

Fifi stole my Status.

When I joined that August body – The Swansea Borough Constabulary, in the year 1952, I was so proud to become a member of a respected organisation which had served the public over many years with distinction.

I wore the uniform with pride and patrolled the highways with my head held high.

Each year there took place memorable symbolic occasions. One of course was the Annual Mayors Parade.

I have no doubt that members of N.A.R.P.O. will remember with nostalgia the events which followed many weeks of planning and preparation.

My recollections are of drill practice in the yard of the T.A. Centre off Richardson Street, at the rear of the Vetch Field Football Ground.

Here we would march backward and forward under the supervision of Sergeant No 173 Buckler. What a character was Charlie !

When the big day arrived we all had to pay special attention to our personal appearance. Uniform trousers had to display well creased trousers with uniforms brushed down to ensure that no foreign bodies adhered. Then of course boots were well blackened and polished to an extent that one could see ones reflection in the toe caps.

The pride of being part of the big occasions was just wonderful but when saw the prominent position that the Selected group of officers – The Halberdiers- were accorded, I became quite envious.

The Halberdiers wore if you remember, a special uniform which was deemed Ceremonial. The uniform jacket was

buttoned up to the neck and had two perpendicular lines of sparkling buttons at the front. At the rear the jacket had two slits, one above each buttock of the wearer. Then there was the ceremonial leather belt and shoulder strap,

Finally, each Halberdier was supplied with a long Halberd ( A combined spear and battleaxe) This impressive weapon was highly polished and was carried over the left shoulder

Each Halberdier was especially selected with due consideration being accorded to his stature and bearing. The total number of Halberdiers amounted to eight and they considered themselves to be Elite and envied by other officers.

Now with all due modesty, in my early days of service I had a very impressive physique. I stood a good six feet in height and was very well proportioned. I was delighted when asked whether I would like to become one of this elitist group of officers by Sergeant Buckler. I replied in the affirmative which led to me being supplied with the full Ceremonial Uniform.

There followed several years of marching alongside of such officers as Harry Summers – Jack Ellery- Hubert Robins- Mike Spearing and others the names of whom I cannot remember.

Everything seemed to be settled and I wallowed in my elevated status but of course life provides all manner of unexpected developments.

The date of the Mayors Parade Ceremony and inspection was due. Each Halberdier was ordered to prepare for the big day. I gave my best pair of boots an impressive shine and spent hours pressing the creases of my trousers. The wonderful "Melton" cloth was Virginal after all the brushing. The day prior to the parade I was working "Afternoon" shift on 19 beat, "A" Northern Sub Division.

I was required to take a written statement from a Café owner near Morriston Cross. It was necessary for me to take

the statement in a rear living room of the business establishment. I was provided with much appreciated cup of coffee by the witnesses wife.

I commenced writing the statement with occasional sips of my coffee. Prior to this I had placed my helmet on the floor alongside of my chair. Now the café owner and his kind wife owned a small Poodle bitch named "Fi fi". It was very small in size but quite active and was the adored pet of the family I eventually completed my statement after which I thanked both husband and wife for their kind co-operation. I then wished them a very goodnight and went to pick up my helmet. As I looked down at my headgear I saw that little "Fi fi" was busy chewing away at the chinstrap and in fact it already was in tatters.

I snatched up the damaged Helmet but it was far too late to save the chinstrap. There followed lots of apologies from the embarrassed restaurant owners but I couldn't blame them for the calamity could I ?

The following morning I prepared myself for the Mayors Parade but to my dismay I could not find another helmet to wear. As a consequence I was obliged to place the damaged Helmet on my head with the well chewed strap ends tucked up inside.

At the Guildhall steps I joined the other Halberdiers, all of whom looked extremely smart indeed with their chin straps in position

Within a few minutes Sergeant Buckler approached me and said, "Ninety, put your chin strap down into position"

I then explained that I had no chin strap as a consequence of a playful bitch named Fi fi.

Sergeants Buckler immediately marched off to inform the Inspector in Charge, Inspector "Bill" Francis. After due consideration he ordered me to leave my elevated post and to join the lines of "ordinary coppers". I deliberately stood in the centre line of assembled men to be as less conspicuous as possible but to no avail. Within minutes Superintendent Eb'

Jones spotted my lack of chin strap. There followed a short conversation between the drill sergeant, Bert' Addison and "Eb" which led to me being ordered to leave the parade and consider myself dismissed from the parade.

I made my way home and surprised my wife by my early return but her reaction to my explanation was uncontrolled laughter, not remorse.

The following week I reported to Mr Thomas, the police force tailor, at his second floor workshop, where he provided me with a new helmet.

Unfortunately I had "Fouled my Nest" as far as my Senior Officers were concerned. I was never ever again selected as Halberdier. I must admit to being saddened by this situation. But it is to my credit that I didn't seek retribution of the playful little Bitch. On later occasions when I visited the family home of the restaurant owner I even patted the animal in a friendly and forgiving manner. Little did the little bitch realise how her enjoyable chewing session had reduced my status within the good old Swansea Borough Force !

Hubert Thomas. (Ex 90, or later 2110.)