The Policeman's Bike

I think the village of Horsted Keynes has had a fairly amicable relationship with law enforcement down the years. Few locals were reported as going through the courts, and even fewer found their way to jail, although one Middy item recorded a young motorcyclist being asked a question by the judge and being quoted as replying 'Yus, Mate.'

However, in the inter-War years, maybe with a greater incidence of such offences as poaching, things seemed to be a little different. I can't quote a name for the officer concerned, but he evidently arrived in the village, where he'd have presumably been accommodated at No 7 Leighton Villas, and set about applying the law with unusual gusto. This was almost certainly in the Thirties and, according to my Dad, some of the local youth felt moved to register its disapproval.

The man concerned was in the habit of regularly leaving his official bicycle against the blacksmith's wall and going off round the village on foot to find villains. On one such occasion the protesters waited until he'd disappeared from sight and assessed he'd be away for some time. The cycle was taken across to the signpost by the village seat and, little by little with the help of several strong hands, the main triangle of its frame was manoeuvred, one at a time, over the three finger posts, before triumphantly lowering the machine down to the ground, suitably impaled on the signpost's central stem.

No doubt, every available nook of concealment was occupied to witness the officer's return, but no matter how hard he tried, he failed to reverse the route the trusty bike had taken in becoming trapped. The outcome, if any, was never disclosed but the subsequent arrival of a squad of council workers to excavate the signpost and restore his mobility, was viewed with considerable glee.

Nick Turner