

ENFORCING LAW AND ORDER (Catching criminals) IN THE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1700 – 1900)

Reasons for changes in the Industrial period

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were an age of great industrial and agricultural change in Britain. Two of the most important developments were:

- a huge rise in the population of Britain, from around 9 million in 1700 to 42 million in 1900
- the concentration of many of the new population in large towns and cities – the process known as urbanisation

With such changes, **the old medieval system of policing which had existed for centuries had to change**. The new industrial towns had to have a new system of law enforcement. What also had to change was the idea that communities were responsible for their own law enforcement. The idea gradually developed that policing should become a specialist job and that **enforcing law and order would have to become the responsibility of government**. By the mid nineteenth century, the system of law enforcement in Britain was **completely changed**.

Due to its size and particular problems, most of the **initial experiments** in finding a more effective way of combatting crime took place in London. The inadequacies of the old system were really obvious here with neither constables nor watchmen being effective in such a growing city. Another problem was the opportunist **'thief-takers'** who captured criminals for reward money or who negotiated the return of stolen goods for a fee. The most infamous of the 'thief-takers' were Charles Hitchen and Jonathan Wild, both of whom were also corruptly involved in arranging the crimes from which they made a profit.

The Bow Street Runners and other steps towards a professional police system

As London grew some leading JPs tried to find a solution to the growing crime rate in parts of London. Among the first was **Thomas de Veil** who set up his office in Bow Street in central London. He took an active part in assisting his constables in investigating crimes and his work paved the way for the more successful and organised schemes of the Fielding brothers.

The work of the Fielding brothers, although small in scale and range, was a real turning point in the history of policing. In 1748 **Henry Fielding** became the Chief Magistrate at **Bow Street**. He made a careful enquiry into rising crime in London, published in 1751 as *An Enquiry into the Late Increase in Robbers etc.* He claimed that the old medieval system of law enforcement was **not fit for purpose** and he tried a number of ways to tackle the problem in his area. These included:

- Setting up a small force of full-time law officers who were properly trained and paid through a salary and rewards
- Keeping records of reported crimes
- Placing adverts for information in local newspapers
- Starting a magazine to pass on information about crimes and criminals

The officers did not wear a uniform so as to blend in on the streets but did carry a distinctive staff, similar to that used by parish constables. At first they were known as 'Mr Fielding's People' but later became famous as the **Bow Street Runners**.

Following Henry's death in 1754, his brother **John Fielding**, continued his work at Bow Street. He began a **Horse Patrol** to tackle highway robbery and continued to publish a weekly newspaper, renamed **The Hue and Cry** in 1786, referring to the older medieval idea of everyone having a responsibility to assist in catching criminals.

As with most pioneers, both Fielding brothers were dead by the time that the full effects of their work were clear. However, their legacy was carried on after their deaths by magistrates such as **Patrick Colquhoun**. These developments included:

- The **Middlesex Justices Act** of 1792 which extended the Bow Street scheme by funding a similar arrangement in seven other areas of London
- As much of London's crime was based around the River Thames, a **River Police** was set up in 1798 with money from private businesses
- In 1805 the Horse Patrol was re-introduced with government money to patrol the highways around London and guard against highway robbery. The Horse Patrol was the first uniformed police force in the country and the distinctive colour of their waistcoat gave them the nickname **Robin Redbreasts**

The methods introduced by the Fielding brothers were very effective in tackling crime - if only in their local area. **They are highly significant** in the history of policing as they were among the first to show government how to deal with crime effectively - by using a paid force of police officers to protect lives and property. They also developed the idea of '**preventative policing**' by attempting to stop crime from being committed rather than dealing with crime after it has been carried out.

Robert Peel and the setting up of the Metropolitan Police

Another turning point in the history of combatting crime in Britain is **the establishment of the Metropolitan Police in London in 1829**. The main reason for its establishment was that, despite the success of small-scale schemes such as those connected with Bow Street, London's crime rate continued to rise. MPs became convinced that an organised police force paid for by government was needed in London. This was a huge change in attitude and the man charged with organising it was **Sir Robert Peel**, the Home Secretary.

While this solution may now seem sensible, it has to be remembered that the idea of a police force controlled by the government was **opposed by many people**. There were many reasons for this opposition:

- Many people still believed in the old idea of **people enforcing the law themselves**: this idea stretched back to medieval times and was still clung to in many less urbanised areas
- Many believed that a government-run police force would be an **invasion of privacy** and limit free speech
- Others strongly believed that the government could use the police force to **arrest and attack political opponents**
- Others believed that a state police force would be **expensive and cause taxes to rise**

Despite the opposition to the setting up of a state police force, Peel and many other politicians were convinced that **the existing police forces in London were old-fashioned, inefficient and inadequate** in their attempts to control crime in London. In 1829 **the Metropolitan Police Act** set up a new police force in London under the control of Robert Peel. The new officers quickly gained the nicknames of '**Peelers**' or '**Bobbies**' after their founder. The main features of the new force included:

- It was run by **two Commissioners** with equal authority – Charles Rowan and Richard Mayne
- The headquarters were at **Scotland Yard** in Westminster
- The police's authority covered **a radius of seven miles from Charing Cross** (but excluded the City of London area which kept the medieval system)
- There were **17 districts** each with a company of **144 police constables**

- Each constable had to be under 35 years old, at least 5 foot 7 inches (1.7 meters) tall and be able to read and write
- The constables were given a **distinctive uniform** consisting of a blue jacket, white trousers and a tall white hat. Each carried a truncheon and a rattle
- Constables worked a seven day week, patrolling a set area

The establishment of such a police force was a radical change for the central part of London. Despite the opposition, within a few years the new Metropolitan Police Force had proved effective in reducing crime rates so was **expanded to cover more of London in 1839**. This Act extended the police area to **a 15 mile radius of Charing Cross**. It also saw the River Police and Horse Patrol brought into the Metropolitan Police and saw the end of the Bow Street Runners and the control of JPs and magistrates over policing in London.

The extension of police forces in the nineteenth century

Once the Metropolitan Police had been established and proved effective in London, **the government allowed other regions of the country to introduce similar forces**. A number of Acts were passed to allow this. The most significant were:

- **The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835** which allowed police forces to be set up in larger borough towns
- **The Rural Police Act of 1839** which enabled police forces to be set up in more rural areas of the country

It was not compulsory to set up a police force. Only around half the areas decided to set up their own force with most local authorities claiming they could not afford it.

Despite public concerns, the government was determined to have publicly funded police forces in every area. **The County and Borough Police Act in 1856** made it compulsory for a police force to be set up in every county that had not previously taken the opportunity to set one up. To make sure the law was obeyed, the government appointed Inspectors of Constabulary and offered a grant of 25% of running costs to those forces deemed efficient. Setting up a police force in different counties helped to tackle the fear that the government was in control. Within a few years, the old system that operated around JPs and constables was replaced in all parts of the country.

Despite initial concerns, as the police grew more successful at tackling crime, suspicion and hatred of the force died down and they became accepted and respected as **a crucial part of the community**. Rather than just seeing the police as the old 'thief-takers', communities came to rely on them to deal with all sorts of issues, most of which were not really criminal.

Early developments / specialisms in the police force

The following **specialised** parts of the modern police force had their origins in the nineteenth century. Each county police force gradually introduced these into its area.

The Detective Branch (1842): the uniformed police were meant to prevent crime but the detectives were used to investigate crimes; they dressed in plain clothes. In 1878, this was replaced by the Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D.)

The Special Branch (1883): this was originally set up to deal with the threat from Irish terrorism, but was later expanded to protecting and investigating all potential terrorist threats

Photography (1850s onwards): the police made great use of this developing technology to provide visual images of criminals for the various police forces and in newspapers and magazines

Fingerprinting (1901): this record of establishing unique identity was introduced in 1901 after a series of trials. A national register soon followed and the crime detection rate increased by over 400% in the first few years

The setting up of these specialist units is significant – they show the police as a progressive organisation, adapting to changes in society. The pace of change in crime enforcement for many centuries had been very slow: **now it was changing rapidly.**

SUMMARY OF POLICING DURING THE PERIOD OF INDUSTRIAL CHANGE AND URBANISATION c.1700 -1900

- The old medieval system of policing which had existed for many centuries was gradually replaced during this period
- The main reasons for change were associated with population growth and the effects of urbanisation
- Many early attempts at changing the system were in large cities such as London and were based on the work of individuals such as the Fielding brothers at Bow Street
- A major turning point in crime prevention was the setting up of the Metropolitan Police in 1829 – the first large-scale publicly funded force
- The model of the Metropolitan Police was quickly dispersed to the rest of the country by 1856
- The idea of a government funded police force faced much opposition at first but gradually became accepted

ENFORCING LAW AND ORDER (Catching criminals) IN THE MODERN PERIOD (1900 – present)

The changing nature of policing in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries

Even though the pace of change quickened through the nineteenth century, some aspects of policing remained constant. **The basic role of the police remained the same** as those of the old JPs, sheriffs, constables and watchmen – the maintenance of public order (keeping the peace) and the prevention of crime. However, what was now to **change rapidly** were methods and resources available to the police including the advances in forensic science, the use of computer technology, the development of specialist units and skills and changes in transport and communication.

Developments in policing in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries

The number of police forces: in 1900 there were nearly 200 separate police forces, many of which were small and increasingly inefficient. As the twentieth century progressed, the number of forces began to fall to 117 in 1964 and then to 43 in 2000. The main reasons for this reduction are the need to share information and communicate better, to spread manpower and resources more effectively and to be more cost effective

Police training: in 1900 police pay was not that attractive, being similar to a skilled manual worker. The job basically consisted of walking the beat and the only equipment was a whistle and truncheon. There were huge changes in the twentieth century with pay rises aimed at attracting a wider range of applicants and carefully structured courses in specialist colleges.

Women in the police force: one major change from the nineteenth century has been the establishment of women in the police force. In 2015 around 28% of police officers were women. Women were first used in the police force during World War I and the first official woman police constables were appointed in 1919. Since then the role of women in the police force has evolved in the same way as the role and status of women in society has developed. Key dates to consider include:

- 1946: from this date women police officers did not have to resign if they got married
- 1973: women were permitted to become detectives
- 1974: women police officers got equal pay with men
- 1999: women were no longer called WPCs

The police and the community: the nineteenth century police had worked hard to build trust and respect with local communities. This mutual relationship continued well into the twentieth century but the idea of the 'neighbourhood' policeman began to change. The police faced different pressures as the century progressed and there was the feeling that they were becoming too remote from the public. Towards the end of the twentieth century, the idea of community policing was given a boost by various initiatives designed to assist both the police and the community. These developments include:

- **Neighbourhood Watch Schemes**, first introduced in 1982, involving organised groups of local people working with the police to prevent crime in their neighbourhood
- **Police Community Support Officers**, first introduced in 2002 to help tackle minor crime and anti-social behaviour; by 2012 they made up 8% of the police force
- **Crime Prevention Schemes**, set up in the 1990s. These are run by the police and offer advice on personal safety and property security

Developments in transport and communication

One of the biggest changes in policing during the twentieth century was connected with **improved methods of transport and communication**. The pace of change was fast, as criminals made great use of new technology so did the police. **Policing in 1900 was done on foot** – the police patrolled their

'beat.' As the century progressed this method of policing became less common as the need for faster transport got greater. Key dates include:

- By 1904, there were **bicycles** being used in over 130 police forces, mostly in rural areas
- The first **police cars** were used from around 1919, but became more common in the 1930s. The first police driving school was set up in 1935
- More common than cars in the 1930s were **motorbikes**, including those with sidecars, which greatly improved speed and effectiveness
- By the 1970s, the **police patrol car** had become an essential part of policing and the 'bobby on the beat' became less common
- Since the 1980s the larger police forces have had access to **helicopters and light aircraft** which have helped in serious situations of surveillance and tracking

It should be noted that since 2000, the ever-increasing use of modern technology has been slowed down as the police forces have increased their **foot patrols**, hoping that this would reassure local communities

Together with developments in transport, have come developments in the use of communications. The police forces in the twentieth century became very pro-active in updating their methods of communication, leading to significant improvements in both prevention and detection of crime.

Telegraph and telephones: this type of communication was first used in the late nineteenth century with most police stations linked to their regional headquarters by telegraph by 1900. **Telegrams** were commonly used in police work. These gradually became replaced by telephone devices with blue police **telephone boxes** being introduced in the 1920s and the **999 emergency number** was available from 1937. Since 2000, mobile telephones have revolutionised this kind of direct communication.

Radio: wireless communication was highly significant in the development of police work. The radio was instrumental in the arrest of the infamous murderer **Dr Crippen** in Canada in 1910. The first experiments with mobile radio were in police cars in the 1930s but reception was often poor. However, by the 1960s all police cars had **two-way radio** (walkie-talkies) and most police officers were equipped with mobile radios – well before these became common in society.

Camera and video technology: since the mid nineteenth century photography had been extensively used in alerting the public about dangerous criminals, and from 1900 it became essential in investigating cases and providing evidence. The later twentieth century saw huge advances in video technology including CCTV and number plate recognition.

Computer technology: the police were also in the forefront of using computer technology to improve and cross-reference data and evidence across forces. **The Police National Computer** was set up in 1974 and was developed to hold huge amounts of data on fingerprints, DNA, motor vehicle records and missing persons. After 2000, the system was upgraded to play a major role in monitoring potential terrorist activity.

The growth of police specialisation

Another aspect of policing that has developed rapidly has been specialisation. Once the various police forces were established in the mid-nineteenth century, there were gradual attempts at arranging **specialised aspects**. The idea of training police officers in specialist work continued in the twentieth century, enabling the police to deal with a particular situation in a specialised way. The specialist branches of the police dealing with detecting crime (CID) and with terrorist threats (Special Branch) continued into the twentieth century but other specialist parts of the police force also developed. These included:

- **The Flying Squad (1919):** set up in London to deal with serious, organised crime

- **The Fraud Squad (1946):** many forces have branches that investigate fraud and other economic offence; since the growth in the internet, much of their work has been connected with identity theft
- **Dog Handling (1946):** trained officers use dogs to help trace people, property, drugs and detect explosives
- **Counter-terrorist Command (2006):** formed from a merger of other branches to prevent and counter the threat from global terrorism

The growth of specialist branches and sections is very important in police work. The nature and types of crime are becoming more varied and complex and the methods of prevention and detection have to also develop and change.

The increasing use of forensic science

Another area where policing has developed is in the use of **forensic science**. The use of **fingerprinting** has continued to be a fundamental part of detection since 1901 and computer technology has seen this evolve until a National Automatic Fingerprint Identification System was set up in 1995 to enable police across all forces to compare records of fingerprints.

From the 1930s onwards, the police have increasingly come to rely on **forensic scientists** to help gather evidence and link people to crimes. This is done by analysing hair, skin and fibres and traces of blood or other bodily fluids found at scenes of crime. **Specialist scenes of crime officers** gather this evidence and take it to laboratories for analysis. The Metropolitan Police Laboratory opened in 1935, followed shortly afterwards by others in Nottingham, Sheffield and Cardiff.

While fingerprinting remains an essential tool in crime detection, since the 1980s the police have increasingly depended on forensic scientists being able to use **DNA** found at crime scenes. Just as significant was that the DNA profiling was able to clear the prime suspect in the case who might have been wrongly convicted if not for DNA. In 1995, the National DNA database was set up to store DNA evidence.

SUMMARY OF POLICING DURING THE MODERN PERIOD c.1900 TO THE PRESENT DAY

- The role of the police has remained the same since medieval times – to try to prevent crime and to catch criminals after crime has been committed
- It is still essential to the police to have the trust, respect and support of the public
- Since 1900 the pace of change in the methods of policing has been very fast – the modern police force has seen great changes in a number of areas
- There have been changes in the size and scope of the police forces
- There have been dramatic changes in the use of transport and communication technology
- The police have become more specialised and skilled in dealing with particular crimes
- The police have come to rely increasingly on forensic science to gather evidence and obtain convictions