

in Queensland, was hit by an egg thrown by a bystander.

The local police sergeant, requested by the Prime Minister to take action, pointed out that he worked for the Queensland Government, not the Commonwealth.

Plainclothes body

The incident incensed the Prime Minister and he promptly created a 'Commonwealth Police Force' to protect him and his Ministers against such abuses in the future. The new force operated mainly in Queensland to 'carry out the law of the Commonwealth in the State of Queensland', and historically became known as the Commonwealth Police (1917-19).

"I understand it ceased to exist in about 1919," Mr Davies says. "A plainclothes body known as the Investigation Branch was formed that year to take over the work of the Public Service investigators."

Then followed a succession of federal agencies formed for both investigative and guarding purposes.

A seamen's strike in 1925 led to the creation of yet another ill-defined body. When the NSW government refused to allow NSW Police to serve process on the president and the secretary of the Seamen's Union, the Commonwealth created a body of Peace Officers to carry out the duty.

After the strike ended, the Peace Officers continued to serve Commonwealth process, carry out minor investigations and perform police functions for the Investigation Branch. They helped the Branch to check the backgrounds of people seeking old-age pensions.

Guarding role

In 1927 the Commonwealth Police title resurfaced when eight NSW Police Sergeants and Constables serving at Acton were seconded to the Federal Government for the inauguration of Federal Parliament and were joined by 10 members of the Peace Officers in carrying out local policing. They took over the policing of the Federal Capital Territory from the NSW Police and became the Commonwealth Police (Federal Capital Territory).

During the early 1930s, with unrest growing, guards at Commonwealth departments such as Trade and Customs were sworn in as Special Peace Officers.

The first federal police force based outside Canberra was created when South Australia gave over administration and policing of the Northern Territory to the Australian Government in 1911.

The South Australians finished their five-year contracts and most of them went home. However, seven stayed on and became the nucleus of the Northern Territory Mounted Police.

Their resources were stretched severely in policing such a vast area at a time when Darwin was a frontier town. Fortune hunters and wanderers from more than 40 nations made up the population.

In 1929, a big crowd of unemployed rioted and locked the Territory Administrator in his office in Government House. Sixteen arrests were made.

In an incident the year before, a mounted constable and a local man killed 31 Wararamulla tribesmen at Coniston. They had been investigating the murder of another man by the tribesmen when they, too, were attacked. A Board of Inquiry found the two men had acted in self-defence.

Aboriginals also killed five Japanese trepang gatherers in 1932 and later killed an investigating constable before disappearing into the wilds of Arnhem Land. The NT Administrator requested funds from Canberra to finance an expedition into the bush to catch the killers but the funding was refused.

Blacktrackers became an integral part of NT policing. A tracker named Neighbour was awarded the Albert Medal 'for gallantry in saving life on land' after rescuing an unconscious member of the NT Police, W.F. Johns, from a crocodile-infested river. Mr Johns later became Commissioner of the South Australia Police.

Huge payout

Conditions were difficult for the members. In 1912, the Commonwealth even forgot to pay some of them for several months. However, when one policeman retired in 1925 after 33 years' service, he received a retirement benefit payment of 25 pounds —

A strike by civil watchmen at the Maribyrnong munitions factory in 1935 prompted the formation of the Defence Establishments Guard to protect Commonwealth munitions factories and Commonwealth buildings in Sydney and Melbourne.

In a move to rationalise the situation, the Peace Officers and the Defence Guards were merged in 1940 to form the Peace Officer Guard (POG).

Throughout the war, its numbers swelled to more than 2000 and its

OUTBACK FEDERAL POLICE

a huge sum at the time. The average payout was less than five pounds.

When a member managed to take infrequent holidays, others had to be re-shuffled to cover his districts as well as their own.

The hopelessly unsuitable blue and silver SA Police uniform was not replaced by a khaki one until 1930.

During the 1930s, the 'Mounted' disappeared from the title of the force, but horses, mules and camels remained the chief means of transport.

By 1937, only Darwin and Alice Springs had motor transport; it didn't become widespread throughout the NT until after World War 11.

Life was most primitive in the Outback. Some police and their wives lived in tents and were totally isolated until pedal wireless arrived in 1937.

The Territory in its time has been the scene of both tragedy and joy. Darwin was evacuated after the Japanese bombing in 1942 and police remained to guard premises and stop looting.

The NT Police also played a significant part in the Petrov affair, rescuing Mrs Petrov from Soviet guards at Darwin airport in 1956.

The devastation of Darwin after Cyclone Tracy struck on Christmas Day 1974 provided both local and interstate police with a major situation none had faced before. However, they came through with commendation for their devotion to duty and thoroughness.

The granting by the Commonwealth of self-government to the Territory in 1978 saw the responsibility for NT policing pass from Canberra into local hands, ending a most colourful era of federal policing. ■

members were principally concerned with protecting sensitive military targets such as ammunition factories.

"This was a role which translated into the functions of the latter day Commonwealth Police Force," Mr Davies says.

In 1946, the Investigation Branch merged with the wartime military Security Service to become the Commonwealth Investigation Service (CIS) with offices in all States.

During the post-war years, the CIS and the Peace Officer Guard found the going



Peace Officers pose for an official photo outside Maribyrnong munitions filling factory in 1935. The Peace Officers and Defence Establishments Guard were merged in 1940 to form the Peace Officer Guard.

tough. For instance, the CIS spent considerable resources chasing tax defaulters for sums of less than five pounds. The POG arrested people on charges such as 'smoking in a shed' and 'smoking on ship'.

In 1958, the Guard provided members to keep an eye on students' late night activities at University College, Canberra. The following year, Guards were patrolling Canberra High School to keep an eye on skylarking students.

The two forces were merged in 1960 to form the third organisation known as the Commonwealth Police (COMPOL).

COMPOL continued surveillance work. It pioneered anti-terrorist and atomic evaluation sections and in the late 1960s its members took over diplomatic and airport guarding.

High standard

"It achieved a high standard in both criminal investigation and crime intelligence gathering," Mr Davies says. "It was responsible for the establishment of the Australian Police College, the first training source available in this country for overseas, State and Territorial potential officer students. There were also the international offices, such as Interpol in Paris and the ensuing creation of interesting and important overseas police postings in Cyprus and at strategic embassies."

The fact that COMPOL maintained, at mundane posts such as the Lithgow Small Arms Factory, St. Mary's Ammunition Factory and the Army Victoria Barracks, Melbourne, police whose principal task was patrolling the grounds and buildings and checking passes of em-

ployees and visitors, sometimes overshadowed the high quality of true police work members were undertaking very efficiently in the remaining areas of responsibility.

"A solution to this problem was ultimately found by the creation of a Commonwealth protection agency — the Australian Protective Service — to which many Commonwealth Police were attracted, while others remained performing general uniformed duties within the Territory," he says. "The quality of members and their training over the years led to a number of exceedingly competent officers later achieving high rank."



Protecting sensitive military targets was a priority in the early post-war years. This picture of Peace Officer Guards taken in South Australia in 1948 shows the rugged conditions under which they worked.

Newest federal body

COMPOL and the ACT Police merged to form the Australian Federal Police (AFP) in October 1979. The Federal Narcotics Bureau, a division of Customs since 1970, was absorbed into the AFP one month later.

In 1984, the newest federal investigative body, the National Crime Authority (NCA) was formed with investigators seconded from the AFP and State police forces, and investigators appointed from outside areas.

Mr Davies looks back with interest on developments.

"As a dedicated professional police officer of some 45 years, 11 of them as an executive officer, I was delighted to end my career by becoming a serving member when the AFP was formed, and to be translated into it as Assistant Commissioner (Operations)," he says. "Former Commonwealth and ACT Police, and Narcotics Bureau members have all benefited from this great alliance.

"The AFP is commanded by a distinguished Australian police officer who holds Public Service Permanent Head status, which, within my experience, is of enormous administrative importance.

"His team of Deputy and Assistant Commissioners consists of highly-competent Australian police drawn from each category of the amalgamated bodies.

"The AFP can only rise to even greater heights in the fight against Australian and international crime," he adds. ■