

## 2 Saying no to a county force, c.1840-1856<sup>1</sup>

THE WEST RIDING County Constabulary did not come into existence until 1857 but, contrary to Critchley's assertion that 'the old parish constable system limped along untouched,' the magistrates of the West Riding recognised the need for police reform and after considerable debate adopted the superintending constable system rather than implementing the Rural Police Acts of 1839 and 1840. This chapter first looks at the debate about police reform in the county and then evaluates the chosen reform path.

Police reform had been on the agenda for much of the 1830s. Both nationally and locally, politicians were struggling to find a way forward. A few men – notably Edwin Chadwick – had a clear vision of what was required but most were more hesitant, more pragmatic in their approach. The upshot was a variety of initiatives from different parts of the country, notably in Kent and Cheshire.<sup>2</sup> The debate became more focussed after the passing of the permissive Rural Police Act, 1839 and the modifying act of 1840. Magistrates across the country had to decide whether or not to implement the act in full or in part across each county. For some fifteen years prior to the 1856 County and Borough Police Act, which required the creation of county forces, there was a period of diversity and experimentation in policing.

Of particular significance to events in the West Riding were two other acts – the Parish Constables Acts of 1842 and 1850, which sought to modernise the long-established practice of policing by unpaid, locally-approved, parish constables. Paragraph XXIII of the 1842 Act made provision for the appointment by the magistracy of 'a [paid] superintending Constable' responsible for 'the Superintendence of all the Parish Constables ... under

such Regulations as they [Justices of the Peace] shall make.’<sup>3</sup> However, such an appointment could only be made where there was ‘a Lock-up House ... [for] the temporary Confinement of Persons taken into Custody ... and not yet committed for Trial.’ (Paragraph XXIII) The need to build new (or refurbish old) lock-ups was a significant constraint on the adoption of the system until 1850 when it was removed. The 1840 Act also made provision for the appointment of paid constables (Paragraph XVIII) who would also be under the superintending constable.

The magisterial discussions and decisions took place in the wider context of modernisation and recent reform (the 1832 Reform Act, the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act) but also of concern with rising criminality and popular discontent. Of particular relevance to the magistrates of the West Riding was the huge support for factory-reformer Richard Oastler and the large-scale demonstrations by opponents of the new poor law which took place in Huddersfield. There were also mass meetings of Chartists at Peep Green, Hartshead Moor as well as in Barnsley, Dewsbury and Sheffield, not to mention the marauding gangs around Halifax involved in the Plug Plot disturbances. Nor were these movements seen in isolation. In particular, for many critics of police reform, irrespective of their political allegiances, such reform and the new poor law were inextricably linked.<sup>4</sup>

The Yorkshire magistrates were not a homogenous group. There were different political affiliations, different beliefs, different experiences and perceptions of crime, and conflicting views on the appropriate form of policing for the county. One belief united them, the conviction that the local magistracy should have a key role in the governance of the police. They also operated in a wider political context, shaped in part by the local press, ranging from conservative-leaning papers, such as the *Leeds Intelligencer*, openly hostile to ‘the Whig spy-system ... [intended] to enforce the odious new poor law,’<sup>5</sup> through liberal papers, more sympathetic to reform, such as the *Bradford Observer*, the *Sheffield Independent* and the *Halifax Express*, to the more radically-leaning *Leeds Times* and *Sheffield Iris*.<sup>6</sup> In addition, popular sentiments were expressed through meetings and petitions as well as letters to the press.

## **Police reform in the West Riding – the magisterial debate, 1840-56**

Given the extent of contemporary condemnation, it would be easy to conclude that alternative forms of policing, particularly those based on parish constables, were on the ‘wrong side of history’ and doomed to failure and yet many counties, including the populous economic powerhouse of the West Riding, refused to adopt the Rural Police Acts.<sup>7</sup> This raises two important questions. First, why did magistrates in these counties persist in their opposition; and second, how, having rejected the idea of a rural force, were these counties to be policed? Even with the benefit of hindsight, knowing that the interim would be between 1841 and 1856, a decade and a half is a long time to persist with an apparently discredited and unreformable system of policing.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike in Lancashire, where the process of reform went relatively smoothly, in the West Riding it did not. Particularly in the early-1840s, the debate was highly politicized but there were other considerations – some constitutional, focussing on the appropriate level of responsibility for policing, others focussing more on individual liberty – but all involving an evaluation of the extent of reform needed (if any) and the associated costs.<sup>9</sup> The magistrates, who first met at Pontefract in April 1840, were faced with an ‘all or nothing’ choice. Even supporters of police reform, including the influential Tory, Lord Wharnccliffe, balked at the costs for rural rate-payers if a county-wide force were created but there was no consensus among the hundred or so magistrates in attendance at this meeting. Some saw ‘the old parochial constable system’ as being irreparable: ‘it would be like mending an old steam engine instead of taking a new one from Boulton and Watt.’<sup>10</sup> Others were less sure, indeed some referred to the ‘efficiency of the present police.’<sup>11</sup> While there was a vociferous minority advocating a county-wide force, more opposed such an idea, not least because many magistrates felt themselves insufficiently informed to make a decision. As one, S J Worsley, made clear, in his mind there was ‘no evidence ... to show the present system was insufficient.’<sup>12</sup> In the absence of agreement, and aware of the amending act due to be voted on in the summer, Wharnccliffe proposed that the matter be considered at a special meeting in September.

By the time of the 1840 September meeting two important things had happened. First, the amending act had just been passed and with it came the option of partial adoption and, in the eyes of Wharnccliffe at least, a real chance of a compromise solution in the form of a police force for the manufacturing districts. Second, attitudes on both sides had hardened as the implications of a rural force became clearer. Advocates of a county-wide force, especially those of Liberal persuasion were even more convinced of the need for their proposal. At the same time, opponents of the act had had time to rally support and make the magistrates aware of their feelings. Although some of the more outlandish memorials, such as that from Saddleworth with its reference to the 'final death blow to the rights and liberties of the people,' could be laughed out of court, doubts about the need for, let alone the costs of, a county-wide force were sufficient to ensure the heavy defeat (by fifty-four votes to thirty-two) of a Liberal motion to adopt the act for the whole county. The stage appeared set for the reform-minded Tories, led by Wharnccliffe, to win support for a police force only for the manufacturing districts. The proposal to that effect was carried, though only by thirty-nine votes to thirty. However, the compromise/partial solution never materialised for three reasons. First, the sheer complexities of the county's economy precluded a speedy decision. Magistrates floundered in the face of facts on the ground. Could the various division of the county be labelled simply as either manufacturing or agricultural? Should Upper Agbrigg, for example, be excluded from the provisions of the partial compromise (as one unnamed magistrate asked, possibly in jest) because of its extensive agricultural land and moorland? Or should it be included because of the presence of semi-industrial villages, such as Honley and Holmfirth? Second, the political miscalculation of the Liberals re-opened the debate. Attempting to steal an advantage at a poorly-attended meeting at Wakefield in February 1841 – the weather was particularly inclement – they forced through a motion for a county-wide force.<sup>13</sup> At the next meeting, in April and also at Wakefield, there was a powerful backlash. Over a hundred magistrates attended, including many who rarely participated. The opponents of a county constabulary came out in force. A motion to determine the size and pay of the county force was defeated (by fifty-one votes to thirty-eight) and a majority voted to defer further consideration of police reform. Third, by 1842 there was an alternative in the form of the Parish Constables Act.

Conscious of the need to ensure the West Riding was policed, in September 1842 a pragmatic Wharnccliffe observed that 'the sooner it [the 1842 act] was put into execution ... the better,' adding further that he 'thought they [the magistrates] would be glad to take advantage of the Act.'<sup>14</sup> The magistrates were indeed glad to adopt an act which gave them the authority to appoint to the key role of superintending constable. By the spring of 1843 a committee was established to decide a plan for the uniform implementation of the act.<sup>15</sup> Reporting to the adjourned session at Wakefield in June 1843, the committee concluded that 'it is very expedient to provide sufficient Lock-ups and Superintending Constables throughout the different Districts of the Riding,' before concluding that, in their opinion, 'Superintending Constables, if properly chosen [were] well-calculated to concentrate and diffuse the necessary information connected with the prevention and detection of crime, and for the proper regulation of the Local Constables.'<sup>16</sup> The magistrates responded positively, though the roll-out was to be conducted 'prudently and cautiously.'<sup>17</sup> The role and responsibilities of a superintending constable was never clearly defined. Magisterial expectations were mixed. The majority expected superintending constables to tighten surveillance on beerhouses and public houses, and the petty criminality associated with them. A vocal minority talked in lurid terms of a tackling the worsening threat to property, even to the person, especially in remoter districts where criminals (allegedly) roamed unchecked.

The following years saw a series of appointments and there was no attempt to revive support for a county constabulary until the early-1850s. At the Pontefract sessions in April 1851 Wrightson 'rode his hobby horse' again, drawing attention to 'the unprotected state of the West Riding in respect to its police.'<sup>18</sup> In the eyes of many, Wrightson and 'his coadjutors' were 'a small but energetic coterie,' that cared more for the 'thinly populated districts of the eastern and northern divisions ... throwing the dust in the eyes of the magistrates from the manufacturing districts, and holding forth the old prophecy of danger and destruction of property.'<sup>19</sup> However, a committee was established to consider the adoption of the Rural Police Act, and through a sub-committee 'to make inquiries as to the extent and efficacy of the present constabulary force in the Riding.'<sup>20</sup> The subsequent report concluded there was 'not sufficient grounds to warrant the adoption of the Rural Police Act.'<sup>21</sup> However, as the sub-committee was stalemated, it

was unable to make a recommendation. There followed a lengthy discussion at the magistrates' meeting in November 1851 at Wakefield which revealed the persistence of entrenched views, for and against the Rural Police Act, an unsophisticated attitude towards crime statistics and clear support for the existing superintending constable system. At the next meeting (at Pontefract in April 1852) matters came to a head. Wrightson's attempt to persuade the magistrates to adopt the Rural Police Act was heavily defeated, whereas a motion introduced by Hastings Ingham to 'increase the efficiency of parochial constables by the appointment of superintendent constables in each petty sessional district' was passed by thirty-five votes to twenty-five.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the lock-up committee reported to the meeting that they had received 'the most favourable mention of the results flowing from the appointment of superintending constables.'<sup>23</sup> Taking advantage of the greater flexibility of the amended Parochial Constables Act, more superintending constables were appointed until by 1854 the whole county (with the exception of the small division of Kirby Malzeard) was covered. As Ingham argued in a lengthy letter to the sympathetic *Leeds Intelligencer*, 'the West Riding magistrates have ... done that which really amounts to the establishment of a new police force over every part of the riding.'<sup>24</sup>

Events within the West Riding were overtaken by events in London and the passing the County and Borough Police Act, which required the creation of police forces in all counties and boroughs.<sup>25</sup> Ironically, this provided the local advocates of the Rural Police Act one last, if largely meaningless, chance. In August 1856 Wrightson (who else?) introduced a motion to adopt the act and in September the West Riding magistrates approved it. By bringing forward by a matter of months what would have happened in any case in January 1857, the West Riding magistrates could claim to be making the decision, rather than having it forced upon them.

While the creation of a county force in 1856/7 can be seen as a triumph for the ideals of 1839, the discussions among the magistrates of the West Riding reveal the extent of support for the alternative model of parish-based policing. As Ingham stressed, he and other opponents of the Rural Police Act were not 'economists,' opposing reform simply on the grounds of costs. They had a different vision which emphasised more the parish than the county, albeit with a lower financial burden on ratepayers, but saw in the superintending constable system an opportunity to share responsibility

between the two and to minimise government ‘interference.’ For a decade and a half, notwithstanding powerful advocacy for a county-wide force, a majority of the West Riding magistrates were prepared to keep faith in an evolving, reformist version of parochial policing. But was magisterial faith in the superintending constable system well founded? It is to the practice of policing that we now turn.

### **The Superintendent Constable system in practice, 1842 - 1856**

While details of the debates on policing the county are well recorded, the same cannot be said about the practice of policing. Much of the daily contact between police and public simply went unrecorded. Where this contact did lead to formal proceedings, the majority of cases were brought before local magistrates at petty sessions, for which there are few, if any surviving records for the period under consideration. Further, none of the key figures, from superintending constable to parochial constable, has left a notebook, diary or memoir. As a consequence, much of the evidence is drawn from the local press. Coverage was partial – in both senses of the word – and varied from publication to publication. Nonetheless, the local press provides a wealth of detail not otherwise available, from which can be created a picture of police actions and attitudes, magisterial guidance to and criticism of the police, and public responses to them.

Any evaluation of policing has to take account of the complexities of the West Riding and its petty sessional districts, which varied in size, geographical terrain, overall population and socio-economic development. Table 1 captures the variations in terms of population and acreage. The Halifax, Huddersfield and, to a lesser extent Bradford districts stand out with large populations and large areas to be policed. In contrast, Upper Mill and Scisset were characterised a small population and a small area while Ingleton and Settle had a small population scattered over a very large area.

The distinction between districts with a superintending constable and a lock-up (marked by \*) and those with only a superintending constable is important to an understanding of the roll-out of the superintending constable system. Until 1850 the appointment of a superintending constable was dependent upon the existence of a lock-up. Seven districts, with a combined

population of c.411,600 were policed under the system in the 1840s. However, following the passing of the 1850 act superintending constables were quickly appointed in the remaining fifteen districts, with a combined population of c.411,500.

**Table 2:1: West Riding Petty Divisional Districts by population and area, 1853 (\* districts with superintending constable and lock-up)**

Population 000 → Area 000 acres ↓	Less than 25	25 - 49.9	50 – 74.9	75 – 99.9	100 and above
Less than 25	Upper Mill* Scisset		Dewsbury*		
25 – 49.9	Otley Sherburn Selby Wentbridge	Keighley Wakefield		Bradford*	
50 – 74.9	Ainsty (York) Leeds Snaith	Rotherham*			Huddersfield*
75 – 99,9		Barnsley*			Halifax
100 and above	Ingleton Settle	Doncaster Knaresborough* Skipton			

Source: Abstract Return of Superintendent Constables, PP 1852/3 675

As its advocates were well aware, much depended upon the quality of the men who applied to become superintending constables.<sup>26</sup> No evidence survives of a 'job description' for the post or of required qualifications. However, the overwhelming majority (90 per cent of those appointed) had previous police experience, in one form or another.<sup>27</sup> Some had experience in city forces (Manchester, Liverpool and the Met), others in urban forces in Yorkshire (Bradford, Leeds and Halifax), yet others in county forces (Lancashire, Staffordshire and Cheshire). Several had been paid constables (Batley, Rotherham and Denby Dale) and others railway or canal company police officers. Some of these men were very experienced. Nine (half of those for whom full details exists) had served for ten or more years, of whom five had served between sixteen and nineteen years at the time of their appointment. The striking exception was the superintending constable for



the Huddersfield district, Heaton, who had no previous police experience but was strongly supported by the local magistrates who proposed him. Further, there was competition for most of these posts. Richard Green, appointed to the Dewsbury post in 1846, was one of thirty-eight candidates. William Green was the successful candidate in a field of fifty-four applicants for the post of superintending constable for the Barnsley district.<sup>28</sup>

The role of superintending constable was seen as an important stepping-stone for ambitious, promotion-seeking men. Four men, including Stephen English, who later became chief constable of Leeds, moved in and out in this way. However, the bulk (67 per cent) went on to serve for several years in the senior ranks of the newly founded WRCC.<sup>29</sup> A few men resigned within a year of appointment but others moved to other forces or related posts. William Briggs moved to the Bradford force, John Danson to the Huddersfield force, while Stephen English went on to be chief constable of Norwich, and James Green became deputy governor of York Castle. A further three, allegedly too old to be recruited, received gratuities in recognition of their prior services.

Most of these superintending constables, leading by example, were active, crime-fighting officers in their own right, though much of their work revolved around enforcing licensing laws. Thomas Heaton, traversing Upper Agbrigg in his gig, was the most assiduous but he was not alone.<sup>30</sup> John Bland (Upper Strafforth and Tickhill), Charles Ingham (East Morley), John Pollard (Skyrack) and Thomas Grisedale (Saddleworth) were all experienced and well-regarded officers. There were others less impressive. George Shepley (Scisset) was also frequently seen in his gig but was given to offering others a ride and frequenting local hostelrys. Unsurprisingly he was severely criticized for his behaviour and his failure to visit the out-districts of his division.<sup>31</sup> However, generally speaking, the superintendents were held in high regard by the county magistrates and other influential groups.

The success of the superintending constable in creating a *system* depended on their ability to work with parochial and paid constables as well as with magistrates and other law-enforcing agents and agencies. The magistrates were aware of their part. In April 1848 they agreed to draw up a set of rules and regulations for parochial and superintending constables.<sup>32</sup> Later, after a spate of new appointments, they organized a meeting of newly appointed superintending constables at Wakefield.<sup>33</sup> However, the bulk of the responsibility fell on the superintending constables themselves. There

were three strands to their work: communication, guidance/training and discipline, to which might be added influencing selection. The evidence is frustratingly incomplete but a number of tentative observations can be made.

From the outset the county magistrates made clear that every superintending constable was expected to 'communicate frequently with the Constables of the several townships within his District.'<sup>34</sup> In practice this meant visiting in person the various townships.<sup>35</sup> Such communication was problematic, especially in the larger divisions, or in those with scattered populations. The sheer number of parish constables was a logistical nightmare. Spiers oversaw (in theory) 210 men, Heaton around 180 men in thirty-one different locations.<sup>36</sup> On average, there were some thirty townships in each division.<sup>37</sup> Despite these problems, the county magistrates were generally satisfied with the level of communication. In 1851 the Lock-up committee reported that 'in all districts, except in the neighbourhood of Barnsley, ... the superintending constables were in satisfactory communication with the parochial constables and could confidentially communicate with them.'<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, training and guidance were problematic, not least in logistical terms. Nonetheless, as early as 1848 (the year of his appointment), Thomas Heaton compiled 'a small book of instruction,' which was issued, every year, to the parochial constables of Upper Agbrigg, while in Upper Strafforth and Tickhill in 1853, the newly-sworn in constables were issued with a 'book of instruction ... with particular injunctions to keep a sharp look out after the public houses and beerhouses.'<sup>39</sup> In addition, the local press ran numerous adverts for *Instructions for Parochial Constables*, 'introduced by Magistrates' Clerks or Superintendent Constables into several of the most important towns in the West Riding,' or so ran the blurb. The extent to which such publications were purchased, let alone read, is unknown and unknowable.<sup>40</sup> Nor was discipline an easy matter, as critics of the system delighted in pointing out.<sup>41</sup> And yet some superintending constables – notably Heaton, Ingleton and Spiers – undoubtedly acted against unsatisfactory constables, though this appears to be more the exception than the rule.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, there is scattered evidence that certain superintending constables made known their opinions as they sought to influence the election of parish constables with whom they could work.<sup>43</sup> Both Spiers and Green (W) actively sought to gain the appointment of 'appropriate' parish constables but the most high-profile and long-lived incident took place in Upper Agbrigg.

The parish constables for Birkby and Fartown, Netherwood and Hinchcliffe, first appointed in 1852 were deemed 'efficient' by the local magistrates but their very efficiency brought them into conflict with several local figures, notably the landlord of the Lamb Inn, Hillhouse. Matters came to a head in April 1856, at the annual swearing-in meeting. Objections were raised to their appointment, but Superintendent Heaton spoke out strongly in their favour. The magistrates agreed and approved the appointment of the two men, noting that 'it was necessary for Mr Heaton to have men with whom he could work as constables.'<sup>44</sup> The decision was well received in the courtroom and the pages of the *Huddersfield Chronicle*. Even the *Huddersfield Examiner*, a persistent critic of Heaton, recognized that he 'knew his men,' even if he used them as 'pliant tools.'<sup>45</sup>

The role of the parish constable was, deliberately so, a key element in the superintending constable system. There were literally hundreds of them but very few left a meaningful trace in the historical records. Most are simply names on a list of candidates submitted to local magistrates, which were reported in the local press. Of their activities, in many cases there is simply no evidence. Nonetheless, a majority of county magistrates, for the most part, retained faith in them as part of a new system of policing. It would be naïve to suggest that there were not shortcomings. On a number of occasions, the meetings called to nominate parish constables were poorly attended; on other occasions, questions were raised about the number and quality of men putting themselves forward. However, it would be misleading to suggest – as many police reformers did at the time – that parish constables were uniformly decrepit and incompetent. Ultimately, it is impossible to offer a precise evaluation of the quality of parochial constables in the 1850s. Undoubtedly a small minority were totally incompetent, if not verging on the corrupt. John Halliday, a Kirkheaton constable, was described, not unfairly, as 'a fatherly Dogberry,' while Ephraim Kaye, a Dalton constable, had more success in local horticultural shows than in court. Almost certainly many more were well intentioned but hampered by the fact that they were unpaid constables and had to look elsewhere for their income. However, there were also some – again a minority but too easily overlooked – who were competent and aspired to be 'professional' in terms of their conduct, their commitment to enforcing the law and their ability to establish a degree of order and decorum even in localities such as Kirkheaton, Kirkburton and Scammonden, all known for their hostility to the police.<sup>46</sup>

Francis Goodall in Marsden-in-Almondbury and William Taylor of Honley were both long-serving and well-respected constables, as were John Shaw of Marsden. Nathaniel Hinchcliffe and Miles Netherwood, of Birkby and Fartown, were seen as dependable constables. Several parochial constables went onto a successful career in the WRCC. John O'Neill of Barnsley, George White of Ovenden and Joseph Brier of Southowram are cases in point. Indeed, Brier's policing career illustrates well the fluidity of policing at this time as men moved to various posts. He had been a constable for four years in the Halifax force before becoming constable for Southowram and then a constable in the WRCC, serving seventeen years in the latter post. Similarly, John Broadhead had been a constable at an ironworks and then a constable in the Ainsty of York before joining the WRCC.<sup>47</sup>

Of greater significance in terms of foreshadowing later reform, was the emergence of a small group of paid constables appointed under the provisions of the 1842 act. The option was taken up sluggishly and patchily despite the West Riding magistrates repeatedly exhorting local ratepayers to take advantage of this cheaper but equally effective provision. 'It would be for the interest of every township to have a paid constable,' opined one magistrate, G Pollard, Esq., while another local J.P. argued that the various townships in the Huddersfield district could raise £400 through contributions of £10-15 each, which would make possible the appointment of five or six constables under Superintendent Heaton.<sup>48</sup> However, as the repeated exhortations bear witness, take up was slow. While the precise number of paid constables and their dates of appointment cannot be determined, the fragmentary evidence suggests that, while they were to be found across the county, they existed in greater number and were appointed earlier in the south of the county, notably around Halifax but also in the Huddersfield and Barnsley districts. In contrast, in Bingley and Otley proposals to appoint a paid constable were consistently rejected.

There was some competition for these posts. The proposed appointment of seven constables for day and night duty in Barnsley attracted eighty-eight applicants. There were 'upward of fifty applicants for the office' of paid constable for Northowram, twenty men applied for one post at Wath-upon-Deane and nineteen for another at Elland. However, the post of paid constable for Greetland attracted no applicants. The fact that the salary was £20 per annum compared with £40 for the Elland post might explain some

of the difference.<sup>49</sup> The successful candidates were men with prior policing experience. John Shaw, 'late constable at Barnsley' was chosen as the paid constable for Hoyland. Joseph Hay had been in the Halifax borough force before being appointed paid constable for Knottingley, as had John Turner, the paid constable for Northowram.<sup>50</sup> The number of paid constables needs to be kept in perspective. In the West Morley/Halifax division in the mid-1840s there were six paid constables out of a total of 207 paid and unpaid constables.<sup>51</sup> In Upper Agbrigg/Huddersfield district the situation was little better with about six paid constables in a total of approximately 180. On the other hand, in the Rotherham district in the early 1850s, there were eleven paid constables in a total of eighty-one men.<sup>52</sup>

The appointment of paid constables was not met with uniform acclaim. Indeed, the very suggestion brought considerable opposition in certain places. This was most noticeable in Otley where a proposal to appoint a paid constable was roundly defeated, giving 'greatest satisfaction to the working and poorer classes ... who exerted themselves to the utmost in bringing about the result.'<sup>53</sup> Elsewhere the appointment of a paid constable was problematic, most particularly in Kirkburton, near Huddersfield. A paid constable (Glover) was first appointed in 1850 but had met with 'a very warm but unsuccessful opposition.' The 'poorer classes' determined to 'nurse their wrath' and Constable Glover was assaulted in 'the most cowardly and clandestinely manner' on a number of occasions.<sup>54</sup> Matters escalated and in February 1851 local feelings 'assumed a more excited tone, and burst out in all its pent-up vehemence at a town's meeting.'<sup>55</sup> The meeting voted to dispense with the paid constable at the end of his period of service but it soon became apparent that 'the manufacturers seem determined to retain the present paid constable, while the working classes seem determined to dispense with his services.'<sup>56</sup> There followed an acrimonious legal dispute in which the high-profile radical lawyer W. P. Roberts represented those working men seeking to dispense with the paid constable. Ultimately the challenge failed, and the paid constable remained in post for another year.<sup>57</sup> The extent of his continuing unpopularity soon became evident. In the following months, the windows of his house were broken by stones and he was physically assaulted on at least two occasions. One assault led to a trial for cutting and wounding with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm, for which sentences of seven years' transportation and twelve months hard labour were handed down.<sup>58</sup> It is all

but impossible to establish the specific causes of the friction between Glover and certain sections of the local community but his close association with certain local employers did not help; nor did his zealotry in 'moving on' people and enforcing the licensing laws. Whatever the precise reasons for his unpopularity, no paid constable was subsequently appointed in Kirkburton.

A similar set of difficulties emerged in Meltham where the question of the appointment of a paid constable was debated for several years in the early 1850s. For some local ratepayers, the 'drinking, swearing, gambling, racing and all sorts of *immoralities*' demonstrated the need for reform but others felt the concerns were overstated and the parochial constable more than adequate.<sup>59</sup> Reports in 1855 are more detailed and indicate a polarisation of views and considerable animosity. The *Huddersfield Chronicle* reported 'a great deal of prejudice against a paid constable' and, along with the *Huddersfield Examiner*, referred somewhat enigmatically to 'party spirit' running high on the subject.<sup>60</sup> In a poll only sixteen people voted for a paid constable while 129 voted against but this was not the end of the matter. In February 1856 an officer was appointed, paid for by 'a few [unspecified] gentlemen.'<sup>61</sup> Despite a claim that this was 'very generally approved' the new constable (former Inspector Sedgwick, recently of the Huddersfield town police) was assaulted soon after taking up post and a few weeks later had the windows of his house broken by stones.<sup>62</sup> As in Kirkburton, the intrusion of the police into working-class leisure activities appears to have been crucial. Elsewhere there was simmering discontent rather than outright hostility. Kershaw, one of the paid constables in the Barnsley district, was accused of repeated perjury 'swear[ing] anything which would serves his purpose.'<sup>63</sup>

However, in other townships the outcome was different. The appointment of a paid constable in Marsh was uncontroversial – indeed the absence of trouble at the local feast that year (1854) was seen as evidence of his good influence on the community – while the appointment in Marsden was welcomed and the constable praised for the 'untiring zeal' with which he discharged his duties.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, the work of Nicholson the paid constable for Ovenden was praised.<sup>65</sup> But how active and effective were these men, especially in comparison with unpaid constables? Hard evidence is difficult to come by, especially relating to petty offences tried before local magistrates. Much depends upon the thoroughness (or otherwise) with which the local press reported matters.

There is mixed qualitative evidence with praise from manufacturers and condemnation more from working men and women, particularly when it came to the surveillance of beerhouses, fairs and feasts. John Earnshaw (Holmfirth) was widely seen as an 'indefatigable and untiring,' for better or worse, but even his supporters recognised the limitations of his impact. Significantly their remedy was to appoint a second paid constable.<sup>66</sup> Despite having a night force appointed under an improvement act, Huddersfield also employed two paid constables in the mid-1840s, who worked closely with the superintending constable Heaton. The two men were undoubtedly energetic. In the year ending January 1848, they brought 256 cases before the local magistrates. 51 were serious crimes (felonies), the remainder petty crimes, particularly vagrancy, beerhouse offences and drunk and disorderly behaviour.<sup>67</sup> With the appointment of Heaton, the three men acquired notoriety in some quarters, but praise in others, for their 'crusade' against the beersellers of Castlegate in general and the successful prosecution of the notorious beerhouse keeper and self-styled 'King of Castlegate,' John Sutcliffe.<sup>68</sup> In similar style, John Nicholson, the paid constable of Ovenden, brought 142 cases, only three of which were felonies before the Halifax magistrates in the year ending April 1855.<sup>69</sup> Other paid constables were not so active and were criticised for being so. The voting residents of Elland dispensed with an unsatisfactory paid constable in 1855, having had one for ten years previously.<sup>70</sup> The residents of Skircoat condemned their paid constable for not preventing larger-scale gambling,<sup>71</sup> Likewise, the Keighley constable, Joseph Heaton, was criticised for his indifferent performance.<sup>72</sup> Worse, Joah Woodhouse of Shelf was fined for being drunk and assaulting a young boy.<sup>73</sup> Notwithstanding the blanket criticisms of advocates of a county force, the evidence suggest that some paid constables were effective by the standards of the day. There were influential figures in the county who viewed them positively and would have agreed with William Deedes that 'the Parochial Constable Act was [not] the most perfect Act that could be devised; but ... in many counties it had been found sufficient, and that with very trifling alterations it might be adapted to meet all requirements.'<sup>74</sup>

Although it is important to evaluate paid, as well as parochial, constables, ultimately the test of the superintending constable *system* is the way in which the component parts worked together to combat crime. Much police attention (and not just in the West Riding) was focussed on beerhouses and public

houses, reflecting a widespread belief that they were hotbeds of immorality and breeding sites for crime. Across the riding constables were exhorted to act and were openly encouraged by their senior, superintending constables, many of whom led by example. Examples of co-operation between superintending constables and parochial constables became increasingly common, not least as several magistrates had made clear that the uncorroborated evidence of a single constable would be insufficient to gain a prosecution.<sup>75</sup> The greater attention paid to this problem brought praise from magistrates. At the Halifax Brewster Session of 1852, it was noted that 'since the appointment of [Superintendent Spiers] ... the publicans and beersellers are much more completely kept in hand, and their misdeeds and convictions recorded.'<sup>76</sup> Similarly, the Barnsley magistrates praised the work of their superintending constable in this respect.<sup>77</sup>

A related concern with gambling – and not simply in beerhouses – brought a similar response. The ubiquity of pitch-and-toss meant that individual law-enforcement officers regularly chanced across young men gambling on the roadside, but more organised gambling required co-operative action. A group of regular gamblers in Lindley were arrested only after their activities had been observed for several weeks. Officers in plain clothes were also used by Charles Ingham in the Bradford district; Thomas Spiers likewise in the Halifax district.<sup>78</sup> Other drink-related offences also brought co-operative action, as superintending constables and ordinary constables worked with officers of the Inland Revenue to thwart the illegal actions of local 'illegal distillers' or 'whisky spinners.'<sup>79</sup> Similarly, concerns with embezzlement saw joint action with officers of the Worsted Inspectorate across the county.<sup>80</sup> Godfrey and Cox have rightly drawn attention to the way in which members of the Woollen Inspectorate took the initiative in these matters.<sup>81</sup> However, the process worked both ways, albeit on a smaller scale as officers of the Worsted Inspectorate, and also the Inland Revenue, worked with the police in tackling other crimes.<sup>82</sup> Again such successful concerted action needs to be put in perspective. Not all parochial constables were assiduous, nor could they be made so by their superintending constable. For example, gambling was an ongoing concern in Kirkheaton, where the local constable showed little interest in acting.<sup>83</sup>

The persistence of cockfighting, and to a lesser extent dogfighting, especially in some of the 'wilder' parts of the county, posed major problems.



The opportunity for large-scale gambling attracted punters from out of the county and was enhanced by improvements in transport which made it easier to attend a 'battle.' Such gambling was well organised, to the extent of giving false information to the police to lure them into a wild goose chase. Nonetheless, police action did drive cockfighting to more remote locations. In the late-1840s such 'disgraceful pastimes,' as the Huddersfield magistrates described them, took place close to the town, especially on Castle Hill. On a number of occasions, Heaton, usually with two or three constables, succeeded in disrupting the events, dispersing the crowd and arresting the main protagonists.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, to escape his 'vigilance, battles [cock fights] are generally fought among the moors and thinly-populated districts on the confines of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire.'<sup>85</sup> Even then he continued to pursue them. Forewarned of a scheduled fight, Heaton with Superintendent Shepley of Scisset and John Earnshaw set out at 2 a.m. to a remote farm in Upper Maythorn, over ten miles from Huddersfield. Having hidden in a pigsty for several hours, the three men eventually burst forth, sending the crowd fleeing, but identifying twenty-five of the main protagonists who were arrested over the next days.<sup>86</sup> This was not a unique incident. There had been a similar collaborative effort in the summer of the previous year. In August 1855 a major dogfight, reported as a clash between Lancashire and Yorkshire, was arranged to take place in a field behind the Shepherd's Boy Inn in Marsden. A crowd of between 400 and 500 assembled. Heaton mustered 'several parochial constables,' four of whom he sent into action, having been 'given them previous instructions what to do.'<sup>87</sup> The fight was broken up and forty-three men, including beerhouse keepers, labourers, miners and weavers were brought to trial.<sup>88</sup> Heaton was not alone. William Green (Barnsley), Charles Ingham (Bradford), Thomas Spiers (Halifax) and Thomas Grisedale (Saddleworth) all took on dog and cock fighters, albeit on a lesser scale.<sup>89</sup> This is worthy of further comment. Although in parts of the riding constables turned a blind eye to out-of-hours drinking and gambling, in at least five districts the superintending constable and an often-self-selecting group of constables took the fight (sometime literally) to the enemy.

In sum, the old system proved more effective than its contemporary critics claimed but, equally important, the new county force was not notably more efficient in its first decade. In 1858, now with more men at his disposal, Heaton, by now a superintendent in the WRCC, was thwarted

by cockfighters on Castle Hill, who, though driven from their original site, found an alternative location a mile away, where the police were kept at bay by volleys of stones while the fight proceeded.<sup>90</sup>

A greater test of the superintending constable system was its ability to deal with serious crimes, such as theft, burglary, warehouse-robberies and horse theft.<sup>91</sup> Superintending constables, with varying degrees of application arrested servants who had stolen linen, clothing and cutlery from their masters and mistresses; workmen who had stolen tools, money and even boots from their masters and fellow workmates; and women, often described indiscriminately but not necessarily accurately, as prostitutes who relieved their drunken punters of their watches and cash. Superintendent Ingham, 'with an efficient body of auxiliaries,' arrested a local thief in 1849, while Superintendent Green did likewise.<sup>92</sup> Superintendent Heaton also targeted high profile local criminals. At the start of his police career, he targeted John Sutcliffe and, some years later, Henry 'Slasher' Wilson.<sup>93</sup> Other more seasoned criminals were arrested in collaborative manner. In the early-1850s the Senior family (father and two sons) achieved local notoriety as horse-thieves. In 1851 two animals were stolen near Market Weighton and brought to Bradford before being moved on to Huddersfield. Superintendents Ingham and Heaton worked together in locating the thieves before, 'with an efficient force' of local constables, finally making an arrest outside Huddersfield. The climax was somewhat farcical – George Senior tried to hide up a chimney to evade arrest but his 'dangling extremities' gave Heaton the opportunity to pull him out – but should not obscure the successful collaborative effort.<sup>94</sup> Cooperation in a different form was seen when Superintendent Pollard thwarted a warehouse robbery at Churwell near Leeds in 1856. The gang had begun moving twenty-nine ends of cloth (valued at £240-250) when Superintendent Pollard, the two Morley constables, Holroyd and Lupton, with four men employed by the owners, Messrs. Crowther's, intervened. There followed a 'murderous affray,' one of the gang was shot in the thigh and later died, another escaped but five men were captured and brought to trial.<sup>95</sup>

However, the most spectacular and large-scale police action came in Lockwood, near Huddersfield, which resulted in the arrest and trial of the notorious Wibsey gang. Ten pieces of cloth, valued at about £100, were stolen from a warehouse in a carefully prepared crime. The initial problem was locating the material. To this end, Heaton worked with the experienced

Abraham Sedgwick, formerly of the Huddersfield borough force but now paid constable of Meltham. After a day searching various locations, they found eight of the ten pieces in the false roof in a disused church at Quarmbly, two miles from Huddersfield. There followed a period of surveillance by Heaton and seven men, comprising the Scisset superintending constable, three parochial constables, a paid constable, and two other men with police experience, one of whom was John Thomas, recently head of the Huddersfield borough force and later an officer in the WRCC. Over the course of several days, the men secreted themselves in a mistal opposite the church. Eventually the gang returned and after another touch of farce – Heaton gave one of the constables a lozenge to prevent a cough warning off the thieves – there followed a meleé in which two men were arrested, one having been laid low by ‘a terrific blow on the back of the head with his [Heaton’s] stick.’ Four gang members fled. Undaunted Heaton ordered ‘a coach with a pair of the best horses in Huddersfield’ at 3 a.m. and set off for Wyke Common, near Bradford, where gang members were known to live. The first arrest was made at 5 a.m. after Heaton, now in his mid-forties, ‘hit one of the men, whose nose bled profusely.’ Other arrests were made, the last at 9 a.m. when they surprised the final gang member as he lay in his bed in Wibsey Slack, some twelve hours after the police operation had started. Following the successful prosecution of the Wibsey gang at Leeds Quarter Sessions, the chairman of the magistrates praised Heaton but, significantly, noted that ‘the activity, vigilance, zeal, and patience of the Superintendent *and the police* are creditable to them in the highest degree.’<sup>96</sup>

Crime fighting was a key component of policing but there was also a (widely defined) welfare role, which afforded the most striking example of police co-operation. On the 5th of February 1852, after a prolonged period of heavy rain, the Bilberry reservoir, above Holmfirth, broke its retaining embankment and cascaded an estimated eighty-six million gallons of water down the Holme valley, drowning at least eighty people and wreaking destruction and havoc as far as Honley and Armitage Bridge, over six miles away. The chaos was compounded by disaster tourism, which saw railway companies in the region putting on special trains to view the scenes of devastation and death. The ‘influx of visitors was considerable ... thousands visiting Holmfirth from different parts of the country on special trains.’<sup>97</sup> In addition, many came in omnibuses and cabs, on horseback and foot.<sup>98</sup>

The challenge to the authorities, including the police, was immense. The police were praised by the coroner for their actions which involved 'Mr. Superintendent Heaton with the whole of the constabulary of the region [Upper Agbrigg], Mr Superintendent Thomas, with a staff of eighteen of the Huddersfield borough force and Mr Superintendent Spiers of the Halifax district constabulary, assisted by the special constables.'<sup>99</sup> This was clearly exceptional but it provided a unique opportunity for co-operation in maintaining order and facilitating rescue and recovery work.

From these examples a picture emerges of a small core of men, maybe no more than ten or twelve in number in any one district, upon whom several superintending constables, notably Green, Heaton and Spiers, could rely in enforcing the law, albeit on an *ad hoc* basis. However, while there was an important degree of co-ordination and co-operation in policing within petty sessional districts, there is much less evidence to suggest similar action between the superintending constables and constables of different districts.<sup>100</sup> For the most part, superintending constables (and many parochial constables) focussed upon the problems within their localities and only infrequently helped out elsewhere.

## Conclusions

Rather than being 'an evolutionary dead end' in the development of policing in England, the superintending constable was an important, though undervalued, element in the development of policing in the 1840s and 1850s. Its gradual, pragmatic evolution smoothed the way for the rural police system required by the 1856 act, most clearly seen in the contributions to the WRCC made by a majority of superintending constables, paid constables, nightwatchmen and parochial constables, all of whom had learnt their trade under the old policing order and brought their experience to the new.

There are a number of more specific conclusions to be drawn. Looking first at the policing debate in the West Riding, it is clear that there was greater complexity but also more progress than allowed in certain accounts. According to Philips and Storch, the practical difficulties of determining a rate for an economically complex and diverse area, combined with political miscalculation 'produced a final decision which did not even loosely reflect

or represent the wishes of the majority of the magistrates ... a permanent impasse, and an understandable reluctance to revisit the matter.<sup>101</sup> This is misleading. Undoubtedly pragmatic considerations and botched politics played a part, but it is important to recognize the complex of constitutional issues, not least the relationship between central government and the unpaid magistracy, of which participants in the debates were keenly aware. As in other counties, notably Cheshire, there was no simple division between pro-reform and anti-reform magistrates, set apart by conflicting views of the importance of the independence of the magistracy. Some Yorkshire magistrates, like their counterparts in Herefordshire, rejected the Rural Police Act because of the threat they saw it pose to magisterial independence but others, notably Lord Wharnccliffe, chair of the West Riding quarter sessions and a leading Tory, supported (partial) adoption of the act in order to preserve magisterial independence, rather than reduce it.

There is also a danger of overlooking and minimizing the significance of the distinction between 'core' and 'non-core' magistrates.<sup>102</sup> The men who flooded into Wakefield in April 1841 undoubtedly inflicted a severe defeat, not only on those Liberal magistrates, who had overplayed their hand by passing a county-wide proposal, but also stymied the more pragmatic advocates of partial adoption. It is easy and condescending to dismiss these figures as out-of-touch, even reactionary 'backwoodsmen,' on the wrong side of history. Yet these men were still a force to be reckoned with and their beliefs (especially when reinforced by petitioners, speaking in terms of threats to liberty) more influential than commonly recognized. Their votes ensured that the adoption of the Rural Police Act was off the agenda for the rest of the 1840s and when attempts to adopt it were made in the early 1850s, they too were decisively defeated.

Some opponents of the Rural Police Act were staunch defenders of parochial rights and responsibilities and saw no proven need to change the old system of policing; others saw the need for reform but looked in a different direction. In adopting the Parish Constable Acts, a majority of the West Riding magistrates opted for a system that retained the existing relationship with central government but gave additional influence to magistrates at county level, through the appointment of superintending constables, while maintaining a role, albeit diminished, for rate payers and parish constables. Contrary to claims of diminishing support for the superintending constable

system, the evidence from the West Riding points to growing support amongst magistrates as the system evolved, especially after 1850. Thus, the implementation of the superintending constable system worked with the grain of magisterial 'independence' thinking but also eased the way for the introduction of the 1856 County and Borough Police Act.

In terms of practical policing, perhaps the most striking feature of policing in the West Riding in these years was fluidity. Men moved back and forth between different forms of policing. Even among parochial constables, let alone among paid constables, there were a significant number of men with experience of other forms of policing. There was no clear-cut distinction between 'old' and 'new' police. In the years, c.1852-65, which bridged "old" and "new" policing, there were marked similarities between 'old' and 'new' in terms of the quality of personnel, police priorities, practices and outcomes in terms of fighting petty and serious crime. The superintending constable system was a viable, though imperfect, alternative, which proved capable of tackling a range of problems, ranging from petty to more serious crimes.<sup>103</sup> It was less inefficient and less ineffective than unreformed parochial policing. More importantly, it satisfied a majority of the county's ruling elite in terms of providing an appropriate level of security without unreasonable expenditure.

In personnel terms, the formation of the WRCC was greatly eased particularly by the presence of experienced superintending constables who could take on the role of superintendent in the newly-created force. Not all superintending constables made the grade but some – notable William Hall and Thomas Heaton – made significant contributions. Overall, twelve (i.e., two-thirds) proved their worth, working to pensionable age or dying in service in the new force.<sup>104</sup> To a lesser extent, men who had served as parish or paid constables also eased the transition to the new force. Again, not all succeeded. The long-serving and diligent John Earnshaw left after a few months whereas Thomas Varley a long-serving parish constable for Bingley served a further sixteen years in the WRCC. The success of men such as William Greenwood and John Gibson, previously paid constables for Hipperholme and Northowram respectively, promoted to the rank of inspector by the end of January 1857, highlights the ability and unrealised potential within the old system.

All that said, it is important to recognize the limitations of the superintending constable system. Like any system, it depended heavily

on the quality of men at all levels. Not all superintending constables were able and assiduous, even if most were. Superintending constables worked together, and they were able to mobilize support from (some) parochial and paid constables. Such co-operation is important to note but it needs to be qualified by the fact that there was no formal means of ensuring it took place on a regular basis. The absence of a superintendent to superintend the superintending constables was a significant flaw.

Even more varied were the many parish constables. Some were mediocre, inefficient and in some cases lazy, even corrupt. An unquantifiable minority were not and played a positive role in enforcing the law and preserving order before 1856. Paid constables were a more reliable but smaller group, though much depended on the willingness of townships to co-operate. Noting the appointment of a paid constable at Ardley, one of the townships in the Barnsley division, the *Leeds Intelligencer* commented that 'if the whole of the 42 townships ... would do the same a much better working of the constabulary business in the Barnsley petty sessional division would be the result.'<sup>105</sup> As a result of these limitations, the size of the proto-police forces available to superintending constables was limited. The assiduous Thomas Heaton, for example, was supported by a core of ten or twelve constables with whom he worked on a regular basis. As superintendent of the Upper Agbrigg division of the WRCC he had significantly more men at his disposal – eighteen rising to forty-four in the first year – as well as greater powers to co-ordinate action and redeploy men than before. In February 1857, in responding to the presentation of a silver snuff box from the Lockwood Prosecution Society in recognition of his astuteness and perseverance in bringing the Wibsey gang to trial, Heaton told his audience that the protection of person and property 'had been a very difficult task, until the new system of police [i.e., the WRCC] had been brought into operation.'<sup>106</sup> Given the large number of parochial and paid constables in every division, it was a considerable (practically impossible) task for superintending constables to instruct and discipline all the men under them. In addition, the basis in the parish and the absence of a hierarchy meant that there was no effective way of developing and promoting talent.

Finally, the roll-out of the superintending constable system introduced and accustomed the population of the West Riding to the impact of more active policing, which in turn eased the advent of the WRCC by reducing the

shock of 'new' policing. Popular responses were predictably varied. In many parts of the county much of 'respectable' middle-class society welcomed the attempts to clamp down on drinking, gambling and other forms of vice as much as they approved of more effective actions against serious crimes against property. Correspondingly, many working-class men and women resented the intrusion of the police particularly in what they saw as legitimate, time-honoured leisure activities. At times, such resentment manifested itself in physical attacks on individual policemen and their homes. However, there were other aspects of pre-1856 police work – prosecuting shopkeepers for faulty scales or selling unwholesome meat – that were of direct benefit to largely working-class consumers. With these observations in mind, it is time to turn the formation of the WRCC, its deployment in its early years and the popular responses it provoked.



## Endnotes

- 1 This chapter draws on earlier published material. 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
- 2 D Philips & R D Storch, *Policing Provincial England, 1829 – 1856: The Politics of Reform*, London, Leicester University Press, 1999. See also R D Storch, "Policing Rural Southern England Before the Police: Opinions and Practice, 1830–1856" in D Hay and F Synder eds. *Policing and Prosecution in Britain, 1750–1850*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989 and S H Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland, 1780–1850*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- 3 An Act for the Appointment and Payment of Parish Constables, Victoria CIX, 1842
- 4 See for example, Richard Oastler at a public dinner in Paddock, near Huddersfield: the Whigs 'without their poor law ... will never be able to make out a case which will prove the police to be necessary. ' *Leeds Intelligencer*, 23 September 1837.
- 5 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 9 September 1837
- 6 See for example, *Leeds Mercury*, 9 March 1839, *Bradford Observer*, 17 November 1837, *Sheffield Independent*, 24 September 1836 & 17 April 1838, *Halifax Express*, 2 November 1836, *Leeds Intelligencer*, 22 October 1836 & 9 September 1837, *Leeds Times*, 10 January 1835 and *Sheffield Iris*, 17 April 1838
- 7 Eastwood is incorrect in stating that the 22 counties which adopted the Rural Police Act included 'all counties with sizeable urban populations.' D Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1800-1870*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997, p.144
- 8 There were a few voices that defend the West Riding and its policing. Although having no significant impact on the parliamentary debate, Beckett Dennison was adamant that Grey's allegations 'had no good foundation in fact.' Indeed, 'the magistrates were of the opinion that a rural police was wholly unnecessary ... and [its] population were not in [a] demoralized state.' In the same speech, somewhat exaggeratedly, he claimed that the '320 magistrates in Yorkshire ... had on every occasion on which the subject had been brought before them rejected it.' For further details see fn. 74.
- 9 Establishing the balance of opinion is not straightforward, not least given the large number of magistrates who did not attend some or all of the meetings.

- 10 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 11 April 1840
- 11 The Hon S J Worley referring to memorials sent to him. *Leeds Intelligencer*, 11 April 1840
- 12 *Sheffield Independent*, 11 April 1840
- 13 The vote was twenty-seven to twenty-one, which reflected the limited support for the proposal.
- 14 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 24 September 1842
- 15 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 8 April 1843
- 16 *Halifax Guardian*, 24 June 1843
- 17 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 1 July 1843
- 18 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 12 April 1851. Wrightson, a Liberal MP was a proponent of parliamentary reform, an opponent of the corn laws and an ardent advocate of the Rural Police Acts.
- 19 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 25 October 1851
- 20 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 12 April and 30 August 1851
- 21 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 18 October 1851
- 22 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 10 April 1852. During the debate, several magistrates (for example Wickham, Rhodes and Ingham) spoke positively about the impact of superintending constables.
- 23 *Bradford Observer*, 8 April 1852. See also *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 10 April 1852.
- 24 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 22 December 1852. This was more so the case by the end of 1854. The *Intelligencer* was a persistent and virulent critic of the rural police acts.
- 25 See Palmer, *Politics and Protest*, pp.501-17
- 26 The following analysis is based on evidence for twenty-seven men who served as superintendent constables. A further four names were identified but there was insufficient evidence to include them. The information has been drawn from quarter session reports, census returns, records of the West Riding County Constabulary and the local press.
- 27 Of the three who had no previous police experience, one was a worsted inspector (with experience of working with the local police) and another was a local official, a rates-collector and later poor law relieving officer. There was no information for the third man.
- 28 *Sheffield Independent*, 11 April 1846 and 30 October 1847. In comparison, there were only seven applicants for the Upper Agbrigg post but this might be explained in part by the fact that Heaton success was a foregone conclusion, given his support among local magistrates.

- 29 19 were appointed superintendents and one inspector.
- 30 Heaton was known to cover twenty miles or more a day, issuing summonses and making arrests en route. Such was his commitment that one such sortie took place on Christmas Day. For further details of Thomas Heaton see Taylor, 'No Remedy for the inefficiency of Parochial Constables,' pp.67-88. It is also the case that there were other examples of highly active individual constables. George Colley, of Ross in Herefordshire, for example, was described as 'indefatigable,' thwarting thefts from farms that previously had been a nightly occurrence. Shakesheff, T, *Rural Conflict, Crime and Protest: Herefordshire, 1800-1860*, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2003, p.63. Similar figures can be found in borough forces. PC Sheffield and DC Partridge were particularly active in Huddersfield. D Taylor, *Beerhouses, Brothels and Bobbies: Policing by Consent in Huddersfield and the Huddersfield District in the mid-nineteenth century*, Huddersfield University Press, 2016, pp.27-8
- 31 *Leeds Times*, 18 October 1856 and *Huddersfield Examiner*, 19 August 1856
- 32 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 8 April 1848. Unfortunately, no copy appears to have survived.
- 33 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 29 January 1853
- 34 *Leeds Mercury*, 22 March 1851
- 35 There is no evidence of any of the superintending constables keeping a record of their activities. A journal kept by John Campbell, superintending constable for Bradley Haverstoe in north-east Lincolnshire, 1846 – 1851 records the work of an industrious superintending constable who, almost every day and six days a week, wrote to and visited the townships for which he was responsible and exhorting them to act often against vagrants, beggars and gypsies. It also shows how he co-operated with other law enforcement agents, including parish constables, railway policeman, and even members of the Hull police. It would be wrong to generalise from Campbell's experience but it is consistent with the argument in this chapter that a more efficient system of policing could be developed under the 1842 Police Act. I am grateful to B J Davey for providing me with a copy of this document, the original of which is in the Lincolnshire county archive.
- 36 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 26 April 1851. Systematic data on the number of parish constables and their length of service is not available.
- 37 Skipton had 49 townships, Skyrack and Upper Osgoldcross had 36 and 35 respectively, Lower Osgoldcross 26 but Dewsbury and Ewcross only 11 each. *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 27 November 1852
- 38 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 12 April 1851
- 39 *Sheffield Independent*, 16 April 1853, *Huddersfield Examiner*, 22 April 1854 and *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 19 April 1856. Again, no copies of these documents appear to have survived.

- 40 For example, *Halifax Courier*, 1 October 1853
- 41 For example, Wrightson's trenchant critique, *Leeds Times*, 30 October 1855.
- 42 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 June 1856, *Halifax Guardian*, 29 June 1850, 4 February and 16 December 1854
- 43 For example, Spiers, *Halifax Courier*, 1 April 1854, Green, *Leeds Intelligencer*, 4 March 1856 and especially Heaton, see Taylor, 'No Remedy,' pp.79-80.
- 44 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 19 April 1856. Heaton also observed that some parish constables could not be relied upon to respond and discharge their duty.
- 45 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 19 April 1856. For details see Taylor, *Beerhouses, Brothels and Bobbies*, pp.169-70.
- 46 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 19 May & 16 June 1855.
- 47 This material is drawn from the WRCC Examination Book A, accessed via Ancestry, for the months to the end of January 1857.
- 48 *Halifax Guardian*, 31 March 1849 and *Huddersfield Examiner*, 22 January & 12 November 1853
- 49 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 17 September 1853, *Halifax Courier*, 7 April 1855 and *Leeds Mercury*, 16 March 1844
- 50 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 18 February 1854 and *Halifax Courier*, 13 May 1854 and 7 April 1855
- 51 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 8 April 1846
- 52 *Sheffield Independent*, 3 April 1852
- 53 *Leeds Times*, 8 October 1842. See also *Leeds Mercury*, 1 September 1849
- 54 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 8 March 1851. Assaults on Glover are reported on 11 May & 17 August 1850 and 18 January 51 (the assault took place on Christmas Day, 1850).
- 55 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 12 April 1851.
- 56 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 8 March 1851.
- 57 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 12 April 1851.
- 58 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 26 July 1851. One assault led to a trial for cutting and wounding with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm, for which sentences of seven years' transportation and twelve months hard labour were handed down. Both men had previously been fined for assaulting Glover, though it was claimed on behalf of one of the defendants that he had been the victim of three or four summonses from Glover. See also *Huddersfield Chronicle* 26 April, 12 July 51 and 25 October 1851.
- 59 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 11, 18 & 25 September 1852. Two years later but 'there appeared an overwhelming majority against a paid constable' because

it was widely (but erroneously) believed that it would mean 'a policeman in uniform with a salary of some £50 or £60 per annum'. *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 24 February 1854.

- 60 *Huddersfield Chronicle* and *Huddersfield Examiner*, 17 February 1855.
- 61 *Huddersfield Chronicle* and *Huddersfield Examiner*, 8 March 7 5 April 1856.
- 62 *Huddersfield Chronicle* and *Huddersfield Examiner*, 17 February 1855.
- 63 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 4 December 1847. A slander case arising out of this was finally ruled up at the Court of Exchequer.
- 64 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 18 February 1854 for a brief reference to the constable of Marsh and *Huddersfield Chronicle* 17 September 1853 for a longer piece on Goodall.
- 65 *Halifax Courier*, 17 March 1855
- 66 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 19 July 1851
- 67 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 12 February 1848
- 68 Taylor, *Beerhouses*, pp.134-5
- 69 *Halifax Courier*, 5 May 1855
- 70 *Halifax Guardian*, 17 February 1855 but the same paper reported regret at the decision one month later, 17 March 1855
- 71 *Halifax Courier*, 29 September 1855
- 72 *Bradford Observer*, 23 August 1855
- 73 *Bradford Observer*, 1 November 1855
- 74 W Deedes, *Hansard*, 16 February 1853, vol.124, cc.159-62. See also the positive comments of Lord Campbell at the Court of Queen's Bench and reported in the *Bradford Observer*, 10 June 1858. William Deedes, MP for Kent Eastern, better known for his cricketing prowess, was an outspoken advocate of reformed parochial policing. This observation was made in a Commons debate, 16 February 1853, *Hansard*, vol. 124, cc.159-62. Note also the comment by Beckett Dennison later in the same debate on policing calling out Grey's allegations regarding the West Riding and repeating the assertion of its magistrates that 'rural police was wholly unnecessary in the West Riding.' *Hansard*: House of Commons debate, 25 April 1856
- 75 This was particularly true in the Halifax division, where the magistrates explicitly instructed the superintending constable to inform local constables of the need for corroboration. *Halifax Guardian*, 1 May 1852. Attitudes varied across the county. Magistrates in Upper Agbrigg, for example, were more willing to accept the uncorroborated evidence of Superintendent Heaton.
- 76 *Halifax Guardian*, 28 August 1852
- 77 *Leeds Times*, 6 September 1851. The same was true of the magisterial

- response to Heaton's 'crusade' in Upper Agbrigg.
- 78 *Bradford Observer*, 26 April 1849 and 26 January 1851 and *Halifax Guardian*, 5 February 1853 & 16, and *Leeds Mercury*, 7 October 1856
- 79 For example, *Halifax Courier*, 16 September 1854, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 2 & 25 September 1852, 29 April & 27 May 1854, *Huddersfield Examiner*, 13 December 1851 & 13 March 1852, *Leeds Intelligencer*, 4 November 1854, *Leeds Mercury*, 30 April 1856
- 80 For example *Bradford Observer*, 6 July 1854 and *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 10 April 1856
- 81 B Godfrey and D J Cox, 'Policing the industrial north of England, 1777 – 1877: the control of labour at work and in the streets,' *Crime, History & Societies*, 20(1), 2016, pp. 1-19
- 82 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 24 May 1851
- 83 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 10 August & 2 November 1850 and 3 April 1852
- 84 For example, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 5 & 12 May 1855.
- 85 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 19 April 1856
- 86 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 10 and 24 May 1856
- 87 *Huddersfield Chronicle* 14 & 28 April 1855.
- 88 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 15 September 1855.
- 89 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 19 October 1850 and *Halifax Courier*, 22 September 1855
- 90 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 5 July 1858
- 91 Murder and manslaughter were rare, though highly publicized in the local press but see, for example, the contribution of Superintendent Richard Green and local officers in the Mirfield murder case, 1847 *Bradford Observer*, 23 July 1847. See also similar involvement of Superintendent Ingham and some of his officers, *Halifax Guardian*, 16 July 1853.
- 92 *Bradford Observer*, 25 June 1849 and *Sheffield Independent*, 13 June 1855 & 16 February 1856
- 93 See also chapter 12. For details see Taylor, *Bobbies*, pp.134 ff.
- 94 *Leeds Times*, 12 April 1851, *York Herald*, 14 April 1851 and *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 19 April 1851
- 95 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 15 & 19, 1856 and *Leeds Mercury*, 15 & 17 January 1856. See also *Leeds Times*, 4 April 1856, for another successful collaborative effort, involving a local constable and a gamekeeper, in arresting a burglar near Harewood.
- 96 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 25 August & 3 September 1856 and *Leeds Mercury*, 18 October 1856. Italics added.
- 97 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 February 1852
- 98 The disaster was widely reported but see *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 & 14

- February 1852 and *Halifax Guardian*, 7 & 14 February 1852.
- 99 *Halifax Guardian*, 14 February 1852
- 100 This appears to be the only serious crime in which Shepley was involved and the location of Scisset, less than ten miles to the south of Huddersfield and within the Upper Agbrigg petty sessional district, was hardly a barrier to co-operation.
- 101 Philips and Storch, *Policing Provincial England*, p.206
- 102 Philips and Storch, *Policing Provincial England*, p.179
- 103 There is also evidence that superintending constables, in conjunction with others, were capable of handling incidents of large-scale disturbance, such as the Milnsbridge riot, 1849. *Hull Packet*, 27 April 1849, see also *Leeds Mercury*, 21 & 28 July 1849
- 104 Of the three superintendents appointed in late-1856 who were not superintending constables, two became long-term officers.
- 105 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 4 March 1856. For the experience of paid constables in Upper Agbrigg, see Taylor, *Beerhouses*, pp.170-2.
- 106 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 14 February 1857