

CLIMB DOWN



*Lambeth Walk c.1956
Source not known*

In 1956 I was a uniformed Police Constable, living in a police section house in the Elephant and Castle and stationed at Kennington Road police station.

One day I was posted to patrol the Lambeth Walk street market in order to ensure that stall holders behaved themselves. In particular I needed to ensure that the pavements were kept free of boxes of produce etc. I was new to the area: it was in fact my first unaccompanied patrol since I joined the Metropolitan Police in late 1954.

The stall holders were aware of my lack of knowledge and one of them decided to challenge my authority, by refusing to move boxes onto the road, rather than obstruct the pavement. I asked him twice to move the boxes, when he refused I telephoned the station and requested the attendance of the "hurry up wagon" (police van) as I intended to arrest the stall holder.

I was not intimidated by the attitude of the stall holder and his friends. I had served in the Royal Air Force as an aircrew member for seven years and had faced upsets before.

When the van arrived I arrested the stall holder for wilful obstruction and we entered the van without trouble. Then the area erupted and the other stall holders tried to turn the van over and called for all police officers to be sent to Cyprus, which at that time was under martial law.

The next day at Lambeth Magistrates' Court, I prepared myself for a difficult hearing. To my amazement the stall holder pleaded "Guilty" paid his 10/- (ten shillings) fine, shook me by the hand and apologised.

I had no further trouble from the occupants of Lambeth Walk.

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