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THE HISTORY OF POLICING

THE NEW  
POLICE  
IN THE  
NINETEENTH  
CENTURY

PAUL LAWRENCE

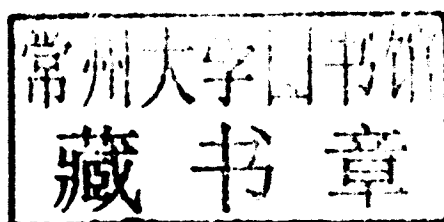
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# The New Police in the Nineteenth Century

*Edited by*

Paul Lawrence

*The Open University*



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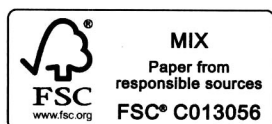
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## The New Police in the Nineteenth Century



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# Series Preface

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In modern society it is scarcely possible to read a newspaper, to enter a bookshop, to watch television or to visit a cinema without rapidly finding a story concerning the police. The police, according to the popular image, fight crime, and are there to protect 'us' – ordinary, law abiding folk – from the criminal 'other' – often some international gang or a vicious, sexual predator-cum-serial killer. When pressed, many ordinary observers will probably admit that this is escapism and that the reality is much more mundane. It is left largely to scholars and academics to probe that reality and, by so doing, to provide a coherent analysis of how the police institution developed and functioned and, through a better overall understanding, to encourage policy-makers and practitioners in reforms and reassessments.

Until the last third of the twentieth century the history of police and policing was rarely undertaken by anyone other than former police officers or people closely connected with the police service. Their research could be extensive and detailed, but their narratives were generally congratulatory. The cultural and intellectual climate of the 1960s, however, prompted a generation of young scholars to reassess the origins and development of police institutions. These scholars came from a variety of discipline areas. They looked back at the origins of the word 'police' and traced how a concept of governance became a bureaucratic institution. They challenged the common-sense assumptions that the police were created to fight crime and to preserve law and order and they probed the conceptualisations of 'crime', 'law' and 'order'.

The volumes in this series note the traditional narrative of police history, but really commence with the significant reappraisals published in the late twentieth century and then continue with the reassessments and debates that followed. The volumes are organised in a broadly chronological manner. The first begins with significant analyses of the concept of 'police' and policing structures under the old regime; subsequent volumes move through the development of policing in the nineteenth century, consolidation in the twentieth and the manner in which models have been structured with a view to export into the twenty-first century. The essays and articles in each volume have been selected by a historian with personal expertise in the area and each volume commences with an editor's introduction reviewing the literature, the shifting perspectives of research and debate, and the lacunae. The result is an accessible, organised and authoritative collection of the key articles on the history of police and policing that will prove an invaluable tool for both research and teaching.

CLIVE EMSLEY  
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# Introduction

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The epithet ‘New Police’ is a shorthand term coined during the nineteenth century to refer to the police forces set up across Britain and Ireland between 1829 and c.1870. Although subsequently purloined by historians as a useful descriptor for what many have seen as a wholesale reorganisation of policing in Britain during the period, the term was first adopted by the press in reporting the introduction of the Metropolitan Police in 1829. While initially using lower case letters, the term was soon held to warrant capitals, as in an 1830 article in the *Morning Chronicle* which carried the headline ‘Murder of a New Policeman by a gang of burglars’.<sup>1</sup> The expression remained in use throughout the century and was eventually used to refer to any of the new forces set up in response to the Police Acts of 1829, 1839–40 and 1856 or, collectively, to all of them. The term was thus a popular one but also helped set up certain conceptual distinctions which were readily adopted by both the public of the nineteenth century and early historians of the police.

Whether intentional or not, the application of the adjective ‘new’ to the police of the nineteenth century often implied a discontinuity with prior systems of policing. Making an intellectual distinction between ‘old’ and ‘new’ systems of policing naturally suggested a radical break, rather than a process of gradual evolution. In discourses around policing (both those contemporary to the nineteenth century and early academic work) the ‘new’ police have thus often been seen as the product of rapid and decisive legislative reform. As some of the essays in this volume demonstrate, this was in fact not always the case and the discontinuity between ‘old’ and ‘new’ was less acute than might be assumed from the rhetoric of nineteenth-century police reformers.

In addition, of course, ‘new’ has often been taken to imply ‘better’. The older, traditional systems of policing in England were customarily derided during the nineteenth century. Many opined, as did Samuel Smiles, that the old police were ‘nothing short of a disgrace’, and that ‘the thieves were much better organised than the police’ (1870, pp. 91–92). The new police were, by contrast, often described by nineteenth-century commentators (and some later historians) as both more efficient and more effective than the old. As W. O’Brien (Chapter 6) put it in the *Edinburgh Review*: ‘the arrangements are so good, the security so general, and the complex machinery works so quietly, that the real danger which must always exist where the wealth and luxury of a nation are brought into juxtaposition with its poverty and crime, is too much forgotten’ (p. 83). Again, however, the essays in this volume show that this early vision of a disciplined, regularised and effective new police was often far from the reality.

Thus the term ‘new police’ is not value-free and, as will be outlined below, the development of policing during the nineteenth century was far more complex than the simplistic ‘out with the old, in with the new’ mantra of early police historians. While the bare bones of police

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<sup>1</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 18 August, 1830. On the etymology of the term, see its entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which notes that both lower and upper case usage persisted throughout the nineteenth century.

reform and practice can be sketched fairly quickly, the debates around reform, the variable application of legislation at local level and the continuities of police practice over time outlined in the essays in this volume all bear witness to what was in fact a protracted process of complex and, at times, hesitant change. Thus the epithet 'new', while still in widespread use, must, at the very least, be used with caution. There were significant changes to the way in which Britain and Ireland were policed during the nineteenth century, but these changes were by no means as sudden or as radical as they have at times been represented.

## **Police Reform**

When considering the reform of the police during the nineteenth century, the most obvious legislative starting point is the Metropolitan Police Act, introduced by Sir Robert Peel in 1829. When Peel took over as Home Secretary in 1822, the Tories had already been thinking about police reform for some time. As early as 1820 the Duke of Wellington, concerned about radical demonstrations, had urged that the government 'ought, without the loss of a moment's time, to adopt measures to form either a police in London or military corps ... or both' (Emsley, 1996, pp. 24–25). Peel initially undertook a large-scale rationalisation of aspects of the criminal law, however, before turning to policing with the Metropolis Police Improvement Bill of April 1829.<sup>2</sup> Given an easy ride through parliament because of the attention being directed to the issue of catholic emancipation, the subsequent act established the Metropolitan Police, neatly sidestepping concerns expressed by the City of London Corporation by leaving it outside the jurisdiction of the measure. The new force of 3,000 men took to the streets between September 1829 and May 1830 (Emsley, 2010, p. 235).

Outside of London, legislative reform of policing in boroughs was initially precipitated by the national Lighting and Watching Act of 1833, which provided local authorities with the means to improve their daytime watches and night patrols, and the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 (which reformed borough electorates and standardised the composition of town councils) also specified that watch committees be set up to appoint and oversee urban police forces. In rural areas, Lord Melbourne as prime minister agreed to Edwin Chadwick's 1836 proposal for a Royal Commission on a Constabulary Force. Following a somewhat one-sided report from the Commission, the Rural Police Act, introduced and passed in 1839 (and a further amending act in 1840), was a permissive act which left the decision on whether to establish a rural police (as well as the control of that force) in the hands of the county magistrates.<sup>3</sup> Despite this, as Clive Emsley notes in Chapter 1, 'the formation of the Metropolitan Police in 1829 is, with justification, generally regarded as the breakthrough, yet the legislation of 1839 was important for much more of the country' (p. 3).

The reform of policing in both counties and boroughs continued during the 1840s and 1850s, partly due to the slow implementation of the existing legislation. While the majority of boroughs had effected the Municipal Corporations Act by the end of the 1830s, as Jenifer Hart notes in Chapter 2, there were still twenty-three that had not (p. 28). While twenty-four counties had implemented the 1839 Act by 1841, and a further eleven did so in the next fifteen

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<sup>2</sup> For more on Peel's reform agenda, see Gash (1961).

<sup>3</sup> On Chadwick's machinations as chair of the Royal Commission, see Philips and Storch (1999, ch. 6).

years, around a third of counties still had not complied by the mid-1850s (Philips and Storch, 1999, p. 233). Thus a Select Committee was appointed in 1853 'to consider the expediency of adopting a more uniform system of police'. The resultant police bill, introduced by Lord Palmerston in 1854 against a backdrop of extensive public order problems in Blackburn, proposed that boroughs with fewer than twenty thousand inhabitants would cede control of their forces to the counties and that there would be greater Home Office interaction with Chief Constables. As Jenifer Hart notes in Chapter 3, 'it is not astonishing to find that these proposals encountered violent opposition, chiefly from the Boroughs who were well supported by the City of London' (p. 42), and the bill was withdrawn. A new bill, introduced in February 1856, had a much easier time in parliament, partly because it left local control of the police intact and partly due to the Crimean War (which removed troops normally available to quell unrest) and the end of transportation (which elevated public concern over ex-convicts at large on British soil) (Palmer, 1988, pp. 510–16). The County and Borough Police Act of 1856 made the establishment of police forces a requirement at local government level in all counties and boroughs, and allowed for part-funding from central government funds via a grant that the force would receive only if it passed an annual inspection by one of three government inspectors appointed for the purpose of monitoring manpower levels and efficiency (see Chapter 7 by Henry Parris).

By c.1870 all but a handful of provincial authorities had established new police forces along the lines specified by parliament. It is important to note, however, that the key legislative moments of 1829, 1839–40 and 1856 were the result of prolonged and (at times) acrimonious debate over a considerable period of time. In the case of London, for example, attempts to reform policing in the capital had been ongoing since at least 1785, when Pitt the Younger had introduced the London and Westminster Police Bill, a measure designed to put in place a centrally controlled police force for the whole city. This bill failed, but another more moderate one introduced in 1792 succeeded in introducing seven new police offices in the city, each staffed by three stipendiary magistrates together with a force of six constables per office. Later, in 1798, a private police force was established to protect goods at London docks and wharfs and in 1800 this force was made official as the Thames River Police. Thus, some reform of policing in London had already taken place in the period immediately prior to 1829. Equally, the period immediately *after* 1829 saw the continuance of these older forms of policing alongside the new. The 'new' police initially functioned in parallel with 300 or so constables operating out of Bow Street and other police offices, who were directed by magistrates under the loose supervision of the Home Office. While the Bow Street constables were primarily acting as a detective force, and the new metropolitan police constables were focused on prevention, there was obviously a degree of overlap. This was discussed in a series of select committees during the early 1830s, and the 1833 Select Committee on the Metropolitan Police recommended that both the horse patrol and the constables from Bow Street became amalgamated with the new force. The horse patrol was amalgamated in 1836, but the latter not until the Metropolitan Police Act of 1839. The 1833 committee also recommended abolishing the separate jurisdiction of the City of London, but in the end the City introduced its own police force instead, via a private bill which precipitated fierce debate (Harris, 2004, pp. 132–53).

Thus, police reform even in London was a more complex process than a cursory survey of the main legislation would suggest, and the same is true of reform in the provinces. As

Storch and Philips contend in Chapter 8, it is true that 'by the late eighteen-twenties ... important members of both the national governing class and the provincial ruling class were increasingly defining as a problem the inadequacy of existing policing arrangements in provincial England' (p. 144). Following the success of his 1829 act, Peel had plans for a 'national' policing network of stipendiary magistrates under Home Office control. A bill to this effect was nearly introduced in 1832 but plans were aborted when it became clear that local authorities were primed to resist on grounds of cost and the erosion of local control. Central control was imposed in some instances where fears of public disorder were particularly acute. In 1839, as Michael Weaver shows in Chapter 15, Birmingham, Bolton and Manchester had the control of policing taken out of local hands, partly due to fears of political agitation and partly due to problems with local government in those cities. In general, however, resistance to reform on grounds of cost was an ongoing tension until 1856. As Emsley notes in the case of Bedfordshire in Chapter 1, many rural areas were reluctant to raise funds to pay for the policing of problematic, newer, urban areas (p. 6).

Not only was police reform in the provinces thus often a contested and protracted process, two other factors also act to complicate the seductive picture of pioneering reformers introducing a sudden wave of new national legislation around policing. In the first place, research has made clear that some new forces around the country were actually set up in advance of the national legislation, as a result of local initiative. In Gloucestershire, for example, the parish of Dursley set up its own force in 1814 in a manner remarkably prescient of later, national interventions. As Bryan Jerrard shows in Chapter 12, in this case there were clear continuities between those involved in 'old' and 'new' methods of crime prevention. Other historians have also demonstrated this type of grass-roots initiative. The Cheshire Police Act of 1829, for example, also created a new professional force of constables shortly before the Metropolitan Police Act, so the idea that the 1829 Act served as an example to other areas of the country cannot be wholly sustained. Second, a final layer of complexity is added by the fact that other national legislation passed during the period – particularly the Parish Constables Act of 1842 and the amending Superintending Constables Act of 1850 – in fact allowed rural parishes to appoint constables on the model of the 'old' system, an allowance that many availed themselves of (Philips and Storch, 1999, pp. 213–19).

Thus, police reform in the nineteenth century was a long and complex process, dogged by ongoing tensions between local and national authorities. The provinces saw the need for change, but were very unwilling to countenance any loss of local authority to central forces. Even in mid-century, there were considerable debates about the extent to which further reform was necessary (see Chapter 6 by O'Brien). So, while the police forces introduced as a result of the police acts passed between 1829 and 1856 were 'new' in the sense that national legislation impelled the local implementation of new structures, the protracted debates, delays and diversions around implementation mean that 'new' cannot here be taken to imply a sharp break with the past or the sudden replacement of all that had gone before. This statement is equally true in terms of police practice, where continuities with older mechanisms of policing are also in many ways also apparent.



## **Police Administration and Practice**

As with legislative reform, an outline sketch of the duties, organisation and *modus operandi* of the new police forces can be quickly made. In London, the key innovation of the Metropolitan Police was a primary focus on 'the prevention of crime' (rather than solely the detection and arrest of offenders after the fact), as evidenced by the declaration that 'the absence of crime will be considered the best proof of the complete efficiency of the police'.<sup>4</sup> The district covered by the Act was divided into five divisions, with each division further subdivided into eight sections, each in turn containing eight beats (see Chapter 6 by O'Brien). Constables were to walk their beats at a regular pace in order to prevent crime, and were marked with letters so that they could 'at all times be known to the public'. They were also expected to know their beat intimately and to be able to deal with all classes of people. While bearing considerable similarities with the more efficient of the old parish watches, this type of policing was a novelty in some areas. Regularity and visibility helped to distinguish the new police from the old, although it might also be argued that the better old watches had supplied their men coats with the name of the parish and the number of the man painted on the back. Regardless of this, policing itself remained a tough, physically demanding job. One problem with the focus on prevention, of course, was that the detection of culprits when crimes had been committed required stealth and a level of freedom of action not available to early new police constables. For this reason, a detective force was eventually established in 1842 (Emsley and Shpayer-Makov, 2006).

New police constables were salaried and received far less by way of rewards and incentives than old police constables (although they could, like their predecessors, also be fined for dereliction of duty). The funding arrangements of the Metropolitan Police were an ongoing headache for successive Home Secretaries. As Robert Morris shows in Chapter 5, the office of the Receiver of the Metropolitan Police (the official responsible for the finances) was institutionally separate to the office of the Commissioner, and the relative supremacy of each was not clear. As Morris notes with dry understatement 'the potentiality for friction in these arrangements may be imagined' (p. 73). There were only three Receivers between 1829 and 1910 and all fought to retain their independence and a degree of control over the operational practices of the police. John Wray, the first receiver, was not drawn from a tradition of civil service (because one did not exist at the time) and, as John Reynolds notes, 'Wray's interest in the accuracy of the account keeping was remote' (2000, p. 2). The commissioners tried to wrest power away from Wray but were ultimately unsuccessful. Maurice Drummond took over from Wray in 1860 and the commissioner during the 1870s, Edmund Henderson, made another unsuccessful bid to gain control of the purse-strings. Charles Warren made a further attempt to gain full control of the police budget during the 1880s but again the Receiver at the time (Richard Pennefather) managed to stall the issue. The financing of the Metropolitan Police thus remained a source of tension into the twentieth century, the more so given that the force was (by the end of the century) one of the largest work organisations of any kind. Despite this, however, the new force was (from the outset) different in appearance, procedure and administration to the previous police of London.

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<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, 25 September 1829, p. 3, col. e.

In the provinces, too, changes in police administration and practice became apparent, albeit in a somewhat more piecemeal fashion to London. The regulations governing the provincial police were often (primarily for the sake of convenience) based on those of the Metropolitan Police, as Jerrard notes (p. 231). As in London, as Emsley points out in Chapter 1, '[i]n most of the early constabularies the turnover of men was high. The constable's life was gruelling and strictly regimented' (p. 7). Partly, this may have been due to reluctance on the part of local authorities to invest significantly in their forces. However, while local authorities retained primary control over the financing and direction of their forces, following the 1856 Police Act Home Office Inspectors were appointed to judge the efficiency of provincial forces on criteria of numbers and discipline. The Inspectors could withhold a proportion of central government funding if they deemed a force 'inefficient' (see Chapter 7 by Parris). While the entire staff of the Home Office only amounted to around forty in 1856 (thus necessarily limiting the extent to which civil servants could spend time worrying about police staffing levels) the Inspectors did act to help raise numbers to what they deemed appropriate levels and had a voice in debates about consolidation of very small forces. However, as Hart notes in Chapter 2, 'it seems probable that in most boroughs the reform of the police was gradual' and that 'the standard of policing remained low in many boroughs even after 1856' (pp. 33, 37).

Thus it is important to move beyond this outline sketch of changes in administration and to ask what these changes in London and elsewhere meant in practice, and to consider the extent to which operational police practice really changed during the nineteenth century. Did the undoubted (if gradual) changes in police administration radically affect police operational practice? A key point explored at length in the historiography is the notion that the 'new police' acted to enforce new, middle-class standards of decorum and public orderliness on the developing working class. Robert Storch, for example, in Chapter 14, has claimed that the new police acted as 'an all-purpose lever of urban discipline' (p. 267). For him, via 'the pressure of a constant surveillance of all the key institutions of working-class neighborhood and recreational life' (p. 273) the new police sought to manufacture new standards of behaviour for the working classes. The new police were considered by those who were the primary object of their attention as a 'plague of blue locusts', and in Chapter 13 Storch claims that a novel fear over public disorder among the lower classes meant that the *purpose* of the new police was in large part to monitor and regulate working-class drinking and other leisure activities.

Writing more recently, historians such as Stephen Inwood, in Chapter 11, have agreed with Storch about the novel focus of the police on the routine surveillance and regulation of customary working-class pursuits, but have argued that while the Metropolitan Police 'had, or fairly quickly acquired, many of the legal powers they needed to control working-class street life' (p. 199) in fact street culture remained resistant to police control and that 'from the start, and especially in the difficult field of popular morality and street behaviour, the two Metropolitan Police Commissioners tried to tread a path midway between laxity and tyranny, between the demands of "respectability" and the practical necessity for good relations' (p. 201). Inwood uses the policing of Sunday trading (technically illegal) as an example of the pragmatism of the new police of the nineteenth century. The police were keen to avoid unsightly brawls and unnecessary conflict with working-class communities and hence while '[t]heir aim in general was to establish minimum standards of public order' they also sought 'not to provoke social conflict by aspiring to unattainable ideals' (p. 214).

Overall, as D.J.V. Jones notes in Chapter 4, '[i]t was, and remains, difficult to establish the reception which the new police received in the first decades of their existence' (p. 56). On the one hand, the rather blunt 'social control' thesis advanced by Storch has now become more nuanced. As Emsley and Mark Clapson show in Chapter 9, English policeman came from a range of backgrounds during the nineteenth century, but were drawn mainly from the unskilled and semi-skilled working class. Such officers were at times understandably reluctant to enforce what appeared to many of them to be pointless attempts at social engineering. Moreover, it is also important to remember that the new police did not entirely, and certainly not immediately, replace other older or private systems of policing. As Barry Godfrey records in Chapter 10, factory owners in the north of England relied in part on a private system (the Worsted Committee and its inspectors) for the prosecution of thefts until the end of the century and beyond.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, while the new police were a social mechanism that could be engaged by all classes, it is also apparent that the way they were organised and the duties they were given made it more likely than before that they would come into fricative contact with the working classes (Davis, 1984). Arguably, it was not until the advent of mass motoring that the middle classes really came into extensive contact with the police (Emsley, 1993). Thus any consideration of the operation of the new police in the nineteenth century needs to recognise both the novel demands made of constables and the pragmatism and discretion with which they mediated these demands.

## **Regional Variations**

This introduction has so far followed the contours of the established historiography, in that it has concentrated on England, which thus far has been the primary focus for historians of the police. However, the policing of the outlying areas of Great Britain reveals both similarities and differences with the English picture. Wales, of course, had the same legal system as England during the nineteenth century and there is a solid body of work (much of it produced by David Jones) that pertains to criminal justice history in Wales. As Jones notes in Chapter 4, crime in Wales followed very similar patterns to England (including a predominance of petty crime associated with low income, and a general sustained fall in serious crimes from mid-century onwards), and police administration followed similar patterns too. Initial resistance to the introduction of new forces based on fears of erosion of local control and spiralling costs was followed by a degree of acceptance, and a general involvement in pedestrian yet important aspects of social regulation such as vagrancy, truancy, weights and measures, and licensing. The work of Jones and others on Wales thus supports to some extent the idea that the new police were involved in the imposition of new standards of social order but also reinforces the notion that the size and composition of forces (particularly in rural areas) very often impeded the efforts of elites to impose certain aspects of social regulation (Jones, 1992; see also Jones, 1982, 1996).

Scotland had its own legal system, but there is as yet very little work focusing specifically on policing in Scotland. Aside from a number of unpublished PhD theses, the primary work

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<sup>5</sup> For more on the porous division between public and private policing during the nineteenth century, see Williams (2008).

is David Barrie's *Police in the Age of Improvement* (2008).<sup>6</sup> What all these works show, and others on the legal system too, is both the significance of the English model but also the various ways it was eventually tailored to local conditions (see Crowther, 1998). As Barrie notes, Scotland emerged from the age of improvement with 'a modern, specialized constabulary force' (2008, p. 15), but constabularies were initially administered under a dual control system whereby elected police commissions shared responsibility for the administration of forces with town councils and magistrates. Scottish police forces, as was the case in England and Wales, customarily adopted a pragmatic approach to the many demands placed upon them. The laws forbidding golf, cricket and football on Glasgow Green went largely unenforced! More significantly, as in the English case, some aspects of working-class culture, such as heavy drinking, remained more resistant to the new police than both police commissions and town councils would have liked.

Ireland, despite having the same legal framework as England during the nineteenth century, has generated a policing historiography far in excess of that devoted to Wales and Scotland. Partly, this is because the particular social, economic and political circumstances in Ireland gave issues of law and order maintenance a particular significance during the period. Partly, too, it is because of the recently acknowledged influence of Ireland on the development of policing in England and overseas (see Sinclair, 2008; see also Fedorowich, 1996 and Sinclair, 2011, Volume IV in this series). Following the Act of Union of 1801 Ireland remained a part of the United Kingdom until 1922 (albeit a rather unwilling participant at times) and, as in England, Wales and Scotland, significant changes in police systems and practices occurred. However, the term 'new police' was not commonly applied to Ireland. While crime prevention and detection duties (together with a range of administrative responsibilities) were, of course, part of Irish policing, public order issues were perhaps more to the fore than elsewhere.

As in England there was an established 'old' police in Ireland at the turn of the nineteenth century. Parochial constables were supposedly unpaid but in fact a substitution and deputy system had evolved as in England, so that a small salary was often involved. Their powers were limited, however, and their operations were confined to their own parishes. In 1787 attempts had been made to renew this system and the Irish Parliament had passed legislation to allow the Lord Lieutenant to appoint a chief constable for each police district (baronies or half-baronies), who could then appoint a further sixteen subconstables. The efficiency of these varied widely from place to place. They had no uniform or training, and were only policemen in their spare time, but appeared to have been tolerably effective in some areas (Malcolm, 2006).

During the early part of the nineteenth century, police reform was initially hesitant and faced established opposition as in England. Robert Peel, appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1813, decided that some change was necessary, concluding that what order there was in Ireland was achieved by what Tadhg Ó Ceallaigh refers to in Chapter 16 as 'a disproportionately large military force' (p. 319), which was nonetheless split into expensive, small detachments that were very geographically dispersed. Peel thus introduced the Peace Preservation Act in 1814. This garnered little initial opposition as its proposals were relatively mild (the Lord Lieutenant was given powers to appoint salaried, superintending magistrates who were responsible to central government), although an amending act to increase central control had

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<sup>6</sup> Unpublished theses include McGowan (1997), Goldsmith (2002) and Smale (2007).



a harder passage. Ó Ceallaigh notes that this was Peel's 'first major essay in legislation' (p. 330) and Peel wrote privately at the time that he felt that what Ireland really needed was 'a salutary period of "despotic government"' (p. 333).

The Peace Preservation Act (although modified by a second amending act requiring the government to pay a portion of the costs of the police) remained something of a dead letter act and certainly did not provide the period of tight control that Peel had perhaps envisaged. While disturbances of a violent nature were endemic during the period there was as yet no stomach in Westminster for the creation of a national, armed police force. This changed in 1822 with the passage of the Irish Constabulary Act, which established a force in each barony with chief constables and inspectors general under the control of Dublin Castle. The duties of these forces were in many ways similar to those of the new constabularies in England but they were armed from the start and divorced from local civil control. The Police Reform Act of 1836 saw the appointment of James Shaw Kennedy (who had originally been offered the commissionership of the Metropolitan Police by Peel), who, as Gregory Fulham reports in Chapter 17, wanted the Irish constabulary to be fully capable of 'acting as a military body' (p. 347). Under Shaw Kennedy's command, wearing bottle-green uniforms, armed with short-barrelled carbines and sword bayonets, and living in barracks, the RIC (Royal Irish Constabulary) did not endear itself to local populations. Dublin itself was policed by a separate civil force – the unarmed Dublin Metropolitan Police.

Shaw Kennedy lasted only two years as inspector-general, however, and the post-1836 period arguably witnessed the gradual 'domestication' of the RIC (see Chapter 21 by Elizabeth Malcolm). The force eventually became more representative of the Irish population, thanks to sustained efforts to recruit more Catholics into the rank and file, and to the decision to allow more constables to marry. The Famine of the late 1840s produced some violent confrontations. Long hours and the unpleasant duty of tax collection, which was pursued rigorously even in the face of widespread despair, took their toll on police–public relations. However, as W.J. Lowe argues in Chapter 19, '[i]t was during the Famine that the Irish Constabulary began a steady movement toward becoming a familiar fixture of Ireland's civic scenery' (p. 379). After the famine period, as police duties gradually became more routine and less focused on peace-keeping, so the necessity to foreground the use of force diminished (see Chapter 18 by Lowe and Malcolm).

This process took decades, however, and the attrition rate among police personnel remained high. Later in the century, for example, police discontent during the Irish Land War resulted in prolonged police unrest. Rural disturbances, precipitated by wrangling over the shortened duration of tenancy agreements and an agricultural depression which meant that many tenants were defaulting on their rents, resulted in the formation in 1879 of the Land League, which helped tenants to organise mass rent strikes and resist eviction. Police officers found themselves on extended and arduous duties for which their official allowances were insufficient. Police protest in 1882 had press support and the government was forced to respond via parliament. As Lowe notes in Chapter 20, however, '[t]he responses of both officials and the general public in the months following the August 1882 agitation removed any doubt that there was great respect for the R.I.C. throughout Irish society' (p. 420).

Thus, as with the English case, the nineteenth century saw the gradual evolution of recognisably modern mechanisms of policing in Ireland. The public order issues raised by Ireland's complex relationship with mainland Britain, and the armed and national nature of