

# Police Imp in

## Part One

**Richard and Joanne Gillespie (Imp Club in Ireland ACO and PRO), Londonderry, Northern Ireland**

This month marks a year since the 50th celebrations in Linwood and Coventry in which the Police Imp played a big part over the course of the four days. Since that was the first time the car has been active in the Imp Club, we thought we would tell you about the history of the car, our journey home with it to Northern Ireland and the 50th celebrations in the eyes of the Police Imp...

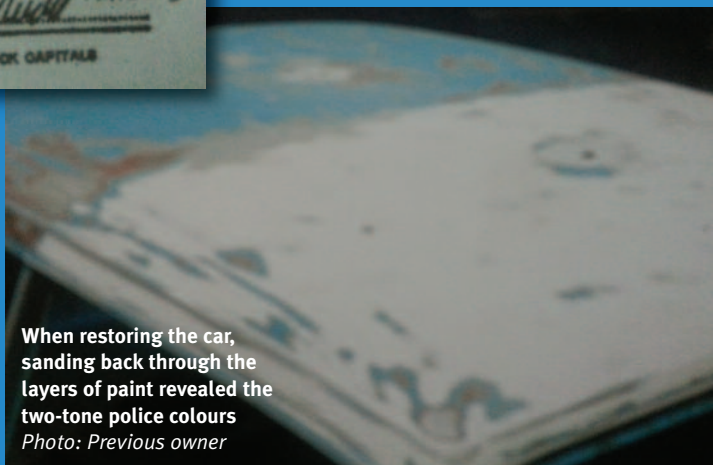
1st CHANGE / USE BLOCK CAPITALS  
First Name(s) .....  
Surname NORFOLK JOINT POLICE,  
Address MARTINEAU LANE,  
NORWICH. NOR 07T.  
13 SP 72  
MR MIKE JAMES  
RUDD  
THE OLD BUNKER  
MARKET STREET, NORWICH, NOR 07T  
2nd CHANGE / USE BLOCK CAPITALS

The car was first registered to the Norfolk Joint Police on 13th September 1972 (see copy of original logbook, left). It was one of six commissioned and it is the only one of the six we know of remaining. The car still has its original features such as the radio, blue light and siren which all are in full working order. The passenger seat still has the original steel reinforcing in it to allow the handcuffing of prisoners to it.

The car received a full restoration eight years ago by the previous owner, bringing it back to its former glory. As you can see from the photo of the roof, when sanded right back you can

clearly see its two-tone colour showing claim to the authenticity of it being an original police car shell.

In September 2012 we purchased the Imp from an eBay auction becoming its 3rd owner. A few days



**When restoring the car, sanding back through the layers of paint revealed the two-tone police colours**  
*Photo: Previous owner*

# Ireland

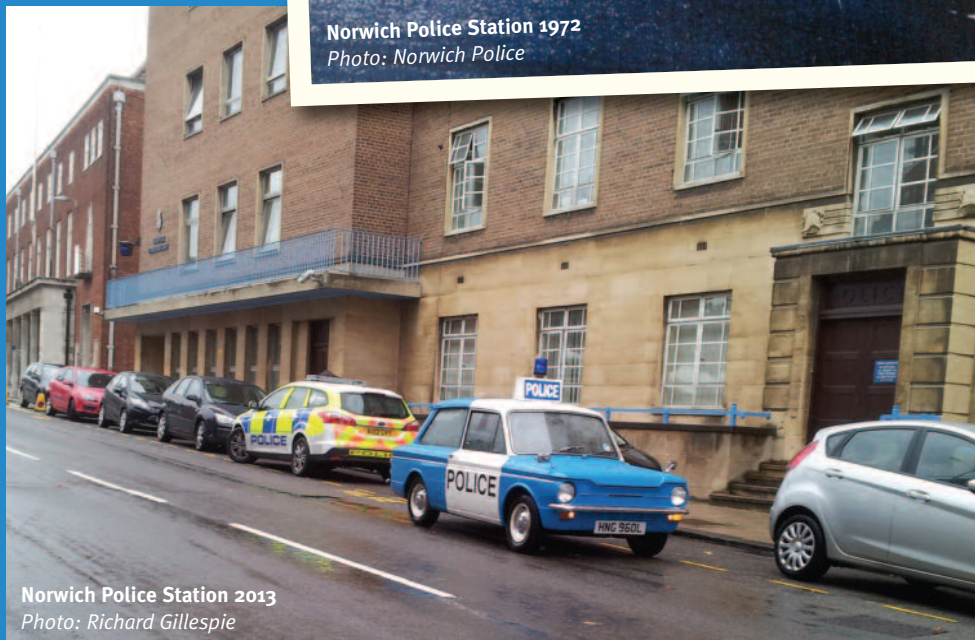
later we flew in from Belfast to collect the car and drive the long distance from Norfolk back to Northern Ireland. The owner thought we were barking mad as the car had only done 100 miles in the previous six years and

Richard had fractured a bone in his clutch foot so was hobbling about on a crutch. However, the owner said he had checked the car over and assured us everything seemed to be working. A few miles down the road we soon discovered the temperature gauge wasn't working, which as you all know is a real pain with an Imp.

After saying our goodbyes we first headed for the Police Station in Norwich where the car was commissioned to recreate the photo taken in 1972. That night we were staying with a friend in London; while driving into London we decided to turn the blower on to clear the window. After a while we decided that it wasn't working only to glance in the shop window where something bright had caught our eyes only to see the police sign on the roof lit up. Oops!



Norwich Police Station 1972  
Photo: Norwich Police



Norwich Police Station 2013  
Photo: Richard Gillespie

The following day we headed towards Bristol to see our good friend Steve Forde (Bath & Bristol ACO). Steve had a quick check over the engine as the fan belt needed tightening. He gave us a few bits and pieces for the car and a few tools to get us home in case we needed them. Ever the gentleman, Steve wouldn't accept any money so we insisted on taking him out to lunch before heading back on the road.



**Hero Richard Hammond**  
*Photo: Richard Gillespie*

Since it was late afternoon before leaving Steve, we decided to make our overnight stay in Birmingham that evening. Eight miles away from the hotel we suddenly heard a metallic bang from the rear. Looking behind we saw some mechanical looking pieces flying followed by a fanbelt. We pulled onto the hard shoulder to see what was missing. The pulley had collapsed from the dynamo leaving us with no way of securing the belt but the dynamo was still intact. We couldn't venture on to the motorway of course to search for the belt. With no temperature gauge and no water pump we knew we shouldn't drive the car any distance, but – police car or not – we were sitting dangerously on the hard shoulder of the M6. Seeing the slip road was less than a mile away, we took the crazy decision to crawl to the slip road with fingers and toes crossed that we didn't cook the engine.

Sitting on the hard shoulder of the slip road we first 'phoned Steve Forde to see if he knew any imp members in Birmingham who might have a pulley and fan belt as the AA was unlikely to have any parts for an Imp. We sat there helplessly thinking who is going to come out to help us on a Saturday night. Low and behold Steve rang back to say he was speaking to Richard Hammond (Joint Birmingham ACO), who was prepared to pull a pulley off a spare dynamo and the belt off his own Imp to get us back on the road.

After a huge sigh of relief we soon realised we couldn't start working on the slip road in the dark with no hazard lights; it would be too dangerous. So we decided to ring the AA to take us back to the hotel to meet Richard. The AA operator must have thought we were barking mad when we said we were in a 1972 police car and had no hazard lights to switch on. The Highway Road Agency rang afterwards as they couldn't see us on the cameras. We explained where we were and not long afterwards a patrol car pulled up behind (with hazards) to put cones and a warning triangle out. It took four hours for the AA to lift us – not good, considering we were supposed to be a priority. We were extremely annoyed as Richard Hammond and Iain Mitchell were waiting three hours at our hotel.

When we finally arrived we couldn't thank Richard and Iain enough. The pulley didn't want to

come off Richard's dynamo so we decided the best thing was to put his complete dynamo on and hope it was OK (being a spare it was an unknown quantity). With everything on and radiator filled with water again we took a quick spin around the car-park and everything seemed fine. We offered Richard and Iain money for all the hassle and disrupting their evening, but again they refused, so we insisted that Richard at least take our dynamo with him.

The next morning we headed off again. Two miles down the road we discovered the dynamo wasn't charging after all. Again we pulled off the road into a nearby retail park and rang Richard. Unfortunately for us he was working but he gave us the number for Pete Smith (the other ACO for Birmingham). Pete wasn't answering, so we left a message. Shortly after Pete rang back to say he would be with us shortly.

Pete arrived with us, but he didn't have a spare dynamo. We didn't know what we were going to do, but Pete being the handyman that he is dismantled the dynamo and cleaned the bushings inside to see if that would help. Fingers crossed we took the car for a spin and the battery light stayed obediently off. With a huge sigh of relief we thanked Pete and again he wouldn't take any money.

We would like to pause here to say a MASSIVE thank you to Steve Forde, Richard Hammond, Iain Mitchell and Pete Smith. If it wasn't for their help and kindness we would have been really stuck. Like Graham Anderson said on the Sunday afternoon at the Matlock National in 2012, "It really is a fantastic club; we are just like one big family. People will go out of their way to help someone in trouble."

Again we went on our way onto the M6. It was crazy the amount of attention the Police Imp was



Bo'ness Motor Museum  
Photo: Richard Gillespie

getting. People were driving up the hard shoulder just to get a picture, we were like celebrities! Cars, lorries and even – no, *especially* – the Police were flashing lights and waving. Eventually we had to stop for fuel. An older gentleman pulled alongside and said, “I am looking to report a dead deer on the third lane of the motorway”. We both looked at each other thinking is this guy joking or does he really think we really think we *are* the Police. When we explained we weren’t actually the Police, he went mad accusing us of impersonating (*IMPersonating? GP*) the Police and that he was going to report us. After he had finished we filled up and went on our merry way laughing to ourselves.

Our next stop was going to be Bo’ness, as we heard there was another Police Imp on display in the museum there. As it was getting dark we switched on the headlights only to find the light for the dynamo came on again. We were 20 miles away from Moffat so we made a quick decision that we were going to make that our overnight stop and drive the rest of the way on sidelights.

Next day we continued onto Bo’ness, the dynamo seemed fine with no lights on. We had a quick look around the museum and the owner was delighted to discover we were driving the Police Imp. A few photographs later we headed to Ayr to see our good friend Silvo who sells the best ice cream in the UK.

Finally we were heading for the ferry in Cairnryan, but knew on the other side we would be driving in the dark, so we had Richard’s dad and uncle on standby with the trailer. We drove the 70 miles from Belfast to Derry/Londonderry on sidelights trying to save electricity. Luckily we made it home without calling for help. We didn’t do too bad, driving approx 1,000 miles in five days in a car that had hardly moved in the last ten years.

The conclusion of the story next month will feature the Police Imp’s part in the 50 celebrations.



A taste of what's to come in Part Two  
Photo: John Workman