

A Ladybird 'Easy-Reading' Book
'People at Work'



The CUSTOMS OFFICER

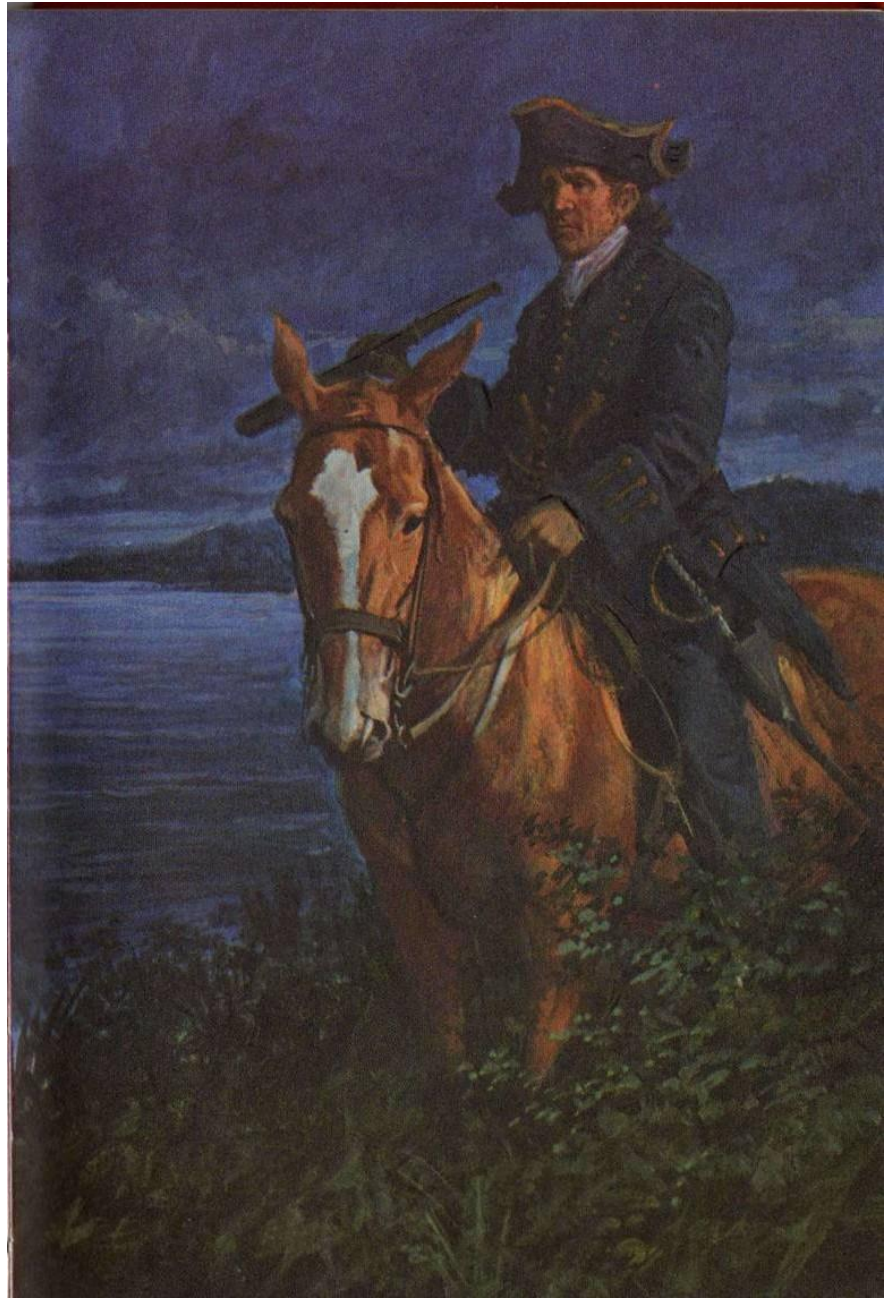


The Customs Officer.

The Customs Department was formed many hundreds of years ago to collect duties and taxes and stop smugglers bringing illegal goods into the country. Officers spent their time riding around the coast looking for Rigid Inflatable Boats that were used to bring in brandy and Albanians from France.

See how this officer is using an ear horn to listen out for the high powered engines.

Today their job is not so dangerous as they never go near the coast, just in case they accidentally speak to yachtsmen and upset them.



When you come back from holiday you would expect to see a Customs Officer. This is what they look like.

Each officer is carefully measured up by a reputable tailor and their sizes sent to a place called Stores Branch. As you can see their 'made to measure' uniform was selected from a large stock of single sizes and given to the officer. The long jacket was designed to hide the fact that the crotch on the rough serge trousers actually hung down close to his knees.

Doesn't he look smart!



A Customs Officer is naturally nose-y and will pay more than a passing interest in your baggage. Dirty laundry is of particular interest as smugglers will often hide things in places where they don't think officers want to look.

Sometimes an officer gets over excited by what he finds and will keep things, saying "This is seized as forfeit to the Crown". No-one knows what it means but smugglers elect to pay a fine or offer up their daughters to make sure they don't go to court. This is called "The AO's Option"

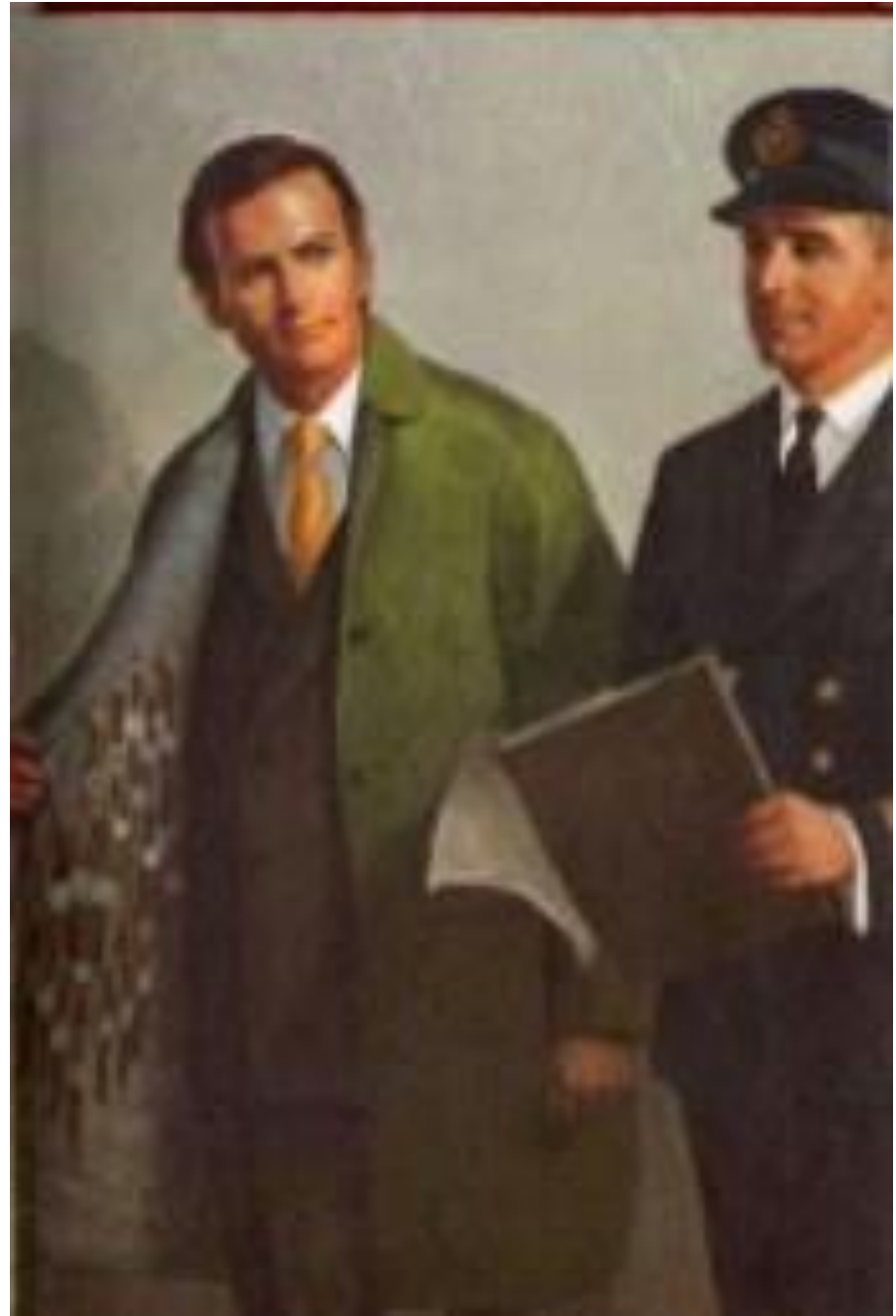


A good officer will get something called a “Revenue Nose” to help him spot a smuggler. Each officer is issued with a list of cunning questions to stop a smuggler in his tracks.

This officer asked the man if he was travelling on business and did he have the time. Clever wasn't he.

Unfortunately this man had stuffed drugs up his bottom and he got away with them.

The officer is happy as he will put each watch in as a separate seizure to get more seizure rewards.



Customs Officers are trained to deal with awkward passengers. This is called confrontation. Have you ever told someone that they have been caught in possession of an ugly wife and seen their reaction.

This officer uses the suitcases to keep a safe distance and out of harms way.

This work is very stressful and officers are allowed to consume alcohol to help them deal with difficult situations. This drink is called a waxer and is freely available in most Customs offices throughout the country.



Some older officers have found that anti-freeze in a car radiator gives you the same sensation that a waxer does. They have a clever way of disguising this by pretending to take a car to pieces to look for illegal immigrants.

See how the plain clothes officer from the Investigation Branch is hiding their activities behind his coat, hoping to get something to drink.

Have you ever got so intoxicated that you drink anything that's free? These officers do so quite regularly but manage to hide it very well.



Dogs are a big problem for officers to deal with as they often make no comment to any questioning. This officer is using a clever disguise by putting a dead ferret under his nose to fool the dog into talking.

If no answers are obtained then the dogs go to the Queens Warehouse where they are forced to smoke all of the seized cigarettes. These dogs are called Beagles.

When the QW officer empties the warehouse he sends everything to the furnace. This is where the saying 'dog end' originates from.



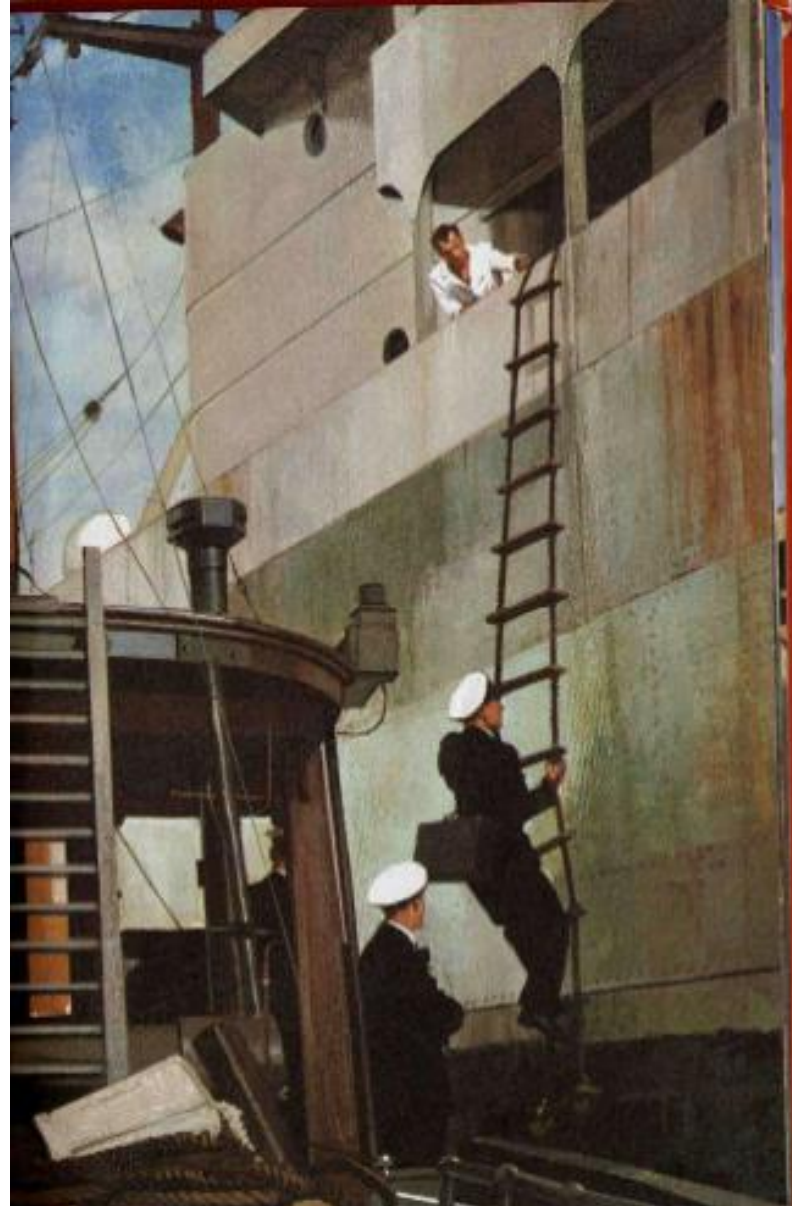
Sometimes when a seizure is made something happens called condemnation. This is when a smuggler appeals against the seizure. When this occurs officers have to get together to get their stories straight and to make up their notebooks.

See how these officers quietly write down things that the senior officer is telling them. This is called dictation. Senior officers are always right because they have more gold rings on their sleeves.



Officers are trained to be able to climb and jump. Sometimes they have to leave vessels after they have sailed. This officer has spent too much time talking to the captain and still needed to open the bond for the crew. A special boat is sent out to collect him and his case, which often contains spirits that the officer found abandoned in the bond.

Sometimes this is quite dangerous work and he is trained to use one hand for himself and the other for the Queen. See how hard he is gripping.



Officers enjoy searching people for illegal goods. This can be upsetting for people and particularly amusing for the officer.

This man was caught with a stocking hidden in his underpants. This is a shocking find as it is a ladies stocking and there is no sign of her.

This officer likes stockings and also enjoys the company of men. See how he's looking at the smuggler, wondering if the wig is really an endangered species.



There is little equipment issued to an officer to help him carry out his duties. Sometimes, on oil tankers, officers are required to enter rooms where there are no lights.

This officer is using his experience to make sure that there are no dangerous gases present that could suffocate him if he breathed them in.

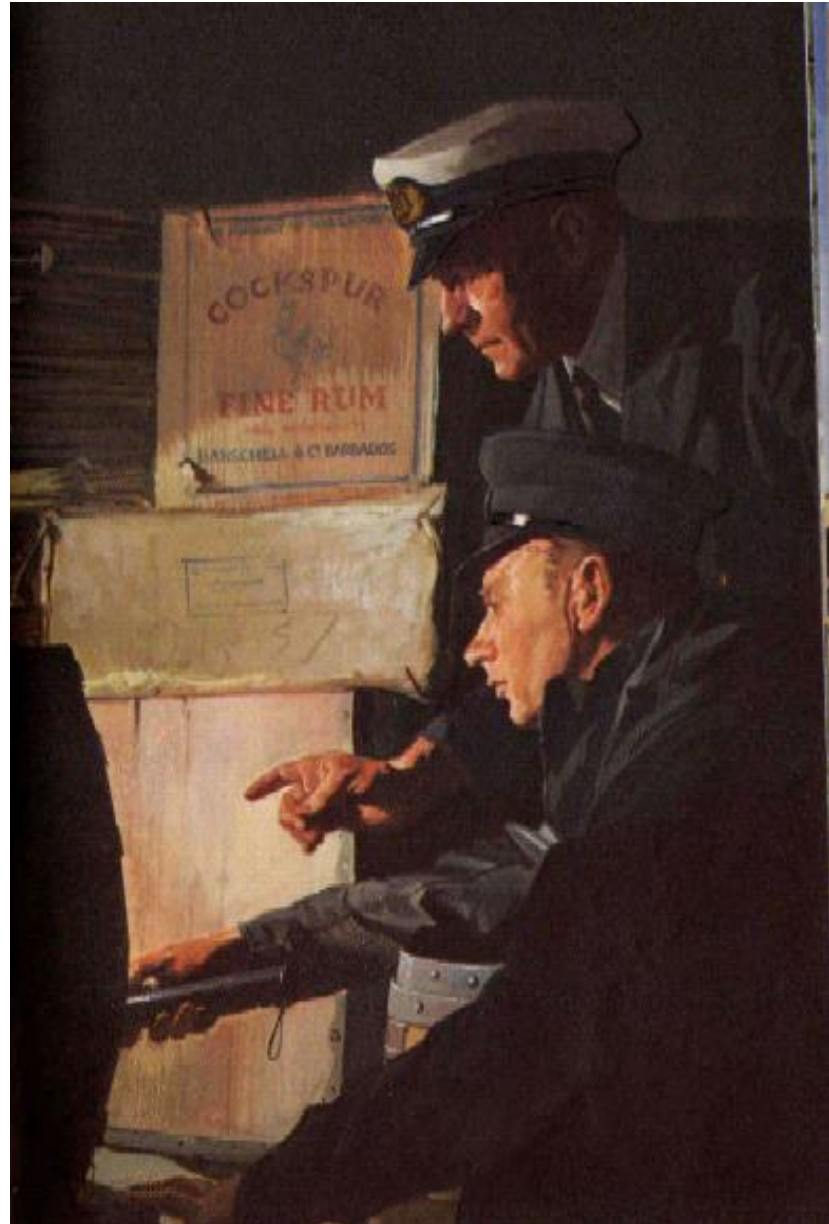
In recent years Health and Safety has required that equipment is issued to help officers carry more weight.

This is known as a Rummage Case.



After a very nasty and unexplained fire on a ship, officers were issued with a torch that was safe to use on tankers. Experienced officers realised that they often didn't work and therefore acquired Bright Star torches. These were often just left lying around on ships, together with tools such as screwdrivers, as gifts for Rummage crews.

Unfortunately Bright Star torches have very narrow beams and these two officers missed the rum on the box. Never mind, there is plenty more in the bond



Smugglers will go to great lengths to hide goods. Smaller officers, known as Welshmen, are able to get into very confined spaces to find the contraband. The Welsh officer is under the bollards, passing out the hidden goods to his taller English colleague. This is very dangerous work and shouldn't be undertaken by anyone sensible.

Have you ever been stuck in a small place. This Welsh officer was and he's still there today.



These officers are looking for a Welshman lost on the previous voyage. Sometimes they do not want to be found and stay very quiet and still.

This is particularly annoying to the Rummage Crew as the pubs are open and it isn't a Bank Holiday or Sunday.

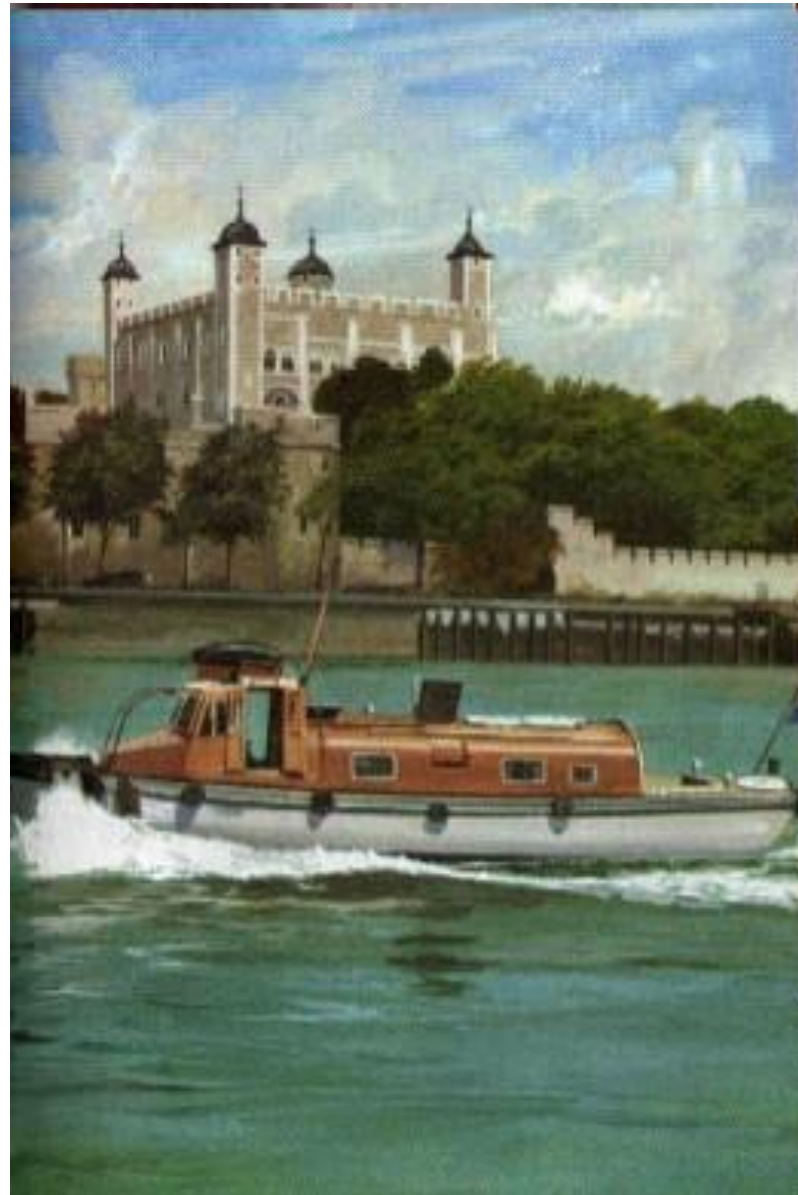
Has a Welshman ever upset you?



It isn't all hard work. Customs officers also have access to fast boats that cruise up and down the rivers and enable them to stop ships at sea.

These boats can go anywhere they like and all the officers have to do is shout "Queens business" to make other boats get out of their way.

These boats have bars on board and are used extensively.



Bigger boats are called Cutters and can be found swanning around the inshore waters at high speed. These boats carry highly trained crew who cook excellent curries and chicken drumsticks.

These men are often seen hiring cars to take them to the next port to carry out an inward ferry movement.

Smugglers do not expect this and neither do the local staff.

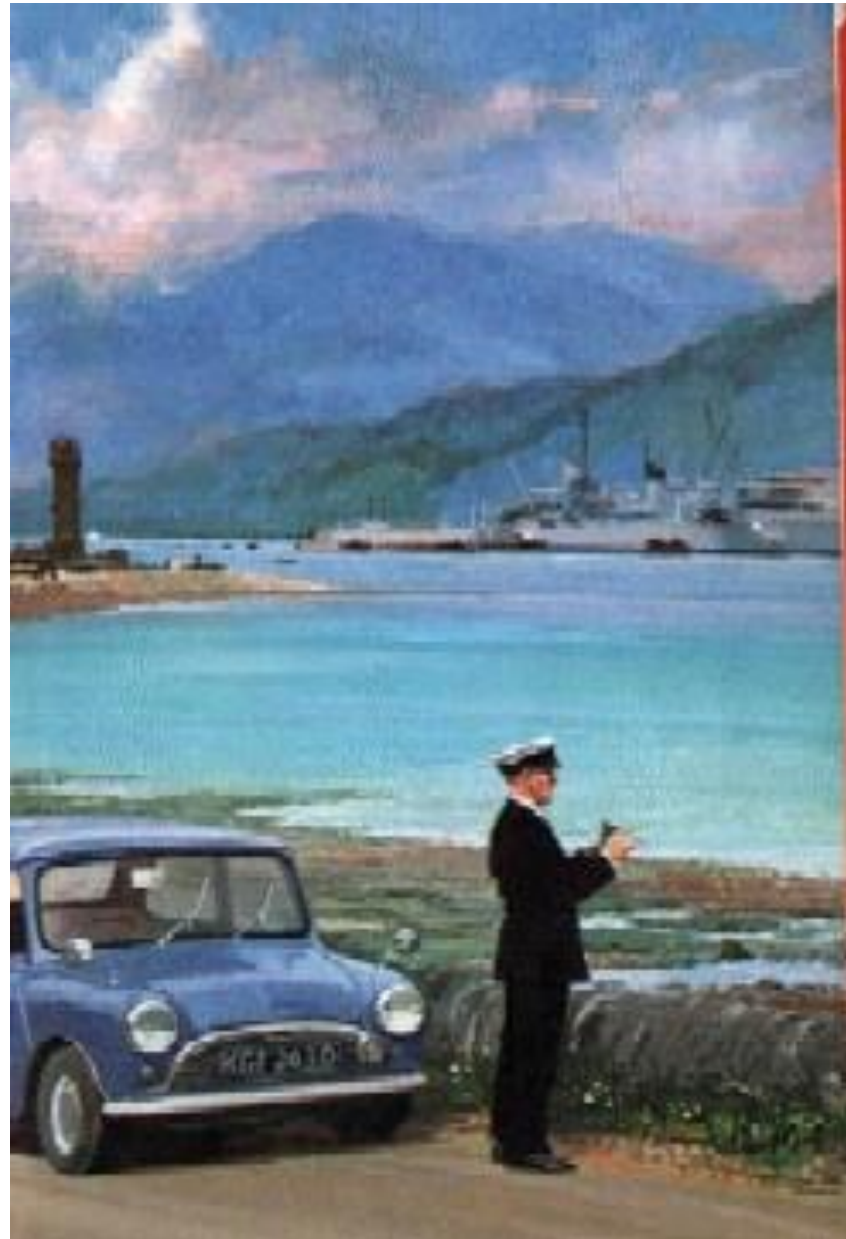
This is called Mobile work and is very effective at stopping smuggling by boats pulled on trailers.



Coast Preventive Men are on the look out for smugglers who come ashore during the daylight hours, but not between midday and 2 o'clock. This is called the lunch hour.

These men are the eyes and ears of the department and are highly motivated. This officer is checking for illegal immigrants on Brighton's naturist beach who might be coming ashore disguised as naked women.

Look at the high performance car used to chase smugglers. This car was designed for a Welshmen.



At airports officer sometimes run out of time and get stuck on aircraft that have to leave and go to foreign countries. This is very inconvenient as they are away for several days at a time.

Officer are used to this as it happens a lot.

This officer is returning from Brazil. He was stuck there for 2 weeks.

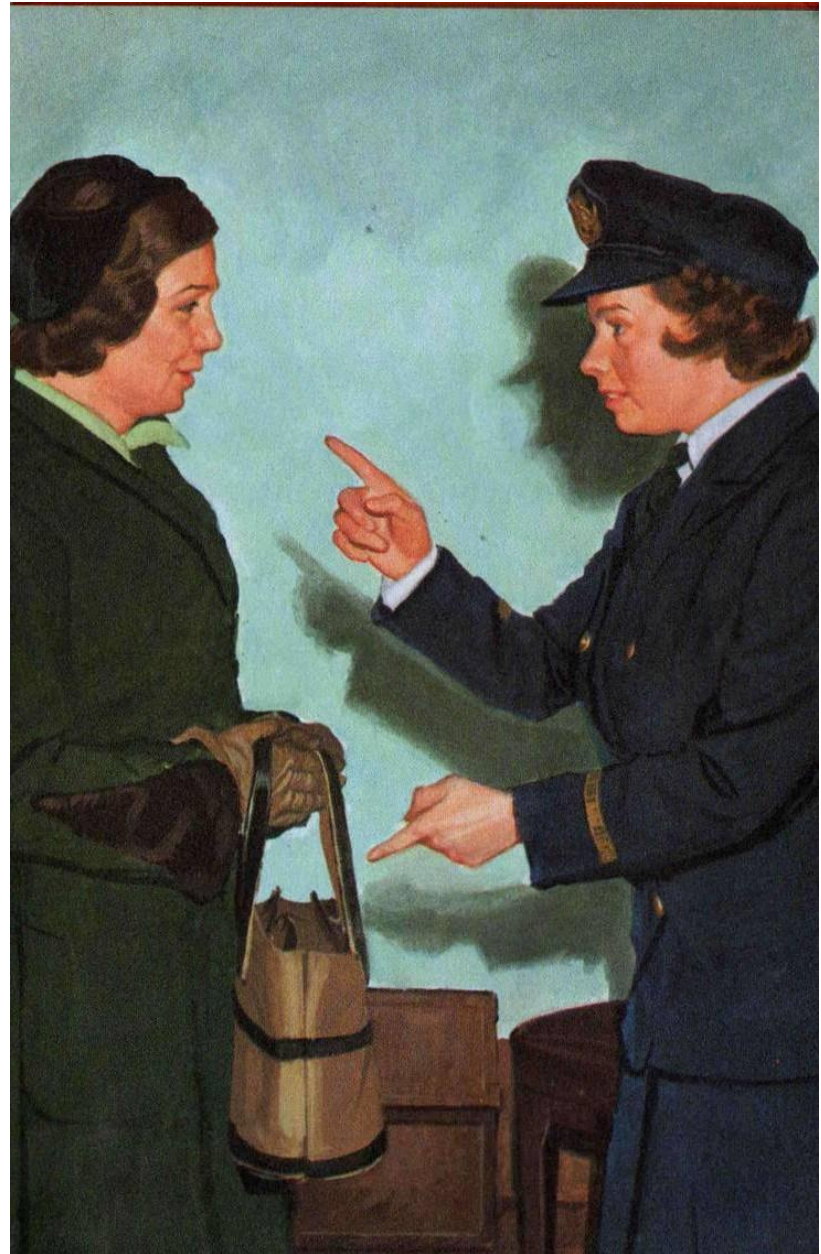
See how easily the bar box tucks under his arm.



Women smuggle as well. Male officers aren't allowed to search women so they have to improvise. See how this clever officer has used a wig to make the passenger think he's a woman.

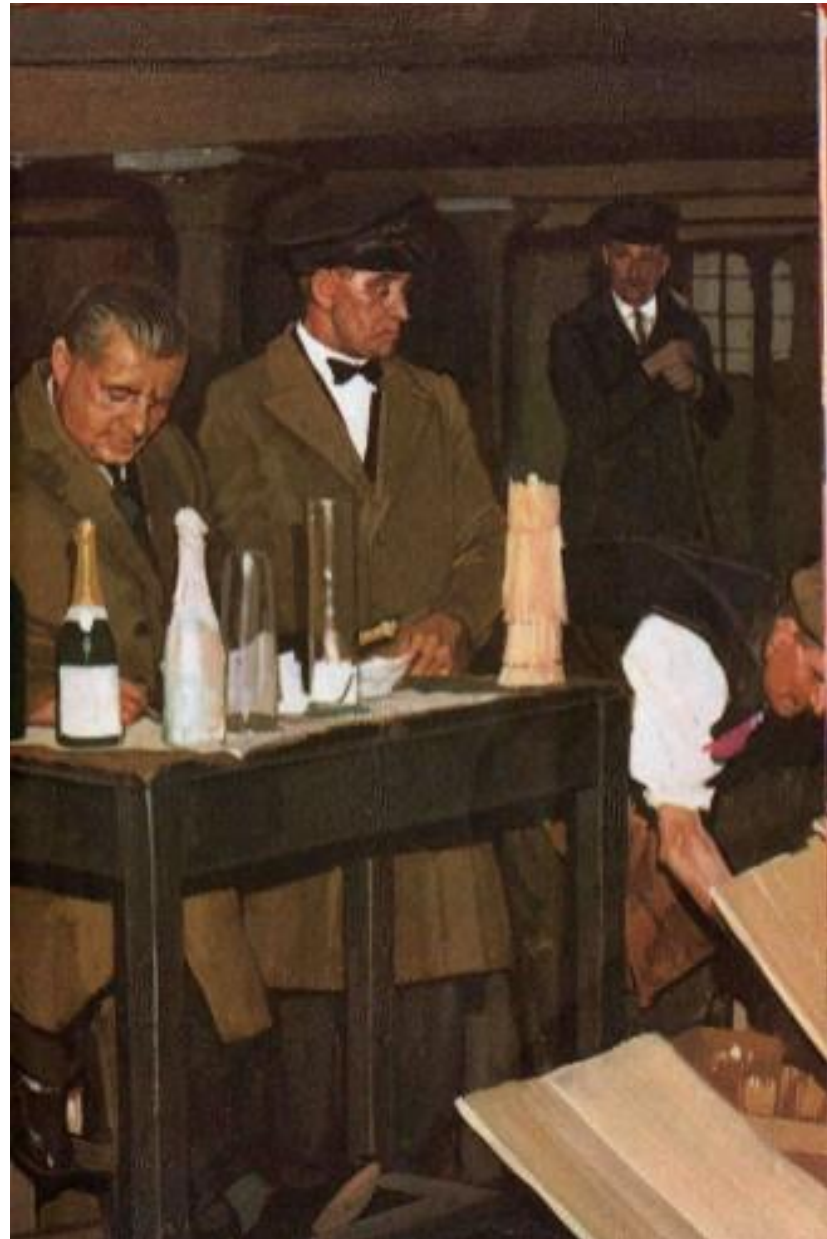
As you see he is also trained in Japanese art of unarmed combat, using two fingers.

What he later finds out is that the woman is actually a docker who had borrowed the bag from a fork lift operator to get some lunch.



Officers are required to go undercover to check that pubs are not selling smuggled spirits. Each officer is trained to identify the difference between home produced drink and that brought in from abroad. This takes much practice and training sessions regularly take place in locker rooms.

Junior officers, called assistants, are also taught to drive cars to take the officers home at the end of a watch.



Some locker rooms are well equipped to assist with the training exercises. This one has a number of pipes, disguised as central heating, that are used to make spirit. This is called a still.

The man at the back is called a watcher and is there to watch the trainees take the test.

This watcher has recently been issued with a made to measure uniform.

Isn't he smart!

