

9 Policing the community in the "great towns" after 1856

BY THE LATE-NINETEENTH century the novelty of seeing uniformed policemen patrolling the streets, lanes and alleys had worn off as they became a familiar, though not necessarily loved, part of the street scene. At the same time, there emerged an orthodoxy that eulogised the distinctive role of the 'English police ... [as] servants of the whole community – excepting only that part of it which in setting the law at defiance, has thereby become a public enemy ... [and who] year by year have risen in the estimation of their fellow-countrymen.'¹ Within the West Riding, the success of John Jackson, allegedly the 'People's Chief Constable of Sheffield,' gave rise to similarly positive comments in the local and regional press. Later historians, though critical of the simplistic law-abiding/law-breaking dichotomy and more sensitive to the class biases in the law and its enforcement, have tended towards a more optimistic interpretation, of late-Victorian developments.² Recently, Churchill has argued strongly for a more 'pessimistic' interpretation, though this has been challenged by the present author.³

Furious drivers, troublesome pedestrians and vagrants

The police authorities in all three towns took seriously the threats to property and person but the bulk of police work revolved around more mundane offences dealt with summarily by local magistrates. The scope of summary justice was extended significantly through the 1847 and 1850 Juvenile Offenders Acts, the 1855 Criminal Justice Act and the 1871 Prevention of Crime Act. The increasing volume of summary offences over time stands in

contrast to the long-term fall in indictable offences. The ratios of indictable arrest to summary offenders proceeded against (albeit a crude measure) shows the growing relative importance of summary offences, particularly after the 1879 act. The figures also suggest that the contrast was significantly greater in Bradford compared with Leeds and Sheffield.

Police work was dominated by attempts to enforce codes of conduct in public space throughout the day and night. A brief perusal of local by-laws makes clear this intent. For example, the Sheffield Improvement Act, 1871 laid out the penalties for a variety of anti-social offences, including negligent and furious driving of carts and cabs, and acting in a disorderly or indecent manner. There was provision to deal with the problem of street musicians as well as stray dogs, rabid or otherwise. Shop-keepers, displaying goods on the pavement, or negligent proprietors of omnibuses and tram companies could also find themselves on the wrong end of the law.

Table 9.1 Indictable offences (arrest) and summary offences (total proceeded against) in Bradford, Leeds & Sheffield, 1861 -1891 (five-year averages)

	Police strength	Summary offences proceeded against	Summary offenders per officer	Indictable arrests	Indictable arrests per officer	Ratio indictable arrests to summary offences per officer
Bradford						
1861	119	1502	13	173	1.5	1:9
1871	165	3495	22	143	0.9	1:24
1881	233	4566	21	95	0.4	1:53
1891	253	4663	18	95	0.4	1:45
Leeds						
1861	225	4925	22	481	2.1	1:10
1871	301	6313	21	457	1.5	1:14
1881	400	7733	19	345	0.9	1:21
1891	423	9181	22	267	0.6	1:37
Sheffield						
1861	196	4689	24	388	2.0	1:12
1871	280	5117	18	367	1.3	1:14
1881	330	5440	16	269	0.8	1:20
1891	385	8317	22	255	0.7	1:31

Source: Judicial Statistics

In other words, those who used the streets for earning a living or for leisure activities were most likely to come into contact with the police. Younger working-class men particularly most at risk of direct contact with the police and, as a consequence most likely to have a criminal record. In Sheffield in the early to mid-1870s roughly 900 people per annum were summonsed for breaches of the town's bye-laws (the overwhelming majority being convicted), which exceeded the number of assault cases (c.780 per annum) and was eclipsed only by the number of drunk and disorderly cases (c.1200 per annum). A decade later the pattern was essentially the same, though the absolute numbers had fallen by some 25 percent.⁴

Well before the advent of motor vehicles, the police had a responsibility for facilitating the free flow of traffic for commercial and personal use and for ensuring the safety of the public. In his 1860 annual report, chief constable Jackson drew attention to many 'summonses taken out by the [Sheffield] police ... for offences committed by carters and drivers' and promised firm action would be taken by his men.⁵ In increasing numbers, the police prosecuted carters for blocking streets and leaving their horses and carts unattended. Butchers, 'a class addicted to furious driving' in Bradford, milk-dealers, even drivers of heavy waggons were brought by the police before the local magistrates on various dangerous driving charges, some for endangering life, a few for injuring or even killing a member of the public.⁶ In 1870s complaints that 'the streets of Bradford are becoming more and more dangerous' were accompanied by demands from the public for greater police action.⁷ But worse was to come and not just in Bradford. A growing number of cab-drivers, jostling for custom, were joined by privately-run omnibuses, racing for custom. Attempts to regulate the latter were thwarted by blatant refusals to adhere to agreed timetables, over-crowding and the ill-treatment of horses, which brought another actor, the RSPCA, on stage. In the last decade of the century the traffic problem was further complicated by the appearance of the bicycle – and the tricycle and the velocipede. Yet again there were demands for greater police action and, after several years consideration, Sheffield introduced regulations for cyclists in 1885 while Bradford adopted a set of street traffic regulations in 1896.⁸

Problems for the police were not confined to reckless road users – pedestrians could be a problem. Jackson (again) complained that 'much inconvenience is caused by persons standing in the principle and most

crowded thoroughfares of the borough.⁹ A month later police notices appeared exhorting 'foot passengers to keep to the right and drivers of carts, carriages etc the left hand side of the road.'¹⁰ As reports of subsequent debates in the town council and the annual crime statistics both show, this was an ongoing and unresolved problems. Similarly, attempts to curb the use of obscene language in public were unsuccessful but continuing action brought the police into contact with members of the public otherwise law-abidingly going about their lives. Such 'micro-frictions' were a recurring feature of everyday life in which the values and codes of behaviour of one class (or more accurately one part of a class) was imposed on another. Even seemingly well-intentioned reforms – the campaign to stop street trading by children, for example – involved the police in action that impinged on the economic wellbeing of low-income families reliant upon multiple sources of income. The negative economic impact of certain watch committee orders also brought the police into conflict with shopkeepers and licensees who felt penalised by police action against tradesmen exhibiting their goods on the pavement outside their shops or trading on a Sunday. The parents of young newspaper vendors never protested in public, any more did aggrieved carters, but these mundane, almost daily interactions coloured perceptions of the police as much as any high-profile conflict.

The police were also involved, with varying degrees of willingness, in preserving decorum or moral order, which involved the removal of undesirable elements of society and the suppression of undesirable activities. The former brought them into contact with some of the most marginalised members of society; the latter, involving the policing of two of the most popular working-class leisure activities – gambling and drinking – brought them into conflict with a wide swathe of working-class society and beyond.

Table 9.2: Prosecutions under the Vagrancy Act (as %) in Bradford, Leeds & Sheffield, 861 - 1891 (3-year averages)

	Total number of prosecutions under Vagrancy Act	Prosecutions per 00,000 population	Prostitute %	Begging + no visible means of subsistence %	Found in enclosed premises + frequenting place of public resort to commit felony %	Other %
1861						
Bradford	109	103	17	62	8	7
Leeds	450	268	17	62	17	3
Sheffield	555	300	27	33	30	8
1871						
Bradford	289	147	16	26	33	17
Leeds	393	259	7	18	19	56
Sheffield	367	240	13	48	33	6
1881						
Bradford	417	194	25	44	25	7
Leeds	957	309	1	31	14	54
Sheffield	332	285	3	75	14	8
1891						
Bradford	185	266	18	46	17	19
Leeds	910	368	1	22	9	68
Sheffield	380	324	7	74	7	12

Source: Judicial Statistics

Concerns with vagrancy were nothing new but the presence of beggars, prostitutes and incorrigible rogues (allegedly) bent on criminality were an affront to the social and political elites of any town aspiring to respectability. The 1824 Vagrant Act, and its subsequent amendments, notably in 1838, was a wide-ranging piece of legislation that gave considerable power to local magistrates and police against those deemed to be immoral or idle (prostitutes and beggars), or indigent (no visible means of subsistence), or those likely to commit a crime (frequenting places of public resort etc to commit a felony) or simply the incorrigible. In all three towns, hundreds of men and women were prosecuted, though not uniformly. Compared with the other two towns, overall prosecution rates were particularly low in Bradford in the years around

1861 and again around 1891 and were lower in Sheffield compared with Leeds in later years. Nor are there any clear-cut patterns when the overall figures are broken down. Prosecutions for those found begging or having no visible means of subsistence varied from a peak of 75 per cent in Sheffield around 1891 to a low of 18 and 22 per cent in Leeds in 1871 and 1891. Alleged prostitutes were a significant minority in Sheffield around 1861 and Bradford around 1881; in contrast, Leeds prosecuted very few.

The prosecution figures give only a partial view of the impact of the legislation. The numbers stopped and questioned simply for being out at night are not captured in the annual returns of *Judicial Statistics*. How many innocent working-class men were stopped on suspicion of having ‘implements for housebreaking?’ And how many innocent working-class women were suspected of being prostitutes? The questions are unanswerable but there was a real likelihood of antagonistic interactions with the police, as evidence elsewhere occasionally reveals.¹¹

‘The devil makes work ...’ – the problem of working-class leisure

Working-class leisure activities, as noted in earlier chapters, changed over time – pigeon-racing supplanted cock-fighting, commercialised music and sport eclipsed local feasts – but the fears remained for many members of ‘respectable’ society and the police remained charged with disciplining people at play.

Of all the forms of gambling – and there were many – pitch-and-toss was probably the most popular and most ubiquitous. Its precise extent is impossible to establish as many instances simply went unreported or unrecorded. Court reports in the local press reveal a variety of venues from semi-public back alleys and yards to public streets, often on the edge of town (in the sight of but beyond the jurisdiction of town police) but also in more central locations. Blatant lawbreaking, especially when it took place on Sundays, attracted considerable criticism, which in turn led to pressure on watch committee members, chief constables and their men to act. Juvenile gamblers, from the suburbs as well as the town centre, were regularly brought before the Leeds magistrates, but indignant letter-writers regularly

bemoaned the levels of police inaction which resulted in pitch-and-toss being 'so glaringly carried on' and 'played with impunity'.¹² In the early 1870s, crowds of 150 to 200 men and boys were reported congregating on 'the roads that lead out of Leeds,' playing pitch and toss but also assaulting the police.¹³ A flurry of prosecutions and harsher sentences seemed to have had a short-term deterrent effect – or more likely a relocation of gambling activities – but did little to check the problem.¹⁴ Gambling gangs employed scouts to escape arrest, the police used men in plain clothes to infiltrate them and periodically constables were stoned and beaten.¹⁵ Despite a fall in the overall number of prosecutions, juvenile gamblers, charged with playing pitch-and-toss, tip cat and dice, on one occasion outside Armley gaol, were still appearing before the town magistrates in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Some were fined but others imprisoned, in response to a demand for strong action in the face of a perceived increase in gaming on the streets of Leeds.¹⁶ The police had limited power. As chief constable A B Nott Bower noted in 1883, in the absence of a byelaw making street betting a punishable offence, 'it is extremely difficult with the limited power now possessed by the Police (viz., being only able to proceed against them for obstruction) to deal with these persons.'¹⁷ Much of the evidence points to less-than-determined attempts by the police to clear the streets of gamblers, born out of a recognition of the enduring popularity of gambling and the determination of its patrons. Yet, perversely, occasional over-zealous policing could be a problem. 'The Midden,' a piece of wasteland in the Shambles, off Briggate, was a popular gambling venue but such was the enthusiasm with which it was tackled in 1890 that chief constable Webb called upon his men to be 'very discreet in dealing with people in the neighbourhood ... [as] a great many people ... are not there for the purpose of betting,' even though they were obstructing the footpath.¹⁸ Yet again, there was a risk of scooping up , and alienating, innocent individuals.

Similar concerns were aired in Bradford and Sheffield in the 1860s.¹⁹ The *Sheffield Evening Telegraph* pointed at the local magistrates, demanding them to take firm action against Sunday gamblers in particular, while the *Bradford Observer* asked more generally, 'What Are the Police Doing?'²⁰ Indignant letter-writers to the local press periodically complained of the absence or indifference of the police.²¹ Anxious to allay criticism, the chief constable of Bradford assured the public that 'the police have received strict instructions to be on the look out and summon all offenders.'²² Similarly, the Sheffield

watch committee made clear it was taking firm action against 'the nuisance of gaming in the public streets' and that the chief constable had put out a notice prohibiting pitch-and-toss and other forms of gambling in the streets.²³ By the 1880s there were signs that the authorities were less concerned with pitch-and-toss, dismissing it as an 'unsophisticated juvenile amusement,' while focussing on the more serious threat of billiard schools and the like.²⁴ Indeed, there was a growing feeling that young boys, literally gambling for coppers, felt the full force of the law, whereas bookmakers, operating 'in the unnumerable passages and courts off Briggate,' and elsewhere, 'managed to go scot free.'²⁵ Nonetheless, late into the nineteenth century, as chief constable Withers of Bradford lamented, 'gambling in the streets and public places was very much on the increase.'²⁶ There was concern that 'the mania for betting in Sheffield is spreading to a large extent.'²⁷ The 'passion for gambling' in Bradford was particularly worrying as it involved women and children.²⁸ Nonetheless, it was men who were the most prolific gamblers and gambling itself was becoming more organised. In September 1891 thirty men were arrested following a police raid on a Bradford betting club. Great play was made of the scale of losses incurred by punters.²⁹ In Leeds 'the worst feature' revealed by another betting raid was that 'a good part of the [arrested] man's transactions were with very young persons, who made bets for small sums.'³⁰ The problem for the authorities was the sheer scale of the problem. Beerhouse betting was commonplace and not just on big race days. Betting clubs, found in a variety of locations, were well patronised. In a police raid in Sheffield in 1894, twenty-five men were arrested while many more escaped by jumping from upstairs windows.³¹ In addition, the running grounds, such as Hyde Park, Sheffield, or the Victoria race ground, Leeds, or those attached to well-known venues such as the Queen's Hotel, Sheffield, offered the opportunity to bet on handicap races, dog races and rabbit courses. The bigger meetings attracted big names – not least the native American Deerfoot – and punters from outside the county. But smaller running grounds, attached to public houses, such as the Sheaf House or the Falcon Inn (both in Sheffield) were not uncommon. And then there was problem of betting on pigeon races, and so on. Quite simply, the police lacked the manpower to curb gambling – even if they genuinely wanted to do so.

For the ordinary constable, the situation was more problematic and also more ambiguous. The law surrounding gambling was flawed, effectively

privileging aristocratic gamblers and discriminating against their working-class counterparts. Many constables came from a cultural background in which gambling was the norm, and with which they sympathised. Attempting to arrest street gamblers was time-consuming, often fruitless and occasionally dangerous. The approach of a constable was enough to scatter a crowd of impromptu gamblers into the back streets or back lanes before an arrest could be made. More organised gamblers employed scouts to warn them of approaching trouble, prompting games of hide-and-seek as officers chased gamblers from one street to another with little success.³² There was also the potential danger facing the constable on the beat attempting to arrest a gang of street gamblers. PC Robert Hall attempted to arrest three young lads in Jericho-street, Sheffield in December 1869. Within minutes, 'a motley crowd, numbering 150 lads and young men' started to throw stones at him. A heavy blow to the head from a half brick forced him 'to beat a hasty retreat,' but as he fled along the street another group of about fifty youths mobbed him. To escape 'being roughly handled,' he ran into a house, seeking shelter and abandoning the arrests.³³ This was an unusual example of popular hostility but other incidents involved more mundane assaults on the arresting officer.³⁴ Nor was a successful prosecution guaranteed. Sympathetic magistrates determined that money was being collected to buy beer, not to gamble, or dismissed prosecutions on the grounds that certain games, such as 'All in the Well,' involved skill rather than simple chance.³⁵ The longer-term impact of police actions on the incidence of gambling was limited. Gambling schools were still to be found in all three towns and it took considerable police resources to arrest participants. In one large-scale action in Leeds, involving two detectives, one sergeant and six constables, a grand total of twelve men, out of a crowd of around a hundred, were arrested. Almost despairingly, the *Yorkshire Evening Post* noted that 'the place [a footpath off Dewsbury-road] has been used for gambling purposes for 20 years,' and attracted 'men in all grades of society.'³⁶

The wider 'passion for gambling' attracted particular attention in Bradford but for another reason. Concerns with police passivity were replaced by allegations of police collusion with illegal gamblers, which came to a head in the mid-1890s.³⁷ The practical problems facing the police were considerable. It was alleged that nine out of every ten public houses or beerhouse proprietors were either a bookmaker or countenancing betting but, under

the law, the police had to prove that a landlord 'knowingly tolerated' betting. Signs proclaiming "No betting or gambling on these premises" provided an easy defence. But there were doubts about the determination of the police. Sporadic raids took place. The presence of the chief constable on one occasion was meant to indicate the seriousness with which the problem was being tackled but was seen as little more than a token gesture.³⁸

More serious, particularly in the eyes of anti-gambling groups, was the charge that members of the watch committee favoured the drink interest. The *Bradford Observer* pointed out that 'the Watch Committee was constituted very largely of men who were directly or indirectly represented in the maintenance of the public houses,' which made it difficult for ordinary constables.³⁹ In November 1897, 'very serious charges against [the] police' were made.⁴⁰ The Home Secretary intervened, writing to the mayor of Bradford of claims of 'systematic betting [taking] place openly in licensed public-houses ... [and] collusion on the part of the police.'⁴¹ Tensions were heightened by claims that the watch committee had ordered the chief constable not to prosecute a landlord even though he had illegally given a drink to a member of the force, for which the officer had been disciplined.⁴² Debates in the council chambers and the local press were bitter and chief constable Paul strongly defended the police and was supported by 'the majority [of watch committee members who] felt that there was not the slightest foundation for the grave charges made against the police.'⁴³ There was much speculation regarding the complainant – a member of the Anti-gambling League it was rumoured – but the enquiry ended abruptly when the original complainant failed to provide additional evidence requested by the Home Secretary. Suspicions remained as did criticisms of police inaction over illegal, off-course betting but in the absence of hard evidence the police weathered the storm.

Despite the continuing concern with gambling and the role of the police, the voices of those most directly involved are all but unheard. There are few direct insights into the thinking of the ordinary policeman in the three towns. What motivated the zealous policing of gamblers in 'the Midden'? Was it a belief in the threat posed by gambling? Or an animosity to the people found there? How many shared the sense of shame felt by the Middlesbrough officer speaking to Lady Bell.⁴⁴ Similarly, how many young gamblers in Bradford or Sheffield, experienced the police as persecutors, chasing 'poor lads playing

innocent games,' as Joseph Toole did in Salford? And how many, like Robert Roberts, also in Salford, felt 'fear and hatred' as the 'rozzers' heavy-handedly broke up a card school?⁴⁵ Those who attacked the police may well have felt hatred, if not fear, but many appear to have shown an indifference to, bordering on a contempt for, the police. In Cross Sun Street, Bradford, the gang of some thirty ruffians who met there regularly, showed little regard for the police as they indulged in 'gambling, pitch and toss, dancing in front of people's doors, kicking stray cats ... and using the most disgusting and filthy language.'⁴⁶ They were not alone. Gambling remained ubiquitous, and gamblers remained undeterred by the actions of the police.

Despite concern with 'mania for gambling,' for working-class men the most common leisure activity remained drinking. Public houses and beerhouses were attractive in a variety of ways from companionship and sociability, through shared sporting interests, to escape from the pressures of a humdrum life. Their association with petty crime (including gambling) brought a high likelihood of contact and conflict with the police. The number of public houses and beerhouses dropped, particularly in the 1870s, while population continued to grow. While the falling ratio of licensed premises to population was welcomed by many reformers, particularly in Bradford and Sheffield, there were still large numbers of pubs and beerhouses for the police to watch, particularly in Sheffield.

The legislative framework changed significantly with the passing of the Wine and Beerhouse Act (1869) and the Licensing Act (1872).⁴⁷ Magistrates now had the power to refuse licences to badly run beerhouses with links to disorderliness, theft or prostitution. The problem of beerhouse brothels, which had been such an issue in the late-1850s and 1860s, particularly in Bradford, could now be tackled by closing the most extreme cases. In the first year in Bradford of some 450 beerhouses, sixty were refused a licence. Unsurprisingly, these had been located in the poorer districts of the town, particularly the notorious Southgate 'the nucleus of crime in this borough.'⁴⁸

Table 9.3: Public houses and beerhouses in Bradford, Leeds & Sheffield, 1876/80 – 1891/5

	Bradford		Leeds		Sheffield	
	Public houses	Beerhouses	Public houses	Beerhouses	Public houses	Beerhouses
1876/80	180	346	356	444	567	700
1881/5	192	323	354	428	558	689
1886/90	194	309	356	424	542	666
1891/5	193	302	356	420	529	649
	Public houses per 00,000 population	Beerhouses per 00,000 population	Public houses per 00,000 population	Beerhouses per 00,000 population	Public houses per 00,000 population	Beerhouses per 00,000 population
1881	99	184	114	138	198	244
1891	90	142	97	115	164	203
1901	97	119	79	94	125	154

Source: HMIC annual reports

In other respects, the new legislation had limited impact. Prosecutions for selling drink to a drunken person or simply permitting drunkenness were few, not least because of the absence of a legal definition of drunkenness. From a police perspective, the greater problem was the number of drunken people, not exclusively men, liable to cause a breach of the peace. The number of cases of drunkenness and drunk and disorderly behaviour brought to court do not provide an accurate measure but rather reflect the extent to which police authorities decided to prosecute such behaviour and the extent to which their forces did so. Enforcement varied considerably from force to force. Prosecution rates adjusted for population were consistently higher in Leeds than in Bradford but, in the short run – and that was the lived reality – much depended on the (changing) attitudes of the watch committee, the stance of the chief constable. In Bradford there was a relatively low-key approach response by chief constable Withers, whereby only the more serious incidents came under official purview. Only after a number of criticisms by HMIC and the appointment of a new chief constable determined to follow a firmer line was there an upturn in the number of prosecutions in the town, around the turn of the century. In Leeds, despite higher prosecution levels, discretion was also the order of the day. Chief constable Wetherill made clear that drunks should be asked to ‘move on’ in the first instance – only

the incapable or disorderly were to be arrested. As with the policing of gambling, the pragmatism of senior officers could be thwarted by the zeal of the ordinary constable, as chief constables J W Nott Bower and F T Webb both found. Nonetheless, concern with the problem of drinking (and the level of prosecutions) had diminished in Leeds in the 1880s and 1890s. In contrast, in Sheffield, where chief constable Jackson was in post from 1859 to 1898, the increase in concern with drunkenness and drunken and disorderly behaviour, and prosecutions, came in the 1890s. There were also significant year-on-year variations. In Bradford in 1889 prosecutions jumped to 451 from 351 (+c.30%) in the previous year; in Leeds in 1880 there were 1422 prosecutions compared with 1954 in the year before (-c.25%); and in Sheffield in 1890 there were 1628 cases compared with 1212 the year before (+c.35%). These figures highlight the importance of chance and the associated sense of arbitrariness about police action and the enforcement of the law. But if the chances of being arrested could vary, the likelihood of being convicted (with the exception of late-1890s Bradford) were very high.

Much also depended on the largely unrecorded actions of the constable on the beat. Here other considerations played a part. Interactions with drunks could easily become volatile, especially when over-policed communities or occupations were concerned. Policing reflected contemporary concerns (and stereotypes) thereby creating self-fulfilling prophecies about, among others, navvies, miners, itinerant hawkers and, perhaps most obviously, the working-class Irish. All three West Riding 'great towns' had substantial Irish populations and almost without exception found in the more squalid parts of town. Particularly in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, there several bitter clashes with the police as they patrolled these areas, though the realities could be more nuanced.

Table 9.4: Drunk and disorderly cases and convictions in Bradford, Leeds & Sheffield, annual averages, 1875/9 – 1895/9

	1875-9	1880-4	1885-9	1890-4	1895-9
Bradford					
Cases	776	415	365	398	428
Convictions	650	323	313	362	173
% convictions	84	78	86	91	40
Leeds					
Cases	1826	1718	1330	1668	1660
Convictions	1733	1640	1275	1598	1549
% convictions	95	95	96	96	93
Sheffield					
Cases	1184	893	957	1446	1411
Convictions	1092	836	889	1377	1337
% convictions	92	94	93	95	95

Source: HMIC annual reports

One such ‘problem area’ was that around Silsbridge lane, Bradford. James Burnley, better known to readers of the *Bradford Observer* as SAUNTERER, penned in 1870, a gloomy picture of the area in graphic, sometimes sympathetic but racialised, language.⁴⁹ Squalor, filth, degradation and darkness were to be found throughout the ‘Irish colony,’ as he termed it. There were beerhouses, public houses with a singing saloon attached and ‘low’ music halls where drunkenness and debauchery abounded. However, and the point is worth stressing, this was not a ‘no go’ area. ‘Two policemen are standing sentinel, at the entrance to the Lane [while] two more are walking together further down.’ The police, with some trepidation, visit the various beerhouses and outside, to the undisguised relief of SAUNTERER, successfully persuade a group of young men, ‘looking vicious and ruffianly,’ to ‘move on.’ Not every night had been or was to be so uneventful. In a disturbance the previous year that lasted two hours from 11.30 to 1.30 a.m., denizens of Silsbridge-lane ‘mustered in great force [and] ... sticks and stones, boots and everything in the world that could be used were used in the attack on PC Light and his comrades.’⁵⁰ On several occasions, the Lane saw less dramatic incidents in which constables were assaulted.⁵¹ July 1885 witnessed another crowd -- estimated at between 200 and 300 -- assembling in the Lane and assaulting two policemen as they tried to make an arrest. With assistance from four other officers, they brought four men to custody and thence to court. Chief

constable Withers gave evidence that George Tindall, at 24 the oldest of the accused, had seventeen convictions, including five for assault on the police. Michael McDermott, at 18 the youngest, already had four convictions for assaulting the police. Both men were repeated offenders in their teens and twenty – both were in Armley prison in 1891 – and they were not alone in this respect. Andrew Vicars, aged 25, was charged with assaulting a policeman following a brawl at the Roebuck Inn, Duncan-street in 1899. He had twenty-four convictions, including six for assaulting a police officer, the most recent being the year before.⁵² However, as the other two defendants in 1885 demonstrate, police assailants were not necessarily repeat offenders.

The Lane was not the only problem area for the Bradford police – Bolton road and Sunbridge road were regular trouble spots – nor was it only the Irish who attacked the Bradford police. Withers, in his annual report for 1883/4, reported 154 recorded assaults on the police, the highest figure to date, and bemoaned the fact that the police receive ‘constant abuse ... in some localities.’⁵³ Things had improved somewhat a decade later when the number of assaults on the police had fallen to 136 in 1898/9. Statistics relating to assaults on the police are, at best, a rough measure of the problems that arose from the inter-actions between the police and particularly working-class young men. The long-term decline in assaults probably reflects a real decrease in interpersonal violence and, to that extent, the police were beneficiaries of wider societal changes but the decline in the number of assaults on the police may well also reflect a diminution in overt, physical anti-police hostility, itself, in part, growing out of a recognition of the permanence of the police rather than any great increase in positive support for them.

Similar trouble spots can be identified in Leeds, such as York-street, Shannon-street and Marsh-lane, for example, and in Sheffield, notably Scotland-street. Sheffield had no equivalent of SAUNTERER but there are occasional insights. In 1868 an intrepid reporter on the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, accompanied by an experienced detective, ventured into the town’s back streets where he visited ‘low beerhouses’ and witnessed men and women of ‘the lowest type.’⁵⁴ The account detailed the vulgarity of men and women, the crudities of the songs and dancing, in all ‘a picture at once revolting and disgusting.’ But, not unlike Silsbridge-lane, these streets were policed and, though the writer never acknowledged it, there was a degree of order in the gathering of working-class men and women at leisure. Local newspapers were

happy to provide ‘shock, horror’ stories of life in the *terra incognita* of the urban backstreets, alleys and courts but many aspects of working-class life went unreported as being unnewsworthy. Policing, in practical terms, was a series of compromises between the police – or more accurately individual constables – and the policed. Overzealous action could be counterproductive either by alienating individual members of the public or by provoking hostile collective responses, though there was also evidence that pointed to a culture of arrest among some constables. Chief constable Webb of Leeds was scathing about the practice of ‘locking people up for “drunkenness” from off their own door-steps,’ but the scale of the problem is unclear.⁵⁵

Nonetheless, there were conflicts in which the police had to intervene. Some were rowdyism or small-scale drunken arguments that got out of hand, often leading to complaints from ‘respectable residents’ about the ‘disorderly and riotous conduct’ and demands for an increased police presence.⁵⁶ Some were characterised by clear anti-police sentiment, such as siege of the Boot & Shoe beerhouse, at which two Leeds policemen had to be rescued by their colleagues who eventually dispersed the crowd, charging with staves drawn.⁵⁷ But others were more serious – ethnic clashes between English and Irish and internal Irish disputes that threatened the peace at large. Tensions were heightened by fears of Fenianism and Irish revolt particularly in the 1860s and 1880s. In 1862 trouble broke out near the New Inn beerhouse in Kirkstall-road, Leeds. Not only did a large group of Irishmen ‘indulge in their old Donnybrook Fair propensities,’ as the *Leeds Intelligencer* chose to report it, but also ‘raised a “philoloo” and began throwing stones in all directions,’ thereby precipitating a large-scale clash with local Englishmen, which only ended when a ‘small but determined body of police’ arrested twelve men.⁵⁸ But the Irish were not an undifferentiated group. There were hostilities between men and women from different parts of Ireland that were little more than parochial rivalries transported into mainland Britain. Others reflected a more fundamental difference between Orange and Green.⁵⁹ Such tensions were exacerbated by a number of militant Protestant preachers, of whom William Murphy is the best known, whose violent and abusive rhetoric led to riotous behaviour across Britain. In similar vein, in September 1862, the preposterously-titled Baron de Camin spoke to a crowd of 6000 or more at Peck-over-Wall, Bradford. Many were working-class Irish Catholics, dismissed as ‘the lower order of Irish,’ already aware of

his reputation, and reacted strongly to his salacious references to the sexual immorality of Catholic priests and nuns. Baron de Camin was assaulted and rescued by the mayor and chief constable and the police arrested a number of Irishmen, at least two on charges of assaulting the police. In the melee 'two or three Irishman were severely punished by exasperated Englishmen.' Later an anti-Catholic crowd damaged that day Saint Marie's Roman Catholic Church and School.⁶⁰ Nor was this an isolated incident. Four years later Fenians were allegedly behind the rioting in White Abbey, a district on the north-west of Bradford town centre, which was seen as the product of 'the ill-feeling of the lower Irish population ... towards their English neighbours.'⁶¹ It was claimed that the Irish rioters shouted 'To hell with the Queen' and 'We'll take White Abbey and then ... Bradford,' and kicked and stoned the police sent to restore order. It was also rumoured that 'the Bowling puddlers intended to come up to the disturbed district and punish the Irish.' The attack never materialised but tensions were still high when seven Irishmen appeared before the Bradford Police Court charged with riot, for which they were committed to the Leeds Assize.

The nature, extent and persistence of popular anti-police sentiment is notoriously difficult to establish. The published statistics relating to assaults on police officers are at best a partial guide, reflecting changes in police prosecution practices as well as changes in anti-police violence. In themselves they say nothing about the motive behind an attack – or a prosecution! The occasional recorded outburst in court can provide an insight but there is no systematic evidence to assess changing attitudes over time. One potential source of information, police occurrence books, have recently been used with considerable effect by David Churchill.⁶² The wider question of policing by consent will be explored more fully in a later chapter but at this point it is important to consider the actions and the attitudes of men identified in this source. The officious, if not downright provocative, PC Prewer was attacked on a number of occasions but so too were other less confrontational constables. More generally, there was a resentment at what was seen as unwarranted interference with customary behaviour, from interfering with "fair fights" to warning men for not controlling their dogs, to swearing in the street. Verbal violence was more common than physical violence. Such examples highlight the extent to which the police engaged in a cultural conflict, enforcing laws that challenged older codes of behaviour among certain groups, which still

had relevance into the 1880s. There is a further point that emerges from the police records of the officers involved in these incidents. Some, such as PCs Booth and Grundy, were inexperienced and did not serve long in the force, while others had poor disciplinary records, none more so than PC Prewer who, among eleven recorded offences, had been found guilty of using 'threatening and improper language' and 'wilfully annoying an inhabitant,' and was eventually ordered to resign. But others, notably Sergeant Pool and PC Whitaker were experienced men with good disciplinary records. In other words, while all constables were individuals, they were equally likely to be involved in an antagonistic encounter with the public *but* the actions of the ill-disciplined or the inexperienced could exacerbate matters greatly.

Public order: crowds, demonstrations and strikes.

Much policing was mundane and involved interactions with individuals or small groups of people. However, there were times when the police were called upon to deal with large crowds. Visits from members of royalty were largely uncontentious affairs and allowed the police to show off their logistical and organisational skills and could add to their popular standing. The royal visit to Sheffield in 1897 on the occasion of the opening of the new town hall was one such occasion. Not only was chief constable Jackson, astride his charger, greeted with applause by the crowd, but the police were also praised for their good-natured and efficient conduct. But other large gatherings were more confrontational and more problematic for the police. Political differences led to election riots, for example in Sheffield in December 1868 and again in February 1874, the latter involving an anti-Irish dimension. Religious differences, and not just between Catholics and Protestants, were similarly divisive. Led by Lieutenant Emerson Davison, commonly referred to as 'the Converted Wrestler,' members of the Salvation Army were mobbed in Sheffield in 1882 and again in 1885. Similarly, Mormons had to be protected by the police from an angry mob. Religious sentiment also played an important part in the riotous protests following the allegation that 'bodies [were] being taken up immediately after interment and sold for dissection' from the Wardsend Cemetery, Sheffield in 1862.⁶³ The impact of such events on perceptions of the police is difficult to gauge. In the reporting

of the various cases noted above, there were no explicit anti-police sentiments recorded but it would be naïve indeed to assume that this reflected a neutral, let alone positive, response to the police. Irish suspicion of and hostility towards the police is likely to have been, at least, confirmed by the sight of the chief constable of Bradford guarding the Baron de Camin and a line of policemen holding back protesters. But did anti-Mormon demonstrators see the police as a threat?

Industrial action, in whatever form, was undoubtedly problematic for the police with the potential for physical injury as well as of a more general sense of mistrust, if not outright hostility. The most high-profile and distinctive problem centred on the so-called 'Sheffield Outrages.' Although not unique to Sheffield, 'rattening,' had given rise to concern for several years before the appointment of a Trade Union Commission in 1867 to enquire into 'acts of intimidation, outrage or wrong alleged to have been promoted, encouraged or connived at by trade unions in the town of Sheffield.'⁶⁴ The practice that could involve the 'theft' of tools, the destruction of equipment and even the destruction of premises was illegal but widespread. The complexities of Sheffield trades and the secrecy surrounding trade union activities gave rise to considerable anxiety and anger among the town's mercantile and manufacturing community, which was compounded by the failure of the police 'to put their hands upon the perpetrators.'⁶⁵ However, in John Jackson there was a man whose persistence made a breakthrough, notably in his interviewing of James Hallam. Jackson's standing in certain quarters of the town soared. The Watch Committee passed a vote of thanks and awarded him 100 guineas.⁶⁶ A testimonial fund was set up and the presentation – of 'a handsome silver salver' and a cheque for £600 – took place at a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce and Manufactures attended by the dignitaries of the town in December 1867. The president of the Chamber of Commerce, the Mayor of Sheffield and the Master Cutler all eulogised Jackson.⁶⁷ Carried away by the emotions of the event, Mr Dunn, the man behind the fund-raising campaign for Jackson, said he spoke not just for the 'manufacturing and mercantile class,' but also for 'the great bulk of the working men of this town.'⁶⁸ Unwittingly, Dunn recognised that matters were more complicated when he told his audience that the working class had 'lamentably failed in marking their sense of the outrages.' The prominent role played by chief constable Jackson left little room for doubt. The extensive press campaign,

offering a reward of £1000 for evidence that led to a successful prosecution and a pardon for all but 'actual perpetrators,' stated unambiguously that Jackson was the man to whom details should be sent. Further, the simple fact that officers were sent to find the thieves who had taken tool, to protect threatened premises and to give evidence at the trials of alleged ratteners meant that it was difficult to maintain the claim that the police were neutral. More telling was the fact that attacks on the police became 'not only more numerous but of a most serious character' and that some ten officers had recently and unexpectedly resigned as a consequence.⁶⁹

The 'Sheffield Outrages' were exceptional. Industrial disputes, often relatively minor, were to be found throughout the period but, with worsening economic conditions from the 1880s onwards and the emergence of 'new unionism,' industrial disputes became more bitter and increased the jeopardy for policemen called upon to preserve order. The widespread disturbances in the coal districts of south Yorkshire in 1893 extend beyond the colliery towns and villages to Sheffield. In the September rioting broke out at Broughton-lane, Sheffield. Crowds, including women and boys and estimated to be 5000 or 6000 strong, gathered to prevent coal being taken from the railway yard. Police, mounted and on foot, were ordered to escort the loaded carts beyond the disputed area. They were met by 'booing ... hissing and howls of derision.'⁷⁰ At first, the police were unmolested as they moved through the crowd but they were eventually forced to retreat and were unable to prevent the destruction of the weighing office and the burning of some carts. In the words of the local press, 'the police force of Sheffield was ... distinctly overwhelmed.'⁷¹ Additional police were brought in from Hull and troops were brought in and the demonstrations petered out. A number of arrests were made and four men were eventually tried at the Leeds Assize in December 1893. The verbal hostility towards the police was clear – as Charles Lister, one of the men arrested, said: 'I shall not go away for any b----- bobbies.'⁷² Another of the accused, Joseph Bailey accused the police of being provocative: 'You bobbies seem to want a row if there isn't one,' though defence counsel was more circumspect, referring to their calmness' and 'the shameful manner' in which the police had been treated while carrying out 'a very difficult task.'

Equally bitter was the long-running strike at Manningham Mills in Bradford. Predictably the employment of 'blackleg' labour brought protest from the strikers. The vans conveying the strike-breakers were stoned and

several arrests made for disorderly conduct. On the instruction of the mayor, these charges were withdrawn and in the early months of 1891 there was a working relationship between the strikers, the local police and the police authorities. The Huddersfield-based *Yorkshire Factory Times* praised the borough police, from the chief constable downwards, for 'universally [being] kind and considerate to the collectors' and noted that 'no police officer had interfered with the work of the strikers.'⁷³ Even when escorting 'blacklegs' to and from work, '[f]ew people ... blame the ordinary police ... for their conduct,' adding that they 'have to obey orders.'⁷⁴ Even the no-nonsense superintendent Paul, it was acknowledged, had been 'fair ... and displayed no vindictiveness' in giving evidence against strikers charged with failing to move on.⁷⁵

Cracks soon appeared. There was disquiet at the use of plain-clothed men, concern that the police at the mills were 'treating ... women and girls with unwarrantable and unnecessary roughness,' and indignation that Withers, the chief constable had opposed bail for two 'respectable' men held in custody for heckling 'blacklegs.'⁷⁶ The growing number of policemen led to claims that Manningham was 'in a state of siege,' comparable to a proclaimed district in Ireland ... [people] confronted by a policeman at every step, and shadowed and tracked as if [they] were criminals.'⁷⁷ By early March there were complaints that the police were 'endeavour[ing] to pick a quarrel for the sake of taking offenders to the Police Courts.'⁷⁸ It was openly suggested that the police and the magistrates were siding with the mill owner (Lister) and his directors. The turning point was Wither's decision to ban a mass meeting by strikers and their supporters scheduled to be held in the Star Music Hall on 6 March. There had been at least three meetings at this venue, as well as others in the town's Jubilee Hall and St George's Hall, but Wither's insisted that police permission was now required, arguing that safety regulations had not been observed and, worse, there had been spoken at a previous meeting 'words ... calculated to bring into contempt the Christian religion' and 'the conduct of the audience [had been] offensive to public decency.'⁷⁹ A protest meeting was arranged to condemn 'police interference with the right of public meeting.'⁸⁰ The local Bradford press noted the increased tension but it was the *Yorkshire Factory Times* that was most critical in its condemnation of 'senseless officialism.' Until recently, it argued 'nothing occurred of a character likely to call forth any open rupture between the police and the strikers.'⁸¹ Accusations were made in the *Bradford Daily Telegraph* that Lister

had 'influenced the police, attempted to interfere with free speech ... and in other ways attempted to counteract the work of the [strike] committee.'⁸² Confusion and anger were increased when councillor Sheldon, a member of the watch committee told the protest meeting that 'no instruction' had been given to the chief constable regarding the Star Music Hall meeting.⁸³

The strikers continued to hold meetings at St George's Hall and the Valley Parade Ice Rink. Matters came to a climax on Sunday 12 April when Ben Tillett was due to address a meeting at St George's Hall. A request for a meeting in Dockers' Square had been refused by the chief constable and the mayor but an overspill meeting nonetheless took place there. Withers with sixty men were present. Initially, 'the crowd surged round the officers very angrily' but the crowd, allegedly of 'enormous dimensions' was 'suddenly confronted, by a swiftly advancing line of constables with batons ready for execution.'⁸⁴ The crowd was broken up but not before windows in the town hall were smashed. Rioting continued over the following two days, necessitating the use of outside police (mainly from Halifax and Huddersfield), the military (the Durham Light Infantry) and the reading of the Riot Act. Such was the hostility that the mayor, the chair of the watch committee and the chief constable were all sent death threats. The following Saturday, 18 April, saw another mass meeting by strikers, estimated to be between 60,000 and 90,000 people. The authorities had in readiness 290 soldiers, 200 Bradford policemen and a similar number from other Yorkshire forces. The event passed off peacefully.

Press accounts of the events of 12 – 14 April paint a confusing picture. The clash was widely reported with the *Shields Daily News* comparing it with the recent riots in Trafalgar Square.⁸⁵ Similarly, a graphic image in the *Penny Illustrated Paper* echoed earlier depictions of Trafalgar Square.⁸⁶ More locally, the *Driffild Times* reported police 'using their batons freely' and 'some rioters ... seriously injured,' and the *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, which earlier had sympathised with the plight of injured strike-breakers and the police who protected them, spoke of the police 'firmly but quietly' obeying their orders.⁸⁷ The *Leeds Times* went further talking of the police's 'perfect forbearance.'⁸⁸ The *Yorkshire Factory Times*, circumspectly, believed 'the large majority of the police did all that they could be expected to do under the circumstances' but importantly qualified this judgment with the observation that 'there were [police]men on whom will come the stain of having unmercifully

truncheoned their neighbours and the workers of Bradford.⁸⁹

As ever, the voice of the strikers went largely unheard. The sympathetic *Yorkshire Factory Times* reported a 'good tempered' crowd, initially at least, subjecting the police to 'a lot of badinage, and hoots and jeers at their expense were not infrequent' but has nothing to say of post-riot attitudes. Occasional insights can be gained from an otherwise marginalised contemporary incident. Just before the 12 April meeting at St George's Hall, superintendent Paul 'had a pretty warm "set to" [during] his "striking" peregrinations at Manningham Mills,' but worse was to follow. Entering the Beamsley Hotel, presumably to demonstrate the presence of the police, he was viciously assaulted before finally overcoming his assailant as he 'set to work and thrashed his opponent badly.'⁹⁰ Paul chose to take no further (legal) action! Similarly, a retrospective insight into the trade union perspective can be gained from the observation of W R Donald, president of the Bradford Typographical Society at the time, that the incidents reminded him of 'scenes from the French Revolution.'⁹¹ It is difficult to see how the actions of the police in dispersing crowds on those three days in April 1891 can have enhanced their standing in the eyes of many working-class men and women.

The Manningham Mills strike was a major event but its wider impact on Bradford paled into insignificance compared with the Leeds gas strike, which left streets in darkness and industries deprived of power. It was also part of a wider upsurge of 'new union' activity, which added to tensions. Strikes, usually short-lived and involving relatively small numbers, were a recurring feature of mid- and late-Victorian Leeds. Occasionally, police were called in to protect property but for the most part trade disputes passed with little trouble. That was emphatically not the case in 1890. The town's gas committee sought to reduce the hours of work of coke stokers during the summer months as a money-saving exercise. A strike was called in June 1890 and the town council's response was to bring in some 600 strike-breakers from as far afield as Manchester and London. The police, anticipating significant opposition, wanted to make a show of strength. Superintendent McWilliams headed a contingent of sixty officers with a further 120 men under superintendents Matthews and Pullan. There was considerable support for the strikers from fellow trade-unionists but also from the wider public.

Contemporaneous reports spoke initially of 'a good deal of horseplay' between strikers and police and the 'good humour' of the crowd.⁹² More

specifically, 'strikers were allowed by the police to climb on to the walls around the [New Wortley] works and to call upon the men [i.e. strike breakers] to come out.'⁹³ Whatever early goodwill existed, it was quickly dissipated as violence broke out on several occasions in which 'blood flowed freely.'⁹⁴ The 'blacklegs' arriving at the towns Midland station were given a police and cavalry escort but found themselves faced by gas-workers armed with 'formidable sticks, many of them with hooks, spikes and nails attached.'⁹⁵ Onlookers outside the town hall, to where the strike-breakers were being marched, were shocked by the sight of 'the disabled condition of Superintendent MacWilliams ... limping at the head of the procession, supported by two other officers.'⁹⁶ The police were subjected to a number of large-scale violent assaults, notably the stoning as they passed the New Wortley railway bridge on Wellington-road. Police reinforcements were called in from Halifax and Huddersfield and particularly Bradford, from where 100 men were sent. In addition, the military presence was strengthened.

Predictably, there were conflicting accounts of police action. The *Yorkshire Post* stressed their 'unpleasant duty,' which they carried out with 'temper, moderation and self-control.'⁹⁷ Skirmishes reported in the *Leeds Mercury* resulted in 'a large number of heads broken or bruised' during charges by police whose batons were 'freely used.'⁹⁸ The *Leeds Times*, similarly reported police violence, including letters from eye-witnesses.⁹⁹ Unsurprisingly, the *Yorkshire Factory Times* was most outspoken, at best accusing the police of 'want of tact,' at worst of indiscriminate violence.¹⁰⁰

The extent to which outside forces contributed to this violence is impossible to establish but the contingent from Bradford were clearly prominent. 'Superintendent Paul smashed over the body of one of the rioters a heavy logwood stick he carried, and more than one of the Bradford men had snapped his baton.'¹⁰¹ Paul, along with inspector Ackroyd and the sergeants from Bradford, 'led their men splendidly on into the thick of the fray and for a long time they beat a lively tattoo upon the heads' of protestors.¹⁰² As in Bradford, it is difficult to believe that such behaviour enhanced the popular reputation of the police.

Some conclusions

The scope of police work expanded in the second half of the nineteenth century but at its core of police work was the maintenance of order and decorum in public places. The principal targets of police action remained relatively unchanged – drunks, brawlers, vagrants, prostitutes – but they were joined in the last quarter of the nineteenth century by, among others, those falling foul of the education acts and, prefiguring a major change in police activity in the twentieth century, a variety of delinquent road-users. In contrast, large-scale public-order policing was an exceptional but high-profile and sensitive aspect of police work.

For the majority of the middle- and upper-classes the police were seen as servants, there to provide a service. The police had a responsibility to protect *their* property and to ensure order according to *their* values and codes of behaviour. Judgements on the police were couched in terms of the effectiveness with which they maintained order and decorum and delivered value for money. As the reports of watch committees make clear, not to mention the letter pages of the local press, seemingly mundane concerns, such as the continuing presence of stray dogs – whether on the streets or on omnibuses – bulked large. There were exceptions, notably those petty-bourgeois shopkeepers, who found themselves admonished for carelessly displaying their goods or fined for allowing their displays to obstruct the footpath; or their entrepreneurial counterparts, delivering a range of goods and services, who ran into trouble with the police for irresponsible driving. In addition, hinting at a future in which middle-class drivers would find themselves in conflict with the law, new arrivals on the road – cyclists, tricyclists and velocipedists – found themselves at odds not only with meandering pedestrians but also with police officers on duty in the streets in the 1880s and 1890s.

Few areas were unpoliced, but the weight of policing varied according to class and respectability and was but lightly felt in middle-class suburbs. The regulatory focus necessarily meant that the brunt of everyday policing fell most heavily on those for whom the streets were the sites of work and play. Further, police attention was more focussed, more selective in terms of particular ethnic and occupational groups and specific geographical areas. The bulk of interactions between police and public involved men and women from the poorer, more insecure parts of the working classes. Young men, in

particular, were likely to have a negative experience and a criminal record. While the exceptional crime caught the attention of contemporary observers, the realities of routine policing were more mundane, even petty. Itinerant traders, street musicians, beggars and vagrants, boys playing football in the street, men and women using abusive language, along with the loiterers, the obstreperous drunks, juvenile gamblers, even the bookies' runners, these were the low-lying fruits easily picked by the late-Victorian police. Such were the fundamental realities of a policed society in Bradford, Leeds and Sheffield.

Popular responses ranged from begrudging acceptance, rather than positive endorsement, to outright verbal or physical hostility. As Victoria's reign came to an end there were few, if any, who had any meaningful direct memory of the advent of the new police in Bradford, Leeds or Sheffield. The bobby on the beat was a well-established feature of daily life on the street and (again) few doubted their continuing presence. At the same time, outright physical opposition to the police had probably diminished, in part because of wider societal changes towards violence and in part from a pragmatic recognition of the permanence of the police. However, at the same time, there were individual and collective memories passed down over time that perpetuated negative images of the police. Churchill's research points to the continuance of often strong anti-police sentiments into late-nineteenth century Leeds. Although 'overwhelmingly the product of contentious episodes in street policing,' rather than the product of routine encounters, this evidence reveals 'an undercurrent of hostility towards the police among a portion of the public.'¹⁰³ Older images of the police as idlers or meddlers in petty matters, such as the licensing of dogs or the selling of newspapers by boys in the street, were still found in certain quarters in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. The extent to which these images remained meaningful depended on the *ongoing* experience of routine policing. The perception of policemen being in the community but not of the community was not easily eradicated; nor was the perception that much of the 'law' that they enforced was an often-petty encroachment on legitimate activities. Informal welfare activity, even the performance of the police brass band or an appearance at the annual flower and vegetable show, might 'humanise' the bobby but suspicions lingered and limited co-operation, even among otherwise law-abiding working-class men and others; clumsy, let alone provocative policing engendered mistrust and hostility. Much depended on the behaviour of the individual constable who needed to be able

to assert his authority – something of a confidence trick given the numerical disadvantage at which he operated – without antagonising or alienating a significant portion of the community he policed. A semi-facetious piece ‘the natural history of policemen,’ reproduced in the *Bradford Observer*, praised the virtues of the ‘systematic’ officer, the ‘courageous policeman ... whose beat is invariably quiet and orderly’ and ‘the humane policeman ... with a wide scope for the exercise of his kindly sympathies ... *more common than some would think* ... and not a mere creation of the fancy’ but also condemned the ‘ambitious [officer who] tries to curry favour with his superiors by an over-exhibition of zeal and an over-exertion of toadyism.’ This was the man, who having declared ‘war to the knife against ... apple-women without licences, naughty boys and other small fry ... [who has] given colour to those proverbial peculiarities associated with the force.’¹⁰⁴ But there is a danger of overstating the police presence. Undoubtedly, some constables were zealous or officious, others were more pragmatic, some were temperamentally unsuited and, as the police conduct books make clear, a significant minority of policemen, including longer-serving men, failed to fulfil their duties, overlooking an unsecured door or window, absenting themselves from their beat, sleeping on duty, or accepting a free drink from a grateful landlord. And even the more conscientious constables were not perambulatory panopticons. Street gamblers knew to flee as a constable approached, while thieves knew to wait until another had passed by.

As the new century approached police/public relations in the three cities (as they had now become) had improved considerably in comparison with the fractious days of the 1840s and 1850s but difficulties persisted. Certain groups, most notably the poor Irish, remained particularly ill-disposed towards the police. A wider number of men and women were involved in contentious encounters with the police and a wider number still experienced their constraining influence, almost on a daily basis. Unsurprisingly, examples of negative images and hostile attitudes are to be found; perhaps more surprising is the absence of more such evidence from the literally thousands of routine interactions between the police and the public that took place year in, year out. Thus, there is a meaningful sense in one can speak of policing by consent in all three cities *but* it was not a one-off achievement, rather an ongoing, and at times precarious, process of negotiation between police and public.

Endnotes

- 1 Captain W L Melville Lee, *A History of Police in England*, London, Methuen, 1901, chap. xvi, 'Co-operative police and the suppression of riot,' pp.328-9. Speaking specifically of the Metropolitan police, former commissioner J Munro spoke of the police as 'a disciplined body of men, specially engaged in protecting the 'masses' as well as 'classes' from any infringement of their rights on the part of those who are not law-abiding.' 'The London Police,' *North American Review*, 1980, pp.617-8
- 2 For example, C Emsley, *The Great British Bobby*, London, Quercus, 2009 and D Taylor, *The new police in nineteenth-century England*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997. The latter specifically notes contemporary and retrospective working-class hostility to the police.
- 3 D Churchill, "I am just the man for Upsetting you Bloody Bobbies": popular animosity towards the police in late-nineteenth century Leeds,' *Social History*, 2014 (2), pp.248-266 and D Taylor, Conflict, consensus and the vexed question of "policing by consent" in nineteenth-century England 'The case of the West Riding of Yorkshire,' *Crime, Histories, Society*, 2023, 27, pp.53-73
- 4 Figures calculated from chief constable's annual returns reported in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*. It is worth noting that prosecutions under the Education Act almost equalled prosecutions for drunk and disorderly behaviour.
- 5 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 12 July 1860
- 6 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 5 June 1879 (butchers) and 29 June 1883 (milk dealers) Complaints to the local press grew steadily in the 1880s and 1890s.
- 7 *Bradford Observer*, 3 October 1873 and 19 April 1871
- 8 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 11 June 1885 and *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 11 August 1893 and 3 August 1896
- 9 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 12 July 1860
- 10 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 9 August 1860
- 11 For a discussion of the tensions in London see D Taylor, 'Cass, Coverdale and Consent: The Metropolitan Police and working-class women in late-Victorian London,' *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 12 (1), pp. 113–136
- 12 *Leeds Times*, 31 July 1858 & 23 January 1869 and *Leeds Mercury*, 28 February 1871
- 13 *Leeds Mercury*, 28 February 1871
- 14 *Leeds Times*, 26 April and 3 May 1873, 11 April 1873, and 20 February 1875
- 15 *Leeds Times*, 29 April 1876 and 23 June 1877
- 16 *Leeds Times*, 4 & 11 May 1889, 22 February & 15 March 1890 and 13 April 1892, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 27 May 1891 & 13 June 1893

- 17 Cited in Churchill, *Crime Control*, p.114
- 18 Cited in Churchill, *Crime Control*, p.120
- 19 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 1 October 1868 and 10 & 29 June 1869
- 20 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 1 December 1869 & *Bradford Observer*, 13 September 1866
- 21 There was a flurry of letters of complaint regarding street gambling to the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* in late 1869. Police inaction was condemned in a later letter (31 December 1892) to the same paper. For alleged police inaction in Bradford see *Bradford Observer*, 19 September 1867 and 11 June 1868.
- 22 *Bradford Observer* 4 May 1865
- 23 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 10 & 29 June 1869
- 24 *Bradford Weekly Telegraph*, 9 June 1883
- 25 *Leeds Mercury*, 13 April 1892 and *Leeds Times*, 18 June 1898
- 26 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 4 September 1888
- 27 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 30 July 1892
- 28 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 8 July 1896
- 29 *Manchester Courier*, 22 September 1891. The incident received wide press coverage from Derby to Dundee and included the revelation that one unfortunate gambler had lost seven horses and carts!
- 30 *Leeds Mercury*, 25 April 1895
- 31 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 20 November 1894
- 32 There is also evidence from other parts of the country of informal understandings between police and gamblers. This could take the form of a tip-off regarding imminent police action or a taken arrest.
- 33 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 1 December 1869. For a similar large crowd see *Bradford Observer*, 24 May 1869.
- 34 For example, *Bradford Review*, 7 July 1866 and *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 1 October 1868, 29 June 1869 & 10 August 1893 and *Leeds Times*, 23 June 1877.
- 35 For example, *Leeds Times*, 2 September 1876 and 23 March 1878. The latter involved a gambling game called 'Up Major.'
- 36 *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 23 January 1899
- 37 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 8 July 1896 for gambling passion and 6 November 1897 for police collusion.
- 38 *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 24 April 1895
- 39 *Bradford Observer*, 6 November 1897
- 40 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 13 November 1897
- 41 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 13 November 1897

- 42 *Bradford Observer*, 11 November 1897
- 43 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 13 November 1897
- 44 Lady Bell, *At the Works: a study of a manufacturing town*, London, Edward Arnold, 1907 and reprinted David and Charles, 1969, p.255. The officer felt 'quite ashamed' at 'neglecting my other duties' when pursuing street gamblers.
- 45 J Toole, *Fighting Through Life*, London, Rich & Cowan, 1935, p.5, accessed at fighting through life : joseph toole : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive and R Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, London, Penguin, 1971, p.162. Heavy handed treatment of juvenile gamblers, according to Roberts 'helped colour the attitude of a whole working-class generation towards civil authority.'
- 46 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 31 December 1892
- 47 P Jennings, 'Policing Public Houses in Victorian England,' *Law, Crime and History*, 2013, pp.52 - 75
- 48 *Bradford Observer*, 15 October 1857. For details of the 1869 purge see *Bradford Observer*, 26 August, 30 September & 7 October 1869
- 49 *Bradford Observer*, 'Phases of Bradford Life: III In and about Silsbridge-lane,' 31 March 1870
- 50 *Bradford Observer*, 18 November 1869
- 51 For example, *Bradford Observer*, 14 July and 9 December 1873
- 52 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 2 May 1899
- 53 *Bradford Observer*, 15 October 1884
- 54 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 26 December 1868
- 55 Cited in Churchill, *Crime Control*, p.118
- 56 *Leeds Mercury*, 16 July 1859. See also *Leeds Times*, 15 February 1862 and 2 March 1867 and *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 11 September 1857
- 57 *Leeds Mercury*, 25 November 1856
- 58 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 27 September 1862. See also *Leeds Times*, 17 July 1858 and 23 January 1869, *Leeds Intelligencer*, 24 March 1860
- 59 For example, *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 30 November 1867
- 60 *Leeds Mercury*, 15 & 16 September 1862
- 61 *Bradford Review*, 7 April 1866
- 62 Churchill, "I am just the man for Upsetting you Bloody Bobbies"
- 63 The allegations of grave robberies were reported in the *Chester Chronicle*, 7 June 1862
- 64 Report to the Trade Union Commission, 1867, Parliamentary Papers online
- 65 For example, *Sheffield Independent*, 20 January 1860. As early as 1860 the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 20 January 1860, not simply lamented police failure

but argued that 'the time has come to employ other means.' Not all small employers believed it was a matter for the police. See the evidence of Robert Eadon, Report to the Trade Unions Commission, 1867, Q.710. He also denied that fear had stopped him going to the police.

- 66 *Sheffield Independent*, 13 August 1867. Opinion was not unanimous. Isaac Ironside in particular was sceptical, even alleging that confessions from two key figures, Hallam and Crapps, had been made to a 'gentleman' prior to their interviews by Jackson.
- 67 *Sheffield Independent*, 13 December 1867
- 68 *Sheffield Independent*, 13 December 1867
- 69 *Sheffield Independent*, 13 August 1867
- 70 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 7 September 1893.
- 71 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 8 September 1893
- 72 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 14 December 1893
- 73 *Yorkshire Factory Times*, 2 January 1891
- 74 *Yorkshire Factory Times*, 20 February 1891
- 75 *Yorkshire Factory Times*, 30 January 1891
- 76 *Yorkshire Factory Times*, 30 January and 29 February 1891
- 77 *Yorkshire Factory Times*, 27 February 1891
- 78 *Yorkshire Factory Times*, 6 March 1891
- 79 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 26 February 1891
- 80 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 3 March 1891
- 81 *Yorkshire Factory Times*, 17 April 1891
- 82 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 2 March 1891
- 83 *Yorkshire Factory Times*, 6 March 1891
- 84 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 15 April 1891
- 85 *Shields Daily News*, 17 April 1891
- 86 *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 18 April 1891
- 87 *Driffield Times*, 18 April 1891 and *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 13 April 1891
- 88 *Leeds Times*, 18 April 1891
- 89 *Yorkshire Factory Times*, 17 April 1891
- 90 *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 9 April 1891 and *Huddersfield Examiner*, 11 April 1891
- 91 *Yorkshire Factory Times*, 16 September 1904
- 92 *Leeds Mercury*, 1 & 2 July 1890
- 93 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 2 July 1890
- 94 *Leeds Mercury*, 2 July 1890
- 95 *Leeds Mercury*, 2 July 1890

- 96 *Leeds Mercury*, 2 July 1890
- 97 *Yorkshire Post*, 4 July 1890
- 98 *Leeds Mercury* 2 July 1890
- 99 *Leeds Times*, 5 July 1890
- 100 *Yorkshire Factory Times*, 4 July 1890
- 101 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 2 July 1890
- 102 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 5 July 1890
- 103 Churchill, 'Just the man,' p.250 and p.254
- 104 *Bradford Observer*, 1 March 1866