

The changing role and policing priorities of the New Police in Chester, from
1856 to 1876

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Abstract

This study examines the changing role and policing priorities of the New Police in Chester from 1856 and 1876 and explores how the Watch Committee dealt with the issue of high turnover rates in staff in the Chester City Police in order to maintain an efficient police force to enable it to perform its role during this period.

It argues that the Watch Committee's influence was beginning to wane and signs started to appear that central government were beginning to shape local policing matters. It will claim that central government and the Watch Committee were not the only influences on the changing role of the Chester City Police in this period: agitation by constables changed the role they performed and that circumstances and events could sometimes decide policing matters. It further argues that four crucial measures were introduced, which tried to address the issues of high turnover rates and lack of experience in the force, and this allowed the Watch Committee to maintain the Chester City Police in an efficient state to be able to perform its role effectively. However, this study reasons that it is difficult to see how the Chester City Police could be truly effective when ultimately it could not retain enough experienced men to pass on their knowledge to new recruits.

It concludes that the force performed a 'Domestic Missionary' role to impose better standards of moral discipline on the working class, by targeting drink and gambling offences. It was used to protect property of the ratepayers. But the role was multi-faceted and changed through pressure from the constables, Watch Committee, government and external events. Chester City Police experienced the same problem of high turnover rates in staff as other forces. Measures with varying degrees of success were introduced by the Watch Committee, HM Inspectors of Constabulary and Chief Constables to solve this

problem. It questions whether the Chester City Police was truly able to perform its role effectively.

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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 assessment as part of A825.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Godfrey and Lawrence argue that regarding the development of policing many important questions remain.¹ Emsley claims that only limited work has been done on what was going on in the provinces.² This study is a response to this call for more information. It will examine the changing role and policing priorities of the New Police in Chester between 1856 and 1876 and consider how the Watch Committee dealt with the issue of high turnover rates in staff in order to maintain an efficient police force during this period. The two issues are intrinsically linked because without enough numbers to maintain an efficient police force, its role and policing priorities could not be effectively performed.

The years 1856 to 1876 have been chosen because they were a period of significant transition for the Chester City Police. It changed from being policed under the *Municipal Corporations (England) Act, 1835* to being policed under the *County and Borough Police Act, 1856*. This impacted on who dictated the role of the police: ‘Local Bobby or State Lackey?’³ The force was led by two different Chief Constables - John Hill and G. L. Fenwick - each with their own ideas of policing. Taylor argues that this period saw an emergence of ‘an important sense of self-worth’ amongst the constables, which gave them the confidence to challenge the role placed upon them by the Watch Committee.⁴ All these factors influenced the way the force developed.

Although Hart found that statistics did not lend any support to a ‘migration thesis’, she argues that contemporaries thought that the success of the Metropolitan Police had caused

¹ Barry Godfrey and Paul Lawrence, *Crime and Justice Since 1750*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 19.

² Clive Emsley, ‘Block 4: Crime, police and penal policy’, A825 MA History Part 1 (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 2009), p.18.

³ Clive Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History*, 2nd edn (Essex: Longman, 1996), p.171.

⁴ David Taylor, *The new police in nineteenth-century England: Crime, conflict and control* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 76.

a vast migration of criminals from London into the provinces and this belief was the only reason that the police in the boroughs was reformed.⁵ It was against this back drop that the voluntary *Municipal Corporations (England) Act, 1835* was introduced. It allowed the council of a borough to appoint a Watch Committee and create a police force. Hence the Chester City Police was established and by 19 February 1836 it was operational.⁶

Taylor claims that the 1850s saw a real and growing concern with maintaining order and this led people to consider the benefits of compulsory policing.⁷ This resulted in the introduction of the *County and Borough Police Act, 1856*, which brought the Chester City Police into line with the rest of England and Wales. The force formed part of the Northern District, which covered Cheshire, Cumberland and Westmorland, Derbyshire, Durham, Lancashire, Northumberland, Nottinghamshire and York, and consisted of 60 forces.⁸ Seven forces existed in the Cheshire area: Cheshire, Birkenhead, Chester, Congleton, Macclesfield, Stalybridge and Stockport.⁹

The key primary sources used for this study are the Borough of Chester minutes of the Watch Committee and the Chester City Police Force Resolutions of the Watch Committee. The minutes provide a record of the weekly interactions between the Watch Committee, the Chief Constable and Constables. From these minutes the roles and changing roles that the force performed can be identified and analysed. There is a scarcity of sources relating to frontline policing.¹⁰ The Charge Book for 1863 is one such rare source; it provides a complete record of all activities undertaken by the force every day for the entire year, from

⁵ Jenifer Hart, 'Reform of the Borough Police, 1835-1856' *English Historical Review*, 70 (1955), 411-27 (pp.414-5).

⁶ Cheshire Record Office, ZCCB/15, Borough of Chester Minutes of the Watch Committee, 1836-1854, 19 February 1836.

⁷ Taylor, p.37.

⁸ PP. 1877-23 (42), *Report of Inspectors of Constabulary to Secretary of State, 1875-76*, p.198.

⁹ PP. 1859-17 (22), *Report of Inspectors of Constabulary, 1857-58*, p.78.

¹⁰ D. J. V. Jones, 'The New Police, Crime and People in England and Wales, 1829-1888', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 33 (1983), 151-68 (p.152).

which it is possible to determine the exact role that was performed by the Chester City Police. Although it only covers 1863, it gives an indication of the typical role that was performed by the police throughout the period and when compared with other sources help to reveal continuity and change over time. The minutes also show that a high turnover rate of staff was a problem facing the Watch Committee. Evidence from the minutes identifies the scale of the problem and outlines the strategies adopted by the Watch Committee to cope with this major issue. They also show how the force's Chief Constables and HM Inspectors of Constabulary intervened in an attempt to successfully resolve the long standing problem of high turnover rates in the Chester City Police. The evidence within the sources allows comparisons to be made with other police forces at an area, regional and national level. Other primary sources have been consulted: Reports of Inspectors of Constabulary to the Secretary of State, Returns of Judicial Statistics of England and Wales, Annual Reports of Chief Constable Fenwick, Roll of Members, Enrolment and Record Books, Disciplinary Records, Orders and Regulations of the Chester City Police, Miscellaneous Letters addressed to the Chief Constable and Newspaper articles.

There is key secondary material regarding the role of the New Police in England and Wales and the high turnover of staff in provincial police forces. Storch accepts that the main role of the New Police was the prevention and detection of crime but he argues that they had an important secondary role of 'domestic missionary'.¹¹ He means that the police were used by urban elites to impose better standards of moral discipline on the working-class, by suppressing popular activities such as drinking and gambling. In this way the perceived link between popular working-class leisure, crime and disorder could be broken. To perform this role, Wall argues that local policing priorities were largely determined by

¹¹ Robert D. Storch, 'The Policeman as Domestic Missionary: Urban Discipline and Popular Culture in Northern England, 1850-1880', *Journal of Social History*, 9 (1976), 481-509.

the Watch Committee.¹² Steedman argues that in the 1830s provincial forces consisted of local models of policing that were directed by Watch Committees who represented local ratepayers who saw the police as servants to protect property, but by the 1880s more and more central legislation came to define the local police as agents of central government.¹³ In relation to the high turnover of staff in English police forces, Steedman argues that by the mid-Victorian years the rate had begun to fall, and that resignations and dismissals accounted for most of the turnover of staff.¹⁴ Critchley,¹⁵ Emsley¹⁶ and Taylor,¹⁷ argue that tough working conditions, poor pay and severe discipline accounted for most resignations. Taylor found that the most common reasons for dismissal were caused by drunkenness, neglect of duty, insubordination and a general failure to act in the manner expected of a constable.¹⁸ He argues that some constables became frustrated by a lack of promotion opportunities and this led to misconduct and dismissal.¹⁹

Chapter Two explores the changing role of the Chester City Police. The theories of Storch, Steedman and Wall will be tested. It explains the original role the force was expected to perform and how it was organised to fulfil this role. An examination of 1863 is made to determine what role the police actually performed on a day-to-day basis. Who decided local policing priorities and how that changed is explained.

Chapter Three examines the debate amongst historians regarding the high turnover rates of staff in English and Welsh police forces. It looks at the extent of the problem nationwide

¹² David S. Wall, *The Chief Constables of England and Wales: The socio-legal history of a criminal justice elite* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Dartmouth, 1998), p.43.

¹³ Carolyn Steedman, *Policing the Victorian Community: The formation of English provincial police forces, 1856-80* (London: Routledge, 2016), p.8.

¹⁴ Steedman, p.92.

¹⁵ T. A. Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales 900-1966* (London: Constable, 1967), p.150.

¹⁶ Emsley, p.215.

¹⁷ Taylor, p.57.

¹⁸ Taylor, p.57.

¹⁹ Taylor, p.60.

and compares it with the situation faced by the Chester City Police. The possible reasons for such high turnover rates are explored. It considers how police forces were measured in terms of efficiency. It shows how the Watch Committee dealt with the issue in order to maintain an efficient police force during the period 1856 to 1876.

This study argues that the Watch Committee's influence was beginning to wane and signs started to appear that central government were beginning to shape local policing matters. It claims that central government and the Watch Committee were not the only instigators of change: agitation by constables altered the role they performed and occasionally circumstances and events decided policing matters. It further argues that four crucial measures were introduced to try and address the issues of high turnover rates in an attempt to maintain the Chester City Police in an efficient state to be able to perform its role effectively. But it reasons that it is difficult to see how the Chester City Police could be truly effective when ultimately it could not retain enough experienced men to pass on their knowledge to new recruits.

Chapter 2: The changing role of the Chester City Police

Storch accepts that the main role of the New Police was the prevention and detection of crime but he argues that they had an important secondary role of ‘domestic missionary’.¹ He means that they were used by urban elites to impose better standards of moral discipline on the working-class. This was done by suppressing popular activities such as drinking and gambling. In this way the perceived link between popular working-class leisure, crime and disorder could be broken. To perform this role, Wall argues that local policing priorities were largely determined by the Watch Committee.² Steedman acknowledges that in the 1830s it was the Watch Committee who dictated the role of the police, but argues that by the 1880s more and more central legislation meant that central government had a greater say on what duties the police carried out.³ These theories will be tested against the changing role of the Chester City Police between 1856 and 1876.

To appreciate how the role of the police and policing priorities changed, it is necessary to understand the original role they were expected to perform. The Chester City Police was created under the *Municipal Corporations (England) Act, 1835*. The Act defined the role of the police as, ‘Preserving the Peace by Day and by Night, and preventing Robberies and other Felonies, and apprehending Offenders against the Peace’.⁴ The force was brought into line with the rest of England and Wales by the *County and Borough Police Act, 1856*. The Act added to the role by ordering that, ‘Constables shall in addition to their ordinary duties, perform all such Duties connected with the Police ... as the Watch Committees ...

¹ Robert D. Storch, ‘The Policeman as Domestic Missionary: Urban Discipline and Popular Culture in Northern England, 1850-1880’, *Journal of Social History*, 9 (1976), 481-509.

² David S. Wall, *The Chief Constables of England and Wales: The socio-legal history of a criminal justice elite* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Dartmouth, 1998), p.43.

³ Carolyn Steedman, *Policing the Victorian Community: The formation of English provincial police forces, 1856-80* (London: Routledge, 2016), p.8.

⁴ *Municipal Corporations (England) Act, 1835*, 5 & 6 William 4, Ch. 76, pp.1029-30.

from Time to Time direct and require'.⁵ The *General Orders and Regulations of the Chester City Police, 1875* recognised that 'The primary object of an efficient Police is the prevention of crime, the next that of detection and punishment of offenders if crimes are committed' and acknowledged that, 'The duties of the police are various, and altered or modified from time to time by Acts of Parliament and by regulations framed by the Watch Committee'.⁶ These expectations suggest that central government was content for the role of the police to be managed locally but there was recognition locally that central government could influence the role played by the police. It corroborates Wall's assertion that policing priorities were largely determined by the Watch Committee but also supports Steedman's argument that the role was later defined by central government. The way the Chester City Police was organised to perform its role will be examined next.

Critchley argues that the primary function of the New Police was to prevent crime and their main method to achieve this was to patrol the streets in uniform.⁷ Hence, beats provided the platform for the police to perform its role. In 1836, the beats in Chester were based on a disorganised concept of, 'the men will be directed to parade the principal streets.'⁸ Over time this changed. By 1875 the beats had evolved into a large organised network covering the city. Nevertheless, Hart is critical of the areas covered by provincial beats, arguing that they did not include the suburbs.⁹ In Chester the beats did cover the suburbs. There were five strategic fixed points and sixteen beats were created to cover the centre, north, south, east and west of the city as well as outlying Saltney.¹⁰ A close

⁵ *County and Borough Police Act, 1856*, 19 & 20 Victoria, Ch. 69, p.194.

⁶ Cheshire Record Office (CRO), 01661, *General Orders and Regulations of the Chester City Police, 1875*, Preface and Introduction.

⁷ T. A. Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales, 900-1966* (London: Constable, 1967), p.160.

⁸ CRO, ZCCB/15, Borough of Chester Minutes of the Watch Committee, 1836-1854, 1 December 1836.

⁹ Jenifer Hart, 'Reform of the Borough Police, 1835-1856', *English Historical Review*, 70 (1955), 411-27 (p. 417).

¹⁰ CRO, 01661, pp.61-3.

examination of the four central beats corroborates HM Inspector of Constabulary W. P. Elgee's claim that 'a regular system of patrol [was necessary] to afford adequate protection to the property of the ratepayers'.¹¹ To illustrate this point, Beat 1 encompassed, 'The Cross, on the right taking Abbey Square to the Northgate, and back on the opposite side taking King Street to King's Buildings back to the Cross'.¹² Maps of this period show that the constables who patrolled this beat had responsibility for policing all the shops on either side of Northgate Street, public market, pot market, meat market, potato market, Pied Bull Inn, Red Lion PH, Blue Bell PH, Northgate Tavern, Liverpool Arms Inn, Grosvenor Arms Inn, Northgate Brewery and three of the most affluent dwelling areas of the city: Abbey Square, King Street and King's Buildings.¹³ An indication of this affluence is that a landed proprietor, four solicitors, the Treasurer of the City of Chester, a Dean and a Canon were the residents in Abbey Square.¹⁴ Disciplinary records for 1856 to 1869 emphasise the importance of the crime prevention role that was attached to all sixteen beats: twenty-eight men were charged with thirty-nine offences relating to not patrolling a beat regularly, being absent from a beat, loitering on a beat and failing to find premises insecure on the beat.¹⁵ A direct comparison of the importance of crime prevention and the way the beats were set up in Chester can be made with that of Birmingham in the 1840s.

Weaver explains that in 1839 owing to the Town Council's inability to deal with major Chartist unrest, Commissioner Francis Burgess was brought in under emergency measures to command the Birmingham Police Force and be directly answerable to the Home Office.¹⁶ Burgess viewed policing as a science and believed that prevention was the key to

¹¹ PP. 1871-25 (28), *Report of Inspectors of Constabulary to Secretary of State, 1869-70*, p.70.

¹² CRO, 01661, p. 62.

¹³ CRO, 217418, Sheets XXXVIII. 11.12 and 217153, Sheet XXXVII.11.17, Chester Town Plans, 1875.

¹⁴ R.G. 9/2630, 1861 Census for England, Chester, District 6, Abbey Square, pp.5-6.

¹⁵ CRO, ZDPO/1/2, Chester City Police Force Reports against Constables, 1842-69.

¹⁶ Michael Weaver, 'The New Science of Policing: Crime and the Birmingham Police Force, 1839-1842', *Albion*, 26 (1994), 289-308 (p.289).

eliminating crime.¹⁷ To this end he divided Birmingham into a series of beats that were constantly patrolled by constables. Men were to walk the beat on their own at a rate of 2.5 miles per hour, which would not leave time, Burgess felt, for a burglar to force an entry, help himself to the victim's property and escape before a patrolling constable would pass and discover the break-in. Doors, windows and shutters were to be examined to discover if any had been tampered with to prevent crime occurring. Men had a responsibility to be alert for suspicious characters and deal with them pro-actively. A sergeant patrolled the beat in the opposite direction to supervise the constables. An inspector made spot checks to ensure constables and sergeants were doing their job properly.¹⁸ It is possible to say that Birmingham provided a blueprint for Chester to follow. Chester was divided into a series of comprehensive beats, which covered the city. Constables had to 'walk their beats at a uniform rate of about 2 miles per hour, not to loiter, or gossip, but be active and attentive to their duties'.¹⁹ The police were instructed to 'carefully examine the windows and fanlights of property, especially of silver smiths' and pawnbrokers' shops upon their respective beats at nights' and 'when shutters or windows are found open or insecure, the inmates are to be roused; care being taken to prevent the escape of anyone who may be on the premises for a felonious or unlawful purpose'.²⁰ Men on night duty were to 'pay special attention to any stranger loitering in any street or near any shop and stop and search them'.²¹ A sergeant was 'constantly to patrol his section and enforce the performance of duty by the constable'.²² An inspector was responsible for 'marching the men to their respective beats and to see that orders are properly carried out'.²³ The similarity between

¹⁷ Weaver, p.290.

¹⁸ Weaver pp.296, 298.

¹⁹ CRO, 01661, p.7.

²⁰ CRO, 01661, P.60.

²¹ CRO, 01661, p.10.

²² CRO, 01661, p.52.

²³ CRO, 01661, p.36.

the way Chester and Birmingham was policed is clear to see. The force could have been influenced by Burgess's 'science' of preventative policing and it set up its beats accordingly. It accords with Philips and Storch's notion that a preventative police would not only catch offenders after the event, but would also prevent crimes being committed by regular patrolling.²⁴

When discussing the role of the Chester City Police a caveat needs to be applied.

Throughout the period of this study it was deemed that the strength of the force was sufficient for the 'ordinary police duties' of the city.²⁵ Situations involving anything other than 'ordinary police duties' proved difficult to deal with. For example, in April 1871 the First Regiment of Cheshire Militia had been billeted in the city on training exercises. Serious disorder had occurred between the police and militiamen. The disturbances were caused by an initial confrontation between a constable and an off-duty soldier, which resulted in the soldier requiring hospital treatment. Further confrontations resulted in hospitalisations on both sides. In a final 'show down', thirty militiamen marched up Bridge Street with 'their belts off' intent on attacking the police before they were dispersed by the military Picquet. Chief Constable Fenwick was forced to write to Colonel Cholmondeley and plead that, 'the police force of the city is a mere handful and any collision with the militia might produce the most serious consequences, riot and probably murder. I ask your prompt attention on the subject'. Cooperation was given. The military Picquet was doubled and it patrolled the city for the remainder of the Regiment's stay, ensuring that there were no further instances of serious disturbance.²⁶

²⁴ David Philips and Robert D. Storch, *Policing Provincial England, 1829-1856: The Politics of Reform* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), p.132.

²⁵ PP. 1664-26 (48), *Report of Inspectors, 1862-63*, p.72.

²⁶ CRO, ZCCB/17, Watch Committee Book, 1867-75, 24 April 1871.

Regarding this situation, comparisons can be made with other parts of northern England. The altercations in Chester were similar to the Leeds anti-police riots in 1844.²⁷ Storch explains that the riots in Leeds were caused by a confrontation between police and off-duty soldiers who had a perceived grievance of police brutality against one of their own. Here too, the police were attacked by soldiers using military belt buckles as weapons. The events twenty-seven years apart illustrate that there was still strong animosity between the police and military. What the events of April 1871 do highlight is that without external assistance, the Chester City Police only had the capacity to deal with 'ordinary police duties' and this had limitations on the role they could successfully perform.

The Watch Committee and central government had expectations on the role the police should perform. An examination of 1863 has been made to determine what role the police did perform on a day-to-day basis. This year has been chosen because of the availability of an important primary source. Jones argues that in general most frontline information on crime and policing - such as occurrence books and charge sheets - have been destroyed or lost forever and all that is left is potentially unreliable information contained in national official statistics, such as annual reports of chief constables and inspectors of constabulary reports.²⁸ Emsley reinforces this point; he argues that the figures were used for boosting or maintaining police numbers and budgets.²⁹ Godfrey and Lawrence agree; they claim that chief constables were liable to 'massage figures down (to show their effectiveness) or up (in order to argue for an increase in police resources)'.³⁰ Not surprisingly then, Jones appears to value these lost/destroyed documents for the reliability of the information they

²⁷ Robert D. Storch, 'The Plague of the Blue Locusts: Police Reform and Popular Resistance in Northern England, 1840-57', *International Review of Social History*, 20 (1975), 61-90 (pp. 72-74).

²⁸ D. J. V. Jones, 'The New Police, Crime and People in England and Wales, 1829-1888', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 33 (1983), 151-58 (p.152).

²⁹ Clive Emsley, *Crime, Police, & Penal Policy: European Experiences 1750-1940* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), p.131.

³⁰ Barry Godfrey and Paul Lawrence, *Crime and Justice Since 1750*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p.100.

contain. The Charge Book for January to December 1863 is one such rare source; it is the only book of its type in existence relating to the Chester City Police.³¹ It is a complete written record of every offence and occurrence the force dealt with from 10.00am one day to 10.00am the next day. The record was completed at the time the events happened and appears to be a true recollection of everything that happened for the entire year. Based on Jones's argument, unlike official 'tidied' bureaucratic records, the information obtained from this source can be considered untainted.

Godfrey and Lawrence explain that there were two distinct categories of crime: felony (serious) and misdemeanour (less serious).³² Weaver produces a standard argument that in the Victorian period crimes against property were four or five times more numerous than crimes against the person.³³ For clarity, the 'nature of crimes' listed in the *Return of Judicial Statistics of England and Wales, 1863* has been used to establish what was considered crimes against property and crimes against the person.³⁴ Weaver's assertion will be tested against the evidence contained within the Charge Book of 1863.

Table 2.1: Offences against property and the person

Offences against property:	
Burglary	8
Shoplifting (theft)	194
Robbery	7
Pick-pocketing	13
Embezzlement	1
Fraud	9

³¹ CRO, ZDPO/4, Charge Book, 1863-4.

³² Godfrey and Lawrence, pp.170-1.

³³ Weaver, p.299.

³⁴ PP. 1864-3370 (57), *Return of Judicial Statistics of England and Wales, 1863*, p.65.

Forgery	3
Criminal Damage	30
Total	265
Offences against the person:	
Administering poison	1
Assault	50
Stabbing	3
Total	54

Table 2.1 shows that 265 crimes against property and 54 against the person were dealt with by the Chester City Police. These figures support Weaver's claim that crimes against property were four to five times more numerous. It puts Chester in line with the rest of England and Wales regarding these categories of crime.

The Charge Book also exposed that the consumption of excess alcohol and its associated disorder issues caused significant problems for the Chester City Police.

Table 2.2: Alcohol related offences and associated disorder issues

Drunkenness	364
Public House/Beer House offences	42
Disorderly Conduct	48
Breach of the Peace	4
Total	458

Table 2.2 reveals that the Chester City Police dealt with 364 incidents relating to drunkenness. This was the highest single figure in any of the presented tables and suggests

that dealing with drink related offences was a priority for the force. This could corroborate Storch's 'domestic missionary' argument. This role is further evidenced in that there were 42 incidents of the force targeting after hours drinking. On the nights of 25th to 27th July 1863 there appears to have been a 'special operation' to target this offence, which resulted in twelve publicans being summonsed.³⁵ That the police were possibly undertaking 'special operations' suggests they took this aspect of their role seriously. A press report of the publicans' prosecutions indicates that the 'special operation' may have been a response to pressure from above: 'The Mayor when delivering the decision of the court said it was high time that strong steps had been taken to prevent these abominable practices. Selling drink on a Saturday night was bad enough and the streets on these nights were disgraceful, but on a Sunday it was quite inexcusable and the Magistrates were resolved to do what they could to put the practice down'.³⁶ This supports Taylor's claim that in order to reform the morals of the people, drinking came under increasing pressure.³⁷

Emsley suggests that there were was a distinct difference between the day and night time role of the police: 'during the day the constable patrolled on the kerbside of the pavement, at night he walked on the inner side from where he could more easily check bolts and fastenings'³⁸

Table 2.3: Day time and night time incidents

Day time incidents:	
Obstruction of the highway	45

³⁵ CRO, ZDPO/4, 25-27 July 1863.

³⁶ *Cheshire Observer*, 'Chester City Police Court', 1 August 1863, p.7.

³⁷ David Taylor, *The new police in nineteenth-century England: Crime, conflict and control* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p.91.

³⁸ Clive Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History*, 2nd edn (Essex: Longman, 1996), p.225.

Nuisance	15
Total	60
Night time incidents:	
Doors/windows insecure	190
Suspicious characters	78
Total	268

Table 2.3 supports Emsley's claim regarding the day time and night time nature of the police role. During daylight hours, the force dealt with 45 incidents of obstruction of the highway and 15 incidents of nuisance, such as prosecutions against Samuel Gregg for 'obstructing Northgate Street by leaving bricks and sand there all day'³⁹ and John Roberts for 'depositing a quantity of gravel on the footpath in Saltney Road'.⁴⁰ This is in line with Taylor's assertion that local bye-laws - the 'micro-technics' of power - created rules and regulations regarding conduct in the streets that became a major element of police work.⁴¹ During the night, crime prevention became a role for the Chester City Police; yet Emsley argues that 'there is no way of measuring whether the police did actually prevent crime'.⁴² However, it is possible that the discovery of 190 insecure windows and doors - in each case the occupants were roused and the insecurities made good - and the detention of 78 suspicious characters may have prevented some crimes from being committed.

The Charge Book indicates that the role of the police was considerably varied.

Table 2.4: Miscellaneous occurrences

³⁹ CRO, ZDPO/4, 17 February 1863.

⁴⁰ CRO, ZDPO/4, 6 March 1863.

⁴¹ Taylor, p.92.

⁴² Clive Emsley, 'The Bedfordshire Police 1840-1856: A Case Study in the Working of the Rural Constabulary Act', *Midland History*, 7 (1982), 73-92 (p.78).

Warrants	114
Begging/Vagrancy/Destitution	41
Lost/found property	155
Lost/found dogs	255
Straying animals	163
Chimney fires	23
Total	751

Table 2.4 shows that the force dealt with 114 warrants and encountered 41 instances of begging, vagrancy and destitution. Managing property and animals seems to have formed a large part of the daily workload. The Chester City Police managed 155 incidents of lost and found property, 224 lost and found dogs and 163 straying animals. This would have placed a considerable burden on their time as each found dog and straying animal had to be impounded and temporary homed. The evidence in Table 2.4 supports Emsley's argument that crime fighting only ever occupied a small percentage of police time.⁴³ Having established the role the police performed, the 'why' and 'how' the Watch Committee was able to determine policing matters will be examined next.

Critchley provides a simple explanation for why the Watch Committee dictated the role of the police on behalf of the ratepayers: 'a town council was to be elected by popular franchise'.⁴⁴ If the Watch Committee did not do the bidding of the ratepayers, they might not be re-elected. Wall offers an explanation of how the Watch Committee was able to dictate police matters. The *Police Act, 1890* entitled police officers after 25 years' service a

⁴³ Emsley (1996), p.224.

⁴⁴ Critchley, p.63.

pension for life or if incapacitated on duty after 15 years service a pension on medical grounds.⁴⁵ Wall argues this was significant because prior to this legislation, the granting of a pension was at the discretion of the Watch Committees and they used this as a tool to control their Chief Constables and police officers.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Taylor argues that the Watch Committee's right to hire or fire all constables, including Chief Constables, gave it considerable power.⁴⁷

Research for this chapter reveals significant evidence that local policing priorities were largely determined by the Watch Committee. It was not unusual for written complaints to be sent directly to the Watch Committee. A flavour of this significant evidence can be seen in the examples below:

In 1859, a letter was received by the Watch Committee from Mr Yates of Garden Lane complaining of 'numbers of disorderly men and boys congregating about Stone Bridge on Sundays and committing depredations on the neighbouring properties'. Chief Constable Hill was ordered by the Watch Committee 'to make arrangements for police to visit the location more frequently on Sundays'.⁴⁸

On 18 November 1864, Reverend Temple complained to the Watch Committee that 'depredations were committed in his garden'. He requested that 'constables, watch and visit Lache Lane and the neighbourhood more frequently than they do'.⁴⁹ The Watch Committee ordered that the 'Saltney and the Lache district be more frequently watched'

⁴⁵ *Police Act, 1890*, 53 & 54 Victoria, Ch. 45, p.328.

⁴⁶ Wall, p.49.

⁴⁷ Taylor, p.78.

⁴⁸ CRO, ZCCB/16, Borough of Chester Minutes of the Watch Committee, 1854-1869, 2 June 1859.

⁴⁹ CRO, ZDPO/1/8, Chester City Police Force Resolutions of the Watch Committee, 1864-1872, 18 November 1864.

and went even further by ordering that ‘a constable be appointed to reside in Saltney, specifically to watch the districts’.⁵⁰ As an incentive to make the appointment permanent, the Watch Committee allowed, ‘PC Patrick Jowell one shilling extra pay to act as constable in the Saltney district and to reside there’.⁵¹

In 1865, a memorial was received by the Watch Committee from ratepayers in Watergate Row complaining about ‘the disgraceful state of the row, owing to idlers being constantly in the Row to the annoyance of the public and hindrance of the trades of the Memorialists’. The Watch Committee dealt with the issue immediately: the Chief Constable was ordered to, ‘put a stop to the annoyance’.⁵²

On 17 October 1867, the Improvement Committee reported to the Watch Committee that the ‘public was much inconvenienced by obstructions at the Cross by Fishwomen standing there with their baskets selling fish and the Committee had repeatedly called the attention of the Chief Constable to the annoyance but without effect’. The Watch Committee ordered that, ‘the Chief Constable will take the proper measure for putting a stop to the annoyance and not to give the Improvement Committee occasion to complain again on the subject’.⁵³

The evidence reveals a simple but powerful process: ratepayers complained about an issue to the Watch Committee, the Watch Committee made the issue a policing priority and the Chief Constable was ordered to instruct the police to deal with the matter. This supports the theories of Wall and Steedman that policing priorities were directed by the Watch Committee, who in turn were influenced by local ratepayers. The Watch Committee

⁵⁰ CRO, ZDPO/1/8, 8 December 1864.

⁵¹ CRO, ZDPO/1/8, 6 July 1865.

⁵² CRO, ZDPO/1/8, 5 October 1865.

⁵³ CRO, ZCCB/17, 17 October 1867.

minutes reveal that they had considerable authority over the Chief Constable and his officers. It corroborates Steedman's argument that initially policemen were minutely supervised by local Watch Committees through their ability to impose upon the police a wide range of administrative tasks.⁵⁴

However, there were some signs that central government were beginning to dictate policing priorities. For instance, in 1870 a letter was received from the Home Office complaining that, 'wilful damage was constantly being done by mischievous persons to the Government Telegraph Plant in different parts of the country, principally breaking the insulators fixed to Telegraph Posts'. It requested that the Chester City Police be instructed to 'keep a careful watch over Telegraph Lines within the city to prevent such damage'. The Watch Committee made this a policing priority and instructed the Chief Constable to deal with the request.⁵⁵ This request could be seen as the Government attempting to assert more authority over the local forces by asking that its Telegraph Plant be made a policing priority. This supports Steedman's argument that the police eventually became agents of central government and confirms Taylor's claim that there was a tendency towards centralisation that spelt the end of parochial control.⁵⁶

Emsley claims that 'in 1874, precisely to give the Home Secretary greater supervision and control of the provincial police, the Treasury grant was increased from one-quarter to one-half'.⁵⁷ The grant contributed towards the cost of wages and uniform for each force. Research for this chapter suggests that central government was beginning to dictate policing priorities but as will be seen it was not the only driving force to change the role of

⁵⁴ Steedman, p.8.

⁵⁵ CRO, ZCCB/17, 23 April 1870.

⁵⁶ Taylor, p.37.

⁵⁷ Emsley (1996), p.92.

the Chester City Police. An examination of the *Elementary Education Act, 1870* shows how central government changed the role of the force. It demonstrates the influence of central government on local policy as well as the implementation of a national education policy. The Act required ‘the parents of all children aged between 5 and 13 years to cause such children to attend school’ and it allowed ‘the appointment of officers to enforce the attendance’.⁵⁸ In the case of Chester, it was police officers who enforced attendance.

Chester City Police only provided figures relating to offences under this Act from 1878 onwards. In this year, 792 persons were proceeded against, thirty-nine cases were dismissed and 753 were convicted. Of those convicted seventeen were imprisoned for fourteen days, 116 fined and 620 had orders made against them to send their children to school. Chief Constable Fenwick hoped that the proceedings would act as a deterrent.⁵⁹

However, the proceedings did not act as a deterrent. The corresponding figures for 1879 were: 1,043, 178, 865, forty-three, 254 and 568.⁶⁰ A regional and national comparison with similar size forces of population and establishment reveals a massive disparity in the number of summary offences that were dealt with under the Act. At this time, Chester had a population of 35,257 and an establishment of thirty-eight, Warrington 32,114 and thirty-two and Oxford City 31,404 and thirty-eight.⁶¹ In 1878, the police in Chester dealt with 792 offences under the Act, Warrington seventy-nine and Oxford thirty-four.⁶² In 1879 the figures were: Chester 1,043, Warrington again seventy-nine and Oxford again thirty-four.⁶³ The problem in Chester was ten and thirteen times greater than Warrington and thirty-two and thirty-one times greater than Oxford. The extent of the problem in Chester illustrates

⁵⁸ *Elementary Education Act, 1870*, 33 & 34 Victoria, Ch. 75, pp. 458 and 471.

⁵⁹ CRO/ZDPO/11, *Chester City Police Force annual reports of the Chief Constable, 1878*, pp. 4-5.

⁶⁰ CRO, ZDPO/11, *1878*, p.19.

⁶¹ PP. 1878, Cmd.2154 (79), *Return of Judicial Statistics of England and Wales, 1877*, pp.61-3.

⁶² PP. 1878-79, Cmd.2418 (76), *Return of Judicial Statistics, 1878*, pp. 87, 89 and 91.

⁶³ PP. 1880, Cmd.2726 (77), *Return of Judicial Statistics, 1879*, pp. 83, 85 and 87.

the demand placed on the force by the Act. It meant that in 1878 one constable was permanently engaged by the School Attendance Committee.⁶⁴ The following year, it was necessary to employ two constables ‘almost altogether in servicing Police Court summonses and executing warrants of commitment for the non-payment of fines in school attendance cases’.⁶⁵ In a force of only thirty-eight officers to have two constables permanently written-off to deal with offences under the Act was a considerable drain on resources.

The extent of the work caused by the Act can be further illustrated. Chief Constable Fenwick was socially aware and made a link between crime and poverty. He discovered that ‘the existence of courts seriously affected the welfare of the city’ and established that ‘seven comparatively small spots contributed to 28 per cent of common offences; relative to the population, the correct proportion should be nearer five per cent’.⁶⁶ This corroborates Godfrey and Lawrence’s argument that ideas on the causes of criminality ‘shifted from the will/culpability of the individual to the environmental factors that shaped his/her destiny’.⁶⁷

Table 2.5: Common offences committed in the courts of Chester, 1879⁶⁸

Location	Drunkenness	Assault	BOP	Disorderly Conduct	Education Cases	Total
Parry’s Entry	7	11	0	4	25	47
Crook St and Courts	11	3	2	5	66	87
Boughton	30	44	3	24	137	238

⁶⁴ CRO, ZDPO/11, 1878, p.3.

⁶⁵ CRO, ZDPO/11, 1879, p.3.

⁶⁶ CRO, ZDPO/11, 1879, p.6.

⁶⁷ Godfrey and Lawrence, p.118.

⁶⁸ CRO, ZDPO/11, 1879, p.7.

Greenway St	2	11	0	12	26	51
Charles St	3	3	0	5	17	28
Union St	2	10	2	5	42	61
Courts off Lower Bridge St	15	9	7	8	54	93
Total	70	91	14	63	367	605

Table 2.5 reveals that in the seven most crime ridden areas of Chester relative to the most common offences, the *Elementary Education Act, 1870* caused the most work for the force: five times more than drunkenness, four times assaults, twenty-six times breach of the peace and six times disorderly conduct. It was central government who introduced the *Elementary Education Act, 1870*; in just two years it had caused the police to deal with 1,835 offences. To facilitate this increase, two constables had to be permanently employed to deal solely with offences against the Act. These numbers clearly confirm Steedman's argument that the police were becoming agents of central government. It also accords with Taylor's claim that 'a policeman was expected to combine a variety of roles: crime fighter, peace preserver, moral missionary and [in the case of the 1870 Act] welfare agent'.⁶⁹

It was not only central government who changed the role of Chester City Police. Edwin Chadwick was an important figure regarding police reform. He advocated that to make the new police more acceptable to ratepayers, in terms of providing value for money, they must be seen to perform a multifunctional role: 'the prevention of calamities as well as crimes'.⁷⁰ One of these extra duties was that of Fire Brigade, which according to Critchley

⁶⁹ Taylor, p.95.

⁷⁰ Phillips and Storch, p.114.

was to justify the cost of the police.⁷¹ In 1864, HM Inspector of Constabulary for the Northern District John Woodford observed that, ‘In several of the boroughs ... the police are further employed to assist in the extinction of fires ... which has not, so far as I have been able to ascertain, been found to interfere materially with the proper performance of their ordinary duties’.⁷² This was not the case in the Chester City Police. The constables’ objections to performing the dual role of Policeman and Fireman resulted in a significant change in role for the force.

In 1837 a plan put forward by a deputation from the Commissioners of Police for improving the ‘Fire Engine Establishment’ was accepted by the Watch Committee and it was decided that ‘the present firemen will be discharged and the engines shall be worked by the police’.⁷³ The Chester City Police now had the dual role of Policemen and Firemen. It appears that this dual role eventually became unworkable. In 1854 a memorial was read from the police constables stating that ‘the time and attention required of them as Firemen interfered so much with their duties as Police Constables that they felt that they could not perform the duties of the two offices satisfactorily’; all of them tendered their resignations as Firemen but offered their services until a new Fire Brigade could be formed.⁷⁴

After a year of deliberation it was decided that rather than the whole force being employed as a Fire Brigade, the numbers performing the role would be reduced to one Superintendent, one Inspector, two Sergeants and seven Constables. To make this acceptable, the Watch Committee, granted the Superintendent an extra £10, the Inspector £3, the Sergeants £2.10 and Constables £2 per annum on top of their police pay.⁷⁵ The

⁷¹ Critchley, p.157.

⁷² PP. 1865-32 (45), *Report of Inspectors, 1863-64*, p.76.

⁷³ CRO, ZCCB/15, 6 July 1837.

⁷⁴ CRO, ZCCB/16, 18 May 1854.

⁷⁵ CRO, ZCCB/16, 4 June 1855.

reduction in numbers became an issue. The constables appointed as the Fire Brigade argued that the force was ‘too weak to effectively carry out the wishes of the Watch Committee and they were unwilling to take so heavy a responsibility upon themselves’ and requested they be relieved from their appointments. Angered, the Watch Committee ordered that the whole of the police force be directed to act as a Fire Brigade on the former scale of payment until fresh arrangements could be made; the appointment of the seven constables was rescinded.⁷⁶ The men backed down and agreed to act as a Fire Brigade in accordance with the regulations approved by the Watch Committee.⁷⁷ This shows a dispute between the rank and file police constables and the Watch Committee, one in which the authority of the Watch Committee held sway.

Change in regulations meant that only ten of the men continued to perform the dual role. Taylor argues that the nature of police work, particularly watching while others slept, helped to create an important sense of self-worth amongst constables.⁷⁸ In this case, the constables possibly developed a consciousness of self-worth purely in monetary terms. Their claim that the newly formed Fire Brigade was too weak and the threat of further resignations can be seen as a deliberate attempt by the constables to force the Watch Committee to reappoint the whole of the force as Firemen on the additional rate of pay. Yet, it could it could have been a genuine concern, by those who performed the dual role, that their numbers were too small to be fully effective in fighting of fires. Years later this proved to be the case with disastrous consequences for the city, which changed the Firemen role of the police forever.

⁷⁶ CRO, ZCCB/16, 7 July 1855.

⁷⁷ CRO, ZCCB/16, 2 August 1855.

⁷⁸ Taylor, p.76.

On 30 December 1862 a large fire destroyed the Town Hall.⁷⁹ A key role for Chief Constable Hill as Superintendent of the Fire Brigade was to regularly check the Fire Plugs to ensure that in the event of a fire there would be a sufficient supply of water. On the night of the Town Hall fire, there was insufficient water to fight the fire. Hill took the blame. The actions of Hill and the Fire Brigade were severely criticised in the local press: '[The fire] must have been detected at an earlier stage. Had an ordinary amount of energy been displaced, the building might have been saved'.⁸⁰ Hill resigned as the Superintendent of the Fire Brigade. This proved to be the catalyst for the collapse of the Police-Fire Brigade dual role. The question of establishing a more efficient Fire Brigade in the city was debated by the Watch Committee. Within a year the role of Fire Brigade was removed from the Chester City Police. Robert Noblett was appointed Superintendent of the Fire Brigade and a new Volunteer Fire Brigade was created.⁸¹ This changed the role of the police completely and it can be argued that the press - with its criticism of the police in the dual role of Fire Brigade - played its part in bringing about this change in role of the police.

The Watch Committee acknowledged that it could frame regulations to alter the duties of the police. In 1872, it changed the role of the police by introducing bye-laws to regulate boating on the river Dee.⁸² The regulations necessitated Constable William Rose being appointed the dedicated Boat Inspector during the April to September boating season. The change in role was emphasised in that Rose was provided with a different uniform to that of the Chester City Police: a 'Monkey jacket, vest and cap to have thereon the initials "R. P."' (River Policeman).⁸³ His new role greatly affected the leisure industry on the river Dee. Boat owners had to apply for licences, which would not be granted until the boats had

⁷⁹ CRO, ZCCB/16, 8 January 1863.

⁸⁰ *Cheshire Observer*, 'Great Fire in Chester', 3 January 1863, p.4.

⁸¹ CRO, ZCCB/16, 20 January 1864.

⁸² CRO, ZCCB/17, 2 February 1872.

⁸³ CRO, ZCCB/17, 10 February 1873.

been examined and passed fit for purpose.⁸⁴ Boats could not operate on the river Dee without a licence. This was significant as the river was a dangerous place. In the return for the number of boating incidents on the river Dee for 1874, three people were drowned, eighteen boats and sixteen canoes were swamped or upset, sixty males and three females were immersed but rescued or managed to get ashore.⁸⁵ Although only involving one constable for only six months of the year, it can be argued that the introduction of the boating bye-laws is an example of the Watch Committee changing the role of the Chester City Police. It used the police to generate revenue - through the money received for licensing and fines for the use of unlicensed boats - and to bring safety to a dangerous part of the city. Despite Steedman's claim that by the 1880s more and more central legislation came to define local polices forces as agents of central government, the creation of the boating bye-laws indicates that as late as 1876 the Watch Committee could still dictate policing matters.

The implementation of the boating bye-laws uncovered the problem of the steamer *The Lord Belgrave*. According to Taylor, many Victorian experts believed that there was a direct link between drink and crime.⁸⁶ Under its Board of Trade certificate the steamer was entitled to sell and did sell intoxicating liquors not subject to any laws. The Watch Committee attempted to suppress this activity. An unsuccessful memorial was sent to the Board of Trade requesting them not to renew their certificate in respect of the steamer on the grounds that it was used as a floating public house.⁸⁷ In essence, it was beyond the control of the local authority for policing purposes. Trading under a Board of Trade certificate, the owner of the steamer had identified a loophole in the system which enabled

⁸⁴ CRO, ZCCB/17, 15 March 1875.

⁸⁵ CRO, ZCCB/17, 5 April 1875.

⁸⁶ Taylor, p.117.

⁸⁷ CRO, ZCCB/18, Watch Committee Book, 1875-1883, 7 October 1875.

him to flout the existing licensing laws. That the Watch Committee was prepared to enlist the help of a government department to give them the power to resolve the issue illustrates its determination to suppress popular activities likely to cause crime and disorder, such as drinking in a floating public house. This clearly corroborates Storch's argument that urban elites used the policemen as 'domestic missionaries'.

Central government, the Watch Committee and the police themselves were not the only dynamic to change the policing priorities and role of the force. Godfrey and Lawrence explain that the Fenians were members of a group of Irish nationalists committed to the overthrow of English rule in Ireland by physical force.⁸⁸ In 1867 they launched a violent campaign on the mainland, which had significant consequences for the policing priorities of the Chester City Police.

On 11 February 1867, Chief Constable Fenwick reported to the Watch Committee that he had received reliable information that Fenians were planning a raid on the Castle to secure arms and ammunition that were stored there and then attack the city. In order to protect the lives and property of the citizens, the Watch Committee authorised that 500 Special Constables be sworn in to act as constables for such time as the magistrates thought proper and necessary.⁸⁹ This is the only record of the incident in any of the Watch Committee minutes. Press reports reveal that the plot was thwarted by the early intelligence received from Liverpool detectives, which enabled preparations to be made to defend the city. The city was successfully defended through mutual aid between officers of the Chester City Police and Cheshire Constabulary, the volunteer Special Constables and military reinforcements of the 54th Foot from Manchester and the 1st Battalion of Scots Guards

⁸⁸ Godfrey and Lawrence, p.170.

⁸⁹ CRO, ZCCB/16, 11 February 1867.

from London.⁹⁰ Faced with such a response, the 1,400 Fenians, who had amassed themselves in the city aborted their attempt to attack the Castle and simply dispersed. The incident supports Steedman's claim that in the 1860s most boroughs did not have police forces large enough to deal with riots and that the response pattern to such events was to swear in respectable citizens as special constables, and to call on the county constabulary and military to deal with the situation.⁹¹ It also corroborates her argument that county constabularies were seen as a defensive militia, which in cases of emergency could be augmented and armed in order to defuse violent situations.⁹²

The event of February 1867 was not the city's only brush with Irish nationalism. On 3 October 1867, at the request of Magistrates, the government supplied eighteen revolvers with 500 rounds of ammunition for use by constables in case of necessity and the government intended to supply eighteen more so that the whole of the force may be armed if needed.⁹³ This suggests that the force was in possession of intelligence that there was an impending threat to the city. It corroborates Emsley's claim that by the end of the 1860s guns were being issued to police forces to cope with the Fenian threat.⁹⁴ It is possible that this information originated from Special Branch, which was created during the Fenian terrorist campaign to protect national security.⁹⁵ The intelligence proved accurate. The Town Clerk reported to the Watch Committee that an attempt had been made, supposedly by Fenians, to set fire to the Police Station on the night of 18 October by throwing a bottle containing explosive liquid on the roof of the building, causing extensive damage. The Watch Committee ordered that a reward of £100 be offered for information which would

⁹⁰ *Cheshire Observer*, 'The Fenians in Chester', 16 February 1867, p.2.

⁹¹ Steedman, p.33.

⁹² Steedman, p.22.

⁹³ CRO, ZDPO/1/8, 3 October 1867.

⁹⁴ Emsley (1996), p.255.

⁹⁵ Godfrey and Lawrence, p.110.

lead to the conviction of the person(s) responsible for the attack, the force was increased temporarily by fourteen men and fifty citizens enrolled as Special Constables.⁹⁶ Central government considered the threat to Chester on-going and it provided a further thirty revolvers and ammunition to arm the additional men and Special Constables.⁹⁷

The Fenian campaign in Chester illustrates that circumstances and events could also dictate policing priorities and the role performed by the police. During these episodes, the arming and recruitment of extra constables together with the enrolment of a considerable number of Special Constables became a policing priority in order to quash the Fenian threat to the city. This brought about an additional role for the police - the protection of national security.

In summary, the research for this chapter has provided evidence to support the theories put forward by Storch, Wall and Steedman. The main role of prevention and detection of crime remained static and the force did perform a secondary role of 'domestic missionary'. Yet, between 1856 and 1876 change did occur: the Chester City Police no longer performed the role of Firemen and they did undertake additional roles under Acts of Parliament and local bye-laws. The role and policing priorities were dictated by the Watch Committee, although central government began to have more of a say on what role and policing priorities the force performed. It also showed that circumstances and events could sometimes decide policing matters.

⁹⁶ CRO, ZCCB/17, 19 October 1867.

⁹⁷ CRO, ZCCB/17, 14 November 1867.

Chapter 3: High turnover rates of staff

This chapter examines the debate amongst historians regarding the high turnover rates of staff in English and Welsh police forces. It will look at the extent of the problem nationwide and compare that with the problem faced by the Chester City Police. The possible reasons for such high turnover rates are explored. It considers how police forces were measured in terms of efficiency. It shows how the Watch Committee of the Chester City Police dealt with the problem in order to maintain an efficient police force during the period 1856 to 1876.

Steedman argues that although there was a high turnover of staff in English police forces, by the mid-Victorian years the rate of turnover began to fall. She shows that between 1856 and 1880 the percentage of a force leaving for all reasons in southern counties fell from 15 to 8 per cent, and in the northern counties it fell from 30 to 15 per cent. Steedman explains that resignations and dismissals accounted for most of the turnover of staff and that only a small amount of staff received a pension. As late as 1880, the pension rate in the south was only 16 per cent of a year's turnover; in the north it was 10 per cent.¹ To reach these conclusions, she established the strength of a force, then for each intake year she looked at the recruits' career pattern to establish the reasons for leaving and length of service. Steedman's methodology has been followed in order for direct comparisons to be made with the Chester City Police.

Table 3.1: Number of recruits joining and leaving the Chester City Police and the reasons for leaving for selected years, 1856-76.²

¹ Carolyn Steedman, *Policing the Victorian Community: The formation of English provincial police forces, 1856-80* (London: Routledge, 2016), p.92.

² Cheshire Record Office (CRO), CJP/20/7/1, City and Borough of Chester Police Force: Roll of members from January 1836.

Years	1856	1861	1866	1871	1876
Strength of force	29 ³	33 ⁴	36 ⁵	38 ⁶	38 ⁷
Number of recruits	5	15	11	10	5
Reasons for leaving:					
Resigned	0	7 (21% of force)	6 (17%)	2 (5%)	2 (5%)
Dismissed	5 (17%)	7 (21%)	3 (8%)	7 (18%)	2 (5%)
Died	0	0	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0
Pensioned	0	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0	1 (3%)
Total leaving	5 (17%)	15 (45%)	11 (31%)	10 (25%)	5 (13%)

Trends in Table 3.1 show that the strength of the force gradually increased over the period but at the same time the number of recruits fluctuated considerably. The fluctuation in recruitment was reflected in the total numbers leaving the force. Numbers leaving were at its lowest in 1856 (17 percent of the force) and 1871 (13 per cent) and at its highest in 1861 (45 percent), 1866 (31 per cent) and 1871 (25 per cent). Steedman argues that between 1856 and 1880 the turnover rate for southern counties fell from 15 to 8 per cent and the northern counties from 30 to 15 per cent. This suggests a gradual fall in the turnover rates. There are similarities and differences with the turnover rates for the Chester City Police. The 17 per cent figure for 1856 is slightly higher than the 15 per cent for southern counties, yet much lower than the 30 per cent northern figure. The 13 per cent fall in 1876 is a bit higher than the eight per cent in 1880 for southern counties but is on a par with the 15 per cent fall in the north. The figures for the Chester City Police reveal that change was not gradual. The turnover rates in the middle years rose and fell considerably:

³ PP. 1857-58(47), *Report of Inspectors of Constabulary to Secretary of State, 1856-57*, p.80.

⁴ PP. 1862-28 (45), *Report of Inspectors, 1860-61*, p.70.

⁵ PP. 1867-14 (35), *Report of Inspectors, 1865-66*, p.106.

⁶ PP. 1872-47 (30), *Report of Inspectors, 1870-71*, p.153.

⁷ PP. 1877-23 (42), *Report of Inspectors, 1875-76*, p.119.

45 per cent in 1861, 31 per cent in 1866 and 25 per cent in 1871. Selected years however give only a snap shot of the situation; to get the full picture, a more comprehensive analysis is needed.

Table 3.2: Total number of recruits joining and leaving the Chester City Police and the reasons for leaving, 1856-76.⁸

Years	1856-76
Total number of recruits:	284
Reasons for leaving:	
Resigned	136 (48% of force)
Dismissed	113 (40%)
Died	13 (4%)
Pensioned	22 (8%)
Total leaving	284 (100%)

Figures in Table 3.2 shows that the total number of officers recruited to the Chester City Police for the period of this study was 284. The number of men who resigned or were dismissed was 249 (88 per cent of the force). This corroborates Steedman's argument that resignations and dismissals accounted for most of the high turnover of staff in England and Wales. Only twenty-two officers (8 per cent of the force) stayed on long enough to obtain a pension. This corroborates Steedman's argument that even by 1880 the pension rate was still very small: Chester City Police's pension rate of 8 per was half that of southern counties (16 per cent) and even smaller than the 10 per cent of northern counties. The figures illustrate that a major problem facing the Watch Committee was the retention of

⁸ CRO, CJP/20/71.

staff. Moreover, the figures in Tables 3.3 and 3.4 illustrate that the high turnover of staff caused an associated problem - a lack of experience in the force.

Table 3.3: Length of service of the recruits in the Chester City Police for selected years, 1856-76.⁹

Years	1856	1861	1866	1871	1876
Strength of force	29	33	36	38	38
Number of recruits	5	15	11	10	5
Period of service:					
Under 1 year	1 (3% of force)	10 (30%)	3 (8%)	4 (10%)	1 (3%)
1-2 years	2 (7%)	3 (9%)	5 (14%)	3 (8%)	2 (5%)
2-5 years	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)
Over 5 years	1 (3%)	0	1 (3%)	2 (5%)	0
Pensioned	0	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0	1 (3%)

Table 3.4: Length of service of the total number of recruits in the Chester City Police, 1856-76.¹⁰

Years	1856-76
Total number of recruits:	284
Periods of service:	
Under 1 year	138 (49% of force)
1-2 years	56 (20%)

⁹ CRO, CJP/20/71.

¹⁰ CRO, CJP/20/7/1.

2-5 years	33 (11%)
Over 5 years	35 (12%)
Pensioned	22 (8%)

Figures in Table 3.3 corroborate Steedman's argument that men who left with under one year's service provided the largest proportion of an intake's turnover.¹¹ Table 3.4 confirms this argument and reveals that within two years, 69 per cent of men left the Chester City Police. It also reveals that only 12 per cent of staff remained on the force for over five years. The figures highlight the extent of the problem facing the Watch Committee in terms of high turnover rates in staff and the knock on effect of a lack of experience. The considerable variability in Tables 3.3 and 3.4 can be explained for a number of reasons. These reasons will be explored next.

In essence, the high turnover of staff was caused by resignations and dismissals. This was certainly the case in the Chester City Police where resignations and dismissals accounted for 88 per cent of the men leaving the force between 1856 and 1876. It was not until after the First World War that standardised pay and working conditions were universally introduced.¹² Taylor argues that a desire for less arduous work conditions and better pay were probably the main reasons why men resigned from a police force.¹³ In terms of arduous work conditions, he explains that working the beat was at the heart of police work and the hours spent on duty were long, men could work fourteen hours a day, seven days a week.¹⁴ A contemporary ballad recognised this hardship: 'I'll not be a policeman, O dear,

¹¹ Steedman, p.93.

¹² Clive Emsley and Mark Clapson, 'Recruiting the English Policeman c. 1840-1940', *Policing and Society*, 3 (2002), 269-86 (p.271).

¹³ David Taylor, *The new police in nineteenth-century England: Crime, conflict and control* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977), p.57.

¹⁴ Taylor, p.52.

O dear, Because if I was I should never be still, Eight hours on duty and seven on drill'.¹⁵

The physically demanding nature of the role could be too much for some men and that caused them to resign. For instance, Thomas Holland Beckett was allowed to resign from the Chester City Police after serving for only four days as he could not bear the cold weather.¹⁶ Similarly, John Dodd resigned after nineteen days and Robert Harkness after three weeks.¹⁷ These examples suggest that some men were just not cut out for police work. Such instances of short service were noted by HM Inspector of Constabulary for the Northern District W. P. Elgee who lamented, 'Many resign soon after joining, who, had they remained long enough to become accustomed to the duty, and to give the service a fair trial, would have made useful constables'.¹⁸ Gradually however, work conditions did improve. For example, by 1876, a system of eight hours street duty per day had been adopted in most large boroughs in the Northern District.¹⁹

Critchley echoes the point made by Taylor; he explains that a policeman's life was one of unremitting hard work, performed under conditions of severe discipline.²⁰ His wages were at the level of an unskilled agricultural labourer and after patrolling his beat on foot for twenty miles a day for continuous weeks at a stretch, he took home a weekly wage that left him near the breadline.²¹

Emsley agrees with Critchley that an inability to cope with severe discipline probably contributed to the high turnover of staff.²² For example, the disciplinary record for George Chambers reveals that he was fined for parading for duty without a cape, being temporarily

¹⁵ Johnson Ballads 43, Bod17589, V325061, *The Police-men on drill*, 1828-29.

¹⁶ CRO, ZCCB/17, Watch Committee Book, 1867-1875, 3 March 1870.

¹⁷ CRO, ZCCB/17, 24 January 1870 and 3 January 1865.

¹⁸ PP. (28), *Report, 1869-70*, p.71.

¹⁹ PP. (42), *Report, 1875-76*, p.114.

²⁰ T. A. Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales 900-1966* (London: Constable, 1967), p.150.

²¹ Critchley, p.151.

²² Clive Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History*, 2nd edn (Essex: Addison Wesley Longman, 1996), p.215.

absent from his beat, not appearing in court in time for Magistrates, being absent from roll call, late for duty by ten minutes and gossiping on duty.²³ Eventually, the severe discipline proved too much for Chambers and he resigned from the Chester City Police.

Taylor found that the most common reasons for dismissal were caused by drunkenness, neglect of duty, insubordination and a general failure to act in the manner expected of a constable.²⁴ The disciplinary records for the Chester City Police for the period 1856-69 confirm this to be the case. For instance, the career of John Hughes shows that he was fined, reprimanded, reduced in rank and finally dismissed for twelve instances of drunkenness, five of neglect of duty, two of insubordination and two of failing to act in a manner expected of a constable.²⁵ Moreover, the records also show that a further ten men - Crawford, Mulholland, William Williams, Gilbride, Broadhurst, Leonard, Devers, John Davies, Blything and Tyndale - were dismissed in similar circumstances to John Hughes.²⁶ Of all the offences, drunkenness was the most significant problem for the Chester City Police. The same disciplinary records reveal that forty-four men were charged with eighty-eight drink related offences.²⁷ Even as late as 1875, Chief Constable Fenwick was forced to send a circular to every publican in city cautioning them against supplying constables with liquor when in uniform.²⁸ The double problem of resignations and dismissals greatly impacted on the police's ability to perform its role efficiently.

Parris explains that a force was judged to be efficient if it had enough numbers of police to be able to combat crime under normal conditions - this number was measured by the ratio of constables to population - and on discipline, in that a force should have enough superior

²³ CRO, ZDPO/1/2, Chester City Police Force Reports against Constables, 1843-69.

²⁴ Taylor, p.57.

²⁵ CRO, ZDPO/1/2.

²⁶ CRO, ZDPO/1/2.

²⁷ CRO, ZDPO/1/2.

²⁸ CRO, ZCCB/18, Watch Committee Book, 1875-83, 2 December 1875.

officers to supervise the constables on duty continuously and regularly.²⁹ The first report by HM Inspector of Constabulary for the Northern District John Woodford corroborates Parris's arguments regarding efficiency in relation to numbers and discipline.³⁰ In relation to the Chester City Police, Woodford suggested that the authorised staff be increased from twenty-nine to thirty-three men to create a ratio of population to each constable of 1:841, which was deemed the necessary figure to make the force efficient in numbers. He addressed the issue of discipline by recommending that one of the four additional staff be a sergeant in order to provide the necessary supervision of the constables on night duty. Woodford seems to have introduced a further category of efficiency that the men be physically fit enough to perform the role of constable. He noticed that the age and length of service of three constables had caused their physical powers to wane and he recommended that they be superannuated. The recommendations were accepted by the Watch Committee. Furthermore, when the 1861 census revealed that Chester's population had increased from 27,766 to 31,101, to make the force efficient in numbers, Woodford recommended an increase in establishment from thirty-three to thirty-six men, which gave the force a ratio of 1:864. The force now stood at: one Chief Constable, two Inspectors, three Sergeants and thirty Constables.³¹ Likewise, in 1871 when the city's population increased to 35,701, the force was strengthened on HM Inspector of Constabulary W. J. Elgee's recommendation to thirty-eight men; it now comprised of: one Chief Constable, two Inspectors, six Sergeants and twenty-nine Constables, giving a ratio of 1:939.³²

²⁹ Henry Parris, 'The Home Office and Provincial Police in England and Wales – 1856-70', *Public Law*, (1961), 230-255 (pp.231-2).

³⁰ PP. (47), *Report, 1856-57*, pp.43-4.

³¹ PP. 1863-20 (50), *Report of Inspectors, 1861-62*, pp. 60-62, 82.

³² PP. 1873-16 (31), *Report of Inspectors, 1871-72*, p.116.

Woodford also believed that a key weapon in the battle to retain staff was the certainty of a pension, yet in the Northern District few such schemes existed.³³ The Watch Committee of the Chester City Police was innovative and by 1856 a superannuation fund had been established for the force, the deduction from pay being 6d a week for each man.³⁴ Moreover, when the fund became depleted, the Watch Committee ensured that pensions could continue to be paid by making up the deference from the borough fund.³⁵ Furthermore, the Watch Committee had introduced generous rates of sick pay and paid leave. For instance, Detective Sergeant Wallace had been absent from his duties through bronchitis for twenty-five days and the Watch Committee continued to allow him full pay until he was fit enough to return to work.³⁶ Woodford believed that the prospect of a pension would help to retain staff; yet, the Chester City Police did have a pension scheme and as Table 3.2 shows this did not prevent 48 per cent of the force resigning.

The final part of this chapter will look at how the Chester City Police was maintained in an efficient state during the period 1856 to 1876. Several significant events over this period illustrate how the Watch Committee dealt with the issue of high turnover of staff.

Between 1856 and 1858 thirteen constables were dismissed from the Chester City Police.³⁷ Largely, the dismissals were for serious breaches of discipline, such as Thomas Hall who was dismissed for being drunk and behaving in a highly disgraceful manner towards Mr Williams, who was a member of the Watch Committee, and his wife.³⁸ Hall's case supports Steedman's observation that Watch Committees would hear complaints against

³³ PP. 1859-17 (22), *Report of Inspectors, 1857-58*, p.56.

³⁴ PP. (47), *Report, 1856-57*, p.44.

³⁵ PP. 1876-30 (34), *Report of Inspectors, 1874-75*, p.127.

³⁶ CRO, ZCCB/17, 8 April 1875.

³⁷ CRO, CJP/20/7/1.

³⁸ CRO, ZCCB/15, Borough of Chester Minutes of the Watch Committee, 6 March 1856.

the police and fine or dismiss a constable who had offended against a ratepayer.³⁹

However, in the early part of 1859, the situation escalated and the Watch Committee was faced with an increased number of reports of ill discipline. It culminated with an incident in Brook Street whereby constables Large and West fought each other with their night sticks in the middle of the day, in full view of the public. The matter was compounded by their supervisor Sergeant Speed omitting to report the conduct of the two constables. Large and West were dismissed for disgraceful conduct and Speed was severely reprimand and fined for gross neglect of duty.⁴⁰ Furious, the Watch Committee notified the men that it was their intention to dismiss from the force any officer who was reported to the committee after this time, whatever the nature of his misconduct may be. They backed up their threat by placing advertisements in the local papers for constables to replace the men they were likely to dismiss. It was a determined attempt to rid the force of ill disciplined men and replace them with a better calibre of officer. This hard line strategy resulted in the dismissal of six constables and the recruitment of nine others. However, this policy did not solve the problem of staff retention.

In 1863 Woodford was troubled by the considerable number of changes caused by dismissal and resignation that had taken place in the Chester City Police.⁴¹ Chief Constable G. L. Fenwick was acutely aware of this situation and suggested to the committee the desirability of reconsidering the scale of pay, as he found that men after serving a short time with the Chester City Police left it to join the County Force, in which they received a higher rate of pay.⁴² The Watch Committee's response to this important pay issue was to simply advertise for more staff in the local and Dublin papers. It is possible to speculate

³⁹ Steedman, p.31.

⁴⁰ CRO, ZCCB/15, 24 March 1859.

⁴¹ PP. 1864-26 (48), *Report of Inspectors, 1862-63*, p.78.

⁴² CRO, ZDPO/1/8, Chester City Police Force Resolutions of the Watch Committee 1864-72, 8 December 1864.

why advertisements were placed in Ireland. There were large Irish neighbourhoods in Chester. Peavitt suggests that between 1841 and 1851, the Irish-born population of Chester rose from 1,013 to 2,032.⁴³ The appeal via Dublin papers could be seen as an attempt by the Watch Committee to recruit men from Ireland who might be able to interact more easily within the Irish-born community or possibly be prepared to work for lower wages, or it might indicate that the force was struggling to attract recruits locally and had to cast its net further. Whatever way, it was a short-term strategy of replacing like for like that did not work.

The drain continued and on 5 January 1865 Fenwick reinforced his request.⁴⁴ He recognised that a pay increase would have the effect of checking the numerous resignations of good men who had served for twelve months, who left to join the Cheshire Constabulary. Fenwick was concerned that the city had become a training depot for the county; he claimed that out of the ten men who resigned during the past year, six were known to have joined the county force. He believed that if increasing the pay had the effect of retaining steady men in the force then increased efficiency would follow because at present one third of the force was always composed of recruits. Fenwick also argued that the increased outlay would be met by the committee not having to pay for numerous alterations to old uniform and the purchase of new uniform caused by the incessant changes in the force.

Figures in Table 3.4 support Fenwick's assertion that men were leaving the force after a short period of service: 138 men (49 per cent of the force) left within one year. He was correct to think that constables received more pay in the Cheshire Constabulary. The

⁴³ Helen Thais Pevitt, 'The Irish, Crime and Disorder in Chester 1841-1871' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Liverpool, 1999), p.44.

⁴⁴ CRO, ZCCB/16, Borough of Chester Minutes of the Watch Committee, 5 January 1865.

Cheshire weekly pay rates were: First Class constable 21 shillings, Second 20s and Third 19s; the corresponding figures for the Chester City Police were: 20s 6d, 18s 6d and 17s 6d.⁴⁵ Overall, this was lower than the national median figures for Borough forces in 1863: 20s, 19s 6d and 19s.⁴⁶ He was also right to be concerned that men were leaving to join the Cheshire Constabulary; between 1857 and 1871 fourteen constables left the Chester City Police to join their neighbouring force.⁴⁷ The Watch Committee was persuaded by Fenwick's powerful arguments. The pay was increased to parity with the Cheshire Constabulary. However, the pay increase contained a flaw: it limited the number of First Class constables to ten; this created a 'glass ceiling' that would cause future problems.

Fenwick had linked efficiency to experience. Between 1861 and 1868, six constables with over ten year's service were dismissed.⁴⁸ Taylor explains that the reason forces lost experienced men was that some constables became frustrated by the lack of promotion opportunities and this led to misconduct and dismissal.⁴⁹ For example, William Wynne joined the Chester City Police in 1854. He amassed twenty-one disciplinary charges throughout his career. Wynne's offending became progressively worse, resulting in fines, reprimands, cautions, reduction in rank and eventual dismissal in 1868.⁵⁰ Table 3.4 shows that between 1856 and 1876 the Chester City Police only twenty-two men stayed long enough to obtain a pension. Yet, in a nine year period, the force dismissed six constables with over ten year's service. These were experienced men who having amassed double-figure lengths of service could have been expected to remain on the force and ultimately receive a pension. Clearly something caused their careers to go off the rails. Taylor's

⁴⁵ PP. 1864-26 (48), *Reports of Inspectors, 1862-63*, p.71.

⁴⁶ Steedman, p.109.

⁴⁷ CRO, CJP/7/1-2, Cheshire Constabulary Enrolment and Record Books, 1857-1931.

⁴⁸ CRO, CJP/20/7/1.

⁴⁹ Taylor, p.60.

⁵⁰ CRO, ZDPO/1/2.

‘frustration’ explanation for the loss of experienced men is convincing. It is possible to argue that - in the case of Wynne and the five others - the Chester City Police was losing some experienced men through ill-discipline caused by the frustration at the lack of promotion opportunities.

Fenwick proposed a solution to this problem. He recommended the creation of a ‘merit’ class of constable.⁵¹ However, the Watch Committee did not act upon this recommendation until a year later.⁵² This corroborates Steedman’s observation that it was not until the mid-1860s that police authorities began to deal with the problem of slow promotion by creating a ‘merit’ class intermediary between first-class constable and sergeant.⁵³

The effect of the creation of the ‘merit’ class was fourfold: it potentially provided a bridge to sergeant rank, encouraged excellence in performance of duties, offered aspiration to other ranks and facilitated a succession of promotions across all the constable ranks, thus improving pay for the majority of constables in the force. Importantly, it brought pay on parity with the Cheshire Constabulary and most surrounding forces.⁵⁴ This measure helped to stabilize the force for a while but more pay agitation occurred a few years later.

In 1867 a memorial was read from the constables requesting the committee to increase their wages, on that grounds that owing to the present high price of provisions and house rents they found their wages inadequate and constables in the county of Cheshire, the towns of Manchester, Liverpool, Birkenhead and other towns in the vicinity whose duties

⁵¹ CRO, ZDPO/1/8, 19 October 1864.

⁵² CRO, ZDPO/1/8, 13 December 1865.

⁵³ Steedman, p.107.

⁵⁴ PP. 1867-14 (36), p.106.

were similar to their own received a higher rate of pay.⁵⁵ The figures in Table 3.5 show that the argument put forward by the constables regarding rates of pay was partly flawed.

Table 3.5: Rates of pay for all classes of constables in selected forces, 1866-67.⁵⁶

Force	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Cheshire	22s	21s	20s				
Birkenhead	27s	25s	24s	22s	21s	20s	
Chester	22s	21s	20s	19s			
Congleton	25s						
Macclesfield	21s	20s	19s				
Stalybridge	22s	21s	20s	19s			
Stockport	21s	20s	19s	18s	17s		
Liverpool	27s	26s	25s	24s	22s	21s	20s
Manchester	25s	23s 6d	22s 6d	21s	20s		

Figures reveal that a constable in the Chester City Police received higher pay than those of Stockport and Macclesfield, was on par with Cheshire and Stalybridge but did receive less pay than Congleton - which was unique in that it only had three constables - Birkenhead, Liverpool and Manchester. The Watch Committee would have been aware of these figures and that the constables' memorial was partially inaccurate regarding rates of pay. The committee did not entertain the application. This tough stance backfired. The response from the constables was emphatic - eight resigned. To deal with this large hole in the establishment, the committee came up with a four part strategy. Firstly, it rushed through a

⁵⁵ CRO, ZDPO/1/8, 6 June 1867.

⁵⁶ PP. 1867-68 (36), *Report of Inspectors, 1866-67*, p.100.

series of promotions, which meant four constables immediately received higher pay. Secondly, it adopted a very lenient discipline policy; only one constable was disciplined in 1867. Thirdly, eight constables were immediately recruited. Fourthly, not since the force was first established, a pool of five supernumerary constables - they were appointed through recruitment advertisements in the press for as long as deemed necessary by the Watch Committee - was created to act as a buffer against future resignations.⁵⁷ The four part strategy adopted by the Watch Committee again stabilized the force.

Emsley argues that a degree of uniformity was imposed from above by the 1856 County and Borough Police Act and by the appointment of the HM Inspectors of Constabulary.⁵⁸ Woodford and his successor W. P. Elgee had both been the Chief Constable of the Lancashire Constabulary.⁵⁹ Therefore, the Northern Division was inspected by two very experienced former senior police officers, who would be aware of the problems facing the northern police forces and how it was possible to solve those problems. This 'creeping centralisation' can be seen in the events of 1870.⁶⁰

Elgee was aware of the staffing issues facing police forces in the Northern District.⁶¹ He recognised that the frequency of changes amongst the constables was seriously affecting efficiency. He believed that if men had stayed long enough to become accustomed to the duty and given the service a fair trial they would have made useful constables. He also understood that it was important to retain constables after they had acquired a sound knowledge of their duty and become really effective. Elgee thought that the best way to retain staff was through rates of pay and the reduction in periods of pay from one class to

⁵⁷ CRO, ZDPO/1/8, 4 July to 5 December 1867.

⁵⁸ Emsley (1996), p.249.

⁵⁹ Parris, p.232.

⁶⁰ Emsley (1996), p.91.

⁶¹ PP. 1871-25 (28), *Report of Inspectors, 1869-70*, p.71.

another. He offered this solution to the Watch Committee of the Chester City Police. Elgee addressed the ‘glass ceiling’ that had been created in January 1865 and requested that the composition of first class constables be unlimited, instead of being restricted to ten constables as it was at the moment. He also requested that the period of service in third class before promotion be reduced from twelve months to six months.⁶² This measure was adopted by the Watch Committee and as a consequence twelve constables were promoted to the next pay band. It was hoped that this strategy would help to retain staff and end the agitation for higher pay but it did not.

The following year, a further memorial was read from the police constables requesting to grant them an increase in their wages.⁶³ The Watch Committee accepted the demands and new pay scales were introduced.

Table 3.6: New pay scales for constables in the Chester City Police, 1871.⁶⁴

Third Class	On joining and during six months	19 shillings per week
Second Class	After six months joining and for the next 12 months	20 shillings per week
First Class	After 18 months and during the next three years	21 shillings per week
Merit Class	After four and half years and during the next three years	22 shillings per week
Service Pay	After seven and half years and during the next four years	23 shillings per week
Service Pay	After eleven and half years	24 shillings per week

⁶² CRO, ZDPO/1/8, 7 April 1870.

⁶³ CRO, ZDPO/1/8, 5 October 1871.

⁶⁴ CRO, ZDPO/1/8, 19 October 1871.

The complete restructuring of pay scales and the introduction of two bands of loyalty payments aimed at encouraging long service appears to be a determined effort on behalf of the Watch Committee to negate future pay demands. However, Elgee acknowledged that the force had not been up to the full strength for some time, in consequence of difficulty in obtaining men suitable for service.⁶⁵ To rectify this problem, in 1873 a new pay scale for all ranks was adopted, which increased pay by an extra two shillings per week.⁶⁶ It had a positive impact on the force - Elgee observed that since the constables' position was improved, an adequate supply of eligible candidates had been forthcoming, and there were fewer resignations.⁶⁷

A successful application by Chief Constable Fenwick in 1874 for an increase in his salary offers an insight into how the Watch Committee was able to increase pay for the whole of the force.⁶⁸ He argued that pay could be increased because the valuation of the city - upon which the watch rate was made - had grown from £79, 409 to £126, 430 in ten years, which was an increase of 62 per cent. He further argued that one half of his salary would be paid by the Government and not the Watch Committee: the Exchequer reimbursed local police authorities one quarter, and after 1874 one half, of their expenditure on pay and uniform.⁶⁹ This allowed monies to be available to increase pay across the board. As a consequence, Elgee concluded that the strength of the Chester City Police was correct for the policing requirements of the city, and the scale of pay was reasonable and proper.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ PP. 1875-18 (36), *Report of Inspectors, 1873-74*, p.132.

⁶⁶ CRO, ZCCB/17, 3 April 1873.

⁶⁷ PP. 1876-30 (34), *Report of Inspectors, 1874-75*, p.116.

⁶⁸ CRO, ZCCB/17, 6 August 1874.

⁶⁹ Jenifer Hart, 'The County and Borough Police Act, 1856', *Public Administration*, 34 (1956), 405-17 (p. 408).

⁷⁰ PP. 1877-23 (42), *Report of Inspectors, 1876-77*, p.128.

In summary, research for this chapter reveals that between 1856 and 1876 the Chester City Police experienced similar issues of high turnover of staff as other forces in England and Wales. The number of men leaving the Chester City Police for all reasons fell from 17 per cent in 1856 to 13 per cent twenty years later. These figures are comparable to what was happening in the south (fall from 15 to 8 per cent) and similar to the north (30 to 15 per cent), although the 30 per cent starting figure in the rest of the north was much higher. The overall figure of 88 per cent confirms that the main reasons men left the Chester City Police was through resignation and dismissal. This is completely in line with what was happening in the rest of England and Wales. Further investigation shows that over the 20-year period, within two years of being recruited the Chester City Police lost 69 per cent of its men. Furthermore, only 12 per cent of staff remained on the force for over five years. The double problems of high turnover rates and lack of experience had to be overcome to enable the force to perform its role effectively.

Between 1856 and 1876, the Watch Committee implemented a number of strategies - with varying degrees of success - in an attempt to remedy the problems of high turnover rates and lack of experience. The hard line strategy of dismissing ill disciplined men in the hope of recruiting better calibre officers failed. Throughout the period, the Chester City Police - like most other forces - was plagued with dismissals through ill discipline. This was a problem that was never truly addressed. The continual aggressive recruitment campaigns largely proved ineffective; for every man it recruited, the force lost an equal amount through dismissal and resignation. Failure to respond to the request for a pay rise in response to the cost of living crisis spectacularly backfired, with eight constables immediately resigning. The Watch Committees fourfold response to this problem – the implementation of a series of promotions, the adoption of a more relaxed discipline policy, the immediate recruitment of eight constables and the creation of a pool of supernumerary

constables - did temporarily stabilize the force. Arduous working conditions may have been one of the reasons why constables resigned from the force. However, the working conditions gradually improved in terms of sickness pay, paid leave, pension provision and time spent on duty. The only benefit that was missing was paid rest days. Therefore, it can be argued that the pressing problem was rates of pay. Chief Constable Fenwick and HM Inspectors of Constabulary John Woodford and W. P. Elgee recognised this to be the case. Between them they persuaded the Watch Committee to implement four crucial measures, which addressed the issues of high turnover rates and lack of experience in the force. The measures were: (1) the introduction of parity pay scales to prevent officers transferring to neighbouring forces, (2) the creation of a 'merit' class of constable to increase promotion opportunities and prevent quality officers leaving the force, (3) the breaking of the 'glass ceiling' by having unlimited numbers of constables at the top pay scale and (4) the reduction of the time spent within each class before promotion could be obtained. On one hand, it could be argued that the implementation of these four key measures between 1856 and 1876 helped the Watch Committee maintain the Chester City Police in an efficient state to be able to perform its role effectively. On the other hand, it is difficult to see how the Chester City Police could be truly effective when only 12 per cent of its strength remained on the force for five years and only 8 per cent stayed long enough to obtain a pension. The force simply did not have enough experienced men. Furthermore, what experience there was could not be passed on and maintained when 69 per cent of the force left after two years.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This study examines the changing role and policing priorities of the New Police in Chester between 1856 and 1876 and considers how the Watch Committee dealt with the issue of high turnover rates in staff in order to maintain an efficient police force during this period.

Research reveals that that the primary role of the Chester City Police was the maintenance of order and the prevention and detection of crime. However, evidence showed that the role performed by the police was varied: considerable time and effort was spent on dealing with lost and found property, dogs and straying animals. There was significant evidence to support historians' claims that local policing priorities were largely determined by the Watch Committee in boroughs: ratepayers complained about an issue, the Watch Committee made the issue a policing priority and the Chief Constable was ordered to instruct the police to deal with the matter. Yet, evidence was discovered that central government were beginning to shape local policing matters. New legislation such as the *Education Act, 1870* necessitated the Chester City Police to have two constables permanently employed dealing with offences under the Act. The burden placed on the force was considerable: Chester City Police dealt with considerably more offences than some of its regional and national counterparts. The Watch Committee and central government were not the only parties to introduce change. Agitation by the constables changed the Police-Fire Brigade dual role forever; firstly by limiting the role to ten men and then disbanding it altogether when a volunteer Fire Brigade took over the role permanently. Evidence also showed that national events could dictate policing matters. The Fenian campaign against Chester in 1867 - the attempted raid on the Castle and the attack on the police station - and the response to those situations illustrated that circumstances sometimes dictated the role and policing priorities performed by the police.

Research shows that several attempts, with varying degrees of success, were made by the Watch Committee to overcome the problem of high turnover rates of staff in the Chester City Police. Evidence identified that ultimately it was poor pay, which caused men to leave the force. Chief Constable Fenwick and HM Inspectors of Constabulary John Woodford and W. P. Elgee persuaded the Watch Committee to implement four crucial measures, which addressed these issues: (1) the introduction of parity pay scales to prevent officers transferring to neighbouring forces, (2) the creation of a 'merit' class of constable to increase promotion opportunities and prevent quality officers leaving the force, (3) the breaking of the 'glass ceiling' by having unlimited numbers of constables at the top pay scale and (4) the reduction of the time spent within each class before promotion could be obtained. This helped the Watch Committee to maintain the Chester City Police in an efficient state, but the evidence made it difficult to see how the force could be truly effective when only 12 per cent of its strength remained on the force for five years and only eight per cent stayed long enough to obtain a pension. The force simply did not have enough experienced men to pass on knowledge.

It argues that the Watch Committee's ability to influence the role and policing priorities of the Chester City Police began to wane between 1856 and 1876, and signs started to appear that central government was beginning to shape local policing matters. It claims that central government and the Watch Committee were not the only drivers of change; agitation by constables altered the role they performed and occasionally circumstances and events decided policing matters. It also argues that four crucial measures were introduced, which tried to address the issues of high turnover rates and lack of experience in the force in order to enable the Watch Committee to maintain the Chester City Police in an efficient state to be able to perform its role effectively. But it reasons that it is difficult to see how

the Chester City Police could be truly effective when ultimately it could not retain enough experienced men to pass on their knowledge to new recruits.

This work is important because it contributes to the understanding of the history of policing. This study was produced in response to a call by historians of policing for further information regarding the development of policing, particularly in the provinces. Little academic attention has been given to the development of the Chester City Police. The study engages with some of the key debates in the history of policing. It explains the changing role and policing priorities of the New Police in Chester between 1856 and 1876 and shows how the Watch Committee dealt with the problem of high turnover rates in staff in order to maintain an efficient police force during this period. The two issues are intrinsically linked because without enough numbers to maintain an efficient police force, its role and policing priorities could not be effectively performed. The research enables comparisons to be made with the Chester City Police and other forces both regionally and nationally. The evidence reveals similarities and differences in the way the Chester City Police developed compared with some other forces in England. The study shows how the Chester City Police developed during a twenty-year period; it therefore, helps to fill some of the gaps in the knowledge of the crime and policing field of history.

This study could be developed in the future. Wall argues that little information is available to provide a comprehensive profile of the social composition of Watch Committees because of the varying nature of local economies and party politics.¹ Research for this dissertation reveals that at the end of November each year, the Watch Committee minutes give the full details of every member who would form the committee for the forthcoming

¹ David S. Wall, *The Chief Constables of England and Wales: The socio-legal history of a criminal justice elite* (Aldershot, Ashgate/Dartmouth, 1998), p.95.

year. This vital information would provide a clear starting point for further research to attempt to establish a comprehensive profile of the social composition of the Chester City Police Watch Committee.

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A826 Research Supervision Diary

Date of contact with tutor	Type of contact and topic discussed; changes agreed (if any)	Dates: TMAs submitted and received
17/5/2023	<u>Phone call.</u> Discuss slight changes to dissertation proposal. Agree that chapter 2 would cover the changing role of the new police in Chester, 1856-76 and that chapter 3 would cover how the Watch Committee attempted to overcome the problem of high turnover of staff.	TMA/01. Sent 25/5/2023. Received 5/6/2023.
11-13/7/2023	<u>Email.</u> Request/receive guidance on primary source referencing.	TMA/02. Sent 27/7/2023. Received 14/8/2023.
21/7/2023	<u>Email.</u> Progress update provided to Linda.	TMA/03. Sent 28/09/2023.
8/8/2023	<u>Phone call.</u> Discuss feedback from TMA/02. Agreed to rework TMA/02 as to the guidance provided in PT3e and queries in the draft. Linda requested that I attempt to incorporate the information from Table 2 into Table 1, likewise with Table 3 and 4. It was agreed that I would email Linda a copy of the changes.	Received 30/10/2023.
20/08/2023	<u>Email.</u> Sent an attachment containing the changes made to Tables 1 to 4. The attachment was in the page format for the dissertation, which highlighted that it was not physically possible to incorporate Table 2 into Table 1 and the same with Table 2.	
18/11/2023	<u>Email.</u> Numbering of footnotes.	

REDACTED FOR DATA PROTECTION REASONS

