

JOINING THE BRITISH SOUTH AFRICA POLICE BY "ACE"



POLICE DEPARTMENT, SALISBURY

THE early days of colonization have always been saturated in romance, and Rhodesia, the youngest colony in our vast Empire, is in no way behind her elder sisters in this respect.

Her early history is a phantasmagoria of romantic gems, hardships endured, glorious failures and magnificent victories. The continent in which Rhodesia is situated—Africa—spells difficulties and mysteries which lured those early settlers to fight her, with her witchery and charm, and steal from her something to hand down to posterity and the Empire. It was a fight that gripped those old campaigners—got into their blood. They fought and won at such cost that they could not give up their charge. A few, it is true, have tried to break away and settle once again in the cities, but Mother Africa, the witch, has called them back. Perhaps that is why she makes one fight so hard—having won you cannot leave her.

British colonization has traditionally become the hallmark of fair play, justice and order, so it is not surprising to find, in the history of our Colony, in common with the older and larger dominions, the early introduction of a police force. Its members made fine colonists, they got to know the country; they were the people who fought for it, and loved it. The history of our own and other forces is very largely the history of the colonies in which they have operated. With such a background of romantic appeal which is still alive to-day, it is little wonder that into the ranks of our own force, the

British South Africa Police, have come some of the pick of Britain's youth. The type of life, the lure of the country and the job appeal, in the first place, to the right stamp of man. Regulations do the rest.

The majority of recruits for the police come from England where an application must first be made to Rhodesia House. No applicant is considered unless he is a British subject, is unmarried, is between 20 and 25 years of age for the Mounted Branch and between 20 and 30 years of age for the Dismounted Branch; possesses suitable references; can give a satisfactory account of his movements since leaving school; can satisfy the authorities as to his educational qualifications or be prepared to undergo a test. He must be medically examined and passed free from any infirmity and be of strong constitution and equal to the performance of police and military duties. His height for the Mounted Branch must not be less than 5 feet 6 inches or 5 feet 10 inches for the Dismounted Branch. The first period of engagement is for three years. If he is fortunate in passing the scrutiny of his questioners and the pummelling of the medical officer, he may be accepted. Recruits are required to pay their own passages and fares to Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, the headquarters, to where they are drafted in batches of anything from 5-40 according to requirements. Here a final medical examination is held and the "oath" taken. He is now a member of the force and draws his kit and equipment.

For recruiting purposes the force may be said to consist of two branches, the Mounted and Dismounted. Although due consideration is given to the wishes of applicants, height, weight and build are the deciding factors in determining in which section a recruit will be required to serve. The Dismounted Branch operate in the populated areas and towns and the Mounted Branch in the more remote areas of the Colony.

The rookie now finds himself at the Training Depot. This is a well-laid-out, thoroughly equipped and up-to-date schooling centre, where the newcomer can look forward to some six months of hard training. The day starts before sun-up with the native bugler blowing "Reveille". In the still air of a Rhodesian morning the notes seem to creep into his very room. No, there is no escape. He may be tired, damned tired, from the energies of the day before, from the unaccustomed routine of grooming or riding but he is fit and getting as hard as nails. The early morning parade may be riding school, grooming or physical training according to circumstances. The mornings in Rhodesia are always perfect and an hour in the saddle soon knocks away the cobwebs, stiffness disappears and he feels he is learning to do a man's job even though the instructor's remarks are couched in terms which indicate that the squad's equestrian ability, and that of our rookie in particular, exists only in the imagination—put perhaps a trifle more bluntly. Equitation instructors are all blessed with a quick wit—sharp but not malicious—a nice difference. If a stirrup is lost the culprit may be told to "open the door and ride inside". If he "shews daylight" in executing a jump, it may be suggested that he should have joined the Air Force; that from his seat on a horse he is undoubtedly a good swimmer and references to "sacks of mealies tied up ugly" are not uncommon.

In all forces there is the staff (the office wallahs) who work office hours from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and between them and the rest, more commonly known as "the duty man", whose day begins before sunrise, there exists a certain amount of rivalry. This is fairly well indicated by the remark of an equitation instructor who was unsuccessful in attracting the attention of a rookie on an early morning ride at about 6 a.m. "Hi—you—Trooper —, wake up! and when you get back put in an application to join the staff. Your brain doesn't work before 9 or after 4." But these gibes all help the work along—and its breakfast time: a shave, a wash, and then "skoff".

The Training Depot possesses adequate and well-equipped bathrooms and an excellent mess. The men's rooms are contained in attractively designed blocks. The rooms house two men each and look on to a grass square, surrounded by leafy trees which, in the Rhodesian sunlight, makes an admirable setting around which the rooms, offices and institute are arranged. The latter is a fine building and one in which our rookie is particularly interested, as it contains the library, the reading room, where all the latest periodicals can be found, the billiard tables, the dry and, last but by no means least, the wet canteen. The dry canteen is a veritable emporium where all his requirements are catered for from slacks, shoes and tennis racquets, to sports coats, tinned food and patrol kit. The wet canteen is open at suitable hours for refreshment.



POLICE DEPOT RIDING SCHOOL

But he must tear himself from the now empty mess tables and the pleasant thoughts of the canteen—the bugle has sounded the "short warning" and its first notes of the "Fall in" will be a matter of minutes only. There it goes! He falls in with his own squad, notebook and pencil in hand and the daily series of lectures has begun. There are a thousand and one things a policeman must know. There are many different duties he may be called upon to perform, innumerable situations with which he may be faced. He must be prepared for them all. He marches off to a lecture room to take notes from the lectures of experienced officers and N.C.O.'s and learn of the pitfalls to be avoided, the intricacies of law, how to act at the scene of a crime and conduct investigations. In the model office he receives practical instruction in the running of a police post and the maintenance of its records. Now, to the museum, where he can see specimens of the birds and game dealt with in the game laws, samples of forms, passes and permits, diagrams of insect and plant life mentioned in the various statutory enactments, so that he will recognize them in real life. Occasionally he is treated to special lectures on some of these matters by experts from the departments within whose jurisdiction falls the suppression of the particular animal or vegetable pest in question. Exhibits from actual cases are also found there and their value and significance explained in order that our rookie shall have the benefit of the experience of seasoned campaigners against crime.

EXERCISES FOR SUPPLENESS



The force, although primarily a police force, is not entirely divorced from military duties and in this connection our friend stumbles over the duties of a mounted rifleman, how to conduct a reconnaissance, the duties of a scout and the principles of bush fighting, etc. When the practical side of this training is reached it is soon his turn to be horseholder and lead away mounted to cover the other three horses of his "four", while the riders perform dismounted action. This is often a feat for a skilled performer but to the uninitiated it is —, which is just how the instructor will describe it. Each horse thinks it knows the best cover and as each selects cover in three directions diametrically opposed the result is — — —. A break for a few minutes, and then it is a lecture on animal management where he is taught how to care for his horse, from how to describe it correctly to the ailments it may develop and the symptoms, and treatment to be given. Later when he is a patrolling trooper he will be far away from any veterinary aid and he must be self-reliant and deal with these matters unaided. His horse and his rifle are his best friends. So, to a musketry class where he is taught "care of arms" and how to use them; how to "judge distance" and use ground to advantage in attack and defence. On the range our recruit puts theory into practice with revolver, rifle and automatic weapons.

To meet the demands of modern civilization mechanisation has become necessary so his afternoon may be spent in learning the mechanisation of the motor cycle and motor truck; how to ride and drive as, when he gets to a district, it is almost certain that he will be required to ride a motor cycle on some of his patrols. Strip track road work has made all the main, and the majority of branch, roads suitable to this mode of locomotion. In native reserves and even in the wilder parts of the country, the well-beaten native footpaths have proved excellent surfaces for motor cycles. In those areas where mechanical transport can be used its mobility has been found invaluable and the recruit must be just as efficient in the use of this method of patrolling as with the horse. Some districts lend themselves more readily to motor transport than others in which mounted work is essential. Each has its own particular interests and the day will come when our rookie will be passed out on transfer to one of them.

The speculation as to where he will be sent is always a topic of much interest. Will he go to a district where large game can be found? Will it be a gold mining centre? Or a farming or ranching centre? Will he get a chance to camp under the shadow of the Zimbabwe Ruins, to see the Acropolis, the Temple and the Valley of Ruins bathed in the light of an African moon? Will it be near the Victoria Falls, that awe-inspiring spectacle and one of the wonders of nature? All these thoughts pass through his mind as the final stages of training are drawing near, and forms the subject of much discussion. A romantic appeal is always made by the native background with its ancient customs, rites and witchcraft, an understanding of which is often of value in the investigation of native crime, so "Trooper Rook" is more than anxious to get out to the "edge o' beyond" and put his theory into practice. The native language is essential to successful police work so our recruit is coached in this and he will have a fair knowledge of a dialect by the time his training period is over. Ability to speak the language is a condition of promotion which is from the ranks. From the Commanding Officer to the last made N.C.O. every one of them has served through the ranks. In this respect all men's chances are equal, so, should our recruit wish to make this life his profession, he has everything in front of him.

When the bugle has blown "dismiss" for the last parade of the day he still has time in which to indulge his favourite sport. One can see to play most games until nearly 7 p.m. in the summer and about 6 p.m. in the winter. The depot possesses fine recreational grounds and rugby, soccer, cricket, tennis and golf are catered for. The 9-hole Depot course provides a real sporting round. Sport is greatly encouraged, so by the time "Retreat" is sounded our friend has had a pretty full day. Dinner, a chat, or a game of billiards, and to bed. The three last "calls" of the day are "First Post", "Last Post" and "Lights Out". These are blown between 9.30 p.m. and 10.15 p.m. Seldom does he hear them all; the weary body and contented mind are busy resting for the tasks of the morrow, and other morrows; until fully fledged he is doing his bit as others have before him, maintaining peace, order and security and upholding the tradition of the Empire and Corps in the words of the Corps motto: *Pro Rege, Pro Lege, Pro Patria*.

CHANGING THE GUARD AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE, SALISBURY

