



# International Police Association

Professional Commission



## IPA World Seminar for Young Police Officers 2019 Stirling, Scotland, UK Report

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**IPA Section:** UK

I have been an IPA member for 8 years and I have only now realised the benefit of what that means. I have recently completed the 5 day Young Police Officers Seminar 2019. I get a lot of raised eyebrows from my friends and PSNI colleagues when I mention the “Young Police Officers” bit so I must point out that it means under the age of 35 or so. To be honest I did not really know what to expect.

My flight was slightly late arriving into Edinburgh and so I missed the opening welcome from May-Britt Ronnebro. We soon got our accommodation rooms sorted within Stirling University campus and heads down for the night. Our lectures commenced at 08:30 each morning and began on Monday with the Art of Communication which was delivered by Cathy McDonald who is a retired Inspector from Police Scotland who was a trained hostage and crisis negotiator. This was a great lecture to open with and we were able to pick up many key points from Cathy. This was followed up in the morning with a lecture from Mark Bullen on prison tattoos. Mark is a former officer from England who is currently residing in Russia. When I saw this lecture slotted into our timetable it did make me wonder what it was about – it was in fact about Russian prisoners’ tattoos, their meaning, their history and how to tell if they are in fact genuine Russian mafia tattoos. Our first day finished unexpectedly early with a lecture from May-Britt Ronnebro who was fantastic at winning our attention and got us excited about our membership within the IPA and the potential we could reach with it. After tea time the stormy weather got the better of the seminar and following a fire alarm evacuation some of us made our way to a local establishment to get to know one another better and continued to swap war stories. Here I also had the opportunity to meet some of the other lecturers that would be presenting over the next couple of days.



The lectures lined up for Day 2 were as interesting as the previous day. There were talks on terrorism, including one from a former Superintendent from the PSNI which was handy as I could relate to some of what he spoke about. There were also talks on gangs and a catch-up on the lecture we had missed the evening before on virtual police training and mental health. The mental health lecture from Sergeant Laura Gibson within Police Scotland was interesting and I was able to pick out some topics that I will share with my bosses here in PSNI soon. That evening I was able to have a bit of free time to myself and explore the area nearby the University and took a walk up to the local Wallace Monument.

On Wednesday morning we were introduced to Rob Stenhouse who put us through our paces with new techniques on “slapping”. I honestly thought I had learned everything there was to know on how to slap in my PSP classes in the PSNI but this brought it to a whole new level. Yet again the morning was finished off with a fun exercise in groups of two or three and there were only minor injuries sustained; mostly involving pride from some of the boys. We had an absolute ball slapping the limbs off each other, and this particular class got us moving around with different partners and getting us chatting to other friends we maybe hadn’t got speaking to so much up to this point. In the afternoon Yvonne had arranged a trip to a local distillery for a tour around with one of the workers in smaller groups with an



explanation of the distilling process of one of the local whiskys. And of course we had to get a wee taste in too! On our way home we stopped at another local tourist spot, the Kelpies and got another great group photo together.

Later that evening a larger group of us took advantage of the nice weather, ordered a car full of pizzas and sat out on the university lawns near the lake and socialised until the wee hours. Sandro, my new friend from Switzerland produced his PSNI bagpipes and let a few novices have a go and it was all a good laugh.

The next morning we set off early after breakfast for Edinburgh and on the way stopped at a look out point at the Firth of Forth bridges for another photo op. We were joined on our journey with Jim Leslie who was kind enough to give us a run through of the local history on our bus journey to Edinburgh including snippets of the history of Stirling, its castle and its crossing points from the lower end of Scotland to the northern areas. Jim had interesting stories to tell of Edinburgh including one I had to furiously Google, as having been a visitor to Edinburgh many times, I had never before heard of the “Haggis” animal that lived and bred on Arthur’s Seat. The visit to Edinburgh wouldn’t be complete without a quick tour of the Castle grounds and we had the perfect one o’clock alarm to know when to return to the bus for lunch!

That evening is of course my highlight of the week, and that which I was looking forward to the most. We were all changed into our “number ones” and had dinner at the Royal Scots Club. I really do love the group photo of us together in all our different styles and colours of dress uniforms and will be one I will be getting framed for my wall. It was here that I realised how many different ranks of officers we had as part of our group and how little difference it had made when it came to getting to know each other. There was no rank structure when it came to making new friends here. We had a couple of brief speakers at the gala dinner

including one from Superintendent John Wylie from Police Scotland who was presenting to us the following morning and Clive Wood who is our current president of IPA Section UK. The evening flew in and before we knew it, it was time to return to the University for a night-cap.

On our final morning we listened to lectures of human trafficking which was a completely new topic to me and one which was probably the most-thought provoking one for me. There was recently a secondment opportunity advertised to our own Human Trafficking department and I'm sorry I was too late to apply for that when I returned to work. Supt. Wylie returned to speak to us about the International Exchanges program that Police Scotland run and again, this was a completely new topic for me that I had not anticipated hearing about at all. It was explained that there is a team from Police Scotland who go out to foreign, often remote, countries and give advice on Police training techniques. Just because they can. And it all sounds a bit humble and perhaps they don't get the recognition they deserve but it certainly sounds like these countries, some of which I had barely heard of get huge benefits in these training techniques, some of which I would have taken for granted in my current role.

To say I learned a lot from this Young Police Officers Seminar 2019 is a complete understatement. It's an experience that I enjoyed immensely. To a lot of people that meet me I appear to be an extrovert and speak to people without problems however that could not be further from the truth. I did find it a little difficult to speak to all these new people and I am guilty that perhaps there are some I didn't get speaking to much at all. There was not a great deal of "alone time" as the week had such an extensive itinerary but one thing is for sure there is nobody I regret meeting here. Some of the participants have been amazing at keeping us all in touch. Yvonne had already set up a private Facebook group to get most of us together on social media in the weeks leading up to the seminar. A WhatsApp group had been set up almost immediately on our arrival and everyone including the lecturers were invited to join so that all up to date information could be shared with group with regard to the timetables and room locations and this has continued to be in use by a large number of us. Joel from Australia has collated everyone's contact and location details so we all have that for future reference and Win-Marie from Australia is putting together individual videos of us all talking to her about who we are where we come from. I now have friends from all around the world, the USA, Canada, Australia, Asia and all over Europe. I'll never be stuck for another holiday destination in my life. Ishak from Mauritius is very keen to have each and every one of us and our families over to visit him and from the promo videos he showed us in the lecture theatre, I think it is definitely on the bucket list.

I have also returned home with an enormous number of gifts in the form of Police patches, challenge coins and pins etc. from my new friends and their police forces. I am in the process of having the patches framed together to have on display as a reminder of this trip. I am also going to need a fairly large photo album to print off too! A great many thanks must be given to Yvonne McGregor and her team including Steve, May-Britt and Aidan for ferrying us about and organising us. You would think that would be an easy job with a group of adults, most of which carry firearms in their day to day lives, however our trip to Edinburgh proved that not to be the case!! I can't wait to find my next IPA trip. Just need to find a babysitter.....

**Catherine Connolly**