

Looking back at my time in Mid – Wales

By Peter Griffin (PC 153 / 753)

I have been looking through the old photographs on the Dyfed Powys NARPO website and came across some very interesting photos from the days of the Mid-Wales Constabulary.

My wife Megan (nee Owens) No. 147 and I served with the Mid-Wales Constabulary during the middle to late '60's. Meg left the force before amalgamation in 1968 but I served until 1970 when I transferred to West Mercia Constabulary. We were both stationed at Newtown and Llandrindod Wells - I also spent a short time at Welshpool.

As far as I recall the Mid-Wales Constabulary only had one DMW bike which was based at Newtown although there may have been one in Breconshire division. Soon after being moved to Newtown from Welshpool (to get married) it was discovered that I had a full motorcycle licence even though I did not own a bike. This ensured that I was 'volunteered' to ride this machine.



I do not have many fond memories of it as it was a pig to start, being fitted with a Villiers 250 cc two stroke engine. It was also very top-heavy due to its large body and fairly small wheels. I recall on one windy day passing a field gateway in a high hedge and being blown to the offside of the road. (A DMW is shown on the left)

Some of pictures on the website show the floods at the police headquarters in Newtown. On one particular night I was sent out in the pouring rain on the DMW to warn farmers without telephone, to move their animals to higher ground because the Severn was about to flood. As you can imagine it was extremely difficult to ride the bike along the muddy farm tracks in pouring rain.



Before the flood barriers were erected, among the first buildings to flood were the town police station and HQ. The ground floors of both buildings would be several feet deep in muddy river water (see left). The business of the police station would be conducted from the first floor of a solicitor's office in Broad Street.

After being stationed at Newtown I was posted to Llandrindod Wells Traffic and at that time Meg was the only Police Woman for that division. I am pretty certain that there was not a DMW at Llandrindod but they did have a Land Rover because of the heavy snowfalls experienced every winter.



The Ford Zephyr 6 BEP 201C shown on the left is identical to the patrol cars I drove in Llandrindod Wells and it could well be the actual vehicle that was based there but after all this time I cannot be 100% sure.

I do recall that one of them had the Reg. No. TEP100 and this was my first allocated car which is very similar to the one in the picture.

When we first went to 'Llandod,' Superintendent Mervyn Morgan was the Officer-in-Charge, together with Inspector Wyndham Slee. Johnny Morris was the Traffic Sergeant followed shortly after amalgamation by Hywel Bevan.

During my service at Llandrindod Wells I worked with many officers on Traffic including Terry Rees, Richie Thomas, Mike Richards, Brian Oakley, Trevor Millichip, and DAL James. I also fondly remember many former colleagues from my time there including Chief Inspector Jim Murphy and Inspector Geoff 'Duff' Edwards who was the examiner when Megan took her driving test – a lovely man (he passed her)!

Also stationed there were Sergeants John Tutty, Bert Mills, Ernie Herbert and DS Tony Williams. PC's: Colin Williams, Geoff Hopkins, Phil Rees, Jim Humphreys, Russell Morgan, Cyril Hendy, DC Ralph Rees, together with two young probationers, Phil Hopkins and Hugh Colley. It is with sadness that so many that we worked with have now gone on to patrol that beat in the sky.

There were of course many more, but your memory lets you down. However, I have fond memories of my time in the force and the men and women that I worked with - it was in my view a happy time.

Meg and I lived in the flat above the Police Station for a time – it was originally the Sergeant's flat and both our daughters were born in Llandrindod Wells hospital. When space had to be found for Ken Howarth (Home Office Radio Engineer), one bedroom was given over to Ken and it became a compact two bedroom flat.

About 10 years ago, Meg and I visited Llandrindod Wells station and introduced ourselves. We were given a tour of the nick including our old flat. Some of the rooms which were now being used as offices had the same wallpaper and the remains of the light pull over where our bed used to be!

I still remember the Welsh Nationalists troubles leading up to the investiture of Prince Charles as Prince of Wales in 1969. On the night shift we carried out pipeline patrols and checked quarry explosives stores. One particular inspection involved parking up the car and walking across fields to check on an inspection chamber for the Elan Valley pipeline - this little trip took 45 minutes on foot.

What I remember most that it was always freezing cold - I cannot recall the exact locations but by coincidence the pipeline crosses the river only 3 miles north of where I now live in Stourport-on-Severn.

I transferred to West Mercia Constabulary in December 1970 and finally retired in 1992 having spent much of my service on traffic as a Sergeant working M5 and for a time M6, shortly after it opened through Birmingham, including Spaghetti Junction and the link to M5.

On retirement from the force I went into local government and worked for over 12 years as a planning enforcement officer for a council in Worcestershire - just on the edge of Birmingham.

I am a member of NARPO here in Worcestershire and do so appreciate the work of its members and officers.

Finally, best wishes to all those that remember Meg and I for Christmas and the New Year.

Regards

Peter (PC 153 / 753).