

The mystery of the pole.

The period to which my story refers is the early 1960's.

I was at this time based in the northern sub district of Morriston, with Ivor (The Chin) Griffiths being the Inspector in charge.

Together with my wife I lived in the Brynhyfryd area and during these early days of marriage things were to say the least rather frugal. The rate of pay as a constable was quite small and consequently every penny had to be counted (No doubt NARPO members will be able to confirm the relatively low pay factor of this time)

Now our semi- detached homestead was not fitted with central heating as so many are now-days. We relied upon an old fashion open grate but the fuel, that is coal, was quite expensive on police pay. I made a point of collecting whatever fuel I could find, in the form of old wooden sleepers and such.

I took advantage of a scheme introduced by the post office services in which they sold off old telegraph poles very cheaply. Over the years I had bought several of these discarded poles which made excellent fuel when sawed into small blocks. They were saturated with a tar based preservative which provided lots of heat.

It was whilst I was patrolling Woodfield Street that I spotted a gang of B/T workers bringing down of an old pole. I immediately thought to myself, this is an opportunity to strike whilst the iron is hot. I spoke to the foreman in charge of the gang and asked him whether I could buy this particular pole. He replied in the affirmative saying I could pay later at the Strand Head Office.

The foreman asked me where he could leave the pole and I suggested one of the many lanes which lead off the main street. I then continued my patrol.

The following day whilst off duty I arranged for a loan of a motor lorry so that I might collect the pole and convey it to my home. Following a success with the transport problem I then made my way to a Timber Yard at Morriston where I had a friendly association with the owner. I explained my need for a loan of a large crosscutting saw, but the fellow declined to lend the tool saying that the saws were very easy to damage. Nevertheless the yard owner offered to send two of his employees to the location of the old pole where they would saw it into suitable lengths.

I explained that the pole was in a lane leading off Woodfield Street. He assured me that the promise would be fulfilled I thanked him and left the scene.

The following day I was working afternoon shift on 19 beat. I arrived at Morriston Police Box and listened to a conversation between the two Northern Sub CID staff - they were DC Roy Evans and DC Mervyn James. These hard working detectives were talking about a complaint registered by B/T concerning a telegraph pole. I was immediately on my guard but I declined to enquire what it was all about.

It was time that I commenced my patrolling of my beat. My first destination was up the lane adjacent to the Gem Cinema, a short distance from the police boxes. In the lane I saw three elderly men, all retired steel workers. They were seated on one of several sections of a telegraph pole whilst they smoked their pipes.

As I survey the scene one of the men said to me, "They must have had a bloody cheek". I enquired of him what he was talking about - To which he replied, as he pointed

toward the sections of telegraph pole, "The buggers who sawed this up". He continued, saying, "Never mind your CID will find the culprits". I replied saying no doubt they would do so.

It then became all too clear what had occurred. My friendly saw mill workers had found the "NEW" pole which had been deposited in the lane by B/T and had assumed that this was the one which needed to be sawn into short lengths.

I made my way to the Timber Yard where the owner asked me whether I was satisfied with the help that he had afforded me in providing the sawyers. I will admit that still in a state of shock I thanked him very much without explaining the dreadful mistake that had taken place.

I am sure that the CID Staff attached to A Northern Sub Division made extensive enquiries in an effort to solve the mystery of the severed telegraph pole but it was eventually filed as unsolved. I considered that the least said about the matter was the better course of action. I made no attempt to trace the pole, which should have been the target for the helpful sawyers.

The experience caused me to cease attempting to acquire other old poles from B/T. I reverted to collecting flotsam timber from Swansea Beach foreshore. Do you blame me?.

Hubert Thomas. Ex 90 and 2110