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**From Parish Constable to County Constabulary: An
examination into the changing role of police constables in
Dorset 1835-1875.**

2018-2019

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**A dissertation submitted to The Open University for the degree
Of MA in History**

January 2020

Word Count: 14,866

Abstract

The histories of rural constabularies have been largely overlooked except for the county constabulary's own efforts to pen their histories during the centenary in 1956. Local historians have also contributed to the field on a macrohistorical level, often through their personal genealogical research, discovering that a family member was employed in the police. Although rural areas may seem quieter than their urban counterparts, and therefore less worthy of study, the geographical divergence that can be found within a county means that communities have different needs creating diverse cultures and socio-economic norms than their neighbours. This work seeks to address this deficit in knowledge by focusing on two areas of research to examine the development of rural policing in the county of Dorset. Firstly, how the restructuring of local governance brought a more nationalised approach to policing and crime prevention, and deterrence. Secondly, an investigation into the men employed in the service to understand what life was like for early constables. The first part will be explored by looking at the changing legislation relating to policing, justice systems, punishments and the restructuring of local governance, and how well the nationalising of the police was accepted by Dorset communities. The second part will seek to answer questions about the constables as individuals; what kind of men were they, and how did they fit into their communities? Were they ostracised because of their post? What tasks were they expected to undertake and how was the working day structured?

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Personal Statement

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work and that I have not submitted it, or any part of it, for a degree at The Open University or at any other university or institution. Parts of this dissertation are built on work I submitted for the assessment as part of A285.

Signed.....

Name.....

Date.....

1. Introduction

The system of policing in England that we are familiar with today emerged from changing legislation in response to the evolving societal values that were occurring throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This study examines the process of change in policing and the methodologies that supported it. Much of the previous history of the police has come from orthodox historians who have focused on the instigation and development of the Metropolitan Police in response to the work of far-sighted reformers, and how that system of policing spread in a linear progression outwards to the provinces. The 1970s saw a change to a more revisionist perspective of analysis, which was useful in exploring the development of police in other towns and cities, however, like the orthodox view it tended to look at police reform as originally emanating from London.¹ This work will take a counter revisionist perspective and look at the diversity of police reform within one county to test the validity of orthodox and revisionist historical analysis.

The first chapter of this work focuses on the situation in nineteenth-century rural England to provide context for discussion on the development of policing. Focusing on the growth in population and the subsequent migration from rural to urban areas; changes in agriculture and manufacture; the introduction of legislation such as the Enclosure

¹ Robert Reiner, Review of Carolyn Steedman, *Policing the Victorian Community: the formation of the English provincial forces, 1856-80* (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London 1984) in *British Journal of Criminology*, 25 (1985), 87-89<<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.bjc.a047499>> [Accessed on 30 July 2019]

Acts and the Poor Law Act all helped to create an environment of social disorder and unrest, not just in Dorset but across the country. The second chapter will look at the system of policing, of parish constables and night watchmen in the first part of nineteenth-century as these wider changes were advancing, inspecting why the system was becoming viewed as inefficient by those in government. The changing perceptions of crime and the perceived ineffectiveness of the existing systems of policing resulted in a flurry of legislative changes which are examined in chapter three focusing specifically on the introduction of the Metropolitan Police, The Municipal Act 1835, and The Royal Commission. This legislature led to the introduction of the Rural County Act, 1836, and the County and Borough Police Act, 1856. The reason for focusing on these items is that they bore the most influence on policing in Dorset. The second part of this essay will examine the police that emerged from this legislature from a sociological perspective. Chapters four and five will examine how the borough and county forces were organised and maintained, shifting to a more quasi-military system of governance than existed with parish constables. A majority of the constables throughout the nineteenth century did not stay long in the post, this phenomenon will be examined by exploring the backgrounds and lives of the men and the work they were expected to undertake to get a sense of why this was the case. There is no doubt that alcohol dominated the constable's lives in one way or another both professionally and recreationally and chapter five examines this impact in more detail. The conclusion will assess whether the policing of Dorset was a result and extension of the Metropolitan Police as orthodox and

revisionist historians would argue or if they developed in response to separate needs.

Relevant primary sources identified for the first part of this research include the minutes from Watch Committee meetings that saw the introduction of paid police forces after the 1835 Municipal Act. These show operational issues encountered by these early forces. They also provide information on the men employed and the structure of the force. Reports from the Inspectors of Constabulary were produced yearly after 1856 providing information on how the constabularies and borough forces were evolving. For the second part, censuses have been used to place the men within their communities. Post-1856 General Orders provide information on the types of control placed upon the men in the county constabularies by the Chief Constable and gives information on disciplinary matters. Journals and occurrence books show the structure of a constable's day. Calendars of prisoners and gaol records provide information of the criminals. Both areas of research rely heavily on newspaper reports as they provide a consistent timeline of information and can be useful in cross-referencing other primary sources.

An exploration of secondary material will focus on work produced by local historians as well as material from the wider academic community. Local police historian Melvin Hann produced a book charting his grandfather's career as a police officer in the nineteenth century innovatively using only General Orders and newspaper records. It provides a good springboard into other lines of enquiry using different available records. A Ph.D. Thesis, 'Policing and Police Reform in a

Rural County; Somerset c.1830-1856' by Robert Love is a similar study to this work so it offers a chance for comparison between Dorset and a neighbouring county. From the wider academic community, Joanne Klein's work into police constables of Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham is out of context in relation to the period of this work however, it provides a good reference for reconstructing the daily lives of police constables to show how working-class culture and individual personalities influenced the force. Clive Elmsley has produced much work on policing throughout his distinguished career focusing on both urban and rural policing. Robert Storch has previously examined how the idea behind the new police was to impress morality and order upon the labouring classes. Carolyn Steedman investigates the quasi-military role that constables were expected to endure. T.A Critchleys' seminal work on the history of the police cannot be ignored and provides a good reference to the whiggish account of policing which dominated historical thinking for much of the twentieth century. This work will draw upon all these influences and apply them to a study of Dorset. Due to the scope of the research and its sociohistorical approach the work is best viewed from a qualitative perspective to express the nuances that occurred. Quantitative data is used in several chapters to express statistical evidence, particularly in regards to populations and the backgrounds of the police constables.

2. Nineteenth-Century England

Until the nineteenth century, agriculture in England could be divided broadly into landlords, tenant farmers and hired labourers but during the century changes happened in the agriculture system leading to civil unrest which lasted nearly a century. Firstly, came the introduction of the Enclosure Acts, due in part to the ever-increasing demand upon agriculture as England's population doubled. This also meant that a permanent surplus of agricultural labourers became available in the countryside as the population expanded.¹ The Enclosure Acts revolutionised farming as traditional common and wasteland was privatised. The effects of this were most strongly felt by the rural poor who became effectively landless, entirely dependent on wage labour and/or assistance from the poor rate. Those who had relied on common land for raising animals, growing food and collecting firewood were no longer able to maintain economic independence. Concurrently perquisites from employment were also taken away and criminalised during this period leaving labourers further at the mercy of a wage economy, and the ups and downs of inflation when they were already surviving at, or below, subsistence levels. These shifts in the economics of agriculture meant that farms increased in size with smaller ones succumbing and with it the smallholder and family cultivator, changing the dynamics of farming.²

¹ E.J Hobsbawm & Rude, George, *Captain Swing* (London: Readers Union Ltd, 1970), p. 42.

² Hobsbawm & Rude, p. 29.

In such economic hardship, the rural poor of Dorset survived through makeshift economies. In Dorset most were employed in the hemp and flax industry from the growing of the hemp to the production of net, ropes, twine, sailcloth's, and other items. To give an example of just how prevalent the industry was in Bridport and its surrounding environs the population was in the region of 8923 in 1851 (see Table 1), of which over 7000 people were employed in constant work in the industry. This could range from agricultural labour, outworking from home, workshops and factories and hemp and flax spinning walks.³ Dorset labourers were some of the lowest paid in the country. A male labourer could expect to earn around 7 shillings per week, which meant that a living wage could not be made through single occupation and had to be supplemented in a variety of ways. Often to make ends meet the whole family was employed. Women and children would work as spinners and weavers or even as agricultural labourers themselves, particularly at harvest time. This extra work could bolster the family economy by 90%.⁴ Coastal ports in the county offered another avenue of piecework with the loading and unloading of cargo, shipbuilding, and of course, fishing. The Dorset coast is particularly abundant in mackerel providing a good food source for those in poverty.

Topping up income through rural crime was also a common feature in Dorset life. Examination of the Quarters sessions in the early nineteenth

³ Jacqueline Richards, 'Rethinking the makeshift economy: A case study of three market towns in Dorset in the later decades of the old poor law', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leicester), 2017, p,199.

⁴ Richards, p.200.

century shows that most goods stolen were covering basic needs such as food, firewood, or clothes (See Table 2). Smuggling was also rife along the coast during the period and caused much concern amongst the Dorset magistrate. There is evidence to suggest that their concerns were not unfounded. The infamous Isaac Gulliver's smuggling gang the 'White Wigs' were often reported being seen walking the streets of Bridport. Despite several organised smuggling gangs prison registers and court records show that for most involved in smuggling it was simply the poor trying to put food on the table.⁵

1851	Total Population	Employed in Agriculture	% of population employed in Agriculture
Beaminster	7536	2618	35%
Blandford	7961	2169	27%
Bridport	8923	1553	17%
Dorchester	13875	4041	29%
Shaftesbury	7094	1803	25%
Sherborne	7084	1758	25%
Sturminster	5542	1717	31%
Wareham	8977	1931	22%
Wimborne	9170	2541	27%

Table 1. Population and Dorset Towns and No's employed in Agriculture
Source: Shaw-Taylor, L., Kitson, P., Wrigley, E. A. (2007). 1851 Census Report Registration District Occupational Data. [data collection]. UK Data Service. SN: 5433, <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN> [Accessed 29 May 2019]

⁵ Richards p, 204.

Name	Sex	Age	Offence	Sentence	Length
Bridport Quarter Sessions Tues 2nd October 1810					
Daniel Dolling	M	59	stealing wheat	hard labour	1 yrs
Mary Simpson	F	40	stole 3 linen gowns and other clothes	hard labour	1 yrs
Adam Blake	M	11	stole stockings and handkerchief	hard labour	1 mth
James Cook	M	57	Stole great coats, trousers and pillowcase	hard labour	2 yrs
George Ash	M	17	Stole cabbages, potatoes and basket	hard labour	3 mths
Bridport Quarter Sessions 17th October 1815					
William Steel	M	21	stealing oak timber	hard labour	3 mths
Elizabeth Bartlett	F	58	stole canvas wrapper	hard labour	3 mths
Susannah White	F	45	as above	hard labour	6 mths
Elizabeth Scott	F	35	stole a shift	hard labour	3 mths
Bridport Quarter Sessions 17th October 1820					
John Broad	M	31	stole 2 pieces of timber	hard labour	4 mths
John Rodbard	M	32	steal a drawing knife	no prosecution	
John Turner	M	27	stole linen gown and trousers	hard labour and whipping	3 mths
Catherine Turner	F	22	as above	no prosecution	
George Hurford	M	14	stealing bees and honey	hard labour and whipping	3 days
Mary Collis	F	17	stole 8 bundles of wheat	hard labour	2 mths

Table 2 Theft of Items at Bridport Quarter Sessions Source: Laura Kaddey, A285 TMA 4 [unpublished]

The result of the agricultural changes and the grinding poverty experienced by the labouring classes led to the swing riots. In Dorset, there were two main areas of unrest. In the east Bere Regis and further

north Cranborne Chase and Shaftsbury. The neighbouring counties of Wiltshire and Hampshire experienced some of the worst of the unrest. As the troubles spread throughout the county, the Dorset gentry began to feel unease at the tumult that they witnessed happening to their county neighbours. Records left by a local landowner and Magistrate, James Frampton, who lived only six miles from Bere Regis, in Moreton show the anxiety felt. In a letter to Joseph Weld on the subject of raising a troop of yeomanry, Frampton describes in some detail how the unrest is spreading through the county. He speaks about an attack on Mr Coates and Mr Bennett's house, who lived not far from him.⁶ As labourers gathered for 'illegal assemblies' to demand a 10-shilling wage and cases of arson and the destruction of threshing machines broke out Frampton organised the enrolment of special constables to quell the trouble.⁷ James Frampton would later become an infamous figure in 1831 for his role in the case of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. The changing agricultural and urban societies and the resulting civil unrest during this period is one of the reasons why the current systems of policing began to be questioned.

⁶ D/Fra/X/32 Copy of letter sent to Lord John Russell from James Frampton concerning renewal of trade union activity in Dorset n.d.(1830s)

⁷ Hobsbawm & Rude, p.127.

3. Old Style Policing: Parish Constables and Night

Watchmen

Policing had remained largely unchanged through the ages and although organisations varied across the country most boroughs and towns operated a system of parish constables and night watchmen for law enforcement.

Parish constables

In smaller boroughs, often only one man would be elected to serve as Parish Constable whilst larger boroughs may have employed a few. Men were usually elected from the community by the local vestry, or relevant governing body, on an annual basis. The position of parish constable was not one of full-time employment, and was generally unsalaried, with the expectation that the position would be conducted in addition to normal occupation. In Dorset, the parish constable came under the direction of the local Justices of the Peace for the county. There were often certain restrictions on eligibility for the post. Men were normally required to be property owners, and earn above a certain amount. This ruled out the labouring poor and ensured that the men would not be financially dependent on others. As property owners, it was understood that they would have a vested interest in the law and the protection of their property. Despite it being unsalaried it was possible to earn some money within the role. In some areas, a small retainer was paid through voluntary subscriptions and fees could be earned from the victims of crime if the case went to court. For some self-employed artisans this made the role financially worthwhile but for many

others, public service acted as a hindrance to their existing earning potential. In these circumstances it was possible, if the elected constable was wealthy enough, to pay someone else to act as a substitute on their behalf.¹ This meant that despite annual elections the same parish constable could be in place year after year as money earned for the capture of criminals could be lucrative for some.²

The role of the parish constable was not dedicated to the prevention or deterrence of crime. Tasks involved relief for the poor; maintaining accurate lists of inhabitants liable to serve in the militia; finding billets as necessary for troops to be stationed in the town or borough and the preservation of peace. Law enforcement tasks included the arresting and moving on of vagrants, house searches, issuing a warrant on behalf of the Justices, taking offenders into custody and the collection of evidence. An important distinction between the role of the parish constable and the later police officers was that the constable only ever acted on the bequest of the Justices or private citizens, never through any initiative on the part of the constable.³

By the turn of the nineteenth century, the system of parish constables began to be seen as insufficient, particularly in response to the growing crime rates and there were definite drawbacks to the system. As mentioned previously the post was part-time this in itself must have

¹ Robert Storch, 'The Old English Constabulary', *History Today*, 49 (1999), 43-49 (pp.46-48).

² Barry Godfrey & Paul Lawrence, *Crime and Justice 1750-1950*, (Cullompton: Willan, 2005), p. 12.

³ Godfrey & Lawrence, p.10-11.

meant it was a difficult responsibility for many men trying to juggle their workload and other commitments. Also, because the position only lasted for a year it is difficult to see how someone with competing obligations could have taken full ownership of the role. The fact the men elected were part of their communities meant that they would be unlikely to want to alienate themselves from within their neighbourhoods by being overzealous in their role. In this case, they may have inadvertently felt the need to turn a blind eye to minor crimes such as anti-social behaviour, drunkenness or poaching. The job could also be dangerous, much like the role of the police constable which followed. Men most often worked alone and could be subject to violence when carrying out their duties. Local newspapers provide many reports of the type of violence experienced by the parish constables. For example; George Critchall a 28-year-old labourer was sentenced at the Dorchester Petty Sessions to 12 months imprisonment at Dorchester gaol in January 1857 for a 'savage assault' on a parish constable, that had taken place in the preceding October.⁴ Cornelius Thorne had attempted to serve a summons to Critchall in the Greyhound Inn, Dorchester, for poaching game; Critchall struck the constable on the cheek with a life preserver. The marks of which were still visible when the case went to court the following January.⁵ John Smith also assaulted a parish constable at Blandford in 1854, receiving a sentence

⁴ Calendar of Prisoners. 08 Jan 1857. CRITCHELL, George. Dorset, England, Calendar of Prisoners 1857. p.2. www.ancestry.co.uk :accessed 07 December 2014.

⁵ Dorset County Chronicle 30 October 1856, p.4

of one-month hard labour for his troubles.⁶ For the authorities there was another issue to consider. There is evidence that parish constables could also manipulate the outcomes and the recording of crime to make their lives easier. In 1829, in Sturminster, a man called John Hatcher robbed Eliza Robings on her way to Blandford. When the parish constable of Childe Okeford received the warrant, instead of arresting Hatcher, took Robings to a beer shop and convinced her to compound the felony. His ruse was discovered and reported to a local magistrate, Revd Harry Yeatman, who fined him £2 for neglect of duty.⁷ Acts such as these brought the role into further disrepute.

Night Watchmen

In addition to the parish constables, which operated in the day many towns often employed night watchmen. The costs of which were met out of rates or voluntary subscriptions paid by the wealthier residents of the town. By the nineteenth century, unlike the election of parish constables, night watchmen were usually hired into the post aided by the introduction of a series of Watch Acts.⁸ It was not a well-paid post and the money received was often only enough to cover basic living expenses. This meant that the job tended to attract older or more infirm men into the post as the money earned was not enough to support a family.

⁶ Dorset County Chronicle 21 September 1854, p.6.

⁷ Robert Storch, 'Policing Rural Southern England before the Police', in *Policing and Prosecution in Britain 1750-1850*, ed. By Douglas Hay and Francis Synder (OUP: Oxford, 1989), (pp, 211-266) p.226.

⁸ *Constables and the Night Watch*,
< <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Policing.jsp#constablestext> >.
[accessed on 5 Sept 2019)

It could be argued that the employment of older and frail men into the position aided the perception that the watchmen system was ineffectual. Like the police that proceeded the watchmen their main function was to act as a crime deterrent with a large part of working hours taken up with walking a beat, often calling as they went, checking doors and windows, questioning suspicious characters and watching for fire. Historians such as Chris Williams have reported that the role of night watchmen was often regarded as a largely unsupervised with no direct supervision.⁹ This may be true in some cases but there is evidence of supervision and accountability as night watchmen wrote reports that were submitted to whichever governing body controlled them.

A night watchmen's report from Charmouth, a small seaside town in Dorset, written in 1830, gives some idea to an average night's work. The two men employed in post corroborates the premise the men were often older and infirm, James Welch, was 56 years old at the time of the report, and Henry Rippen was in his 80s. Their age also proves that the role was one of a deterrent rather than prevention as it is unlikely they could have given sustained chase, or apprehended younger men. The report starts at ten in the evening when they remark that they gave the time to a man and boy on a horse and cart who were passing through the village. Next, they encounter a man who was riding very fast through the turnpike gate at midnight. Despite their calling to him he failed to stop, further proof of their limitations. The rest of the night

⁹ Chris A Williams, *Police Control Systems in Britain, 1775-1975* (Baltimore, Maryland: Project Muse, 2017), p. 37.

passes without incident until four in the morning when Mrs. Bray calls from her window suspecting that someone has broken into her house. The watchmen check the shutters and doors and found all was safe. No doubt laying Mrs. Bray's fears to rest. After this, they walk the beat some more until daylight arrives and they meet people to and froing for work.¹⁰

A question arises as to why such a small remote village would feel the need to hire night watchmen in the first place. In part, it is likely that as Charmouth is situated on the main thoroughfare from Lyme Regis to Bridport there would have been many strangers passing through. Residents may have felt the need to protect their property but another clue exists in the parish archives because along with the Night watchmen's report is a letter, also written in 1830, regarding the need to muster petty constables in the event that a mob pass through the village due to the recent unrest.¹¹ Residents were clearly worried that the impact of civil disturbances within the area might reach their doors. The presence of the night watchmen would have given a sense of security to the residents knowing that they would raise the alarm in the event of trouble and offered some semblance of protection

¹⁰ PC/CMO/19/1/2/12 Night Watch Report 29/11/1830.

¹¹ PC-CMO/19/1/2/11 Letter concerning the need to muster petty constable, 1830.

4. Changing Legislation 1830-1856

The civil disturbances, population growth and migration, leading the burgeoning urban areas all contributed to the general feeling that crime was growing at an expedient rate. By the early nineteenth century, it was supposed by many, even those in provincial areas, that the current system of parish constables and night watchmen was no longer effective for crime control.¹ Previous histories of crime and policing have focused on London during this period because it appears to have acted as a nucleus for policing reform. This was due mainly to the work of Sir Robert Peel, the Home Secretary at the time, who instigated the implementation of the Metropolitan Police. This was not a straightforward task. Revolution in Europe had made the English wary of a centralised, militaristic force that had the potential to control and repress. England was run primarily on the basis of local government and the idea that any autonomy could be lost by using the police as an instrument of control brought opposition. Peel was able to circumvent disapproval by his clever use of crime statistics. He demonstrated that there had been a 19% increase in population over ten years and a subsequent rise in crime of 55%.² On the strength of his findings and the feeling that crime needed to be tackled in 1829 3000 men took to the streets of London as constables of the newly formed Metropolitan Police. Traditional historians such as T.A. Critchley argue that the idea of policing reforms spread out to provincial areas from the capital as a

¹ Clive Elmsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History*, (London: Taylor and Francis, 1996), p.4.

² Godfrey and Lawrence, p.15.

direct result of the introduction of Peel's Police. This idea is now known to be too simplistic. Investigative work by Clive Elmsley has shown that by the late 1820s, concurrent with the Metropolitan Police's formation, discussions were already taking place regarding the roles of the parish constable in Bedford and Cambridge, not in the style of the Metropolitan Police but rather through development of their existing systems.³ This was likely happening in other areas. Whilst it could be argued that the Metropolitan Police acted as a yardstick for police development, the development of provincial forces was much more multifaceted than the linear versions previously put forward by orthodox historians.⁴

Municipal Corporations Act 1835

The opposition of the local English government to any form of centralisation and loss of self-rule led to piecemeal police reform in the early part of the nineteenth century. The first major piece of legislation to have a sizeable effect on police reform was the Municipal Act, 1835. It changed the system of local governance. Gone were the oligarchical structures that dominated many towns and boroughs, instead power was given over to a rate-paying electorate. More importantly part of the Act required the formation of a watch committee who within three weeks of formation were tasked with the job of employing constables to preserve the peace, and prevent robberies both day and night. In addition to recruiting, the men the watch committees were also

³ Elmsley, *The English Police*, p. 34-36.

⁴ Robert George Love 'Policing and Police Reform in a rural County; Somerset c.1830-1856' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leicester, 2016) p,22.

responsible for outlining rules for the constable's operations.⁵ The Act had a strong influence over rural policing. In 1834 only 20 or so borough forces existed in England but by the 1840s, five years after the introduction of the Act that number had risen to 140 where it remained until the introduction of the County and Borough Police Act in 1856.⁶

Critchley argued that despite the changes it was doubtful that small town watch committees took too much trouble to look beyond their resources and simply used the previous parish constables as a 'ready-made source of labour'. The result being that nothing inherently changed and the police remained inferior to that of the Metropolitan Police.⁷ Examination of the watch committee minutes for Bridport and Poole shows that Critchley's assertions are far too broad and each borough reacted in different ways depending on perceived needs. In Bridport, it appears, from surviving letters of application for the post of constable that all men were newly appointed to the role.⁸ Poole did keep members from the preceding system of policing. The previous Master of the Watch, William Harmen, was transferred into the post of Assistant to the Night Superintendent. Benjamin Inkpen who was a

⁵ Carolyn Steedman, *Policing the Victorian community: the formation of English provincial police forces 1856-80*, (Routledge:London, 2016), Amazon Kindle e-book (chapter 1 (i), para. 2, location 418)

⁶ David Taylor, "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. Figures do vary slightly Carolyn Steedman writes '38 administrative counties by the early 1850's 18 had established constabularies, 13 had just revamped the idea of parish constable and 7 had constabularies in some districts and not in others.'

⁷ T.A Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales, 900-1966*, (Letchworth: Garden City Press, 1967) p.64-65.

⁸ DC-BTB/W/7 Applications, notes of appointment and conditions of acceptances of posts of police constables, 1836.

constable was promoted to Superintendent. The Minutes also show that in April 1838 Christopher Baker, constable, was superannuated because of his advanced age of 72 years.⁹ It will most likely never be fully understood the reason for transferring these men into the new police. Critchley suggested that it was a lack of motivation on the part of the watch committees and it was simply easier to transfer the men across but this view seems narrow-minded. It is conceivable that it would be viewed as advantageous to continue to employ good men who had local knowledge of the area and the communities in which they served. It is also feasible that men were transferred because they were good at their job. Benjamin Inkpen appears in newspaper reports for a further 17 years in his role as Superintendent.¹⁰

There is nothing in the minutes of the Poole Watch Committee meetings to suggest that the role of the office was some half-hearted attempt. The minutes are well written, presented and thorough. In contrast, the Bridport Watch Committee may have fitted Critchley's assertions more accurately. Minutes are written on various bits of paper, ill-kempt, with scant information, giving the impression they were scribbled hurriedly during the meeting lacking the care and attention of the minutes taken at Poole. They provide some information as to payments made to the constables when injured in the line of duty but lack any consistent recording of how the system was working.¹¹ The differences in both sets of minutes are interesting when compared against the Inspectors of

⁹ DC-PL/B/1/6/1, Poole Borough Watch Committee, 01/01/1836-05/09/1840.

¹⁰ Dorset County Chronicle, 16 July 1857, p, 7.

¹¹ DC/PL/B/1/6 Bridport Watch Committee Minutes.

Constabularies' first report in 1856. In Poole, the force was regarded as efficient and well run, whilst in Bridport the borough police were regarded as inefficient; suggesting that the level of attention in the meetings and how seriously the watch committees regarded their role had a bearing on the outcome of the individual constabularies.

County Police Act 1839

In 1836, as the Watch Committees were forming and developing their forces, Edwin Chadwick, a prominent social reformer who had an active role in poor law reform a few years earlier, was establishing a Royal Commission to investigate the state of rural policing which he believed to be inadequate. Chadwick strongly believed in a police directed by a centralised administration and used the commission to purport this belief. Questionnaires were sent out to all the watch committees in the country. The returns from the questionnaires supply a useful source in how the borough forces were progressing. Poole's return is written up as part of the minutes and gives information as to the number of men in force, how many were in uniform, and whether it was thought they had sufficient men of good character, which they did. They also believed that keeping the police was useful especially when it came to expelling vagrants, a preoccupation in Victorian rural society. The result of the Royal Commission was the introduction of the County Police Act, 1839 (also known as the Rural Constabulary Act). The Act did not achieve Chadwick's goal of a nationalised force, instead, it allowed boroughs

the choice of establishing a paid county force only if they so wished.¹² This provided boroughs with much procrastination and resentment, as they perceived it as an attack on their autonomy and self-rule. The result of this permissive act was piecemeal reform. Only eight county constabularies were initially established in 1839, with seven more the following year. By the time of the County and Borough Police Act in 1856, there were twenty-six. Disunion towards the county constabularies was so great that some counties ran both systems. West Dorset magistrates and Justices were vehemently opposed to the introduction of a county constabulary. At the Christmas Sessions which took place in Dorchester on the 31 December 1839 and the 1 January 1840 the rural police were the main focus of discussions. It was acknowledged that policing in the county was not quite in the condition that the magistrates would wish it to be and that in 'some part of the county, it was indeed very deficient'. Whilst they concurred with the need to develop their police forces the magistrates were totally against the principles laid out by the Royal Commission and the subsequent Act. Their disagreements lay with the concept of a nationalised force. They had no wish to destroy the system of policing that had been the mainstay of English rural life throughout the ages.¹³ There was however more disgruntlement towards the Act on a more nuanced level. The magistrates did not believe that strangers were better employed as

¹² Love, p.19.

¹³ This concurs with Elmsley's findings that recruitment policies were instigated at a local level. Clive Elmsley 'The Policeman as a Worker: A Comparative Study c 1800-1940', *International Review of Social History*, 45 (2000) 45-110 (p. 94).

policemen than local men (although they did agree that men should not be employed by their parishes). Nor did they feel that the Act was particularly relevant to Dorset as they regarded that the county lacked the serious crime seen in other areas. The Act was viewed as being in need of amendment as it was not broad enough to take into account variables that were specific to Dorset and what they considered to be important issues that needed addressing such as the guarding the coast and shipwrecks, and the protection of the public who frequented fairs and other public gatherings. It appears that there was a consensus in the points raised because the vote against forming a county constabulary was fairly unanimous of the 36 men in attendance only one voted in favour of the constabulary.¹⁴

County and Borough Police Act 1856

The introduction of the County and Borough Police Act 1856 marked a turning in point in police history. No longer would police reform be piecemeal and permissive. This Act made it compulsory for all counties to establish a police force if they had not already done so.¹⁵ In addition, the treasury offered an incentive of one quarter towards the costs of pay and clothing to ease any financial burden. The result of the state's financial intervention meant that it could become more involved in the running of police services. For any payment to be made forces had to adhere to a set of rules dictated by the state which related to pay, qualifications of the men, uniform and accoutrements and the

¹⁴ Dorset County Chronicle 2 January 1840, p.4.

¹⁵ Clive Elmsley, 'The Bedfordshire Police 1840-1856: A case study in the Working of the Rural Constabulary Act', *Midland History*, 7), 73-92 (p. 73).

implementation of various administrative processes that the chief constable had to follow. Otherwise the day to day running of the force was left to the discretion of watch committees and justices. To check the individual forces were fulfilling their requirement for treasury money Her Majesties Inspectors of the Constabulary were set up to monitor each individual force on a yearly visit. This would be the beginning of a more standardised system of policing.¹⁶ Any forces found wanting and inefficient were at risk from losing the entitlement of a quarter costs paid by the treasury. Another consequence of the introduction of the grant was that towns with populations of less than 5000 did not qualify for any monies. Whilst some boroughs continued without assistance from the government many small towns consolidated their forces into county constabularies which rationalised the number of small forces considerably.

Wider Legislative Changes in Justice and Penal Systems

There are also wider legislative changes to consider which influenced the reform of police over the nineteenth century. Just as the police were beginning to be seen as ineffectual, so too were the justice and penal systems. By the nineteenth century the use of transportation was dwindling which led to the Criminal Law Act 1776 and later the Penal Servitude Act 1853. This increased the number of convicts held within the penal system. For the police, this would ultimately lead to a higher

¹⁶ Police (Counties and Boroughs) Bill, House of Commons sitting. 10 March 1856 Vol 140 cc2113-88 <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1856/mar/10/police-counties-and-boroughs-bill#S3V0140P0_18560310_HOC_19> [Accessed 12 May 2019].

number of repeat offenders within their communities. By the 1870s, it had also led to the police acting as an early form of probation officers as it became expected that they would supervise prisoners upon release from gaol, often this was for many years. In 1871, Sarah Westwood was sentenced to five years' penal servitude but on release was subject to seven years' police supervision for a crime of false pretences.¹⁷ Sarah had a distinguished criminal career and was the subject of many newspaper reports as a 'female swindler', she travelled around much of the south-west during her career and it appears from the records that she is unlikely to have submitted herself to any police supervision instead just moving on to another area¹⁸

The Justice system also came under attack during the period, leading to several acts of parliament being passed which focused on making the system more professionalised. Justices were no longer allowed to hold court in their parlours or local inns, instead, they were moved out into designated courts where they were able to come under the scrutiny of the general public. As people became more confident in the system of prosecution then it is likely that more cases would have been brought as a result thus increasing a policeman's workload.

¹⁷ Terry Hearing, *Dorset Justice*, (Poole: The Magistrates Association, 1999), p. 110.

¹⁸ Bristol Mercury, Saturday 12 November 1870. p.3; Western Mercury, Saturday 31 October 1874, p.5; Western Daily Press, 26 October 1876, p.8.

5. New Style Policing: From the Borough Police to the County Constabularies

Borough Police

The Municipal Corporation Act entered the statute book in September 1835 and by February 1836 Dorset boroughs appear to have fulfilled their obligation of establishing a police force. In Poole, six men were to be on duty both day and night and these were to be headed by a day inspector and assistant plus a night inspector and assistant. Dorchester employed four, strong and able men whilst Bridport employed one part-time superintendent and four constables.¹ Blandford also established day and night police, led by a superintendent which was noted to have 'long been wanting in the town'.²

The response towards the new police was not altogether a positive one. To pay for the police a new borough rate was imposed upon the residents. This led to much opposition which newspapers at the time reported on. Dorchester's ratepayers met during the last months of 1836 to complain about the 'indispensable heavy borough rate payable by inhabitants (previously) free from such imposts'.³ Residents were frustrated that the present system of watch offered 'no protection to the inhabitants, and the expenditure incurred to support it was a waste of the public fund'. Another common theme that arose time and again both in parliament and the communities was the belief that the 'new police would disturb the ancient course of the administration of justice, and the

¹ DC-BTB/W/7 Applications, notes of appointment and conditions of acceptances of posts of police constables, 1836.

² Dorset County Chronicle 4 February 1836 p.4.

³ Dorset County Chronicle 24 November 1836 p.3.

establishment throughout the country of a standing army of ministerial spies'.⁴

Despite any animosity held toward the introduction of paid police, borough watch committees generally fulfilled their task. Records for Bridport borough police build a picture of the type of men chosen for the role. The Superintendent of the new police was Samuel Rooker Champ, who was 34 years old at the time of his employment. He lived locally residing in East Street which despite its name is in a fairly central position within the town. His role as superintendent was part-time and would continue to be so throughout his career. When he wasn't policing he followed the career of whitesmith.⁵ He stayed with the borough police until the introduction of the County Police Act in 1856. At 55 he may have felt the need to retire and continue his career as a whitesmith or he may not have been allowed to continue in a part-time role. Initially, it appears that Rooker-Champ was in charge of three constables before a fourth was appointed several months later in response to ratepayers complaints that a constable was needed to watch over the harbour at West Bay. All lived within the centre of Bridport. Robert Northover who was 40 years old in 1839 had previously worked as a shoemaker and lived in West Street. James James the oldest recruit at 52, lived in South Street, and was a labourer whose previous employment was at Swain and Sons, coal merchants in West Bay.⁶ Lastly, Robert Gale, a

⁴ Dorset County Chronicle 24 November 1836.

⁵ A whitesmith is more specialised than a blacksmith. They focus on refining, polishing and finishing items, often making more delicate items such as locks

⁶ Hunts and Co Directory of Dorset, Hants, Wilts and Somerset 1851, p.49.

mason, who also resided in South Street. It is interesting why a shoemaker, mason, and whitesmith would apply for the post. Except for James James these men were in skilled occupations who unlike unskilled workers should have had a steady and tidy income. A clue to why is in one of the letters of applications for the post. It appears that Bridport was suffering an economic downturn during the period. In his application, Mr James Bishop writes that the 'situation on a townsman who has numerous and dependant family and the means of supporting them has greatly failed in this past year'.⁷ Attached to his application is a reference letter signed by 23 local business men suggesting that he was well-respected and implied a wish on their part to assist him in finding employment.

It could be viewed that these new borough forces were a bridge between the old system of parish constables and night watchmen and the new county police that arrived in 1856. The borough constables had much in common with the parish constable and particularly the night watchmen. The system of walking the beat and checking premises as well as issuing warrants would have been very familiar to both. Yet influence from the Metropolitan Police and a more militaristic style of policing was slowly emerging. The conditions of employment given to the men at Bridport contains the nucleus of the infringements that would be made on the personal freedoms and movements of police officers

⁷ DC-BTB/W/7 Applications, notes of appointment and conditions of acceptances of posts of police constables, 1836.

that would become prevalent after the introduction of the County and Borough Police Act in 1856:

1. Each man shall be required to devote his whole time to the police service.
2. He shall promptly obey all lawful orders which he may receive from the persons in authority over him.
3. He shall conform himself to all regulations which may be made from time to time for the good of the service.⁸

Minutes from the watch committee meetings show that some elements were taken from the Metropolitan Police in Poole, for example, a note is made that the uniform will be in a similar style to that of the London police.⁹ The uniform would have been an important element in the new police. Uniforms are generally an effective way of forming a sense of belonging and commonality amongst the officers an important factor in establishing an organisation, and to outsiders, it is a recognisable symbol and helps promote confidence in their abilities. Bridport minutes further highlight a connection to Metropolitan Police. There is a note in the meeting minutes that the instruction and order book of the Metropolitan Police has been sent to them to assist in guiding the development of their force.¹⁰

A system of hierarchy was also becoming firmly established. Watch committees, magistrates, and Justice of the Peace, did not appear to confer directly with constables. Special cases were given directly to superintending officers as can be seen in court records, perhaps this

⁸ DC-BTB/W/7 Applications, notes of appointment and conditions of acceptances of posts of police constables, 1836.

⁹ DC-PL/B/1/6/1. Poole Borough Watch Committee, 01/01/1836-05/09/1840.

¹⁰ DC-BTB/W/7 Applications, notes of appointment and conditions of acceptances of posts of police constables, 1836.

may have had roots in the fact that the constables were from working-class backgrounds, and therefore viewed to be not as competent. An example of this is the case of Regina Vs Henry Warr in 1845. Henry Warr was a prominent figure in Bridport a carrier but also the Post Master which earned him a great deal of respectability and trust within the town. He banked with a local bank, Gundry's and Co. of Bridport and it is likely that because of the position of Post Master that he was able to secure an overdraft of £900. He was caught trying to pass off a bill of sale for leather items amounting to £20 to his bank which he had forged. Upon discovery, he fled to America. Samuel Rooker Champ was issued a warrant by the Secretary of State, due to the nature of the crime, and followed Warr to America where he apprehended him with the help of the American police. Warr was returned for trial, and upon arrival was declared bankrupt in Exeter. He was sentenced to ten years' transportation for his crime. The case was a high profile one and was reported in newspapers across the southwest.¹¹ In contrast, an image of the plodding constable is brought to mind at the Dorset Lent Assizes in 1839. Bridport Constable Robert Gale was giving evidence in a case of theft. The prisoner had been apprehended by a gentleman in Winterbourne Abbas and Gale was tasked with collecting the prisoner. Winterbourne Abbas is ten miles from Bridport and in all likelihood Gale would have had to collect the prisoner on foot taking him back to Bridport. Subsequently, when the trial was held at the Assizes in Dorchester, fifteen miles away, it can be presumed that Gale also

¹¹ Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, 26 July 1845 p.3.

travelled on foot to give evidence.¹² A task nowhere near as glamorous as chasing a forger to America. Covering these sorts of distances must have taken a significant amount of time and highlights that a large part of a constable's day-to-day employment could be taken up by simply travelling from one place to another.

Introduction of the County Constabularies 1856

The introduction of borough police had gone some way to developing the police but the result was an unbalanced system across the country as town councils and watch committees had different priorities relating to the perceived needs of their districts and differing levels of financial input based on the money available from the borough rate.

On the introduction of the County and Borough Police Act 1856, police committees were formed to investigate the putting together of the county forces. In Dorset, they met for the first time during the Midsummer Quarter Sessions in 1856. Their purpose was to consider and report on how many constables were needed and what the rates of pay would be. When setting the pay provincial forces followed the lead of the Metropolitan Police. Peel had made a policy of recruiting constables from the working classes, allowing men to better themselves as they rose through the ranks. There were several reasons why the provincial forces may have followed suit. Firstly, it kept costs down as pay was set at a similar level to that of a manual labourer. Secondly, it was thought that labourers would be more amenable to both discipline

¹² Sherborne Mercury 25 March 1839 p.3.

and the hierarchal societal structures.¹³ Chief constables were noted for concurring the agricultural labourers were the best recruits for the police as they were more malleable.¹⁴ The reality though was that labourers made up the largest share of the work force in the county and were willing to work for the money offered.

At the following adjourned sessions on the 19 July 1856, the Justices submitted their report which was to be forwarded to the Secretary of State informing him of their decisions. They concluded that the force was to be made up of 112 men the structure and pay is outlined in Table 3.

	Job Title	Rate of Pay
1	Chief Constable	£350 per annum + £150 Expenses
3	Superintendents	£130 per annum + £50 expenses
9	Sergeants	£1-10-0 per week
60	1 st Class Constables	17/6d per week
30	2 nd Class Constables	15/- per week

Table 3. Wages for Dorset Constabulary 1856. Source: D., Holmes, & J., Gray, *Dorset Constabulary 1856-1956*, (Unknown, 1956). p.5.

The expenses received by the Chief Constable and Superintendents were to cover the cost of keeping a horse as the men were expected to travel extensively in their role. In addition, the Chief Constable had to pay for a clerk out of his expenses. For the constables, they were to receive a weekly wage of 15 or 17 shillings a week depending on class.

¹³ Clive Elmsley, 'Recruiting the English Policeman c.1840-1940' *Policing and Society*, Vol 3 (1994) pp.269-286 (p.271).

¹⁴ Steedman, (chapter 2, para. 6, location 1774).

in addition, horses and carts for the force were also purchased. The whole cost of the force was calculated to be £6940 per year.¹⁵ The pay for the constables was higher than those of agricultural labourers who could expect to be earning around 10 or 11 shillings during the late 1850s.¹⁶ but the wage was more in line with other manual workers. For men employed in agriculture and other labouring jobs which were market or weather dependant the role of a police constable must have seemed a comfortable one. A uniform supplied, a regular wage and annuities paid as well as the chance to better one's prospects must have been a great draw for many men.

After the structure and pay of the force had been decided the first Chief Constable of Dorset was appointed at the following Michaelmas sessions in 1856, 39-year-old Lieutenant-Colonel Samuel Symes. The employment of a military man into the role of chief constable was a theme that occurred in almost all county constabularies and military men continued to be employed throughout the rest of the century. Kim Stevenson et al have investigated the history of chief constables from 1835 to present day and have highlighted that this basis of demonstration focused on the social standing of these men with strong qualities of service and responsibility imparted from military experience and further instilling a hierarchy. These values, in turn, represented the social status and outlook of the elite which employed them and they

¹⁵ D., Holmes, & J., Gray, pp.7-8.

¹⁶ *Wages through history; British Labour Statistics* (2011)
<<https://historyofwages.blogspot.com/2011/02/agricutlural-labourers-wages-1850-1914.html>>[accessed 14 June 2019]

were able to be used as public figureheads.¹⁷ Once appointed Symes wasted no time in placing an advert in the local newspaper seeking men for his force. His requirements were straightforward the men were required to be between 22 and 35 years of age, over 5ft 8inches, be able to read and write and have no more than two children.¹⁸ These narrow criteria would ensure a younger more dynamic force distancing itself from the satiric 'Dogberry' image often applied to the police. Narrowing the criteria to a certain subset of men also assisted the constabulary into developing a social subculture much like that found in the military. This was to be an important element of the new police, control and military influence was used as a way to professionalise and unite the force.

Opposition to the County Constabularies

The County and Borough Police Act was not widely embraced by the Dorset boroughs. Many remained fiercely independent with the idea of amalgamation a contentious issue as records of town council meetings show. After the Inspectors of the Constabulary made their first visit to Bridport borough police in September 1857 the Secretary of state wrote a letter to the council outlining their recommendations. At the following town council meeting held on 16 November 1857, the mayor arrived with a letter signed by 397 ratepayers. The letter complained of the intrusion of the inspector's report citing; 'we consider the right of self-

¹⁷ Claire Davis, Review of ed. K Stevenson *Leading the police: a history of chief constables 1835–2017* (Routledge:Abingdon) in *Policing and Society*, Vol 28, (2018) pp.748-750 (749).

¹⁸ Poole and Dorset Herald 6 November 1856, p.4.

government, which we hold by charter a great privilege; not one to be surrendered by those whom we elected as town council, to any government which may seek by any means (however plausible) to deprive us of it without our consent'.¹⁹ A similar response was elicited from Dorchester town council upon receiving a similar letter after the inspectors visit. Mr Garland, one of the town councillors thought 'they should send a reply that they could manage their own affairs' and that the letter was most 'dictatorial' and 'absurd'.²⁰

County and Borough	Area in acres	Population in 1851	Established number of police for regular daily duty on 29 Sept 1856	Chief constable	Superintendents	Inspectors	Sergeants	constables	Totals for duty on 29 Sept 1857	No. of the population to each constable including all ranks
Dorsetshire	623,210	146,332	112	1	10	-	10	100	121	1209
Blandford	27	2,504	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	2,504
Bridport	257	7,300	3	-	1	-	-	2	3	2,433
Dorchester	571 ½	6,391	6	-	-	-	2	4	6	1,063
Lyme Regis	1,499	2,661	2	-	1	-	-	1	2	1,350
Poole	4,749	9,255	11	-	1	-	1	9	11	841
Weymouth	1,600	9,755	10	-	1	-	1	8	10	975

Table 4. No's of constables, 1857 Inspector of Constabulary Report.²¹
Source: HMIC Report 1857, p. 141.

It was not only the perceived encroachment on their local governance that caused concerns but also the financial implications that following

¹⁹ Bridport News, 21 November 1857 p. 4.

²⁰ Dorset County Chronicle, November 12, 1857, p 284.

²¹ HMIC Report 1857, p. 141.

the inspector's recommendations would incur. In Dorchester, one councillor, Mr Coombs believed that if they followed the recommendations and received the one-quarter cost from the treasury they would still be £50 worse off per annum. These considerations may explain why Dorchester did not amalgamate with the County until 1890. In contrast, the Bridport town council thought that amalgamation with the county police would be advantageous as it would allow constables to be able to 'perform their duties without fear or affection'. Whilst some reservations remained about the loss of self-governance, a motion was carried to join the county force. Furthermore, it was also agreed that the extra expense needed to meet the inspector's recommendations of having four constables as opposed to two would be collected out of a separate rate that was to be known as the police rate.²² So on 16 January 1858, Bridport was consolidated with the County Constabulary for a cost of £290 per annum that included clothing and all extras²³. The town council agreed to pay £218 the remaining £72 was covered by the treasury. In addition to these payments, the lock-up and station houses were to be held by the county police free of charge. The different reactions of these two boroughs show that the transition to the county constabularies was not a streamlined process. In fact, the incorporation of other borough forces into the county constabularies spanned sixty years. Lyme Regis was to follow Bridport joining the constabulary on the 29 March 1860 for the cost of £175, paying £135 and having £40

²² Bridport News, 21/11/1857 p.4.

²³ The police were also to cover the surrounding parishes of Bridport; Allington, Bothenhampton, Bradpole, Burton Bradstock, Symondsburry and Walditch.

paid towards the cost from the treasury.²⁴ Shaftsbury followed in 1873 and Wareham in 1887. Followed later still by Dorchester and Blandford in 1890 but it was not until 1921 that the Weymouth Borough Police, the last borough force in Dorset finally succumbed.²⁵

Control of the Constables

The quasi-militaristic approach to policing was applied to the county constabularies from the very start. Carolyn Steedman noted that the introduction of the County and Borough Police Act coincided with the Crimean war which led some to view the constabularies as a form of defensive militia 'it's timings, and many of the provisions it contains, were dictated by a situation of war, and a contemporary invasion panic'.²⁶

General orders provide good examples of the militaristic influence and discipline that the constables were expected to endure. Chief Constable Symes obliged all his men to ensure that they returned to their quarters every evening by 10pm where they were expected to remain until their next shift began. Constables were not allowed to smoke on the street and were required to have their hair cut. In a later order, the Chief Constable recommended that the men sew leather into the pockets that held their staffs so it did not rub a hole in the pocket.²⁷ Preserving the life of the uniform was probably wise because constables were expected to wear their uniforms at all times, including Divine Service

²⁴ DFFO/41/16 Agreements concerning consolidation of police forces.

²⁵ D., Holmes, & J., Gray, p.5.

²⁶ Steedman, (chapter 1 (iii), para 8, location 676).

²⁷ D., Holmes, & J., Gray, p.9.

which they were expected to attend at least once on a Sunday.²⁸ The Chief Constable also had expectations of the men's demeanour informing the constables that they were to 'discharge their duties with the utmost forbearance and perfect civility towards all classes and despite any provocation should not permit themselves to be rude or harsh in performance of their duty....They must keep under control their private feelings'.²⁹ As Critchley points out it was important for the men to behave in this way much as it had been for the Metropolitan Police as it was imperative to cultivate good relations with the public and not antagonise them given that many were averse to the idea of county constabularies.³⁰ Also, many forces instigated the practice of drills. The Dorset constables were drilled each month before being allowed to collect their wages. Drilling already had a long history as a military technique the design of which produced a collective body and controlled the individual further instilling army nomenclature.³¹ The expectation of the men to be in uniform even during their leisure time meant that the uniform took on symbolic importance, the constables were always visible, showing marks of rank and further restricting the body.³² Personal space was controlled even further through the practice of walking the beat. In Dorset, men were ordered to walk at not less than 3.5 miles per hour. Similar rules applied in other constabularies for example in Essex the men were to take the outward side of the footpath

²⁸ D., Holmes, & J., Gray, p.9.

²⁹ D315/2 Wareham general order book, 15 March 1857.

³⁰ Critchley, p.147.

³¹ Williams, p. 62 & 66.

³² Williams, p.68.

and give way to people in a respectable manner.³³ The use of conference points also ensured that the men had to be in a certain place at a certain time. If they failed to make the conference points at the allocated time, they would be reprimanded. Repeated infractions would see their pay or class reduced, in worst-case scenarios they could be called upon to resign. For the men employed who had no previous military experience this control over personal freedom must have seemed extreme and stifling and separated the men from their communities, marking them out as 'other' and aimed to remould their personalities. Despite this militaristic approach, Critchley argued that the efficiency of the provincial police was low and slow when compared to the Metropolitan Police because the hierarchy of the police system i.e. the Justices did not have the experience to lead or organise the men. He viewed provincial police as a 'body of watchmen rather than an organised force, required to obey the justices who were 'themselves not organised or professionally qualified to act as section commanders', and that this created a master and servant relationship.³⁴ Indeed, rural areas had long held a natural hierarchy where men knew their place however it is hard to see the validity of Critchley's assertion. Whilst Justices may not have had direct skills of policing, many did have previous military experience and did hold a system of control and management over their respective areas administratively as part of their role of landowners. There is no reason to think that as a group they would have been unable to run small police forces efficiently.

³³ Williams, p. 63.

³⁴ Critchley, p. 66.

6. The Men of the Constabulary

To understand what attracted men into the constabulary and the high rates of turnover that were synonymous with early policing it is useful to understand what kind of men were recruited to gain an understanding of early constables. The Metropolitan Police had made it a policy to recruit men from the working classes and many county constabularies followed suit. The reality is that this was not a conscious decision to emulate the Metropolitan Police but rather a need to recruit from the local labour available and, as discussed in chapter two, agricultural workers and manual labourers made up the largest share of the workforce. Several studies have examined both the occupational backgrounds and the origins of the early constables. Clive Elmsley conducted a study on police personnel records looking at a sample of 18,000 men which took in the County Forces of Cambridge, Kent, East Suffolk and Worcestershire.¹ Whilst Carolyn Steedman focused her research on Staffordshire and the East Midlands.

Use of Census Records

Unfortunately, personnel records for Dorset do not survive for the very early years of the constabulary so no direct comparisons could be made with the studies carried out by Emsley and Steedman. Careful use of the censuses in 1851 and 1861 did, however, provide an insight into where the men originated from and also their previous occupations. By compiling a list of men who had given their occupations as police

¹ Clive Elmsley, 'Recruiting the Police c. 1840-1940' *Policing and Society*, 3 (1994), 269-286.

constables on the 1861 census it was possible to cross-reference them with their entries on the 1851 census thus giving both birthplace, age, marriage status, and previous occupation. The negative aspect of using the census was that not all the police constables were picked up in the census returns in 1861. The HMIC Report for 1861 lists 133 constables plus a further 39 for the borough police.² Only 87 entries were found in the census, 65% of the total number of constables employed during 1861. There are many possible reasons for this difference, inaccurate record-keeping, whether the men were employed as constables at the time of the census, poor spelling, etc. Despite the small sample size, a picture still emerges which shows the birthplace of the constables and their previous occupations, the findings of which are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Figure 1 shows that 68% of the Dorset constables were born in the county with 22% from the neighbouring counties of Wiltshire, Hampshire and Somersetshire. Ten percent came from out of the area, scattered across England, including places like Oxford, Middlesex, Essex, and Cumbria. These findings are not dissimilar with Elmsley's study or a study conducted by Maureen Scollen for her Ph.D. thesis which explored the policing in Essex. In Kent and East Suffolk over three-quarters of the men were born in their respective counties In Huntingdonshire and Worcestershire half the total men were born in the county and many others came from neighbouring counties.³ In Essex

² HMIC Report, 1861, p.134.

³ Elmsley, 'Recruiting the Police' p.279.

59 per cent were from Essex whilst 16.3 per cent came from adjunct counties. The rural poverty discussed in earlier chapters would largely account for this. People would have more likely been migrating out of the area rather than in, so constabularies would not have had the opportunity to recruit men from a larger variety of areas. In contrast in the borough of Birkenhead, situated across the river Mersey from Liverpool only 2.3% of the men were local. Its proximity to Liverpool most likely meant more transitory migration patterns.⁴

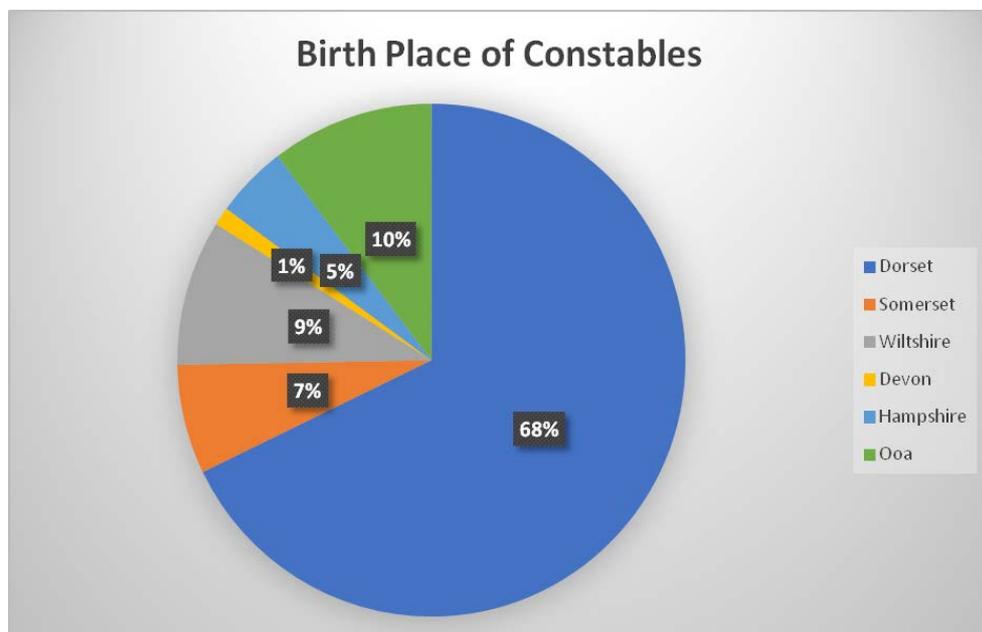


Figure 1. Birthplace of constables listed on 1861 census Source: 1861 Census of England. Findmypast.com [Accessed on 19 July 2019]

In addition to the birthplace of the constables, their previous occupations can also be found by using the census returns. By cross-referencing the men who appear on the 1861 census with their entries on the 1851 census it is possible to examine previous occupations. Unfortunately, in doing so the sample size shrunk, only 44 men from the

⁴ Elmsley, 'Recruiting the Police' p.276.

1861 census could be reliably identified in the 1851 census. The rest could either not be found, or had conflicting results and were therefore excluded.

Figure 2 shows that police constables were indeed drawn from agricultural work 39% were listed as agricultural labourers whilst 20% were listed as simply 'labourer'. It could be assumed that some of those also worked in the agricultural industry which would raise the percentage of agricultural workers even further. This matches the occupational data for Dorset towns listed in Table 1 that highlights that close to a third of the workforce were employed in agriculture. Carolyn Steedman had similar findings in her study on the constabularies of Staffordshire and Buckinghamshire. In these counties, rural labourers made up between a third and a half of the force between 1856 and 1880.⁵ These findings go against Elmsley's conclusion that men coming from agriculture rarely rose above ten per cent in any force.⁶

⁵ Steedman, (chapter 2, para 7, location 1774).

⁶ Elmsley, 'Recruiting the Police', p. 272.

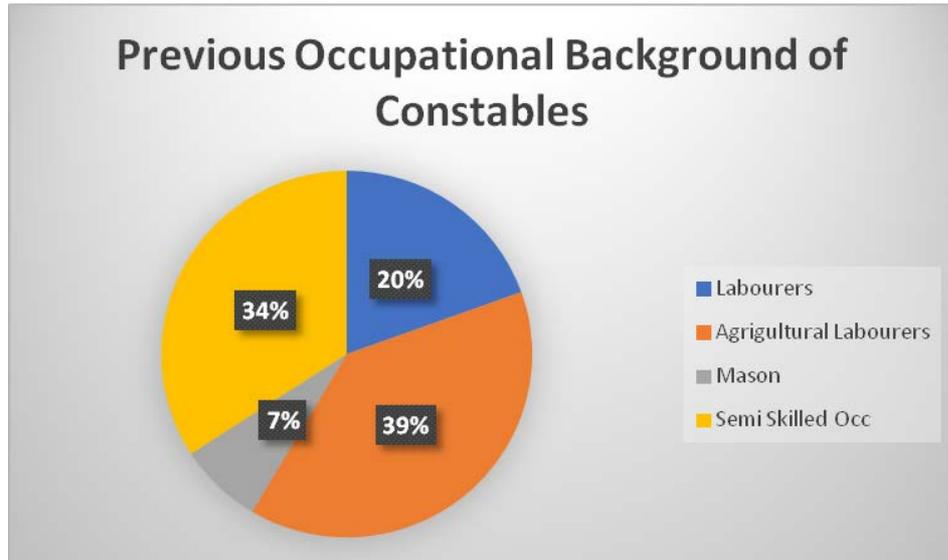


Figure 2. Previous occupational background of constables listed on 1861 census Source: 1861 Census of England. Findmypast.com [Accessed on 19 July 2019]

The draw of the police force is obvious. It supplied steady work, and therefore steady wages, the uniform was supplied. There was also a chance that if injured in the line of duty money for living expenses and medical bills was often paid plus an annuity if unable to continue work, none of which applied to those working in agricultural labour. Another small draw was the chance of a pension at retirement age, although this would not be properly mandated until 1890.

The drawback of the use of the censuses above is that whilst interesting it does not produce reliable data. It is impossible to separate the borough police from the constabulary police and as already mentioned not every constable was able to be extrapolated from the census data.

Use of Police Recruitment Records

Recruitment records for the Dorset Constabulary do exist post-1870. These not only provide more reliable information but also show any developments in recruitment since the constabularies' inception. Data

on the constables was gathered from those employed from 1872 to 1874. 78 men were employed during those three years and whilst this is a small sample size some clear patterns develop. Further research spreading a larger span of years would be useful to determine how recruitment patterns were linked with wider changes in the community, such as economic downturns, bad harvests, and civil unrest, but it was unfortunately not possible within the scope of this work.

By the 1870s the number employed in the Constabulary had increased from 121 in 1857 to 133 in 1875.⁷ Figure 4 shows the men employed were still overwhelmingly local with 79% being born within the county this is an 11% increase from the results of the census returns. One drawback on using the recruitment data is that the recording of previous occupations is not as informative as those listed on the census returns. In Figure 5 the most common occupation is simply 'Labourer', which makes up 55% of the workforce with the rest coming from semi-skilled occupations such as grooms, gentleman's servants, bakers, shoemakers and interestingly gamekeepers, an occupation which usually excluded men from joining. Recruitment during the period seemed to favour the single man, 63% were single, and an even further anomaly shows that 78% of the men had no children upon joining which is highlighted in Figure 3. Both these differences could be due to the fact that the average age of joining the force was 23 years old so it may just be that the men had not settled down to family life, or it could have been a deliberate decision on part of the Chief Constable, perhaps

⁷ HMIC Report, 1875, p.198

single men were seen as more malleable and committed than those with family ties. The nature of the job meant that the men were moved on to a different station every few years which could have acted as a deterrent for men joining if they had families who were settled in one particular area. The Chief Constable was very keen on employing those who had previous public service experience, this included previous police or military experience, railways, convict services or county asylum experience. A public service background was evident in a third of all recruits between 1872 and 1874. Ten per cent of the recruits had previous Metropolitan Police experience, even if it was only a few months experience. This would seem to suggest that the constabulary was keen to bring in the specialist knowledge and experience gained by these men in their previous roles.

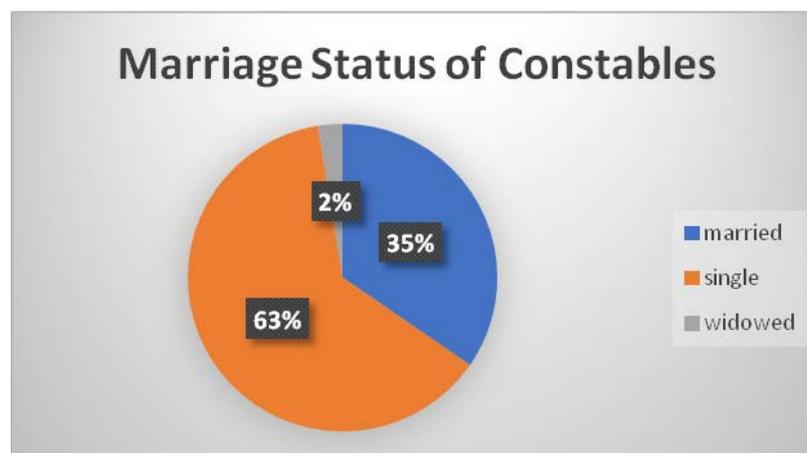


Figure 3. Marriage status of constables listed on Application 1872-1874
Source: *Police recruitment records, BP/DT, accession 10058, box 29* [uncatalogued]

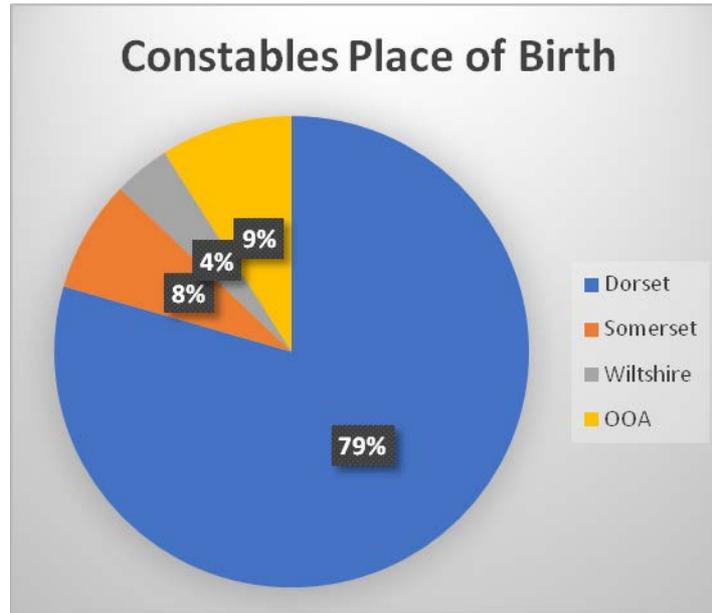


Figure 4. Constables place of birth listed on Application 1872-1874
Source: *Police recruitment records, BP/DT, accession 10058, box 29* [uncatalogued]



Figure 5. Occupations listed on Application 1872-1874 Source: *Police recruitment records, BP/DT, accession 10058, box 29* [uncatalogued]

Year	No. of Men Recruited	% of Total Number Employed in Constabulary
1872	15	11.3
1873	18	13.5
1874	14	10.5

Table 5. Percentage of men employed 1872-1874 Source: *Police recruitment records, BP/DT, accession 10058, box 29 [uncatalogued]*

Year	No. of Men Who Left Constabulary Employment	% of force
1872	10	7.5
1873	7	5.3
1874	9	6.8

Table 6. Percentage of men who left employment 1872-1874 Source: *Police recruitment records, BP/DT, accession 10058, box 29 [uncatalogued]*

A constable's daily schedule

A constable's daily work was not easy and must have come as a shock to anyone who joined the force thinking it was an easy option. The hours were long and the work often tedious and alienating in nature. It could be hazardous as well, dealing with criminals, drunks and cases of civil unrest put the constables in danger.

The control of a constable's daily schedule was achieved through the use of a journal, individual to each constable. The men had to record the hours of the shifts they undertook, conference point meetings, places on their beat that they had visited, the miles they had walked,

the state of the weather and a section for any remarks. The journal was not about crime prevention, or a tool to assist the men with the detection of crime, it was used primarily to record their whereabouts.

In Dorset only a few journals survive but together they span a period of sixty years starting with the journal of PC Hebditch in 1858 and ending with PC Joseph Jackson in 1919.⁸ Examining these records shows how little day-to-day policing changed over these years.

The shift patterns must have felt relentless. Labourers may have been used to working long hours but constables had to adapt to a shift pattern that spread across 24 hours, 7 days a week. Table 7 gives an example of the shift patterns the PC Hebditch had to endure. There were usually two shifts each day of varying lengths but in total the daily hours worked were in the region of 8 to 10. If there was a fair or some other form of public duty such as attending an execution then the men would work for the whole day, usually about twelve to thirteen hours. The shift revolved around the walking of a beat. The men could cover up to 20 miles a day on foot wearing a constricting uniform in the stifling heat of the summer, or the cold and damp of winter along roads that did not benefit from the luxury of tarmac. In the countryside those working in the night during the winter months did so in complete darkness save for a lamp they carried. Along the beat the constables were supposed to

⁸ D.195, PC Soloman Dennett, Dorset Constabulary Archive, Journals (1877-1919); D-271/1, PC James Searley, Dorset Constabulary Archive, Official Journal (1883-1886); D-315/5, PC 36 Hebditch's Journal (1858-1861).

check in with local landowners and farmers and would list the residences in their journals so they could be checked if needed.

During a shift the constables needed to check in with other constables at pre-appointed places known as a conference points. Here constables on a nearby beat or a Superintendent would sign the journal. This ensured that the constables were compliant and following the beat correctly. If the constable could not make his conference point in the time allocated he would record his reason in the 'remarks' section of the journal. Examples of this are seen when on June 21 1858 PC Hebditch was unable to make his conference point 'in consequence of being sent for by Mr Burch of Hilfield about some person wilfully breaking one of his cottage windows'. Or, on June 30 1858 he 'attended Dorchester quarter sessions to give evidence against Eliza Thorn for stealing two half sovereigns, the property of Robert George at Cerne Abbas on the May 25 1858, he notes that she was committed to six months hard labour.'⁹ Perhaps the grimmest of all was on the 9 and 10 August 1858 Hebditch was unable to meet his conference points 'in consequence of being on duty at the executions of James Seale at Dorchester.'¹⁰

A common theme in the journals was the constables recording the checking of public houses. They would list the name of the pub and the time it was checked. Of the many entries by various constables over the years a telling sign of their relationships with the public house was that

⁹ D-315/5, PC 36 Hebditch's Journal (1858-1861)

¹⁰ An infamous murder of a woman in Stoke Abbott, Beaminster, a well-known case throughout the Southwest at the time because of its ferocity. *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, Thursday 12 August 1858, p.2

they were always found to be in good order, or on a rare occasion closed suggesting that perhaps the constables turned a blind eye whenever possible. Other things that were remarked on that were connected directly to policing but more about the control over the constable's personal space was that the constables always noted their attendance at divine service highlighting the expectation for the men to attend.

Date	First Shift	Second Shift	Total number of miles walked
18/06/1858	14:00-17:00	21:00-04:00	22 Miles
19/06/1858	15:00-20:00	04:00-09:00	18 Miles
20/06/1858	16:00-23:00		16 miles
21/06/1858	10:00-13:00	19:00-14:00	20 Miles
22/06/1858	0:00-15:00	06:00-13:00	16 Miles
23/06/1858	10:00-15:00	16:00-21:00	25 Miles
24/06/1858	16:00-20:00	04:00-09:00	20 Miles
25/06/1858	11:00-14:00	17:00-0:00	19 Miles
26/06/1858	15:00-18:00	21:00-04:00	19 Miles
27/06/1858	14:00-21:00	21:00-04:00	22 Miles
28/06/1858	16:00-23:00		16 Miles
29/06/1858	13:00-16:00	20:00-01:00	17 Miles
30/06/1858	07.30-23:00		26 Miles

Table 7. PC Hebditch's shift patterns in 1858 Source: D-315/5 - Journal of P.C. 36 Hebditch. 1858-1861.

The journals give little idea to the types of incidents that constables would come across on their daily beats but the survival of beat books

for Bridport division shows that the work could be emotionally demanding as well as physical. Table 8 gives an example of what constables were dealing with in November 1867.

Date	Incident Recorded
5 November 1867	Cow shed set on fire in South Perrott
13 November 1867	Man destroyed wheat and straw stacks
15 November 1867	<p>Large number of persons assembled in the streets of Lyme Regis and proceeded to the Mill where windows were broken. Mayor had to call in Special Constables. By 12 town was quiet</p> <p>Inquest held at Five Bells, Bridport of male child found in bed. Verdict accidental death by suffocation</p>
24 November 1867	Boy of 9 months dies of natural cause although parents were reprimanded for neglect

Table 8 Entries for Bridport Beat Book November 1867 Source: D-315/3/2 Bridport Division Beat Book

Accidental fire and the deaths of children appear regularly and it is reasonable to suggest the police were early on the scene much as they are today. There were entries in the book for a boy aged 8 who had been killed by a threshing machine, or the accidental drowning of an 11-year-old, death by being run over by a waggon, and many suicides. Whilst death may have been a more regular part of life than in present times dealing with these situations must have left a mark upon the men

who witnessed these scenes on a regular basis. There are also physical health aspects to consider. In the case of fires breaking out, if the men were active in trying to extinguish them then repeated exposure without breathing apparatus must have put their health at risk over the long term.

7. The Demon Drink

Alcohol was an integral part of working-class life and was consumed as often as could be afforded by large numbers of working class men and women. This was to come to the forefront of Victorian sensibilities when in 1830 the Beerhouse Act was introduced in England and Wales establishing a new type of drinking establishment. This allowed rate paying individuals to apply for a license to sell beer from their homes. In addition, the tax on beer was also reduced lowering the price of a pot of beer by 20%.¹ Many took advantage of the Act, in the first six months after the Beerhouse Act was introduced 24,000 beer shops came into being alongside 51,000 already established licensed public houses.² This had the effect of leading the middle and upper classes to believe that they were seeing unprecedented levels of drunkenness. It also furthered the divide between the classes as the upper classes saw the working classes as too weak to resist the temptation of drink.³ In 1834, the Report from the Select Committee on Inquiry into Drunkenness granted police unlimited rights to inspect beer shops which became one of the primary roles undertaken during a constable's beat, probably the reason why it was recorded in their journals. The drawback to using the police to control working-class drinking was that the constables were themselves from working-class backgrounds. This does raise the question of how effectively beer houses were controlled.

¹ Nicolas Mason, 'The Sovereign People are in a Beastly State': The Beer Act of 1830 and Victorian Discourse on Working Class Drunkenness', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, (2001), p.109.

² Mason, p.113.

³ Mason, p.115.

It is hard to gain an understanding of just how much alcohol was consumed by the working classes during the nineteenth century. There is much debate on the statistics of drinking amongst the working class in England during the period but the consensus is that drinking levels continued to grow through the latter half of the century until they finally began a long-term decline in the twentieth.⁴ To comprehend how much alcohol the working classes consumed researchers have often looked at how much money was spent on alcohol. This view can only be impressionistic at best as reliable figures are almost impossible to ascertain. Charles Booth and George Simm suggest that one-quarter of working-class earnings were spent on drink whilst Rowntree thought 1/6 was more accurate for the working class of York. Leone Levi considered that the working class purchased 75% of all beer and spirits sold.⁵ Despite the reliability of this evidence being vague it is reasonable to draw a conclusion the working class spent a large proportion of their income on drink.

Where there is alcohol there is often violence, and arguments can escalate quickly. For policemen who patrolled on their own, or even in pairs, they could be easily overpowered if a situation got out of hand. Violence was more normalised than it is today and in the line of duty constables often bore the brunt. Toughness was likely a desirable quality in a constable. Gregory points out Howard Taylor's argument of policing being a dangerous activity was at a time when masculinity was

⁴ A. E. Dingle, "Drink and Working-Class Living Standards in Britain, 1870-1914", *The Economic History Review*, Vol 25 (1972), 608-622, p. 611.

⁵ Dingle, p. 612.

expressed by aggressions and strong physicality. Elmsey noted that it was unlikely that constables reported assaults because of this.⁶

Records of violence towards police officers exist in local newspaper reports of court trials, and general order books when the incident was sufficient enough for the Chief Constable to make a note.

For constables, being attacked in whatever context must have been a frightening experience and is likely a reason that many a man left the force. In a job that was reasonably low paid, for some the risk must have outweighed the benefits. There are several examples of what the constables had to put up with. On Christmas Eve 1859, just several months after joining the constabulary PC Richard Hann was on duty, on his own, at Sturminster Station. In the lock-up was Mr Esau Hart who was there due to drunkenness. Two men arrived at the station, Andrew and George Hart, presumably family members. They offered one hundred pounds to PC Hann for Esau's release. Hann declined and a fight ensued which ended up with three men beating the constable around his head with their fists. When the matter went to court two witnesses came forward describing events differently saying that it was the officer who struck the first blow. The jury must have believed the witnesses because after thirty minutes' deliberation they acquitted the defendants.⁷ Whatever the truth behind who threw the first punch PC Hann may well have received life-changing injuries, or even worse, in the course of his duty. This was not the only time PC Hann was to

⁶ Gregory, p.132.

⁷ Maurice, Hann, *Policing Victorian Dorset* (Dorset: Dorset Publishing Company, 1989) p. 3.

undergo an assault on Christmas Eve. Eight years later in 1867 when PC Hann and a colleague ordered Mr John Murmin to go home due to his violent nature he lashed out against the constables and found himself charged with assault and being drunk and riotous. The courts issued a heavy fine of five pounds but he was unable to pay and was subsequently committed to six weeks of hard labour.⁸

The time taken up by the constables for issues involving alcohol are hard to define from the records. A list of prisoners from October 1876 to September 1877 highlighting the number of people sent to prison on alcohol-related charges compared with other categories of crime gives some idea to how prevalent it was in the courts. Table 9 only shows the numbers convicted and does not include cases which were dismissed. It is also likely that other crimes may have had alcohol as a component that is not obvious from the court records.

505 people were sentenced between 01/10/1876-30/09/1877	No. of people convicted	Percentage of total people convicted
Stealing	101	20%
Vagrancy	96	19%
Drunkenness	75	15%
Assault	59	12%
Poaching	14	3%

Table 9. No. of persons convicted 1876-1877 at Dorset Petty Sessions
Source: Ron 9/3/17 Database of prisoners sent to Dorchester Prison

It is interesting in John Murmin's case in that he stated his reaction was because he had been treated badly by the police in the past. Some

⁸ Maurice Hann, p. 50.

constables may have instigated incidents of violence themselves. Again, evidence for this exists in the court records. At the Blandford Petty Sessions in 1866, it was PC Hann who found himself being summoned for assault by Mr William Shave. Hann admitted his actions and was fined 5 shillings including costs.⁹ Hann does not appear to have suffered any serious reprimand for the incident, instead he was promoted to second-class constable the following month on 30 August 1866.¹⁰ PC Hann spent many years in the constabulary without blemish and it was likely that in all other respects he was considered a good, hard-working constable.

Alcohol was a large problem within the constabulary. Police constables being drunk undermined the force's efficiency and was seen to damage its reputation. Even drinking off duty was frowned upon. Yet publicans and members of the public would often offer alcohol to constables.¹¹

The general order books show just how prevalent drinking was amongst the constables as a note was made of those who were reprimanded or dismissed from the force. From a random selection of 239 men who were listed in the general orders between 1856 to 1888. There were 82 records relating to the constables being caught drinking. The most common situation of drinking on duty appears to be when the constables were on duty at fairs or other public events such as the races. They were also often caught drinking in a public house or

⁹ Dorset County Chronicle, 19 July 1866, p.6.

¹⁰ Maurice Hann, p. 47.

¹¹ Joanne Klein, *Invisible Men: The Secret Lives of Police Constables in Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham, 1900-1939*, (Liverpool: LUP, 2010) p. 78.

beerhouse, or in the case of PC Martin Barrett, who was found drunk and asleep at the road side probably returning home from the pub. Constables did not have to be on duty in order to be reprimanded for drinking. PC Brown swore at his landlady when drunk and was fined a week's pay and dismissed.¹² The punishments for drinking infractions varied. The men could be fined, moved at their own expense to another station or dismissed, which suggests that other aspects of the men's behaviour were taken into account. The inclusion in the general orders of those caught drinking and their subsequent punishments was a clear sign from the chief constable that alcohol was not tolerated.

¹² D-2193/1 Printed transcript of Dorset Constabulary general orders. January 1886-September 1901.

8. Conclusion

For much of police history the emphasis has focused on orthodox and revisionist views which have suggested that provincial policing was a result of a linear progression of ideas and influence from the Metropolitan Police. By using a counter revisionist approach and focusing directly on the development of policing in one county it has been possible to test the validity of past orthodox and revisionist evaluations which has shown that the situation is more complex than that.

Provincial policing in Dorset never underwent the 'plague of blue locusts' that happened in London when 3000 men took to the streets in uniform on the 29 September 1829.¹ Police reform in Dorset was more piecemeal where new ideas existed amongst the old, particularly pre-1856 and the establishment of county forces. Smaller towns and villages tended to keep their systems of parish constables whilst the larger towns often took the opportunity to upgrade and develop their forces. This did not necessarily mean the introduction of more constables. Even when paid forces were initiated after the 1836 County Police Act, the numbers of police on the street did not change significantly. Any changes and development focused more on how the force was run. From the start of the paid police, control over the men was introduced and made apparent through the hierarchical structure and uniform. The later county constabularies would go further still,

¹ Storch, R., & Engels, F. (1975). The Plague of the Blue Locusts: Police Reform and Popular Resistance in Northern England, 1840–57. *International Review of Social History*, 20(1), pp. 61-90.

introducing military type discipline such as drilling, and the decision of the chief constable to employ young single men helped them to form a camaraderie that separated them from their peers.

In the communities, the adversity towards the new police was in large part due to the financial burden placed on rate payers as well as the idea that the police could be used by the state against them. This financial concern helped shaped the individual police forces as the watch committees had to focus on the specific needs that were seen as important to the local communities in order to justify the rate payers expense rather than any attempt to directly emulate the Metropolitan Police. That is not to say that the Metropolitan Police had no influence. Examples in earlier chapters showed that Poole and Bridport cherry picked certain ideas to suit their needs and it makes sense that there would be an exchange of ideas. The biggest influence on the later formation of the county constabularies was not the Metropolitan Police but the chief constables. The decision taken by most counties to employ military men into the role of chief constable meant that constabularies did begin to look more uniform as these men drew on their military experience. The military influence has been evidenced in this work and also in the work of Margaret Scollern and Margaret Gregory in their respective studies on Essex and Monmouthshire as well as the larger work by Carolyn Steedman and played a much larger part than previous orthodox police historians have acknowledged.

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