

Lest we forget

Former police officer is the killer!

Tony Moore describes the events that left two police officers dead and another wounded fifty years ago, shot by a former police officer from the same force.

Howard Wilson joined the Glasgow City Police. Tall, articulate and smartly dressed, he had expected to be promoted quickly through the ranks, but it didn't happen. Wilson resigned and became a businessman, opening two greengrocer's shops but they quickly lost money.

Broke and desperate, Wilson, teamed up with two other men, Ian Donaldson and John Sim, also a former policeman - both businessmen who were also in debt - and, in July 1969 with another man, robbed the British Linen Bank in Williamwood, getting away with just over £20,000. Although they did not spend lavishly on fast cars and drinking, by Christmas the three men were again in the red so they decided on a repeat operation. All three men were members of a gun club in Bearsden.



This time their target was the Clydesdale Bank in Renfrew on the 30 December 1969. Their haul was just over £14,000 and a large metal box full of coins. After the robbery they drove back to Wilson's tenement flat in Allison Street and began to unload the money. But they were spotted by Inspector Andrew Hyslop who recognised Wilson as a former police officer.

Hyslop didn't know about the robbery but was suspicious of the men's behaviour. He radioed for back-up and it

came in the form of three constables, Acting/Detective Constable Angus MacKenzie, and Constables Edward Barnett and John Sellers. The four officers made their way up to Wilson's flat, found a suitcase full of coins and notes and started to search the property more thoroughly. It was at this point that Wilson pulled out a pistol and shot Hyslop at close range in the face.

Detective Constable Angus MacKenzie and Police Constable Edward Barnett went to tackle Wilson, but being a marksman with the pistol, he quickly shot both of them in the head. Barnett appeared to be dead but Mackenzie was still alive. So, Wilson stooped over him placed the gun to his forehead and fired a second, this time, fatal shot. Meanwhile Constable Sellars was the only officer in possession of a radio, which were just being issued to the Force, rushed into the bathroom, fought off attempts by Wilson to enter and radioed for assistance. First to arrive was Detective Constable Campbell who burst into the room, and tackled Wilson. Wilson had one shot left but in the struggle the bullet hit the ceiling. Assisted by Constable Sellars, who burst out of the bathroom, Wilson was subdued and placed under arrest. MacKenzie was dead. Barnett died from the bullet lodged in his brain on 4 January 1970. Hyslop survived but was crippled for life.

At their trial in February 1970 at Edinburgh High Court, the three men were found guilty of robbery and were each sentenced to twelve years imprisonment. Wilson accepted responsibility for the murders and was sentenced to life imprisonment; he was given a further six-year sentence for trying to escape and attempting to murder prison officers. After 33 years in prison, much to the disgust of the Scottish Police Federation, and the families of two officers who died and Hyslop's family, Wilson, then 64 years of age, was released on 30 September 2002.

Inspector Hyslop and Constable Campbell were awarded the George Medal; Detective Constable MacKenzie and Constable Barnett were posthumously awarded the Queen's Police Medal for Gallantry. Constable Sellar received no award at the time but, after pressure from his family, he was presented with Glasgow Corporation Medal by the Lord Provost some two years later. He subsequently quit the Force, and moved to the south of England where he joined the Sussex Police.

Hyslop died on the island of Islay in November 2000, aged 74 years. At his funeral, his coffin was carried by officers from Strathclyde Police Force.

In December 2009, on the 40th anniversary of this dreadful deed, the widows of the two deceased officers, Jane Mackenzie and Margaret Barnett, then both in their 60s, attended a ceremony, arranged by the Glasgow Police Heritage Society, at their husbands' graveside. Speaking for the first time about her husband's death at the time, Jane Mackenzie said, 'It took me a decade to come to after the incident. It is something you do not get over. It sucked the life out of me and it takes a long time to get going.' Neither woman remarried.



One of our members, Paul Dew, found the following tribute in [St John's Church, Hillingdon](#), and thought you might be interested.

Apparently, nothing is known about this John Atlee but the church historians know that there were branches of the Atlee family living in Hillingdon who held parochial office over many years.

Paul wishes to acknowledge Christine Bartlett.

HERE LIETH THE BODY OF JOHN ATLEE WHO
WAS IN OFFICE OF THE HIGH CONSTABLE OF
ELTHORNE HUNDRED 36 YEARS & DECEASED THE
LAST DAY NOVEMBER 1599 IN THE FAITH OF JESUS
BY WHOSE BLOOD & PASSION I HOPE TO BE SAVED