



Commissioner John Stevens and Home Secretary David Blunkett with CSOs. Photo by Femke van Iperen

Making their presence felt

By Femke van Iperen

The Met's first Security Police Community Support Officers started patrolling the streets of Central London at the end of September. But what does that mean to our local streets where crime prevails?

On Monday 23 September the first 44 civilian PCSOs, aged between 18 and 58, took to the streets in Westminster. Following three weeks training, their duties will be based on 'presence, prevent and protect', and operating alongside the police it is intended that they will free officers for more serious crime.

Though resembling police, the civilian officers will have limited powers. As proposed by the Police Reform Bill, these may include the authority to detain a person for up to 30 minutes before arrest and to enter premises to save life or prevent serious damage. It's hoped some of these powers will be introduced from this December.

The Metropolitan Police area has been allocated 500 PCSOs, and by next March the Met hopes to have increased the total amount of Security PCSOs to 300, operating at major incidents. Based at Charing Cross and Belgravia Police stations, they are to help patrol central London. How will that affect local communities?

The Met hopes to have a further 200 Community and Transport PCSOs working alongside beat officers by next March who will aid police in local neighbourhoods.

Fear of crime
Superintendent Mark Gore, in charge of recruiting PCSOs, told THE ARCHER, "Within the community role they should be tackling issues like anti-social behaviour. And provide visibility and security."

Joyce Thakur, Head of Barnet Borough Watch also welcomes the scheme: "These officers can act as a go-between the police

and the public, and can give people feedback; let them know they are included. They can improve quality of life and lower the fear of crime which is high in Barnet, although our crime rates are

actually low."

According to the police, the use of civilian officers will be in addition to the 4,000 extra police that have been deployed over the last year, and will not replace them.

Thanksgiving Explained

By Maggie Eiseman-Renyard

Thanksgiving Day in the USA falls on the last Thursday of November. Although it is a national day, many places of worship hold special services. Families assemble to count their blessings over a meal based on New World ingredients: turkey, cranberry sauce, sweet potatoes, pumpkin pie, and succotash. (The last item is the native American dish of maize and beans on which Daffy Duck built a career.)

Pilgrim Fathers

Thanksgiving Day commemorates the survival of just over half of a group of British settlers in their first year in Massachusetts. The people we now call The Pilgrim Fathers were a Puritan sect who left what they saw as a corrupt and godless England to live in Holland in the first years of the 1600s. In 1620 they returned to the West Country to organise passage from Plymouth to northern Virginia aboard the Mayflower, an inauspicious small merchant vessel supposed to have been a veteran of the Armada battles. Faith in God and in their role as the New Israelites were central to the pilgrims' lives. An uneasy relationship between the emigrants and the sailors and soldiers who accompanied

them can't have been helped by being blown off course. They arrived in a freezing New England as winter set in.

Asylum Seekers

Nearly half the settlers perished of cold, disease and malnutrition until the appearance of a couple of local men of the Wampanaog Nation. Both Samoset and Tisquantum, who they called "Squanto", could speak English. Squanto had visited England as a guest of explorer John Weymouth, who later helped him to return home to America after slavers captured and sold him to a Spanish Caribbean colony. Partly from their own Algonkian religious convictions, these native Americans befriended their asylum seekers, taught them about the local plants, animals and techniques of

An Old Trick

By Diana Cormack

It is strange to think that, though millions of us know the name of Guy Fawkes and what he tried to do, he was actually chosen for the task because he was largely unknown in London.

That, coupled with the fact that he knew a few things about explosives. He learned about them when he was in Holland, where he went after fighting as a soldier in Spain. The original members of the Roman Catholic plot to blow up the Protestant King James I and his parliament needed someone cool-headed and skilled who could make his escape after the event without being recognised.

Not a lot of people know that Guy, a convert to Catholicism, came from Yorkshire and the doughty people of that county were unhappy when they learned of the cruel punishment inflicted on him after his 'mischief' ended in failure. They took to the streets to show their disapproval and consequently, though exactly when is uncertain, Mischief Night began. It was particularly popular with the mill and factory workers living in the terraced streets of the Victorian era.

Mischief Night

I learned about it as a child when I lived in the old West Riding of Yorkshire, where it

still survived. On the evening of 4 November, before the rest of the country celebrated the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot with Bonfire Night, children were allowed go around causing mischief. They could get up to whatever tricks they could think of, the more ingenious the better, as long as they weren't cruel or harmful. My favourite was the simple one of tying string between opposite doorknobs in the street, knocking and then running away to watch as neighbours struggled to open their doors. I never realised that the adults were in on the act!

It would be interesting to know if the imported commercialised custom of Trick or Treating on Halloween has usurped the tricks carried out on 4 November. I hope that Mischief Night will not be forgotten, commemorating as it does the expression of a community's feelings nearly four hundred years ago.

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of Barnet Borough Watch also welcomes the scheme: "These officers can act as a go-between the police

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