Station Officer, roused the family of the resident Inspector from their slumbers in the flat above the station, who, so the story goes came down clad in uniform serge jacket over his

nightshirt. His cries of despair when he saw the wrecked charge room sent the horse into an encore, up it reared once more and another floor board went through. The horse was finally got out into the passage. where it managed to empty the fire buckets or water and sand as it went past. Then with its final show of contempt for the station, relieved itself in the doorway. Who was most upset at being late for market and was loudly airing his views of the Police Force in a most flowery language, as is known only to those in the vegetable trade.

Back inside the station the trail of wreckage and mess was surveyed by the night duty staff who were not amused when one of the early turn looked in and asked, "Had a busy night?" The duty officer had by this time heard about it and arrived on the scene. The station officer had visions of being 'On the Dab'. The resident Inspector was ready to 'put anyone on anything' when into this 'happy' crowd walked the PC who had started the whole thing off by finding the horse, completely unaware of the trouble he had caused. The Station Officer very politely asked him if he still had the "..... keys to the ..... back gate in his ..... pocket?" Then, and only then, did the keys come to light.

The night duty relief about to book off were not amused when the Inspector told them all to report back to the station as soon as possible with all the carpentry tools they possessed and any wood suitable for mending the floor, doors and desk. Some were told to get plaster, trowels and paint to repair the walls where they had been kicked and chipped. The Early Turn were also sent home with the same instructions, whilst the chap who started it all was told to clean up the passage. Within half an hour the station sounded like a building site, with sawing and hammering resounding throughout the station accompanied no doubt, with a few well chosen words as a hammer slipped and hit a thumb.

No doubt tea was brewed, or even a strong drink was found to stir the flagging spirits of the workers and the fact that their efforts were not found out until some long time afterwards (when the story was told at someone's retirement party) shows how well the repairs were carried out.

The story went on (but I think this was a bit of poetic licence from 'Old Ted') that, as the Sub-Divisional Inspector walked into the front office to make his daily visit and sign the books, the last man went out the back door having just finished rubbing a mixture of dirt and ink into the new floor boards.

As I said at the beginning, this was how the story was told to me, and I was even taken into the old nick and shown the marks on the wall which were supposed to be in the place where the repairs had been made. No doubt there are one or two pensioners who served at Walham Green who can remember this incident, but I expect the original actors have long since 'handed in their papers'.

Reg Humphries  
TDB

## It happened in the park

This is a true story of a happening in Hyde Park on a sunny day during the Easter Holidays.

We here in England, were greedily soaking up the sun while all those who had paid out good money to find the sun, wasted it and were washed out with rain and floods. Hyde Park was full of people taking advantage of this sudden summer. All the boats were out on the Serpentine and there was a long queue of would-be sailors patiently waiting their turn. Some brave ones who had shed their winter clothes, put on their bikinis and were sunning themselves; the deckchairs were full and peace reigned everywhere. Even two of our Traffic Division Officers had forgotten the fact that they had been brought out from Late Turn to keep a watchful eye on the Easter Motorists, decided to take a turn round the park to catch the sights.

It was hot in the front of the Land Rover. All the windows that could be opened, were opened, the heater was in the unusual position of 'OFF', even so their uniforms were hot and sticky. To ease their discomfort, our two tried to cool off by licking king sized iced lollies as they drove slowly round the park taking in the sights of the mini skirts, the daffodils and an occasional eye to the traffic. All was at peace - or so it seemed until the observer, who we shall call the 'Thin One', suddenly shattered the peace of Oscar by calling out "Full Emergency - Man Overboard" , at the same time pointing out to his driver, who we shall call the 'Fat One', a spot in the middle of the lake where an amateur oarsman, on catching a crab, had fallen out of his boat into the water. In true 'Z Cars' manner, the Land Rover sped down to the water's edge shattering the peace of the park with its two-tone horns blaring.

People woke up, sat up and stood up to watch. All eyes turned towards the Land Rover as the Thin One leapt out, abandoning his iced lolly on the seat, and ran towards the water's edge, where as luck would have it, two gentlemen from the East, having temporarily lost control of their boat, hit the bank almost at his feet. Sizing up the situation he shouted,

"Stop, I am commandeering your boat. This is an Emergency".

The two occupants were startled by his shout and began thinking of how much they had paid for the hire of the boat and not particularly wanting a British policeman in it with them, gripped their oars and pulled hard away from the shore, saying in their best Bus Conductor's English,

"Full up, another one just behind", just as the Thin One reached the point of no return. His left leg was still on the bank but the rest of him was over the water and his right leg vainly trying to bridge the ever increasing gap between the boat and the bank, leaving nothing but water beneath him.

Yelling, "Get the rescuer, get the rescuer" to his colleague, he gracefully slid out of sight beneath the waves, only his up-raised arm sticking above the water to mark the spot. The Fat One, who had been trying to tell Oscar what was happening, saw this and at once collapsed into uncontrollable fits of laughter across the front seats of the Land Rover, every time he tried to compose himself and tell Oscar about it, he once again dissolved into laughter and rolled about on the front seat.

The Thin One had by this time surfaced and hauled himself into the boat, much to the surprise of the two Eastern Gentlemen who were still pulling on their oars like the start of the boat race. There he sat in the back, dripping water all over the boat and giving commands like Captain Bligh.

They reached the spot where the man had fallen in and our hero went to pull him out, but the man did not want to be saved. He was happily swimming on his back in true Olympic style with the painter of the boat between his teeth and making strongly for the boathouse. Our hero, the Thin One (who had in his time been a weight lifter) would not take no for an answer. He reached out of the boat, lifted the swimmer into his boat and then made his 'crew' row him back to the shore, salvaging a waterlogged uniform cap on the way.

He squelched ashore and made his way up to the Land Rover, where he found his colleague still convulsed with laughter and almost as wet as he was, having been rolling about on top of the iced lollies, which had been forgotten in the emergency. As he got back into the vehicle, two other Police cars came screaming up to the spot, doors flew open and the crews rushed over, asking, "Where's this \*\*\*\*\* who's fallen in?" On hearing this the Fat One once more burst into uncontrollable mirth and was soon joined by the others, when they saw his wet, bedraggled colleague sitting rather miserably in the front seat.

This happened at Easter, but even now if you say to the Fat One - "Full Emergency", he collapses in a big heap as he tries to tell you what happened one sunny afternoon in Hyde Park.

Reg Humphries  
TDB

## THE MUDLARKS

It had been raining for quite some time. It was not a very nice night to be out at all, but as we all know, we have to carry on and the job has to be done.

This must have been the thought in the minds of the two diligent officers from C11 the night they decided that a late call must be paid on a firm that they had suspicions about not being quite honest in their dealings.

This firm's yard was near [*a well known company*] in one of the large open spaces that helps to make up the 'green belt'.

These two officers in their Mini thought that late at night would be the best time to call and see if they could find what they were looking for; so in order to create an element of surprise, they decided to go round the back.

This of course meant driving across the 'grass'.

I say 'grass' because that's what it looked like in the light of their lamps. So they said farewell to the hard Macadam surface they were used to and they ventured forth into the land of the unknown, a grass track.

As I said, it had been raining for some time, or I should have said it had been raining heavily for the past three days, and the radio was getting annoyingly repetitive with its warnings of floods. Our friends left the road and on to the grass.

It was a bit bumpy, but then with a front wheel drive, hydro-elastic suspension and the possibility of a good job well done, this didn't deter them.

All went well for some time until they were nearing their goal. They put the headlights out and carried on with the side lights. This was their first mistake.

They didn't see the change of colour in the grass nor did they see the reflection from the water lying on the grass. On they went until suddenly the Mini turned amphibious and started to float out from the firm ground into the middle of this inland muddy lake. By the time they had thrown out the anchor they had stopped almost in the middle of this rather large area of soft mud. All four wheels were failing to make any contact with terra firma and no matter how hard they tried, they could not coax the Mini into going forwards or backwards.

Finally they decided that to get out of this trap, they would have to have help, but not being equipped with an R/T, they were unable to call Oscar for assistance. Someone would have to get out and go for help.

No doubt there was some argument between the two men, but at last a door was opened and out stepped a brave officer. As he got out he slid almost up to his thighs in thick mud. This is not funny when you get a plain clothes allowance and you are wearing your best mohair slacks and latest Italian shoes. After a struggle, he reached solid ground and set off squelchingly to find a telephone; and in due course the local nick sent their van to help out at the scene.

The van driver, trying to be all helpful pulled over to the stricken Mini and selected reverse gear. Back he went towards the Mini when, too late, his rear wheels started to spin and before he could put the clutch pedal to the floor he had dug two neat trenches for his back wheels and the weight of the van took him back just that little bit more. The front wheels went into the well-cut slots and now the van was also out of service.

Luckily the van driver had R/T and before long his plaintive call was heard at the nick, “Elp, I’m in the s....” (mud).

No doubt those at the nick, after having a good laugh at the plight of their colleagues, then sent a call to Oscar who in turn dispatched one of our Land Rovers to the scene to help out.

As it was getting near the time to go home to a warm bed, our lads went post haste to the scene with horns sounding and lights blazing. At the scene, they donned their gumboots, hooked up the tow-ropes and decided to pull the van out by reversing. However the driver failed to see the gully behind him and before he had taken up the slack in the rope, he managed to get a rear wheel down the gully and so put his own vehicle out of action along with the Mini and the van.

Once more calls were made over the air for help – in any form. This duly arrived in the shape of another Land Rover. This time the crews were up to all the tricks of mud and water, having taken part a long time ago in the rescue of stranded Minis on the foreshore. [See *‘It could only happen at Barnes’*] Expertly, they coupled up to the front of the Land Rover in the gully and gently, with all four wheels driving, they inched it up and out on to firm ground once more. Next on the list was the van, which by now had sunk to axel level on all four wheels. This took the combined efforts of the Land Rovers pulling together and eventually the van came unstuck from the mud with a large squelch.

As soon as the tow-ropes were uncoupled, the two Land Rovers sped away from the scene to shouts of “don’t forget us” coming from the middle of the swamp. The lads were not dashing back to book off – they had seen quite a large crowd of young men fighting and were dashing across to put a stop to it.

This they did in record time and returned to the scene with five prisoners deposited in the van with the driver and his mate in charge. Now a last effort was made to free the stricken Mini. Here, use was made of the man in the muddy mohair as they made him wade back and forth with the tow-ropes and fix them to the Mini. Dead clever these Traffic Division types, why get wet when someone else can? At last they pulled the Mini slowly out of the mud and set it on firm ground. Tow lines were retrieved, the crews returned to their vehicles and a very muddy convoy set off to the local nick to wash off the evidence of their mud larks. The prisoners were charged and plenty of tea was drunk – all down to the man with the muddy trousers.

The riddle of the original investigation is still a mystery, as they are unable to persuade the driver to venture forth from the tarred surface of the roads. His mate is still trying to incur sufficient expenses to get his trousers cleaned, and replace his shoes, one of which disappeared into the mud, never to be seen again. No doubt in years to come it will be dug up and cause some speculation as to how it got there and all who took part in this episode, will have passed on.

Reg Humphries  
TDB

## Cor Luv a Duck

This is a true story of a happening in Hyde Park in the late sixties.

It was a very wet Saturday in June and the rehearsal for Trooping the Colour had been cancelled. It was still raining as the Greek Ambassador's wife drove her large Mercedes Saloon westwards along the South Carriage Road. As she got near to where the new barracks were being built, she saw a duck waddling across the road. Putting her foot firmly on the brake pedal and pulling the steering wheel to the left, she slid straight into the back of a small Ford van parked in the kerb and pushed that into the back of a Morris 1100, both belonging to workmen on the building site.

Someone called the Police and two motorcyclists attached to Barnes Garage answered the call and arrived on the scene. They parked their bikes side by side and started to take the usual particulars and then assisted in pulling the cars apart so that they could record the damage. Names and addresses were exchanged with some difficulty, as the Greek lady's name was lots of Ps, Os and Ds, while one of the car owners, a Polish man, had lots of Ks, Is and Zs in his name.

At the same time a Vauxhall Velux was being driven west in the South Carriage Road. The driver, who should have been in the Synagogue and not in his car looking through the steering wheel, saw the group and straight away put his foot hard on the brake pedal, causing him to slide, which resulted in his hitting the two motor cycles, then into the Mercedes, which went into the van, which went into the 1100, which then hit a Hillman Minx, belonging to another of the workmen.

I was called to report this second accident and after taking a few notes and measurements, told the two PCs to see me in the canteen in the Hyde Park Police Station, as their bikes were not badly damaged and would be rideable. Having settled down with a cuppa, I was starting my report, when one of the Hyde Park lads came in and on seeing me, asked if I was still dealing with the accident in the South Carriage Road and had I heard the latest. I said that I was aware of the two bikes being damaged. He laughed and said "There's more since you left. Your duty officer turned up and as he arrived and pulled into the side of the road opposite the accident, a Volkswagen following him had to swerve to get past him and in doing so had collided with a taxi coming from the opposite direction." The duty officer had swiftly left the scene!

The net result of this was:

- One taxi, frontal damage
- One Volkswagen, frontal damage
- Two Police motorcycles, damaged
- One Mercedes Saloon, front and rear damage
- One Vauxhall Velux, front and nearside damage
- One Ford van, front and rear damage
- One Morris 1100, front and rear damage
- One Hillman Minx, rear damage

I had to report that there was no trace of the duck!

Reg Humphries PS15TD