
GEORGE WILLIAM MALTBY

Chief of Police, St. James (1960-1970)

*Written & researched by John Burchill
August 15, 2022. Winnipeg Police Museum*



Born at Hull, Yorkshire, England on August 23, 1914, George Maltby began his police career with the Hull City Police on May 13, 1935. He was promoted to Sergeant in 1949 and Inspector in 1952 working in central, western, traffic and prosecutions divisions before retiring after 25 years of service in 1960.

During World War II George joined the Royal Air Force in 1941 (air crew) and trained as pilot. In 1942 he was seconded to the Commonwealth Air Training Programme and sent to Canada. He was based mainly in North Battleford and Calgary where he trained young RCAF pilots in Cessna Cranes and Oxfords.

During his time in North Battleford, George was billeted with the Sandmeyer family, who remained in contact with him for many years after the war ended.

Chief Maltby, St James-Assiniboia PD, 1969

In April 1944 George returned to England, married Muriel Corp and then spent the next two years with Bomber Command serving in Europe, Burma and South East Asia flying 4-engine Lancasters. After demobilization in 1946 he returned to his work with the Hull City Police.

In 1959 the Sandmeyers sent George a letter saying that the St. James Police Force was looking for a new police chief and would he be interested? Fondly remembering his time in Canada, George sent off a letter of interest with his current qualifications. A reply came saying that the current deputy police chief (Joseph Bagley) would fill the vacancy, but would he be interested in taking the deputy chief's position until Bagley retired in two years? He was, and off he went for an interview at the Canadian High Commission in London regarding immigration details.



Hull City Police 1935, George right seated (collar No. 368)



George Maltby in RAF Flight Uniform

Although not officially able to retire until he had 25-years of service on May 13, 1960, Hull City's Chief Constable Sidney Lawrence allowed George to use accumulated time to leave earlier for St. James.

George's appointment was announced on December 18, 1959, and he officially started in January 1960. George was subsequently promoted to Chief of Police for St. James on November 1, 1962, when Bagley retired.

When George and his family initially arrived in St. James they were met by Constable Ken Johnston who helped them settle in. George knew Ken well as they had both worked together at Hull City Police. Ken had immigrated to Canada a few years earlier and joined the Winnipeg Police in 1956. Ken would rise to become the Chief of the Winnipeg Police in 1981.

During George's time with the St. James Police he oversaw the absorption of the Town of Brooklands Police in 1967, and the amalgamation with the R.M. of Assiniboia Police in 1969.

At the time St. James and Assiniboia Police merged in 1969, George oversaw one of the larger and most progressive police departments in the Winnipeg metro area and it was not without its own significant crime problems from robbery to murder.

One of the biggest cases, at least the most notorious, that George had as Chief of the St. James Police was the March 1, 1966, gold bullion "heist" at the the Winnipeg International Airport (which was within the jurisdiction of the St. James Police).

The heist was orchestrated by Ken Leishman, also known as the "Flying Bandit" for his numerous crimes during the 1950s and early 1960s that included flying to Toronto to rob banks. However, it was the theft of nearly 600 pounds worth of gold bullion (almost \$16 million today) from the Winnipeg International Airport that made national headlines.



Ken Leishman, 1966 St. James arrest photo

TransAir was an airline that connected northwest Ontario and Winnipeg. Leishman knew that it regularly flew gold bullion from Red Lake, Ontario to the Winnipeg International Airport where it was transferred to an Air Canada flight bound for the Royal Canadian Mint in Ottawa.



Chief Maltby, March 11, 1966, with stolen Gold bars

Leishman's plan was simple. When the flight arrived, they stole an Air Canada Cargo van from an airport parking lot and drove onto the tarmac. Dressed in Air Canada uniforms they met the plane, showed the TransAir ground crew a fake waybill and the 12 wooden boxes of gold were transferred into to their van and they drove away.

The abandoned Air Canada truck was soon located and suspecting the well-thought out plan had been the work of a mastermind, they suspected Leishman and began investigating all contacts. It didn't take long before they found the trail and the gold bars in a backyard. On March 20, 1966, Leishman was charged with conspiracy and robbery.

Not long after, on the evening of September 1, 1966, Leishman was one of ten prisoners who escaped from Headingley Jail. In spite of roadblocks and a massive manhunt Leishman, with three others, stole a car and drove to Steinbach where they stole a plane and flew to Gary, Indiana. Captured, Leishman was returned to Winnipeg and locked up at the old Vaughan Street Jail (which was used as the police lock-up for department's other than Winnipeg).

On October 30, 1966, Leishman managed to pick the lock on the old steel door of his cell and escape through a back door and over a fence. Four hours after his escape, Leishman was arrested by two officers from the West Kildonan Police. On November 1, 1966, Leishman plead guilty to all the charges against him. He was eventually released and died in a plane crash in 1979 while on a medivac mission.

The story of Leishman's exploits are the subject of several books and a 2005 Documentary "[Ken Leishman: The Flying Bandit](#)" made by Frantic Films in association with History Television, which is now available online (watch the film for footage of Chief Maltby from 16:18-16:30).

George remained Chief of the combined St. James-Assiniboia Police Department until April 1, 1970, when he officially resigned to accept an appointment as Manitoba's first Ombudsman, a position he held until 1982. He was appointed to the Order of the Buffalo Hunt in 1972. ¹

Former Manitoba Ombudsman and Winnipeg Police Board Vice-Chair Barry Tuckett, who worked under George and was a friend for 20 years, told me that when he was first hired at the Ombudsman's Office in 1978 he found Mr. Maltby to be quite intimidating.

"This was no fault of Mr. Maltby. I was working for a former Chief of Police who was now the Ombudsman, and I could see that he was a no nonsense, straight-laced individual whose presence drew respect. One could tell at the outset that this was a hard working, learned man that would not be baffled by fiction or fooled by pretenders. You had to know what you were talking about and you had to demonstrate common sense and compassion. To work for Mr. Maltby, you had to have a good sense of right and wrong, and demonstrate it through your work".

Others also spoke of George based on their knowledge of him and his work. Val Werier, a reporter for whom he had a great deal of respect, wrote in an article when George came to the defence of an inmate whose property had disappeared in a correctional institution. Mr. Werier stated *"I admire Mr. Maltby's tenacity in going after the authorities in the aid of a man charged with murder. It illustrates the Ombudsman's respect for the rights of an individual no matter how unpopular the cause may be"*.

Following George's retirement as Ombudsman in 1982, he was appointed to the Complaints Committee of the College of Physicians and Surgeons; he received an Honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Winnipeg in 1982; and was founding Chairman of the Manitoba Press Council in 1984. He had also been a member of the St. James Kiwanis Club and Vice-President of the Woodlawn Community Club.

George died at Winnipeg on July 27, 1999. His wife Muriel died just six weeks later. George was survived by his son David, daughter-in-law Mimi, and grandchildren Alex and Madeleine.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of George's son, David Maltby, who graciously provided the first three pictures on pages 1, 2 and page 5 for this article.



Ombudsman Maltby and his new staff, May 23, 1970

¹ Established by the provincial government in 1957, Manitoba's Order of the Buffalo Hunt was the highest honour the province could bestow on individuals who demonstrated outstanding skills in the areas of leadership, service, and community commitment until the Order of Manitoba was established in 1999. The Order of the Buffalo Hunt is still presented for noteworthy achievements in sports and other public endeavours.



George Maltby, Honorary Doctor of Laws
University of Winnipeg, October 17, 1982

NOTE: Anyone wishing to recognize a police member they feel made sustained and substantial contributions to policing in Winnipeg and its surrounding municipalities during the past 150 years is asked to send me their name and (if known) a brief description of their accomplishments.