Force Orders were issued to keep Officers abreast of changes in law and the goings on in the Constabulary. In this day and age the Force Order is supplemented by high tec means, such as In-Force video's and computerised message switches via the IRIS Computer network. In the past, however, the Force Order was the only way of keeping Officers appraised of the changes constantly going on within the Essex Police.

Force Order No. 1 was issued on 1st September 1915 and was titled, "Strength of the Force". It informed us that 'The Secretary of State had approved of the increase of the Force by 1 Superintendent as from 14th May, 1915 (appointment of Capt. Fitch) and the substitution of 1 Constable for an Inspector as from 1st April 1915 (P.C. Pledger appointed plain clothes officer at Chelmsford in place of Insp. Flack appointed in charge of Dunmow Sub-Division'. That first issue contained Orders 1 to 9, letting the Men of Essex Police know that Brentwood and Romford Divisions were to amalgamate, along with the news that 'The County horse at Romford will be transferred to Brentwood', also that 'Supt. Hastings will draw forage allowance in respect of one of the horses at Headquarters'.

A careful study of the archives reveals some amazing
facts published in these documents making the author wonder if future Police Officers will be quite so taken aback on going over todays issues, although the writer of todays orders do not seem to have the imaginative pen of their predecessors. The Force Orders detailed in this short notebook are taken word for word from the finely bound archive volumes.

The first one is, to my mind, one of the best of a truly memorable collection.

Force Order 1859. 31st May 1927
SCHEME FOR STOPPING MOTOR VEHICLES
ON THE HIGHWAY SUSPECTED OF BEING
USED IN CONNECTION WITH THE
COMMISSION OF CRIMINAL OFFENCES

The practice of making use of motor vehicles in connection with “Hold up”, “Housebreaking”, “Burglaries” and other serious offences, in connection with which the motor vehicle used is often a stolen one, has rendered it necessary to formulate some organised scheme for stopping any such vehicle which is known to be on the road either before or, as is usually the case, after the commission of an offence.

It is obvious that after an offence has been committed in which a motor vehicle has been used the perpetrators will endeavour to escape as fast as possible and in order that any scheme may be effective the utmost speed in putting the scheme into operation is absolutely essential. It is more than probable that the more serious the offence which has been committed the greater will be the speed at which the car will travel, especially during the hours of darkness, the more desperate will those concerned in it be and the greater will be the necessity for passing the information and manning at the utmost what will be referred to in this order as the “Stopping Places”.

Speed is the all important factor in the success of the scheme. Directly it becomes known to any Police Officer that a serious offence has been committed in connection with which a motor vehicle has been used, he will (unless so much time has elapsed since the offence became known as to make it practically impossible for the motor vehicle to still be in the County) telephone direct from the nearest available telephone to the “Stopping Place” which seems to be most likely to be able to hold up the car. The information should if possible give the index number and colour of the car, its make and if possible the number of occupants, for instance - “Bank hold up at Braintree, 3 men in red car (number, if known) left Braintree about 4 p.m. - armed”. Immediately on receipt of this information the “Stopping Place” will be manned and the information circulated to the other “Stopping Places” named below in what appears to be their order of importance. Every Police Officer must note in his notebook the telephone number of each “Stopping Place”.

The following are the “Stopping Places”:-
Springfield Road Corner, Chelmsford.
Tel. 12 Chelmsford.
Brentwood High Street.
Tel. 51 Brentwood.
Romford Cross Roads.
Tel. 79 Romford.
Epping Police Station.
Tel. 17 Epping.
Braintree - Bank Corner.
Tel. 15 Braintree.

The following equipment will be issued to each of the above stations -
8 Oil lamps with red glasses.
1 Rope with iron hook attached, and at Romford and Epping 2 strips of studded matting in addition.

These stores must be kept available for immediate use at a moment’s notice, either at the Police Station or under local arrangements at the “Stopping Place”. Lamps must be kept filled with oil (or oil immediately available) and properly trimmed.

Plough Corner. Tel 50 Romford, will be used for observation purposes only.

AFTER DARK

Immediately any information is received at any “Stopping Place” that a car is “wanted” and is known to
be on the road, every available man must, without a moment's delay, hurry with all possible speed to the “Stopping Place”. No question of “other duties”, “dress” or “rank” must stand in the way - one man only will be left at the Police Station, whose duty it will be to circulate the information, attend to the telephone, warn and send to the “Stopping Place” at once every available Police Officer.

On arrival at the “Stopping Place” the lamps will be lit and placed across the road.

One or two men will have charge of the rope and will hook it on to the wheel or any other part of a car which may be pulled up for examination, the end may be secured to anything handy. All Police must secrete themselves as far as possible and be prepared for any resistance which may be offered.

At Romford and Epping about 30 yards beyond the line of lamps another line of lamps will be placed in the road and the strips of studded matting will be so placed on the side of the road that they can if required be immediately drawn across the road by the rope to which they are attached. This obstacle must also be manned.

**PROCEDURE**

Having placed the lamps across the road, with the men in readiness and secreted as far as possible it will probably be experienced that several motor vehicles will approach the lamps and “pull up”. A brief explanation will probably be sufficient to satisfy the police that the “wanted” car is not amongst them and they will be allowed to proceed. In the case of any doubt the hook should invariable be attached. Any car allowed to pass the first line of lamps should not be held up at the second line and similarly cars approaching the second line first (i.e. from the opposite direction) should unless suspected be allowed a free passage through both lines. The “wanted” car will probably either slow down and then dash on when Police are spotted or will dash through the lamps without even slowing down. In that event all the Police at the first line of lamps will blow their whistles (the whistles should hang loose so as to be immediately available). This will signal the men at the second line to at once pull the studded strips of matting across the road and be prepared to capture the car directly it stops after being punctured.

Under no circumstances must the studded matting be pulled across the road unless and until the whistles are blown from the first line.

Care must be taken to prevent onlookers from standing near and especially just beyond the strips of matting because it must be anticipated that a car which is travelling fast and is suddenly punctured is very likely to skid in any direction, but a few Police should be about 30 yards beyond the second control to arrest men escaping from the punctured car.

**BY DAYLIGHT**

The procedure by day will be as follows :-

On information being received that a “wanted” car is on the road the “Stopping Places” will immediately be manned and every car will be stopped sufficiently long (inspection of driving licences being made the excuse) to examine that there is at all times a block through which no car can be forced. In examining the licences the police will keep a constant look out for the “wanted” car. The only equipment taken to the “Stopping Place” will be the rope and hook which should be kept out of sight as far as possible but ready to hook on if the “wanted” car is spotted. By day it is anticipated that the men in the “wanted” car will bolt directly the pull up is seen and a few police, if available, should be so placed as to deal with a contingency of this nature.

J. A. UNETT, Chief Constable.

**INDEX:** Stopping of Motor Bandits on the Highway. Motor Bandits.

The Force order is reproduced in full, exactly as published in 1927. Research has not yet found a countermand to this so one wonders whether we can still go out at night, armed with ropes and hooks, carrying lamps with wicks trimmed, to catch our current batch of Motor Bandits.

The acquisition of the red lamps for use in stopping the motor bandits may or may not have some bearing on Force Order 1894, issued on 4th August that same year.

**1894. BICYCLES RIDDEN BY POLICE**

As several cases have occurred of cyclist being run down after dark by motor vehicles, when it is generally alleged that the cyclist was not seen by the driver of the motor vehicle in time to avoid a collision, all members of the Force are directed to carry on the rear of their bicycles, during lighting up time, either a red lamp, duly lighted, or a glass reflector, and the Superintendents are not to pass any claim for bicycle allowance unless this condition is fulfilled.

About the same time, PC 253 FROST was fined 5/- by the Chief Constable for riding his bicycle without lights, maybe the Superintendent pinched the rear light for his “Stopping Place”?

The bicycle was, of course, the standard form of
transport for the Police Officer, but I always wonder why the introduction of two man cycle patrols using a tandem, never came into being. The villains most certainly utilised this method of getting around the countryside, or so we are led to believe from Force Order 2486, issued on August 27th 1931.

1286. MERIT BADGE

Pc 477 Radford is awarded the Merit badge under the following circumstances:

About 9 p.m. on 9th August, 1931, two men on a tandem bicycle passed the above Constable at Rivenhall. He recognised them as being wanted for Larceny and immediately gave chase and overtook them in Witham where he arrested and took them both to the Police Station.

When in the yard of the Police Station both men bolted followed by the Constable. After crossing a field they attempted to cross the river which was about 3 feet deep. P.C. Radford followed and after a struggle arrested one man in the river and brought him to the Police Station.

On the following morning about 1 a.m. P.C. Radford came across the other wanted man and arrested him.

Well maybe the single crewed area bicycle is more efficient. But the thought of the chase involved leaves modern Hollywood Police chases for dead.

Merit badges were not given out lightly, the award came only on rare occasions. It was introduced as the Merit Star by Chief Constable McLardy in 1871. Only ten Sergeants and Twenty Constables could bear the distinction at any one time. It may be that financial restraints of the day were the cause of the limit, as Constables received and extra shilling a week and Sergeants two shillings, as holders of the award.

Sergeant 18 Carpenter's Merit badge award, was duly noted in Force Order 2632 on 9th September 1932.

2632. MERIT BADGE

P.S. 18 Carpenter is awarded the merit badge under the following circumstances.

At 8.30 p.m. on Friday, 26th August, 1932, a motor car was stolen from Chelmsford. Information was received at Epping Police Station at 9.20 p.m. and P.S. Carpenter, who was on duty, received the information. He at once went into the High Street, Epping, where he was joined by P.C. 525 Shaw, and almost at once saw the wanted car coming towards them. It contained two men and was being driven towards London. About 30 yards behind this motor car was Mr. Harold Vickers, of 21 Hall Lane, Chingford, who was riding a Sunbeam motor cycle.

Sergeant Carpenter stopped the motor cyclist, told him that the car in front had been stolen and asked if he would take him on the pillion seat in pursuit of the car. Mr. Vickers readily agreed and Sergeant Carpenter mounted the pillion seat and followed the car. About a quarter of a mile south of Epping the pair were able to get in front of the car. Sergeant Carpenter dismounted and went towards the car and called upon the driver to stop. The driver did not stop, thereupon the Sergeant endeavoured to get a hold on the car as it passed him, but the car being a saloon he was unable to do so. Sergeant Carpenter and Mr. Vickers again went in pursuit and caught up with the car about a mile further on. Mr. Vickers was able to draw along the offside of the stolen car and the Sergeant again called upon the driver to stop, at the same time drawing his truncheon with the intention of throwing it at the occupants of the car. The driver of the car then deliberately turned to the offside and collided with the motorcycle, throwing both Mr. Vickers and the Sergeant to the ground.

After the collision P.C. Shaw, who was following in a motor car, picked up Sergeant Carpenter and continued the chase.

They travelled for a distance of another quarter of a mile when they came upon the stolen car beside the road. The occupants had disappeared in the forest where it is very thick over a large area.

Assistance was forthcoming but despite a thorough search the thieves could not be found.

Mr. Vickers and the Sergeant were injured but not seriously, and the motor cycle was badly damaged.

The action of the Sergeant is highly commendable as is also that of Mr. Vickers who so readily assisted the Sergeant in the chase.

Force Order 2633 has a Chief Constables Commendation for P.C. 525 Shaw for his actions in the above case.

In the same order, 2633, P.C. 133 Dunn was commended for his 'astuteness in dealing, single handed, at about 3.45 a.m. on 28th August, 1932, with three offenders who had stolen a motor car from the Metropolitan Police District.' Could he have failed in his attempt for a Merit Badge because his tale didn't read so well or, more likely, the Constables Merit Award allowance was probably used up.