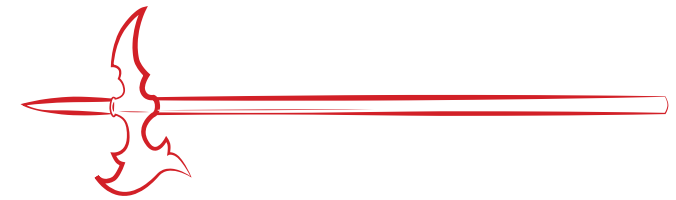


POI Files

Find out more about people of interest.

Using records, artefacts and media from the time, we can build profiles of real people to reveal more about how people lived, survived, rebelled, died or came a cropper of the law.



Executed, 1381



Death of Wat Tyler by Anker Smith, 1796



John Ball preaching to peasants, 1400's

Why do you think Wat Tyler was executed and his head displayed?

What actions would people take to combat unfair taxes today?

PEASANTS REVOLT

Wat Tyler *“Is said to have been a man of Dartford, where he exercised the trade implied by his name, or, as some say, that of a blacksmith. The story of his rebellion is well known: how it commenced by his beating out the brains of the Collector of the poll tax; culminated in his assembly of 100,000 men on Blackheath, and his marching with them to London; and ended with his death at the hands of Sir William Walworth in Smithfield, 1381. After his death, his head was placed upon London Bridge; what became of his body is unknown”*

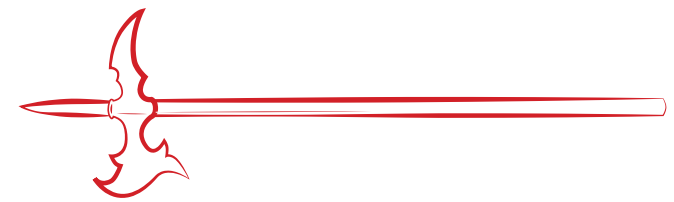
from History of Kent Vol III by Edward Hasted, 1778-99

In May 1381 peasants from Fobbing, a village in Essex refused to pay the poll tax and their opposition spread to surrounding villages in Essex and Kent. Peasants gathered together and started to march towards London, led by a man named Wat Tyler. They were joined by supporters from Norfolk and Suffolk.

Also at Blackheath was John Ball, a radical preacher who was very critical of the feudal

system and the Church. Medieval society regarded the monarchy and nobility as more important than the peasants, yet Ball preached that God saw everyone as equal, and that peasants were unfairly treated. His ideas encouraged peasants to demand changes. The Black Death (1348 - 1349) killed up to half of the population in England. Workers realised they could demand higher pay due to the shortage of labour, which made landowners unhappy so they put pressure on the government to do something.

Historians believe this is most likely what happened when Wat met with King Richard: King Richard told the peasants they should leave London as he had agreed to their demands, but Tyler said he wanted more reforms. Some chroniclers recorded that Tyler looked as though he was going to strike King Richard, and the Mayor of London, William Walworth, stepped forward to protect him. Tyler was stabbed, either by the mayor himself, or by King Richard's soldiers. Tyler managed to run away and was taken to a hospital. He was tracked down by the mayor of London, taken back to Smithfield and executed.



Burned at the stake, 1551



VALENTINES DAY MURDER

On St. Valentine's day 1551 a grizzly site was found in the grounds of Faversham abbey - the landowner Thomas Arden lay dead in the snow, his wife's affair with the tailor Mosby having taken a murderous turn. The 1570s saw the rise in popularity of true crime narratives in print, and in c.1590 the Arden murder was turned into a play

Alice 'young, tall, and well favoured of shape and countenance' was born in 1538 at Faversham Abbey which had recently been dissolved in the Reformation. Her husband Thomas Arden was a successful businessman with business ties to Alice's family, but not loved by his wife. Alice was having an affair with a tailor, Richard Mosbye, who would often visit the house of the Ardens.

"The wicked wife then laid a plot for murdering her husband in his own house. She procured the services of Mosbye's sister, Cicely Pounder, and of two of Arden's domestic servants, Michael Saunderson and Elizabeth Stafford.

On a particular day selected Sunday, Black Will was hidden in a closet at the

end of Arden's parlour. After supper, Arden sat down to play some kind of game with Mosbye; Green stood at Arden's back, holding a candle in his hand, to shaddowe Black Will when he should come out; and the other conspirators had their cue.

At a given signal in the game, Black Will came with a napkyn in his hand, and suddenly came behind Arden's back, threw the said napkyn over his hedd and face, and strangled him; and forthwith Mosbye stept to him, and strake him with a taylor's great pressing iron upon the scull to the braine, and immediately drew out his dagger, which was groat and broad, and therewith cut the said Arden's throat."

Excerpt from *The Chronicles* by Raphael Holinshed, published 1577

Suspicious immediately fell on Alice. She was "very strictly examined" by the mayor on the murder and initially denied any knowledge of the deed. Searches near the house revealed hair and blood of the victim, the bloody knife and the cloth, which was discarded but poorly hidden. Alice was forced to confess and reveal her accomplices.

THE LAMENTABLE AND TRVE TRAGEDIE OF M. ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM IN KENT.

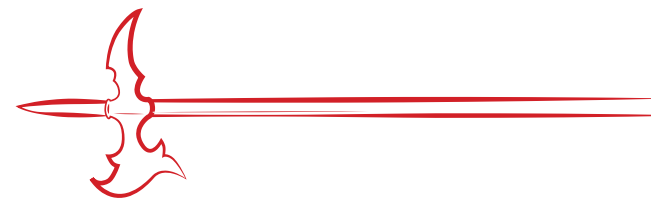
Who was most wickedlye murdered, by the meanes of his disloyall and wanton wyfe, who for the loue she bare to one Mosbie, hyred two desperat ruffins Blackwill and Shakbag, to kill him.

Wherin is shewed the great mallice and disimulation of a wicked woman, the vnsatiabie desire of filthie lust and the shamefull end of all murderers.

Title page of the play *Arden of Feversham*, 1592

What methods of collecting evidence do the police use?

Why would Alice plan to murder her husband rather than leave him?



Thief, 1694



Police checking for work passes at Pembroke Gate, Chatham Dockyard, late 19th Century

SEARCH FOR STOLEN GOODS

Watchmen were appointed from the shipwright staff to assist in policing the dockyards from 1686. Not many years after this time, Admiral Sir Edward Gregory reports in a letter to the Admiralty;

“The evening on Thursday last having proved wet and obscure the bell no sooner summoned the workmen to their call, but they found themselves surrounded by officers. The Master Shipwright planted at the gate with three or four trusty fellows about him to search every individual man and thing that passed.

This transaction beget a horrid consternation among the guilty, and every rascal soon let drop his purchase in the crowd, among which were found spikes, nails, bolts, lead, rope etc, which have been punctually returned into the stores. But with all the care and caution that could be used, it was impossible to seize any more than four of these offenders.

The chief rogue of which is one Richard Hind, Junior, a shipwright who has a year’s pay due to him at Christmas and in my conscience is an inveterate offender. For we not only seized him overnight with the king’s



Chatham Dockyard, 1774

good actually on him, but found a quantity of lead in his chest the next morning when I caused all the receptacles pretended for tools to be searched throughout the whole yard.

I have not undertaken to punish the villain, because I would leave him to the utmost severity that law and justice can inflict upon him, and I request you to resolve upon making him a public example.”

The likelihood is that Richard Hind would have faced the maximum penalties for stealing from the shipyard, this might have been a public flogging or a sentence with hard labour.

What do you think Richard and the other shipwrights were intending to do with the stolen goods?

Why do you think so many of the shipwrights were stealing the items?

Do you think Richard deserved the maximum sentence?

Died in Chatham, 1850



Death of Lion Queen, Circa 1860, Staffordshire Pottery, Rochester Guildhall Museum

NEWS SENSATION

Ellen Blight was a 'lion tamer' who worked in her uncle's travelling circus called Wombwell's Menagerie. She was killed in Chatham at the age of 17 when she was attacked by a tiger during one of her performances. Her death was modelled as a popular china figurine.

"Richard Cooper Todd, surgeon, attached to the Royal Artillery, stationed in Brompton Barracks, said he was witnessing the exhibition at the time of the occurrence and was standing quite close to the rope in front of the den.

He saw the deceased enter and going in the tiger did not appear to be very friendly with her; she struck him on going in and he laid down. She then proceeded to her performance with the lion and afterwards turned round and again struck the tiger. It appeared angry and immediately seemed to turn upon the deceased; rearing upon his hind legs and seizing her by the neck, she fell on her back and the tiger crouching over her, he [the surgeon] saw no more of her until removed from the den, when he hastened to her assistance.

She was perfectly insensible and had lost a great deal of blood and her face and lips were very pale. She was still alive, the heart was beating, but she was perfectly unconscious. Witness placed his hand on the wound in the neck to stop the bleeding and administered some brandy to deceased, but she was unable to swallow it and in a very few minutes her heart



Death of Lion Queen, Wombwell's Menagerie, Illustrated London News, 1850

ceased to beat[...].

The jury returned a verdict to the effect that deceased was killed by a male tiger whilst exhibiting in its den and expressed a strong opinion against the practice of allowing persons to perform in a den with animals.

It will be remembered that, when, about two years since, Mr Wombwell exhibited his menagerie to the royal family at Windsor, the "Lion Queen" was especially anxious to exhibit the extraordinary command which she had acquired over the fierce animals, but her Majesty expressly forbade the performance. Since then the unfortunate deceased had been the great attraction of the exhibition in all the principal towns of the United Kingdom.

It is to be hoped that this horrible termination to her career may have the effect of preventing such performances for the future."

From The Daily News, 14 January 1850

Who is (are) responsible for the death of Ellen Blight?

Do we have laws that protect animals and restrict animal ownership?

Born in Gillingham, 1788



Portrait of William Cuffay by William Paul Dowling, 1848, The National Portrait Gallery

ACTIVIST FOR WORKERS RIGHTS

Born in Medway to parents Juliana Fox and Chatham Cuffay (a Chatham dockyard worker formerly enslaved), William worked as a tailor, moving to London in 1819.

A trade union member, William was involved in the Chartist movement. The Chartists wanted to make the political system more democratic, to empower and provide protection to workers.

He went on strike with his fellow tailors in 1834, demanding a ten-hour workday from April to July and an eight-hour day during the rest of the year with pay of 6 shillings and 5 pence a day. The strike collapsed, Cuffay was sacked and subsequently blacklisted from employment.

William also helped in having the Master and Servant Act amended, so employers could no longer have their employees imprisoned if they left their jobs without permission.

Cuffay was secretary at a Chartist meeting on August 13, 1848 that had been infiltrated by government spies. Cuffay was arrested and accused of “conspiring to levy war” against Queen Victoria.



Photograph of the Chartist meeting on Kennington Common by William Edward Kilburn, 1848

He was convicted of preparing acts of arson, intended as a signal for the planned armed uprising and sentenced to 21 yrs transportation. He was pardoned three years after his conviction but stayed in Tasmania continuing to be involved in politics.

Cuffay died poor at 82 years old, however seven Australian newspapers published obituaries. One observed that his grave had been “marked”, should a memorial to him be built at some future time.

On 15 July 2021, a Nubian Jak Community Trust blue plaque was unveiled at Chatham Historic Dockyard in memory of both Chatham and William Cuffay.

Should you be able to protest against things that are unfair?

What kinds of protest are there? Are some of them illegal?



Sentenced, 1837

2766	Robert Pinner	16	Sty a Handkerchief	Maidstone
2766	Charles Mackway	13	Sty a Handkerchief	Maidstone
2766	Thomas Harvey	12	Sty a Comb	Maidstone
2767	Robert Sperdell	12	Sty a Handkerchief	Maidstone
2768	James Sweeney	16	Sty a Handkerchief	Maidstone

Hulk register, entry showing Sperdell

HANDKERCHIEF THIEF

Ordinary people who lived in the past often leave very little evidence behind them to help us understand how they lived their lives. One of the ways we learn about them is when they are recorded as breaking the law.

On 4 April 1837, a twelve-year-old boy called Robert Sperdell was convicted of theft at the Maidstone Assizes. His name and offence are written in the court records, which also tell us he was sentenced to seven years transportation.

At this time, thousands of men, women and children were being sent, or ‘transported,’ to the British penal colonies in Australia, at New South Wales and Van Dieman’s Land (now Tasmania). The penalties for returning to Britain before the sentence had expired were very severe. Many convicts never saw their home country again.

Robert was initially sent to a prison hulk at Chatham to wait for a transport ship. He was held with about 350 other boys on the ‘Euryalus,’ an old wooden warship that had been converted into a jail.

We can see from the Hulk Register that he was prisoner number 2767 and he had



A POW hulk like those used for convicts

What should we do with children who break the law?

**Does every crime deserve time in prison?
Which crimes do?**



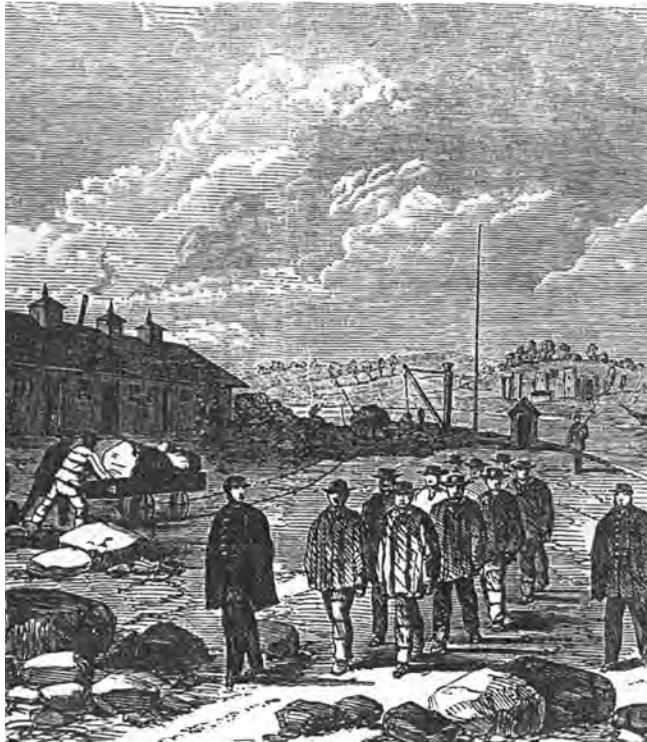
Port Arthur, Tasmania

stolen a handkerchief. He was removed from the Hulk on 13 November 1838.

The next stage of his journey was aboard the transport ship ‘Pyramus’ for the three-month journey to Tasmania. By downloading Australian records, we can discover that when he arrived he was sent to a labour camp in Port Arthur. It is even possible to look at the Tasmanian ‘conduct book’ in which the treatment of transported convicts was recorded. Amongst the punishments that Robert received are repeated periods of solitary confinement and being forced to work in chains.



Imprisoned, 1861



Convicts at work on St Mary's Island. Baldwin Archive, University of Kent

ESCAPE AND CAPTURE

“Macallum (...) was employed with a small party of other convicts at a secluded portion of the dockyard, under the charge of the usual convict guard. Seizing the opportunity of the attention of the warder being diverted to another part of the yard—which, there is no doubt was planned by the other prisoners—Macallum slipped away from his gang, and immediately disappeared.

Passing beneath the gun barge near which he was at work, he crawled along by a small jetty, his absence all the while not being known to the convict warder. He then changed his convict dress, though how he succeeded in procuring fresh clothes without being seen is a profound mystery. Having divested himself of his convict garb, escape was of course more easy, as suspicion was not likely to arise should anyone perceive him.

The convict then passed along to a pile of timbers, which he ascended, and having placed a piece of wood against the wall, ascended from the timber stack to the top of the wall which bounds the dockyard. Although this spot almost faces the prison, he does not appear to have been perceived by any of the officials. After letting himself down the wall he was met by a little girl, when he coolly informed her that there had been a police constable nearly killed in the dockyard and that he had been dispatched in the nearest way to procure a surgeon.



Chatham Prison Construction 1856, Baldwin archive

The convict then ran off in the direction of Brompton. Immediately his escape was discovered, Sergeant Langstone, one of the detectives, and several of the convict warders were sent out to scour the neighbourhood in order to effect his capture. The prison officials succeeded in tracking him as far as Gillingham, where all traces of him were lost. A reward was immediately offered for his apprehension, and a description of the convict forwarded to every principle town in the kingdom. Late on Friday night Macallum was captured at Dartford by one of the County Police and conveyed the following day to Chatham.

Although 18 yrs of age, he has been twice sentenced to penal servitude for two burglaries committed in Scotland. He once before attempted his escape in Chatham dockyard but was captured. On being apprehended at Dartford, Macallum informed officers that after his escape he swam across the Medway three times to avoid being taken.”

From The Times, 1861

Should prisoners be expected to work while serving their sentence?

Macallum was imprisoned more than once, why do you think he continued to do illegal activities after being released from prison each time?

Born, 1870

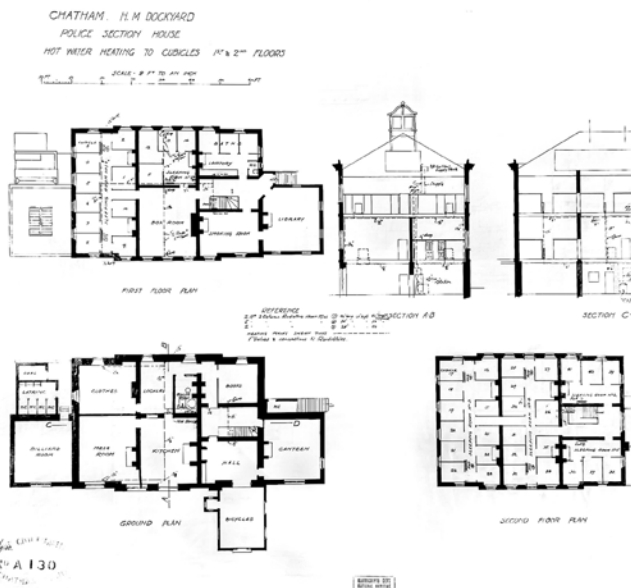


Photograph of Walter James George

WELLBEING AND WORK

Born in Cambridge, he joined the Metropolitan Police in 1895 and was posted to Chatham Dockyard, living in the Section House with his fellow constables.

He married Lavina Scur and had three children, Florence, Albert and Walter, however by 1911 after 10 years of marriage Walter was back in the Section House, separated from his wife and children.



Floorplans of the Police Section House



Barming Asylum

In 1914 Walter became ill with influenza, which he recovers from but then starts to have fainting fits, confusion, and delusions. He's sent to Medway workhouse and then transferred to Barming Asylum.

The doctors diagnosed him with "general paralysis of the insane," which could have been syphilis, which doctors didn't understand well at the time. Unable to work, Walter is pensioned off from the police, and moved to a padded room and restrained with a straitjacket.

Walter died in the asylum two years later after a convulsive fit, aged just 45.

Do we have laws which protect people when they become ill and unable to take care of themselves?

Are employers responsible for making sure their employees are safe at work?

Born in Ashford, 1876



Chatham Dockyard c1903, Henry: second from right.

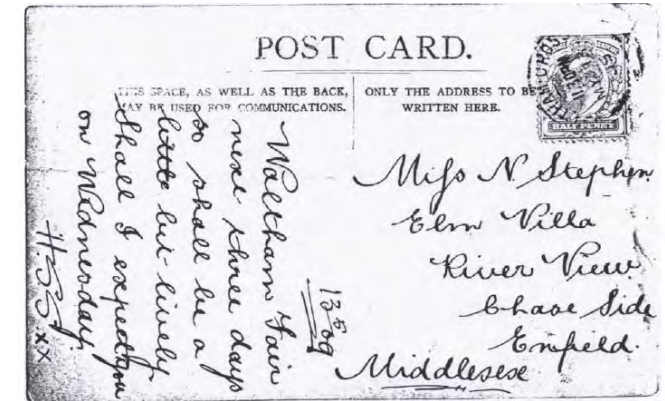
LIFE IN THE SERVICES

Henry Skeates started his service career volunteering as a private in the 1st East Kent Regiment before joining the Metropolitan Police at age 21 in Stoke Newington, London. When he was in Kent he played football for Ashford United and then in London was in the divisional football team, winning the Lady Bradford Challenge Cup in 1904.

In 1904 He returned to Kent as Sergeant, stationed at HM Dockyard Chatham for the Dockyard division of the Metropolitan Police. As a single man he lived at the dock barracks, or Section House.

He was then posted to Waltham Abbey, where he worked with both town police and the Royal Gunpowder Factor. Here he also met his wife Elizabeth Steven and together they started a family in Enfield. In 1914 he was awarded a certificate for attempted life-saving of a child in the Cornmill Stream. As Police service was considered a reserved occupation during WWI he stayed working as a police officer.

There were police strikes over low pay and harsh regulations in 1918 and 1919. Like many, Henry joined the (illegal) Police and



Postcard from Henry Skeates to Elizabeth Steven

Prison Officers' Union but as he and his men did not strike in 1919 they weren't sacked. He was well known for harshness of his dealings with market traders, using a ring gauge to check the size and quality of the vegetables.

After 27 years' service he retired in 1925 and was given an engraved gold pocket watch as a present. He moved with his family to Ipswich after he retired, working again as a bailiff and then during WWII he served in the HomeGuard.

What would it be like to live at the police barracks?

Why do police officers and football teams wear uniforms?



News article covering the Lady Bradford Challenge Cup, 1904. Henry: back row centre.

Employed, 1966-1970



Devizes to Westminster canoe race team.



Hospital ward with John farthest from camera

Would you have stopped your breakfast when you weren't on duty?

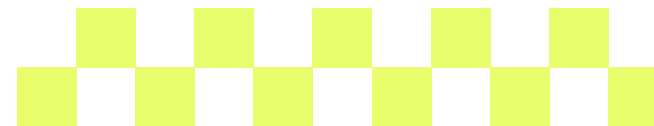
How can understanding mental illness help with crime and punishment?

BREAKFAST RUN

"I was still pretty young myself, having joined up at the minimum age, so was keen to work full time in young offender establishments and was lucky enough to get myself posted to HM Borstal Rochester in March, 1966. I enjoyed my almost four years at Rochester. Cross country running and rugby were the only two activities I took away from my school days at St Bedes College in Manchester and I was able to employ both at Rochester Borstal. It was here that the Tutor Organiser, Peter Antwiss, asked whether I might be interested in taking part in the Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race."

"The hospital consisted of a large ward and several single rooms. We had a part time psychiatrist and he was kept busy.(...) I doubt very much has changed today but at least our present society is starting to understand the extent and the complexity of mental illness"

I was back in my ground floor flat just outside the Borstal cooking breakfast when a borstal boy ran past my window followed by another and another; five in all. Turning off the gas cooker I chased after them and by chance got them cornered (...)



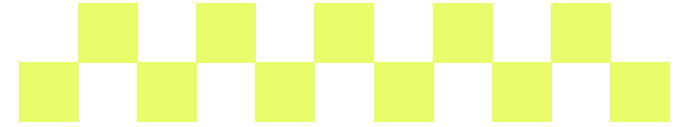
Rochester Borstal in 1967

I persuaded them that escaping was an offence but assaulting an officer whilst so doing magnified the offence a hundred fold. The ring leader understood this and they capitulated and I walked them back to the road where we were met by a stampede of officers out to recapture them. I handed them over and went back to finish cooking my breakfast.

Now I didn't want a fuss but I did expect someone in authority to at least say thanks for my risking life and limb. Not a word was ever mentioned, not a mutter of commendation, not a 'kiss your backside.' 'Well,' I thought, 'should this event ever repeat itself I would just keep cooking breakfast, nay, I'd probably offer the escapees their bus fare!!'

From johnramwell.com/hm-rochester

Receives the Queen's Commendation for Bravery, 1967



Sergeant David Howlett of the Admiralty Constabulary at Chatham Dockyard

HIGH RISK

The Periscope, a newspaper for workers at Chatham Dockyard, covers the brave actions of two dockyard sergeants.

Sgt Howlett "The man, armed with a one pound underwater scatter charge and a knife was reported near a jetty known as King standing around when Stairs. A lot of visitors to the Victory were there when we arrived. So our first move was to order them back out of harms way"

As the Police advanced the man retreated back along the jetty. At one point he held his knife to the back of a fisherman and appeared to be using him as a hostage—but then let him go. The armed man went back towards the end of the jetty, which was exactly where the police wanted him to go. Then he stopped.

"I approached him thinking I might be able to persuade him to hand over the weapons" said Mr Howlett. 'Had I got close enough I could have clobbered him perhaps but, when I was still about eight feet away he ordered me to stop. He said if I took one more step he would pull the pin from the charge. He said he had nothing to live for and wouldn't mind who he took with him."

Mr Howlett had an idea. He could see that the man was obviously a heavy smoker and decided to offer him a cigarette. "He was very agitated and I was trying to calm him down and get some sense out of him." he said.



Chatham Dockyard and St Mary's Island

The problem was to be resolved in a more dramatic way, however. Police Sergeant Clifford Burns, had meantime positioned himself on the jetty's guard rail.

"Suddenly Sgt Burns leapt over the rails and threw himself at the man. The force of the attack sent both men and the bomb over the side into the water. It was a very brave action on Sgt Burns part. When the charge was recovered it was found that the pin was three parts out. It was an underwater charge and we got it on good authority that, had it exploded on the surface, it would have wiped out all of us on the jetty."

Sgt Howlett is now stationed permanently at Chatham Dockyard and lives with his wife and three children in Lower Rd, Gillingham. Sgt Burns no longer lives locally but his mother, Mrs Clara Burns still lives in Westcourt Street Brompton.

From the Periscope, 1967

What actions might have helped prevent this incident from taking place?

Do you think Sgt Burns actions were brave or dangerous?

Arrested, 2009



Example of a hydraulic machine press

FAKE FORTUNE

“Coin-making paraphernalia was found hidden in a concealed room behind wooden panelling at Tonge Corner Farm, Tonge, near Sittingbourne on 13 May.

Maidstone Crown Court was told on Friday that brothers-in-law Michael Silk and Mr Bart also deny having counterfeiting materials, including a hydraulic machine press, and possessing counterfeit coins with a view to distributing them as genuine.

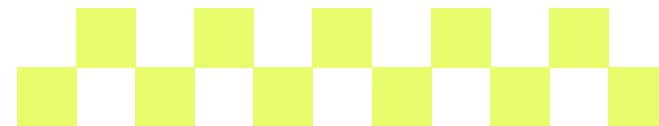
Andrew Forsyth, prosecuting, told the court police forced entry into a rented industrial unit on the farm and found Michael and Stephen Silk. They recovered £8,000 worth of prepared coins and 14,000 yellow metal discs waiting to be pressed.

When Michael Silk’s coat was checked it contained keys, a remote device for an alarm system and an adapted spanner, which the Crown alleged was for use on the machinery. But in interview he denied knowledge of any factory or being party to any manufacture of coins.

DNA found on some discarded latex gloves in a bin in the concealed press room was linked to Michael Silk.

Why is it important that DNA was found on the latex gloves?

How easily do you think you could detect a real coin from a fake one?



Fake £1 coin

Neighbours reported a male driver in a white Peugeot frequently visiting the unit, which the Crown alleged was Mr Bart, Mr Forsyth said.

Mr Bart was arrested when he arrived at the unit during the police search. He told officers he had a key to the unit but did odd jobs and denied any wrongdoing.”

From news.BBC.co.uk

Interviewed, 2021



HM Belmarsh, Category A prison



A wood workshop for the prisoners at HM Standford Hill, Category D prison

PRISONER'S POV

What was life like for you before prison?

Before prison, I had a good job and was earning lots of money. I had my own place and car. I also had good friends and my family. I occasionally saw my family as they lived a distance away and I sometimes went for a drink with my friends. I had freedom. When my charge came up, I lost everything. No family, friends, job, car, or flat. I lost everything.

Please tell us about your routine in prison. Were there set hours for things such as waking up, lunch, work and sleep? How did you find this?

When I was first in prison, I was locked away 24/7 for four days with no access to entertainment such as the library or kettle for a cup of tea. After this, I was put in a cell with two others and I was locked away for 23 hours a day. I couldn't make tea as I didn't have a flask or kettle. The only time we could get tea is if a cell mate came and made tea before being locked up. Over time, I could go to the library once a week so I had something to read. There was a TV in there but it only had four channels on it.(...)

I eventually got used to the routine in prison. I went to work, came back, had tea and then got locked up. You got used to it. Though, every time you moved prisons, the routine changed. Usually, I only had access to post once a week and had access to the gym three times a week. There were also occasional competitions on such as indoor bowling, football or table tennis. These were on some weekends or key events like Christmas. There were lots of sports available to play. This did vary depending on the prison, though. (...)

When I got my D-cat I was open all the time. I could walk around the grounds. I could go to the gym every day if I wanted to. There was education there I could take part in such as Maths, English, and Computer work. You could also work outside the prison, which I did. (...)

In the D-cat, I was called by my first name instead of a number and the routine seemed to be a lot milder and friendlier and you could talk to the officers any time you wanted. It was a good way to ease back into being released.

From institutionalhistory.com/inside-out-a-personal-perspective-on-modern-british-prisons

How do you think it feels to be called by a number instead of by your name?

Why do you think there were sports teams and competitions in prison?