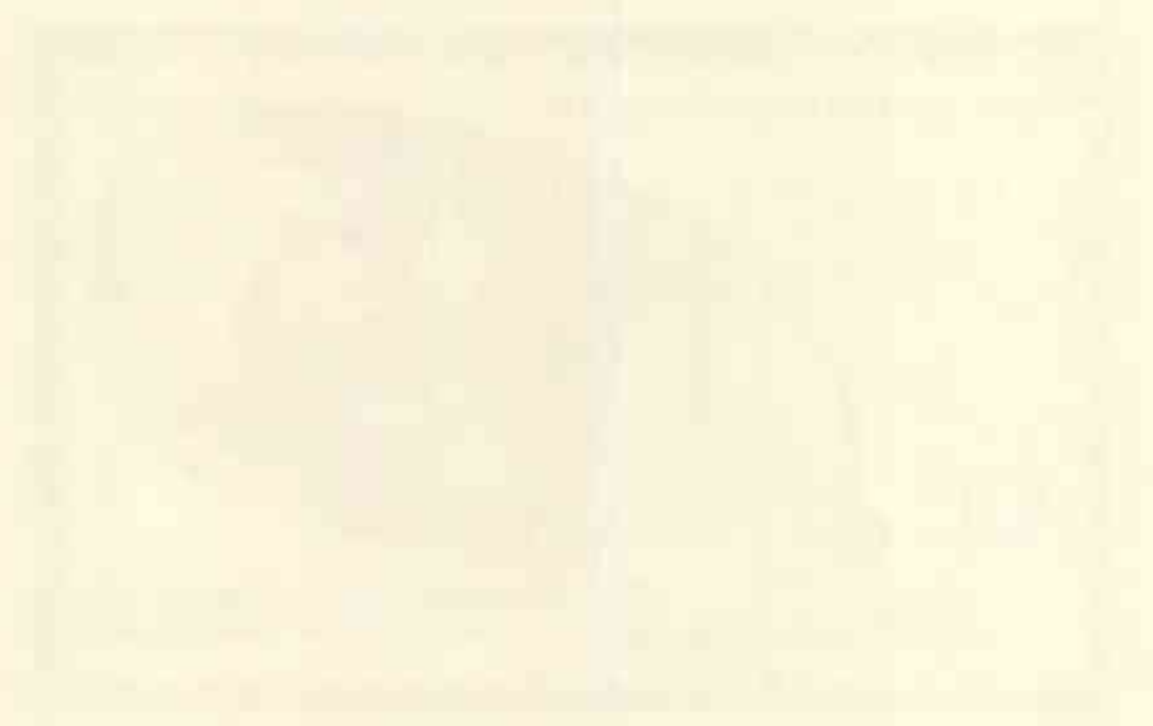


Pot Pourri



Fifty two

1903 10 3



1903 10 3

CONNERY'S WAY.

Inspector Connery caught the 8.20 am. 'bus outside his house, as he did every morning. The conductor noted the slight limp and held Connery's arm as the 'bus lurched forward.

Connery climbed the steps, looked at the front of the 'bus, saw with satisfaction that his seat was empty. It usually was. For Connery had discovered by chance a strange phenomena. He had caught the 8.20 am. for months, and found that he saw the same people, invariably sitting in their own seats, every morning. No one spoke or smiled at him, or at anyone else, except if they were friends, yet he felt they were reassured to see him. He was, in fact, a member of an exclusive club, the main prerequisite of which was total anonymity.

On the rare occasion when he had missed the 8.20, and caught a later 'bus, everyone was strange, and looked at him almost as if he had intruded. He had recognised that they had their own little club, and he was an outsider....

He settled in his seat and took an extra deep breath of anticipation...he scanned the road ahead for the heavy truck laden with timber. The traffic was heavy, and indeed increased in volume as it approached the city centre, but he knew the timber lorry would be easily discernible.

The previous night Connery had gone outside just before midnight to close the small cloche windows over his lettuce, and had looked up at the sky, to try and estimate if the late frost would be severe. He had no interest in astronomy, but one cluster of stars overhead made his forehead wrinkle...he thought he had seen a similar pattern somewhere else - not in the sky but on a mundane object.

Later he had woken suddenly in the middle of the night - a glance at the luminous dial of the alarm clock showed it to be 5.50 am. His subconscious mind had connected the two patterns...the unknown star cluster shape resembled a group of knot-holes on wood...on planks...on planks on the timber lorry which he had sometimes noticed amongst the morning traffic. His mind raced over the possibilities, and sleep was rejected fiercely for an hour or more.

The 'bus stopped at the red traffic light - it pulled into the inside lane, and Connery, sitting on the right side of the 'bus, looked downwards and saw the lorry below...thick planks, probably 8"x2", lay length-ways down the chassis. The lorry was loaded with them - and at the end of one plank, near the centre of the load, was the group of knot holes, extremely similar to the group of stars...the same plank in the same position as he had previously noted. Prior to this confirmation there had been just a slight doubt in his mind. After all, he

had bigger things to think of than knot-holes in a plank - the Fledsbury-Smythe file, for instance. But now, the implications were enormous...a large lorry, loaded with thick long planks to capacity, had been travelling into the city (and obviously out of it again) at least half a dozen times in a few days, presumably without the planks ever being unloaded.

The orange light alerted the two drivers side by side, and they both accelerated on the green light. The 'bus won, and Connery, turning his head, saw the timber lorry drop in behind. He got up and plodded between the seats...looks of surprise were shown as he passed, because this wasn't his stop. He felt the 'bus slow down, and the lorry, seeing its chance, rudely pulled into the next lane and overtook the 'bus.

Connery got a quick glimpse of the vehicle's registration number, AFG 631, and repeated it to himself madly until he got off the 'bus. He wrote the number down with his ball-point pen on the back of his left hand, decided he'd walk the rest of the way to his office.

He was fifteen minutes late. Some of the senior officers regarded it as one of the perks of commissioned rank to saunter in half an hour after the workers had arrived. Connery did not accept this, and preferred to let the office staff see him at his desk when they arrived. He fancied Sergeant Jameson leered behind his back as he passed through to his office.

The IN tray was full, Connery liked it that way. It was years since he had time to do the crossword, although the Chief Constable would sometimes ring through for assistance with a difficult clue. Connery buzzed for Jameson.

"Anything fresh?" he asked.

"Here's the Fledsbury-Smythe file, sir," grinned Jameson. He dropped the bulky file on the desk top.

Connery frowned. He looked at the back of his hand, wrote the lorry number on the top page of a scrap-pad, and handed it over.

"Let me know who owns the lorry, Sergeant," he said, dismissing Jameson with an outward wave of his right hand.

The Fledsbury-Smythe file...he had never known anything like it before. He brooded as he sat looking at the well-thumbed manilla cover....

A criminal named Robert Winston Mulgrew, Criminal Record Office number 23366/63/6 had been arrested for a series of forgery and uttering cases - 105 separate cases in fact. Mulgrew had obtained cheque books, and had forged various names on the cheques, obtaining sums of between £5:10:0 and £1,300 at banks and shops all over England. Although a criminal of limited education, with a working-class background, Mulgrew had become accomplished at presenting himself at the banks and shops as a gentleman of means. He was well dressed, and used a variety of aliases, combining high-ranking titles of the armed forces with names such as Montague-Fitzsimmons, Delaney-Montrose and the little gem Fledsbury-Smythe, in which name the file had become associated. Mulgrew had been identified by the Modus Operandi branch, and due to a clever piece of work by the detective squad in Bristol, had eventually been caught, with a considerable amount of money in his possession, and with the cheque-book stubs, which agreed numerically with the forged cheques. Handwriting experts said the forged names were all written by Mulgrew, and bank cashiers and shop assistants had unerringly picked him out at numerous

identification parades. The whole case, in fact, was superbly prepared, and presented a classic example of detection and consolidation of evidence - with just one magnificent exception. Of the 105 forged cheques tendered, 69 had a right thumb imprint upsidedown on the reverse side - the imprints not being made by Mulgrew. When the first cases had occurred, the cheques had been sent to the Fingerprint Department, and had been sprayed with a mixture of ninhydrin and acetone, which reacted on sweat from the pores, and when subjected to heat revealed the fingerprints as red patterns. Connery knew, from previous cases of a similar type, that the chance of getting a good identifiable fingerprint on a cheque was about one instance in twenty-five, or 4%. In Mulgrew's case, the percentage was almost 66%. There could be no doubt about it - the right thumb imprint of an unknown person had been purposely planted on the backs of the cheques so that they would be easily found.

The situation was complicated, and Connery worked it out this way - if he, Connery, had the job of defending Mulgrew, he thought he had more than an even chance of getting an acquittal. The three major evidential links were :-

- a. Handwriting,
- b. Identification by witnesses,
- c. Numbered cheque stubs tallying with those on the forged cheques.

Taking them and shooting them down in order:-
a. Handwriting. It was not an infallible science. The defence could always produce a vagrant handwriting expert who could violently disagree with the prosecution expert.

b. Identification by witnesses. The stock defence objections were twofold:-

- i. The police had already told the witnesses who to pick out, possibly by showing them a photograph beforehand.
- ii. Insisting it was a case of mistaken identity, or Mulgrew had a double.
- c. Numbered cheque stubs in his possession tallying with the forged ones - these had been placed in his pocket by either :-
 - i. The Police, or,
 - ii. The actual criminal.

But to a defence lawyer, the masterstroke was that 69 of the cheques, issued by different banks, had one identical right thumb imprint on each of them - therefore it was obviously made by the culprit - but it was not Mulgrew's right thumb - therefore Mulgrew could not be the culprit.

It was obviously an extremely clever play by Mulgrew - and obviously Mulgrew knew of the existence of the thumbs and would notify his lawyer about it.

The Pledsbury-Smythe file was a hot potato which nobody wanted to handle - no senior officer wanted to take the responsibility of ordering a prosecution because of the thumb imprint which was unidentified, because in these circumstances a resultant unsuccessful prosecution and verdict of 'Not Guilty' would signify a lack of appreciation of evidential circumstances. The file had finished up with Inspector Connery - he had to make the decision.

His telephone buzzed, it was the Photography Department stating they were now ready to take his photograph - he had

asked them for an appointment, because he wanted a new photograph for the renewal of his driving licence.

Connery posed, a rather stiff-upper-lip expression, whilst the white-coated sergeant photographer clicked the Nikon. He didn't visit the department very often, although administratively it was his responsibility. He asked a few general questions, got a few polite but non-committal answers. In a corner, near the exit, he noticed a photographer, using a Linhoff, focusing on a small black two-way communications radio, slightly larger than the pocket variety used by the city force for local communications. It had a chrome aerial partly extended, and had black-ribbed sides and smooth corners.

"Is this a proposed new issue for the force, Sergeant?" asked Connery.

"No sir," smiled the Sergeant condescendingly, "twenty of these were stolen during a smash and grab last night at Christie's, in Arundel Street. A similar model is being photographed for inclusion in the Police Gazette."

The photographer returned then, saying the plate was OK. He handed the radio to Connery for examination.

The Inspector knew that many professional criminals (and indeed some amateur ones) carried two-way radios for two reasons. a. to listen to police control broadcasts to cars and beat-men, and b. to keep contact with the lookout man whilst they were committing the crime. Usually the equipment they used was much more efficient than police equipment.

Connery extended the aerial, tuned, and suddenly heard someone talking, an adolescent voice which was just breaking. This person was speaking to someone called Sam, although Connery couldn't hear the other end of the conversation...and Connery became even more convinced that it was a young boy, because he was using garbled radi vernacular, which he'd obviously picked up from 'Z Cars' or a similar TV programme - or perhaps from an actual police transmission.

"...and tell you what, Sammy, try it out from Hilltop Farm"...a pause..."but you could get there in half an hour on your bike"....."wilco, Sam..switch on at 2.30 exactly, mind, and I'll ask Lenzy to tune in and see if he can pick you up, but reception may be poor because he's in the valley....Roger and out."

The photographers were looking at Connery and laughing amongst themselves, but Connery left their office and crossed the building to the Traffic Department. A large map of the city and suburbs covered one complete wall, and it was liberally covered with black and red pins, the red denoting fatal accidents, the black injury...but Connery stood back from the map, noting the contour lines...looking especially for concentric rings showing hills, and scanning particularly for buildings and paths on the summits. There were several; he took note of the map references and the nearest village police stations.

Connery looked at his watch back in his office-11.15 am. He buzzed for Jameson.

"Sergeant," he said. "I want you to telephone through to the villages of Mossley, Overton, Denton and Swarditch - ask if they have a Hilltop Farm in their police areas."

He waited whilst Jameson jotted down the details.

"Er, by the way, sir, I've traced the ownership of that vehicle you gave me to check. It belongs to the Enterprise Trading Company, 113 Poolo Street, East London...and, Sir...Superintendent Watson asks what you're doing about the fingerprints on the Mulgrew cheques?"

Occasionally, Inspector Connery swore, using the conventional four-letter words. It was not a good thing to use obscene invective in front of the 'other ranks', because it showed you could lose control - you could let slip that mask of detachment which was why you were singled out to be an officer.

Connery swore because he just wasn't in control of things...he was trying a couple of long shots in which he could be wasting valuable time, whereas he knew he should really be making a decision about that Mulgrew (Fledsbury-Smythe) file.

"---- Super Watson," swore Connery, "tell him to try Mulgrew's big toe 'prints."

It was the most sarcastic thing he could think of. He dismissed Jameson with a decisive flick of the left forefinger, and picked up the offending file.

'Prosecute on all charges,' he wrote savagely - signed it and threw it in his OUT tray. It was finished. He had taught himself not to have recriminations or second thoughts once he had made his final decision. He picked up the telephone and asked to be put through to the Enterprise Trading Company.

A girl answered in a distinct cockney accent, although she tried to make it sound as though she was auditioning for the National Theatre.

"Enterprise Trading Company...can I help you?"

"The Glantwitch Trading Association here," said Connery, sweating slightly, "I'd like to hire one of your lorries for a couple of weeks - I noted your AFG 631 and it would suit my requirements."

"Hold on, sir...."

After a moment she returned to the 'phone.

"I'm afraid you'll have to wait another six weeks, sir, that vehicle is already on loan."

"Ah," breathed Connery, "could you tell me who has it, dear? I'll ring them myself and ask them when they'll be finished with it."

"Sorry, sir - it's company policy...I cannot divulge that information."

Connery replaced the telephone. He crossed to the window, as he always did when perplexed, and gazed at the busy city centre. Experimentally, he pulled a finger across the window, and noted the clear line it left, bisecting a film of dust. The townhall across the square took on a new architectural glitter when viewed through the clear patch of window.

He shouted a "come in" at the knocked door, and Jameson entered, his eyes furrowed together.

"There is a Hilltop Farm in Overton, sir," he said.

"Good. Order a car from Transport for 2 pm. I want you to come along too, so leave fifteen minutes earlier for your lunch."

Alone again, Connery pondered the wisdom of his pending actions...the morning had started off easily enough, although the knot-holes

had stirred his interest ...his mind now seemed more alert than usual and he appeared to have an inner perception which controlled his actions without his being able to counteract the complicated suggestions.

The transport car was parked on the grass verge behind a high trimmed hawthorne hedge. A couple of yards in front was a five-barred gate which introduced a path running directly to the top of a rounded hill. Hilltop Farm, Constable Oglivvy confirmed, was at the top of the hill. A small copse of coniferous trees half covered the hill behind the farm.

It was ten to three pm. The transport driver was asleep, or pretending to be, the peak of his cap rested on his nose.

Sergeant Jameson was quiet...very quiet, but this wasn't unusual. He always remained quiet when he didn't know what was happening.

Constable Oglivvy was obese and red-faced. He should have been off duty that afternoon, and as he was on his twenty-sixth year on the force he felt able to assert his displeasure by inference. He didn't say anything either.

Inspector Connery looked at his watch, almost five to three, and then a young boy in short trousers climbed over the gate.

"That's Sammy McDowell," blurted Oglivvy. "His father's very rich."

"Bring him over here," ordered Connery, suddenly feeling rather cold.

The constable called the boy over...Sammy looked fresh-faced and innocent, as if about to ask the choir master if he could sing descent.

"Where's your walkie-talkie, son," asked Connery. He looked out of the opened window directly at the boy.

"Walkie-talkie, sir?" he queried, eyes wide.

"Two-way radio," hissed Connery, "don't bother to lie, we have you on tape."

"Loud and clear," confirmed Jameson with little conviction.

"What's he talking about, Mr.Oglivvy?" asked the boy.

"Dunno," said the village constable. He ran a spatulate finger round his collar. He was sweating freely.

Connery knew he had to be right. The boy had obviously seen the car stop at the gate, behind the hedge, hadn't he? His name was Sam, and he was at Hilltop Farm at 2.30 pm. Connery didn't like dealing with children. But Sammy was no child...in body yes, but in mind he was cold, calculating....mature. He'd seen too many TV crime shows. And Connery was getting no help from his associates, and if the facts got out he'd be the laughing stock of the county and city police. He tried one gigantic bluff.

"If that's the way you want it son," said Connery in a father-like way. "The others will get off lighter, because we've recovered most of the sots. We'll drop you at Evertton, Constable Oglivvy, and then we'll take Sam to the Remand Home, until we search his house."

The boy's eyes grew even wider ...he was white-faced, nervous, but still the picture of innocence.

A horrible thought struck Connery...perhaps the boy

did have a walkie-talkie - but denied it because he perhaps knew a G.P.O. licence was required...and he hadn't got one.

The boy got in the car, sat between Connery and the Constable. Sergeant Jameson cowered in the front seat, hoping that the boy would never be able to recognise him.

The car had travelled fifty yards when the boy burst out crying. "It's in the trees at the top of the hill," he sobbed. "Ricky Dawson gave it to me."

Connery told the driver to stop. His lips were dry, and he wrapped his tongue around them.

"Show the Sergeant," he said to the boy. As they climbed the hill, he turned to Constable Oglivy.

"D'you know where Ricky Dawson lives?"

"Yes," said Oglivy. "His father is rich, too."

The time was 4.5 pm. Twenty black two-way radios were on Connery's desk. He smiled as Sergeant Jameson asked him how he had worked it out. He picked up the telephone and asked for the photographers.

"Inspector Connery here," he said. "You've probably published the police gazette...remember the two-way radios you were photographing this morning, which division was in charge of the case?"

A pause.

"F Division, sir."

Connery slammed down the 'phone - then picked it up again and asked for the Detective Inspector of F Division...spoke to him.

"Re your smash and grab and larceny of those two-way radios. Well, I've twenty in my office at the moment. Your criminal was fifteen years old, name of Richard Dawson. Constable Oglivy, Overton Station has the case...you'd better contact him."

He put the 'phone down again, and as he did so it rang continuously until he picked it up.

"Right sir, coming sir," he said into the mouth-piece. Connery turned to the Sergeant.

"The Chief Constable wants me."

The Chief Constable was a retired Brigadier. He was the conventional ex-army officer type or at least he had made himself so...trimmed white moustache, greying hair, slightly bulbous nose and a look of subtle bewilderment. He had assumed this facade of incredulity and he hoped it suggested a shrewd brain underneath...most people accepted the former premise and didn't know about the latter.

"Come in my dear Inspector," he beamed. "Wonderful work, wonderful. Tell me all about it."

He produced a bottle of VAT 69, poured generous measures in two glasses and quickly waved the soda syphon above them.

Connery was pleased. It was the first time he'd received the accolade.

"It was just a hunch, sir," he said, accepting the glass. "I hope it won't be considered a precedent, but I've handed the case over to the village constable at Overton."

The Chief Constable blinked apprehensively

"Er..Overton..Overton?" he muttered. "Er, the

Constable...eh...or...what?"

"I know I perhaps went over the heads of 'F' Division, sir," explained Connery," but Constable Oglivy was of considerable assistance - "

"But dash it, my dear fellow. What's all that got to do with the toe print?"

"The toe print?" panted Connery. He literally staggered back.

"Yes. I've been told that you advised Super Watson to check some fellow's big toe print on a cheque, and it's it."

Connery couldn't stop his hand trembling. He finished the drink off in a gulp and quickly followed with the refill. He excused himself, and thundered down to see Sergeant Jameson. But when he reached his office, he pondered for a second. His suggestion about the toe print was made when he was in a vile temper - he'd felt viciously sarcastic. But obviously Jameson had thought it to be a serious suggestion, and had passed it on to Super Watson. Because of Connery's growing reputation as an unorthodox investigator, or, as he had overheard, a harbinger of flukes, the police had caused Mulgrew's toe prints to be taken. Comparison had provided confirmation. It was incredible but true. Mulgrew, planning the crimes, and maybe grinning like mad, had carefully pressed his right big toe on each cheque, knowing that unidentified but identical fingerprints on the differing cheques would give him at least a 50-50 chance at any eventual trial. It was probably unique in the annals of crime.

He pushed open Jameson's door.

"I see you passed on my hint about the toe prints," smiled Connery.

"Yes sir. You should have heard what they called you when I told them of your suggestion first of all. But please accept my congratulations sir. It's your best yet."

"Thanks, Sergeant," said Connery gravely. He went to his own office. He packed away the growing bundle of files, shook his head once more in utter disbelief, and went home.

It was a pleasant evening. After watering the garden, Connery sat on an upturned wheel-barrow and watched the steady growth of his dahlias and chrysanthemums. But his thoughts quickly turned to the day's activities. Normally he dismissed office problems from his mind a minute after five o'clock each day...but today his success had been phenomenal; it wasn't false modesty, he had to accept that perhaps he really did have something...an indefinable but instinctive ability to assess and conclude far above that of the average policeman. But surely a detective investigating the theft of twenty two-way radios should, on his own initiative, have decided to obtain an identical set and operate it, as Connery had done accidentally, so as to intercept potential operations. No one had thought of it.

The 'big toe print' was a fluke to end all flukes. He hadn't meant it as a serious suggestion. But his protégé, Sergeant Jameson, clung blindly to his every word, and had considered it his duty to pass on the suggestion.

And suddenly Connery remembered the timber lorry. He pursed his lips and whistled softly. He had been temporarily stumped when the firm who owned the lorry had refused to divulge the person or

persons who had hired it - if it was on hire. Another policeman might have telephoned New Scotland Yard and asked them to send a man round to get the information. This obviously would have alerted the owners, who might reasonably be expected in turn to warn the hirer.

It was getting cold as the sun disappeared. Connery put his gardening tools in the shed, and went in for coffee. His wife prattled about a new TV serial being shown, but he went into the front room, switched on the electric fire and looked at the reddening bar. Once more he went over the facts...because of an unusual arrangement of knot-holes, resembling a constellation in the night sky, he had discovered that several mornings at about 8.30 am a lorry loaded with timber had travelled northwards from London...therefore it had always left its destination at the same time. The particular length of timber with the knot-holes was always in the same position...therefore not only was the same load of timber being carried, it hadn't even been unloaded.

Why this was being done was a mystery - it was impossible to guess the reason for it...at least, Connery was baffled. No criminal offence was being perpetrated, as far as he knew - and then Connery made up his mind. His teeth clamped together with the effort of concentration - he telephoned through to Transport and asked for a car to call at his home at 7.45 am next morning. He rang through to the Duty Detective in "B" Division and asked for one detective sergeant and one detective constable to be at the station at 8 am, when he would pick them up for an unspecified job. Connery felt that if it was a fiasco on the morrow he could always boast about the too print...

It was raining slightly, a steady drizzle. This did nothing to evoke enthusiasm amongst the two plainclothesmen who sat in the rear seat. This was much too early and much too mysterious for them.

The Transport car was parked on the wide approach on the outskirts of the city, to the south. At 8.10 am. Connery saw the lorry approaching. He instructed the Transport driver, who was in uniform, to stop it. The lorry, number AFG 361, obeyed his hand signal and drew to a halt just behind the police car.

The driver looked down from his cab, quite unconcerned. He was chewing, a practised grinding of molars accentuating his jawline. His hair was fair, and he was ruggedly handsome. Rather like an actor modelling for a new male deodorant.

The uniformed policeman asked to see his driving licence. Connery signalled the detective sergeant to stay with them, and he took the young and agile-looking detective constable to the rear of the lorry.

"Now then, young fellow," Connery smiled, "climb up that pile of timber...now you see that one length...no, higher, yes, that one - see if it has a sort of collection of knot-holes at one end, about seven of them."

The detective appeared petrified, with what particular emotion Connery could not comprehend.

"Are you serious, sir?" he asked, clinging to the timber. Cars started to blow their horns as the nearby ones slowed down to see what was happening.

"Of course I'm bloody well serious," rapped Connery. He saw and felt a movement from the front of the lorry, and the

lorry driver raced past him. The two policemen who were supposed to be watching him stood blankly gazing after his retreating figure. There was a squeal of brakes being hastily applied as the man raced across the busy road.

"Congratulations," rasped Connery to the detective sergeant. "Fantastic aptitude you have for this sort of work."

"Don't blame me, you didn't tell me to hold him - he wasn't under arrest."

Secretly Connery knew he couldn't blame the man, because he hadn't told them anything about the operation - even he didn't know what was going on.

The detective constable joined them. He was sucking a finger.

"Got a splinter sir," he said, "or...the knot-holes are as you stated - and a funny thing, sir, the lengths of timber are nailed together - they won't move."

"Another thing sir," observed the Transport driver, "the tyres aren't flat, and they should be with that load of timber."

"Good men," said Connery. He nodded to the driver, "um...you take this lorry to the Transport Yard - try not to touch the rear-view mirror or the door, I want the cab examined for fingerprints. We'll bring your car back ourselves."

After the cab had been examined and photographed, a crowd of spectators gathered round to watch Connery supervise a squad of shirt-sleeved men dismantle the load of timber in the Transport Yard.

There was a gasp of sheer astonishment from the watchers, and from the officers and typists hanging out of the windows overlooking the yard, but mostly from Connery himself, as a section of planks dropped away to reveal a large chamber, which was filled to capacity with cartons of cigarettes. The planks had been arranged as a facade to conceal this space, large enough to conceal half a dozen men. In fact, crumbs and cigarette butts squashed flat on the linoleum floor attested that it had recently been used for that very purpose.

The cartons were unloaded and a total of 400,000 cigarettes were counted.

Connery went back to his office, and checked the New Scotland Yard list of missing and stolen property with Jamson, and found that cigarettes totalling his seizure (including the identical brands) agreed with those taken during a warehouse-breaking in London a week previously. Connery telephoned the Yard immediately and gave all the information he had regarding the vehicle and the rascient Enterprise Transport Company. He also promised to send down photographs of the fingerprints found on various parts of the cab for favour of search in their fingerprint collections.

"This definitely is the climax of your career, sir," said Jamson. He shook the Inspector's hand warmly.

The telephone buzzed, Jamson lifted it, raised his eyes, passed it to Connery, whispering 'It's the Chief Constable.'

"Yes, sir?" queried Connery.

"Er...word of three letters, Inspector...For he's a jolly good feller'...the letter word ending in 'er'".

"Axe" said Connery, and heard a muttered 'blast it' before the Chief Constable's telephone was replaced.

"Just one thing sir," said Jameson. "I'm in the Registry Football Pool club, and, well, the lads have heard all about your luck this last couple of days, and they'd like you to mark our coupon this week."

Connery smiled darkly.

He marked x's at random over the proffered coupon...

John Berry
1968.

GENERAL COMMENT

My enthusiasm for S&PS has received a temporary lapse because the January 1968 mailing has so far failed to arrive. I am stencilling this on 12th March 1968, just prior to posting this issue in time for the April deadline, and I have suffered the frustration of not having seen the previous mailing, and therefore not knowing what you all thought of my special 50th issue.

Notwithstanding, I've taken extreme care whilst writing my CONNERY'S WAY. I think it is one of my best literary efforts to date. And of course I make the promise once again that the basic crimes actually happened. I've obviously dramatised the situations and invented the surrounding circumstances in this case in order to write a story with temporary frustrations, several surprises and a 'fluke' or two. This I know from personal experience to be the conventional course of crime investigation... (especially the ones I've taken part in.) So please don't think that Inspector Connery is a super sleuth. He's just lucky having me to write his script for him...

For those amongst you who are astronomically minded, the latest news in radio astronomy is the discovery of the so-called 'pulsator's'. The Mullard Observatory at Cambridge University has found a source of energy outside the Solar System but in our own galaxy which sends out a signal every 1.3 seconds. At first some observers thought it to be an artificial signal from 'outer space', but observations have shown that the source is not orbiting, therefore it cannot be a planet. Calculations show it to be presumably a very instable white dwarf about four hundred miles in diameter.

With 'quasars'... 'pulsators' and 'X-Ray' stars discovered in the last few years new thoughts on Cosmology are being continually reshaped to absorb the latest advances in knowledge. Yet it is still just clever guesswork. Cosmological theories remain merely mental exercises for those so minded and intellectually capable, and although they make absorbing reading they are really only an advanced form of science fiction. I have often wondered why someone like Ted White has not given us lesser mortals some of his own theories on the subject....

My space stamp collection now features twelve BHUTAN three-dimensional stamps, four of them airmails. Whatever border line exists between postage stamps and miniature works of art..well... this BHUTAN set falls on the wrong side. They are very thick, like a postcard, are admittedly adhesive, and have four basic space motifs, which are magnificent and truly 3D.

I have taken the liberty of featuring a 'galaxy and telescope' CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1967 stamp as my front cover. I think it is an admirable design, well worth appearing somewhere as a front cover. Perhaps, in my next few issues I plan to feature similar designs of space stamps from other countries.

So this is FOT FOURRI #52, printed and published by John Berry, number 31, Campbell Park Avenue, Belmont, BELFAST BT4 3FL, Northern Ireland, for the 82nd S&PS mailing, due out in April 1968.

John Berry
1968
