

BUYING YOUR FIRST POLICE CAR - Steve Woodward

This article was originally written for Classic 999 magazine but never got published due to that magazines demise. Police Car UK has a bit of a problem at the moment. We have lots of superb classic Police cars/bikes appearing on the scene but not enough owners. In fact, some Police Car UK members have more than one car/bike because of this situation, they can't bear the thought of these vehicles being lost again and therefore just have to save them! Therefore, we have published this article in the hope that we might persuade some of you to take the plunge and come and join us on the show circuit and perhaps buy a classic Police car. Everything you could possibly need to know is written here and if it's something you've been thinking about for a while then hopefully this will alleviate any fears you might have had. Please excuse the references to Classic 999 magazine in the text, but it was originally intended for their use.

So you're thinking about buying your first Police car or motorcycle? Or rather your first ex Police car/bike? My initial question to you and this should also be the first thing you ask yourself is why? What's your motive? If it's because you fancy yourself wearing a pair of shades and then looking at your reflection in a passing shop window as you chase your mates down the High Street whilst using a blue light then walk away now. We don't want you and you will be surprised just how quickly your local constabulary will get to know you and your car. The fines are pretty big to. And being disqualified from driving can be a trifle embarrassing! If your motives are strictly honourable and you genuinely yearn to preserve a little piece of our transportation history then read on and discover the perils and pleasures of classic Police car ownership. It's an interesting ride.

So what sort of vehicle are you looking for? Old, new, car, bike, van, original, replica, in working order or restoration project? Is this an additional car just to be used at shows or will it be your everyday driver? How much money have you got to spend on its purchase and its upkeep? Have you got somewhere secure to store it? What about all the Police equipment, where are you going to obtain that from? What's the law concerning its use on the road? What on earth will your friends and neighbours think? These are all questions that should be uppermost in your mind before you even start looking. We all have our own personal tastes when it comes to our modes of transport, some of us like Jaguars, others prefer Fords, and I even know people that like Vauxhalls! Only kidding, I don't know anybody that *likes* Vauxhalls. Whatever your choice this is usually where we start from. You have a penchant for a particular make and model and an unexplained interest in that some of these cars were once used by the Police. Now mix the two and hey presto we're off buying arm falls of classic car mags, scanning the internet and contacting the relevant car club. If only it were that easy. You see classic Police cars/bikes are actually quite rare, no matter what type of car/bike you are considering, its highly likely that if you find your dream car that it will be the last of its breed. Why? Because Police cars, no matter which era they hail from, get a really hard life. They are on the road 24/7, get caned by a variety of drivers that frankly don't share your interest or enthusiasm and have no intention of making sure its treated nicely because one day it might be a show car. Yes, they get well serviced, but most have high mileage and the occasional knock both inside and out. After serving the Police for a year or two they go off to auction where the second-hand trade buys them up cheap and sell them on cheap. A lot of them get a second round of tough knocks when they become taxis and the high mileage is doubled again. Others get purchased by people not willing to service them properly and as the values depreciate so does the care and eventually it's off to the scrap yard. Some of the bigger, heavier cars like the Westminster, Wolseley 6/110, Austin 3 litre, MK1 Granada and Volvo 144s have suffered a rather undignified end on the banger racing track. That sadly is a brief potted history of your average Police car. So, if you find a survivor its likely to be the only one left, unless it's a Morris Minor panda car of which there are about 20 that we know of. I think somebody has a farm somewhere and they are breeding them!

Therefore, if your dream car is a Wolseley 6/99, a Ford Anglia 105E or a series 1 XJ6 then forget it, because as far as we can ascertain there aren't any left, they've all gone. Unless you know better, in which case we will all be delighted, but the bottom line here is that we have already lost a fair number of iconic Police cars and if you do happen to locate an old patrol car then grab it with both hands.



MODERN CARS AT AUCTION

The easy option is to go for a more modern motor being sold off by the Police via your local auction house. There you are likely to find current stock like Astra's, Focus, Peugeots, a variety of vans, Omegas and of course the Volvo T5. The temptation for many is huge and the thought of driving that big motorway bruiser in Police trim is almost too tempting. But my advice is this; forget it. Your motives (as above) would be questioned and your chances of being pulled over and prosecuted are very high. Police officers don't take kindly to being impersonated and there have been many occasions where bogus Police cars (mainly unmarked but with concealed lights) have stopped motorists and ordered on the spot fines or even more bizarre demands. You could of course keep the car plain and use magnetic livery and only apply it to the car on arrival at your show and we will discuss this further on in this article. Whilst some would argue that any or all Police cars are worth saving for future generations to admire, there has to be a limit on a modern cars practical and legal use. I have of course just shot myself in the foot with this statement because if a modern car is saved today it won't disappear like so many of the others that I have mentioned above! We therefore have to strike a balance between the number of modern cars being saved and the loss of those same cars if we don't do something to preserve them now.

There is also the perceived terrorist link to consider. Whilst every single preservationist, whether Police, Fire or Ambulance should take additional steps to ensure the security of their vehicle it goes without saying that the more modern your vehicle the more likely it is to attract interest from all concerned. The fear is that a terrorist group might use an emergency vehicle to gain access to a target because the vehicle itself is not likely to attract attention. Therefore, if a terrorist (or any other criminal element) decided to use this tactic, then stealing an old Wolseley and trying to pass it off as a current patrol car would be laughable if the subject weren't so serious. No, they would of course aim for something a lot more contemporary and this is where the danger lays and this is what worries the authorities. We all have a duty therefore to reduce that fear by acting in a responsible manner and are seen by those looking at us as taking the threat seriously. This in part is why PC-UK will not accept any Battenberg liveried vehicles into the organisation.



THE CLASSICS

As this publication is Classic 999, I would guess that most of you reading this will have a leaning towards the older cars anyway. Therefore, it is likely that most of you will be looking for a genuine classic. Here there are two options; buying one that has already been restored back to Police spec ready to show or buying a wreck and restoring it back to its former glory yourself. The big difference here is probably one of price and to some extent availability of your preferred choice of vehicle. As there are so few saved cars around it is likely that if for example you hankered after a fully restored Police spec MK3 Zephyr 6, then you will end up waiting a long time as there are only two left and I doubt very much if the owners will part with them just yet. But if you were prepared to restore one you might just get lucky. This is where your research and persistence in the chase might pay off. Contact the relevant car club, see if they have any classic Police models on their registers. You might be surprised just how many there are (depending on the car of course) and that the owner is very aware that his pride and joy is a former Police vehicle but has absolutely no interest in that side of things at all. He has probably repainted it in another colour and made various changes to the specification but underneath it has that essential ingredient; an interesting history. Your timing might be just right and he was thinking of selling it soon anyway or he could at least keep your details handy for the day when he does. I know of several brilliant cars lurking just beneath the classic Police car surface that are just begging to be let out. These include a MK1 Lotus Cortina, restored to a very high standard by a Police car enthusiast, sold onto a Ford enthusiast who doesn't show it as a Police vehicle, merely as a Cortina! Then there is the owner of an ex-Met Police Sunbeam Tiger, who has painted it red, upgraded the engine with nitrous oxide tanks and races the thing! So, there are still many untapped vehicles to be had, it's just a question of detective work, patience and perhaps a little arm bending. At the end of this article I will be producing a table showing the cars that still exist and those, that to the best of our knowledge don't, so you will be able to gauge from that just how many are missing. But for now, here's a very quick guide to some of the more important cars that failed to survive; the Wolseley 6/90, 6/99, 6/110, Austin 1100, A/99 and A/110 Westminster, Ford Consul GT, Anglia 105E, MK2 Escort, MK3 and MK4/5 Cortina, Hillman Hunter/Minx and Avenger, Humber Hawk and Super Snipe, Jaguar XJ6 series 1 or 2, Morris Marina, Riley Pathfinder, Triumph 2000 MK1, Vauxhall Viva HB and HC, Velox or Victor. Quite a few lost forever.

I mentioned 'interesting history' just now and this I feel is quite important. Police cars by their very nature end up being involved in matters of history, either on a local or national basis and part of the real fun of owning such cars is researching and locating that item of unique history attached to your car. In issue 4 we read about Dave Butlers Rover V8 being used by Earl Mountbatten. In issue 6 there was an advert in the classifieds for an ex Met Land Rover with a connection to the Iranian embassy siege. I know of a Triumph 2500 estate used at the scene of the Guildford pub bombings. Hertfordshire Police have recently purchased back one of the first MK2 Zephyr estates used on the M1 motorway in 1959, whilst Hampshire Police have bought back the first foreign Police car used in the UK, a 1966 Volvo 121 Amazon estate. Others have been used on royalty protection duties whilst many will have featured in a particularly high profile local event that you might locate in a regional newspaper or force magazine. The historical angle adds incalculable value to your car, not in financial terms but in the connection between it merely being just another car and an event in history that most of us can make a connection with. This in turn will form the basis of conversations between yourself and someone admiring your newly acquired set of wheels and just adds to the overall enjoyment of classic Police vehicle ownership. Which let's face it is one of the main reasons why we do it in the first place; it gives us the chance to talk cars/bikes with other likeminded people. And you never know where that might lead onto. I've lost count of the number of times classic Police vehicle owners have told me that whilst in the process of talking to somebody at a show that that person has then produced an archive photo of their actual car, or they were once one of its drivers, or they have that elusive item of equipment hidden in the loft, or even requests for the car to appear in film or TV work. The public truly love looking at old Police vehicles (rather than current ones in the rear-view mirror) and many will have tales of woe about being stopped by one or about being transported to the local nick in the back of one. This comes with the territory I'm afraid and much of it will have to be taken with a very large pinch of salt and a knowing smile!

But let's now get down to the nitty gritty of restoring your newly found vehicle. I'm not going to start lecturing you here on how to go about your restoration as I'm not qualified to do so and that's what the other standard classic car magazines are best at. There are two basic things I will advise you on however and this has come from personal experience. One; set yourself a realistic time frame to achieve your goal of getting your car back on the road and then double it! And two; set yourself a realistic budget and then double it! Depending on the type of car/bike you have purchased you might find that your vehicle differs in many aspects from a standard civilian spec vehicle. I'm not necessarily talking about go faster bits (see issue 1 about whether Police cars are modified or not) but more likely items like the suspension, brakes, electrical wiring and component parts, together with differing trim levels and even the tyres. If you are going to do it properly you need to know the differences and you might need to consult the force from which your car originated for help. Don't bother with the HQ staff as none of them will be able to assist. Instead locate the central workshops for that force and try the Fleet Manager or any of his staff. Many will have been employed there for years and most will be only too pleased to help. Remember these are 'car' people and most of them will enjoy reminiscing over your car and will relish the idea of trying to remember where that switch went. It's basically a question of finding the right person so if at first you don't succeed, do try again. Many Police vehicles were modified by the vehicle workshops staff to overcome a particular reliability problem or to boost the cars performance in some way and much of this will have been peculiar to each individual force. Therefore, it is essential you locate someone who genuinely remembers the modification and can inform you how best to resurrect it. This is also true of radio equipment and other Police items that do change over the years and it can be a minefield of differing opinions, most of which will be well intentioned but wrong. The passage of time can play havoc with the memory banks and as the Police service as a whole are notoriously bad at keeping historical records on such things, you will have to rely almost entirely on other people's recall. You might get lucky and locate a photo of your car or one of its sister cars from the same era. Whilst this will undoubtedly assist you with the details about the exterior it's usually the interior fittings that cause all the problems. Until fairly recently (I'm talking about the last 15 to 20 years depending on which force we are talking about) Police patrol cars could be pretty hit and miss as far as consistency of interior fitments were concerned. It wasn't unusual to get out of one car fitted out in a particular way, climb into a workshop spare vehicle of identical make and model, only to find that the emergency switches were in a different place and that the radio handset was of a different make to the one you were used to. Therefore, unless you have photographic evidence or the memories of a former driver with a cast iron memory, then your chances of being absolutely positive about the interior could be quite remote. But then that's half the game isn't it? Imagine fretting over the position of certain fitments and then attending a show one day and finding that one person who really does know. And you'll recognise him straight away. He'll be standing in front of your car slowly shaking his head in disbelief that one of his cars has survived after all these years. Then he will very politely ask you if he can have a look inside. He'll climb in and straight away will start rearranging the furniture for you! His speech will get faster and faster as he starts to recall various things; so pay attention. Much of what he is telling you will prove invaluable and then in a flash he'll be gone. I witnessed just such an occurrence last summer between a car owner and one of its former drivers, separated by nearly 50 years. Once sat inside the car he last drove in 1956 it's as if it were only yesterday. The emotion and elation experienced by both men had to be seen to be appreciated, it was that tangible. My point here is that whilst we should all strive for 100% accuracy and authenticity in our chosen project it could be sometime before it is exactly as it should be and that you shouldn't lose too much sleep over it in the meantime. But come the day that quivering bloke is found standing in front of your car, grab him with both hands and don't let go until you have all your answers.



POLICE MOTORCYCLES

Classic Police motorcycles are another avenue to explore. Whether it is British or elsewhere, the hobby is a growing one and some of the bikes owned by members of the Historic Police Motorcycle Group and Police Car UK of course are truly fascinating. They have everything from Norton, Triumph, Velocette, Moto Guzzi, Honda, BMW, DKW, Suzuki, in fact you name it they probably have it. And they are a great bunch, who travel all over the country and abroad attending various shows. They have strong links to the equivalent Dutch group who also come across to the UK to attend events here. The same basic rules apply to bikes as cars, in the obtaining and running of one, there really is no difference.



REPLICAS

So, what if you can't find your dream car and to the best of your knowledge none have survived? Occasionally I'm asked for advice on replica Police cars and whether or not they are acceptable. This is a delicate subject and one that requires tact and diplomacy, which apparently, I'm not renowned for! There is a place for replicas but only as a last resort and only to keep alive an item of such historical importance that the public would otherwise never get to see it. As far as I am aware there are only a handful of replica Police cars in the UK. These include a beautiful Hillman Imp of the old Dunbartonshire Police (and the basis of a Lledo Vanguard's model in the Pinky and Perky Police Imps set) a Ford Anglia 105E, a Triumph Herald, a MK4 Cortina and a trio of Wolseleys, a 6/80, 6/90 and a 6/110. All of these cars were transformed from basic civilian car into a Police spec replica with the best of intentions and all because the originals no longer exist. The Imp for example was based on one of only two such cars run by the Dunbartonshire Police and therefore the law of averages was already stacked against either of them surviving. The owner, Mike Scott from Aberdeen has done a superb job in tracking down all the correct equipment, much of it unique to these two cars and giving us a bit of history to admire in the metal, not just from photographs. The Ford Anglia for example (even though I've not actually seen this car) is an important car for us to remember in that it was the first of the panda cars used by Lancashire County Constabulary and a whole lot more forces besides. Isn't it incredible when you look back on just how many hundreds were in service and that none of them appear to have survived? Sad isn't it. And that's where the replica really comes into its own. Whilst the car itself cannot boast any real history, it does have historical value in that it is depicting an icon long since lost to the tin worm and the scrap yard. So long as the owner is the first to admit that the car is a replica and not the real thing then I can't see a problem. It does become a problem however when that person tries selling it on as the real thing and to my knowledge this has only happened the once when the owner of the aforementioned MK4 Cortina managed to hoodwink a classic car magazine into doing a four-page spread on the Essex based dustbin and got them and their readership believing it was the real McCoy. The car was very well known in Police circles and the magazine received several calls detailing the truth of the matter. Several months later that car was still for sale with a dealer who had to word his advert very carefully indeed. If you are in the slightest doubt about your intended cars authenticity contact PC-UK before you buy. So, let's be careful and very selective when it comes to thinking about a replica. Have all avenues to trace an original been explored? Would I be better off looking at saving a different model? Because at the end of the day why are you doing this? It should be to preserve a small piece of our transportation history. In my submission, simply doing up a standard car to look like a Police car isn't quite achieving that objective is it.

EQUIPMENT

So, you've got your car/bike, modern or classic, replica or original, it's fully restored and ready for the road with all the usual legal necessities. Now all you need is the correct livery, equipment and period extras necessary to transform it into a Police car. Where on earth do you start? What do you need? A lot of that depends on what car you have. If you have a 1950s car it won't need a great deal but it will probably be harder to locate. If you have a 1990s car the list of equipment is almost endless, but easier to obtain. So for the sake of this exercise let us look at an early 1980s traffic car. What do you need to look for? Let's start on the outside. Blue lights obviously, but which make and model? Some were still using single blues, others twin blues whilst some were experimenting with the first light bars. Aerials, again which type, UHF, VHF, both probably but again which type and where were they located (holes in the roof and body will give you the necessary clues here). Police/Stop signs were either incorporated into the roof box or in a separate box placed on the boot lid or rear bumper. Some 1980s cars came with large black boot spoilers incorporating such lights. Then there is the livery itself. Was it orange, yellow, with or without chequers, in which case what colour, blue or black? Were there Police labels on the doors, bonnet or boot, if so what size? What about the force crest, was it displayed on this vehicle, where will you get it from and most important of all, do you need to seek permission from that force to display it? We will cover this fully later. Let's move inside the car. You'll probably need a calibrated speedo (usually a separate fitment) a VASCAR speed unit, again which model, radio handset and radio (possibly two, a UHF and VHF set) a map light, the correct switch gear, fire extinguisher, observers rear view mirror and an old 'baccy tin containing a tyre depth gauge and road chalk. Now let's move to the boot, you'll need about six accident and slow signs, plus the metal tripods to erect them on. Twelve cones are the norm, plus a broom and a shovel. A first aid kit, a couple of blankets in protective bags, the mains set for the VHF radio and a box full of bits like car cleaning kit etc. Are you still with us? Well if you took my earlier advice and got in touch with the force workshops that originally dealt with your car then hopefully you will have struck up a decent enough relationship with them to enable you to drive the car there for them to have a good look at. Once there let them crawl all over it, point out a few mistakes and get in a few one liners about how sad you are and then ask them for their help. Before you know it small items of obsolete equipment will be thrust into your arms and a detailed list of what else you need will quickly follow. Every force workshop is different, but generally speaking they will have stuff lurking in corners or in store rooms that finished their active service years ago. In general, they will be glad to assist you, if not a little bemused by it all.

There is a very important issue concerning your acquisition of equipment though. If you are obtaining it directly from a Police force, i.e. from workshops get a written receipt from them detailing the equipment donated, to include the date and the name of the person handing it over to you. If an officer kindly hands you something at a show at the very least get his collar number and again record the date somewhere. If you buy an item from E Bay or elsewhere print out and keep the relevant transactions and file with your vehicles other paperwork. No matter where and when you obtain something keep a written record. Why? Because if you ever get stopped and questioned about the items and equipment on your vehicle you will be able to produce those records to show that you either purchased the items legitimately and in good faith or had them donated. If you can't then how are you going to answer the very obvious questions that will head your way? At best you might end up having them confiscated under the Police Property Act or at worst looking at a court date!

So, you've come home with a few priceless goodies, but there is still a lot to obtain. Where next? E Bay is now a good source of obsolete Police items but please bear in mind the current security concerns as detailed earlier. The radio fitted to your car is obviously an essential item and it's here on E Bay where you will probably find it. Just type in Pye or Burndept for example (two of the more familiar Police radio makes) and you will generally find obsolete Police radio equipment there. The people selling these items are usually radio experts in their own right and they might be able to offer you some advice if you aren't too sure on which type of radio you need (although your friendly force workshops should have been able to tell you). These same radio people might also be able to assist with items like aerials, correct wiring procedures etc, so it pays to chat them up for some advice. You might find other items on E Bay like the old Winkworth bell, but be careful on the price, some of the better ones have fetched over £150 each. Make sure the one you are bidding on comes with a working electric motor and hammer because it's not much use having a shiny bell

if there is nothing inside it to make it ring! E Bay has clamped down on the sale of obsolete Police equipment lately so the possibility of finding a blue light or some other equipment might prove tricky. Car auto jumbles (not boot sales) but the bigger car related sales like Beaulieu or Newark can sometimes turn up the occasional item but these are more by luck than judgement. One of your best sources though will be PC-UK and by joining them and attending a rally or two during the summer, its members will be only too happy to offer you their advice and will no doubt be able to locate that equipment for you or at least point you in the right direction. We will cover the PC-UK role later in this article.

As for the sticky bits that might need to be added to your cars exterior this can cause one or two problems. The actual materials are readily available from a variety of legitimate sources and you should be able to locate them locally. Again, your local workshops might point you in the direction of their own suppliers which will make life easier as they might still have what you need in stock. Obtaining the correct stripes etc shouldn't be too much of a problem but driving on the road with them might be. It really does depend on how current the livery on your car is. If for example you are intent on using a current livery, especially if it's in Battenberg then your chances of being stopped and questioned will increase. Apart from the obvious security questions you might also leave yourself wide open to accusations concerning impersonating a Police Officer. We will cover this more fully later. To my knowledge there are only two such cars in the UK at present and both are driven to shows minus the side livery which is then applied by magnetic signs. This is a far more responsible approach to current livery problems. The other problem with applying a livery (no matter how old it is) is if you are going to use your car as an everyday driver. Yes believe it not there are one or two people out there that do just that and again you have to ask the question, why? What are your motives? Your local Police will become very suspicious and rightly so. Your chances of being stopped will rise significantly and you stand every chance of being prosecuted.

We touched on the force crest problem earlier and this has caused problems for two owners that I am aware of. Both of them approached the two individual forces concerned to request permission to use their force crest on one of their old cars. A blunt refusal was the reply in both cases. The reason behind this is quite simple. If you are displaying a force crest it is basically a trade mark of that force. As such you could be seen by the public as being a representative of that force, who in turn has no control over what you are doing, hence the refusal. Once that refusal has been issued you have two choices. Obey the ruling and have your car on display not fully finished or ignore it and take a chance. But by doing that you do run the risk of prosecution, as most forces have now slapped a registered trademark on their crests, the force name and other insignia to prevent copy and misuse. Most car owners it has to be said don't seek permission and do it anyway. To my knowledge this hasn't caused any problems thus far, but who knows what might happen in the future. I think it will depend largely on the circumstances but I reckon any force would probably ignore it or perhaps issue an advice letter requesting the owner remove the crest. This is all very well until that force asks you to bring your car to next year's Police Open Day or to some other event!



THE LAW

Every PC-UK member that owns and drives a classic Police car/bike to and from shows should carry with them an A4 laminated card containing on one side the law appertaining the use of that car and the equipment carried, with some useful tips on how to go about remaining within the law and on the other side an introductory letter to any stopping Police Officer explaining what it is they have just stopped. The following is a basic guide and is similar to that on the laminated card and should give you some idea of the laws involved.

RESTRICTIONS ON FITTING BLUE BEACONS TO VEHICLES **REG 16 ROAD VEHICLES LIGHTING REGULATIONS 1968**

No vehicle, other than an emergency vehicle, shall be **fitted** with;

- a blue warning beacon or special warning lamp, or
- a device which resembles a blue warning beacon or a special warning lamp, **whether the same is working or not.**

NOTES OF GUIDANCE

- an emergency vehicle means a motor vehicle used for Police purposes only.
- a warning beacon means a lamp that is capable of emitting a flashing or rotating beam of light throughout 360 degrees in the horizontal plane.
- a special warning lamp means a lamp, fitted to the front or rear of a vehicle, capable of emitting a blue flashing light and not any other kind of light.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

If you cannot remove warning lights from your car completely when travelling, then you must cover them completely with a tailor made black cover or similar and ensure that it does not come lose during transit. You could also change the lens to amber or white but again you are still advised to cover that up as well. You are also advised to remove the fuse to avoid accidental activation. The important words here are **fitted** and **working or not**. Most vehicle owners it has to be said merely cover their lights up with a properly made cover, but that still doesn't comply with the strict letter of the law. To be absolutely sure they should be removed when on the road. See Blue Light issue further on in this article.

USE OF AUDIBLE WARNING INSTRUMENTS **REG 37(4) & 99(4) CONSTRUCTION & USE REGULATIONS 1986**

Reg 37(4) states that no motor vehicle shall be fitted with a bell, gong, siren or two-tone horn, unless it is for fire, ambulance or police purposes.

Reg 99(4) states that no person shall sound, or cause or permit to be sounded a gong, bell, siren or two-tone horn, fitted to or otherwise carried on a vehicle (whether it is stationary or not).

NOTES OF GUIDANCE

- a bell, gong or siren refers to any instrument or apparatus capable of emitting a sound similar to that emitted by a bell, gong or siren.
- A two-tone horn is an instrument which, when operated, automatically produces a sound which alternates at regular intervals between two fixed notes.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

You are advised to set up your audible warning device with a quick release mechanism so that you can travel to and from events without the device fitted at all and then re-fit it upon your arrival. However, it is understood that with some cars this might not be practicable and you are advised to disconnect the power supply to the device by either removing the fuse or by other means render it non-active whilst the car is on the road.

IMPERSONATE POLICE OFFICER OR WEAR/POSSESS POLICE UNIFORM WITH INTENT TO DECEIVE

SECTION 90(1) 90(2) & 90(3) OF THE POLICE ACT 1996

Section 90(1) states that any person who, with intent to deceive, impersonates a member of a Police force or special constable, or makes any statement or does any act calculated falsely to suggest that he/she is a member or constable, commits an offence (6 months imprisonment).

Section 90(2) states that any person who, not being a constable, wears any article of police uniform in circumstances where it gives him an appearance so nearly resembling that of a member of a police force as to be calculated to deceive, commits an offence.

Section 90(3) states that any person who, not being a member of a police force or special constable has in his possession any article of police uniform, unless he proves that he obtained possession of that article lawfully and has possession of it for a lawful purpose, commits an offence.

ARTICLE OF POLICE UNIFORM MEANS any article of uniform or any distinctive badge or mark or document of identification usually issued to members of police force or special constables, or anything having the appearance of such an article, badge, mark or document.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

The important line here is 'with intent to deceive'. If you are at a show and wearing uniform and another member of the public approaches you then you must make it absolutely clear that you are NOT a police officer. Likewise, if something happens on the road whilst you are travelling to and from a show, do NOT under any circumstances place yourself into a position where the public believe you are a Police officer (unless you are directed to do so by an on-duty Police officer). Best practice is to travel in civilian clothing and change on arrival.

SECURITY

I'm talking here about the security of your car, not the national security issue. You might think this is pretty basic but the fact is you will need to be extra vigilant when looking after your new acquisition. There are plenty of low life's around who would glean nothing but pleasure from causing damage to your car, purely because it's a Police vehicle. We have unfortunately experienced this in the last couple of years where the cars in question were securely locked away in garages, but the local toe-rags have somehow found out what's inside, gained access and then caused as much grief as possible. This has also happened at one or two car shows as well, where minor malicious damage has been caused even whilst the owner has been present! Theft of some of the equipment on show has also been experienced and I'm quite sure this was done as some kind of trophy hunt rather than someone actually requiring that particular item, so it pays to be on your guard, even when relaxing at such events.

CLUB SCENE

In a nutshell there is only one organisation that caters for the truly serious enthusiast and that is **Police Car UK (PC-UK)**. Formed in 2005 as an organisation for serving and retired Police officers and staff, together with a number of specially selected individuals who have a proven record in the preservation field, either as photographers or vehicle collectors, it is a very well organised and motivated club. It is an informal and very friendly organisation whose members hold a wealth of knowledge and will be only too pleased to welcome new members and their cars/bikes, providing they meet the strict admission criteria.

If it's Police motorcycles you are interested in (whether British or overseas) then you can contact the **Historic Police Motorcycle Group** via its Chairman Mr David Bragg, 41 Shawford Road, West Ewell, Epsom, Surrey, KT19 9SW. There is no web site at present but they do produce an excellent annual magazine detailing the events they attend during the year.



THE SHOW SCENE

Once your car/bike is ready to show it's time to hit the road and join the rest of us at an event during the summer months. There are basically three different types open to you; the standard car rally, either one car makes or multi cars, the Police Open Day or the classic Emergency Service Shows. The latter two are obviously the ones we are more interested in here. Police Open Days are generally by invite only and might be restricted to cars/bikes operated by that force only. Others are more open to classic Police cars from anywhere but still usually by invite only, so it pays to become registered with PC-UK, 911EVAC or the HPMG because they are the main point of contact. The emergency service shows could be organised by a variety of people but usually, fire, police or ambulance staff to promote a joint show. Again, these are usually by invite. Whatever the show you are sure to find yourself amongst friends sharing a similar interest to yourself and they will, where possible help you with any queries you might have. So, come on, don't be shy, we want to see you and your car at a show in 2018 and beyond.

FAME AND FORTUNE

A growing amount of interest from the TV and film world has meant that these companies are approaching PC-UK and individuals to use their cars as props on the large or small screen, because they are authentic and the owners have done all the hard work for them. It means that a TV program won't get criticised for using a 1980s car in a 1960s film if it has been responsible for mocking one up. PC-UK has been approached several times in the last 12 months to come up with the right car for a certain period in time. There are several issues concerning this that you need to be aware of. They might want to have their own driver use your car whilst you stand on the side lines and cringe every time he crashes the gearbox. This is a personal view but I would insist on me doing the driving. Be very careful when it comes to camera work especially if they want to clamp cameras and micro phones to the side of your car. Will you be covered if they damage your car, will they pay for it? Get it in writing *before* you start. Which brings us onto the sticky subject of insurance and you must check this out before you land your first TV role. Look at the small print on your insurance policy. It will say three things; 'Social, domestic, pleasure only' and 'not for business use' and then, 'not for hire or reward'. If you are using or permitting the use of your car to be used on a TV film set, or on a magazine shoot and you are being paid for it then you are probably invalidating your insurance. You'll probably get away with it most of the time until something goes wrong. When it does and your insurance company is facing a third-party claim for injuries sustained then it will walk away and hang you out to dry. Not only will you be looking at a summons for uninsured use but the possibility of a massive claim made against you personally. The financial rewards for TV and film work can be very good indeed. The going rate at present is £250 per day, plus travel expenses, plus accommodation if required. They will probably feed you copious amounts of food but be prepared for lots and lots of hanging about, waiting for something to happen. You will also find that TV companies in particular will plead poverty and will try and knock you down in price. Don't budge an inch. There is no such thing as a poor TV company! They always do things at the last possible moment, so you are likely to receive a call on Thursday afternoon asking you to be 200 miles away on Friday morning and because they are poor they can only give you fifty quid. We have learned that when you refuse they always come back to you with a revised offer and it has to be at the going rate and nothing less. Always remember that you spent a fortune getting this vehicle up to authentic standard and that if people wish to use it they have to pay accordingly.

The same applies if you are approached to use your car as a wedding car or for the increasing popularity of school prom nights. Classic Police cars and in particular the American cruisers are very popular requests for this type of work. You can easily hire it out for a couple of hours at £250 but again check your insurance policy. For hire or reward is exactly that.



BLUE LIGHT ISSUE

One of the big issues surrounding this hobby and one of the first questions we get asked is; can I drive it on the road with blue lights attached? The 1968 Road Vehicle Lighting Regulations states that you can't, but then it was never written with people like us in mind. Classic Police vehicle ownership hadn't even been thought of then! Up until 2007 a common-sense approach by both the car owners and the Police meant that so long as you did your bit by covering it up then it was unlikely that you would be prosecuted. However, following an incident involving a member from another organisation things have now taken a backward step. Because of this PC-UK is currently working with ACPO to bring about an official change and at the time of writing this section of the article (Dec 2008) we are waiting for a response from them. As a PC-UK you will be updated immediately when we have a result.



CONCLUSION

Owning a classic Police car is never dull. You will meet some interesting people along the way and most will admire your car for all the right reasons. If you haven't taken the plunge but have been thinking about it for a while, I hope this article has given you the confidence to take that leap. Remember there are lots of people out there prepared to help you if you need it and I can promise you a whole new social life will open up for you. And for those of you who own classic Police cars already and have had them locked away in your garage for years, *what are you doing?* Get it out, dust it off and let's have a look at it. I don't understand those that spend hours of their time and a fistful of fivers restoring such vehicles only to spirit them away from public view. Come and join the rest of us this summer at a few rallies and open days and let the public admire your handy work. Take a look at the PC-UK web site for an up to date calendar of events. No excuses now, come and join us!