

THE LONG(AGO) ARM OF THE LAW:

Figures supplied by the Public Relations Branch of the N.S.W. Police Department give the staff on strength at Wollongong Police Station in November 1976 as comprising two Superintendents, four Inspectors, six Sergeants 1st class, twelve Sergeants 2nd class, fourteen Sergeants 3rd class and ninety-nine Constables.

From the same source it is learned that throughout World War I, 1914-18, the station was staffed by one sub-inspector, one Sergeant and six Constables, one of these was a mounted trooper who provided the sole mobile unit apart from the availability of two bicycles owned by constables who cycled to work.

Peacekeeping consisted of daylong "pounding the beat" up and down Crown Street by two constables and their attendance on the arrival of all passenger trains at Wollongong Railway Station. Trooper Windsor carried out a daily horseback patrol of the far-flung areas of Hospital Hill, Stuart Park and Mount Drummond. For police business further afield advantage was taken of the fact that car driving tests and the issue of drivers' licences were then in police hands, and a novice undergoing a test provided an opportunity for a constable to visit remote corners of the area on official business.

I experienced the workings of this system in 1925 when applying at Kiama for a driver's licence. Sergeant Hawkey conducted the test by asking me to drive him to Jamberoo police station where he discussed official matters with the local trooper over afternoon tea served to us by the policeman's wife. This was a pleasant amenity for the motoring public which could well be adopted by present day registry offices. I was then directed to head for Minnamurra where a summons was served for non-registration of a dog, whose owner presented us with a bag of oysters. On return to the office at Kiama my licence was issued forthwith, and I was thanked for my co-operation in the carrying out of police functions. It is a sobering thought that I have been driving cars for half a century on the strength of that sketchy test.

Around 1920 the three seaside townships of Port Kembla, Shell-harbour and Kiama were looked after by foot policemen Somerville and Arnold at the two first-named and Sergeant Hawkey and two constables at Kiama. The four "inland" villages of Figtree, Dapto, Albion Park and Jamberoo each carried one mounted trooper namely Small, Hargreaves, Archer and Constable, with Trooper Buchan up at Robertson as a backstop whenever a raid was made on illicit whisky stills in the Macquarie Pass region.

Other than lumbering the occasional drunk, there were few breaches of the law to be handled in those quiet farming communities, but the local trooper shouldered duties far removed from those of today. These included inspection of all dairies and milking sheds annually, ordering such repairs and painting as he thought necessary, collection of registration dues and issue of certificates; which entailed visits to scores of farms over a wide area and many miles in the saddle. Also he was supposed to be present at all killings of cattle, sheep and pigs by local butchers, a duty impossible of fulfil-

ment except in token fashion. Duty did not end at sunset, every bazaar, concert, ball, circus, euchre party or picture show saw the uniformed upholder of law and order hovering in the background until the finish. He was never seen out of uniform except at church on Sunday.

While the trooper was out on district work, his family attended to callers at the station, issued dog licences, collected fees and in the absence of a telephone took messages. A relief was never supplied when an officer took annual leave; the constable or trooper at an adjoining station doubled for him. On one occasion in 1924 Tooper Small of Figtree looked after Albion Park, twelve miles away, in addition to his own station and district—all done on horseback.

No mounted police were employed north of Wollongong and the few stations existing in the various mining townships were sparsely manned.

Time brings changes, and it is certain that Wollongong and district police would be somewhat at a disadvantage and non-plussed if suddenly deprived of motor transport, radio, telephones and typewriters and issued with horses.

—B. E. Weston.