



Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, last week. From left: William Wordsworth, Chief Supt. Geoffrey Reeves, Samuel Johnson, Pc Paul Clark, Sgt. Peter Simmons, William Shakespeare, Insp. John Grey, James Thomson, Pc Ted Walter, Sgt. Stewart Lowe . . . For observation of human nature, who better than a policeman?

## When versifying duty's to be done, to be done

POLICE CONSTABLE Ted Walter huddled over a tape-recorder in his patrol car. It was in the early hours of the morning in a secluded part of Farnborough, Kent, and PC Walter was on the look-out for car thieves.

But all was quiet and his whispering into the tape-recorder was not a police report—it was poetry.

"I had this idea for a poem, it was too dark to write, so I decided to test out lines of the poem as they came to me on my tape-recorder," he explains.

PC Walter, 19 years in the

force, a married man with two sons, lists his favourite poets as Shelley, Edward Thomas and Dylan Thomas. He is one of some 50 Metropolitan policemen, from chief superintendent to recent recruit, whose poems are being considered for an anthology to be called Poets on the Beat. (Some of the poets are pictured above.)

The response to an appeal for poems in the summer edition of The Warren, No. 4 area's lively "house magazine," has amazed everybody. So far more than 300 poems have flooded in, ranging from nonsense rhymes and

barrack-room ballads to philosophical soul-searchings.

Sgt Stuart Lowe, 26 years in the force, who started the appeal and has himself written about 60 poems says: "Police are more intelligent, more versatile, than in the days when recruits were looking more for a safe, steady job, than a vocation.

"But the idea of the anthology is not to say to the public, 'Look what a clever bloody lot we are and you thought we were idiots.' It is to encourage just one facet

of a wealth of talent within the police force."

Rosy-faced, brisk and affable, Sgt Lowe, who is in charge of "home beat" constables at Sutton, seems at first acquaintance as unlikely a character as Dixon of Dock Green to have written a poem like *Despair*:

*No warmth the sun, no whisper of the leaves,  
Laughter that grates on tautened nerves,  
Stretched pain a soulful melody . . .*

Although Sgt Lowe points out that "the policeman is in a better position than anyone else to observe human nature," only one of his poems, *The 3 am Backstreet*, stems from his early days on the beat at Peckham.

*A widowed road,  
Oiled black-bodied spilling into oblivion,  
Reflects not emanates luminosity.  
Darkness protects its anonymity.  
Stitched by needled rain,  
Sentry lamps parade its granite edge, urging  
Guttered water down grinning drains*

*Athwart the flood;  
Greyed cats its only passengers,  
Transient shapes of little purpose.*

The most senior contributor to the anthology is Chief Superintendent Geoffrey Reeves. His poems range from an heroic ballad to a police station frolic:

*There's a reeking smell on the stale night air  
So you look around and the bright boy's there  
And you know as you catch the prisoner's breath  
It's Verminous Vera st meth.*

Story: Michael Moynihan Picture: Peter Dunne