

THE FIRST NSW POLICE FORCE BADGE

By Mike Neville

As a young bloke growing up in Hunter's Hill, on Sydney's beautiful harbour in the 1950s, the most exciting thing to happen, besides another hot chicken dinner with party hats on a hot Christmas day, was the sound of a motor car coming up our street.

Warm bread was still being delivered by horse-drawn wagon in those days, from the old Hunter's Hill Bakery. My Dad took great delight in running out and scooping up the still steaming, horse manure from the street, for Mum's rose garden. As the horse and wagon moved on down the street, there was always another neighbour impatiently waiting with his basket and shovel; for fresh bread and the fresh fertilizer.

Besides the local Doctor's car (a new shiny, black Zephyr) which visited our street on the odd occasion when some kid had the 'flu, the other exciting 'drive by' was by the unmarked cream, FJ Holden, radio car that came from the now extinct Hunter's Hill Police Station.

But, the most exciting visitor to drive up our little suburban street in his powder blue Morris Minor, was my Uncle Ken DeLacey Neville (aka Captain Wombat), who was an ex-intelligence officer during WW2 and was also an aspiring author. His real job was actually a stage manager with the ABC orchestra. After the war he spent many days working at the Conservatorium of Music in Macquarie Street, Sydney, next to Government House.

When Uncle Ken would visit us, he would bring along his cased, Remington 'Deluxe' portable typewriter, 'Coo-ee' mouth organ (and spoons) and some wonderful old stories about our long-deceased relatives and, at times, he would even bring along some old family photos to match his



This photo of Senior Sergeant Charles Dalton had the author delving into his forgotten past.

stories. We thought he was better entertainment than the new black and white AWA TV our neighbours had just bought.

One of the photos Uncle Ken brought to show us was that of my Great Grandfather. It was an old, torn, black and white photo of a young man in a splendid, ornate uniform with his medals, 1821 pattern cavalry sword, sabretache and a white shiny helmet; which shared pride of place next to him on an impressive pedestal.

THE GOVERNOR'S BODYGUARD

Uncle Ken said the man in the photo was his Grandfather, and his name was Senior Sergeant Charles Dalton and that he was apparently wearing the uniform of a soldier in the 8th King's Royal Irish

Hussars. Ken told us proudly that Dalton was the only survivor of the Crimea War and the infamous 'Charge of the Light Brigade' to settle in Australia.

He also told us that our family ancestors had actually lived at Government House, in the building now known as the Conservatorium of Music, and his Mum (my Grandmother) was born there. Our Great Grandfather, he said, had protected various Governors from the many potential villains of the time.

Apparently, after leaving the military, he had joined or been merged with the newly formed NSW Police Force in 1862 and then rose through the ranks to become the officer in charge of the NSW Police Governor's Mounted Escort; a position he held for 25 years.

As the years progressed, the story seemed more and more absurd to me and I soon forgot about it, as most teenagers would who were more interested in stories about the latest GT Falcon, than about old cavalry troopers

After some serious thought about joining the NSW Police Force in the late 1960s, I eventually decided to become a creative writer and enter the advertising business following, I hoped, in the future 'literary' footsteps of my brother, Cliff Neville (60 Minutes) and cousin Richard Neville (Oz Magazine). So maybe Uncle Ken and his typewriter did have an effect on all us young Nevilles during our formative years?

After many years of working my way up the corporate ladder



The Governor's bodyguard performing duty in 1885

in advertising and marketing and then running my own business, I sold my Sydney advertising agency to an American company in 1993 and moved to Detroit, USA, and after a successful 35-year career in advertising, I was ready for retirement.

During one of my last business trips to Florida in 2000, I stumbled across an old antique store and there on the wall, to my amazement, was a copy of the exact photo of Great Grandfather Dalton that Uncle Ken had shown me, all those years ago. I was subsequently informed that although the photo was apparently that of a Sergeant wearing the uniform of the 8th Hussars, no one quite knew exactly what the round-shaped badge was for (known as a 'helmet plate') on the white helmet next to him in the photo. Even the helmet itself looked very suspicious, as it apparently did not belong with that particular uniform. The 8th Hussars normally wore a 'Busby' type helmet and not a white 'foreign service' helmet; as in the photo with Dalton. How very interesting, I thought.

And so, with a new interest reinvigorated in me about my ancestral past, I began my research into who exactly this Senior Sergeant Charles Dalton was and exactly what the uniform he was wearing in that photo.

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS

The place to start and the tool to use was the new high-speed Internet and with the extra time I now had, due to my impending retirement, I began the journey into my forgotten past and the mysteries surrounding it. But the mystery soon deepened further.

Firstly, I found out through a British military historian in London, that even though the old records showed that Charles Dalton was actually in the 8th Hussars and survived 'the charge of the Light Brigade', he never attained the rank of Sergeant in the 8th. So why was he wearing that uniform?

On my next trip to my home in Sydney, I visited the NSW Government Archives and found his Police records and there it was: Charles Dalton (No 1342) had actually retired with the rank of Senior Sergeant from the NSW Police Force in 1889. A friend of mine, also in the job with the NSW Police, pointed me in the right direction to find even more detailed public records about his various duties, promotions and exact dates of service.

But what about the ornate Hussar uniform he was wearing in the old photo and the white helmet with the large round badge on it? It looked nothing like any NSW Police uniform or badge I had ever seen before.

My next step was to join the

PICAA (Police Insignia Collector's Association of Australia) and see what more I could find out. I even started a web site – www.ozbadge.com about Australian Police insignia to see what I could flush out worldwide.

Over the next few years of researching Australian Police insignia, I managed to find, collect and collate, at great cost, original examples of all the early NSW Police 'cypher' type helmet plates (badges); including the early Queen Victoria cypher (VR) helmet plate, issued circa 1880, King Edward 7th (EVIIR) plate issued circa 1901, King George 5th (GvR) plate issued circa 1911 and the King Edward 8th (EVIIR) plate issued circa 1936, which was probably not widely issued (and/or withdrawn after a few months), as Edward abdicated after 325 days as sovereign, with Mrs. Wallis Simpson, and was never crowned. That final plate became obsolete almost immediately (because it displayed Edward 8th's personal cypher) and was to be the last in this series of these rare and beautiful helmet plates for the NSW Police Force.

But, what about that elusive round, helmet plate (known as roundel), which was portrayed in the early photo of Sergeant Charles Dalton? I had now come to believe

that this must have been the very first NSW Police badge; issued soon after 1862. The photo of him can be fairly accurately dated, as taken around 1869 (when records show he was promoted to Sergeant). It looked like a very beautiful, detailed and ornate badge that a few had heard of but none, that I could find, had ever seen.

I soon realised that I was not only probably searching for an important part of NSW Police Force history, I was also searching for an important part of Australia's history; as well as my family's history.

I searched everywhere for any information: including the Australian War Memorial (who incidentally also has the same photo of Sgt Dalton as I have, but still mistakenly identifies him as wearing the uniform of the 8th Hussars), the Justice and Police Museum, the NSW Police Depot Museum and every other collector and little country museum in Australia and overseas museum that I could think of.

No original 'roundel' was found by me anywhere I looked (and there was not much information about it either) and it also seemed to me that no one had actually even seen one. All I was able to find, were a couple of rough 'cast' fake specimens of this supposed 'roundel' with the words 'NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE' on them and some rumours of where an original might be. But at least, I now knew there was an early round NSW Police badge and it was probably on Dalton's helmet in the photo. But even the cast fakes I found looked bad; it looked like there had actually been a few generations of castings of the cast fake! The only roundel, which is still in the possession of the Police Force, was apparently an old cast fake as well.

Any information at all, about any of these badges, was scarce. No one, it seemed to me, had published any comprehensive reference on

the history of any of the old NSW Police badges. And so, I decided I would try and do it. It made sense as I am one of a handful of people who has all the original badges; except for the roundel. I knew it would be an expensive and time-consuming task to do it properly, but it seemed worth doing not only for sake of the present generation, but also for the reference of future generations.

A PIECE OF HISTORY

I also decided that the best way for people to reference and appreciate the history and beauty of these badges was to build a complete display of them with an approximate time line attached. Given that there are probably only a handful of sets of the original badges surviving, it is obviously impossible for the average person to even access them, much less obtain them. I decided that the best thing to do was try and remake the badges, so that all who were interested, could see them, appreciate them and maybe own them; without outlaying the thousands of dollars that I had. That part of the task seemed daunting.

Even though the badges were probably out of copyright, being so obsolete and old, I decided to remake them 'officially' with the Commissioner's and the NSW Police Force's permission. I thought that was an important part of their future heritage and credibility, even if they were replicas, and so I wrote to Commissioner Moroney with my idea.

Within a couple of months I had secured an official license and some enthusiastic support from Commissioner Moroney and also Assistant Commissioner Graeme Morgan and so, I began the task of remaking the badges. I decided they should be made an almost indiscernible 5% smaller than the originals, to protect the intrinsic history and value of any surviving



Elusive: This is probably the first-ever medal issued by NSW Police in 1862

originals and that they should also be marked on the back with an 'Oz' bug and a replica sticker. But, I also wanted to make them as close to perfect as I could.

The art of making the hand-engraved, three-dimensional, badge dies today (like they did 100 years ago) is time consuming, expensive and quite literally, a dying art; if you can find anyone who still has the skills to do it. I found that out the hard way. It took me over a year and many thousands of dollars to find an artisan who I thought could make the replicas to my almost perfect, original standards and in the same manner and with a similar process as they were originally made. It was a labour of love and it took a lot longer and a lot more money than I expected, but I think we succeeded.

And now, I am happy to say, the final results are available for all to see, appreciate and own. The four brass replica 'cypher' helmet plates, as issued to the NSW Police Force, from circa 1862-1936, and remade by Ozbadge, are now available for sale, as a Limited Edition Collectible, at the NSW Police College Shop in Goulburn. The historical information about each of them is also available online at: www.ozbadge.com. Also, as part of their release, I decided that a part of the profit from the sale of every badge set would go to NSW Police Legacy.

Oh, and what about the search for an original example of the very 'first' NSW Police badge, the one that started me on all this: that elusive 'roundel'?

THE ELUSIVE ROUNDEL

Well, in early November, 2006, when I was nearly at the end of my long journey into the past, Noble Numismatics published their latest catalogue for an auction to be held in Sydney, on 24 November 2006. I was fortunate enough to view it online. On page 375 of their beautifully printed catalogue, under Lot: 4185, was the following description of an item they had listed for auction (with no photo of it): *New South Wales Police, Governor's Mounted Bodyguard, helmet badge, VR crown, c1870, in white metal (70mm). Nearly extremely fine and extremely rare. \$1,000.*

Bingo!

This only known, surviving roundel, NSW Police helmet plate was finally found in a very old and very comprehensive collection from the estate of a recently deceased, retired Police Superintendent in Victoria. It was put up for bidding at the auction in Sydney and was immediately sold, after some enthusiastic bidding, for the surprisingly reasonable amount of \$5,000.00 with commission. It was, of course, bought by me regardless of what the final price would be.

My Great Grandfather would have turned in his grave, if I had let that one escape. One of the original, brass 'VR' cypher, NSW Police helmet plates also sold at the same auction, for just over \$2,000.00; as did a very rare, 'VR' cypher, Sterling Silver, 'Commissioned Officer's' plate.

The roundel was immediately photographed and examined in detail and then replicated. The plate was reproduced beautifully, but not too perfectly (and just slightly larger) in order to preserve the intrinsic and historical value of this only known surviving original 'roundel' we have today. The plate is now in my family's safe deposit box in Sydney, where it awaits the opening of a dedicated NSW Police Force Museum; when it will be loaned for display and for the enjoyment of all to see.

So, after all these years of research, what do I know now, that I didn't know before?

Well, I now firmly believe the first issued NSW Police badge was the 'roundel' helmet plate. The only reason it became known as the 'Governor's Bodyguard' badge, is because the only photo ever found of anyone wearing it happened to be that of my Great Grandfather who was an ordinary copper, but assigned to the NSW Police Governor's Guard duty. We also know that it would have been extremely cost prohibitive and

politically incorrect to make such an intricate and special helmet plate like that, just for the use of the four mounted officers of the NSW Police Governor's Guard, who were routinely assigned from general duties and who, records show, were officially accounted for as stationed at the old Depot.

There are no other known and dated photos of any NSW Police officer wearing any other badge pre-1868 that I am aware of. Unless of course, another photo turns up from under someone's floor boards somewhere. History is never written in stone.

And as for his ornate NSW Police uniform? Well, it was obviously fashioned after the uniform of his old regiment, the 8th Hussars. It is a well known fact that Commissioned Officers of the NSW Police Force, soon began to wear these Hussar-style undress jackets from the late 1800s, right up until the mid 1940s.

See, Great Grandpa (wherever you are) maybe I would have made a good detective after all. May be in my next life?

With special thanks to: Commissioner Ken Moroney AO APM, Assistant Commissioner Graeme Morgan, APM and Kenneth DeLacey Neville. ■

Photos: Australian War Memorial, Picture Australia (National Library of Australia) and Ozbadge ©



Labour of love: this replica set reproduces the sought-after NSW Police Badges



Also available is this replica set of NSW Police Commissioned Officers' helmet plates