MURDER is a crime which I am happy to say rarely occurs in Cardiganshire.

Though there have been perhaps a dozen murders in the county since the Police Force was established in Cardiganshire in 1814, it seems there has been only one person executed for it.

In September, 1894, Mrs. Mary Davies was found dead in bed at her home in Borth. A pillow was over her face and at first it was thought she had died of natural causes. Her husband, a sailor, was at sea and she lived alone in the house.

Police inquiries soon discovered that the house had been broken into and the woman murdered.

Suspicion fell on one Thomas Richards, a brother-in-law of the murder victim. His description was circulated to police forces throughout Britain and that night Richards was arrested in Neath. He was brought to Aberystwyth Police Station and charged with murder, burglary, and forgery.

At Carmarthen Assizes on November 10th, 1894, he was found guilty and sentenced to death. Richards went to the scaffold, the first and, I believe, the only person to do so, in the entire history of the Cardiganshire Constabulary.

A few years earlier, in 1885, the death sentence was passed on one John Price, who murdered his wife at Aberystwyth by shooting her with a pistol.

Reprived

Petitions were sent to the Home Office and he was reprieved by Queen Victoria, the sentence being commuted to one of penal servitude for life.

Another murder occurred on the Trawscoed Estate in 1889 when a gamekeeper employed by the Earl of Lushorne was shot dead by a man who, with two others, was found poaching. The Earl offered a £50 reward for the apprehension of the culprit, but he was never arrested.

In 1880, the body of a small farmer, Edward Edwards, was found dead on the hillside at Llanfair Clydogau, near Llan- Peter. An inquiry jury returned the verdict of murder by person or persons unknown, but no arrest was ever made.

Today's police have a great variety of duties, including the investigation of crimes that no longer belong only to the history books.

Among their unpleasant duties was to attend the numerous sales held under distress warrant after people had failed to pay titles. Many of these took place in coastal villages like Llanrhystud, Llanon, Llanrhian, and Brynhoffnant.

On March 10th, 1894, Chief Constable Barrett Lewis went with a force of 40 men, some from outside the county, to attend such a sale at Penbryn, near Cardigan.

The bailiff and the police met with stubborn resistance and the crowd threw stones and other missiles at them. The police charged their assailants and inflicted head and other injuries on at least 40 people. Several constables were also badly hurt and their batons broken.

The position became so serious that the Home Secretary was consulted, and the local M.P. asked questions in Parliament. Police reinforcements were called in from other Welsh police forces.

CRUEL

A cruel practice which the young Cardiganshire Constabulary helped to stamp out was that of the "ceffyl pren". This wooden horse was used by unruly groups to victimise people who figured in local gossip or scandal, and sometimes effigies were burned.

Arson and sheep stealing were also prevalent between 1860 and 1880 and a number of farmhouses and cottages were destroyed.

Illegal sales of beer in unlicensed cottages (cwrw bach) were popular at one time, but the police succeeded in stamping it out after plain-clothes policemen found it at a watch on suspected premises.

Any police work would naturally be hindered by the poor communications in the county, especially before the railways arrived in the 1860s.

Constables had to go on foot from village to village, from town to town, and country to country, to hunt down criminals. They would then have to march them back again, and sometimes find lodgings over-night.

In such cases, the policemen