

A date that will never be forgotten - 23rd August 1971.



It started as a normal Monday morning that resulted a short time later in three police officers being shot, one of whom died and showed great acts of bravery by unarmed officers challenging determined armed robbers.

It began shortly after 9am when the silent alarm was sounded at Peers the Jewellers in the Strand, Blackpool, which turned out to be an armed robbery in progress. The first officer to arrive, Constable Walker saw the five robbers leaving the premises and getting into their Triumph getaway vehicle. A pursuit began which resulted in the Triumph ramming the police vehicle leaving the officer dazed. Constable Hampson took up the pursuit until the Triumph stopped and a robber got out and shot him in the stomach.

The Triumph continued until it was blocked in by three police cars driven by Constables Walker, Jackson, and Hillis upon which the five robbers jumped out of the car. One of the robbers pointed a gun at Jackson before turning and running off down an alleyway.

Constable Hillis ran after one of the robbers who turned and fired two or three shots at the officer from about six feet but did not hit him, he continued and after a violent struggle detained the man.

Three of the robbers were now running down an alley followed by Constables Walker and Jackson and as Walker got within ten yards a robber turned round and fired a shot at Constable Walker that missed. The officer carried on running towards the robber who fired again, hitting Constable Walker in the groin. The robber continued running and jumped into the driver's seat of a delivery van whilst two others got in the back of the van. They drove off just as Superintendent Richardson and Inspectors Gray and Redpath arrived at the scene and continued the pursuit.

The van crashed into a wall and as the robbers began to run off Superintendent Richardson and Inspector Gray tried to talk the driver into surrendering his gun. He then turned and ran followed by the officers, in the lead was Superintendent Richardson who caught hold of the man. The man turned and shot Superintendent Richardson in the stomach and as he was falling shot him again, injuries that proved fatal.

Two other robbers were seen by Detective Sergeant Mackay and Detective Constable Hanley who entered the pursuit and caught up with the two fugitives, one of whom levelled his pistol at Sergeant Mackay's head as the C.I.D. car drew alongside him. Mackay swung the driver's door open, and it struck the man, knocking him off balance and they continued to run off. They gave chase in the car and one of them turned round and aimed the gun at the head of Sergeant MacKay but fortunately the gun failed to fire. He used his car to knock them off their feet and then began a chase on foot.

The robbers ran down an alley towards Inspector Redpath who saw them approaching pursued by Sergeant MacKay. Sergeant MacKay tackled the man and as he fell to the ground Inspector Redpath kicked the gun from his hand. Constable Hanley caught up to the other man and arrested him.

The brave actions of all the officers were acknowledged by the Queen in her honours list in November 1972 when she made the following awards:

George Cross:

Superintendent Gerald Irving Richardson (Deceased).
Constable Carl Walker.

George Medal:

Sergeant Kenneth MacKay.
Constable Ian Hampson.
Constable Andrew Hillis.
Constable Patrick Jackson.

British Empire Medal for Gallantry (Civil Division)

Inspector Edward Gray.
Constable Edward Hanley.

Queen’s Commendation for Brave Conduct

Inspector Stephen Drummond Redpath.



Full detail of the award can be viewed by reading the record of the London Gazette, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/45826/supplement/13433>

In his memory the ‘Gerry Richardson Trust’ was established and has generated money to help young people in the Blackpool area to pursue interests and activities, both of physical and cultural character. In the years since being established the Trust has helped nearly 19,000 young people shape their futures.

On the 23rd of August, as in previous years floral tributes will be laid on his grave at the Blackpool Cemetery. A memorial dinner to mark the anniversary of his murder is being held on the 20th of August to remember Superintendent Richardson and his colleagues who acted in the greatest traditions of the Police Service.

John Pickard - Secretary, Blackpool & District Branch.

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The Gerry Richardson Trust has developed its own website this year and can be viewed by visiting <https://gerryrichardsontrust.org/> Donations can be made to the Trust through the website.