

A FEW RECOLLECTIONS OF THE DAY WE AMALGAMATED (55 YEARS ON)

The date was the 1st April, 1967, it was a Saturday, just another ordinary day really. I was a paid-up member of the Derby Borough Police Mobile Section, I don't think we had a posher title at that time.

We were using Mark 3 and Mark 4 Ford Zephyrs. The Mark 3 was well liked by us all whereas the Mark 4, commonly called The Dagenham Dustbin, was constantly living up to its name. I'm sure they spent more time being repaired than they did on patrol.

We were something of an elitist section although I never found out why. For example, we were issued with brown leather gloves rather than the black ones everyone else had, and we had an overcoat called a British Warm, shorter in length than the general issue and which had silver buttons rather than the black ones on general issue and a rubber truncheon which followed the contour of your leg whilst driving.

So back to the 1 April, the day we were to amalgamate with the Derbyshire Constabulary. I was on the early turn, 6am - 2pm. We paraded as usual and then walked back to the garage to be briefed by our Sergeant, who I feel sure was Alan B. that day. "OK Sergeant, what's to do today?" We had to ask because we had had no prior briefing as to what would happen. Back came the reply. "I have no idea" Not a good start really.

We received our patrol areas, logged on with the radio room and off we went. As usual, we returned some time later, presumably with despatches, newspapers and quite possibly milk for the tea! Now things were happening, the County men arrived from their base at St. Mary's Gate, with their vehicles. We knew most of them from encounters over the years and enjoyed a good working relationship with them. We were quite interested to see these vehicles included an Austin Gypsy 4x4 which we all expressed a wish to drive, but were quickly told you needed an additional driving course so to do! As we were to find out later, it really wasn't that impressive but I can only imagine there wasn't much choice in 4x4's at that time. I keep referring to policemen as neither the Borough or County forces had policewomen drivers on road traffic duties at that time. It would be a couple of years or so before the first women officers were given Advanced Driving Courses.

So the next question was posed to the skipper, "What is happening regarding the radio networks?" as we were still on separate systems.

The reply, as before, "No idea, but I will find out", and with that we were off on patrol again. In fact I remember it was late morning before the Home Office Wireless engineers put us all on to the same network.

After breakfast I suppose it was inevitable that someone said, "Do we keep our collar numbers or what?" as it was pretty obvious that there must have been officers in the County force with the same numbers as ours. I'm not sure how, but I was nominated to telephone the Uniform Stores at Matlock to try and find out. I remember speaking to the Storeman who was Alistair Cameron's father! "Of course you will have different

numbers". Next question. "Well, perhaps you could tell us what they will be" and eventually, "Well, can you send us some of these new numbers please?"

I don't think we were ready for the reply, "How many do you want?" "Well, we have at least two uniform jackets, a British Warm overcoat and a raincoat". The next response was even weirder. 'Do you know how much these metal numbers cost?' Of course we had no idea and the result of our enquiries came a few days later when we all received one set of metal numbers with the instruction to put them on which ever item of uniform we wished until further supplies became available.

Not a particularly auspicious day for the rank and file officers and I suppose we were all left wondering about the apparent lack of liaison between the senior officers of the two Police forces on what was such an important day for all concerned. And as the saying goes, the rest is history.....

Alan King. Retired Inspector.