

6 Policing the county, c.1870 to 1900

THE INITIAL POPULAR response to the WRCC was mixed and highly problematic in certain locations in the early 1860s. Irrespective of high-flown rhetoric about the police as servants of the public, there was a pragmatic recognition that a degree of popular acceptance was essential if the force was to operate in any meaningful manner. Establishing and maintaining a *modus vivendi* between police and policed was a considerable and ongoing challenge. This chapter will look at a number of key interactions between the men of the WRCC and the communities they policed, focussing specifically on the policing of popular leisure and the policing of industrial disputes – both of which stress-tested the notion that the force operated more through co-operation rather than coercion.

Policing popular leisure – Victorian ‘culture’ wars

Popular leisure was a contested area as much in the later-Victorian years as it had been a century, or more, before. New forms of leisure emerged and old ones disappeared – cockfighting largely disappeared but pigeon-racing became more popular. Traditional village feasts transformed themselves – helter-skelters replaced wrestling greased pigs and music-hall hits could be heard from fairground rides. Off-course betting became more popular than pitch-and-toss, except among young lads, and so on. But there remained a persistent concern among many magistrates and police chiefs that popular leisure was part of a ‘rough’ culture that encouraged immorality and that the police had a major role in protecting society, maintaining decorum as well

as order. In reality, both the provision and consumption of leisure was more complex than this simplistic model of 'good v evil,' or 'rough v respectable' but the fact remained that the police were often required to take action against activities that were seen to be perfectly legitimate by (largely working-class) participants. Such action cast them in a confrontational role and risked alienating popular sympathy. But while some officers were enthusiastic in their 'moral missionary' role, many shared the values of the communities from which they were drawn and saw nothing immoral in drinking and gambling, even blood sports. Pragmatic policemen were also aware of the benefits of more circumspect enforcement, not least when large crowds were involved.

Boozing and betting

The consumption of alcohol was an integral and time-honoured part of numerous aspects of social life but there were also legal constraints relating to licensing, drunken behaviour and so forth that the police were expected to enforce. For many working-class men socialising over a beer was the most common non-work/leisure activity. The changing number of public- and beer-houses in the West Riding are given below.

Table 6.1 West Riding licensed premises and prosecutions, 1871 - 1891*

	1871	1881	1891			1871	1881	1891
1.Public houses	2479	2512	2514		1a. Public houses per 100,000	2.5	2.2	2.1
2.Beer houses	1658	2271	1976		2a. Beer houses per 100,000	1.7	2.0	1.7
3.Public houses proceeded against	169	175	137		3a. Public houses prosecuted as % total	7%	7%	5%
4.Beer houses proceeded against	167	90	56		4a. Beer houses prosecuted as % total	10%	4%	3%
5.Public houses convicted	132	129	89		5a. Public house convictions as % prosecuted	78%	74%	65%
Beer houses convicted	142	67	42		Beer house convictions as % prosecuted	85%	74%	75%

*5-year averages centred on census years

Source: HMIC annual reports

The figures highlight the scale of the potential problem, albeit one that declined over time. Yet despite the criticisms levelled at beerhouses in particular, there were relatively few prosecutions for breaches of the licensing laws. In part, this reflected the weakness of the law that made successful prosecutions difficult; in part, it reflected a more pragmatic awareness of the unproductive use of police manpower and the counter-productive risks of a 'war' on pub landlords and beerhouse keepers. There was more than enough to do in dealing with drunk and disorderly behaviour. The pages of the local press are full of reports of policemen being assaulted by drunks – and even drunks being assaulted by policemen – notwithstanding the decline in per capita beer consumption in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Table 6.2 Drunk and disorderly prosecution, 1871 - 1901, West and North Ridings of Yorkshire and Lancashire (5-year averages centred on census years)

	Drunk & disorderly total	Drunk & disorderly convicted	Convictions as % total	Drunk & disorderly per officer	Drunk & disorderly per 000 population	Policed population 000s	Size of force
WRY 1871	5121	4848	95%	7.0	5.2	982	731
WRY 1881	8200	7810	95%	8.8	7.2	1146	930
WRY 1891	9280	8936	96%	9.0	7.9	1177	1027
WRY 1901	12339	11915	96%	10.0	10.0	1239	1229
NRY 1871	1275	1221	96%	8.3	5.7	223	154
NRY 1881	1072	1062	99%	5.5	4.8	257	196
NRY 1891	906	855	94%	4.3	3.6	251	209
NRY 1901	877	845	96%	3.5	3.5	248	249
Lancs 1871	11544	11136	96%	12.3	8.7	1321	941
Lancs 1881	17549	16846	96%	14.2	10.8	1618	1240
Lancs 1891	16846	13179	78%	12.0	10.8	1561	1409
Lancs 1901	12124	10648	88%	7.5	7.5	1627	1626

Source: HMIC annual reports

The figures in Table 6.2 do not provide an accurate measure of drunk and disorderly behaviour. It is difficult to believe that the citizens of the North Riding were more restrained than their counterparts in the West Riding, though both might have liked to believe in their moral superiority over the folks on the other side of the Pennines. Police practices varied within forces over time and also between forces at any point in time. Some districts and

certain groups – colliers and the Irish, most obviously – were more heavily policed than others, though it was not unknown for certain ‘problem’ communities, especially in the mining districts, to be left to police themselves, as long as their activities did not spill over into the wider world. Nonetheless, the figures have meaning in that they provide a measure of the extent to which the police impacted on daily life.

Much depended upon the way in which the law was enforced. The early 1870s saw two large-scale anti-police incidents that arose from over-zealous, even provocative policing of drinkers. The first took a traditional form of protest and censure – rough music. In the 1860s, there had been scattered examples of popular protest – burning in effigy and rough music – against unpopular policemen but nothing on the scale of events in 1872 in Emley, a small village in Lower Agbrigg, some five miles from Wakefield.¹ The local economy was diverse but the presence of a collier community contributed to its reputation ‘of being one of the worst villages in the West Riding to manage.’² There were important tensions in the village between teetotallers, in particular members of the Band of Hope, and those who ‘like a “drop of the cratur.”’³ A regular flow of petty offences, involving drunkenness, disorderly behaviour and common assault, came before local magistrates but there is no evidence of anti-police sentiment (or actions) in the village during the years immediately following the introduction of the WRCC. But that was before the arrival of Cavan-born PC John Suttle, who was transferred to Lower Agbrigg in August 1868. His early actions in Emley are largely unrecorded. He was demoted to second-class constable in August 1869 but no reason was included in his police record. From August 1871 Suttle gave evidence supporting the schoolteachers of the Wesleyan Chapel in their attempt to have revoked John Bradshaw’s licence for the Odd-fellows’ Arms and also backed the Band of Hope in their conflict with a well-known village toper, the village blacksmith, Francis Parker.⁴ Suttle even brought a case – for the malicious destruction of an umbrella – against the younger Parker, which was, somewhat dismissively, thrown out. He was at odds, not just with the Parkers, or the Swallows, who kept the White Horse Inn, but with more influential people, not least local farmer and assistant overseer, Thomas Silverwood.⁵ Suttle was undoubtedly a moral missionary, seeking to eradicate ‘drunkenness and debauchery’ as well as to prosecute ‘dog-fighters, cock-fighters and poachers.’⁶ Not only was he zealous, but he was also inventive

in his task, giving rise to allegations that he was prone to ‘imaging things which never took case,’ in other words, of giving false witness.⁷ Matters came to a head in October 1871. For reasons that are not recorded, but probably related to his deteriorating relationship with several villagers, Suttle was to be transferred to Heptonstall.⁸ News of the move became public and he was soon the focus of a large and well-organised demonstration.

The local band was engaged, an irregular procession formed and a crowd of persons marched through the village. One man carried a beer-barrel on his back, another carried a loaf of bread, held aloft on a hay fork. A third carried a ham on his head, while others for want of better things, tied their handkerchiefs to the end of sticks and held them up to flutter in the breeze ... beer was plentiful ... and great was the rejoicing.⁹

PC Suttle could not escape unnoticed.

As the policeman essayed to depart [members of the crowd] brayed discordant noises in his ears and in those of the horse drawing the cart full of goods, and not content with that, and with shouting uncomplimentary and coarse epithets, they stoned, jostled and knocked him down and otherwise insulted him.¹⁰

A crowd, initially estimated at eighty, but swelling to 200 or more, escorted him out of the village. Unlike in Honley in 1862 popular disapproval was expressed *after* the news of Suttle’s imminent departure from Emley. This was not an attempt to drive out an unpopular policeman but the scale of the celebrations at his departure – and the evident animosity towards the man – reflect a considerable degree of hostility towards an individual constable, though not towards the police *per se*. Suttle continued his personal moral crusade in Heptonstall until he was pensioned in 1880, but, although he was assaulted on at least two occasions, he never again stoked communal ire in such spectacular style as was seen in Emley. As for the village, in the following months there was a marked drop in the number of cases brought by the police but, as the *Wakefield Express* noted, ‘who or what may have effected this very desirable change we are unable to say.’¹¹ One might conjecture that

a change in police personnel played a part in defusing tension. The extent to which the hostility in Emley cut across class divisions was limited, especially in comparison with earlier incidents. The crucial division was more one between 'rough' and 'respectable' cultures and it is significant that Suttle targeted dog-fighters and cock-fighters as well as drunkards .

The second large-scale protest took place in Ossett. As in Emley (and also Honley and Holmfirth earlier), there was no evidence of overt hostility to the new police of the WRCC until December 1873. However, unlike in Emley the Ossett police antagonised more 'respectable' members of local middle-class society. In January 1874 the Local Board determined to memorialise the chief constable (Capt. McNeil) about the over-zealous, even dishonest, behaviour of the local police, who 'were in the habit of locking up and by false swearing convicting respectable persons on the charge of drunkenness.'¹² The chair of the Local Board, J Illingworth made clear that 'instead of being a protection to the people of Ossett, they were positively a terror.' He warned the chief constable that unless they greatly changed their behaviour, or were removed, 'there would be a serious breach of the peace.'¹³ Once again, it was a case of over-zealous policing by a teetotaler constable, 'a good Templar,' who arrested anyone showing the 'least effects of alcoholic drinking.'¹⁴ As well as complaining to the chief constable, in language reminiscent of the Holmfirth memorialists in 1862, several inhabitants of Ossett protested in a novel way – refusing to offer accommodation for the police. The outcome was policemen sleeping in their own cells.¹⁵ Despite the strength of feeling in the town, McNeil refused to hold a public enquiry. Further, having considered detailed evidence of thirteen cases of alleged misconduct submitted to him, he concluded that his intervention in twelve cases was inappropriate, as they had been 'adjudicated upon by the magistrates,' and the thirteenth was 'not of a character calling for an official enquiry.'¹⁶ Whereas changes of police personnel had been effected in Honley, Holmfirth and, more recently, Emley, nothing happened in Ossett. More surprisingly, there was not a reaction in the town. By the summer, the anger had dissipated, though the number of petty cases from Ossett appears to have diminished. The Ossett protest was by, and on behalf of, those respectable members of society who had fallen foul of over-zealous officers. There was no coming together of the community as happened in Honley and Holmfirth; nor was there any popular protest as took place in Emley. Nonetheless, this incident still points to the fragility of

support for the police, even among those most likely to support them, albeit in their role as servants.

Police concern with alcohol-related problems was very real. A closely related problem was betting – ‘laking for brass.’ * Again, the beerhouse was seen as a site of unlawful behaviour and there is no doubt that betting took place on a variety of games, from dominoes, cards and dice to ‘puffing darts’(or throwing darts) for money. Geography worked against the men of the WRCC, especially in the thinly-populated and less easily accessible parts of the county. Beerhouse gamblers were arrested and prosecuted but often with difficulty but beerhouse-based gambling was not the worst problem for the police. The real difficulty stemmed from the ubiquitousness of gambling, especially pitch-and-toss, not just in village streets but on the public highway, in the lanes and on the moors across the county, sometimes in the open, sometimes in the seclusion of a wood or a quarry, or in a barn; and occasionally in the most unexpected places, such as near the parish church in Batley or opposite the police station in Dewsbury. Most were locals but the county force also had to deal with gamblers leaving the more tightly regulated streets of various towns in search of a safer location in which to gamble and also some from outside the county. The numbers involved varied – commonly half a dozen or so, but as many as thirty or forty in exceptional cases. Some were well-organised (and regular) occurrences with paid ‘scouts’ to warn of the arrival of a policeman, others were more impromptu and amateurish. Further, certain localities – mining villages, especially in the south of the county, or communities in the neighbourhood of Huddersfield. Skelmanthorpe, Hunslet and Queensbury – had (or claimed) a reputation as gambling hotspots but as a correspondent to the *Huddersfield Chronicle* observed, ‘it is a well-known fact that pitching and tossing is a very popular game for young men – and old men too.’¹⁷

Neither court records, nor even reports in the local press capture the extent of the problem. Much remained unreported and unrecorded. Changes in the enforcement of the law may have had a short-term deterrent effect but, as far as press coverage gives a crude approximation of publicly-expressed concern and of police action, pitch-and-toss was a persistent problem throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Several senior police figures,

* Playing/gambling for money.

responding to reformist pressure, sent out men in plain clothes to identify and arrest gamblers but with little success, as Barnsley superintendent Sykes found out when he sought to disrupt the organised gambling gangs that met regularly at Wortley colliery.¹⁸ Others, like superintendent Heaton could call on assiduous officers such as Sergeant Corden, first met in chapter 4. But not all officers were as determined. The amiable PC Robert Wardle, stationed in the 'semi civilized' village of Kirkheaton, with its reputation as a cock-fighting centre, was not noted for his energetic enforcement of the law but such was the level of complaints to the chief constable of gambling in and around the village that he was called to into action.¹⁹ He could hardly do otherwise when a group of would-be gamblers filed past his window on the way to a local wood, a known location for gambling. But there was no sustained campaign against gambling gangs. Instead, Wardle dealt only with the most blatant cases – gambling on the highway in broad daylight.²⁰ Wardle was not alone in dealing with only the most egregious incidents.

From cock-fighting to pigeon flying

Popular leisure was constantly changing. By the late-nineteenth century it was less cruel and more commercialised but older, less 'civilised' leisure activities proved remarkably resilient to the campaigns of reformers and the actions of magistrates and the police. Concerted efforts had been made in the 1860s to stamp out cock-fights and prize-fights in the southern divisions of Upper Agbrigg, Staincross and Lower and Upper Strafforth and Tickhill but a perverse mixture of geography and improved transportation enabled punters from across the county, as well as gamblers from adjacent counties, to attend well-organised and well-attended 'battles' and fights, attracting regular crowds of fifty to sixty people and several (reportedly) of 200, 300, even 500.²¹ But still the problem persisted and large-scale police action also continued into the following decade. In 1875, two inspectors and a *posse* of police were sent to prevent a cock fight in 'a sequestered region above Bell's-o'-Lacks, Greenfield,' after a tip-off from 'a repentant old cockfighter,' though it subsequently emerged that the motive had been to avoid a heavy betting loss if the fight had gone ahead.²² Of greater concern were the reports in 1877 of several cockfights taking place near Dewsbury and the inability of

the police to make any arrests. In early May the police made a major effort to capture the cockfighters, who had planned a 'battle' at Soothill Woods near Mirfield. Three detectives, men new to the district and 'dressed as sporting characters' were sent to infiltrate the cockers while a further twenty uniformed policemen were in attendance. Their arrival proved to be a tactical blunder. There was a stampede to get away and among the fleeing men and boys was a member of the Batley School Board. The main protagonists retreated to a pub in Dewsbury, accompanied by the three detectives whose tenacity aroused suspicion. They were finally betrayed by their hands, which were not those of working men. The three officers were allowed to go and the cockers went their way unhindered to hold their fight at Kirkheaton.²³ Most reported incidents were relatively small-scale but there was a persistent tradition of cock-fighting around Barnsley, Dewsbury and Holmfirth.²⁴ There were fewer incidents of cock fighting – and also prize fighting – from the late-1870s but this had more to do with declining popular support rather effective police action. Indeed, in the mid-1880s there was magisterial condemnation of 'a tendency [in the police] to strain the law to put down cock fighting.'²⁵

Pedestrianism in its various forms had enjoyed considerable popularity and commercially successful in the mid-nineteenth century but had resulted in conflict in the police. Although overshadowed by the growth of amateur athletics – often over-reported in the local press – professional racing continued to flourish in private race grounds, such as the Queen's Ground, Barnsley or the Warren House, Linthwaite but proprietors and punters learnt to accommodate themselves to the law and the police – licences were obtained, illegal gamblers excluded – but so too did the police, taking action when the law was flagrantly broken. A similar accommodation took place with the more plebian short-distance pigeon flying, which became a well-established part of working-class life in the last third of the century.²⁶ For many respectable social critics pigeon-flying was to be condemned as much as dog or cock fighting.²⁷ At best it was seen as a waste of leisure time, at worst another opportunity for gambling, and attracting large crowds, numbering into the low hundreds, occasionally more. Pigeon-flying events took place across the county but support was particularly strong in the south. From the late-1850s there was growing concern in Barnsley, not least because of the prevalence of pigeon-flying on Sundays and the failure of superintendent

Burke to act. In response to complaints from the Barnsley Local Board of Health, chief constable Cobbe agreed that on Sundays 'the whole of the available force should perambulate the town [Barnsley] with a view to keeping the streets clear, and putting a stop to such practices as pitch-and-toss and pigeon flying etc.'²⁸ With a new superintendent, Samuel Hockaday, and a greater police presence, it was claimed that even in a notorious district, such as Worsborough Common, pigeon flying had 'almost entirely disappeared.'²⁹ Such optimism was misplaced. Footpaths and highways were obstructed by crowds, throwing pigeons or awaiting the return of birds in a short distance race. Worsborough Common maintained its reputation as a site for betting on pigeon flying, foot racing and knurr and spell.³⁰ But disturbances were not confined to the mining villages, though colliers were widely known as the keenest supporters. Outlying villages, such as Marsden or Meltham, even Hipperholme, or relatively secluded locations, such as Sodhouse Green, on the outskirts of Halifax, or Castle Hill, just outside Huddersfield were among the more popular sites.³¹ Nonetheless, there was a perceptible shift in crowd behaviour and far fewer prosecutions in the 1880s and 1890s. But as obstreperous pigeon-fanciers became less common, a new trouble-maker appeared in the 1890s – the rugby football fan. There was a proliferation of clubs and not just in the medium-sized and large towns. Its popularity was such that games attracted crowds in their hundreds and, for more important matches, thousands. Although now codified, the new football was well-suited to older inter-village rivalries and to persistent models of masculinity that valorised physical strength and bravery. The sheer size of crowds and the logistics of getting to and from matches posed obvious problems of order. Increasingly across the 1890s there were complaints of crowd abuse directed at referees and, occasionally, assaults on players. Sowerby Bridge rugby football club, not one of the leading names in the sport, came close to suspension after a game against Otley in which an opposition player was 'sodded and stoned.'³² However, there is little to suggest that violence between supporters of different teams was a major problem in the 1890s for the WRCC.

There remained a clear belief that a range of popular leisure activities, notably involving gambling, though legitimate in the eyes of many working-class men and women, had been unfairly criminalised. Although there were no major confrontations with the police to compare with those of the 1850s and 1860s, there were ongoing but largely unrecorded clashes that

brought many young working-class men into conflict with the police. But equally important, there was a process of accommodation whereby ordinary men and women came to terms with the expectations of orderly behaviour enforced by the police but also whereby the police tolerated activities, which, strictly speaking, were illegal. There was continuing dilemma for ordinary constables, many of whom shared a liking for the very activities they were asked to regulate and prosecute. If responses elsewhere are any guide, some will have turned a blind eye to gambling, some half-heartedly pursued miscreants and others deliberately let it be known that they intended to raid a gambling school. But there was also a judgement to be made when action was taken: how far, and in what manner, could and should they go before police action became counter-productive? There was a very real risk of alienating even otherwise law-abiding people, as Robert Roberts had noted (albeit talking about Salford) when heavy-handed police action in dispersing juvenile card players, gambling for ha'pennies, left participants with 'a fear and hatred of the police.'³³ There was, for the most part, a recognition of the need for pragmatic policing. In this regard, the modest, uncontroversial and low-key careers of a PC Wardle was more typical and more important than the more high-profile careers of a Sergeant Corden, let alone than the incident-strewn careers of a PC Suttle.

Policing and public order: elections and industrial action

Policing large crowds of people, whether watching the arrival of a royal, participating in an election or engaging in strike action, posed particular challenges for the police. The greater the tensions, the greater the threat of violence directed at the police. Effective policing of large crowds was often beyond the capability of a divisional force. A degree of co-operation was required, which in turn raised further organizational and leadership challenges, and also risked heightening tensions as outsiders were brought in.

There were a number of election riots in the West Riding which bring out differing experiences. The Huddersfield election of 1865 was particularly corrupt, though disturbances – stone-throwing and the like – did not materialise on a large scale. Co-operation between the borough force and the Upper Agbrigg police ensured trouble was kept to a minimum. Here

was a good example of effective co-operation. Chief constable Cobbe had responded positively to a pre-election request from the Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners to work with the borough force.³⁴ On the day, Cobbe was present and the experienced Thomas Heaton led the Upper Agbrigg contingent. Working together with William Hannan and the borough force, early-afternoon trouble was nipped in the bud. Successful action was not always the case. In 1868 and again in 1874 election day in Barnsley saw 'riotous and tumultuous proceedings.'³⁵ On both occasions, police were brought in from a variety of divisions. In 1868 the police were 'fearfully treated' and only cleared the crowd, after the Riot Act had been read and they had used their cutlasses.³⁶ With rumours flying about the scale of injuries, the *Barnsley Independent* published a list of fifty injured officers, as supplied by the police.³⁷ In 1874 men were again sent in from across the county. A stone-throwing crowd, intent on attacking the Conservative headquarters, was finally cleared after repeated charges by the police. Similarly, in Pontefract in 1885, police from several parts of the county 'dispersed the mob, which numbered several hundred, by charging them with drawn staves.'³⁸ Although undoubtedly victims of these crowd attacks, the evidence given at subsequent trials of rioters throws little light on attitudes towards the police, though with the exception of the 1885 Pontefract election, where one of the rioters was alleged to have shouted 'Let's go into the --- bobbies,' there was no explicit anti-police sentiment reported.³⁹

This was not always the case when policing strikes, where there was a significantly higher risk of antagonising and alienating significant elements in working-class society. The police were put in a position in which they were identified with one protagonist in a conflict between employer and employees and taking place within a legal framework that provided considerable protection to property and set limits on the actions of employees. Such tensions were nothing new but the overall situation deteriorated over the course of Victoria's reign, particularly in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Britain's quasi-monopoly of industrialisation was undermined by the modernisation of economies across the world and the problems of competition were exacerbated by falling prices. At the same time, trade unions became larger, better organised and, at times, better funded. They were to be found among unskilled as well as skilled occupations, which in turn led to the emergence of employers' associations seeking to employ 'free,'

that is, non-unionised, labour. The West Riding had a history of often violent incidents arising out of industrialisation and its wider social and political implications that could be traced back through Chartism to Luddism. Strikes and lockouts were a recurring feature, not least in the mining districts which witnessed several high-profile violent incidents, including the infamous “Featherstone Massacre” of 1893.

Several police historians (the present author included) have seen the relationship between strikers and the police as essentially confrontational.⁴⁰ Such an approach obscures, in a general sense, the extent to which the increasingly proletarianized police, concerned with wages and conditions of work, had interests similar to other groups of workers. It also obscures the variety of responses to be found. Undoubtedly, as in other parts of the north of England, there were violent exchanges.⁴¹ The lockout at the factory of Messrs. Thewles and Sons, near Holmfirth, and the employment of ‘blacklegs,’ for example, saw the police ‘much pushed against and [having] stones thrown at them.’⁴² Likewise, the lockout at Messrs. Oldroyd and Sons in Dewsbury saw crowds of 2 – 3,000 who stoned the police who, in turn, ‘used their staves freely.’⁴³ In fact, many strikes were small-scale and relatively trouble-free, with minimal or no police involvement. A weavers’ strike near Huddersfield in 1857 saw ‘no public demonstrations, nor the slightest disturbance.’ Nor did the 1896 Slaithwaite cotton spinners’ strike, which led to the trial of sixteen spinners, accused of intimidation. Despite the length of the strike and the importation of new, strike-breaking hands from Lancashire, the police sent to prevent any breach of the peace had little cause for action. Indeed, at the trial it was noted that there had been ‘no rioting or stone throwing’ during the strike. The only action brought by the police, in the person of superintendent Pickard, was a solitary case of using obscene language – an offence which took place at 6 a.m..⁴⁴ But not all lockouts or strikes were so trouble free.

Some of the most serious troubles took place around the collieries owned by Benjamin Huntsman, a descendant of (and named after) one of the great figures in steelmaking in the Sheffield district. Grievances, dating back to mid-1868, if not before, were raised with Huntsman but to no avail.⁴⁵ In January 1869 a strike was called and the situation rapidly deteriorated as Huntsman’s agents scoured the country to find men who were required ‘before entering service ... to become members of a Free Labour Society ...

and to renounce all intentions to belong to any combination of workers.⁴⁶ Huntsmen provided accommodation, including cottages recently built for his new men, which became foci of conflict between union and non-union men and their families. From the outset 'knobsticks' were subjected to verbal assault on the way to and from work and as the strike lengthened tensions grew. There were a number of relatively small-scale clashes, including a shooting in a local beerhouse, between unionists and non-unionists, involving both men and women; but matters soon worsened. Notice was served on striking men who occupied company houses and it was even rumoured that Huntsman was arming his 'free labour' men. There were several mass attacks on the houses provided for the strike breakers, which necessarily involved the police in restoring order. Initially, the local police managed to control the situation. When in summer 1869, a crowd of forty to fifty people attacked cottages lodging non-unionist, the appearance of PC Jackson, albeit armed with a cutlass, was enough to see the crowd disperse and an attempted crowd rescue thwarted.⁴⁷ As the situation deteriorated in the winter of 1869/70 more police from across the county were brought into the area – from Bradford, Dewsbury, Halifax, Huddersfield, Leeds and Wakefield, – fifty men of the 22nd Infantry were sent to near-by Tankersly Farm. There were several serious assaults on the police as they sought to restore order. In one incident sergeant Greenwood with his seven men, with drawn cutlasses ... were assailed with a shower of stones, which injured two of them seriously.⁴⁸ PC Walker lost four of his teeth in the attack and PC Taylor was 'rendered ... insensible.' In a second incident, superintendent Sykes of Barnsley and ten of his men, again with drawn cutlasses, were 'met with a shower of stones' from a crowd of about 400 strikers. Following this clash, thirty-three men were charged that they had 'unlawfully, riotously and tumultuously did assemble and gather together to disturb the peace.'⁴⁹ The men were sent to trial initially at Barnsley petty sessions. The train bringing the prisoners was re-routed to avoid attack and, fearing a rescue attempt from a crowd of 2000 or 3000, the prisoners were 'placed in the centre of a large body of police with the infantry before and behind them.'⁵⁰ As well as the 160 officers forming a human shield around the prisoners a further 200 policemen from across the county were on duty, marching through the streets. Strikingly, at the trial an unnamed collier shouted to approval: 'You are Huntsman's bobbies and have nothing to do with us.'⁵¹ How many people shared this sentiment

is impossible to determine but the sight of the police protecting 'black sheep; or 'knobsticks' to and from work must have been seen as unambiguous and not just to striking colliers and their families.

It was a measure of the seriousness of the situation that at the height of the troubles both chief constable McNeill and superintendent Sykes stayed overnight and were joined by the Lord Lieutenant of the county, Earl Fitzwilliam. Although some criticised the authorities for not using the military to restore order, Fitzwilliam was unwilling to use troops until it was clear that the police could not control matters. McNeill and Sykes were confident that, with the enhanced body of police available to them and their knowledge of the scale of discontent, military aid – itself not without risk – was not needed to restore order; and in this they were proved correct but at an unmeasurable loss of standing and legitimacy in certain quarters.⁵²

Huntsman's collieries were not the only ones hit by strike action. There were at least nine collieries at which owners refused to negotiate with the South Yorkshire Miners' Association in the spring of 1869 and well over 3000 men out on strike in the summer.⁵³ One of the troubled collieries was the recently-opened Denaby Main colliery owned by Messrs Pope and Pearson. The strike did not last as long but the grievances were essentially the same as at Thorncliffe, as was the response of the owner. There was violence between strikers and strike-breakers, particularly when they were escorted by police to and from work. At times, the police struggled to contain angry crowds but there was not the overt anti-police sentiment seen at Thorncliffe. Denaby Main soon became a large and important pit – by the mid-1880s it was employing some 1200 men and boys – but it was a site of recurring conflict which highlighted the lack of trust between employers and employees. In early December 1880, the company gave 800 boys and men fourteen days to leave the pit. There were two elements to the problem. First was the dispute with the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire railway company over tonnage rates – a dispute that drew in the railway commissioners. The Denaby Main owners put the blame on the railway company for the decision to close the pit, leaving the men and their families to bear the financial burden. Second, and more important, was the question of wages. In 1879 the men had accepted a 5 per cent wage cut as trade was poor but with a gentleman's understanding that this would be restored as trade improved. Rather than restore wage levels, the company,

as many suspected, proposed a change in work practice equivalent to a wage cut.⁵⁴ On this occasion there were no major disturbances. The colliers were described as 'very orderly' and there were no clashes with the police even after the employment of non-union labour in late-January 1881.⁵⁵ Eventually the men returned to work on the terms in operation on the eve of the lockout but there was a legacy of profound mistrust and bitterness, which became apparent during the 1885 dispute.

Crucial to an understanding of industrial relations in the pit are two specific points. First, the determined opposition to unionisation of the managing director, Benjamin Pope, and his manager. From the outset he wanted to employ non-union men and on the condition that they did not join a workers' association. When this was not possible, he refused to negotiate with members of the South Yorkshire Miners' Association, ignoring appeals to go to arbitration. His preferred option was to use the courts to evict striking miners and their families from company-owned cottages and to bring in 'free' labour, particularly from Staffordshire but also, at times, from Wales and Cornwall. He also used the local magistrates' courts to bring actions for intimidation and expected police protection for his new workforce. That said, there is no evidence of the close relationship between colliery owners and senior police figures that was to be found in South Wales, especially during the Cambrian coal strike in the early twentieth century.⁵⁶ The second point was the growth of trade unionism in the area and, more importantly, the determination of local colliers, who at times voted to reject union advice to return to work. The strikers and their families were prepared to undergo considerable privations by striking but there was a degree of community, not just in Denaby but in the wider region, that manifested itself in both material and moral support. There is a third, more general point to be borne in mind. Even a cursory look at the reports of local magistrates' courts shows the large presence of colliers, being tried for attending cock fights and prize fights, or for assault and drunk and disorderly behaviour; and in many cases the police were targets of their ire. Put simply, colliers as a group, along with navvies, especially if Irish, often found themselves in conflict with the law and were not predisposed to look favourably on the police – and worse.

The 1885 strike over proposed wage cuts started in the January. By spring (as in 1869) the company had obtained ejection orders from magistrates at Rotherham and Doncaster for over one hundred striking colliers and their

families. The police were well aware of the potential for disorder and planned accordingly. Some 200 policemen were drafted in from across the county and as far afield as Selby and Goole. In addition, chief constable Russell and superintendents Hammond (Rotherham) and Sykes (Doncaster) were present and these senior police officers were also in touch with the Lord Lieutenant, Earl Fitzwilliam, on the question of possible military involvement. This was undoubtedly a show of force but the actual policing of the ejections, which were enforced in four batches in April and May, was deliberately non-confrontational and at times sympathetic. As had happened before, the strikers refused to empty their homes, leaving the police with the task of removing personal possessions onto the streets. The *Yorkshire Post* reporting the first ejections commented that 'the police undertook their duties with due regard to the feelings of the families to be ejected,' a view shared by the *Barnsley Chronicle* (a paper sympathetic to the colliers' cause) and the conservative *Sheffield Telegraph*.⁵⁷ There were references to the care with which items were removed and to the distress felt by some constables.⁵⁸ There were also humorous incidents – a heavy box carefully brought out by the police only to be found full of stones, or constables dropping bolsters on the heads of the fellows and even a miner playing the Dead March from Saul on his concertina as his possessions were taken out.⁵⁹ The *Barnsley Chronicle* opined that the attitude of the police 'cannot be too highly praised,' not least when they helped the families to move to Mexborough where bread was distributed and 'the police shared their lunch with some of the hungry youngsters.'⁶⁰

The fact that there was 'no sign of excitement, no hint of displeasure' was not simple due to the police. Equally important was the fact that the colliers had voted in a mass meeting to 'stay calm' and allow the police to do their job unhindered.⁶¹ Nonetheless, senior police officers played a crucial role. Chief constable Russell was seen walking 'amongst the miners and their wives and chatted as freely as if one of themselves ... and during one of the quiet chats [he] promised to do his best to find lodgement for the families.'⁶² Similarly there was praise for the two superintendents, Hammond and Sykes. The former, it was said, 'appears ... to have become somewhat of a favourite in the place ... [being] greeted with a smile or a nod from most of the residents he met.'⁶³ A mass meeting of strikers passed votes of thanks 'to family and friends' for their help and also to the police.'⁶⁴

The evictions passed with virtually no trouble but the general situation worsened as Pope continued to bring in new men, housing them at Sparrow Barracks from where they had to be escorted to and from work by the police.⁶⁵ The hostility between the two groups was considerable. There were noisy mass protests – rough music in the form of whistles, drums, tin whistles as well as pots and pans – fights in the streets and beerhouses and a mass attack on Sparrow Barracks, when cottages were ransacked and possessions destroyed. The arrival of a further batch of strike breakers at the end of April was met by a particularly vocal crowd. With men brought from across the county, the police put some 100 men on the street but there was ‘no attempt to interfere with the police.’ Indeed, as disturbances broke out ‘several women’ in the crowd were heard to call out that ‘the “bobbies were not to blame.”⁶⁶ The police were not only directly involved both in attempting to maintain or restore the peace and also in the subsequent court cases at which they gave evidence.⁶⁷ Unlike the trial of the Thorncliffe strikers in 1870, at two mass trials, of twenty-one and twenty men, for intimidation in May and June 1885, there were no allegations that the police were ‘Pope’s men.’⁶⁸ The newspaper reports need to be treated with caution. It is also important to note that there was dismay among strikers that the police had not arrested any ‘black sheep,’ and there were a small number of assaults on policemen by out-of-work colliers but overall the most remarkable feature of the events of 1885 in Denaby was the absence of hostility towards the police, notwithstanding the very strong feelings against Pope and his ‘knobsticks.’

Nor were these events of 1885 unique. There was a further bitter dispute at Denaby in 1902/3, popularly known as the ‘bag muck’ strike.⁶⁹ In many ways this was a re-run of 1885. The management response to trouble at the colliery was to take legal action, firstly, to evict strikers, 750 in total, and, secondly, to prevent the Miners’ Association from paying out strike pay. At the same time Pope and his colliery manager looked for ‘new’ men, particularly (once again) from Staffordshire. As in 1885 there were two highly problematic scenarios: the eviction of striking colliers and their families and the protection of non-union labour brought in to break the strike. The first evictions took place in January 1903 in inclement weather. Once again, there was a substantial police presence, augmented by men from across the county, with mounted officers patrolling the streets. The chief constable was also in attendance, as were the two superintendents, Blake and McDonald, each with 150 men.

The event was widely covered in the national, as well as regional and local press. Images such as those taken from the *Sphere* and the *Sheffield Telegraph* were disseminated across the country as were photographs taken by C F Shaw of Batley, one of several photographers in the village.⁷⁰ The *Sphere* sketch shows a distressed woman and (presumably) her children who are foregrounded as possessions are being removed from their house but in the background is a collier quietly talking to a policeman. The *Sheffield Telegraph* had a similar depiction but with greater emphasis on the work of the police. These images, as well as a number of photographs were seen well beyond the bounds of the West Riding. Such was the novelty of photography that the Montgomery Hall, Sheffield offered 'new local pictures added daily' and 'reproduced nightly by Jasper Redfearn's Animated Photographs.'⁷¹



The Sphere, 17 January 1903



Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 7 January 1903

Press coverage emphasised the distress caused by the evictions but also carried an implicit criticism of the way in which the company had conducted itself. The police, on the other hand, were explicitly praised for the way in which they carried out their task. The *Huddersfield Chronicle* waxed lyrical about the 'very favourable impression' created by the police' as they emptied the cottages.⁷² Later in the same report it noted 'the working co-operation whereby the police brought the articles outside and handed them to the miners on the footpath.' Similar positive comments were to be found in the *Sheffield Telegraph* and the *Sheffield Independent*, the latter reporting how strikers and police came to an 'amicable agreement to proceed slowly ... so that no families will be found on the streets without accommodation waiting for them.'⁷³ Importantly, the *South Yorkshire Times*, very sympathetic to the strikers, was generous in its comments on the police.⁷⁴ In the most detailed coverage of the evictions that made clear the distress and suffering of the evicted colliers and the families it ran a section under the banner heading **KINDLY CONSIDERATION BY THE POLICE**, which showed the police in a very positive light. The 'stern looking' superintendent Blake, responsible for some of the evictions, delayed the process by two hours because of the heavy rain – his men stayed out in it —and then made a 'considerate decision ... only to evict those without families or where children were grown up' to minimise the distress for young children. Superintendent MacDonald, responsible for the rest of the evictions, it was reported, urged his men to treat the strikers' possession 'as if they were their own property.' Police behaviour

was 'warmly received by the spectators' but, the report continued, 'it seemed hardly necessary judging by their commendable conduct the previous day.' Even when two policemen were assaulted by strikers, the paper referred to it as 'an unfortunate incident,' which gave rise to all the more regret because of the 'friendly relationship which has existed between the evicted people and the police, the latter having shown throughout every consideration for the feelings of the evicted persons.'⁷⁵ In fact, tensions in the village increased as more non-union men were brought in by Pope and his manager. Seen as 'this unpleasant business,' escorting 'black sheep' to and from work put the police in the middle of a volatile situation, which was made more febrile by the company's decisions to prosecute over 300 colliers for leaving work without notice and to appeal to the High Court to prevent the Yorkshire Miners' Association from paying out strike money.⁷⁶ There were several noisy protests and 'a great deal of hostility' directed at the strike breakers but there were no incidents of major violence. The trial of six colliers for 'watching and besetting' and intimidation, following one of these protests gave rise to the one unambiguous criticism of the police. The defence counsel sought to blame the police for the troubles because of 'their want of thought and vainglorious desire to show what their strength was.'⁷⁷ This was not borne out by the testimony of the defendants. For the most part, the earlier good relationship between strikers and the police survived intact. The relationship between the two is not easily characterised. There is no doubt that the police ensured that they were present in large numbers, and with military backup if necessary. In both 1885 and 1903 magistrates were on hand with copies of the Riot Act. In that respect the police presence was a statement of force, with the implication that resistance would be folly. Indeed, union leaders were aware of this and their advice was again: 'Be calm.' That said, the actual implementations of the evictions were conducted with a degree of co-operation and even mutual respect. Despite what was required of them, the police were not seen as agents of the company.

The most serious dispute in the strike-torn region in 1893 took place at Featherstone and resulted in fatalities as strikers confronted police and military.



Source: *Illustrated Police News*, 8 September 1893

The coalfield dispute was bitter and widespread. The proposal to cut wages by c.25 per cent aroused much hostility. Strikes, followed by lock-outs affected 250 collieries with 80,000 men not at work. There were serious disturbances in several parts of the county which stretched police resources. At Morley Main, near Dewsbury, '[m]obs paraded and attacked the blacklegs as they went to and from work. In the afternoon, the police charged the mob and several persons were injured including two officers.'⁷⁸ The marching gangs of strikers, moving from colliery to colliery, posed a new threat to the police, who in previous (and indeed later) strikes had been able to focus on a single location, be it Thorncliffe or Denaby. Yet, whether due to poor intelligence or overconfidence, the WRCC felt there was no danger of a major disturbance and, as a consequent, chief constable Russell went on holiday in Scotland and over 250 constables were sent to Doncaster, as they had been in previous years, to ensure there was no trouble at the races. Although this was partly reversed later – 188 men were sent back to the Barnsley district – the police presence, particularly at Featherstone and Nostall, was felt to be inadequate, which led to the local magistrates (many of whom were colliery owners) to seek military assistance. Unlike previous disturbances, the police were on the back foot and as a consequent were forced to retreat when faced with

‘volley after volley of stones.’⁷⁹ Although able to offer protection to the much-disliked colliery manager, Holiday, Corden (by now an inspector) and the police had no chance of restoring order without military intervention. The introduction of the troops was poorly managed. There were no cavalry men and the infantry was split in two, on the insistence of the magistrates. Further, there was no magistrate to meet those troops who disembarked at Featherstone station. With no-one to read the Riot Act the troops, only twenty-eight in number, marched to Acton Hall, where the situation rapidly deteriorated with heavily armed men, stoning police and military and finally live rounds were used and two people killed. The shooting of civilians on the mainland attracted considerable attention which overshadowed the role of and response to the police.

There was considerable anger, which grew in intensity as the authorities failed to act decisively. Firemen attempting to prevent the destruction of Acton Main, as much as policemen protecting colliery managers were attacked. Both were seen to be trying to thwart the will of the crowd. In a polarised and highly-fraught situation, the police were (and were seen to be) on the ‘other’ side. The police undoubtedly could have been better informed and better prepared but the main lesson drawn from the subsequent inquiry was that such matters should not be left to local magistrates, several of whom had vested interests in halting the strikes and tended to overstate the threat posed by the strikers. As a result, the responsibility for requesting military support was vested in the chief constable of the area concerned. Of greater relevance here is the impact of the “Featherstone Massacre” on perceptions of the police. Unfortunately, the local press was more concerned with the large-scale destruction of property and the deaths that resulted from the decision to fire on the crowd. The police were criticised but there was no suggestion that they had inflamed the situation, nor was there any outright condemnation of their behaviour during the disturbances at Ackton Main. Nonetheless, it would be surprising, indeed implausible, for the events not to have damaged the standing of the WRCC, at least in and around Featherstone.

While the ‘Featherstone Massacre’ attracted most attention at the time and from later historians, it is worth briefly considering other events nearby. The police lost control of events at a number of places. At Wath Main colliery initial success in dispersing a crowd of angry strikers (7th September) was followed a day later by a humiliating retreat the following day: ‘the police

made themselves scarce and the mob set to work,' reported the *South Yorkshire Times*.⁸⁰ Part of the problem at Wath Main stemmed from the fact that at nearby Denaby a strong force of police (c.100 in total) had deterred the marching gang from attacking. Indeed, more police, some mounted, and soldiers were sent to Denaby, which was known to have been 'a pit "specially spotted" by the roving wreckers.'⁸¹ This did little to diminish local anxiety as arrangements were made to load coal onto trains. 11 September 1893 was the most 'sensational day at Denaby Main ... since the rioting and evictions' of 1885.⁸² In the event, there was a tense stand-off, as angry strikers watched the coal being moved out, but no violence. The chief constable, Capt. Russell, was met by hostile miners unwilling to listen to his proposals to minimise trouble. Having set out arrangements for sheltering women and children, he returned to Denaby where, or so he claimed, 'those very men cheered me.'⁸³

There are a number of specific conclusions to draw from this overview of the policing of certain industrial disputes in the West Riding. First, it should be noted that the police were called in to act in situations not of their making. The parameters of industrial conflict were set by colliery owners and managers, determined to cut wages, alter conditions of work and employ strike breakers, and by trade unionists (not just union leaders), determined to resist and the police had little choice but to operate within them and shape them as best they could. Second, there was a wider range of experiences than commonly suggested. There is little doubt of the bitterness between strikers and management and their non-union strike breakers. Equally, there is little doubt that police involvement – be it maintaining order at the factory or colliery, evicting strikers from company property and giving evidence in intimidation trials – had the potential to generate anti-police sentiment and action. But outcomes varied from strike to strike. There was considerable violence at Thorncliffe and the police were accused of being on the side of the colliery owner (Huntsman) Most notably, in the bitter strikes at Denaby Main there was evidence of co-operation with the police, sympathy for the unpleasant tasks they had to carry out and respect for the way in which they did them. Even when there were incidents of strikers assaulting constables, this was condemned as breaching the good relations that had developed, facilitated by the decision of strikers to 'Be calm' and not impede the police. Third, these positive outcomes, particularly in the south Yorkshire coalfield, depended in no small measure on the ability of the police chiefs

to mobilise a large body of men at the likely scenes of disturbance (railway stations, colliery gates etc). Such shows of strength were undoubtedly meant to deter but also created a space for more conciliatory measures. Finally, the accident of personality was important. The decisions and actions of the various superintendents at Denaby Main were a key element in defusing potential conflict. Similarly, chief constable Russell's decision to continue as usual (including taking his annual holiday) played an important part in the tragedy that unfolded in Featherstone. Most particularly, the determination of colliery owners and managers, from Huntsman to Pope, played a key role in determining the nature of the conflict.

Conclusion

While a degree of generalisation is unavoidable in any historical discussion, to talk of 'the police' and 'the public' as if they were homogenous and unchanging entities is simplistic and misleading. As well as variation at any particular point in time, there were important generational changes. By the turn of the twentieth century the WRCC had developed into a significantly different force – more experienced, less undisciplined – than its predecessor c.1870. So too the policed community. The men and women of the West Riding c.1900 also had different outlooks and values from their forebears of c.1870. One important difference deserves emphasis. By the turn of the century the WRCC had been in existence for over forty years. There was at least one generation that had grown up knowing nothing other than the local policeman as an established element within the local community. Inherited memory was important but few people under fifty had direct experience or a contemporary memory of the introduction of the WRCC or the major disturbances of the early 1860s. In the same way as the factory had gone from a threatening novelty to a permanent and accepted (even welcomed) part of the economic landscape, so too the bobby had become a permanent fixture in society.

One of the purposes of this chapter has been to emphasise the diversity of police work and the diversity of police action. Crime fighting was a high-profile element of police work but it was an area in which they could burnish their reputation as defenders of the law-abiding public. Similarly, there were

a number of 'welfare' activities, some required by law, others informal, that could enhance the standing of the individual constable and also the force itself. Helping out at accidents (and a growing number of constables had first aid training), stopping runaway horses, ensuring that proper weights and measures were used, enforcing legislation relating to animal welfare in times of rinderpest or murrain outbreaks, even crowd control at agricultural shows and other public entertainments, not to mention during a royal visit, were all such opportunities. But, like crime fighting, this was but one aspect of police work. Other elements, especially policing leisure or industrial disputes could be more problematic,

It is not just the intrinsic nature of the various aspects of policing that needs to be considered. Equally, indeed more important was the way in which constables performed their duties. Unsurprisingly, among the hundreds of men who served in the WRCC in its first fifty or so years, there was considerable variation in terms of performance. Putting aside the large numbers who were dismissed or resigned from the force, there were a number of efficient, even zealous, men, who sought to uphold the law in its various forms and to maintain order in public places. Here there was a real risk of alienating large sections of the local population. Heavy-handed policing of public houses and beershops, intolerance of popular leisure activities and simply the over-use of 'move on' tactics, could and did provoke reactions, which in certain cases, alienated a broad spectrum of society, as in Emley and Ossett. Such men were probably a minority, albeit an important one. Others were, if not indolent, selective in their approach. Drawn from the working-classes, many policemen shared the values and practices of the communities over which they presided. Becoming a policeman did not stop a man from enjoying a beer, and not just when off duty, nor enjoying a flutter. Indeed, as evidence from elsewhere makes clear, many policemen did not view the monitoring of gambling as proper police work.⁸⁴ In addition there were more pragmatic considerations. County constables were more isolated than their urban counterparts and were expected to patrol larger areas. Tracking down and arresting gamblers, for example, was a time-consuming exercise with limited returns. More serious gambling was well-organised. The police were often playing catch-up, dependent upon information from the public, some of which was deliberately misleading. Some events were disrupted and arrests made but an unknown number of events took place beyond the ken of the

police. Similarly, keeping surveillance on drinking establishments could be difficult in some of the larger districts with difficult-to-access places. Equally pragmatic was the judicious turning of a blind eye, doing enough to keep out of trouble with the police hierarchy and enough not to provoke local opposition that could create trouble, even challenging the legitimacy of the police.

The second general aim was to stress the diversity of public responses. It is tempting to think in terms of broad conflicting groups, comprising like-minded people. The advantages of simplicity are offset by disadvantages of over-simplification. Class is an important consideration but, as the Victorians themselves took delight in observing, there were important divisions within broad social classes. Further, values, temperance for example, transcended and cut across class divisions. Likewise certain economic interests, not least in the sphere of leisure, clearly cut across conventional class lines. Finally, and at the risk of overcomplication, individuals were not necessarily 'consistent' in their attitude towards the police. The respectable artisan might welcome the police when they stopped antisocial behaviour or apprehended a petty thief but might have a different view when he saw 'boys in blue' escorting strike-breakers brought in by his employer.

In light of these complexities, it follows that police/public relations were complex and changed over time. The wider question of 'policing by consent' will be discussed more fully in the concluding chapter but some more specific observations on potential loci of conflict are in order here. Popular leisure, evolving over time, was an obvious potential source of conflict in a society where high-profile and influential groups condemned older 'barbaric' pastimes and newer ones that threatened to 'rebarbarize' society. As attitudes towards animal welfare changed and the criticism of blood sports grew, it is unlikely that police attempts to suppress cock fighting and dog fighting alienated more than a hard core of petty criminals and those in a semi-criminal and 'rough' world.⁸⁵ On the other hand, as foot racing, and even pigeon flying, became more 'respectable' and were taken off the road the potential for conflict with the police was reduced. Another area of tension was the policing of industrial disputes. Again, the evidence is mixed. There was violence and anger, some of it directed at the police – the cry of 'Huntsman's men,' being a case in point – but there were also strikes which passed with little overt hostility to the police. More surprising, were those strikes, especially in the south of the riding, in which there was a degree of

mutual understanding and co-operation between strikers, from communities not known for their sympathy towards the police on a day-to-day basis, and the men enforcing ejection orders.

In conclusion, as Victoria's reign grew to a close, the West Riding was not only a policed society (albeit with the qualifications noted in the previous chapter) but also one in which policing was by consent consent, albeit qualified as will be explored later.

Endnotes

- 1 For local examples of burning in effigy see *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 24 November 1860, 20 June 1863, 1 July 1865, 19 June 1869, 22 June 1872, 30 June 1874, 22 October 1879, & 21 August 1890. For examples of rough music see *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 20 June 1863, 2 July 1864, 1 July and 23 September 1865, 1 September 1866, 30 March 1867, 6 April 1878, 26 August 1884, 23 June 1890; *Leeds Mercury*, 16 February 1863, 12 June 1866, 22 August 1866, 21 December 1866, 30 June 1874, & 17 October 1893. The custom was undoubtedly less common by the end of the century and the *Leeds Mercury*, not entirely accurately, consigned 'stang-riding,' as it was often termed, to the category of bygone punishments in the 1880s. See for example 2 February 1884. There were also places like Skelmanthorpe where, according to Superintendent Heaton, 'the police were interfered with in the execution of their duty.' *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 12 July 1873. Heaton appears to have overstated his case. There were some disturbances involving navvies, briefly staying in the village, but local press coverage reveals far fewer anti-police incidents than in places such as Scammonden or Kirkheaton. Conflict between miners and colliers, on the one hand, and the police on the other, was reported on numerous occasions in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, See for example *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 16 May 1879, 1 & 5 June 1880, 18 October 1888, 20 January 1894.
- 2 *Leeds Times*, 15 June 1872
- 3 *Wakefield Free Press*, 14 October 1871
- 4 *Leeds Times*, 19 August 1871 and *Wakefield Free Press*, 2 September 1871
- 5 *Wakefield Free Press*, 26 August 1871
- 6 *Wakefield Free Press*, 14 October 1871 and *Leeds Times*, 11 March 1871
- 7 *Leeds Times*, 11 March 1871
- 8 It is entirely conceivable that he was moved to defuse the situation, in the same way as Antrobus had been moved on from Honley a decade earlier, but there is no evidence to substantiate this assertion.
- 9 *Leeds Mercury*, 2 October 1872.
- 10 *Leeds Mercury*, 2 October 1872.
- 11 *Wakefield Express*, 15 March 1872
- 12 *Leeds Mercury*, 1 January 1874
- 13 *Dewsbury Reporter*, 3 January 1874
- 14 *Wakefield Herald*, 3 January 1874
- 15 *Leeds Mercury*, 31 December 1873
- 16 *Dewsbury Chronicle*, 25 April 1874
- 17 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 23 January 1869

- 18 *Barnsley Independent*, 20 March 1869
- 19 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 17 February and 1 May 1875
- 20 See for example, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 23 February 1876 and 30 May 1877 and *Huddersfield Examiner*, 17 May 1876
- 21 A cock-fight near Stocks Moor railway station was attended by fifty to sixty (*Halifax Guardian* 24 April 1869), about 150 gathered for another fight in a quarry at Woolley (*Wakefield Express*, 3 May 1862) while a later fight at Woolley Moor was attended by some 500 people. (*Wakefield Free Press*, 8 April 1865).
- 22 *York Herald*, 18 June 1875
- 23 *Batley Reporter*, 12 May 187
- 24 For example, *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 29 May 1875 and *Wakefield Herald*, 13 May 1876 for Barnsley; *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 26 June 1874 for Dewsbury and *Leeds Mercury*, 23 June 1875 for Holmfirth
- 25 *Todmorden and District News*, 18 & 25 June 1886
- 26 M Hohnes, 'Pigeon Racing and Working-Class Culture, c.1870 – 1950,' *Cultural and Social History*. 4(3), 2007, pp.361-83
- 27 Condemnation came from the obvious sources – temperance societies and mechanics' institutes most obviously – but at the Miners' National Conference, 1863, held at Leeds, concerns were raised to the prevalence of 'drunken Monday, pigeon-flying, dog fights. Knur and spell matches, and racing.' *Leeds Mercury*, 10 November 1863
- 28 *Leeds Times*, 23 April 1859. See also *Barnsley Chronicle*, 5 February 1859 and *Sheffield Independent*, 12 March 1859.
- 29 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 3 December 1859
- 30 *Sheffield Telegraph*, 12 April 1866, *Barnsley Chronicle*, 20 April 1867, 22 January 1876 and 11 December 1880
- 31 For example, *Halifax Courier*, 28 March 1868 (Sodhouse Green), *Brighouse Times*, 14 April 1877 (Hipperholme), *Huddersfield Examiner*, 27 June 1872 and *Leeds Times*, 15 February 1873 (Castle Hill),
- 32 *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 19 January 1898. This was not the first time that the club's supporters had attacked an opposition player. See *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 27 February 1894 for an incident involving a visiting Keighley player.
- 33 R Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century*, London, Penguin, 1971, pp. 93-4
- 34 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 8 June 1865
- 35 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 11 February 1874.
- 36 *Bradford Observer*, 26 November 1868 and *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 28 November 1868

- 37 *Barnsley Independent*, 5 December 1868. It was also noted that one civilian had been killed and a police officer died soon after. PC George Taylor had not fully recovered from a prior illness when he was sent to Barnsley, His WRCC record recorded the cause of his death as diabetes.
- 38 *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 7 December 1875
- 39 *Yorkshire Post*, 24 December 1885. The claim was made in respect of Joseph Turner, one of five men sent for trial at quarter sessions, where all were acquitted.
- 40 C Emsley, *The Great British Bobby*, London, Quercus, 2009, p.151 and D Taylor, *The new police in nineteenth-century England*, Manchester University Press, 1997, pp.118-21. The latter refers to a number of conflicts with no counter examples. See also R Geary, *Policing Industrial Disputes, 1893 to 1985*, London, Methuen, 1986, who characterises industrial relations in the late-nineteenth century in terms of 'stoning and shooting.'
- 41 For a detailed examination of anti-police sentiment in North Lancashire, see J E King, "We could eat the police!": Popular Violence in the North Lancashire Cotton Strike of 1878,' *Victorian Studies*, 28, 1985, pp.439-71.
- 42 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 15 & 22 June 1861
- 43 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 13 & 20 May 1865.
- 44 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 21 July 1896, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 22 July & 18 November 1896 and *Colne Valley Guardian*, 13 & 20 November 1896
- 45 These include the enforced introduction of 'minute contracts, which made easier the process of dismissal, as well as detailed concerns with pay and conditions. See *Sheffield Independent*, 28 January 1869 for details.
- 46 *Leeds Times*, 8 May 1869
- 47 *Sheffield Telegraph*, 19 June 1869
- 48 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 29 January 1870
- 49 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 29 January 1870. See also *Wakefield Express*, 12 February 1870 for further details.
- 50 *Doncaster Gazette*, 28 January and 4 February 1870
- 51 *Sheffield Independent*, 26 February 1870. The cry was heard again at a later trial. *Leeds Times*, 9 April 1870
- 52 Of twenty-three Thornccliffe men tried at the York Assize in March 1870, the three ring leaders were sentenced to five years' penal servitude.
- 53 *Leeds Times*, 3 April 1869 and *Sheffield Independent*, 3 July 1869
- 54 The miners were asked to give up "packing" which would be given to "bye workers." For details see *Sheffield Independent*, 17 January 1881. It was 'generally believed' that the company wished 'to effect a reduction in the Men's wages.' *Sheffield Independent*, 6 December 1880.

- 55 *Sheffield Independent*, 6 December 1880 and 25 January 1881
- 56 J Morgan, *Conflict and Order: The Police and Labour Disputes in England and Wales, 1900 – 1939*, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1987, chap. 2 and B Weinberger, *Keeping the Peace? Policing Strikes in Britain, 1906 – 1926*, Oxford, Berg, 1991, especially chap. 3.
- 57 *Yorkshire Post*, 9 April 1885, and similar sentiments in *Sheffield Telegraph*, 9 April 1885 and *Barnsley Chronicle*, 11 March 1885.
- 58 *Yorkshire Post*, 9 April 1885 and *Barnsley Chronicle*, 18 April 1885
- 59 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 18 April 1885 and *Leeds Times*, 18 April 1885
- 60 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 18 April 1885
- 61 *Leeds Times*, 11 April 1885
- 62 *Sheffield Evening Star* reprinted in *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 15 April 1885
- 63 *Sheffield Telegraph*, 9 May 1885, *Yorkshire Post*, 9 April 1885 and *Sheffield Evening Star* in *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 15 April 1885
- 64 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 11 April 1885
- 65 There were several instances of strikers conversing with the new men and persuading them to return. The local brass band also played ‘Men of Harlech’ and other patriotic tunes to persuade men from Wales not to work.
- 66 *Leeds Mercury* 29 April 1885 and *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 29 April 1885
- 67 Some indication of the scale of the legal assault can be gained from the fact that a special court had to be held at Rotherham to consider the 122 summonses for intimidation preferred in the name of Henry Walters, an underground manager at Denaby Main.
- 68 *South Yorkshire Times*, 22 May 1885 and *Yorkshire Gazette*, 13 June 1885
- 69 This referred to payment for the removal of the layer of dirt before coal could be mined. In many South Yorkshire collieries, the men were paid a separate rate for the removal of ‘bag muck’ – not at Denaby!
- 70 *South Yorkshire Times*, 6 February 1903. See also *Eckington, Woodhouse and Staveley Express*, 23 January and especially 6 February 1903 for more photographs. Copies could also be purchased from the paper’s office.
- 71 *South Yorkshire Times*, advertisement, 9 January 1903
- 72 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 January 1903
- 73 *Sheffield Independent*, 6 January 1903
- 74 *South Yorkshire Times*, 9 January 1903
- 75 *South Yorkshire Times*, 9 January 1903
- 76 The judgment went in favour of the company, which was awarded damages and costs. At the time, the decision was bracketed with Taff Vale in terms of its significance for trade unions.

- 77 *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 4 March 1903
- 78 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 2 Aug. 1893
- 79 *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 8 September 1893
- 80 *South Yorkshire Times*, 8 September 1893 and *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 September 1893 for the initial police success.
- 81 *Sheffield Independent*, 12 September 1893
- 82 *Sheffield Independent*, 12 September 1893
- 83 *Leeds Times*, 16 September 1893, telling its readers that Russell's words had been reported in an (unnamed) 'London paper.'
- 84 Lady Bell was told by one Middlesbrough policeman of his 'shame' at neglecting his 'proper duties' by spending time pursuing street gamblers and the like. Lady Bell, *At the Works: A study of a manufacturing town*, London 1907 reprinted Newton Abbott, David & Charles, 1967, p.225
- 85 'Slasher' Wilson was a well-known petty criminal from Huddersfield for patronised numerous cockfights and dogfights and spent much of his time taunting 'Tommy Yatton,' as Thomas Heaton was known. Wilson will reappear in a later chapter.