

If the stereotype of the village Bobby ever really existed it did not survive the Great War. There was a big turnover of staff as police men joined the armed forces across the county. There are records of at least three constables in Wheathampstead who joined up.

*PC Alban Freeman* – served in the village from August 1914 until December 1915 when he enlisted in the army. He was held back in the police reserve before finally being mobilised in early 1917 as a gunner in the Royal Horse Artillery. Before he went on active service he died in hospital of a fever.

*PC Ernest Hawthorne* – worked in the village between March to June 1915 before enlisting in the Life Guards. He was killed in action in France in August 1917.

*PC Thomas Kempthorne* – enlisted with PC Freeman and was mobilised with him at the same time in 1917. He survived the war.

In 1918 the County Council purchased two cottages opposite The Swan ‘for the accommodation of police constables.’ This may have been done to make Wheathampstead a more attractive posting and to provide more stability in policing after the disruption of the war.

Newspaper reports suggest that crime in the area was mostly petty although the penalties often were not. Two 12 year old boys were charged with stealing a soldier’s dinner and one was sent to an approved school until he was 16. A boy of 13 received six months probation for stealing a cycle lamp. A man who stole 24 postage stamps received 14 days hard labour. Unsolved crimes included the theft of six army boots from the Bull Hotel valued at 12 shilling and 6d.

# Village Bobby



The Special Constabulary made an important contribution in the war. This badge belonged to Fred Collins.



Pre-war Policing - providing security for the Cottage Garden Society show in 1913