

OFFICIALS

The Second Commandant

Cyril Roy Mitchell Cuthbert (1902 – 1984)



An enthusiastic amateur forensic scientist, Constable Cuthbert was keen to establish a more scientific method of crime detection at the Metropolitan Police HQ in London. He had some medical and dental knowledge and, after taking evening classes in chemistry, he bought a 35 shilling second-hand microscope and set himself up as the scientific policeman. His bosses were not pleased with what he was doing and he nearly lost his job. However, during a visit, Lord Trenchard, the Commissioner of Police, decided that, after seeing Cuthbert working at his microscope, a Forensic Unit was desirable for the Metropolitan Police. Professional scientists were employed to establish a Laboratory and Sgt. Cuthbert became the Forensic Unit Police Liaison Officer.

At the outbreak of war, Cuthbert, now an Inspector, was transferred to the Alien Tribunal at Bow Street Magistrates Court in London as secretary. In September 1940 he joined the Alien Tribunal Administration Team in Douglas, Isle of Man.

As the number of internees and the need for tribunals was rapidly decreasing, Inspector Cuthbert transferred to Port St Mary, working alongside Miss Wilson, a former prison Governor, who was beginning to establish Dame Joanna Cruickshank's idea for a Married Camp. As a result of much effort, on May 8th 1941 the 162 couples moved into the married quarters. Inspector Cuthbert was given charge of the Married Camp, with Miss Wilson as his deputy, and he moved into the Ballaqueeney Hotel as Commandant in charge of the 300 internees now settled in Port St Mary.

Cuthbert made a significant change from the stern Dame Joanna who imposed firm rules to cope with the initial arrival of 3,500 internees.

News that Dame Joanna was retiring was now rumoured and prompted Cuthbert to write to the Home Office and suggest that he could take command of both camps, with Miss Wilson as his deputy. The Home Office had sent him a stern reprimand for altering official orders referring to Internees to read 'Aliens', but they agreed that, as he was already in place and numbers were rapidly decreasing, he should take command of the Women's Camp.



A question was asked in the UK Parliament about a man being in charge of a Women's Camp, as Dame Joanna's resignation letter had referred to a new female commandant. However Miss Wilson, the woman who had been such a valuable deputy to Dame Joanna, was to be second-in-command with a special charge of women's interests.

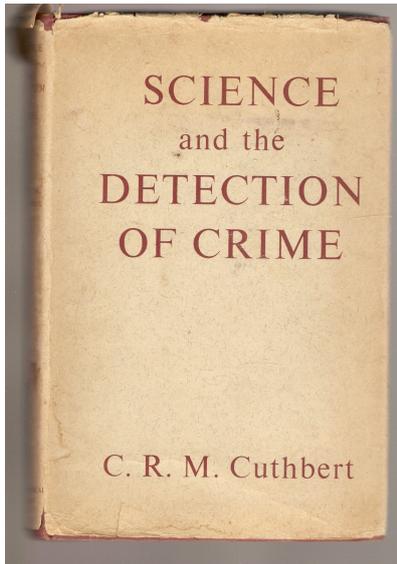
Insp. Cuthbert moved into a furnished house on St George's Crescent in Port Erin and, in August 1942, the internee numbers so dramatically reduced that the Married Camp was moved to Spaldrick. The Towers held the internees that wished to go back to Germany and the Waverley had the Italian couples. Moving the married camp from Port St Mary was completed in one day with everyone helping with loading and unloading the lorries.

The two Port Erin camps were separated by a barrier and operated a tally system - Married Camp internees had to pick up a tally from the guard on the way to the village, which was to be returned when they came back through the barrier.

Insp. Cuthbert worked from an office in Victoria Square where he spent many hours collecting all newspaper cuttings from the beginnings of the camp. From these he compiled a comprehensive report, with some observations of his own, which he sent to the Home Office.

Rushen Camp closed in September 1945.

Cuthbert returned to London and his responsibilities at the Forensic laboratory where he lectured to many Police departments on his specialist subject, giving his interesting talks on the cases he had seen investigated. After giving such a lecture during a visit to the USA, at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, he became an Honorary fellow there.



In 1951, after receiving the King's Police Medal for Distinguished Service and his promotion to Detective Superintendent, he retired from the Police service.

He took up a position on the board of companies and travelled the world selling scientific instruments to India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Malaya. In 1958 he wrote *Science and the Detection of Crime* a fascinating book, reviewing the work of the team of forensic scientists at the Criminal Investigation Department.