



Sedgley's

Diamond 60

*Sixty years, sixty people,
sixty stories about village life
since 1952.*

1954

1954 National Service with the Regimental Police

by John Holman

My first job was at George Hill and Sons at Deepfields, where I was a carpenter making export packing cases. In 1952 I did my National Service. I was fortunate because when I left school I'd been in the army cadet force so I knew how to strip a Bren gun down and how to do drill. I was also quite fit then, in the army football and athletic teams and I even ended up as heavyweight champion of Bicester Garrison! I did my basic training at Wrexham, from where I was sent to an ammunition depot at Carlisle.

Later I joined the regimental police in the guardroom at Bicester near Oxford, looking after prisoners. I was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal: when soldiers absconded it was my job to fetch them back from police stations around the country. If any of the AWOL soldiers were court-martialled and sentenced to 28 days or more we had to take them to Colchester to the Military Corrective Establishment, the 'prison' for absconders.

There were quite a lot of absconders then - some couldn't take it during the training and afterwards - they decided they'd had enough and they were off! I felt sorry for them because for many it was their first time away from home, but I had a job to do.

I remember two of them absconded and were missing for three months and finally gave themselves up at Wick near John O'Groats in Scotland. We spent three days getting up there on the train and then fetching them back. Because they'd been away for 3 months they had to be court-martialled.

For lesser offences the sentence was 7 days 'CB' (confined to barracks) which was done in our guardroom. The longer they absconded for, the greater the sentence.



**Lads doing drill on National Service
in the 50s**



**Discipline was tough and some
absconded, going 'AWOL'**



**John had learnt how to strip a Bren
gun while in the Army Cadets**