

Mid-Wales Constabulary

1948 – 1968

Mid-Wales Constabulary was established 1 April 1948 under the provisions of the Police Act, 1946, by amalgamation of Radnor, Brecon and Montgomery County Constabularies. At a conference with the Home Office in 1946, members of the Breconshire Standing Joint Committee decided to offer no opposition to the proposed amalgamation. Breconshire's Chief Constable, Lieutenant Colonel C G Cole-Hamilton was set to retire on 30 June and Radnorshire Constabulary's Chief Constable had already retired with the Chief Constable of Montgomeryshire, Captain Lloyd, being appointed acting Chief Constable of Radnorshire on 12 July 1946.

In April 1947, the Montgomeryshire Police Committee at Newton considered a communication from the Home Secretary on the suggested amalgamation of the three forces. It was decided the Police Committee of the combined force should consist of eight representatives from Breconshire, six from Montgomeryshire and six from Radnor. Brecon later suggested they should have ten representatives and Radnor four but the other two counties were not in agreement with this proposal. Instead, the original scheme was agreed as, overall, the negotiations were not moving so happily as they might and it was feared the Home Secretary may need to intervene due to stubbornness in certain quarters.

Under the Home Office Order, the first Chief Constable of the Mid-Wales Constabulary was Captain Humphrey C Lloyd, who had been Chief Constable of Montgomeryshire since 1939 and was one of a short list of five candidates for the position of Chief Constable of Cheshire in 1946. Mr Lloyd appointed Superintendent T Llewellyn Brumwell, the Deputy Chief Constable of Montgomeryshire Constabulary as the Deputy Chief Constable of Mid-Wales Constabulary.

At the first meeting of the Mid-Wales Police Authority, 8 April 1948, Captain Lloyd said the change-over had already taken place without a hitch and the new authority seemed to be starting off "in top gear", although he felt a considerable increase in the establishment of the Force would be necessary.

An application was made to the Home Office in 1948 to sanction additional recruiting for the Force but this was held up more than a year. By 1949, the Chief Constable noted experienced CID officers were doing jobs they should not be doing and that his men were being grossly overworked. Senior officers were doing menial work - typing and the like - instead of being employed on crime detection because the Chief Constable was short staffed. The draft budget estimate for 1949 was £108,250, an increase of £7,000 on the previous year. It left deficiencies of £22,553 to be raised by Breconshire, £13,644 by Montgomeryshire and £14,303 by Radnorshire.

Deputy Chief Constable, Superintendent T Llewellyn Brumwell, who was widely known for his unfailing integrity, retired in 1954, having given the County loyal service for forty years.

In March 1959, the Home Office approved the appointment of Chief Superintendent Reginald Ernest Geoffrey Benbow, of Birmingham City Police, as Chief Constable of the Mid-Wales Constabulary in succession to Captain Humphrey C Lloyd who was retiring. It had been agreed in May of 1958 that Chief Constable Lloyd was not prepared to continue beyond 31 August. An earlier appointment on 26 June 1958 by the Mid-Wales Police Authority of Superintendent John Ronald Jones, of the Mid-Wales Constabulary, was not approved by the Home Office because of its policy concerning local appointments. Outside officers, and not those within the particular force to which the appointment is to be made, should be considered for the post of Chief Constable. The Home Secretary stated:

“I have come to the conclusion that it would not be right for me to approve the appointment. I believe it will be in the best interests of the Force for an outside officer to be appointed.”

Superintendent Jones was a native of Carmarthenshire and served as a Police Constable in the Metropolitan Police from September 1930 until March 1933. He then transferred to Breconshire Constabulary, serving as a Constable in that Force until its amalgamation into the Mid-Wales Constabulary. He continued as a Constable until March 1949, when he was promoted Sergeant. In May, 1954, he became Sub-Divisional Inspector and transferred to Brynmawr. In September 1956, he was promoted Divisional Superintendent and was transferred to Newton. Mr Jones was appointed Chief Constable of Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire Constabulary, in succession of Mr T Hubert Lewis, on 16 February 1960.

The newly appointed Mid-Wales Constabulary Chief Constable, Mr R E G Benbow, was born in Newton, Montgomeryshire and joined the Birmingham City Police in January 1928 and was a Constable in 'E' Division, Edward Road, Balsall Heath. In December 1938 he was promoted as a Sergeant of 'A' Division. In 1941, Mr Benbow became an Inspector and, in 1944, he went to the Forces with the rank of Major (civil affairs) and was Public Safety Officer with the SHAEF Military Mission to the Royal Netherlands Government. Later he served with the Military Government in Schleswig-Holstein, with headquarters at Kiel.

He returned to Birmingham as an Inspector of Erdington Sub-Division and a year later was promoted Chief Inspector and transferred to 'D' Division headquarters, Aston. For six months in 1952 he was Director of Studies at the Police College Ryton-on-Dunsmore, being recalled on promotion to Superintendent of 'B' Division, Selly Oak. Mr Benbow was Birmingham City Police's youngest Superintendent in 1948. He became Chief Superintendent at 'A' Division 1 December 1954.

Under Chief Constable Benbow, there was a change to helmets from caps for Sergeants and Constables in the Mid-Wales Constabulary instituted from 17 October 1960. A group of new police cars were delivered to Mid-Wales Constabulary in June 1962, a variety of pastel colours, with only one black one among them. A senior Police Officer denied the patrol cars were going into "plain clothes". He said the delivery had been taken of the first batch of new cars available from their suppliers regardless of colour. Chief Constable Benbow was awarded the Queen's Police Medal, 1 January 1963, and returned to Birmingham City Police as Deputy Chief Constable that same year.

The vacancy left by Chief Constable Benbow was filled with the appointment of Superintendent Richard Benjamin Thomas of No. 7 District Police Training Centre at Chantemarle, Cattistock, near Dorchester, on 10 October 1963. Mr Thomas was educated at Gloucester and spent all of his police service with the Gloucestershire Constabulary. He was for ten years in the Criminal Investigation Department and during that period was commended by his Chief Constable on twelve occasions. He was the representative of the commandants on the Training Centre's Committee of the Central Conference of Chief Constables.

On 1 April 1968 Mid-Wales Constabulary became part of the newly formed Dyfed-Powys Police force under Chief Constable John R Jones. Chief Superintendent Mervyn Morgan was appointed Chief of the Mid-Wales Division of the Dyfed-Powys Police Force. Mr Morgan had been Superintendent at Brecon where he started his police career in 1939.