

# **CREATING A POLICED SOCIETY?**

**THE POLICE AND THE PUBLIC IN THE  
VICTORIAN WEST RIDING, C.1840 – 1900**

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Designed by Dawn Beaumont Cockcroft

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*To*

The staff of the Huddersfield Royal Infirmary Intensive Care Unit, October  
2021, who saved my life,

and to my wife Thelma, who nursed me back to health



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# 1 Introduction

The first policemen came into our midst, to plant the thin edge of the wedge which was to revolutionise our manners and customs ... we have lost all traces of mummery; all traces of Lee Fair ...most of our Mischief Night; as nearly all of the peace eggers ... If mummers were to be seen upon the streets now, the police would interfere.

Isaac Binns, *From Village to Town*, Batley, 1882, p.139

ISAAC BINNS' 'RANDOM recollections,' covering the past thirty years of his life, offer an affectionate glimpse of a fast-changing world. Only once does he strike a discordant note and that was when he mentioned the 'new' policeman. As he wrote, the police had been a continuing presence for a generation or more, during which time they had intervened in more than leisure activities. It evoked in Binns a sense of loss, a resigned acceptance that life had been irrevocably changed combined with thinly-disguised displeasure, if not outright anger, at what the police had done. But how typical was Batley? And how typical were Binns' responses? What follows is an attempt to provide a picture of the diverse and changing forms of policing to be found in the West Riding of Yorkshire and to offer an interpretation of the impact of the police on the population of the county in a period which fortuitously approximates to the reign of Queen Victoria.

The decision to consider the West Riding is based on the belief that a regional study offers an alternative perspective both to macro-histories of the police in England and micro-histories focussing on specific towns. The writing of any history requires a degree of generalization and the higher the level the

greater the loss of detail. There is no “right” approach. The broad sweep of ‘macro’ history provides an understanding of the past through its ability to discern, from the welter of detail, broad patterns, covering wide geographical areas as well as long periods of time. The intricate detail of ‘micro’ history provides another understanding of the past through its focus on complexities and irregularities that defy simple categorization and generalization. The present study falls somewhere between the two, though not out of any belief in an Aristotelian golden mean. The West Riding of Yorkshire was a longstanding and meaningful administrative unit but one whose diversity makes it particularly useful to an analysis of the development of policing and the creation of a policed society. It was a unit large enough to throw light on individual forces and the relationship with broader developments in the policing in England and Wales but small enough to bring out important local variations.



Principal towns in the Ridings of Yorkshire



Although seeking to break new ground in considering the development of policing across the West Riding as a whole, this study owes a clear debt to other scholars, notably David Churchill, Jane Posner and Chris Williams, and their research on specific towns.<sup>1</sup> I trust I have accurately summarised and fully acknowledged their arguments – even when I have reached different conclusions.

### **The Victorian West Riding: Some key demographic and socio-economic features**

The West Riding was one of the largest counties in England (c.1.75 million acres) and was subject to minor boundary changes in the period under review, notably the transfer of Todmorden from Lancashire in 1888 and the southward expansion of Sheffield into areas that once were part of Derbyshire. Unlike the larger North Riding, the West Riding was heavily if unevenly populated. Its population rose from c.1.2 million in 1841 to c.2.8 million in 1901.

The implications of these figures become more apparent when broken down by petty sessional districts which were the basic unit for policing in the period. These districts varied considerably in both area and population, Scisset and Upper Mill, both less than 20,000 acres, stood in contrast to Knaresborough, over 170,000 acres in size. Similarly, there were considerable variations in population from the Halifax district (over 100,000 people) and Upper Mill, Settle and Snaith (each with fewer than 25,000). Petty sessional districts were not homogenous units. The Huddersfield (or Upper Agbrigg) district contained numerous villages and hamlets, some in bleak, inhospitable and inaccessible moorlands in the Pennines. In addition, it contained fourteen semi-industrial townships, varying in size from 2,000 to over 10,000 people. The Upper Strafforth and Tickhill district contained thirty parishes that varied from important urban and industrial centres, such as Rotherham, Conisbrough and Handsworth, to mining villages like Maltby, as well as small villages, such as Rawmarsh and Wath-upon-Dearne.

The region was central to the urbanisation and industrialising of Britain. Around the mid-nineteenth century only Lancashire could match the West Riding in terms of employment in secondary, that is industrial, employment. The woollen and worsted industries and associated trades were heavily

concentrated in and around Bradford, Halifax and Huddersfield. Old and new industrial practices co-existed. In Upper Agbrigg handloom weaving persisted in Kirkheaton, notwithstanding its proximity to Huddersfield, whereas modern mills were built in Marsden and Meltham. Taking advantage of new technologies and geographical location, some communities, such as Golcar and Lockwood, prospered and grew. Others, such as the older-established semi-industrial villages of Honley and Holmfirth, saw economic stagnation and even population decline. In the south there was a concentration of metal-working trades around Sheffield and Rotherham. As well as large scale iron and steel production, there were the specialist 'little mesters,' contributing to the production of cutlery, scissors, pocketknives and a range of tools for agriculture. The expansion of the railway network, itself generating employment for unskilled navvies, saw York become an important centre with a variety of trades related to the railways, and likewise Doncaster, especially after the Great Northern railway moved its engine works there in 1853. Also, in central and southern areas were to be found a growing number of mining villages as new mines were opened in the second half of the century.<sup>2</sup> Yorkshire-mined coal was important to the national as well as to the regional economy. And yet at the same time agriculture and related trades continued to be an important source of employment in the more easterly and northern parts of the county. Mixed arable farming developed in the Vale of York and the expansion of urban centres offered an alternative – the liquid milk trade – to dairy farmers who increasingly faced competition from abroad in traditional butter and cheese making. For those in the upper regions of the Pennines sheep rearing was a precarious source of income. It is no coincidence that in these districts agriculture and industry were intertwined in the distinctive form of the farmer/weaver and the semi-industrial villages in an otherwise rural context. Social tensions caused by economic change posed problems of order that were compounded by local traditions of popular dissent and political radicalism. Demands for factory reform, opposition to the New Poor Law and the threat of Chartism posed very real threats to public order. Unsurprisingly, there were fears that 'a vast number of the working classes ... are constantly aiming at the subversion of all social order.'<sup>3</sup> The prosperity of the third quarter century was threatened by a combination of industrialisation in Europe and America and a policy of free trade which brought intensified competition across the regional

economy. In contrast, the adoption of tariffs by Germany, and later America, added to the problems of exporters. The staple industries continued to grow in the long term but in the short-term cyclical fluctuations brought considerable distress to many communities. Industrial discontent, notably in the mining and textile industries, became an increasingly common feature of the regional economy. Popular forms of protest, notably rattening, especially in and around Sheffield, co-exist with more modern trade union action – both created problems for the police.

The expansion of employment opportunities led to a growth in the urban population. The established ‘great towns’ of Leeds and Sheffield grew, though not to the same extent as Bradford, which saw rapid expansion unequalled in the West Riding and matched only by the ‘infant Hercules’ of Middlesbrough in the North Riding. The ‘middling towns’ of Halifax and Huddersfield also saw significant population growth as did smaller towns such as Batley and Dewsbury. Attention tends to be focussed on the spectacular, such as the rapid expansion of Bradford, with its associated problems of poverty, disease and petty crime but it is important not to lose sight of the less dramatic but more typical urban areas. Across the county, albeit not consistently, internal migration was an important element. Men and women from less prosperous parts of the mainland – north Scotland, north Wales, the south-west of England, even the North Riding – were attracted to the West Riding, though the most high-profile and problematic incomers in the eyes of many Victorians came from Ireland who began arriving before the Great Hunger.

The variations in demographic, social and economic, and geographical circumstances created distinctive policing problems. The constable pounding the beat in densely populated Bradford or Sheffield faced quite different problems from his counterpart in sparsely populated districts such as Ewcross and Claro, or the remoter parts of Upper Agbrigg and Staincross. The geographical dimension should be stressed. The ratio of police to population, the most commonly discussed metric used by the police inspectorate, obscures the very real practical problems of policing districts such as Saddleworth. Poorly served by road and beyond the reach of the railway, there were huge tracts of land which provided an ideal location for a fugitive from the law let alone a group of gamblers betting on a cock-fight or prize fight, or even a landlord or landlady ignoring the licensing laws. Much of the district around Marsden in Upper Agbrigg was ‘uncultivated moorland,’ the village of Holme

was part of 'a mountainous moorland township,' while Scammonden was 'a wild and mountainous township,' albeit only seven miles from Huddersfield. Less inaccessible townships in Upper Agbrigg, such as Scholes and Shelley, were 'straggling' and 'scattered,' while in the relatively compact village of Honley there were numerous and independently minded landowners and artisans, who kept alive a radical tradition. So too did Holmfirth but, along with Kirkheaton, it was notorious for its lawlessness, notably cock-fighting and brawling. Similar problems were encountered in the petty divisional districts of Staincross and Upper Strafforth and Tickhill. Even where the terrain was less challenging, the sheer size of a district such as Claro posed considerable logistical problems. Finally, even relatively tranquil places, such as Ripon, bypassed by many of the major economic and social changes of the day, still posed challenging quotidian problems for the local bobby.

### **The changing pattern of policing in the West Riding**

The provision of policing in the Victorian West Riding varied across both time and place. Three snapshots in time give an insight into the dynamic evolution of policing in the county. Like a kaleidoscope, different patterns were created as time passed and as the component parts themselves changed in size. At the start of the period, c.1840, the West Riding magistrates, unlike their counterparts in Lancashire, rejected the opportunity to establish a county force, eventually opting for the superintending constable system that looked to modernise the traditional parish constable approach. Elsewhere in the county there were police forces in Leeds and Sheffield but not in Bradford. There was a police force in Doncaster and Barnsley (the latter incorporated into the West Riding County Constabulary [hereafter WRCC] in 1856/7 only to reappear decades later) but not in Halifax, Huddersfield and Wakefield. Move on two decades, and c.1860, there was now a county force but to contrast 'rural' policing with 'urban,' was to ignore significant internal variations. The WRCC initially comprised twenty-one divisions based on petty sessional districts that varied markedly in size and socio-economic structure. Further, the county force was responsible for the policing of semi-industrial villages, such as Honley and Holmfirth, but also sizable and dynamic towns such as Barnsley, Dewsbury and Rotherham.

The county force co-existed with a variety of borough forces, ranging in size from Leeds and Sheffield on the one hand to Pontefract and Ripon, on the other. Some forces were relatively long-established, and with a track record of police reform, but not all. Police forces were established as recently as 1848 in Halifax, Huddersfield and Wakefield. Jump to the end of the century and a different pattern is evident. The WRCC was still there but it had taken over responsibility for policing Pontefract and Ripon and retained responsibility for the policing of towns such as Batley and Keighley but other towns it had once policed now had forces of their own – Dewsbury from 1863, Rotherham from 1882 and Barnsley from 1896.

Police forces were not homogenous and unchanging entities, as will become clear in the following chapters. Nor did they act in isolation, particularly after 1856, but even beforehand, superintending constables occasionally co-operated with themselves and with borough constables. The establishment of the WRCC led very quickly to co-operation between men of the three county forces, particularly where their jurisdictions abutted. In subsequent years there was co-operation between borough forces and county police divisions on a variety of issues, ranging from gambling to industrial disputes. There was also co-operation that transcended county borders again on a variety of problems ranging from the aftermath of natural disasters or crowd control during a royal visit to preserving order during a strike or even an election. Inter-force relations were not always harmonious. Less public, though probably more contentious, were the refusals of certain boroughs to respond to requests for help from nearby forces. In addition, there were the informal interactions from the movement between forces as men sought to further (or restart) their careers. The significance of such interaction is difficult to establish. Stephen English's application to become chief constable of Leeds may well have been enhanced by his experience as a superintending constable in the county before moving to Norwich. On the other hand, the appointment of men who had served a short time in other forces was more likely to be a recipe for failure. PC Antrobus, of whom more later, was exceptional in the havoc he wrought (not to mention his dishonesty in getting a post in the WRCC) but was one of many who tried and failed to make a go of policing on two or three occasions.

## Key questions and interpretations

The present study focuses on the complicated evolution of policing across the West Riding and revolves around three important and inter-related set of questions. The first centres on the notion of a policed society, popularised by Gatrell and recently challenged by Churchill. Put simply, what were the realities of a police presence in the streets and lanes of Victorian Yorkshire? What did the police do? But how did different sections of society perceive and experience the police? How were perceptions of policing as an abstract (something necessary for the common good) impacted by policing as an experience (perhaps positive, perhaps negative, coercive even brutal)? To what extent did the varied geography of the West Riding shape, not just the perceptions, but the realities of living in a policed environment? Further, to what extent was the impact of the police determined by their limitations, as revealed in the discussion of efficiency? In short, in what respects can late-Victorian society be meaningfully described as policed?

The second concerns the creation of 'efficient' police forces over the course of Victoria's reign. This involves consideration of issues relating to recruitment, retention, training and discipline. It also requires consideration of 'efficiency,' the term used by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary from 1857 onwards. What precisely constitutes efficiency? Was it a question of overall numbers (and some consideration of their drill skills)? To what extent was it a matter of management in what were increasingly bureaucratic organisations? Was the inspectors' notion of 'efficiency' shared by the various watch committees and police committees across the county? Further, it raises the question of the extent to which such 'efficiency' translated into effectiveness in the eyes of local masters as well as later historians. How was efficiency or effectiveness to be measured? Was it, as a crimefighting force, to be seen in the number of prisoners sent to quarter sessions or assizes? Or, as a force for social discipline, was it in the number of drunks or vagrants arrested? Indeed, how, if at all, could efficiency or effectiveness be measured for what was perceived as essentially a preventative institution? In more mundane terms, to what extent did illness, let alone continuing ill-discipline reduce the effectiveness of the police?

The third set of questions centre on the vexed concept of policing by consent that gave rise to dispute among contemporary observers as well as

later historians. What does consent mean? In what ways and to what extent was it qualified? Is it more fruitful to think of begrudging acceptance, even resignation, rather than overt approval? How much of the population has to be antagonistic towards the police for it to invalidate the concept? Further, was consent, however defined and qualified, more an ongoing, dynamic process rather than a one-off situation? More widely, to what extent was constructing consent dependent on external factors beyond the control of the police? In other words, were the police beneficiaries, rather than instigators, of wider changes in social attitudes and behaviour?

The focus of this study necessarily means that certain aspects of policing are marginalised or omitted. There will be no sustained discussion of the police estate – the stations, sub-stations, cells, etc. – nor of the domestic lives of constables. Likewise, there is only passing reference to the enforcement of important pieces of legislation, for example dealing with adulteration of food or fighting contagious animal diseases. In particular, the role of the police in fighting serious, that is indictable, crime falls largely beyond the purview of this study. The focus here is more on petty crime and on the police as agents of social discipline rather than as crime fighters.

The central argument of this book is that by the end of the nineteenth century the West Riding was a recognisably if unevenly policed society. Debates might have raged about the precise form of policing but very few, if any, argued that the police should be abolished. The officers involved, for the most part, satisfied the inspectorate that they were efficient, though even this was qualified by the continuing problems of recruitment, retention, discipline and ill-health, hinted at in the annual inspection reports and substantiated by the evidence of police conduct books and watch committee minutes. The effectiveness of these forces was more apparent in terms of social discipline rather than crime fighting. While never satisfying the demands of pressure groups, agitating against intemperance, gambling and prostitution, the various police forces largely satisfied their immediate, and often more pragmatic, masters. Finally, while recognising that police legitimacy did not run to all actions and locations, and notwithstanding persistent anti-police sentiments among certain social groups and even an upsurge of anti-police violence around the turn of the century, the police were accepted, albeit often begrudgingly, even fatalistically, to a degree sufficient to justify talking, pragmatically and realistically, of ‘policing by consent.’

## A brief historiographical survey

From its earliest days around the turn of the twentieth century, police history was largely dominated by one force, the Metropolitan police, and its alleged diffusion across the country.<sup>4</sup> Further, the advent of 'new' policing was viewed in positive terms with the police as benign agents of law and order and welcomed by the majority of the nation. This changed dramatically in the 1970s when Robert Storch's seminal articles turned orthodoxy on its head with their emphasis on the provincial experience and, more so, their emphasis on conflict.<sup>5</sup> The upsurge of interest in 'modern' police history continued over the following decades, during which time there has been a plethora of popular histories, academic studies, articles and dissertations, with varying focii. As a consequence, there is now a greater appreciation of the roots of change that stretch back well into the eighteenth century, a fuller acknowledgement of the continuities between 'old' and 'new' policing in terms of personnel and practices, and a greater awareness of the complexities and dynamics of policing provision in the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

There is also now a better understanding of police forces as bureaucratic organisations, often employing large numbers of men (though only the occasional woman as matron before the Great War), and with a wide range of responsibilities extending well beyond crime fighting.<sup>7</sup> Shpayer-Makov's analysis of the Met highlights both the changing strategies of senior figures often in response to pressure from the rank-and-file and the emergence of 'an *esprit de corps* and a sense of common feeling of professional identity.'<sup>8</sup> Williams also stresses the importance of the emergence of 'uniformed and disciplined institutions' in which the proletarianized constable was at the bottom of 'a hierarchy of supervision.'<sup>9</sup> Klein's history of 'the secret lives of police constables' explores further the experience of the ordinary city constable and the tensions between formal training and expectations and the realities of beat work. Although highlighting the contrasts between pre- and post-war policing, particularly in terms of discipline she emphasises the responsibility that fell on beat officers – 'their most important skill remained exercising discretion, deciding how to prioritise their attention and what to ignore.'<sup>10</sup>

The notion of a policed society has been accepted, explicitly or implicitly by many historians, the present author included, with little consideration of the problematic nature of the concept.<sup>11</sup> Gatrell's notion of 'the policeman-



state' has been particularly influential.<sup>12</sup> He emphasises the role of the state in progressively taking control of the criminal justice system and, in so doing, eroding older procedures. This broad thesis has been challenged, most notably by Churchill.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, it remains the case that the number of police forces (and policemen) grew and the supervisory and disciplinary powers of the ordinary constable were increased through the proliferations of local bye-laws, not to mention the extension of summary justice and the introduction of habitual criminals' legislation. Formal interaction between police and the public as measured by the annual crime statistics, Gatrell stresses, increased to the point that roughly a quarter of all men had been arrested or summonsed by 1901.<sup>14</sup> For poor, urban working-class men the figure would have been higher. The idea of a policed society has also been explored by J Carter Wood, who argues for a shift from customary 'self-policing' to a more formal 'policing of the self.'<sup>15</sup> Through a 'long process of tense negotiations' the number of critics challenging 'the legitimate place of the policeman in British society' diminished significantly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and, as a consequence, working-class 'acceptance' of the police had replaced earlier hostility and resistance.<sup>16</sup> Churchill, as part of a wide-ranging and important book, has emphasised the far greater degree of civilian involvement in law-enforcement than acknowledged in more policed-centred histories.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, there has arisen a more sophisticated analysis of police/public relations and of popular responses that incorporates issues of class, gender and ethnicity.<sup>18</sup> Despite broad agreement that older orthodox and revisionist police histories require modification, there remain important differences in interpretation among recent historians. Taylor, especially in his early work, argued for an interpretation of qualified policing by consent but this has been rigorously challenged by Churchill, who presents a re-invigorated 'pessimist' case that emphasises the 'fractious and oppositional' nature of police/public interactions.<sup>19</sup>

Looking more specifically at histories of urban and rural policing, an early study of urban policing in Lancashire by Eric Midwinter highlighted the different patterns of reform in incorporated boroughs Lancaster, Liverpool and Wigan, and unincorporated towns, Bolton, Manchester, Salford and Preston – the last two creating a town force to avoid being merged with the Lancashire county constabulary. He also drew attention to the high rates of turnover

and the poor discipline of these 'new' forces.<sup>20</sup> Roger Swift's 1988 re-appraisal of early-Victorian policing also drew attention to the considerable variations between the towns of Exeter, Wolverhampton and York but discerned certain common factors: the gradual nature of reform, the low levels of efficiency and the gradual, grudging acceptance of the 'new' police forces.<sup>21</sup> His more recent book on Cambridge, while recognising the 'watershed' nature of the new force introduced in 1836, reasserts these findings.<sup>22</sup> Another early study, Davey on Horncastle, emphasised the importance of the 1833 Lighting and Watching Act as a means of responding to demands for improved policing.<sup>23</sup> The men appointed under this act were, according to Davey, effective and played a key role in the defeat of crime in the town in the 1840s and 1850s as brothels were closed down and drunks less frequently seen on the streets.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the use of the 1833 Act was not unique to Horncastle. The opportunities presented by improvement acts, as well as the importance of the attitudes of local ruling elites in determining the pace and extent of police reform comes out in Taylor's studies of Middlesbrough and Huddersfield.<sup>25</sup> More recently, Brown's study of Torquay and Exmouth shows continued faith in parochial constables and opposition to the 1856 County and Borough Act, notwithstanding the pressures created by an emergent leisure resort in the former.<sup>26</sup> Three recent doctoral theses are particularly relevant to this study - Churchill on Leeds, Posner on Halifax and Williams on Sheffield.<sup>27</sup> Aspects of their research are directly relevant to the overall aims of this study as will become more apparent in subsequent chapters.

Rural policing has been equally well served. Among a number of early works focussing on individual county forces, Lowe's detailed study of the Lancashire constabulary drew attention to the problems of recruitment difficulties, high turnover and ill-discipline in the early years of a large county force. The strict discipline imposed on constables proved too much for many with some 40 per cent of recruits leaving within a year of appointment. Nonetheless, even in a high-wage county, police pay and other perks saw a significant minority of men serving for ten years and more, even though few were promoted beyond the rank of first-class constable.<sup>28</sup> Steedman's seminal work, *Policing the Victorian Community*, provides a detailed analysis, among other things, of the careers of the county forces of Staffordshire and Buckinghamshire. In analysing how 'policemen changed themselves from a collection of unimportant working-class men wearing the uniform of local

power and authority, into the beginnings of a recognisable police force,' she raises a number of points that are of particular relevance to the present study: the problems of creating a disciplined, hierarchical organisation from recruits drawn largely from the unskilled working classes, the demands placed on recruits, their scope for action, and the emergence of a wider sense of a police community, not least in the campaign for pension rights.<sup>29</sup>

The extent of experimentation in policing is made clear in Storch's analysis of policing practices in southern England. Similarly, the importance of the politics of reform was explored in detail by Philips and Storch.<sup>30</sup> The latter argue persuasively that police reform grew out of 'prolonged and complication transactions between, in their terminology, 'the National Governing Class and the Provincial Ruling Class during a period in which policing options were gradually narrowed down until there was but one, itself 'grounded on the principles of 1839,' which was enshrined in the 1856 act, as a consequence of which there was a recognisably 'policed rural society.'<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, their analysis brings out the extent of experimentation with different models of policing in the 1830s and 1840s.

The superintending constable system was one such experiment and was tried in a number of counties, including Buckinghamshire, Herefordshire and Kent, and not just the West Riding. However, its reputation was thoroughly traduced by the 1853 Select Committee on the Police, which called (even recalled) witnesses to praise county forces, notably Essex, and condemn alternatives.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Sir George Grey, in presenting the revised police bill to parliament in 1856, went out of his way to condemn unequivocally (though not accurately) the superintending constable alternative.<sup>33</sup> Later historians, though less condemnatory, have marginalised its importance. Palmer briefly recognized it as 'a popular alternative [to] the generally unpopular county police' while Emsley, noting that the evidence was 'stacked against' the superintending constable system, nonetheless condemns it for its dependence on unprofessional parochial constables.<sup>34</sup> Philips and Storch, focussing more on the politics of police reform, make some reference to the working of the system in Buckinghamshire and Kent but barely touch on the experience of the West Riding. They saw it as a 'widespread experiment ... which started with great enthusiasm [but] was giving diminishing satisfaction by the mid-1850s.'<sup>35</sup> In particular, they argue that 'their great defect was particularly felt in cases where they had to deal with serious violence, robberies and

burglaries.<sup>36</sup> Further, they also argue that even in counties heavily committed to the superintending constable system, by the mid-1850s magistrates were convinced that a system heavily reliant on parochial constables could not deliver the protection deemed necessary at the time. This conclusion is based on direct evidence from Buckinghamshire and the assumption that 'similarly cautious negative conclusions were being drawn elsewhere.'<sup>37</sup> This was not the case in the West Riding, as the present author has argued.<sup>38</sup> Foster's analysis of magisterial attitudes in the east and north ridings of Yorkshire notes the scepticism with which police reforms were met. Rather than taking the opportunity to create a county force, magistrates in the east riding looked to the option of appointing superintending constable under the 1840 act. Twelve men were appointed in 1844 but Foster does not consider in detail their work.<sup>39</sup> Other accounts touch briefly on the subject. Pye, in his study of protest and repression in the West Riding during the Chartist years, acknowledges the role of the 1842 Parish Constable Act but relates this narrowly to 'the creation of police forces in growing industrial towns.'<sup>40</sup> Tennant suggests that 'the Superintending Constables legislation may have been more successful in some counties than is realised' but her research is focussed on Cheshire and its experiment in policing.<sup>41</sup> With the exception of Taylor's studies, there are no detailed analyses of the superintending constable system in practice.<sup>42</sup> In part this reflects a general belief that it was an 'evolutionary dead end,' in Palmer's words; in part it reflects a major problem of evidence. Nonetheless, from the pages of the local press, quarter session records and other official records, it is possible to provide insights into its operation in a specific regional context.

As well as a greater awareness of the variety of policing 'experiments' across England in the years before 1856, which render simplistic older distinctions between 'old' and 'new' police,<sup>43</sup> there has been an emphasis on the importance of the local magistracy and their perception of and relationship with central government.<sup>44</sup> Shakesheff's work on Herefordshire highlights how magistrates were motivated to oppose the Rural Police acts by a strong sense of independence from central influence.<sup>45</sup> Similarly in Cheshire, as Tennant has demonstrated, the magistracy sought a distinctive solution to their problems and resisted pressures from central government.<sup>46</sup>

The role of the police in the wider criminal justice system has been explored

by writers such as Philips (the Black Country), Jones (Montgomeryshire) and Barrett (Cheshire).<sup>47</sup> Looking at the advent of the new police, Philips argues that there was a fundamental shift from 'an unpoliced society' c.1835, to a 'policed society' c.1860. By the latter date, he argues, 'a paid police force operated, relying not only on coercion but also on the moral assent of most of the population to the role of a police force as enforcer of law and order.'<sup>48</sup> In contrast, Barrett is highly critical of the policeman-state argument. He stresses the involvement of multiple actors in the prosecution process and the limited role of the police, whose significance is seen in terms of 'their ability to bring different sets of witnesses together.'<sup>49</sup>

More pertinent to the argument to be presented here are a number of recent studies which have considered the totality of policing within a county. Scollan's research on Essex brings out clearly the diversity of police provision. Despite the fact that chief constable McHardy was seen as an advocate of the new county policing, he acknowledged in his evidence to the 1853 Select Committee that his 'new' county force not only co-existed but also co-operated with the old (albeit reformed) parish constable system.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, borough policing in Essex saw a multiplicity of experiences including in Harwich an abortive attempt to involve the county force in a collaborative venture.<sup>51</sup> Gregory's study of policing reform in Monmouthshire depicts a similar situation in which different forms of policing – based on the 1842 Parish Constable Act, the 1833 Lighting and Watching Act, the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act and local improvement acts – co-existed.<sup>52</sup> Co-operation between 'old' and 'new' was also to be seen in Denbighshire.<sup>53</sup> Unlike many other local studies, Gregory's also considers developments in policing in the late-Victorian and Edwardian years, with a chapter that highlights ongoing disciplinary problems and an innovative chapter on morbidity and mortality based on findings from death certificates. Although not offering a county-wide analysis, Tennant's study of Cheshire argues that the county force grew out of an 'entrepreneurial system of policing' that could be traced back to the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>54</sup> Police reform was a 'complex and controversial' process in which county magistrates, seeking to defend their position against central encroachment, played a key role. Again, the existence of alternative policing, including private initiatives, is a key feature of the Cheshire experience but the absence of central control in the county, which gave rise to inconsistent implementation, was a serious weakness.

All that said, there remain certain aspects of modern police history that are relatively under-researched. First, despite the emphasis on what might be termed the classic reform period, c.1830 – 1870, little is known of the working of one of the alternatives – the superintending constable system. Also, the last decades of the nineteenth century have been somewhat overlooked, notwithstanding the fact that these years that saw both consolidation – second generation new police, if you will – but also continuing evolution, especially with the emergence of new borough forces and the amalgamation into county forces of others. Second, despite the growing number of studies of medium- and small-sized towns, the histories of the ‘Great Towns,’ Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester (not to mention London) have been more fully researched and, accordingly, tend to dominate the overall narratives.<sup>55</sup> There remains a tendency to view county and borough forces as separate entities rather than comprising a mix of policing practices, inter-linked to a greater or lesser extent, that operated, albeit intermittently, on a regional basis. This complexity also impacted on the experience of the individual constable and members of the ‘policed’ public. For the young recruit joining the county force, for example, before moving to an urban force for more experience but also more pay and then gaining promotion in a medium-sized force, there was not a single policing experience. Practice and culture varied. Similarly, for a working-class woman or man, moving from town to town, whether searching for employment, moving with a family member or even fleeing the law, there was no single experience of being policed. In one town every drunk on the streets would be arrested (and recorded), in another only those who refused to ‘move on,’ or had nowhere to move to. Capturing this detailed lived experience of the police and the policed is almost impossible but an awareness of the variations across a region is a step in that direction.<sup>56</sup>

## **Structure and sources**

The main body of the book is divided into two sections. The first (chapters 2 to 6) focuses on county policing, from the superintending constable system prior to 1856 and the West Riding County Constabulary thereafter. There are two important reasons for this decision. First, county constables policed around 95 per cent of the acreage of the county throughout the second half of

the century. Further, county constables were responsible for policing over 50 per cent or more of the population of the West Riding until c.1881. Even at the turn of the century the figure was 45 per cent of the total, the remainder being policed by ten borough forces. Second, several of the divisions that comprised the WRCC had more men than certain borough forces. Three divisions – Staincross, Upper Morley and Dewsbury – had more than one hundred men, though a similar number – Ewcross, Saddleworth and Lower Staincliffe – had less than twenty men. The second section (chapters 7 to 12) is devoted to the borough forces, analysed in terms of the size of population they served. There is one omission – York – that needs explanation. Its distinctive position and the fact that for part of the time it was deemed to be part of the north riding led to its exclusion from this study.

There are a number of common concerns that run through the book. Recruitment, retention and training were ongoing problems from the smallest to the largest. So too was the question of leadership. This cluster of questions are considered in chapters 3, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 12. Popular responses, particularly to the policing of daily life and leisure, but also to public order policing are explored in chapters 4, 6, 9, 11 and (in part) 12. Although there are general themes in common, emphasis varies depending upon the particular problems faced more by some forces than others, but also reflecting the strengths and weakness of the different sources used.

Chapter 13 brings together the findings from the various forces in the West Riding and argues for what might be seen as an ‘optimistic’ interpretation of the development of policing, notwithstanding the conceptual and evidential problems associated with the key concepts of ‘a policed society,’ ‘efficiency’ and ‘policing by consent.’ It is an argument which highlights, first, the existence, albeit qualified, of forces that were effective enough to make their presence felt in working-class life. Secondly, it argues that, in a meaningful sense, the late-Victorian West Riding was a policed society, or perhaps more accurately, a number of policed societies. Finally, and in contradistinction to recent neo-Storckian interpretations, it argues that a pragmatic but meaningful *modus vivendi* had been established between police and policed that can be described as ‘policing by consent.’

A variety of sources have been used, all of which have weaknesses that require careful usage but which, overall, provide a sufficiently solid block

of evidence to underpin the central arguments presented here. Patterns of recruitment, retention and career progression are based on the evidence contained in a variety of police registers that detail biographical details, including career outcomes and conduct records, though there is no uniformity of approach across the various forces studied. Not all are comprehensive, nor are they always accurate. In an age when people were less sure of their date of birth, there are examples of conflicting evidence with other sources such as the census returns. Most discrepancies are relatively minor but a more serious problem was the men who deliberately lied about their past. Some were found out (and dismissed) when testimonials proved to be forgeries. Others found their dishonesty exposed elsewhere, in court records for example, but the police record was never corrected. Yet others were never found out. The scale of the problem is unknown and unknowable but the author remains confident that the likely extent of this problem does not undermine the validity of the statistics generated for this study. Watch committee and town council minutes are a further valuable source of information, not least in supplementing the police records of indiscipline, but again there are problems. Outcomes are covered almost without exception but the same cannot be said of the details of debate. Very occasionally the local press proved to be more informative. The editor of the *Huddersfield Chronicle*, the radical and one-time Chartist Joshua Hobson had 'inside' informers. As a consequence, the paper offered a fuller account than watch committee minutes. The reports of chief constables were another valuable source of evidence. As well as an annual report on crime, many chief constables provided quarterly or monthly reports but again there was considerable variations in the detail provided. But as well as variations between forces or between chief constables in any given force, there were variations over time in the reports of individual chief constables.

Considerable use has been made of sources generated by central government, notably the annual reports of her majesty's inspectors of constabulary. As well as containing statistical information, these sources record the judgments of the inspectors and, in their correspondence with local watch committees, and reveal the tensions and differences of opinion among those charged with the oversight of the police. In some cases, however, they fail to reflect accurately conditions on the ground. The inspection of the WRCC took place at the same time as large-scale anti-police protest



broke out in Honley and Holmfirth but no mention is made in the annual report which deemed the force to be efficient and well managed. Parliament also undertook more specific enquiries, such as the 1872 select committee on police superannuation funds. As well as the overall conclusions and recommendations, the minutes of evidence contain a wealth of local detail, not always consistent with the overall conclusions. Further, select committees were not politically neutral. This was particularly true of the 1852/3 select committee reports on police which were biased against the superintending constable system operative in several parts of the country. The question of selectivity and bias, intentional or otherwise, is also a well-known problem when using the local press. Editors were concerned with the viability of their papers, which manifested itself in coverage of exceptional crimes, from daring robberies to gruesome murders. Their coverage was also influenced by their political stance but equally important was their unwitting testimony which revealed itself in widely-held assumptions about, for example, the causes of crime.

Through sceptical reading and cross-checking of sources, key components of the historian's craft, most of these problems can be mitigated. There remains, however, the problem of silence in the historical records. Specifically, the thoughts and feelings of the policed, particularly those who most felt the force of policing, are rarely captured in the historical record. Often their evidence has more to do with minimizing punishment by telling the courts what magistrates wanted to hear than creating an accurate record for the benefit of later historians. On occasion, however, the reports of court proceedings, such as the trial of the Honley rioters, provide an insight through the evidence of witnesses and the responses of the crowd in the courthouse. Similarly, as Churchill has demonstrated, police occurrence books – where they survive – provide valuable insights into popular attitudes. Likewise, the ordinary constable only occasionally left a footprint in the sources. Disciplinary records refer to insubordination without giving any detail and it is the voice of the senior officer that is more often heard. Now and again, what appears to be an authentic voice of the ordinary constable comes through in an angry or foulmouthed retort that by chance found its way into the historical record but all too often, others spoke, with varying degrees of inaccuracy, for these groups. Consequently, conclusions

are necessarily tentative and open to challenge but therein lies the fascination and frustration of historical research.

## Endnotes

- 1 D Churchill, 'Crime, Policing and Control in Leeds. C.1830 – 1890,' unpublished Ph.D., Open University, 2012 J Posner, 'The establishment and development of the New Police in Halifax, 1848 – 1914,' unpublished Ph.D., University of Huddersfield, 2014, and C A Williams, 'Police and Crime in Sheffield, 1818 – 1874,' unpublished Ph.D., Sheffield University, 1998.
- 2 For details of mines in the West Riding Northern Mine Research Society see Coal Mines in Yorkshire 1854 (nmrs.org.uk) which lists almost eighty mines in the West Riding in the second half of the nineteenth century
- 3 Captain Fenton to General Bouverie, 29 October 1832, quoted in J Hargreaves, *A Metropolis of Discontent: Popular protest in Huddersfield, c.1780-1850* and A J Brooke, 'Labour Disputes and Trade Unions in the Industrial Revolution,' respectively chapters 9 & 10 in H Haigh, ed., *Huddersfield: A Most Handsome Town*, Huddersfield, Kirklees Cultural Services, 1992. The quotation is in Hargreaves, pp.208-9. See also N Pye, *The Home Office and the Chartists, 1838-48: Protest and Repression in the West Riding*, Pontypool, Merlin Press, 2013 and C Howe, *Halifax 1842: A Year of Crisis*, London, Breviary Stuff Publications, 2014.
- 4 See particularly, T A Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales*, London, Constable, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1967, W R Miller, *Cops and Bobbies: Police Authority in New York and London, 1830-1870*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1973 and P T Smith, *Policing Victorian London: Political Policing, Public Order and the London Metropolitan Police*, London, Greenwood Press, 1985, also, though with a more specific focus, S Petrow, *Policing Morals: The Metropolitan Police and the Home Office, 1870-1914*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994.
- 5 R D Storch, 'The Plague of Blue Locusts: Police Reform and Popular Resistance in Northern England, 1850-1880,' *International Review of Social History*, vol. 20(1), 1976, pp.61-90 and 'The Policeman as Domestic Missionary: Urban Discipline and Social Discipline, 1850-89,' *Journal of Social History*, vol.19(4), 1976, pp.481-502
- 6 For pre-Met reform in London, see R Paley, 'An imperfect, inadequate and wretched system?' Policing London Before Peel,' *Criminal Justice History*, vol.10, 1989, pp.95-131 and E A Reynolds, *Before the Bobbies: The Night Watch and Police Reform in Metropolitan London, 1720-1830*, London, Macmillan, 1998
- 7 See particularly, H Shpayer-Makov, *The Making of a Policeman: A social history of a labour force in metropolitan London, 1829-1914*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2002, Chris A Williams, *Police Control Systems in Britain, 1775-1975*, Manchester University Press, 2014 and for a later period J Klein,

- Invisible Men: The Secret Lives of Police Constables in Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham, 1900-1939*, Liverpool University Press, 2010.
- 8 Shpayer-Makov, *Making of a Policeman*, p.266
  - 9 Williams, *Police Control*, pp.202-3
  - 10 Klein, *Invisible Men*, p.310
  - 11 For example, D Taylor, 'Conquering the British Ballarat: Policing Victorian Middlesbrough,' *Journal of Social History*, 2004, pp.755 – 771. D Philips & R D Storch, *Policing Provincial England, 1829-1856: The politics of reform*, Leicester University Press, 1990, p.10 and J Carter Wood, 'Self-Policing and the Policing of the Self: Violence, Protection and the Civilizing Bargain in Britain,' *Crime, History and Societies*, (7), 2003, pp. 1-20, for example at p.3
  - 12 V A C Gatrell, 'Crime, authority and the policeman-state' in F M L Thompson, ed., *The Social History of Britain, 1750 – 1950*, vol. 2, Cambridge University Press, 1990
  - 13 D Churchill, 'Rethinking the state monopolisation thesis: the historiography of policing and criminal justice in nineteenth-century England,' *Crime, History & Societies*, 2014 (18), pp.131 – 152 and D Churchill, *Crime Control and Everyday Life in the Victorian City: The Police and the Public*, Oxford University Press, 2017,
  - 14 Gatrell, 'Policeman-state,' pp.279-280
  - 15 Carter Wood, 'Self-Policing,' p.12
  - 16 Carter Word, 'Self-policing,' pp. 2, 3 & 12
  - 17 Churchill, *Crime Control passim*.
  - 18 For example, D Taylor *Beerhouses, Brothels and Bobbies: Policing by Consent in Huddersfield and the Huddersfield District in the mid-nineteenth century*, University of Huddersfield Press, 2016 and the same author's 'Cass, Coverdale and Consent: The Metropolitan Police and Working-Class Women in Late-Victorian London,' *Social History*, 2015, pp.113-136. See also Klein, *Invisible Men*, chapters 6 – 8.
  - 19 D Taylor, *The new police in nineteenth-century England*, Manchester University Press, 1997, *New Police*, pp. 124-7 and Churchill, *Crime Control*, p.240
  - 20 E Midwinter, *Law and Order in Early Victorian Lancashire*, Borthwick Papers, York, 1971
  - 21 R Swift, 'Urban policing in Early Victorian England, 1835-1857: a reappraisal,' *History*, (73), 1988, pp.211-237. See also J Field, 'Police, Power and Community in a provincial English town,' and B Weinberger, 'The Police and the Public in nineteenth-century Warwickshire,' both in V Bailey, ed, *Policing and Punishment in the Nineteenth Century*, London, Croom Helm, 1981.
  - 22 R Swift, *Provincial Police Reform in Early Victorian England: Cambridge 1835-1856*, London, Routledge, 2021

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- 24 Davey, *Lawless and Immoral*, chapter 10
- 25 D Taylor, *Policing the Victorian Town: The Development of the Police in Middlesbrough, c.1840-1914*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002 and *Beerhouses, Brothels and Bobbies*.
- 26 J Brown, 'Authority and Crime, 1835-60: A comparison between Exmouth and Torquay,' Unpublished Ph.D., University of Plymouth, 2012
- 27 See fn. 1
- 28 W J Lowe, 'The Lancashire Constabulary, 1845-70: the social and occupational structure of a Victorian police force,' *Criminal Justice History*, vol.4, 1983, pp. 41 -61, see also the two articles by D Foster, 'Police Reform and Public Opinion in Rural Yorkshire,' *Journal of Local Studies*, 1982, pp. 1-8 and 'The East Riding Constabulary in the nineteenth century,' *Northern History*, (21), 1985, pp. 193-211
- 29 C Steedman, *Policing the Victorian Community: The formation of English provincial police forces, 1856-80*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, p.68
- 30 R D Storch, 'Policing rural southern England before the police: opinions and practice, 1830-1856,' in D Hay & F Snyder, eds., *Policing and Prosecution in Britain, 1750-1850*, Oxford University Press, 1989.
- 31 Philips & Storch, *Policing Provincial England, 1829-1856: The politics of reform*, Leicester University Press, 1990, pp.9 and 230.
- 32 No witnesses were called from Kent and the one from Buckinghamshire, William Hamilton, appears to have been selected to condemn from within. When H M Clifford, chair of the Hereford quarter sessions, expressed satisfaction with the superintending constable system, his evidence was listened to with incredulity. It was a measure of governmental concern that Captain J B McHardy, chief constable of Essex, was recalled to counter suggestions that there was a viable alternative system.
- 33 *Hansard*, vol.140, Police (Counties and Boroughs) Bill, 5 February and 10 March 1856
- 34 Palmer, *Police and Protest*, p.499. C Emsley, *The English Police*, Harlow, Pearson, 1996, p.50 and *Crime and Society in England*, London, Longman, 2004, p.39
- 35 Philips & Storch, *Policing Provincial England*, p.62 and p.231
- 36 Philips & Storch, *Policing Provincial England*, p.62
- 37 Philips & Storch, *Policing Provincial England*, pp. 2126-8 and p.231
- 38 D Taylor, "No Remedy for the inefficiency of Parochial Constables": Superintending constables and the transition to "new policing" in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the third quarter of the nineteenth century,' *Crime*,

- History & Societies*, 19, 2015, pp.67-88 and "Drops in the Ocean': The Politics and Practice of Policing the West Riding of Yorkshire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,' *Northern History*, lix, 2022, pp.28-51
- 39 D Foster, 'Police Reform and Public Opinion in Rural Yorkshire,' *Journal of Local Studies*, 1982, pp. 1-8. See also 'The East Riding Constabulary in the nineteenth century,' *Northern History*, (21), 1985, pp. 193-211
- 40 Pye, *Home Office*, p.178. See also P Bramham, 'Successful Failures: Policing Keighley, 1840 – 1860,' unpublished MA thesis, University of Huddersfield, 1986 for a brief discussion of the origins of the West Riding County Constabulary.
- 41 The quotation is from the concluding remarks to M Tennant 'The Police that never were: Peel, Melbourne and the Cheshire Constabulary, paper/Powerpoint given to the Open University Police History Seminar Series 24 March 2017. See also M Tennant, 'Enterprise, experimentation and the State: industrialisation and the Cheshire Constabulary,' unpublished PhD, Keele University, 2016
- 42 "No remedy for the inefficiency of Parochial Constables": Superintending constables and the transition to 'new policing' in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the third quarter of the nineteenth century,' *Crime, History & Societies*, 19, 2015, pp. 67 – 88 and "Drops in the Ocean": The Politics and Practice of Policing the West Riding of Yorkshire in the mid-nineteenth century, *Northern History*, lix, 2022, pp. 98-115
- 43 The same applies to Scotland. See D Smale, 'The development of the new police in the Scottish borders, 1840-1890,' unpublished PhD, Open University, 2007
- 44 Philips and Storch, *Policing Provincial England*, chapter 8.
- 45 T Shakeshaft, *Rural Conflict, Crime and Protest, Herefordshire, 1800-1860*, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, chapter 3. He also makes a plea for more studies of non-adopter counties, p.71. Interestingly, Herefordshire magistrates decided not to adopt the Superintending Constables acts.
- 46 Tennant, 'The Police that never were.'
- 47 D Philips, *Crime and Authority in Victorian England: The Black Country, 1835-1860*, London, Croom Helm, 1977 and R Jones, *Crime, Courts and Community in Mid-Victorian Wales, Montgomeryshire, People and Places*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2018 and A A Barrett, 'The system of criminal justice in Cheshire, 1820 – 1875,' unpublished PhD, University of Keele, 19996
- 48 Philips, *Crime and Authority*, pp.53-4
- 49 Barrett, 'Criminal justice in Cheshire,' p.21 and p.96
- 50 M J Scollan, 'Parish Constables versus Police Constables: Policing Early

- Nineteenth Century Essex,' unpublished PhD, Open University, 2007, chapter 5. The reference to McHardy is at p.162.
- 51 Scollan, 'Parish Constables,' chapter 6.
- 52 M Gregory, 'Policeman's Lot: the nature and dynamics of the Monmouthshire constabulary, 1857 – 1914,' unpublished PhD, University of Cardiff, 2008
- 53 F Clements, 'The Development and Aims of the Denbighshire Constabulary in the nineteenth century,' unpublished PhD, Open University, 2004, quoted in Gregory, 'Policeman's Lot,' p.332
- 54 M Tennant, 'Enterprise, Experimentation and the State: Industrialisation and the Cheshire Constabulary, 1790-1860,' Unpublished Ph.D., University of Keele, 2010. Tennant also makes a telling point about oversimplified binaries, as in old and new police, urban and rural policing, detective and preventative policing and so forth.
- 55 Churchill, *Crime Control* and J E Archer, *The Monster Evil: Policing and Violence in Victorian Liverpool*, Liverpool University Press, 2011. See also, D R Welsh, 'The reform of urban policing in Victorian England: A study of Kingston upon Hull, 1836 to 1856,' Unpublished Ph.D., University of Hull, 1997
- 56 The real-life situation was, of course, even more complicated as policemen moved across county/regional boundaries, bringing experiences and ideas with them.





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Conclusions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## Endnotes

- 1 This chapter draws on earlier published material. D Taylor, "No Remedy for the inefficiency of Parochial Constables": Superintending constables and the transition to "new policing" in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the third quarter of the nineteenth century,' *Crime, History & Societies*, 19, 2015, pp.67-88 and "Drops in the Ocean': The Politics and Practice of Policing the West Riding of Yorkshire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,' *Northern History*, lix, 2022, pp.28-51
- 2 D Philips & R D Storch, *Policing Provincial England, 1829 – 1856: The Politics of Reform*, London, Leicester University Press, 1999. See also R D Storch, "Policing Rural Southern England Before the Police: Opinions and Practice, 1830–1856" in D Hay and F Synder eds. *Policing and Prosecution in Britain, 1750–1850*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989 and S H Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland, 1780–1850*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- 3 An Act for the Appointment and Payment of Parish Constables, Victoria CIX, 1842
- 4 See for example, Richard Oastler at a public dinner in Paddock, near Huddersfield: the Whigs 'without their poor law ... will never be able to make out a case which will prove the police to be necessary. ' *Leeds Intelligencer*, 23 September 1837.
- 5 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 9 September 1837
- 6 See for example, *Leeds Mercury*, 9 March 1839, *Bradford Observer*, 17 November 1837, *Sheffield Independent*, 24 September 1836 & 17 April 1838, *Halifax Express*, 2 November 1836, *Leeds Intelligencer*, 22 October 1836 & 9 September 1837, *Leeds Times*, 10 January 1835 and *Sheffield Iris*, 17 April 1838
- 7 Eastwood is incorrect in stating that the 22 counties which adopted the Rural Police Act included 'all counties with sizeable urban populations.' D Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1800-1870*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997, p.144
- 8 There were a few voices that defend the West Riding and its policing. Although having no significant impact on the parliamentary debate, Beckett Dennison was adamant that Grey's allegations 'had no good foundation in fact.' Indeed, 'the magistrates were of the opinion that a rural police was wholly unnecessary ... and [its] population were not in [a] demoralized state.' In the same speech, somewhat exaggeratedly, he claimed that the '320 magistrates in Yorkshire ... had on every occasion on which the subject had been brought before them rejected it.' For further details see fn. 74.
- 9 Establishing the balance of opinion is not straightforward, not least given the large number of magistrates who did not attend some or all of the meetings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





## 3 Creating a county police force: the early years under Col. Cobbe

AFTER MORE THAN a decade of policing under the superintending constable system, the magistrates of the West Riding were required to establish a county-wide force. The challenge facing them and their appointee as chief constable, Colonel Charles August Cobbe, was considerable. The initial size of the force was 487 officers and men, growing to almost 700 in 1868, when Cobbe resigned to become one of her majesty's inspectors of constabulary. Despite being adjudged to be 'efficient' in the annual inspections, the early years were problematic, particularly in terms of retention, but by the late-1860s there were signs that a more stable force was coming into existence.<sup>1</sup>

Cobbe had a vision of a force distanced from civilian society by men, preferably married, drawn from outside the county or from districts other than those they policed, thereby avoiding any familiarity that would undermine the policing enterprise. A policy of rotation between districts would further reduce the danger of constables 'going native.' His model rested on the optimistic assumption that there were sufficient men of the right calibre to be recruited and trained to the job. There were, however, contradictions at the heart of this model of policing. Men were repeatedly exhorted to get to know the people, especially those from the working-classes, they policed and win their confidence. This, as far as it was achievable, required both time and a degree of familiarity between police and policed which was not easily achieved given short-term postings. Similarly, the desire to recruit and retain married men – believed to be more dependable and bringing stability to the force – was undermined by the disruption caused to them and their families by frequent transfers.

The early growth of the force was lumpy – 1858, 1862, 1864 and 1868 saw significant augmentations but recruitment, as reflected in shortfall figures, was not a quantitative problem. However, the large number of recruits appointed year on year point to the continuing underlying churn of men either resigning or being dismissed from the force. Starkly, in 1863 the authorised strength increased only by one yet 128 men had to be recruited to maintain the overall strength of the force. Recruitment and retention remained a serious and ongoing qualitative problem.

Advertisements were placed in the local and regional press on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1856 and interviews commenced on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> December, followed by initial training. On 27<sup>th</sup> December Cobbe announced a pause on applications and recruitment and announced that the first deployment would be made for the start of the new year, when the men would be ‘sufficiently drilled, whilst many had previously served in the police force.’<sup>2</sup> In early January 1857 just over 200 constables with previous police experience were deployed across the twenty-one divisions. A further 175 were undergoing four weeks of training at the Wakefield headquarters with an emphasis on drill, which was intended to instil obedience to the orders of senior officers and a sense of place within the police hierarchy.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 3.1 WRCC authorised strength and recruitment, 1857 – 68**

Year	Authorised strength	Increase in authorised strength	Shortfall in men at inspection	Total men recruited (calendar year)
1857*	487		0	720
1858	529	42	0	160
1859	539	10	0	126
1860	545	6	4	136
1861	550	5	0	154
1862	578	28	6	125
1863	579	1	0	128
1864	606	27	0	131
1865	618	12	2	128
1866	630	12	6	111
1867	645	15	4	104
1868	656	21	2	99

\*This figure includes recruitment in December 1856.

Sources: HMIC annual reports and WRCC Examination Books

Consistent with a strongly-held belief among police reformers that small boroughs were inefficient, Cobbe made clear his intention of taking 'overcharge of the police' from the local boards of Barnsley, Keighley and Rotherham.<sup>4</sup> Despite considerable local dissatisfaction in these towns, they were unable to resist.<sup>5</sup> Cobbe's ambitions extended to the incorporation of the larger Huddersfield and Wakefield police forces into the WRCC but in this he failed. The wrangling over Huddersfield was of more than local interest. It revealed the limitations of reformers to achieve their ends and, more importantly, the perceived shortcomings of the county force. Huddersfield, HMIC Woodford conceded, 'would not be as efficiently watched during the night under the arrangements of the county constabulary' as it was under the Improvement Commissioners.<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, Woodford's first report on the WRCC was positive. 'The officers and men,' it noted, 'seem to have been selected by the chief constable with care and discrimination [and] many amongst them [had] served with credit in other police forces.'<sup>7</sup> Although there was some 'deficiency of strength' in one or two divisions bordering on great towns, 'in its present stage this force is entirely equal to a full discharge of [its] duties over a district, so populous and so important as the West Riding.'<sup>8</sup> By the time of the 1858 inspection the force was at its authorised strength. The 'managerial' team comprised the chief constable, Cobbe, twenty-one divisional superintendents and sixteen inspectors and a chief clerk. The hard graft of policing was carried out by 443 constables and forty-eight sergeants, who were considered to be in a 'highly satisfactory state of discipline and efficiency.'<sup>9</sup> The following years saw steady augmentation. By the end of the 1860s, the number of constables was significantly larger (549) as were the number of sergeants (77) and the core management team had been strengthened by the appointment of an assistant chief clerk. Divisional management was enhanced by an increase in the number of inspectors from sixteen to twenty.

During the 1860s, the judgement from above, that is Her Majesty's inspector, was consistently positive. On more than one occasion they were referred to as 'a well-chosen, intelligent and healthy body of men,' sometimes 'very satisfactory' in terms of discipline and efficiency,' more often 'highly satisfactory.' Moreover, according to Woodford, the WRCC provided 'a very complete system of patrolling by day and night ... extending in the counties to the most rural and least populous districts.'<sup>10</sup> Cobbe himself was equally

confident about the quality of his force. Addressing the county magistrates at the West Riding Easter Session, at Pontefract in 1861, he asserted that 'the force ... is working satisfactorily ... its services generally appreciated [and] the conduct of the men ... very good.'<sup>11</sup> The official view seemed too good to be true – and so it was. A more detailed analysis using the WRCC Examination books reveals a different picture.<sup>12</sup>

### **Leadership: superintendents and inspectors**

In a matter of weeks, Cobbe was required to recruit, train and deploy just under 400 men initially, rising to over 500 a year later. He needed men to train the new recruits in the short term and to maintain discipline and efficiency in the longer term. Given the urgency of the situation, Cobbe looked to men of proven ability and local knowledge. Of the twenty-one divisional superintendents, eighteen had been superintending constables in the West Riding.<sup>13</sup> Predictably they were older than other recruits. Only one was in his (late) twenties, while ten were over forty, notwithstanding the fact that the upper age limit for the force as a whole was forty. Three men, Ingham, McGregor and Smith were forty-nine years old, and Heaton almost forty-seven. Cobbe clearly valued experience but there was a price to pay in terms of longevity of service.<sup>14</sup>

Eight of these superintendents became long-serving officers, retiring on a pension, and two died in service – William Green (Barnsley), after eighteen years and John Smith (Oteley) after eight years. The most successful was William Hall, originally a draper from Stockton-on-Tees. Joining the Durham constabulary, he served for ten years, reaching the rank of superintendent. Moving with his family to the West Riding he was the superintending constable for Lower Agbrigg for five years before being appointed as superintendent of that district in 1857. In a career that spanned more than thirty years in the WRCC, he rose to the post of deputy chief constable. He retired on a pension in December 1890 aged seventy-two. The affection in which he was held by his fellow senior officers was reflected in the generous presentation he received two months later. But the years of service had taken their toll and 'illness and infirmity' led to his death in March 1891.<sup>15</sup> Though never moving beyond the rank of superintendent, Thomas

Heaton was similarly highly regarded, at least by his fellow police officers and members of respectable society. Held 'in respect and esteem' he was praised for being 'unusually vigilant, [making] many clever and smart arrests.'<sup>16</sup> Similarly, William Exton was praised for his 'faithful and impartial service,' but it was his success in containing the threat of the navvies, as they built the Settle & Carlisle railway, that was particularly noted.<sup>17</sup> The platitudes in their obituaries – they were 'most able,' 'faithful servants' and 'respected by all' – should not obscure the key role they played in the early years of the WRCC. But there were also failures. Four former superintending constables were dismissed and two more resigned within months.<sup>18</sup> Despite a successful career as superintending constable Thomas Spier's 'services [were] dispensed with' after three months. No reason was given in his police record and there was no mention of his demise in the local press, which for several years had commented positively on his police activities.<sup>19</sup> Charles Ingham's departure was also surprising. He had served in the Bradford borough force for eighteen years and a further eight-and-a-half years as superintending constable for East Morley but, after only nine months, was struck off, 'having been appointed Inspector of Weights and Measures for the East Morley division.' Whatever the precise reasons behind these resignations and dismissals, they constituted a significant problem for Cobbe. Barely eighteen months after the formation of the WRCC, seven superintendents (a third of this group) were no longer in post. That four of them had been dismissed was particularly worrying and raised questions about the wisdom of his decision to rely upon ex-superintending constables. Further, it increased the dependency on the next rank in the police hierarchy – the inspectors from whom were promoted men to the rank of superintendent.

In the initial deployment (January 1857) there were thirteen inspectors, rising to sixteen in March 1858 and to twenty a decade later. This initial deployment threw up some unexplained anomalies – why were inspectors allocated to Upper Agbrigg and East Morley but not to West Morley and Skeyrack? – which were addressed over time. A more serious matter was the flurry of redeployments amongst inspectors in the first year. There was no obvious pattern to the early deployment of these men. Eight of the twenty-one divisions had no inspector in 1857, whereas three (including the contrasting divisions of Claro and Dewsbury) had seen four and another two divisions had seen three inspectors. Four men served in two divisions that year while

the unfortunate Robert Tucker found himself moved to four in less than twelve months. Such mobility has hardly conducive to effective policing but the first year, 1857 was exceptional. Looked at from a longer perspective, Cobbe's strategy was to give his inspectors experience of at least two or three divisions before allowing them to settle for a longer period. For some the first posting was a matter of months; for others a year, even two. James Kershaw, for example, started in Keighley and, within a month was transferred to Claro. From there he moved to Lower Agbrigg after three years and to West Morley after five years. In 1868, after another three-year stint, he was transferred to the Sheffield division, where he served as superintendent for ten years. George Sykes spent his first fourteen months in Dewsbury, moving in rapid succession to Upper Barkstonash and Staincross, before a five-year spell in Staincross. Promoted to superintendent in November 1865, after a brief period at Otley, he served out his last fourteen years back in the Staincross division. In contrast, John Nicholson was sent to East Morley in 1857 and stayed there until 1865. He served another five years at Lower Strafforth and Tickhill, before a final period of service of eleven years in West Staincliffe.

In 1857 twenty men were appointed as inspectors and a further five promoted from the rank of sergeant. In 1858 and 1859 a further four men became inspectors, three promoted. As might be expected, they were older, all but one was married on appointment, twenty-one (over 80 per cent) had previous police experience and seven also had military experience. Seventeen (over 60 per cent) had served more than five years, with nine having served for more than ten years. They had served in a variety of county and borough forces but only five had been in the Lancashire constabulary. More surprising, given Cobbe's preference for men from outside the West Riding, eight had been employed locally as policemen.

Career outcomes were varied. Six men were promoted to superintendent and served in post until pensionable age, and a further three served as inspectors and retired on pension. Seven were promoted but subsequently demoted, in all but one case to the rank of sergeant; five were dismissed (one for unspecified 'conspiracy'), one absconded and three resigned. Put simply, three-fifths of early inspectors failed to meet the demands of the post. Of those that did, their experience was of regular movement between police divisions, particularly in the early part of their career. George Bull served

in three districts in five years before being promoted to superintendent. Similarly, between February 1857 and July 1858, George Lottey served in three before gaining promotion. Robert Tucker served in five before he forced to resign after six years in the force. Even more varied was the career of Seth Parker. In his first seven years he served in four divisions, moving to a fifth on promotion to superintendent. Two years later he was demoted to inspector and moved to a fifth district. By the time he retired in January 1888 he had served in eight division. In the last, Rotherham he served eleven years, significantly longer than any other posting.

Superintendents and inspectors were the leaders of the WRCC at divisional level. Their performances during the Cobbe era were mixed. In view of the importance of these positions in the police hierarchy, and at a time when many of the rank-and-file policemen were inexperienced, the combination of brief tenure of office and poor performance meant that this level of management was weak and added to the broader problem of creating an efficient and effective force. But what of the men they commanded?

### **The rank and file: constables and sergeants**

In two months, December 1856 and January 1857, 442 men were sworn in.<sup>20</sup> These recruits were drawn from a broad socio-economic spectrum. Almost a quarter were from the textile trades, though labourers comprised the largest single occupational category. Overall, the first cohort of the WRCC did not conform to 'the image of rural class relationships' that Steedman claims was commonplace across the country in the early years of the new county forces.<sup>21</sup> Although Cobbe sought to recruit from outside the county, 69 per cent of men in the lower ranks were born in Yorkshire, and more were living there immediately prior to recruitment. 137 men, or 31 per cent of the total in the first cohort had previous police or military experience. Surprisingly in light of criticisms of the early WRCC, only ten had served in the Lancashire County Constabulary. Previous police experience had been gained most commonly in the northern city forces – Manchester, Bradford, Leeds and Liverpool. There were a few men (five in all) with experience of the Met – the same number as had served in Halifax – but there is little evidence to suggest that there was a flood of men from the Huddersfield force, attracted (as

Cobbe claimed) by higher wages.<sup>22</sup> On closer examination, previous police experience was less than impressive, some men having served only weeks, even days, before leaving. In total, 30 per cent of men with previous experience had served less than one year. However, more than half had been in a force for between one and four years and 16 per cent had served for more than five years. Contemporary opinion was divided on the length of time it took for a recruit to become an effective constable. Some said three years, others five.<sup>23</sup> Taking the latter figure, only twenty-two men (or one per division) had meaningful police experience. A significant minority (fifty-nine or 14 per cent) had served as parish constables, paid constables or nightwatchmen under the old system. The evidence of the WRCC Examination Books is incomplete and inconsistent. Twenty-three were identified as paid constables, nine as nightwatchmen, six as parish constables and twenty-one simply as constables. Several of these men had experience of different forms of policing, reinforcing the conclusion that there was a significant degree of fluidity in mid-nineteenth century policing. Their presence also highlights the extent to which the superintending constable system smoothed the transition to the new county force.

All recruits were provided with a book of rules and regulations 'showing the extent of his powers and duties' and, in addition were 'required to keep a journal of the discharge of his duties.'<sup>24</sup> With only basic drill training, the WRCC relied heavily on 'learning by doing,' tempered, where possible, by mentoring by more experienced officers. With relatively few experienced men, many recruits, thrown in at the deep end, failed and were soon lost to the WRCC. The loss of some 40 per cent of recruits in their first year (rising to 55 per cent after two years) was worrying but not significantly out of line with other forces at the time, including the earlier-founded forces of Lancashire and Staffordshire.<sup>25</sup>

**Table 3.2 Length of service of first WRCC cohort**

	Less than 1 year	1 to 4 years	5 to 9 years	10 to 19 years	20 and more
Number	181	101	37	53	72
Percentage	41	23	8	12	16

Source: WRCC Examination Books A & B



More encouraging for Cobbe, and easily overlooked, was the 45 per cent of recruits who served for more than three years and the 36 per cent who served for five or more years. These were men, who by contemporary standards, had 'served their apprenticeship.' Further, given the importance of training 'on the job,' the fact that just over 120 men served for ten years or more helped to create a cadre of experienced, if not always physically fit, men.

In terms of career outcomes, broadly speaking, as many men were dismissed as were awarded a pension and twice as many chose to leave the force. Again, the WRCC was not out of line with other county forces. Indeed, the percentage of resignations was higher in Lancashire (59 per cent for the period 1845–70), though the figure for dismissals was the same.<sup>26</sup>

**Table 3.3: Career outcomes of first WRCC cohort**

	Pension	Dismissed	Resigned compulsorily	Resigned and discharged	Resigned – ill health	Resigned	Died	Other*
Number	95	93	3	33	10	188	18	4
Percentage	21	21	1	7	2	42	4	1

\*One absconded, and three incomplete records

Source: WRCC Examination Books A & B

There were a number of success stories, some spectacular, though the opportunities for promotion to the most senior rank were limited by the presence of superintendents appointed in January 1857. In total some twenty-seven men (or 5 per cent of the first cohort) became inspectors and four superintendents. As a result of the churn among inspectors appointed in January 1857 and the need to expand their number, sixteen men were promoted to inspector between 1857 and 1859. The remaining twelve were promoted in the 1860s. It is difficult to see any clear relationship between type and length of previous service and length of service in the WRCC. The experienced Holmfirth paid constable, Earnshaw resigned within months whereas the long-serving Bingley parish constable, served a further sixteen years in the WRCC, while Greenwood and Gibson, paid constables for

Hipperholme and Northowram respectively, were promoted to the rank of inspector by the end of January 1857 but they were the exceptions.

Closer examination of the data reveals other important problems, notably finding suitable men to serve as sergeants. By 1859 there were fifty-four sergeants in post. Of the first cohort eighty-six men, (approximately 20 percent), were appointed or promoted to the rank of sergeant but thirty-one of these (that is over a third) were subsequently reduced to the rank of constable. In addition, several of these men resigned only months after appointment. The problem was, unsurprisingly, most acute in 1857. Of forty promoted men, thirteen were reduced in rank or resigned within weeks and months. A particularly stark example was PC Boothman. With over twelve years' experience in the Cheshire and Lancashire forces, he looked a good prospect when appointed in January 1857. On 1st February he was promoted to the rank of sergeant, only to be reduced in rank two weeks later. Four months later he was promoted again. This time he managed just over two months in the post before being dismissed for unspecified 'irregular conduct.' Only three sergeants went on to a long-term career. One was pensioned after sixteen years, one retired because of ill-health after fourteen years and the third died in service after nine years. A second problem, which became more apparent over time, related to the seventy-two long-serving officers who did not gain promotion and saw little improvement in their material condition. The number of these men dismissed or resigning was significant, eighteen and fourteen (or 25 per cent and 19 per cent) respectively. Further several men who served long enough to be pensioned had disciplinary records that deteriorated over time, being demoted from first to third class on one or more occasion. Efficiency was not helped by the combination of poor performance and age. A final problem was the 20 per cent, or so, of recruits unable to read or write. Three-quarters of this sub-group of recruits left in the first two or three years – 40 per cent in the first year alone. Exceptionally, there were success stories. Thomas Stephenson, an illiterate labourer, served for over thirty years and was promoted to the first class and the good conduct classes. Even more striking, John Symonds, an uneducated farm labourer, also served for thirty years, during which time he was promoted inspector (in 1876) and then superintendent (in 1882).

Overall, a significant minority of the first cohort learnt their trade and went on to be long-serving officers but there were also high levels of

resignations and dismissals. The former was, in effect a commentary by the men on the police as a force. For a variety of reasons – inadequate pay, the dangers and restrictions of the job and better paid and less stressful alternatives – these men were making clear their dissatisfaction with policing and its demands. The latter was a commentary by the police authorities on the quality (or lack of) of certain recruits. Taken together these weaknesses are a useful corrective to the optimistic claims of police reformers and the police's own inspectorate. A more realistic, though retrospective, assessment from within the force came with the departure of Cobbe. At a dinner of police superintendents in January 1870, where a presentation was made to the recently retired chief constable, Superintendent Grisedale spoke of the Herculean task that had faced Cobbe as he sought 'to mould the force out of very imperfect material.'<sup>27</sup>

### **The divisional experience**

The WRCC was not a homogenous entity. Indeed, in many respects it was a confederation of twenty-one different district forces. It is easy to overlook the importance of geography. Police/population ratios may well have been (very roughly) equal across the county but for both police and policed there were significantly different experiences between lightly and densely populated districts. In Upper Agbrigg, by way of example, the police were a regularly visible presence in places such as Honley and Holmfirth but far less so in Holme or Scammonden, let alone in the surrounding moorland districts where a policeman was more isolated but also a rarer figure. Thus, for a fuller understanding of the early experience, four divisions – Dewsbury, Keighley, Upper Strathforth & Tickhill and Upper Agbrigg – will be considered.

**Table 3.4 Comparative statistics for first cohorts of constables and sergeants in the Dewsbury, Keighley, Upper Strafforth & Tickhill and Upper Agbrigg divisions**

	Dewsbury	Keighley	Upper Strafforth & Tickhill	Upper Agbrigg
Cohort size	32	22	29	40
Area (acres)	24,500	37,000	67,500	64,000
Population (approx.)	72,000	42,000	36,000	120,000
In post after 3 years (as %)	12	4	10	17
In post after 5 years	6	2	8	15
Left in 1st year (%)	41	50	66	63
Left by 3rd year (%)	63	82	72	83
Resigned (%)	41	36	45	45
Dismissed (%)	25	18	14	33
Transferred (%)	25	36	31	15

Source: WRCC Examination Books A & B

There is no obvious pattern to a generally grim picture. By 1860 losses ranged from just over 60 per cent in Dewsbury to almost 90 per cent in Keighley. Although men continued to be posted to these divisions, inexperience was very much the order of the day. Starkly, in Keighley none of the original cohort remained in the division by the end of 1861, a mere six in Dewsbury and only fifteen in the large and populous division of Upper Agbrigg. The core of a more permanent force may be discernible in hindsight but the contemporary experience was more of policemen frequently coming and going but rarely staying.

## Dewsbury

The Dewsbury petty sessional district was one of the smallest in the West Riding, including difficult-to-access Pennine communities, as well as urban centres such as Dewsbury (until 1863), Batley and Mirfield.<sup>28</sup> The Dewsbury division was led by John Martin who became superintendent in late-1857, succeeding William Hall who had been transferred months after his initial appointment in January 1857. Martin, born in Inverness was an experienced

policeman, having served periods of three years in the Edinburgh force, the Lancashire county force and the Salford borough force, and one year as assistant superintendent in the Dumfries police. He was twenty-nine when he joined the WRCC and served for twelve years. He was a key local figure in the early policing of the Dewsbury division but his later years were overshadowed by declining health, which finally saw him resign on the grounds of 'infirmity of mind.'

1857 saw a flurry of changes among inspectors appointed to the division. Five were appointed, of whom two were transferred within months, one transferred just after a year, one demoted and one dismissed for another unspecified 'conspiracy.' Matters stabilised thereafter, particularly in the person of William Weatherill. Weatherill built up a reputation as an active and energetic man but was best-known for his part in subduing a major disturbance at the Methodist Free Church chapel, Batley.<sup>29</sup> His fellow inspector from 1865 to 1869 was Seth Parker, who had been transferred from Upper Agbrigg, where he had been heavily criticised for heavy-handed policing in Holmfirth in 1862. Parker avoided trouble and in 1869 became the superintendent of the Saddleworth division, only to be demoted for misconduct two years later.

Half of the first cohort were single and two-thirds had no previous police or army experience. Only four were born outside the county and three of these were living in the West Riding when they joined. Despite disciplinary problems, overall wastage rates in the first year were in line with the force as a whole and not as bad as in adjoining Upper Agbrigg. Nonetheless, over 80 per cent of the first intake had left the division within five years. More men resigned (39 per cent) than were dismissed (24 per cent) but a significant portion (27 per cent) were simply transferred elsewhere. Drunkenness and (unspecified) misconduct were the most common causes for dismissal. Richard Harley lost his job for 'disgraceful conduct,' having served less than three weeks and Thomas Uttley was in uniform a mere eight days before drunkenness led to his dismissal. For other men, it did not take long before dissatisfaction with the job led to resignation. PCs Dawson and Earnshaw left after three months, PCs Winterborn and Wood after six. A minority went onto longer term service in the WRCC. Both Benjamin Foster and William Irvin were 'work horse' constables, learning their trade in Dewsbury but moving on after two years.<sup>30</sup> There remained a small core of men who became the face of

first-generation policing in the Dewsbury division. Neither Benjamin Berry nor Charles Shepherd rose above the rank of first-class constable in careers that both lasted six years. The stalwarts of the force were James Denley, who served twenty-three years as a constable in the town, before retiring in 1880, and Thomas English, who died in service in his thirty-first year in the WRCC, mostly as a sergeant. Their reward for long service was promotion to the merit and good conduct classes after twenty-three- and twenty-five-years' service. These were essentially consolation prizes for long-serving men with no realistic chance of furthering their career.<sup>31</sup>

The Dewsbury district was nominally policed by the WRCC, but the reality was of an inexperienced force, including inspectors, at best learning their trade in these early years, at worst simply leaving the force within months of appointment. In retrospect one can see the emergence of a core of career policemen but it would take several years for this to impact in any meaningful way, by which time the borough of Dewsbury had established its own force.

## **Keighley**

The Keighley division was also relatively small and covered a diverse area which included some industrial centres, notably Keighley itself, as well as market towns such as Bingley and Ilkley, as well as villages such as Giggleswick, Grassington and Haworth. Its first superintendent, John Cheeseborough, had previous local experience and served for almost six years before resigning. His successor, the highly-successful William Gill, served in the division for thirteen years. Both provided continuity and firm leadership, as did inspector Henry Hay.

The degree of continuity with existing policing practice was clearer in the Keighley division than elsewhere. Ten men (almost 50 per cent of the cohort) had served as nightwatchmen or paid constables in Keighley, Bingley and other localities, with a further three with police experience elsewhere. Few became long-serving men. John Robinson, a Bingley nightwatchman, was promoted to the merit class and received a further commendation but remained a constable until his death in 1864. Edward Whitehead, who had served seven years' in the Lancashire county force, served seven years

in Keighley. Although promoted to inspector in 1859 he was dismissed five years later. For the remainder, with or without police experience, seven resigned in the first three years, three were dismissed and six transferred. The overall divisional experience further highlights the difficulties facing Cobbe and his superintendents in the early years of the WRCC.

### **Upper Strafforth & Tickhill**

The Upper Strafforth and Tickhill division contained important towns, notably Rotherham and bordered on Sheffield which had its own police force. In addition, it contained mining communities, such as Maltby and villages like Wath-upon-Deane and a large part was relatively inaccessible Pennine-uplands.

The division was well served by Superintendent John Gillett from 1857 to 1880. He had served for almost fifteen years in the Lancashire county constabulary, rising to the rank of inspector. His subsequent career was a vindication of Cobbe's policy of appointing experienced men from outside the county. In contrast, there was a rapid turnover of inspectors. Robert Tucker, served for seven months before being transferred. Thomas Black, transferred from Staincross and promoted to inspector on 1 October 1857 was demoted two weeks later for neglect of duty. He was followed by Joseph Howarth, a man of ability as his subsequent career demonstrated but his stay in Upper Strafforth and Tickhill lasted a mere eight months before he was transferred to Upper Agbrigg. His replacement, Michael Cavanagh, was compulsorily resigned a year later. There seemed to be an element of continuity in the person of John Ashley but he was demoted after three years. The rapid turnover of men points again to a major weakness in divisional leadership.

The first cohort of policemen was equally problematic. As in Keighley, almost half the first cohort had previous police experience – a figure rising to two-thirds if army and other public service is included. The first year was again critical – 60 per cent of recruits left or were asked to leave. The following years saw fewer losses, though only 30 per cent of the cohort was in post after three years. Married men with no police experience were more likely to resign, but for reasons that are not apparent, the largest group to be dismissed were married men with prior police experience. The reasons for dismissal

were utterly predictable – drunkenness, insolence and neglect of duty – but it is the brevity of certain police careers that is striking. William Gill\* was dismissed after less than a week, while William Taylor managed all of three days before being ‘dismissed by order of the chief constable.’ Others lasted a little longer before being discharged. During his first two years in the division, John Cantwell moved his way up to first-class constable. The return journey took only two months (December 1861 and January 1862). Three days after his final demotion to third-class constable, he resigned. Samuel Robertshaw served for eleven years in the division but was reduced in rank for misconduct on four occasions. The record of these men, and of other early leavers, again casts doubt on the claim that the force had been carefully selected.

However, there were men who made a long-term career of policing. Joseph Haworth, a man with more army than police experience, spent less than a year in the division but was first promoted sergeant and then inspector, at which point he was transferred to Upper Agbrigg. William Horn, who had no previous police experience, rapidly moved to the first class and merit class. After thirteen years he was made an inspector and promoted to Saddleworth in 1870.<sup>32</sup> Also promising, but ultimately less successful, was John Ashley, appointed in January 1857. He quickly made sergeant (March 1857) and inspector (January 1858) but after three years, and for reasons not officially recorded, he was demoted to sergeant, moved to Dewsbury and, three months later, retired on grounds of ill-health. For most long-serving men there were few opportunities for promotion. John French and John Smalley both served in the district for six years. French managed to work his way up from third-class to first-class constable and gain entry to the merit class by 1865 by which time he had been transferred to Staincross. John Smalley progressed from third- to first-class and back down to third in his first two years. In 1863 he was promoted to sergeant and also transferred to Staincross. But overall few men remained in post after five years from the arrival of the first cohort – building a stable force was a protracted (and uneven) process.

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\* Not to be confused with the successful William Smith Gill, rapidly promoted to superintendent and later chief clerk and deputy chief constable.



## Upper Agbrigg

Upper Agbrigg was one of the larger, more heavily populated and diverse divisions, including a number of industrialised villages, such as Kirkheaton, Lockwood and Golcar, close to Huddersfield, through the mixed-economy villages of Honey and Holmfirth to the wilder districts in the Pennines, such as Hade Edge, Holme or Scammonden.

The experience of senior police management in the early years in this division was of short tenures and some unsatisfactory appointments. The notable exception was Thomas Heaton, one-time superintending constable, appointed superintendent in 1857 and serving until retirement in 1875.<sup>33</sup> His considerable contribution to the policing of the Huddersfield district should not be overlooked but he necessarily depended upon others to ensure the division was properly policed. Thomas Parkin, the first inspector, was stationed at Holmfirth. He had served in the Blackburn borough force for over five years and a further five years in the Lancashire County Constabulary, but such was his ability he was recalled to headquarters in June 1858 and subsequently became a superintendent. His replacement was Joseph Haworth, who came in June 1858. Promoted first-class inspector in November 1859, he was transferred to the Ainsty division but during his brief time at Holmfirth he did much to foster good relations between the new police and the villagers. His successor, Seth Parker, another ex-Lancashire County Constabulary man was altogether a flintier character. His aggressive action against local beerhouses was an important factor in precipitating the mass protests of 1862, which led to his transfer out of the district. His successor, William Airton, born in Skipton, but having served briefly in the Met, did much to restore relations in the mid- and late-1860s. His work as inspector of nuisances and particularly his actions during the cattle plague won him local support. Of the two other inspectors who served in Upper Agbrigg there is little to say. Airton's successor, the successful career policeman, Walter Nunn, who had worked his way up from constable to inspector, moved to Upper Agbrigg in January 1868 but died shortly afterwards. Samuel Hockaday was promoted to inspector and transferred to Upper Agbrigg in July 1868 but was forced to resign six months later. The combination of brief tenure of office and poor performance led to weak divisional management, only partly offset by Heaton's dedication.

The first cohort of constables were inexperienced men. Only seven men had three years' previous experience or more. Not that that guaranteed success – Earnshaw, despite a successful time as the Holmfirth constable, was dismissed after five months. Losses in the first year were particularly high and four out of five men had left by the end of the third year – almost as many dismissed as resigning. Cobbe's faith in married men was misplaced. They were twice as likely to resign or be dismissed as their single counterparts and again, the reasons for dismissal were predictable – drunkenness, insubordination and neglect of duty. However, as in other divisions, there was the kernel of a more stable, professional force. Abraham Sedgwick, the often-embattled paid constable of Meltham, was promoted to sergeant after one month, and eighteen months later was promoted to the merit class, at which rank he remained until he was pensioned on the grounds of ill-health in 1872. Another workhorse of the division was James Smith, who served for seventeen years. He moved through the ranks, with a reversal in 1862, becoming a first-class constable in 1865. His career stalled at that point. Eleven years later he was moved to the good conduct class, which brought a small financial gain, but he made no further advance during the remaining eight years of his police career. His reward for twenty-seven years' service – a pension of 2s 6d per day.

Thomas Heaton rarely spoke in public but in his first year as a superintendent, he had noted how policing had been made easier under the WRCC. Whether he remained of the same opinion is unknown, but the problems he faced were considerable and suggest that there were more similarities with the old policing order than he would have liked to admit. Indeed, in 1862 he was to be faced with the greatest challenge to the legitimacy of the WRCC ever experienced in the Victorian years, as will become clear in chapter four.

The focus on divisional experiences reinforces much – both negative and positive – from the overall analysis of the WRCC but it also brings home forcefully the scarcity of experienced men with knowledge of a district, let alone a town or village therein. Transfers between divisions, with the exception of Upper Agbrigg, were as important as resignations in creating short-term careers. And the early-year problems are compounded by transfers within divisions, which are unrecorded in the WRCC Examination Books.

## **The 1860s – years of slow progress**

The turmoil associated with the rapid creation of a county force from scratch in 1857 was never to be repeated but the early years continued to be problematic in terms of recruitment and retention. Of 154 men appointed in 1861, over a third resigned and a similar proportion were dismissed. Half the recruits left in their first year and barely a third were in post five years later. A conscious effort had been made to stabilise matters by recruiting experienced men. 40 per cent of all recruits (fifty-eight men) had previous police experience. But the policy proved a failure. There were some successes – John Barrett and Thomas Sutherland both became long-serving sergeants, while John Boshier and John Symonds both became inspectors – but they were the exceptions. Some lied and were found out and dismissed with weeks, though some like the notorious Antrobus (of whom more later) hid their indiscretions longer. Some had testimonials that should have sounded alarmed bells. William Howlett, according to the report from the York borough force, was known to be ‘silly,’ and yet was appointed, only to be dismissed for inefficiency a year later. Others had records that spoke of failure. William Acton had served in three different forces, including the WRCC, for periods of three, seven and twelve months – an appointment that smacked of optimism; George Baker was dismissed in March 1861, only to return four months later – an appointment that smacked of desperation. Taken as a whole, almost half of these men were dismissed, most within the first two years, and a quarter resigned, also after a short time.

Despite these problems, a growing number of men were making a career of policing. Thirty-six men from this cohort went on to serve at least ten years, including twenty-four for over twenty. Roughly half achieved one promotion (to sergeant) but only six men reached the rank of inspector and a mere three became superintendents in the WRCC. On average it took between six and eight years to become a sergeant and a further five to six to become an inspector. For some the wait was long indeed. John Sutherland waited twelve years to become a sergeant and John Boshier fourteen years to become an inspector. The majority of long-serving men never rose above the rank of constable, though they were eligible for promotion to the merit and good conduct classes. For some the guaranteed all-year employment was sufficient and they served their time with few blemishes on their disciplinary record

and receiving a pension in due course. Others (a quarter of all long-serving men) managed to serve until pensioned but often with a poor disciplinary record. William Balderstone was promoted seven times and demoted four times in a thirty-year career, which boded ill for the efficiency of the force. Similarly, Samuel Nichols, who was one of a number who failed to make the grade as a sergeant, and then there were the remainder, just over 50 per cent of long-serving men, for whom the frustrations of a stalled career manifested itself in resignation or (in at least five cases) dismissal. The implications for efficiency are, again, clear.

Nor did the situation improve in the remaining years of Cobbe's reign. Recruiting suitable men remained problematic in a flourishing regional economy, even after the pay increases of 1866. Even the Inspector of Constabulary for the Northern District, prone to putting a favourable gloss on matters where possible, noted in 1866 'the difficulty of procuring properly-qualified men for service in the police [which had been] so recently aggravated by the high rates of wages now paid for labour'. Indeed, he felt there was 'a danger of the service [in the county] becoming seriously impaired'.<sup>34</sup> Retention problems were equally stubborn. Roughly three-quarters of recruits served less than five years, two men resigning for every one dismissed. The percentage of men receiving a pension rose slightly (from about 12 to 14 per cent) but disciplinary problems (short of dismissal) remained.

But what was the state of the force when Cobbe left office? There is no muster roll for the WRCC but the information in the force's examination books can be used to construct a snapshot of the force in any given year.<sup>35</sup> The following analysis is based on the records of 459 men in post on the morning of 1 January 1868, of whom 385 had five or more years' experience. A first estimate of 'efficient' men in the force, that is excluding consideration of illness and ill-discipline, gives a range from 60 per cent to 70 per cent of the overall force which had an authorised strength of 645 in 1867, rising to 656 the following year.<sup>36</sup> The largest group by far of these 'experienced' men had joined in 1857, the foundation year of the force. They accounted for c.40 per cent of the total and had ten years' experience in the WRCC. A further 40 per cent had served between five and nine years. However, these figures underestimate the extent of overall police service. Several men, as noted earlier, brought with them experience of policing in a variety of forms. Abraham Sedgwick, exceptionally, joined the WRCC, aged 40 in 1858,

having served as a paid constable in Huddersfield from 1840 until he joined the Huddersfield borough force and served a further thirteen years. Sedgwick was unusual but several men had previous police experience running to years, though others had served for a matter of months, in some cases weeks and days. Unfortunately, the WRCC records were not always complete, hence the exclusion of this partial information in the following analysis.

Almost two-thirds of these 'experienced' men went on to receive a pension, although, less so for men with only three or four years of service in 1868. The overall potential of long-service was diminished in three ways. A small number of men (thirty-four or some 6 per cent) were dismissed. A further fifty (9 per cent), particularly the longest-serving men, were forced to retire early because of either physical or mental ill-health or died in service. Exceptionally, PC Hargreaves was killed on duty but many others had impaired health from a variety of work-related causes – arresting a suspect, stopping a runaway horse or impounding a dangerous dog as well as the more mundane flat feet and bronchitis. Rarely considered are the psychological pressures of the job. PCs Merkle and Tillotson left the force because of 'infirmity of mind' and 'insanity' but others will have suffered from real but unrecorded psychological problems. The third and most important reason, was voluntary resignation, especially for men with only three or four years of service. These figures highlight the ongoing problem of retaining experienced men. It is no coincidence that many of these resignations came after career progression had stalled. Thomas Brannigan, for example, had become a sergeant and promotion to the merit class within four years. Between 1869 and 1871 he was reduced in rank on four separate occasions. Deprived of his position in the merit class, he resigned. Voluntary resignations were the product of a complex mix of frustrated expectations and the ongoing quotidian demands of the job but also an evaluation of alternatives – and in the 1860s a relatively healthy regional economy saw higher wages in several alternative occupations.

**Table 3.5 WRCC, 1 January 1868 – totals and career outcomes for men with three or more years' service**

Years of service	Total (all ranks)	Pension	Dismissed	Resigned	Resigned ill-health	Died (+ killed)
10	198	146	6	19	15	11 + 1
9	38	28	2	5	0	3
8	35	27	1	5	2	0
7	40	27	1	9	3	0
6	44	27	6	7	1	3
5	30	18	5	6	0	1
4	34	11	8	10	3	2
3	40	16	5	14	2	3
Total	459	299	34	75	26	24
As %	100%	65%	8%	16%	6%	5%

Source: WRCC Examination Books A & B

Superintendents were key figures at divisional level. Twenty-one had been appointed in December 1856 and January 1857, two more were promoted later that year and a further two in 1858. For the most part they were men with considerable prior police experience. Daniel Astwood had over sixteen years' police service, Thomas Heaton eight. The majority served satisfactorily into the 1870s. Exceptionally, Robert Ormsby and William Smith Gill were still in service at the turn of the twentieth century. Superintendents, however able, were also dependent upon the support from their inspectors. Eighteen were appointed in January and February 1857. Again, many had considerable police experience. Inspector Parkin had over ten years' experience in the Lancashire and Blackburn constabularies. Christopher Copeland, likewise, had served ten years in the same force. The majority served many years before being pensioned but a minority (about 10 per cent) proved unsuited to the post and were either required to resign or were reduced to the rank of sergeant. Several seemingly promising inspectors proved to be highly unsatisfactory. Inspector Caygill, nine years in the Bradford constabulary, was reduced to the rank of sergeant within months of appointment and was compulsorily resigned five years later. Inspector Hudson, eleven years in the Lancashire force, was dismissed also within months – for yet another unspecified 'conspiracy.'

The appointment of senior men took place in a very short space of time and it is understandable that men with past police experience (particularly in the

West Riding) were appointed to most of these posts. A clear majority (about 75 per cent) were in post a decade after appointment. However, the very fact that so many served for several years meant that promotion opportunities were limited. Only five inspectors in post in 1868 had been promoted in the previous three years. Promotions to inspector or superintendent, were confined to a small minority (c.10 per cent) of men in this cohort and, again, there were quality concerns arising out of the number of men who were reduced in rank as their shortcomings became apparent. More generally, two-thirds of the cohort remained constables, albeit for some in good conduct and merit classes. This was the reality and was apparent to the rank and file, as well as their senior officers, and was only partially solved by the creation of additional classes for good conduct and length of service. There was a further managerial problem. Of approximately 100 men who were promoted to the rank of sergeant, thirty-two were subsequently reduced in rank or dismissed. Given the importance of sergeants in the police hierarchy this was an important weakness.

The hard graft of policing was carried out by sergeants and constables, who unsurprisingly accounted for the majority of resignations and dismissals. The WRCC examination books are frustratingly patchy in recording disciplinary matters. The evidence provides some illuminating examples of the reasons behind some dismissals or resignations but is insufficiently robust to go further. Fuller information relating to demotions and removal from merit class is summarised below.

Demotions, with few exceptions, were linked to disciplinary failings. Virtually every long-serving man had a blemish or two on his record. But a clear minority (averaging 25 per cent and worsening over length of service) had a poor record, some men being losing rank five, even seven times. The WRCC appears not to have had a consistent policy regarding disciplinary breaches. Some men were given the benefit of the doubt on the first occasion. William Cherry was one of several men who finished their careers as a first-class constable in the good conduct merit class after an early career reduction in rank. Others benefitted more than once. John Smalley was one such man. Twice promoted sergeant, he was reduced in rank five times. Similarly, George Woodcock who twice reached the rank of first-class constable. Initially, the decision to retain him appeared to be vindicated when he became a sergeant and was promoted to the merit class in 1872. Five years later he was back as

a constable and no longer in the merit class. Nonetheless, he remained in the force a further two years before being pensioned at the end of a twenty-two-year career. John Hollies, a first-class constable, was pensioned after twenty-three years' service. During those years he was reduced in rank no less than six times. Although not explicitly stated, the problems of recruitment and retention in these years probably explained these men's survivals – only the worst were dismissed!

**Table 3.6 WRCC, 1 January 1868 – constables' and sergeants' disciplinary records**

Years of service	Total PCs and Sergeants	PCs and Sergeants with poor disciplinary record (3 or more demotions etc)	PCs and Sergeants with poor disciplinary record as % of total
10	165	46	28
9	33	10	30
8	31	9	29
7	37	8	22
6	37	9	24
5	26	5	14
4	31	6	19
3	38	6	16
Total	398	99	25%

Source: WRCC Examination Books A & B

William Burgess was an example of a man unable to take a second chance. Within three years he had become a sergeant, only to be reduced to the third-class constable three years later. Given an opportunity to resurrect his career, he became a sergeant for the second time in 1867 ten years after being sworn in. Three years later, having been reduced in rank a further three times, he was finally dismissed. Henry Green followed a similar career trajectory. Promoted to sergeant in 1859, less than two years after joining, he was reduced to the rank of second-class constable three years later. Twice he worked his way back to first-class constable only to be reduced a class on both occasions. Patience was exhausted and Green dismissed in 1868. In the absence of a clear policy statement regarding disciplinary matters and of detailed records of the performance of individual constables, it is difficult to arrive at firm conclusions. The willingness of the authorities to tolerate one



or two disciplinary offences paid off in quantitative terms. A majority went on to be long-serving men with no further problems. For a minority (about 25 per cent) with poor disciplinary records the picture is mixed. Over half of this group received a pension, the remainder were dismissed or resigned. Their direct and indirect impact on efficiency is impossible to quantify.

### **Some conclusions**

Any assessment of the WRCC at the end of its first decade must balance the ongoing problems of recruitment and retention, especially in the first three years of service, against the growing core of experienced constables, albeit with a minority of questionable policing ability, around whom a more stable and effective force could be developed. Similarly, weakness in the ranks of sergeants and inspectors, while undoubtedly worrying for Cobbe and his successors, had to be set against the relative success of the majority.

The introduction of the WRCC brought a discernible quantitative improvement to policing in the West Riding, though one that should not be overstated. Thomas Heaton as superintending constable of Upper Agbrigg, had at best about a dozen dependable men with whom he could work in the mid-1850s. As the newly appointed superintendent, he had in the early 1860s fifteen men from the initial cohort with five years' experience, as well as those with three- or four-years' experience, who had been appointed subsequently. However, there was much to be done in terms of efficiency and experience. Indeed, one of the more striking similarities between the reforming 'old' policing of the early 1850s and the 'new' policing of the late-1850s and the 1860s was the number of ill-educated, ill-disciplined and often incompetent men charged with the responsibility of policing their local community. There were important, positive signs, nonetheless. While there is no escaping the continuing churn of men in and out of the force, there was also an underlying mathematical logic that saw an increasing number of men serving long enough to learn their trade. This will be developed further in chapter 5 but suffice it to note now that by 1868 a majority of men – 60 per cent or 75 per cent depending on the criterion used – had the experience deemed necessary by contemporaries to become an efficient officer.

There were also advantages to a county-wide police force. It made easier collaborative action between divisions, especially when faced with threats to public order. There were other positive signs of co-operation between divisional and borough forces. Woodford in his report for 1862 commented on 'the merit of [the Sheffield borough force] co-operating cordially and harmoniously with the constabulary of the county ... to the undoubted advantage of the public.'<sup>37</sup> In similar vein, the chief constables of the three ridings established 'a system of conference points' for constables working on the borders between forces.<sup>38</sup> Further, the new police hierarchy, which itself developed over time as new classes were created, allowed for the promotion of able men, albeit on a limited scale, in a way that simply did not exist before 1857. It also created a hierarchy of supervision and reinforced among new recruits an awareness of their place as wage-earning employees on the lower rungs of the force.<sup>39</sup>

Given the scale of the problems associated with creating a county force, and the difficult context in which it took place, the early years of the WRCC can be seen as a success. There was, in the eyes of HMIC, an 'efficient' force in being but this was an efficiency conceived in terms of brute numbers (related to the size of the policed population), drill capabilities and administrative structure as reflected in well-kept books and regulations pertaining to police responsibilities and conduct. It was, in effect, setting a pragmatic minimum standard below which – in their estimation and given prevailing wisdom – meaningful policing was not possible. As inspectors in more private correspondence or conversations conceded, there was still much to do if the West Riding, was to be effectively policed – but a start had been made.

### Appendix 1: 1st Superintendents in the WRCC, 1857

Division	1st Superintendent	Location of Superintendent
Lower Agbrigg	William Hall	Wakefield
Staincross	William Green	Barnsley
Upper Strafforth & Tickhill	John Gillett	Rotherham
Lower Strafforth & Tickhill	Daniel Astwood	Doncaster
Upper Osgoldcross	R S Ormesby*	Pontefract
Lower Osgoldcross	Martin Burke	Goole
Lower Barkstonash	T Robinson	Selby
Upper Barkstonash	John Hudson	Sherbourne
Claro, Kirby Malzeard & Ripon Liberty	G Akrigg	Knareborough
Otley	John Smith	Otley
Skyrack	John Pollard	Leeds
East Staincliffe	A Beanland	Skipton
West Staincliffe	W H Cockshott	Settle
Ewcross	William Exton	Ingleton
Keighley	John Cheeseborough	Keighley
East Morley	Charles Ingham	Bradford
West Morley	Thomas Spiers	Halifax
Saddleworth	Thomas Grisedale	Saddleworth
Upper Agrbrigg	Thomas Heaton	Huddersfield
Dewsbury	William Hall	Dewsbury
	*initially inspector	

## Appendix 2: WRCC pay rates, 1858 & 1866

### 1858

Rank	Pay per annum.
Chief constable	£500
Chief clerk	£150
Superintendent	£120
Inspector	£70 & £75
Detective	£110
	Pay per week.
Sergeant	23s-0-½
PCs	18s-1, 19s-10 & 21s

### 1866

Per annum (£-s-d)					
Rank	Initial pay	After 3 years	After 7 years	After 10 Years	After 13 Years
Chief constable	£500				
Chief Clerk	£150	+£25	+£25	+£25	+£15
Asst. Chief Clerk	£91-5	+£13-13-9	+£13-13-9	+£9-2-6	+£9-2-6
Superintendent	£120	+£20	+£20	+£15	+£15
Inspector	£91-5s	+£4-11-3	+£4-11-3		
Storekeeper	£91-5	+£4-11-3	+£4-11-3		
Detective					
Inspector	£110	+£15	+£15		
Per week					
Sergeant	25s-8d	+1s-2	+1s-2d		
PC 1st Class	22s-2d	+7d	+7d		
PC 2nd Class	21s	+7d	+7d		
PC 3rd Class	19-10d				
Merit	1s-2				

Source: HMIC annual reports, 1858 and 1866

## Endnotes

- 1 Cobbe was one of 66 applicants for the post. He was interested in policing matters but had no direct experience. He was a close friend of John Woodford, one-time chief constable of Lancashire and at the time one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary and acknowledged his debt to Woodford on a number of occasions.
- 2 *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 21 & 28 November 1856 and *Bradford Observer*, 4 December 1856. For an example of the adverts see *Yorkshire Gazette*, 6 December 1856
- 3 For details see *Leeds Times*, 10 January 1857
- 4 *Sheffield Independent*, 10 January 1857. For details see chapter 12.
- 5 *Sheffield Independent*, 20 December 1856
- 6 Huddersfield Improvement Commission minutes, KMT 18/2/2/1, 4 March 1857 and *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 March 1857.
- 7 HMIC , annual report, 1857/8 paragraph 5
- 8 HMIC annual report, 1857/8 paragraph13
- 9 HMIC, annual report, 1857/8 , paragraph 3
- 10 HMIC annual report, 1857/8 , p.50
- 11 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 13 April 1861
- 12 Not every entry was accurate. There were discrepancies between evidence on an individual in different parts of the archive. Further the evidence provides a snapshot at a particular point in time, i.e., when the individual joined the force. Changes in marital status went unrecorded.
- 13 Of the three men who had not been superintending constables, only one had no police experience at all.
- 14 Heaton served for eighteen-year, Smith for eight while Ingham and McGregor lasted less than a year,
- 15 WRCC Examination book Superintendents and Inspectors, *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 21 February 1891
- 16 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 27 March 1875 and *Huddersfield Examiner*, 27 March 1875
- 17 *Leeds Times*, 14 August 1875
- 18 A further two resigned after two and five years respectively.
- 19 Similarly, Thomas Robinson, (Lower Barkstonash) was dismissed after two months but with no reason given,

- 20 WRCC Examination Books A & B accessed via Ancestry. Not all records are complete, nor were they always accurate. Men lied about previous police experience that had ended in dismissal. Some were found out.
- 21 C Steedman, *Policing the Victorian Community: the Formation of English Provincial Police Forces, 1856–1880*, London, Routledge, Kegan & Paul, 1984, p.70.
- 22 The police background is quite diverse. There were men who had served in the county forces of Devon, Gloucester, Hampshire and Somerset as well as nearby Lincolnshire; and men from Roxborough, Sidmouth and the Irish Constabulary.
- 23 Sir Thomas Henry, chief magistrate of the London police courts claimed that 'very few men can learn the duties of a constable in under two years.' *Report of the Select Committee on Police Superannuation Funds, 1875 Q.5018*. Received wisdom among senior police officers giving evidence to the *Select Committee on Superannuation, 1890*, was that it took between three and five years to make an efficient officer.
- 24 HMIC, annual report, 1857/8 p.39
- 25 W J Lowe, "The Lancashire Constabulary 1845–1870: the Social and Occupational Function of a Victorian Police Force', *Criminal Justice History*, vol. 4, 1983, p.55 and Steedman, *Policing the Victorian Community*, pp.93 & 94.
- 26 Lowe, 'Lancashire Constabulary', p.57. Steedman's figures for the Buckinghamshire and Staffordshire forces are not directly comparable. Her figures relate to individual years and are sub-divided according to length of service of recruits in each year. Steedman, *Policing the Victorian Community*, pp.95–6.
- 27 *Barnsley Independent*, 15 January 1870
- 28 See chapter 13 for the Dewsbury borough force.
- 29 Bibles and hymnbooks were scattered around and a Sunday school teacher had 'a large piece bitten off his thumb.' *Nonconformist*, 7 April 1869 and widely reported across the country.
- 30 Irvin eventually became a sergeant in 1869 but soon after was demoted and lost his good conduct status.
- 31 This was a common problem across all forces. Senior officers and local politicians were well aware of the problem of retaining longer-serving men and the introduction of various classes (merit, good conduct, long service and so forth) was a means of recognising the service these men had given but at the same time offering consolation for a career that was not going further. For a detailed consideration of an urban force seeking to tackle this problem see D Taylor, *Policing the Victorian Town: The Development of the Police in*

*Middlesbrough, c.1840 -1914*, Houndsmill, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002, chapter 7.

- 32 He became superintendent in Ewcross in 1875, where, in 1888, aged sixty he died of 'diarrhoea and exhaustion!'
- 33 For further details of Heaton's career, see D Taylor, *Beerhouses, Brothels and Bobbies: Policing by Consent In Huddersfield and the Huddersfield District in the mid-nineteenth century*, Huddersfield University Press, 2016, Part 2.
- 34 Reports of Inspectors of Constabulary to Secretary of State, 1865/6, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1867 (14), p.81. The maximum wage paid to a WRCC constable remained at 21s (£1.05) a week from 1858 to 1866 when it rose to 22s 2d. The Lancashire County force, which had paid its men at the same level as the WRCC in the late-1850s and early-1860s began offering more (24s 6d) from 1865.
- 35 The process is extremely time-consuming and the evidence not always complete. The figures thus generated should be seen as a good approximation rather than an exact measure but sufficiently robust to allow conclusions to be drawn.
- 36 The actual strength in these years was 641 and 654.
- 37 HMIC annual report, 1862
- 38 *Yorkshire Gazette*, 24 October 1857. For an example of co-operation between the east and west riding forces see *Beverley Recorder*, 20 October 1860.
- 39 For further discussion see Shpayer-Makov, *Making of a Policeman*, especially chapter 1 and Williams, *Police Control Systems*, especially chapters 2 – 4. Steedman, *Policing the Victorian Community*, chapter 1, also stresses the importance of a hierarchy of command, though probably overstates (p.6) the limited scope for individual action by rural policemen.





## 4 The WRCC and the public in the 1850s and 1860s

BY THE TIME of his resignation as chief constable in 1869 Colonel Cobbe had overseen the creation and deployment of the WRCC to the satisfaction of the county magistrates and her majesty's inspector for police. There were eulogistic references to 'the suppression of crime and the maintenance of order' but no mention of the popular reception of this new police force.<sup>1</sup> Cobbe never spelt out in detail his philosophy of policing but he subscribed to the popular (if somewhat naïve) view that the police would gain respect and popular support through the impartial enforcement of the law. The extent to which the WRCC succeeded will be considered, particularly in light of Storch's highly influential article and his references to an initial 'bitter and often violent response' to the new police in the West Riding, followed by 'more or less open warfare.'<sup>2</sup> It will be argued that the initial responses in the late-1850s were more varied and the most serious challenge to the WRCC came later in 1862 in two villages not mentioned by Storch.

The introduction of a uniformed police force across the West Riding in 1857 was undoubtedly a novelty but in many parts of the county this was not an abrupt break with past practices. The superintending constable system, for all its shortcomings, accustomed people, albeit unevenly over the county, to a more intrusive and pro-active form of policing. Nonetheless, the arrival of the newly-formed county constables aroused considerable local interest with a marked upsurge in reporting police matters in 1857 and 1858, with certain papers, notably the *Leeds Examiner*, the *Leeds Time*, and the *Huddersfield Examiner*, all unsympathetic towards the newly-formed WRCC, albeit from different perspectives, and seizing upon examples of popular hostility.

The arrival of 'raw recruits' gave rise to a 'popular feeling of dislike [of] the county police' in certain quarters according to the *Huddersfield Examiner*.<sup>3</sup> Concerns were expressed at 'paltry' and 'trumpery' charges and 'intermeddling cruelty,' particularly the excessive use of handcuffs.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, there were assaults upon members of the WRCC across the county from Knaresborough, Keighley and Skipton to Cudworth, Cawthorne and Mirfield, which in some cases involved large and hostile crowds, though Cobbe's quarterly report to the West Riding magistrates in April 1857 showed that the police prosecuted in only five cases.<sup>5</sup> Given the alleged predilection of the police, at least in the early years of the force, to prosecute trivial cases of assault this figure is strikingly low. Certain locations stand out – notably Dewsbury, Rotherham and Barnsley and their environs – as did certain ethnic and occupational groups – the Irish, navvies and miners; but contexts and motives varied. The 200 or so people on Castle Hill, Huddersfield, in June 1858, attacked the police, as they had done before, for interfering in what to them was a legitimate leisure pursuit – cockfighting.<sup>6</sup> An attack on the police in Barnsley in February 1858 was provoked by what was seen as an unwarranted intrusion into a private matter – domestic violence.<sup>7</sup> Other clashes arose out of more obvious criminal activity. The incident which led to PC Walker's loss of two fingers – later produced as evidence in court – was a clash with a band of sheep stealers.<sup>8</sup> A few incidents, such as the fracas in Pontefract in January 1858, were motivated by 'feelings of revenge against the county force.'<sup>9</sup> More generally, there were reports of police being 'knocked down, kicked [and] trampled on,' and limbs being broken as bricks and stones were thrown.<sup>10</sup> But elsewhere the new police were met, if not with open arms, more with a mixture of curiosity, scepticism and indifference than outright hostility.

### **A case study: Upper Agbrigg**

Although no police division was 'typical,' a detailed case study brings out the complexities of police/public relations in the early years of the WRCC. The extensive reporting of police matters in the *Huddersfield Chronicle*, and to a lesser extent the *Huddersfield Examiner*, makes this possible for the Upper Agbrigg division.<sup>11</sup>

The first cohort of the new force arrived in January 1857 and was augmented during the following months. The simple fact of a significant increase in police personnel changed local dynamics and threatened the *modus vivendi* between police and policed that had previously developed. The experienced superintendent Heaton and the local magistrates were worried that ‘in Longwood and other places a number of lawless characters had determined in every possible way to interfere with the police, with the view of driving them out’ but the threat never materialised.<sup>12</sup> In one isolated incident, James Maud attacked Sergeant Caygill, declaring ‘he would drive the police out of Longwood as they were determined to have no policemen there’ but there was no support for Maud.<sup>13</sup> There were sporadic clashes with the new police on a number of occasions in the old trouble-spot of Lindley, where in 1859 according to Heaton, ‘the police [were] shockingly treated’, though there were also positive comments about the behaviour of the new police in the village. There was continuing hostility in Deighton, another problematic area for the old parish constables.<sup>14</sup> There was open hostility here to the newly-arrived county police officers, PCs Firth and Ward, who were the victims of a savage attack in March 1857 by two men previously arrested for drunkenness. The defendants claimed that they were now more determined ‘to oppose the authority of “the gentleman in blue” who have been recently stationed in the village,’ which led the Huddersfield bench to make ‘a marked example’ and imposed a fine and costs that amounted to the considerable sum of £13-8s-6d which was soon paid shortly after a collection had been made.<sup>15</sup> But, as in Lockwood, there was no concerted anti-police action, though Heaton conceded that ‘there were a number of lads and men in the villages who took it upon themselves to do all they could to annoy the police.’<sup>16</sup>

The new police were subject to ‘annoyance’ elsewhere. In Golcar the newly-installed policeman was assaulted, while in Uppermill a crowd rescued a police prisoner; at the Honley Feast there was a serious assault on one of the local policemen while in Crosland Moor, during a stang-riding\* protest,

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\* Stang riding was a form of ‘rough music’ that is, a cacophonous and mocking ritual directed at individuals who transgressed community norms of morality. A representation of the offending individual(s), astride a long pole, or stang, was carried on men’s shoulders, while a crowd beat pots and pans, cheered and even threw mud and other unpleasant substances. For more detail see E P Thompson, *Custom in Common*, London, Penguin, 1993, chapter eight.

the 'mob made a dead set at the police;' In Kirkheaton police actions led to sporadic trouble but in Slaithwaite the police were criticized merely for doing 'nothing but walk the streets in their smart dresses and clean, spotless shoes.' However, in Kirkburton, somewhat surprisingly given earlier tensions, 'few have proved more favourable to the new county force than the inhabitants of Kirkburton and neighbourhood' while in Meltham the police were welcomed for their success in 'quelling the disorderly rows that have so long been the disgrace of that village.'<sup>17</sup> In many places there was no great love for the new police but there was also a recognition that the police were here to stay. Trivial or mean-spirited prosecutions might damage their reputation and 'tend to aggravate the popular feeling of dislike to the county police' but there was no concerted effort to expel the police.<sup>18</sup>

Nor did attitudes change significantly in the following years. The police continued to be particularly unpopular in Lindley, in 'the semi-civilized neighbourhood of Kirkheaton' and 'among the ruthless-looking desperadoes ... [from] the wild region around Scammonden.' Their attempts to curb out-of-hours drinking and suppress cockfighting in and around Kirkburton and Holmfirth also provoked a number of violent responses. The most serious took place in Jackson Bridge in the summer of 1858. The police were subjected to Saturday-night attacks by 'parties secreted on the way side, in readiness with stones, bludgeons etc' and as a consequence 'officers have resigned their duties, not daring to risk their lives in so perilous a district' but this was an isolated and short-lived occurrence.<sup>19</sup> Sporadic violent incidents continued to be found throughout the early and mid-1860s.<sup>20</sup> More often than not they involved drunks and people with a personal grudge against individual policemen. Henry Sanderson, better known as 'Red Harry,' was arrested in Holmfirth for assaulting two constables who had served him with a warrant for non-payment of rates. He singled out PC Rhodes, telling him "Ov Ow'd thee a grudge an ol pay thee off afore theea goas 'yoat o' this heease.'<sup>21</sup> Overall, however, there was a general if begrudging acceptance of the new county police; while in some villages, such as Honley, the demands were for more, rather than less, police action.<sup>22</sup>

Assaults on the police made good copy but to focus solely on manifestations of anti-police sentiment would be to paint a misleading picture. Police work covered a wide range of activities, many of which minimised and marginalised outright opposition, and some even winning more positive support. In

hindsight the vagrants of Victorian Britain appear more as pathetic figures, often undeserving losers in a socio-economic order that offered little protection for the unskilled and misfortunate but, at the time, such footloose, wandering people were seen as a major threat to settled society. In this sense, the police were working very much with the grain of contemporary beliefs (or prejudices) and thus their role as protectors against a threatening 'other' was seen as necessary for the wider good of society.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, not all routine policing was uncontentious. There was a longstanding consensus among local magistrates and police chiefs that beerhouses in particular, but also village feasts and the like, were major sites of immorality and criminality, which required firm action. As the police became increasingly involved in curbing drinking, gambling and cockfighting, and in ensuring order at customary celebrations the scope for conflict between the police and working-class men and women (and some middle-class people as well) increased. Heaton, whose personal enthusiasm in the early 1850s has already been noted, continued to set the tone and many of his men responded energetically. Beerhouse keepers and publicans were prosecuted for selling liquor out of hours in every village in the division, though certain men were regular attenders at the local courts. Increasingly the emphasis was on the 'crusade' against gambling, which was seen to be particularly pernicious.<sup>24</sup> But, in rural area, bringing to justice landlords who permitted gambling on their premises was not easy. William Corden, an energetic sergeant, was able to successfully prosecute John Whiteley, an innkeeper from Scammonden, but only with some difficulty. With two other men, he hid himself near the inn, and 'having placed a ladder against an upstairs window ... heard one of the men say, "we'll play for another quart"'. On another occasion, also in Scammonden, Corden and 'the [two] constables lifted each other up to get a glimpse into the room through a crevice in the blind.'<sup>25</sup> They then quietly entered the house and arrested the miscreants who were 'tossing' and 'marrying.'<sup>\*\*</sup> In similar style, PCs Lucas and Wardle arrested gamblers, 'throwing the dart for beer' in the Stafford Arms beerhouse, Kirkheaton, after looking through an ill-fitting blind.<sup>26</sup>

Even more problematic for the police was the widespread practice of 'lakin' for brass' [playing for money] in fields and bye-ways. Such events were well organised. In Lockwood between thirty and forty young men would

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\*\* Local dialect for gambling.

meet regularly in a field to play pitch and toss, paying a young boy to stand watch for 3*d.* an hour. After numerous complaints and several unsuccessful attempts, the police, 'in disguise,' finally caught the gamblers unawares and arrested thirteen men.<sup>27</sup> A similar incident in Longwood highlighted not only police difficulties – not helped by naïve tactics that involved men 'dressed in blue slop, so as to imitate weavers as much as possible' and 'one of the officers mounting a donkey' – but also the defiance of the arrested gamblers who 'treated the matter with much levity and said they could easily club up the money.'<sup>28</sup> And these were the more able and active officers. Others were less successful. PC Wardle, for one, tried – not always wholeheartedly – and failed on several occasions to catch Sunday gamblers in Kirkheaton.

Much depended upon the actions of the individual constable. A constable was extremely fortunate not to be assaulted at least once in the course of his normal duties but some men were more unpopular than others. The experienced Abraham Sedgwick was one such man. When in the Huddersfield force, he had been attacked on at least six occasions. As a sergeant in the WRCC he was subject to a number of serious attacks, including two at local feasts. Following one such incident the local magistrates made clear that 'they deprecated on the part of policemen anything like officiousness such as was likely to promote a demonstration against them.'<sup>29</sup> The magistrates' words were warmly received and those charged made it clear their hostility towards Sedgwick. Other members of the force were guilty of dishonesty as well as of using excessive force. Four men were charged with attacking the police in a brawl outside the Junction Inn, Golcar, but when the evidence had been heard the magistrates were scathing. The police 'case had miserably failed and ... the officers and the defendants ought to change places,' PC Stansfield, they continued, was responsible for 'one of the grossest assaults,' involving 'the unwarrantable use of his staff.'<sup>30</sup> In Stansfield's case this was a one-off incident but there were other officers who were repeatedly reprimanded. One such was PC Thomas Manuel, who had previously served in the Lancashire County Constabulary. A case against Benjamin Garside, a repeat offender well-known to the bench was dismissed by the magistrates with the pithy comment that 'the officer might have been mistaken as to the time he had seen the defendant.'<sup>31</sup> Manuel was an unpopular figure in Lindley – 'the d--d Irish b-----' as he was once described, and widely mistrusted, not least by the magistrates.<sup>32</sup> Matters came to a head in 1860 when he was accused

of imprisoning Joseph Bottomley 'in a damp and loathsome cellar' and in handcuffs for eight hours. The case aroused considerable attention locally and 'it was unmistakably evident that the sympathies of the majority of those present were on the side of the plaintiff.'<sup>33</sup> The magistrates awarded Bottomley £10, criticised Manuel personally but also observed in open court that, not for the first time, 'the police of the West Riding Constabulary had ... made use of their powers in a most excessive manner.'<sup>34</sup> An equally problematic figure was Sergeant Obed Caygill, who came to Upper Agbrigg having been demoted from the rank of inspector because of inefficiency. A long-standing teetotaler, Caygill was the epitome of Storch's 'domestic missionary.' The zeal with which he prosecuted innkeepers and beerhouse keepers, gamblers and 'nude' racers matched that of his superintendent, Heaton.<sup>35</sup> Unsurprisingly, he was the victim of several assaults and there were recurring accusations of his 'cruel, wanton and unnecessary ... violence.'<sup>36</sup> Eventually Caygill resigned but damage was not restricted to his personal reputation. Such men – as was to be seen even more dramatically in Honley – could bring the whole force into disrepute and conflict.

But it was possible to be both active and popular. William Corden was active officer, involved in numerous prosecutions for licensing offences and gambling in and around Golcar and Slaithwaite but, unlike Caygill, he was never attacked during his nine-years of service. Indeed, on his departure to become an inspector in Barnsley, Corden was presented with a watch inscribed by 'a number of friends at Golcar' and at a presentation made at the Rose & Crown Hotel, Golcar Hill, he was praised for his 'straightforward and upright conduct' and 'a private life without blemish'.<sup>37</sup> In a telling aside, a report on the fifth annual bowling match at Slaithwaite Bath Spa noted that 'Police-sergeant Corden [was] frequently applauded during the play'.<sup>38</sup> Here was living proof that involvement in community life need not involve 'going native' but, to the contrary, could strengthen the standing of the police.<sup>39</sup> Corden was not alone. Sergeant Thomas Greenwood was a similar example of pragmatic policing. Probably because of his prior policing experience, he was stationed at Slaithwaite and was responsible for policing in one of the more difficult areas. He had a reputation as 'an active officer' and was praised for his vigilance in a number of major cases (including horse theft and arson) but, like most officers, spent much of his time dealing with more banal incidents of out-of-hours drinking, gambling and clothes-line thefts

– although his arrests had none of the abrasiveness of Caygill’s – and on a number of occasions, responded to requests from landlords or landladies to deal with obstreperous customers. His career was not without incident (he was attacked on a number of occasions) or blemish (he was criticised by magistrates for exceeding his duty in a poaching case) but he did not attract the opprobrium, let alone hatred, which surrounded some of his fellow officers. Why this was the case is not easy to explain from the limited evidence available but his handling of an out-of-hours drinking offence in 1864 provides some insight. The Western Great Inn at ‘Top o’ Stannedge’ was located in one of the remoter parts of the division above Marsden. For many years, the landlady was Hannah Rhodes, who was known for her cavalier attitude towards licensing hours. Affectionately known as ‘Mother Rhodes’ (in the 1850s) and ‘Nanny Rhodes’ (in the 1860s), her hospitality made the Great Western Inn a popular destination for day-trippers from Huddersfield, Sunday-school outings and even the occasional wedding party, but she was a serial offender with regard to the licensing laws. From a police perspective the problem was twofold. First, there was the question of resource allocation. There were enough public houses and beerhouses in Marsden and Slaithwaite to occupy the time of the police without worrying about Stannedge but the police could not totally ignore persistent flouting of the law. Second, any police action against a popular figure risked being counterproductive. When Greenwood acted in the summer of 1864 he proceeded with considerable tact. The evidence was clear-cut: over twenty people were drinking out of hours on Sunday afternoon when he visited but he made great play of his reluctance to take action – he told the court that he was ‘personally unwilling to get the old lady into trouble [but was] compelled by duty to report what he saw’ – and also stressed the generosity of ‘Nanny Rhodes’ – I have ‘reason to believe that Nanny’s accommodating disposition induces her occasionally to offer house-room to parties “turned out” at proper time on Sunday afternoon from the public houses in Marsden and the valley below,’ he explained. As Greenwood well knew this was a fiction but it had the effect of defusing a potential problematic situation. He was not a paragon of virtue, nor could he avoid conflict, especially when breaking up prize fights, as he did on at least two occasions, but his career demonstrates that it was possible to be an active officer without antagonising large swathes of the local population.



Sergeants such as Corden and Greenwood were important, not least in the example they set, in establishing the presence of the newly-formed WRCC. However, more important were the ordinary constables who were responsible for the bulk of interactions between the police and the public. Unfortunately, most of these interactions went unrecorded, and even where there is some evidence it is often so fragmentary that it is difficult to reconstruct a picture of the manner in which the new police went about their daily business. It is impossible to say how many constables were ‘inoffensive and civil’ like Constable Reuben Redmond.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, one does not know why members of the public came to the assistance of some constables under attack – but they did.<sup>41</sup> When Constable William Holmes was attacked by the belligerent William Dyson, alias ‘Bull Head’, outside the Star Inn, Slaithwaite, three men helped him arrest his assailant.<sup>42</sup> Elsewhere, constables appear to have been viewed with something akin to affection. One such example is the long-serving Robert Wardle, first in Berry Brow and finally in Kirkheaton. Wardle was not a highflier but he soon established himself as a well-liked and respected figure, having ‘a high character for vigilance and activity, although he was *neither a harsh nor a meddling officer*.<sup>43</sup> He was ‘a steady and efficient officer’ but not one to assert himself in the manner of a Corden or a Greenwood. Although he made the occasional arrest for gaming in local beerhouses, many of his arrests were for careless driving, hawking without a license, sleeping rough or obstruction of the highway. He was known locally as ‘Robert,’ a policeman who liked a drink, but one who tended to ‘live and let live,’ exemplified by his somewhat dilatory approach to gambling in Kirkheaton. In that sense, his success came via low-intensity policing in which rigorous enforcement of the law was traded off against tolerance of the police. If Wardle struck an acceptable balance (and he was not criticised by his superiors for his inefficiency), not all men did. Exemplifying the fears that Colonel Cobbe had expressed from the outset, Constable William Booth was charged by Superintendent Heaton for neglect of duty, his conduct being ‘very improper and unbecoming an officer.’ As Heaton explained, Booth ‘began to mix with the inhabitants instead of attending to his duty.’<sup>44</sup>

It would be simplistic to see the development of policing simply in terms of ‘good cops’ and ‘bad cops.’ Broader socio-economic inequalities, gender and class assumptions, the class orientation of the law and courts and the general expectations of the police created a context in which the individual constable

operated and imposed constraints on his actions. Equally important were the practical realities of policing in a rural district characterised by scattered habitations and harsh landscapes. The individual and his use of discretion was important in shaping the relationship between police and policed. Overall, there was no Storchian 'open warfare' but there were signs that a new and enduring *modus vivendi* between police and policed was emerging by the late-1860s. Incidents of police violence still occurred but less often in the mid- to late-1860s; concerns remained about 'bad judgment' by the police but, again, fewer as time passed. The excessive use of handcuffs and other restraints on men and particularly on women as they were marched or carried by cart to the county police station in Huddersfield aroused popular anger in the late-1850s, less so in the late-1860s, not least because of the opening of new stations (or police houses with cells) that reduced the need to move the arrested long distances through the streets.<sup>45</sup> In broad terms, the police were becoming more disciplined but also more aware of the limits of their power in practice. They were also developing priorities that fitted better with popular concerns and extending their role beyond narrow crime-fighting to broader 'welfare' concerns but, while progress was made towards a workable and working policed society, unresolved problems remained. There were still incidents of the police being openly insulted in the streets, their windows smashed and even their gardens vandalised.<sup>46</sup> More worryingly, there was also clear evidence of an unwillingness to cooperate with the police. As Heaton recognised, there was 'a great reluctance manifested by people to come forward to give evidence along with the police'.<sup>47</sup> Even when people appeared in court there was an ongoing problem of 'hard swearing' or giving false testimony, 'frequently resorted to by witnesses for the purpose of clearing their friends from the charges brought against them by the police'.<sup>48</sup>

The introduction of the WRCC into Upper Agbrigg had been achieved with some difficulty but, after five years, there were encouraging signs that suggested that a *modus vivendi* was being established between the new police and the bulk of the population but this progress was thrown in doubts in 1862. In that year, the two largest popular anti-police protests in the county took place.

### **The Honley anti-police riot, June/July 1862<sup>49</sup>**

Honley was a village of some 5 - 6000 people, about four miles from Huddersfield, with a mixed economy, boosted by the advent of the railway in the early 1850s. Farmers and agricultural labourer lived alongside mill-owner and their workers and with weaver/farmers. Old and new technologies in the woollen industry co-existed, while craftsmen and retailers plied their trades. The village had a radical tradition with a Owenite socialist club dating back to the early nineteenth century. In the 1850s Honley was policed by a group of parish constables under a 'head' constable, who faced little popular hostility. Nor was it a particularly troublesome area in the early years of the WRCC. Indeed it was one of a small number of villages who requested a greater police presence. The 1861 census recorded three constables and a sergeant living in the village, the latter having been moved to Honley following demotion from the rank of inspector for 'irregular conduct.' The most significant figure was PC Edward Antrobus who had been transferred to Upper Agbrigg in 1861, serving in Deighton and Farnley Tyas before being posted to Honley. Antrobus and trouble went together. His abrasive approach had led to conflict with locals in both places but this was as nothing compared to the trouble that broke out in Honley. In just over a year, he was responsible for more prosecutions than had been brought by all constables in the village in the four years since the formation of the WRCC but it was the manner in which he went about his work that generated widespread hostility. Officially moving on small groups of millworkers, hitting young boys, and vindictively pressing for heavy charges and, on a number of occasions lying in court that he was the victim in beerhouse brawls.<sup>50</sup>

Matters came to a head on the evening of Monday 23 June at 6 o'clock.<sup>51</sup> A pre-arranged mass protest was started by the arrival of a well-known local hawker, Johnny Moss, ringing a handbell and calling out: 'Come up, Antrobus! Roll up, Antrobus!'<sup>52</sup> Within minutes a crowd of some 300 people, including children blowing penny whistles, surrounded Antrobus, subjecting him to verbal and physical assaults as he was run out of the village. As he sought refuge in a nearby public house the 'mob' smashed windows and burnt Antrobus and his wife in effigy. This marked the end of the first phase of the Honley riot. Significantly, popular anger was directed solely at one unpopular policeman. Nowhere in the extensive coverage of the events

is there no reference to anger being directed at the other police officers living in the village.

The second phase started the following day when police with warrants for the arrest of ten alleged ring-leaders arrived in Honley. Six men were arrested and taken to Huddersfield after an attempted mass rescue failed. At the same time, a local defence committee was established and money flowed in from all quarters, including 'many of the most respectable inhabitants ... [who] subscribed liberally to the defence [fund].'<sup>53</sup> The well-known radical lawyer and vocal critic of the new police, 'Mr Roberts of Manchester' was engaged to defend the arrested men.<sup>54</sup> The local police led by Heaton and supported by chief constable Cobbe took a hard line from the outset with the decision to prosecute on the serious charge of riot, and the accompanying rhetoric of 'wanton outrage' and 'a determined spirit of rebellion and revolt against the authority and control of the police.'<sup>55</sup>

Roberts' flamboyant defence focussed on police 'surveillance, cruelty and tyranny' and highlighted the pettiness and maliciousness of specific police actions.<sup>56</sup> The riot, he argued, was 'the unfortunate result of a perfectly legal resistance' to the excessive and illegal behaviour of the police. The excoriating critique of Antrobus – reinforced by Antrobus's crass evidence – struck a chord with the men and women of Honley who crowded the courtroom. But Roberts was not content with the individual. He stressed the specific shortcomings of Antrobus but represented him as part of a wider police system that was presided over by the 'large swelling pomposity of Mr. Superintendent Heaton' – a comment that provoked loud laughter in the courtroom.<sup>57</sup> He was also aware of magisterial concern with unacceptable actions by the county police and appealed to their paternalistic instincts: 'the people of Honley ... relied on the magistrates to protect them from Mr. Heaton and his myrmidons.'<sup>58</sup> The magistrates were not persuaded by the prosecution argument that the events constituted a riot and the matter was treated as a common assault, with relatively lenient punishments in the form of fines ranging from £1 to 5s handed down. The decision was well received by those in court and, when the prosecution counsel responded to the punishment with the hyperbolic claim that he would 'recommend the chief constable to let his men be killed off as fast as the mob could kill them', he was greeted with hoots of derision.<sup>59</sup> Although the magistrates had not explicitly accepted Robert's argument that poverty was being penalized,

their decision to treat the case as one of common assault and the levels of fines that they imposed showed they had little sympathy with the actions of Antrobus and his fellow officers.

This was a major rebuff for the police but they compounded their difficulties by issuing new summonses, which strengthened the resolve of the defence committee. More importantly, as the local press pointed out, 'we are no longer dealing with Police-constable *Antrobus* but with Superintendent *Heaton*' who had replaced Antrobus at the centre of the stage. The *Huddersfield Examiner* was unequivocal in its condemnation of the 'vindictiveness... of his actions' and argued that 'had it been Mr Heaton's intention to have proved the truth of the charges brought against the police generally ... that of "cruelty to the poor," he could not certainly have accomplished this more effectually than by taking the course he so unwisely adopted.'<sup>60</sup>

The second trial of a further twenty-four men from Honley, charged with aiding abetting the (alleged) rioters, was, if anything, more sensational. It had barely started when, to the amazement of those in court, it was brought to a halt. One can but conjecture that the magistrates were influenced by the breadth and depth of popular opposition. Following discussions and an agreement between the magistrates and the two counsels, Mr Learoyd, the prosecutor, beat a very public retreat, recommending 'the withdrawal of the charges against the defendants on the ground that such a course would serve more than any other to promote the restoration of kindly feeling in the village of Honley.'<sup>61</sup> The magistrates issued a statement that stressed their duty to both the police and the people but made clear that 'if a policeman exceeds his duty the Bench, *as in many previous cases*, would discountenance his proceedings.'<sup>62</sup> The matter appeared to be over. The response in the village was unequivocal: 'Honley was "all alive" with such a display of popular feeling as, perhaps, never before manifested in a country village.'<sup>63</sup> And it might have ended there had not Heaton, reportedly 'discouraged' by the magistrates' decision to call off the second trial, come to the decision – politely described at the time as 'very indiscreet' – to prosecute twenty-four boys, aged between ten and twelve, for their part in the riot 'for no other ostensible fault than playing their tin whistles &c at the riot.'<sup>64</sup> The impact in Honley was dramatic. The police decision was seen as vindictive and 'aroused public sympathy for the boys' and, according to the *Huddersfield Chronicle* 'did not abate the strong feeling manifested against the other side [i.e. the police]'.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, according

to the *Huddersfield Examiner*, '[t]he indignation of the entire community was now fairly roused and the sixpences of the poorest joined with the guineas of the rich in attesting the unmistakable unanimity of feeling with which this oppressive supplementary proceeding was regarded.'<sup>66</sup> The public protest that took place on the next day (1 July) when the boys were due in court was strikingly high-profile. '[T]he boys walked down to Huddersfield, two and two together, like scholars at a school-feast, accompanied by their mothers, and a host of other women.'<sup>67</sup> For just over an hour, this procession of women, not simply accompanying but protecting their children, made its way from Honley along one of the main roads into Huddersfield through 'crowds of sympathising friends and relatives.'<sup>68</sup> Once again the magistrates decided not to proceed with the charges; once again the people of Honley celebrated.

A large crowd, estimated to be in excess of 3,000, turned out, and in a prominent position was Johnny Moss, on his mule, which had been renamed Antrobus for the occasion! A local band, from nearby Berry Brow, played 'Oh dear, what can the matter be' (and other unnamed 'lively airs') as the 'monster procession' made its way, 'most peaceable and orderly,' through the village. There was a 'thrill of joy through the neighbourhood ... [and] demonstrations of joy and welcome.'<sup>69</sup> The celebrations ended at the village cricket ground, where, after some short speeches, there were 'three hearty cheers for Roberts the Defence Advocate and the [Honley] Defence Committee', followed by 'three times three cheers' for Princess Alice's marriage, which had taken place that day. 'Finally, the whole of the large crowd sang the national anthem in good tune and with a violence that made the valley ring again.'<sup>70</sup> Significantly, 'the additional police force in the town [i.e., Honley] did not interfere at all, but wisely let the villagers have their frolic out in their own way.' It was a decision that eased tensions to such an extent that even the police were treated with 'due civility.'<sup>71</sup>

The matter did not end with these celebrations. There was a third phase in which what had started as a popular rising, using 'traditional' forms of protest, was taken up the 'middling sort' in Honley. A week later there was a well-attended meeting at Honley town hall at which it was decided to send a memorial to the chief constable Cobbe, condemning, in general 'the irritating and insulting conduct of police' and specifically the 'indiscreet and injudicious, if not illegal conduct' of PC Antrobus. It concluded that 'the peace of the district [of Honley] cannot be maintained because of the

bitterness of the feeling which is entertained against [PC Antrobus] by the villagers.<sup>72</sup> However, the signatories, described as '133 manufacturers, merchants, solicitors, tradesmen, &c', made it clear that it was the actions of the police generally, not just Antrobus alone, that was cause for concern. In saying this, they were not suggesting that the police should be removed but rather that the force should act properly.

If the police of this district will thus try to discharge the duties imposed upon them, they will have the regard and support of all respectable men; but if they transgress proper limits and encroach upon the liberties and privileges of the people, all the prosecutions which may be threatened, cannot prevent that which we fear and deprecate – disorder, riot and crime.<sup>73</sup>

There could be no clearer statement of the desire for a properly policed society, in which laws were upheld but liberties protected. The memorial concluded with a specific request that Antrobus be removed. Cobbe, who had also received a letter from Antrobus asking to be moved, agreed and a new constable took his place. There was no trouble at that year's Honley Feast and the greatest disturbance in the village was caused by a tornado that hit in October.<sup>74</sup> An unpopular policeman had been run out of town but there was no rejection of the police *per se*. Honley was never an unpoliced village but when PC Grant was installed a new working relationship had to be established – and one which reflected the villagers' sense of the legitimate limits of police action. Grant, although not a local man, was an experienced officer, who soon won the support of many of the people in Honley. The number of prosecutions, especially for minor offences, dropped dramatically and such was his success that he was promoted to first-class constable in April 1863 and sergeant in May 1864, at which point he moved to Kirkburton, where he served out the remaining fifteen years of his career. After the tumultuous summer of '62 life in Honley was much quieter. Fewer cases were brought before the local magistrates, though press reporting of foot races and the like suggest no significant change in local behaviour. Unlike Antrobus, the new constable, Grant, won the 'entire approval' of people in the village.<sup>75</sup> It is unlikely that village mores had changed dramatically. Rather, the police had learned to use their discretion in the implementation of the law rather

than pushing it to the limit as had been the case with Antrobus. There was one final twist in the Honley saga, which reflected positively on Grant but also suggested that senior policemen had not properly learnt the lessons of the previous months. In the summer of 1863, the defence committee held its last meeting, a supper 'celebrating the popular triumph over a meddling and over-officious policeman' at the Allied Tavern. The supper would not have taken place had the senior police officers, Colonel Cobbe and Superintendent Heaton, not 'disapproved' of the defence committee's proposal to present '£2 to Police-constable Grant ... who had gained the respect and confidence of the inhabitants ... [including] the class with whom policemen chiefly come in contact ... by his excellent conduct as a police officer'.<sup>76</sup> No reason was given for the refusal but the proposal, as well as the overt praise for Grant, was implicitly a criticism of Cobbe's decision to transfer Antrobus to Honley and Heaton's defence of him as 'a model officer.'

The Honley riot was the largest manifestation of anti-police sentiment in the West Riding since the introduction of the WRCC. Its aftermath revealed considerable hostility to the police but also a desire for a properly policed society. As significant as the troubles of June 1862 was the rapid restoration of order thereafter.

### **The Holmfirth anti-police demonstration, July 1862**

The anti-police protests in Honley had a traditional flavour – direct action through rough music and burning in effigy – in Holmfirth it took the more modern form of protesting through public debate and petitioning. The 'considerable dissatisfaction ... with the manner in which the [new county] police have interfered with the peaceable inhabitants' which 'rendered themselves obnoxious to many' was led more by respectable middle-class men than in Honley.<sup>77</sup>

Holmfirth, a larger village than Honley, was located some six miles south of Huddersfield. It too had a diverse economy, a recent train link and a tradition of radicalism. Unlike Honley it had more of a reputation for criminality, harbouring cock fighters and whisky spinners and the like. The newly-introduced WRCC had met violent opposition in nearby Jackson Bridge and their men were not popular among the beerhouse keepers and their clientele,



the cockfighters and gamblers of Holmfirth. Notwithstanding, outright opposition to the police was confined to more marginal members of society in the first four years under the new police.<sup>78</sup> Police zeal had been tempered to a significant degree by the attitude of the highly-regarded Inspector Haworth. His departure, in late 1859, removed an important force for conciliation between the police and respectable Holmfirth folk. At a special meeting he had been given a hearty vote of thanks and speakers praised the fact that 'his object ... [was] to carry out the law rather than to impose fines ... [and he] had frequently cautioned disturbers of the peace instead of taking them before the magistrates.' In particular, he was praised for being 'free from the overbearance and officiousness to which some officers are too prone.'<sup>79</sup>

In the absence of his restraining presence matters began to worsen, with the conduct of certain constables being described as an 'intolerable nuisance.'<sup>80</sup> One of the most assiduous men was Joseph Briers, who had been moved to Holmfirth, having been demoted from sergeant as the result of indiscipline. Briers was a high-profile and unpopular man. In February 1861 he was viciously beaten by a gang of seven men after he had (at the request of the landlord) cleared the Rose and Crown. Their trial caused 'considerable excitement in the district' and, though found guilty and fined £6 and costs each, the money was paid immediately for the men.<sup>81</sup> More interest was aroused by the subsequent trial of Briers for perjury. The case was dismissed but this was 'evidently distasteful to the crowded court who manifested their dissatisfaction by their muted execrations.'<sup>82</sup> Three months later Briers was transferred out of the village but much damage had been done to police/public relations. Briers was not alone. The names of two other men appear repeatedly in the local press: PCs Linas Hancock and John Strange. Both men were outsiders and both were later moved out of Holmfirth and subsequently dismissed. Their careers highlight the difficulty faced by Cobbe and Heaton in recruiting good men. Hancock was serving his second term in the WRCC and never progressed beyond the third class; Strange was marginally more successful, though was demoted to the second class before being transferred.

Matters in Holmfirth finally came to a head in 1862. Working men had borne the brunt of police zeal initially. After two sessions in which there had been no business for the magistrates, their session of May 1862 saw a sharp increase, as the result of 'trivial' cases brought by the police, mainly for allegedly drunk and disorderly behaviour.<sup>83</sup> Within a few weeks the situation

had deteriorated dramatically. The *Huddersfield Chronicle* editorialized about the need for the Holmfirth magistrates to consider other testimony, especially when police evidence was unsupported. Only in this way could 'a proper respect for authority' be restored.<sup>84</sup> Under the heading 'Frivolous Police Charges And Their Results,' a correspondent detailed cases of men being charged with obstruction when making their way home or even standing on private property, which gave rise to 'strong feelings against the police.' The case of Joseph Balmforth, a painter, epitomised the problem. He was charged with 'obstructing the road' as he made his way to his front door, through a crowd of people, including a police officer. The officer testified that Balmforth had taken him by the shoulder and deliberately caused an obstruction and, in the absence of any other witness in court, the magistrate, emphasising the fact that the police evidence was on oath, fined him 1s (5p) and costs.<sup>85</sup> Whereas once animosity towards the police had been confined largely to 'rougher' elements, by the summer of 1862 anti-police anger 'now pervades every class in the community'. The nature of many of the cases brought before the local magistrates, the suspicion that a number of police cases were 'imagined or manufactured,' and the willingness of the magistrates to accept uncorroborated police evidence united local sentiment against 'a persecuting force.'<sup>86</sup>

This was the context in which the Rev. T James and twenty or more of the respectable male population of Holmfirth called a meeting to consider what action should be taken in light of 'the glaring encroachments of the police upon the rights and liberties of the peaceable inhabitants of these places.'<sup>87</sup> The organizers seriously underestimated the number of people who wished to attend. As the time for the start of the meeting approached 'the road in front of the [Town] Hall was thronged with countless wearers of blue smocks, the hard working and aggrieved portion of the community who have especially been the subject of the harsh treatment of which they complain.'<sup>88</sup> The initiative was taken by middle-class men who dominated the speech-making. The very visible presence of these middle-class figures, equally aggrieved at police high-handedness, helped direct local anger into the more respectable form of protest of petitioning the authorities. Nonetheless, there was real anger, not least at the stance of the chief constable who had written to the Rev. James claiming, not only that he had received no complaints, but that the police had acquitted themselves well. The first claim was denied by

some of those present and the second dismissed as 'bosh and nonsense.'<sup>89</sup> There was further anger with the manner in which the village's grievance had been investigated. Cobbe had simply asked the relevant Superintendent, Heaton, to look into matters and he, only interviewing the police involved and, totally ignoring the petitioners, had concluded that nothing was amiss.<sup>90</sup>

Two resolutions were put before the meeting and both were passed unanimously and accompanied by 'triumphant cheers' before being sent to both the chief constable and the Lord Lieutenant of the county. The first was proposed by Alfred Wood, a mill-owner, and seconded by the woollen manufacturer, James Holmes; the second proposed by a local shopkeeper, John Sanderson was seconded by James Schofield, a draper. The first resolution made clear the prevailing mood. Trivial cases had been brought before magistrates sympathetic to the police, which 'excited universal indignation amongst the inhabitants of this neighbourhood.'<sup>91</sup> Wood spoke forcefully of the 'petty tyranny which has for some time past been exercised by the police towards the different classes of the community' and bemoaned the fact that 'in Holmfirth the police were not their servants; they were their tyrants.'<sup>92</sup> He was not alone. The speeches were dominated by a rhetoric that stressed the liberties of the English, and their constitutional rights and warned of the threat posed by the police which threatened to reduce the people of Holmfirth to the level of 'the crawling serfs of a Russian or an Austrian despot.'<sup>93</sup> At the same time there were very specific criticisms made of the county police. Despite the cost of maintaining a force, it was seen to fail in its basic responsibility of protecting property and person. Wood damned the police for their incompetence in dealing with the robbery from his mill and for their insulting behaviour to respectable men of the town.<sup>94</sup> There was also sympathy for less respectable victims of police action, including 'unfortunates' [i.e. prostitutes] from whom 'fees' were extracted to avoid prosecution.<sup>95</sup> Yet more serious accusations were made of police manufacturing cases and magistrates accepting false and uncorroborated police evidence, even in the face of contrary evidence from 'respectable' witnesses. Complaints were made about the 'policeman's meddling malady,' their surliness and their 'petty tyranny and pomposity;' and about the paltriness of the cases that the police brought against bystanders on the Victoria Bridge in the centre of the village and even against respectable men trying to enter their own homes! There

was an element of social snobbery from middle-class men who resented being told what to do by men who were deemed their social inferiors, not to mention being ‘comers-in.’ However, it was clear from the size and the response of the crowd that these criticisms struck a chord among ‘the wearers of blue smocks’ as well.<sup>96</sup>

There was further anger at the suggestion that there was a conspiracy against the police. As Holmes made clear that ‘it is not that we want to do away with the police’ but rather, fewer and better policemen. Like Wood, he stressed ‘the dictatorial and officious actions of the police’ and quoted Roberts’s claim at the recent trial of the Honley rioters that the police waged a war against the poor. The situation was not helped by the fact that the new policeman was ‘a low-bred stranger with whose antecedents we have no acquaintance’ and who acted in a manner that had more in common with ‘John Moss’s mule.’<sup>97</sup> To compound matters further, and quoting a recently retired policeman, Holmes argued that the police were told from the very top (i.e. Superintendent Heaton) not to be friendly with members of the local community. Despite the undoubted anger on display, the calls for moderation prevailed and, after the second resolution had been passed to resounding cheers, the crowd gave a further three cheers for the Queen and then dispersed quietly – but there was to be one final twist to the events of the day.

Superintendent Heaton had been aware that a mass meeting was scheduled to take place in Holmfirth and that local feelings were running high. Taking advantages of the opportunity afforded by a county force (and the railways) and not wishing for a repeat of the scenes in Honley, he arranged for thirty-six men, from three divisions of the West Riding, to be present under his leadership. Entraining from Huddersfield, they duly arrived in Holmfirth to be greeted more with mirth than anger. The ‘most peaceable and orderly’ conduct of the meeting (and its aftermath) was beyond reproach and the police had nothing to do and no-one to arrest. However, as a local eyewitness (described as ‘a gentleman in whose truthfulness we have entire confidence’) told the *Huddersfield Examiner*, the police ‘determined to make the best of the unfortunate occurrence by kicking up a shindy of their own.’ Presumably in the absence of Heaton, fifteen or so drunken policemen ‘sallied forth into the town and neighbourhood and ... suffered their usual surly dignity to melt down into swearing, leap frog and other antics much to the amusement of those who saw them.’ Having spent much of the early morning of Tuesday

drinking copiously in the Rose & Crown, Holmfirth, four or five policemen then 'perambulated the road from the end of Victoria Street to Upper Mill, rousing many of the peaceable inhabitants from their slumbers at four o'clock in the morning. Two were seen 'performing the donkey's part between the shafts of a cart' while 'oaths and various kinds of ribaldry' were heard as the police roamed through Upper Mill. Perhaps the most amazing aspect of this drunken spree is that it was 11½ miles from Holmfirth to Upper Mill.<sup>98</sup> Matters could scarcely get worse for the reputation of the police – but they did. On the following day,

[o]n the platform at the Holmfirth station and during their ride to Huddersfield, they [the police] cheered themselves and others, by lustily singing 'Here's to the red, white and blue,' strongly emphasizing the last word, and adding to it occasionally the word Antrobus.<sup>99</sup>

Cobbe's response to the Holmfirth resolutions was not reported but it is striking that by the end of August no cases had been brought by the police before the local magistrates.<sup>100</sup> There were also changes in police personnel in Holmfirth and whereas '[t]he last police acted on the system that if there was not a squabble in the street they would make one,' there were now no such incidents – a change that was 'much the better.'<sup>101</sup> As in Honley, so in Holmfirth a *modus vivendi* was re-established through the restriction of police activities.

### **Some conclusions**

Standing back from the detail of the two disturbances, question arises about the typicality of Honley and Holmfirth. Both had traditions of liberal and radical politics, though both (Honley in particular) prided themselves on being law-abiding. More generally, there was an ongoing, grumbling hostility that manifested itself in smaller scale attacks on the police in various parts of the area. During the trial of the ringleaders of the Honley riot, the prosecutor, Mr Learoyd, drew attention to how the 'revolt against the authority and control of the police ... had pervaded to an alarming extent some of the places surrounding this and neighbouring towns.'<sup>102</sup> This might be dismissed

as courtroom hyperbole but the evidence suggests that there were real problems for the new county police in some areas. The pages of the local press bear witness to continuing animosity towards the police, particularly in Deighton, Lindley, Kirkheaton, Scammonden and Skelmanthorpe.<sup>103</sup> Many public shows of communal disapproval drew strength from traditions, firmly rooted in a pre-industrial, largely rural past, but still seen as relevant in the present. As Roberts had pointed out in the trial of the Honley rioters, 'the law might be in favour of the goaders [but] a goaded people [will] find means of showing their contempt for those who use the law with cruelty.'<sup>104</sup> Nonetheless, it is also the case that the troubles of 1862 were exceptional in their scale but were they atypical or were they major conflagrations in a landscape that was, more generally, liable to experience localised fires of anti-police sentiment? For some contemporaries the answer was clear. The Honley riot was a 'fire [that] only wanted igniting' and Antrobus was the spark. In other words, there was a 'dislike of the police generally' as well as animosity towards Antrobus that came to a head on that Monday in June 1862.<sup>105</sup> But for others, it was the restoration of order in Honley and Holmfirth that was most significant.

There is also the question of the typicality of Antrobus, variously described as 'peculiarly obnoxious' and 'officious and overbearing.' Few, if any, officers had a record of indiscipline to compare with his. Having been found guilty of assault on more than one occasion and (as it later transpired) having been twice dismissed from police forces before he joined the WRCC, he was hardly a typical policeman. But the evidence from Holmfirth points to a wider problem in the force. Although not as officious as Antrobus, PCs Briers, Hancock, Strange and Taylor, as well as the newly-appointed Inspector Parkin, showed a degree of zeal and insensitivity in prosecuting landlords and their clients that brought them into conflict with several inhabitants of Holmfirth.<sup>106</sup> Elsewhere, there were many ordinary men and women who would have recognised Roberts's claim that some members of the police showed 'servility to the rich' and 'cruelty to the working classes.'<sup>107</sup> The magistrates at the trial of the Honley rioters recognised that there was a problem but down played it, optimistically characterising it in terms of a few rotten apples: 'there might be three or four men ... that might bring the whole [force] into disrepute.'<sup>108</sup> The events discussed in this chapter reveal the fragility of police/public relations. The implicit contract between police

and public could and did break down, to a great or lesser extent, but it could also be restored, as happened after the most serious breakdowns in Honley and Holmfirth, where there was widespread criticism of bad policing but also a broadly-supported desire for a properly policed society.

The West Riding in the 1860s was a policed society in the sense that there was a permanent policed force that impacted on various aspects of everyday life. But in several places, notably the outlying and difficult to access areas, policing was light-touch; in more places policing was variable in quality because of the men in uniform. While the WRCC as a whole may have been deemed efficient by HMIC, the on-the-ground reality was that it contained many men with limited experience of routine policing and many others whose discipline was questionable. But it also contained men of ability who not simply made policing their career but also did so in a positive manner, albeit more in terms of regulating public spaces rather than fighting serious crime. Much would depend on how the force developed in the coming decades and it is to this we turn in the following chapter.

## Endnotes

- 1 See for example *Leeds Mercury*, 4 January 1870. The praise lavished on Cobbe by the county magistrates was widely reported,
- 2 R Storch, 'The Plague of Blue Locusts: Police Reforms and Popular Resistance in Northern England, 1840–1857', *International Review of Social History*, xx, 1975, 61–90, at p.87. The example of 'resumed open warfare' quoted by Storch related to Lees, near Oldham, during the exceptional circumstances of the cotton famine.
- 3 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 7 & 14 March and 30 May 1857. R Storch, 'The Policeman as Domestic Missionary', *Journal of Social History*, 9, 1976 at pp.482 & 487 misleadingly refers to 'unpoliced areas' around Huddersfield.
- 4 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 14 March, 5 September and 7 November 1857 & 23 October 1858.
- 5 *Leeds Times*, 11 April 1857
- 6 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 5 June 1858
- 7 For example *Barnsley Independent*, 27 February 1858
- 8 *Leeds Times*, 4 April 1857. The incident took place outside Wombwell in the south of the county.
- 9 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 2 January 1858
- 10 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 24 January 1857 and 1 January 1859
- 11 Though even here there are limitations. Of the twelve villages to which the initial detachments of police were sent, there are no reports of positive or negative responses in the local press for six of them For a more detailed account see Taylor *Beershops, Brothels and Bobbies*, chapters 8 & 9.
- 12 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 21 November 1857.
- 13 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 21 November 1857 and *Huddersfield Examiner*, 14 November 1857 for opposition to the policing of 5<sup>th</sup> November celebrations.
- 14 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 9 July 1859.
- 15 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 & 14 March 1857. See similar comments after an attack in Kirkheaton, 21 June 1860.
- 16 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 28 February 1857.
- 17 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 3 January, 7 & 28 February, 14 March, 13 June 1857 and HC, 17, 24 & 31 Jan., 7 February, 7 & 14 Mar., 4 & 11 Apr., 6 June, 4 Jul, 3 Oct., & 7 Nov. 1857.
- 18 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 30 May 1857. Both local papers stressed the inferiority of the county force in comparison with the town force. *Huddersfield Examiner*, 7 March 1857, 'The glorious county police.' *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 14 March & 7 November 1857.
- 19 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 5 June 1858.



- 20 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 1 December 1860, 21 November 1862, 6 October & 24 November 1866.
- 21 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 April 1860.
- 22 For local responses, including Honley see *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 9 Jan., 3 Apr., 1 May, & 10 Jul. 1859, 16 Jun., 21 Jul., 1 Sep., 22 Oct., 1 Dec. 1860, 2 Feb., 16 Mar., 25 May, 23 Nov. 1861.
- 23 See also the enforcement of bastardy order, prosecutions for neglect of family, concern for missing children and enforcement of legislation regarding nuisances.
- 24 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 23 June 1866.
- 25 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 30 December 1865 & 4 January 1868.
- 26 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 16 March 1867.
- 27 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 22 October 1864.
- 28 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 18 May 1867.
- 29 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 28 November 1863. For similar earlier incidents see *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 3 October 1857 and 11 September 1858.
- 30 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 1 December 1860.
- 31 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 8 August 1857. For other examples of his evidence being dismissed see
- 32 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 9 January 1858, 2 April, 9 & 20 August 1859 and April 1860
- 33 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 30 June 1860.
- 34 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 30 June 1860. Later that year Manuel was again criticised for 'more uncalled interference'. *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 20 October 1860.
- 35 For examples of his melodramatic style of policing see *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 5 April 1861, 19 February & 19 June 1852
- 36 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 10 July 1858.
- 37 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 24 & 27 February 1874.
- 38 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 1 August 1868.
- 39 He also enhanced his reputation as an active inspector of nuisances. Sergeant John Turner is another example of a man who played a very active role as inspector of nuisances, in his case, to the Newsome Local Board as well as enforcing cattle plague regulations in 1866/7.
- 40 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 16 June 1860.
- 41 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 16 June 1860.
- 42 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 11 November 1865. Dyson had 11 previous convictions for assault, three of which were against the police.

- 43 *Leeds Mercury*, 15 January 1859.
- 44 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 21 May 1864.
- 45 *Huddersfield Chronicle* 7 Nov. 1857, 10 Jul., & 23 Oct. 1858.
- 46 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 Apr. 1860. See also 16 Apr., 24 Dec. 1859, & 3 Nov. 1860. The Golcar police constable had his celery uprooted in 1860, just before the annual village feast. *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 29 Sep. 1860.
- 47 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 28 May 1864 and *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 16 June 1866.
- 48 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 8 December 1860.
- 49 For a fuller account of the Honley riot see Taylor, *Beerhouses*, chapter 8.
- 50 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 5, 9 & 19 October & 28 December 1861. See also *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 25 January, 3 & 10 May and 14 June 1862.
- 51 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 28 June 1862.
- 52 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 28 June 1862.
- 53 *Leeds Mercury*, 2 July 1862.
- 54 For details of Roberts's varied career see R. Challinor, *A Radical Lawyer in Victorian England: W. P. Roberts and the Struggle for Workers' Rights*, (1990). Although discussing police action on a number of occasions, C. Frank, *Master and Servant Law: Chartists, Trade Unions, Radical Lawyers and the Magistracy in England, 1840–1865*, Farnham, Tauris, 2010 has a more specific focus. See *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 16 November 1850, 15 August 1857 and 24 March 1860 for examples of Roberts defending workmen charged with embezzling woollen waste under the Worsted Acts. Roberts' condemnation of the 'plague of blue locusts' is cited in Challinor, *Radical Lawyer*, p.81.
- 55 *Leeds Mercury*, 2 July 1862.
- 56 *Leeds Mercury*, 30 June 1862.
- 57 *Leeds Mercury*, 5 July 1862.
- 58 *Leeds Mercury*, 5 July 1862.
- 59 *Leeds Mercury*, 30 June 1862.
- 60 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 28 June 1862.
- 61 *Leeds Mercury*, 2 July 1862.
- 62 *Leeds Mercury* 2 July 1862. Italics added.
- 63 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 5 July 1862.
- 64 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 5 July 1862.
- 65 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 5 July 1862.
- 66 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 28 June 1862.
- 67 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 5 July 1862.

- 68 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 5 July 1862.
- 69 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 28 June 1862.
- 70 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 5 July 1862.
- 71 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 5 July 1862 and *Huddersfield Examiner*, 5 July 1862.
- 72 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 12 July 1862.
- 73 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 12 July 1862.
- 74 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 25 October 1862.
- 75 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 28 May 1864. Grant may have been helped by the sudden and unfortunate death of his 13-year-old son in the December of 1862, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 15 March 1879. Antrobus later confessed to having been dismissed from two police forces before joining the West Riding constabulary and having been convicted for assault on more than one occasion, though he had lied about this to gain re-employment as a police officer. *Leeds Mercury*, 22 Oct. 1863.
- 76 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 29 August 1863. The sum was the difference between the £41 subscribed for the defence of the Honley rioters and the £39 than had actually been spent.
- 77 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 5 July 1862.
- 78 There were reports of 'dastardly attacks' on the police in the summer of 1858 which dwindled in number but never entirely disappeared. *HC*, 5 June 1858 and 1 December 1858, 24 December 1859 & 1 September 1860.
- 79 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 5 November 1859.
- 80 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 1 October 1859.
- 81 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 9 March 1861.
- 82 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 16 March 1861.
- 83 *Leeds Mercury*, 5 May 1862. The reasons for this upsurge in police activities are not given.
- 84 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 21 June 1862.
- 85 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 21 June 1862.
- 86 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 17 August 1861 & 21 June 1862. The paper concluded that 'these cases are almost becoming a nuisance'. The actions of the Holmfirth magistrates contrasted with those of their counterparts in Huddersfield who were more sceptical of the police and openly criticized them on occasion.
- 87 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 12 July 1862.
- 88 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 12 July 1862.
- 89 *Leeds Mercury*, 10 July 1862 & *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 12 July 1862.
- 90 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 12 July 1862.

- 91 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 12 July 1862.
- 92 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 12 July 1862.
- 93 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 12 July 1862.
- 94 Wood claimed that he had informed the police of the likely perpetrators (seen spending freely in town) but that they had failed to prevent the robbers from leaving with the stolen goods from Holmfirth and nearby Brockholes railway stations. *HC*, 12 July 1862.
- 95 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 12 July 1862.
- 96 The unity of sentiment in 1862 contrasts with the hostility between Chartists and Anti-Corn Law Leaguers in Holmfirth in the 1840s.
- 97 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 12 July 1862.
- 98 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 12 July 1862.
- 99 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 12 July 1862.
- 100 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 30 August 1862.
- 101 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 28 March 1863.
- 102 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 5 July 1862.
- 103 Responsibility for the policing of Lindley switched to the Huddersfield borough force following incorporation of the town in 1868. Heaton's claim regarding Skelmanthorpe (*Huddersfield Chronicle*, 12 July 1873) may have been overstated. There were some disturbances involving navvies, briefly staying in the village, but local press coverage reveals far fewer anti-police incidents than in places such as Scammonden or Kirkheaton. Conflict between miners and colliers, on the one hand, and the police on the other, was reported on numerous occasions in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, See for example *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 16 May 1879, 1 & 5 June 1880, 18 October 1888, 20 January 1894.
- 104 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 5 July 1862.
- 105 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 28 June 1862.
- 106 See for example *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 27 June, 12 September 1857, 12 & 30 October, 13 November 1858, 8 January, 2 April 1859, 21 July, 4 & 18 August, 27 October, 10 & 24 November, 8 December 1860, 9 February, 25 May, 22 June, 17 August, 28 September & 26 October 1861.
- 107 *Leeds Mercury*, 30 June 1862.
- 108 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 5 July 1862.

## 5 The later years of the WRCC: consolidation and careers, c.1870-1900

UNDER COL. COBBE'S successors, McNeill and Russell, the WRCC grew substantially, becoming more complex and bureaucratic but also more stable and experienced. As the police remit, both formal and informal, expanded a recognisably policed society developed in the West Riding. The force more than doubled in size, matching the growth in the county's population in the 1870s and 1880s but exceeding it in the 1890s. Given the large number of men (over 3500) who served in the WRCC between 1870 and 1899, this chapter is centred on three decadal snapshots of the cohorts recruited in 1871, 1881 and 1891 and an in-depth study of the force in 1900.

**Table 5:1 WRCC, 1872 -1902\***

	1872	1882	1892	1902
West Riding				
Authorised strength	759	938	1050	1232
Police/population ratio	1:1293	1:1172	1:1168	1:1005
Police/population ratio 1862 =100	87	79	79	68

\*Years chosen to incorporate most up-to-date census information

Source: Annual Reports of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary

During these years, the police hierarchy remained fundamentally unchanged.\* The numbers in the senior ranks (chief constable, superintendents and inspectors) increased in absolute terms but consistently accounted for around six per cent of the establishment. The appointments of a chief clerk and, later,

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\* See Appendix 1

a deputy chief constable were important managerial developments. So too the growth in absolute and relative terms in the number of sergeants. In 1861 they accounted for 10 percent of the establishment, rising to 14 per cent by 1881, at which level it remained over the next two decades.

The division remained the critical unit of policing but the initial structure was modified over time. The growth of population in the south of the county led to the creation in 1869 of two divisions – Sheffield and Rotherham – out of the original Upper Strafforth and Tickhill. County boundary changes (the loss of part of Saddleworth to Lancashire in 1888 and the acquisition of Todmorden) led to reductions and redeployment. Similarly, the extension of borough boundaries within the county led to change. The Upper Agbrigg divisional strength was reduced by eleven in 1869 as a consequence of the redrawing of the boundaries of the borough of Huddersfield. Bradford's boundary changes in 1899 had a similar impact. So too the merging into the WRCC of the borough forces of Pontefract (1889) and Ripon (1887) and the creation of borough forces in Dewsbury (1863), Rotherham (1882) and Barnsley (1896). By the turn of the twentieth century the WRCC policed a population of 1.129 million people, including ten municipal boards with populations of over 10,000 including Batley, Keighley and Todmorden.<sup>1</sup> The extent of the evolution of the force can be seen in the official snapshot of the force in 1895.\*\* Perhaps the most striking feature is the wide discrepancies in divisional police strengths. At one extreme were Dewsbury, East Morley and Staincross with over 100 men and, at the other Ainsty & Wetherby, Barkstonash and Todmorden with numbers in the 20s, and the much-reduced Saddleworth with only fourteen men.

As the force grew over time, its structure became more finely graded. With the growing number of longer serving men, it became necessary to differentiate between them, not least in terms of experience. The pay structure of the force, relatively simple in the late 1850s, became increasingly complex as new classes were created (merit, good conduct and later long service). The force had been praised for its progressive and 'very comprehensive' pay scales in 1860, which incorporated as an incentive a merit class, but change was needed. Responding to the problems of recruitment and retention in the 1870s, pay scales were revised in 1873, to match rates in Lancashire<sup>2</sup> (and a second merit class was

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\*\* See Appendix 2

created) and again in 1878 but remained unchanged thereafter until 1891. Senior police figures were well aware of the difficulties, as were the county magistrates. In the early 1870s, Col. Pollard openly admitted that 'he could not get satisfactory men [because of] the large increase in the amount of wage that had been given throughout the country.' Supporting the proposed increase, fellow magistrate, Col. Compton drew attention to the fact that 'carpenters and masons were better paid than policemen, who were expected to be intelligent, men of discretion, and to be on duty every day.'<sup>3</sup> The situation eased in the following decades as wage levels in local industries stagnated. Nonetheless, the underlying problem of attracting and retaining good men never went away.

### **The ongoing challenge of recruitment and retention**

The challenge for the WRCC was to recruit and retain sufficient men with the range of qualities required to be a Victorian policeman. Much depended upon the state of the local and regional economy and changing perceptions of the rewards and conditions of service of policing. A buoyant regional labour market posed major problems into the 1870s.<sup>4</sup> Wage levels were high, and the situation was compounded by the fact that in 'other avocations for employment' in which 'well trained and intelligent police officers' were particularly suited held out 'strong inducements' in a manner that the police did not.<sup>5</sup> Thereafter problems facing the staple, export industries took some of the heat out of the regional labour market, to the benefit of the WRCC. Nonetheless, basic pay levels remained central, particularly at recruitment and during early years. By the early 1870s the basic three-class structure for constables, dating from 1857, remained but now within the first-class category there were three different pay levels (22s 9d, 23s 4d and 23s 11d per week)) as well as a merit class (24s 6d). There were three ordinary classes and a merit class for sergeants (25s 8d, 26s 10d, 28s and 29s 2d), compared with the one class in 1857. In addition, there was an acting sergeant class. By the turn of the century there were six classes for constables (the first encompassing three wage levels) and five for sergeants (the first encompassing two wage levels). In broad terms, a first-class constable c.1871 would earn 23s 11d per week and his counterpart c.1901 31s 6d, an increase of approximately 30 per cent. For

sergeants, the corresponding figures are 28s and 37s 4d, a similar percentage rise. In real terms the increase would have been larger as prices, especially of foodstuffs, fell in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and regularity of employment remained a bonus.<sup>6</sup>

Promotion opportunities, which impacted more on retention varied over time and were dependant on 'accidental' factors, waiting for retired or dead men's shoes. Only a small percentage of men achieved more than one promotion, and many never that. Consequently, the creation of new classes – merit, good conduct and long service – for constables and sergeants was seen as a means of rewarding, and thereby retaining, longer-serving men whose upward career paths had stalled. There was also the possibility of a discretionary pension but the right to a pension (subject to certain criteria) was not won until 1890. HMIC Woodford, for whom policing should be 'a profession for life,' urged the authorities to adopt 'all reasonable means ... to induce well conducted, effective and intelligent men' to stay. One such means was the establishment of a superannuation scheme and he praised the WRCC for introducing one from the outset. However, he overstated its importance and it was not until the 1890s that the prospect of a pension appeared to impact on both recruitment and retention.

Although there were more dangerous jobs, policemen still faced the triple occupational threats of assaults, accidents and illness, as well as constraints on behaviour, the disruption caused by transfers and the continuing social isolation – living in a community but not being truly part of it – which also impacted on family members. To some extent this was offset by a growing sense of camaraderie, created in part by the provision of rest rooms and leisure facilities and partly by the growth of informal, social organisations, from sport to religion.

The difficulties of the 1870s led to a continuation of a recruitment policy that (necessarily) prioritised quantity over quality. In most years, the force was never more than 5 per cent short of its authorised strength at inspection but retention rates were problematic. Indeed, Woodford's successor as Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary (HMIC) for the northern district, W P Elgee, argued on more than one occasion for an initial contract of six months or a year to staunch the flow of early leavers, though the proposal was never implemented for fear of exacerbating existing recruitment difficulties. However, there were clear signs of improvement, starting in the mid- to late-1870s. The extent of churn that characterised the early force



diminished significantly. Total variations fell, dropping below 10 per cent of establishment from the mid-1880s. The most significant element was the dramatic reduction in the number of dismissals. A number of factors contributed to this. Changing economic circumstances may have made policing more attractive for more than agricultural labourers than it had been in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Applicants themselves may have been better qualified for and/or more aware of the demands of the job and the WRCC may have become better at vetting out unsuitable men. Or, at times, disciplinary practice may have changed and men were retained who previously would have been dismissed. A more stubborn problem was that of voluntary resignations, which accounted for some 60 per cent of total variation throughout the period. More positive, was the increase in the number of men receiving a pension in the 1890s, reflecting the legislative change at the beginning of the decade. Taken together, the force at the turn of the twentieth century was significantly different from its predecessor a generation earlier. It was not only larger, more complex and more bureaucratic, it was also more stable and less ill-disciplined.

**Table 5.2 WRCC annual variations, 1875/9 – 1900/4**

	1875-9	1880-4	1885-9	1890-4	1895-9	1900-4
Total variations annual average	172	120	84	72	88	121
Total variations as % of WRCC establishment	20%	13%	9%	7%	7%	9%
Dismissals - annual average	30	14	7	6	7	5
Dismissals - % of total variations	17%	12%	8%	8%	8%	4%
Resignations – annual average	116	74	52	42	51	78
Resignations as % of total variations	67%	62%	62%	58%	58%	64%
Pensioned – annual average	17	23	8	15	20	33
Pensioned - % of total variations	10%	19%	10%	21%	23%	27%
Others* – annual average	9	9	17	9	10	5
Others - % of total variations	5%	8%	20%	13%	11%	4%

\*includes discharge with gratuity, death and absconding

Source: HMIC annual reports

As ever, the broad brush of averages spread over several decades obscures both short-term variations and individual experiences. To translate these general trends into more immediate and human terms and to provide a complementary perspective, it is valuable to look at the experiences of the cohorts recruited at ten-year intervals from 1871 to 1891 before looking at the state of the force at the turn of the twentieth century.

The overall changes in career outcomes for these three cohorts are summarised in the following tables. There was a significant and sustained increase in the percentage of men pensioned (or in the case of the 1891 cohort, still in service in 1914 but eligible for a pension). There was also a persistent problem of ill-disciplined men who were either dismissed or required to resign. Indeed, the record of the 1881 cohort was worse than its predecessor, reflecting a more stringent approach to early-career performance, which led to an increase in the number of men being resigned compulsorily for lack of ability. And resignation levels, though diminishing over time, still ran at c.30 per cent overall for the 1891 cohort.

**Table 5.3 Career outcomes (as %) for three WRCC cohorts, 1871, 1881 & 1891**

	1871	1881	1891
Pension	17	27	5
In service 1914*	0	0	34
<i>Pension &amp; in service</i>	17	27	39
Dismissed	11	9	9
Resigned compulsorily	6	20	14
<i>Dismissed &amp; compulsory resignation</i>	17	29	23
Resign	58	38	30
Resign ill-health	6	1	6
Died in service	1	4	1

Source: WRCC Examination Books

On a more positive note, there was a significant increase in long-serving, career policemen, especially late in the century. Using the pessimistic/optimistic parameters noted above, the percentage of 'properly trained' constables rose from 26% - 34% in the 1870s, to 40% - 48% in the 1880s and 56% to 61% in the 1890s. But, if this is evidence of training time better spent, the problem of early-years wastage was far from solved. There was improvement over time

but even for the cohort of 1891 almost two in five recruits left in their first two years in the force. Further, the increasing number of men serving for twenty years or more meant that the force contained an increasing percentage of men well past their peak of physical (and probably mental) ability.

**Table 5.4 Length of service (as %) for three WRCC cohorts, 1871, 1881 & 1891**

Length of service	Less than 1 year	1 to 2 years	3 to 4 years	5 to 9 years	10 to 19 years	20 years and over
1871	36	31	8	5	3	17
1881	32	22	8	8	6	26
1891	13	25	5	4	11	41

Source: WRCC Examination Books

With more men becoming long-serving officers the prospect of promotion took on greater significance. The percentage of long-serving men who remained as constables (albeit in some cases with promotion to merit, good conduct or long service class) more than trebled between 1861 and 1891. At the same time the already small percentage of men promoted to the higher ranks of superintendent and inspector declined further. As the careers of the first superintendents and inspectors came to an end, there were opportunities for promotion for promising men recruited in the 1860s and 1870s. However, as career policemen, serving for twenty or more years in many cases, the opportunities for later cohorts, especially that of 1881, diminished.

**Table 5.5 Promotions (as %) for career policemen for three WRCC cohorts, 1871, 1881 & 1891**

	Pensioned but no promotion beyond PC	Sergeant	Inspector	Superintendent
1871	9	11	4	1
1881	27	7	2	0
1891	31	18	1	0

Source: WRCC Examination Books

## The cohort of 1871

In the early 1870s HMIC Elgee was concerned with 'the large proportion of inexperienced men' which in turn stemmed from problems of recruitment and basic initial training. The high wages resulting from an economic upturn and the subsequent high demand for labour across the region, including the West Riding, resulted in 'much difficulty ... in obtaining men of intelligence' to join the force. By 1871 the authorised strength of the WRCC was 736 men. There had been a significant augmentation between 1869 and 1870 and overall numbers were to continue to grow steadily throughout the decade. As in other forces, large-scale short-term increases were associated with higher levels of turnover. In total 127 men became members of the force in 1871. A majority were born and living in the West Riding but over a third were born in Scotland, reflecting a decision to recruit from poorer but more distant parts of the country, notably Aberdeenshire. Two-thirds of these men had worked on the land (as farm servant, farm labourer, ploughman etc). More local recruits were likelier to have been working in the various branches of the textile trade, though many gave their occupation simply as labourer.

Looking at biographical information relating to these men, there is no obvious occupational or age pattern but, as in previous years, the recruitment of men with previous police experience proved a mixed blessing. Forty-three men (just over a third of the annual intake) had previous police experience but only nine of them (21 per cent) served long enough to be pensioned. Twenty resigned, most commonly within twelve to eighteen months, while twelve (almost 30 per cent) were either dismissed or resigned compulsorily. Even promising men disappointed. James Peacock had an impressive record: six years' service in the Durham city force, four years in the Richmond borough force before becoming its head constable, a post he held from 1868 to 1871. Appointed in October 1871, aged twenty-nine, he was compulsorily resigned two years later. Nor was the faith in the qualities of the agricultural labourer well placed. Of forty-five such men, half left within the first year (overwhelmingly resignations) with only five serving until they were pensioned. It was small consolation that farm workers were less likely to be dismissed or compulsorily resigned. The continuing number of men resigning within days or weeks of appointment suggests a lack of awareness of the demands of police work. Unfortunately, the examination books do not

record consistently reasons for resigning. Overall, it remained the case that the police authorities continued to struggle to identify promising candidates before appointment. Rather they appeared willing to give the benefit of the doubt (even in the case of men who presented themselves a second time after a short stay in the WRCC) and to weed out only the most inefficient and inappropriate men in their first months as policemen. But this still left them struggling to stem the flow of voluntary resignations.

Of the forty-one men who served for more than three years, twenty-one went on to serve for twenty years or more. During this time, they could expect to serve in two or three divisions. John Dickie was transferred once, serving thirteen years in Upper Osgoldcross and eighteen in Keighley, while William Plowright served six years in West Staincliffe, eleven years in Lower Strafforth & Tickhill and a final seven years in Staincross. Very few (three to be precise) served in more than five divisions. More surprising, eight men served in only one division throughout their police career, in five cases for more than twenty years. Although there were cases of men serving for only a few years (or even months) in a division, taken as a whole, postings lasted on average for some five years or more. The examination books do not include reasons for transfers, though many were linked to promotions and, more so, demotions. Movement between divisions was undoubtedly important but so were transfers within divisions. Unfortunately, again the examination books are silent.

The promotion prospects of this cohort were different from those of their predecessors, who had benefitted from the opportunities created in the foundation years. Nonetheless, there was sufficient churn for fourteen men (11 per cent of the cohort) to become sergeants but there was a two-track pattern of promotion. Promising men were promoted rapidly, Thomas Spencer in just over three years, Alexander Adams and Adam Sutherland after four. In contrast, Frederick Plowright and Isaac Pritchard received their promotions as reward for long service after eleven and twelve years, respectively. Not all promotions were successful. Henry Younger resigned after six years in post, Thomas Marshal was reduced to the rank of first-class constable after six years and William Burnell stood down at his own request after three years. Despite the recognised importance of sergeants, finding good men to fill the post remained problematic. Nor were further promotion prospects in the force good. Only five were subsequently promoted

to inspector, one after three years, two after seven and two after thirteen and fourteen years, respectively. James Gordon's rise was the fastest but his promise was never fulfilled. After two years as an inspector, he was demoted to first-class constable. Three years later he was promoted sergeant for the second time. Nine years later he received a pension after twenty-seven years' service. Only one man from this cohort, William Bielby, went on to become a superintendent in the WRCC.

It was the long-serving police constables who bore the brunt of beat work over the years. Eleven men from this cohort fell into this category. After reaching the rank of first-class constable (usually after two or three years) and entry into the good conduct class (some six years later), they stayed at the same pay grade for almost twenty years. Three men resigned, one because of ill-health, but all had a good personal conduct record. Of the nine constables who received a pension after twenty-five years' service, a clear majority, somewhat surprisingly, had no blemishes on their record but for a few their career pathway was more chequered. John Clarkson was twice a first-class constable and a member of the good conduct class; twice he was demoted. His career ended badly. Some three months before he was to retire on a pension, he was demoted from the first to the third class. Henry Brook's career followed a similar trajectory but he managed to regain his first-class and good conduct status for a third time just before his retirement.

Standing back from the detail, the characteristics and experience of the cohort of 1871 still had much in common with the men of the early force. Worryingly large numbers of recruits were dismissed or resigned in their first or second year in the force. Effectively, two out of three recruits failed to become an 'efficient,' serving constable. For those who stayed, promotion opportunities within the force, especially beyond the rank of sergeant, were very limited. Nonetheless, with the passing of time, the incremental effect was to increase the number of more experienced men at all levels in the force. To that extent the long-term process of slow but steady consolidation continued.

### **The cohort of 1881**

This process of consolidation continued and was reflected in the experiences of the 1881 cohort. By this time, the force numbered 934 men. Recruits

were again drawn overwhelmingly from the West Riding with a significant minority from the eastern counties of Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire. The latter accounted for most of the twenty-seven recruits who identified themselves as farm servants, farm labourers, grooms etc. The problems of arable farming, which was to intensify in the following years, was already creating a new source of labour.<sup>7</sup> There were a similar number of ordinary labourers. Taken together, unskilled men accounted for almost half of the year's recruits. Not surprisingly the textile trades were still well represented but there was also a smattering of skilled men – joiners, cabinet makers, stone masons, blacksmiths and the like – but even fewer clerks, notwithstanding the force's need for administrative skills. But in contrast to a decade earlier, there was a quiet confidence that there were sufficient 'eligible candidates' coming forward to join the force and that, in the words of HMIC Legge, 'great care [was] exercised in the selection of those most eligible.'<sup>8</sup> Closer examination of the police records paint a less optimistic picture.

Of the 120 men enlisted in that year, sixty-four (54 per cent of the cohort) left in the first two years but this was lower than the 66 per cent of a decade earlier. Fifty-six men served for three years or more, over half of whom served over twenty years. The resignation rate had been cut by a third, with a small number of resignees comprising men with five or more years' experience, some of whom sought promotion elsewhere. The dismissal rate was largely unchanged but, reflecting a more stringent approach to work performance, there was a marked increase in the number of men compulsorily resigned for inefficiency. The bulk of these losses were incurred in the first two years, but a small number of established men (more than in the previous cohort) were required to resign later. William Smith and Edwin Cryer, for example, had served for ten and fifteen years respectively, albeit with repeat cycles of promotion and demotion, when their careers were ended. Had these standards prevailed a decade earlier, several long-serving men would have seen their police careers truncated. Smith was one of five men who did not receive a pension despite serving for over ten years. Twenty-five men, a majority of long-serving men, were pensioned. Also, a reflection of the growing number of longer serving men, there was an increase in the relatively small number of men who died in service.

As in previous years, these men could expect to serve in two or three divisions and were spread across the county. However, the percentage serving

in one division was twice as high as in the 1871 cohort. Fortuitously, five men were sent to Staincross and their experiences reflect wider characteristics of the police experience. Frank Moore, an ex-miner, was one of the workhorses of the force. In just over a year, he had worked his way up to first-class constable. A brief lapse led to a demotion but by the end of the year he had regained his former status. For the next six years his conduct was exemplary and he was promoted to the good conduct class. Two years later, an experienced constable, he was promoted sergeant but, like several others, he failed to make the grade and was demoted to first-class constable after three years. In May 1906, after twenty-five years' service, he received a pension of just over £1 a week. Richard Gaythorpe's career appeared to be following a similar trajectory. By 1888 he was also a first-class constable in the good conduct class. Probably frustrated by the limited rewards, he resigned two years later to work for Barnsley county court. After a brief spell, which saw him, and three county court bailiffs, seriously assaulted, he rejoined the force in 1891, returning to the Staincross division. Within months he was transferred to Dewsbury, the first of four transfers in one year, before ending up in Lower Agbrigg, where he served for a further sixteen years. William Smith appeared even more promising but, having reached the good conduct class by December 1884, his ill-discipline saw the loss of his good conduct class (twice), demotion to third-class constable and compulsory resignation a year later in 1891. The other two men served for only four years. James Delaney had previously served in the WRCC for six years when he was re-appointed and posted to Staincross. Ill-health forced his resignation aged thirty. Alfred Austwich, had also served briefly in the WRCC. His second career ended tragically when he was shot by a notorious local poacher and criminal, James Murphy, who was subsequently executed for the crime. Austwich's fate was exceptional but it evoked considerable local sympathy, including a public subscription that raised over £500 for his widow and children.

There were a growing number of career policemen in this cohort but their promotion prospects were worse than for previous cohorts. Only ten men achieved a first promotion, usually after ten years or more years in service. The unfortunate, Charles Dove served twenty-one years in five different divisions, eventually became a sergeant after fifteen years, but died in service at the age of forty-three. There was still a problem finding capable sergeants. A third were subsequently demoted, though one was re-promoted and served



four years until pensioned, Further promotions within the WRCC were even scarcer. Only two were promoted to inspector but neither became a superintendent. Francis Hyde, one of the two, was unusual in that he had had a very brief stint in the WRCC (in 1879) before being reappointed. For the majority, the only hope of advancement was to the good conduct class with the hope of a pension at the end. Twenty-five men, most having served twenty years or more, were still constables when they received their pensions. Six served out their time with an unblemished record but not deemed worthy of promotion. A further five men served over ten years without promotion and left without a pension. These were the harsh realities for this cohort. However, not least in the reduced wastage rate, there was an acceleration of changes, which suggest, if not a clear break with the past, at least the beginning of a new phase in the development of the WRCC.

### **The cohort of 1891**

As in the early 1880s, recruitment was not seen as a major quantitative problem. There was 'no scarcity of candidates' across the northern district. The WRCC by the early 1890s had topped 1000 men and the experience of the cohort of 1891 illustrates the extent to which the force had changed since its inception in 1856. The number of recruits (seventy-seven) was significantly lower than in previous years and was itself an indication of less churn in the system.<sup>9</sup> These were also among the first men to join since the passing of the 1890 Police Act. Overall variations were lower, the dismissal rate had been cut by a third, the number of long-serving men (ten years and more) had doubled and with it a similar change in the percentage of pensioned men. Almost half the intake served for ten years or more, while two in five received a pension. There was a dramatic fall in short-lived service, ending within a year. These were positive signs but the concentration of resignations among men with two years' service showed that the problem identified by Elgee a decade earlier had not been fully resolved.

Again, these men could expect to serve in two or three districts. William Thorpe, for one, was first stationed in West Staincliffe before transfers to Keighley and Todmorden, serving two stints of six years and one of ten. He was never promoted beyond constable but his long service was eventually

recognised by the two long-service classes introduced in 1909 and 1912. Roughly a quarter had a single posting, all but one remaining as a constable, including five men who each served over twenty years. There were increased opportunities for promotion but only to the rank of sergeant, as men appointed in the late 1870s and early 1880s retired. Fourteen men, almost 20 per cent of the intake, were promoted to the rank of sergeant, a process which took on average ten years. High-fliers like Joseph Bell and Firth Lees was promoted after two and six years respectively, but at the other end of the scale, for men like Owen Flannery and Edward Pearson promotion came as a reward for 'long and faithful service,' close to retirement. For the remainder, there was a period of ten years before promotion and then little chance of further progress. The post was important and the job secure but the only increases in pay came from the introduction of new pay scales and the later creation of two new good-conduct classes for men serving fourteen and twenty-one years, respectively. Further, from the turn of the century the cost of living began to increase, eroding the purchasing power of men on fixed incomes. However, only one man resigned and this group of experienced sergeants played a key role in the creation of a more professional force in the early twentieth century. However, there was a continuing problem of men, seemingly of promise, failing to make the grade. George Bell, for example, was promoted to sergeant after two years. His career stalled and after eight years he was demoted. Although he regained his good conduct class two years later, he was never again considered for promotion. The only recognition he gained was for long service, being moved to both the good conduct classes in April 1912 when they were first introduced. Even more dramatic was Tom Carver's fall from grace, ending as it did in the county lunatic asylum. Claiming, somewhat implausibly, the 'excitement of promotion' to the rank of sergeant and subsequent depression, he murdered his three children, attempted to murder his wife and tried to commit suicide. At his trial at Leeds assizes the judge instructed the jury to return a verdict of guilty but insane.<sup>10</sup> Further promotion opportunities within the force for sergeants were very limited. Only two men, Frederick Farnside and Firth Lees became an inspector; and neither became a superintendent,

There remained one last group, comprising the twenty-eight men (over a third of the cohort), who served for ten years or more but never moved beyond the rank of constable. These were the men who plodded the long and

often lonely beats across the county. Along with their experienced sergeants, these men were central to the ongoing policing of the West Riding. Contrary to earlier fears, many of these men did not become ill-disciplined or even tempted to resign. Thirteen men were promoted to the first class and never reduced in rank over the course of their long careers. One died in service, one resigned on grounds of ill-health and only one resigned voluntarily. Of the other twelve, two were forced to resign as the result of repeated infractions and reductions but the remaining ten were either pensioned or still in service, with over twenty years to their names, when war broke out in 1914. Joining the ranks of other long-serving men from the 1880s (and even a few from the 1870s) these men were central to the creation of a more stable and better disciplined force that stood in stark contrast to the force under Col. Cobbe.

### **The force at the turn of the twentieth century**

As the turn of the twentieth century the WRCC was a large force of just over 1200 men.<sup>11</sup> The basic framework was the same as in 1868 but the structure had become more refined and more complex and the organisation itself, while still hierarchical, was more bureaucratic. Unlike the high level of churn in the late-1850s, by the late-1890s overall variations were 8 per cent of the establishment. Voluntary resignations still accounted for about half of the overall turnover but for every five men resigning, three were pensioned and two dismissed or compulsorily resigned.<sup>12</sup> The WRCC examination books contain (not always complete) details of 928 men of all ranks who had served for three years or more in the force, that is about 75 per cent of the total establishment. The corresponding figure for 1868 was 70 per cent. This modest improvement should not overshadow the significant reduction in wastage among recruits in the first two years – fewer men were now needed to be recruited to maintain the authorised strength of the force<sup>\*\*\*</sup> – nor should it obscure the improvements in the quality of the men.

The cumulative effects of the changes analysed above can be seen in the profile of the force at the start of 1900. At the top, the chief constable and his deputy were supported by twenty-two superintendents, the majority

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\*\*\* See Appendix 3

responsible for the management of the divisions, of whom fifteen were in the first class. Three of these men had been in service from the inception of the force and had benefitted from the unusual opportunities for promotion in the early years. Robert Seymour Ormsby, a man with no declared trade and no previous police experience, joined in December 1856, though he had been a lieutenant in the Sligo Rifles. By January 1857 he had been promoted to inspector and a month later he became a superintendent, serving lengthy stints in Claro and West Morley, where he finished his career in 1902 by which time he was in his early seventies. A month later in 1857 the twenty-three-year-old clerk, William Smith Gill had been appointed as an ordinary constable. Within months he was promoted straight to the rank of inspector as assistant clerk. Six years later he was a superintendent at the Wakefield headquarters. In 1884 he became chief clerk and seven years later he was made deputy chief constable, a post he held until 1907. Gill was the most spectacular beneficiary of the force's need for capable administrators. James Kane, another Irishman, was the third man from the initial intake. With experience in the army and the Lancashire constabulary, he was able to take advantage of the need for leadership in the new force. He was a sergeant within months and an inspector by 1859. In 1866 he was promoted to superintendent and served two long spells, one in Ansty, the other in Staincross until his retirement in 1900. These men were the exceptions. The majority of superintendents in 1900 had still worked their way up the ranks over several years. Most took around twenty years to reach this position, having gained experience as inspectors in various divisions *en route*. Nine men in post in 1900 had between ten- and twenty-years' experience as superintendents and a further five had been in post for five to nine years. These men were the embodiment of the police ethos of promotion from within. They were, unlike some of their predecessors from the early years, successful men who had combined ambition with a mix of administrative and managerial skills.

The forty-one inspectors in post at the end of 1899, the next level in the hierarchy, had a key role in police management. Only six were in the first class compared with twenty-four evenly divided between the fourth and fifth classes. These were men who had joined the WRCC in the 1870s and early-mid 1880s. Unlike superintendents, only one, William Booth, joined before 1860. A substantial majority, nonetheless, were men of experience, having served

at least ten years in the lower ranks. Two proved unsatisfactory and were reduced to the rank of sergeant. This was a significant improvement on earlier experience. Of some 200 men appointed to the rank of inspector between 1857 and 1899, almost 20 per cent were reduced in rank and a further 3 per cent dismissed. There was also a similarly small number for whom promotion appears to have been a consolation prize for men nearing retirement. Overall, at the end of 1899 only five had ten years' experience or more as an inspector whereas fifteen had less than five. Inexperience was not the same as lack of promise and eleven of these men went on to become superintendents as retirements opened up opportunities in the 1900s. In comparison with the early years of the force the superintendents and inspectors in post at the end of the century were more experienced and dependable than their predecessors. They were the end product of a process spread over three decades that had seen the winnowing out of men unsuited or unfit for promotion to more senior ranks. Whereas in the early years it was necessary to promote men with little police experience by the late-nineteenth century promotions were made in light of proven track records in the WRCC. Not every promotion was a success but there were fewer failures.

There were 177 sergeants, of varying degrees of experience but tilted towards the less experienced end. Fifty-four (30 per cent) were in the fifth class, with a further thirty-five (20 per cent) in the fourth class, compared with thirty-three men (20 per cent) in the first class. In contrast, of the 982 constables 43 per cent were in the first class compared with 25 per cent in the lowest two classes. These men had been recruited over three decades. Somewhat surprisingly, 15 per cent of constables and 30 per cent of sergeants had been recruited in the 1870s. Given their length of service (twenty years or more) there are doubts about their physical and mental efficiency given the cumulative toll of police work. As might be expected, the largest percentage of sergeants had been recruited in the 1880s and constables in the 1890s. Only one man recruited in the 1890s had been promoted beyond the rank of sergeant.

**Table 5.6 WRCC, 1 January 1900 - rank and recruitment of men with three or more years' service**

	Constables (% all constables)	Sergeants (% all sergeants)	Inspectors & superintendents (% all inspectors & superintendent)	Totals
1870s	105 (15%)	44 (30%)	38 (47%)	187
1880s	265 (38%)	78 (53%)	42 (52%)	385
1890s (1890 – 96)	329 (47%)	26 (18%)	1 (1%)	356
Totals	699 (100%)	148 (101%)	81 (100%)	928

Source: WRCC Examination Books

The known career outcomes for the cohort as a whole are summarised below. Overall, 85 per cent of these men received a pension, rising to more than 90 per cent for men with ten or more years' service.

**Table 5.7 WRCC, 1 January 1900 - totals and career outcomes for men with three or more years' service\***

Years of service	Total (all ranks)	Pension (or in service 1914)	Dismissed	Resigned	Resigned – ill health	Died	Other
20 years	179	172	1	0	0	5	1
10 -19 years	361	326	14	8	4	9	0
5 -9 years	239	188	16	22	4	9	0
3 – 4 years	109	71	10	24	2	3	0
Totals	888	757	41	54	6	12	1

\* The twenty men who joined the army reserve are not included.

Source: WRCC Examination Books

The contrast with 1868 can be seen from the following table. As well as the significant increase in the percentage of men receiving a pension, the decline in the number of voluntary resignations is worthy of note. This was the product of men making more informed judgements about the police, more limited alternatives in the regional economy and (to some extent) better training.

**Table 5.8 Career outcomes for men with three or more years' service, 1868 and 1900**

	Total	% Pensioned	% Dismissed	% Resignation
1868	459	65	8	16
1900	888	85	5	6

Source: WRCC Examination Books

Men with ten years' service or more (that is, recruits from the 1870s and 1880s) were overwhelmingly likely to receive a pension. The unsuitable or unwilling had in effective been winnowed out. For the least experienced men attrition rates due to dismissal (including compulsory resignations) and voluntary resignation were appreciably higher.

**Table 5.9 Main career outcomes for constables and sergeants with three or more years' service on 1 January 1900**

	% Pension (or in service 1914)	% Dismissed	% Resignation	Others
1870 -4	85	8	0	7
1875 - 9	99	0	0	1
1880 -4	94	0	1	5
1885 - 9	94	1	2	3
1890 -4	71	7	11	11
1895 - 6	58	11	22	9

Source: WRCC Examination Books

The bulk of recruits, despite the promise in theory of rising through the ranks, remained constables throughout their careers and this was increasingly the case over time. Thomas Longden was a striking example. Appointed in January 1870, he rose to the rank of first-class constable by July 1878. A year later he was in the good conduct merit class where he remained until pensioned in August 1901 after an unblemished career. A decade later Eli Elm's early career followed a similar pattern of promotion to first-class constable in eighteen months. Elevation to the good conduct merit class took another six years but, despite never being demoted, he progressed no further, dying in service in 1900. In contrast, George Harris was one of many long-serving constables who yo-yoed between the first and third classes in a

career that lasted twenty-five years. Reduced to the third class for the fourth time in 1900, he remained in post at this level until pensioned in 1905. His continued presence in the force, and that of other similar cases, remains something of a mystery. The recruits of the early and mid-1890s had to wait for the Edwardian years and later for promotion opportunities to open up. Opportunities for a second (or third) promotion within the force were never high and diminished over the last decades of the nineteenth century.

**Table 5.10 Rank of men with three or more years' service, 1 January 1900**

	Constables (as % all constables appointed in decade)	1 promotion = Sergeant (as % all constables appointed in decade)	2 promotions or more = Inspectors or Superintendents (as % constables in decade )	Totals
1870s	105 (56%)	44 (24%)	38 (20%)	187 (100%)
1880s	265 (69%)	78 (20%)	42 (11%)	385 (100%)
1890s (1890 – 96)	329 (92%)	26 (7%)	1 (1%)	356 (100%)
Totals	699 (75%)	148 (16%)	81 (9%)	928 (100%)

Source: WRCC Examination Books

These figures provide a snapshot in time and, consequently, fails to capture an important dynamic. Over the course of the period from 1870 to 1899 there was movement up and down from the ranks, particularly that of sergeant. It has often been implicitly assumed (not least by the author) that a man promoted to the rank of sergeant either stayed at the level or (for a minority) became an inspector or even a superintendent. Clearly upward movement took place but it was also the case that a minority were reduced in rank or requested such a demotion. Between 1870 and 1899 437 men were promoted to sergeant, of whom 224 were not appointed further. Of the rest 123 (28 per cent) were promoted to inspector but ninety (21 per cent) were reduced in rank, eighty compulsorily and ten at the request of the individual. The percentage of demotions was higher (at 25 per cent) in the 1870s and 1880s. Only in the last decade of the century was there a significant reduction to 14 per cent. The overwhelming majority of men thus reduced were never promoted again. The shortcomings of these sergeants were a particular facet of a more general problem of indiscipline. As noted



above, the statistics relating to indiscipline are partial but reductions in ranks (and often the associated removal from a merit or good conduct class) were recorded throughout the period.

The figures point to improvement over time, notably for men of the 1890s, but only on the assumption that disciplinary standards did not vary significantly over time. There is no direct evidence of greater tolerance in the 1890s compared with the 1870s, though there appears to have been a tightening of procedures in the 1880s, but it remains the case that some of the improvement may have been less real and more a product of changing attitudes towards minor acts of indiscipline. Taken at face value, the figures suggest an improvement in discipline among the 1890s recruits, although there remained a minority (16 per cent) of multiple offenders. The wider problem remains: what impact did indiscipline have on effectiveness? Or were these men effective, and therefore acceptable, policemen in spite of their lapses in discipline? Or did their presence reduce effectiveness and morale? Too little is known of the details of these men's careers to answer these questions with any precision.

**Table 5.11 Demotions (as %) among constables and sergeants**

	None	1 or 2 reductions	3 or more reductions
1870s	46	29	25
1880s	43	38	18
1890s	65	21	16

Source: WRCC Examination Books

Overall, by the turn of the century the WRCC had at its core a substantial number of experienced and well-disciplined men. This was the culmination of two inter-related long-term trends: one the growing number of career policemen and, the reverse side of the coin, a diminution in the number of unsuitable or unwilling short-stay men. There was an underlying logic which saw both the sifting out of the latter and the steady accumulation of the former. There was a tipping point, somewhere in the late-1870s and early-1880s, from which point a more mature force developed.

## The changing roles of the police

In much police rhetoric, not to mention popular imagination, the police were associated with crime fighting, protecting the law-abiding but vulnerable civilians from the depredations of a threatening criminal class. The reality was quite different. Serious crimes against person or property were relatively rare and even with the more common non-violent crimes against property the police depended upon the initiatives and co-operation of the public. The long-term decline in of serious crime meant that the ratio of indictable offences to summary offences rose steadily (from 1:14 to 1:36 between 1861 and 1881) and dramatically by 1891 (1:70). Drunk and disorderly behaviour, common assaults and vagrancy offences accounted for 50 per cent of summary offences throughout but assaults were significantly less important in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

Nonetheless, the police had a growing role that made them a presence in many areas of everyday life. Public order was and remained an important concern. There were high-profile incidents, political and economic – elections, reform meetings, demonstrations of the unemployed and strikes – that became more common, or more intense, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. But there were newer problems of order, for example, associated with the growth of rugby and football as spectator sports in various parts of the county. Hostility between partisan rugby supporters necessitated police intervention, especially in places like Featherstone. The police were also a visible presence at various large-scale ceremonial events, from the visits of royalty and leading politicians to the weddings and funerals of local dignitaries.

**Table 5:12 Selected crime statistics for the West Riding, 1861 – 1891 (3-year averages)**

	All indictable offences	All summary offences	Drunk & disorderly behaviour	Common assault	Vagrancy
1861	936	13,268	2787	3034	598
1871	863	18,864	4948	3405	1011
1881	738	26,286	7925	2458	2820
1891	409	28,503	9656	1885	2169

Source: *Judicial Statistics*

The long-standing problem of vagrancy continued to take up much police time, particularly in the last decades of the century; more so the perennial problems of drunkenness and disorderly behaviour which were not simply associated with beerhouses but also with the emerging music saloons and music halls in more urban areas. Even in a largely rural county, the responsibility for maintaining order and freedom of passage in the streets became more difficult, notably in the urban areas for which the WRCC was responsible. The growth of manufacturing and retailing increase the volume of horse-drawn traffic and in some areas the advent of private tram companies, vying for trade, added to the problem; and that was before the cycling craze of the 1880s and 1890s, let alone the occasional appearance of a petrol-driven vehicle. The 'battle for the roads' that was to achieve prominence in the inter-war period had its roots in late-Victorian, as well as Edwardian, years. It is no coincidence that policemen were expected to be trained in first aid by the end of the century, though the 650 men with 'ambulance' (that is, first aid) certificates was deemed as 'unsatisfactory' by HMIC.

Elsewhere, new laws brought new responsibilities for the police. Food adulteration laws, never that rigorously enforced, added to the burden on the police. So too the legislation pertaining to contagious diseases among animals, an important consideration in a county that still had a substantial number of cattle and sheep, as well as oversight of the storage of petroleum and explosives. And this was on top of responsibility for more mundane matters, such as common lodging houses, street lamps, slaughterhouses, and weights and measures, not to mention acting as assistant relieving officers for the casual poor, impounders of cattle and catchers of unlicensed dogs. Much to the concern of HMIC Woodford, these burdens had increased dramatically over the course of the 1860s and it did not diminish thereafter. In 1870 eight superintendents, one inspector and two sergeants had responsibility for the oversight of common lodging houses; six superintendents, two inspectors, eight sergeants and seven constables spent time overseeing public nuisances; and twelve superintendents and one inspector had responsibility for weights and measures. By 1900 the demand on manpower was striking: the chief constable, all twenty-two superintendents and one inspector shared responsibility as inspectors under both the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act and the Food and Drug Acts. Three superintendents were designated as petroleum inspectors, all twenty-two superintendents, six inspectors and one

sergeant under the Explosive Act and one superintendent and two inspectors as inspectors of common lodging houses. And then there were the informal appearances, ranging from performances by police football, cricket and even tug-of-war teams, often in charity events, not to mention participation by individual policemen in annual local flower and vegetable shows.

### **Some conclusions**

Any judgement on the overall performance of the WRCC has to consider what preceded it as well as how it developed over time. In comparison with the superintending constable system, two major differences stand out. First, the WRCC was more bureaucratic with its rule book, its records of performance and its disciplinary procedures. There was a hierarchy of surveillance and discipline. Sergeants became key figures, checking on, advising and admonishing constables but also subject themselves subject to surveillance from inspectors and superintendents. Individual constables, in particular, were subject to a variety of formal and informal controls and the force as a whole was subject to external scrutiny on an annual basis. Within the force, behind the front-line of the beat, were important figures, notably the chief clerk and his assistant but also the drill sergeant, with responsibilities for the 'efficient' running of the force. Second, constables were now full-time workers unlike some, though not all, of their predecessors. They were part of a hierarchy with clearly defined roles, subject to supervision, both direct and indirect, and subject to discipline when they fell short of expectations. From initial, usually short, training, through learning on the job, they were expected to be models of respectability, internalising values that may have been alien to them in an earlier life.

Although there were some continuities, the WRCC of c.1900 was very different from the force roughly a generation earlier c.1868. The statistics reviewed in this chapter show the extent to which the problems of recruitment and retention had been resolved over time and the extent to which a more stable force had been created. The problems associated with the rapid creation of a large force in the mid- to late-1850s, the relative prosperity of the 1860s and early 1870s that provided attractive alternative employment, and the suspicions that still surrounded policing as a long-

term occupation help explain the volatility of the early years of the WRCC, when large numbers of men joining, only to resign or be dismissed in a short space of time. Growing experience and expertise within the force, changing economic circumstances that drove men from declining occupations to consider policing as an alternative, and changing perceptions of policing (especially after the 1890 Police Act) help explain the emergence of a more stable and professional force in Victoria's latter years. So too did a growing improvement, albeit from a low base, with police training and education, especially for the older, pre-1890 men who tended to be less well educated than those appointed thereafter.<sup>13</sup>

In hindsight, not least following the publication of the report of the Desborough Committee, the extent and persistence of problems that impacted on efficiency are glaringly obvious but it is also important to evaluate the force in the light of contemporary expectations and experiences. When judgements were made c.1900 the comparisons drawn were commonly with the known past rather than with an unknown future. Similarly, the criteria used to judge the acceptability of an individual officer or the force as a whole were drawn from experience and contemporary concerns. Senior police officers were aware of the shortcomings of the force and sought to remedy them, not least by improving initial and in service training, particularly for those seeking promotion. From senior policemen lecturing their men to chief constables implementing educational classes, there was an awareness of and an attempt to improve police training, not just for new recruits but also for more experienced men.<sup>14</sup> To what extent the police were reactive rather than proactive is a matter of debate but there was a growing recognition of the need for 'a better trained police force ... for the prevention and detection of crime [and] ... to fully understand the by-laws and general laws of England.'<sup>15</sup> What was once deemed satisfactory, now required improvement. Put differently, the WRCC continued to be a work in progress but there was justifiable satisfaction with the progress that had been made over the past forty years or so.

Finally, the police were an established feature of everyday life. Few, if any, questioned their existence as a part – indeed an important, even necessary part – of society. Fewer doubted that the presence of the uniformed constable was a defining feature of the world in which they lived. Not always efficiently or effectively, not always with whole-hearted support, the West Riding at

the turn of the twentieth century was unquestionably a policed society. The nature of popular responses, the extent of consent is the subject of the next chapter.

## Appendix 1 Structure of WRCC, 1861 -1901

### Senior Staff

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901
Chief Constable	1	1	1	1	1
Deputy Chief Constable			1	1	
Chief Clerk	1	1	1		1
Assistant Chief Clerk		1			
Superintendent 1st class			13	16	11
Superintendent 2nd class		12	4	3	2
Superintendent 3rd class		2	2	4	5
Superintendent 4th class		6			4
All Superintendents	21	20	19	23	22
Inspector 1st class			10	5	4
Inspector 2nd class		8	12	5	8
Inspector 3rd class		3	3	7	6
Inspector 4th class		10		7	14
Inspector 5th class				6	8
Total Inspectors	18	21	25	30	40

Source: HMIC annual reports

**(B) Sergeants and Constables**

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901
Sergeant – Merit		11	18**		
Sergeant – Good Conduct			32		
Sergeant 1st class		26	34	85	33**
Sergeant 2nd class		26	22**	23	13
Sergeant 3rd class		24	9	39	35
Sergeant 4th class					39
Sergeant 5th class					57
Acting Sergeant			16		
Total Sergeants	53	87	131	147	177
Constable – Merit		33			
Constable – Good Conduct			6		
Constable 1st class		357*	532	621*	316***
Constable 2nd class		80	89	72	123
Constable 3rd class		77	41	86	144
Constable 4th class					101
Constable 5th class					100
Constable 6th class					143
Total Constables	457	547	668	779	927

\*4 different pay levels reflecting length of service within this category; \*\* 2 different pay levels; \*\*\* 3 different pay levels

Source: Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary annual reports



## Appendix 2: Police divisions, leadership, location and strength, 1895

Division	Superintendent	Inspectors	Police strength
Lower Agbrigg	R Shepley (Wakefield)	J Ackroyd (Normanton)	56
Staincross	J Kane (Barnsley)	J Stewart (Penistone) & T Mellor & J Parker (Barnsley)	104
Rotherham	L Hammond (Rotherham)	J Johnson (Rawmarsh)	58
Lower Strafforth & Tickhill	W Blake (Doncaster)	G Wakefield (Mexborough)	46
Upper Osgoldcross	T Wincup (Pontefract)	J Hanson (Castleford) & T Birkett (Pontefract)	58
Lower Osgoldcross	H Harrison (Goole)	J Puntton (Snaith) & J McDonald (Goole)	34
Barkstonash	T Stott (Selby)	A Tidswell (Sherburn)	23
Sheffield	W Bielby (Sheffield)	F Knight (Hillsboro')	46
Ainsty & Wetherby	J Crow (Tadcaster)	R Ambler (Wetherby)	26
Claro etc	R Ormsby (Knaresborough)	W Booth (Ripon) & W Butterworth (Harrogate)	61
Otley	B Gratson (Keighley)	J Birkhead (Bingley) & C Noble (Keighley)	54
East Morley	B Crawshaw (Bradford)	J Turton (Shipley) & C Dalgoutte (Pudsey)	103
West Morley	A Varley (Halifax)	G Ramm (Brighouse) & A Quest (Sowerby Bridge)	70
Saddleworth	C Proseey (Dobcross)		14
Upper Agbrigg	J Prichard (Huddersfield)	W Calcraft (Holmfirth)	49
Dewsbury	W Midgely (Dewsbury)	B Gregg (Dewsbury) & J Drake (Morley)	113
Todmorden	J Fearnside (Todmorden)		27
Head Quarters	T Stuart Russell Chief Constable), W Smith Gill (DCC & Chief Clerk), W Hall (Superintendent), R Sykes & J Haynes (Clerks), Drill Instructor – vacant		

### Appendix 3 WRCC Augmentation and recruitment, 1870 -1899

	Authorised Strength	Increase over previous year	Total recruits	Recruit per increase
1870	723	66	160	
1871	736	13	126	
1872	759	23	85	
1873	778	19	207	
1874	797	19	166	
1875	832	35	248	
1876	833	1	168	
1877	878	45	226	
1878	890	12	151	
1879	906	16	159	
<b>1870s cumulative totals</b>		<b>249</b>	<b>1696</b>	<b>6.8</b>
1880	920	14	118	
1881	934	14	118	
1882	938	4	129	
1883	950	12	130	
1884	955	5	109	
1885	960	10	80	
1886	966	6	94	
1887	969	3	120	
1888	989	20	73	
1889	1015	26	89	
<b>1880s cumulative totals</b>		<b>114</b>	<b>1050</b>	<b>9.2</b>
1890	1017	2	73	
1891	1025	8	75	
1892	1050	25	91	
1893	1139	89	156	
1894	1178	37	114	
1895	1197	19	116	
1896	1199	2	87	
<b>1890-6 cumulative totals</b>		<b>182</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>3.9</b>

Source: HMIC Annual reports and WRCC Examination Books

## Endnotes

- 1 The full list is Batley, Brighouse, Harrogate, Keighley, Morley, Ossett, Pontefract, Pudsey, Ripon and Todmorden. Keighley (c.42,000), Batley (c.30,000) and Harrogate (c.28,000) were the largest by population while Todmorden (c.13,000 acres) was by far the largest by area,
- 2 *Bradford Observer*, 1 July 1873
- 3 *York Herald*, 21 October 1871. Similarly, the *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 3 July 1873, referred to the recent increase in police pay as being 'necessary in consequence of the increased cost of living.'
- 4 These problems were more acute in certain years. There were specific references to post being unfilled for a long time (1864), recruitment difficulties (1875) and high levels of resignation among recently appointed men (1865, 1868 and 1873).
- 5 HMIC Annual Report, 1873
- 6 Ideally, local price data would be set aside wages and earnings data for major occupations in the West Riding. Given the complexity of the regional economy, not to mention the wider catchment area for recruits, and the absence of any detailed study of regional wages and earnings, it is not possible to provide a detailed comparison to compare with Taylor's study of Middlesbrough, 'The standard of living of career policemen in Victorian England: The evidence of a provincial borough force,' *Criminal Justice History*, 12, 1991, pp.107 - 131.
- 7 Many men and their families also moved to north Yorkshire where they found work in the ironstone mines of East Cleveland and the iron and steel industry of Middlesbrough.
- 8 HMIC Annual Report, 1883, p.128
- 9 The volume of men recruited into the WRCC declined markedly over time, notwithstanding the continued growth of the force. As well as recruiting to meet any augmentation to the force, it was necessary to replace men who had left during the year. Between 1870 and 1871 the authorised strength of the force increased by 13 (from 723 to 726) but 126 men were recruited in 1871. In contrast, between 1890 and 1891 the force was augmented by 8 (from 1017 to 1025) but only 77 men were recruited. Details are given in Appendix 3.
- 10 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 8 May 1905 & 28 July 1905
- 11 The situation is complicated by the outbreak of war in South Africa. Twenty men left the force to join the army reserve.
- 12 Figures from HMIC annual reports. Outright dismissals were low (5 per cent) but compulsory resignation accounted for 15 per cent.
- 13 The early Examination Books contain a surprisingly large number of men unable to read or write.

- 14 First aid classes are a good example of the force attempting to update the skills set of its constable in response and the benefits were appreciated by the wider community. See for example, *Batley Reporter*, 19 November 1892 and *Yorkshire Factory Times*, 16 August 1895.
- 15 *Hull Daily Mail*, 29 September 1891

## 6 Policing the county, c.1870 to 1900

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

### **Policing popular leisure – Victorian ‘culture’ wars**

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

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

### **Boozing and betting**

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

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

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

\*5-year averages centred on census years

Source: HMIC annual reports

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

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

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

Source: HMIC annual reports

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



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

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

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

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

PC Suttle could not escape unnoticed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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\* Playing/gambling for money.

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

### **From cock-fighting to pigeon flying**

Popular leisure was constantly changing. By the late-nineteenth century it was less cruel and more commercialised but older, less 'civilised' leisure activities proved remarkably resilient to the campaigns of reformers and the actions of magistrates and the police. Concerted efforts had been made in the 1860s to stamp out cock-fights and prize-fights in the southern divisions of Upper Agbrigg, Staincross and Lower and Upper Strathforth and Tickhill but a perverse mixture of geography and improved transportation enabled punters from across the county, as well as gamblers from adjacent counties, to attend well-organised and well-attended 'battles' and fights, attracting regular crowds of fifty to sixty people and several (reportedly) of 200, 300, even 500.<sup>21</sup> But still the problem persisted and large-scale police action also continued into the following decade. In 1875, two inspectors and a *posse* of police were sent to prevent a cock fight in 'a sequestered region above Bell's-o'-Lacks, Greenfield,' after a tip-off from 'a repentant old cockfighter,' though it subsequently emerged that the motive had been to avoid a heavy betting loss if the fight had gone ahead.<sup>22</sup> Of greater concern were the reports in 1877 of several cockfights taking place near Dewsbury and the inability of

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

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

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

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

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

### **Policing and public order: elections and industrial action**

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

as many suspected, proposed a change in work practice equivalent to a wage cut.<sup>54</sup> On this occasion there were no major disturbances. The colliers were described as 'very orderly' and there were no clashes with the police even after the employment of non-union labour in late-January 1881.<sup>55</sup> Eventually the men returned to work on the terms in operation on the eve of the lockout but there was a legacy of profound mistrust and bitterness, which became apparent during the 1885 dispute.

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

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

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

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

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

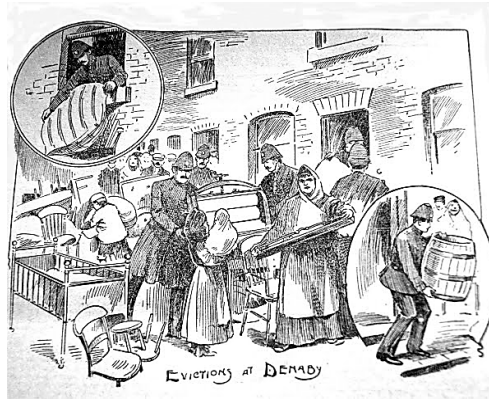
Nor were these events of 1885 unique. There was a further bitter dispute at Denaby in 1902/3, popularly known as the ‘bag muck’ strike.<sup>69</sup> In many ways this was a re-run of 1885. The management response to trouble at the colliery was to take legal action, firstly, to evict strikers, 750 in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

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



*The Sphere*, 17 January 1903



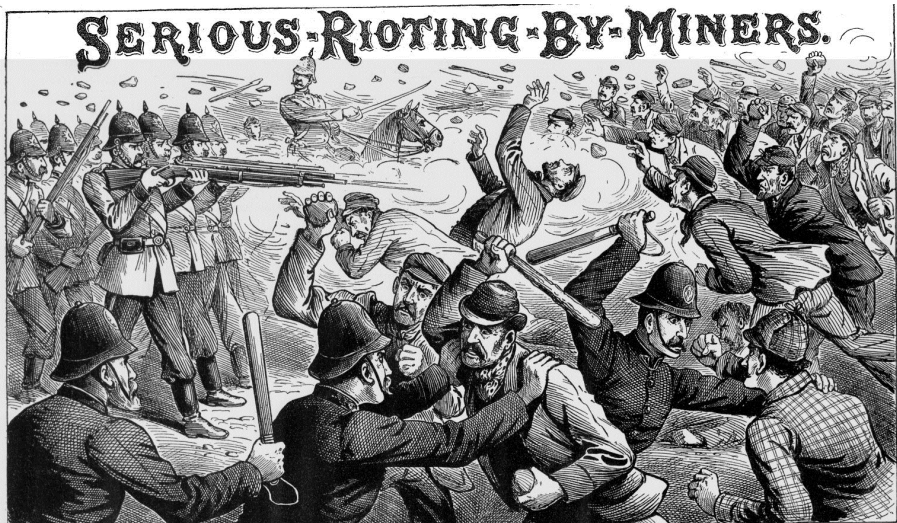


*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 7 January 1903

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

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

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



Source: *Illustrated Police News*, 8 September 1893

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

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

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

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

made themselves scarce and the mob set to work,' reported the *South Yorkshire Times*.<sup>80</sup> Part of the problem at Wath Main stemmed from the fact that at nearby Denaby a strong force of police (c.100 in total) had deterred the marching gang from attacking. Indeed, more police, some mounted, and soldiers were sent to Denaby, which was known to have been 'a pit "specially spotted" by the roving wreckers.'<sup>81</sup> This did little to diminish local anxiety as arrangements were made to load coal onto trains. 11 September 1893 was the most 'sensational day at Denaby Main ... since the rioting and evictions' of 1885.<sup>82</sup> In the event, there was a tense stand-off, as angry strikers watched the coal being moved out, but no violence. The chief constable, Capt. Russell, was met by hostile miners unwilling to listen to his proposals to minimise trouble. Having set out arrangements for sheltering women and children, he returned to Denaby where, or so he claimed, 'those very men cheered me.'<sup>83</sup>

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

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

## Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

## Endnotes

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

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

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

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

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

## 7 Policing the “great towns”: Bradford, Leeds and Sheffield to 1856

THE DETAIL EXPLORED in Part 1 made clear that ‘rural policing’ was an umbrella term covering a range of differing experiences of policing and being policed. Similarly, in Part 2, the complexities lurking under the broad heading of ‘urban policing’ will be examined. Indeed, such complexities are increased by the differing chronologies of urban forces and by the varied socio-economic and political characteristics of the communities they served. It is convenient to use numerical size – of police forces and policed communities – to distinguish between great, medium-sized and small towns but they are not homogenous categories.

While there was much to be admired about urban life, particularly in cultural and scientific terms, there was also much to be feared. Towns tended to have younger populations, including an above average number of young adult males, who, as new arrivals, were (or were seen to be) more shallow-rooted, and less responsible. In towns, large numbers of poor people were herded together in overcrowded, poorly built and inadequately maintained properties in districts lacking basic public health facilities – conditions that created a breeding ground for crime and immorality. The Irish poor, fleeing the catastrophe in John Bull’s Other Island, were particularly, and unfairly, feared and condemned but they were the most visible of internal migrants. Anxieties were compounded by concerns with the corrupting influences of ‘the demon drink’ and gambling in its many forms. An effective local police force could be a source of considerable civic pride but there was no escaping its primary function of preserving order and maintaining decorum.

**Table 7.1: Population growth in Bradford, Leeds & Sheffield, 1831 -1901 (000s and index, 1861 = 100)**

	Bradford	Index	Leeds	Index	Sheffield	Index
1831	44	42	123	59	92	50
1841	67	63	152	73	111	60
1851	104	98	172	83	135	73
1861	106	100	207	100	185	100
1871	147	139	259	125	240	130
1881	194	183	309	149	285	154
1891	266	251	368	178	324	175
1901	280	264	429	207	409	221

Source: B R Mitchell & P Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, Cambridge University Press, 1962, pp. 24-7

All three great towns of the West Riding grew significantly during the Victorian period. Bradford's growth was so dramatic that some compared the town with frontier towns in America or Australia. Their economic and social histories were distinctive but in all three existing institutions of governance were found wanting. Fragmentation of responsibility and limited powers restricted their abilities, particularly in Bradford. In all three there was a broadly similar approach through improvement act and incorporation, though the chronologies of change and outcomes varied. Particularly in Leeds 'old' policing arrangements evolved in response to demands for greater security, reducing the contrast between 'old' and 'new' policing but in all three towns improvement dated back at least to the early nineteenth century.

### **The emergence of the 'new' police**

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Bradford was little more than 'a mere cluster of huts,' according to one observer and but one of a number of relatively small towns involved in the worsted trade.<sup>1</sup> By the start of Victoria's reign it had clearly supplanted Halifax as the dominant centre of the trade and, in so doing, becoming, in the words of the *Morning Chronicle's* special correspondent, 'essentially a new town.'<sup>2</sup> Unsurprisingly, the rapidly-expanding town quickly outgrew its institutions. An improvement act of 1803, applicable to the town centre, was limited in its scope but the Tory-dominated Improvement



Commissioners were unwilling to use fully their powers. Matters reached a critical point in the 1830s. The insanitary state of the town, especially the Irish districts, the poverty of many of its inhabitants, notably handloom weavers, the inability to maintain order in the face of popular protest, be it anti-New Poor Law protesters or 'physical force' Chartists, and the growing, if more mundane, threat of petty crime and immorality –all were laid bare and added to the movement for municipal reform.<sup>3</sup>

Although not unique to Bradford, – nearby Huddersfield was similar – responsibility was shared by various authorities, whose activities were rarely coordinated. The Court Leet of the Lordship of the Manor confirmed two constables annually, the Improvement Commission was responsible for the night watch, numbering just under fifty men by the mid-1840s, and from 1842, the Vestry appointed two paid constables. In addition, from 1817 there was an Association for the Prosecution of Felons. Further, there was outright opposition to the creation of a police force from opposite ends of the political spectrum.<sup>4</sup> The leading Tory, Squire Auty, had played a prominent role in the opposition to the adoption of the Rural Police Acts of 1839/40 and continued to oppose police reform in Bradford, in which he was joined by the town's Radicals. Change was delayed and it was not until 1847 that Bradford became a municipal borough. In November, the newly formed watch committee set out its proposals for a police force with distinct day and night sections, rather than a single, combined force.

The senior officers comprised a chief constable, a superintendent and two inspectors. The watch committee selected as chief constable William Leverett, who had risen through the ranks to become an inspector in an eight-year career with the Liverpool police, in preference to the experienced local man, superintending constable Charles Ingham. From the outset there was disagreement over the appropriate level of salary. A compromise was struck with the salary being £200 for one year only.<sup>5</sup> Not for the last time, expenditure on the police was a source of contention.<sup>6</sup> Four sergeants and forty-eight constables were to be assigned to night duty, two sergeants and ten constables to day duty. There were also two designated detectives. An estimated 700 men applied to join the force. The watch committee looked for men of experience to fill the post of sergeant. Only one of the six appointed was not a serving police officer; two were serving in the Manchester force and one in each of the London, Liverpool and Sheffield forces. Twenty of the

forty-eight-strong existing night watch were appointed as constable, six other men had some police experience but thirty-four newly-appointed constables had none. A further eighteen men were placed on a 'supernumerary list' to fill vacancies promptly. Quantitative change was limited but the watch committee looked to create a force that was qualitatively superior. All recruits, as well as being expected to be literate, were issued with a detailed rule book, containing basic advice and providing a base-line for conduct. General advice – 'never enter a public house or accept liquor from any whomsoever,' and do not 'enter into idle chat with any of the inhabitants' – was combined with more specific guidance – 'behave ... with a determined sternness of manner and never allow [drunken and quarrelsome men and 'women of the town'] to gather in crowds.' The watch committee had no illusions about likely popular response to the police. Constables were to disperse potential troublemakers but 'must be cautious how they interfere [because] ... the police are *obnoxious* to such persons.'<sup>7</sup> A clear command structure and appropriate guidance and training were necessary elements in creating a more effective force but much depended upon the quality of recruits and that in turn depended in no small measure on wage levels. Sergeants' pay was set at 21s per week and constables' at 17s. This was low compared to the pay of an overseer in the local textile industry, which could average 30s per week.<sup>8</sup> With a new man brought in to lead, a new command structure, and the passing of eighty-nine byelaws, the newly-elected watch committee was determined to break with the minimalist approach of the old improvement commissioners and take a more interventionist stance.

If Bradford was the brash new town, Leeds was 'a more substantial and slower-growing town.'<sup>9</sup> The woollen and allied trades dominated an increasingly diversified local economy. As in Bradford, there was a substantial Irish population, living in some of the town's most insanitary districts but there was a wider problem of overcrowding and inadequate housing associated with the two-roomed, 'House and Chamber,' tenements.<sup>10</sup> Local reformers waxed eloquent on the threats posed by drunkenness and gambling born out of such squalor. Although Chartism took a distinctive and essentially moderate form in Leeds, the very presence of such men heightened the perceived need for an effective, protective police. However, there was a tradition of municipal reform, dating back to the Improvement Act of 1755 with its concern that '*several Burglaries, Robberies, and other Outrages and Disorders have lately been committed. and many more attempted within the said Town, and the Streets,*

*Lanes, Alleys, and Passages thereof*.<sup>11</sup> In the early nineteenth century a night watch was created, a chief constable appointed and steps taken to improve supervision. The watchmen provided a 'significant preventive police.'<sup>12</sup> For thirty-four weeks of the year there were twelve inspectors and seventy-one watchmen, falling to seven inspectors and fifty-one watchmen for the remainder of the year. In 1834 the local magistrates conducted a thorough review of the working of the night force to improve efficiency, taking advice from Liverpool and Manchester and bringing in a new superintendent.<sup>13</sup> The focus remained on the city centre and, as a consequence, the fast-growing out-townships fell outside these provisions. The 1835 Municipal Corporations Act was less of a break with the past, particularly in terms of personnel but there was a determination to continue improvements in policing, though closer (and more regular) scrutiny of the police by the watch committee, a revised beat system (1843), the building of additional stations (1852), and an overall increase in numbers.<sup>14</sup> Not all issues were resolved. The size of the force remained a contentious issue, as was the amalgamation of the day and night force but this does not detract from the post-1835 drive to improve overall urban governance in Leeds.

Sheffield was the only West Riding town of comparable size to Leeds. Its prosperity was founded on the transformed steel industry with its wide-ranging cutlery and tools trade based on a plethora of small producers, the 'little mesters.' Mortality rates in the town, notably from respiratory diseases associated with the cutlery trade, were high but there was a wider problem of insanitation in the 'many old, crowded and filthy locations ... [with] hundreds of slight and flimsy cottages ... and partial and insufficient sewerage.'<sup>15</sup> Many of the poorer elements of Sheffield society, including an Irish community in 'The Crofts,' lived in squalid conditions. As in other towns, there was a concern that social problems were exacerbated by the prevalence of beerhouses. Conservative fears were further heightened by the strength of support for the radical cause in Sheffield.

Police reform in Sheffield dated back to the early nineteenth century. The 1818 Improvement Act covered an area described by a three-quarter-mile radius centred on the parish church, which contained a significant proportion of the population but excluded the expanding out-townships. The act made provision for a large commission, which was responsible for the appointment of 'able-bodied' watchmen, who were responsible for dealing with 'all such

Malefactors, Disturbers of the King's Peace and all others suspected and disorderly Persons ... wandering or misbehaving themselves.' By October 1820 there were eight watchmen in post, rising to fifty by the early 1830s. A plan introduced in 1821 divided the town into fifty beats, confirmed the role of watchmen and was printed and distributed at large. Contrary to reformist expectations, the new arrangements did not provide a defence against disorder but, despite long-running criticism of the commissioners, there was little attempt to improve policing until the mid-1830s. In 1836 a day force was created from men of the night watch.<sup>16</sup> Two years later a detailed watching plan was agreed. There was a general agreement that 'an extended and improved police act' was desirable but there was also a firm view that those outside the boundaries had no claim.<sup>17</sup> Effectively, the out-townships were left to their own devices. Some – notably Nether Hallam and Attercliffe – adopted the 1833 Lighting and Watching Act. By the late-1830s the question of incorporation was centre stage in Sheffield. Policing was a key element in the debate. The 1839/40 Rural Police Acts were seen as a threat to Sheffield's standing. According to the *Sheffield Independent* there was a danger that Sheffield would be put on 'the same footing as Ecclesfield, Penistone, Holmfirth and Delft.'<sup>18</sup> With incorporation in 1843 a borough watch committee was appointed and a 'new' police force established but reflecting the extent of police reform immediately prior to incorporation, the 'old' police were to all intents and purposes, rebadged as the 'new.'

The pathway to police reform took different routes in the three towns, particularly in Bradford. There, the greater pace of demographic and economic growth more quickly swamped existing institutions but the lack of political initiative led to a sharper contrast between 'old' and 'new' policing. In Leeds and Sheffield, there were a series of more gradual adjustments. There were, nonetheless, underlying common concerns – the need to protect ever more valuable but vulnerable property; more so, the need to regulate public spaces in an efficient, civilised and decorous manner; and the need to protect respectable society from petty criminality and immorality. Police reform, not inevitable, even when there was an awareness of the limitations of existing institutions, depended upon the decisions of local elites. More important, there was no guarantee that the 'new,' or not-so-new, police would achieve the aims of reformers. The test would come quite literally in the streets,

### 'New' policing before the inspectorate

In the decades before the 1856 County and Borough Police act the watch committees of the three towns exercised considerable influence with comparatively little governmental oversight. Although there was a widely held measure of efficiency of one constable for every thousand people, there was no mechanism for enforcement and the size of police forces reflected local balances struck between the demands of efficiency and economy. Somewhat surprisingly, the statistics published by the government in 1854 show a broad similarity in the police/population ratios in the three towns in 1851. The stability in the size of the force in Sheffield contrasts with both Leeds – where numbers were cut in the late-1840s only to be restored in the early-1850s – and Bradford where police numbers grew dramatically in the early-1850s. Nonetheless, as of 1851 to meet the 1:1000 ratio, there would have had to have been (roughly) a 10 percent increase in numbers in Sheffield, 20 percent in Leeds and 25 percent in Bradford.

**Table 7.2: Police and population in Bradford, Leeds & Sheffield, 1848-1853**

	Bradford			Leeds			Sheffield		
	Police	Population	Police population ratio	Police	Police population ratio	Ratio	Police	Population	Police population ratio
1848	69			137			122		
1849	69			132			122		
1850	69			134			122		
1851	84	103,786	1:1236	142	172,279	1:1213	122	135,310	1:1109
1852	93			147			122		
1853	111		1:935*	152		1:1133*	134		1:1010*

\*Based on unadjusted 1851 census figure

Source: Parliamentary Papers, City and Borough Police, 1854

An important element in the campaign for incorporation had been the need for a effective policing and yet the newly-formed Bradford force could not have appeared at a more difficult time than 1848. At its worst, parts of the city were under Chartist control and the police needed approval to enter them. Nor did it help that there remained vociferous critics of the 'burthen' on ratepayers created by the force.<sup>19</sup> Several influential figures pointed to Leeds and Sheffield 'with their enormous expenditure ... and secret watch committees.'<sup>20</sup> Opposition to 'wasteful, extravagant and abominable jobs,' as councillor Rhodes put it, continued.<sup>21</sup> In 1849 councillor Driver sought to reduce the size of the force. 'There was,' he claimed, 'no earthly use for a police force on the present scale.'<sup>22</sup> He failed to carry the day but the force remained unchanged in size until 1851. Numbers increased thereafter, not least because of an extension of the policed area, but the watch committee constantly reminded council members that it was proceeding cautiously. When the watch was extended to parts of Bowling, Manningham and Little Horton, the committee reported approvingly that this had been achieved with the appointment of two extra men, rather than the seven originally thought necessary.<sup>23</sup> That this was achieved by extending the beats of in-post constables was glossed over. Thereafter and despite reassurances that expenditure per constable in Bradford were lower than in Leeds and Sheffield, 'economical' councillors focussed on the question of police pay.<sup>24</sup> A proposal from a divided Watch Committee to reward five men 'of unblemished service' provoked a lengthy debate in council in 1853. The chair of the watch committee, and later mayor, councillor Murgatroyd commissioned a survey of police pay in other northern towns and successfully argued that, not only were the officers underpaid but, more importantly, raising police wages was not squandering ratepayers' money but a means of raising 'the character of the police force' and therefore its efficiency.<sup>25</sup> The reality was less optimistic.

As in other forces, the early years of the Bradford police were characterised by high rates of turnover and indiscipline. In the first quarter of 1849, the chief constable informed the watch committee that three constables had been dismissed and a further thirteen fined – equivalent to approximately one-third of the force. Ill-discipline, especially neglect of duty was a greater problem in the winter months, but even in the summer months roughly one in six constables was disciplined.<sup>26</sup> The problems were predictable. Men were dismissed for drunkenness, insubordination and neglect of duty. And men

resigned because of the demands of the job and the low levels of remuneration in a booming local economy.<sup>27</sup> The need to improve the 'character' of the force was recognized by many members of the town council but admonitions to appoint men of sound morals and industriousness were easy to make but less easy to implement. In both recruitment and discipline pragmatism trumped perfectionism. The watch committee was generally supportive of the town's police and lenient in its response to disciplinary matters. However, this leniency, and particularly the willingness to re-appoint after recent dismissal, led to public criticism.<sup>28</sup> Challenged about the dismissal and re-appointment of John Binns for drunkenness, the watch committee justified the decision on the grounds that it was his first offence and 'his character as an efficient and steady officer stood high.'<sup>29</sup> Similarly, the re-appointment of PC Laycock shortly after dismissal for drunkenness was justified in terms of his previous excellent character.<sup>30</sup> When councillor Rawson, yet again, drew attention to the 'unjust and dangerous' watch committee practice of re-appointment, he was reassured that in three such cases, they were 'of such a special character' as to warrant reappointment.<sup>31</sup> The situation eased over time but the chief constable's 1856 claim that his force was 'never in a better working order or in a better state of discipline,' while technically correct, glossed over continuing difficulties that reduced its efficiency.<sup>32</sup>

A number of cases involving police violence were seized upon by councillors Pollard and Auty – both well-known opponents of the new police.<sup>33</sup> Ultimately, the officers were told (by the chief constable at the behest of the watch committee) to exercise 'more discretion.' Even when PC Field was found to have 'exceeded due discretion' when beating a woman with his staff, he was merely requested not to do so again!<sup>34</sup> Working-class women were in a particularly vulnerable position. Sergeant Lotty and PC Rawnsley, seeking to execute a warrant relating to an offence under the Worsted Act, took Ely Wigglesworth from her bed in the early hours of the morning, even though she was sick, and held her at the police station. The watch committee reviewed the case and concluded that the officers were not at fault as they were following orders from a superior, though it did ask the chief constable to instruct his men to 'use more discretion in the executions of warrants.'<sup>35</sup> Even less fortunate was Lydia Kitchen who complained about the refusal of the police to come to her aid when assaulted by her husband. Patriarchal attitudes and the police belief that domestic questions were not within their

remit triumphed. The watch committee, though not unanimous, concluded that the constable had acted (or more accurately not acted) properly. Further, blaming the victim, they opined that ‘the woman with her tongue kept her husband in a state of constant irritation, and that, if she had been quiet herself, the probability was that no disturbance would have taken place.’<sup>36</sup> Only occasionally, as in the case of PC Bolton, accused of assaulting a member of the public with his staff, was there public condemnation. Bolton, according to the mayor, had not shown ‘the required good temper and forbearance’ but had acted with ‘unnecessary cruelty.’<sup>37</sup>

Police violence was a major problem but more widespread were more mundane forms of misconduct – sleeping on night duty, drinking on duty and simple neglect. The failure to act rarely caught the public eye as the unusual case of Edward Hailstone shows. Hailstone was a man of standing in the community, a prominent Bradford solicitor, who was to become deputy lieutenant of the county in 1870.<sup>38</sup> In the summer of 1852, he was incensed by the absence from duty of PC Ashworth, who had spent ‘his time in my garden with a female companion.’ There was also the question of an alleged theft of garden produce by another constable, Wilkinson. Hailstone, in a letter to the *Bradford Observer*, was further angered by the fact that he had personally taken the fornicating PC Ashworth to the police station, only to find later that he had not been dismissed. The watch committee concluded that the offence was ‘not such as to warrant them in discharging the constable ... but it [did] require his suspension for one month.’<sup>39</sup> Hailstone found some satisfaction in the example made of the hungry PC Wilkinson, who was dismissed and subsequently fined 20s and costs by the town magistrates, as an example to others, for his nocturnal theft of eight or nine gooseberries and a similar number of pea-pods.<sup>40</sup> Hailstone still felt that ‘the duties of the [watch] Committee are not understood by its members, or are performed in a lax manner,’ only to be told by the watch committee chair, councillor Murgatroyd, that the committee had acted properly on the evidence available to it. The case was unusual but nonetheless throws light not simple on police misdemeanours but also on the tolerant attitude of the authorities.

A number of these cases also throw light on the relationship between the police, watch committee and the town magistrates. Whereas in Leeds it was common practice for cases to be sent from the watch committee to the magistrates for action, in Bradford it was the reverse but the relationship



between the watch committee, and senior police figures, and the magistrates was not always cordial. In the summer of 1851, the watch committee set up a sub-committee to consider the 'better preservation of the peace.'<sup>41</sup> The main concerns were 'several cases of violent assault upon the police' and the leniency of the Bradford magistrates, handing out 'fines of a few shillings' that could easily be raised by friends of the defendant. There was also a concern with the leniency with which magistrates dealt with cases of theft from the person by prostitutes in beerhouses.<sup>42</sup> It was feared that magistrates were undermining the police in a central area of their work.

For all the talk of fighting serious crime, a major and constant concern was with the blight of drunkenness and prostitution. The chief constable's reports record in detail the number of prosecutions for various infringements of the licensing laws – selling out of hours, permitting drunk and disorderly behaviour and/or gambling and 'harbouring notoriously bad characters' – problems more strongly associated with widely-condemned beerhouse-keepers. Chief constable Leverett, convinced that 'prostitution [was] more amalgamated and concentrated with drinking facilities,' detailed the number of beerhouses, their location and the number of prostitutes associated with them.<sup>43</sup> An occasional voice was raised in defence of 'beerhouse keepers ... [as] a set of injured and ill-used men,' but the bulk of opinion said otherwise.<sup>44</sup> Leverett had no doubt that beerhouse/brothels were in a majority but even those who did not were in 'a poverty-stricken case' and survive only through 'foolish and vicious games and amusements,' including Dart Puffing, Dominoes, Nigger Dancing and Dancing Matches,' which corrupted the young boys found therein.<sup>45</sup> Firm action against beerhouses won approval from some quarters but exacerbated hostility from others.

The continuing scale of drunkenness and the growing number of assaults on the police in the mid-1850s bear witness to the limited impact of the 'new' police and the limited success in winning acceptance, let alone support, from many sections of working-class society, not least the over-policed Irish.<sup>46</sup> As well as small-scale scraps, involving maybe two or three drunken men and a constable or two, there were reports of gangs of fifty or sixty Irishmen congregating to thrash the police.<sup>47</sup> Insensitive or excessive policing provoked a violent response. In the summer of 1848, using a recently passed byelaw to prevent loitering, the police sought to break up a crowd at Sun Bridge, which 'as latterly become customary [were] discussing the state of affairs

in general and of Ireland in particular.<sup>48</sup> A police request to ‘move on’ was laughed at and the police attempted to arrest the individual concerned. The ensuing meleé gave rise to accusations of police brutality, though an attempted prisoner rescue was thwarted as ‘some [unspecified] lovers of order and authority instantly came to the aid of the policemen.’<sup>49</sup> For the most part, the police were viewed by many working-class men and women with suspicion. At times they faced not just excessive use of police staffs but also faced ‘routine’ violence, particularly, but not exclusively, in the Irish districts of the town. Talk of consensual policing rang hollow in such circumstances. As councillor Rudd ruefully noted in 1855 ‘the police had odium enough to bear’ from the ordinary folk of Bradford.<sup>50</sup>

The *Leeds Mercury* greeted the advent of the “new” police in the town with enthusiasm. Under the new system, based on the Met model, it argued that Leeds would be ‘regularly watched,’ day and night by ‘a selection of men of responsibility ... [with] habits of sobriety and integrity.’<sup>51</sup> These constables, guided by the *Instructions to the Police Officers of Leeds*, were instructed to be ‘active without being offensive.’<sup>52</sup> The new system, the *Mercury* concluded, was ‘incomparably better than the old system.’ In fact, the contrast between old and new was less dramatic. Nonetheless, the watch committee faced two problems. First, was the question of amalgamating the day and night forces. Initially rejected, it remained a live issue, and provoked intense debate, notably in the mid-1840s. Second, was the question of the size and associated cost of the force, which again led to bitter disputes, as influential critics, from left and right of local politics, wanted to see the numbers greatly reduced, even the force disbanded. Even those who were more supportive of the police were still wary of increasing the rates burden. At the same time, there was also an awareness, especially among senior police figures, that the more men were needed to reduce beats, which were much longer in Leeds – as much as four or five miles and taking as much as an hour and forty-five minutes – than in Manchester, Liverpool and the Met.<sup>53</sup> And then there was the question of policing the expanding out-townships. In both cases, the need to augment the force had to be balanced against the costs involved.

The Leeds force did grow from ninety-five men at its inception to 152 by the early 1850s but the path was far from smooth. Expansion was constrained at best, reversed at worse, as in the mid-1840s. The climax came in 1845 when the force was cut by twenty-seven men – four sergeants, two

acting sergeants and twenty-one constables.<sup>54</sup> It took seven years for the force to regain its level of 1844. There was a shared concern with economy but it was the Tory councillors who were the most outspoken and persistent critic of what they saw as a bloated and inefficient force. Councillor Jackson's reference to 'imbecile wretches,' who should be culled from the force was extreme but, given the high level of dismissals, there was little doubt, *pace* the *Leeds Mercury*, that the watch committee continued to struggle to find suitable recruits. In the late-1830s, annual turnover was equivalent to some forty percent of the force. For every man who resigned, a further four were dismissed.<sup>55</sup> Although the situation improved by the mid-1840s, there was a further deterioration in the early 1850s, when turnover was roughly 30 percent of the force.\* Unsurprisingly, men were dismissed most commonly for drunkenness, neglect of duty and insubordination while others resigned, most commonly in the first months of service. Dismissals were the tip of a larger problem of discipline, particularly in the late-1830s. The annual total of recorded disciplinary offences was in excess of one hundred in these years but later fell to about fifty.<sup>56</sup>

Despite high rates of turnover, as in the WRCC, there emerged a group of men, serving five years or more, who played an important part in the development of more stable and more efficient forces. In Leeds, between the 1835 and 1855, sixty-four men became long-serving officers.<sup>57</sup> All but two served at least ten years with thirty-five (or 55 per cent) serving between twenty and twenty-nine years. Nine served for over thirty years and one forty. Given the demands of the job for constables in particular, there must be considerable doubt about the physical and mental capabilities of these men in their later years in the force. Only half of these men were pensioned but a significant minority, almost one-third either resigned or were dismissed. Some men were not lost to policing but were promoted elsewhere but others simply left for unspecified 'better' employment elsewhere. More striking, almost half never moved beyond the rank of constable, creating a problem in maintaining morale and efficiency among older men. The creation of long-service classes and the occasional pay increase was a partial, but not wholly successful, response. Prospects were better for men appointed in the 1850s as post-1856 expansion increased opportunities. Even so, those who did move

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\* See appendix 1

up a rank rarely gained a promotion beyond sergeant. Equally striking, just over half of these men had five or more disciplinary incidents on their record, though again there are signs of improvement among the 1850s-men. Overall, only six men had a clean record. Elsewhere there were predictable incidents of drunkenness (though a distinction was drawn between being drunk and being 'in liquor'), late arrival on duty, and neglect of duty. Occasionally a man was missing from duty only to be found in a beerhouse or a brothel, or simply in a drunken sleep at home. As in Bradford, the career policeman was a flawed individual whose (recorded) indiscretions impacted directly on the way they discharged their duties.

Undoubtedly there were success stories. William Ingham (joined 1833) served for thirty-nine years, rising to the rank of inspector and with no disciplinary incidents recorded to his name. John Merritt (1847) and John Moody (1841) also became inspectors with only a couple of blemishes on their record.<sup>58</sup> John Cliffe (1842), exceptionally, had been dismissed for 'insulting the Watch Committee,' but after 'expressing contrition,' was re-engaged and eventually made inspector. But there were also failures. Daniel Griffin (1855) was another a promising figure but his career ended in ignominy when, as an inspector, he was dismissed for improper conduct. Likewise, among those who achieved one promotion to sergeant, there were several positive careers, notably John Neal (1837), the longest serving officer with forty years to his name when he retired, William Kirby (1855) a detective sergeant, whose only fall from grace was a failure to report a 'strong smell of fire,' and the aptly-named Benjamin Best (1849). However, there also nearly as many who were demoted from the rank of sergeant because of their poor disciplinary record. The career of William Simpson (1855) illustrates the problem facing the watch committee. Although disciplined on three occasions as a constable, he was deemed sufficiently able to be promoted to sergeant in February 1860. During an eleven-year stint sergeant Simpson was disciplined three times for being drunk on duty and twice for falsifying his night returns – the second such offence, combined with drunkenness, saw him demoted in December 1871. Despite being disciplined a further three times for drink-related offences, he was re-appointed sergeant in September 1875. Charitably, Simpson's abilities as a police officer outweighed his disciplinary weaknesses in the eyes of the watch committee. Less charitably, there was no better alternative. For whatever reason, his continued employment (and that

of men with similarly chequered records) highlight the continuing presence of men, whose flawed characters had a negative impact on their performance, in a force that was often praised in public for its positive contributions to public life.

There were a number of long-serving policemen with good disciplinary records who never achieved promotion and whose only recognition and reward was movement into the good conduct class. Daniel Gregson (1848) was unique in serving twenty-one years with an unblemished disciplinary record. Most constables had a record that ranged from mediocre to barely acceptable. Thomas Pitts (1849) appeared to be an officer of promise, rewarded by the watch committee for 'extraordinary diligence,' yet racked up twenty-one disciplinary incidences for which he was variously cautioned, reprimanded and fined. These were predominantly for neglect of duty and drinking on duty. Similarly, Joseph Porritt (1855) and, lastly, the inaptly-named George Virtue (1844), who was finally dismissed after seventeen years in the force, during which time he was disciplined on twenty-seven occasions for being drunk on duty neglecting his duty or being late. Belatedly demoted from second to third class constable in 1858, his behaviour did not improve and he was eventually dismissed in 1861. It is difficult to see such men as efficient officers. Indeed, the surprise is that they were not dismissed earlier in their careers. Given the reputation of the Leeds Watch Committee for its supervision of the police, their tolerance of ill-disciplined men raises questions about either their judgement or the difficulties they faced in recruiting and training good men.

In welcoming the "new" police, the *Leeds Mercury* saw them as a counter to the 'gambling, drunkenness and dogfights' that were 'favourite pastimes in some parts of town.'<sup>59</sup> Both drunkenness and gambling, not to mention prostitution, were undoubtedly widespread problems in the town centre; less so, dogfighting, which tended to take place in less crowded places such as Hunslet and even Headingley.<sup>60</sup> The balance of police work in the late-1830s was clear. There were approximately 550 felonies reported annually. At the same time, there were a similar number of vagrancy cases and over a thousand for drunk and disorderly behaviour.<sup>61</sup> The importance of beerhouses and 'low' lodging houses as sites of crime and immorality was a continuing theme in the local discourse on crime and the priorities thus set were reflected in the actions of the police. Week after week the local press reported a sorry

catalogue of largely petty crimes committed or planned in the town's numerous beerhouses, though statistics for arrests for drunkenness and vagrancy reveal often sharp year-on-year fluctuations.<sup>62</sup> Equally important, were the ongoing constraints on police action. The sheer number of beerhouses meant that not all could be subjected to close scrutiny – a problem that was exacerbated yearly by the cycle of 'high days and holidays' and the associated short-term upsurge in drinking. In addition, for the individual constable there was the question of how much discretion was the better part of proverbial valour. Policemen were well aware of the physical violence that had been inflicted on some of their colleagues. Problem spots, problem individuals became well known and only tackled with a sufficient force of men. More generally, officers learnt the imprecise science of dealing with drunks and avoiding physical assault. The impact of such early-Victorian 'canteen culture' is impossible to quantify but foolish to ignore.

Notwithstanding these constraints on action, the "new" police represented a significant intrusion into working-class life in Leeds. Charged with maintaining decorum on the streets and lanes, policemen, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, kept beerhouses, casinos and concert halls and their clientele under surveillance. Resources were devoted on perceived problem areas, which almost by definition, were inhabited by poor, unskilled working-classes, especially those from Ireland. Further, even when the *actual* police presence was limited, the *potential* for surveillance and interference remained. Practical policing was in no small measure a confidence trick to disguise the fact that the policeman was regularly outnumbered in his daily work. Occasionally, police authority of challenged; very occasionally it was (albeit briefly) overthrown – history records such events. More often, men and women moved on when requested or followed the advice to go home quietly – history rarely, if ever, records these events.

The immediate impact of the 'new' police was clear. The number of drunk and disorderly prosecutions doubled in 1836 compared with 1835. Overall, the number of people brought before the town's magistrates increased by a third in one year as the number of women prosecuted rose by 70 percent.<sup>63</sup> But police activity, praised by the *Leeds Mercury*, was perceived differently by those on the receiving end of police attention. The arrival of the new police was accompanied by an increased number of assaults upon them.<sup>64</sup> References in the local press highlight the conflict between police and public.

Many were drunken brawls, individual explosions of anger often directed at individual officers. Nonetheless, beyond the individual officer, the 'bloody Peelers' were unloved and often some more. Disturbances at Vicar's Cross in 1844 pointed to the existence of anti-police sentiment. A proposed meeting, 'to hear the usual addresses on temperance, etc,' was banned by the mayor but went ahead. In the eyes of some councillors such meetings were locations for the spread of 'Infidel and Socialist opinions, and political disputations.'<sup>65</sup> The police intervened to disperse the crowd and maintained a presence there throughout the day. The 'constant collisions with the police' resulted in more trouble than had occurred at earlier meetings. The 'Teetotallers, the Primitive Methodists, and other preachers,' joined Chartist figures, notably Joshua Hobson, in condemning the actions of the police in infringing the right to assemble and the right to free speech.<sup>66</sup> Matters were overtaken by a more serious clash between soldiers and police which resulted in several days of riot.<sup>67</sup> More important than the initial clash between the two – a not unusual occurrence at the time – was the popular response. Alleys, inns and shops were reportedly thronged with respectable people, whose manifestations of sympathy had throughout been on the side of the police.<sup>68</sup> More worryingly for the authorities was the response of the 'mob' or 'rabble,' as the press continued to characterise working-class action. Initially, 'the whole of the lower classes [in Kirkgate] ... turned out into the street and excited the soldiers to acts of violence upon the police officers.'<sup>69</sup> This was followed by more positive actions. The 'rabble ... fell upon the police, pelting them with stones and bottles.'<sup>70</sup> Attempts by the police to escape down alleys and lanes were thwarted and civilian attacks on the police took place. Cries of "Down with the police" and "We will murder them all" were reported. The *Leeds Mercury*, often a supporter of the new police, noted that the police were 'vehemently hissed and scoffed at,' while the 'mob' acted 'not ... out of love to the soldiers themselves but from some feeling of hatred to the police.'<sup>71</sup> There were references to the 'exasperating petty tyranny' of the police' and to a general hatred born of the 'petty and unmanly tyranny which they [the police] have displayed on many recent occurrences.'<sup>72</sup>

The events of summer 1844 were the product of long-standing resentments and, although the troubles died out relatively quickly, they did not disappear. A number of large-scale prisoner rescues, responding to 'the Irish cry,' was indicative of enduring hostility with that particular section

of the community. Twenty additional officers, with drawn cutlasses were required to thwart a prisoner rescue in Marsh Lane in 1848.<sup>73</sup> Eight years later, two constables were 'besieged' in the Boot and Shoe beerhouse by some two hundred Irish and had to be rescued by twenty of their colleagues armed with staves.<sup>74</sup> Although not all interactions were as combative, policing in many parts of Leeds in the mid-century was confrontational, even coercive, and some way from the Peelite ideal of policing by consent.

Following incorporation in 1842, Sheffield's not-so-new 'new' police date from 1844. Given the town's pathway to incorporation, there was an important element of continuity in terms of both personnel and practice. Thomas Raynor, an experienced officer who had demonstrated his reformist credentials under the old improvement commission, was appointed as head of a force, in theory, of some eighty men, many of whom were carried over from the previous regime. Similarly, the new watch committee contained several experienced men, who had been involved with policing for some years. Police numbers, standing at seventy-one in 1844, were increased significantly in 1845 (forty more men) and to a lesser extent in 1846 (nine more). Thereafter numbers remained stable before being increased in 1853 (an additional twelve) making a total of 134 men. More resources were devoted to night policing, nightwatchmen outnumbered day constables by approximately 3:2. In 1849, for example, there were thirty-nine police constables and sixty-five nightwatchmen, who were supervised by three sergeants and five patrol sergeants as well as three inspectors.<sup>75</sup>

Although not without problems, the Sheffield force experienced fewer difficulties in recruitment and retention than in Leeds or Bradford. 1845 was a year of great numerical change and, as in other towns, and saw considerable churn in the force. Almost 20 per cent of the force had been disciplined, including 7 percent dismissed or ordered to resign.<sup>76</sup> By 1850 these numbers had been halved and by 1846 a mere 6 per cent of men were disciplined. Only two men (or 1 percent of the total) were dismissed. Unsurprising drunkenness was, by far, the most common disciplinary offence. In contrast, neglect of duty and disobedience rarely featured.<sup>77</sup> These figures stand in stark contrast to experiences elsewhere and the question immediately arises: was this the product of low expectations and inadequate supervision, or even of under-reporting/recording? The improvement drive initiated by the new chief constable (Jackson) appointed in 1859 lends support to this view but it



would be misleading to overlook the early determination of the previous chief constable (Raynor) to improve standards. Equally, the watch committee, and more specifically the police sub-committee, played an active role in the management of the town's police force, including the remodelling of the force in 1856/7.<sup>78</sup> However, this determination to maintain or improve standards was underpinned by an awareness that the Sheffield police were still relatively inexperienced and that the churn of dismissals and resignations, even if lower than in Bradford or Leeds, meant that it took years to create a stable force. In 1855 the watch committee, despite its general pride in the town force, conceded that the supervisory arrangements for the night watch were insufficient to ensure that constables resisted the temptation of a free drink or a comfortable break, especially in the harsher winter months. Indeed, there was a growing belief in the mid-1850s that the chief constable Raynor was no longer able to maintain or improve standards of policing.

As in Leeds, the watch committee placed great emphasis on its role in hiring and firing men, in disciplining them, approving promotions and even occasionally commenting on the deployment of men.<sup>79</sup> The watch committee was also concerned with economy and value for money. Sheffield's local politicians were not alone in protecting rate-payers' money but, for the most part, there was agreement about (even pride in) the efficient way in which the town's force was run. Alderman Hall, for example, not only praised the town force but assured fellow councillors that 'the greatest possible economy' had been exercised.<sup>80</sup> But not everyone agreed. Following his election in 1846, the one-time Chartist, Isaac Ironside – supported by other members of the Central Democratic Association – was a constant critic, arguing variously that the size of the force could be diminished and the salary of the chief constable – the 'principal thief taker,' as he described Raynor – reduced.<sup>81</sup> Chartist councillors were not unique to Sheffield – Joshua Hobson in Leeds was another notable example – but Ironside was a particularly outspoken figure, who often questioned the very legitimacy of the new police. However, despite challenging the establishment notably over the treatment of the dismissed constable, George Bakewell, Ironside was often more of a pragmatist, to the extent of defending the police and the difficulty of their job.

The meetings of the watch committee were also an opportunity for members to draw attention to problems of order and decorum in the town. The overall tone had been set at the outset when the newly-appointed watch

committee set out a range of byelaws to regulate behaviour in public places. They proscribed a range of general street nuisances including, brawling, disorderly behaviour, prostitution, dog fights, cock fights and prize fights, and travelling showmen,<sup>82</sup> Over the years a number of concerns were brought to the attention of the police – furious driving by milk-boys and baker-boys, dogs roaming the streets, young men loitering in the streets, gambling – not just on the streets but also in temperance houses! – begging and drunkenness. Between 1835 and 1839 arrests for felonies in Sheffield averaged thirty-one per year. At the same time there were an annual average of 102 vagrants were prosecuted and 1465 men and women for disorderly conduct.<sup>83</sup> A similar picture emerges from post-incorporation police statistics. Raynor's monthly return of crime statistics in April 1844 showed that almost 70 per cent (197 of 288 cases) were drink related.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, assault cases figured large in the statistics, in large part a product of the police attention given to the town's 300 or so beerhouses. Unlike in some towns, the Sheffield police only arrested drunks when they became troublesome. The drunk, even the drunk and incapable, particularly if they were locals, were commonly instructed or helped to go home. Thus, official statistics of arrests significantly understated the police presence in working-class life.

Figures from the chief constable's annual returns of crime statistics give a rough indication of the impact of the police and their 'productivity,' as measured by arrests per constable.<sup>\*\*</sup> Over an eleven-year period, 1845 – 55, the police made an annual average of 3328 arrests per year, or twenty-nine arrests per constable per year. The number of arrests and the arrests per constable were both higher for the years from 1851 when the size of the force was increased from 109 to 119.<sup>85</sup> Considered another way, the percentage of the town's population arrested by the police rose from 2 percent (1845 – 50) to 3 percent (1851 – 5). These overall figures understate and misrepresent the underlying reality that it was predominantly working-class young men who dominated the crime figures, and for whom the arrest rate exceeded 25 per cent.<sup>86</sup> In the absence of a reliable series of statistics for the pre-incorporation period, it is difficult to assess the impact of the new police. While the old police may have had a slightly better arrest rate (as Williams argues), the

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<sup>\*\*</sup> See appendix 2

fact that there were more new police meant they had a greater overall impact than their predecessors.

The way in which the new police acted was of considerable (but immeasurable) importance. There are scattered references to confrontational attitudes and the excessive use of force by the police in the early 1850s and, in so far as they reflect anti-police sentiment, there was an increase in recorded assaults on the police, from an improbable two in 1846 to sixty-four in 1850.<sup>87</sup> Qualitative evidence points to the unpopularity of the police, especially among certain sections of the population, with more press-reported cases after incorporation than before. Almost every case of assault on the police was linked with popular recreational activity – gambling in the streets, drinking in beerhouses or singing rooms; often they involved a prisoner rescue. Several assaults were minor – one-on-one or two-on one attacks – but others point to a wider communal dislike. Large crowds gathered, throwing ‘stones and brickbats,’ even using a police staff against its owner. Officers were kicked and hit. In extreme cases, constables were severely injured – a jaw broken and teeth kicked out – and rendered unfit for work.<sup>88</sup> Certain beerhouses, such as the Brown Cow and its singing room, appear on several occasions, – while certain streets were ‘unsafe for policemen to venture ... unless aided by one or more of his colleagues.’<sup>89</sup> The ‘outrageous’ behaviour of the Irish, attempting prisoner rescues at almost every opportunity, was singled out for condemnation in the local press but it is clear from other reports that it was not simply the Irish who were not averse to giving the police a thrashing when the opportunity presented itself.<sup>90</sup> Equally significant were the repeated requests by Raynor for protection for the police and magisterial statements of their determination to do so. Raynor was an experienced officer with many years of service. He felt it necessary, in May 1848 and again in March 1850, to warn of ‘the many interferences with the police’ and to call for protection for the police.<sup>91</sup> The town magistrates responded not simply with strong verbal support but also by handing out stiff fines – as much as £3, even £5 – in an attempt to deter anti-police violence.<sup>92</sup>

The extent of anti-police sentiment in certain quarters were starkly revealed during the widely-reported anti-police riot in Paradise-square in the summer of 1855. Paradise-square was a well-known venue for mass meetings. John Wesley had addressed large crowds there, as did Chartist leaders in the 1840s while in February 1855 there had been a mass meeting to protest

against Sabbatarian proposals to limit Sunday licensing hours. There were also a number of 'Irish broils' which 'frequently disgrace the neighbourhood.'<sup>93</sup> In late-July 1855, in this 'locality inhabited by a great number of low-conditioned Irish,' a dozen or so police officers were 'stoned and beaten most unmercifully' by a crowd of Irish men and women, 'animated by a desire to annihilate the force,' that numbered about fifty in the earliest reports, rising to over a thousand by the time the police gave evidence at York Assizes in cases of riot and murder.<sup>94</sup> The trouble rose out of an alleged robbery of £72 by two (or more) Irishmen from a local fish-shop owner, an incident to which the police had been called. The situation escalated rapidly and became very serious for the police, one of whom died from his injuries. Three important points stand out. First, the speed with which the riot developed and the size of the crowd (even discounting later police estimates), suggest considerable hostility. Anger, hatred even was close to the surface in this district. One of accused allegedly swore he would 'kill the b---y policeman,' while there were cries of 'd--- the bloody watchman.'<sup>95</sup> Second, the way in which the crowd isolated the police points to a degree of organisation and something more than a simple 'spontaneous' outburst. Third, the scale and nature of police action raises questions about the policing of the Irish. Within a short space of time, about twelve officers and at least two detectives were at the riot. Further, some had infiltrated the crowd in plain clothes – a fact which may have made uniformed men reluctant to use their truncheons.

Not surprisingly, the Paradise-square riot provided ammunition for critics of the town's force and its police commission. The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* was particularly outspoken. The town was 'inefficiently lighted and watched,' its police inadequate in numbers – 'not one officer to every thousand persons' – resulting in over-long beats and inadequate protection.<sup>96</sup> There were also criticisms that the decision to turn off lights during the summer months added to the difficulties of the police. More generally, the events of late-July 1855 showed in dramatic manner the extent to which Irish communities existed apart, using their own language, gathering and dispersing 'like magic' and hostile to authority. Ironside told the police commission 'you cannot control the Irish ... they will beat your policemen.'<sup>97</sup> Overstated maybe but there was an important kernel of truth in his comment.

There were other less spectacular indicators of the problems facing the new police in Sheffield. The persistence of cock- and dog-fights, for example,

reflected both the strength of older popular leisure activities in the face of respectable condemnation and criminalisation and the practical difficulties facing the police, where the advent of improved communication, facilitated the organisation of such events, hatched in town but often carried out in the remote countryside, out of the reach of the law. More mundanely, large numbers of young men simply loitering on street corners, obstructing the footpath, or gathering on the outskirts of town in gambling schools were able to evade police attention as often as not, and were not deterred when they were brought before the magistrates. Magistrates and police chiefs had a clear perception of an orderly and decorous town but translating this into a reality threw up challenges which they overcame partially at best.

### **Some conclusions**

Looking at the experiences of the three great towns in Yorkshire, a number of preliminary observations can be made. First, obviously but still importantly, experiences varied in terms of timing, the extent of the break with the past and the impact on and response of the local (but especially working-class) community. Second, the watch committees played an important role in improving the quality of their forces, particularly in Sheffield, but also imposed constraints on force size, notably in Leeds. Third, the organisation of the forces became more complex, more bureaucratic over time. As in the WRCC, rule books, conduct registers and the like were all part of the surveillance and discipling of the ordinary constable. Nonetheless, particularly in Bradford and Leeds, but even in Sheffield, police indiscipline was an ongoing problem that impacted on the efficiency and reputation of the police. A policeman seen or reported publicly asleep, more so an inebriated constable ordering around members of the public failed on both counts. Fourth, while the various 'new' police forces were larger and better regulated than their predecessors, they remained relatively light on the ground, not least where boundaries limited watching to town centres and excluded faster growing out-townships. Further, the police were necessarily part of a wider law-enforcement network that included non-police organisations, not to mention ordinary members of the public. Fifth, notwithstanding these limitations, the new police made a significant intrusion into working-class,

particularly at work or at leisure on the streets. Finally, the adoption of Met practices and principles, especially the notion of policing by consent, set out an ideal to aspire to but the nature and scale of popular opposition highlights the challenges to the exercise of police powers and even, in some cases, to the legitimacy of the police themselves.

## Appendix 1: Leeds police statistics

**Table App.1.1: Turnover in Leeds Police, 1838/9 - 1853/4**

	Dismissals	Dismissals as % of total turnover	Resignations	Resignations as % of total turnover	Total turnover	Force	Turnover as % of force
1838-9	38	78	11	22	49	107	46
1844-5	10	53	9	47	19	142	13
1847-8	13	76	4	24	17	128	13
1850-1	24	59	17	41	41	134	31
1853-4	18	49	19	51	37	152	24

Source: Adapted from D Churchill, 'Crime, Policing and Control in Leeds, c.1830 – 1890,' unpublished PhD, Open University, 2012, p.75

**Table App.1.2: Disciplinary incidents in Leeds Police, 1838/9 – 1853/4**

	Total disciplinary incidents	Incidents of drunkenness	All drink-related incidents	All drink related incidents as % total	Force	All disciplinary incidents per 100 constables	All drink related incidents per 100 constables
1838-9	123	38	48	39	107	115	45
1844-5	46	25	34	74	142	32	24
1847-8	47	23	27	57	128	37	45
1850-1	68	27	35	52	134	51	26
1853-4	44	14	29	65	152	29	19

Source: Adapted from D Churchill, 'Crime, Policing and Control in Leeds, c.1830 – 1890,' unpublished PhD, Open University, 2012, pp. 87 & 91

**Table App.1.3: Career policemen in Leeds, outcomes, 1835 – 1855**

	Final	Career	Outcomes*		
	Pension	Resigned	Dismissed	Died	Incomplete
1830s	7	0	1	2	1
1840s	14	5	7	5	1
1850s	13	5	2	5	1
Total	34	10	10	12	3
		Promotions	Final Grade		
	None	Good Conduct PC only	Sergeant only	Inspector or Superintendent	Incomplete
1830s	3	3	4	1	1
1840s	9	8	9	2	1
1850s	3	5	12	2	1
Total	15	16	25	5	3
		Disciplinary	Incidents		
	0	1-4	5-9	10+	Incomplete
1830s	1	4	3	4	1
1840s	4	9	7	7	1
1850s	1	9	7	5	1
Total	6	22	17	16	3

\*Including men re-appointed

Source: Leeds Constabulary Register of Constables,  
1833 – 1914 and Police Conduct Books



## Appendix 2 Sheffield police statistics

**Table App.2.1: Police activity in Sheffield, 1845 -1855**

	No. of arrests	Estimated population	Arrests as percentage of population	Police strength	Arrest per constable
1845	2556	120,201	2	109	26
1846	2873	122,593	2	109	25
1847	2680	126,033	2	109	25
1848	3006	127,521	2	109	28
1849	3093	130,059	2	109	28
1850	3187	132,647	2	109	29
1851	3806	135,287	3	119	32
1852	4149	139,591	3	119	35
1853	3864	144,044	3	119	32
1854	4014	148,639	3	119	34
1855	3377	153,380	2	119	28
Average	3328				29

Source: Adapted from Williams, 'Police and crime,' table 8.2, p.214

## Endnotes

- 1 *Morning Chronicle*, 6 December 1849. Letter XV from 'our special correspondent' was devoted to an account of Halifax and Bradford.
- 2 For a concise introduction to the economic development of Bradford see, Gary Firth, 'The Bradford Trade in the Nineteenth Century,' in D G Wright & J A Jowitt, eds., *Victorian Bradford*, Bradford, Bradford Metropolitan Council Libraries Division, 1982, pp. 7 - 36
- 3 For a detailed account of the reform movement see A Elliot, 'The Establishment of Municipal Government in Bradford, 1837 – 57,' unpublished University of Leeds PhD, 1976.
- 4 *Bradford Observer*, 7 December 1843
- 5 *Bradford Observer*, 2 December 1847
- 6 *Bradford Observer*, 23 and 30 December 1847
- 7 Bradford Watch Committee minutes, 20 December 1847 cited in Elliott, 'Municipal Government in Bradford,' p. 203. Emphasis added.
- 8 Elliott, 'Municipal Government in Bradford,' p.202.
- 9 *Morning Chronicle*, 10 December 1849, letter XVI from 'our special correspondent' focussing on Leeds.
- 10 *Morning Chronicle*, 10 December 1849, letter XVI
- 11 A Brief History of Leeds Improvement Acts, 1755 to 1842, posted by Leeds Libraries, 13 December 2019 at A Brief History of the Leeds Improvement Acts: 1755 – 1842 – The Secret Library | Leeds Libraries Heritage Blog (secretlibraryleeds.net)
- 12 D Churchill, 'Crime, Policing and Control in Leeds. C.1830 – 1890,' unpublished Ph.D., Open University, 2012
- 13 For further details see Churchill 'Crime, Policing and Control,' especially pp. 48-50.
- 14 For further details see Churchill, 'Crime, Policing and Control,' chapter 1
- 15 *Morning Chronicle*, 15 February 1850, letter XXXII from 'our special correspondent' focussing on Sheffield
- 16 C A Williams, 'Police and Crime in Sheffield, 1818 – 1874,' unpublished Ph.D., Sheffield University, 1998, pp.78-9
- 17 *Sheffield Independent*, 8 September 1838, comments by Messrs Booth and Palfryman (chair).
- 18 *Sheffield Independent*, 12 December 1840
- 19 See the 'great outcry' at proposal by local magistrates to appoint 100 men for seven months during the Chartist troubles. *Bradford Observer*, 1 September 1842

- 20 Letter in *Bradford Observer* 2 December 1847.
- 21 *Bradford Observer*, 4 May 1848 but see also 11 May and 26 October 1848.
- 22 *Bradford Observer*, 21 June 1849
- 23 *Bradford Observer*, 19 December 1850
- 24 *Bradford Observer*, 19 February 1856 for comparative costs
- 25 *Bradford Observer* 11 November 1852 and 20 January 1853
- 26 Chief constable's quarterly reports, *Bradford Observer*, 19 April and 18 October 1849
- 27 Firth, 'Bradford Trade,' pp.7-36
- 28 *Bradford Observer*, 6 February 1851. The Watch Committee justified their action in terms of the 'excellent character' of the man they had dismissed and re-appointed a week later.
- 29 *Bradford Observer*, 25 April 1850
- 30 *Bradford Observer*, 6 February 51
- 31 *Bradford Observer*, 20 February 1851
- 32 *Bradford Observer*, 9 October 1856
- 33 *Bradford Observer*, 23 May, 20 June & 24 October 1850,
- 34 *Bradford Observer*, 23 May & 20 June 1850
- 35 *Bradford Observer*, 23 May 1850. Councillor Pollard who raised the matter used it to argue that 'there was a greater number of police than was needed.'
- 36 *Bradford Observer*, 10 March 1853
- 37 *Bradford Observer*, 14 April 1853
- 38 For further details see his obituary in *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 26 March 1890
- 39 *Bradford Observer*, 19 August 1852
- 40 *Bradford Observer*, 12 August 1852
- 41 *Bradford Observer*, 21 August 1851
- 42 *Bradford Observer*, 28 August 1851
- 43 *Bradford Observer*, 9 October 1856. See also his reports in *Bradford Observer*, 28 June 1849, 5 September 1850, 27 October 1853, 19 October 1854 and 22 November 1855.
- 44 Councillor Lee reported in *Bradford Observer*, 19 June 1851
- 45 *Bradford Observer*, 19 & 26 April 1849 and 9 October 1856
- 46 Year on year the Irish were disproportionately represented in the local crime statistics, accounting for about forty percent of those brought before the magistrates.
- 47 *Bradford Observer*, 21 August 1851. For more routine assaults, involving Irish men and women, see 8 August 1850, 7 August 1851 and 19 February

- & 6 May 1852. For assaults by soldiers see 28 February 1851 (an attack on 'bloody Peelers'), and 25 September & 13 November 1851. The former involved an attempted rescue by members of the public.
- 48 *Bradford Observer*, 3 August 1848
- 49 *Bradford Observer*, 3 August 1848. See also *Leeds Mercury*, 12 August 1848
- 50 *Bradford Observer*, 19 August 1855
- 51 *Leeds Mercury*, 26 March 1837. The *Leeds Times* was equally positive.
- 52 *Leeds Mercury*, 2 & 16 April 1836. The *Instructions* were also available for 6d and were recommended to members of the public, notably pub landlords and beerhouse keepers, most likely to come into contact with the police.
- 53 *Leeds Mercury*, 23 February & 5 October 1839
- 54 *Leeds Mercury*, 12 April 1945
- 55 Churchill, 'Crime, Policing and Control in Leeds, c.1830 – 1890', p.75
- 56 Churchill, 'Crime, Policing and Control', pp. 87 & 91
- 57 The following analysis and examples are taken from the Leeds Police Conduct Books accessed via Ancestry.
- 58 Other examples include Edward Glendenning (1854) and George Greenwood (1853).
- 59 *Leeds Mercury*, 26 March 1836
- 60 A request in 1847 for policing to be extended to Hunslet, dogfighting along with other 'outrages and unseemly proceedings' specifically mentioned *Leeds Times*, 15 May 1847.
- 61 'Condition of the Town of Leeds and its Inhabitants,' *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, vol. 2, 1840, pp.397 -424 at p.414
- 62 Leeds Police Report, 1852, tables 1 and 4, cited in Churchill, 'Crime, Policing and Control,' p.104
- 63 'Condition of the Town of Leeds and its Inhabitants,' p.414
- 64 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 10 September 1836. The paper was an outspoken critic of the new police and was happy to report their unpopularity.
- 65 *Northern Star*, 20 July 1840
- 66 *Northern Star*, 29 June and 20 July 1844
- 67 The Leeds anti-police riot of 1844 was an important element in the highly influential argument of R D Storch, 'The Plague of Blue Locusts: Police Reform and Popular Resistance in Northern England, 1840 – 57,' *International Review of Social History*, xx, 1975, pp.61 -90 at pp. 74-6
- 68 *Leeds Mercury*, 15 June 1844
- 69 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 15 June 1844
- 70 *Leeds Mercury*, 15 June 1844

- 71 *Leeds Mercury*, 15 June 1844
- 72 *Leeds Times*, 15 June 1844. See also 'The Terrible Seventeenth, or the Battle of the Lobsters: A Military Tragedy in Three Acts,' published in the *Leeds Times*, 22 June 1844, which, while taking aim at both sides, referred to the use of 'move on' tactics and the prevalence of physical assaults on innocent bystanders and women.
- 73 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 14 October 1848. For similar incidents see *Leeds Mercury*, 14 September and 21 December 1850 and 2 February 1856
- 74 *Leeds Mercury*, 25 November 1856 and *Bradford Observer*, 29 November 1856
- 75 *Sheffield Independent*, 3 November 1849. In addition, there were four detectives, a warrant officer and assistant warrant officer and Raynor as chief constable.
- 76 Williams, 'Police and Crime,' p.192
- 77 Williams, 'Police and Crime,' p.193
- 78 For further details see William, 'Police and Crime,' pp.135-8
- 79 As late as January 1856 the watch committee members expressed its concern that men were being appointed without appearing before them. *Sheffield Independent*, 5 January 1856. For concern with promotions see *Sheffield Independent*, 11 January 1851, though it should be noted that opinion was divided on devolving promotions to the chief constable, and for concern with deployment of officers to meetings, see *Sheffield Independent*, 18 January 1851, where again there were differences of opinion as to the role of the watch committee viz a viz the chief constable in such matters. There are also scattered references to the over-zealousness of the watch committee in disciplining men. See *Sheffield Independent*, 13 January 1855 when the fining and demotion of a sergeant led Isaac Ironside to denounce the 'maw-worms, the cants, the teetotallers' of the watch committee. See also the watch committee enquiry into the performance of older nightwatchmen, *Sheffield Independent*, 14 June and 5 July 1851.
- 80 *Sheffield Independent*, 11 November 1848 and again 12 May 1849
- 81 For example, *Sheffield Independent*, 11 November 1848
- 82 For the full details and the discussion of several bye-laws, see *Sheffield Independent*, 11 May 1844
- 83 Williams, 'Police and Crime,' Table 7.1, p.183
- 84 *Sheffield Independent*, 6 April 1844. In a subsequent report Raynor the number of drink-related offences had risen to 943 in 1846, though falling to 848 a year later. Drunk and disorderly cases predominated, though there remained a sizeable minority categorised as drunk and incapable, and men outnumbered women by 7:1 in 1845 but by 3:1 a year later. *Sheffield Independent*. 13 May 1848

- 85 Adapted from Williams, 'Police and crime,' table 8.2, p.214
- 86 On the assumption that the male population in 1851 comprised 49 per cent of the total population, and that men aged 15-19 accounted for 27 per cent of the total population (the national figures for England and Wales in 1851) and that 80 per cent of the population was working class, some 14,319 young working-class men, 27 per cent of their total were arrested in 1851. This rough estimate probably understates the reality. Further, if arrest (conservatively) accounted for three-quarters of all interactions between young working-class men and the police, the figure rises to 36 per cent. Further, the poor Irish were over-policed and over-represented in the figures for assaults, especially on constables, and drunkenness.
- 87 *Sheffield Independent*, 24 May 1851. The *Sheffield Independent* alone records a higher number of cases heard by the town magistrates in 1846.
- 88 *Sheffield Independent*, 29 March 1845, 30 May 1846, 30 October 1847, 31 August 1850, 19 July and 25 October 1851, 30 April, 6 August, 1 October & 26 November 1853, and 18 March & 2 December 1854
- 89 *Sheffield Independent*, 22 September 1849, 29 March 1851, referring specifically to Sim's croft, and 2 June 1855 when Raynor referred to districts in which the police patrolled in twos or threes.
- 90 *Sheffield Independent*, 2 January 1855 for Irish outrageousness and 6 July 1850, 1 October & 26 November 1853 for other incidents involving the Irish but see also 29 March 1845, 7 June 1845, 30 May 1846, 30 October 1847 for other large-scale assaults or rescues when the Irish were not identified.
- 91 *Sheffield Independent*, 20 May 1848 and 23 March 1850
- 92 *Sheffield Independent*, 30 May 1846, 19 July 1851 and 2 December 1854
- 93 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 23 July 1855
- 94 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 23 July 1855. The most extensive reporting of the riot, the immediate arrests and the coroner's enquiry is in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 23, 24, 25 & 30 July, and 2, 10, 11 August 1855. See also *Sheffield Independent*, 11 August 1855. For the subsequent trials (four men accused of riot and another two of murder) see *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 13 December 1855. The riot was covered extensively in the regional press but also made nationals, such as the *Morning Chronicle*. The quotations in the text are from *Morning Chronicle*, 25 July 1855.
- 95 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 13 December 1855 (police evidence at York Assizes) and *Sheffield Independent*, 11 August 1855. The latter also reported a member of the crowd shouting 'don't kill the man.'
- 96 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 24 July 1855
- 97 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 2 August 1855

## 8 An inspector calls: Policing the "great towns" after 1856

THE 1856 COUNTY and Borough Police Act, which established a police inspectorate, was part of a wider set of changes in the criminal justice system of England and Wales, all of which impacted on local policing.<sup>1</sup> Policing was still viewed as a local government function, and although the inspectors appointed under this act did not have the powers to enforce their recommendations, their reports (and the threat of failing to gain a Treasury grant), added a new dynamic into the process of police development.<sup>2</sup> With a brief exception, all three towns were deemed efficient and in the latter part of the third quarter of the nineteenth century later historians have identified the emergence of stable forces in Leeds and Sheffield.<sup>3</sup> However, as will become clear, there were problems of wastage, ill-discipline and sickness that qualify these judgements of efficiency and stability.

All three forces grew substantially in absolute terms but population growth (and particularly in Bradford boundary extensions) meant that police/population ratios did not improve significantly overall. There was no hard and fast rule but a ratio of 1:800 was deemed appropriate by HMICs and the Home Office for 'great towns'.<sup>4</sup> By that yardstick, all three towns fell short much of the time.

**Table 8.1: Police establishment in Bradford, Leeds & Sheffield, 1861-1901**

	Bradford		Leeds		Sheffield	
	Force strength	Population ratio	Force strength	Population ratio	Force strength	Population ratio
1861	119	1:892	228	1:756	191	1:969
1871	159	1:917	301	1:861	280	1:857
1881	220	1:832	400	1:773	330	1:834
1891	256	1:845	423	1:869	385	1:842
1901	390	1:710	507	1:846	515	1:794

Source: Annual Reports of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary

## Bradford

The one-time boom town continued to grow rapidly and there were significant boundary changes in Bradford in 1882 and especially 1897. The area policed by the Bradford force expanded tripled, from 6,590 acres in 1861 to 22, 843 in 1901, which necessitated the building of new police stations. In 1861, as well as the main station, there were another four stations – in Great Horton, Little Horton, Bowling and Manningham. In 1891 there were seven – New Leeds, Allerton and Heaton, having been added. By 1901 there were twelve – with new stations at Low Moor, Idle, Tong, Thornton, Heaton and Frizinghall, Initially, there had been a sergeant in charge of each station but by the end of the century the senior officer was a sub-inspector. Improved communications and information sharing were necessary responses and were facilitated by the creation of a four divisional structure, with each division under a superintendent. The more complex, but interdependent, force required a different skill set. Finding men with the appropriate administrative-cum-managerial skills was not easy for much of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The structure of the force became more complex in other ways. In the 1870s there were three pay grades for constables and sergeants and a merit class. By the end of the century five pay grades for sergeants and ten for constables, including a long service class, in addition to the merit class.<sup>5</sup> Advancement through the grades was still seen as an incentive for appropriate good behaviour. The appointment of



Superintendent C J Paul as chief constable in 1894 was seen as living proof that an able officer could work his way to the very top but he was very much the exception.

The importance of leadership has received more attention from historians of late.<sup>6</sup> Increasingly managerial and administrative skills were required of men who had spent much of their careers as 'thief takers,' or at least 'drunk arresters.' In Bradford, Paul followed two long-serving chief constables: Frederick Grauhan (1859 -74) and James Withers (1874 -94), the latter having been previously being chief constable of Huddersfield. Grauhan came to Bradford with both military and police experience. He had worked his way up to an inspector in Manchester and superintendent in Leeds before becoming chief constable but remained as much a 'thief taker' as a manager. Even as chief constable, he was involved periodically in police action. Indeed, an injury sustained when 'quelling a disturbance among the Irish of Silsbridge-lane' contributed to his retirement on the grounds of ill health.<sup>7</sup> Although never criticised in the official annual reports, there were growing local criticisms in the early 1870s that his experience was too military and his focus on discipline too narrow for a chief constable.<sup>8</sup> Expectations had changed and Grauhan's successor, Withers, appeared a more rounded man and had a successful recent record at Huddersfield. He was held in high regard by local politicians, especially in the earlier years of his period of office. Nonetheless, there were unresolved problems, notably of indiscipline, notwithstanding improvements in terms of retention. Withers last year was overshadowed by an embezzlement scandal involving one-time chief clerk, James Woodman, who had just been appointed chief constable of Reigate. Behind the respectable façade was a personal tragedy which resulted in a five-month prison sentence with hard labour for crimes committed over a period of four years.<sup>9</sup> The case reflected badly on Withers who had frequently praised Woodman, though blame also attached to a watch committee that presided over a force 'notoriously underpaid in the higher ranks.'<sup>10</sup> But as with Grauhan, expectations had changed over the years. It fell to Withers' successors to tighten-up administrative procedures (chief constable Paul) and bolster morale and improve instruction (chief constable Ross).<sup>11</sup>

Important as the chief constable could be, more depended on the collective qualities of senior officers and particularly of the ordinary constables and their immediate superior officers. The Bradford police force was consistently

adjudged to be efficient by HMIC but behind the positive – and often formulaic – judgements were indications that all was not well. The length of beats in the town were criticised repeatedly until the early 1870s. In the same period, the low quality of recruits was highlighted on more than one occasion, as were questions about the drill skills and the quality of the police estate.<sup>12</sup> In 1873, it was explicitly stated that ‘day duty was very inadequately provided for.’<sup>13</sup> Thereafter, the comments were less critical, though as late as 1894 the force was adjudged ‘hardly ... large enough for so important a place.’<sup>14</sup> Only three years later was it augmented.

**Table 8.2: Bradford police annual variations, 1886/9 – 1895/9**

	Average force size	Total variations	Resig-nation	Dismissal	Pension	Discharge with gratuity	Died	Total variation as %
1886-9	240	55	32	12	6	1	4	5.6
1890-4	251	81	23	17	26	9	6	6.3
1895-9	269	71	19	17	26	1	8	5.3

Source: HMIC annual reports

There were signs, however, that some of the major problems seen in the mid-nineteenth century were being overcome. Variations in the last years of Grauhan’s period of office stood at about 20 percent. As many men (nine) were dismissed in 1873 as were pensioned and twice as many (twenty) resigned.<sup>15</sup> His successor, Withers, was fortunate in that his term of office, during which overall variations were halved, coincided with worsening economic conditions that eased recruitment and retention pressures. Resignations fell in both absolute and relative terms from the mid-1880s onwards and there was a marked increase in the number of men pensioned in the 1890s. Inevitably there were short-term variations, most notably for dismissals, which were above average in 1887, 1892 (when resignations were also above average) and 1895, but the longer-term trends were clear. In quantitative terms, variations as a percentage of the overall force were marginally lower than in Leeds or Sheffield, though it would be naïve to conclude that Bradford policemen were more disciplined.

Dismissals were the tip of a wider problem of indiscipline which can be seen from an examination of the disciplinary report books and the constables’

defaulters' book, which covers the years from 1870.<sup>16</sup> Responsibility for disciplinary matters was shared between the chief constable and the watch committee with only the more serious cases going before the latter. Disciplinary matters were considered thoroughly, as can be seen from the detailed reports and the marginal comments thereon. The number of men disciplined remained high for many years. In the mid-1880s at least a third of the force was reported annually for a breach of discipline. There was some improvement in the following years but the figure still hovered around 30 percent a decade later. In around 10 percent of cases a satisfactory explanation led to no further action being taken and in a handful of cases, personal circumstances were taken into account. PC Briggs was excused for failing to report his night leave to the Bowling police station on the grounds that his child had died. PC Ruttey was excused for being late on duty because he had been with his mother who was 'very ill and not expected to live long.' PC Standage, however, was cautioned for being late on duty even though his wife was ill. The chief constable's marginal note tersely stated: 'Cannot have men stopping off when they like.'

A minority of offences for which action was taken appear trivial – failing to report to the tailor for new trousers or wearing the wrong uniform. Others were more serious, varying from being late for parade – both morning and afternoon, and often for by as much as thirty minutes or more – to neglect of duty in various forms. Some men were simply absent from their beat, usually during the early hours of the morning and more so in the winter months; some found in shelters, others in the local bakery and brewery. A significant minority (approximately 20 per cent of the total) were either found asleep, drinking or drunk on duty. These more serious breaches of discipline, often resulting in dismissal, highlight the everyday pressures and temptations of the job. PC Marshall found the cold so unbearable that he left his beat to find a cup of coffee. PCs Anderson, Bloom and Parkers, on separate occasions, found the lure of a pint with the watchman at the Peel Park Brewery irresistible. Old shortcomings reappeared in new guises. PCs Helliwell and Wilson were founding drinking at the football match at Park Avenue, PC Mattocks left his beat to go to a fried fish shop, while PC Galgour's downfall was attendance at the People's Palace, albeit when on sick leave. The impact on police effectiveness of such lapses is clear but there were other cases that had wider implications. The sight of PC Walton, vomiting in

the street or PC Scott, so drunk that he was 'scarcely able to speak,' did little for the image, let alone the effectiveness, of the force. So too, the sight of PCs Thomas, Phillips and Lane, asleep in a milk cart, on a wall and in a closet, respectively. And there were the occasional cases of sexual misconduct. A drunken PC Dixon was seen entering a brothel while a similarly inebriated PC Lane was found having 'sexual intercourse in a yard, off his beat.'

Though concerned with improving discipline, successive watch committees were essentially pragmatic in their approach, recognising both the cultural norms of the societies from which the men were recruited and the practical problems of maintaining police numbers. There was also a tendency to 'turn a blind eye,' most obviously to Christmas time drinking. First-time offenders, unless theirs was a major breach of discipline, were generally cautioned. So too were a small number of men whose last (recorded) transgression was several years earlier. Repeat offenders in the early months of their police career were likely to be dismissed or instructed to resign, but men with three or more years of service, even if more frequent and/or serious offenders were only fined and, in some cases, demoted. Whether out of concern for time and effort already invested in such men, or out of a belief in the potential of the accused constable, or out of concern about finding replacements, the chief constable and watch committee were prepared to be lenient – in some cases strikingly so. PC Balmer was found in the boiler room of Messrs Perkins & Co., 'dead drunk ... quite helpless and unable to speak' in January 1888. Called before the watch committee he was fined 20s despite the fact that he already had a record of insubordination – he told the reporting sergeant: 'I don't care a Bugger [*sic*] for you or the Chief Constable.' At a time when a number of men had been dismissed for drink-related offences, PC Hargreaves was merely fined (albeit 10s) despite the fact that, while on duty, he was seen sitting in the snug of the Wheat Sheaf Inn 'with his Helmet on the table and a pint pot containing Beer in front of him' at 2.45 p.m. There were times, however, when no leniency was shown. Unusually, there was a flurry of dismissals for being 'under the influence' around Christmas 1891, while earlier that year chief constable Withers had insisted on the dismissals of men who had falsified their age when applying to join.

Thus, there were several long-serving men with poor, indeed extremely poor, disciplinary records, which raises questions about the wisdom of the approach and its impact on the efficiency and image of the force. It is

important to be realistic. The men who joined the Bradford force mostly came from a background in which their masculinity was defined in terms of physical prowess – working hard and playing hard. Few were teetotallers! One would not expect these men to have an unblemished disciplinary record but the presence of a number of multiple offenders casts doubt on official judgements. Between 1870 and 1898, 55 percent of the force had between one and four disciplinary offences on their record, 21 per cent between five and nine and 5 percent ten or more. Only one in five had a clean record. Significantly, no man with five or more offences was promoted. Poor discipline was heavily concentrated among constables, the very men patrolling the streets of Bradford. Specific examples bring home the scale of the problem. PC Albert Dewhirst was finally dismissed in 1898 after an eleven-year career in which he was reported on twenty-two occasions. A series of cautions and fines had no lasting effect on his performance. He struggled to get up for 6 a.m. parades and disliked night work, neglecting his beat several times. Other serial defaulters – Richard Hardman, John Lane and Thomas Singleton – were eventually dismissed but a few, such as Richard Allen, went on to claim their pension. Their careers, and those of others like them, were a sorry catalogue of unspectacular failures that continued over several years. And men like these were still to be found serving in the 1890s. There was an important level of continual underperformance even as the force ostensibly became more stable and efficient.

The voice of the disgruntled policeman can be heard occasionally in the disciplinary records. PC Balmer's outburst was one of a number of responses from men on disciplinary charges. Some simply offered 'no excuse,' others pleaded, promising not to offend again, if not reported, but others simply confessed to their weaknesses. PC Walton, having finished vomiting, confessed to having 'had too much tonight,' continuing 'to tell the truth I don't care about the job. I may as well as give it up.' Similarly, PC Dennison admitted that he was 'always going in and out of public houses while on duty.' Others angrily confronted their sergeants, using 'filthy' and obscene and threatening language,' according to the reports. Repeat-offender, PC Scott, somewhat enigmatically, complained of 'too much B---y F----g finger work [administration] up there' at the station in the Town Hall, but PC Thorne was unambiguous, telling Sub-Inspector Ackroyd that he would not take his 'humbug,' before accusing him of having 'had your knife in me a long time.' He

finished in belligerent tone. 'If this had been any other job than policing, you would have had to fight me before now.' For the most part, disillusionment and antagonism went unrecorded. These brief insights point to a more problematic world that persisted even during these so-called stable years.

There was also one shocking example of collective indiscipline that cast a heavy shadow over the force. In July 1895, the *Bradford Daily Telegraph* carried a brief story of a local greengrocer who appeared in court with 'both his eyes blackened ... and swollen and his face ... greatly discoloured.'<sup>17</sup> The full story did not come out for three weeks. In pouring rain, members of the Bradford police cricket team had been returning from a match at Guiseley. As they neared Bradford, two lads, who were using sacks to protect themselves from the rain, asked for a lift in the wagonette carrying the team. The driver refused and when the two boys tried to clamber aboard, 'some of the constables, who are alleged to have been "in liquor," beat them with sticks, knocking them into the road.' To make matters worse, the police cricketers stopped the vehicle, alighted and further 'ill-treated' the boys. Jonathan Green (greengrocer) and his son came to the aid of the boys only to be set upon themselves. Ellis snr was 'so bruised as to be unrecognisable the next day.' The police then took the four people to the Town Hall, where they charged them with 'loitering with felonious intent' and alleging that the boys 'were in women's clothes.'<sup>18</sup> After a hastily-called investigation the watch committee dismissed eight constables and a sergeant.

Behind the comforting overall judgement of HMIC was a degree of inefficiency – measured in terms of neglected beats, false reports and inebriated constables – persisting into the last decade of the nineteenth century. While the range of constabulary responsibilities increased over the years, the ability to enforce the range of laws was undermined by the shortcomings of the ordinary constables. Equally, popular confidence in the police was not enhanced by the sight of a constable asleep, let alone drunk, on duty.

## Leeds

After 1856 the Leeds police force was responsible for policing the whole borough. There was a dramatic increase (c.50 per cent) in numbers in a very short period of time. The force continued to grow over time but, with the

exception of 1867/8, percentage year-on-year growth was in single figures.<sup>19</sup> Unlike in Bradford, the policed area remained roughly constant thereafter at c.21,500 acres. Nonetheless, the organisation became more complex, not least with the introduction of a four-divisional system (1869), each division headed by a superintendent. It also became more bureaucratic and better equipped in terms of communications, especially after Henderson's initiatives in the late 1870s.<sup>20</sup>

Leadership was a problem in the late 1850s. After thirty-six years' service, the long-serving chief constable, Edward Read, 'worn out by length of service,' was incapacitated as 'bodily strength and memory had failed.'<sup>21</sup> Notwithstanding his earlier 'great zeal and efficiency,' in the eyes of his critics, he presided over 'one of the worst forces in England.'<sup>22</sup> HMIC Woodford's concern with the failure to appoint 'an active, energetic and effective officer' at the head of the force was remedied in 1859 with the appointment of Stephen English, one-time superintending constable but more recently chief constable in Norwich. English was one of seven men who held the office between 1859 and 1899, none of whom served for more than nine years. English was praised for improving the discipline and physical health of the force and for saving the corporation 'the expense of two chief inspectors ... previously employed,' but his tenure ended abruptly over unexplained domestic problems which led to the watch committee calling upon him to resign.<sup>23</sup> The impact of his immediate successor, William Bell, another military man but also deputy chief constable of Monmouthshire, was limited following a 'very severe and protracted illness.'<sup>24</sup> Like English he was concerned with inefficiencies in the force – high turnover of men, the prevalence of illness-related absenteeism and drunkenness – but identifying problems was easier than solving them. Improved pay and better promotion prospects depended as much on the willingness of the watch committee and Bell came up against the resistance of economically-minded councillors. A more substantial contribution to the development of the force was made by James Wetherell, who had worked his way through the ranks becoming chief constable of Oldham, before moving to Leeds in 1866. Wetherell was an able administrator, playing an important part in the development of the new divisional system, and a capable manager, credited with the appointment of several 'diligent' senior officers.<sup>25</sup> Yet he too, ran up against watch committee parsimony. And again, illness struck and he died in office in 1874 aged 48.

In addition to the chance impact of illness, a further complication was the opportunity for promotion between forces. Leeds had benefitted, poaching English and Wetherell from smaller forces but it also lost out. Chief constable Henderson, by reputation a stickler for paperwork but concerned with improving information flows within the force and without, left for Edinburgh after three years, and John William Nott-Bower moved to Liverpool after a similar short period. J W Nott-Bower was succeeded by his brother, Arthur, who had risen to the rank of chief clerk in the Nottingham force. During his nine years term of office, he instigated a number of administrative reforms aimed at improving book-keeping and also improving the flow of information. The tensions between watch committee and chief constable remained. Indeed, in the last decade of the nineteenth century the chief constable (Webb) was bemoaning the lack of sufficient police numbers and the resistance of the watch committee in a manner that his predecessors would have readily recognised. Although not having a long-serving chief constable, the Leeds force was led by several able men but their impact was limited partly by their short tenure but also by watch committee parsimoniousness.

In the early years of inspection, the annual reports of successive government inspectors on the Leeds force contained several persistent criticisms of ordinary constables. Doubts remained about the number of men who 'from age and long service, seem to be pretty well worn out, and no longer capable of effectively and satisfactorily performing their duties.'<sup>26</sup> Although there were signs of improvement, concerns remained about the size of the force and the length of certain beats. Despite letters to the mayor of Leeds demanding action, the watch committee responded by reaffirming their belief in the efficiency of the existing force and denying the need for increased numbers.<sup>27</sup> The force was expanded in the late 1860s and early 1870s but there was still 'difficulty in keeping the force up to the established strength' and, even with a full force, 'the complement of constables for day duty is less than is desirable.'<sup>28</sup> Criticisms diminished from the mid-1870s as the force was further expanded, albeit reactively in response to the criticisms of successive government inspectors. If, as Churchill has argued, the force was 'relatively orderly, stable and experienced' by the 1870s, it was significantly more so in the following decades.

A major problem in the late-1850s and early-1860s was the high turnover rate, especially in 1857/8 and 1858/9 when there were 105 resignations and



seventy-four dismissals, equivalent to c.40 per cent of the force.<sup>29</sup> This was to change gradually but significantly in the following years.<sup>30</sup> Over the course of the 1860s the force grew in size from c.230 to c.280 but an average of seventy men per year were recruited, which translates to an overall variation rate of over 25 percent. The watch committee was sufficiently worried to instigate an enquiry into the high rate of turnover, especially among newly-appointed men, but with little short-term effect. In the following decade, the force grew to c.350 men but, averaging an annual recruitment of about seventy, with an overall variation rate of approximately 20 per cent. It was only in the 1880s and 1890s that significant improvements were seen, the variation rate falling to approximately 12 per cent and then below 10 per cent. Annual recruitment fell from about sixty in the 1880s to around forty in the 1890s, despite continued augmentation that took the force to 500 by the end of the century. More precise figures for the late-nineteenth century are summarised below. Voluntary resignations still accounted for a third total variation as late as 1895-9 but dismissals had fallen to 12 per cent. In contrast, pensions accounted for 40 per cent.

**Table 8.3: Leeds police annual variations, 1886/9 – 1895/9**

	Average force size	Total variations	Resig-nation	Dismissal	Pension	Discharge with gratuity	Died	Total variation as %
1886-9	421	30*	13	7	5	2	2	7.1
1890-4	434	35	18	4	8	1	3	8.1
1895-9	475	25*	9	3	10	0	2	5.3

Including 1 absconder

Source: HMIC annual reports

For successive chief constables and watch committees police discipline was a major concern. In the late-1850s and early-1860s the number of recorded disciplinary incidents averaged c.100 in a force of just over 220 men. A generation on, the annual average for the 1880s was sixteen. The ‘collapse in disciplinary figures,’ as Churchill terms it, was in part more apparent than real, as the watch committee devolved responsibility for all but the most serious matters to the chief constable and superintendents.<sup>31</sup> However, the

evidence of the forces conduct book suggest a real, if less dramatic, change over time.

The majority of men appointed in the mid-to-late 1850s, including those who were to move through the ranks, had a disciplinary record, quite commonly running to five or six incidents. The most common problems were being late on duty, failure to work a beat, sleeping on duty and succumbing to alcohol – the authorities even managing to distinguish between ‘being in liquor,’ ‘rather under the influence of alcohol,’ and being ‘drunk on duty.’ Men promoted through the ranks to senior positions, central to the management of the force, generally had a clean record. Chief superintendent and deputy chief constable, John McWilliam had an unblemished record over a career that lasted more than thirty years, as did inspector John Newhouse, whose career lasted eighteen years. Superintendent John Hunt’s one indiscretion came at the outset of his career. In contrast there were very few (four in total) long-serving sergeants who had a clean record. John Verity was an exception, appointed in October 1857, he was finally made sergeant in 1875. Though he never moved beyond the rank of first-class sergeant, he served for more than thirty years with a clean disciplinary record. Only one long-serving constable, John Wilde, was in a similar position. Yet the watch committee, and later the chief constable, adopted a pragmatic approach, sometimes dismissing men, especially early in their police careers, but more frequently offering a second or third chance to men on drink-related charges. In several cases the approach was vindicated as men went onto a long-term career. But the continued presence of other men raises doubts about the wisdom of the policy. PC (later sergeant) George Bennett had a problem with alcohol that led to a variety of cautions and fines throughout his career but this did not prevent him from being promoted to sergeant and the good conduct class. Finally, after sixteen years and twelve disciplinary offences, he was dismissed for being drunk on duty – for the fourth time. PC Ramsden’s career was not dissimilar and also eventually ended in dismissal. Others, such as PCs Kenyon, Kershaw and Wood had similar records to Bennett but remained in post. The most egregious case, however, was that of Richard Glover. Appointed in January 1857 and superannuated in June 1891 (i.e. a career of over thirty years), he became a first-class constable and was promoted to both the good conduct and long service classes. All this while he amassed twenty-eight cautions, reprimands and fines for offences including not just

neglect of duty, lateness on duty and drill, but also making false statements, not assisting a colleague in a drunken brawl and allowing a prisoner to escape. Although his record was particularly bad, he was but one of number of inefficient men who remained in post. A generation later the situation was appreciably different. The men recruited in the early-1890s were less likely to resign, much less likely to be dismissed and much more likely to have an unblemished disciplinary record: 45 per cent of these men had no punishments recorded against their names and a further 47 per cent had four or less. The frequently offending constable recruited in the late-1850s was now more of a rarity. Constables Allan Marshall and William Wray, both of whom served over twenty years despite each having eleven punishments, mainly drink-related to their names were unusual. More common were the likes of one-time farmer Tom Dixon, resident constable at Moortown for many years with an unblemished record. Quite simply, the scale of the misconduct that was evident in the 1860s had diminished significantly by the 1890s.

Overall, the Leeds force c.1900 was larger, better organised, better equipped technologically, better disciplined and more stable than its counterpart c.1860. In certain respects, it compared favourably with its late-Victorian counterpart in Bradford, if not in Sheffield. These were important advances but there were important qualifications to be borne in mind. Half the recruits from the early 1890s served for twenty years or more; but one in five still resigned in the first twelve months in the force. A pension was the career outcome for over 50 percent of the cohort; but 40 percent either resigned or were dismissed. The majority of these career policemen started and finished their careers as constables, albeit in various long-service – seven, ten, fifteen, twenty and twenty-two-years classes, but also good conduct and even an ‘Exemplary Conduct and Efficiency’ class. Less than a quarter were promoted and the bulk of these men only became sergeants. Although there was a growing differentiation of constables – there were seven grades of constables in 1890 – there was a growing number of men, for whom talk of promotion was meaningless. There was still the stick and carrot of movement up and down the constabulary scales but there was a cohort of older men, more experienced but physically less able over time, and with no real chance of material improvement beyond the introduction of new pay scales, as happened in 1867 and 1890 and 1901. An unknowable number

simply worked out their days to a pension, doing enough not to risk dismissal for inefficiency but little more. In the late-1880s, the watch committed bemoaned the fact that 'inefficient constables in the Force are never reported either to the Chief Constable or to the Watch Committee, unless they are guilty of some specific breach of discipline or act of misconduct.'<sup>32</sup> Even though the number was low (six officers were asked to resign), the persistence of unrecorded inefficiency is a further qualification to HMIC verdicts of efficiency. In addition, there was the problem of 'ordinary illnesses' – fifteen days per man per annum in the 1860s<sup>33</sup> – and infirmity, especially among older men. These were the men who patrolled the streets of Leeds, enforcing a range of laws that impacted most on the working-classes of the town.

## Sheffield

While its population grew by some 75 percent, the policed area remained largely unchanged between c.1860 and 1900. Police numbers grew at roughly the same rate as the overall population until the rapid expansion of the late-1890s and early-1900s. During these years, the number of outstations was increased from three in 1868, to five in 1873 and six by the early 1880s, linked initially by telegraph (1874) and later by telephone (1881). The divisional structure was extended to six by the 1880s and the structure of the force, as elsewhere, became more complex. Initially senior ranks comprised a chief constable, inspectors and sub-inspectors. This was strengthened by the creation of the rank of superintendent (from 1870) and subsequently deputy chief constable and chief clerk. By 1900 there were four classes of superintendents and five of inspectors. Similarly, as the number of sergeants grew, the initial two classes were expanded to four (including a merit class) by the mid-1870s and to six by the turn of the century. Reflecting the force's earlier development, there were five classes of constable – from probationary to merit – c.1860. By 1901 there remained five classes – from probationary to first class – and then three long service classes as well as a merit class.<sup>34</sup>

Sheffield was unusual in having a long-serving and highly respected chief constable. John Jackson was appointed in late-1858. Having previously served in the Lancashire county constabulary, he had been chief constable of Oldham since 1849, where he gained a reputation for dynamism and

tact, in a town that had seen considerable hostility to the police. HMIC Woodford described him as 'an intelligent and zealous officer' and in a letter to the town's mayor praised Jackson's 'unwearied attention and perseverance in drilling, advising and correcting, and by the personal example which he sets at all times to those under his command.'<sup>35</sup> Woodford's successor, Elgee was equally fulsome, adjudging Jackson to be 'so eminently fitted for the office of Chief Constable.'<sup>36</sup> Twenty-five years later, HMIC Croft simply spoke of Sheffield's 'excellent chief constable.'<sup>37</sup> There was similar praise from members of the watch committee, which were endorsed by the local press. Following his death in office in late 1898, the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* praised 'The People's Chief Constable.'<sup>38</sup> It was becoming difficult to separate the man from the myth.

Jackson's reputation rested on two very different but high-profile events. The first was the 'Great Flood' of 1864, when the Dale Dyke dam broke as its reservoir was filled for the first time. Jackson distinguished himself, displaying considerable personal courage during the initial 'inundation,' and playing a major role in organising the police response in the aftermath.<sup>39</sup> The second was his contribution to the enquiry into the Sheffield Outrages. The commissioners singled out his 'great aid' and concluded that they were 'in no small measure indebted [to Jackson] for whatever success has attended our enquiry.'<sup>40</sup> More generally, there was no doubt as to his organisational ability and personal popularity when he appeared, usually on horseback, at ceremonial events such as royal visits. More important was his impact on police discipline and efficiency, which won him the support of successive watch committees but also of many in the force.

When HMIC Woodford conducted his first inspection in Sheffield, he found a force that he seen a significant growth in numbers but, at 177 men, was still short of the establishment of 190. Although important improvements had been achieved under the early leadership of Thomas Raynor, by 1857 he was an old man in his late 60s, exhausted by years of police work. The newly-created police sub-committee was concerned, not simply by the inefficiency of the chief constable, but of the force itself. Jackson responded to the challenge in a detailed report to the watch committee. While defending the force – 'with a few exceptions ... a very fine body of men'<sup>41</sup> – he highlighted the high turnover rate, especially among men in the early months of service, and the problems of sickness and ill-health. In the following years he took

'every justifiable opportunity ... to rid the force of inefficient and worthless men,' which, in the eyes of watch committee members, meant that 'no police force ... has been so greatly improved.'<sup>42</sup> Jackson established a good working relationship with the police sub-committee and the watch committee in the 1860s and sustained it in following decades, which bore fruit in the limited opposition in council to proposals to augment the force. There was an 'economical' faction but, unlike in Leeds, there was no attempt to reduce the size of the force. Criticism of wasteful expenditure was largely confined to over-fancy buttons and elaborate braid on senior officers' uniforms.

Relations with HMIC Woodford were good with the exception of a serious breakdown in communication which led to the force being deemed inefficient in 1863 and 1864. This, according to Williams, was more bureaucratic than real.<sup>43</sup> There is, however, a danger of downplaying the problem. Even when the numbers were increased, 'after so long an interval,' as Woodford tartly observed, they were only 'sufficient for the ordinary duties of the borough.'<sup>44</sup> Further, numbers were again criticised as 'insufficient to provide constables for the whole of the beats' in the annual reports for 1871 and 1875. As late as 1896 another government inspector drew attention to Sheffield's relatively poor standing in relation to other large towns.<sup>45</sup>

A more stable force, comprising men for whom policing was a long-term career, gradually came into being but Jackson had inherited a promising situation. As early as 1859, the average length of service for inspectors and sub-inspectors was twelve years, for sergeants was almost ten years, for constables in the merit class just short of nine years and just over five years for first-class constables.<sup>46</sup> By the mid-1870s 40 per cent of the force had between five and twenty years' experience with a further 5 per cent (past their physical prime) with twenty years' or more experience.<sup>47</sup> A further positive sign was the percentage of men receiving a pension. In 1875 there were only nineteen men on the superannuation scheme as a whole. By 1895-99, almost half of total variations was for men taking their pension.<sup>48</sup> Jackson was undoubtedly concerned with improving the efficiency of the force but he relied heavily on other able senior officers, notably superintendent, later deputy chief constable, Mackley, an accountant by training, whose 'really excellent' book-keeping was used as a model by HMIC Elgee. The reputation of the force as one of the best organised and disciplined force in the northern district rested

on the combination of able senior officers and experienced constables. But a good reputation did not mean that there were no problems.

Like other forces, Sheffield faced a retention problem, especially in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, with variations ranging from about 25 percent in the early 1860s and falling to 15 to 20 percent a decade later.<sup>49</sup> Ignoring the suspiciously low 1886-9 figure, the statistics for the 1890s show a clear improvement. Even so, as many men were dismissed or resigned as were pensioned; and for every man dismissed, three resigned voluntarily.

**Table 8.4: Sheffield police average annual variations, 1886/9 – 1895/9**

	Average force size	Total variations	Resignation	Dismissal	Pension	Discharge with gratuity	Died	Total variation as %
1886-9	360	9	4	1	2	0	2	2.5
1890-4	400	25	8	4	11	0	2	6.3
1895-9	428	26	9	3	12	0	2	6.1

Source: HMIC annual reports

Jackson consistently spoke of the importance of enforcing discipline to make 'the police force thoroughly efficient.'<sup>50</sup> The contrast between the opening years of his tenure as chief constable with the latter years of his predecessor was striking. In the mid-1850s, despite concerns about police indiscipline, a mere 6 per cent of the force was punished (and only 1 per cent dismissed or ordered to resign) whereas in 1860 the overall figure was 16 per cent, with 5 per cent (that is nine men) removed from the force.<sup>51</sup> Jackson stamped his authority on the force in these years. By the mid-1860s the figures for dismissal and other punishments had fallen to level last seen in the 1850s and by 1870 all punishments were at an all-time low. In the opinion of the watch committee this was evidence of a more disciplined body of men. There were periodic short-term concerns about drunkenness in the force – notably in 1874, 1877, 1881 and 1891 – and the need to 'keep members of the force out of temptation.'<sup>52</sup> There was always an element of pragmatism in the watch committee's approach. In 1881 it stressed that it was 'very anxious to prevent their officers from getting *too much* drink,' while recognising that the men were 'only fallible.'<sup>53</sup> By the last decade of the century the watch committee reported, with a sense of satisfaction, but also relief, that there

had been 'no reports of drunkenness or misconduct [among constables] for the last few months.'<sup>54</sup> But behind this rosy official image some awkward facts occasionally came to light that suggested a certain laxity in matters of discipline. A high-profile case involving serious neglect of duty by detective officer Leonard in 1865 led to criticism of the decision merely to demote the man to first-class constable rather than dismiss him.<sup>55</sup> Two years later the watch committee was heavily criticised for not taking appropriate action in the case of two detectives guilty of false imprisonment.<sup>56</sup> In 1874, a sergeant found guilty of lying about the conduct of a fellow officer was again demoted rather than dismissed. Questioned by alderman Hutchinson, alderman Harvey defended the watch committee's decision on the grounds that he had 'only once been out of order' in an eight-year career and that the loss of income was 'very harsh treatment.' Further, in what might have been intended as a light-hearted comment, he continued that 'if they were to discharge everyone who told untruths,' many men would have to be dismissed.<sup>57</sup> More disturbing were the revelations of (financial and liquid) 'treating' of constables by a local 'liquor firm,' Duncan Gilmour & Co., at Christmas time that came to light shortly after Jackson's death.<sup>58</sup> For several years previous there had been claims that the relationship between the town's drink interest, the watch committee and the police were too close but they were dismissed by members of the watch committee and the 'paragon' that was Jackson. It subsequently transpired that Gilmour had been a member of the watch committee, that the firm employed a superannuated ex-sergeant in the Sheffield force to distribute the Christmas treats – 'not in any way given as a bribe, but merely as recognition of services rendered'<sup>59</sup> – and that the practice date back over forty years. Although not on the same scale as the contemporaneous bribery scandal in the Manchester force, this episode suggests a greater degree of collusion than earlier denials had suggested.

Even in the problematic years of the late-1850s and early-1860s, resignations had been a greater problem than dismissals but both disciplinary and retention issues were related to the quality of the men recruited, which in turn was linked to questions of pay, pensions and conditions of work. There was, as alderman Saunders told the town council in 1859, 'not sufficient inducement for good men to stay.'<sup>60</sup> It was a concern repeatedly heard over the following decades. 'It has latterly been very difficult to obtain thoroughly competent men for the force, or to retain them,' the watch committee concluded in



January 1872 and offered by way of explanation 'the greater inducements held out to them in other avocations.'<sup>61</sup> Committee members were clear that to attract men 'whose intelligence and character [is] superior to those of an ordinary labourer,' it was necessary to offer more than 'the wages of an unskilled workman.'<sup>62</sup> Two months later it noted that 'resignations are taking place faster than men can be got to fill the vacancies.'<sup>63</sup> Alderman Gurney made clear that 'the number of men who were continually leaving the force prove that the wages were not a sufficient inducement for them to remain.'<sup>64</sup> Nor was the situation helped by the fact that 'opportunities of promotion and advancement to higher grades [were] few in number.'<sup>65</sup> Unsurprisingly in their evidence to the 1872 select committee on police superannuation funds both HMIC Elgee and chief constable Jackson stressed the difficulties of recruitment and retention.<sup>66</sup> Notwithstanding a number of pay increases, there remained a worry that Sheffield police were underpaid in relation to their counterparts, not just in Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester but also in Rotherham.<sup>67</sup> The problem had been exacerbated in the early years by the practice of stopping the pay of men on sick leave, 'causing good men to leave the service and demoralising many who remain.'<sup>68</sup> According to figures supplied to the watch committee by Jackson in 1863, on average nine men (just under 5 percent of the force) were sick and unfit for work daily.<sup>69</sup>

Throughout these years there were recurring demands for improved wages that drew on a variety of arguments that highlighted the dangers of the job, the rising cost of living, especially in the 1870s, and, increasingly, injustice stemming from higher wages paid in other urban forces. The seemingly obvious answer, increased wages, was not self-evident at the time. Alderman Mycock, chair of the watch committee, and a long-term member of the police sub-committee was clear that 'it was of the utmost importance that the interest of the ratepayers should be considered as well as the interests of the members of the police force.'<sup>70</sup> Further, he doubted that 'the police [were] more subject to disease or injury than an artisan.'<sup>71</sup> From a very different perspective, councillor Schofield, a Democrat, had no doubt that 'the wages given to the police were adequate' while 'thousands of mechanics in Sheffield ... were working for less.'<sup>72</sup> Even sympathetic councillors had to be convinced that the time was right. In 1880, 'Considering the depression existing throughout the county,' alderman Harvey told fellow councillors, 'now was not the proper time to raise [police] salaries.'<sup>73</sup> Others such as councillor

Saunders simply denied that the Sheffield police were not well-paid relative to other forces, or like alderman Wood, felt the men ‘wanted the wages but did not want to earn them.’<sup>74</sup> Others, like alderman Rawson simply saw no need to improve wage levels as he had seen policemen ‘gossiping together in the daytime.’<sup>75</sup> Perhaps more fundamental, was the unresolved contradiction in the widely-held perception of the police. On the one hand, they were bracketed with labourers – there was strong belief was that agricultural labourers in particular made ideal recruits –but on the other there was an expectation that they would behave in an exemplary manner, showing skills of interpersonal conduct and record keeping not associated with unskilled workers.<sup>76</sup> In other words, as a growing number of councillors realised, ‘to attract [men of] intelligence and character, higher inducements must be offered than the wage of an unskilled workman.’<sup>77</sup>

Not simply because of its salience in police memorials requesting an increase in wages, watch committee members looked closely at the question of comparative pay but what might have seemed a simple question – how much was a policeman or sergeant paid in any given force? – was not easily answered because of the complexities of pay scales and the lack of uniformity between forces and the lack of synchronicity in awarding pay increases across forces. The forces in all three towns (Sheffield, Leeds and Bradford) had five classes of sergeants, each with its own pay level. Sheffield had four classes of constable, Leeds seven and Bradford four. To make matters worse, Sheffield had constables on seven different pay levels in the first class, Leeds had men on two different pay levels in all classes, except the lowest 6th class, and Bradford had two different pay levels for merit-class constables, four for first-class constables and three in both the second- and third-class. The following table captures some of this complexity. The figures do not fully support the claim of the Sheffield police that there was a long-standing injustice in terms of pay but there was no gainsaying recurrent pressure from below. The watch committee generally acted pragmatically, conscious of the balance to be struck between overall numbers, levels of pay and leave entitlement. At times, it, and its policing sub-committee responded to the various demands and pressure for increased pay in an *ad hoc* manner (as in 1865, 1870, 1873 and 1878). At others it overhauled the whole pay structure as in 1872, 1875, 1890 and 1901.<sup>78</sup>

**Table 8:5 Wage rates (shillings per week) for constables and sergeants in Bradford, Leeds & Sheffield, 1859 - 1900**

	Sheffield	Leeds	Bradford
1859 Sergeant	23s	22s	21s
1859 Constable	16s to 22s	18s to 21s	17s to 19s
1870 Sergeant	26s	24s to 29s	24s to 27s
1870 Constable	20s to 23s	19s to 24s	20s to 23s
1880 Sergeant	32s 2d to 34s 2d	31s to 33s	30s 2d to 36s 2d
1880 Constable	24s to 28s 8d	24s to 28s 2d	23s to 29s 2d
1890 Sergeant	32s 2d to 35s 2d	33s to 37s	30s 6d to 39s
1890 Constable	24s to 29s 10d	25s to 35s	23 to 31s
1900 Sergeant	33s 3d to 39s 6d	34s to 42s	32s to 40s
1900 Constable	24s to 32s 8d	24s to 36s	24s to 35s

Source: HMIC annual reports

Pay was of particular importance to recently-recruited men but as their period of service lengthened the question of a pension came more to the forefront, and not simply in Sheffield. Despite the advocacy of HMIC Woodford, Sheffield did not introduce a police superannuation fund until 1860 when amending legislation to the 1856 County and Borough Police Act made it compulsory. Advocates of change, such as Dr Hudson, saw a police pension as a necessary part of the creation of a stable and efficient force. Councillor Beal argued it would end the force's current state of 'being continually effervescing,' but also stressed the morality of a superannuation scheme. For men who had served the corporation to be 'cast adrift ... with nothing but the parish to look after [him]' would be 'an injustice and a shame.'<sup>79</sup> But others differed. Councillor Saunders, well-known for his opposition to the new police arrangements added a different moral perspective, arguing that as the police were properly paid, they should be left to 'take care of themselves ... because the more men were cared for by others the less they would care for themselves.'<sup>80</sup>

The pension rights granted under the 1859 police pension act were limited. No pension was to be awarded to a man under sixty years of age, unless, on medical advice, the chief constable certified him to be 'worn out or disabled.' It was repeatedly stressed that 'the constable's right to an allowance is not absolute.'<sup>81</sup> There was ongoing criticism of the police superannuation fund, critics seeing it as 'the biggest of all the abominations the town had,' which was reflected in the close scrutiny of the allowances proposed by the

watch committee.<sup>82</sup> More generally within the council, there was support for the scheme, not least because it was particularly well funded. Local considerations, however, were overtaken by a nation-wide campaign for reform which saw a select committee established in 1872 to consider the matter. Giving evidence, Jackson gave a positive view. The council had acted 'in an exceedingly liberal spirit,' and he was 'satisfied with the existing provision [for] men who have become incapacitated either mentally or bodily.'<sup>83</sup> However, he was forced to concede that there was 'strong feeling in the force,' especially among younger men, in favour of a pension for service 'irrespective of age or of mental or bodily infirmity.'<sup>84</sup> He also saw the size of the superannuation fund as 'amply sufficient to account for the men's dislike of the fund as at present established and administered.' Jackson also argued that 'more liberal allowances... [were] needed to secure active, healthy, intelligent men for the force and to retain those now in it.'<sup>85</sup> A similar view was given by chief constable Henderson of Leeds, who acknowledged that 'the great amount of uncertainty and dissatisfaction ... among the men' and was firmly of the view that change was needed to improve retention.<sup>86</sup>

Among some witnesses from the ranks there was a sense of betrayal as newspaper adverts for police recruits had made bogus claims of 'a liberal retiring pension after 15 or 20 years' service.'<sup>87</sup> PC Robert Nichols, a constable in Sheffield for over eight years, was less forceful but nonetheless attested to the strength of feeling within the ranks for a service-based scheme and to the importance of an improved pension scheme for retention and efficiency.<sup>88</sup>

The practical impact locally was negligible. The council remained determined to retain and exercise its powers. Notwithstanding the complaints that had been made, the policy of granting pensions at the minimum age of sixty was continued. In the following years a sorry procession of long-serving but 'worn out' men were considered, such as inspector Samuel Smith, who had served for thirty-three years before he was deemed eligible for superannuation and approved for retirement.<sup>89</sup> The demand for the right to a pension was finally met in 1890 and, unsurprisingly, was followed by a large batch of retirements. The impact upon the number of resignations or the level of rank-and-file dissatisfaction is not recorded but the retention of long-serving men, especially those not moving beyond the rank of constable and probably suffering from indifferent, if not poor, health, cannot have added to the efficiency of the force, even allowing for the experience they brought to the job.

## Some conclusions

The mid- and late-Victorian years witnessed important developments in the policing of the three 'great towns' in the West Riding. The forces became larger, more complex and more bureaucratic and with a wider range of responsibilities. The process of experience accumulation – explicitly noted in Sheffield in the late-1850s – continued and quickened through the last quarter of the nineteenth century as wastage rates fell. A further complicating factor was the changing relationship between watch committees and chief constables. Policing was still seen as a local (rather than national) responsibility but it was no longer possible for local councillors to exercise the close and detailed control, particularly over discipline, seen in earlier years – and still found in some smaller forces. The presence of an experienced and long-serving chief constable – Jackson in Sheffield, Withers (to a lesser extent) in Bradford – facilitated this process but even in Leeds the chief constable was dealing with all but the most serious disciplinary matters by the mid-1880s. More generally, the working relationship between watch committee and senior police officers was pragmatic but not always productive. There were still local politicians who were reluctant to support expansion in police numbers on the grounds of economy, more so in Leeds, even Sheffield, than in Bradford, but there were no campaigns to reduce the number of policemen as had been seen in the mid-nineteenth century.

At the same time, expectations of the police at all levels changed, higher standards were expected and new skill sets required. Chief constables required managerial, rather than simply military, skills, particularly as they came more dependent on superintendents responsible for the various out-stations. They also needed the support of 'office staff' with clerical and accounting skills to ensure books were properly kept, communications maintained or improved, and information accurately and promptly disseminated. By the turn of the century, if not before, the chief clerk was a key figure. More research remains to be done on the detailed work of 'senior management teams' but their overall importance was not in doubt. Also of considerable importance was the sergeant, the last link in the extended management chain. Superintendents and inspectors tended to be more able, better disciplined and more ambitious. The situation was more problematic among sergeants. In addition to problems of frustrated ambition – and few

men gained more than one promotion – there was the question of ability and aptitude. A significant minority of men promoted to the rank of sergeant found themselves demoted, or even asking themselves to be reduced in rank. By the end of the century there was a growing awareness that experience of working a beat was not sufficient but it was not until the early twentieth century that more resource was put into training would-be sergeants.

Particularly in the 1870s, the forces faced severe difficulties in finding a sufficient number of suitable recruits. Particularly in Bradford, recruits were deemed to be sub-standard; more generally, it was difficult to maintain authorised strengths. Pay rates linked to those of a notional agricultural labourer, a buoyant local and regional economy, let alone the dangers and isolation of the job, restricted the flow of recruits. Watch committees advertised for men in low-wage districts, from Aberdeenshire to Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lincolnshire. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century recruitment was less problematic. In part this was a product of improved retention, which reduced the volume of recruits needed to maintain establishments, but it also reflected wider economic changes beyond the control of local police authorities. Recruitment was merely the start of the process. Retention was a major problem in the mid-nineteenth century as large numbers of men resigned, often within days and months of joining. By the 1880s and 1890s the number of men resigning had dropped considerably. The relative (un)attractiveness of police pay changed as watch committees improved pay rates and as the prosperity of certain trades waned. The attraction of a pension became more important after the 1890 police pension act. Probably, though it is almost impossible to prove, recruits were better supported in their early careers as the number of longer-serving men increased and recruits were less unaware of the demands of the job as more men became policemen. Whatever the mix of reasons, as fewer men resigned, particularly in the early months, the pressures on recruitment were eased, less police time was wasted on unproductive training, and more stable forces emerged.

More striking was the reduction in the number of dismissals, particularly in Leeds and Sheffield, which suggests a long-term improvement in discipline. The figures, however, need to be treated with care, not least as the criteria for dismissal were not necessarily consistent between forces or over time. More important, incidents warranting dismissal were the tip of a disciplinary iceberg. Occasionally noted briefly in inspector's annual reports, police

conduct books bear witness, in all three towns, but more so in Bradford, to the continuing problem of indiscipline, often involving serial offenders, which impacted on the efficiency, and in some cases the public image, of the force. Indiscipline was also part of a wider problem of inefficiency, some of which went unrecorded or simply escaped documentation. Data relating to days lost to sickness are scattered but occasional estimates show as much as 5 percent of a force could be on sick leave at any one time. Similarly, the number of men, worn out physically and mentally, and eventually pensioned, is indicative of a larger problem of inefficiency at work. The short-term upsurge of men retiring on a pension in the early 1890s reinforces this point. Finally, the occasionally-recorded grumble of a discontented constable points to another source of inefficiency among men disillusioned with their job, lacking an obvious alternative occupation, and waiting for a pension. The annual HMIC inspection, enthusiastically reported in the local press, had an important propaganda purpose. The sight (or report) of smartly-dressed and seemingly fit men performing well-drilled exercises helped reinforce a positive public image of the police but behind the sturdy figure of a cheerful, avuncular policeman, bringing order to the streets, was (albeit in a minority) an arthritic or inebriated officer doing the minimum required. None of this is to dispute long-term improvement in all three forces but this change is better understood in terms of reducing inefficiencies. As many late-Victorian senior officers realised, there was a job to be done in improving the education and training of the next generation of policemen and not just in the West Riding.<sup>90</sup>

## Endnotes

- 1 Transportation was being phased out, a new sentence (penal servitude) was introduced, new prisons were being built and there was a significant extension of summary justice.
- 2 The impact of the inspectorate varied considerably, depending on the men in post. Despite having been chief constable of Lancashire, John Woodford, the inspector for the northern district was something of a disappointment, his later annual reports becoming formulaic and repetitive. His successor William Elgee, also a chief constable of the Lancashire force, was more thoughtful and active. Much also depended on the attitudes and actions of politicians and civil servants. Whereas Home Secretary, Richard Cross, seeking to exploit the raising of the Exchequer grant to 50 per cent in 1874, hoped to secure 'a greater amount of supervision and control over the police forces of Great Britain,' his successor, William Harcourt expressed his faith in local politicians and their understanding of local needs and condemned the inflexibility of the 'Procrustean rules of the Inspectorate.' *The History of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary: the first 150 years*, 2006 at the-history-of-hmic-the-first-150-years.pdf (justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)
- 3 Leeds in the late-1860s and Sheffield in the 1870s. Churchill, 'Crime, Policing and Control,' and Williams, 'Police and Crime.'
- 4 There were significant variations over time. During the early 1860s, particularly during the dispute between the Home Office and the Sheffield watch committee, a figure of 700:1 was mentioned in correspondence yet in 1880 reference was made to the 'government rule' of 1:800 for great towns.
- 5 HMIC annual reports. By 1899 there were also five pay grades for inspectors
- 6 See particularly K Stevenson, D J Cox & I Channing, eds., *Leading the Police: A History of Chief Constables, 1835 – 2017*, London, Routledge, 2018. Of earlier works, see D S Wall, *The Chief Constables of England and Wales: The socio-legal history of a criminal justice elite*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1998 and R Reiner, *Chief Constables*, Oxford University Press, 1991.
- 7 *Leeds Times*, 3 October 1874
- 8 *Bradford Weekly Telegraph*, 14 November 1874
- 9 *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 7 & 8 December 1894 and *Leeds Times*, 8 December 1894. In the 1901 census the once-married Woodman was living alone and working as a housepainter. Woodman was looking after his parents and his brother's family.
- 10 *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 7 December 1894
- 11 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 11 December 1894, *Bradford Weekly Telegraph*, 11 July 1896 & 16 June 1899. Ross had worked with Robert Peacock, chief constable of Manchester, who established educational classes for the force



- and whose addresses were published as *Police Constables' Duties*, Manchester, 1900. Ross, later chief constable of Edinburgh, published his 'lectures and addresses' as *Police Administration*, n.d. [1902?] There were other educational publications published in the 1890s and 1900s and aimed at ordinary constables, such as T Marriott, *A Constable's Duty and how to do it*, London, Reeves & Turner, 1894.
- 12 The 1861 report referred to basic training 'in simple mobility movements' as being 'hardly sufficient ... [for] their being moved with steadiness and decisive effect.'
  - 13 HMIC annual report for 1873
  - 14 HMIC annual report for 1894
  - 15 *Leeds Mercury*, 12 November 1874
  - 16 Individual information drawn from Bradford Constable's Defaulter Book, 1870 – 98 and Constable's Disciplinary Report Book, 1870 – 98 provided by West Yorkshire Archive Service and accessed via Ancestry.
  - 17 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 6 July 1895
  - 18 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 27 July 1895 and *Leeds Mercury* 29 July 1895
  - 19 The watch committee approved an increase of 36 men to deal with the crowds expected between May and October for the National Exhibition of Works of Art, which was opened by the Prince of Wales on 19 May 1868. It is estimated that in total about 500,000 people visited the exhibition. The exhibition catalogue can be seen at National Exhibition of Works of Art, at Leeds, 1868 : official catalogue : National Exhibition of Works of Art (1868 : Leeds, England) : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive
  - 20 For details, see Churchill, 'Crime and Police,' pp.68-70
  - 21 *Leeds Times*, 8 January 1859
  - 22 *Leeds Mercury*, 2 January 1859
  - 23 *Leeds Mercury*, 2 January 1862, *Leeds Times*, 7 December 1862 and *Leeds Intelligencer*, 7 & 14 December 1862. Ironically, English came to Leeds from Norwich as a result of the latter's 'penny wise pound foolish' policy regarding his salary. *Norfolk Chronicle*, 26 February 1859.
  - 24 *Leeds Times*, 4 August 1866. One of the unsuccessful candidates was William Hannan, chief constable of Middlesbrough and later chief constable of Huddersfield.
  - 25 *Leeds Mercury*, 27 October 1874
  - 26 HMIC annual report, 1859. A similar comment about the impact of long-service and physical disability was made in the 1861 report.
  - 27 Woodford was particularly concerned with the night beats, over half of which took an hour and a half and all (64) were over an hour long. HMIC report 1862.

- 28 HMIC report 1872 and 1873. Leeds was not alone, 1872 was a difficult year for many boroughs in the northern district.
- 29 Churchill, 'Crime and Police', p.75
- 30 Information derived from Constable's and Officer's Conduct Books provided by West Yorkshire Archive Service and accessed via Ancestry,
- 31 Churchill, 'Crime and Police', pp.87-8
- 32 Churchill, 'Crime and Police', p.78
- 33 Churchill, *Crime Control*, p.49
- 34 There were also variations to be found as the force experimented with the most effective structure. In 1890, for example, there was a probationary class plus third, second and first classes. Depending on length of service, there were five pay grades within the first class. In addition, the merit class contained four pay grades.
- 35 HMIC annual report, 1863
- 36 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 24 May 1869
- 37 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 2 May 1894
- 38 This was widely reported in the regional press, see for example *Hull Daily Mail*, 6 October 1898
- 39 S Harrison, *A Complete History of the Great Flood at Sheffield*, Sheffield 1864, *A Complete History of the Great Flood at Sheffield* (shu.ac.uk) refers to the Jackson's conduct as 'in the highest degree commendable', p.81
- 40 Report ... [of] the Examiners [into] Acts of Intimidation, Outrage or Wrong alleged to have been promoted, encouraged or connived at by the Trade Unions in the Town of Sheffield, Report, 1867, p.vii
- 41 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 4 June 1859
- 42 Town council debate on minutes of watch committee reported in *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 14 February 1863
- 43 Williams, 'Police and Crime', p.143
- 44 HMIC annual report, 1865
- 45 *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, 13 January 1896 report on town council discussion of watch committee (and police sub-committee) minutes.
- 46 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 15 September 1859. Inspectors and sub-inspectors averaged twelve years' service. As he conceded the largest group of men third-class constables averaged little over a year and it was amongst these men that the greatest churn took place.
- 47 Jackson evidence to Select Committee on Police Superannuation funds, Parl. Papers 1875, 325, Q.1753
- 48 Figures taken from HMIC annual reports. There was year on year variations. In 1898 the figure fell to 32 per cent and in 1895 it rose to 79 per cent.

- 49 Figures taken from Jackson's special report, 1859 and 1871, and annual reports to the watch committee. See particularly report in *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 4 June 1859 and *Sheffield Independent*, 1 March 1871. HMIC annual report 1874 gave a figure of 20 percent but Jackson's evidence to the select committee on police superannuation funds gave a figure of 15 percent.
- 50 Jackson's address at the annual mayoral dinner for the police, *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 12 October 1870
- 51 Williams, 'Police and Crime,' p.192
- 52 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 3 November 1877 and 27 October 1881
- 53 *Sheffield Independent*, 27 October 1881. Italics added – the watch committee did not define what constituted 'too much drink!'
- 54 *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, 8 January 1891
- 55 For details see *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 13 April 1865.
- 56 *Sheffield Daily telegraph*, 8, 9 & 11 May 1867
- 57 *Sheffield Independent*, 12 March 1874. Similarly in 1877 alderman Grundy, chair of the watch committee, defended not dismissing constables found guilty of being drunk on duty on the grounds that fines were 'sufficiently heavy.' *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 30 October 1877.
- 58 *Sheffield Independent*, 9 March & 13 April 1899 and *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, 8 April 1899
- 59 *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, 8 April 1899
- 60 *Sheffield Daily News*, 14 July 1859
- 61 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 8 January 1872
- 62 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 8 January 1872
- 63 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 20 March 1872
- 64 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 12 December 1872
- 65 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 1 March 1871
- 66 SC on Police Superannuation Funds, 1875, Q.422 (Elgee 'the men do not stop here [Sheffield] very long') and Q.1801 [Jackson 'considerable difficulty' in recruitment including 'no recruits from Sheffield.']
- 67 *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, 12 September 1891
- 68 *Sheffield Daily telegraph*, 1 March 1871
- 69 Chief constable's annual report, *Sheffield Independent*, 9 September 1863. Figures from his 1859 report gave a slightly lower figure of 3.5 percent, *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 13 July 1859
- 70 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 11 August 1859
- 71 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 14 October 1858
- 72 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 14 October 1858

- 73 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 15 July 1880
- 74 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 3 March 1883
- 75 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 9 January 1890
- 76 Perversely, there were those that argued that low wages necessitated the recruitment of 'too many by who by birth and training are alien to the English ... whose chief credentials consist of a thorough knowledge of bludgeons and life preservers' – an unsubtle prejudice against the Irish.
- 77 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 14 March 1872
- 78 The question of pay was also related to hours of work. The working day and the working week were shrinking across many parts of the economy. Sheffield police were granted an eight-hour day in December 1875 but the watch committee rejected a claim for leave of one day a fortnight, as it did again in 1883. Eventually, in 1896 the watch committee increased annual leave by seven days, bringing Sheffield up to the average of twenty-one days' leave for constables in city forces. *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 9 March 1896
- 79 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 14 October 1858
- 80 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 11 August 1859
- 81 *Sheffield Independent*. 30 October 1869
- 82 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 25 October 1864 for the 'abomination' quote and, as an example, the debate over awarding an allowance to the widow of a man who had only served five years, *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 30 October 1862.
- 83 Select Committee on Police Superannuation Funds, PP 1875, QQ. 1779 & 1787
- 84 Select Committee on Police Superannuation Funds, PP 1875, Q.1787
- 85 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*. 1 & 8 May 1875
- 86 Select Committee on Police Superannuation Funds, PP 1875, QQ. 4375-6 & 4378-9
- 87 Select Committee on Police Superannuation Funds, PP 1875, xiii, p.553
- 88 Select Committee on Police Superannuation Funds, PP 1875, QQ.4251 & 4289. Unsurprisingly, PC Kershaw, Leeds, gave similar evidence, for example Q.4457
- 89 *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, 7 April 1888
- 90 See for example, Henry Riches, the newly-appointed chief constable of Middlesbrough. D Taylor, *Policing the Victorian Town: The development of the police in Middlesbrough c.1840 – 1914*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002, p.114

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

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

### **Furious drivers, troublesome pedestrians and vagrants**

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Judicial Statistics

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

Well before the advent of motor vehicles, the police had a responsibility for facilitating the free flow of traffic for commercial and personal use and for ensuring the safety of the public. In his 1860 annual report, chief constable Jackson drew attention to many 'summonses taken out by the [Sheffield] police ... for offences committed by carters and drivers' and promised firm action would be taken by his men.<sup>5</sup> In increasing numbers, the police prosecuted carters for blocking streets and leaving their horses and carts unattended. Butchers, 'a class addicted to furious driving' in Bradford, milk-dealers, even drivers of heavy waggons were brought by the police before the local magistrates on various dangerous driving charges, some for endangering life, a few for injuring or even killing a member of the public.<sup>6</sup> In 1870s complaints that 'the streets of Bradford are becoming more and more dangerous' were accompanied by demands from the public for greater police action.<sup>7</sup> But worse was to come and not just in Bradford. A growing number of cab-drivers, jostling for custom, were joined by privately-run omnibuses, racing for custom. Attempts to regulate the latter were thwarted by blatant refusals to adhere to agreed timetables, over-crowding and the ill-treatment of horses, which brought another actor, the RSPCA, on stage. In the last decade of the century the traffic problem was further complicated by the appearance of the bicycle – and the tricycle and the velocipede. Yet again there were demands for greater police action and, after several years consideration, Sheffield introduced regulations for cyclists in 1885 while Bradford adopted a set of street traffic regulations in 1896.<sup>8</sup>

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

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

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



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

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

Source: Judicial Statistics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: HMIC annual reports

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



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

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

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

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

Source: HMIC annual reports

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Public order: crowds, demonstrations and strikes.**

Much policing was mundane and involved interactions with individuals or small groups of people. However, there were times when the police were called upon to deal with large crowds. Visits from members of royalty were largely uncontentious affairs and allowed the police to show off their logistical and organisational skills and could add to their popular standing. The royal visit to Sheffield in 1897 on the occasion of the opening of the new town hall was one such occasion. Not only was chief constable Jackson, astride his charger, greeted with applause by the crowd, but the police were also praised for their good-natured and efficient conduct. But other large gatherings were more confrontational and more problematic for the police. Political differences led to election riots, for example in Sheffield in December 1868 and again in February 1874, the latter involving an anti-Irish dimension. Religious differences, and not just between Catholics and Protestants, were similarly divisive. Led by Lieutenant Emerson Davison, commonly referred to as 'the Converted Wrestler,' members of the Salvation Army were mobbed in Sheffield in 1882 and again in 1885. Similarly, Mormons had to be protected by the police from an angry mob. Religious sentiment also played an important part in the riotous protests following the allegation that 'bodies [were] being taken up immediately after interment and sold for dissection' from the Wardsend Cemetery, Sheffield in 1862.<sup>63</sup> The impact of such events on perceptions of the police is difficult to gauge. In the reporting

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

truncheoned their neighbours and the workers of Bradford.<sup>89</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Some conclusions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





## Endnotes

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 10 The medium-sized forces: Halifax and Huddersfield

THE SHEER SIZE of Leeds and the spectacular growth of Bradford has attracted considerable attention across the years. However, nearby Halifax and Huddersfield were important, and growing centres of trade and commerce, which, coincidentally, saw the foundation of their police forces in the same year, 1848. Police histories, with the early emphasis on London, and more recently on the great cities, have virtually nothing to say about these towns.<sup>1</sup> Yet the development of the forces in the two towns was shaped by distinctive factors that add further to an understanding of the complexities of policing in the West Riding.

**Table 10.1: Population of Halifax & Huddersfield, 1851-1901(000s)**

	Halifax	Huddersfield
1851	34	31
1861	47	61
1871	66	70
1881	74	82
1891	90	95
1901	105	95

Source: B R Mitchell & P Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, Cambridge University Press, 1962

Halifax, that ‘astonishing trading town’\* at the centre of worsted production in the West Riding during the early years of the industrial revolution, remained a thriving town with a diversifying economy, even

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\* Charles Dibdin, the prolific songwriter and composer, perhaps best remembered for ‘Tom Bowling,’ described Halifax thus in his 1788 *The Musical Tour of Mr Dibdin*. He deemed Halifax ‘the most musical spot for its size in the kingdom’ but also described the town as ‘black [and] dismal.’

as it was overtaken by Bradford.<sup>2</sup> Its governance was in the hands of commissioners or trustees who derived their powers from legislation dating back to 1762 and improvement acts in 1768 and 1823. In 1848 it became a municipal borough whose boundaries were extended significantly in 1866 and 1891. In accordance with the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act, Halifax established a police force in 1848. Huddersfield, in contrast, was an ‘insignificant cluster of irregularly built lanes’ in the early nineteenth century with ‘houses poor and scattered, the streets narrow, crooked and dirty.’<sup>3</sup> By 1837, however, *White’s Directory* described it as ‘a populous, flourishing and handsome market town,’ governed under an improvement act of 1820. With the passing of a further improvement act in 1848, the commissioners established a police force which operated in an increasingly-anachronistic area of 700 acres within 1200 yards of the town’s market cross specified in the 1820 act. It was not until 1868 that the town became a municipal borough, at which point its policed area expanded to 10,000 acres, with a further boundary extension in 1891.

The Halifax force grew from twenty-five at its inception to thirty-five a decade later. New boundaries necessitated a force of fifty-six in 1866. Thereafter, the force grew steadily in size. By the 1880s the authorised strength had reached seventy-five. Further boundary changes in 1893 saw numbers rise to ninety. By the end of Victoria’s reign, the force numbered 107 men. The size of the Huddersfield force remained largely unchanged (thirty to thirty-two men) until boundary changes in 1868 brought a dramatic expansion to sixty-eight men. By the end of the 1880s the Huddersfield force was eighty-four strong, rising to 112 in the early 1890s and topping 120 at the end of the century. As they grew in size, both forces developed more complex structures. The demands for managerial and administrative skills grew but, particularly in Huddersfield, there were significant weaknesses in early leadership.

**Table 10.2 Policed population and acreage, Halifax & Huddersfield, 1857 – 1901**

	Halifax Population per constable	Halifax Acres per constable	Huddersfield Population per constable	Huddersfield Acres per constable
1857	959	28	833	23

1861	1000	26	738	23
1871	1002	54	1003	145
1881	987	50	899	115
1891	986	45	852	105
1901	980	130	702	99

Source: HMIC annual reports

Police/population ratios worsened in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, more so in Huddersfield. The situation remained largely unchanged in Halifax thereafter but improved appreciably in Huddersfield. Indeed, by the end of the century the Huddersfield ratio was comparable with that of the riding's great towns.

### **The early years, 1848 – c.1870**

In 1820 'an Act for lighting, watching and cleansing the Town of *Huddersfield*' was passed, followed three years later by another 'Act for paving, lighting, cleansing, watching and improving the Township of Halifax.' Under these act night watches were established. In Halifax, where an additional two day-constables were later appointed, there was general satisfaction with policing arrangements, especially as in 1844 beats were reorganised and a compendium of rules and regulations issued to every man in the force. Despite two bodies responsible for policing in the town, there was no great pressure among the town's elites for more than improving existing practices.<sup>4</sup> Thus, on the eve of incorporation, Halifax was policed by two day constables and twenty night watchmen, overlooked by a recently created watch committee. Huddersfield had between eight and twelve nightwatchmen (in the summer and winter months respectively), a day constable and two paid day constables but, in contrast, there was growing dissatisfaction with the lack of coordination between the three bodies responsible for policing and demands for a new force.<sup>5</sup> Perversely, 1848 was more of a break with the past in Halifax, where the newly-appointed watch committee stressed the need for younger men, that is aged twenty-three to twenty-four, physically strong, morally upright, industrious, disciplined and literate.<sup>6</sup> Such paragons of 'policely' virtue were not to be found among the town's existing officers, many of whom were either too small, too old or illiterate. The new men were



overwhelmingly local but the break with the past was not total. John Rawson, a 'well known and respected' detective, was retained. So was the highly-experienced Thomas Spiers, who was appointed superintendent of a force comprising an inspector, a detective, four sergeants and eighteen constables.<sup>7</sup> Spiers had been in the Leeds borough force for seven years before becoming deputy constable under the old system in Halifax. Spier's career highlights the fluidity in mid-nineteenth century policing, for, in addition, he went on to serve five years as the superintending constable for the West Morley petty sessional division, before joining the WRCC in 1857. In Huddersfield, the pattern of recruitment was opposite that of Halifax. Men were brought in from outside to fill two of the three senior posts – inspector of the night constables, John Thomas, came highly recommended from Ripon and the night sergeant, John Brown, had been serving in the Manchester force. Only the superintendent, John Cheesebrough was local and he had to retire through ill-health shortly after appointment to be replaced by Thomas. The captain of the old night watch was interviewed but not appointed. Six members of the old watch (of eight interviewed) were appointed as were the two paid parochial constables and the patrolman, responsible for the town gaol. Eight new men were appointed as constables but 60 per cent of the new force were old! The contrast between the two towns is surprising, given the radical/chartist presence (70 per cent) on the newly-elected Halifax council.<sup>8</sup> Fears of the police as an oppressive army rapidly evaporated.<sup>9</sup> The one attempt to reduce police expenditure (in 1850 proposed by the radical alderman Ramsden) was defeated by seventeen votes to nine.<sup>10</sup> The radical presence in Huddersfield was limited and attempts to reduce expenditure on the police in the early 1850s were comfortably defeated, though there was a small cut in numbers in the early 1860s.

The performances of the two forces also differed markedly. In the first two decades, 150 men were recruited in Huddersfield and 170 in Halifax.<sup>11</sup> 56 per cent left the Huddersfield Force within their first year compared with 35 per cent in Halifax. The annual average turnover was roughly 30 per cent in Huddersfield, roughly 20 per cent in Halifax. Overall resignation rates were only slightly higher in Huddersfield (28 per cent compared with 25 per cent), though they were worryingly high during superintendent Beaumont's tenure in the mid-1850s. Overall dismissal rates were much higher in Huddersfield (46 per cent) than Halifax (20 per cent). Again, individual years were highly

problematic. In 1849 half the Huddersfield force was dismissed; in 1857 60 per cent of the force were dismissed or resigned; while between 1858 and 1860 the thirty-strong Huddersfield force experienced twelve resignations and fifteen dismissals. As a consequence, whereas 33 per cent of the Halifax cohort went on to serve for twenty years or more, compared with less than 10 per cent in Huddersfield. The emerging core of long-serving men was significantly larger in Halifax.

The contrast between the two towns is perplexing. Their economic fortunes were comparable and they recruited from a similar labour pool. Good management, from the watch committee and senior police officers, was of the essence and it was sadly lacking in Huddersfield. It was unfortunate that Cheeseborough, the first Huddersfield police superintendent was soon struck down by illness but the appointments of Thomas and Brown were strikingly ill-judged. Brown was dismissed in June 1849, having been found absent from duty, asleep on duty and discovered in a brothel, while on duty. Two months later the watch committee recommended the dismissal of Thomas for drunkenness and neglect of duty. The recommendation was not acted upon. Thomas was reprimanded and, within months, was appointed superintendent. Indiscipline at the top was mirrored by indiscipline in the Huddersfield ranks. Clashes – physical and verbal – did nothing for the discipline of the force but the situation was not helped by the inconsistent approach to discipline adopted by the watch committee. ‘Gross neglect of duty’ generally led to instant dismissal, as Clayton Connard found when he was found ratting in a local beerhouse, stripped to the waist and challenging all and sundry to a fight. But the treatment of minor offences -- neglect of duty and drunkenness – was more varied. For some, a first offence brought a reprimand or fine and a second offence dismissal but for a large number (sixty-four men) leniency was shown by the watch committee, usually on the grounds that the individual was deemed to be ‘active and intelligent’ or ‘otherwise an efficient officer.’ Nineteen men took advantage of a second chance and in the case of Hugh Mellor, Ramsden White and especially William Townend made a significant contribution to the force but thirty-two men so treated were subsequently dismissed and a further thirteen resigned. The force had several men with patchy disciplinary records, or worse. Detective Sergeant Marsden, for one, was eventually dismissed after four drink-related charges in as many years; his successor, Nathaniel Partridge,

had a similar problem with drink and debt that compromised his career and led to enforced resignation. Hamer Sedgwick was fined or cautioned seven times in an eight-year career which saw him twice dismissed. Joseph Graham managed to survive for twenty years despite a string of drink-related offences which finally saw him dismissed as 'a habitual drunkard.' The Halifax force was not without its problem officers but not on the same scale. As the *Huddersfield Chronicle* concluded 'the continual reports of drunkenness ... [reflected either] very little care exercised in the choosing of men ... or that the force must be in a very defective state of supervision.'<sup>12</sup>

Despite high variations and disciplinary problems, notably in Huddersfield, neither town were formally adjudged to be inefficient. Indeed, when colonel Cobbe sought to incorporate Huddersfield into the WRCC, HMIC Woodford made it known that he believed the town would be better policed if it stayed independent. But it is difficult to see what this meant in practice. A partial snapshot can be gained from the Huddersfield watch committee minutes in the late-1850s, which contain information on individual performances.<sup>13</sup> The most detailed figures relate to the year 1859 when the force comprised thirty-two men, eight of whom had been in post from the outset but seven were in their first year and a further twelve (40 per cent) had less than five years' service. Two men were on long-term sick and seven had been disciplined that year. From a policed population of approximately 25,000, ninety-eight felonies were recorded and 491 summary offences, or roughly three felonies and sixteen summary offences per constable. These figures hardly suggest a heavily policed town but, in fact, the work of the force was unevenly distributed. Three-quarters of the force were involved with three or fewer felonies, including ten men with none at all during the year. The newly-appointed detective Partridge alone was responsible for twenty-six cases, approximately 25 per cent of the total, and three other men, two inspectors (Townend and White) and sergeant Thorpe, collectively responsible for a further twenty-one cases. Responsibility for summary offences was also unevenly distributed across the force, though to a less marked degree. Partridge topped the table with fifty cases, followed closely by Thorpe (forty-five) and, at a distant, by Townend and White (twenty each). 70 per cent of the force had twenty or fewer cases to their name, of whom eight had fewer than ten. Unsurprisingly, these were overwhelmingly recently-appointed men. More surprising, was the mixed

performance of experienced men. Putting aside the two men with health problems, six of the eleven had only between ten and nineteen cases to their names. Arrests and summonses were only a partial measure of police activity but the figures raise questions about the efficiency and impact of the police. These figures reinforce the qualitative evidence of poorly-led force of limited efficiency, though the absence of comparable information for nearby towns, including Halifax, makes further comparison impossible.

The question of leadership was a final and significant difference between the two towns. By the time of incorporation, 1868, Huddersfield was on to its fifth (or sixth, if the brief, illness-terminated career of Cheeseborough is included) head constable.\*\* In contrast, Halifax had but two in the same period.<sup>14</sup> These very different experiences raise important questions about the leadership and management of the police and the relationship between chief constables and watch committees.

Thomas Spiers was already an experienced policeman when he was appointed superintendent in 1848. In recommending him, the Halifax watch committee highlighted that as deputy constable the 'discharge of his duties has been unexceptionable.'<sup>15</sup> He was, it continued, expected, 'next to the watch committee, be responsible for the efficiency of the men.' The watch committee kept a close eye on recruitment, discipline, pay and police priorities, such as enforcing various of the town's eighty-eight bye-laws.<sup>16</sup> In other words, Spiers was to take orders and ensure that they were carried out. Nor did this change when John Pearson was promoted from inspector to superintendent following Spiers's resignation in 1851. The watch committed prioritised such matters as gambling, on the streets and in beerhouses, and prostitution, in brothels, beerhouses and dram shops, but took a pragmatic approach. Drunks capable of walking were not to be arrested and only the worst brothels to be prosecuted.<sup>17</sup> Pearson, like Spiers before him, was happy to take orders and go along with a low-key, semi-consensual and non-confrontational form of policing.<sup>18</sup> From 1857, the initial government inspections were generally positive – the men were in 'a very satisfactory state of efficiency,' organisation was improved in 1860 and 1861, and the response to the need for an extra

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\*\* Huddersfield was unusual but not unique in this respect. By 1869 Birkenhead was on its eighth head constable since 1837. Other problem forces include Boston, Dover, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Plymouth and Portsmouth.

constable in 1862 was prompt – and the relationship between watch committee and superintendent constructive. The situation deteriorated from the mid-1860s onwards. In part, this was due to external factors – there was ‘difficulty in obtaining good and steady men’ since augmentation in 1866, which had seen the appointment of a ‘considerable proportion’ of inexperienced men – but there was also a growing sense that earlier police pragmatism had turned into something more sinister. The law was not being enforced with sufficient rigour, not least because of an over-cosy relationship between the watch committee, especially its long-serving members such as Aldermen Swales and Walsh, and the police superintendent. The first doubts emerged as early as 1863. Despite concern with the number of ‘Houses of Ill-fame’ in slum districts of Halifax identified by Pearson, the watch committee refused to name their owners in 1863, thereby protecting those members who were slum landlords.<sup>19</sup> More serious was the growing concern with the failure to enforce licensing laws. The temperance movement, strong in Halifax, began to assert increasing influence on the watch committee in the late-1860s. Further, HMIC Woodford privately expressed concern over the lack of action against law-breaking licensees. Pearson, a man known to like a drink, was seen to be too close to the drinks interest in Halifax. There were allegations that he turned a blind eye to out-of-hours drinking – even of participating in lock-ins – and used his position to stop officers bringing certain landlords to court. In March 1872 the recently appointed detective-inspector, John Lawton, unusually an outsider from the Manchester force, resigned because of the obstacles thrown in his way when trying to prosecute the landlord of the notorious Black Bull Inn.<sup>20</sup> A letter in the *Halifax Courier* from alderman Longbottom drew further attention to the alleged failings of superintendent Pearson.<sup>21</sup> In the face of demands from influential local temperance leaders, the watch committee held an enquiry.<sup>22</sup> Opinion in the town was divided. Pearson was forced to resign but the council was split. The acrimony generated by the incident cast a dark shadow over a long career in policing and threatened to undermine the watch committee’s reputation for efficient management of the police.

There might have been a sense of *schadenfreude* in Huddersfield in 1872 as its history of police management and leadership was poor. Over two decades it proved impossible to establish a long-term working relationship between watch committee and the police superintendent. Initially, the situation

appeared positive. John Thomas, for all his personal failings, was initially seen as an effective, hands-on officer, taking an active part in quelling trouble in Huddersfield's notorious Castlegate area and being acclaimed as 'most praiseworthy' in the local press.<sup>23</sup> Rather like Spiers in Halifax, Thomas was doing what the watch committee wanted. Conflict between Thomas and the watch committee broke out in 1855 but the roots of the clash go back to the earlier electoral success of an 'economy' faction led by C H Jones.<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Jones' first victim was the town's superintendent of scavengers, John Jarrett, but it was clear that he had his eyes on the police, opining that 'sufficient supervision was not exercised ... by Superintendent Thomas.'<sup>24</sup> Jones was not simply interested in waste (or, in the case of Jarrett criminal behaviour), he wanted to introduce a business model of local government, in which the elected commissioners acted as a board of directors, with Jones as 'CEO' and the police superintendent as a senior manager.<sup>25</sup> Thomas, in contrast, remained a hands-on thief-taker. Jones' views were shaped by his knowledge of the larger, more bureaucratic Manchester police force and he never doubted that they could be transferred to a smaller force. Jones and his supporters also had a clear view of the personal qualities of a head constable. Thomas, with his well-known predilection for drinking and gambling, did not fit the bill. The first major clash between the two men – and personal animosity exacerbated matters – centred on the accusation that Thomas was drinking and gambling at the Golden Lion Inn, Pontefract, while on duty taking a prisoner to the quarter sessions. A special meeting of the commissioners was called and, after a vituperative debate, the vote went against Thomas. Adverts were placed for a new police superintendent and, after lengthy consideration of applicants, the watch committee decided the best man for the job was – John Thomas! The decision provoked a crisis in local politics. At a second special meeting, Jones, and his supporters, launched an excoriating attack on the professional and personal qualities of Thomas. The commissioners were divided and a vote for dismissal resulted in a tied vote, with the casting vote with the chair – C H Jones! Nothing new emerged from this unseemly clash of views – it was hardly a debate – but Jones made clear his belief in the primacy of the watch committee and its responsibility to micro-manage

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<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Jones went on to become the first mayor of the town in 1868.

the force.<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup>

The departure of Thomas provided Jones an opportunity to appoint a man who would implement 'a new system [with] new discipline, new orders [and] new men.'<sup>26</sup> George Beaumont, inspector of the night police, Halifax, was the chosen new broom. With powerful support among commissioners, and especially among members of the watch committee, Beaumont, adopting an office-based managerial stance, set about his task, dismissing men deemed to be inefficient and improving discipline, including the banning of smoking on duty. The relationship between watch committee and head constable could hardly have been closer. The new era, however, was short-lived. Beaumont lost the support of the force, several of whom resigned, including the long-serving and well-regarded inspector Sedgwick. Jones and Beaumont were accused in the *Huddersfield Chronicle* of presiding over 'a system of espionage,' characterised by 'pettifogging interference of every kind,' not to mention fabricating charges against Sedgwick.<sup>27</sup> A special meeting of the watch committee considered the efficiency of the police and also the grievances of the constables. The latter were dismissed as 'paltry' and Beaumont was rewarded with a salary increase.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately for Jones, Beaumont was less than a paragon of moral virtue. Although he survived a high-profile sexual scandal –he was accused of seeking sexual favours from a female prisoner –his 'series of petty but fraudulent acts,' over several months led to his dismissal.<sup>29</sup> The first attempt to implement Jones' model and style of management had been tried and failed.

Although Jones was no longer on the watch committee, several of his supporters remained and participated in the appointment of Samuel Priday, inspector of B division, Manchester. Priday's experience made him an obvious person for the post but he did not share the approach of the Jones faction. Based on his recent Manchester experience, he believed that, as chief constable, he was responsible for the day-to-day management of the forces and that his recommendation, especially regarding disciplinary matters, would be acted upon by the watch committee. While he was able to improve morale among the men, his position was weakened by the watch committee's decision to reduce the size of the force in the early 1860s but it was the determination

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<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> The matter did not end there. Thomas met Jones on the streets of Huddersfield, tweaked his nose in public and found himself in court at the Quarter Sessions at Wakefield, where he was fined £5 for assault.

of the watch committee to be involved in the day-to-day running of the force that undermined Priday's authority and provoked him to write to the local press, complaining about 'a want of ... cordiality and support.'<sup>30</sup> He accused an unnamed 'principal officer of the Commissioners' who took upon himself to 'countermand my orders.' Further, he felt undermined by the refusal of the watch committee to support him by punishing appropriately men 'brought before the Committee for improper conduct.' Priday spelt out an alternative, not significantly different from the practice emerging in Halifax, in which the head constable could 'exercise his judgment' in carrying out the functions of a superintendent of police but to no avail.

Priday resigned in 1862, to be replaced by William Hannan, the major figure in the foundation of the 'new police' in Middlesbrough. Initially, it looked as if the right man had been chosen. Hannan looked to bring flexibility and efficiency through the amalgamation of the night and day force, the issue of new regulations, improved record keeping as well as pressing for a superannuation scheme, for all of which he was complimented by the watch committee and HMIC. He played a very active role in restricting the beerhouse/brothel problem that stained the reputation of the town. The election of 1865 was the start of Hannan's problem. On the day, things ran very smoothly thanks to the combined efforts of Hannan and Cobbe, chief constable of the WRCC but in the subsequent parliamentary inquiry, to which he was called to give evidence, Hannan was accused by local politicians, notably Joel Denham, of giving evidence in a partisan manner. Local elections in 1867, which brought a 'godly leaven of the Puritan element,' added to his problems. His suggestion of low-key policing of the November 5th celebrations, probably wise in terms of police/public relations, was rejected by the watch committee. The outcome was predictable. Bonfires were lit and squibs let off in St. George's Square and the 'over-zealous and frog swelling pride,' particularly on the part of certain members of the watch committee, made them 'the butts of fun, frolic and scorn of the assembled crowd.'<sup>31</sup> Rather than accept responsibility for an ill-judged approach, the recently-elected 'Puritans' blamed Hannan. More damaging were the criticisms of his alleged failure to deal with the problem of drunkenness in the town. Hannan had been a critic of beerhouses and the evils attendant upon them, but he found himself under attack over allegations that Huddersfield had one of the worst records in the country. Hannan produced a report for the watch



committee, which made clear his condemnation of beerhouses in particular and also highlighted the varying ways in which drunkenness was recorded. In Huddersfield all known cases of drunkenness were recorded, which made the town look worse than others who chose a less strict approach. His arguments failed to carry the day and, once again, he found himself criticised by Denham and his supporters for not improving the moral condition of the town. Taken together with his declining health, these criticisms led to Hannan's resignation. It is unlikely he would have been able to stay on much longer as his critics in the commission were already letting it be known that they did not see him as a suitable figure to lead the larger force needed for the about-to-be incorporated town. Hannan left the force to become the landlord of the Bull and Mouth Inn, ruefully noting that 'not one Superintendent had left Huddersfield to go to a better situation but had left in disgrace.'<sup>32</sup> Over two decades successive local politicians were unable to develop a constructive relationship with the town's various superintendents of police. The management model that Jones brought from Manchester was tried and failed twice. Notwithstanding Hannan's somewhat rough-and-ready ways, it was not immediately obvious that he lacked the qualities to be a successful head of a small to medium-sized provincial force. Indeed, he had demonstrated his worth in a more problematic town, Middlesbrough. Likewise, Priday was a capable man whose position was undermined by the actions of the watch committee. On the other hand, Thomas was an old-fashioned 'thief-taker' with a poor disciplinary record, hardly leadership material, whereas Beaumont was simply a bad choice, lacking the managerial, let alone, moral qualities to do the job well.

The first generation of 'new' policing in the two towns was strikingly different. Notwithstanding the inglorious end to Pearson's career in 1872, the overall experience in Halifax was positive. The force was less unstable and saw the emergence of a larger cohort of experienced, career constables than in Huddersfield. Further, the relationship between the Halifax watch committee and its superintendents of police was for the most part good, which could not be said of Huddersfield. Nonetheless, the signs of difficulty in recruiting suitable men during the period of economic growth in the 1860s, coupled with Pearson's more minimalist style of policing and his eventual fall from grace gave rise to a feeling that policing in Halifax needed to be put back on an even keel. Even more so in Huddersfield where the force was

poorly-managed, often ill-disciplined and less stable and the town faced the challenge of incorporation. In both towns there was a feeling of trepidation as they faced a new decade with new men leading the police.

### **Refounding and consolidation, c.1870 to 1900**

Charles Tempest Clarkson was the man chosen from an initial field of thirty-eight to be the new superintendent of police in Halifax. He combined both experience and ambition and appeared to be the man to restore integrity and efficiency into the town force. His self-confidence was considerable and he moved quickly to implement his ideas to invigorate and modernize the force. The force was to take a pro-active role, strictly enforcing the law, particularly in relation to drunkenness, prostitution and Sunday trading. Some of his reforms were relatively minor and uncontroversial – helmets, whistles, improved quality uniforms, and the photographing of criminals. Other changes – accelerated promotion and greater use of the recently-introduced merit class – proved divisive as he set about creating a force in his image, promoting sympathetic officers and marginalizing others. Of ten newly-promoted sergeants, only one was from the Pearson era. Clarkson sought to improve discipline, and at the same time strengthen his position. He recommended the dismissal of inappropriate men – at least sixteen men were dismissed for drink-related offences, including ten for their first offence. He encouraged the resignation, on the grounds of ill-health, of four long-serving sergeants. He also believed that the watch committee should not interfere with the day-to-day running of the police.<sup>33</sup> In 1873 alone, roughly a third of the force left, seventeen men resigned, including at least seven experienced officers, and a further five were dismissed. The Clarkson cohort, recruited between 1872 and 1876, comprised some 100 men. Just under 40 per cent left within the first twelve months and almost 80 per cent less than five years. Only ten men, or just over 10 per cent served for twenty years or more. 65 per cent of the cohort resigned and 33 per cent were dismissed. These statistics were worse than those for the first cohort of Halifax police. Further, Clarkson's workforce strategy effectively divided the force in two, those he had appointed or promoted and those inherited from the previous regime, many with a residual sympathy for Pearson, who, by now a local

councillor remained a potent focus of opposition. It also meant that the force comprised many inexperienced constables led by equally inexperienced officers. The rigorous enforcement of laws and by-laws, especially the 1872 Licensing Act, was initially welcomed in many quarters, not least the new watch committee but the continuing zeal with which his men brought to their work soon became counter-productive. The police were increasingly seen as arrogant and overbearing. Hostility was not confined to 'the usual suspects,' of unskilled working-class youths and men, particularly from the Irish community. Respectable working-class men and women, petty bourgeois shop-keepers, and even middle-class drinkers criticised the police as they fell foul of the law. The dismissal of detective inspector Birkenshaw and sergeant Holmes for improper conduct and gross breaches of duty led to widespread criticism of police behaviour. The wrongful arrest of Patrick Manley and Henry Holland (subsequently re-arrested) created such ill-feeling that Clarkson was booed in the streets. Finally, his operational independence brought him into conflict with the watch committee. The positive relationship of the early months soured. His defence of his men and his resentment at being asked to account for police behaviour by the watch committee raised questions about his judgment and fitness for the post. The town council set up a special commission to look into the behaviour of the police and within days Clarkson resigned. Despite seeing himself as the expert on policing, Clarkson failed on three counts. First, police actions alienated swathes of the town's populace in a way that threatened effective policing and undermined popular support. Second, Clarkson's beliefs and actions undermined the necessary working partnership with the watch committee. Third, it left the force itself divided, demoralised and distrusted.

Charles Pole, Clarkson's successor, was appointed for his experience, having worked his way through the ranks to chief constable of Grantham, his administrative skills as chief clerk of the Leicester force and his less divisive man-management.<sup>34</sup> He served from 1876 to 1903, the last two decades characterised by a striking degree of stability in terms of retention and a significant reduction in indiscipline. In total, over 200 men were recruited, of whom eighty-four (42 per cent) served for twenty years for more, and ninety-three (47 per cent) who were pensioned. The number of men leaving in their first year was low (thirty or 15 per cent), with a clear contrast between the opening and closing decades of his tenure. Overall, resignation levels

remained high but there was a significant reduction in the number of men dismissed. Pole had a reputation for discipline but also for encouraging able men and there were some striking success stories – most notably Joseph Farndale, who became chief constable of Bradford, via Margate. But this masked the reality for the majority of recruits who served with little chance of promotion. Even those who did become sergeants had to wait a decade or more for promotion.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Pole was criticised for his reluctance to recommend ordinary constables for promotion to the merit class.

The fall in the number of men dismissed from the force is striking. In total fifteen men were dismissed, including six in Pole's first year and thirteen in the decade 1876-85. Pole inherited a police scandal with allegations of wrongful arrest and financial malpractice among senior officers. A scathing report from the Police Inquiry Committee led to demotions (detective-sergeant Bootham and PC Wadsworth), dismissals (sergeant McKenzie) and forced resignation (inspector Sinkinson).<sup>36</sup> The initiative already rested with the watch committee but Pole was happy to endorse a policy of tighter discipline. From the mid-1880s the number of reprimands, fines and demotions agreed by the watch committee fell by more than 50 percent while the force grew in size by roughly a quarter.<sup>37</sup> The figures are skewed by the transfer of responsibility for minor disciplinary matters to the chief constable in 1878 and a less strict approach to drink-related offences, especially among longer serving, more experienced men. Nonetheless, there was a real, if less spectacular, decline in disciplinary offences through to the early twentieth century. Drunkenness remained by far the most common offence but declined from c.65 per cent of the total in the early years to c.40 per cent in the latter.

Finally, when Pole took office in 1876, HMIC Elgee was expressing concern at the high rate of turnover in the force. A decade later, and for the rest of the century, it was very low, averaging 6 per cent in the late-1880s, falling as low as 3 per cent in 1891 and never exceeding 8 per cent. These figures were significantly better than those from the Clarkson and Pearson eras. In part, this can be explained in terms of the personality and policies of the chief constable. Pole was held in high regard by many, though not all. The radical *Halifax Comet* depicted him as 'a composite portrait of Von Moltke and Bismarck ...[typifying] the iron discipline of official rule.' The more mainstream *Halifax Evening Courier*, while seeing him as 'a strict

disciplinarian,' praised him for his 'high standards and efficiency,' while the *Halifax Daily Guardian* deemed him 'an efficient, a courteous and a humane officer.'<sup>38</sup> He was undoubtedly strict but also fostered a greater sense of belonging, an *esprit de corps*, supporting claims for improved pay (at least after 1890) and conditions of work, and also encouraging the growth of social and sporting clubs as a means of boosting morale, though he drew the line at men playing professional rugby. But there were external factors involved, not least a less favourable labour market, which highlighted the various advantages of employment in the police.

**Table 10.3 Average annual variations (as %) for selected northern towns, 1885/9 – 1895/9**

	Force size 1885-9	1885-9 variations as % of force	Force size 1890-4	1890-4 variation as % of force	Force size 1895-9	1895-9 variation as % of force
Halifax	77	7	85	6	96	5
Huddersfield	98	6	113	3	118	4
Blackburn	114	6	128	10	135	7
Bolton	113	11	119	6	135	11
Burnley*	73	12	80	6	92	8
Oldham	122	10	137	11	157	12
Preston	104	5	109	8	114	5
Middlesbrough	70	6	81	6	91	5

\*1887-9

Source: HMIC annual reports

The Halifax force by the end of Victoria's reign was larger, more complex, more bureaucratic and better led. The basic structure for constables (third, second and first class) remained but now there was a merit class and provision for longer serving constables as they reached five, seven, nine, eleven- and fifteen-years' service with good conduct. A similar format existed for sergeants (up to ten years' service) and inspectors (up to seven years' service). Equally important was the administrative and managerial strengthening that eventually came with the appointment of a chief clerk (1881) and a superintendent and deputy chief constable (1896). Pole also created and sustained a good working relationship with the watch committee. To some extent he was helped by

the fact that there was a new generation of relatively inexperienced men on the watch committee, who were more dependent on his experience, but he also encouraged a less combative approach and he was allowed a degree of autonomy that none of his predecessors in Halifax had enjoyed.

While the late-Victorian improvements were real, there was still more to do. Expectations of the police, at all levels, and not just in Halifax were changing. Policemen needed to be better trained and better educated. Size and fitness were no longer enough. Instruction and education classes were introduced by chief constable Richardson, Pole's successor. Police standing orders and regulations were revised and updated in 1906. In the same year, the introduction of street telephones improved communications between stations and men on the beat. There was an awareness of new techniques – fingerprinting etc – to aid detection. Nonetheless, over the previous half century the Halifax force had become significantly better organised, disciplined and efficient.

Huddersfield's 'new broom' came in the form of James Withers, who joined from the Preston force in December 1867, the seventh man since 1848 to lead the Huddersfield police.<sup>39</sup> The task confronting him was made more difficult by the fact of incorporation, which increased the area to be policed from 700 acres to 10, 000 and a population to be policed that more than doubled to 72,000. The police force itself was augmented from thirty-two to sixty-eight men and Withers had the task of training up a large cohort of new men, and combining them with those he inherited, for whom pay was low and discipline patchy, to form an efficient force. He was assured that he would have 'the full charge and superintendence of the whole Police general management Force [and] be held responsible for the general conduct and management thereof.'<sup>40</sup> Similar assurances had been given when Priday was appointed but not followed through. Withers was fortunate in that Joel Denham, and several other new members of the watch committee, were and remained staunch supporters. He set about his task with zeal. Within a week he informed the watch committee that he was restructuring the existing pattern of police duties and running the force according to 'the Metropolitan System.'<sup>41</sup> In an implicit criticism of past practice, inspectors and sergeants were clearly instructed to 'visit the men on their beats at their usual points and also at uncertain times at different places on their beats' *and* to ensure that full records of such visits were kept. Withers also took firm action to

improve discipline. On 21 January 1868, the watch committee had to hold a special meeting to deal with the volume of cases brought to its attention by the new chief constable. In the first six months of that year Withers reported twenty-one disciplinary cases, mostly drink-related, to the watch committee, which supported its man. Thereafter, the number of cases fell dramatically. At the annual police dinner, held with no sense of irony in the Ramsden Arms, the chair of the watch committee, Denham, spoke glowingly of the harmony and good feeling between the town's politicians and its police force and the continuing determination to continue raising 'the standard of discipline and efficiency of the force.'<sup>42</sup> Not only did Withers please his local masters, but he was also singled out for praise by HMIC Elgee. He also requested that he might discipline the men. The watch committee agreed that he could impose 'such penalties as will tend to abate drunkenness and neglect of duty,' though all disciplinary matters would be reported to the watch committee for consideration and approval.<sup>43</sup> Withers took firm action to improve discipline but also looked to improve police pay. Progressive pay scales were introduced in 1870 and pay was enhanced twice in 1871 and again in 1873.

Withers' approach was put to the test as men were recruited to meet the new authorised strength following incorporation. Rapid augmentation was associated with greater instability in the short-run, as had been abundantly evident in Leeds. The watch committee was highly satisfied with his approach – though not enough to meet his demands for a pay increase – but, on closer examination, the results were mixed. In October 1868 the first cohort of Withers' men were approved for service. In March 1869 he informed the watch committee that 'the new officers ... are becoming more efficient and more conversant with their general duties.'<sup>44</sup> By December 1870, eighteen had been promoted to the first class (including one to sergeant) with two more still in the system. However, eleven had been dismissed and four had resigned. In other words, 44 per cent of the cohort had left in just over a year. A better picture of Withers' impact can be obtained from an analysis of the career outcomes of all recruits during his term of office.<sup>45</sup> Men serving less than one year as a percentage of the cohort stood at 30 per cent, compared with 56 per cent for the years of the improvement commission, 1848-68. Men serving more than five years rose to 34 per cent compared with 15 per cent for the earlier period. Also positive, the percentage of men dismissed

had fallen to 33 per cent from 46 per cent; as was the emergence of a small number of men (eleven or 8 per cent) receiving a pension. As one might expect, the bulk of dismissals (75 per cent) took place in the early years, almost 50 per cent before a year was out. Similarly, most resignations took place within the first months of service. However, men serving five years or more accounted for 25 per cent of resignations, a figure that rose to 46 per cent of all men serving more than three years. If, as contemporaries thought, it took at least three years to train an efficient officer, roughly half of the men trained to efficiency chose to resign, representing a significant loss of trained men and waste of resources devoted to training.

Although Withers' refounded force was an improvement on what had gone before, it still had weaknesses in terms of its health and discipline. In part, this was the result of inherited problems. Noah Worsnip, for one, appointed in 1857, had a chequered career, combining success as a detective with drink-related disciplinary and health problems. But these problems were also to be found among a majority (roughly two-thirds) of men recruited during Withers' period of office. Within twelve months, William Milnes was fined and reprimanded on five occasions before resigning in October 1869. Thomas Thornton was fined on four occasions for drunkenness on duty before being dismissed, having been found asleep on duty, in 1871 – a career that lasted eighteen months. Thornton was not the only multiple offender to be dismissed at an early stage, which pointed to a chief constable and a watch committee determined to clamp down on indiscipline, especially when drink-related. But the experiences of other men showed a less consistent and at times less successful approach. As under the improvement commission, men deemed to be promising were given a second chance which led, on a number of occasions, to a successful and long career. Firth Jaggar (1869-98) was reprimanded for being drunk early in his career but ended as an inspector; Thomas Roberts (1871-91) likewise became an inspector, while Waller Wigglesworth (1868-96), who had a poor disciplinary record in his early years, became a stalwart long-serving constable. In others the outcome was poor. Iddo Wood's career (1869-77) started well but fell apart after seven years. Five disciplinary offences, four in one year, led to his resignation in December 1877, when he left to take over a pub in Manchester. Martin Lynch had problems almost from the outset and yet it was only after being fined or reprimanded for the sixth time in two years that he was finally dismissed. More surprising



were the careers of some twenty longer-serving men, who were persistent offenders. John Taylor (1873-81) was disciplined fourteen times before he resigned; and Alfred Rayner (1872-80) was fined and reprimanded fifteen times, as well as being twice demoted before being required to resign. Lewis Smith (1868-96) was disciplined seventeen times, three times in his first year, and especially after 1890 had a poor health record, yet he remained in post until being superannuated in 1896. John Garside (1871-97) was also pensioned after a career that saw him disciplined on eighteen occasions as well as having poor a health record. If Smith's and Garside's survival in the force was something of a mystery, more so were the two careers of George Sedgwick, (1870-8 and 1879-87) both characterised by a poor disciplinary and health records and both terminated by dismissal. The majority of the Huddersfield force recruited under Wither had a disciplinary record, albeit a majority with fewer than five and concentrated among short-serving men. Notwithstanding an easing of recruitment difficulties in and after the 1880s, the watch committee and chief constables continued to tolerate (or felt they had to tolerate) the employment of a significant minority of repeat offenders, notwithstanding the impact on efficiency, morale and reputation.

Sickness, which was to become a particular issue under chief constable Ward, was a further drain on efficiency and was also, in part, an inherited problem. John Boler, for example, joined in 1861 and was superannuated in 1876, during which time he was on sick leave on eighty-six separate occasions, the bulk for a period of seven days, and concentrated in his later years. But between 25 and 30 per cent of the men recruited under Withers suffered from poor health. Seven men resigned because of ill-health – three a matter of months after appointment. Another six were discharged due to long-term sickness and given a gratuity. Several were absent sick almost from the outset. Thomas Hamer (1874-9) was appointed in October 1874 and was off for two days in December, followed by five more recorded absences in 1875. By the time of his discharge he had forty-six sickness absences recorded, amounting to 233 days, or 16 per cent of his career. The presence of such problem figures raises questions about the rigour of the recruitment process. Other cases were less problematic. A number of men, such as the unfortunate Benjamin Broom, who broke an arm and a leg in separate incidents, suffered injuries while on duty. Others, such as Thomas Burns (1871-97) and John Salter (1873-89), as well as the aforementioned

Firth Jagger and Lewis Smith suffered recurrent bouts of ill-health in the last four or five years of long careers. However, for slightly more men, ill-health punctuated almost all of their careers. Thomas Laycock (1868-81) had only one illness-free year. In all, one-tenth of his career was spent on the sick. At the very least, the loss of manpower was a drag on performance but, given the suspicions of malingering that were formally noted later, there was probably also a negative impact on morale.

Withers period in office undoubtedly saw an improvements in the town force but the refounding was not wholly successful. Problems of recruitment and retention remained, albeit to a lesser degree than before, but exacerbated by the number and severity of assaults on the police.<sup>46</sup> So too did problems of ill-discipline and ill-health. Nonetheless, Withers was held in high regard by many Huddersfield politicians. It appeared that the town had solved the police managerial problems that had beset it for the past twenty years. Then, in 1874, he resigned. Costs had always been an important concern for successive watch committees but only briefly in the early 1860s had the 'economical' commissioners reduced police numbers. In the early 1870s the debate revolved around the chief constable's pay. Opponents of 'municipal government' won council seats in 1872 and 1873 and turned their attention to the pay of senior council employees. The question of Wither's salary became a major issue in successive council elections. His salary had risen from £220 to £300 per annum in 1872 but he believed he was worthy of a further increase. The upshot of an often-bitter political conflict was a triumph for the 'economical faction' over their 'pragmatist rivals.' Despite warnings that a refusal to improve salaries would result in the loss of men, such as Withers, the council refused his request and he left to become chief constable in Bradford.<sup>47</sup> Further, they agreed to advertise for a new chief constable at a reduced annual salary of £250.

Contrary to the claim made by Withers opponents – that there were numerous men willing to take the post at £250 p.a. – only twenty-six men, of varied and generally limited police experience, applied. The council opted for Henry Hilton, the chief constable of Glossop, who came with glowing references. The appointment was perplexing for two reasons. First, Glossop, a town of some 20,000 people, had a force of only eight men; second, it was deemed to be 'wholly inefficient.' in 1872, 1873 and 1874. Hilton's brief period in office in Huddersfield was a disaster. He was effectively forced to resign

when a special sub-committee was set up to 'investigate the conduct and management of the Police Department by the Chief Constable.' In a short space of time, the watch committee appeared to have undermined the recent gains and brought the town back to the problems that had dogged it a decade earlier. The town force, as well as being badly led, was again characterised by poor discipline and a high level of sickness-related absences from work. This was John Ward's inheritance when he took over.

Ward was serving in the Leeds police force when he was appointed to the Huddersfield force. In less than a decade he had gone from being a third-class constable, to chief clerk in four years and then to superintendent of the detective department in Leeds three years later. He took the post of chief constable at Huddersfield, and all that went with it in terms of additional duties, for a salary of £300 per annum.<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> The thoroughness with which he approached his job was reflected in the long and detailed reports he submitted to the watch committee. His first months saw him tackling head-on the problems of ill-discipline and lengthy (and frequent) sick leave among the men.

Under the old regime, constables absenting themselves on the grounds of ill-health simply sent a message to the police office. There was little or no supervision, no medical evidence was required, even when a man had been off for weeks, and no pay was deducted. Ward highlighted the problem in his first report to the watch committee. '25 men [out of a force of 75] have averaged more than 20 days' sickness each annually. 14 of these average over 30, and 6 over forty.'<sup>48</sup> In any one week, there were as many as sixteen men (approximately 20 per cent of the force) absent sick. Ward suspected a degree of malingering. A new system was introduced almost immediately, under which a certificate from the police surgeon was required, or else pay would be deducted accordingly. The next task was to identify those who were unfit for police work and who could be encouraged to resign. The problem was, in part, a product of success. As more men made a career of policing, job-related illness and conditions became more common – bronchitis, often severe, and pleurisy were cited, as were flat feet and even an ulcerated big toe. A special

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<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> He was to be captain and superintendent of the fire brigade, chief inspector of lodging houses and hackney carriages and markets, and responsible under the Explosives and Petroleum Acts and the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act.

sub-committee was set up to consider seven of the worst cases. By May 1879, Ward could report 'the amount of sickness is very much less.'<sup>49</sup> Several men were subsequently certified by the police surgeon as 'unfit for further duty' and left the force with a weekly allowance from the superannuation fund. A month later he declared 'the health of the force has generally been good.'<sup>50</sup> The likes of PC Hamer had departed but there were a few long-serving men, who had joined before incorporation, who remained in post. Detective Inspector White, appointed in 1849, was eventually superannuated in 1880. Inspector Galvin, appointed in 1860, likewise in 1886.<sup>51</sup> The same year saw the death in post of William Townend, a paid constable in the 1840s and a founder member of the town force. All had been physically incapacitated and with a lengthy sickness record in their latter years. Ward's later reports to the watch committee contain few references to sickness but there was still a tolerated level of sickness across the force. The Defaulters Record book details several problematic cases.<sup>52</sup> John Beaumont, who was appointed in 1872, had 104 cases of recorded sick leave, equivalent to just over a year-and-a-half in a twelve-year career. Importantly, his poor health record was clear when Ward took over but it was a further five years before he was ordered to resign. He was not alone. Daniel Runham, who was pensioned in 1911, had lost almost a year in sixty-one cases of sickness, the bulk of which occurred after 1880. Similarly, PCs Branland, Collier and Horner, who lost, respectively 611, 309 and 557 days, but were not required to resign. While these men were exceptional, losses to sickness, usually a week or less, were a commonplace occurrence, effectively factored into the assessments made by senior police figures but the efficiency costs of illness, whether in the form of sick leave or sub-optimal performance, should not be minimized.

The second major problem explicitly tackled by Ward was that of police indiscipline. The minutes of the watch committee contain numerous references, especially in 1879 and 1880, to the failings of ordinary constables and, less frequently their superiors. Once again, the watch committee was generally happy to endorse Ward's recommendations. He was determined to make a firm stance. For the most part, indiscipline was an individual problem but in May/June 1879 there was a collective problem at the Lockwood sub-station. Starting as a complaint against Sergeant Thornton for neglect of duty, improper conduct and making false entries in his report sheet, it became apparent at a special meeting of the watch committee that the problem was

more systemic. As a consequence, 'the majority of the Constables stationed in the Lockwood Section' were removed and replaced.<sup>53</sup> A new book of 'Police Regulations and Instructions' was issued in August 1879 and in December classes were introduced for 'the instruction of the men [in the rules and regulations] as well as for general instruction and practice.'<sup>54</sup> In July and August a further seven men were 'reported for misconduct,' ranging from being 'under the influence of liquor' or 'drunk on duty' to 'gossiping on duty.'<sup>55</sup> Fines were levied but two constables were severely admonished. Eight men, including two sergeants, were reported and punished in December of the same year. Two were reprimanded by the mayor, two were demoted two fined, one constable allowed to resign and a probationary officer dismissed.<sup>56</sup> His improvement drive continued throughout 1880 by which time he confidently reported to the watch committee the 'great improvement' in discipline.<sup>57</sup> Thereafter, his monthly reports routinely detailed one or two, occasionally three men for a variety of predictable offences – being late on duty, neglecting duty, varying degrees of intoxication and occasionally fighting or insubordination. The relatively low-key approach, and Ward's oft-repeated judgment that 'the conduct [of the men], with a few exceptions, has been satisfactory,' should not obscure the on-going extent of low-level ill-discipline. Once again, the Defaulters Conduct book throws light on the scale of the problem. The vast majority of men, including long-serving men and those who gained promotion, had a disciplinary record. For some men disciplinary problems brought a sudden end to their careers but others were still treated with a surprising degree of leniency. Thomas John Emerson was punished on four occasions for drink-related offences but only on the fifth was he cautioned that another such offence would result in dismissal. He served a further ten years before retiring on a pension. In contrast, Owen Townsend, Fred Robinson and John Gray were ordered to resign after sixteen offences each for Townsend and Robinson, and fourteen for Grey. Thomas Lowcock was more favourably treated, in being discharged with a gratuity after his thirteenth offence. Others were even more fortunate, Thomas Farnell appeared before Ward on sixteen, and Henry Harrison fourteen times but both continued to a pension. Frederick Collier, the man with health problems, was also disciplined on fifteen occasions yet was still serving when he died in post, over twenty years after his appointment.<sup>58</sup> The records contain no indication of the thinking behind these decisions but, for

whatever reason, Ward and the watch committee adopted a lenient policy. Nowhere was this clearer than in the aforementioned two careers of George Sedgwick, who joined in June 1870 but was dismissed, having been found drunk on duty in Paddock, his ninth drink-related offence, in September 1878. Five months later he was re-employed only to be ordered to resign in June 1887, having been on sick leave for 269 days and disciplined eight times, mainly for being drunk. The problem, while never disappearing, diminished over time. Ward, reflecting on his years in post, had no doubt that there had been improvements. 'The force today,' he told the watch committee in July 1888, 'was more effective and far better mannered – they had men of better education and better able to do their duty.'<sup>59</sup> More importantly, in 1891 HMIC Legge adjudged the Huddersfield force to be 'one of the most efficient and best equipped forces in the country.'<sup>60</sup> Late-Victorian Huddersfield was undoubtedly a policed town but among the men who patrolled the streets were still those whose discipline and health were questionable.

A third problem was the ongoing difficulty in recruiting suitable men particularly in the 1870s but also in the late-1880s. Despite a number of pay rises, men continued to leave for better pay and/or conditions. When Ezra Bostwick resigned in 1880, Ward ruefully noted that he was leaving after five years 'in consequence of having obtained a situation where he will receive more pay and shorter hours.'<sup>61</sup> Albert Hawkyard left after eighteen months 'to go to America,' while Joseph Sykes was one of many who gave his reason for resignation simply as a desire 'to improve himself.' As a consequence, in the early 1870s, the town was less well watched during the day. A further augmentation in 1876 led to 'difficulty in meeting with suitable men' and 'several of the newly appointed constables [being] below the average in physique and general appearance.' By the late-1880s HMIC was stressing the need for a further increase in numbers to ensure enough men for night, as well as day, duty. Numbers were duly increased in 1890 and again in 1896 in the light of official criticism. Annual variations were low as the numbers dismissed dropped dramatically. But if the problems of the mid-Victorian years had been largely overcome, there were different problems to be solved and new expectations to be met. As early as 1879 Ward had shown an awareness of the need to improve the knowledge and skills of officers but there is no evidence of any follow-up to this initiative. A different set of skills were developed through St John's ambulance training

but it is less clear that Ward was interested in newer developments such as fingerprinting. Nonetheless, Ward was held in high regard by local politicians. Such was their unwillingness to lose him that in 1881, when he applied for the post of chief constable of Nottingham, the watch committee increased his salary from £300 per annum to £350. As with Pole in Halifax, there was widespread agreement that Ward had been successful in overcoming 'many difficulties,' inherited from his predecessor and had left the force 'very much more efficient' than it had been on his arrival.<sup>62</sup>

### **Some conclusions**

Despite sharing similar socio-economic characteristics and common problems, there were significant differences in the development of policing in the two towns, particularly in the early years. The Huddersfield force was bedevilled with leadership problems almost from the outset. The determination of the watch committee, particular under councillor Jones, to impose its management model and the continuing concern with economy led to conflict with able men, such as Priday and Withers, but the situation was exacerbated by the personal short-comings of men like Beaumont and Thomas. The refounding of the force under the very capable Withers was only partially successful. Problems of recruitment and retention were particularly acute in the 1860s and 1870s but problems of ill-discipline and ill-health persisted longer. Recruitment and retention difficulties led to a more lenient management approach, which saw some men being given a second chance (and more) and others being retained despite mounting absences due to illness. However necessary, such policies reduced the overall efficiency of the force and probably damaged morale as well for much of the period. The Halifax force was not without its problems but to a much lesser degree. Nonetheless, it was only from the mid-1880s onwards that recruitment, retention and discipline became relatively unproblematic. However, by the late-nineteenth century both towns compared favourably with their counterparts in Lancashire.

As both forces grew in size and took on a wider range of responsibilities, administrative and managerial skills assumed greater importance. The expectations of a head constable went beyond being a good 'thief taker,' and

both towns, but notably Huddersfield, struggled to find a suitable person. And when they did, there was the problem of retaining a good but ambitious man. An unwillingness to increase his salary saw Huddersfield lose chief constable Withers to Bradford, though the lesson was learned later when one of his successors, Ward looked to move on. The continued growth of both forces necessitated a strengthening of management. A superintendent, and deputy chief constable, was appointed in Huddersfield in 1875 but it was only in 1896 that the same post was created in Halifax. Administrative skills became increasingly important, especially after 1856. A small number of men with clerical experience were appointed but the absence of administrative ability was an ongoing problem for the Huddersfield force in the 1850s and 1860s and it was not until 1879 that a chief clerk was appointed. Boundary changes and subsequent augmentations created new problems. Out-stations needed to be managed on a daily basis by men who, for the most part, had been recruited more for their physique and for a different role. Unsurprisingly, given the absence of specific training, a number of men promoted to the rank of sergeant were unfit for the post. The scandal at the Lockwood sub-station, Huddersfield, was a stark illustration of a wider problem in both towns.

1848 marked a turning point in the policing of both towns but the first generation of 'new' policing was beset by major challenges in terms of management, administration and rank-and-file performance. Training, at all levels, took place largely on the job and a significant number of men – again at all levels – were found wanting. Society was policed but often partially and imperfectly. Significant improvement, never linear, was discernible in both towns from the 1870s. The simple passage of time meant that – yet again at all levels – there were more men who had proved themselves of doing the job. Other, wider factors, not unique to Halifax and Huddersfield, also played a part – changes in the labour market, changes in the basic skills of the workforce and changing perceptions and expectations of policing. By the late-nineteenth century both forces were not only larger, more complex and more bureaucratic but also more efficient than their predecessors.



## Appendix 1

**Table 10A : Comparative pay, constables and sergeants, Halifax & Huddersfield, 1870 -1901 -(1st class constable and 1st class sergeant shillings and pence per week and 1st class inspector pounds and shillings per annum)**

	1870	1881	1891	1901
Halifax 1st Class Constable	23	26/6 – 28	25/6 – 30	25 – 33
Huddersfield 1st Class Constable	22 – 23	28	28 – 30	29 – 35
Halifax 1st Class Sergeant	28	31 – 35/6	31 – 33	33 – 40
Huddersfield 1st Class Sergeant	24 – 27	34	34 – 37	34 – 38
Halifax 1st Class Inspector	78	104	110	105 – 130
Huddersfield 1st Class Inspector	104	106 – 12s	119-12s	150

Source: HMIC annual reports

## Endnotes

- 1 C Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History*, Harlow, Pearson, 1996 makes no reference. D Taylor, *The new police in nineteenth-century England*, Manchester University Press, 1997 makes a few passing references as does S H Palmer, *Police and protest in England and Ireland, 1780 – 1850*, Cambridge University Press, 1988. N Pye, *The Home Office & the Chartists, 1838 -48*, Pontypool, Merlin, 2013 considers the towns at greater length but within a specific focus and time frame.
- 2 For details see the excellent and succinct account in J A Hargreaves, *Halifax*, Lancaster, Carnegie, 2003.
- 3 G Philips, 'Walks Around Huddersfield. No.1,' *Bradford Observer*, 2 September 1847
- 4 See *Halifax Express*, 21 November 1841 and *Halifax Guardian* 7 January 1843 and 6 June 1843. For a more critical view see *Halifax Guardian* 21 September 1844. Public health rather than public order dominated the incorporation campaign. See J Posner, 'The establishment and development of the New Police in Halifax, 1848 – 1914,' unpublished Ph.D., University of Huddersfield, 2014, especially p.37ff.
- 5 Minutes of the Proceedings of a Parliamentary Inquiry on the Huddersfield Improvement Bill, February 1848, Kirklees archive, KMT 18/2/1/1. See particularly the evidence of local magistrate, John Sutcliffe and the paid parochial constable, William Townend.
- 6 *Halifax Guardian*, 19 August 1848
- 7 *Leeds Mercury*, 27 May 1848 and *Halifax Guardian*, 8 July 1846. 178 applications were received for the posts of sergeant and constable.
- 8 Figures calculated from Posner, 'New Police in Halifax,' appendix 1, p.294'
- 9 For details see Posner, 'New Police in Halifax,' pp.37-43
- 10 *Halifax Guardian*, 2 February 1850
- 11 The figures for Huddersfield refer to the period 1848-68.
- 12 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 2 November 1850
- 13 Huddersfield watch, fire and lighting committee minutes, KMT 18/2/3/14/1, 10 February 1857, 22 February 1858, 21 February 1859 and 23 January 1860. The forces perquisite fund was distributed in terms of performance, albeit tempered by considerations of seniority.
- 14 For a more detailed account see D Taylor, 'A fit man to be at the head of the police': Police Superintendents and Watch Committees in the first generation of 'new policing': a Yorkshire perspective,' in K Stevenson, D J Cox & I Channing, eds, *Leading the Police: a History of Chief Constables, 1835 – 2017*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2018, pp.15 – 32.

- 15 *Halifax Guardian*, 19 August 1848. The word was used in the sense of excellent.
- 16 *Halifax Guardian*, 9 September 1848. The bye-laws ran to sixty-five pages but leaflets were distributed explaining the regulations.
- 17 *Halifax Guardian*, 29 September 1849 and Halifax Watch Committee Minutes, HXM, 10 October 1853
- 18 The number of pamphlets and leaflets distributed to shopkeepers and households in the town, explaining various by-laws or changes in legislation, was evidence of such an approach.
- 19 Halifax Watch Committee Minutes, HXM, 23 February 1863. Slum-owning council members had been noted earlier in the Ranger report on Halifax. Posner, 'New Police in Halifax.' P.71.
- 20 *Halifax Guardian*, 16 March 1872
- 21 *Halifax Courier*, 22 June 1872
- 22 *Halifax Guardian*, 23 March & 17 August, 1872 and *Halifax Courier*, 15 June 1872
- 23 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 11 May 1850
- 24 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 8 April and 15 July 1854
- 25 Commissioner Shaw compared members of the watch committee to company directors, *Huddersfield Examiner*, 4 August 1855
- 26 *Leeds Mercury*, 3 January 1856
- 27 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 16 October 1858
- 28 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 November 1857. The minutes of the watch committee contain no reference to this matter.
- 29 Huddersfield Watch Committee Minutes, 18/2/3/14/1,11 for 8 October 1859
- 30 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 11 October 1862 citing letters dated 25 & 30 August and 2 September 1862. The *Chronicle* was edited by Joshua Hobson who had contacts among the commissioners, who leaked him information that was not recorded in the official minutes.
- 31 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 9 November 1867
- 32 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 July 1866/1859 and
- 33 For further details see Posner, 'New Police in Halifax,' chapter 3.
- 34 *Halifax Courier*, 21 February & 13 June 1903 and *Halifax Guardian*, 13 June 1903
- 35 Thomas Hemingway and William Bradley served eleven and twelve years respectively before being promoted while George Crossley waited seventeen years, though he did make inspector two years after his first promotion.
- 36 Halifax Watch Committee minutes, 3 & 23 October 1876, *Leeds Times*, 8

July & 28 October 1876, *Leeds Mercury*, 5 October 1876 and *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 26 October 1876

- 37 Data from the watch committee minutes collated by Posner show 78 recorded offences in the years 1876 -85 when the force numbered approximately 75 men. In the years 1895 -1903 the number of recorded offences had fallen to 28 in a force of around 100 men. In other words, a shift from an average of one offence per man to an average of one offence per three men.
- 38 *Halifax Comet*, 20 June 1903, *Halifax Evening Courier*, 17 February 1903 and *Halifax Daily Guardian*, 9 January 1909
- 39 For a more detailed account see D Taylor, 'Policing Victorian Huddersfield: Chief Constable Withers and the Refounding of the Borough Force,' in D Griffiths, ed., *Making Up for Lost Time: The Pioneering Years of Huddersfield Corporation*, Huddersfield Local History Society, 2018, pp.61 - 83.
- 40 Huddersfield Improvement Commission, Minutes of Watch, Fire and Lighting Committee, 1860 – 68, 18/2/3/14/2, 23 December 1867 Committee, KMT 18/12/2/84/1, 8 October 1868 and 11 January 1869
- 41 Huddersfield Improvement Commission, Minutes of Watch, Fire and Lighting Committee, 1860 – 68, 18/2/3/14/2, 30 December 1867
- 42 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 23 May 1868
- 43 Huddersfield Minutes of Borough Watch Committee, KMT 18/12/2/84/1, 8 October 1868 and 11 January 1869
- 44 Huddersfield Minutes of Borough Watch Committee, KMT 18/12/2/84/1, 8 March 1869
- 45 In total there are complete records for 132 men. Partial records exist, either in watch committee minutes or the Defaulters Book, for a further eighteen individuals.
- 46 In his annual report for 1869 he wrote of assaults that 'deter many persons from joining and cause many to leave' the force. *Huddersfield Examiner*, 15 January 1870
- 47 Withers was not the only senior figure to be 'poached' by Bradford, as several of his supporters pointed out.
- 48 Huddersfield Minutes of Borough Watch Committee, KMT 18/12/2/84/3, 7 April 1879
- 49 Huddersfield Minutes of Borough Watch Committee, KMT 18/12/2/84/3, 12 May 1879
- 50 Huddersfield Minutes of Borough Watch Committee, KMT 18/12/2/84/3, 9 June 1879
- 51 In July 1880, having already lost ninety-one days to sickness, the police

surgeon reported that White would 'never be able to resume his duties,' but White requested to continue and was granted three-months' sick leave. At the end of this period the police surgeon reported that White was 'unable to walk' and repeated his earlier judgement. Still White asked for a further period of sick leave but this time the watch committee refused and superannuated him.

- 52 This evidence is not comprehensive and does not compare with the detailed examination of police health in Hull by the police surgeon, Henry Munroe, *Medical Statistics of the Hull Police Force from November 19, 1857, to 19 November 1879* cited in D R Welsh, 'The Reform of Urban Policing in Victorian England: A Study of Kingston upon Hull, 1836 -1866,' unpublished Ph.D., University of Hull, 1997, p,357ff.
- 53 Huddersfield Watch committee minutes, KMT 18/12/2/84/3 30 May and 9 June 1879
- 54 Huddersfield Watch committee minutes, KMT 18/12/2/84/3 8 December 1879
- 55 Huddersfield Minutes of Borough Watch Committee, KMT 18/12/2/84/3, 7 July and 11 August 1879
- 56 Huddersfield Minutes of Borough Watch Committee, KMT 18/12/2/84/3, 8 December 1879
- 57 Huddersfield Minutes of Borough Watch Committee, KMT 18/12/2/84/4, 10 January 1881
- 58 He was not alone, see the record of Samuel Horner and Daniel Runham for a similar combination.
- 59 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 23 July 1888
- 60 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 20 August 1891
- 61 Huddersfield Minutes of Borough Watch Committee, KMT 18/12/2/84/3, 9 February 1880
- 62 *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 28 July & 7 August 1897

# 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.’<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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
<b>Halifax</b>				
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
<b>Huddersfield</b>				
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

### **Drunkenness 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.'<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> Here and in other Castlegate beerhouses there were opportunities for betting on fist fights, dog fights and rattling events, several openly advertised in *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*.<sup>6</sup> 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.'<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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.'<sup>13</sup> 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.'<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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.'<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.'<sup>22</sup> 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.'<sup>23</sup> 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.'<sup>24</sup> Withers continued to make his presence felt the following year. 30 per cent of all licensees were prosecuted, 36 per cent of beerhouse keepers.<sup>25</sup> 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.'<sup>26</sup> 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.'<sup>27</sup> 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.'<sup>28</sup>

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.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> 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.'<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup> '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.<sup>33</sup>

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.<sup>34</sup> 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.'<sup>35</sup> 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.'<sup>36</sup> 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.'<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> The *Huddersfield Examiner* sarcastically referred to 'that instinctive horror of gambling which is so strong in the [Huddersfield] force.'<sup>40</sup> Nor was the force's reputation enhanced when superintendent Thomas was accused of gambling with a prisoner at the quarter sessions at Pontefract.<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup>

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.'<sup>43</sup> 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.'<sup>44</sup> 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?’<sup>45</sup> – 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.<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup> 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.’<sup>48</sup> 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.’<sup>49</sup> 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.’<sup>50</sup> 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.'<sup>51</sup> 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.'<sup>52</sup> Exceptionally, public pressure led to police action, as in 1895, following a high-profile police raid on the Acorn Inn.<sup>53</sup> 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.'<sup>54</sup> As the town's mayor noted 'the practice of playing pitch and toss, especially on the Sabbath, prevailed to a great extent' across Halifax.<sup>55</sup> 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.<sup>56</sup> 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.'<sup>57</sup> 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'<sup>58</sup> – 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.<sup>59</sup> 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.<sup>60</sup> 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.<sup>61</sup> 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.<sup>62</sup>

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.'<sup>63</sup> 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.'<sup>64</sup> 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).<sup>65</sup> 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.'<sup>66</sup> 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.<sup>67</sup>

**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.’<sup>68</sup> 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.<sup>69</sup> 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.<sup>70</sup> And then there was the very occasional odd-ball prosecution, such as that of Dr Monck, the well-known spiritualist in 1876.<sup>71</sup>

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.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, the newly-incorporated Halifax watch committee published (and publicised) a sixty-page booklet detailing the eighty-eight local bye laws,<sup>73</sup> which provided for 'the suppression of almost everything which can be deemed, or may become, a public nuisance or annoyance.'<sup>74</sup> 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.<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup> Likewise, Hilton had to 'put on extra men in the evenings to see that the men did not drive furiously.'<sup>77</sup> 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.'<sup>78</sup> PC Turner, was disciplined by the watch committee having 'very much exceeded his duty' in 1851, but such action was rare.<sup>79</sup> Assaults on policeman and prisoner rescues more than doubled in the early 1850s.<sup>80</sup> The initial response in Huddersfield was more muted.<sup>81</sup> 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.<sup>82</sup> 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.<sup>83</sup> On more than one occasion, 'the Irish cry' brought a crowd onto the street.<sup>84</sup> 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.<sup>85</sup> There were 'numerous and frequent ... complaints [in Halifax] that these peace officers are the first aggressors and sole cause of disturbances.'<sup>86</sup> 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.<sup>87</sup>

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.<sup>88</sup> 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.<sup>89</sup> 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.'<sup>90</sup>

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.'<sup>91</sup> This they did on several occasions and at times even took to the rooftops and threw 'broken slates at the [police] officers' below.'<sup>92</sup> 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.'<sup>93</sup> 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.'<sup>94</sup> 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*.<sup>95</sup> 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.<sup>96</sup>

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.<sup>97</sup>

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.'<sup>98</sup> 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.'<sup>99</sup> 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.'<sup>100</sup> The chief constable Clarkson was booed as he walked the streets.<sup>101</sup> 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.<sup>102</sup> 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.'<sup>103</sup> 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.<sup>104</sup> 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.<sup>105</sup> 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.'<sup>106</sup> 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.'<sup>107</sup> 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.'<sup>108</sup> 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.'<sup>109</sup> 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.<sup>110</sup> 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.'<sup>111</sup> 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?<sup>112</sup> 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.<sup>113</sup>

### **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.<sup>114</sup> 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.'<sup>115</sup> 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.'<sup>116</sup> Constable Taylor, one of the men on special duty, saw 'nothing to find fault with in the conduct of the strikers.'<sup>117</sup> 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.<sup>118</sup> 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.'<sup>119</sup> 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](http://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

# 12 Anachronisms and arrivals – the smaller borough forces

THE DEVELOPMENT OF policing in England and Wales is often presented as a relatively straightforward, even natural progression starting with the Municipal Corporations Act, 1835 and the Rural Police Acts, 1839/40 and culminating in the County and Borough Police Act, 1856. The reality was a more complex and more dynamic process that continued to play out into the last decades of the nineteenth century. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the experiences of smaller borough forces, charting the appearance of new borough forces in some areas and the disappearance of others. The amalgamation of smaller forces into the WRCC – Barnsley and Keighley in 1856 and Pontefract and Ripon in 1887 – can be seen as rationalisation of provision. Similarly, the creation of separate forces in Dewsbury (1863) and Rotherham (1882) but also Barnsley (1896) can be viewed as logical responses to the growth of these towns. But even this depiction is problematic. Why did the Pontefract and Ripon forces not disappear earlier? Why were the Rotherham and Barnsley forces not created sooner? On closer examination other awkward questions arise. Why did Batley, so similar in socio-economic terms to neighbouring Dewsbury, not establish its own force? And why, if Barnsley re-established its own force, did Keighley not follow suit?

In 1875, outside of the five great and middling towns, there were five other borough with their own forces, ranging in size from c.30,000 (Dewsbury and Wakefield), through c.20,000 (Doncaster) to less than 10,000 (Pontefract and Ripon).<sup>1</sup> The WRCC was responsible for the policing of twelve towns, including three municipal boroughs, with populations ranging from c.12,000 (Idle, Liversidge and Shipley) to over 20,000 (Barnsley, Batley and Rotherham).<sup>\*</sup> By 1900, the two smallest borough forces had been amalgamated into the WRCC and two boroughs (Barnsley and Rotherham)

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\* The other towns were Bingley, Birstall, Gomersal, North Brierley and Pudsey.

had their own forces, leaving seven towns, notably Batley and Keighley with populations of c.30,000, still policed by the county force.\*\*

## Wakefield

In comparison with dynamic industrial centres such as Halifax, let alone Bradford, Wakefield was more important as the administrative centre of the West Riding, as well as being the site of the WRCC headquarters. Demographic growth was modest – its population roughly doubled in the second half of the nineteenth century, topping 50,000 in 1901 – and it experienced fewer of the socio-economic tensions seen in several other nearby towns. Like Halifax, it was incorporated in 1848. The newly-established watch committee oversaw the creation of a twenty-one strong force, including three sergeants and sixteen constables. Incorporation was about more than policing, but there had been complaints about the failure of the two police officers to work in ‘union and harmony’ with the nightwatchmen and their inability to safeguard property.<sup>2</sup> The chief of police, John Brierley, was later reprimanded by the town magistrates for ‘seldom being found at the police office ... [and] not paying a proper obedience to the town authorities.’<sup>3</sup> While the newly-created force coped with routine matters, it struggled to contain larger-scale disturbances. In late 1849 ‘an effigy of the late Mayor was paraded through the streets, preceded by men bearing torches; a band of musicians and a considerable number of drunken and disorderly people.’<sup>4</sup> The yeomanry and police from Leeds had to be called in to quell the disturbance but proposals to augment the force were resisted, with some councillors calling for a reduction in numbers.<sup>5</sup> Few went as far as Councillor Green – ‘putting down the whole force’ – but numbers were cut by one in 1854.

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\*\* The other towns were Harrogate, Morley, Ossett, Pudsey, and Todmorden.

The one truly contentious issue – other than the wisdom or otherwise of allowing officers to grow moustaches – was the 1854 police bill with its proposal to amalgamate borough forces into county forces, which aroused strong local opposition against ‘unwarrantable attacks.’ At a public meeting called by the mayor of Wakefield, opposition to Grey’s ‘obnoxious’ bill evoked memories of ‘our forebears,’ who had ‘struggled for, fought for, and bled for’ local privileges.<sup>6</sup> A few spoke in favour, only to be shouted down, and the majority voted to petition parliament against the proposed legislation. Even the more moderate 1856 act, which allowed boroughs, irrespective of size, to amalgamate with their county forces was viewed with suspicion. Local politicians in Wakefield, like their counterparts in Huddersfield, made clear their opposition to colonel Cobbe’s attempts to incorporate as many smaller boroughs into the WRCC as possible. Nor did those fears entirely disappear. As late as 1866 and in a debate over the enforcement of the Cattle Disease Act, a proposal for close co-operation between borough and county forces in the matter was opposed on the grounds that ‘allowing the county police to come into town [would be] the thin end of the wedge.’<sup>7</sup>

Wakefield retained its force but independence was no guarantee of unanimity. Expenditure levels and perceived value for money were central to the debate, even before 1856. Arguments became more heated as the borough force was deemed ‘insufficient in numbers to meet the everyday requirements of the borough,’ with the town inadequately protected at night and at day, on each of the first three inspections. At least one participant in the local debate, councillor Green argued that ‘the shortest and best course would be to turn all the force over to Colonel Cobbe and the county force.’<sup>8</sup> The benefits that would accrue, he continued, would save ‘the town a great deal of money and the council a great deal of trouble.’ Although the amalgamation option was not taken up, Green’s comments are a reminder of the range of policing options. The proposed augmentation of ten men entailed a significant increase of expenditure, even with the government grant, and was only approved in 1860 after long and acrimonious debates. Nor did arguments over the size of the force disappear. In 1863 some councillors remained convinced that the Wakefield police were ‘too numerous and require reduction,’ and numbers were cut by four (15 per cent) 1866.<sup>9</sup> Under external pressure, numbers were increased by six in 1868 and by a further seven two years later, bringing the force to thirty-seven.



The 1860s and 1870s were problematic decades in terms of recruitment and retention, exacerbated by low pay and poor conditions of service. Posts went unfilled, beats were overlong and protection geographically patchy. Variations were worryingly high. In 1869 six men resigned and a further three were dismissed, a combined total roughly equivalent to 30 per cent of the force. As the watch committee minutes bear witness, ‘a large number of officers’ were fined and reprimanded for ‘neglect of duty and particularly for drunkenness.’<sup>10</sup> ‘The present police,’ one councillor complained in 1865, ‘were almost in a state of insubordination.’<sup>11</sup> Worse was to follow when ‘altercations between the inspectors and the men under them’ became known.<sup>12</sup> Councillors, notably alderman Holdsworth, spoke of the police being in ‘a very unsatisfactory condition,’ plagued by ‘great disorganisation,’ which saw the chief constable’s orders being disobeyed.<sup>13</sup> Such were the recruitment difficulties that men, known to have been dismissed from police service, were re-appointed. An exasperated HMIC Elgee told the town clerk that ‘you don’t improve [the force] by getting dismissed men.’<sup>14</sup> But there were leadership failures at the top of the force and in the watch committee. The long-serving superintendent McDonald was replaced in 1868 but, while more active, his successor James Chipstead was unable to improve the discipline. Nor were the police successful in dealing with crime. During his inspection in 1871 and again in 1876, Elgee drew attention to low number of arrests in relation to reported felonies.<sup>15</sup> As the *Wakefield Free Press* observed Chipstead was ‘not ... one of the cleverest or most far-seeing’ of men.<sup>16</sup> Yet it was not until September 1877 that the watch committee grasped the nettle and ordered the superannuation of the superintendent, ‘incapable from age and infirmity of body and mind.’<sup>17</sup>

His replacement was Charles Clarkson, one-time chief constable of Halifax. Once again, he proved himself to be a strict disciplinarian and a determined enforcer of the law. Men with poor disciplinary records, such as PCs Lambert and Stewart, both with serious drink problems, were allowed to resign. Even PC Bleasby, ‘a good constable,’ but who ‘could not let servant girls alone,’ was given the same option to avoid dismissal.<sup>18</sup> Clarkson also sought to improve morale and create the *esprit de corps*, so lacking when he took office, by arguing for improved pay and better educational and recreational facilities.<sup>19</sup> In contrast to his time in Halifax, Clarkson stressed the role of the police as ‘the guardians and not the oppressors of the public,’

and exhorted his men to 'use no more violence than was necessary' and even telling them that 'a kind word from a policeman would quell a disturbance ... [whilst] the display of a tyrannous kind of authority might cause a tumult.'<sup>20</sup> In his annual report for 1888 he again stressed that 'the police are forbearing and do not make arrests unless absolutely necessary.'<sup>21</sup> Clarkson was held in high regard by many local politicians. Councillor Mander spoke warmly of 'an able and respected chief constable,' under whom had developed 'a good police force ... as efficient and well-disciplined as any in the West Riding of Yorkshire.'<sup>22</sup> Clarkson himself drew attention to the very few cases of assaults on the police, compared with the 1860s and 1870s when colliers and navvies fought with police, and that there had been 'no accusation of undue severity or brutal behaviour of any kind.'<sup>23</sup> In an unprecedented show of support, a mass meeting, estimated at 5000 people, mainly from the working classes, demonstrated their support for Clarkson.<sup>24</sup>

Despite tangible improvements in the 1880s, a more disciplined force than under McDonald and Chipstead, and relatively few serious offences, Clarkson came under pressure from moral reformers in town. Sabbatarians pressed for firmer action on Sunday trading, which in turn led to a clash with the local Tradesmen's Association, and from nonconformists concerned with 'the widespread evil of betting and gambling,' especially in public houses during prohibited hours.<sup>25</sup> The presence of 'an intolerant Liberal caucus' led to dissension with the watch committee and the town council at large.<sup>26</sup> Members of the watch committee were accused of permitting 'gross infractions of the law,' treating the law 'as a plaything to serve the private ends of privileged parties.'<sup>27</sup> Despite claims that Clarkson had been 'prevented from fulfilling his duty ... because men in authority have had interests at stake which would suffer by a rigid enforcement of the law,' Clarkson's resignation was accepted by the watch committee, a decision which 'created profound dissatisfaction ... [and] evoked a heartfelt sympathy for the Chief Constable.'<sup>28</sup> There is a certain irony in the fact that Clarkson's fall in Wakefield mirrored that of Pearson in Halifax. Despite Clarkson's reputation and the popular support in some quarters, public and political opinion swung quickly against him and his supporters on the watch committee. The new chief constable was exhorted to reassert discipline, 'not ... of late years a prominent characteristic,' and the newly-elected watch committee averred there would be 'no more winking at offences under the Licensing Acts, no more condonation of practices which

everyone have known to be illegal ... carried on with impunity before the very eyes of the police.'<sup>29</sup> The truth of the matter remains unclear but Clarkson's defence, that it was 'never his policy ... to harass or irritate any tradesman, publican or private person ... unless absolutely necessary for the weal of the general public,' hints at a degree of toleration, a willingness to overlook all but the most egregious breaches of the law.<sup>30</sup>

Thomas Harris became chief constable in the summer of 1889. He made an immediate impact on the force. By the end of 1891, from a force of forty, four men had been dismissed, four required to resign and another four discharged with a gratuity. He also made an impact on the town as the number of prosecutions for drunkenness increased by 150 per cent in the early 1890s. Opinion in the town was divided and Clarkson's suicide in July 1890 added to the bitterness of local politics. Defenders of the new order, such as councillor Nicholson, praised the new chief constable for creating 'a police force not only in name but in reality.'<sup>31</sup> Long-term defenders of Clarkson, such as alderman McGirr, condemned a 'system of espionage ... a most objectionable system and more in keeping with Continental practices,' as policemen visited public houses twice and thrice a day to check for gambling, while newer, working-class voices complained of the attempts to turn Wakefield into 'a new Jerusalem.'<sup>32</sup> Despite his determination to stamp out pub-based gambling, Harris, in his evidence to the royal commission on the licensing laws, was forced to concede that 'dishonest trade' was still conducted by some publicans and that getting evidence on illegal betting was extremely difficult. In part this reflected the strength of popular support for gambling in its many forms; in part it reflected what Harris conceded to be the difficulty of maintaining 'the efficiency of a small force.'<sup>33</sup>

The experience of Wakefield policing highlights three important points. First, and particularly in a small force, leadership was of considerable importance. While recognising the limitations of any individual, the performance of the chief constable, whether the failure of Chipstead in his later years, or the success of Harris in his early years, impacted on both the performance of the force and the enforcement of the law. Second, the pressures exerted by Sabbatarians, temperance and anti-gambling reformers impacted directly on the police, though Wakefield was not unique in this regard. Third, as Harris acknowledged, there were problems associated with small forces. Although not fundamentally different from the basic challenges

facing larger forces, there were particular problems in attracting and holding on to able men, at all levels. Pay was often higher in larger, nearby forces and promotion opportunities greater.<sup>34</sup>

## **Policing Dewsbury and Batley**

In the discussions about the remit of the WRCC in 1856/7, little was said about the unincorporated town of Dewsbury. In previous years it had been policed as part of the Dewsbury division, with a superintending constable. Some seventy men were appointed to the division by 1859. The early years were characterised by considerable instability.<sup>35</sup> The extent to which this contributed to the movement for incorporation that emerged in summer 1860 is unclear but by late 1861 leading proponents of incorporation, notably George Fearnley, subsequently mayor of the town, 'found fault with the present body of police in Dewsbury.'<sup>36</sup> His main complaint was that the town was used to train up novice officers, who, when instructed and likely to be useful, were sent elsewhere. The promise of a cheaper, more stable and more efficient borough force was part of the wider campaign, stressing the importance of local control and greater efficiency, which came to fruition in April 1862.<sup>37</sup> It soon became apparent that the practicalities of creating a separate force had not been thoroughly thought through. The policy, as far as it existed, was to depend upon the WRCC for facilities, such as offices and cells, but also personnel. A request to the Home Office that superintendent Martin of the Dewsbury division of the WRCC be permitted to be simultaneously head of the borough force was declined as illegal. In October 1862 John Thomas, one-time head constable of Huddersfield, but now a sergeant in the WRCC was appointed along with a further nine constables.

For a town of some 18,000 the number of police was grossly inadequate, as HMIC Elgee made clear in his reports throughout the 1860s and early 1870s. Only in 1874, when numbers were belatedly increased from twelve to twenty-five, that the force was deemed 'numerically efficient.' Although Dewsbury's politicians had told Cobbe that the WRCC men could and should be withdrawn, Cobbe insisted on keeping his men in the town, a decision confirmed by the county magistrates in 1863.<sup>38</sup> The refusal to augment the new force meant that Dewsbury was ineligible for Treasury

support for over a decade. The folly of such intransigence led to frustrated outburst by some local politicians, who were aware that a relatively small investment would bring in money to pay for more men. ‘They [the members of the watch committee] could have twelve more men, by paying for six,’ a frustrated Alderman Blakeley opined.<sup>39</sup> Eventually, in autumn 1873, the watch committee voted to increase the force from twelve to twenty-five, citing the need to tackle the anti-social behaviour of ‘roughs’ in ‘Little Ireland,’ that is Daw Green. The debate over policing rumbled on for several years and was more than a concern for the rates. Some simply denied the existence of any problem, notwithstanding a police/population ratio that deteriorated from 1:1500 to 1:2000, even arguing that ‘there was a deal more paid by the Corporation for servants than there ought to be.’<sup>40</sup> Others saw it as a problem of leadership under both Thomas and his successor, superintendent Millar.<sup>41</sup> ‘There was,’ councillor Auty argued, ‘no necessity for increasing the force if the present police were efficiently managed’<sup>42</sup> Not every supporter of augmentation felt the time opportune and, even then, ‘advancing the salaries [of the police] was not a very pleasant thing to do.’<sup>43</sup> More nuanced observations were made by the indefatigable councillor Fothergill. He opposed augmentation of the town force but argued frequently that a better paid force would result in ‘a more sober and superior class of officers.’<sup>44</sup> But, he continued, this would only be a partial solution because the problems, especially in the Daw Green district, required moral and educational action that the police could not offer. Describing the predominantly Irish and poverty-stricken area of Daw Green, in the casual racism of the day, alderman Hinchcliffe spoke of ‘an Arab population in the neighbourhood who paid no attention to morality.’<sup>45</sup> The answer depended upon the actions of parents, teachers and even the local catholic priest. Such arguments helped preserve the policing *status quo* but the recurring problems of disorder and increasing pressures from ratepayers finally persuaded the town council to act in 1873.

Although adjudged ‘numerically efficient’ in 1874, there remained problems, not least the management of large-scale augmentation. The Dewsbury force was not the most attractive proposition in the mid-1870s. There was ‘considerable difficulty’ in recruitment and as a consequence, several new recruits ‘did not seem likely to make efficient constables.’<sup>46</sup> HMIC Elgee’s fears were well founded. In his 1877 report he drew attention to the ‘frequent changes among the constables’ and the continuing difficulty

in recruiting 'suitable men to replace those who left.'<sup>47</sup> The size of the force continued to be problematic. On the advice of HMIC, a further four men were added to the establishment in January 1879, giving a police/population ratio of 1:850. Despite continuing population growth, the size of the Dewsbury force remained unchanged for ten years, resulting in a worsening of the police/population ratio to 1:1000, before a series of small increases resulted in a force of thirty-seven men by the turn of the century. Although never deemed inadequate, the force remained 'very small' in light of the continued growth of the town. The problems of recruitment and retention continued into the late-nineteenth century. Night-time beats remained too long in the 1880s and variations remained high. In 1886 three men were dismissed and a further three resigned from a force that numbered twenty-nine. The following year a further three men were dismissed and five more resigned. Only in the 1890s, under a new chief constable, captain Despard, did matters improve. Annual variations averaged under two between 1890 and 1894 but seven men were dismissed in the mid-1890s when, in 1896, variations rose to 20 per cent. A key factor was the limited opportunities for promotion in a small force not noted for the generosity of its pay levels, which led ambitious men to look to the larger forces, especially nearby Leeds. There was a further factor – the particular dangers of policing in Dewsbury. There was a level of anti-police sentiment in a town with a large Irish presence and a number of particularly violent strikes.

Finding the right man to lead the force proved difficult, particularly in the latter years of the century. Following the resignation of the much-criticised superintendent Millar in 1887, five men held the post in the next decade. James Arrowsmith (1885-7) moved to Bootle, attracted by the challenge of heading a larger force and by better pay. His successor, commander Scott (1887-90) moved to Salford for the same reasons. His successor, T Weatherall (1890-3), after an undistinguished term of office, resigned on health grounds. The appointment of captain Despard (1893-6) was controversial. He was the only candidate *not* to have any police experience but he was soon looking elsewhere, finally being appointed chief constable of the Lanarkshire force, where he served for thirty years. In 1896 the watch committee looked within the ranks of the town force, promoting inspector Shore, who had been in post since 1886. Seeking to explain this turnover of chief constables, the local press seized on the pre-occupation with drill,

which effectively meant the appointment of a man with military experience, and the exclusion of others with greater police experience. This was but one part of the problem. The town council was persistently unwilling to increase the size of the force. It was also less than generous in terms of pay. This meant the force, and its senior men, were working at the limits of resources. There was little incentive for chief constables to stay. Indeed, ambitious men saw Dewsbury as a stepping-stone to a larger force and greater remuneration. The benefits of Dewsbury as a testing ground were reaped by other forces but for the town it meant a lack of continuity and direction.

Overall, policing in mid- and late-Victorian Dewsbury was problematic. The town was policed and its force deemed efficient by the standards of her majesty's inspectors but, even in the late-1890s, there were barely enough men to police the town effectively. Manpower was stretched. Night beats in particular were too long, while pay rates for constables and sergeants were consistently lower than in nearby Halifax and Huddersfield. The resultant high rates of turnover led to the employment of many inexperienced men and poor leadership did not bring improvements in discipline and efficiency seen elsewhere.

In nearby Batley incorporation in 1868 also provoked a long-running debate about the best way to police the town. There was much wrangling over costs with detailed statistics bandied about freely but inconclusively. In 1875 a resolution was achieved after the town clerk, having collected information from sixteen similar-sized towns, argued that a borough force offered better protection but at a (slightly) higher cost.<sup>48</sup> There were criticisms of the WRCC in Batley, highlighting its lack of local knowledge and their short-term periods of service. As well as being more efficient, and better suited to the needs of the town, it was argued that a borough force would complete the process of change in local government set in train by incorporation.<sup>49</sup> Opponents of a separate borough force advanced a number of predictable arguments – the county force were good enough, a borough force would push up rates and the time was inopportune – but there was also a powerful argument for staying with the WRCC that looked beyond the local interests of Batley. Rather than having a collection of forces subject to local authority, councillor Jubb argued that 'they all ought to be connected together throughout the county to detect crime.'<sup>50</sup> But the most telling contribution came from outside the town. The town clerk had consulted the

Home Office and HMIC Elgee in 1878. In response, Elgee replied that ‘the existing arrangements with the West Riding Constabulary [was] preferable, both in respect to efficiency and economy to the appointment of a Borough Police Force.’<sup>51</sup> The question had been resolved but did not die away entirely. In 1887 an editorial in the *Batley News* mounted a scathing attack on the local council for ‘deliberately ignoring the ratepayers’ expressed wishes,’ and the betrayal of the town’s independence,’ all in the name of what proved to be ‘an excuse of false economy.’<sup>52</sup> But no campaign sprang up. There was occasional mention of inadequate policing at local election meetings and even a wistful regret that the town lost ‘shrewd and able’ officers, promoted elsewhere in the county but nothing more.<sup>53</sup> There were also more pressing issues in local politics – water and gas supplies, and particularly sanitation. And there was the evidence from Dewsbury that maintaining a separate borough force was far from a panacea.

### **The Dewsbury force in action**

The newly-formed Dewsbury force experienced a baptism of fire. Within months it was called upon to deal with riotous behaviour among local colliers and to cope with a crowd of irate Irish navvies, estimated to be some 4000 strong, attempting to rescue one of their number who had been arrested for murder.<sup>54</sup> Worse was to follow. A bitter strike at Oldroyd’s mill led to attacks on ‘black legs’ and their police protectors, which led to the trial of seven men for riot and assault at York Assizes. The crowd, initially estimated at 2000 but growing to 4000 by the time of the trial, swamped the local police who had to be assisted by men of the WRCC, Huddersfield and Wakefield.<sup>55</sup> The rioting, which lasted for two or three days, was the worst since ‘the memorable “plug” riots’ of 1842.<sup>56</sup> Popular anger, not exclusively directed at the police, was exacerbated by the subsequent death in prison of one of the young rioters.<sup>57</sup> These were exceptional incidents. More common were the continuing number of cases of drunkenness and assault, particularly in Daw Green with its large and poverty-stricken Irish population. With at least twenty beerhouses, ten of which were on the high street, it had a reputation for drunkenness, violence and immorality that equalled, if not exceeded that of the Castlegate area in Huddersfield. Poverty-related crimes – begging,



petty thefts and prostitution as well as gambling –were also regularly reported in the local press. More often than not drunken men and women, often repeat offenders, fought each other in twos or threes but there were also largescale fights involving fifty or more participants which involved the police. Stereotyped and scapegoated, the Irish inhabitants of Daw Green were seen to embody all that was bad about Irish immigrants.

Of particular concern to the police were the criminal activities of the ‘Young Forty’ (or ‘Young Forty Thieves’) gang, which terrorised Daw Green from the late-1860s to the early 1880s. The ‘Young Forty’ comprised some forty-five to fifty young men and was substantially larger than the Huddersfield ‘Small Gang,’ which operated at roughly the same time. John Moran was referred to as the ‘captain of the Young Forty,’ but there appear to have been several leading figures, including Francis Sullivan, Tom Robinson and the Curley brothers, Peter and Michael. Gang members were drawn from the first generation of British-born Irish. They came from some of the poorest and most overcrowded areas. The list of crimes committed by the gang ranged from using abusive language, drunk and disorderly behaviour and gambling to criminal damage, larceny and a variety of assaults, including attacks on the police and at least one incident of indecent assault. Seven individuals, aged from eleven to sixteen were accused of indecent assault in 1870 but it was alleged that this was ‘not the first outrage ... it was not safe for respectable females to go along the High Street in the evening.’<sup>58</sup> During the next decade the gang exercised a reign of terror. Attempts to bring order on the streets by the police were negated not simply by their hostility – ‘for a policeman to go [into Daw Green] was like walking into a slaughterhouse’<sup>59</sup> – but also by community protection. There were ‘those in the neighbourhood ever ready to shelter any one whose hand had been raised against the “Bobby”’<sup>60</sup> Unsurprisingly, attempts to prosecute members were thwarted by witness intimidation. Equally predictable was the oft-repeated complaint by superintendent Millar that he had insufficient men to bring order to Daw Green. As with the ‘Irish Small Gang’ in Huddersfield, prison sentences thinned gang membership. The ‘Young Forty,’ as a gang disappeared in the 1880s but many of the not-so-young members were regularly in prison. Francis Sullivan was sentenced to prison on twenty-five occasions between 1879 and 1895. Others looked for an alternative life-style but with limited success. Patrick M’Donagh joined the 10th Regiment of Foot only to desert in 1875. Michael Curley ‘for some times past [was] living the

life of a professional fighting man, and going about the country with sparring booths' but was convicted of assaulting a police constable in 1883.<sup>61</sup> As his physical prowess declined with age, he lived out a life in poverty. In 1894 he was back in prison for not returning to the workhouse when on leave.

Away from the criminality of the 'Young Forty,' and the wider incidence of drunken and disorderly behaviour, the police struggled to preserve order on the streets. Gambling was rife. Pitch-and-toss was an every-day occurrence in the streets, even in the market place, as was 'tip cat.' Men betted on knur and spell, dog races and prize fights, several of the latter taking place within the Borough Park. Similarly, begging in the street remained a cause of concern for watch committee members and members of 'respectable' society. Even with an augmented force, the police struggled to control the streets of Dewsbury. There was little love for the police. Reminiscent of the costermongers interviewed by Mayhew, 'it was a very prevalent thing for men to try to get a kick at an officer.'<sup>62</sup> Anti-police sentiments were strongest in the 1870s but as late as 1892 the *Batley News* spoke of men from Daw Green who still 'pay no regard to the police forces, borough or county.'<sup>63</sup> And the situation was no better in Batley, policed by the WRCC. The large Irish population was equally problematic, if not more so. There were several large-scale disturbances between Irish men and women and the police, in one of which a constable was killed.<sup>64</sup> Prostitution and street gambling remained sources of concern.

Dewsbury in the last-third of the nineteenth century was nominally a policed town. In the first decade of its existence the town's police force was wholly inadequate. There was a short fall in both quantity and quality. There were repeated accusations that officers turned a blind eye to out-of-hours sales and drunkenness. Treating of policemen by licensees was a recurring problem but there were also incidents of police expecting to be given a drink when they entered a pub or beerhouse. In one sense, this was a show of strength (as was demanding money from prostitutes) but in another sense it reflected the weakness of the police, particularly where anti-police sentiment was strong. On the streets, and away from the clamour of the council chamber, the police arrived at a series of pragmatic compromises that minimised hostility but also minimised prosecutions. In theory, the police had considerable power to control the lives of those they policed; but in practice, the policed could constrain the actions of the police, particularly,

though not exclusively, in towns like Dewsbury, which combined a tradition of radicalism with an influx of immigrants, many of whom had little love for figures of English authority.

### **Policing Barnsley, Keighley and Rotherham**

These three small towns were governed, in part at least, by improvement acts – dating from the 1800s in the case of Rotherham and the 1820s for the other two – which, though they contained provision for watching, were more concerned with sanitary matters. None were unpoliced by 1856, but the most vulnerable to amalgamation into the WRCC was Keighley. The local improvement commissioners had been reluctant to increase numbers. In 1848 they finally decided to double the number of watchmen – to four. Five years later they reformed the night watch, extending the time period to the hours between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m., and appointing James Kershaw as superintendent. There was also a superintending constable stationed at the Keighley lock-up in 1853. Although there was no great local dissatisfaction with policing arrangements, the limited number of men to police a town of some 18,000 people made it vulnerable to Cobbe's advances.<sup>65</sup> In an attempt to avoid amalgamation, advice was sought from Barnsley but to no avail. With the establishment of the WRCC, the town force disappeared and a Keighley division established, comprising twenty-two men, half of whom were responsible for the town.

In Barnsley, the working of its Police and Improvement Act was more problematic. There was growing criticism of the commissioners from the mid-1830s onwards and concern at the low number of men (five) for a population estimated at 13,000. A reformed night watch for the winter months was introduced but its captain, John Savage, became the centre of a vicious local debate in the early 1850s.<sup>66</sup> There were also financial considerations with some commissioners critical of the fact that the nearby Rotherham force was less expensive. On the eve of the 1856 police act, the town was policed by a sergeant, two day constables and seven night constables under a superintendent. Despite local dissatisfaction, there was opposition to Cobbe's proposals for consolidation but again to no avail. With the advent of

the WRCC, the Staincross division was allocated thirty-nine men, though less than half were stationed in Barnsley itself.

In 1835 the Rotherham improvement commissioners appointed John Bland as superintendent of police. He was to lead the town police for over twenty years, ultimately joining the WRCC when the Rotherham force was consolidated. Despite being held in high regard as an individual, there was criticism that the force he led was inadequate. In the late 1830s it comprised five watchmen and a sergeant for twenty-one weeks over winter and four watchmen and a sergeant for the rest of the year. Nonetheless, there was no willingness to increase expenditure on the police. Indeed, there were vocal critics on the commission who wanted to see police numbers reduced. Responsibility for policing was taken over by the local Board of Health in 1852, under the Police Clauses Act which had been incorporated. The town force now comprised a superintendent, Bland, an inspector, a sergeant, two day constables and seven night constables. In addition, there were two day and night constables for 'the agricultural districts, on the edge of town. Bland was concerned with the problems of finding and retaining suitable men at the rates of pay on offer. With the introduction of a county force imminent, local opinion hardened. 'The district,' according to a report in the *Sheffield Independent*, 'is now sufficiently watched by night as well as by day, to the entire satisfaction of the inhabitants.'<sup>67</sup> The assertion was not enough to preserve this small force. Once again, local judgment was over-ridden by the government and the Home Office, which had more stringent, though still rudimentary, criteria for efficiency and was actively seeking to reduce the number of small police forces across the country.

The short-term impact of amalgamation with the WRCC was mixed. In quantitative terms there was an improvement of the ratio between police and population in Keighley but there was also considerable turnover of personnel. Some men were dismissed as unsuitable and ineffective, others resigned, unwilling to become part of a larger entity with less of a local focus. Further, transfers to other divisions added to early instability. Of the first cohort in the Keighley division, twelve, or 50 percent, served less than a year. Four served for five or more years, one of whom was dismissed and another died in service. Only Joseph Greenwood served more than ten years, during which he became a first-class constable and was promoted to the merit class. Almost as many men (eleven) were transferred as were dismissed or resigned.

Of these eleven, three went on to a longer career elsewhere in the county. There were eleven men in the division with previous police service, including four Keighley nightwatchmen. The policy, although understandable, was not a success. Only James Gawthorpe, previously a paid constable at Harden, served for more than five years. It is no coincidence that three of these men were aged forty or over when appointed to the WRCC, and three more were in their late 30s. Any continuity with the past was soon gone and the division, and the town of Keighley, was soon policed by outsiders. Nor was the situation helped by problems at the top. John Cheeseborough, a man with links to the town, served as superintendent for five years but there was a dismaying turnover of inspectors. Two (Hey and Shuttleworth) were dismissed and another (Sykes) shot himself after only six months in the division. Only William Gill, who later became deputy chief constable, had a successful career. Nor did the establishment satisfy the inspectorate. HMIC Woodford pointed out the need for more men as early as 1857 and his successor, Elgee, was highly critical of the inadequacies of police accommodation and cells in Keighley for much of the 1870s. Yet, despite the earlier professed commitment to a town force, there was little sign that local politicians, either on the local board of health or later, the town council, had any great desire to establish an independent force for the town. The pressures for change that emerged in Barnsley and Rotherham, did not appear in Keighley. 'Civic pride' arguments, influential elsewhere were muted while economic concerns remained a powerful barrier to change. There was a general acceptance, satisfaction would be too strong a word, with the manner in which the town was policed as part of the county constabulary.

This was not the case in Barnsley. As in Keighley, there was a quantitative improvement following assimilation into the county force but a similar churn of men. Over half (twenty-five of thirty-nine) left within a year and only seven served more than five years. Again, the authorities looked to men with prior police experience – 50 per cent fell into this category – but again with mixed results. Just over half were dismissed or resigned after a short career and only two were promoted, one to inspector and one superintendent. The rest were pensioned after long careers as the workhorses of the division. There were still many in Barnsley itself who hankered after the days of the Barnsley Police Act. The fact that there were few Barnsley-born men in the first cohort rankled and there were a number of incidents, such as the dismissal of the

popular PC Wetherill, that added to the feeling that the interests of Barnsley were not properly considered.<sup>68</sup> But although Barnsley became a municipal borough in 1869, and notwithstanding developments in nearby Rotherham in the early 1880s, the demand for a separate Barnsley force did not become a major issue in the 1870s, not least because it was estimated that a force of sixteen men would be required in place of the ten men of the WRCC presently stationed in the town.<sup>69</sup> The balance of the argument did not swing until the early 1890s, when the old arguments – that Barnsley's needs were not being met by the strangers to the district in the WRCC – resurfaced with greater force. Despite some concerns about the financial costs, others argued that expenditure could be better controlled (and the police better managed) with a borough force. It was even claimed that there was strong support 'among the working men of Barnsley for the establishment of a borough force,' though this might have been wishful thinking on the part of the *Barnsley Chronicle*.<sup>70</sup> In November 1893 the council voted in favour of a borough police force by ten votes to eight. Wider opinion was also divided. The anonymous contributor to the *Chronicle's* 'Notes and Queries' column claimed that support for a borough force was confined to 'a narrow and not entirely disinterested circle.'<sup>71</sup> In fact, practicalities, particularly the need to find adequate cell space, were the biggest problem. Sharing county property was not a long-term solution. And then there was the size of the establishment to be considered. In discussions with the Home Office, HMIC Croft made clear that fifty men would be needed. The council, conscious of costs, decided, after a lengthy discussion and on the recommendation of the watch committee, that forty 'would be ample.'<sup>72</sup> By the autumn of 1896 the Barnsley borough force was ready to take to the streets. The forty men was significantly larger than the thirty or so men of the Barnsley division of the WRCC allocated to the town in the 1890s but still left Croft sceptical of their adequacy as a force.<sup>73</sup>

By this time, in nearby Rotherham, a borough force had been in existence for almost two decades. The advent of the county force had been unsuccessfully resisted by members of the Rotherham Board of Health, who continued to argue for the re-establishment of 'the old system of policing,' as late as summer 1860.<sup>74</sup> The early experience of the new county force was little different from that in Barnsley or Keighley. 60 per cent of the first cohort had gone in the first year, 80 per cent by the fifth. Married men with

families were more likely to resign, men with previous police experience more likely to be dismissed. Inevitably, there were men who went on to a successful career, some remaining in the division. There was also strong leadership from superintendent John Gillet, who led the division from 1857 to 1880. Nonetheless, to a greater degree than elsewhere and from an earlier date, there was dissatisfaction in Rotherham with the WRCC. Echoing earlier anti-police sentiments, there were complaints that the county police were ‘busybodies in uniform,’ willing to lie to gain a conviction but unwilling to deal with serious crime in the town.<sup>75</sup> Their insensitivity towards prisoners, marched ‘half-naked and in handcuffs’ to the railway station, aroused hostile comment, as did their inability to deal with threats to order, such as the election riot of 1865.<sup>76</sup> Following reports of police violence and accusations of lack of police discretion, the *Sheffield Independent* opined that ‘the people of Rotherham have no great respect for the police force at the best of times,’ let alone in the aftermath of the riot.<sup>77</sup> It was not just in the pages of the liberal press that the argument was made that Rotherham was too big and too important to be treated like a village and that a separate borough force would ensure effective local control. Success was far from guaranteed. The advocates of a separate borough force would have to argue their case repeatedly for the next seventeen years before they carried the argument.

Rotherham police reformers faced several obstacles. First, the WRCC was not an unchanging entity. Of particular significance was the decision in 1868 to split the old Upper Strafforth and Tickhill division, thereby creating two new divisions, Sheffield and Rotherham. This recognition of the importance of the rapidly-expanding town was reinforced by decisions to increase the Rotherham division establishment in 1874 and again in 1878. The increases were not enough to satisfy critics of the WRCC, but it made it more difficult to argue that Rotherham’s needs were being overlooked. A further barrier to police reform was to be found in the wider world of town politics. Rotherham’s politicians had a variety of major problems to tackle. The sanitary condition of the town was urgent, not least after the smallpox epidemic of 1872, and there were other pressing questions, such as the quality of the water supply and the provision of gas, not to mention providing a new market and slaughterhouse, let alone a free library. As a consequence, police reform at times lost its saliency, being at the forefront of local politics only in the early and mid-1870s and again in the early 1880s.

In the 1870s police reformers stressed the inadequacies of the Rotherham division force. With only twenty-two constables in a town of some 30,000 they were unable to deal with drunken women brawling in the streets, prostitutes congregating in Wellgate and the flood of beggars, allegedly driven out of Sheffield by a more efficient force.<sup>78</sup> It was also argued explicitly that the men sent there for training and retained in the town were 'the whole of the "scum" of the riding.'<sup>79</sup> More tactfully, to the complaints of tradesmen about over-zealous policing of obstructions in the streets, was added a wider critique of an out-of-touch and unsympathetic county force. Such manifest shortcomings, it was argued, could be remedied only by the town having control of its own police force. Defenders of the *status quo* advanced three main counter-arguments. First, there was the simple denial of any need for change. 'There were few towns,' argued councillor Gummer, 'so free from crime' as Rotherham.<sup>80</sup> Second, was the acceptance of the need for some police reform but a denial that now was the time, especially given other pressing issues such as public health. Third, and most powerful was the claim that police reform was too expensive, too much of a burden on ratepayers. The introduction of a borough force would (allegedly) see the police rate doubling from 2d in the pound to 4d.<sup>81</sup> Added to which was the £5000 to £6000 costs of building accommodation for the police and cells for prisoners. And all, as councillor Neil argued, for a mere 'ten or twelve extra' men, who, as his colleague alderman Guest noted, would probably be no better than the men presently policing Rotherham.<sup>82</sup> These were powerful arguments that delayed police reform until the early 1880s, by which time new arguments were presented. The themes of police inadequacy and insensitivity were less prominent and were buttressed by an appeal to local civic pride. The need for local control was now presented as 'the last link in the complete management of the town.'<sup>83</sup> And to add force to the argument, the town clerk produced details of towns smaller than Rotherham that had their own police forces. The arguments against were largely unchanged. A memorial from 'some sixty manufacturers, shopkeepers and other ratepayers' prayed that 'the matter [of a borough police] should remain in abeyance until after the inevitable sewage question had been dealt with.'<sup>84</sup> The added burden on ratepayers was also foregrounded. Opinion was shifting but there were still lengthy and acrimonious arguments and narrow votes that finally resulted in the decision to create a borough force. The accident of personality, in the form of a mayor



prepared to use his casting vote on more than one occasion, was critical in a council that remained evenly and bitterly divided. There was one further point – a growing awareness on the part of leading opponents that the tide of opinion was turning decisively. Councillor Jenkins, a long-time critique of police reform, conceded ‘it was time for hard words to end.’ The council had voted for a borough force and ‘however objectionable the police may be (and he did not elaborate on this point) ...they were now committed to having them [borough policemen] and they ought to make the best of them.’<sup>85</sup> On the first of July the new, thirty-two-man force started its duties.

### **The Barnsley and Rotherham forces in action**

The new Barnsley force combined relative youth with experience. Chief constable Turner was 31 years old and had eight years of police experience in Rotherham and Dewsbury. His two inspectors, both in their late-20s, Butler and Harrap, had seven and nine years’, respectively. Further, three of the four sergeants had at least five years’ experience. In contrast, three quarters of the constables had served less than one year.<sup>86</sup> From the outset there was doubt as to its numerical adequacy of the force. The watch committee recommended an agreement with Sheffield corporation for ‘temporary additional police services from time to time as required.’<sup>87</sup> To attract men, improved pay rates were approved but annual variations in the late-1890s at roughly 12½ per cent, were significantly higher than in the more-established and larger forces in Halifax and Huddersfield. Nonetheless, the sceptical HMIC Croft was sufficiently satisfied with the men and their management to deem the force efficient.

Such approval was more surprising given the well-known inadequacy of police premises, including cells. The existing police station was sited on the wrong side of town, away from the Sheffield-road end of town, where most arrests were made, As a consequence, prisoners were paraded through town, followed by mobs of people.<sup>88</sup> In 1898 HMIC Croft, ‘very agreeable and pleasant’ in manner, made it clear that the continued independence of the force was at stake.<sup>89</sup> The response was tardy. The proposed new police station became part of a wider plan for other municipal buildings, notably a new town hall. Financial concerns were one element in the delay but there were also local politicians, notably alderman Bailey, who wanted the borough

force to be disbanded and the town's policing to be returned to the WRCC.<sup>90</sup> He was not alone in criticising the borough police. The *Barnsley Chronicle* pointed out shortcomings and openly wondered 'whether we are better with the Borough than we formerly were with the County Force,' while among its letter-writers there were strongly-worded accusations of police inadequacy.<sup>91</sup> Ultimately, hard-line opponents of the borough force were unsuccessful, their proposal seen as 'too drastic,' but their presence was another reminder of the ongoing argument about the most effective and economical form of policing.

The concerns that were expressed about police inadequacies in the late-1890s were largely focussed on the moral state of the town, rather than on serious crime. Pitch-and-toss was ubiquitous and the police seemed powerless to prevent it. As late as 1901, there were complaints of a hundred-strong crowd, of all ages and including children, gambling on "the Midden."<sup>92</sup> To make matters worse in public houses and beerhouses 'gambling is openly practiced,' tolerated even encouraged by landlords, safe in the knowledge that police action was unlikely. In June 1899, the licensee of the Shepherd's Rest beerhouse and seven other men were prosecuted for playing dominoes for beer, in what appeared to many as a token gesture. 'It seems somewhat strange,' in the words of the *Barnsley Chronicle*, 'that an insignificant beerhouse keeper in an obscure part of town' should be prosecuted when the practice was so widespread.<sup>93</sup> In an echo of events in Halifax a generation earlier, the explanation for many critics was that the 'drink interest' had captured the watch committee and that both chief constable Turner and his successor George Butler turned a blind eye to the problem.<sup>94</sup> Barnsley, in the opinion of the *Barnsley Chronicle*, was 'one of the hottest gambling hells in England.'<sup>95</sup> The moral panic over gambling overshadowed the extent to which a desire for decorum saw police action against drunks and, to a lesser extent, vagrants; and a desire for order in the streets saw the prosecution of 'furious driving' by carters, cabmen in the town.

The newly-formed Rotherham force comprised thirty-five men, including five sergeants and thirty-eight constables, a significant increase on the two sergeants and eighteen constables of the WRCC. At its head was the experienced John Pollard, who joined the WRCC in 1867 and had been acting-inspector, later inspector in the Rotherham division since 1877. His inspector, Henry Baker had ten years' police experience, the last seven in Rotherham. The force was largely unchanged until 1891 when numbers were

increased by 20 per cent in response to population change. Further minor additions took the force to fifty-three by the end of the century.<sup>96</sup> Although not singled out as a problematic force, night beats were deemed to be too long and eight beats were doubled as late as 1900. Annual variations in the late 1880s averaged about 20 per cent. Between 1887 and 1889 twenty-one men departed, fourteen either dismissed or compulsorily resigned. 1889 was particularly problematic with a third of the force leaving. The situation improved thereafter but there was a further spate of dismissals and compulsory resignations in the mid-1890s. As in both Dewsbury and Barnsley, finding appropriate accommodation was difficult but in Rotherham it took much longer to resolve the situation. As late as 1891 accommodation was still 'quite inadequate,' especially the 'dark and ill-ventilated cells.' Work on new facilities dragged on through the 1890s but, eventually, in 1897 the work was completed and the offices and cells deemed satisfactory.

The advent of the new force was met with less than popular approval. 'The roughest of Rotherham,' opined the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, seem to consider the recently-formed borough police force [of Rotherham] the objects of assaults of the most violent description.<sup>97</sup> The so-called "Short pipe gang" was one of a number of loosely-organised groups of young men responsible for a number of thefts and assaults on members of the public, as well as on the police in the summer of 1882.<sup>98</sup> There had been a number of similar incidents in previous years but the arrival of a new force gave added impetus. Indeed, the police played their part. While admonishing people not to take the law into their own hands, the mayor was forced to admit that there had been 'complaints of the policemen being over-zealous and over-officious' and physically mistreating prisoners.<sup>99</sup> A number of widely-reported cases were brought and a number of prominent 'trouble-makers' jailed, though the police had difficulty in finding witnesses willing to give evidence. The "Short pipe gang" disappeared from view, though individual assaults on the police remained a recurring feature. As in other towns, several of these incidents arose out of police attempts to break up gambling schools. The concern with street gambling, vagrancy and drunkenness were central elements in the drive 'to enforce by-laws for the good government of the town' that had been one of the more powerful arguments for the introduction of an independent force.<sup>100</sup>

Prosecutions for drunkenness fluctuated markedly from year to year but sharp increases in 1883, 1891 and 1899 added to police unpopularity but a more serious problem stemmed from the enforcement of the licensing laws. The chief constable, Pollard, adamant that constables should not be seen drinking in public houses, was known to be sympathetic to the drinks interest, which was well served by the Sheffield, Rotherham and District Licensed Victuallers' Association. But there was support for teetotalism among local magistrates and councillors, including the mayor, alderman Kelsey, who was known to be a member of the Blue Ribbon movement.<sup>101</sup> What unfolded was a complicated but unseemly spat which created bitter relations within the senior ranks of the police and between local politicians and the police.<sup>102</sup> There followed allegations of secret meetings, even a map targeting certain licensed properties, and of instructions from the mayor and his close allies regarding inspector Baker's recommendations to the upcoming Brewster sessions. The municipal elections in 1883 were dominated by the drink question. Advocates of the drink trade spoke of 'teetotal bigotry and prejudice' and warned of the 'wholesale extinction' of off-licenses.<sup>103</sup> The honesty of Baker's evidence was called into question. Pearson and Baker were at odds, threatening legal action, and, after a private meeting with the mayor, the chief constable and a small number of councillors, at which he admitted that he might have given some erroneous evidence, Baker was charged with gross misconduct by the mayor. Refusing to resign when ordered to do so, he was dismissed in December 1883.<sup>104</sup> The whole affair was damaging for the standing of the police, in particular chief constable Pollard. Baker became something of a local hero.<sup>105</sup> A memorial drawn up by several hundred Rotherham inhabitants not only praised Baker and sympathised with him in 'trying and peculiar circumstances' but protested 'against the harsh and unfair treatment which [Baker] has received from the Watch Committee and most of the Town Council.' In a final twist, it transpired that Baker had a new job as a traveller for a company that was part of the Holywell Brewery.<sup>106</sup>

Pearson eventually returned to his post but never fully recovered his health or his authority and died four years later. Discipline declined and when captain L R Burnett, formerly acting chief constable of Wolverhampton, took over in 1888 he took firm action and eleven men were dismissed or ordered to resign in the following months. Thereafter, there were no major scandals. Particularly, under the leadership of James Enright (1891-1907), attempts

were made to improve police morale. Improved pay in 1891 was not unimportant, but so too was the development of social networks within the force, through sporting associations and even the annual, celebratory dinner. For a relatively newly formed force, these social bonds were an important part of its sense of identity and morale.

While the establishment of a borough police force made sense in terms as ‘the “last link” in the complete management of the town,’ there were very real practical problems, especially in the early years.<sup>107</sup> It is not surprising that the *Barnsley Chronicle* was sceptical of the newly-formed borough force while in Rotherham it was not until its second decade that it became a more disciplined and relatively stable force. Both Barnsley and Rotherham, as indeed, Dewsbury, were policed but police impact was limited and popular support more limited than in the larger towns by the late-nineteenth century.

### **The persistence of small forces**

Since the 1830s, police reformers had sought to cajole smaller boroughs into amalgamating their forces with that of the county in which they resided. This reforming impulse was resisted in many towns which were jealous of their rights and suspicious of London and the centralizing tendencies of reformers. Palmer, quoting the local press in 1856, argues that the debate on police reform had shifted decisively away from concerns with the threat to liberty. The ‘old fears,’ as the *Norfolk Chronicle* noted in March 1856, were ‘an anachronism, mere hypothesis and exaggeration,’ Only ‘lecturing firebrands’ now made such arguments.<sup>108</sup> There is a danger of overstating the demise of the ‘old fears.’ As late as 1863, responses to the Police Amendment bill, proposing the amalgamation of the City of London police with the Metropolitan police, arouse interest outside the capital. In Yorkshire, there was a fear that the bill was ‘the thin edge of the wedge to enable the Government to obtain control over the entire police system.’<sup>109</sup> The most outspoken criticism came from the *Yorkshire Gazette* with its condemnation of the ‘Boa Constrictor of Centralization.’<sup>110</sup> It continued that if the proposal – ‘the diabolical project’ – were not defeated ‘other cities and towns will speedily be sacrificed to the same insatiable taste for centralization.’ Such ideas could be dismissed as provincial paranoia but they played a part in the

determination of politicians in Pontefract and, especially Ripon in resisting the pressures from the Home Office.

Pontefract, with its long-standing governing charter dating back to 1607, established a 'new police' force in 1836 with four men. By the time of the first annual inspection (1857) there were two constables and two or sometimes three nightwatchmen to police a population of just over 5000. HMIC Woodford was unimpressed and the force was deemed to be inefficient in the first three years. The report for 1858 was excoriating, calling on 'the local authorities ... to cast aside all prejudices and [look] only to the common good' and amalgamate with the county force.<sup>111</sup> The Pontefract authorities were unpersuaded. An additional constable was appointed in 1860, thereby achieving the Government's numerical efficiency mark. The number rose to eight in 1868 but the new inspector, Elgee, was unimpressed. 'The recently appointed men seemed below average,' he noted, adding that 'difficulty had been met with in obtaining suitable candidates.'<sup>112</sup> But although advising that pay scales should be aligned with those in the county force, he appears to have given up on the idea of amalgamation. It was not until April 1889, under the provision of the 1888 Local Government Act, that it was amalgamated with the WRCC. In that year, the WRCC appointed twenty extra men, 'mainly to meet the requirements of the borough of Pontefract.'<sup>113</sup>

The limitations of governmental powers were even more apparent in the city of Ripon. Local politicians were jealous of their distinctive local privileges and were determined not to succumb to governmental pressure. A two-man force was created in 1848 and three decades later it was doubled in size, at which level it remained until its demise at the end of 1887, having been adjudged 'inefficient' at every inspection. There was no office, no books were kept and the cells were inadequately ventilated. Watching at night was 'supported by voluntarily contributions.'<sup>114</sup> As with Pontefract, there was a call for 'sacrifice on the part of the local authorities' in Ripon. The sense of frustration is plain to see in the annual reports. The city council spent many hours discussing the location of the cattle market, the need to keep dogs on leads, and even the playing of musical instruments in the Market Place by the Salvation Army, but little time on police matters. On receiving 'the usual annual complaint [from the Home Office] as to the inefficiency of the Ripon police force, the council 'resolved to refer the Home Secretary to the previous resolution of the Council on the subject.'<sup>115</sup> As late as February 1887, the

watch committee rejected the Home Secretary's strong recommendation to amalgamate.<sup>116</sup> The only positive response was a watch committee recommendation, after a 'long and animated discussion,' to appoint two extra constables in 1876 but even this was insufficient. There was limited discussion of the costs of policing, prompted by HMIC's observation that amalgamation would reduce costs but the council opinion was that 'the present police force is all that is required for the safety of the city.'<sup>117</sup>

In fact, the crux of the matter was political. In 1876 'a majority of the Corporation' believed that an increase in police numbers to qualify for a grant from the Treasury, would result in 'undue restrictions' on the council, as well as encouraging frivolous cases.<sup>118</sup> In 1884 the mayor made clear that local opinion was strongly against 'the central authority possessing control which might be exercised locally.'<sup>119</sup> And worse might follow, 'if Ripon lost control of its police, the City Court might follow as well as the Liberty Quarter Sessions.'<sup>120</sup> There was some movement in early 1887 but the council could not decide between an augmentation of the force to retain its police, or amalgamation. In the end, it mattered not. Ripon, with a population of 8000 was too small to remain independent under the provisions of the upcoming Local Government act. The force ceased to exist in December 1887 and was absorbed into the WRCC and an additional four men were added to augment the previous four-man force.<sup>121</sup>

Neither of these two towns could be described as being policed in any meaningful sense. Ripon was unprotected at night and the ill-health of seventy-year-old Sergeant Wilson left the city under-policed during the day. It was not simply the inability to deal with large-scale events, such as the 1885 Pontefract election. Routine policing was light touch. The number of indictable offences reported to the police – averaging around ten per annum – was low, the number of arrests made lower still and not all of these came to trial for want of evidence. More people were arrested and convicted for drunk and disorderly behaviour, as one would expect, but again the numbers were relatively low. In Pontefract, which had just over forty public houses and beerhouses, annual arrests averaged just over ninety; in Ripon, with a similar number of licensed premises, arrests averaged forty per annum, convictions thirty. The fact that Ripon, and to a lesser extent Pontefract, could resist Home Office pressure for thirty years is a measure of the strength of localism and the fear of centralization that persisted in this part of Yorkshire but it is

also a measure of the weakness of central government and its agencies.<sup>122</sup> The disappearance of two very small forces in the late-1880s was a step towards a more rational policing structure across the county but there were still the anomalies of equal-sized boroughs, some of which had independent forces while others remained under the WRCC.

### **Some conclusions**

The evolution of policing in these small towns highlight patchiness and unpredictability of outcome. The survival of very small forces in Pontefract and Ripon contrasts with the disappearance of larger forces in Barnsley and Keighley. The decision to establish a borough force in the growing town of Dewsbury contrasts with the decision not to do so in nearby and equally dynamic Batley. The later creation of forces in Rotherham and Barnsley contrasts with its absence in Keighley. Only Wakefield, large enough to retain its independence in the mid-1850s and modestly prosperous thereafter, appears 'normal.' Accidents of politics and personality were crucial at the local level. Principle – opposition to the 'Boa Constrictor of Centralization' found in much of the conservative regional press, especially in the northerly part of the riding and the adjacent north riding<sup>123</sup> – played a part, as did a sense of civic pride but so too did hard-headed economics. There was no single, or simple, path to a modern policed society but rather a series of calculations or compromises in which expectations of security were weighed against economic costs and judged against wider political values and priorities. One of the most striking feature is the persistence of the 1856/7 settlement. Dewsbury's break from the WRCC was problematic and served to confirm the wisdom of remaining with the WRCC in Batley. Even the emergence of separate forces in the burgeoning industrial centres of Rotherham and Barnsley, rather than being seemingly inevitable came after much bitter debate and late in the day. While there was agreement that some form of 'new' policing was both necessary and desirable, there continued to be considerable scope for debate about the appropriate form and level of policing. Debate did not end in 1856.

The practical problems of creating and maintaining an effective force were, in essence, common to all boroughs but were more acute for the smaller forces



with fewer promotion opportunities and generally lower wages. Recruitment problems were more persistent and variations, though improving, remained higher than in the larger forces into the late nineteenth century. Even in small towns, larger and more complex forces required managerial and administrative skills. Again, attracting and retaining well-qualified men was problematic. There were able chief constables but the more ambitious looked to move to larger and more prestigious forces. Similarly, policing priorities did not vary fundamentally between forces. Property was to be protected, public order and decorum maintained. Police work was dominated by relatively mundane matters. The pre-occupation with the threats posed by drunks, gamblers, navvies, itinerants and vagrants reflects a desire for a stability in a visibly changing society, which was as strong in Dewsbury or Rotherham as it was in Bradford or Leeds. But with vacancies in the ranks and over-long beats, many smaller boroughs were poorly protected. The persistence of gambling in the streets and lanes as well as in pubs and beerhouses highlights the limitations of police power; a situation not helped by support for the drink interest by certain influential local figures in several towns. Finally, while the police were able to assert their authority against marginal groups, notably vagrants and beggars, there were limits to police power. Gambling schools were disrupted but regrouped; witnesses were not always easy to find, even when large crowds were involved, and certain areas and groups remained mistrustful of, if not openly hostile to the police even in the 1890s.

## Endnotes

- 1 The West Riding was unusual but not unique in this respect. The Lancashire county constabulary was responsible for the policing of five municipal boroughs with populations in excess of 10,000 (including Burnley and St Helens) and 28 similar 'towns of place' (including Heywood, Leigh and Widnes).
- 2 *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 2 August 1839
- 3 *York Herald*, 3 April 1847
- 4 *Leeds Mercury*, 1 December 1849
- 5 See *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 4 June 1853, 2 July 1853 and 8 December 1854
- 6 *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 29 February 1856
- 7 *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 9 March 1866
- 8 *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 8 May 1857
- 9 *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 4 June 1863
- 10 *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 9 September 1864
- 11 *Wakefield Free Press*, 10 June 1865
- 12 *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 9 June 1865
- 13 *Wakefield Free Press*, 10 June 1865. There were also claims that officers were fiddling expenses.
- 14 *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 21 April 1871
- 15 1870 was a particularly bad year with arrests in only a quarter of all recorded cases of felony but 1872 was equally bad and overall, in the early 1870s there were no arrests in roughly two-thirds of such cases.
- 16 *Wakefield Free Press*, 15 September 1877
- 17 *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 15 September 1877
- 18 Wakefield Register of Officers and Constables, 1833 -1914 accessed via Ancestry.
- 19 As well as a recreation room and library, the men enjoyed a 'splendid bath room [with] such a lavatory as there was not another in England.' *Wakefield Express*, 24 May 1879
- 20 *Wakefield Express*, 24 May 1879
- 21 *Wakefield Free Press*, 13 October 1888
- 22 Report of Policeman's Supper in *Wakefield and West Riding Herald* and *Wakefield Free Press*, 14 October 1882. Similar sentiments were expressed five years later, *Wakefield Free Press*, 12 & 29 October 1887
- 23 Annual report 1888, *Wakefield Free Press*, 13 October 1888. See *Wakefield*

- and West Riding Herald*, 1 July 1876, 'Ruffianism in Wakefield on Saturday Nights,' for examples of anti-police hostility.
- 24 *Wakefield Free Press*, 18 May 1889
  - 25 *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 5 & 19 March and 15 October 1887
  - 26 *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 12 November 1887
  - 27 *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 27 April 1889
  - 28 *Wakefield Free Press*, 11 May 1889
  - 29 *Wakefield Express*, 13 July 1889
  - 30 *Wakefield Express*, 5 October 1889
  - 31 *Wakefield Free Press*, 8 March 1890
  - 32 *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 4 February 1893
  - 33 Annual report for 1892, *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 21 January 1893
  - 34 Large-scale events, such as elections and even the Yorkshire Show, held in Wakefield in 1870, required outside help. This was a problem experienced elsewhere, notably Doncaster's annual race week. A high spot in the racing and social calendar, race week attracted people from across the county and beyond. Every year arrests and prosecutions soared as a variety of people found themselves in court for relatively minor charges of drunkenness, gambling, assault and petty theft but also more serious charges of horse theft and even rape. No borough force could have coped with such an insurge of people and Doncaster looked primarily to the county but in addition there were 'detectives and other officers from London and most of the provincial towns in the provinces.' *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 16 September 1873. A combination of covid restrictions and personal illness precluded a more detailed consideration of the Doncaster force.
  - 35 See chapter 3.
  - 36 *Leeds Mercury* 27 November 1861. The pro-corporation movement also called upon John Crossley, mayor of Halifax, to explain the policing benefits that had incorporation there.
  - 37 *Leeds Mercury*, 2 September 1862
  - 38 *Leeds Times*, 11 April 1863
  - 39 *Batley Reporter and Guardian*, 8 June 1872. A similar situation had occurred in Middlesbrough in 1856 but local politicians saw the benefit of bringing in the Treasury grant. D Taylor, *Policing the Victorian Town: The Development of the Police in Middlesbrough, c.1840 – 1914*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p.37
  - 40 Councillor Reynolds, *Dewsbury Chronicle*, 6 January 1872
  - 41 *Dewsbury Chronicle*, 6 August 1870
  - 42 *Dewsbury Chronicle*, 11 October 1873

- 43 Councillor Howroyd, seconding the motion to increase salaries for constables, sergeants and the superintendent. *Dewsbury Chronicle*, 6 January 1872. The proposal to increase Superintendent Millar's annual salary by £10 aroused opposition.
- 44 *Dewsbury Chronicle*, 6 January 1872
- 45 *Dewsbury Chronicle*, 6 August 1870
- 46 HMIC annual report 1874
- 47 HMIC annual report 1877
- 48 *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 6 August 1875
- 49 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 8 September 1871
- 50 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 8 September 1871
- 51 *Dewsbury Chronicle*, 5 October 1878
- 52 *Batley News*, 29 October 1887
- 53 *Batley News*, 1 March 1895 and *Batley Reporter* 23 May 1896
- 54 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 8 March 1863 and *Leeds Mercury*, 22 June 1863
- 55 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 20 May 1865 and *Yorkshire Gazette*, 20 Mat 1865
- 56 *Wakefield Free Press*, 20 May 1865
- 57 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 28 October 1865
- 58 *Bradford Observer*, 14 February 1870 and *Newcastle Courant* 18 February 1870
- 59 *Dewsbury Reporter*, 24 October 1874
- 60 *Batley Reporter*, 27 September 1873
- 61 *Huddersfield Examiner*, 27 July 1883
- 62 *Dewsbury Chronicle*, 10 June 1876
- 63 *Batley News*, 22 July 1892
- 64 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 22 April 1878
- 65 For a positive view of policing in 1850s Keighley see P Bramham, 'Successful failures: Policing Keighley, 1840-1860,' unpublished MA dissertation, University of Huddersfield, 1986 but even he concedes the limited manpower available, p.76.
- 66 Savage later claimed that he was unpopular, particularly with publicans, because he was not prepared to turn a blind eye to their law-breaking. *Barnsley Chronicle*, 6 December 1879
- 67 *Sheffield Independent*, 23 August 1856
- 68 *South Yorkshire Times*, 7 June 1895
- 69 *Sheffield Independent*, 3 January 1871
- 70 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 21 May 1892 and see also 2 January 1892
- 71 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 21 March 1896

- 72 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 7 September 1895 and 6 & 11 June 1896
- 73 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 6 June 1896 and HMIC annual report 1897
- 74 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 19 July 1860
- 75 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 19 July 1860 and 3 September 1864
- 76 *Wakefield Free Press*, 22 October 1864 and *Sheffield Independent*, 29 July 1865
- 77 *Sheffield Independent*, 19 July 1865
- 78 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 5 February 1874, 3 July and 4 August, 1874 and *Barnsley Independent*, 21 November 1874
- 79 *Sheffield Independent*, 5 February 1874
- 80 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 3 July 1875
- 81 *Sheffield Independent*, 5 February 1874
- 82 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 3 July 1875
- 83 *Sheffield Independent*, 13 March 1882
- 84 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 2 March 1882
- 85 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 4 May 1882
- 86 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 17 October 1896
- 87 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 28 November 1898
- 88 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 19 February 1898
- 89 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 19 December 1898
- 90 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 1 October 1898
- 91 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 19 February 1898 and 28 December 1901
- 92 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 5 October 1901. See also 15 September and 27 October 1900
- 93 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 17 June 1899
- 94 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 14 May & 24 September and 26 November 1898 and 1 April & 17 June 1899
- 95 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 24 September and 15 October 1898
- 96 The force itself expanded at a faster rate than the population of the town. While the Barnsley force's police/population ratio worsened from 1:855 to 1:1027 in 1901, that of Rotherham improved from 1:934 in 1891 to 1:793 a decade later.
- 97 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 8 August 1882
- 98 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 1, 4 & 8 August 1882
- 99 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 11 August 1882 and *Sheffield Independent*, 20 July 1889
- 100 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 11 March 1882
- 101 The Blue Ribbon movement, or Gospel Temperance was an American

- movement that had considerable impact in England in the 1870s and 1880s. See L I Shiman, 'The Blue Ribbon Army: Gospel Temperance in England,' *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (December 1981), pp. 391-408
- 102 *Sheffield Independent*, 6 September 1883
  - 103 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 22 September & 29 October 1883
  - 104 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 29 October 1883, *Sheffield Independent*, 1 and 5 December 1883
  - 105 *South Yorkshire Times*, 16 May 1884
  - 106 *South Yorkshire Times*, 16 May 1884
  - 107 *Sheffield Independent*, 13 March 1887
  - 108 *Norfolk Chronicle*, 1 March 1856. The passing of the 1856 Police Act is discussed in S Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland, 1780 -1850*, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 510 -516
  - 109 *Whitby Gazette*, 16 May 1863. It also condemned Grey's desire for 'direct and undivided control.' See also the more implied criticism in *Malton Gazette*, 9 May 1863.
  - 110 *Yorkshire Gazette*, 9 May 1863
  - 111 HMIC annual report 1859. It also pointed out that a division of the WRCC had its headquarters in Pontefract.
  - 112 HMIC annual report 1877
  - 113 HMIC annual report 1885
  - 114 HMIC annual report 1860
  - 115 *Yorkshire Gazette*, 12 April 1884 and *Leeds Mercury*, 16 April 1885. See also *Richmond and Ripon Chronicle*, 18 April 1885 for city council simply noting the 'annual complaint' from the Home Office.
  - 116 *Northern Echo*, 26 February 1887
  - 117 *Yorkshire Post*, 5 December 1883
  - 118 *York Herald*, 17 April 1876
  - 119 *Yorkshire Gazette*, 12 April 1884
  - 120 *North Star*, 12 May 1887
  - 121 The majority of amalgamations into county forces took place in Cornwall (6) and Devon (7).
  - 122 Similar opposition to amalgamation with the North Riding County Constabulary was to be seen in Richmond.
  - 123 See for example, *Yorkshire Gazette*, 9 May 1863, *Richmond and Ripon Chronicle*, 16 July 1880 & 24 September 1881, *Malton Gazette*, 9 May 1863, *Whitby Gazette*, 16 May 1863



# 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.<sup>1</sup>

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 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.<sup>2</sup> Vic Gatrell, in another influential essay, expounded the notion of the policeman-state, described 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.'<sup>3</sup> 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.'<sup>4</sup> 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.'<sup>5</sup> 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.'<sup>6</sup> The focus is similarly to that of Gatrell, 'specifically on property crime' and drawing 'heavily upon evidence relating to indictable criminal charges.'<sup>7</sup> *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.'<sup>8</sup> 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.'<sup>9</sup> It was a world recognisable, albeit to differing degrees, to the slum-inhabitants of Robert Roberts Salford and of Isaac Binn's village-cum-town of Batley, in the West Riding.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> So too, Eliza Campbell, imprisoned one month, and William Goode, fined 30s and cost, both in Sheffield for swearing in the street.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> And so too, Angelo Forte and Francisco Margotta, fined for playing a hurdy-gurdy and accordion respectively in the streets of Halifax.<sup>15</sup> 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 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.<sup>16</sup> 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,' 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.<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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 of police/population ratios for 1902 reveal.\* In that year, it was deemed that

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\* Doncaster and York are excluded for reasons given previously.

‘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 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.

**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<sup>19</sup> and a similar percentage suffering from stress<sup>20</sup> – 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 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.<sup>21</sup> 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 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 goal 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, 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.'<sup>22</sup> 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',<sup>23</sup> 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.'<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> 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!<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup>

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 not social consensus.'<sup>28</sup> Reviewing an earlier debate, he rightly criticized

'both the orthodox and revisionist approaches' for their 'absurdly absolutist conceptions of what consensual policing could mean.'<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> 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.'<sup>31</sup> 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.'<sup>32</sup> 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 exercise 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.'<sup>33</sup>

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 (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.<sup>34</sup> 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. And even when disturbances were relatively small-scale, as in Bradford in the

mid-1850s, the 'the police had odium enough to bear.'<sup>35</sup> 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.'<sup>36</sup> 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.'<sup>37</sup> 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 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.<sup>38</sup> 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 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.<sup>39</sup> 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 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 where 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 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.'<sup>40</sup> 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. 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.

## 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.

- 17 See for example the Home Office, 'Policing Productivity review,' 2024 [www.gov.uk/government/publications/policing-productivity-review/policing-productivity-review-access](http://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=2ahUKEwiz1cy-0wOKGAXUmUkEAHf82CKoQFnoECBkQAQ&usq=AOvVaw2NBBx-8m24J\\_DsqohcMgp0e](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=2ahUKEwiz1cy-0wOKGAXUmUkEAHf82CKoQFnoECBkQAQ&usq=AOvVaw2NBBx-8m24J_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/npsc-data-shows-a-national-absence-rate-for-police-officers-and-staff-of-94-percent/>
- 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](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/definition-of-policing-by-consent](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/policing-by-consent/definition-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 Scruton, *The State of the Police: Is Law and Order Out of Control?* London,

- 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*, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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*, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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



## A brief bibliographical note

SUCH HAS BEEN the growth in interest in police history since the 1970s that a comprehensive bibliography would run to several hundred entries, if not more. The following is a brief guide to some of the more important books relevant to the present study. Further references, particularly to articles and unpublished doctoral and masters' dissertations can be found in the footnotes of this book. Among a number of general histories of policing, spanning the eighteenth to the twentieth century, C Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History*, Harlow, Pearson, 1996, remains an excellent starting point, being thorough, thoughtful and readable. The range of research interests can be gained from two valuable (but extremely expensive) collections of essays: P Lawrence, ed., *The New Police in the Nineteenth Century*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2011 and C A Williams, ed., *Police and Policing in the twentieth Century*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2011. The former contains R D Storch's two seminal articles: "'The plague of blue locusts': police reform and popular resistance in northern England, 1840-57," *International Review of Social History*, 1975 and "The policeman as domestic missionary: urban discipline and popular culture in northern England, 1850-1880," *Journal of Social History*, 1976. Although not a history of policing as such, R Reiner, *The Politics of the Police*, Oxford University Press, 2012, has some perceptive observations on the historical development of English policing. Narrower in focus are two important earlier contributions by D Philips and R Storch, *Policing Provincial England, 1829-1856: The Politics of Reform*, London, Leicester University Press, 1999 and C Steedman, *Policing the Victorian Community: The formation of English provincial forces, 1856-80*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984. More thematic, but no less illuminating are H Shpayer-Makov, *The Making of a Policeman: A social history of a labour force in metropolitan London*, Aldershot,



Ashgate, 2002, C A Williams, *Police Control Systems in Britain, 1775-1975*, Manchester University Press, 2014 and the collection of essays, K Stevenson, D J Cox & I Channing, *Leading the Police: A history of chief constables, 1835-2017*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2018.

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