

1 The Carruthers Estate

It is sometimes necessary to think in terminology which has more of a military connotation.

ACPO Public Order Manual

As usual, Saturday begins quietly in Sandford. In the town centre, shopkeepers are boarding up their broken windows and deciding how much to tell the insurance companies they lost during the looting. The owners of two burnt-out cars from the night before are at the police station explaining that their documents were destroyed in the glove compartments. But it is a fine day, rather warm for April in Sandfordshire, and the gangs of boys who caused all the damage are long since back in their beds. This afternoon they will get up as usual and go to see Sandford win at home against Chelsea, and as usual one of them will stab a visiting supporter and there will be a decent-sized punch-up at the ground. The police will have their work cut out trying to keep order and get the gangs from Chelsea back on the trains without anyone else getting hurt.

Then late at night, just before closing time, the landlord of The Vines on the edge of the high-rise Carruthers Estate, next to the town centre, will try to close early when his customers start fighting each other. His pub and the flat above it will be set on fire. Six hundred people will build barricades across the entrances to the estate and, as usual, start a riot inside it. The police commander on the ground will send in armoured vehicles to break through the barricades. A unit of police in riot gear will rush in behind them to take back the territory and, as they do, someone in one of the tower blocks will fetch down his rifle and start shooting at them. It happens every Saturday in Sandford. It is what the town and the Carruthers Estate were invented for.

Sometimes the police get back in control by Saturday midnight. Other times they spread out too thinly and are beaten back. On a good Saturday they can get the fire crews in early enough to save most of the estate. On a bad night they face such a hail of petrol bombs that they are lucky if they come through in one piece themselves.

The police know that they will always win in the end. What makes it instructive is that neither side knows how long they will take, or what the cost will be in casualties and arson. It all depends on the police commander in charge of the operation. He is the crucial variable. Every other factor in Sandford, from the violence of the gangs right down to the weather, is as constant as the computer which controls them.

At ten o'clock on a Thursday morning in a real room in the city of Birmingham, five senior officers are sitting down to test their nerve against it.

The backstreets of the Carruthers Estate are known to policemen from all over Britain. Uniformed officers have trained in their thousands in the escalating violence of Sandford on a Saturday night. To a senior officer – Chief Inspector upwards – the names of the four entrances to the Carruthers Estate are as familiar as the Old Kent Road and Park Lane (from a different board game). They are: Polygon Close where the public house is set on fire, Wren Close, Robin Close and Snow Close where the shooting starts. The whole of Sandford was created in 1983 by a small committee of senior officers from different police forces who devised a training programme for every part of the country to prepare for real-life rioting of the kind which broke out in London, Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol and elsewhere in 1980-1. Their job was to ensure that riot police from each force are trained in exactly the same way, so that men from anywhere can be sent as reinforcements to disturbances anywhere else. At that stage, in 1982, none of those involved talked about taking on pickets in an industrial dispute or fighting a convoy of hippies. It was riots that worried them, and Sandford could stand for any of the tense real-life inner-city areas where they might break out. The tactics police have learned in Sandford are now ready for any city in the country. In 1984, every

police force in England, Wales and Scotland started training with the full kit: a large map of Sandford to be spread out on a table-top; a box full of wooden police vans and little wooden crowds with numbers of rioters printed on them (from 15 up to 600); another box of coloured wooden counters with codes on them indicating units of the Sandfordshire Constabulary a handful of senior officers, also made of wood and labelled CH INSP or SUPT; and a control kit listing all the possible complications to the basic story which the computer could generate in response to hasty decisions by the commanders under training. They also had four wooden police dogs, each labelled DOG.

The Facilitator arrives and sits down next to a low table with the map of Sandford spread out. In normal life he is Superintendent Derek Williams of the West Midlands police, an amiable and slightly stocky man in his early forties who came into the force as a constable in the Black Country and has done well to become Deputy Head of Operations, a department which ranks high in the pecking order. In Sandford, he is the aide-de-camp of the computer.

An electronic siren in the VDU next to the map interrupts the social pleasantries, and the first contestant takes his seat opposite the Facilitator. He reads the screen:

YOU ARE THE CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT IN CHARGE OF 'D' DIVISION SANDFORD.

YOU KNOW THAT LAST NIGHT THERE WAS SPORADIC DISORDER ON 'A' DIVISION WHEN CROWDS OF YOUTHS COMMITTED LOOTING AND DAMAGE IN THE CITY CENTRE.

AS A RESULT THE WHOLE FORCE HAS BEEN PUT ON A GENERAL ALERT.

The Facilitator adds some new information just in from the Carruthers Estate. A report from Father Brown, who has been a reliable source of intelligence in the past, indicates that there is going to be trouble on the estate tonight. In addition, a local councillor had phoned to say that snooker balls, stones and petrol bombs are being stored in some of the tower blocks.

The computer prints up a piece of cop sociology:

YOU KNOW THAT THE CARRUTHERS ESTATE IS A COMPLEX OF MANY TYPES OF HOUSING. THE OLD HAS BECOME RUN-DOWN, THE NEW IS MAINLY MULTI-STOREY FLATS. SOCIAL PROBLEMS SEEM MORE ACUTE HERE.

The Facilitator reaches for his box of pieces and begins lining up the wooden transit vans and panda cars along the edge of the map. To the left, his assistant arranges the magnetic coloured counters on a large deployment board which will show at a glance which police units are on stand-by around Sandford throughout the trouble to come. 'Just a couple of points, gentlemen,' says the Facilitator. 'These yellow flashes I shall introduce at certain points are not meant to represent fires necessarily, they stand for any kind of incident requiring police attention. And in deference to our guest can you say "protective equipment" please Gents, not "riot gear"?'

The siren sounds again.

TODAY IS A WARM SATURDAY IN APRIL.

THE TIME IS 6 P.M.

The news from the football ground is mixed. On the positive side, the Facilitator can report that, once again, Sandford have beaten Chelsea who played their usual kind of game. But regrettably there was at least the usual amount of violence on the terraces, and police at the match are worried that it might get worse if they encounter any delays in getting the Chelsea fans on to their trains home. They are particularly anxious to pack them all off before opening time at 7 p.m. There is, however, a problem:

ONE VISITING FAN (A YOUTH) WAS STABBED.

HE IS UNCONSCIOUS IN HOSPITAL, HE IS *NOT* IN A CRITICAL CONDITION.

A radio message from the police commander at the match, relayed through the Facilitator, gives a further twist. Some of the Chelsea supporters are refusing to leave the ground because they have heard a rumour that this brother-in-arms has died in hospital from his stab wounds. The commander says that he knows this to be untrue, but cannot convince the crowd, who are threatening to move towards the hospital. The commander is asking for instructions from the Chief Superintendent back at 'D' divisional headquarters, the man in the hot seat; and would he kindly be quick about it as things are getting out of hand.

As it happens, the first contestant has got his answer ready. He has dealt with difficult football crowds often enough in real life, and takes some pride in having learned their codes of antagonism and trust. He knows they will never believe any police officer's assurance that their colleague is alive and mending. Some of those people have no respect for authority at all.

'Tell him to get the crowd to appoint one of their number as a representative, and lay on a police escort to take him to the hospital to see his mate. Then get him back and give him a loudspeaker as fast as possible.' The divisional radio room passes on the message.

Then the contestant sees another problem coming up – there is less than an hour to go before officers on the 11 to 7 day-shift go off duty. They include all the units at the football ground, and other officers all over Sandfordshire who have been doing a normal day's work. The Superintendent says he wants to spend some money, and keep all those in 'D' Division on for overtime. The Facilitator says that, in the circumstances, he feels sure the Assistant Chief Constable will support the decision.

They look across the deployment board to check the strength of their forces. Nine blue counters represent the Police Support Units, each consisting of twenty constables, two sergeants and an inspector, all fully riot-trained and kitted out with 'protective equipment' in pairs of transit vans. The police call them 'SPG-style' units. Four green counters represent the permanent reserve of the Task Force, in the same 20:2:1 units and the same vans, but better prepared as a fighting force because they work and train together all the time. Four red counters represent the dog vans, with one dog and one handler in each. Add in the divisional headquarters staff, and their opposite numbers in the control room at D2 subdivision, and that's the battle-strength.

The Chief Superintendent checks that the rest of the force are still on general alert, and that he could call them at an hour's notice. He looks at his watch, and takes a moment to work out that it is still set to Birmingham time. The Facilitator tells him that in Sandford it is getting on for ten past six in the evening. It will be dark in less than ninety minutes. He has got to prepare himself and his officers for whatever the night may find on the Carruthers Estate. The home crowd will have a boisterous evening after their win. It could get lively before closing-time. Closing time? That's hours away! He has still not seen the lads from Chelsea on to their trains. He says he wants the Assistant Chief Constable to begin contacting neighbouring forces to explore the chances of getting some of their men to Sandford later in the evening, under the agreed system of mutual aid. Then he drums his fingers for a minute, until the Facilitator brings him the news he wants. The truth worked wonders with the visiting fans, and they are now *en route* to the railway station under police escort. A few of the home crowd are hanging around trying to get at them, but the commander at the ground expects to keep control and have the visitors away before 7 p.m.

The Chief Superintendent takes a deep breath and turn his mind to the next problem: how to deal with the home crowd they've left behind. The Facilitator lets him off. 'Right, thank you, Mr Jones. Got us off to a good start.' A mumble of approval greets the first contestant as he takes his seat back with the other four.

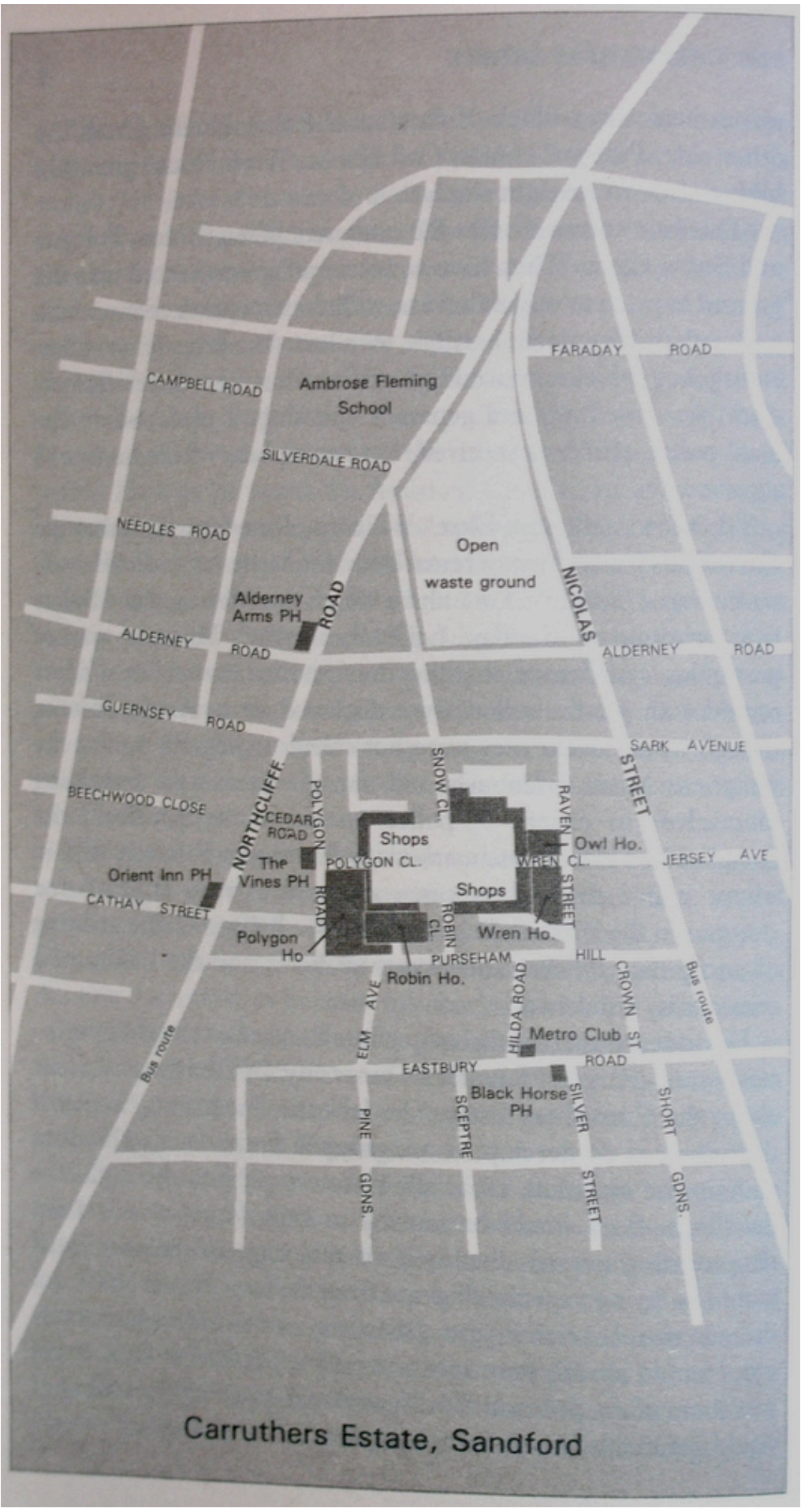
'Mr Jeavons, will you takes over please?' Into the hot seat moves Superintendent David Jeavons – a sharp-featured, pensive man with steel glasses, whose usual posting is in Bradford Street police station in the centre of Birmingham.

‘Let me just tell you something more about the Carruthers Estate,’ says the Facilitator. ‘You have some fears about it from the information you got from Father Brown and the local councillor. That centre quadrangle there is about the size of a football pitch, and tends to be a pedestrian-type area with trees, wastepaper bins, benches etc. There are one or two shops but no more than that in the centre quadrangle. It is not a shopping precinct. Snow House, where you have got one of your observation posts, is a fourteen-storey block of flats, as is Robin House across the other side. Polygon House, Owl House, Wren house are again high-rise of six or eight storeys.

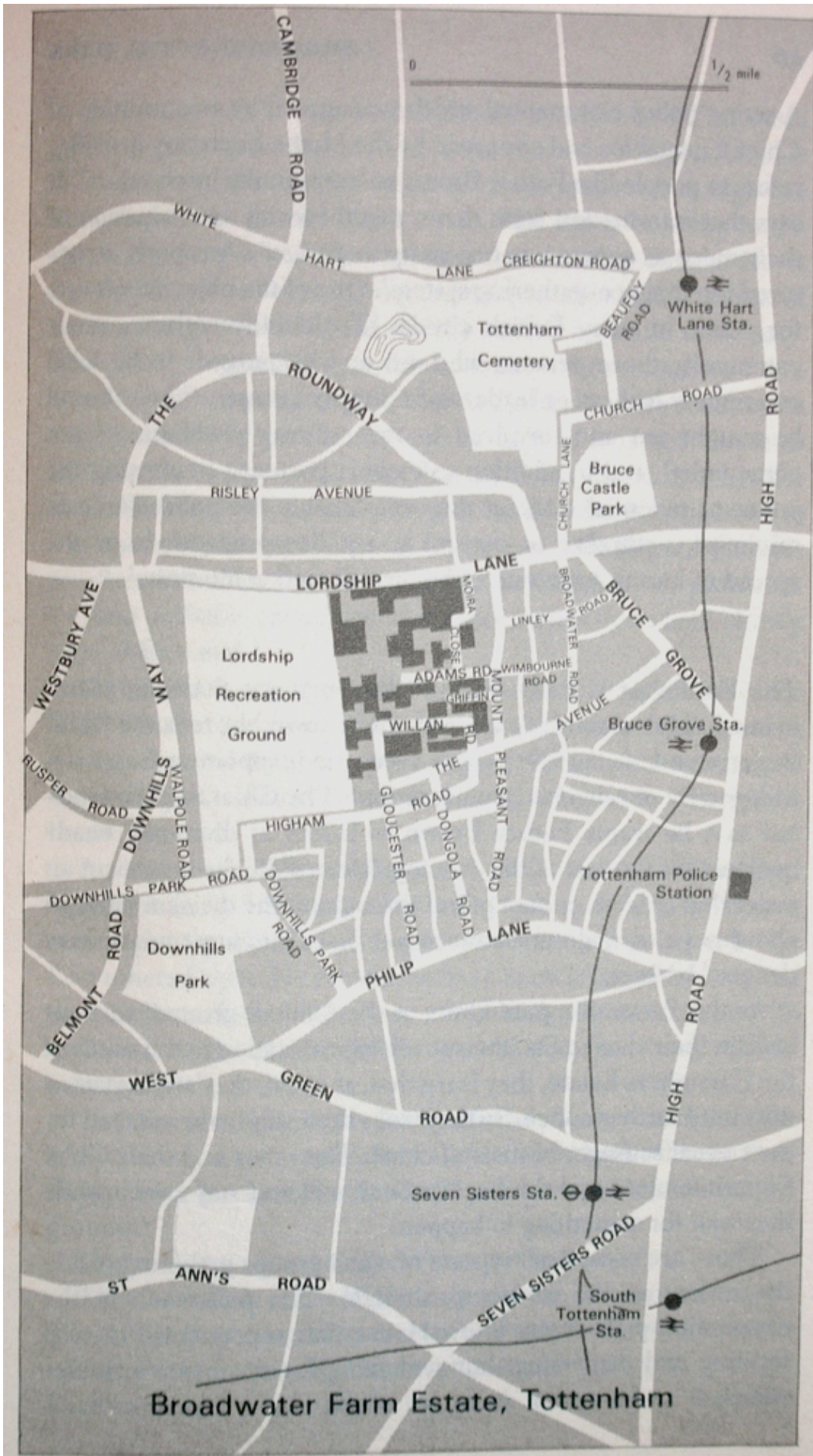
‘The four entrances into the estate are Wren, Robin, Polygon and Snow Close. They have concrete pillars cemented into the ground to prevent vehicle access, with the exception of one which has collapsible metal barriers to allow fire brigade or other emergency vehicles into it. High-rise and low-rise, generally low-class type dwelling, and generally speaking, a place where the local police officer is received, but not a place where he is well received.’

What the Facilitator, Derek Williams, does not add, is that the Carruthers Estate bears a remarkable similarity to the real Broadwater Farm Estate in Tottenham where the Metropolitan Police faced rioting on Sunday, 6 October 1985. The riot was of particular significance, marking the first time that police officers armed with plastic bullets were deployed on streets in Britain, though in the event they were not called on actually to fire the weapons. More ominously still for the men now imagining themselves in charge of police operations in Sandford, the Broadwater Farm Estate marked the first riot in post-war Britain where police themselves came under fire from at least one shotgun in the surrounding tower blocks. It also saw the injuring of 200 police officers and twenty civilians, and the killing of a community policeman.

David Jeavons is easing himself into the rank of Chief Superintendent in charge of Sandford’s inner city ‘D’ Division. ‘My fear about the Carruthers Estate,’ he tells the Facilitator, ‘is that if disturbances do develop we are going to find it very difficult to contain the situation, especially if rioters get into the high-rise dwellings. So I would be looking to keep large crowds from congregating towards that area. At this stage of the evening, I would be trying to get intelligence from the two officers I have got there in the observation post. Of course, as a Chief Superintendent, I would already have access to people like Father Brown and members of the police authority, so that if anything does break, I could get in touch with them.’



Carruthers Estate, Sandford



A secret police riot manual which was agreed by a committee of Chief Constables and approved by the Home Secretary in 1983, refers to people like Father Brown as 'community intervenors'. It says that information from them, together with an evaluation of their merit as sources, is necessary as part of a 'properly structured intelligence-gathering system'. One of the objectives it sets for police in every British city is: 'To identify within a tense community those persons who are or who purport to be local community leaders or leaders of minority groups'. They should be sought out and 'involved in the policing problems of the community', and in addition to their importance in alerting the police to potential trouble, they can 'enable the police force to minimize, neutralize or control anti-police propaganda or the spread of harmful rumour within an affected community'.

The Facilitator is more basic in his language than the secret manual: 'He's a good stick, old Father Brown,' he tells the Chief Superintendent, 'and he has got a very good rapport on the estate, irrespective of religious denomination'. The Chief Superintendent says he wants Father Brown with him at divisional headquarters for the rest of the evening. Meanwhile, he sends out an order officers on foot patrol throughout the division must go about in pairs. 'I do not want to put them into any unnecessary danger,' he says.

As the Police Support Units at the football ground are sent back in their vans to D2, the sub-divisional station to the south of the Carruthers Estate, they learn that, as usual, they are to stay on duty until further notice. So they make their way to the canteen for their usual sausage, beans and chips. Then they and their Chief Superintendent and the Facilitator sit still and stay awake while they wait for something to happen.

There are occasional reports of small groups gathering inside the estate, on the centre quadrangle. The policemen in the observation post in the Snow House flats report small crowds forming and dispersing, but remaining 'by no means troublesome'.

Then there's a telephone call from the landlord of The Vines public house, which is just outside the estate on Polygon Road. It is 10.30 p.m. He says he wants to close now, even though the licensing hours go on until 11 p.m. His bar is bursting at the seams, and some of the customers are getting rough. He is worried that if he keeps serving them for another half hour, one of the small fights which have already started up could turn nasty. The Chief Superintendent thinks about it for a moment. For a start it must be pretty rough already if the landlord is about to turn away a barful of paying customers. In law, it is the barman's decision that counts, of course, but the police have a duty to offer their advice. 'Well, he is saying that he thinks it is dangerous to stay open. But in actual face, my experience is that if public houses are cleared half an hour early, it might well create more problems. I would probably encourage him to keep them there until closing time, if he could.'

He looks across to the deployment board. The eight vans of the Task Forces are out on patrol, and two of them are criss-crossing the area around the Carruthers Estate. 'They look very handy to cope with any disturbance which may arise from that public house,' he says.

A glance back to the deployment board. 'And we have a Chief Inspector and a Superintendent at D2 station. I think the time is now right for the Chief Inspector to be going towards the Carruthers Estate. He is local, he has a knowledge of the area and the residents. I want him there to establish communication with members of the public on the ground and feed back reliable information.'

'In fairness to him,' adds the Facilitator, 'he has come into the station in response to an earlier call. He is just back off leave, very disgruntled, but he has arrived and you have put him out on the ground.'

'Right. So he's gone to The Vines public house.'

They both look at the VDU screen as the siren sounds again. The Chief Superintendent winces and mutters a word which is not in the riot manual. 'And our message now tells us,' the Facilitator says with a shade too much anticipation, 'that The Vines public house is set on fire.' There is a pause of a few seconds.

‘My thought,’ says the Chief Superintendent, ‘is that obviously the fire services are going to be needed.’ The other four contestants shuffle in their seats, and one whispers the word ‘brilliant’ to his neighbour.

‘We have got to make sure,’ the Chief Superintendent continues, getting back into his stride, ‘that they have a route through to the area. I would be considering that we have some Special Constables on duty, and could deploy them to create traffic diversions well away from the Carruthers Estate, so that we can gain access for the fire brigade.’

‘In fact’, interrupts the Facilitator, ‘they have already reported that they are sending two tenders down and they are asking for an escort.’

‘Yes.’ The Chief Superintendent now tries to regain the initiative. He asks, remembering the euphemism, if it is only the Task Force which has got ‘protective equipment’ on board their vans. ‘I would be looking at this stage to ensure that all the other vehicles had that on board too.’

But events, mediated through the Facilitator, wrongfoot him again. ‘The Task Force has arrived at The Vines and rescued the licensee and his wife from the fire. They are now being attacked by a group of about a hundred outside. The Task Force, as you say, have got their protective equipment in the vans. Can they put it on?’

The Chief Superintendent is in a corner. He wants to say yes they can put it on double-quick. But he knows the dangers of dressing his men in riot gear. It might provoke the crowd even further, which is a charge he would have to face next day, which could mark his career for years to come. He plays for time. ‘I would be looking for information from the Chief Inspector who is with them as to whether it was possible to disperse the crowd without it. Meanwhile I am bearing in mind that I do not want them going in the direction of the Carruthers Estate and I want a Police Support Unit to prevent entrance on to the estate.’

The Facilitator pushes the pace: ‘The information is coming in that they are going in that direction and there could be an attack with stones and bottles.’ That’s a clear enough threat to swing the decision in favour of riot gear.

‘If that is the intelligence from the Chief Inspector, then I suggest to him that it would be wisest for them to be fitted into protective equipment.’

So the stage is set. The crowd is getting ready to attack, and the police have crossed the critical line. They have ceased to be constables in ordinary uniform, and have become a riot force which will act with military precision. From now on, the game will be played by combat rules.

When the police put on riot gear, their senior officers have to bear in mind not only the dangers they already face, but the dangers they may create. The secret riot manual gives a detailed and frank summary of the pros and cons:

OVERT PROTECTIVE CLOTHING IN RESPONSE TO SERIOUS DISORDERS

(a) Description

Officers deployed in areas of serious public disorder wearing the following items of protective clothing:

- (i) pure wool barathe uniforms treated with Zirpro and Nuva-F
- (ii) protective gloves
- (iii) cricket box
- (iv) shin pads
- (v) protective boots
- (vi) clip-on tie
- (vii) riot helmet and visor
- (viii) fire resistant overalls
- (ix) any additional body protection that forces may consider necessary and have available.

In addition, these officers would probably be equipped with long or short shields.

(b) Advantages

- (i) provides good personal protection against injury to officers employed in serious disorder

- (ii) gives officers additional confidence and thereby lessens the likelihood of over-reaction
- (iii) heightens the team's response because of confidence that they are specialists, properly equipped for riot control
- (iv) psychological effect on the crowd in that they perceive that they are dealing with a properly disciplined, trained and equipped force
- (v) the sight of officers so dressed will encourage onlookers and the less committed members of the crowd to disperse before the violence escalates
- (vi) reassurance to the families of officers so deployed
- (vii) reassurance to law-abiding member of the public that effective police action is being taken.

(c) *Disadvantages*

- (i) the traditional image of the British police is removed
- (ii) may attract unnecessary attention
- (iii) may heighten tension between police and the community
- (iv) may precipitate disorder
- (v) may encourage the crowd to escalate their violence
- (vi) may encourage rioters to wear protective clothing and carry offensive weapons
- (vii) may restrict movement of officers
- (viii) may become uncomfortable, particularly in warm weather
- (ix) may be used as anti-police propaganda
- (x) officers so deployed need to be removed from the area as soon as violence subsides in order to return to normal policing as soon as possible.

Overt protective clothing is not to be put on unless the condition of 'sporadic disorder' is present. This is the third stage of a potential riot, coming after 'normality' and 'high tension'. It is defined in the manual as: '*Sporadic Disorder*: The situation in a community where there are frequent outbreaks of disorder, any of which might trigger a riot.' The later stages of disorder are rioting, serious rioting and (ultimately) lethal rioting.

Whether the Chief Superintendent in Sandford knew it or was simply acting from instinct, it was the report of stones and bottles being prepared for an attack on the police which pushed a condition of 'high tension' towards 'sporadic disorder' in the official police categories, making riot gear quite in order.

In Sandford, the police are taking the risk that their overt protective clothing 'may heighten tension between police and the community', or even that it 'may encourage the crowd to escalate their violence'. Whether it will 'encourage rioters to wear protective clothing and carry offensive weapons' only the next few hours will tell. For good or ill the decision has just been taken to remove the traditional image of the British police. The officers concerned will have to live with the consequences.

The Chief Superintendent is showing signs of strain. The blast of war may have blown in his ears, but his sinews remain stubbornly unstiffened. He seems to find it impossible to conceal the thought that this is not what he joined the police for. If he had wanted to command battles, he would have gone into the army. Unknown to him, he is not alone in this feeling, even within the room. A similar thought is running through the mind of the Facilitator. But the game must go on. The computer is unrelenting:

FROM: CID

PRISONERS FROM THE PUB DISTURBANCES HAVE BEEN QUESTIONED.

THEY STATE THERE WILL BE A RIOT ON THE ESTATE TONIGHT.

POLICE WILL BE ATTACKED.

The facilitator has worse news yet: 'Mr Jeavons, a do-it-yourself shop on Wren Close, on the other side of the estate, has been broken into. Tools, paraffin, paint, thinners etc. have been seized. The information has come from officers who are on foot patrol in pairs in the area.'

The Chief Superintendent puts the break-in to the back of his mind for a moment. His immediate concern is what to do about the remaining foot patrols who are still walking about in pairs in ordinary police uniform. 'Those officers are now at risk. I want them withdrawn, so that they can be mobilized and formed into a Police Support Unit. There is a grave danger of them being subject to individual attack.' He is back on top.

'Fine,' says the Facilitator. 'Meanwhile the fire engine has come round Northcliff Road and is just going into a side street by The Vines licensed house.' At least something is going right. 'Now Mr Jeavons, it is time you went and had a refreshment – I would suggest not alcohol, just a cup of coffee. Mr Crowe, perhaps you would come and take over.'

As David Jeavons leaves the map table, he is greeted with the same mumbling of approval, but this time it is accompanied by the odd nod of sympathy for his performance under duress. The first hour of the game is almost complete, when Chief Inspector Eric Crowe steps forward to see what he can make of the next part. He is wondering how important the break-in at the do-it-yourself shop may prove to be, but before he can begin to tackle it the Facilitator moves him along: 'Look at the screen, Mr Crowe, the fire engines have just come round the corner to the pub, and they have come under attack by a crowd of about one hundred and fifty. What is your first consideration?'

'My immediate concern is the safety of the fire service units. I want the Task Force to disperse that crowd and stop the attack.' He orders all units which have not yet kitted themselves up with protective equipment to do so straight away. While the order goes out, the Facilitator returns to the question of the break-in.

The new acting Chief Superintendent, Eric Crowe, knows there is something he's missed about the do-it-yourself shop. He knows that a crucial point is staring him in the face, but he can't get it clear in his mind. The Facilitator drops a large hint, the first of many. 'We have not yet responded to the report of the break-in, but now we have got a car on fire just round the corner.'

'I'll bring a Police Support Unit to Wren Close. I want the keyholder contacted, and the city engineers to board it up as soon as possible.'

'All right,' says the Facilitator, 'we will get back to the control room to contact the keyholder. What kind of assistance are you expecting from him?'

'Sorry, what did you say?' asks the Chief Superintendent, who is still searching his head for the right idea. 'I want him to check for stuff that is missing. Ask him to go to the station at D2 and we can meet him there and escort him under police cover.'

The Facilitator drops another hint, the size of a fire-engine: 'Unit 5B has arrived at the scene and says there is a strong smell of paraffin.'

'Then send another PSU with protective equipment, and leave the fire service to that.'

The Facilitator is about to give up the effort, but he tries one more time: 'What about the rest of the stuff inside? This is right on the entrance to the estate!'

'Well I have got a unit there securing the premises.'

'Do you think the fire brigade might help with getting rid of the paraffin?'

Eric Crowe is beginning to see his way out of the smoke. 'Yes, ask the fire brigade to get rid of it and leave the Units there until they have.' Then suddenly, from somewhere, he gets an idea that restores his poise: 'I am thinking at this stage of setting up a bridgehead somewhere, to bring in some of my reserves. Is there any news of the mutual aid units?'

'Well, they are still some considerable time away because it is not yet eleven o'clock and they are not due to arrive in Sandford until midnight. But we have got one more Task Force unit still at D1 available for you.'

'Yes. Now this open waste ground next to the estate – is that suitable for the bridgehead I have in mind?'

'Not really. It is well-trodden debris, not the safest of ground. It is really a derelict site which has grassed over, a bit rough.'

‘How about the school playgrounds or fields?’

‘There is Ambrose Fleming School which is quite close to the estate. We have made a check and it is not being used tonight, so it could be available.’

‘Then I want to use the school as forward holding point. I’ll bring those Units in reserve up to there, and I want to see some dogs there too.’

Some police officers find it uncomfortable to talk like military commanders with their ‘bridgeheads’ and ‘forward units’. Their secret riot manual is not only filled with army jargon, but even explicitly draws attention to the new role it demands of the constabulary. In an introductory section headed ‘Borrowed terminology’, it lays out the case with perfect clarity:

When considering deployments of police personnel in a riot context it is sometimes necessary to think in terminology which has more of a military connotation.

Examples of these are as follows:

- pincer movement
- leapfrogging (of units)
- out-flanking movement
- diversionary tactics
- feints
- frontal attacks
- attacks from the rear
- infiltration
- entrapment

It is not considered necessary to define these words in a police context since the meanings are those of common usage. The application of the movements which these words imply can easily be translated to the police context.

Such words constitute an important part of the vocabulary of strategic and tactical planning and for police officers, whose ordinary duties do not include such thought processes, it is necessary to make a conscious effort to tune in on this level.

Eric Crowe is by now thoroughly tuned in on this level himself. He calls for a situation report and discovers that the crowd outside The Vines is being kept back from the fire-brigade, which is tackling the flames. The licensee and his wife have been rescued and taken to divisional headquarters at D1 station to be interviewed by the CID in spite of their distress at losing not only their livelihood but also their home in the flat above the bar.

Meanwhile, some of the crowd have moved off towards the Carruthers Estate, and are gathering in growing number inside the centre quadrangle having got past the police units which were supposed to keep them out. The latest information from the observation posts is that several small crowds have collected, making a total of about 300. The Facilitator wants to know if there is anything Father Brown can do to help. He is, after all, waiting at headquarters in case trouble breaks out on the estate.

‘Yes, certainly. Ask him to go to the people in the square and use his ...’ He pauses while he consults his mental *Thesaurus*; ‘... his presence to try and deflate the situation and talk good sense to the leaders of these groups.’

‘Send him on his own, or with a police officer?’ asks the Facilitator innocently.

The acting Chief Superintendent has seen that ball coming; ‘I think this man operates alone. In normality, he moves around in society and is quite accepted within it. I would not fear for his safety at this stage.’

And with that, Mr Crowe is stood down. He receives a mixed response from the other contestants. They like his idea of setting up a bridgehead, but are all itching to tell him what he had overlooked at the do-it-yourself shop. He will find out soon enough.

Meanwhile, the Facilitator is arranging some elementary catering at the Ambrose Fleming School for the police units which have been on duty for twelve hours. One of the contestants chimes in: ‘We’ll get a lot of mileage out of them with just a cup of tea.’ One of the others

thinks it might take a couple. There is a brief discussion about whether the Chief Superintendent himself ought to call it a night and hand over to his deputy. After all, he has been on duty all day too, and his head won't be getting any clearer. The consensus is that he should get right away from the scene – go home and get to bed, and leave the police operation to someone else who is of course as capable as he is himself. They all agree that would be best. But not one of them can declare that he would actually do it in real life.

They also raise the question of getting the Press Officer and one of the Assistant Chief Constables into action to deal with the press and television interest which is bound to be alerted by now.

Then the Facilitator reports that events in the centre quadrangle have taken a turn for the worse. The crowd is now 600 strong and very agitated. In Snow Close, they have started taking out the street lighting and ripping up the trees and benches. Police units are sealing off all four entrances to the estate in an attempt to contain the area of disorder. There is slightly better news from The Vines, where the fire is now out, and only a token force of police is needed to protect firemen during the damping-down for an hour or two.

In Raven Street, the burning car is now out too. At the do-it-yourself shop, the fire brigade has pumped off all the remaining paraffin. The units from neighbouring forces are expected to arrive at the agreed rendezvous-point (the nearest motorway service station) in less than half an hour.

'Mr Foster, it's your turn.'

Superintendent Michael Foster, from Dudley, is the only contestant to have kept his jacket on. Being a CID Officer, he is not wearing a uniform. His is a smart blue jacket that goes with his sharply pressed trousers to give the air of a sales manager facing the board of directors.

He takes the seat with confidence. 'I am particularly concerned with the burglary at the do-it-yourself shop, because of the inflammable liquids which were stolen. I want someone to tell me now the size of that tank and the amount which had gone before the fire-brigade arrived. I am also eager to learn if there had been any recent thefts of milk bottles or other containers in the area.'

The obvious danger dawns on Chief Inspector Crowe. He puts his right hand up to his temple to block his view of the other contestants as they give smiles that say 'That was it, Eric.'

But the new Chief Superintendent is not done yet. 'I would be reviewing the events of the previous night to see if there was anything to suggest the same thing happening tonight as a pattern rather than a spontaneous thing. I see CID involvement here in respect of the intelligence, in order to try and prevent the situation occurring again. I would expect to have by now, in situation, an incident room, gathering all of that information and providing a very good intelligence system for the officer in charge.'

The Facilitator asks him what should be done with officers as they come off duty in rotation. Should they be left alone to get over the battering they've had, or does he see a need to debrief them?

'I think it is essential to debrief them. They may well have seen incidents which are not reported at this stage. They may have heard rumours or had intelligence given to them which they must now be giving back into my incident room so that it can be passed on.'

The Facilitator is almost silent. 'Thank you very much', is all he can find to say.

Mr Foster returns to his seat, with his confidence polished. The table-top map is now so crowded with wooden vans and yellow flashes that it is almost impossible to see the Carruthers Estate beneath them. All four entrances are completely blocked off by police units. Inside the centre quadrangle, there is now just one wooden crowd with the number 600 printed on it. The visiting riot police from neighbouring forces have been met at the motorway service area and are on their way to the Ambrose Fleming school. Everybody can

see that this is the final pitched battle of the night. The fifth, and last, contestant is brought forward to lead the police troops into it.

Superintendent Dick Chidley has earned quite a reputation in the West Midlands for his skill and enthusiasm in riot training. He is a tall, dark-haired man from one of Birmingham's most difficult policing divisions. His duties in C Division cover the Handsworth and Lozells districts, where there have been real-life lethal riots. He is reckoned to have the right stuff when it comes to maintaining public order. His previous training sessions with the table-top difficulties of Sandford brought high opinions from the Facilitator. The police managers think enough of him to arrange a special training session later in the month at their training ground, when he will command a hundred real police officers in a battle to control not little wooden crowds on a table-top, but a full-scale riot by a hundred other policemen in civilian clothes, with proper sticks and stones and petrol-bombs as weapons.

As he takes the Chief Superintendent's seat in the Sandford exercise, he realizes how much of his future is at stake. The computer brings him the latest report:

FROM: PSU INSP.

BARRICADES HAVE BEEN ERECTED AROUND THE CENTRE OF THE ESTATE, ABOUT HALF WAY DOWN WREN CLOSE, ROBIN CLOSE, POLYGON CLOSE AND SNOW CLOSE.

THEY HAVE OVERTURNED VEHICLES AND USED BUILDING MATERIALS.

Dick Chidley begins by summarizing the bad news. 'We have a situation in the estate of escalating disorder. There is some stone-throwing and some broken windows, and we have had one attack on a do-it-yourself shop where accelerants have been stolen which could be used as firebombs. But we have taken further temptation away from there. I have got all major exit and entry routes covered by PSUs still in their vehicles, but kitted up and ready to go out on the streets if the situation dictates.'

He looks back at the VDU screen and reads again about the barricades. 'The crowd are trying to create an area where the police will not be able to go. I want anyone coming out of there – civilian or police officer, injured or not – to be going for debriefing so that we can keep a full picture of everything that happens. We have also got two spotters in there who are feeding information back. Now with these barricades being introduced, I want to take the protected officers out of their vehicles to take back the territory that has been declared by the rioters as a No Go Area.'

'Why bother?' asks the Facilitator. 'They are inside, we are outside. Why not just leave them to it?'

The Chief Superintendent switches into auto-response: 'I presume that not everyone inside is in sympathy with the riot. Our main priority as a police force is the protection of life and property, and we have got to take back that area as soon as possible.'

'I suppose ultimately,' coaxes the Facilitator, 'that you would have to consider an evacuation?'

'Yes we would. Evacuation to a place of safety, particularly for people who want to get out and are vulnerable by reason of age, either at the top or bottom of the scale.'

'All right then, how are you going to take those barricades out?'

The Chief Superintendent says he wants the help of at least two barricade-removal vehicles from the local authority. Behind the barricades he expects to find a force of rioters armed with various devices to protect the barricade, and he plans to use units of riot police armed with short shields and truncheons to break up the crowds. Meanwhile, other units will line up behind the long shields in containment formation, to keep all the rioters inside the estate. As time goes on, short shield units will run through these lines to make arrests and frighten some of the crowd into giving up the fight.

It is a well-practised manoeuvre known to most policemen (but not the authors of the secret riot manual) as a 'snatch squad'. The version of it outlined in the manual is a direct

import from the British Colonial Police, perfected twenty years ago in Hong Kong. It is a part of a sophisticated armoury of public order tactics which the Royal Hong Kong Police have taught officers in Britain since 1981.

Dick Chidley has learned which manoeuvres he can use on his own initiative, and which would need the agreement of a senior officer of his own force. The code phrase is 'ACPO approval', a reference to those ranks eligible for membership of the Association of Chief Police Officers – the organization which prepared the manual. It consists of Chief Constables, Deputy Chief Constables and Assistant Chief Constables.

At least two of Dick Chidley's planned tactics will need to be referred up to one of Sandfordshire's Assistant Chief Constables. The use of bulldozers or armoured lorries to break up barricades, and the offensive manoeuvres of short shield units, are considered dangerous enough to require the approval of very senior ranks.

'I understand that ACC (operations) is on hand at the command post.'

'Yes, and he is quite willing to listen to your sympathetic pleas.'

The Chief Superintendent and the Facilitator then go through the prescribed warnings to be given to the crowd before the police move in to attack. They solemnly agree that before any offensive action can be taken, three clear warnings must be shouted to the rioters through a loudspeaker. If at all possible, they should be broadcast through a mobile public address system mounted on a Task Force van. They should be recorded for possible use as evidence later. The mood of the crowd should also be noted, and the exact time. If the police have banners handy announcing their intentions, they should hold them up to reinforce the warning. The discussion has a similar air of unreality to the earlier conversation about going home to be as the battle was about to start. Everyone nods wisely and agrees that, for the purposes of a training exercise, three clear warnings should be the rule.

'Three warnings,' says the Chief Superintendent, 'before my officers equipped in NATO gear make the final push to retake this territory.' 'NATO gear' is another borrowed phrase meaning riot gear.

'How long are you going to wait after the final warning before you go on the offensive?'

'Not at all. We go in immediately.'

The barricades are pushed over by council bulldozers. Officers in short shield formations run through the gaps with their truncheons ready, yelling battle-cries at the top of their voices. Some of the crowd, frightened and bewildered, start to run away. But in a sealed quadrangle, with four simultaneous police attacks through the entrances, there is nowhere to run to. The lines of long shield move forward at the double to take the territory the short shield men have cleared. The snatch squads re-form behind the lines, waiting to run through and make further arrests among the crowd. The police, under Dick Chidley's command, rapidly regain the upper hand. Throughout the entire evening, the Chief Superintendent (played by a succession of five contestants) has not stepped nearer the conflict than the control room at divisional headquarters, more than a mile away.

Dick Chidley is beginning to look relieved. If he had mistimed his moves he could have found himself in trouble. If he, and his fellow 'Chief Superintendents', had gone on to the offensive early they might have to face the very serious allegation that they had provoked the worst of the violence. If they had left it too late they might have been struggling to contain even fiercer fighting in the centre quadrangle, while fires began sweeping through the tower blocks.

The Facilitator is encouraging the atmosphere of self-congratulation which has settled on them all, when the siren sounds on the VDU:

FROM: PSU INSP.

I HAVE JUST HEARD TWO SHOTS FROM SNOW CLOSE.

‘This is an Inspector telling us’, says Dick Chidley with some attempt at disbelief, ‘that we now have firearms on the streets?’

‘That’s right.’

‘Then the Police Support Units in Snow Close must immediately retire out of range of the shots.’

‘All right,’ says the Facilitator, ‘you can withdraw the troops to a safe distance.’

‘But what about the person who fired the shots?’

‘I would direct that we have Firearms Department available,’ responds Dick Chidley while he searches for the right euphemism, ‘available to take courses of action if we can identify and isolate the user of the gun.’

It is a circumlocutionary masterpiece. Firearms Department instantly make themselves available to take courses of action, while the Facilitator announces that at this cliff-hanging moment the exercise is at an end and lunch is about to be served. The contestants stand up and shake each other by the hand. Four of them start to put their jackets on, while Superintendent Michael Foster straightens his hair. They joke for a moment with the Facilitator and then step from the D1 control room in Sandford out into the daylight of Birmingham.

Once they have all left, the Facilitator resumes his usual bonhomie as Superintendent Derek Williams. Most of them did quite well, he thinks. He has put more than 250 senior officers through their paces in Sandford, and this lot were a bit above average.

His main programme of training courses was carried out between October 1984 and October 1985. This meant that most of the officers who came to him as students of public order tactics had already gained experience of large crowds at football matches. Many had also seen action against the picket lines during the dispute between the miners and the National Coal Board, when they had been to Yorkshire and Kent as visiting forces themselves under mutual aid arrangements.

There are some pieces missing from the Sandford board game. The fictional constabulary has no plastic bullets or CS gas, so these ‘specialist weapons’ are barred from use at the Carruthers Estate. There are no water cannon either, though this makes Sandfordshire less untypical, since only the Metropolitan Police have so far even experimented with these appliances. Derek Williams maintains that the Carruthers Estate exercise is as realistic as anything available to the police. Its marked resemblance to events at Broadwater Farm in October 1985 confirms the point in his mind – though he insists that no individual area was taken as a model when the game was invented in 1983. But while the game may be realistic enough about the choice of police tactics during the escalation of public disorder, it seems imaginative about the nature of the rioters and the causes of unrest.

No explanation is offered of the prescience of those arrested outside The Vines who confidently tell detectives that ‘there will be a riot on the estate tonight’. How do they know? Have they been talking to Father Brown? Or is there statement merely a reflection of the view expressed by a number of police officers, that riots are the product of organization by ringleaders with either a criminal or political motive?

It is an uncomfortable fact that a central omission in Sandford is the kind of action by the police themselves which precipitated the real riots at St Paul’s in 1980, Brixton and Toxteth in 1981, and Handsworth and Tottenham in 1985. As Lord Scarman noted in his 1981 report on riots:

Significantly, the beginning of the disorders in Toxteth on 3–6 July 1981, namely the arrest by a police traffic patrol of a youth who had been riding on a motorcycle, invites comparison with the beginning of the disorders in Brixton. In each case a minor incident set off a great riot.

In the United States, the National Commission established by President Johnson to report on the wave of riots which swept the country during the 'long hot summer' of 1967 reached an almost identical conclusion. It analysed the stages of each city's rioting in great detail, with particular attention to the background of grievances. The deepest and most intense grievances they discovered in the ghettos related to police practices:

To many Negroes police have come to symbolize white power, white racism and white repression. And the fact is that many police do reflect and express these white attitudes. The atmosphere of hostility and cynicism is reinforced by a widespread perception among Negroes of the existence of police brutality and corruption, and of a 'double standard' of justice and protection – one for Negroes and one for whites.

This hostility, the Commission said, combined with social grievances over poverty, unemployment, slums and schools to form an explosive mixture. The fires which had raged that summer were often set off by a single spark, an incident of little apparent importance. The person found to have struck the spark was usually a police officer:

Almost invariably the incident that ignites disorder arises from police action. Harlem, Watts, Newark and Detroit – all the major outbursts of recent years – were precipitated by routine arrests of Negroes for minor offenses by white police.

This incendiary metaphor was tailored by Sir Kenneth Newman in April 1987 to fit London. As Metropolitan Commissioner, Sir Kenneth was giving one of the last major newspaper interviews of his term in office. He spoke memorably of the predisposing causes of community violence – discrimination, underprivilege, unemployment and poor housing – as 'a volatile vapour hanging over the city looking for a spark to set it off'. In Britain too, that spark can be struck by the police.

The leader of the ACPO working group which invented Sandford and devised its table-top exercise in public disorder was Geoffrey Dear. At that time, he was an Assistant Commissioner in the Metropolitan Police. It had been his duty to present part of the Met's case at the Scarman Inquiry. He is now the Chief Constable of the West Midlands. Mr Dear identifies a problem for the police on two levels. They have first to face specific grievances over their own force's behaviour in some city areas. In addition, they face a general sense of hostility as the most visible representatives of the state in place where it is least supported. People who live in conditions which breed resentment may find their social and political emotions suddenly brought together, he maintains by a police raid on one of their clubs: 'It is a fact of life we have to live with that it is almost always police action – even the very best kind of police action – which forms the trigger-point of a riot.'