

## CIVILIAN DETECTIVE DOCTRINE IN THE 1930s AND ITS TRANSMISSION TO THE MILITARY POLICE IN 1940-42

*Colin R. Moore and Gerry R. Rubin<sup>1</sup>*

### Abstract

The Special Investigation Branch (SIB) of the Royal Military Police (RMP) was formed in 1940, after the military authorities became concerned at the widespread theft of military stores by members of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), and following a report on the matter by Chief Inspector George Hatherill of Scotland Yard. As a result 19 volunteer detectives from Scotland Yard joined the BEF to form the initial intake of the SIB.

This article seeks to show that the creation of the SIB in early 1940, also entailed the transmission of civilian detective practices to the Royal Military Police, following the creation of a corpus of civilian detective doctrine during the 1930s. The development of standardised civilian detective doctrine can largely be attributed to the work of the Home Office Departmental Committee on Detective Work which was established in 1933. This body did much to disseminate best training practices by providing a training syllabus for initial police recruits in relevant investigative techniques, and more relevantly offered a syllabus for the training of detectives. It was this doctrine that SIB training courses from 1942 onwards duly embraced.

**Keywords:** Policing, crime detection, police detectives, Royal Military Police, detective training, Special Investigation Branch (SIB), Hatherill Report, Report of the Departmental Committee on Detective Work 1939, Second World War.

### Introduction

In modern memory 1940 is remembered today as the year of Dunkirk and of the Battle of Britain. But it was also the year when, according to most writers on the subject, the Special Investigation Branch (SIB) of the Royal Military Police (RMP) was established as the detective branch of the then Corps of Military Police (CMP).<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Colin R. Moore is an Associate Lecturer, Kent Law School, University of Kent [c.r.moore@kent.ac.uk](mailto:c.r.moore@kent.ac.uk) and Gerry R. Rubin is Professor of Law, Kent Law School, University of Kent [g.r.rubin@kent.ac.uk](mailto:g.r.rubin@kent.ac.uk).

<sup>2</sup> In respect of accuracy of nomenclature, the pre-war Corps of Military Police (CMP) was accorded the prefix 'Royal' in 1946. For consistency of exposition we shall refer throughout to the CMP unless the context suggests that RMP is more appropriate. An embryonic SIB existed during the First World War, conducting intelligence work as well as criminal investigation before being wound up following the Versailles Treaty of 1919. The term 'Special Investigation Branch (SIB)' was also applied in respect of investigators within the military police in two theatres between the wars. Thus the 'Branch' operated with both British occupation forces in the Rhineland between 1919 and 1926 and also within the CMP in Egypt

Its creation was prompted by the military authorities' concern at the widespread theft of military stores by members of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and others in Northern and North-West France during the phoney war.<sup>3</sup> As Gary Sheffield noted in his official history of the RMP,<sup>4</sup> the Provost Marshal of the BEF, Colonel S. V. Kennedy (who had been Corps Provost Marshal until the outbreak of the war), had informed the War Office in December 1939 that his army was experiencing a high incidence of theft of military stores from French docks and military depots. Whilst the CMP attempted to reduce these incidences of theft by utilising soldiers with relevant previous civilian criminal investigative experience, such as the deployment of Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Gordon Thrift (who subsequently joined the SIB) to Nantes and St. Nazaire in late December 1939, it was clear that such measures alone could not be enough.<sup>5</sup> Following the War Office's approach to the Home Office, a Scotland Yard detective, Chief Inspector George Hatherill, was sent to France to report on the situation. In the light of Hatherill's recommendations, the Metropolitan Police eventually agreed to supply 19 volunteer detectives to join the BEF<sup>6</sup>. The more

---

between the wars. Indeed it was in that latter theatre in late 1940 where the term SIB passed into official use. Until then the body created in early 1940 was the clumsily entitled 'Investigation Section Corps of Military Police'. See *Royal Military Police Journal*, [1964] Issue 2, p.8; and <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/lhooper/SIB%20History.html>, accessed 9 May 2014. See also G. D. Sheffield, *The Redcaps: A History of the Royal Military Police and Its Antecedents from the Middle Ages to the Gulf War* (Brassey's, 1994) pp.81-2.

<sup>3</sup> The Assistant Provost Marshal (APM) of London District also requested the loan of an experienced Scotland Yard detective to work with the military police in Home Command. Unlike in the First World War when two detectives assisted the military police at home, but nonetheless retained their civilian status, the APM in late 1939 envisaged that the appointed detective would be commissioned as a captain during the war. The first detective offered to the military, an Inspector, was rejected as unsuitable on the ground that 'he isn't sufficiently of the officer type'. See The National Archives MEPO 2/2503, Maj-Gen Archie Beck, DPS, to Air Vice-Marshal Sir Philip Game, Metropolitan Police Commissioner, 1 January 1940. The authorities softened the blow in respect of the rejected detective by informing him that they were looking for a younger man (he was 46), and that it was important that the appointee had military experience, which he lacked. It seems that a formal attachment did not take place for, in the first three months of 1940, a number of detectives in London assisted the military authorities in investigating cases of the unlawful wearing of military uniform, obtaining money by false pretences, and uttering forged cheques, in some instances resulting in convictions at Bow Street Magistrates' Court. See Inspector's report to Chief Inspector Hatherill, 29 March 1940, MEPO 2/2503. Hatherill was the author of the critical report leading to the creation of the SIB discussed below.

<sup>4</sup> Sheffield, *The Redcaps*, p.101.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Gordon Thrift, O.B.E., [RMP Museum Archive] THRIFT/1, pp.1-2. The letter explained that some success was achieved in recovering goods by halting units without prior warning at the dock gates and proceeding to collect all items dropped on the ground.

<sup>6</sup> The SIB is often described as having nineteen original branch members, and indeed the SIB 'Branch' lapel pin proudly worn by members and former member of the SIB today represents those nineteen men, but they were in fact joined by a twentieth man. This was Sgt. George Baker, a retired Detective Inspector who joined after initial military training but prior to the despatch of the SIB to France. See <http://www.rmp-sib.co.uk/campion.htm> and

senior would become commissioned officers while the remainder of the initial intake would become warrant officers and sergeants. The unit would be under the command of Detective Superintendent Clarence Campion, holding the military rank of major.<sup>7</sup> Thus was created (or re-created in the view of some) the SIB.

While the background to, and brief summaries of, Hatherill's report have previously been published,<sup>8</sup> a fuller consideration of the 37-page document is merited.<sup>9</sup> Firstly the report spelt out in some detail the nature and scope of the losses of stores suffered through theft by the BEF before Dunkirk, a matter that is not a major focus here. More importantly, it sought to explain why the recruitment of a military detective force, and not simply an increase in the number of guards and of patrolling military policemen, was recommended. In so doing, the report also implicitly, if not explicitly, called for the application of existing civilian detective doctrine upon which the new body could draw. However, such doctrine was not as yet available in any authorised military manual form, even though military field manuals, military law manuals, military engineering manuals, and indeed a CMP manual for traditional Redcap activities, were available. This paper therefore argues that the creation of a military detective branch can only be fully understood if it is linked with the development in the 1930s of civilian detective doctrine. For it only made sense to create the SIB if its operating procedures were to be informed by the corpus of specialised knowledge distinctively associated with detective work, rather than with general policing duties. Such specialised knowledge, in effect civilian detective doctrine, was in fact becoming a formal body of investigatory learning, no doubt supplementing the instinctive ability of the detective to solve the mystery by a combination of intuition, acute powers of observation, a sharp memory, logic, experience and luck. This

---

<http://www.britishbadgeforum.com/forums/showthread.php?p=135672>, both accessed 5 May 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Of the original 19, Campion became the only casualty of the fighting, killed in a German air attack near Boulogne on 19 May 1940. Campion Lines at SIB (UK) HQ in Bulford and Campion House at Roussillon Barracks in Chichester, formerly the home of the RMP Training School, are named after him. As a detective sergeant he had been heavily involved in the Elvira Barney murder *cause célèbre* in 1932. Barney, the daughter of Lord and Lady Mullens, had slapped Campion when he was questioning her after she shot her lover, Michael Stephen. She was controversially acquitted of murder. See Peter Cotes, *The Trial of Elvira Barney* (David & Charles, 1976), p.48.

<sup>8</sup> A few details can be found in Hatherill's autobiography, as well as in histories of the RMP. See, for example, A. V. Lovell-Knight, *The Story of the Royal Military Police* (Leo Cooper, 1977) pp.277-80; George Hatherill, *A Detective's Story* (Harper Collins, 1971) pp.27-8. See also, Donald Thomas, *An Underworld at War* (John Murray, 2003) pp.183-4; as well as the following internet-based accounts:

[www.rmp-sib.co.uk/hatherill.htm](http://www.rmp-sib.co.uk/hatherill.htm); <http://www.rmp-sib.co.uk/campion.htm>; <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/lhooper/SIB%20History.html>, all accessed 5 May 2014.

<sup>9</sup> The Metropolitan Police's copy is in MEPO 2/7150.

process of formalisation of doctrine was increasingly being transmitted within civilian police forces, through emerging detective training courses in the 1930s. Notwithstanding the lack of an official detective manual, whether civilian or military, at this time (a crime investigation book under Austrian authorship had been published in English in 1906), the concept of detective doctrine had by then clearly been accepted in official civilian circles. Indeed the SIB similarly came to embrace detective doctrine as shown by the creation from 1942 of the first SIB training courses held in Egypt. The present paper therefore seeks to show that the creation of the SIB in early 1940 also meant the transmission of civilian detective doctrine to the CMP.

## **1 The Theft Challenge**

The structural difficulties of the CMP at the time were a legacy of its relatively modest peacetime establishment, and of the types of duties undertaken by the Redcaps prior to the war. These tended to revolve around controlling traffic movements and preventing disorder among servicemen. In respect of the latter, any resultant disciplinary proceedings would be conducted before military, not civilian, tribunals. However, those crimes that were clearly classified as civilian rather than military such as thefts, especially private property, as distinct from, say, desertion, were invariably handled by the civilian police in peacetime and tried before the civilian courts. With the outbreak of the war and rapid mobilisation, the need for stores and supplies inevitably increased massively. Temptation to 'liberate' them no doubt grew in tandem. A quick look at some figures of military proceedings shows the point graphically. Thus in 1909 there were 10,671 Army courts martial. In 1913 there were 7,052, in 1923 there were 6,185 and in 1937 there were 2,128.<sup>10</sup> For the period 1 September 1938 to 31 August 1946 the figures increased enormously, from 2,123 in 1938/39 to 49,113 in 1944/45.<sup>11</sup> At the same time the number of indictable offences known to the police overall rose from 103,258 in 1921 to 478,394 in 1945, and non-violent indictable property offences increased from 79,724 to 346,564 over the same period.<sup>12</sup>

Of course the huge rise in the number of courts martial after the outbreak of the war is accounted for by the commensurate rise in the size of the Army following the

---

<sup>10</sup> *Army and Air Force Courts Martial Committee, Ch. Mr Roland Oliver M.C., K.C.*, (Cmd. 6200, 1938) para.10.

<sup>11</sup> *Report of the Army and Air Force Courts Martial Committee 1946, Ch. Mr Justice Lewis*, (Cmd. 7608, 1949) p.15.

<sup>12</sup> B.R. Mitchell and H.G. Jones, *Second Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge University Press, 1971) p.202.

introduction of conscription in April 1939.<sup>13</sup> Thus from 187,767 Army personnel on 1 September 1938, the numbers rose to 224,188 a year later, then gradually increased from 1,858,742 on 1 September 1940, to 2,860,623 on 1 September 1945.<sup>14</sup> However the wartime court martial figures are not broken down into discrete offences. Therefore, it is not possible to know whether the number of courts martial for stealing (let alone whether military stores were the target) increased at the same rate as courts martial for other offences, whether civilian or military. While the military authorities, at least abroad, resurrected their jurisdiction to try service personnel for civilian offences, including theft,<sup>15</sup> some soldiers accused of pilfering stores might well have been charged with the catch-all offence of conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline.<sup>16</sup> This would certainly be the case if the matter had been dealt with summarily by the commanding officer or by his immediate subordinate. For while summary dealing was not available in respect of civilian offences, a commander could invoke the 'orderly room' procedure if the accused had been charged under s.40 Army Act 1881, that is, with conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline. Certainly reportage, such as that compiled by Norman Phillips in his account of the SIB in the Middle East, makes it clear that courts martial for larceny offences were indeed conducted during the war.<sup>17</sup> It should be no surprise that, as a former RAF deputy provost-marshal observed (in a passage that no doubt echoed sentiments expressed elsewhere),

...where there was a cookhouse there was a racket; in rationed UK and starving Europe there was always a black market....The same applied no less to stores. I am prepared to state categorically that there was hardly a depot anywhere not subject to a fiddle to a greater or lesser degree.<sup>18</sup>

Whilst a recent study has warned of the dangers of simply assuming that criminal offending was automatically shifted from the civilian to the military sphere by mass

---

<sup>13</sup> Peter Dennis, *Decision by Default: Peacetime Conscription and British Defence 1919-39* (Routledge, 1972) ch.11.

<sup>14</sup> *Report of the Army and Air Force Courts Martial Committee 1946*, p.15.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, *Court Martial of A. M. Fitzpatrick-Robertson for Theft* (1940). TNA: War Office] WO 71/1054,

<sup>16</sup> The court martial lists in the class WO 71 in the National Archives sometimes alternatively refer to the offence charged simply as one punishable by 'ordinary English law' under s.41 Army Act 1881.

<sup>17</sup> Norman Phillips, *Guns, Drugs and Deserters: The Special Investigation Branch in the Middle East* (Laurie, 1954).

<sup>18</sup> F. A. Instone, *Deputy Provost Marshal: I Slew My Dragon* (Midas, 1977) p.239. While the author's further reference to targeted items such as, 'vehicle parts, arms and ammunition, currency swindles, wines, spirits and cigarette deals—from which the highest were not exempt', undoubtedly related to later stages in the war, such as in Italy, and also to the post-war occupation of Germany and Austria, the general point certainly applied in respect of the BEF in late 1939.

recruitment, it is clear that in respect of crime figures in civilian society there had been a gradual increase in the total number of offences in England and Wales between 1901 and the outbreak of the war.<sup>19</sup> Thus rounded up figures for recorded indictable crime show 97,000 crimes in 1911, 103,000 in 1921, 159,000 in 1931 and 359,000 in 1941. Thereafter, the figures rose from 365,000 in 1942 to 478,000 in 1945. As noted earlier there was an almost five-fold increase in indictable offences between 1921 and 1945. However, during this period the population rose from 36 million in 1911 to an estimated 41 million in 1939 and thence to 44 million in 1951 an increase of 18%.<sup>20</sup> Crimes per 100,000 of the population rose from 269 in 1911 to 399 in 1931 and thence to 1,299 in 1951. Of these figures, three-quarters of all civilian crimes committed in England and Wales between the wars were theft and burglary, a proportion that increased significantly during the war itself.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, while the point of departure of the present paper was the rash of pilfering of BEF stores from the docks and depots of Northern and North-West France, the above figures clearly show that the home front also witnessed dramatic growth in crimes against property once war broke out. As Frankie Fraser, a colleague of the Krays, remarked,

The war organised criminals...Before the war thieving was safes, jewellery, furs. Now a whole new world opened up. There was so much money and stuff about - cigarettes, sugar, clothes, petrol coupons, clothing coupons, anything. It was a thieves' paradise. I was a thief. Everyone was a thief.<sup>22</sup>

As Morton explained, during the war, '...the target of the professional criminal changed. No longer was the private home of the rich man the prime target. Now the factory, the warehouse and the distributive network were the objectives', the proceeds of which went to feed the black market. Indeed deserters from the forces were often involved.<sup>23</sup> As another author of wartime crime put it, opportunity knocked for civilians, though bribery in respect of government contracts was as much a

---

<sup>19</sup> Clive Emsley, *Soldier, Sailor, Beggarman, Thief: Crime and the British Armed Services 1914* (Oxford University Press, 2013) p.14. Not all figures are comparable but the direction of growth is clear.

<sup>20</sup> See Mitchell and Jones, *Historical Statistics*, p.3 and pp.201-2.

<sup>21</sup> See also John Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45* (Viking, 1990) p.373; Martin Pugh, *We Danced All Night: A Social History of Britain Between the Wars* (Vintage, 2009) p.106. See also Hermann Mannheim, *Social Aspects of Crime in England Between the Wars* (George Allen and Unwin, 1940), p.107. For a more sceptical view see Howard Taylor, 'Rationing Crime: The Political Economy of Criminal Statistics since the 1850s', *Economic History Review* 51(3) (1998), pp.569-90.

<sup>22</sup> Cited in James Morton, 'Crime in the Blitz,' *Military Illustrated* 226 (2007), Mar., p.16.

<sup>23</sup> Morton, 'Crime in the Blitz', p.17.

mischief as thieving in the blackout.<sup>24</sup> In short, the immense increase in thieving within the armed forces following the outbreak of the war did appear to reflect a similar development in civilian society. It should also be recognised that with the plethora of defence regulations being promulgated to control all aspects of civilian behaviour, there was some justification in the complaint that, 'They [the government] have made criminals of us all'.<sup>25</sup>

## 2 CMP Expansion

The huge growth in minor and organised thefts of military stores was therefore the emerging challenge that the military authorities had to meet from late 1939. While in 1935 the CMP was at its pre-1914 establishment of 500, by September 1939 it contained approximately 3,500 men, the enhancement being due to recruitment of more regulars, territorials, reservists and a supplementary reserve from the Automobile Association. However, only about one-third were properly trained in the core activities of traffic control and maintaining service discipline. Indeed companies dedicated to traffic control, guarding vulnerable points, and ports provost were created only from October 1940.<sup>26</sup> The establishment of the last-named, though technically not a separate wing of the CMP, was no doubt influenced by the Hatherill report (below), in view of the unit's responsibility to prevent pilfering, among its other duties.

Ultimately, within the structure of the Redcaps, the creation of the SIB still remains the most significant feature of the period.<sup>27</sup> As Godfrey-Faussett noted, the caseload of the founding members of the SIB, once recruited (in mufti) into the Army, far outstripped that experienced by them in their peacetime civilian life as detectives. Echoing Instone (above), he observed that,

In all theatres pilferage of army stores became a highly skilled - and very paying - criminal profession; black markets and every sort of racket abounded. Some troops were involved, but the criminals were mainly civilians. Into this crime wave the SIB plunged.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Thomas, *An Underworld at War*, chs.5 and 6.

<sup>25</sup> Morton, 'Crime in the Blitz', p.17.

<sup>26</sup> Col. P. Godfrey-Faussett, 'The Provost Service: Its History and Achievements', *Army Quarterly* 53 (1947), pp.258-9. Godfrey-Faussett served over 40 years in the military police, latterly becoming its chaplain after ordination in 1956. See *Royal Military Police Journal* [1982], Issue 2, p.44.

<sup>27</sup> Sheffield, *The Redcaps*, p.101.

<sup>28</sup> Col. P. Godfrey-Faussett, 'The Provost Service', p.100. Serious offences such as murder, rape, serious assaults, arson and desertion obviously fell within the remit of the SIB as the war progressed. It is not, of course, suggested that the individuals, groups or gangs who surreptitiously, or even openly, pilfered Army stores were claiming a moral right, or a right

### 3 The Hatherill Report

George Hatherill was a Detective Chief Inspector of the CID at Scotland Yard who eventually rose to become Deputy Assistant Commissioner and then Commandant of the Detective Training School in London, finishing his career as part of the investigation team into the Great Train Robbery in 1963. Speaking French and German 'fairly well',<sup>29</sup> he first came to prominence as a detective sergeant in helping to expose the insurance frauds orchestrated by the insurance assessor, Leopold Harris, and which culminated in the trial and conviction of 16 defendants at the Old Bailey in 1934.<sup>30</sup> However his career really 'took off' during and after war. Described as a 'thorough' man with a deep and rough-sounding voice, whose insistence on meticulous detail was said to infuriate his colleagues, he displayed precisely those qualities when investigating the murder of two little girls in Buckinghamshire in November 1941. It resulted in the arrest, trial and later execution (in April 1942) of Gunner Harold Hill, for what appeared to be a motiveless crime.<sup>31</sup> In April 1944, by this time a Detective Superintendent, his prey was an as yet unidentified American sailor among 4,000 serving on four American destroyers anchored in the Thames. A man with an American sailor's sleeve had been seen stabbing to death Charles Gilbey who had been trying to help the licensee of the Railway Tavern (a pub known more familiarly as 'Charlie Brown's') to remove a crowd of American sailors at closing time. By the time Hatherill and the CID had arrived at the pub, the sailors had gone. But within 24 hours the culprit had been found. Matthew Smith faced a US Navy court martial held in London. Found guilty, Smith was sentenced to death but reprieved on account of his youth (he was 19).<sup>32</sup>

Much later, after being involved in investigating the multiple murders committed by John Haigh (the 'Acid Bath' killer) and by John Reginald Christie (of Ten Rillington Place infamy) he was instrumental, as a commander at Scotland Yard, in advising the Birmingham police investigating the notorious murder and mutilation of Stephanie

---

'since time immemorial', or even a 'class' right to the goods they stole. Thus while some BEF servicemen unloading the ships tied up in the French docks had themselves been recruited from the docks of Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow, it is not argued that their pilfering was comparable to the 'customary' takings or 'gleanings', in previous centuries, of workers at the Royal Docks, textile factory operatives, agricultural labourers, commons grazers or coastal 'scavengers' or salvors (or even of wheelie-bin diving 'freegans' today).

<sup>29</sup> Hatherill, *A Detective's Story*, p.29.

<sup>30</sup> For an account see Douglas G. Browne, *Sir Travers Humphreys: A Biography* (Harrap, 1960) pp.302-319. See also Harold Dearden, *The Fire Raisers* (Ellis & Buckle, 1986).

<sup>31</sup> Tom Tullett, *Murder Squad: Famous Cases of Scotland Yard's Murder Squad* (Bodley Head Ltd, 1996) pp.148-155.

<sup>32</sup> Keith Simpson, *Forty Years of Murder: An Autobiography* (Harper Collins, 1978) pp.89-90.

Baird at the YMCA just before Christmas 1959. The methods he suggested resulted in the capture of Patrick Byrne,<sup>33</sup> whose case became a legal authority on the law of diminished responsibility.<sup>34</sup> Given his subsequent track record as a leading detective,<sup>35</sup> it was clearly an inspired choice to appoint him to undertake the enquiry into the BEF thefts, in view of the long-term legacy of the report in the shape of the SIB.

Most of Hatherill's report (26 of 37 pages) is taken up with describing the nature and extent of the pilfering epidemic, accompanied by suggestions that would enhance the watchfulness of guards, the general security in dock areas, and the supervision of unloading from ships and railway wagons. This is consistent with his wide-ranging recommendations to remedy the problem. Thus the main proposal was in fact for a greatly expanded and diversified CMP 'performing overseas duty trained and instructed, not only in their military duties but also in the prevention, detection and investigation of crime on the same basis as the Civilian Police Force'.<sup>36</sup> In other words, he advised that the Army should now seek to claim 'ownership' of the crimes (in the civilian sense) committed by British servicemen overseas, rather than their remaining a matter for local police forces. But second, the overseas military police force should include, among its other units, a trained branch similar to the civilian CID. Thus he saw the proposed military CID, the novel and long-lasting creation of his report, as working in tandem with the other CMP units as a reactive, investigative body rather than as a preventative police.

If such a unit had existed, he argued, it would have been able to counter the problems causing such anxiety to the authorities. First, it would enhance cooperation with the French authorities who were sceptical of the effectiveness of existing CMP resources despite the latter's willingness to investigate serious offences committed by British servicemen against French property or persons. For example, in Rennes, where the APM, Lieutenant Smith-Dorrien, had 17 CMP men under his command, '...in the investigation of serious crimes [including rape, robbery with violence, and a

---

<sup>33</sup> Sir Richard Jackson, *Occupied With Crime* (Harrap, 1967) p.157.

<sup>34</sup> *R. v Byrne* [1960] 2 QB 396.

<sup>35</sup> According to one author, 'Crime reporters... spoke knowingly of such thief-takers as George Hatherill, Ted Greeno, Reginald Spooner, John Capstick, and a score of men to whose surnames was added the sobriquet, "of the Yard"'. See Donald Thomas, *Villains' Paradise* (John Murray, 2006) p.7. For Spooner see Iain Adamson, *The Great Detective: A Life of Deputy Commander Reginald Spooner of Scotland Yard* (Frederick Muller, 1966). For Greeno, see Edward Greeno, *War on the Underworld* (Hutchinson, 1960). For Capstick, see John Capstick, *Given in Evidence* (John Long, 1960).

<sup>36</sup> MEPO 2/7150, p.5.

“smash and grab” raid] there is not a single man in the Corps who has the slightest idea of this kind of work’.<sup>37</sup> Indeed Hatherill remained cautious about allegations of serious assault, including rape, allegedly committed by British soldiers upon French women. For such complaints were often accompanied by claims that the victims’ purses had been stolen, thereby enabling compensation claims to be submitted to the British authorities.<sup>38</sup> But whatever the truth of the allegations, the fact remained that there had been no effective investigation of such claims due to the absence of a military detective force, which only served to make the British serviceman more unpopular among the locals. Second, while Hatherill’s observations regarding the scale and *modus operandi* of the thieving that was taking place did not differ in substance from an earlier and briefer report submitted by Colonel Kennedy, the difference lay in a civilian detective’s eye for spotting more sophisticated thieving techniques that in turn called for a civilian detective remedy. It was this perspective that was missed by Kennedy. In particular, Hatherill reckoned that professional thieves were undoubtedly engaged in the thefts (and not just servicemen with an eye to the main chance). The inference was that only professional policing could be a match for the professional thief.<sup>39</sup>

#### 4 The Initial SIB Intake

The significance of creating a military detective branch, from the standpoint of this paper, was the transmission to a military context of what can straightforwardly be termed detective doctrine. In the case of the original 19 members of the SIB (Hatherill had recommended an investigation branch of 50 to 60 men), such doctrine had, of course, already been absorbed through their civilian activities and therefore what was now required of them before their deployment to France was to attend specialist

---

<sup>37</sup> In the Nantes and St Nazaire docks areas serious crimes involving BEF personnel included one suspicious death of a soldier, three burglaries, 20 cases of larceny, five of car stealing and eight assaults (apart, of course, from military offences). For Hatherill this showed the need for a ‘trained investigation staff both in enquiring into the cases and particularly in preparing the cases for prosecution where arrests are effected’. Such a body should be available ‘on demand by an APM or DAPM in the same way that Provincial Police Forces make requests to New Scotland Yard for assistance in cases of very serious crime’. In particular, crimes committed against French civilians, for which no records had been maintained by the military police, should be subject to specialist investigation. It is assumed that Smith-Dorrien was one of the three sons of the First World War General of that name.

<sup>38</sup> According to Lord Russell of Liverpool, William Joyce often referred in his broadcasts to British servicemen’s indiscipline towards French women. See Lord Russell of Liverpool, *That Reminds Me* (Cassell, 1959) p.137.

<sup>39</sup> At least one court martial of a BEF sergeant for the manslaughter of a French civilian, following a brawl outside a café in Ste Suzanne, was conducted by the British authorities ‘who wanted to let it be seen by the [French] public that the trial would be conducted with due regard to both the victim and the accused.’ See Russell, *That Reminds Me*, p.136.

training for military duties at the military police training school at Mytchett Barracks, near Aldershot in February 1940, covering such topics as the military chain of command, King's Regulations, and the Army system of indent, issue and accounting.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, Lt. Col. George Ripley, one of the 19, deployed his previous military service to good effect to drill the others (including Major Campion), on more basic military skills such as making beds, assembling webbing, and map reading.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, once trained, new investigators could themselves become instructors in due course (presumably once the crime wave by BEF soldiers had been repressed), so that the Army would have its own self-contained police force.

Apart from the facilitation of proper investigations into serious crimes, immediate benefits would include the enhancement of cooperation both with the French police and with deputy APMs (who, as detached regimental officers, would also receive some training in criminal investigation).<sup>42</sup> One further advantage in creating an investigation branch was that a properly investigated crime would greatly assist the preparation for, and the conducting of, any resultant court martial. Hatherill stated that he had spoken to 'Major Russell of the JAG's Department', presumably a reference to Lord Russell of Liverpool, the well-known judge advocate and subsequent author of best-selling books such as *The Scourge of the Swastika* (1954) who was serving with the BEF at the time.<sup>43</sup> Russell complained to him that 'an enormous number of cases sent to be dealt with by a Court-Martial are so hopelessly handled and bungled that it is not possible to proceed with them and the accused are discharged'. Of eight cases of soldiers charged with theft that Russell was then considering, four had to be thrown out and the rest sent back for further investigation, with Russell giving detailed instructions for the investigators. Military police sergeants had no idea how to take witness statements, and knew nothing of the rules of evidence or how to deal with exhibits.

---

<sup>40</sup> Lovell-Knight, *The Story of the Royal Military Police*, p.279.

<sup>41</sup> *Letter from Lt Col. George Ripley*, RMP Museum Archive, RIPLEY/1, p.1.

<sup>42</sup> Hatherill wanted all members of the SIB to hold officer rank. That was because they would come into contact with French *Commissaires de Police* who, as he observed, possessed 'an enormous sense of their own importance and dignity' and who might feel affronted if approached by British detective-NCOs. Moreover, it would enable such detectives to engage, interrogate and deal with British officers (and, indeed, of anyone of more senior rank than the military policeman) more effectively. In the event about one-third of the original 19 were initially commissioned as officers.

<sup>43</sup> Russell, *That Reminds Me*, ch.6; Lovell-Knight, *The Story of the Royal Military Police*, p.278.

In order to address Russell's complaints, Hatherill would have known that detective skills were not simply a matter of having a nose for clues, or possessing an alertness for other people's shifty behaviour or for their dissembling or evasive answers to enquiries. For detective skills required investigators to be acquainted both with scientific techniques and also with correct legal procedures when questioning witnesses or interviewing suspects. Detectives would be expected to have some familiarity with the 'Judges' Rules' on questioning suspects in order to avoid the risk of any resultant confession being later thrown out at trial, on the ground that it was unfairly obtained and not voluntary.<sup>44</sup> They would be alert to the evidential limitations of, say, hearsay statements, or to the danger of contaminating witness statements with their own or others' comments. Moreover, while it was 'difficult to draw a line between the duties of detective officers and of the uniform police',<sup>45</sup> and while at least one Chief Constable (of Bedfordshire) was of the view that 'the role of detective was the duty of every uniformed man',<sup>46</sup> there was also a corpus of knowledge that was distinctive to the detective's craft even if this knowledge was at times deployed by the uniformed police. In short, while there existed from 1936 a CMP manual prescribing military police (that is, general duties) doctrine,<sup>47</sup> the original 19 brought specifically civilian detective doctrine with them from Scotland Yard. In the case of newer recruits to the SIB, of course, that doctrine would then be formally transmitted through SIB training courses from 1942. What, then, did that detective doctrine entail?

## 5 Detective 'Doctrine'

Metropolitan Police Orders going back at least to the first decade of the twentieth century had laid down instructions for any 'officer engaged on an investigation'. Thus the officer attending the occurrence, whether a minor offence or a serious incident

---

<sup>44</sup> *Ibrahim v R* [1914] AC 599. He also noted some doctrinal shortcomings in military law in respect of handling stolen property. For the controversy surrounding the publication of *The Scourge of the Swastika* in 1954 see Gerry R. Rubin, "The Scourge of the Swastika" and Lord Russell of Liverpool's Sensational Resignation from the Judge Advocates General's Office in the United Kingdom', *New Zealand & Australian Armed Forces Law Review*, 10 & 11 (2010-11), pp.19-42.

<sup>45</sup> Sir Edward Troup, *The Home Office* (HMSO, 1925) p.107. Today, SIB officers would be expected, as members of the RMP, to respond to suspected crimes just as would members of the uniformed branch. For they are all military police officers. See A. T. Williams, *A Very British Killing: The Death of Baha Mousa* (Jonathan Cape, 2012) p.22.

<sup>46</sup> Clive Emsley, *The Great British Bobby* (Quercus, 2010) p.233. Before the war one of his constables was sent on a course to London to obtain the Metropolitan Criminal Investigation Certificate.

<sup>47</sup> *Manual of the Corps of Military Police* (War Office, 1936); Chapters were included on the following: Ch. I Organization and Powers; Ch. II Duties; Ch. III Traffic Control Duties; Ch. IV Instructions with Regard to Certain Duties; Ch. V The Provost Service in the Field; as well as a number of appendices.

such as a robbery or murder, was directed to 'attentively survey surroundings and take stock of the situation' and then to endeavour to find persons, whether relatives or others, best placed to furnish the information he required regarding the essential facts. He should then protect the scene from third parties, and ensure nothing was touched or moved from the locus delicti before it was examined, in order to preserve the clues in situ. Accurate measurement and note-taking should then follow, and should record such items as footprints, tool marks, impressions, finger-prints, bloodstains and articles such as clothing found at the scene. Moreover, apart from searching obvious places such as safes, cupboards, stores, chimneys and beds, the investigator should examine less obvious places like the stuffing of cushions, folds of a newspaper, between floorboards, the hole of an old key or the lining of a picture frame. For something otherwise insignificant might provide the key to the mystery, such as a small piece of flannel cut from a petticoat that had been lit as the wick of a lantern used in carrying out a recent murder.<sup>48</sup> It is a moot point whether these instructions could be described as detective doctrine as they seemed directed as much to beat constables discovering a crime scene, as to detectives subsequently called in. The issue is, therefore, what corpus of knowledge could be specifically recognised as detective 'doctrine' that stood beyond the boundaries of ordinary, or 'beat', police work? There is, of course, a plethora of memoirs and reminiscences of former detectives in which the qualities necessary in an effective detective (qualities invariably found in abundance in the author in question) are postulated.<sup>49</sup> An eye for detail, powers of observation, logical thinking (both inductive and deductive), ability to assess suspects' and witnesses' body language, local knowledge, contacts and informants, undercover work and covert surveillance, and knowledge of the criminal *modus operandi*, were part of the canon.

Despite the establishment of a primitive form of school for Metropolitan Police detectives in 1902 by Edward Henry, the Assistant Commissioner, and the subsequent extension of the syllabus of the detective training school in 1913, when

---

<sup>48</sup> HO 45/19921, cited in circular from Troup to Chief Constables, July 2, 1909. Troup was permanent secretary at the Home Office at this time.

<sup>49</sup> For policing memoirs see Paul Lawrence, "'Scoundrels and Scallywags and Some Honest Men....'" Memoirs and the Self-Image of French and English Policemen, c.1870-1939,' in Barry Godfrey, Clive Emsley and Graeme Dunstall (eds.) *Comparative Histories of Crime* (Willan Publishing, 2003) ch.7; Philip Rawlings, 'True Crime,' in Jon Vagg and Tim Newburn (eds.) *The British Criminological Conferences: Selected Proceedings, Vol. 1: Emerging Themes in Criminology* (Loughborough University, 1998); Haia Shpayer-Makov, 'Explaining the Rise and Success of Detective Memoirs in Britain,' in Clive Emsley and Haia Shpayer-Makov, *Police Detectives in History, 1750-1950* (Ashgate, 2006) pp.103-134.

Henry became Commissioner, training for detectives was limited.<sup>50</sup> The possession of relevant qualities in a detective was taken by some to be a gift of nature or, at the very least, qualities that could only be acquired on the job; and certainly not those that could be formally taught. The established practice was to deploy young detectives alongside senior officers during investigations, so that such detective qualities could be developed, and so that the subordinate detectives could also develop the 'smell' or the capacity to catch a 'wrong 'un' by some sort of sixth sense.<sup>51</sup> As one retired Scotland Yard detective put it, ‘

The Universities may save beginners in many professions years of going through the mill, but Scotland Yard has only one University, with Experience as its best professor. Detection is a profession, or perhaps I should say a craft, in which no amount of book learning or theoretical exposition can take the place of actual practice.<sup>52</sup>

Given that detectives were almost exclusively recruited internally from the ranks of uniformed police, it is perhaps unsurprising that many detectives also found their early experience undertaking routine duties as invaluable, and indeed the whole process seemed to be one of 'climbing the ladder'.<sup>53</sup> Other writers, such as the Metropolitan Police Commissioner between 1945 and 1953, Sir Harold Scott, would argue for the triumph of perspiration over inspiration and luck.<sup>54</sup>

Notwithstanding such home-spun philosophies, formal bodies of detective knowledge, which began to be taught at Hendon Police College from the mid-1930s,<sup>55</sup> would obviously include familiarisation with forensic techniques,<sup>56</sup> the ability

---

<sup>50</sup> Tullett, *Famous Cases*, p.31.

<sup>51</sup> Haia Shpayer-Makov, *The Ascent of the Detective: Police Sleuths in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Oxford University Press, 2011), p.97; Other sources give the date of the first detective school as 1913, for example see: Tullett, *Famous Cases*, p.31.

<sup>52</sup> Cecil Bishop, *From Information Received* (Hutchinson, 1932) p.15. See also Ex-Chief Superintendent Peter Beveridge, *Inside the CID* (Evans Brothers, 1957).

<sup>53</sup> Shpayer-Makov, *The Ascent of the Detective*, pp.75-77.

<sup>54</sup> Sir Harold Scott, *Scotland Yard* (Penguin, 1957) p.129. The author did, however, also state, at p.124, that 'The CID itself is very like a university...'

<sup>55</sup> As identified earlier some sources suggest earlier dates. The 'Friends of the Metropolitan Police Historical Collection' website, while noting that the Peel House Training School, in Regent Street, London, was opened in October 1907, also claims that a Metropolitan Police detective school had commenced in August 1901. See <http://www.metpolicehistory.co.uk/1900-1945.html>, accessed on 9 May 2014. According to another source, a detective training school was established in 1913. See Tullett, *Famous Cases*, p.31. It does seem clear that general training programmes for Metropolitan Police recruits commenced in 1905. The definitive volume, *The Official Encyclopedia of Scotland Yard*, edited by Martin Fido and Keith Skinner (Virgin, 1999) p.68, states that, 'The world's first specialised training programme for detectives was offered in 1936' at the Hendon Police College estate (also known as the Peel Centre), formerly the London Aerodrome owned by Claude Grahame-White, and now housing the RAF Museum.

to draft intelligence reports, and acquaintance with the principles of criminal evidence and procedure. The accumulation of a corpus of knowledge can be tracked through numerous histories of police detection going back to the creation of the Detective Department of the Metropolitan Police in 1842 (which became the CID in 1878).<sup>57</sup> In 1922 one Chief Constable proposed that junior detectives should gain experience by working with more senior colleagues in neighbouring forces and that clearing houses of detective expertise should be established in three regions of the country. Such clearing houses, staffed by junior detective officers, would operate as central schools of detective instruction. Nothing seems to have come of the suggestion at the time.<sup>58</sup> It has been suggested that even after the First World War many police forces did not have an effective detective force, with detective work being practically non-existent outside Scotland Yard and a few of the other larger forces, despite the skill and experience evidently accumulated in some quarters.<sup>59</sup> This assessment is possibly somewhat pessimistic, but it is nevertheless fairly apparent that detective doctrine was not systematically rationalised during the 1920s, primarily due to insufficient transmission of practices between forces, and indeed due to the lack of a CID and detectives at all in at least some smaller and rural forces.<sup>60</sup>

However, it was a Home Office committee on detective work that sat between 1933 and 1938<sup>61</sup> that more successfully advocated a greater centralisation and systematisation of detective training, acknowledging that whilst nothing could take

---

<sup>56</sup> In the 1930s Scotland Yard offered courses of various lengths to other forces on single fingerprint identification. See MEPO 2/5036.

<sup>57</sup> See standard police histories include T. A. Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales* (Constable, 1978); David Ascoli, *The Queen's Peace: The Origins and Development of the Metropolitan Police, 1829-1979* (Hamish Hamilton, 1979); Paul Begg and Keith Skinner, *The Scotland Yard Files* (Headline, 1992); Alan Moss and Keith Skinner, *The Scotland Yard Files: Milestones in Crime Detection* (National Archives, 2006); Guy R. Williams, *The Hidden World of Scotland Yard* (Hutchinson, 1972); H Paul Jeffers, *Bloody Business: An Anecdotal History of Scotland Yard* (Pharos Books, 1992).

<sup>58</sup> HO 45/19921, Chief Constable of Doncaster to Home Office (?), February 18, 1922.

<sup>59</sup> Keith Laybourn and David Taylor, *Policing in England and Wales, 1918-39: The Fed, Flying Squads and Forensics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.104.

<sup>60</sup> An often cited fact is that when a new Chief Constable was appointed by Oxfordshire Police in 1940, he found that the force had no CID or indeed any specialist sections. See Eric S. Johnstone, *One Policeman's Story* (Berry Row, 1978) p.65; Clive Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History* 2nd ed. (Routledge, 1996) p.151; Laybourn and Taylor, *Policing in England and Wales*, 82. See also Clive Emsley, *Crime and Society in Twentieth-Century England* (Pearson, 2011) p.159.

<sup>61</sup> Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee on Detective Work and Procedure*, Vols. 1-5, (HMSO, 1939). The work of the committee is briefly mentioned in Critchley, *A History of Police*, pp.210-12; H. M. Howgrave-Graham, *Light and Shade at Scotland Yard* (John Murray, 1947) pp.165-6; Mark Roodhouse, 'The "Ghost Squad": Undercover Policing in London, 1945-49', in Gerard Oram (ed.) *Conflict and Legality: Policing Mid-Twentieth Century Europe* (Francis Boutle Publishers, 2003) ch.8, and in Emsley, *The English Police*, p.163.

the place of experiencing the investigation of actual crime, the 'fruits of experience' could be communicated to a receptive trainee to some extent, prior to his undertaking the responsibility of handling actual cases.<sup>62</sup> To this end, the committee laid down a formal syllabus of instruction for aspiring detectives to complement the informal and individualistic methods of on-the-job learning hitherto the officially preferred method of training for detectives. Indeed by the time the committee had completed its deliberations in mid-1938, and before publication of its findings in September of that year, many of its recommendations, including the institution of detective training courses, had already been implemented.<sup>63</sup> Thus eight-week courses on detective training for constables hoping to join the non-uniformed branch<sup>64</sup> were already taking place at Hendon and at the headquarters of the West Riding force at Wakefield from May 1936, with three courses taking place at each location annually. Due to high demand, a new centre was also established in Birmingham, with the first course held in September 1938. An advanced six-week course for senior detectives was instituted from February 1937.<sup>65</sup>

The approach to training recommended by the departmental committee was dualist: training in the methods of criminal investigation for all recruits as an integral part of their initial training, followed by a specialist course for those then subsequently selected for detective training. The committee emphasised the importance of cooperation between uniform and detective branches of the force: uniformed officers were to be directed towards detecting crime as well as merely trying to prevent it. Furthermore, the report identified that these officers needed to be aware of 'what to do', or indeed more likely 'what not to do', when called to the scene of a crime. The need for investigative training was perceived as being even more acute in rural county areas, where crime enquiry work was often carried out by uniformed officers,

---

<sup>62</sup> Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee*, vol. 2, p.4.

<sup>63</sup> HO 45/25052 for this and subsequent information. In fact only two of the five volumes of the report were to be made available to the general public on the ground that it was not desirable that the technical information in the other three volumes be disclosed. Volumes dealing with the selection and training of detectives, criminal records, and communications were therefore kept within police and government circles or otherwise available only to those with a legitimate interest in such matters. The public could have sight of the report's findings on the police system in England and Wales and the state of crime, and of its review of detective work (all in volume 1), as well as its findings on the application of science, on miscellaneous questions and its summary and conclusions (vol.5).

<sup>64</sup> It should not be thought that every beat constable aspired to become a detective. Hours were longer and more unpredictable and promotion prospects were fewer. See Clive Emsley, *The Great British Bobby*, p.246.

<sup>65</sup> A. L. Dixon, *Home Office and the Police Between the Two World Wars* (Home Office, 1966), pg.139; Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee*, vol.2, pp.15-19.

in the absence of any assistance or whilst waiting a longer period for detectives to arrive.<sup>66</sup>

What did such training courses comprise? First, a syllabus for the instruction of all recruits in relation to investigative work was put forward,<sup>67</sup> with the idea that such knowledge should be incorporated into the ordinary school training syllabus.<sup>68</sup> It covered 46 topics including sections on offences and on the Judges' Rules, prisoners' rights, the *modus operandi* of offenders, informants, cooperating with detectives, questioning persons, keeping observation on suspects and premises, bloodstains, fingerprints, footprints, scientific aids, communications, police publications, and practical demonstrations. Overall, the focus of the investigative training was primarily towards investigative techniques and associated scientific techniques (approximately 60% of the course), while relevant evidential and other legal definitions also accounted for a significant proportion of the time spent (around 30%), with records and reports accounting for almost all of the remaining time (just under 10%).<sup>69</sup> A copy of a booklet entitled 'Instructional Pamphlet on Scientific Aids', along with the school's syllabus of instruction, was also to be distributed to each participant.<sup>70</sup> The pocket-sized pamphlet on scientific aids was issued by the Home Office in 1936,<sup>71</sup> and provided the police officer with guidance on: judging the value of scientific evidence, searching for relevant material, examination of the crime scene, and notes on the handling and packing of materials. However, in the report itself, the committee did emphasise that the recruit should not be overloaded with too much detail, as well as stressing the continued importance of the practical training (presumably including crime prevention) received during the probationary period.<sup>72</sup>

During the period between the initial course and possible selection for more specialist detective training, the committee also recommended that young constables should be attached to the CID for a short period in the early stage of their service. This would go some way to fulfilling the aim of breaking down barriers between detective

---

<sup>66</sup> Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee*, vol.2, p.9.

<sup>67</sup> Note that the committee only considered training for the detection of crime, due to their terms of reference; Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee*, vol. 2, p.9.

<sup>68</sup> Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee*, vol.2, 20.

<sup>69</sup> Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee*, vol.2, Appendix 5.

<sup>70</sup> Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee*, vol.2, 20.

<sup>71</sup> Home Office, *Scientific Aids to Criminal Investigation: Instructional Pamphlet for the use of Police Officers* (HMSO, 1936).

<sup>72</sup> Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee*, vol.2, p.11.

and uniform branches, as well as ensuring a higher standard of efficiency in crime work throughout the forces.<sup>73</sup>

The report then provided the recommended syllabus and guidance on detective training, the aim being both to provide the constable with sufficient theoretical and practical knowledge to become a detective, and also to assess his suitability for such a role with the CID.<sup>74</sup> The committee intended the content of the course to be both comprehensive and practical, so that every officer completing the course should have learned a good knowledge of criminal law and court procedure, sound and systematic methods of crime scene investigation, and how to deal with witnesses, identification parades, etc. He would also have mastered technical processes such as making casts and taking fingerprints, as well as handling, marking and packing of objects needed for expert laboratory examination. Together with the acquisition of these key techniques, the report also suggested that familiarity with the organisation and use of headquarters records systems, as well as other headquarters work associated with crime investigation, was also important. Finally a general insight into laboratory work, as opposed to formal participation in the scientific analysis, was also deemed to be advantageous.<sup>75</sup>

The syllabus on detective training itself was divided into 208 sections (including tests and examinations), with 16 sections delivered each week, and with some topics spanning more than one section. Crucially, examination and assessment were central to the syllabus, taking up some 10 percent of the total sessions. After the official opening of the course, the first two topics listed were, in fact, 'Advice to Young Detectives' and 'Dealings with the Press [and the] Confidential Nature of Detective Work', appropriately suggestive, perhaps, of induction to the secretive world of the masons who traditionally numbered many policemen among their ranks.<sup>76</sup> A further exposure to crime scene investigation topics and to criminal law and evidence would follow. In particular there would be intensive coverage of the examination of the scene of a crime and searching persons and places for clues, methods of identification, including identity parades, the application of the Judges' Rules on questioning suspects to ensure evidence was admissible at trial, and the correct way to take statements.

---

<sup>73</sup> Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee*, vol. 2, pp.12-13.

<sup>74</sup> Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee*, vol. 2, p.14.

<sup>75</sup> Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee*, vol. 2, 14-15.

<sup>76</sup> Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee*, vol. 2, 25-46.

To give one detailed example, under the heading of 'Keeping observation on suspected persons and premises', the initial recruit course merely laid down that the topic would, 'Deal with the ability to observe and memorise the personal descriptions of wanted or suspected persons'. By contrast the detective course, under the heading 'Keeping observation on suspected persons, premises and property', would not only 'Deal with the ability to observe and memorise the personal description of wanted or suspected persons....' It would also give instructions on, 'points of vantage, disguise etc.'. It was reminiscent of those old familiar photographs of London detective teams in the late Victorian period where they had disguised themselves as labourers and down-and-outs. The necessity for different types of officers for the different kinds of work falling under this heading was also emphasised. There then followed the further headings of 'Persons', 'Shadowing', 'Premises' and 'Property', and again under each heading were further sub-headings, and yet more divisions. For example, 'Persons' included receivers of stolen property, possessors of stolen property, coiners, street pilferers, pickpockets and prostitutes. Under 'Premises' were listed licensed premises, brothels, shebeens, gaming houses, places of public entertainment, gold and silver dealers, and motor car breakers.<sup>77</sup>

Whilst it was not included in the departmental report, there also existed a six-week syllabus for the training of Detective Inspectors and sergeants, that is for those who possessed practical experience but had not previously had the benefit of the eight-week detective course. Much of the content appeared to be common to both, at least in terms of purported content of the lectures, although a number of topics were omitted from the senior detective course, presumably because these were areas in which the detective was already expected to be familiar, such as preparing cases for court and crime prevention measures.<sup>78</sup>

## **6 A Textbook on Detective Doctrine?**

If brought together into a single printed source such material would indeed be an accessible detective manual, enabling its practitioners to consult the oracle for the relevant doctrine. Despite the exertions of the Detective Work Committee there was, by the time it reported in September 1938, still no Home Office-authorized comprehensive manual or sourcebook setting out detective 'doctrine' comparable to, say, War Office field manuals for the military. A police training manual was however

---

<sup>77</sup> Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee*, vol.2, Appendix 6.

<sup>78</sup> *A Manual of Police Training* (West Riding of Yorkshire Constabulary: Training Establishment, 1938) pp.154-212.

published by the West Riding Constabulary in that year. It included the training syllabus for detectives given in the departmental committee report, and also provided further syllabi for training of Detective Inspectors and sergeants, plus specific three-week courses on fingerprints, *modus operandi*, and photography but lacked any detail regarding the material covered in each section or lecture.<sup>79</sup> Limited elements of detective doctrine had already been detailed in a number of sources. Thus textbooks on fingerprinting had existed since the late nineteenth century,<sup>80</sup> the *modus operandi* system was initially outlined in 1913 in a pamphlet issued by the West Riding Constabulary,<sup>81</sup> and a number of investigative methods were outlined in a few police and criminology journals on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>82</sup> A number of popular works stressed the forensic and professional expertise of detectives, a classic example being *Crime and Its Detection* published in 1932, which featured contributions from a wide range of senior police officers, lawyers and scientists, but nevertheless the contents were intended for the public in general rather than being a manual tailored specifically for serving police officers.<sup>83</sup> The only really comprehensive text was an Austrian-authored book on criminal detection, *Criminal Investigation: A Practical Textbook* by Hans Gross, first published in English in 1906,<sup>84</sup> with subsequent editions published by the legal publisher Sweet & Maxwell appearing in 1924, 1934, 1949 and 1962.

Hans Gross' book has been extensively cited by various modern writers on forensic investigations as well as by authors discussing British *causes célèbres* such as the 'Brides in the Bath' case and the mysterious and unsolved murder of Mrs Caroline Luard in 1908.<sup>85</sup> Though the text of *Criminal Investigation* was not fully structured around relevant British criminal offences, procedures or evidential rules, the volume

---

<sup>79</sup> *A Manual of Police Training*, 213-223.

<sup>80</sup> See Sir Edward Henry, *Classification and Uses of Fingerprints* (HMSO, 1897) and subsequent editions.

<sup>81</sup> Major Atcherley, "M. O." (Modus Operandi), in *Criminal Investigation and Detection* (West Riding of Yorkshire, 1913).

<sup>82</sup> The *Police Journal* was first published in 1928; In the U.S. the *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology* had its first edition in 1910.

<sup>83</sup> W. Teignmouth Shore (ed.), *Crime and Its Detection*, vol.1 and 2 (Gresham, 1932); For a further discussion of detective popularisation see R. M. Morris, "Crime Does Not Pay": Thinking Again About Detectives in the First Century of the Metropolitan Police,' in Clive Emsley and Haia Shpayer-Makov (eds.), *Police Detectives in History, 1750-1950* (Ashgate, 2006), pp.100-102.

<sup>84</sup> Hans Gross, *Criminal Investigation: A Practical Textbook* (Krishnamachari, 1906). This edition was intended for investigative work in India but the first edition intended to guide investigative work in the UK was published by the Specialist Press in 1907.

<sup>85</sup> For George Joseph Smith, see Jane Robins, *The Magnificent Spilsbury and the Case of the Brides in the Bath* (John Murray, 2010) pp.123-4. For the Luard case cited by Gross, see Peter Costello, *The Real World of Sherlock Holmes* (Carroll & Graf, 1991) p.177.

offered practical guidance to those investigating crimes, as well as proffering guidance on forensic scientific investigative techniques, suggesting when the relevant expert should be deployed or called in or, alternatively, recognising a situation where the investigators themselves needed to act as an expert. General chapters were included on the investigating officer; examination of witnesses and the accused; inspection of localities; equipment of the investigating officer; experts; the press; practices of criminals; criminal slang; general and criminal issues relating to 'wandering tribes'; superstition; weapons; drawing, modelling and moulding; footprints and other impressions; traces of blood; ciphers and secret writing; criminal habits; as well as a further five chapters on specific offences. The Indian origins of the book's first English translation (by two English barristers in Madras),<sup>86</sup> would strike a chord with SIB investigators overseas who found themselves at crime scenes in locations remote from experts and forensic laboratory facilities.<sup>87</sup> But its shortcomings for British detectives, both civilian and military, can be gauged by its lack of reference to English criminal law, evidence and procedure. Thus the 'Judges' Rules' receive no mention, while other areas included in the Departmental Committee's suggested syllabus for detective training are also omitted.

It was only with the publication in 1940 of the first edition (running to 156 pages of text) of retired Detective Chief Inspector Reginald Morrish's *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day* [sic],<sup>88</sup> that a general detective textbook authored by a British (indeed Scotland Yard) detective became available. But even that volume was far removed from 'manual' status. First, it appeared in the 'Pageant of Progress' series published by Oxford University Press alongside such other worthy volumes as *Photography To-day*, *The Cinema To-day*, and other similarly entitled volumes on, inter alia, flight, electricity, iron and steel, astronomy, railways, warships and military science. Not surprisingly it excluded some of the sensitive material covered in the detective course, or the confidential aspects of detective work. For example, direct reference to Scotland Yard's *Modus Operandi* Bureau was withheld in the chapter on criminal records. Indeed, overall, the text was more suited to the police duties course than to the detective course. In 1942 Morrish did produce something that looked

---

<sup>86</sup> John Adam and John Collyer Adam; John Collyer Adam was named as co-author for all English language versions until at least 1949.

<sup>87</sup> Gross, *Criminal Investigation*, p.xxii. SIB investigations during and after the Iraq war of 2003 were notoriously constrained by such factors. See for example, Williams, *A Very British Killing*, pp.43-45.

<sup>88</sup> Reginald Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day* (Oxford University Press, 1940). A second edition followed in 1955.

much more like a detective textbook, with the publication of *Criminal Law and Police Investigation*,<sup>89</sup> which was aimed at helping police officers with the difficulties of court prosecutions and promotion examinations.<sup>90</sup> However, once more sensitive details appeared to be omitted.

Yet Morrish had originally possessed a rather more grandiose idea which remained unfulfilled. For, as a still serving detective (he had retired by 1940), he had first raised the possibility in 1936 of publishing a two-volume work containing 52 detailed chapters, under the proposed title, *The Prevention, Detection and Investigation of Crime*.<sup>91</sup> In justifying the project he asserted that, 'The modern detective officer requires a work which includes every type of crime known to the police, with a full explanation as to the best methods to be adopted by the investigator'. Coverage would include criminal law and evidence, scientific aids, and the citing of numerous examples of actual cases that he and his colleagues had dealt with. But it would also contain a chapter on 'National Cooperation in Crime Detection'. This would address, inter alia, the positive and negative roles of the press in crime prevention and detection, and make reference to national crime detection schemes such as the 'Agility' scheme that was primarily designed to stop getaway cars that had crossed county or borough boundaries after robberies. Such cooperation could be seen as one of the *leitmotifs* of a book that the author insisted to his superiors would lead to more efficient detective work both in Britain and throughout the Empire, and to greater coordination throughout police forces.<sup>92</sup> Initially, both the head of Hendon Training School, Colonel Halland, and the Deputy Commissioner, Sir Maurice Drummond, welcomed the idea. The influential Assistant Chief Commissioner, Norman Kendal, by contrast, was less enthusiastic. As the book would in effect be composed of all the lectures on CID work delivered at the training college, trainee detectives would no longer need to build up 'their own books'. They would thus miss out on creating their own portfolios of 'doctrine', an exercise that Kendal considered to be an especially valuable element of their training. In any case, he added, Morrish's two volumes could hardly deal with the whole of the subject suggested in

---

<sup>89</sup> Reginald Morrish, *Criminal Law and Police Investigation* (Police Review Publishing Company, 1942). References here are to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition published in 1946.

<sup>90</sup> Morrish, *Criminal Law and Police Investigation*, p.v.

<sup>91</sup> MEPO 2/3220 for this and subsequent information.

<sup>92</sup> Most chapters covered individual offences and their definitions. A number concerned various means of identification and scene of crime investigation. Others included the prevention of crime and police powers, criminal records, interrogations, habitual criminals, processing procedures, national cooperation, informants, 'How to Become a Successful Investigator', and a 'Compendium of Legal, Medical and Commercial Terms'.

the working title. Moreover, other published sources, including Moriarty's *Police Law* and *Police Procedure and Administration*, Vincent's *Police Code* and, indeed, Gross's *Criminal Investigation* (above), as well as standard works on criminal law, covered Morrish's anticipated material. Furthermore, copyright and financial issues might arise (since Morrish was expecting to be paid by the Home Office for his efforts), while the lectures at future CID training courses might simply become a mere repetition of the book. But, perhaps most damningly, 'I doubt very much whether Chief Inspector Morrish is the man to do the job. If he is I can see no reason why he should not tackle it himself after he has resigned without any official blessing'.

That, in fact, is what happened. For, in the event, the Commissioner, Sir Philip Game, refused permission to publish, preferring instead to accept Kendal's advice. Within a short time Morrish had, indeed, retired, and his first book, minus the more sensitive material, made its appearance in 1940. The timing was plainly fortuitous, coinciding as it did with the creation of the SIB. While not exactly fitting the bill as a detective manual, it was at least subject to adaptation to military conditions, a start for new entrants to the SIB insofar as the chapters were detective-focused and not simply police-focused. For although, as Gary Sheffield noted, the military policeman, unlike his counterpart in 1914, went to war in 1939 'with some sort of doctrine',<sup>93</sup> nonetheless, with no detective branch of the CMP at that time, there could hardly have been detective doctrine. But now at least the doctrinal gap could, in theory, be partially filled.

The text of Morrish's first book, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-Day*, was divided into two parts. The first part concerned general detective techniques and knowledge,<sup>94</sup> and the second considered the deployment of scientific techniques in investigative work, particularly at the crime scene.<sup>95</sup> The first part detailed, amongst

---

<sup>93</sup> Sheffield, *The Redcaps*, p.101.

<sup>94</sup> Part I of the book has the following chapters: 'Ch. I: The Detective and Crime; Ch. II: Powers of a Detective; Ch. III: Co-operation in Detection – Systems of Communication; Ch. IV: The Registration of Criminals; Ch. V: Tracing the Criminal; Ch. VI: Statements and Police Reports; and Ch. VII: Evidence in the Courts'.

<sup>95</sup> Part II of the book has the following chapters, 'Ch. VIII: Science and the Detective; Ch. IX: Photographs in Criminal Cases; Ch. X: The Study of Impressions; Ch. XI: Science and the Detective in Burglary, Housebreaking, Shop- and Warehouse- Breaking; Ch. XII: Science and the Detective in Homicide, Accidental Deaths, etc.; Ch. XIII: Science and the Detective in Manslaughter by Motor Vehicles, Dangerous Driving, etc.; Ch. XIV: Science and the Detective in Fire-Raising (Arson) and Explosions; Ch. XV: Science and the Detective in Fraud Cases; Ch. XVI: Science and the Detective in Forgery, Libel and Blackmail; and Ch. XVII: Science and the Detective in the Reproduction of Obliterated Marks; Unusual Evidence in Theft Cases; Wilful Damage; Attempted Train Wrecking, etc.'

other things, the duties of a detective, his legal powers and relevant legal definitions, the taking of statements, use of expert witnesses, and the giving of evidence. There was also a whole chapter in this part dealing with technological advances in communications, which Morrish explained was useful for cooperation between individual police officers, and also between different forces. Descriptions included the use of telephones, police boxes, teleprinters, recently introduced wireless communications, Dictaphones, as well as devices for making 'conference calls', and covert listening devices.<sup>96</sup> Additionally, there is at least some evidence of what might be called scientific criminological practices described by Morrish in the first part, including local recording and analysis of crime;<sup>97</sup> annual reports and returns to the Home Office;<sup>98</sup> use of crime maps and graphs;<sup>99</sup> central registration and classification of criminals at New Scotland Yard, which combined *modus operandi* analysis with photographic records;<sup>100</sup> along with more traditional approaches to detective work, such as suspect interviews,<sup>101</sup> the use of informants, and the observation of suspected persons.<sup>102</sup>

The second part of *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day* focused on forensic techniques and investigative procedures, as applied to investigative work generally, and then specifically to a number of different types of cases, including burglary, homicide, serious motoring offences, fraud, and blackmail. The first chapter of this part considered the equipment and personnel needed for the setting up of a crime laboratory, with Morrish advising that staff skilled in chemistry, physics, biology, botany, zoology, microscopy, photography, and medicine would be needed.<sup>103</sup> Potential laboratory equipment included the 'comparison microscope' which was useful in ballistic work,<sup>104</sup> and also a spectroscope to carry out substance

---

<sup>96</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, ch. III, pp.35-42. As well as audio surveillance, there was an attempt in October 1935 to use a 16mm cine camera to covertly gather evidence, by Thomas Wells, Chief Constable of Chesterfield Borough Police, in his efforts to clamp down on illegal street gambling. For this, and an analysis of the limits of recorded video surveillance generally, see Chris A. Williams, 'Police filming English streets in 1935: the limits of mediated identification', *Surveillance & Society*, 9(1) (2009), pp.3-9. For a detailed case study on working class gambling see Andrew Davies, 'The Police and the People: Gambling In Salford, 1900-1939' in Chris A. Williams (ed.), *Police and Policing in the Twentieth Century* (Ashgate, 2011), pp.187-216.

<sup>97</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, pp.19-20.

<sup>98</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, pp.18-19.

<sup>99</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, pp.20-21.

<sup>100</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, pp.43-48.

<sup>101</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, pp.55-56.

<sup>102</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, pp.29-31.

<sup>103</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, p.74.

<sup>104</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, pp.74-75.

identification<sup>105</sup>. Another general chapter focussed on photography,<sup>106</sup> firstly for the purposes of evidential recording of the crime scene,<sup>107</sup> suspect identification,<sup>108</sup> and also in the recording of street accidents;<sup>109</sup> additionally, specific photographic techniques mentioned included photo-micrography,<sup>110</sup> ultraviolet and infrared photography,<sup>111</sup> and also the use of oblique illumination, a technique which revealed indentations in documents.<sup>112</sup> Further general chapters focused on the study of impressions,<sup>113</sup> including fingerprints and footprints, and finally a full chapter was devoted to a discussion on techniques to reveal obliterated marks,<sup>114</sup> which was deemed to be useful evidence in theft cases amongst others. The chapters based around specific offences detail the investigative techniques and factors most likely to be relevant to the investigation. For example, in burglary cases the main issues were perceived as establishing the method of entry and exit, preserving/ photographing any fingerprints and footmarks, an exhaustive search for items or fragments left behind, as well as the taking of detailed descriptions of the items stolen.<sup>115</sup> By contrast in the chapter on homicide, whilst still emphasising crime scene searches, the focus is on the murder weapon and associated forensic examination techniques. Firearms and ballistics appeared to be a main focus, but other instruments were considered along with techniques for identifying blood stains, as well as an additional section on poisons.<sup>116</sup>

Morrish's second book, *Criminal Law and Police Investigation*, was not available until January 1942; indeed subsequent reprints in April 1942, and a second edition in 1946, suggest at least some level of popularity and usage by police generally, and potentially also by the SIB. This text continued and extended the offence-based thematic style of the second part of the first book, in the sense that there were specific chapters for particular offences, but the coverage was significantly extended. Now, each chapter was more comprehensive: relevant statutes and legal principles were included, along with the information given in the previous text, as well as

---

<sup>105</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, pp.75-76.

<sup>106</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, ch. IX, pp.81-87.

<sup>107</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, pp.81-82.

<sup>108</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, pp.82-83.

<sup>109</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, p.83.

<sup>110</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, pp.84-85.

<sup>111</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, pp.85-86.

<sup>112</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, pp.86-87.

<sup>113</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, ch. X, pp.88-97.

<sup>114</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, pp.150-156.

<sup>115</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, pp.99-104.

<sup>116</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, pp.112-122.

practical tips for the investigator. For example, in the breaking offences section Morrish advised against secrecy, as he felt that disseminating information as far as possible to members of the public was most likely to bring success; he also advised that receivers of stolen goods could potentially be turned into informants.<sup>117</sup> Beyond these specific-offence chapters, general chapters on evidence, the prosecution and supervision of criminals, aids to the prevention of crime, and aids to crime investigation were also provided.

Overall, the first and second Morrish texts appeared to provide at least a basic grounding in both standard and specialist detective techniques, and consequently provided a decent insight into the content of detective doctrine and the knowledge required by the SIB at that point. However, there was also much that was potentially relevant to the SIB to be found in the Hans Gross text, particularly when the investigator found himself working autonomously and isolated from any specialist forensic support.

## **Conclusion**

The initial 19 recruits to the SIB<sup>118</sup> were transferred to France in February 1940, and formed into six teams comprising an officer, a warrant officer, and a sergeant. These teams were then supplemented with individuals from the existing CMP companies with suitable previous civilian CID or plain clothes training, who were able to help with the vast array of crime inquiries received.<sup>119</sup> After the escape from France each SIB team was allocated to a command in England, Scotland, or Northern Ireland to continue their work.<sup>120</sup> At this stage the expansion of the SIB was relatively slow, with little initial call for its services in the United Kingdom, perhaps with the exception of Northern Ireland, where smuggling of military stores across the border was rife, particularly with the huge prices that could be realised in the South.<sup>121</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> Morrish, *Criminal Law and Police Investigation*, p.83.

<sup>118</sup> The civilian term 'Criminal Investigation Department' would have been inappropriate insofar as the title implied that only criminal investigations would fall within its remit. In fact SIB activities extended to certain non-criminal matters such as fatal accident inquiries, friendly fire incidents, and leaks of confidential information not involving offences under the Official Secrets Acts. Indeed during the SIB's previous incarnation between 1919 and 1926, it would undertake inquiries into the character of German women wishing to marry British soldiers during the occupation of the Rhineland, on which see [www.rmp-sib.co.uk/hatherill.htm](http://www.rmp-sib.co.uk/hatherill.htm), accessed 9 May 2014.

<sup>119</sup> Major J.G. Ellis, 'The C.I.D. in Khaki', *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, [1945] (LXXV) pp.95 and 97; *Letter from Lt Col. George Ripley*, p.1.

<sup>120</sup> Ellis, 'The C.I.D. in Khaki', p.97.

<sup>121</sup> Morrish, *The Police and Crime-Detection To-day*, p.98.

Over time its domestic case load expanded, especially in respect of fraud and forgery investigations and of breaches by service personnel of rationing regulations. Subsequently the SIB became active in other theatres including the Middle East (from May 1941), North Africa and Italy from late 1942, and India from autumn 1943.<sup>122</sup> A call was also made by the War Office for former policemen now serving in the armed forces to transfer to the CMP and specifically to the SIB in anticipation of D-Day. Following the landings and subsequent advances, several new SIB sections were rushed to Europe as supply lines became longer, and depots bulged with valuable supplies that were tempting to thieves.<sup>123</sup>

Notwithstanding these subsequent developments, it is apparent that the concept of SIB detective doctrine, in its fully worked out form, had not taken root at the time of the branch's formation. Indeed, as we have seen, (civilian) detective doctrine was not yet in a manual format that was easily transmissible to the next generation of civilian detectives. How, then, was detective doctrine transmitted to those new recruits to the SIB who had not joined from civilian detective forces? The simple answer is that from early 1942, by which time CIDs throughout Britain could no longer afford to release detectives from civilian duties, the SIB were now obliged to train up military policemen in SIB duties themselves.

The first SIB training courses involving the transmission of suitably adapted civilian detective doctrine were run from April 1942 by Major J. G. Ellis, one of the original 19, at the CMP Depot at Mytchett.<sup>124</sup> In the same year training courses for SIB recruits were also started at the CMP base at Almaza in Egypt.<sup>125</sup> The course at Mytchett was based upon the normal civil police detective constable to sergeant examination, which points to the deployment of the six-week syllabus described previously, and was deemed by Major Ellis to be 'necessarily stiff', but nevertheless leading to the turning out of many first class recruits.<sup>126</sup> By 1945 the SIB of CMP (India) had produced its own Instruction Book which incorporated many areas of

---

<sup>122</sup> Lovell-Knight, *The Story of the Royal Military Police*, pp.280-98, passim. For the SIB activities of Lieutenant-Colonel Claude Harper and his team in the Middle East see Phillips, *Guns, Drugs and Deserters*. For subsequent correspondence in 1942 between Scotland Yard and the War Office regarding promotions, deployments and the return of some of the original 19 to Scotland Yard, see MEPO 2/7150.

<sup>123</sup> Douglas FJ Lightwood, 'Military Police at War', *London Police Pensioner* 55 (1989), Dec., p.18. See also pages. pp.14-15 of the subsequent issue.

<sup>124</sup> Lovell-Knight, *The Story of the Royal Military Police*, pp.312-3.

<sup>125</sup> For class photograph of SIB Course VIII at Almaza in Egypt in mid-1942, see *Royal Military Police Journal* [1982], Issue 2, p.43.

<sup>126</sup> Ellis, 'The C.I.D. in Khaki', p.99.

civilian detective doctrine, providing formal guidance on crime scene investigation, report writing, witness statements, evidential rules, identification parades, formal descriptions, and scientific techniques, amongst other topics.<sup>127</sup> By 1950 the SIB had become a permanent part of the peace-time RMP, with its function clearly established as the investigation of serious crime. Guidance was provided to the RMP Provost branch as to the sort of crimes that required the calling in of SIB personnel including sudden deaths; serious assaults; raids on war department installations; losses and thefts above £50; all losses and thefts of guns and ammunition; any violation of mail; information which might prevent crime; and any other offence requiring a special investigation. Notably this list was deemed to be non-exhaustive.<sup>128</sup> In just over ten years of operation, the SIB had become a pivotal part of the RMP, with its detective doctrine imported from the civilian world, but necessarily developed and refined with a military slant to become a specialist SIB detective doctrine.

These developments had been pre-empted to some extent by Hatherill, who had observed in his report that those men carefully selected for the specialised investigations to be undertaken for the Army would require to attend courses of instruction offered by civilian police forces. A clearer pointer to a syllabus based on civilian detective doctrine is difficult to imagine. His autobiography, published in 1971, sheds some light on what, apart from specialised military elements, he would have expected to be covered on SIB courses after its formation. As noted previously, by the time the Home Office Committee on Detective Work reported in 1938, various civilian detective training courses were already in existence. For prior to such courses, the training for young detectives in the 1920s was restricted to a five-week course on criminal law and procedure. Therefore only with the advent of civilian detective training courses and the establishment of the Detective Training School in the following decade were courses made available for trainee detectives on forensic medicine, scientific aids, ballistics, firearms, footprints, fingerprints, photography, accountancy, falsification of accounts, banking, police communications, poisons, ballistics, explosives, precious metals, gems, antiques, cars, and many other subjects (apart from more detailed coverage of criminal law, evidence and procedure, and international cooperation).<sup>129</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup> *Instruction Book for the Special Investigation Branch of the Corps of Military Police (India)*, Royal Military Police Archive, pp.163-167, and pp.171-207.

<sup>128</sup> *Provost Training in Peace and War* (War Office, 1950) pp.89-91.

<sup>129</sup> Hatherill, *A Detective's Story*, pp.40-41.

For new recruits to the SIB the bulk of such coverage would clearly be relevant to criminal investigations within the military context,<sup>130</sup> and it seems likely that Hatherill would have assumed that SIB investigators would be exposed to at least some of the above. Major Ellis noted in 1945 that other than offences which he considered could not be committed by military personnel, for example 'long firm' frauds, the SIB had investigated every known type of crime, including some that the British civilian police officer would not see, such as gun-running and opium smuggling.<sup>131</sup> Some other administrative difficulties were also more prevalent for the SIB. For example cases awaiting trial by courts-martial could well be put back, and so the military police officer might well be working on many more cases simultaneously than his civilian counterpart or be posted elsewhere. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that evidence exists of very precise training, even prior to the creation of the SIB, in relation to methods of note-taking and precise formatting of notebooks.<sup>132</sup> A further obvious difficulty was that operations in the field would impose a limiting effect on detective capabilities, where limited numbers of military investigators and the inaccessibility of laboratory facilities would impede investigations (a problem perhaps not fully resolved today). Notwithstanding any possible empirical shortcomings, the formalisation of detective doctrine, subsequently transmitted to the military field, remains one of the most significant developments in civilian policing in the 1930s, even if its format was still of the 'in-house' variety and despite Morrish's hopes expressed in his 1940 book.

In short, this paper has argued that the re-establishment of the SIB in early 1940 can only be understood in the light of the growth of civilian detective doctrine that was becoming increasingly formalised and then transmitted through formal training regimes at police colleges in the 1930s. Thus in order to succeed as a detective force, the SIB had to adopt distinctive skills, including what might be called human intelligence-led policing, involving the use of local informers and the employment of under-cover techniques, as well as honing the problem-solving techniques employed by civilian detectives. It was fortunate, perhaps unavoidable, that the first SIB detectives were 'off-the-shelf' and 'ready-made'. But what was even more fortunate was that there was already in existence in 1940 a corpus of civilian detective doctrine

---

<sup>130</sup> Some civilian detective topics such as company law offences and probation would be irrelevant so far as military investigations were concerned. See 'Spotlight on S.I.B.', in *Royal Military Police Journal* [1964] Issue 2, p.8.

<sup>131</sup> Ellis, 'The C.I.D. in Khaki', p.99.

<sup>132</sup> Lance Corporal A. Marriott, Course Notebook, Corps of Military Police: 39<sup>th</sup> Refresher Course 1936, [RMP Museum Archive] pp.32-33.

upon which new military detectives, certainly from 1942, could draw. In other words, had there been no civilian detective schools in the 1930s and no formally transmissible detective doctrine, it is difficult to envisage the early survival of the SIB prior to the creation of a specific SIB detective training course syllabus and notes.<sup>133</sup>

---

<sup>133</sup> Notably even by 1950, the general *RMP Provost Training Manual* (1950) directs the reader towards the SIB course syllabus and notes rather than a specific SIB training manual.