1 Introduction

> The first policemen came into our midst, to plant the thin edge of the wedge which was to revolutionise our manners and customs … we have lost all traces of mummery; all traces of Lee Fair …most of our Mischief Night; as nearly all of the peace eggers … If mummers were to be seen upon the streets now, the police would interfere.
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> Isaac Binns, *From Village to Town*, Batley, 1882, p.139

ISAAC BINNS' 'RANDOM recollections,' covering the past thirty years of his life, offer an affectionate glimpse of a fast-changing world. Only once does he strike a discordant note and that was when he mentioned the 'new' policeman. As he wrote, the police had been a continuing presence for a generation or more, during which time they had intervened in more than leisure activities. It evoked in Binns a sense of loss, a resigned acceptance that life had been irrevocably changed combined with thinly-disguised displeasure, if not outright anger, at what the police had done. But how typical was Batley? And how typical were Binns' responses? What follows is an attempt to provide a picture of the diverse and changing forms of policing to be found in the West Riding of Yorkshire and to offer an interpretation of the impact of the police on the population of the county in a period which fortuitously approximates to the reign of Queen Victoria.

The decision to consider the West Riding is based on the belief that a regional study offers an alternative perspective both to macro-histories of the police in England and micro-histories focussing on specific towns. The writing of any history requires a degree of generalization and the higher the level the

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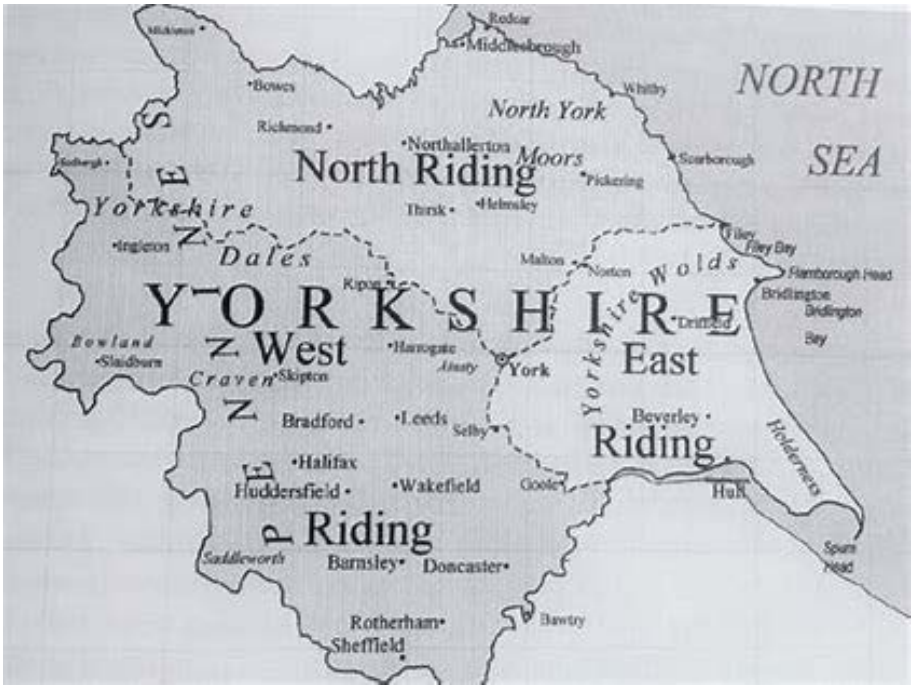
greater the loss of detail. There is no "right" approach. The broad sweep of 'macro' history provides an understanding of the past through its ability to discern, from the welter of detail, broad patterns, covering wide geographical areas as well as long periods of time. The intricate detail of 'micro' history provides another understanding of the past through its focus on complexities and irregularities that defy simple categorization and generalization. The present study falls somewhere between the two, though not out of any belief in an Aristotelian golden mean. The West Riding of Yorkshire was a longstanding and meaningful administrative unit but one whose diversity makes it particularly useful to an analysis of the development of policing and the creation of a policed society. It was a unit large enough to throw light on individual forces and the relationship with broader developments in the policing in England and Wales but small enough to bring out important local variations.



Principal towns in the Ridings of Yorkshire

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Although seeking to break new ground in considering the development of policing across the West Riding as a whole, this study owes a clear debt to other scholars, notably David Churchill, Jane Posner and Chris Williams, and their research on specific towns.[1] I trust I have accurately summarised and fully acknowledged their arguments – even when I have reached different conclusions.

The Victorian West Riding: Some key demographic and socio-economic features

The West Riding was one of the largest counties in England (c.1.75 million acres) and was subject to minor boundary changes in the period under review, notably the transfer of Todmorden from Lancashire in 1888 and the southward expansion of Sheffield into areas that once were part of Derbyshire. Unlike the larger North Riding, the West Riding was heavily if unevenly populated. Its population rose from c.1.2 million in 1841 to c.2.8 million in 1901.

The implications of these figures become more apparent when broken down by petty sessional districts which were the basic unit for policing in the period. These districts varied considerably in both area and population, Scisset and Upper Mill, both less than 20,000 acres, stood in contrast to Knaresborough, over 170,000 acres in size. Similarly, there were considerable variations in population from the Halifax district (over 100,000 people) and Upper Mill, Settle and Snaith (each with fewer than 25,000). Petty sessional districts were not homogenous units. The Huddersfield (or Upper Agbrigg) district contained numerous villages and hamlets, some in bleak, inhospitable and inaccessible moorlands in the Pennines. In addition, it contained fourteen semi-industrial townships, varying in size from 2,000 to over 10,000 people. The Upper Strafforth and Tickhill district contained thirty parishes that varied from important urban and industrial centres, such as Rotherham, Conisbrough and Handsworth, to mining villages like Maltby, as well as small villages, such as Rawmarsh and Wath-upon-Dearne.

The region was central to the urbanisation and industrialising of Britain. Around the mid-nineteenth century only Lancashire could match the West Riding in terms of employment in secondary, that is industrial, employment. The woollen and worsted industries and associated trades were heavily

concentrated in and around Bradford, Halifax and Huddersfield. Old and new industrial practices co-existed. In Upper Agbrigg handloom weaving persisted in Kirkheaton, notwithstanding its proximity to Huddersfield, whereas modern mills were built in Marsden and Meltham. Taking advantage of new technologies and geographical location, some communities, such as Golcar and Lockwood, prospered and grew. Others, such as the older-established semi-industrial villages of Honley and Holmfirth, saw economic stagnation and even population decline. In the south there was a concentration of metal-working trades around Sheffield and Rotherham. As well as large scale iron and steel production, there were the specialist 'little mesters,' contributing to the production of cutlery, scissors, pocketknives and a range of tools for agriculture. The expansion of the railway network, itself generating employment for unskilled navvies, saw York become an important centre with a variety of trades related to the railways, and likewise Doncaster, especially after the Great Northern railway moved its engine works there in 1853. Also, in central and southern areas were to be found a growing number of mining villages as new mines were opened in the second half of the century.[2] Yorkshire-mined coal was important to the national as well as to the regional economy. And yet at the same time agriculture and related trades continued to be an important source of employment in the more easterly and northern parts of the county. Mixed arable farming developed in the Vale of York and the expansion of urban centres offered an alternative – the liquid milk trade – to dairy farmers who increasingly faced competition from abroad in traditional butter and cheese making. For those in the upper regions of the Pennines sheep rearing was a precarious source of income. It is no coincidence that in these districts agriculture and industry were intertwined in the distinctive form of the farmer/weaver and the semi-industrial villages in an otherwise rural context. Social tensions caused by economic change posed problems of order that were compounded by local traditions of popular dissent and political radicalism. Demands for factory reform, opposition to the New Poor Law and the threat of Chartism posed very real threats to public order. Unsurprisingly, there were fears that 'a vast number of the working classes … are constantly aiming at the subversion of all social order.'[3] The prosperity of the third quarter century was threatened by a combination of industrialisation in Europe and America and a policy of free trade which brought intensified competition across the regional

economy. In contrast, the adoption of tariffs by Germany, and later America, added to the problems of exporters. The staple industries continued to grow in the long term but in the short-term cyclical fluctuations brought considerable distress to many communities. Industrial discontent, notably in the mining and textile industries, became an increasingly common feature of the regional economy. Popular forms of protest, notably rattening, especially in and around Sheffield, co-exist with more modern trade union action – both created problems for the police.

The expansion of employment opportunities led to a growth in the urban population. The established 'great towns' of Leeds and Sheffield grew, though not to the same extent as Bradford, which saw rapid expansion unequalled in the West Riding and matched only by the 'infant Hercules' of Middlesbrough in the North Riding. The 'middling towns' of Halifax and Huddersfield also saw significant population growth as did smaller towns such as Batley and Dewsbury. Attention tends to be focussed on the spectacular, such as the rapid expansion of Bradford, with its associated problems of poverty, disease and petty crime but it is important not to lose sight of the less dramatic but more typical urban areas. Across the county, albeit not consistently, internal migration was an important element. Men and women from less prosperous parts of the mainland – north Scotland, north Wales, the south-west of England, even the North Riding – were attracted to the West Riding, though the most high-profile and problematic incomers in the eyes of many Victorians came from Ireland who began arriving before the Great Hunger.

The variations in demographic, social and economic, and geographical circumstances created distinctive policing problems. The constable pounding the beat in densely populated Bradford or Sheffield faced quite different problems from his counterpart in sparsely populated districts such as Ewcross and Claro, or the remoter parts of Upper Agbrigg and Staincross. The geographical dimension should be stressed. The ratio of police to population, the most commonly discussed metric used by the police inspectorate, obscures the very real practical problems of policing districts such as Saddleworth. Poorly served by road and beyond the reach of the railway, there were huge tracts of land which provided an ideal location for a fugitive from the law let alone a group of gamblers betting on a cock-fight or prize fight, or even a landlord or landlady ignoring the licensing laws. Much of the district around Marsden in Upper Agbrigg was 'uncultivated moorland,' the village of Holme

was part of 'a mountainous moorland township,' while Scammonden was 'a wild and mountainous township,' albeit only seven miles from Huddersfield. Less inaccessible townships in Upper Agbrigg, such as Scholes and Shelley, were 'straggling' and 'scattered,' while in the relatively compact village of Honley there were numerous and independently minded landowners and artisans, who kept alive a radical tradition. So too did Holmfirth but, along with Kirkheaton, it was notorious for its lawlessness, notably cock-fighting and brawling. Similar problems were encountered in the petty divisional districts of Staincross and Upper Strafforth and Tickhill. Even where the terrain was less challenging, the sheer size of a district such as Claro posed considerable logistical problems. Finally, even relatively tranquil places, such as Ripon, bypassed by many of the major economic and social changes of the day, still posed challenging quotidian problems for the local bobby.

The changing pattern of policing in the West Riding

The provision of policing in the Victorian West Riding varied across both time and place. Three snapshots in time give an insight into the dynamic evolution of policing in the county. Like a kaleidoscope, different patterns were created as time passed and as the component parts themselves changed in size. At the start of the period, c.1840, the West Riding magistrates, unlike their counterparts in Lancashire, rejected the opportunity to establish a county force, eventually opting for the superintending constable system that looked to modernise the traditional parish constable approach. Elsewhere in the county there were police forces in Leeds and Sheffield but not in Bradford. There was a police force in Doncaster and Barnsley (the latter incorporated into the West Riding County Constabulary [hereafter WRCC] in 1856/7 only to reappear decades later) but not in Halifax, Huddersfield and Wakefield. Move on two decades, and c.1860, there was now a county force but to contrast 'rural' policing with 'urban,' was to ignore significant internal variations. The WRCC initially comprised twenty-one divisions based on petty sessional districts that varied markedly in size and socio-economic structure. Further, the county force was responsible for the policing of semi-industrial villages, such as Honley and Holmfirth, but also sizable and dynamic towns such as Barnsley, Dewsbury and Rotherham.

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The county force co-existed with a variety of borough forces, ranging in size from Leeds and Sheffield on the one hand to Pontefract and Ripon, on the other. Some forces were relatively long-established, and with a track record of police reform, but not all. Police forces were established as recently as 1848 in Halifax, Huddersfield and Wakefield. Jump to the end of the century and a different pattern is evident. The WRCC was still there but it had taken over responsibility for policing Pontefract and Ripon and retained responsibility for the policing of towns such as Batley and Keighley but other towns it had once policed now had forces of their own – Dewsbury from 1863, Rotherham from 1882 and Barnsley from 1896.

Police forces were not homogenous and unchanging entities, as will become clear in the following chapters. Nor did they act in isolation, particularly after 1856, but even beforehand, superintending constables occasionally co-operated with themselves and with borough constables. The establishment of the WRCC led very quickly to co-operation between men of the three county forces, particularly where their jurisdictions abutted. In subsequent years there was co-operation between borough forces and county police divisions on a variety of issues, ranging from gambling to industrial disputes. There was also co-operation that transcended county borders again on a variety of problems ranging from the aftermath of natural disasters or crowd control during a royal visit to preserving order during a strike or even an election. Inter-force relations were not always harmonious. Less public, though probably more contentious, were the refusals of certain boroughs to respond to requests for help from nearby forces. In addition, there were the informal interactions from the movement between forces as men sought to further (or restart) their careers. The significance of such interaction is difficult to establish. Stephen English's application to become chief constable of Leeds may well have been enhanced by his experience as a superintending constable in the county before moving to Norwich. On the other hand, the appointment of men who had served a short time in other forces was more likely to be a recipe for failure. PC Antrobus, of whom more later, was exceptional in the havoc he wrought (not to mention his dishonesty in getting a post in the WRCC) but was one of many who tried and failed to make a go of policing on two or three occasions.

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Key questions and interpretations

The present study focuses on the complicated evolution of policing across the West Riding and revolves around three important and inter-related set of questions. The first centres on the notion of a policed society, popularised by Gatrell and recently challenged by Churchill. Put simply, what were the realities of a police presence in the streets and lanes of Victorian Yorkshire? What did the police do? But how did different sections of society perceive and experience the police? How were perceptions of policing as an abstract (something necessary for the common good) impacted by policing as an experience (perhaps positive, perhaps negative, coercive even brutal)? To what extent did the varied geography of the West Riding shape, not just the perceptions, but the realities of living in a policed environment? Further, to what extent was the impact of the police determined by their limitations, as revealed in the discussion of efficiency? In short, in what respects can late-Victorian society be meaningfully described as policed?

The second concerns the creation of 'efficient' police forces over the course of Victoria's reign. This involves consideration of issues relating to recruitment, retention, training and discipline. It also requires consideration of 'efficiency,' the term used by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary from 1857 onwards. What precisely constitutes efficiency? Was it a question of overall numbers (and some consideration of their drill skills)? To what extent was it a matter of management in what were increasingly bureaucratic organisations? Was the inspectors' notion of 'efficiency' shared by the various watch committees and police committees across the county? Further, it raises the question of the extent to which such 'efficiency' translated into effectiveness in the eyes of local masters as well as later historians. How was efficiency or effectiveness to be measured? Was it, as a crimefighting force, to be seen in the number of prisoners sent to quarter sessions or assizes? Or, as a force for social discipline, was it in the number of drunks or vagrants arrested? Indeed, how, if at all, could efficiency or effectiveness be measured for what was perceived as essentially a preventative institution? In more mundane terms, to what extent did illness, let alone continuing ill-discipline reduce the effectiveness of the police?

The third set of questions centre on the vexed concept of policing by consent that gave rise to dispute among contemporary observers as well as

later historians. What does consent mean? In what ways and to what extent was it qualified? Is it more fruitful to think of begrudging acceptance, even resignation, rather than overt approval? How much of the population has to be antagonistic towards the police for it to invalidate the concept? Further, was consent, however defined and qualified, more an ongoing, dynamic process rather than a one-off situation? More widely, to what extent was constructing consent dependent on external factors beyond the control of the police? In other words, were the police beneficiaries, rather than instigators, of wider changes in social attitudes and behaviour?

The focus of this study necessarily means that certain aspects of policing are marginalised or omitted. There will be no sustained discussion of the police estate – the stations, sub-stations, cells, etc. – nor of the domestic lives of constables. Likewise, there is only passing reference to the enforcement of important pieces of legislation, for example dealing with adulteration of food or fighting contagious animal diseases. In particular, the role of the police in fighting serious, that is indictable, crime falls largely beyond the purview of this study. The focus here is more on petty crime and on the police as agents of social discipline rather than as crime fighters.

The central argument of this book is that by the end of the nineteenth century the West Riding was a recognisably if unevenly policed society. Debates might have raged about the precise form of policing but very few, if any, argued that the police should be abolished. The officers involved, for the most part, satisfied the inspectorate that they were efficient, though even this was qualified by the continuing problems of recruitment, retention, discipline and ill-health, hinted at in the annual inspection reports and substantiated by the evidence of police conduct books and watch committee minutes. The effectiveness of these forces was more apparent in terms of social discipline rather than crime fighting. While never satisfying the demands of pressure groups, agitating against intemperance, gambling and prostitution, the various police forces largely satisfied their immediate, and often more pragmatic, masters. Finally, while recognising that police legitimacy did not run to all actions and locations, and notwithstanding persistent anti-police sentiments among certain social groups and even an upsurge of anti-police violence around the turn of the century, the police were accepted, albeit often begrudgingly, even fatalistically, to a degree sufficient to justify talking, pragmatically and realistically, of 'policing by consent.'

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A brief historiographical survey

From its earliest days around the turn of the twentieth century, police history was largely dominated by one force, the Metropolitan police, and its alleged diffusion across the country.[4] Further, the advent of 'new' policing was viewed in positive terms with the police as benign agents of law and order and welcomed by the majority of the nation. This changed dramatically in the 1970s when Robert Storch's seminal articles turned orthodoxy on its head with their emphasis on the provincial experience and, more so, their emphasis on conflict.[5] The upsurge of interest in 'modern' police history continued over the following decades, during which time there has been a plethora of popular histories, academic studies, articles and dissertations, with varying focii. As a consequence, there is now a greater appreciation of the roots of change that stretch back well into the eighteenth century, a fuller acknowledgement of the continuities between 'old' and 'new' policing in terms of personnel and practices, and a greater awareness of the complexities and dynamics of policing provision in the nineteenth century.[6]

There is also now a better understanding of police forces as bureaucratic organisations, often employing large numbers of men (though only the occasional woman as matron before the Great War), and with a wide range of responsibilities extending well beyond crime fighting.[7] Shpayer-Makov's analysis of the Met highlights both the changing strategies of senior figures often in response to pressure from the rank-and-file and the emergence of 'an *esprit de corps* and a sense of common feeling of professional identity.'[8] Williams also stresses the importance of the emergence of 'uniformed and disciplined institutions' in which the proletarianized constable was at the bottom of 'a hierarchy of supervision.'[9] Klein's history of 'the secret lives of police constables' explores further the experience of the ordinary city constable and the tensions between formal training and expectations and the realities of beat work. Although highlighting the contrasts between pre- and post-war policing, particularly in terms of discipline she emphasises the responsibility that fell on beat officers – 'their most important skill remained exercising discretion, deciding how to prioritise their attention and what to ignore.'[10]

The notion of a policed society has been accepted, explicitly or implicitly by many historians, the present author included, with little consideration of the problematic nature of the concept.[11] Gatrell's notion of 'the policeman-

state' has been particularly influential.[12] He emphasises the role of the state in progressively taking control of the criminal justice system and, in so doing, eroding older procedures. This broad thesis has been challenged, most notably by Churchill.[13] Nonetheless, it remains the case that the number of police forces (and policemen) grew and the supervisory and disciplinary powers of the ordinary constable were increased through the proliferations of local bye-laws, not to mention the extension of summary justice and the introduction of habitual criminals' legislation. Formal interaction between police and the public as measured by the annual crime statistics, Gatrell stresses, increased to the point that roughly a quarter of all men had been arrested or summonsed by 1901.[14] For poor, urban working-class men the figure would have been higher. The idea of a policed society has also been explored by J Carter Wood, who argues for a shift from customary 'self-policing' to a more formal 'policing of the self.'[15] Through a 'long process of tense negotiations' the number of critics challenging 'the legitimate place of the policeman in British society' diminished significantly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and, as a consequence, working-class 'acceptance' of the police had replaced earlier hostility and resistance.[16] Churchill, as part of a wide-ranging and important book, has emphasised the far greater degree of civilian involvement in law-enforcement than acknowledged in more policed-centred histories.[17]

Finally, there has arisen a more sophisticated analysis of police/public relations and of popular responses that incorporates issues of class, gender and ethnicity.[18] Despite broad agreement that older orthodox and revisionist police histories require modification, there remain important differences in interpretation among recent historians. Taylor, especially in his early work, argued for an interpretation of qualified policing by consent but this has been rigorously challenged by Churchill, who presents a re-invigorated 'pessimist' case that emphasises the 'fractious and oppositional' nature of police/public interactions.[19]

Looking more specifically at histories of urban and rural policing, an early study of urban policing in Lancashire by Eric Midwinter highlighted the different patterns of reform in incorporated boroughs Lancaster, Liverpool and Wigan, and unincorporated towns, Bolton, Manchester, Salford and Preston – the last two creating a town force to avoid being merged with the Lancashire county constabulary. He also drew attention to the high rates of turnover

and the poor discipline of these 'new' forces.[20] Roger Swift's 1988 re-appraisal of early-Victorian policing also drew attention to the considerable variations between the towns of Exeter, Wolverhampton and York but discerned certain common factors: the gradual nature of reform, the low levels of efficiency and the gradual, grudging acceptance of the 'new' police forces.[21] His more recent book on Cambridge, while recognising the 'watershed' nature of the new force introduced in 1836, reasserts these findings.[22] Another early study, Davey on Horncastle, emphasised the importance of the 1833 Lighting and Watching Act as a means of responding to demands for improved policing.[23] The men appointed under this act were, according to Davey, effective and played a key role in the defeat of crime in the town in the 1840s and 1850s as brothels were closed down and drunks less frequently seen on the streets.[24] Furthermore, the use of the 1833 Act was not unique to Horncastle. The opportunities presented by improvement acts, as well as the importance of the attitudes of local ruling elites in determining the pace and extent of police reform comes out in Taylor's studies of Middlesbrough and Huddersfield.[25] More recently, Brown's study of Torquay and Exmouth shows continued faith in parochial constables and opposition to the 1856 County and Borough Act, notwithstanding the pressures created by an emergent leisure resort in the former.[26] Three recent doctoral theses are particularly relevant to this study - Churchill on Leeds, Posner on Halifax and Williams on Sheffield.[27] Aspects of their research are directly relevant to the overall aims of this study as will become more apparent in subsequent chapters.

Rural policing has been equally well served. Among a number of early works focussing on individual county forces, Lowe's detailed study of the Lancashire constabulary drew attention to the problems of recruitment difficulties, high turnover and ill-discipline in the early years of a large county force. The strict discipline imposed on constables proved too much for many with some 40 per cent of recruits leaving within a year of appointment. Nonetheless, even in a high-wage county, police pay and other perks saw a significant minority of men serving for ten years and more, even though few were promoted beyond the rank of first-class constable.[28] Steedman's seminal work, *Policing the Victorian Community*, provides a detailed analysis, among other things, of the careers of the county forces of Staffordshire and Buckinghamshire. In analysing how 'policemen changed themselves from a collection of unimportant working-class men wearing the uniform of local

power and authority, into the beginnings of a recognisable police force,' she raises a number of points that are of particular relevance to the present study: the problems of creating a disciplined, hierarchical organisation from recruits drawn largely from the unskilled working classes, the demands placed on recruits, their scope for action, and the emergence of a wider sense of a police community, not least in the campaign for pension rights.[29]

The extent of experimentation in policing is made clear in Storch's analysis of policing practices in southern England. Similarly, the importance of the politics of reform was explored in detail by Philips and Storch.[30] The latter argue persuasively that police reform grew out of 'prolonged and complication transactions between, in their terminology, 'the National Governing Class and the Provincial Ruling Class during a period in which policing options were gradually narrowed down until there was but one, itself 'grounded on the principles of 1839,' which was enshrined in the 1856 act, as a consequence of which there was a recognisably 'policed rural society.' [31] Nonetheless, their analysis brings out the extent of experimentation with different models of policing in the 1830s and 1840s.

The superintending constable system was one such experiment and was tried in a number of counties, including Buckinghamshire, Herefordshire and Kent, and not just the West Riding. However, its reputation was thoroughly traduced by the 1853 Select Committee on the Police, which called (even recalled) witnesses to praise county forces, notably Essex, and condemn alternatives.[32] Similarly, Sir George Grey, in presenting the revised police bill to parliament in 1856, went out of his way to condemn unequivocally (though not accurately) the superintending constable alternative.[33] Later historians, though less condemnatory, have marginalised its importance. Palmer briefly recognized it as 'a popular alternative [to] the generally unpopular county police' while Emsley, noting that the evidence was 'stacked against' the superintending constable system, nonetheless condemns it for its dependence on unprofessional parochial constables.[34] Philips and Storch, focussing more on the politics of police reform, make some reference to the working of the system in Buckinghamshire and Kent but barely touch on the experience of the West Riding. They saw it as a 'widespread experiment … which started with great enthusiasm [but] was giving diminishing satisfaction by the mid-1850s.'[35] In particular, they argue that 'their great defect was particularly felt in cases where they had to deal with serious violence, robberies and

burglaries.'[36] Further, they also argue that even in counties heavily committed to the superintending constable system, by the mid-1850s magistrates were convinced that a system heavily reliant on parochial constables could not deliver the protection deemed necessary at the time. This conclusion is based on direct evidence from Buckinghamshire and the assumption that 'similarly cautious negative conclusions were being drawn elsewhere.'[37] This was not the case in the West Riding, as the present author has argued.[38] Foster's analysis of magisterial attitudes in the east and north ridings of Yorkshire notes the scepticism with which police reforms were met. Rather than taking the opportunity to create a county force, magistrates in the east riding looked to the option of appointing superintending constable under the 1840 act. Twelve men were appointed in 1844 but Foster does not consider in detail their work.[39] Other accounts touch briefly on the subject. Pye, in his study of protest and repression in the West Riding during the Chartist years, acknowledges the role of the 1842 Parish Constable Act but relates this narrowly to 'the creation of police forces in growing industrial towns'.[40] Tennant suggests that 'the Superintending Constables legislation may have been more successful in some counties than is realised' but her research is focussed on Cheshire and its experiment in policing.[41] With the exception of Taylor's studies, there are no detailed analyses of the superintending constable system in practice.[42] In part this reflects a general belief that it was an 'evolutionary dead end,' in Palmer's words; in part it reflects a major problem of evidence. Nonetheless, from the pages of the local press, quarter session records and other official records, it is possible to provide insights into its operation in a specific regional context.

As well as a greater awareness of the variety of policing 'experiments' across England in the years before 1856, which render simplistic older distinctions between 'old' and 'new' police,[43] there has been an emphasis on the importance of the local magistracy and their perception of and relationship with central government.[44] Shakesheff's work on Herefordshire highlights how magistrates were motivated to oppose the Rural Police acts by a strong sense of independence from central influence.[45] Similarly in Cheshire, as Tennant has demonstrated, the magistracy sought a distinctive solution to their problems and resisted pressures from central government.[46]

The role of the police in the wider criminal justice system has been explored

by writers such as Philips (the Black Country), Jones (Montgomeryshire) and Barrett (Cheshire).[47] Looking at the advent of the new police, Philips argues that there was a fundamental shift from 'an unpoliced society' c.1835, to a 'policed society' c.1860. By the latter date, he argues, 'a paid police force operated, relying not only on coercion but also on the moral assent of most of the population to the role of a police force as enforcer of law and order.'[48] In contrast, Barrett is highly critical of the policeman-state argument. He stresses the involvement of multiple actors in the prosecution process and the limited role of the police, whose significance is seen in terms of 'their ability to bring different sets of witnesses together.'[49]

More pertinent to the argument to be presented here are a number of recent studies which have considered the totality of policing within a county. Scollan's research on Essex brings out clearly the diversity of police provision. Despite the fact that chief constable McHardy was seen as an advocate of the new county policing, he acknowledged in his evidence to the 1853 Select Committee that his 'new' county force not only co-existed but also co-operated with the old (albeit reformed) parish constable system.[50] Similarly, borough policing in Essex saw a multiplicity of experiences including in Harwich an abortive attempt to involve the county force in a collaborative venture.[51] Gregory's study of policing reform in Monmouthshire depicts a similar situation in which different forms of policing – based on the 1842 Parish Constable Act, the 1833 Lighting and Watching Act, the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act and local improvement acts – co-existed.[52] Co-operation between 'old' and 'new' was also to be seen in Denbighshire.[53] Unlike many other local studies, Gregory's also considers developments in policing in the late-Victorian and Edwardian years, with a chapter that highlights ongoing disciplinary problems and an innovative chapter on morbidity and mortality based on findings from death certificates. Although not offering a county-wide analysis, Tennant's study of Cheshire argues that the county force grew out of an 'entrepreneurial system of policing' that could be traced back to the turn of the nineteenth century.[54] Police reform was a 'complex and controversial' process in which county magistrates, seeking to defend their position against central encroachment, played a key role. Again, the existence of alternative policing, including private initiatives, is a key feature of the Cheshire experience but the absence of central control in the county, which gave rise to inconsistent implementation, was a serious weakness.

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All that said, there remain certain aspects of modern police history that are relatively under-researched. First, despite the emphasis on what might be termed the classic reform period, c.1830 – 1870, little is known of the working of one of the alternatives – the superintending constable system. Also, the last decades of the nineteenth century have been somewhat overlooked, notwithstanding the fact that these years that saw both consolidation – second generation new police, if you will – but also continuing evolution, especially with the emergence of new borough forces and the amalgamation into county forces of others. Second, despite the growing number of studies of medium- and small-sized towns, the histories of the 'Great Towns,' Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester (not to mention London) have been more fully researched and, accordingly, tend to dominate the overall narratives.[55] There remains a tendency to view county and borough forces as separate entities rather than comprising a mix of policing practices, inter-linked to a greater or lesser extent, that operated, albeit intermittently, on a regional basis. This complexity also impacted on the experience of the individual constable and members of the 'policed' public. For the young recruit joining the county force, for example, before moving to an urban force for more experience but also more pay and then gaining promotion in a medium-sized force, there was not a single policing experience. Practice and culture varied. Similarly, for a working-class woman or man, moving from town to town, whether searching for employment, moving with a family member or even fleeing the law, there was no single experience of being policed. In one town every drunk on the streets would be arrested (and recorded), in another only those who refused to 'move on,' or had nowhere to move to. Capturing this detailed lived experience of the police and the policed is almost impossible but an awareness of the variations across a region is a step in that direction.[56]

Structure and sources

The main body of the book is divided into two sections. The first (chapters 2 to 6) focuses on county policing, from the superintending constable system prior to 1856 and the West Riding County Constabulary thereafter. There are two important reasons for this decision. First, county constables policed around 95 per cent of the acreage of the county throughout the second half of

the century. Further, county constables were responsible for policing over 50 per cent or more of the population of the West Riding until c.1881. Even at the turn of the century the figure was 45 per cent of the total, the remainder being policed by ten borough forces. Second, several of the divisions that comprised the WRCC had more men than certain borough forces. Three divisions – Staincross, Upper Morley and Dewsbury – had more than one hundred men, though a similar number – Ewcross, Saddleworth and Lower Staincliffe – had less than twenty men. The second section (chapters 7 to 12) is devoted to the borough forces, analysed in terms of the size of population they served. There is one omission – York – that needs explanation. Its distinctive position and the fact that for part of the time it was deemed to be part of the north riding led to its exclusion from this study.

There are a number of common concerns that run through the book. Recruitment, retention and training were ongoing problems from the smallest to the largest. So too was the question of leadership. This cluster of questions are considered in chapters 3, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 12. Popular responses, particularly to the policing of daily life and leisure, but also to public order policing are explored in chapters 4, 6, 9, 11 and (in part) 12. Although there are general themes in common, emphasis varies depending upon the particular problems faced more by some forces than others, but also reflecting the strengths and weakness of the different sources used.

Chapter 13 brings together the findings from the various forces in the West Riding and argues for what might be seen as an 'optimistic' interpretation of the development of policing, notwithstanding the conceptual and evidential problems associated with the key concepts of 'a policed society,' 'efficiency' and 'policing by consent.' It is an argument which highlights, first, the existence, albeit qualified, of forces that were effective enough to make their presence felt in working-class life. Secondly, it argues that, in a meaningful sense, the late-Victorian West Riding was a policed society, or perhaps more accurately, a number of policed societies. Finally, and in contradistinction to recent neo-Storchian interpretations, it argues that a pragmatic but meaningful *modus vivendi* had been established between police and policed that can be described as 'policing by consent.'

A variety of sources have been used, all of which have weaknesses that require careful usage but which, overall, provide a sufficiently solid block

of evidence to underpin the central arguments presented here. Patterns of recruitment, retention and career progression are based on the evidence contained in a variety of police registers that detail biographical details, including career outcomes and conduct records, though there is no uniformity of approach across the various forces studied. Not all are comprehensive, nor are they always accurate. In an age when people were less sure of their date of birth, there examples of conflicting evidence with other sources such as the census returns. Most discrepancies are relatively minor but a more serious problem was the men who deliberately lied about their past. Some were found out (and dismissed) when testimonials proved to be forgeries. Others found their dishonesty exposed elsewhere, in court records for example, but the police record was never corrected. Yet others were never found out. The scale of the problem is unknown and unknowable but the author remains confident that the likely extent of this problem does not undermine the validity of the statistics generated for this study. Watch committee and town council minutes are a further valuable source of information, not least in supplementing the police records of indiscipline, but again there are problems. Outcomes are covered almost without exception but the same cannot be said of the details of debate. Very occasionally the local press proved to be more informative. The editor of the *Huddersfield Chronicle*, the radical and one-time Chartist Joshua Hobson had 'inside' informers. As a consequence, the paper offered a fuller account than watch committee minutes. The reports of chief constables were another valuable source of evidence. As well as an annual report on crime, many chief constables provided quarterly or monthly reports but again there was considerable variations in the detail provided. But as well as variations between forces or between chief constables in any given force, there were variations over time in the reports of individual chief constables.

Considerable use has been made of sources generated by central government, notably the annual reports of her majesty's inspectors of constabulary. As well as containing statistical information, these sources record the judgments of the inspectors and, in their correspondence with local watch committees, and reveal the tensions and differences of opinion among those charged with the oversight of the police. In some cases, however, they fail to reflect accurately conditions on the ground. The inspection of the WRCC took place at the same time as large-scale anti-police protest

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broke out in Honley and Holmfirth but no mention is made in the annual report which deemed the force to be efficient and well managed. Parliament also undertook more specific enquiries, such as the 1872 select committee on police superannuation funds. As well as the overall conclusions and recommendations, the minutes of evidence contain a wealth of local detail, not always consistent with the overall conclusions. Further, select committees were not politically neutral. This was particularly true of the 1852/3 select committee reports on police which were biased against the superintending constable system operative in several parts of the country. The question of selectivity and bias, intentional or otherwise, is also a well-known problem when using the local press. Editors were concerned with the viability of their papers, which manifested itself in coverage of exceptional crimes, from daring robberies to gruesome murders. Their coverage was also influenced by their political stance but equally important was their unwitting testimony which revealed itself in widely-held assumptions about, for example, the causes of crime.

Through sceptical reading and cross-checking of sources, key components of the historian's craft, most of these problems can be mitigated. There remains, however, the problem of silence in the historical records. Specifically, the thoughts and feelings of the policed, particularly those who most felt the force of policing, are rarely captured in the historical record. Often their evidence has more to do with minimizing punishment by telling the courts what magistrates wanted to hear than creating an accurate record for the benefit of later historians. On occasion, however, the reports of court proceedings, such as the trial of the Honley rioters, provide an insight through the evidence of witnesses and the responses of the crowd in the courthouse. Similarly, as Churchill has demonstrated, police occurrence books – where they survive – provide valuable insights into popular attitudes. Likewise, the ordinary constable only occasionally left a footprint in the sources. Disciplinary records refer to insubordination without giving any detail and it is the voice of the senior officer that is more often heard. Now and again, what appears to be an authentic voice of the ordinary constable comes through in an angry or foulmouthed retort that by chance found its way into the historical record but all too often, others spoke, with varying degrees of inaccuracy, for these groups. Consequently, conclusions

are necessarily tentative and open to challenge but therein lies the fascination and frustration of historical research.

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Endnotes

1 D Churchill, 'Crime, Policing and Control in Leeds. C.1830 – 1890,' unpublished Ph.D., Open University, 2012 J Posner, 'The establishment and development of the New Police in Halifax, 1848 – 1914,' unpublished Ph.D., University of Huddersfield, 2014, and C A Williams, 'Police and Crime in Sheffield, 1818 – 1874,' unpublished Ph.D., Sheffield University, 1998.

2 For details of mines in the West Riding Northern Mine Research Society see Coal Mines in Yorkshire 1854 (nmrs.org.uk) which lists almost eighty mines in the West Riding in the second half of the nineteenth century

3 Captain Fenton to General Bouverie, 29 October 1832, quoted in J Hargreaves, A Metropolis of Discontent: Popular protest in Huddersfield, c.1780-1850' and A J Brooke, 'Labour Disputes and Trade Unions in the Industrial Revolution,' respectively chapters 9 & 10 in H Haigh, ed., *Huddersfield: A Most Handsome Town*, Huddersfield, Kirklees Cultural Services, 1992. The quotation is in Hargreaves, pp,208-9. See also N Pye, *The Home Office and the Chartists, 1838-48: Protest and Repression in the West Riding*, Pontypool, Merlin Press, 2013 and C Howe, *Halifax 1842: A Year of Crisis*, London, Breviary Stuff Publications, 2014.

4 See particularly, T A Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales*, London, Constable, 1st edition, 1967, W R Miller, *Cops and Bobbies: Police Authority in New York and London, 1830-1870*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1973 and P T Smith, *Policing Victorian London: Political Policing, Public Order and the London Metropolitan Police*, London, Greenwood Press, 1985, also, though with a more specific focus, S Petrow, *Policing Morals: The Metropolitan Police and the Home Office, 1870-1914*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994.

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7 See particularly, H Shpayer-Makov, *The Making of a Policeman: A social history of a labour force in metropolitan London, 1829-1914*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2002, Chris A Williams, *Police Control Systems in Britain, 1775-1975*, Manchester University Press, 2014 and for a later period J Klein,

Invisible Men: The Secret Lives of Police Constables in Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham, 1900-1939, Liverpool University Press, 2010.

8 Shpayer-Makov, *Making of a Policeman*, p.266

9 Williams, *Police Control*, pp.202-3

10 Klein, *Invisible Men*, p.310

11 For example, D Taylor, 'Conquering the British Ballarat: Policing Victorian Middlesbrough,' *Journal of Social History*, 2004, pp.755 – 771. D Philips & R D Storch, *Policing Provincial England, 1829-1856: The politics of reform*, Leicester University Press, 1990, p.10 and J Carter Wood, 'Self-Policing and the Policing of the Self: Violence, Protection and the Civilizing Bargain in Britain,' *Crime, History and Societies*, (7), 2003, pp. 1-20, for example at p.3

12 V A C Gatrell, 'Crime, authority and the policeman-state' in F M L Thompson, ed., *The Social History of Britain, 1750 – 1950*, vol. 2, Cambridge University Press, 1990

13 D Churchill, 'Rethinking the state monopolisation thesis: the historiography of policing and criminal justice in nineteenth-century England,' *Crime, History & Societies*, 2014 (18), pp.131 – 152 and D Churchill, *Crime Control and Everyday Life in the Victorian City: The Police and the Public*, Oxford University Press, 2017,

14 Gatrell, 'Policeman-state,' pp.279-280

15 Carter Wood, 'Self-Policing,' p.12

16 Carter Word, 'Self-policing,' pp. 2, 3 & 12

17 Churchill, *Crime Control passim.*

18 For example, D Taylor *Beerhouses, Brothels and Bobbies: Policing by Consent in Huddersfield and the Huddersfield District in the mid-nineteenth century*, University of Huddersfield Press, 2016 and the same author's 'Cass, Coverdale and Consent: The Metropolitan Police and Working-Class Women in Late-Victorian London,' *Social History*, 2015, pp.113-136. See also Klein, *Invisible Men*, chapters 6 – 8.

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20 E Midwinter, *Law and Order in Early Victorian Lancashire*, Borthwick Papers, York, 1971

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23 B J Davey, *Lawless and Immoral: Policing a County Town, 1838-1857*, Leicester University Press, 1983

24 Davey, *Lawless and Immoral*, chapter 10

25 D Taylor, *Policing the Victorian Town: The Development of the Police in Middlesbrough, c.1840-1914*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002 and *Beerhouses, Brothels and Bobbies*.

26 J Brown, 'Authority and Crime, 1835-60: A comparison between Exmouth and Torquay,' Unpublished Ph,D., University of Plymouth, 2012

27 See fn. 1

28 W J Lowe, 'The Lancashire Constabulary, 1845-70: the social and occupational structure of a Victorian police force,' *Criminal Justice History*, vol.4, 1983, pp. 41 -61, see also the two articles by D Foster, 'Police Reform and Public Opinion in Rural Yorkshire,' *Journal of Local Studies*, 1982, pp. 1-8 and 'The East Riding Constabulary in the nineteenth century,' *Northern History*, (21), 1985, pp. 193-211

29 C Steedman, *Policing the Victorian Community: The formation of English provincial police forces, 1856-80*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, p.68

30 R D Storch, 'Policing rural southern England before the police: opinions and practice, 1830-1856,' in D Hay & F Snyder, eds., *Policing and Prosecution in Britain, 1750-1850*, Oxford University Press, 1989.

31 Philips & Storch, *Policing Provincial England, 1829-1856:The politics of reform*, Leicester University Press, 1990, pp.9 and 230.

32 No witnesses were called from Kent and the one from Buckinghamshire, William Hamilton, appears to have been selected to condemn from within. When H M Clifford, chair of the Hereford quarter sessions, expressed satisfaction with the superintending constable system, his evidence was listened to with incredulity. It was a measure of governmental concern that Captain J B McHardy, chief constable of Essex, was recalled to counter suggestions that there was a viable alternative system.

33 *Hansard*, vol.140, Police (Counties and Boroughs) Bill, 5 February and 10 March 1856

34 Palmer, *Police and* Protest, p.499. C Emsley, *The English Police*, Harlow, Pearson, 1996, p.50 and Crime *and Society in England*, London, Longman, 2004, p.39

35 Philips & Storch, *Policing Provincial England*, p.62 and p.231

36 Philips & Storch, *Policing Provincial England*, p.62

37 Philips & Storch, *Policing Provincial England*, pp. 2126-8 and p.231

38 D Taylor, '"No Remedy for the inefficiency of Parochial Constables": Superintending constables and the transition to "new policing" in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the third quarter of the nineteenth century,' *Crime*,

History & Societies, 19, 2015, pp.67-88 and '"Drops in the Ocean': The Politics and Practice of Policing the West Riding of Yorkshire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,' *Northern History*, lix, 2022, pp.28-51

39 D Foster, 'Police Reform and Public Opinion in Rural Yorkshire,' *Journal of Local Studies*, 1982, pp. 1-8. See also 'The East Riding Constabulary in the nineteenth century,' *Northern History*, (21), 1985, pp. 193-211

40 Pye, *Home Office*, p.178. See also P Bramham , 'Successful Failures: Policing Keighley, 1840 – 1860,' unpublished MA thesis, University of Huddersfield, 1986 for a brief discussion of the origins of the West Riding County Constabulary.

41 The quotation is from the concluding remarks to M Tennant 'The Police that never were: Peel, Melbourne and the Cheshire Constabulary, paper/ Powerpoint given to the Open University Police History Seminar Series 24 March 2017. See also M Tennant, 'Enterprise, experimentation and the State: industrialisation and the Cheshire Constabulary,' unpublished PhD, Keele University, 2016

42 '"No remedy for the inefficiency of Parochial Constables": Superintending constables and the transition to 'new policing' in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the third quarter of the nineteenth century,' *Crime, History & Societies*, 19, 2015, pp. 67 – 88 and '"Drops in the Ocean": The Politics and Practice of Policing the West Riding of Yorkshire in the mid-nineteenth century, *Northern History*, lix, 2022, pp. 98-115

43 The same applies to Scotland. See D Smale, 'The development of the new police in the Scottish borders, 1840-1890,' unpublished PhD, Open University, 2007

44 Philips and Storch, *Policing Provincial England*, chapter 8.

45 T Shakeshaff, *Rural Conflict, Crime and Protest, Herefordshire, 1800-1860*, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, chapter 3. He also makes a plea for more studies of non-adopter counties, p.71. Interestingly, Herefordshire magistrates decided not to adopt the Superintending Constables acts.

46 Tennant, 'The Police that never were.'

47 D Philips, *Crime and Authority in Victorian England: The Black Country, 1835-1860*, London, Croom Helm, 1977 and R Jones, *Crime, Courts and Community in Mid-Victorian Wales, Montgomeryshire, People and Places*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2018 and A A Barrett, 'The system of criminal justice in Cheshire, 1820 – 1875,' unpublished PhD, University of Keele, 19996

48 Philips, *Crime and Authority*, pp.53-4

49 Barrett, 'Criminal justice in Cheshire,' p.21 and p.96

50 M J Scollan, 'Parish Constables versus Police Constables: Policing Early

Nineteenth Century Essex,' unpublished PhD, Open University, 2007, chapter 5. The reference to McHardy is at p.162.

51 Scollan, 'Parish Constables,' chapter 6.

52 M Gregory, 'Policeman's Lot: the nature and dynamics of the Monmouthshire constabulary, 1857 – 1914,' unpublished PhD, University of Cardiff, 2008

53 F Clements, 'The Development and Aims of the Denbighshire Constabulary in the nineteenth century,' unpublished PhD, Open University, 2004, quoted in Gregory, 'Policeman's Lot,' p.332

54 M Tennant, 'Enterprise, Experimentation and the State: Industrialisation and the Cheshire Constabulary, 1790-1860,' Unpublished Ph.D., University of Keele, 2010. Tennant also makes a telling point about oversimplified binaries, as in old and new police, urban and rural policing, detective and preventative policing and so forth.

55 Churchill, *Crime Control* and J E Archer, *The Monster Evil: Policing and Violence in Victorian Liverpool*, Liverpool University Press, 2011. See also, D R Welsh, 'The reform of urban policing in Victorian England: A study of Kingston upon Hull, 1836 to 1856,' Unpublished Ph.D., University of Hull, 1997

56 The real-life situation was, of course, even more complicated as policemen moved across county/regional boundaries, bringing experiences and ideas with them.

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