

## A Police orphan says "Thank you"

*"The Police have always looked after their own and they always will. There is a bond somehow, an affinity, something quite intangible, but it's there and it stays with us all through our lives." These were the words used by a "young old-girl" of the St. George's Police Orphanage in a moving address to the annual meeting of the Northern Police Charities at Harrogate.*

ALTHOUGH THE ORPHANAGE was closed in 1954 there still flourishes an association of former members and Mrs. Elsie Pickering, the organising secretary, paying a tribute to Miss Knocker, the ex-lady superintendent of the orphanage said: "She was a remarkable lady, very dedicated to her work. She demanded the absolute best from every one of her children and would rebuke anyone who let down the standard. We were Policemen's children and we had that bit extra to live up to."

Introducing Mrs. Pickering, the "young old-girl," Mr. H. Ambler, Chief Constable of Bradford and treasurer of the fund, said: "When Mrs. Pickering heard that there had been a reduction in the number of subscribers to the St. George's Fund she offered to come to the meeting to talk to the members about the orphanage and to express appreciation on behalf of the children who had benefited from the generosity of the members of the Northern Forces." Her talk is given below.

Mrs. Pickering: "I entered St. George's in March, 1942 when I was 10 years old. My father had died four weeks previously at the age of 41. He had served 22 years in Bolton Borough Police Force and he left my mother with five offspring and a Police widow's pension of 10s. 1d. per week. We had a roof over our heads but we had to be fed and clothed. Because of the rules laid down at that time concerning the wives of Police officers my mother had never been employed, so, suddenly, at 39 she had lost her husband and she was forced to be the breadwinner. The trouble was — who was to look after us while she went out to work or during air-raids?"

"My father's Chief Constable, Mr. Howard, solved that problem and he made arrangements for us to enter St. George's. This, I am sure, was the turning point of my life. I was no longer the apple of my father's eye, I was just one small child in Miss Knocker's family of nearly 70 children and I had to learn to stand on my own two feet. Believe me, I learnt very quickly. There

was no time for self pity at St. George's and this early training has more than helped me in my adult life.

"I hated the discipline while I was at St. George's but I often look back now and I realise that those really were the best years of my life. Instead of being properly cared for at St. George's I might have been roaming around the streets of Bolton while my mother was out working. I certainly would not have been so well fed and well clothed, especially during those war years. As St. George's children we were always provided with more and better quality clothing than any private school in Harrogate — and we were very proud of our uniform, the red for St. George and the blue for the Police.

"I know from conversations I had as a child with the girls from the Harrogate Ladies College, a very exclusive and expensive school, that we St. George's children had far better food served to us than they. We never went short of anything we needed — not anything we wanted, but anything we needed. I clearly remember how jealous the other girls were when they were told of the turkeys and the money and the presents that were sent to St. George's children by the many generous Police officers. As Police orphans we always had that little bit extra — we were special. When we told the college girls of the Police concerts and film shows, the outings and the pantomimes, the Christmas presents and the parties, the sports days and the prizes, they used to say: 'Why, you're better off than we are and our fathers are rich.'

For the most part St. George's children didn't have fathers, rich or poor, but we did have one thing in common at St. George's, a family tie as it were. Every child had a Policeman father. It made absolutely no difference if he had been a Chief Constable or an ordinary Copper on the beat — we were all treated exactly the same — and voluntary contributions from many Police officers made that way of life possible. The Police have always looked after their own and they always will. There is a bond somehow, an affinity, something quite intangible, but it's there and it says with us all through our lives.

"This bond is very apparent at the reunion of St. George's old boys and girls. There is an enormous feeling of belonging. As adults have all taken different walks in life but we are still, through our Police connections, part of one big family, and we feel very deeply about this. Our toast at these reunions is always the same: 'To every Policeman, everywhere, who made it possible for us to be proud to call ourselves St. George's old boys and girls.' Until now, none of us has been given the opportunity to express our gratitude personally

but today, through the kindness of Mr. Ambler I am able to do this. I know that these words are very long overdue but may I, on behalf of all St. George's boys and girls, past and present, offer to you, all of you, our very sincere thanks and our heartfelt gratitude which you all so richly deserve."

## R.H.S. Awards

### BRONZE MEDAL

P.C. David H. Salter (35), Devon and Cornwall

A young woman threatened to commit suicide and after a Police search was found crouching close to the edge of a 90 feet high quarry cliff. To reach her the officer had to crawl on his hands and knees over slippery mud after dark aided only by a flashlight. The woman then put her legs over the edge and slipped on the loose gravel but was saved by a projecting rock only four feet below. P.C. Salter persuaded the mentally deranged girl to listen to him and eventually managed to grab her and hold her until an ambulance arrived and she was removed to hospital.

### TESTIMONIAL ON PARCHMENT

P.C. Granville G. Clayton (28), Dyfed-Powys

After rescuing others in the same incident, the officer with another man who was awarded a Certificate on Vellum, helped hold up the head of the trapped driver of a car which had gone into the bitterly cold River Marteg. The men were in constant danger of being swept away by the fast current for an hour before the Fire Brigade was able to release the trapped driver.

Sergt. Eric Rawson (37) and P.C. Eric A. Whitehead (22), West Yorkshire

The officers entered near freezing water in a dam full of debris and weed and searched until cold and exhaustion made them give up for a seven-year-old boy who had fallen in. The body was later recovered.

### RESUSCITATION CERTIFICATES

P.C. Kenneth G. Holland (24), British Transport

P.C. Peter Lawson (24) British Transport

P.C. Brian Bateson (39), Bradford

P.C. Sydney K. Nicholson (22), Cheshire

P.C. John Garvey (30), Hampshire

P.C. Keble N. A. Thompson (41), Royal Ulster