

Keep 'em peeled!



Tony Moore gives a brief description of Police 5, on the 55th anniversary of its first broadcast

Police 5, the first television programme aimed at solving crimes, was first broadcast on ATV in June 1962 to fill a 5-minute slot because an imported programme from the United States only ran for 55 minutes instead of the normal 60 minutes. Initially scheduled to run for six weeks, the programme was so successful – two of the three cases covered in the first programme were solved as a result of information from viewers – that it ran for 30 years. It was the first of its kind to reconstruct cases and was at the forefront of the development of Photofits

It was presented by Hackney-born Shaw Taylor who had served in the Royal Air Force during World War II before becoming an actor – he once described himself as an *actor of little consequence* – and then a radio and TV announcer, but became a household name as the presenter of *Police 5*. Sir Joseph Simpson, Metropolitan Police Commissioner at the time, was dubious, thinking that the programme might glamourize crime. But Taylor convinced him otherwise when he pointed out that it

would give the police *three million house-to-house enquiries in five minutes*

Referred to as *Whispering Grass* by the underworld, it is estimated that he made 25,000 appeals during the programme's 30-year run, resulting in 7,500 arrests. Amongst the cases it helped solved was the recovery of some priceless medallions stolen from the Queen's collection at Kew Palace in 1986, for which the Queen thanked him personally when she presented him with the MBE, awarded for his service to law and order, in 1987. In the appeal, Taylor had avoided mentioning the name of the owner, merely referring to her as *a distinguished lady who was not amused*. He signed off every programme with the catchphrase *Keep 'em peeled*

Shaw Taylor died on 17 March 2015, aged 90, at his home on the Isle of Wight