

BARKINGSIDE



POLICE STATION

J
K

BARKINGSIDE POLICE STATION

This document was originally created for the 1993 opening of the then newly refurbished police station in Barkingside

Police Orders of 11th January 1864 listed Barkingside as a station for the first time in a review of the Metropolitan Force. A single Sergeant and 8 Constables were allotted to the station which had no cells, and did not take charges. It remained under the Inspector at Ilford. The 1840 list of stations comprising his Outer District had changed little; Woodford Bridge and Lambourne stations being deleted and Barkingside added.

Superintendent Worels reported in March 1869 that the beer house and grounds, known as the "Mossford Arms" was offered for a police station which was much required, and no doubt acted as a great deterrent to the numerous pig and straw jobbers and farm labourers that resided there. The building, sited at the junction of the High Street and Church Road, had formerly been in use as vicarage to the Holy Trinity Church.

In July 1869 a memorial was received from the local inhabitants requesting the Police Commissioner to build some kind of police station. The freehold site was purchased from Mr. L. Ingram by the Receiver on 11th October 1869, and conversion work to the public house was commenced.

Police Orders appearing on the 1st November 1872 announced the taking into use of the new 'K' Division station:-

"The new station at Barkingside is to be taken possession of by police, and duties commenced therein. The rent to be paid weekly by the officers occupying same is:
1 married Sergeant 4s 0d. each.
4 single men 1s 0d " .

The greater part of the building was set aside for the accommodation of policemen and families, police work areas were confined to a single charge room and the cells.

In 1875 Hainault Forest still extended practically to the edge of Barkingside village, old records state that for the police deer stealing was still a common problem. Hunks of venison, known locally as "Black Mutton" amongst the locals, formed the staple meat diet of most villagers, a situation which appears to have changed only slowly.

In a written report published on 14th April 1881, and entitled "Report on the Conditions of Metropolitan Police Stations", Barkingside was described as "an old inn. slightly adapted for police purposes". The report went on to state that the well was polluted by sewage. As this well may have been the sole source of water at the period, its use for drinking supplies was presumably avoided. At that time the accommodations were occupied by a married Inspector and three single Constables.

In late summer 1886 Barkingside was transferred from 'K' (Stepney) Division into the newly formed 'J' (Bethnal Green) Division as a Sectional Station. The transfer was posted in Police Orders dated 22nd July 1886. Three months after the major change, on 20th November, the Wanstead sub-division was formed out of the previous Leytonstone sub-division, and included the station at Barkingside. Inspector Wallace, previously of the

'G' (Finsbury) Division was placed in charge at Wanstead. This move caused some consternation to Inspector Thorne at Leytonstone who lost his horse to the new Sub-Divisional Inspector. The reason for this change in status for Leytonstone was that the newly constructed, still extant, police station at Wanstead had opened on 23rd September 1886, a few weeks after the formation of the 'J' Division, and a little too late for the change to be brought into effect with the others.

In 1897 permission was given by the Receiver, with no objection on the part of the Commissioner, for the Ilford Urban District Council to erect a fire shed in the garden of the police station.

The mounted officers were added to the strength in 1900, a stable being erected at the rear of the station yard, adjoining the residents garden area. The horses supplementing the stations other 'transport' which amounted to a single Bischoffen hand ambulance used for transporting ill, injured, dead and drunk. This contrivance had been introduced into the 'Force from 1860, and was finally withdrawn in 1938. The first decade of the new century saw the introduction of the bicycle and the telephone.

In 1904 it was reported that Barkingside still retained a single set of married quarters, let out at 5/6d weekly, with the unspecified single men's quarters presumably remaining.

In this period the station had two entrances. The main building doorway then primarily served to provide access to the areas of accomodation provided by the greater part of the main structure. The police work was then primarily concentrated in the single storey section of the building on the corner of the street, the doorway into this section of the building giving access to the charge room and single detention room. For this reason the windows were barred.

By December 1910, in spite of its relative youth, the corrugated iron Ilford U.D.C. Fire Shed in the police station gardens had fallen into disuse for some years. The council approached the police yet again and requested permission for a change of use for the same shed. They wished to convert it into a washing place for tramway employees and a waiting room for intending tramway passengers. Trams were first introduced to run from Barkingside to Ilford in 1903. The Commissioner raised no objections to the request and, in February 1911, it started to undertake its new task.

The story of the Ilford U.D.C. tin shed was an odd one to say the least. Installed in 1897 and apparently little used for its original Fire Shed use, photographs taken in 1908 show this substantial edifice occupying a large section of the resident cultivated station gardens, backing onto the rear of the main police station building. For it to have then been passed by the police hierarchy as a suitable building to house not only a hotch potch of tram employees but every Tom, Dick and Harry passenger seems to break every strand of a credible security plan for the station.

In 1920 the ground floor of the building was taken over for police administration purposes, thereby removing the single men's accommodation and leaving only the upper floor for residential purposes, thereby reducing

the residents to a single married family. At the same time the first cell was built in the rear of the single storey section of the building, in replacement for the previous barred detention room which became a Matrons Room. The window barring was extended to include each of the windows in this section of the police station.

Now reduced to having but a single front door, that on the corner of Mossford being sealed up for all time, the general office was, off the hallway, to the left of the front door and the charge room to the right. By 1940 the Ilford "waiting room" shed had apparently been moved from the gardens which were then largely uncultivated.

In common with a number of police stations in the early post war years, Barkingside was responsible for the supervision and licensing of local civil airfields.

In the Great War the area had been served by a famous Home Defence airfield at Hainault Farm, off Hainault Road, but the military side of this site was run down in peacetime and for a relatively short period after 1919 it became a civil responsibility. The second, lesser known, aerodrome site was across Fairlop Plain, near the Fairlop railway station, at Forest Farm, Forest Road. In 1920 Fairlop Station was on a single track section of the Woodford & Ilford Branch of the Great Eastern Railway, today it is integrated within the Central Line of the London Underground railway. This second aerodrome was sited on the northern side of Forest Road, probably to the east of the farm building which still stand there today.

In spite of limited gliding activity in 1930 and subsequent City of London interest in setting up an airport on the Fairlop Plain in 1936, both of the older sites closed within the decade, to be replaced by an equally short lived wartime airfield on the southern section of Fairlop Plain and operational between 1941 and 1946. This area is known as Fairlop Waters in modern times. Police aerodrome inspection was never an intensive duty in the 1920's, but it all but died out completely with the 1939-45 war.

In 1932 a small portion, about 15%, of Barkingside section lay in the area of the Ilford U.D.C., a matter which came to the fore early in the year when the local authority was claiming in representations to Scotland Yard that a massive increase in crime was underway.

From figures submitted to placate the politicians it seems that the Barkingside portion of Ilford only accounted for a total of 18 crimes and 14 arrests in 1930 and 23 crimes and 11 arrests in 1931. The rest of the Urban District, that covered by Ilford and Chadwell Heath, accounted for a further 123 crimes in 1931. On the lesser subjects it was reported that only three persons were summonsed and convicted for cycling on the footway in 1931 and of 120 summonsed for speeding along the Eastern Avenue, 43 were cautioned and 77 convicted.

In 1939, the onset of war, the congestion encountered in the main building was somewhat relieved by the renting of a bungalow across the road to house the station canteen, the Special Constabulary and lecture

facilities for the duration. In the event this facility remained in use until 1964. The food related building used to stand upon the site of the present McDonalds burger bar - quite fitting really.

The railings surrounding the station, a thirty feet length of 3 feet 6 inch high featuring a spear headed design, were earmarked for removal late in 1941. Most Metropolitan Police stations gave up railings for war scrap from early 1942.

Plans for the new station dated back to 1955. To enable the replacement to occupy the same site, and yet be a larger building, properties either side of the existing station were purchased. Over a period "Mossford Cottage", The Forge and 2 Upper Cranbrook Road were acquired, and demolished. Great acts of mourning accompanied the loss of The Old Forge, a plaque with a long ryme being placed upon the wall and adorned with Union Flags to mark the passing of smithy Frank Stevens connection with the immediate area.

A prefabricated timber building, resembling some said a Swiss Chalet complete with supporting stilts, was erected as a temporary police station on the site of 2 Upper Cranbrook Road, Barkingside, in 1961, and the transfer took place on December 4 that year. The doors of the soon to be demolished old station, having remained open so long, refused to close when the time came.

The new concrete and glass structure erected in its place came into use in September 1964. Police Orders dated the 4th of that month announced:-

"A new Sub-Divisional Police Station of Barkingside 'J' Division, at 1 High Street, Barkingside, Essex will be taken into use at 6 a.m. on 7th September. The existing temporary Sectional Station at 1 High Street, Barkingside will be closed at the same time, and Woodford Police Station will become of Sectional status, and form part of Barkingside Sub-Division"

One feature of the new police station slipped the imagination of the architect, unfortunately for him some wag announced the error quite publicly in the local police magazine, "District Three":-

BARKINGSIDE POLICE STATION

**Now there's a white, glass fronted shoe box at the
end of Tanner's Lane,
Housing lots of men all working for the law,
And by lifting up your eyes, you can see them all
quite plain,
For the canteen windows go right to the floor.
Through these windows at the top,
It's like sitting in a shop,**

Eating egg and chips, or maybe bread and cheese,
And underneath the tables, making local job's eyes
pop,
Is a free peep show of all the typist's
knees.....

D.D.

The 'Force underwent a re-organisation from the 1st April 1965, this being announced in Police Orders dated 6th August 1964. Intent on the Metropolitan Police boundaries following changes introduced by the London Government Act 1963, these changes had little effect to the Barkingside police area, which was now placed within the Local Authority area of the London Borough of Redbridge as a result of the 1963 Act. The Barkingside Sub-Division consisted of Barkingside, Woodford, Loughton and Claybury stations.

In the summer of 1986, the 'J' Division was abolished. In its place, each of the previous Sub-Divisions was upgraded to the status of Division, to be operated under a far larger organisation called Area. This latter consisted of three of the old Divisions. Barkingside, or J.B. Division was formed consisting initially of the head station with Woodford, Loughton and the new Chigwell police stations. The latter two were sited on the Epping Forest District Council area. Early in 1988 Waltham Abbey was transferred from the Chingford Division and joined the other two Epping Forest stations in forming a Sub-Division of the Barkingside Division.

Cottages in Mossford Green, between the police station and the entrance to the recreation ground further along it, were acquired by the police with a view to further expansion of the 20 year old building, now suffering accommodation and structural problems associated with most pre-cast concrete buildings of its era. The newly introduced Computer Aided Despatch (C.A.D.) control room sited at the station was installed, as a temporary measure, in a 'Portacabin' structure in the station yard, and one of the cottages taken over as extra office space until mid-1988. In June of that year the cottages were demolished prior to extending the main police station over the site. Almost immediately financial constraints in the 1988 police budget halted work at the clearance stage. The cleared ground was converted into a temporary car park and fenced off.

In August 1988 Pedigree Petfoods of Leicester received an anonymous demand for £500,000 - the sum to be deposited in two cash accounts which were found to be linked, with other spurious accounts, to a Hammersmith accommodation address opened in 1986. Pedigree only agreed to deposit £50,000, an amount which had been denuded by some £15,400 in withdrawals by the unknown blackmailer early in 1989. The cash, withdrawn through cash dispensers, was not traceable.

In a related criminal act, contaminated jars and tins of food were placed on supermarket shelves in Luton, Tunbridge Wells, Rayleigh, Basildon, Oxford, Croydon and Royston and a threatening £1.25 million demand made of the Heinz Company in April 1989.

After a labourious investigation, this nationally famous campaign was eventually laid at the door of a Barkingside based former policeman. Rodney Whitchelo, 43 when his scheme came to light, had served with the Regional Crime Squad temporarily based at "Barkingside" - a somewhat tenuous connection with the station, especially as the building the R.C.S. used was a mile away from the Mossford Green site, but real enough for the newspapers. At the Old Bailey the crooked ex-policeman was sentenced, by Judge Nina Lowry, to 17 years imprisonment for the £3.75 million pound plot.

In 1989, it became clear that the staff of 1 Area (North), previously housed in the under-used Chigwell police station would be vacating to take up residence at a newly built Edmonton police station. This space came into use in 1991 when the staff at the Barkingside again entered temporary accommodation alongside the station to enable the wholesale re-construction and extending of the police station to begin.

Following the style of activity undertaken when the police station was built, a 'Portacabin' structure served as the station office and enquiry counter, further supported by other temporary modules providing eating, rest and toilet facilities. Although Chigwell became the new temporary Barkingside Division headquarters and centre for the operational Control Room, it operated under the Barkingside name throughout and did not take charges. Although the old cell accommodation was not to be greatly extended in the building works, merely revamped, the processing of prisoners was undertaken at a temporary Custody Suite in the modern Redbridge Magistrates Court situated opposite the Barkingside police station site.

It was the interior of the temporary charging facilities that brought Barkingside to the attention of the media yet again on January 29, 1992. Barkingside based custody officer Sergeant Gerrard Carroll was found dead in the toilets of the Redbridge Court complex shortly after starting his tour of duty. Death of the 46 year old officer was due to a shot to the head, he had been in the police since 1966.

At the subsequent inquest it was ascertained that the deceased sergeant had removed an issue hand gun from the station store, loaded it, and taken his own life. The prime reason given was that he was suffering from tinnitus, a condition that had been brought about and persisted since a head injury was received in a fight with a prisoner at Dalston police station in 1986. The media interest in the case related to the officer's earlier presence at Stoke Newington police station during a period that led to a serious, drugs related, enquiry into police corruption being set up.

This serious incident was not allowed to pass into obscurity quickly. Over one year later, on Sunday February 21 1993, a national newspaper was reporting instances of widely spaced physical attacks upon police officers connected with the Stoke Newington drugs enquiry and again mentioning the late sergeants suicide.

When the building plans were held up it was originally thought that it might be possible to transfer the Divisional status to Chigwell



The bland 1964 Barkingside Police Station seen above in about 1983 was greatly extended in the early 1990s

permanently and save money. Unfortunately the contractual obligations already entered into resulted in this course of action being financially impossible. With the passage of time since the reconstruction stalled, the original plans had suffered some minor modifications, but retained the same general layout as the planners had first intended.

Early in 1993, the extended Barkingside police building came back into use and Chigwell was again vacated, leaving much of its space free until a new use could be formulated for it. The new Barkingside building, about twice the size of the 1960's original, incorporated sufficient vacant space to accommodate a great deal of future growth. In line with all modern Metropolitan Police stations, the building has no space for a snooker table. Once an item that no police station could do without, the modern taste now admits only electronic games and, occasionally, the smaller pool table.

The rebuilt station was taken back into use during the middle of May 1993, although the handling of prisoners was delayed until Monday May 24 to allow the public free access to the building during an "Open Day" held two days earlier.

On the morning of Saturday May 22, 1993, the newly installed Mayor of Redbridge, Councillor John Watts declared the station officially re-opened by unveiling a commemorative plaque, later installed in the station entrance. The event was also attended by representatives of Epping Forest District Council and local Members of Parliament.