

# LEST WE FORGET

This weekend marks 50 years since three police officers were killed in the line of duty. **Anthony Rae** remembers them

## PC Frank Edwin Hulme



PC Frank Hulme, 31, joined Hertfordshire Constabulary in 1952 from the Royal Navy and was stationed at Hemel Hempstead, where he lived with his wife, Barbara, and children: Patricia, Peter and James.

PC Hulme was pronounced dead at 8 pm on Friday, 12 December 1958, but his death had not come quickly. It began two weeks earlier on the night of Saturday 29 November, when he and a colleague intervened in a gang fight on the town's High Street.

PC Hulme made two separate arrests during which he was assaulted by several men and thrown to the ground. Despite this, he secured his prisoners and got them into a police van, but shortly afterwards he collapsed and was rushed to hospital. He had suffered a cerebral haemorrhage from an aneurysm. It could have ruptured any time, especially through exertion or violence.

PC Hulme drifted in and out of consciousness while Barbara visited daily until his death. A post mortem found PC Hulme had died not from the aneurysm, but from a pulmonary embolism resulting from a blow to his thigh during the affray. A coroner's inquest returned a manslaughter verdict. Two men were charged but acquitted.

In a cruel twist of fate, on the eve of PC Hulme's funeral, Barbara's father died.

While Barbara struggled to bring her family back to some sort of normality, PC Hulme's death was forgotten by the police service. In 1969, when the Police Federation published lists of officers killed by criminal acts, PC Hulme's name was absent.

It was not until decades later, Barbara found the strength to seek recognition for her husband. The force knew little of his death, but Barbara persisted in her enquiries and in 2001, his file was found and she finally discovered just how her husband died. In 2004, a new Roll of Honour was unveiled by Hertfordshire Constabulary; among the 18 names listed was: 'Frank Hulme 1958'.

He would not be forgotten again.

## Det Insp James O'Donnell



As PC Hulme was pronounced dead, another tragedy was unfolding 200 miles away in Blackburn, Lancashire, on 12 December 1958.

Henry King 27, had recently been discharged from

the Royal Air Force because of psychiatric problems. His wife had left him and was staying with her parents. That evening, at around 10 pm, he forced his way into his in-laws' house, wielding an automatic shotgun, and held his wife, and six others hostage in the kitchen.

One escaped and called the police, and by the time Det Insp James O'Donnell arrived, King had killed his wife and injured an unarmed police officer, PC John Covill. The other captives had fled.

Det Insp O'Donnell, 47, had joined Blackburn Borough Police in 1932. He served with the Irish Guards during the Second World War, during which he was awarded the Military Medal and Bar for bravery, and after the war, he married his wife Florence and rejoined the force to rise to the position of head of Blackburn CID.

Det Insp O'Donnell took charge as King was threatening to shoot the first person who came through the door. Det Insp O'Donnell identified himself and asked to enter the room to talk. King agreed to this. Det Insp O'Donnell was trying to calm King when the gunman shot him in the chest. Det Insp O'Donnell was rushed to hospital badly wounded.

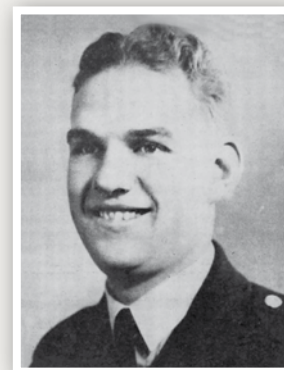
Later, tear gas was thrown into the kitchen and soon afterwards a shot was heard. King had shot himself, but was not seriously wounded.

Det Insp O'Donnell died on 13 December.

King was found guilty of manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility on 13 March 1959, and sentenced to life imprisonment. He served 18 years.

In August 1959 Det Insp O'Donnell was posthumously awarded the Queen's Police Medal for Gallantry. PC Covill and three other officers also received the Queens Commendation for Bravery.

## PC Raymond Henry Summers



Within 24 hours of Det Insp O'Donnell's death, on the night of Sunday 14 December 1958, there was what appeared to be a replay of the fatal injury of Frank Hulme on a north London street.

PC Ray Summers, 23, a Met officer, collapsed while intervening in a street affray. He was dead on arrival at hospital, apparently from a heart attack.

PC Summers, although still a probationer, had three years' RAF service and, at 6 ft 4 ins tall, was well able to take care of himself, even when patrolling alone without a radio.

The scene he met on Seven Sisters Road, Holloway, would have daunted anyone: a gang fight involving knives and axes. However, PC Summers went straight into the affray, breaking it up and was trying to arrest one of the ringleaders when a single blow in the back felled him.

PC Summers's body was left in the mortuary fully clothed, still wearing his helmet. It was only when his body was prepared for the post mortem 12 hours later, that it was turned over and checked. It was discovered that a knife had penetrated five layers of clothing and more than four inches into his body. He had been stabbed to death.

Before long, the murder weapon was recovered and suspects were questioned. Ronald Marwood, 25, became the prime suspect. He had left his wife and disappeared the day after the murder, but six weeks later, with his name and picture in the papers, Marwood gave himself up and confessed.

On 19 March 1959, Marwood was convicted of the murder of PC Summers at the Old Bailey and, despite a public outcry, he was hanged on 8 May.

Within a year of PC Summers's death, his fiancée, Sheila McKenzie, collapsed and died, aged just 21. She was buried alongside him.

**Anthony Rae is founder and chairman of the Police Roll of Honour Trust charity.**  
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