Brian Bishop was born on July 24th 1947 and joined the former Essex Constabulary as a fifteen year old cadet. Whilst a cadet the dog handlers gave him the nickname of ‘Bill’, this was due to his hair ‘a bit thin on top but long and wavy at the back’, which reminded them of ‘Wild Bill’ Hickock.

Brian was attested as Police Constable 389 on August 11th, 1966, and was posted to Colchester. Two years later he joined the Dog Section as a handler. In 1975 he joined the Force Support Unit and subsequently became a firearms instructor. At 6’ 7” tall he was known as ‘The Gentle Giant’.

On Wednesday August 22nd 1984, with other officers, he was called to Central Avenue, Frinton, a short distance from the seafront. This call followed on from reports that earlier in the day a man had robbed two post offices, one in Walton and another in Frinton. It was also known that he had hidden his haul of several thousand pounds alongside a railway embankment.

The wanted man had held up the Post Office staff with a sawn-off shotgun and forced them to hand over money before escaping on a motor cycle.
Following the first raid he had been stopped and questioned by police as he fitted the description of the wanted man. He was then taken to his mother's house as she lived nearby. She gave him an alibi and said that he had been at home all afternoon. He was then released to commit the second raid.

Meanwhile, police had kept watch on the site where the cash had been hidden. Finally the robber approached carrying what appeared to be just a carrier bag. Constable Bishop shouted at him 'Armed Police. Stop!' at which the robber lifted the carrier bag, which concealed a gun, and shot him in the head. Sergeant Mervyn Fairweather was shot in the groin. Another colleague then fired at the gunman, hitting him in the back and side.

Constable Bishop died five days later in Saint Bartholomew's Hospital in London.

A thirty five year old Brentwood man was arrested at the scene but, because of injuries he had sustained, he was detained under guard in Colchester hospital and later charged with murder.

On Friday 19th July 1985 he appeared at Norwich Crown Court, sitting in a wheelchair as he was paralysed from the waist down. He was charged with Constable Bishop's murder and the attempted murder of Sergeant Fairweather. He denied both charges. The jury found him guilty of Brian Bishop's murder. They found him not guilty of attempting to murder Sergeant Fairweather, but guilty of wounding him. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and the judge commented that he would have recommended a minimum of twenty years in gaol had his injuries not reduced his danger to society. Mr Justice Boreham also praised the bravery of the officers who had been with Brian Bishop when confronted by the robber and went on to say 'I only wish Constable Bishop was here to hear the commendation'.

On Wednesday 19th February 1986, the then Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd unveiled a brown granite memorial stone, adjacent to the seafront site where Brian fell. It was funded by the Police Memorial Trust, set up in 1984 following the death of WPC Yvonne Fletcher in St. James Square in London, and was the brain-child of film director Michael Winner. The aim of the Trust is to erect memorials to police officers killed in the course of their hazardous duty, on the spot where they met their death, thereby acting as a permanent reminder to the public they serve, of their sacrifice. Brian Bishop's memorial was only the third to be funded and erected by the Trust, and the first outside London.

A Guard of Honour was provided by colleagues from the Force Support Unit and despite snow flurries and a chilling wind several hundred members of the public attended the unveiling ceremony. In attendance with me, his widow Sue, a former policewoman, was our ten year old son David and Brian's parents. We laid floral tributes. Mr Hurd laid a spray of flowers. As the ceremony came to a close Sergeant Fairweather marched alone to the memorial, saluted and marched off, a fitting tribute from a man injured when his colleague received fatal injuries.

A small wrought iron fence has since been erected around the memorial by the local council and a garden dug inside. School children have planted spring bulbs along the green beside it. In Walton on the Naze the council have called a road on a new housing estate 'Brian Bishop Close'.
Bringing our Roll of Honour up to date  
by Fred Feather Curator of the Essex Police Museum

THE HEADSTONE OF THE REV. J. B. THOMAS

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE
It is very important that officers who have died whilst performing their duty for Essex Police are remembered. Essex Police now has a Memorial Committee, which, under the initial Chairmanship of Assistant Chief Constables Terry Rand and James Conlan and latterly, Assistant Chief Constable Geoffrey Markham, has assumed the responsibility for commemorating our fallen colleagues.

JO-ANN JENNINGS  DAVID WORSFOLD  STEPHEN TAYLOR  ANDREW MORRISON  BRIAN BISHOP  STEPHEN GREET  PETER WRINGE  LESLIE BLOOM  GEORGE MANNING  LESLEY BEET

JOHN SHRIMPLIN  BRIAN RIPPINGALE  SIDNEY DODD  EDMUND FROST  DAVID LEWIS  MAURICE LEE  ALEXANDER SCOTT  GEORGE GUTTERIDGE  THOMAS WAKE  JOSEPH WATT

WALTER REEVE  HENRY WRIGHT  JOHN HARVEY  ADAM EVES  EDWARD RAVEN  THOMAS SIMMONS  JOHN SMITH  EDWARD WILLSMORE  ROBERT BAMBRUGH  WILLIAM CAMPLING

A STONE MEMORIAL
To commemorate the lives of thirty officers who died whilst on duty, a Portland stone memorial was erected in the front garden of Essex Police Headquarters at Springfield. A service was held on 7th October 1992 which dedicated the stone to their memory.

In the nearby reception area a memorial board made of American Oak has the carved names of the following officers painted in gold:-
**Another Four Men**

Within a week of the ceremony on October 13th 1992 tragedy struck again and the life of another young officer was taken. Christopher Wiggins, a twenty-nine-year-old constable with the traffic division, was on the M25 Motorway dealing with a vehicle fire. Just as he was preparing to move his traffic car from the 'Fend off' position a lorry crashed into it and he was killed instantly.

After the death of Pc Wiggins national research brought to light two other officers who had been killed on duty. The Reverend Joseph B. Thomas, the Rector of Radwinter, and John W. Towers, known as 'Bill', of Grays. Both men died during wars and their names were all but forgotten by their colleagues.

Reverend Thomas was a Special Corporal in the County Constabulary and was on patrol on December 28th, 1914, when he was accidentally drowned in the river near Hempstead. He is buried in Radwinter churchyard but his simple grave does not mention his police duty. His name has been included in the National Book of Remembrance of Special Constabulary killed on duty, which is on display in Coventry Cathedral.

On January 26th 1941 War Reserve Policeman Bill Towers was sent with some colleagues to Hangman's Wood near Grays where a man had committed suicide. As the officer pushed the body on a trolley cart along a poorly lit road that winter evening he was struck by an army lorry and died from his injuries.

Both officers have now been included in the 'Roll of Honour'.

Constable Rodney Leake, who worked in the Traffic Department, was the last Essex Police officer to die on duty. It was a summer morning in June 1996 and Constable Leake was on routine patrol when his motor cycle was in collision with a lorry near Ulting and he was killed.

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**The Memorial Book**

The Essex Police Memorial Fund provided the money for a 'Memorial Book' to be made and dedicated to the thirty-four officers who lost their lives whilst on duty.

The individual stories of the thirty-two men and two women were hand-written by calligrapher Sam Somerville on fine vellum and bound by George Kirkpatrick in the finest leather. This beautiful book is encased in an American Oak cabinet which is on display at Police Headquarters.

It was thought fitting that Sue Bishop, the wife of one of the fallen officers, Brian Bishop, be approached to be its custodian. Her main duty will be to turn the pages. The 'Memorial Book' was put on show at a special ceremony on Sunday November 30th 1997, where relatives, friends and colleagues of those who had died on duty within this police district were invited.

The quality of the workmanship alone will help to ensure that it will survive for future generations to know how we respected their memory.