

# THE SHERIFFS OF MOTTINGHAM

By Bernard Brown

Last summer<sup>1</sup> saw the 100th Anniversary of the opening of the present Chislehurst Police Station, which was taken into use in June 1893. However, the policing of the parish had begun nearly ninety years earlier with the appearance of the Bow Street Horse Patrols, which commenced in 1805 and were stationed on the Turnpike Roads at Sidcup and Bromley Common in order to combat the footpads and vagabonds who frequented the district. The officers of the Horse Patrols wore scarlet waistcoats and were nicknamed 'Robin Redbreasts'. One of the patrol stations on Bromley Common was rented from a Miss Lewis of Chislehurst at an annual cost of £14.

Contemporary directories describe Chislehurst as being 'A most respectable village and parish'. This reputation was soon lost on 31st May 1813, when Phillip Nicholson, footman to Thomas Bonar and his wife, was arrested for their murder at Camden House (the present Golf Club) by the famous Bow Street Runners and was later hanged on Penenden Heath, near Maidstone. Nicholson, late of the 12th Light Dragoons, had been employed at Camden House for only three months.

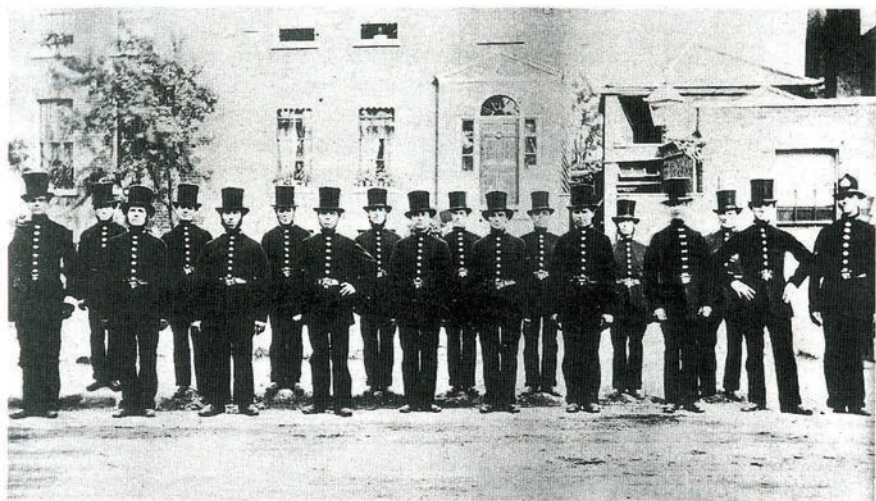
The Bow Street Horse Patrols were absorbed into the Metropolitan Police in 1836, though Chislehurst Parish was not included in the Metropolitan Police District (MPD) until 13th January 1840 by virtue of the Metropolitan Police Act 1839. [The 1829 Metropolitan Police Act had extended the MPD only as far as Greenwich Parish.]

The hamlet of Mottingham was also included under the jurisdiction of the MPD but was in fact patrolled from the former Bow Street Horse Patrol Station at Lee, where charges were dealt with at Greenwich daily.

Although Chislehurst possessed an old parish lock -up and stocks on the Common near the Bull's Head public house, the station-house for the 'New Police' was at Foots Cray, part of the 'R' or Greenwich Division. Chislehurst Parish covered 4,050 acres with a population of 1,792 and was policed by a sergeant and four constables, one of whom was mounted in order to patrol the extremities of the parish. They all lived in a section house near the village in Rectory Place, Hawkwood Lane. All charges occurring within Chislehurst were heard by the Magistrates every third Monday in the month in the unlikely surroundings of the White Lion public house at Locks Bottom.

By 1842 Chislehurst appeared in the directory of 'R' division police stations and was replaced by a new station house at St Mary Cray in October 1850 in the charge of Sergeant John Bovis and five constables while neighbouring Sidcup Police Station had six constables, under the care of Sergeant Walter Scott-

<sup>1</sup> (published in Vol.15, No 2 of *Bygone Kent* in February 1994)



A muster of policemen at Catford about 1864, showing contemporary Police uniform.



Chislehurst Police Station; the photograph dates from 1908.



Chislehurst Police Station celebrated its Centenary last summer.

Barry. The population of East and West Chislehurst now stood at 2,088, but a boundary change in 1844 had reduced the size of the parish to only 2,738 acres.

The railway had yet to reach Chislehurst so most people walked through Kemnal Woods to travel up to London from Sidcup by the regular Maidstone and Kentish Stage-Coaches, which served East Chislehurst. However, the village was provided with a daily Omnibus to London (Sunday excepted) run by the Gates family which was referred to by the late Canon Murray as being: 'A very poor coach with a pair of horses'. It called at the Bull's Head Inn and Tiger's Head around 8 a.m., returning at 6 p.m. bound for Orpington. The fare for this most uncomfortable journey was two shillings and sixpence (12½p) inside or, if one wished to brave the elements atop with the driver, only 1/6d (7½p)!

The road from Orpington through Chislehurst, unlike the Maidstone Road through Sidcup, was maintained by the respective parishes and was therefore in a rather sorry state. It was only on reaching Lee that a reasonable journey was guaranteed over the New Cross Turnpike Trust Roads, which were maintained to the highest standard.

Many travellers passed through Chislehurst in order to avoid payment at the toll-gates established at Ruxley and Sidcup. Another Omnibus ran from Orpington through Chislehurst to connect with the London-Greenwich Railway (opened 1836) and ran once a day. Additional horses known as 'cock-horses' were kept at the White Horse Inn to assist the coaches up Red Hill and White Horse Hill, whose steep gradient was reduced in 1899, the original level still being visible in the footpath, above which can be seen a former parish mile stone bearing the legend:

Miles
10
to
London

Pugilism was a popular (but illegal) sport at that time and many bare-knuckle contests were held on Chislehurst Common. One such event, a Volunteer Sham Fight<sup>2</sup>, was held during the summer of 1860, causing 100 Metropolitan Police Officers to be conveyed by train to the nearest station at Bickley which had been opened in 1858 (then known as Southborough Road). The officers were placed along the road between the railway station and Camden Park with the Divisional horse-drawn 'Black Maria' stationed on Chislehurst Common to convey any arrests to the station-house at St Mary Cray. In addition about a dozen plain clothes men were deployed amongst the crowd in order to detect

<sup>2</sup> The Volunteer movement (Territorial Army) had been launched in the previous year.



A Victorian Police Constable.

(Carson Ritchie Collection)

the pickpockets, so prevalent at such occasions.

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It was in this year that Mr Wythes, owner of the Bickley Park Estate, constructed the present Summer-Hill with its lesser gradient compared with the much steeper Old Hill. At its summit he erected a huge water-tower - which remained an obstruction to traffic for over a century until demolition in 1963.

For a short time, between March and October 1865, Chislehurst Parish was placed under the jurisdiction of the Bromley sub-division - which ceased when the latter was transferred from 'R' Division to the 'P' or Camberwell Division. At the same time the toll-gate at Sidcup was abolished.

The population of Chislehurst had now risen to over 2,290 and the village had, since 1857, been included in the South-East Postal District but later reverted



back to Kent. The thought of tranquil Chislehurst becoming LONDON S.E.29 does not bear thinking about.

Frederick Dilkes was now the resident sergeant at Sidcup while Sergeant Joseph Powell was in charge of St Mary Cray Police Station. Old man Gates' Omnibus had ceased to run due to the opening by the South Eastern Railway Company (SER) of a new branch line in the summer of 1865 to a terminus known as Chislehurst and Bickley Park. The line beyond to Orpington and Sevenoaks opened in March 1868, when a new Chislehurst Station was erected. The original terminus had been at the foot of Chislehurst Hill (Old Hill) which was for many years known as Old Station Hill: a separate line through Mottingham and Sidcup was opened in 1866.

At the top of the hill adjoining the Imperial Arms public house, two cottages were rented on a 21-year lease from Midsummer 1872 from Thomas Townsend of 9 Glenrose, Chislehurst Common, for use as a police station. Alterations were made at a cost of £693.11s.8d to provide the buildings with a single cell, chargeroom and Magistrates' Room, the latter having formerly performed their duties at Sidcup Police Station: indeed, the premises are still known as The Old Court House today. The name of the Imperial Arms, like so many places in the locality, is associated with the Bonaparte family, for it was at Camden House, scene of the gruesome murder sixty years earlier, that Chislehurst was again the hub of police activity on 15th January 1873 on the occasion of the funeral of the exiled Emperor Napoleon III, had resided there. Nearly 1,000 officers and men of the Metropolitan Police, sent down by special train from Charing Cross, were deployed between Chislehurst Railway Station and St Mary's Chapel. The following day a reception, for French mourners only, was held at Camden House by the Empress Eugenie; this necessitated only two inspectors, nine sergeants and ninety constables from the local 'P' and 'R' Divisions. The strong police presence gradually dwindled over the week until by Sunday 19th January 1873 just one sergeant and ten constables from the 'M' or Southwark Division Reserve travelled down on the ordinary 8.03 a.m. train from London Bridge to preserve order, after which Chislehurst settled down to its normal tranquil self.

Because of these distinguished residents, Chislehurst Hill Police Station was removed from the Sidcup sub-division on 15th October 1873 and was made a separate sub-division responsible for its own area. The station at that time consisted of Station-Sergeant John Creasey (who wore four stripes), one Acting Sergeant, one Section Sergeant and nine constables, the population standing at over 3,320.

Only six years separated the deaths of the Emperor Napoleon and his son, Louis, the Prince Imperial, who was killed overseas in the Zulu Wars. Once again, distinguished mourners attended Camden House including Queen Victoria. Nearly 1,500 police were on duty on this occasion in July 1879 - all of whom were awarded an extra day's pay as a token of gratitude from the



A very old and worn Parish Milestone.  
This is Number 8, in Mottingham Lane.

ADVERTISEMENTS.



## CHISLEHURST CAVES

MILES OF MYSTERIOUS UNDERGROUND  
PASSAGES OF GREAT ANTIQUITY

ONE of the most fascinating and unusual holiday expeditions from London is to explore the Chislehurst Caves. Learned men still dispute their origin, and the layman will find enough that is curious to interest and delight him. The hottest day finds these caverns cool. No risk attends their exploration, even for the adventurous who will do without a guide. Chislehurst is reached by Southern Railway, 30 minutes from Charing Cross. Chislehurst Common is one of the loveliest spots near London.

Bus route 109 from Penze.

Sundays—1 B from Willesden via Charing Cross.

Full particulars from—

## TRUST HOUSES LTD

53 SHORT'S GARDENS, LONDON, W.C.2

Tel.: Gerard 8844.

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A 1928 advertisement for Chislehurst Caves.



Scene in a Charge Room at 3 a.m.

(Carson Ritchie Collection)

Empress Eugenie herself. This royal connection with Chislehurst was later perpetuated by the telephone number of the present police station – IMP(erial) 201.

Yet another double murder took place in the district in October 1880 when the bodies of Edward Ellis, 73, and his wife Elizabeth, 66, were found lying in a wood on St Paul's Cray Common. The Inquest was held at the Bull Hotel, Chislehurst, when the jury returned a verdict of 'Wilful Murder' against one Joseph Wailer. He was detained at St Mary Cray Police Station due to the lack of facilities at Chislehurst Hill and brought before Lord Sydney, the Bromley Magistrate, who remanded him to the next Kent Assize.

Such was the excitement of the crowd when it was revealed that Wailer was an ex-policeman, who had been dismissed from Worship Street Police Court for drunkenness and violence, that he had to be taken out of the back door across the fields to the railway station, bound for Maidstone Gaol.

Meanwhile, in December 1883, at the old Chislehurst Hill Police Station the top floor was made into two bedrooms to accommodate the married Sergeant and in July 1885 a partition was made in the mess room to provide a passage to the cell, the mess room being converted into a kitchen.

A new station site was proposed in Mottingham Lane but nothing came of it. Instead, on 11th August 1888, the present freehold site in the High Street was purchased from Mr Owen Edwards for £800.

In 1889 a large portion of Kent became part of the new County of London upon the creation of the London County Council. As a consequence, part of Mottingham came under LCC jurisdiction, with the Metropolis now stretching to the foot of Whitehorse Hill! Police boundaries were unaffected, although a detached part of Fooks Cray parish was ceded to Chislehurst under the Divided Parishes Act, 1882.

A large influx of police was again in evidence in the district on the occasion of the late Earl Sydney's funeral, which took place on Thursday 19th February 1890. Over 100 officers were stationed between Chislehurst Station and Frogna. He was laid to rest in Chislehurst Churchyard.

Chislehurst Hill Police Station finally closed on 24th June 1893, Inspector James Fullard, together with one sergeant and sixteen constables transferring to the new High Street Station which was built at a cost of £3,453.16s.8d. Chislehurst Hill continued in use as a section house until 28th August that year.

By 1895 the station strength had been increased to an Inspector, three sergeants and nineteen constables. Bromley Rural District Council rented space in the rear yard of the new police station from May 1896 to house a portable fire-appliance at a yearly charge of five shillings. This arrangement continued until 1999.

# Metropolitan Police Office.

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## POLICE ORDERS.

TUESDAY, 14TH JANUARY, 1873.

**FUNERAL OF THE LATE EMPEROR NAPOLEON.**—The following numbers of Police are be posted at the places named, at 8.30 a.m., 15th. Great coats are to be worn and capes carried. The Superintendents of B, P, R, and W, are to be mounted.

The Police on duty on the line between Camden House Gates and St. Mary's Chapel, are to be posted at five paces apart.

PLACE.	Division.	Supts.	Insptr.	P.Ss.	P.Cs.	Mounted.	
						Insptr.	P.Ss. or P.Cs.
At Chislehurst Railway Station .. .. .	W.	—	—	2	20	—	4
From Railway Station to Camden House Gate .. .. .	M.	1	1	5	50	1	4
Round Camden Place Enclosure .. .. .	P.	—	—	3	30	—	—
At Camden House Gates .. .. .	P.	—	—	—	—	—	2
In Camden Place Avenue .. .. .	M.	1	2	5	50	1	4
At St. Mary's Chapel .. .. .	B.	—	—	—	—	2	—
In Crown Lane .. .. .	A.	1	2	6	60	—	—
Arranging carriages on Common .. .. .	C.	—	1	4	40	—	—
Reserve near Chapel .. .. .	E.	—	1	3	30	—	—
Reserve near "Tiger's Head" Public House .. .. .	"	—	1	2	20	—	—
From Camden House Gates to first turning on the right on the Common .. .. .	D.	—	1	5	50	—	—
From 1st turning on right on Common to centre of Pond .. .. .	V.	—	—	—	—	1	4
From centre of Pond to Crown Lane .. .. .	E.	—	1	2	20	—	—
From Crown Lane to turning near "Tiger's Head" Public House .. .. .	R.	—	—	—	—	1	4
From turning near "Tiger's Head" Public House, to St. Mary's Chapel Gates .. .. .	L.	—	1	6	60	—	—
	M.	—	1	2	20	—	—
	B.	1	—	—	—	—	—
	"	—	2	9	90	—	—
	G.	—	1	6	64	—	—
	K.	—	1	5	50	—	—
	H.	—	1	3	34	—	—
	R.	1	—	—	—	—	—
	"	—	2	9	92	—	—
		5	21	80	810	6	22

Of all ranks . . . 944.

**DETECTIVES.**—Two Detective Officers from each Division, and as many as can be spared from the Detective Office, Scotland Yard, are to parade at Chislehurst Railway Station, at 9 a.m. Superintendent Williamson is to post and take charge of them.

**SPECIAL TRAIN FOR UNIFORM POLICE.**—A special train will convey Foot Police in uniform on duty, leaving Charing Cross at 7 a.m., and London Bridge at 7.6 a.m., returning from Chislehurst after the visitors to the Funeral have returned to Town, &c.

Superintendent Mott (A) is to arrange for the special train, and pay the expense of same.

The Superintendents of remaining Divisions not specially named above, are to arrange in the best manner possible for Police proceeding to and from Chislehurst.

Capt. Baynes, District Superintendent, is to have charge of the Police arrangements.

The Police Order of 13th is cancelled.

E. Y. W. HENDERSON.

*Police Orders respecting the funeral of Napoleon III at Chislehurst on 15 January 1873*



The telegraphic code 'CT' had been transferred to the new police station from Chislehurst Hill but communication had only been possible to other 'R' Division stations until May 1897, when connection was also made to Bromley in the neighbouring 'P' Division. The new Chislehurst remained as a sub-divisional station for just over a decade until 24th January 1906 when, along with St Mary Cray, it was made a sectional station again as part of the Sidcup sub-division. On the railway, meanwhile, work had started in 1900 (the year Chislehurst became an Urban District) on quadrupling the line between St Johns and Orpington. This involved boring another tunnel between Chislehurst and Elmstead, but on 17th July 1903 the old tunnel collapsed and the line did not reopen until June 1905.

At the instigation of some wealthy season-ticket holders a new station was opened at Elmstead in July 1904 (renamed Elmstead Woods in 1908). It was only as late as 1972 that the area had its first bus route, the B1 (now 314).

Despite its rural setting there was a fixed 'point' at Royal Parade between the hours of 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. and another which had to be worked day and night in High Road, Mottingham, at the junction with West Park (now Mottingham Road). This was because, until the opening of the Sidcup By-Pass (A20) in 1924, Mottingham Lane was the main road to London (used by the Chislehurst Stage-Coach) but it has long since been a backwater, the only clue to its importance being the remains of the 8th milestone from London near Winn Road. A police telephone-box connection was later established in December 1904 between High Road, Mottingham, and Eltham Police Station.

The first motor-bus routes appeared in the village in the summer of 1914 when the London General Omnibus Co. (LGOC) introduced two summer Sunday services:

151 Woolwich-Chislehurst Common (Bull's Head)

159 Chalk Farm-Chislehurst Common (Bull's Head)

This brought an influx of visitors to the village from the poorer parts of London: people who could not otherwise have afforded the trip by train, but who also brought with them petty crime.

The outbreak of war in August 1914 caused the abandonment of both services as the 'B' type buses were sent to the Front as troop-carriers. It was the war however that caused the restoration of a bus service, this time daily, with the introduction of a single-deck service 109 (later 227) between Penge and Woolwich Arsenal for munition workers. Much of the munitions manufactured at Woolwich was in fact stored in Chislehurst Caves as an antiZeppelin measure.

Between 1920 and 1933 it was possible to travel direct to London by Omnibus route 1 or 119, just as it had been before the rail link made Chislehurst a convenient place to live. However, it was the electrification of the Southern



Loading a prison van.

(Carson Ritchie Collection)

Railway through Chislehurst in February 1926 and the opening of Pett's Wood Station in July 1928 that was responsible for the pre-war development.

On New Year's Day 1932 Chislehurst and St Mary Cray Police Stations severed their connection with Sidcup sub-division and became part of the Bromley sub-division just as they had been for a brief spell in 1865. At the same time they ceased to be part of 'R' division, which had been responsible for the parish since 1840, and were transferred to 'P' Division, where they were to remain until the abolition of 'P' District in 1985.

In April 1934 the separate Urban Districts of Chislehurst and Sidcup, including part of Mottingham beyond the LCC boundary, were amalgamated, covering an area of 8,957 acres. Only two months later Police-Public Call Boxes were erected on 2nd July 1934 at the following locations:

Box No. Site

P3 Sundridge Avenue, East of Elmstead Lane

P7 St Paul's Cray Road, Junction with Manor Park Road

P11 Tudor Way, Pett's Wood

Pett's Wood had mainly developed around the railway and had only gained its first bus service, the 94 (now 208) from the Bromley direction in May 1954, and

from the Orpington direction as late as July 1964.

In April 1965 the Chislehurst and Sidcup Urban District Council ceased to exist when the Greater London Council came into being. Chislehurst became part of the New London Borough of Bromley while Sidcup joined the new London Borough of Bexley, both districts no longer being part of the ancient County of Kent. At the same time Chislehurst and St Mary Cray Police Stations ceased to be part of the Bromley sub-division when 'The Cray' was made a 'temporary' sub-divisional station for Chislehurst pending the opening of a new station at Orpington, which in fact took nearly twenty years to implement. It had been envisaged that the new Chislehurst Police Station, to have been built on the site of Hornbrook House, would have been the new sub-divisional Headquarters, but it was never built.

The old police-boxes finally disappeared from the Chislehurst area in June 1970 after the introduction of personal radios and the Unit Beat System. This was followed by a slight internal revision of boundaries in July 1974 affecting the Bromley, St Mary Cray and Chislehurst sections.

From New Year's Day 1980 'P' Division, covering the boroughs of Bromley and Lewisham, was re-named 'P' District. However, the districts were abolished in 1986 along with the Greater London Council, and the Metropolitan Police District split into eight Areas. Chislehurst and St Mary Cray moved from No.4 Area (South) to No.3 Area (South East).

The new divisional police station at The Walnuts, Orpington, had at last opened on 6th December 1983 in lieu of St Mary Cray, which was later closed, much to the annoyance of local residents. As late as July 1991 it was proposed to close Chislehurst Police Station at night, just as it had been experimentally during the period between 1961 and 1965. Fortunately the station was reprieved with the introduction of Sector-Policing and is now known as the ChislehurstPett's Wood sector, which includes that part of Mottingham lying within the Borough of Bromley. Had the County Constabulary been founded before 1857, then perhaps Chislehurst and Mottingham would have found themselves in a more rural environment rather than as part of the vast Metropolitan Police District.