

FORUM

The magazine of Gwent Police Federation

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Remembering fallen officers - see Page 5

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Cover photo: Gwent Sergeant Lowrie Davies lights a candle for Welsh officers at the National Police Memorial Day service. See Page 5.

Photo courtesy of Anderson Photography.

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A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

There is a real lack of understanding of what is expected of the police



By Matthew Candy, chair of Gwent Police Federation

Policing enjoyed some rare moments under a positive spotlight after the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Our response to the passing of the monarch to whom we all swore allegiance was universally acclaimed and operation London Bridge was delivered without a hitch.

Keeping the hundreds of thousands of people who descended on the capital safe, well and in good humour was an incredible achievement, as was ensuring the security and protection of scores of high-profile heads of state who flew in for the funeral.

Operation London Bridge showcased the professionalism, dedication and dignity normally displayed by British policing day in and day out and I am immensely proud of our members who helped make sure the Queen received the farewell she so richly deserved.

But the praise the police service received for its efforts during those two weeks in

September was as unusual as it was hard-won.

The mainstream media seems to have a very simplistic view of policing while at the same time very strong opinions on what we should deliver as a service and how we should deal with certain incidents.

There was a lot of comment recently when the National Police Chiefs' Council announced that all home burglaries in England and Wales will be attended by a police officer. The press and some politicians expressed disbelief that this was not already the case.

They obviously hadn't heard that policing had shed more than 20,000 police officers and a similar number of police staff over the last 12 years.

They couldn't have been aware that almost two thirds of emergency calls to police are not crime-related and that our members spend a substantial amount of their time dealing with what is essentially health and social work because of an absence of other services.

There is a real lack of understanding about what is expected of the police, the ever-increasing demands and the chronic lack of resources and this means we are constantly fighting a negative bias in the media.

I have said from day one that my main aim as branch chair is to fight for fairness for our members and that fight continues on all fronts.

These are troubling times for people in all walks of life, but none seem to be as vilified as hard-working police officers throughout the UK right now.

We are constantly battling a negative bias in the media and I will not accept that we must also accept unfairness or mistreatment in the workplace.

I stood for election because I genuinely care about the rights and conditions under which police officers are expected to work.

And my main aim as chair is to ensure fairness for our members.

PCC's praise for officers who helped police Queen's funeral

Gwent Police Federation members who took part in Operation London Bridge after the death of the Queen have received a message of thanks from the county's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).

More than 140 Gwent officers - including Federation branch chair Matthew Candy - travelled to London for the complex security operation - the biggest in British history - and carried a wide range of duties linked to the 11-day period of mourning and the state funeral itself.

Matthew said the branch was extremely proud of the members who took part.



An officer pays respect as the hearse passes.

He said: "Most police officers will never experience anything like this ever again and have described their involvement as an honour and a privilege.

"The complexity of the policing and security operation surrounding the period of mourning and funeral was quite simply mind-boggling and the fact it was executed without a hitch speaks absolute volumes about the skill, dedication and

professionalism of our police officers.

"We are extremely proud of them and they have every right to be very proud of themselves."

The police presence was the largest on record with more than 10,000 officers deployed to ensure the vast crowds were kept safe, foreign heads of state were protected and the event was not disrupted.

Gwent PCC Jeff Cuthbert said: "I would like to thank all 143 police officers who travelled from Gwent to support the Metropolitan Police during the 12 days between the Queen's passing and her funeral.

"The full state funeral involving the ceremonial procession of the coffin, the Queen's lying in state, and then the funeral itself, presented an unprecedented security challenge and was one of the largest policing operations in history.

"Gwent Police supported colleagues from across the country with specialist search officers, explosive detection dogs, drones, motorcyclists and public order trained officers. It was the biggest deployment of mutual aid from Gwent in many years.

"All our officers did an outstanding job and helped to ensure that those who played a part in the arrangements, and those who travelled to witness this historic occasion for themselves, remained safe."



Officers on duty for the funeral.

“The complexity of the policing and security operation surrounding the period of mourning and funeral was quite simply mind-boggling and the fact it was executed without a hitch speaks absolute volumes about the skill, dedication and professionalism of our police officers. We are extremely proud of them and they have every right to be very proud of themselves.”



Gwent Federation chair Matthew Candy was among the officers to attend.



Branch represented at National Police Memorial Day



The policing family came together to pay its respects to officers who have died in the line of duty on National Police Memorial Day.

The families, friends and colleagues of fallen officers joined police chiefs and politicians for an emotional service at Belfast's Waterfront Hall on Sunday 25 September attended by around 2,000 people.

Gwent Police was represented by the family of PC Terry Davies, who died in August 1990, aged 34 when he was hit by a stolen vehicle which failed to stop as he cycled home after a tour of duty at Maindee.

His daughter Gwent Sergeant Lowri Davies lit a candle in memory of fallen officers in Wales as part of the service. Candles were also lit in remembrance of officers from the three other nations of the United Kingdom.

Gwent Police Federation was represented by secretary Dean Lanfeer, deputy chair Chris Back and Board member Jitka Tomkova-Griffiths.

Dean said afterwards: "National Police Memorial Day is always a moving day. This year's was particularly poignant coming so soon after

the funeral of the Queen and being the first time the police family has been able to come together in person since the pandemic.

"The service is a chance for policing and the country to pay our respects to those who have given their lives to keep us safe.

"We owe them all a huge debt. They will never be forgotten."

Leigh Godfrey, regional Federation rep, represented Wales and the South Wales branch, while Mick Antoniwi, the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution in the Welsh Government, attended and met families of fallen officers.

As a mark of respect for National Police Memorial Day, a number of force headquarters buildings across Wales - including Gwent's HQ - were lit up in blue and the Welsh Government followed suit with the Cathays Park 1 building in Cardiff which it currently occupies.

Next year's service is due to be held at St David's Hall in Cardiff on 24 September.

Liam Kelly, chair of the Police Federation for Northern Ireland, read the names of officers who



have lost their lives during the past year - PC Daniel Golding, Metropolitan Police, PC Craig Higgins, Greater Manchester Police, PC Alex Prentice, Northamptonshire Police, and PC Darryl Street, Civil Nuclear Constabulary.

There was silence as petals of remembrance, representing all who have lost their lives, descended from the gallery as the orchestra played Abide with me and the Last Post was sounded.

Medal for officers killed on duty moves a step closer

Gwent Police Federation is hoping a campaign to honour police officers killed on duty with a posthumous medal is nearing success.

Matthew Candy, branch chair, was reacting to the news that 26 Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are the latest to back a campaign for the creation of the Elizabeth Medal led by Bryn Hughes and Paul Bone, fathers of Manchester officers PCs Nicola Hughes and Fiona Bone who were murdered on duty after attending an emergency call in 2012.

The PCCs have added their names to a letter to Home Secretary Suella Braverman endorsing the idea of a police version of the Elizabeth Cross which is awarded to members of the British Armed Forces who are killed in action.

Matthew said: "The creation of this medal would be a fitting way to recognise those police officers who give their lives in serving their communities. Naming it after Queen Elizabeth II who dedicated her life to public service would be particularly poignant right now.

"I am pleased to see that this campaign is gathering support and hope that the Home Secretary will also give it her backing too."

The campaign has also been endorsed by the Police Superintendents' Association.



Bryn Hughes chats to then Home Secretary Priti Patel at the UK Police Memorial.

Menna shares experiences of 'unforgettable' Police Bravery Awards

Great Britain's national Police Bravery Award nominee Menna Watkins has been reflecting on an "unforgettable" few days spent in London for the ceremony.

Menna was nominated for the calm and courageous way she tackled a knifeman who lunged at her as she investigated reports of a disturbance.

She and her partner Justin Jones, who is also a serving officer on the firearms team with the Force, joined fellow nominees from across England and Wales for the awards event in July.

The pair travelled to the capital the day before, spending the evening in the West End and taking in a performance of *The Phantom of the Opera* at Her Majesty's Theatre, which Menna described as "brilliant".

They made their way to Downing Street the following morning for a special reception hosted by the then Home Secretary Priti Patel who mingled and chatted with nominees and their guests in the famous garden at Number 10.

Menna said: "For me Downing Street was the best part. It was surreal being in Number 10 and in the garden at the back with drinks and some food. It was amazing."

She said: "By the time the Home Secretary got to where we were standing we'd been called to have our photographs taken so I never actually got a chance to speak to her."

“ For me Downing Street was the best part. It was surreal being in Number 10 and in the garden at the back with drinks and some food. It was amazing.

An afternoon exploring the sights of the capital by open-top bus was followed by the awards presentation ceremony hosted by television presenter Mark Durden-Smith at a central London hotel.

"The ceremony was fantastic. They managed to keep it light-hearted but at the same time treated it for what it was and that was really good," she said.

"It was a few days that genuinely I will never forget and Justin said the same. We knew it was going to be good but it was far better than we ever thought it would be."

The annual bravery awards are organised by the Police Federation and sponsored by Police Mutual.

This year's overall winner was Lincolnshire Police's PC Steven Dennis who was stabbed as he tackled a double murder suspect he spotted while off duty and out walking his dogs.

The winner of the regional award for Wales



Menna outside the famous door of No 10 Downing Street.

was South Wales PC Nathan Davies who risked his life trying to save a couple from a river bed during a raging storm.

Nathan was knocked unconscious during the

rescue attempt but crawled on his hands and knees towards the two casualties when he came round and performed CPR on one of them until other officers started to reach the scene.



Menna and Justin outside the gates of Downing Street.



The couple with Chief Constable Pam Kelly at the awards night.



Menna and Justin (far right) with the North and South Wales' nominees and their guests.

Photo courtesy of Anderson Photography.

Photo courtesy of Anderson Photography.

Deputy Chief Constable says time at Gwent has made her who she is

"I'm really proud of my time at Gwent. I've worked with some fabulous officers, who absolutely want to deliver and you can tell they really believe in the mission of policing," says Deputy Chief Constable Amanda Blakeman as she prepares for her move to North Wales Police.

Having spent three years working at Gwent Police, Amanda will be joining North Wales at the beginning of November, as their new Chief Constable - the first ever female to be given the role in the history of the Force.

Here, she reflects on her time with Gwent and tells how her 30 years of experience working across a number of varied roles has shaped her into the leader she is today.

"I've learnt so much during my time at Gwent, as a police officer and a person and I have so many fond memories of my time with the Force," said Amanda, whose career began three decades ago with West Mercia.

"I've always believed in having confident, open and honest conversations with colleagues and you can really feel that we have that across the Gwent Force no matter who you are or what you do. It's also clear that our teams have a shared sense of purpose, you can feel their passion.

“It's time for me to say goodbye to my colleagues at Gwent and to say a huge thank you. Your support and professionalism has been first class.”

"There's a real connection between officers and across teams here. There's compassion, a desire and a commitment to the job.

"I saw a lot of that at North Wales too, which is why I wanted to apply for the role of Chief Constable there."

Amanda spent the first 10 years of her career as a response officer and has since worked in the neighbourhood team, firearms and the investigation department.

"Having had lots of experience across so many roles has definitely helped me become the officer I am today and the leader I am aspiring to be at North Wales," said Amanda.

"I think my experience across different roles has really helped. After all, if you've been up at 2am in the morning trying to complete a file, or supporting victims who have experienced sexual abuse, or a response officer first to the scene, then you understand the pressure that's felt by



DCC Amanda Blakeman.

colleagues - you've felt the same emotions and the same frustrations.

"I know that our officers are delivering their very best and I know that pressures are felt across different teams. Policing is unlike any other job in the world, it's unique. As an officer, you feel this sense of responsibility and actually, the public expects us to be there at their moment of crisis."

Becoming Deputy Chief Constable was never on the agenda for Amanda, let alone leading a force as Chief Constable.

"When I joined policing, I wanted to be a response officer," she explained.

"I was driven by my passion for protecting the public and I really enjoyed my time working

on the frontline. For me, it was never about getting to the top, it was about being in the police.

"I feel very privileged to be moving into the role of Chief Constable. It was definitely a memorable moment when I got the call and I'm really excited about my next chapter.

"I have worked with some great people and with some brilliant teams and I feel that very strongly when I think about the amazing officers I've worked with at Gwent and those I will work with as I move to North Wales.

"It's time for me to say goodbye to my colleagues at Gwent and to say a huge thank you. Your support and professionalism has been first class."

Support network for expectant and new parents launched in Gwent Police



Danni Threader (right) with Kelly Sturdy at the launch of Gwent Babies.

An initiative has been launched at Gwent Police to provide vital support for new and expectant parents from the Force as they begin their journey in life with a baby.

Gwent Babies, a scheme created by the Federation's wellbeing lead Dannielle Threader along with wellbeing specialist for the Force Kelly Sturdy, aims to help anyone who is expecting a baby or returning to work following parental leave.

The initiative, which officially launched at the beginning of September, involves regular coffee mornings where expectant and new parents who work at Gwent Police can attend and meet others in a similar situation.

"In essence, Gwent Babies is there to support expectant and new parents - whatever their situation - with their wellbeing, throughout their entire parenting journey," said mother-of-one Danni, whose passion for helping to launch the group follows her own experiences.

Following first-hand feedback, it was highlighted that officers and staff preparing for, or on parental leave, felt isolated or unsure as to who they could talk to if they had any questions. This, in turn, often resulted in a fear of them returning to work, which increased the potential of continued absence through sick leave.

"I love my daughter, but I found maternity leave pretty horrendous. I'm a single mum and I felt like I was completely cut off from the world. I craved adult conversation, it was very lonely," explained Danni.

"I wasn't in regular contact with work and

when I returned after just six months, it felt unsettling knowing that changes to the job had probably been made and I didn't know about it."

Gwent Babies allows any expectant parent, including those who are preparing for adoption leave, to meet on a regular basis. The support is inclusive and welcomes same sex couples.

Danni, who said that the response to the Gwent Babies launch was 'overwhelming', added: "We had such a positive response, especially from colleagues who said they were worried about announcing their pregnancy or wanting advice after having a baby."

Gwent Babies is also in the process of creating packs for supervisors, to help them better support people who announce their pregnancy.

"The packs will be packed full of information, so we can provide advice and guidance to supervisors which will allow them to better support their team," added Danni.

"We also provide parents - whatever their situation might be - with the advice they need, including knowing their rights and entitlements, as well as a list of 'emergency service-friendly' nurseries. Not every nursery or childcare provider offers shift childcare, which can make life even more challenging for new parents."

Reflecting on her own experience, Danni said that as soon as she told her supervisor that she was pregnant, her role changed massively.

"As soon as you announce your pregnancy you're pulled off the streets - which is quite right and understandable - but it's a massive change to

the role," said Danni, whose daughter is now six-years-old.

"It was no fault of my supervisor at all, he just wanted to make sure I was protected and looked after, so I moved to a back office role. I was so used to being on the frontline, it was a big change," she explained.

"If I'd known the policies and processes I wouldn't have been so surprised, and it could have been much easier to adapt.

"We hope the packs will prevent that lack of understanding that so many new parents The packs are currently in the process of being developed, with three trial supervisor packs distributed so far.

"The test packs have been very well received. In fact, the supervisors said that if it wasn't for the packs, it would've been harder for them," she added. "Ideally, the packs will make life easier for everyone."

As part of Gwent Babies, a 'bump buddies' scheme will hopefully be introduced soon, which will involve colleagues becoming 'ambassadors', trained up to support those preparing for or currently on parental leave.

The next Gwent Babies catch ups for 2022 will be taking place at Gwent Police Federation House on the following dates:

- 27 October, 1pm - 2.30pm
- 24 November, 9.30am - 11am
- 22 December, 1pm - 2.30pm

You can find out more about Gwent Babies by visiting the wellbeing pages on the intranet - The Beat.

Senedd event highlights need for Welsh police memorial

The Police Federation's Welsh lead has paid tribute to the work of the National Police Memorial Day charity at an event at the Senedd and has also highlighted the need for a memorial to fallen police officers in Wales.

Nicky Ryan joined members of the Senedd and South Wales Chief Constable Jeremy Vaughan at the event.

The family of Terry Davies, a Gwent Police officer who died in August 1990, aged 34, when he was hit by a stolen vehicle which failed to stop as he cycled home after a tour of duty also attended.

Nicky said it was an honour to be alongside Terry's family for the event, which aimed to highlight the work of the National Police Memorial Day (NPMD).

She said: "NPMD is a chance for everyone to come together to pay our respects to fallen officers."

"It was an honour to be able to stand side by side with the family of PC Terry Davies as we remembered those officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice and think of the loved ones impacted by their loss."

“ Each year, the NPMD is a poignant and emotional occasion that brings the UK's policing family together to pay their respects. But we also need a permanent memorial that recognises and honours the more than 80 brave officers who have died in the line of duty in Wales

"It was poignant to share it with, not only our senior politicians and police officers, but also with our younger generations as well. Our fallen officers will not be forgotten."

Nicky used the event to highlight next year's NPMD memorial day, which will be hosted at St David's Hall in Cardiff next September.

And she also discussed the proposed National Welsh Police Memorial in Cathays Park.

An appeal has been launched by the Police Roll of Honour Trust to help fund the memorial, which will honour the heroic officers and staff who have given their lives to protect the people and communities of Wales.

Nicky said: "Each year, the NPMD is a poignant and emotional occasion that brings the UK's policing family together to pay their respects."

"But we also need a permanent memorial



that recognises and honours the more than 80 brave officers who have died in the line of duty in Wales.

"Wales is the only country in the UK without a dedicated national police memorial – and it's something we would love to change."

"Which is why we're campaigning for a

National Welsh Police Memorial as lasting tribute to those members of our police service who have died protecting the people and communities of Wales."

She added: "Hopefully this event is a step towards helping us achieve our goal with the help of our elected representatives."



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