

OUR JOHN

A royal crest featuring a crown and a circular emblem with the text "40 YEARS". The crest is positioned between the words "OUR" and "JOHN" in the title "OUR JOHN".

MEMORIES OF THOSE WHO KNEW HIM



1962-

PC John Egerton

**SON
BROTHER
FRIEND
COLLEAGUE**

11 · 03 · 1982

murdered on duty in Farnworth 11th March 1982

PC John Egerton, aged 20, from Farnworth, Bolton, was stabbed to death in a factory yard in Farnworth on March 11, 1982, as he tried to arrest a man he caught siphoning petrol from a van.

The young officer had responded to a call for assistance from a colleague who had seen a man climb into a large factory yard.

They split up to search the area and a short time later PC Egerton used his radio to report that he had disturbed someone, but no other transmissions were heard. The 20-year-old, discovered at the side of one of the yard buildings, had suffered four stab wounds to the head and body, which tragically proved fatal.

The above is what was widely reported. We know of the impact such events have on the nearest and dearest but the ripples of the action of this one man, Arthur Edge spread far and wide.

Here are some stories and memories of family and those officers who knew John, worked with him and had turned up for 'another set of nights'

SON BROTHER FRIEND COLLEAGUE

My brother John was quite quiet growing up but I suppose that was to be expected being the only boy with 4 sisters!

Angela Bretherton - Sister

We have always tried to keep his memory alive and are very grateful to GMP to keep us involved.

MY BROTHER JOHN

I think we did think that we girls ruled the house but definitely not so as he would only take so much then we really knew who the boss was!

Think he always knew what he wanted to do with his career but as the police were not taking cadets on at the time he left school, he had to wait until he was 18, so he did any job he could just until he was old enough.

He went to America with friends in 1981 and I remember him being so happy when he got back you could tell he was going to be doing a lot more travelling in the future.

On John's last day I remember my mum phoning me at work to say that my record player had arrived at her house that I had ordered and I asked her if John was there and to put him on the phone, I asked him if he would bring it down to my flat on his way to work that night and he said he would, he came later with it and set it up for me and that was the last time I saw him! I am so glad I got to see him that day!

I can honestly say that not a day has gone past in this 40 years when I have not thought of him, what would he be doing, would he have a family?

Angela Bretherton - Sister

When John left school he worked on the gardens up top of Plodder Lane, Farnworth

He once went to Disneyland with school friends.

He loved dogs but mum and dad would not allow us to have one so when next door the Tomkins went on holiday he was allowed to look after Honey the dog he was so pleased.

John was not great at maths and mum wanted him to pass his 11plus so she got Sandra from across the road to help him and he passed his 11 plus with her help.

John loved to go watch Bolton football. He also loved to read and he had his own bedroom (he was the only boy) and you would always find him there reading.

John was about 18 months younger than me and when we was older mum and dad had gone out and me and Angela was arguing ...and he told me to go to bed lol and I did.

Margaret Egerton - Sister

John loved to go watch Bolton football.

SON
BROTHER
FRIEND
COLLEAGUE

A lovely young officer, the epitome of a Policeman.

REFLECTIONS OF OFFICERS WHO WERE ON DUTY THAT DAY.

DAVE O'BRIEN

I was on foot patrol in Farnworth, still in my probation when, from a distance I spotted Edge climbing the gate into the yard of Dynamic Plastics on Egerton Street.

We didn't parade many on that night, 3 or 4 officers being absent for different reasons. One of our number was away up the M62 chasing after a stolen car, another was on foot in Little Lever and another was looking after the phones in the station office which was open 24/7 then. John wasn't there either, - he had come on duty at 2200 hrs. an hour earlier than the rest of us, as was the custom then; each shift providing an early start patrol. So when John responded to the call I made for back up I knew we were it.

We scaled the fence and split up looking really for a point of entry to the building.

That's the last time I saw him alive. I found him dead on the ground near some works vehicles a bit later by which time the sergeant and other patrols had arrived. Edge had done one somehow, but I circulated his description.

I remember later that morning having to go to a press conference with James Anderton - God's Cop so eloquently put by Shaun Ryder - who told me not to say anything controversial. They gave me a night off but I was in the following night. We did seven on the trot in those days — and no counselling.

I do find it difficult
talking about that night.

JAN CORNWELL nee Hodkinson

I joined the Police on 9th November, 1981, and was posted to Farnworth in February, 1982. I was on John's scale, my tutor being the late 4107 Charlie (Super) Cooper.

On that fateful night, my first set of nights, Charlie was driving me around the New Bury and Highfield areas of Farnworth. He said that if I saw anything and I wanted to stop, just tell him. In no time I saw a small red van with a back light out. I asked if we could pull him over but a pursuit ensued, only culminating when the driver blew the engine on the M62 at Whitefield. The driver turned out to be Derek 'Chang' Hindley, a prolific disqualified driver and well known to Charlie. In fact I think everyone I reported was well known to Charlie, who always apologised, explaining that I was just learning!! Their reply, "Oh we understand Charlie! No problem!"

As we waited for prisoner transport and vehicle recovery, Sergeant John Dyson contacted Charlie, stating there had been a serious incident and he needed to return to Farnworth as soon as possible. Charlie remarked that it must be serious as he had never known that being said before. Of course as we returned to Egerton Street and saw Sergeant Probert, the true horror of that night was revealed. It will remain in my memory forever. There were flakes of snow falling. Such a bleak night. And later, attending John's home, witnessing the raw pain and disbelief of his family. I didn't know John for long. He was a few months younger than me and seemed very pleasant but shy. When you consider all the life he missed out on. Tragic.

“I didn't know John
for long. He was a few
months younger than
me and seemed very
pleasant but shy”

RICK ARMSTRONG

I joined with John Egerton in 1979. We went to Bruche together and were both posted to Bolton Division, he being assigned Farnworth and myself Central.

We were on the same shift. I remember that fateful night vividly. When the call went out from John Dyson in the Divisional Ops Room that an officer was down there was a cocktail of emotions; Shock, Sadness, Anger and an overriding feeling of wanting to get the one responsible.

We were told that a suspect was likely wearing a lumberjack style coat, popular at the time. So, on the hunt we went, trawling the late night drinking dens like the Jimmy Sherrington's dive on Back Mawdesley St for such clad blokes. A number were 'spoken to' as the saying went.

The murderer, Edge, was later spotted on Manchester Rd Bolton by one of our shifts charge office guys on their way home.

“I remember John as a quiet and reserved chap, a true gentleman.”

DAVE CRITCHLOW

I will never forget that night, it was 10th March 1982 my forty second birthday. I worked in the Bolton Charge Office.

Edge's name came to prominence. On checking his previous he had been arrested with a person from Manchester some 2 years before, I checked back and found an address. I believe it was in Longsight but it came back negative.

At the end of my shift I handed over and left about 6.55am. (a few minutes early). I was passing Bolton Wanderers on Manchester Road going towards Farnworth when I saw Edge walking towards Bolton, I turned into Croft Lane and went to the phone box. I had no change so I dialed 999 and got through to Police and identified myself, gave Edge's name and direction he was headed. I then followed and parked on Orlando Bridge observing him. When he was outside the Technical College 3 Police cars from Castle Street turned into Manchester Road and he was arrested. I think Eric Crompton was one of the officers.

I came back on duty at 10.30pm and was met by the Supt. His comment was 'I left duty at 7am and made a phone call from outside Bolton Wanderers ground at 7.01am. How was that?' I told him it was a mile from the Office, downhill with a following wind.

STUART HODGSON

Sadly, I knew John prior to him joining the Police; he lived on the same road as us, Buttermere Road (as did Dave O'Brien). My wife Carol played rounders' in the local leagues for a few years and got to know John's mum Joan, who used to follow rounders and later the girls started to play.

Joan was aware that I was a police officer and approached me to speak with John when he was considering joining the Police. He was quite a shy lad, but I think he was taken by the social side as well as wanting to be an officer. He did ask the right questions, whether he spoke to anyone else I don't know. He ended up at Farnworth.

On the 11th March I was on nights with my colleagues PS John Dyson supervisor, Pc John (Chalky) Hibbert., myself, and Joe Rushton. The Farnworth patrols that night, as I recall included John of course, Dave O'Brien, Steve Ford, Charlie Cooper, Harvey Clugston, Graham Glover, PW's Yvonne Broadbent and I think Julie Threlfall. PS Mike Kelly supervision.

I do remember the call from Dave O'Brien who was mobile and John who was close by responding to what seemed to be a "Nothing Job" Joe Rushton sensed by the response from John when he said he had disturbed someone in the works yard that he had a problem, no matter, when he called him back there was no response other than Dave O'Brien trying to and subsequently finding him injured.

Within the Control Room we were all tuned in and able to assist as other patrols converged on the area. As is always the case time passes very quickly, and like clockwork, other resources were required as the incident escalated. We kept the force control room updated and various on call support was activated. I must say officers subsequently were badly affected by the events of the night. I myself had misgivings about the advice given and of course 12th March was my 33rd birthday.

Carol and I saw Joan regularly, as did others from Farnworth, she was very involved up to her passing a few years ago with the annual presentation of the John Egerton Bravery Award.

“Joan was very outgoing and kept in touch with other families throughout the country who had suffered similar loss.”

DAVE NEWTON

I didn't know John. He had been on Traffic training I understand but I don't think our paths crossed, which was unusual because probationers on attachment always came out in my car as I was the dedicated HGV man on the unit.

On the morning after the murder I paraded at KTU at 7am. The early turn crew were also parading, which was always quite informal at Castle Street and we were all taking in the news of the incident when CK radio came alive. 999 calls went into the same room CK operated from so we got heads up before most of the division. Dave Critchlow was on Manchester Road and making his way home after nights when he saw the suspect, Arthur Edge, who he knew from previous arrests. Edge was walking along the pavement opposite him towards town. No mobile phones then so Dave had to find a phone box to call it in.

We heard the message of the sighting and ran out to the yard piling into a car. Eric Crompton (affectionately known as "fat Eric" to distinguish him from another Eric Crompton on the division, known as "thin Eric") was driving and I was front seat passenger seat.

We saw Edge outside the Technical College still walking towards town. Eric stopped adjacent and we arrested him. Eric said the necessary and Edge was locked up without difficulty or protest. We handed him over at K1 and thought that was that but later that night a Detective Superintendent and his Inspector came to my home long after I was off duty and I gave a statement regarding the arrest.

RICHARD DOORIS

I well remember the incident. I was attached to the Serious Crime Squad at the time.

In the early hours of that morning, I received a call at home informing me that a Policeman on duty had been murdered during the night. Without hesitation I dashed to Leigh, got a squad car, picked up a colleague & drove as fast as I could to Bolton. I had been told either in the initial call or en route that they were looking for the suspect, Arthur Edge.

I knew Edge well & I also knew that his father lived just off Manchester Road, Bolton. I made my way down Manchester Road towards Farnworth hoping to see him. Sure enough I did see him but so did a Traffic Patrol & they just beat me to the arrest. I was a little disappointed but very glad that he had been caught. My involvement after that was evidence gathering and fringe enquiries.

All in all it was a tragic set of circumstances, it should never have happened. In situations like that one tends to think had I been there perhaps the outcome may have been much different. I certainly thought that and I thought it was tragic that John Egerton, a lovely young officer, the epitome of a Policeman, should die at the hands of someone like Arthur Edge. It is very fitting that John be always remembered by colleagues old and new. R.I.P.

I remember shedding
a tear like so many
others at the funeral
as Constable Yvonne
Broadbent (RIP) walked
past carrying his helmet
on a cushion.

PAT WALLACE K 6948

I worked at Farnworth the same time as John and after his murder I spent many weeks at his parents, home in Farnworth, as did many other of my colleagues at the time.

I continued to keep in touch with Joan and Jack until they both passed away. John was their only son and very much adored by the whole family. He was a quiet gentle lad but when he spoke it was something of meaning and worth saying. John was very popular and I never heard a bad word said about him.

His father Jack never recovered from losing John and I believe that contributed greatly to Jack's early death. Like John, Jack was a quiet man and internalised his feelings. He would sit staring into space for hours on end.

When Edge plunged that screwdriver into John's heart he killed the essence of the Egerton family, a loving ordinary family who never came to terms with the loss of their beloved son.

“Thank you for remembering John,
he truly was a special person.”

PW 6914 PAT STUBBS

née Earp

I remember arriving for early turn (7am -3pm) at Bolton Central. As I passed the Inspector's Office, I was told that a young bobby called John Egerton, had been killed in Farnworth and that I was to “look after the family”. This was the days before Family Liaison Officers.

I arrived at John's family home to find it full of people. During the days I spent with the family, there was an endless stream of visitors which required a constant flow of tea. One minute I was passing a cup to a family member followed by a cup for the Chief Constable, James Anderton, or to the Bishop of Manchester.

There were sacks full of cards & letters sent by members of the public. I was instructed to open & read each one before handing them to John's parents. Joan said that she wanted to reply to all of them .It was heartbreaking to see the grief of John's parents, sisters and family. I also felt so sad for John's colleagues who had lost 'one of their own' as his Sergeant explained.

I had never met John but in the short time I spent in his home, I realised that he was much loved by his family, friends and colleagues and would be sadly missed by many people.

A QUIET AND RESERVED CHAP, A TRUE GENTLEMAN.

JOHN WAS POSTHUMOUSLY AWARDED THE QUEEN'S COMMENDATION FOR BRAVE CONDUCT.

CREATED AND PRODUCED BY BOLTON BRANCH OF NARPO
WITH THE SUPPORT OF GMP HQ & BOLTON DIVISION AND GMP FEDERATION.