

Bravery

The Police Federation's Police Bravery Awards, in association with *The Sun*, recognise the work of police officers who carry out courageous acts every day. Tina Orr Munro highlights the stories behind some of the nominees in the first of a series leading up to the award ceremony, to be held at The Dorchester Hotel in London on July 12



PC Rachael Bown



PC Martin Foster

Burglaries are the bread and butter of police work. But when one young Nottinghamshire recruit attended what appeared to be a routine break-in, it almost cost her life. Rachael Bown, 23, was nearing the end of her probationary period when she and her colleague, PC Martin Foster, were sent to investigate a report of a burglary in the Lenton area of Nottingham just before midnight in February 2006.

PC Bown arrived at the scene with PC Foster, an experienced officer with 17 years service to his credit. Close by, they found Trevon Thomas, a 24-year-old illegal immigrant from Trinidad. As the officers spoke to Thomas, he pulled out a 9mm pistol loaded with 13 rounds of ammunition. The officers barred the way to Thomas's escape route, even though he was brandishing a firearm. PC Foster also sprayed him with CS Spray in an attempt to defend himself and PC Bown. It appeared to have little effect and Thomas fired on them anyway.

PC Bown was hit in the stomach, just below her standard issue body armour, causing her near fatal injuries. PC Foster frantically tried to help his partner but later said he was in

disbelief at what had happened. In December 2006, Thomas, from Melford Road, Bilborough, appeared at Nottingham Crown Court and was found guilty of attempting to murder the young trainee. At that time PC Bown still had not returned to work.

In his defence, Thomas insisted he carried a firearm for protection after being shot himself several years previously. But, following the trial, Det Ch Insp Dave Giles described Thomas as a dangerous man who showed 'contempt for human life'.

"When compromised by uniformed officers, he did not hesitate to use his gun," said the senior detective.

For PC Bown, the road back to work has been a long one. She finally returned in March this year, but says she still thinks about the night she was shot. "Little things bring it back. I couldn't watch anything to do with hospitals or police on TV for a long time. But I am certain it has made me a stronger person.

"Confrontation doesn't scare me any more and I feel I can deal with things so much better."

PC Bown says she is determined the

incident will not define her as a person.

“What happened to me was just an episode in my life. I don’t want to be remembered for being shot. It happened. It wasn’t very nice, but I’m moving on. There is a lot I want to do with my life and my career.”

But PC Bown is not taking the easy route. She has returned to work in one of the force’s Domestic Abuse Support Units.

“I was the domestic violence specialist on my shift section and it’s an area of the job I’ve always wanted to get involved in. I’ve been a victim of violence now too and I think working in the Domestic Abuse Support Unit will help me empathise with those people who suffer at the hands of violent partners.”

She is also hoping that the rest of 2007 will be the ‘most boring’ year of her life.

“I want my life back and I want things to be back to normal again. It’s going to be difficult. missing a year at work means I’ve got to re-train and pick up where I left off. I’m a little nervous but I can’t wait to get back.

“I’m really looking forward to getting back to work. I’ve hopefully got 27 years left in the service and that’s a lot of time to make a difference. I want people to be proud of me.”

After the incident, PC Foster returned to working on the response units, a role he continues to this day.

Shortly after leaving hospital, PC Bown received notification that she had passed her probationary period.

Mick Taylor, chairman of Nottinghamshire Police Federation, says officers both are worthy contenders.

“We are immensely proud of our nominees to the Police Bravery Awards this year.

“Despite knowing that the offender was armed both Martin and Rachael acted in the finest traditions of the force bravely attempting to block the avenue of this escape.

“Either of our colleagues could have lost their lives as a result of Thomas’s actions. Rachael and Martin put themselves between a very dangerous

individual and the law abiding community they serve.

Inevitably, at the time, the media focused its attention on PC Bown, but Mr Taylor says both officers displayed extreme bravery.

“Although not wounded himself, Martin’s courage was as great as Rachael’s because when he stood his ground he knew that Thomas was an individual who would be prepared to kill an officer in order to evade justice.”

Nominees from the first three regions:

Region 1 (North West)

Cheshire

PC Michael Jones

Cumbria

Sgt Paul Brown

Greater Manchester

PC Geoffrey Hince

Lancashire

PC Peter Corser

Sgt Kevin Jones

PC Phil Bayliss

Sgt Wendy Jacobs

PC Lukmaan Mulla

PC David Lomas

Sgt Paul Leigh

Merseyside

PC Michael O’Hara

PC Daniel Jones

Region 2 (North East)

Cleveland

PC Simon Bage

PC Steven Mills

Durham

PC Leanne Thorns

Northumbria

PC Paul Burnett

PC Wayne Wright

PC Victor Holt

PC Kevin Hood

North Yorkshire

Acting Sgt Jerry Perrin

PC Richard Wigglesworth

South Yorkshire

PC Lee Wilcox

PC Martin Stenson

West Yorkshire

PC Gary Panther

PC Richard Coulton

PC Graeme MacDonald

PC John Marsland

Region 3 (Midlands)

Staffordshire

PC Christopher Baker

Warwickshire

PC Peter Doherty

West Midlands

PC Richard Owen

PC Andrew Rudnicki