13 Conclusions

As Victoria's reign came to its end full-time, paid and uniformed police forces were an established feature of everyday life across the West Riding from cities like Bradford, through towns like Barnsley to villages like Berry Brow. In total there were just over three thousand policemen responsible for a population of some 2.75 million people. By far the largest force was the West Riding County Constabulary with 1225 men. Although not as large as the Lancaster County Force (1600 men), it dwarfed the other Yorkshire county forces (East Riding CC, 134 and North Riding CC 248) as well as counties such as Staffordshire (483 men) and Kent (476 men). It was responsible for policing a population of 1.24 million, or 45 per cent of the riding, including ten municipal boroughs, of which Batley and Keighley were the largest. Of seventeen divisions in the 1890s, three had more than one hundred men and a further six between fifty and ninety-nine. Alongside were ten borough forces, varying in size from over five hundred men in Leeds and Sheffield to around forty men in Barnsley, Dewsbury and Doncaster. In addition to mutual support between West Riding forces, there were after 1890 a number of formal arrangements with outside forces, creating a policing network across the county and with links beyond.[1]

The contrast with the early years of her reign was stark. Then there was no county force and, when the opportunity came in 1841/2, the magistrates rejected the option and determined to introduce a modernised version of parochial policing under superintending constables before being required to establish a county force in 1856/7. Following the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act (1835) borough forces were established in Doncaster, Leeds, Pontefract and Ripon. Elsewhere policing took place under

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local improvement acts (Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Keighley and Rotherham) or under specific police acts (Barnsley and Sheffield), though responsibility was shared, with varying degrees of efficiency, with other bodies. 1848 was an important year seeing the establishment of 'new' police forces under local watch committees in four boroughs (Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield and Wakefield), as well as in Sheffield in 1844; while 1856 marked a further turning point with the establishment of an inspectorate and the introduction of Treasury funding. From the outset there was co-operation between different elements of the policing jigsaw but in the early years it was patchy and *ad hoc*.

Policing in the West Riding developed in a complex fashion over six decades. There was no common (or linear) pattern of development, as strengths and weaknesses varied from force to force and over time. In line with much recent work, the distinction between 'old' and 'new' policing, generally speaking, makes little sense. This was clearly the case in Leeds and, to a lesser extent, Halifax. Even for the county the contrast between the old superintending constable system and the WRCC was less than once suggested. But in Bradford and Huddersfield there was a much greater sense of discontinuity. Overall, there was an ongoing process of experimentation, continuing into the late-nineteenth century but most apparent in the 1840s and 1850s. Not only did a variety of policing models co-exist but also there was considerable movement of personnel between paid constables, nightwatchmen, borough forces and the county force. Options narrowed considerably after 1856 but the continuing existence of small forces in Pontefract and Ripon, the later appearance (or re-appearance) of forces in Barnsley, Dewsbury and Rotherham, and the non-appearance (or non-re-appearance) of borough forces in Batley and Keighley highlight the policing decisions that continued to be made.

In the second half of the nineteenth century both the county and the borough forces became more complex and more bureaucratic. The West Riding increasingly became a modern policed society but, beyond the presence of those full-time, paid and uniformed police officers, in what sense can one talk of a policed society? The idea of a 'policed society' can be traced back to Alan Silver's influential essay, 'The demand for order in civil society,' which focused on the state's role in maintaining public order.[2] Vic Gatrell, in another influential essay, expounded the notion of the policeman-state, described

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as a process in which 'the state assumed increasing control of the criminal justice system, as it did of the police' and whereby there was 'an increasing subjection of law-enforcement in all its aspects to central direction.'[3] He focused particularly on what he described as the 'self-serving and convenient obfuscation' that 'the primary rationale of the policeman-state has been to contain and detect crimes against property and the person.'[4] In so doing he (confessedly) omitted drunks, vagrants, prostitutes, publicans, street traders and traffic offenders, among others. Nonetheless, by considering arrests and summonses, he was able to put approximate figures on 'the [considerable} reach of the policeman' by the early twentieth century. The emphasis on the expanding role of the state – the state monopolisation thesis – has been challenged most notably by David Churchill, who insisted on the need to 'move beyond the idea of a 'policed society,' which he equated with the state monopolisation thesis.[5] In his *Crime Control & Everyday Life in the Victorian City* he makes a powerful case for 'a mixed economy of crime control' and argues that the notion of a policed society (or policeman-state) 'capture[s] neither the breadth of participation in crime control, nor the rich variety of strategies and tactics which actors mobilized in responding to crime.'[6] The focus is similarly to that of Gatrell, 'specifically on property crime' and drawing 'heavily upon evidence relating to indictable criminal charges.'[7] *Crime Control* is an important contribution to the literature on policing but it is not clear that the notion of a 'policed society' is redundant. Churchill acknowledges that 'dealing with the nuisances of urban life … was the staple work of everyday policing,' and that 'the expansion of policing left its deepest mark … on the regulation of the city,' while Gatrell's figures for arrests and summonses reveal 'the comprehensiveness with which urban, poorer, younger and male Britons were liable annually to an experience of police discipline.'[8] Through various pieces of legislation. relating among other things to vagrancy, drunkenness, contagious diseases (in animals and humans) and dangerous substances, and swathes of local bye laws, a disciplinary code of behaviour relating to behaviour in public places was developed and enforced, day on day, by continually-present police forces across the country. It was a world summed up by the Woolley brothers and their co-author, Stephen Reynolds in which the police were responsible for 'the enforcement of a whole mass of petty enactments, which are little more than social regulations bearing almost entirely on working class life.'[9] It was a world recognisable, albeit to

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differing degrees, to the slum-inhabitants of Robert Roberts Salford and of Isaac Binn's village-cum-town of Batley, in the West Riding.[10] It was, more importantly, a world experienced by a host of otherwise unknown men and women across the riding. Alf Crowther and Martin Neville, from Dewsbury, arrested and subsequently fined 10s each for street gambling (not to mention the younger lads let off without punishment this time) knew what it meant to live in a policed society.[11] So too did, the fifteen-year olds, Fred Bates and Joe Holt, and eleven other mill hands, fined 2s each, arrested by the local 'bobby' for playing football in the street in Birchencliffe.[12] So too, Eliza Campbell, imprisoned one month, and William Goode, fined 30s and cost, both in Sheffield for swearing in the street.[13] So too, did George Griffin, arrested for begging in Pontefract and sentenced to twenty-one days with hard labour and Agnes M'Crackney, in Keighley, and John Spedding in Batley, both vagrants arrested and imprisoned for fourteen days for having no visible means of support and disorderly behaviour.[14] And so too, Angelo Forte and Francisco Margotta, fined for playing a hurdy-gurdy and accordion respectively in the streets of Halifax.[15] And the list could be extended with ease from the cities and towns to the villages and hamlets of the West Riding. Policemen were every-day figures who intervened in the every-day lives of ordinary people

But the policeman was not a walking panopticon as he worked his beat, coming and going at (more or less) predictable times. It was, therefore, a world that was still partly-policed; it was a world that was also imperfectly-policed by men whose infirmities and indiscipline rendered them less than efficient; and it was a world in which the limitations of police power were known to the police and the policed and which gave rise to a variety of *modus vivendi* whereby the two learned to co-exist. But behind these commonalities there were important differences in what might be termed the intensity of policing between town and country, between different towns and even within individual towns. The geography of the West Riding meant that the hamlets and isolated farms of the Saddleworth or Ewcross districts, for example, had less routine contact with the police than those in East or West Morley, let alone the citizens of Bradford or Leeds; but this was not always the case, as was seen in the villages of Holmfirth and Honley in the early 1860s where the intensity of policing provoked large-scale popular reactions. Generally speaking, the great towns (Bradford, Leeds and Sheffield) operated at lower police/population ratios but the small policed-area of pre-incorporation

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Huddersfield created a close proximity between police and policed. But much depended upon the determination and priorities of watch committees and chief constables – Clarkson in Halifax increased the intensity of policing in Halifax as did Withers in Huddersfield and to a lesser extent Bradford. But there were limits. The maximalist policy adopted by Clarkson in Halifax not only filled the courts to overflowing but lost public support for the police. Policing necessarily involved an element of compromise and accommodation with the wider public as Ward's recognition of the practical limits of policing gambling in Huddersfield demonstrates. Further, at a more individual level, circumstances often pointed to the pragmatic. Sergeant (later inspector) Corden demonstrated that active policing could also be sensitive. Constables Antrobus and Suttle and sergeant Caygill demonstrated the opposite – to their cost and that of the force – while constable Wardle exemplified the low-key approach to policing that did enough to satisfy his superiors without becoming too involved with local misdemeanours. More generally, even in the late-nineteenth century, when police/population ratios had been reduced, the police remained in a minority. 'Move on' tactics, preventing the build-up of crowds and diffusing hostility, helped maintain situations which highlighted the relative strength of the police. So too the ability of an individual officer, particularly in an urban setting, to call upon rapid support from fellow officers. Nonetheless, there remained a sense in which policing was a 'con,' depending upon a belief that the police were irresistible. Judging when to turn a blind eye could avoid a painful and humiliating beating for an individual constable but, through a rejection of a 'one size fits all' approach, it could also enhance the standing of the police in the community.[16] There was a difficult balance to be struck between too much and too little policing. Notwithstanding all these caveats, it remains the case that mid- and late-Victorian West Riding was a policed society, or perhaps more accurately a collection of varyingly policed societies, but how efficient were the various forces?

From the outset, debates on policing words used words such as 'efficient' and 'effective' liberally, if not always rigorously. Local politicians in town and country were much exercised by the financial implications of policing and the need to consider the associated rate burden in often bitter value-for-money debates in watch committees and councils. It was a situation further complicated after 1856 when her majesty's inspectors of constabulary were charged with the responsibility of adjudging whether a force was 'efficient,'

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and therefore eligible for a government grant. Inspectors were required to 'visit and inquire into the State and Efficiency of the Police' but the act did not define 'efficiency.' In practice, her majesty's inspectors of police considered the number, discipline and appearance of police officers, the quality of record keeping and the condition of the local police estate. It is also clear from the published annual reports and correspondence with local watch committees that forces were adjudged 'efficient' notwithstanding some major problems in relation to these metrics. In hindsight, these attempts to measure police efficiency appear crude and of limited value. However, as the extensive recent literature on police performance demonstrates, defining and measuring police efficiency is highly problematic, if not something of a blind alley. Such is (and always has been) the multi-faceted nature of policing and the changing internal and external priorities, not to mention resource limitations, that finding a meaningful definition of efficiency – let alone identifying appropriate and unambiguous measures – is all but impossible.[17] Rather than seek a definition of historical police efficiency, the following observations will focus on a number of general factors that impacted on police performance – the quantity and quality of recruits, discipline, health and leadership – arguing that over the period there was a diminution in a range of important inefficiencies.[18] Further, it will relate these changes to contemporary and local expectations and to the practicalities of routine policing.

The recruitment and retention of a sufficient number of suitable men was (self-evidently) fundamental. In the long run, and with certain exceptions of time and place – Wakefield in the late-1850s, Dewsbury in the late-1860s, Rotherham in the late-1880s and even Bradford in the early-1870s – recruitment was less of a quantitative problem. Scores of men presented themselves as candidates to join the various forces across the West Riding. Many were already living in the county, though a growing number were recruited from further afield – from poorer districts elsewhere in Yorkshire, East Anglia, Cumberland and Westmorland, and northern Scotland. There were other important constraints, not least the willingness of local politicians to fund police numbers. The correspondence between government inspectors and local watch committees reveals several examples of local politicians reluctantly and tardily responding to criticisms of inadequate numbers (or estate) and even in a few cases openly rejecting suggested increases in numbers. The interplay of these factors led to varied outcomes, as a snapshot

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of police/population ratios for 1902 reveal.* In that year, it was deemed that 'the management, numbers, and discipline' of each force had been 'efficiently maintained.' Vacancies at inspection were negligible, except in Huddersfield (4 per cent) and the WRCC (3 per cent) but the population per constable varied markedly. At its starkest, the police/population ratio was 45 per cent higher in the worst provided town (Barnsley) than in the best (Bradford). Nor was there a simple pattern in terms of population. Halifax and Rotherham stand in contrast to Huddersfield, Sheffield and Wakefield.

Table 13.1
Population per constable in West Riding forces, 1902

	Population (000) 1901	Force size	Population per constable	Population per constable 710 = 100	Vacancies
Bradford	280	394	710	100	0
Leeds	429	572	750	106	0
Sheffield	409	515	794	112	0
Halifax	105	107	980	138	0
Huddersfield	95	120	792	116	4
Barnsley	41	40	1027	145	1
Dewsbury	28	37	758	107	1
Rotherham	54	57	953	134	0
Wakefield	41	531	781	110	0
WRCC	1239	1232	1005	142	37

Source: HMIC Annual report, 1903

The problem was more qualitative and the qualities required to be a successful policeman were considerable and changed over time. As well as needing a robust constitution to cope with the demands of routine beat-work and the every-day dangers of policing, a successful policeman need basic literacy skills (written and oral), a willingness to submit to the discipline of a hierarchical and regimented institution, as well as inter-personal skills in dealing with a diverse public. And the reward for all this were wages that did not, for the most part, compare favourably with those in local industries, and the possibility of a pension. Wastage rates, from dismissals or resignations, were stubbornly high until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, even in the

* Doncaster and York are excluded for reasons given previously.

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longer-established forces. Problems were particular acute in those years that saw a significant increase in number, often but not exclusively in the early years of a force. Huddersfield (but not Halifax) in the 1850s, Dewsbury in the mid- and late-1860s, Rotherham in the late-1880s and Barnsley in the 1890s all experienced significant difficulties but so did Leeds in the mid-1850s, Huddersfield (again) in the early-1870s and Bradford in the 1890s, as boundary changes necessitated major augmentations.

By the late-nineteenth century wastage rates were significantly lower across most forces. Total annual variations in the cities (as they had become) and the medium-sized towns was around 5 per cent of the overall force. However, the smaller and newer forces performed less well, Barnsley particularly so, but still better than forces in the third-quarter of the century. There was a concern that smaller forces – long-established and less so – had greater difficulty in attracting and retaining men, for whom the better pay and greater promotion opportunities of nearby larger forces were a lure. The overall statistics mask important variations. Dismissals and compulsory resignations in the cities and medium-sized towns were significantly higher in Bradford and Huddersfield, and more so in Barnsley and Dewsbury. Voluntary resignation (including resignation due to ill-health) levels fell but remained a significant element, even in the much-praised forces in Leeds and Sheffield. Again, the newer forces, despite often recruiting experienced men from existing forces performed less well – though the very high figure for Rotherham is skewed by men resigning to join the Barnsley force. Higher levels of resignation were also to be found in the WRCC. Improved rates of pay and the right to a pension was still not enough. The figures also point a lower level of indiscipline compared with the first generation of new policing, which in turn suggests a combination of improvements in recruitment and early training, a less-unqualified workforce, but also a more realistic assessment of the job on the part of recruits. Nonetheless, overall wastage, particularly among early-year recruits, remained an unresolved issue.

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Table 13.2 Average annual variations in West Riding forces, 1895-99

	Overall variation rate	Resignations as % of overall variation	Dismissals & compulsory resignations as % of total variations	Pensions as % of total variations
Bradford	5	27	24	37
Leeds	5	36	12	40
Sheffield	6	35	12	46
Halifax	6	50	10	33
Huddersfield	4	24	24	48
Barnsley	12.5	52	33	0
Dewsbury	9	31	44	6
Rotherham	10	80	19	1
Wakefield	7	20	20	47
West Riding CC	8	46	19	31

Source: HMIC annual reports

These figures need to be treated with caution. Part of the decline in recorded police indiscipline was more apparent than real, being the product of changing practices as chief constables assumed greater responsibility for minor disciplinary infractions, particularly in the cities. There is also the problem of detected but unreported indiscipline, let alone undetected cases. Nonetheless, broadly speaking, discipline improved over time but in some forces – Barnsley, Dewsbury and even Bradford – it remained a challenge for senior officers. Similarly, figures for ill-health resignations are the tip of greater problem of sickness, both physical and psychological, much of which is simply unrecorded. The occasional estimate – 3866 days lost in Leeds in 1864 – offers a very partial insight into the scale of the problem. Chief constable Ward's inquiry into sickness absences in Huddersfield provides more systematic evidence, albeit of a particularly acute problem. More research on conduct registers – beyond the scope of this work – offers a way forward. In the absence of robust figures, one can merely note that a significant minority of men will have been absent from duty due to physical and psychological problems – current research suggests overall absence rates of just under 10 per cent[19] and a similar percentage suffering from stress[20] – and an unknowable number on duty but working inefficiently through ill-health.

Equally important, but more difficult to evaluate, was police morale. It is clear that in all forces there were well-motivated and active officers, many of

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whom moved up the ranks, but little is known about the majority of men, who left little or no trace in the historical record. In broad terms, changing attitudes towards policing as a long-term career, improved conditions of work (including the provision of educational and recreational facilities), and a growing *esprit de corps*, arising out of formal and informal activities, ranging from the campaign for pension rights, through brass bands, cricket and football teams, to the branches of the Christian Policemen's Association, not to mention the Bradford Police Glee Union, played a part in improving *camaraderie* and morale. On the other hand, continuing high levels of resignations and the persistence of ill-discipline point to countervailing forces. And then there are the 'known unknowns.' How many men worked out their time to a pension, doing the minimum without falling foul of authority?

Leadership was a key element in improving performance and morale. Recent work on chief constables has drawn attention to their impact, for better and worse, in Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester.[21] Equally important, though less studied, were the superintendents, inspectors and sergeants who made up the chain of command. As one might expect, the quality of leadership at the top varied considerably. The long-serving Jackson in Sheffield made a very positive contribution, combining personal flair with an ability to forge and maintain a working relationship with successive watch-committee members, and a mix of man-management skills that enabled him to improve disciplinary standards without alienating substantial numbers of his men. Withers in Huddersfield (and later in Bradford) and Ward, also in Huddersfield, were further examples of men who were able to work with their political masters, tackling problem of indiscipline (and unregulated sickness) while carrying with them the bulk of their men. On the other hand, weak leadership in Dewsbury and Huddersfield in the 1850s and 1860s contributed to the poor early performances of the police in both towns. Similarly, in Halifax, Clarkson created a crisis in policing by alienating members of the local watch committee, dividing the force between his appointees and others, and antagonising wider opinion through his over-zealous approach. More generally, there was a growing awareness that the leadership of increasingly larger and more complex forces required new skills. It was no longer sufficient to be a good 'thief-taker,' like Thomas in Huddersfield and Grauhan in Bradford, or to have a military background. It is no coincidence that later successful chief constables – Pole in Halifax

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and Arthur Nott Bower in Leeds – had had previous experience as chief clerks. There were limits to what even an energetic chief constable could achieve. Much depended upon support from the local watch committee and, as Leeds well exemplified, reforming chief constables were thwarted by unwilling local politicians. There was a further, more fortuitous constraint – ambition. These were men who had worked their way through the ranks and were looking to further their careers. In some cases, notably Withers in Huddersfield, an increased salary was the gaol and the unwillingness of the watch committee to meet his demand led to his departure to Bradford. In other cases, notably William Nott Bower in Leeds, it was a desire to move to a larger or more prestigious force. Nonetheless, the overall quality of chief constables was higher by the 1880s and 1890s than it had been forty years earlier but two important qualifications must be made. First, there remained scope for improvement as became clear in the following decades, especially after the Great War. Second, these men were effectively part of a management team and dependent upon others. This was nowhere clearer than in the WRCC, where successive chief constables depended not only on a HQ team at Wakefield but also on the superintendents responsible for the running of the various divisions, some of which had more men than most borough forces in the riding. More work is required on these men and, even more so, on the inspectors, sub-inspectors and sergeants below them. Suffice it to say that the continuing number of men promoted to these ranks but subsequently being demoted (or requesting to be demoted) points to a weakness in identifying and training men for these posts. Again, progress in the coming decades highlights the limits of Victorian improvement.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the police of the West Riding were better led, better organised, less poorly educated, less ill-disciplined and (some at least) even less unhealthy. These were considerable, if incomplete, achievements and it was not just nostalgia that led long-serving chief constables, like Ward in Huddersfield, let alone Jackson in Sheffield, to look back with pride at the improvements that had been made during their period in office. Yet – and it was not only in regard to relations with their political masters – police performance was greatly influenced by broader factors over which they exercised limited control. One such was the relationship with the wider policed public. As chief constables Hannan recognised in the 1860s, Clarkson found to his cost in the 1870s and Ward conceded in the 1890s,

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without sufficient public support, policing became nigh-on impossible.

The final theme that runs through the book is the contentious issue of policing by consent, recently described unproblematically by the Home Office as 'a long-standing philosophy of British policing' traceable back to the first Metropolitan Police Commissioners,' and eulogised in Charles Reith's 1956 *New Study of Police History*, as 'a philosophy of policing unique in history … derived not from fear but almost exclusively from public co-operation … [which] secures and maintains for them [the police] the approval, respect and affection of the public.'[22] It is a formulation repeated more prosaically (but equally unproblematically) in texts such as *Blackstone's Student Police Officer Handbook*, as 'the active cooperation and tolerance of a majority of the populace,'[23] Several social scientists have adopted a more critical stance. Reiner and Wilson refer to the myth of policing by consent, while Crowther and Campling highlight 'the popular misconception in police history that the police have won the consent of the entire population' – a view argued by an earlier generation of radical criminologists, not least Scraton, who wrote of 'the controversial tradition of the police.'[24] Historians, particularly following the publication of Storch's influential 1970s articles, have shown a greater awareness of the troubled history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century policing but without a rigorous definition of policing by consent and related key concepts such as legitimacy. The doyen of English police historians, the late Clive Emsley, devoted two chapters of his influential *The English Police* to a thoughtful discussion of various aspects of police/public relations but did not explicitly discuss policing by consent.[25] Similarly, the present author, in *The new police in nineteenth-century England* baldly states that 'policing by consent (however begrudging in certain quarters) had become a reality by the late nineteenth century' without discussing the term or offering a definition of it![26] Even David Churchill, in probably the most important book on nineteenth-century Victorian policing of the last few years, despite making several perceptive observations on the weaknesses of 'optimist' interpretations, nonetheless does not offer a meaningful definition of policing by consent.[27]

The most sustained examination of the concept of police legitimacy and policing by consent remains that of Robert Reiner. In *The Politics of the Police* he describes policing as 'inherently a "dirty work" occupation … concerned with the ordering of conflict, [and whose] practices were the result of conflict

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not social consensus.'[28] Reviewing an earlier debate, he rightly criticized 'both the orthodox and revisionist approaches' for their 'absurdly absolutist conceptions of what consensual policing could mean.'[29] Reiner refers at one point to the police as 'a regrettable necessity' and at another to the acceptance of their '*de facto* power' as 'grudging' and 'sullen.' This raises the question of what is meant by the term, consent. Consent can take various forms from a normative agreement that something is 'the right thing to do,' through pragmatic acquiescence and calculative acceptance and even to a quasi-coercive, no choice but 'to obey the law.' And different people can give consent for different reasons at various times.[30] Reiner argues that 'realistically, the most that "policing by consent" can mean is not universal love of the police, but that those at the sharp end of police practices do not extend their resentment at specific actions into a generalised withdrawal of legitimacy from either individual officers or the institution of policing *per se*. In other words, police legitimacy means that 'the broad mass of the population … [including] some of those who are policed against, accept the authority, the lawful right of the police to act as they do, even if disagreeing with or regretting some specific actions.'[31] Further, while noting that the police tactic of using minimal force does not mean force will never be used, he highlights the particular problems associated with the policing of collective disorder and the danger that hostility to (for example) the policing of strikes carries over into a more general 'delegitimation of routine police operations.'[32] Reiner concludes with the observation that the most that could be achieved (as was the case in the 1950s in his view) was a combination of 'the wholehearted approval of the majority of the population who did not experience the coercive excise of police powers to any significant extent' and, more difficult to achieve, 'the *de facto* acceptance of the legitimacy of the institution by those that do.'[33]

Reiner's 'realist' definition of policing by consent provides a valuable framework but certain additional points need to be borne in mind. The protracted, varied and piecemeal process of police reform and the problems of evidence, combined with the generational differences between those experiencing the introduction of new policing in any given area and those later generations for whom policing, rather than being new, was an established part of everyday life, means that there are no simple and clear-cut conclusions to be drawn. For the vast majority of the population, policing by consent was not an abstract concept to be debated in principle but was something lived

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(and re-lived), growing out of specific contexts and specific experiences of policing. Attitudes towards the police were conditioned by lived, quotidian experiences. The myriad interactions between police and policed, the bulk of which went unrecorded, were of fundamental importance in shaping popular responses. In addition, such interactions carried with them an ideological component, although often implicit or partially articulated, relating to the perceived legitimacy of police action regarding a specific activity (street gambling or swearing in public, for example, but also strike action) or a specific location, or event, notably in contested semi-public, semi-private places, such as back lanes or back yards. This in turn raises a further complication: multiple interactions with, and responses to, the police. A hypothetical 'respectable' artisan might welcome police assistance in the case of a theft from or damage to his property; be annoyed at the restrictive presence of the police at certain of his leisure pursuits; but angered at the heavy-handed and biased policing of the strike in which he was involved. For others, the situation was more straightforward. For those for whom the streets were both the site of work and leisure, interactions with the police were likely to be frequent and often negative. At the other extreme, at least prior to the advent of the motor car, there were those for whom interaction with the police largely took the form of calling upon them for assistance, and whose judgements were influenced by the perceived efficiency (including cost) of the police in maintaining 'order and decorum' in public.

The notion that the long-term relationship between police and public was characterised by 'the approval, respect and affection of the public' quickly dissolves in the face of hard facts. In the West Riding there were a number of major disturbances, all some years after the introduction of 'new' police, which point to broad-based, if short-lived, anger. The best-known anti-police riot took place in Leeds in 1844 and there can be little doubt that popular hostility extended beyond the 'mob' or 'rabble,' though the 'respectable people,' who thronged the streets were more sympathetic towards the police.[34] Nonetheless, the scale and duration of the rioting reflected a more deep-rooted and underlying antipathy towards the police in certain quarters, notably but not exclusively the Irish poor. Nor was this the only large-scale anti-police incident in the town in the 1840s. Nor were anti-police disturbances confined to Leeds. The 1855 Paradise-square disturbance in Sheffield also involved violent conflict between crowds of Irish and the police.

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And even when disturbances were relatively small-scale, as in Bradford in the mid-1850s, the 'the police had odium enough to bear.'[35] The problem was not confined to 'the great towns.' Indeed, some of the most organised and persistent anti-police activity was to be found in Huddersfield and Dewsbury. The 'Irish Small Gang' that terrorised Huddersfield for much of the 1860s and early-1870s was a fluctuating group of young English-born Irish youths, who were responsible for a spate of violent anti-social activities and were strongly motivated by an explicit dislike of and contempt for the police, which manifested itself in some spectacular conflicts with them. So too, the 'Young Forty Thieves' who were active in Dewsbury from the late-1860s to the early-1880s. The gangs themselves eventually petered out, their ranks thinned by prison sentences, but the sentiment did not disappear. As late as 1892 the *Batley News* spoke of men from Daw Green, Dewsbury who still 'pay no regard to the police forces, borough or county.'[36] These manifestations of anti-police sentiment were strongly associated with specific over-policed 'other' groups in society but the most serious challenges to police authority – in Honley and Holmfirth in 1862 – were more broadly based. In both villages coalitions of working- and middle-class men and women protested against unacceptable police behaviour, leading to the removal of unpopular officers – one being literally run out of the village.

These incidents were serious and cannot be lightly dismissed. However, their significance is open to debate. The gang violence associated with the 'Irish Small Gang' and the 'Young Forty Thieves' was not replicated later in the century. Further, the extent of working-class support for both the 'Irish Small Gang' and the 'Young Forty Thieves' is open to question. Similarly, popular attitudes in Leeds may well have changed. Another red on blue lobster clash (soldiers v police) in 1862, not dissimilar to 1844 saw public feeling 'very strongly in favour of the police.'[37] Most telling were the responses to the troubles in Holmfirth and particularly Honley. In both cases it was clear that the inhabitants wanted a properly policed society, one in which the police had a role to play but also had to show respects to the rights and feelings not just of 'respectable' men and women but also 'ordinary folk.' There was no further trouble in either villages. Nor were there comparable outbreaks elsewhere, notwithstanding PC Suttle's musical farewell to Emley in 1872.

A more specific source of anti-police sentiment was the policing of strikes. Once again, the evidence is far from clear-cut. On the one hand, there were

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clear cases in which the police were condemned for being on the side of various employers. The clashes between strikers, 'black sheep,' and police during the strike at Thorncliffe colliery in 1869 were particularly violent and the police were openly condemned as 'Huntsman's men' by the former. A generation later the strikes in the south Yorkshire coal districts gave rise to similar responses. The 1893 "Featherstone Massacre" was the most notorious event but the police faced considerable opposition in the surrounding district, including Broughton-lane, Sheffield where criticisms of the police mirrored those heard in 1869. Indeed, the early-1890s saw considerably anti-police sentiment, notably during the Manningham Mills strike in Bradford, 1891 and the Leeds gas strike of 1890. But on the other hand, there were strikes where the police had been called in to deal with violence between strikers and 'black sheep' but did not see anti-police sentiments or actions, such as weavers' strikes in Huddersfield (1857) and nearby Newsome (1881). Nor did the gas strikes in Halifax and Huddersfield see the anti-police violence experienced in Leeds. Yet more surprising was the co-operation between police and strikers and the positive responses to police behaviour at Denaby colliery during strikes, including the eviction of strikers and their families, in 1885 and again in 1902/3. Precisely how this translated into more general attitudes towards the police is unclear – evidence is simply not available – but care needs to be exercised in drawing conclusions from such varied evidence.

Riots made good copy – and not just for Victorian journalists – but such events were untypical of the myriad interactions between police and public across the years in the riding. Some direct contacts left a historical record but many others simply did not. Indirect contacts, an awareness of a police presence in the street, likewise rarely did so. And yet it is from this fragmentary evidence that (tentative) conclusions have to be drawn. There were, undoubtedly, individuals with a lasting and intense hatred of the police and for whom policing was coercive. Henry Sanderson, aka 'Red Harry,' a well-known drunk and brawler from Holmfirth was one such man. Confronting a WRCC officer in a local beerhouse, he made clear to him that 'Ov owd thee a grudge an ol pay thee off afore thee goas 'yoat o' this heease' and, good to his word, he assaulted PC Rhodes (and PC Mozley for good measure) and was duly fined £4.[38] But 'Red Harry,' and others like him who regularly experienced coercive police power, did not question that the police were 'doing their job' in arresting him. Likewise, the cab driver, furiously driving

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through Ripon or Rothwell, or the street porter, obstructing the footpath in Keighley or Kimberworth, may have resented police interference but accepted their presence and increasingly conformed with the byelaws they enforced. Indeed, beyond the pragmatic recognition, more obvious over time, that the police were here to stay, was a begrudging recognition, even amongst those directly affected, that the police had a role to play, not least in minimising the disruptions to everyday urban life; and even a calculative view that, in certain circumstances, the police could play a positive role. None of this added up to wholehearted support but it was sufficient to reduce hostility towards the police that could have led to a widescale withdrawal of support, as had happened most clearly in Holmfirth and Honley. Nonetheless, as Churchill has forcefully argued, strong anti-police sentiments were still to be found in Leeds in the 1880s and 1890s, though as he concedes, such views were expressed in 'problematic encounters' and cannot be taken as typical.[39] Nor do they undermine anything but an absolutist concept of policing by consent.

Much of the discussion of popular attitudes towards the police is confined to male responses. While it is clearly the case that young working-class men were much more likely to have a (petty) criminal record and more likely to be involved in a confrontational situation with the police, it is important to look at women's responses, though the evidence is (at present) slight. An unknown number had negative interactions with the police and some were openly hostile towards the police. Few women had a hatred of the police to match that of Mrs McCabe but many took part in the crowds that jeered and attacked policemen across the riding. In addition, were those whose interaction with the police was problematic. We know of the assault on Mrs Popplewell by superintendent Beaumont in 1850s-Huddersfield but virtually nothing of other women mistreated in the town's police cells. Likewise, we know of Ely Wrigglesworth, dragged from her sick bed by two Bradford policemen in 1850 but not even the name of the woman beaten by PC Field in the same town and in the same year. Similarly, the prostitutes 'fined' by the police in Holmfirth in the early-1860s are anonymous figures on the periphery of a newspaper report. So too the mill girls attacked by Bradford police during the Manningham Mills strike in 1891. Occasionally, there is evidence of young girls wrongly arrested under the Vagrancy Act but how many women were accused of being prostitutes under the same

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legislation? Not all women had such experiences but until more research is done it is impossible to arrive at any firm conclusions.

The question remains: in what sense (if any) can one talk meaningfully of policing by consent in the Victorian West Riding? Surveying the patchy, often partial, evidence, some of which was ambiguous, some of which contradictory, it is clear that there is no simple, unequivocal answer. Nor is the matter helped by various chronologies of police development across the riding. The early Victorian years (to c.mid-1850s) saw much of the old policing structures and practices in place in many parts, with police reform only gradually developing from the mid- and late-1840s. Leeds, the town with the longest record of police reform, saw major anti-police violence break out in 1844 but there were (from the point of view of the local authorities) worrying incidents in parts of Bradford, Dewsbury, Huddersfield and Wakefield. The arrival of uniformed, full-time constables provoked hostility but never the resistance seen just across the border in Colne. On a more mundane level, scattered through the pages of the local press, were incidents of police brutality that smacked more of coercion than consent. Both police and policed, in effect, were struggling to determine practical rules of engagement, even in places were there was a clear element of continuity between old and new policing. The mid-Victorian years (c.1855-75) saw the first generation of new police operating across the riding. It was in these years- that a *modus vivendi* emerged out of a myriad encounters between police and public – or, more accurately, between various policemen and various members of the public. Given the intrusive purpose and potential of the police, it is perhaps surprising that there was not greater resentment and hostility. There were certain sections of society that were not easily reconciled to the police. Colliers in numerous villages in the south of the riding were to be found disproportionately in the crime statistics, as were (most obviously) the Irish; and there were certain districts – Daw Green, Dewsbury, Silsbridge-lane, Bradford or Castlegate, Huddersfield – that had a reputation for lawlessness and a disregard for the police. And yet on closer examination, even in these trouble spots, there were signs that these were policed districts. When *Saunterer* ventured into the environs of Silsbridge-lane, he found the expected squalor and immorality but he also found policemen, patrolling in and around the lane, asking 'ruffianly and vicious' young men to "move on" and exchanging pleasantries with the 'giggling girls' outside the music

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saloon. This is not to say that policemen were not assaulted in the beerhouses of 'the Lane,' every so often – they were – but behind the court reports of violent conflict was a more mundane and less contentious reality as each side adjusted to the presence of the other. So too in Castlegate. Though lacking a *Saunterer*, it too was regularly policed. At times the Huddersfield police had 'great difficulty in doing their duty' and superintendent Hannan was 'obliged to send the officers there in couples.'[40] Nonetheless, two officers were long-term residents of Castlegate and lived unmolested – with one exception when a desperate Mary Wilson, looking to spend time in the Wakefield house of correction broke a window in PC Wilson's lodgings. Even more significant were the events in Honley and Holmfirth. In both villages trust between the police and the public broke down dramatically in 1862 but in neither village had there been serious problems since the introduction of the WRCC in 1857 nor was there any comparable trouble afterwards. The events highlight the fact that policing by consent was essentially an ongoing process rather than a once-off event. 1862 was significant for both the breakdown and the restoration of a properly policed society, characterised by consent rather than coercion. By the late-Victorian years (after c.1875) the West Riding was in its second generation of policing. It was not a 'golden age' but there was less violence, less drunkenness and less (virtually no) large-scale hostility towards the police. Mistrust and dislike was still to be found particularly in (though not confined to) Dewsbury and Leeds. A constable was murdered, albeit in a case of mistaken identity, by young men from Castlegate and the subsequent trial revealed no love of the police that went beyond hatred of a particular officer, but this was an exceptional event. More generally, and more importantly, the old 'Irish cry' no longer rallied the denizens of Castlegate to fight the police, as it had a generation earlier. Police chiefs in the late-nineteenth century and their political masters prided themselves on the orderly state of their towns and the good standing of their police forces. There was an element of 'boosterism' and exaggerated civic pride in these statements but there was also an underlying important truth. Viewed realistically, as Victoria's reign came to an end, the West Riding was not only a policed society, it was also one policed by consent, albeit begrudging at times, rather than coercion. Over time a *modus vivendi* had emerged. There was accommodation on both sides. A majority of the policed population recognised the permanence of the police as an institution and acknowledged their legitimacy as law-enforcers.

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Further, they modified their behaviour, they accommodated to the realities of a policed society. At the same time, the police, for the most part, also accommodated their behaviour, recognising the practical limitations of their powers. Policing by consent rather than coercion was not simply a lofty ideal, it was also a practical necessity. Recalling Reiner's definition, the police had gained *de facto* acceptance by those, overwhelmingly petty offenders rather than hardened criminals, who felt the day-to-day coercive power of the police and their undoubted resentment at specific police actions did not turn into a wider withdrawal of legitimacy of the police. Consent was always less than 100 per cent in a much-divided society, and it was often expressed negatively and given reluctantly. Even among 'respectable' law-abiding working-class men and women there remained a sense that the local bobby might live in the community but was not of that community. Nonetheless, it was consent and the bobby lived and worked in the community.

The overall purpose of this book has been to chart the development of policing in the West Riding from c.1840 to 1900. Specifically, it has argued, firstly, that the West Riding was a policed society (or a collection of policed societies) clearly in 1900, recognisably so as early as c.1860; secondly, that the police forces of the riding became better managed and less inefficient in light of the resources made available and the contemporary expectations of them; and, thirdly, that a pragmatic but meaningful policing by consent was created in the riding. Inefficiencies remained in management, discipline and performance, problems of retention were still challenging and significant pockets of hostility towards the police remained but these caveats should not obscure the very real changes that had taken place in these years.

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Endnotes

1 The industrial troubles in Hull in May 1893, for example, saw over a hundred men sent from Halifax, Huddersfield, Leeds and Sheffield. Later in the same year the Sheffield force also lent men to the Derbyshire force. HMIC Annual report 1893

2 A Silver, 'The demand for order in civil society: a review of some themes in the history of urban crime, police and riot,' in D J Bordua, ed., *The Police: Six Sociological Essays*, New York, 1967, pp.1-24. The term was subsequently broadened beyond riot/public order.

3 V A C Gatrell, 'Crime, authority and the policeman-state,' in F M L Thompson, ed., *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750 – 1980*, vol. 3, Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp.244 and 260

4 Gatrell, 'Crime, authority and the policeman-state,' p.245

5 D C Churchill, 'Rethinking the state monopolisation thesis: the historiography of policing and criminal justice in nineteenth-century England,' *Crime, History & Societies*, 2001, 18/1, pp.131-152, at p. 145. In the abstract he writes of 'the state monopolisation thesis – the idea of the 'policed society,'' equating the two concepts.

6 David Churchill, *Crime Control & Everyday Life in the Victorian City: The police & the Public*, Oxford University Press, 2017, p.241

7 Churchill, *Crime Control*, pp.243 and 244

8 Churchill, *Crime Control*, p.246, but see also p.117 for an enumeration of various groups, not just the marginalised, coming under increased police scrutiny, and Gatrell, 'Crime, authority and the policeman-state,' p.279

9 S Reynolds and B & T Woolley, *Seems So! A Working-class View of Politics*, London, Macmillan, 1911, p.86

10 Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century*, London, Penguin, 1971 and I Binns, *From Village to Town*, Batley, 1881.

11 *Dewsbury Chronicle*, 15 March 1890

12 *Huddersfield Dail Examiner*, 22 April 1891

13 *Sheffield Independent*, 18 March 1874

14 *Pontefract Advertiser*, 12 March 1859 and *Keighley News*, 5 October 1872 and *Batley News*, 29 March 1890

15 *Halifax Guardian*, 1 September 1877

16 Police discretion did not always work toward the minimizing of conflict. Senior officers in a number of forces were concerned with the counterproductive 'enthusiasm' of some of their officers.

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17 See for example the Home Office, 'Policing Productivity review,' 2024 www.gov.uk/government/publications/policing-productivity-review/policing-productivity-review-access and A Ludwig, et.al., eds., 'Measuring Police Effectiveness,' https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=http://ggcpp.nuff.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Police-Effectiveness.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwiz1cy0wOKGAxUmUkEAHf82CKoQFnoECBkQAQ&usg=AOvVaw2NBBx8m24J_DsqohcMgp0e

18 Lack of evidence and space means that other factors such as communications and information dissemination have been omitted and others, such as morale, only lightly touched on.

19 Police Federation, https://www.polfed.org/news/latest-news/2022/npcc-data-shows-a-national-absence-rate-for-police-officers-and-staff-of-94-per-cent/

20 A Cartwright & J Roach, 'The wellbeing of UK police: A study of recorded absences from work of UK police https://pure.hud.ac.uk/files/20475565/Revised_Final_Anon_main_text_29.4.pdf

21 Particularly, J Klein, '"The best police officer in the force' Chief Constables and their men, 1900 – 39,' in K Stevenson, D J Cox & I Channing, eds., *Leading the Police: A History of Chief Constables, 1835 – 2017*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2018, pp. 125 - 140

22 www.gov.uk/government/publications/policing-by-consent/defonition-of-policing-by-consent The exceptionalism of Reith's comment also persists, if somewhat less stridently, yet it is not immediately clear that contemporary policing in Italy and Spain or France and Germany did not depend in significant measure on consent.

23 *Blackstone's Student Police Officer Handbook*, Oxford, Oxford University Press. 2006, p.161. See also G Slapper and D Kelly, *The English Legal System*, London, Cavendish, 2001, referring to 'British policing … based on consent rather than sheer strength.' P.36; or A Crawford, 'Plural Policing in the United Kingdom,' in T Newburn, ed., *Handbook of Policing*, Cullompton, Willan, talking of 'the legitimacy of modern policing through consent,' p.160.

24 T Newburn, 'Policing since 1945,' in Newburn, *Handbook of Policing*, p.109. Similarly see also N Tilly,' Modern approaches to policing: community, problem-oriented and evidence-led,' in Newburn, *Handbook of Policing*, p.373 and M Rowe, *Policing Race and Racism*, Cullompton, Willan, 2004, pp.144-5. R Reiner, 'The Organization and Accountability of the Police,' in M McConville and C Wilson, eds., *Handbook of Criminal Justice Process*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.23; D Wilson, *What Everyone in Britain Should Know About the Police*, London, Blackstone, 2001, p.230; C Crowther and J Campling, *Policing Urban Poverty*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000, p.127; P Scraton, *The State of the Police: Is Law and Order Out of Control?* London,

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Pluto, 1993, esp. chapter 2. And M Brogden, 'The Myth of Policing by Consent,' *Police Review*, 22 April 1983.

25 C Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History*, 2nd edition, Harlow, Longman, 1996, chapters 4 and 8. There is no reference to policing by consent in the index.

26 D Taylor, *The new police in nineteenth-century England*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997, pp.137-8. The preceding chapter, 'The impact of the new police: actions and reactions' manages not to use the term at all.

27 D Churchill, *Crime Control & Everyday Life in the Victorian City: The Police & the Public*, Oxford University Press, 2017

28 R Reiner, *The Politics of the Police*, 2nd edition, London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992, p.5, p.250 and p.259

29 Reiner, *Politics of the Police*, p.59

30 For a detailed discussion see D Held, *Political Theory and the Modern State: Essays on State, Power, and Democracy*, Cambridge Polity Press, 1989

31 Reiner, *Politics of the Police*, p.4-5 and p.60

32 Reiner, *Politics of the Police*, p.257

33 Reiner, *Politics of the Police*, p.60

34 *Leeds Mercury*, 15 June 1844

35 *Bradford Observer*, 19 August 1855

36 *Batley News*, 22 July 1892

37 *Leeds Mercury*, 15 & 27 June 1862

38 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 April 1860

39 Churchill, 'I am just the man,' pp. 251 & 265

40 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 27 April 1867. For further details, see Taylor, *Beerhouses*, chap.5, 'Conquering Castlegate?' pp. 109-20

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