

11 Policing the community in Halifax and Huddersfield

IN NOVEMBER 1873, James Withers presented his fifth annual report to members of Huddersfield borough council, reassuring them that ‘the prevention and detection of crime has had our best attention, as well as the protection of property,’ but added, with evident pride, ‘we have also endeavoured, and I think with some little degree of success, to guard and protect the morals of the public.’¹ In this and other public statements, Withers made clear the importance which he – and his political masters – placed on the maintenance of order and decorum.² Although more explicit than other chief constables of Huddersfield, and indeed Halifax, he shared a common concern that could be traced back to the advent of the new police forces in the two towns.³

As in the great towns, dealing with serious crime was a relatively small part of police work, with the partial exception of Halifax in the early-1870s, and one that declined markedly in the 1880s and 1890s. But while successive chief constables stressed the protection of property afforded by the police, it was abundantly clear that imposing order and decorum on the streets took up considerably more police time. The number of people dealt with summarily increased markedly in absolute terms and relative to population over the third quarter of the nineteenth century, particularly in Halifax but fell away in the late-nineteenth century. The statistics were dominated by a predictable trio of drunk and disorderly behaviour, assaults and vagrancy. As ever, the overall figures obscure significant variations in terms of age, gender and class. The social impact was wider. Even where formal action was not taken, everyday activities, at work and play, were subject to closer police scrutiny as well as taking up a substantial amount of police time and effort.

Table 11.1: Indictable and summary offences, Halifax & Huddersfield, 1861 – 1891 (5-year averages)

	1861	1871	1881	1891
Halifax				
Indictable offences	59	158	69	35
Indictable offences per 000 population	1.3	2.9	0.9	0.4
Indictable offences per constable	1.6	3.0	0.9	0.4
Summary offences	606	1194	1908	1404
Summary offences per 000 population	13	18	26	18
Summary offences per constable	17	20	26	18
Ratio indictable offences to summary offences per constable	1:11	1:6	1:29	1:45
Huddersfield				
Indictable offences	92	123	100	99
Indictable offences per 000 population	1.5	1.8	1.2	1.0
Indictable offences per constable	3.0	1.8	1.1	0.9
Summary offences	943	1778	1991	1374
Summary offences per 000	15	25	24	14
Summary offences per constable	31	25	22	13
Ratio indictable offences to summary offences per constable	1:10	1:14	1:20	1:16

Source: Judicial Statistics

Drunkness and prostitution – the problem of the beerhouse/brothels

In both towns non-conformists were a vocal force providing influential support for Sabbatarian and temperance movements. A variety of organisations held well-attended meetings, widely reported in the local press, which in turn brought pressure on local politicians, several of whom were sympathetic to their demands. However, the drinks interest was also well organised. Police chiefs regularly attended the annual meetings of the local Licensed Victuallers' Association and, in both towns, accusations periodically arose of over-friendly relations with the police. However, it was the beerhouse that was the centre of much police attention from the inception of both forces.

In the 1840s, Castlegate, Huddersfield was notorious for its crime and immorality. A street barely two hundred yards long, it boasted thirteen beerhouses and two public houses. According to the *Leeds Mercury*, 'drinking

and gaming were indulged in all day long and far into the nights ... rows and riots were constant ... robberies were frequent ... and it was dangerous to enter ... after night fall.' More specifically, the "Stews & bagnios" on the premises of several beerhouses ensured 'the continued assembly of lewd and disorderly characters.'⁴ And over it all ruled John Sutcliffe, the self-styled "King of Castlegate." His beerhouse was well-known as 'the rendezvous for thieves and prostitutes of the lowest grade.' It was a centre for coiners, who targeted nearby villages, robberies and thefts were planned, and even carried out there, while 'members of the frail sisterhood,' who rented rooms in a 'barracks' in the yard, openly plied their trade.⁵ Here and in other Castlegate beerhouses there were opportunities for betting on fist fights, dog fights and rapping events, several openly advertised in *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*.⁶ Fights, particularly among the Irish who inhabited Castlegate and the surrounding lanes, were frequently reported in the Leeds press, which lost few opportunities to condemn the 'true spirit of Irish barbarism.'⁷ Despite several brushes with authority, no charge was successfully brought against Sutcliffe. The difficulty of finding witnesses willing to testify in court was a major problem but his sobriquet, Castlegate's Jonathan Wilde, suggests a further reason for his ability to evade punishment. His luck finally ran out in late 1848 when he was sentenced to ten years transportation at York Assizes.⁸ The crime that led to his downfall was utterly commonplace. James Speight had attended the market in Huddersfield and, with money in his pocket, got 'fresh' [drunk], ventured into Sutcliffe's beerhouse in Castlegate and was robbed as he went to relieve himself in the yard. The initial outcome was equally predictable. No witnesses could be found to testify against Sutcliffe, Speight was accused of being 'fuddled' and confused and the case was dropped. Unlike on previous occasions, the matter did not end there. Speight, despite being an old man, was determined to pursue the case, to the extent of walking to and from Askern Spa, near Doncaster – forty miles each way – to give evidence again. The crucial difference, however, was the determination of the newly-appointed superintending constable for Upper Agbrigg, Thomas Heaton, who working with one of Huddersfield's paid constables, Abraham Sedgwick, found witnesses and additional evidence that led to Sutcliffe's demise.

Following his trial, Sutcliffe's 'barracks' were torn down on the orders of the town's improvement commissioners but the wider problem of the

beerhouse/brothel continued. The town force under John Thomas showed little interest in rooting out the problem, perhaps unsurprisingly as he had been disciplined after being found in a brothel. It was not long before a new man took on Sutcliffe's mantle – Henry Wilson, the 'Burton Slasher.' His beerhouse, the Gypsy Queen in Kirkgate, which he ran with his wife, became a centre for gambling, prostitution and theft. A number of high-profile and serious robberies (for which he was charged) were also planned there. 'Slasher's' reign lasted for six years (1852-8) during which time he appeared in court on some forty occasions. He was fined for drunk and disorderly behaviour five times and for assault on seven occasions. In addition, he was fined for permitting gambling, harbouring prostitutes, permitting a dog-fight, passing bad coin and attempting to bribe and intimidate a jury. Such was the profitability of his 'trade,' 'Slasher' was able to pay off immediately his fines – at times running to £20 – and, when necessary, to ensure that he and his wife were properly represented in court. It was not as if he was unknown to the police, to the contrary, but he was able to continue largely untouched by the law. Sutcliffe and Wilson were exceptional but not unique. Other 'low beerhouse keepers,' such as 'Big Dick' Ramsden, appeared in court frequently and it is clear that they, and their clients, survived through an informal/illegal economy. Sporadic attempts were made to tackle the worst manifestations of the problem in the early 1860s. A particularly scandalous incident in 1862 led to the successful prosecution of Mrs Lockwood, who ran the Griffin beerhouse, reputedly the 'best of the low beerhouses.' A young girl, found in a 'horribly diseased state' in the Huddersfield workhouse, was one of many who had been inveigled into prostitution. Despite defence counsel's assertion that the girl's testimony was not credible, the magistrates found against Lockwood and fined her £2.⁹ More typical was the failed prosecution of another Castlegate beerhouse-keeper, John Smith. Despite evidence that Smith and his wife regularly prostituted their domestic servants, his defence counsel successfully argued that evidence of two girls was unreliable, because 'they had previously been girls of bad reputation and ... took no steps to leave the place when they had discovered the true character of the situation,' and that there was no corroborative evidence against his client.¹⁰

Although not to the same degree, Halifax suffered similar problems, notwithstanding concerns and exhortations to action by some leading local

politicians. Following superintendent Pearson's appointment in 1851 the Halifax police were seen to be 'strictly enforcing the law,' regarding drunk and disorderly behaviour.¹¹ Prosecutions for drunk and disorderly behaviour increased by almost 40 per cent between 1851 and 1853 and for being drunk and incapable by almost 100 per cent.¹² Under pressure from John Baldwin, the first mayor of Halifax and chair of the local committee of the Society for the Protection of Women, the watch committee urged 'increased vigilance,' particularly after Pearson's report on the increase in the number of 'House of Ill Fame.'¹³ The watch committee, however, instructed Pearson to prosecute only 'the worst cases,' and little was done, partly because of the difficulties and costs of bringing a successful prosecution. Pearson's zeal for tackling drunkenness waned and there were growing suspicions that his relations with the local drink trade were too close, to the extent of hindering prosecution.

The difficulties of bringing a successful prosecution became very apparent in Huddersfield. William Hannan, the new superintendent of police, was an impassioned critic of certain beerhouse keepers, publicly condemning 'the debasing immorality of the keepers of these houses' as they sought 'their victims ... in our and neighbouring towns and selected principally from the ranks of the poorer classes under the pretence of hiring them as servants, when their object is to procure them for the purpose of prostitution.'¹⁴ He was well aware of the scale of the problem. Of eighty-four beerhouses in town, sixty-four were effectively brothels, with an average of three women working in each. But he was also a determined man, as his successful prosecution of 'Big Dick' Ramsden under the 1830 Beer Act demonstrated. Hannan's thorough preparation, including seeking the advice of the editor of the *Justice of the Peace*, stood him in good stead when Ramsden's appeal against conviction was rejected by magistrates at quarter session.¹⁵ Ramsden was fined £20 and lost his licence for two years. But Hannan was not satisfied and, working closely with the town's improvement commissioners, brought prosecutions against two couples – the Hopwoods and the Smiths, who ran the Brown Cow and Butchers' Arms, respectively, in Castlegate – but this time under the 1752 Disorderly Houses Act.¹⁶ The case and its aftermath highlight the very real problems facing the police. The details created a scandal, which saw Huddersfield branded the 'brothel of the West Riding.'¹⁷ Hopwood had travelled to Ashton under Lyne to take advantage of the distress caused by the Lancashire "Cotton Famine" to recruit girls for the two beerhouses,

sleeping with two of them before returning to Huddersfield. So graphic was the evidence given by one of the girls that Hopwood changed his plea to guilty, for which he was sentenced to eighteen months' hard labour. The Smiths pleaded not guilty but were convicted. John Smith was sentenced to eighteen months' hard labour and his wife, aka "Butter Moll," fifteen months – sentences that 'greatly astounded' the prisoners.¹⁸ The magistrates were scathing in their condemnation and hoped the heavy punishments handed out in a high-profile trial would deter those 'systematically using and employing [their houses] for the lowest purposes of immorality' but the aftermath of the case was profoundly disappointing.¹⁹ Another beerhouse/brothel case in June 1865 was dropped because of costs. Worse still, Mrs Hopwood, who had been too ill to stand trial in December 1854, was found guilty in June 1865 of permitting disorderly persons, including prostitutes and returned convicts, to congregate in the Brown Cow.²⁰ And in February 1866, while the Smiths were serving their 'deterrent' sentences, their stand-in at the Butcher's Arms, was found guilty of harbouring prostitutes.²¹ A month later Mary Garner, a local prostitute, was arrested and informed the police of the continuing widespread practice of bringing in girls 'from other towns ... and keeping them in decoy houses solely for the purpose of prostitution.'²² Such were the limits of even determined police action.

The deteriorating relationship between Hannan and the town's improvement commissioners led to no further action on this matter but his successor, James Withers, took action from the outset. Stating the obvious that drunkenness was 'very prevalent' in the town and there were several 'improper' beerhouses 'where thieves and prostitutes frequent,' he obtained a number of convictions for 'permitting prostitution and other indecent conduct.'²³ His policy of 'strict supervision,' supported by the local magistrates, had an immediate impact. Thirty-eight beerhouse keepers (as well as thirty-five innkeepers) were prosecuted in his first year and twenty of the worst beerhouses closed down. Overall, one in five beerhouses went, leaving 121 by 1874. In 1869 Withers' list of 'improper houses' detailed his opposition to the granting of licences at the annual Brewster session. It was a roll-call of well-known miscreants who had continued in business, notwithstanding earlier convictions, including John Poppleton, of the Clothiers' Inn, Allen Hoyle, the proprietor of the notorious Cambridge Music Hall in Upperheadrow and Lydia Earnshaw, another Castlegate beerhouse keeper, allegedly

the worst in town. But some survived, not least John Conroy, at least three times convicted for infringing licensing laws and roundly condemned by the experienced inspector Townsend. The explanation was to be found in the evidence given at the Brewster session by another inspector, Ramsden White, who pointed out that 'both Conroy and his wife gave the police every assistance in their power in the apprehension of thieves, or any other information they [the police] required.'²⁴ Withers continued to make his presence felt the following year. 30 per cent of all licensees were prosecuted, 36 per cent of beerhouse keepers.²⁵ Although prosecutions fell off thereafter, Withers maintained that his tough approach had had a positive impact on the behaviour of licensees. 'During the past five years,' he reported, 'there has been a marked improvement in the management of public houses.'²⁶ Withers' determination was beyond doubt but his hand was strengthened by legislative changes – the licensing acts of 1869 and 1872 and the Huddersfield improvement act, 1871 – which gave 'justices more power [to regulate] the amusements as well as music and dancing' and led to the establishment of 'rules ... for the proper maintenance of order and decorum.'²⁷ Withers' successor, Hilton increased police surveillance and there was a flurry of prosecutions in 1876 and 1877. The majority of cases were for selling outside hours and very few for harbouring prostitutes. Prostitution persisted, but the concern with beerhouse/brothels largely disappeared. So too had the worry about improper landlords. In 1885 John Ward, in his annual report to the Huddersfield Brewster session, confidently informed the magistrates that 'licence holders generally have exercised considerable care in the conduct of their business and have complied with the requests of the licensing laws.'²⁸

Alleged police leniency towards certain landlords had led to the downfall of superintendent Pearson in Halifax. The new man, Clarkson, armed with new legislative powers, clamped down on licensed premises and drunks. The number of public-house licensees and beerhouse keepers prosecuted jumped sharply particularly in 1873.²⁹ Between 1872 and 1876 arrests for drunkenness averaged 780 but the policy was ramped up over time. In 1876 a total of 970 arrests were made. Cells were full to overflowing on Saturday nights and the magistrates' courts were particularly busy on Monday mornings.³⁰ Clarkson's reforming zeal won him praise in certain quarters but there was a concern that strict enforcement of the licensing laws was creating hostility towards the police among 'frequenters of public houses and beershops.'³¹

The growing hostility led to his resignation in 1876 and a reversion to a less confrontational approach with only the most egregious breaches of the law leading to prosecution. By the late-1870s the number of public-house licensees and beerhouse-keepers prosecuted fell to about 5 per cent of the total, a level at which it stayed through the 1880s and 1890s. Concerns with the beerhouse and the pub declined as their numbers stagnated, despite continuing population growth. There was a steady fall in the number of arrests for drunkenness but only driven in part by changes in police practice. The fall in the number of convictions for drunk and disorderly behaviour was seen as evidence of improving working-class morals. Magistrates and the mayor were satisfied with the behaviour of licence holders and felt that the town compared favourably with other West Riding towns, particularly Huddersfield.³² 'Respectable' concern about working-class drinking never disappeared but there was never the same sense of urgency. Indeed, concern changed focus with gambling increasingly seen as the greatest moral threat.

Table 11.2 Public houses and beerhouses and arrests and convictions for drunk and disorderly behaviour in Halifax, 1875/9 -1895/9 (5-year annual averages)

	Public houses	Beerhouses	Arrest for drunk and disorderly behaviour	Convictions for drunk and disorderly behaviour	Percentage of successful prosecutions
1875-9	102	150	676 (544)*	663 (530)*	98 (97)
1880-4	103	151	403	387	96
1885-9	104	145	291	264	91
1890-4	104	145	264	224	85
1895-9	112	157	259	208	80

* Figure in brackets 3-year average, 1877-9 (i.e., new chief constable in post)

Source: HMIC annual reports

Withers' campaign in Huddersfield did not provoke anti-police sentiments to the same extent as Clarkson's in Halifax. As a consequence, there was no significant change of policy when he resigned. As in Halifax, the number of arrests for drunken and disorderly behaviour fell in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. On more than one occasion, Chief constable Ward speculated on the reasons behind the falling numbers of prosecutions.

Improved police surveillance and better management by licensees were seen as important factors, as were fluctuations in local trade, but he increasingly concluded that the decrease in the statistics reflected a real change, especially among young men but also among young women.³³

There was a further dimension to the question of licensing that particular concerned Ward, namely permission for music and dancing. Contrary to some earlier histories of popular music, a number of pubs were turning into music halls, or offering music-hall entertainment, in the third quarter of the nineteenth century in both towns.³⁴ Some, notably the Cambridge Arms on Upperhead-row, Huddersfield, were subject of police action; all were suspected of threatening to undermine working-class morality. "These places, Ward told the magistrates at the 1879 Brewster session, 'were not required for the advancement of either morals or intelligence. Indeed, immorality was likely to be encouraged by such places.'³⁵ A year later he supported the granting of a theatrical licence to the Gymnasium Hall on the grounds that a licence for music and dancing only would see the largest theatre space in town 'turned into a common music hall.'³⁶ Ward was unable to check the spread of music-hall entertainment and many of his fears proved to be ill-founded but, once again, popular leisure was subject to police surveillance. Pubs and beerhouses remained potential sites of conflict in both towns – though there were fewer drunken brawls in the latter part of the nineteenth century – but it was gambling that became more the focus of concern.

Table 11.3 Public houses and beerhouses and arrests and convictions for drunk and disorderly behaviour in Huddersfield. 1875/9 -1895/9 (5-year annual averages)

	Public houses	Beerhouses	Arrest for drunk and disorderly behaviour	Convictions for drunk and disorderly behaviour	Percentage of successful prosecutions
1875-9	160	120	572	542	95
1880-4	160	116	416	397	95
1885-9	161	111	353	316	90
1890-4	163	111	285	256	90
1895-9	164	109	230	214	93

Source: HMIC annual reports and Huddersfield Watch Committee minutes (1870-4)

Gambling

Gambling, in its many forms, had long been a central element in working-class culture. Older favourites, such as pitch-and-toss, remained popular, though increasingly with young lads, while newer forms of gambling, particularly (illegal) off-course betting on horse racing attracted more punters, but it was the sheer range of activities that worried many. Anti-gambling associations took over from temperance groups in the campaign to improve working-class morals. Irrespective of the personal beliefs of chief constables – and Huddersfield's Ward was vociferous in his condemnation – the police were drawn into attempts to curb gambling. For ordinary constables, many of whom came from cultures in which gambling was ubiquitous, there was a tension between their personal views and the demands made of them.

Organised pitch-and-toss was a major problem in Huddersfield in the 1850s. 'The arrangements of the parties thus offending were so complete that he [superintendent Thomas] was obliged to send out two or three policemen every Sunday in plain clothes in order to check this vicious practice.'³⁷ Gambling took place in a variety of outside locations – the canal banks, the brickyard near Fitzwilliam-street, the cricket ground, and so on – but also in most, if not all, beerhouses.³⁸ The town's magistrates were 'wishful to suppress' gambling but, although there were a steady number of prosecutions, there was concern that the police response was half-hearted.³⁹ The *Huddersfield Examiner* sarcastically referred to 'that instinctive horror of gambling which is so strong in the [Huddersfield] force.'⁴⁰ Nor was the force's reputation enhanced when superintendent Thomas was accused of gambling with a prisoner at the quarter sessions at Pontefract.⁴¹ It was not until the appointment of William Hannan that there was a co-ordinated police response to outdoor and indoor gambling. 'The crusade against Sunday gambling is still being prosecuted in and outside the limits of the Huddersfield Improvement Act,' the *Huddersfield Chronicle* approvingly reported in 1866.⁴²

Hannan's successors, Withers and Hilton, put more police resources into curtailing the extent of gambling, especially on Sundays. Withers bemoaned the fact that 'the police had not a chance of going to church ... [because] it took all of their time, morning, afternoon and night to watch the gambling that was going on.'⁴³ Less dramatically, Hilton informed the watch

committee that he 'had to put 12 men on special duty on Sundays, so much gambling was going on.'⁴⁴ With thirteen sergeants and sixty-one constables in the force, this was a considerable investment of resources. And the results were disappointing. Withers had to concede his men arrested a grand total of nine Sunday gamblers, despite not attending church. Somewhat perversely, increased police activity led to growing criticism – 'Where Are the Police on Sundays?'⁴⁵ – as expectations were raised but not realised. But there were two major problems facing the police – apprehension and conviction. Given the ubiquitousness, even the enlarged force of the 1870s faced a daunting task to 'clear the courts, alleys, bye ways and other places' in which gambling took place.⁴⁶ And even when they came across gamblers, there were the practical problems of making an arrest seen in other towns. Numerous accounts in court highlight the frustrations and inefficiency of the police as officers broke up groups but arrested only a few gamblers. Nor did problems end there. There were difficulties in finding witnesses and the practice of "hard swearing," that is lying, compounded matters for the police.⁴⁷ Finally, there were the difficulties of proving that gambling had actually taken place. Magistrates, despite their opposition to gambling, dismissed cases where there was doubt that money had been staked or had exchanged hands. And even if the police had been able to make the town a no-go zone for gamblers, there were nearby places, such as Crosland moor, which were even more difficult for the police to control.

Open-air gambling, especially along the canal banks but also in very public places such as St. George's square remained a problem throughout the 1880s and 1890s. Officers were regularly 'stationed [in St. George's square]' to stop the young newspaper sellers from gambling.⁴⁸ Yet there was a growing sense that the problem was beyond police control. Boys were arrested playing pitch-and-toss literally underneath signs stating, 'Gambling Strictly Forbidden.'⁴⁹ Ward, informed the watch committee in 1891 that 'complaints about gambling were so numerous that [the police] hardly knew how to deal with them.' Exasperatedly he concluded, that 'the police were sent out in all directions on account of them.'⁵⁰ Nor was there much evidence of success in restricting gambling in pubs and beerhouses. Playing cards or dominoes for money were well established pastimes, joined later by the growing popularity of darts. In theory, the licensing acts of 1869 and 1872 and the 1871 Huddersfield improvement act strengthened the hands of the police.

In practice, police action was very limited. Increased police surveillance ordered by chief constable Hilton result in forty-five prosecutions under the licensing acts, only two of which were for permitting gambling. In 1881 chief constable Ward informed the magistrates of his concern that granting licences for dominoes and draughts, billiards and bagatelle encouraged gambling. As late as 1893 he was still opposing all applications for licences for dominoes. Despite his public statements on the dangers of betting in pubs and beerhouses, prosecutions for permitting gambling were few and far between, in several years there being none, despite the fact, acknowledged by Ward, that 'practically every game of dominoes or darts was played for money or money's worth.'⁵¹ The explanation was simple – evidence was hard come by. In his words, 'the only way to detect breaches of the [improvement] act was by the introduction of what he considered to be the obnoxious spy system. This he was loathe to do.'⁵² Exceptionally, public pressure led to police action, as in 1895, following a high-profile police raid on the Acorn Inn.⁵³ The case was unusual in a number of ways. The prosecution was brought under the 1853 Betting Act and the police made use of a 'private enquiry or commission agent,' instead of using constables in the initial collection of evidence. As required, the prosecution was able to prove that one of the defendant's rooms was being used by the other for his 'trade.' It was clear that Swallow spent most of the day and evening in the Acorn, where he was in contact with various bookies' runners. The scale of the transactions, running into hundreds of bets, and the successful prosecution of a bookmaker and elderly landlord made for good copy but the practical impact on betting in the town was marginal, as Ward knew all too well.

The situation was little different in Halifax. Although explicitly referencing Charlestown, a not untypical mid-century critique spoke of 'all kinds of games, such as jumping, tip-cat, marbles and pitch-and-toss [being played and] ...gambling, to no small extent, is practiced.'⁵⁴ As the town's mayor noted 'the practice of playing pitch and toss, especially on the Sabbath, prevailed to a great extent' across Halifax.⁵⁵ And this despite often heavy punishments. John Frain, the only one of a group of lads apprehended, was fined 15s 4d (c.76p) or, in default, three hours in the stocks.⁵⁶ There were the occasional specific directives from the town clerk – to prosecute gamblers in West Park (1867) and near the town cemetery (1872) – but little else. In 1867 a more general directive focussing on gambling in the streets

and in beerhouse was a 'largely cosmetic exercise.'⁵⁷ Matters changed during Clarkson's brief period in office but his successor reverted to a pragmatic policy of 'blind eye' tolerance thereafter. There was an increase in prosecutions in the 1890s with echoes of the anxieties from the 1850s – 'gambling in the open air [was widespread] in the streets of Halifax'⁵⁸ – but it is less clear that this reflected an increase in gambling *per se*. If anything, street gambling was less prevalent in the 1890s and largely associated with young lads but it was only in 1905 that the council decided to criminalise it.⁵⁹ The well-publicised actions of anti-gambling organisations probably influenced police activity. A correspondent to the *Halifax Comet* noted 'in our every day life ... an alarming amount of betting takes place' and criticised the inaction of the police.⁶⁰ Others, not least the active local Anti-Gambling League, highlighted police failure to 'set about the exposure of all the systematic defiances of the law [that is, gambling]' rather than directing their 'relentless fire of surplus energy upon all sorts of trivial and technical offences connected with the "trade," such as the provision of lavatories.'⁶¹ Pole, like Ward in Huddersfield, was conscious of the near impossibility of stamping out pub-based gambling, short of draconian and counter-productive policing measures.⁶²

A further problem – as in Huddersfield – was the presence of easily-accessible nearby moorland in which gambling was more difficult to prevent. 'Gambling schools, it is well known, are held on many moors and out-of-the-way spots.'⁶³ Exceptionally, the police managed to arrest large numbers of gamblers, as at Ogden moor in 1897 when thirty-nine men were arrested. The local press waxed eloquent in praise of chief constable Pole and asserted that 'an occasional raid in force ... will effectually disperse the gambling schools.'⁶⁴ While it was true that 'two or three police can do nothing, the "crows" [lookouts] being too smart to allow them the chance of a capture,' the logistical demands of a large-scale action, such as that at Ogden moor, made such a venture the exception rather than the rule. As Pole recognised, such an approach might satisfy the demand for police action but did little to curb the extent of open-air gambling.

Regulating the streets – vagrancy, foul language and furious driving

Drunken and disorderly behaviour and gambling were seen as the most high-profile threats to everyday physical and moral order but were parts of a wider concern with more mundane threats to order and decorum. A time-honoured and continuing worry was with vagrants. ‘Sturdy rogues,’ women as well as men, unwilling to work, living a life of criminality and exploiting their children were recurring themes in the local press, even when there was an awareness that vagrancy, poverty and the state of trade were causally linked. The policing response to vagrancy took place within the framework of the 1824 Vagrancy Act, amended in 1838, and later effectively supplemented by the Habitual Criminal Act (1869) and Prevention of Crime Act (1871).⁶⁵ Pre-emptive policing, the power to arrest on suspicion, enabled the police to remove ‘problem’ characters from the streets and, with the support of the local magistrates in some cases, even remove them from the town.

Particularly in Huddersfield, the language of invasion and infestation was commonplace and persistent. There was also greater use of the law in the 1850s and 1860s, despite a smaller population and policed area. In the first year of the town’s ‘new police’ force, there were 118 arrests for begging alone, whereas in early-1850s Halifax recorded vagrancy cases averaged a mere twenty per annum. At its most stark, in 1864 there were nine times as many such offences recorded in Huddersfield. In part this can be explained by the greater concern with beerhouse/brothels in Huddersfield, which led to a higher number of women being charged with prostitution but there were also more prosecutions for begging and having no visible means of support. Given the similarities in the local economies and the wider context in which they operated, the difference reflects different policing priorities. It is no coincidence that in anticipating the benefits of the forthcoming 1856 Police Act, the *Huddersfield Examiner* had emphasised ‘the suppression of vagrancy.’⁶⁶ The balance between the two towns changed dramatically in the mid-1870s when the appointment of a new chief constable in Halifax led to a dramatic upsurge in the number of prosecutions. In the last five years of chief constable Spiers’ tenure an average of fifteen prostitutes were prosecuted; in the first three years of Clarkson’s the average soared to almost 160. The moral panic over prostitution – and to a lesser extent begging – disappeared

with the appointment of a new chief constable. Nonetheless, there were still significantly more vagrancy prosecutions in late-nineteenth century Halifax. Huddersfield did not experience a comparable moral panic over vagrancy, even under Withers – if anything, it was under Hilton that more vagrants, particularly women accused of being prostitutes, were prosecuted. During the 1880s there was a sharp decline in prosecution numbers – prostitutes totally disappear (officially) from the streets of Huddersfield after 1883 – and criticism was not of leniency towards vagrants but of ‘a litigious spirit so rife in our local police courts,’ which was at odds with changing social realities.⁶⁷

Table 11.4 Offences under the Vagrancy Act and Local Byelaws, Halifax & Huddersfield, 1861 – 1891 (3-year averages)

	1861		1871		1881		1891	
	Vagrancy	Bye-laws	Vagrancy	Bye-laws	Vagrancy	Bye-laws	Vagrancy	Bye-laws
Halifax total	20	60	55	151	277	275	103	278
Halifax per 000	0.5	1.6	2.6	2.3	11.2	3.7	1.2	3.3
Huddersfield	53	23	77	253	77	267	21	245
Huddersfield per 000	2.4	1.0	1.1	3.6	0.9	3.3	0.7	2.6

Source: Judicial Statistics

Notwithstanding the persistence of the ‘sturdy rogue’ mythology, the case that came before successive magistrates in the two towns showed the extent to which the law fell on the poor and vulnerable in society. The often-patetic figures who appeared in court were people struggling to eke out a living in a ‘makeshift economy’ that encompassed poorly-paid and irregular work, charity, poor relief and petty criminality. Men and women were prosecuted, having been found sleeping in hay lofts, out-houses, cabs and omnibuses, even the local shooting gallery, as well as at the lime kilns, where more than one man was found with clothes afire. Old men and women, no longer fit to work, joined unemployed workmen resorting to begging during trade slumps. ‘Vagrancy infects all part of the town,’ opined the *Huddersfield Chronicle*, ‘but the mendicants are nearly all itinerants, whom want of employment and pressure of hunger have driven to beg their bread from door to door.’⁶⁸ Women driven to prostitution were not simply prosecuted

but even welcomed the prospect of a spell in the local house of correction, 'preferring to be in Wakefield than out,' to the astonishment of magistrates and the bemusement of journalists, referring to 'prison infatuation' among repeat offenders.⁶⁹ Some cases, not common, raised more serious issues. The prosecution of twelve itinerant Italian street musicians in 1877, for example, led to an exchange of letters between chief constable Hilton and the Home Office on the problem of young children from the poorer parts of Italy being bought or stolen and then trafficked to England.⁷⁰ And then there was the very occasional odd-ball prosecution, such as that of Dr Monck, the well-known spiritualist in 1876.⁷¹

Enforcing local byelaws were an important element of police work from the outset of new policing in both towns in the late 1840s. The 1848 Huddersfield Improvement Act incorporated the Town Police Clauses Act of 1847 and police powers over everyday life were further extended by the 1871 Improvement Act.⁷² Similarly, the newly-incorporated Halifax watch committee published (and publicised) a sixty-page booklet detailing the eighty-eight local bye laws,⁷³ which provided for 'the suppression of almost everything which can be deemed, or may become, a public nuisance or annoyance.'⁷⁴ In both towns greater use of these powers was made from the mid-1860s onwards. The appointment of William Hannan in Huddersfield in 1863 saw a dramatic change as the number of prosecutions jumped five-fold in two years and increased by a further 50 per cent on average in the late-1860s. The dramatic expansion of the borough on incorporation pushed up the figures further and it was not until the mid-1880s that prosecutions began to decline. Unsurprisingly, prosecutions under Clarkson in Halifax jumped in the mid-1870s, but not so dramatically and a similar post-1885 decline was also less pronounced. The bye laws were effectively a code of public conduct, covering the activities of various users of the streets and pavements in town. The watch committee minutes of both town are replete with references to wheelbarrows blocking pavements, wagons blocking roads and enthusiastic shop-keepers impeding foot-passengers with their displays; with complaints about exuberant youths jostling pedestrians, high-spirited lads throwing snowballs and sliding on the ice; and with fiery preachers creating disturbances in the marketplace. Of particular concern, especially in the early 1870s, was the use of foul and abusive language. In Huddersfield

between 1869 and 1874, one in three bye-law prosecutions were for swearing in the street.

Traffic problems were not new in the mid-nineteenth century but an ever-growing population and an increasingly diverse and inter-connected economy added to the difficulties in both towns. A variety of horse-drawn vehicles, moving at different speeds, and with drivers suffering from varying degrees of tiredness and inebriation posed a challenge to the early and mid-Victorian police. Hansom cabs and hackney carriages competed with each other, as did rival omnibuses and steam trams. Milkmen, butchers and tripe-dealers vied with a variety of carters plying their trade in town. Although speed differentials were relatively small – at least by post-Victorian standards – a heavily-laden lurry [*sic*] travelling at eight or ten miles per hour was a different proposition to a milk dray going at two or three. St George's Square, Huddersfield was a particularly 'disgraceful and dangerous' place, according to one London visitor in 1871.⁷⁵ Police resources were diverted to traffic duty, especially during the busy early evening period, as early as the 1860s. Hannan informed the Huddersfield watch committee in 1863 that 'he had actually to draw men from the outer beats and place them on duty in John William-street' to ensure safety around the railway station.⁷⁶ Likewise, Hilton had to 'put on extra men in the evenings to see that the men did not drive furiously.'⁷⁷ However, with an ever-increasing number of street accidents in the late-nineteenth century, the police, with their St John's Ambulance training, made a positive contribution.

Police action impacted on a wide range of everyday activities. There were literally thousands of interactions between police and public, the vast majority of which went unrecorded. Even those that did reach the historical record rarely record direct experience and responses. The problems for the historian are considerable – in some respects insurmountable – but it is to the question of popular attitudes towards the police that we turn.

Conflict and consent – popular responses to the police

The new police faced considerably hostility, particularly in their early years. From 1856 there are annual statistics charting recorded assault on the police, which peak in the mid-1870s in both towns but declining steadily thereafter.

The figures are not a measure of all assaults perpetrated on the police, nor are they necessarily a consistent (under)measurement. However, when adjusted for changing police numbers, there is *prima facie* evidence of a decline in anti-police physical hostility.

The appearance of the 'new' police on the streets of Halifax proved problematic from the outset. The *Halifax Guardian* railed against 'such paltry charges and the exhibition of so much over-officiousness [which] bring the police force into disrepute.'⁷⁸ PC Turner, was disciplined by the watch committee having 'very much exceeded his duty' in 1851, but such action was rare.⁷⁹ Assaults on policeman and prisoner rescues more than doubled in the early 1850s.⁸⁰ The initial response in Huddersfield was more muted.⁸¹ However, it is clear that interpersonal violence involving the police was a recurrent feature of the 1850s and 1860s. Reporting often reflected and reinforced current prejudices but certain districts, notably those centred on Castlegate and Upperhead-row in Huddersfield, or Charlestown and Haley Hill in Halifax, were more hostile towards the police, while certain locations, such as the aptly-named Rocky Road to Dublin beerhouse in Halifax saw recurrent brawls with the police.

Table 11.5 Assaults on police dealt with summarily, Halifax & Huddersfield, 1861-91
(3-year averages)

	1861	1871	1881	1891
Halifax				
Assaults on police	11	35	35	19
Police force	36	62	75	82
Assaults per officer	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.2
Huddersfield				
Assaults on police	16	34	27	16
Police force	31	70	89	112
Assaults per officer	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.1

Source: HMIC annual reports and Judicial Statistics

Both towns had substantial Irish populations, housed in the poorest districts and subjected to varying degrees of discrimination, not least accusations of being a Fenian, notwithstanding efforts to stress their loyalty.⁸² There was an understandable suspicion of and hostility towards the police. Irish districts were over-policed and the Irish over-represented in the crime statistics, thereby

confirming pre-existing prejudices. Most assaults involved two or three people but some attracted crowds, either egging on assailants, as in the case of Rose and Mary Devlin, 'excited by the crowd' as they 'threaten[ed] to tear out the eyes' of Sergeant Townend, or intervening to prevent an arrest.⁸³ On more than one occasion, 'the Irish cry' brought a crowd onto the street.⁸⁴ Equally striking was the over-representation of certain officers. PC Partridge was assaulted seven times in Huddersfield between 1850 and 1854. More importantly, there were allegations that he (and other officers) was over-zealous, provoking rather than responding to incidents.⁸⁵ There were 'numerous and frequent ... complaints [in Halifax] that these peace officers are the first aggressors and sole cause of disturbances.'⁸⁶ In July 1855 PC Cooper was attacked by four men, who belayed him with his staff but it transpired that two or three policemen had abused one of the prisoners, provoking a response and leading to a fracas in which the police admitted 'freely using their sticks,' for which they were reprimanded by the magistrates.⁸⁷

Anti-police sentiment was widespread in certain communities and there were individuals with a visceral hatred of the police but there is a danger of misrepresenting crowd protests. A brawl in Swallow-street, Huddersfield in 1859 attracted a crowd estimated to be in the region of 200 when PC Worsnip intervened. On two occasions he managed to separate the fighters before being driven off by the crowd.⁸⁸ Even allowing for journalistic exaggeration, the numbers involved in many of these disturbances were sufficient to overwhelm a single constable, even two or three, had they so wanted. Instead, there was an element of performative protest as men and women hooted their derision as constables arrested prominent troublemakers and dragged them through the streets to the station.⁸⁹ Equally, and without minimizing the physical damage inflicted, actual assaults were as much concerned with humiliating an authority figure. PC Boler had intervened in a Castlegate 'cat fight' only to be attacked by four men who inflicted on him 'the gross indignity of dragging him up and down the street by his beard,' described as 'very flowing.'⁹⁰

Such incidents, if not wholly spontaneous – the 'Irish cry' was an unambiguous and prearranged call to action – were largely uncoordinated. This could not be said of the Irish Small Gang that terrorized Huddersfield in the 1860s and early 1870s. The gang emerged from the overcrowded and poverty-stricken streets around Upperhead-row, where large numbers

of Irish families lived. Above all else, the Irish Small Gang members were bitterly hostile towards the police. They 'had bound themselves by oath to stone the police.'⁹¹ This they did on several occasions and at times even took to the rooftops and threw 'broken slates at the [police] officers' below.'⁹² In other incidents, the gang incited 'mob' attacks to avoid arrest. The most violent attack took place in April 1867 when PCs Ireton and Standish went to arrest John M'Cabe at his home in Upperhead-row. On their arrival, M'Cabe's mother, already armed with a knife, called out eight or nine men of the gang who 'kicked and maltreated the officers and ultimately threw them downstairs.' The two constables, somehow still holding onto John M'Cabe, were 'then dragged and kicked across the street and thrown into a cellar.'⁹³ A crowd of about one hundred gathered, kicking, and punching, and a dog was set upon the two men, as they cowered in the cellar. Eventually, police reinforcement arrived and the M'Cabes, mother and son, brought to the cells, which brought a complaint from Mrs. M'Cabe who alleged police maltreatment and objected to being put in a cell that had been used to poison stray dogs! This was not the last court appearance of John M'Cabe, 'the king of the Small Gang.' In January 1870 he appeared in court for thirteenth time charged with assaulting the police. Nor was this a one-off event. In July 1871, following a brawl involving gang members outside the Wheat Sheaf in Upperhead-row, the cry of 'The police!' brought a large crowd – estimated at 500 or 600 – and in the ensuing clash, 'the police [were] severely maltreated.'⁹⁴ The unfortunate PC Goldthorpe was felled by a brick and 'dragged 30 yards down High Street and kicked all the way.' In fact, by this time the days of the Irish Small Gang were numbered. After incorporation, the town force was enlarged and was led by the determined chief constable Withers who 'evinced a skill, a patience and a judgment which were beyond praise' and 'completely destroyed the gang' or so claimed the *Huddersfield Chronicle*.⁹⁵ There was much truth in the claim but, perversely, the Irish Small Gang were part-victim of their own success. Increased court appearances enhanced their 'hard men' reputation but brought longer prison sentences, as John M'Cabe found when he was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude at Bradford quarter sessions.⁹⁶

The gang members, in their mid- to late-teens and early-20s, numbered between twelve and fifteen members and at their heart were three sets of brothers – the Carneys (James, Joseph and Patrick), the Woods (John

and Michael) and the M'Cabes (James and John). Although they were Huddersfield-born, their parents were from Ireland. The M'Cabe family had a particular hostility towards the police that dated back to the horrific Mirfield murders of 1847. Two Irish hawkers, Patrick Reid, and Michael M'Cabe were arrested, tried, and sentenced to death. Awaiting his execution in York, Reid confessed that he alone was responsible for the murders. Although escaping the gallows, M'Cabe was not pardoned. Instead, he was sentenced to transportation, but remained imprisoned in Pentonville, leaving his wife and two young sons – James and John – destitute. Unsurprisingly, the M'Cabe brothers and their mother had no time for the police. To what extent the Irish community in Huddersfield sympathized with them is impossible to determine; likewise, the extent of support more generally for the Irish Small Gang. The evidence is partial and inconsistent. Fines imposed on members of the gang were paid for by public collections, which suggests a degree of community support but unwillingness to give evidence points as much to intimidation as solidarity.⁹⁷

There was no equivalent gang in Halifax, but the Irish were nonetheless overpoliced and small-scale incidents remained common in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The extent to which anti-police sentiment was to be found in other parts of working-class society is less easy to establish – absence of evidence is not evidence of absence – but targeting other 'rough' elements provoked attacks on the police, particularly in the early and mid-1870s when the zealous and heavy-handed policing of Clarkson and his acolytes provoked an upsurge in anti-police hostility. Complaints of 'frivolous and paltry charges,' police violence and wrongful arrest created a crisis that led to the disciplining of officers and the departure of the chief constable. Initially the response had been an increase in the number and ferocity of assaults on the police, but the wrongful arrest of 'a respectable shoemaker,' Henry Holland, and the conduct of the police 'created the greatest indignation in the town' as it became known that 'he had been dragged through the streets, chained to a woman and forced to have his photograph taken.'⁹⁸ A second incident a fortnight later saw further accusations of assault and false arrest and the more general claim that 'many innocent men had been sent for goal from Halifax.'⁹⁹ The lenient treatment of the police officers involved led to mass protest meetings, attracting support from the middle classes as well as 'respectable' working classes. A unanimous resolution carried 'amidst

loud applause,' called upon the council to dismiss the two policemen closely involved in the incidents because 'the ratepayers no longer had confidence in them.'¹⁰⁰ The chief constable Clarkson was booed as he walked the streets.¹⁰¹ His departure defused the situation and his successor, Pole, reverted to the more targeted and less confrontational approach of the 1860s. The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw fewer drunken brawls – though the Rocky Road to Dublin beerhouse predictably featured more than once – fewer assaults on the police and fewer accusations of police violence but tensions still broke the surface. John Lister, a well-known local figure and member of the Independent Labour Party, publicised incidents of police brutality in several cases, which provoked letters of support in the local press.¹⁰² In the same year as Lister's most recent allegation of 'Police barbarities,' large-scale hostility to the police erupted in Charlestown. 'Women mobbed the police, who had a right lively time, clogs and other missiles flying in all directions,' as the police sought to arrest members of a gang of Irish 'roughs.'¹⁰³ Despite the flippant press reporting, the magistrates passed sentences of three months' hard labour on the ringleaders. Anti-police sentiment had probably diminished but, as in Leeds, it never disappeared.

A not dissimilar trend was discernible in Huddersfield. The years following the break-up of the Irish Small Gang saw a marked fall in the number of reported assaults on the police in Huddersfield. To some degree this reflected behavioral change, a broad-based decline in inter-personal violence, but to some degree it reflected the extent to which the town's Irish community had been assimilated. However, there were residual hostilities that occasionally came to the surface. Crowd assaults on the police, notably in Castlegate, were still seen in the 1880s but an attempt to incite a crowd to action in 1894, the *Huddersfield Chronicle* reported approvingly, failed.¹⁰⁴ In an echo of the past, a 'small gang,' comprising half a dozen young men from Castlegate, 'some of whom had recently returned from serving in the Militia,' were responsible for 'wilful and malicious damage,' including the smashing of street lamps in September 1888 but disappeared as quickly as it had appeared.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, in 1895 another 'small gang,' this time comprising young men and women from Upperhead-row and Swallow-street, exercised 'a kind of terror,' which made it 'almost impossible to get witnesses to come and give evidence.'¹⁰⁶ All had been before the magistrates on a number of occasions, fifteen-year-old Mary Clancy, shockingly, on seventeen occasions, as well as eleven times in

prison. There was no further reference to their activities and, as with the 1880s 'small gang,' there was no explicit anti-police sentiment. The same could not be said of the brutal attack on PC Smith, in a case of mistaken identity, by four labourers of Irish descent during the August bank holiday, 1895, which left the constable 'hovering between life and death.'¹⁰⁷ Although described (rightly) as 'an event which is fortunately rare in Huddersfield,' the attack and its aftermath revealed tensions in society and antagonism towards the police. The transfer of the prisoners to and from court led to 'turmoil and excitement' and the court itself saw angry scenes. There were rumours of attempts to prevent witnesses giving evidence for the prosecution. Friends of the accused 'tried all they could to prevent ... independent evidence being produced,' according to chief constable Ward. When it was, witnesses were verbally assaulted. 'You b---- cow;' Ellen Rattigan shouted at Mary Gallagher, 'if you swear against anybody belonging to me, I will kill you.'¹⁰⁸ Eventually, the four men were committed to the Leeds assize, where they received sentences ranging from six to twelve months. The Smith assault case is a useful reminder that older hostilities persisted, albeit on a smaller scale.

Discussions of anti-police sentiments and actions tended to concentrate on the actions of men. Although often scarce, there is evidence of women's involvement which casts further light on popular responses to the police. As noted in some of the cases discussed previously, women played an active role in anti-police disturbances, often egging on crowds in attempted rescues of husbands and sons, as well as being directly involved. Few if any matched Mary M'Cabe in hatred of the police but many had no love for the men in uniform who harassed and victimized them. The evidence often comes from unlikely sources. In his annual report for 1858, HMIC Woodford specifically drew attention to the inadequacies of the cell provision in Huddersfield and 'some evils, especially when females are under confinement.' Six years later the problem of isolated cells had not been remedied. The extent to which women prisoners were subjected to sexual harassment and assault in custody is impossible to establish but the recurring references to the dismissal of officers due to 'misconduct' with a female prisoner point to a serious but under-reported problem. Occasionally, sexual misconduct made headlines. In August 1858 George Beaumont was found guilty of indecent assault and fined £5 by the Huddersfield magistrates. Beaumont was the town's superintendent of police, and the offence took place in the

police office! The principal witness, Mrs. Poppleton, told the court how Beaumont 'took hold of me, pulled a half crown out of his left trouser pocket, and made improper proposals to me.'¹⁰⁹ To compound matters, the watch committee interviewed her, without any representation, for several hours as they determined Beaumont's fate. His friends accused Mrs. Popplewell of dishonesty and the committee decided the offence was not serious enough to warrant his dismissal. A large and unsympathetic crowd, informed that 'nothing improper was asked of the woman,' expressed its dissatisfaction with the police and the watch committee.¹¹⁰ Mrs. Poppleton, though badly treated, had the satisfaction of seeing her attacker brought to justice. The same could not be said of women accused of importuning or begging. Again, the occasional piece of evidence hints at the realities of a wider problem. In May 1854 three young Irish girls were found sitting on a doorstep in town, 'not drunk, not disorderly, not even asking for alms,' for which they were imprisoned for a month. 'Will they, 'the *Huddersfield Examiner* scathingly enquired of police action, 'reverence the just and merciful laws under which they have been taught such a just appreciation of British law and Justices' justice.'¹¹¹ Similarly, how sympathetic towards the police was the unfortunate (and unnamed) Italian girl whose fourteen-day sentence for begging was finally revoked after an appeal to the Home Office?¹¹² Perhaps she drew solace from the conclusion of the *Huddersfield Chronicle* that the case had not arisen because of 'excessive police zeal,' More research is required but there is already sufficient evidence to suggest that many working-class women were rightly suspicious of, and hostile towards the police.¹¹³

Industrial disputes

The police also dealt with a variety of large-scale events in which they could present themselves as neutral figures charged with maintaining order for the benefit of the public, but this could not be said so easily of industrial disputes. Halifax and Huddersfield experienced several strikes, which played out in a variety of ways. During the Longwood power-loom weavers' strike of 1871, strike breakers were subjected to verbal abuse and during a mass meeting of strikers, including people from outside the area, there was some stone throwing but there are no reports of violence against either strike

breakers or police. The gas strike of 1893 in Halifax saw violent outbursts among strikers and blacklegs. Strikers 'paraded around the gasworks in a threatening attitude' and windows were broken.¹¹⁴ In response 'a strong body of [Halifax] police' guarded the gas works and help was requested from Bradford and Leeds. The latter were unable to provide men but fifty of the Bradford force were dispatched to Halifax. The strike was widely reported, and several accounts noted that 'the police succeeded in clearing the street,' though one newspaper noted this was achieved 'by great effort.'¹¹⁵ There were few violent incidents reported and none of assaults on the police. Similarly, in the Huddersfield gas strike there was a lot of booing and hissing, and even a successful prosecution of a striker for intimidatory behaviour, but no physical violence. Inspector Wiseman of the Huddersfield force, who oversaw the detachment of police protecting the gasworks, had 'nothing to complain of in the conduct of the strikers.'¹¹⁶ Constable Taylor, one of the men on special duty, saw 'nothing to find fault with in the conduct of the strikers.'¹¹⁷ Although there were strong feelings aroused in these strikes, violence was more verbal than physical and directed at strike breakers and not the police.

Even more bitter conflicts, involving physical as well as verbal attacks on 'black sheep' did not necessarily extend to the police on duty. The 1881 Newsome weavers' strike was a case in point.¹¹⁸ The prize-winning firm of Taylor & Littlewood was a major employer with some 750 people on their books. A dispute over pay – the firm planned a new product but refused to pay the usual 'penny a string ... for the extra shuttling' – started in mid-January. The situation deteriorated, first, when 'learners and beginners' were brought in to complete an order, and second, when weavers were recruited from as far afield as Bradford and Shipley, with Littlewood himself playing an active role in recruitment. The arrival of 'black sheep' in the village gave rise to verbal and physical assaults as men and women made their way to and from their local accommodation. Taylor & Littlewood arranged for beds to be installed at the mill and 'a posse of police' were sent to guard the mill and to ensure workers were able to get through the factory gates. Chief constable Ward informed the watch committee of likely trouble in his report for March 1881. His approach, initially, was low key, deploying 'a small number of Constables in plain clothes.'¹¹⁹ This proved insufficient so 'each evening a strong body of men in uniform' was sent the two miles to Newsome with Ward at its head, even though this put 'a great strain' on the

force. Nonetheless, the watch committee determined to continue the police presence, while at the same time, Ward approached the mill owners to make 'some arrangement' to bring matters to an end, though whether this was widely known at the time is unclear. The strike dragged on for several more weeks during which time the first trial took place of three local men, charged under the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act. It revealed the anger among family, friends and workmates of the accused. There was whistling and jeering as sentences were handed down and prosecutors and witnesses needed police protection as they left the court. But, despite the feelings that ran high in the village, the police were not assaulted nor stoned, nor, despite protecting the mill, were they condemned as 'Littlewood's men.'

Some conclusions

The police forces of Halifax and Huddersfield faced similar problems and similar expectations to their counterparts in Bradford and Leeds. Through various pieces of legislation, not to mention local byelaws, the police sought to impose a code of behaviour in public places. Shopkeepers, drivers and pedestrians were expected to behave considerately. Gamblers, drunks and vagrants were not to be tolerated but the focus could vary. The beerhouse/brothel loomed larger as a police priority in Huddersfield (as it did in Bradford), especially in the late-1840s and again in the mid-1860s to early-1870s. Both Hannan and Withers took firm action to deal with this problem but there was none of the 'domestic missionary' zealotry that characterised Clarkson's tenure as chief constable in Halifax. In Halifax both Spiers and Pole encouraged a non-confrontational approach, even if not all constables followed suit. In Huddersfield Hannan openly recognised that police effectiveness depended on their popularity, while Ward was forced to concede the need to tolerate ongoing, low-level criminality. As in other towns, much depended on the behaviour of the constable in the street. Particularly in the early years, there were men who were ill-disciplined and officious. Rough-handling, particularly when making an arrest, could still cause an outcry even in the 1890s but, overall, there were fewer complaints of police bad behaviour in the 1890s compared with the 1870s or 1850s in both towns.

Although there was nothing to compare with the 1844 anti-police riots in Leeds, the activities of the Irish Small Gang in Huddersfield highlighted the extent of hostility to the police in certain sections of the community. More important, was the less spectacular but ongoing hostility, especially among the poor Irish, during the third quarter of the nineteenth century in Halifax as much as Huddersfield. Even when hostility diminished, there were animosities that stretched over generations and erupted, albeit not so frequently, in the 1890s. The late-Victorian authorities in both towns with some justification took pride in the progress on display but antagonism towards and scepticism of the police – much unrecorded – persisted.

Endnotes

- 1 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 12 November 1873
- 2 See annual report 1873, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 15 November 1873
- 3 Incorporation in Halifax saw the passing, with little opposition, of an extensive corpus of by-laws regulating a wide range of daily activities. A similar sentiment was behind the incorporation of the town police clauses act into the Huddersfield improvement act of 1848.
- 4 *Leeds Mercury*, 14 August 1848
- 5 *Leeds mercury*, 4 November 1848
- 6 For example, *Bell's London Life and Sporting Chronicle*, 12 September & 7 November 1841, 8 December 1844, 12 October 1845 and 18 April 1847
- 7 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 4 June 1845
- 8 *York Herald*, 23 December 1848. The session was dominated by the trial of leading Chartists and Sutcliffe's sentence received little attention.
- 9 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 29 November 1862
- 10 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 26 July 1861
- 11 *Halifax Courier*, 4 November 1854
- 12 Statistics from annual police report, *Halifax Courier*, 5 November 1853
- 13 *Halifax Courier*, 5 November 1853 and *Halifax Guardian*, 4 November 1854
- 14 Annual report, September 1864, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 4 February 1865
- 15 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 24 October 1863
- 16 Subsequently the case was taken over by the poor law overseers and the costs of the case met out of the poor rates under legislation passed in 1818.
- 17 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 10 December 1864
- 18 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 January 1865
- 19 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 January 1865
- 20 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 24 June 1865
- 21 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 3 February 1866
- 22 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 24 March 1866
- 23 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 28 August 1869
- 24 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 23 May 1868
- 25 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 8 January 1870
- 26 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 24 August 1872
- 27 Wither's annual report, 1870, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 22 October 1870
- 28 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 10 September 1885. Prosecutions were very few throughout the 1880s and 1890s.

- 29 *Bradford Telegraph*, 27 August 1873
- 30 Posner, 'New Police in Halifax,' p.145
- 31 *Halifax Guardian*, 5 August 1876
- 32 Especially, *Halifax Evening Courier*, 25 August 1893 and *Halifax Guardian*, 20 August 1897
- 33 See details of annual reports in *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 8 June 1880, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 5 December 1885 and *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 5 December 1892
- 34 D Taylor, 'Pedanto, the Great Pedanto, the Daring Pedanto! Early music hall in Huddersfield, c.1855-80,' *Huddersfield Local History Society Journal*, 34, 2023/24, pp. 1-12 and 'The Day Sam Hall Came to the Mechanics Institutes: Early music-hall entertainment in Halifax, c.1855-80,' *Transactions of the Halifax Antiquarian Society*, 2024, pp. 1-13
- 35 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 28 August 1879
- 36 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 30 December 1880
- 37 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 11 May 1850. See also *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 4 September 1852 for gambling gangs. The local press regularly carried reports of prosecutions throughout the 1850s and into the 1860s.
- 38 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 8 March & 1 June 1851, 31 July 1852, 28 May & 31 July 1853, 22 February, 26 August & 11 November 1854, 14 & 21 April, and 12 May 1855, 12 January, 2 February, 12 July & 23 August 1856
- 39 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 23 August 1856
- 40 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 22 December 1855
- 41 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 9 June 1855 and *Huddersfield Examiner*, 31 July 1855
- 42 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 23 June 1866
- 43 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 3 January 1874
- 44 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 June 1877
- 45 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 17 October 1876
- 46 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 30 September 1871
- 47 For example, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 26 February 1859. Over twenty years later, Chief Constable Ward was making the same point about difficulties in obtaining evidence. *Huddersfield Examiner*, 8 November 1881
- 48 *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 30 November 1889 and 2 May 1891
- 49 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 8 November 1881
- 50 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 25 June 1891
- 51 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 27 August 1896
- 52 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 27 August 1896
- 53 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 1 August 1895

- 54 *Halifax Courier*, 4 June 1853. See also *Halifax Courier*, 1 October 1853, 11 & 18 November 1854, and *Halifax Guardian*, 11 March 1854.
- 55 *Halifax Guardian*, 21 October 1854
- 56 *Halifax Courier*, 23 September 1854
- 57 Posner, 'New Police', p.72
- 58 *Halifax Evening Courier*, 23 August 1893
- 59 Posner, 'New Police', p.273. A clause was added to the Halifax Corporation Act.
- 60 *Halifax Comet*, 15 April 1893
- 61 *Halifax Comet*, 13 August 1898
- 62 See *Halifax Courier*, for a good example of the difficulties of obtaining a successful prosecution,
- 63 *Halifax Evening Courier*, 3 July 1897
- 64 *Halifax Evening Courier*, 3 July 1897
- 65 P Lawrence, 'The Vagrancy Act (1824) and the Persistence of Pre-emptive Policing in England since 1750', *British Journal of Criminology*, 2017, pp.513-31.
- 66 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 26 July 1856
- 67 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 1 July 1887
- 68 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 3 January 1879
- 69 The preference was expressed by the oft-imprisoned Brigit Killarney, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 14 April 1864. Julia Carney was accused of 'prison infatuation' on her thirty-fourth conviction, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 27 July 1850
- 70 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 1 September 1877
- 71 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 11 November 1876 and 7 February 1877. The case ended up in the Exchequer Court. Monck was not the only spiritualist to be prosecuted locally under the Vagrancy Act. Emily and Thomas Livesey were found guilty in 1899 but had their conviction overturned at quarter session. *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 10 June and 31 October 1899
- 72 Huddersfield Improvement Acts, 1848, 11 & 12 Victoria, Cap.cxl, § 10 and 1871, 34 & 35 Victoria, ch.cli, (<http://www/legislation.gov.uk/ukla/Vict/34-35/contents/enacted>)
- 73 Bye Laws Passed by the Council of the Borough of Halifax, 1848: From Weaver to Web (calderdale.gov.uk)
- 74 *Halifax Guardian*, 9 September 1848
- 75 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 24 January 1871 cited in C Verguson, 'Mind How You Go! Accidents in St George's Square, 1885- 1930', *Huddersfield Local History Society Journal*, 34, 2023/24, pp. 13-21 at p.14
- 76 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 29 August 1863

- 77 *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 9 September 1875
- 78 *Halifax Guardian*, 7 July 1849
- 79 *Halifax Watch Committee minutes*, 2 September 1851
- 80 *Halifax Guardian*, 5 November 1853. Pearson's report to the watch committee notes twenty-four assaults on the police in 1853 compared with seventeen in 1851 and eight in 1849.
- 81 The minutes of the watch committee are dominated by the problems of creating a disciplined force but there is nothing in the regional press – the first Huddersfield newspaper did not appear until April 1850 – to suggest major problems.
- 82 See for example the meeting in the Crispin Inn of Irish workmen, and some English in support, to show that they had nothing to do with Fenianism. *Halifax Courier*, 18 January 1868 [check?]
- 83 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 2 August 1851. For early attempted rescues see *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 27 March 1852, 10 April 1852
- 84 For example, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 16 September 1854
- 85 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 27 March 1852 and 12 June 1852
- 86 *Halifax Guardian*, 7 February 1852
- 87 *Halifax Courier*, 7 July 1855
- 88 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 25 June 1859
- 89 For example, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 9 November 1850, 8 November 1851, 27 March 1852, 19 February 1853, 16 & 30 September 1854 and 28 July 1855
- 90 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 May 1864
- 91 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 14 January 1865 and 9 June 1866
- 92 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 14 January and 14 October 1865
- 93 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 6 April 1867
- 94 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 15 July 1871
- 95 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 14 November 1874
- 96 Much of the gang actions was simply vandalism, smashing glasses and mirrors in various pubs in town. There was also an element of territorial identity between the Irish Small Gang from 'top of the town' and those from 'bottom of town.'
- 97 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 14 October 1865
- 98 *Leeds Mercury*, 6 July 1876
- 99 *Leeds Mercury*, 19 July 1876
- 100 *Leeds Mercury*, 22 July 1876
- 101 For allegations of police violence see *Halifax Guardian*, 23 August 1873, for

- complaints of frivolous charges see *Halifax Guardian*, 8 July 1876, for assaults on police see *Halifax Guardian*, 5 October 1872, 17 May and 5 July 1873 and for the wrongful arrest of Holland see *Leeds Mercury*, 6 July 1876 and *Halifax Guardian*, 8 July 1876.
- 102 *Halifax Evening Courier*, 10, 12 and 20 October 1889 and *Halifax Comet*, 3 December 1899
- 103 *Halifax Courier*, 6 May 1899
- 104 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 February 1880, 14 November 1885 and 12 August 1894
- 105 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 21 July 1888
- 106 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 11 June 1895 and *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 12 June 1895
- 107 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 1 October 1895
- 108 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 13 August 1895
- 109 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 14 August and 4 September 1858
- 110 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 16 October 1858. The reputation of the force was not enhanced by the contemporaneous revelation that Inspector White had left his wife and was living with a prostitute. The unfortunate 'Black Damp' was subjected to a form of 'rough music' and forced to flee town. White kept his job.
- 111 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 20 May 1854
- 112 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 11 June 1878
- 113 For an insight into the Met police's treatment of suspected prostitutes see D Taylor, 'Cass, Coverdale and Consent: the Metropolitan Police and Working-class women in late-Victorian London', *Cultural and Social History*, 12, Issue 1, 2015, pp. 113–136
- 114 *Halifax Courier*, 16 & 30 March and 6 April 1889
- 115 *Glasgow Weekly Herald*, 16 March 1889. See also *Hull Daily Mail*, 13 March 1889
- 116 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 10 May 1892
- 117 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 10 May 1892
- 118 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 4, 6, 14 & 15 April and 14 May 1881 and *Huddersfield Examiner*, 31 March and 6 April 1881. Adverts for workers at the mill were posted in the regional press from January 1881 and counter-adverts referring to the ongoing strike posted soon after by the strike committee.
- 119 Huddersfield Watch Committee minutes, KMT/18/12/2/84/4, 21 March 1881