

A group of Manchester police officers c. 1850.

THE GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE MUSEUM

Duncan Broady

Even if one debates the exact nature and scale of crime in Britain today, what cannot be denied is the increased interest in the study of crime and criminals. Whether the work relates to current crime trends, past crime levels or comparative studies of other countries, the study of policing and crime is a growth industry. If we couple this interest in crime with the growth in the number of local history societies, thirsty for information about their communities, then the police, who still remain a collection of local forces, and crime, which may have entered the folklore of an area, become an ideal focus of attention.

It would be wrong, however, to dismiss the interest as a modern phenomenon. Crime and the stories of criminals have always had a ready audience. In the eighteenth century crowds would eagerly await the publication of the life and terrible crimes committed by some brash ruffian about to be hanged. In the nineteenth century we also find early examples of 'investigative journalism' in the slums of the rapidly expanding cities. In Manchester, in 1874, a series of articles on the criminal underworld of the city was reprinted from the *Manchester Evening News* with the title "Criminal Manchester — a series of original articles descriptive of the thieves' quarters in Manchester, and the habits and customs of the criminal population, including scenes in the Charter-street, Deansgate, Gaythorn and Ancoats Districts". An intrepid reporter,

in the company of a criminal guide he called "Mac", was taken to various "kens" or meeting places of the "crossmen" or thieves, of the city. What strikes the modern reader is not only the appalling squalor of the living conditions described, but also the apparent impregnability of the thieves' kitchens against police activity. Indeed wholesale demolition in these 'areas' prior to building projects such as the Central Station, proved the only effective method of dispersing and removing the large concentrations of professional thieves in such neighbourhoods.

Unfortunately the modern resurgence of interest in policing and crime has come too late to save a lot of vital material and documentation which was destroyed after the Second World War largely as a result of the amalgamation and subsequent disappearance of many of the smaller forces in the late 1940s and 1960s. Amalgamations in 1947, 1967, 1968, 1969 and finally in 1974, progressively reduced the number of police forces in Greater Manchester from 12 to just one. Interest in a force's history at that time often rested in the hands of squirrel-like individual police officers. Some amassed their own collections of truncheons or old uniforms in disused offices within a police station. Some of these lone historians took great pains to preserve material, others managed to publish a history of their force shortly before

amalgamation loomed. There are several local examples of this: the Deputy Chief Constable of Rochdale, S. Waller, published *Cuffs and Handcuffs* in 1957 and Inspector R.J. Goslin of Bolton compiled *Duty Bound* just before Bolton Borough Police disappeared in 1969. Generally however, the rule was to destroy, unless it was of immediate relevance.

In time the mood was to change, and by the late 1970s steps were taken to preserve the raw material of police history. Also changing was the acceptance of the then current simplistic views of the role and developments of the police service. As society began again to face protest and disorder that it had apparently not seen since Victorian and Edwardian times, records of those former times were re-discovered and examined for comparative material and gradually a more accurate, though more complex view of the past began to emerge. Examples of this new social history of the police include David Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth Century Britain* and David Philips, *Crime and Authority in Victorian England*. Today, the interest in policing and crime extends through all levels of study, indeed over a third of all schools in the Manchester area now undertake project work on law and order.

The rapid changes in policing methods and the technology now available to police, also brought home to many the importance of preserving police archives. The 1950s Charge Office, which had changed little since Victorian times, suddenly witnessed the advent of patrol car schemes, personal radios and latterly computerised communications systems. It is perhaps a sobering thought that only twenty years ago, a constable could have been summoned to his sergeant by the sound of a wooden staff rapped on the pavement. Now the crackle of a radio informs him or her of new developments.

The need to establish a permanent base for police archives and to ensure the future collection of material relevant to police and crime studies, led to the

establishment of the Greater Manchester Police Museum. The museum was not to be a crime museum, concentrating on the pathetic results of inhumanity and vice. The famous Black Museum at Scotland Yard presents just such a concentration. Gordon Honeycombe in his book *Murders of the Black Museum* comments that "... the effect of the exhibits on display was cumulatively shocking. There was nothing of kindness or consideration ... no nobility save that of the policeman murdered on duty". It was felt that it would have been wrong to play on the voyeuristic, sensation-seeking side of the human character. Rather it was decided to portray the history of police work in general, its equipment, uniforms and day-to-day activity. The newly re-organised police museum at Bridgend South Wales and the smaller displays of equipment at Divisional Police Headquarters in Salford, Rochdale and Oldham also aim to reflect the general history of policing. It is hoped to illustrate the role of the police in the community and show how both changed through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In general terms the Greater Manchester Police Museum is dedicated to the preservation, interpretation and display of artefacts and documents relating to the history of policing in the Greater Manchester area.


The museum is located in the old Newton Street Police Station in Manchester city centre. Built in 1879 the station acted as a section station for 'A' division until its closure in 1978. After closure the station, together with the adjoining Weights and Measures offices became vacant. The building however remained in police hands and the shell of the Victorian station was intact. Moves were made to convert the building for museum use and a full-time Curator was appointed in 1981. From the start the museum collected not only the expected-old truncheons and uniforms, but masses of handbooks, personal papers and other documentation. Some material was donated by relatives of ex-officers, or by the officers themselves; some material was rescued from destruction. The

No. <i>T. 47</i>		Rank <i>Superintendent</i>		Name <i>Fred Taylor</i>	
Joined <i>5 July 1895</i>		Permanently Appointed <i>5 March 1896</i>			
Height	Build	Complexion	Particular Marks	Wears Eyes	Particulars of Service
<i>5' 6"</i>	<i>5' 9"</i>	<i>Blue & tan</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>111</i>
Rewards for Meritorious Conduct, &c.					
Appointments of Police	Stopping Runaway Horses	Rendering valuable "First Aid"	Discharging or rendering valuable assistance at Fire	Rescuing Persons from Danger	Other Meritorious Conduct
<i>1</i>			<i>1</i>		
Promotions and Special Meritorious Cases			Date		
<i>1907</i>	<i>1st</i>	<i>Promoted to 1st Merit</i>	<i>1915</i>	<i>1</i>	
<i>1908</i>	<i>3rd</i>	<i>Promoted to Sergeant</i>	<i>July 15</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Transferred to D. Division</i>
<i>1909</i>	<i>5th</i>	<i>Advanced 2 classes</i>	<i>1918</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Transferred to B. Class</i>
<i>1900</i>	<i>12th</i>	<i>Promoted to Inspector</i>	<i>June 18</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Promoted to Chief Superintendent</i>
<i>1909</i>	<i>1st</i>	<i>Advanced a class (class)</i>	<i>July 25</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Specially awarded £10-10- by the Watch Committee for meritorious conduct in connection with the anti-Run Outrages in Manchester, during April 1921.</i>
<i>1910</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>Advanced a class</i>	<i>1921</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Specially awarded £10 by the Watch Committee for meritorious conduct in connection with the Gr. Grenada & Port Office Raid on the 20th August 1921.</i>
<i>1911</i>	<i>1st</i>	<i>Promoted to rank of Chief Inspector</i>	<i>1926</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Superannuated. £416-13-6 per annum</i>

Fred Taylor's rise from Constable to Chief Superintendent.

31st Jan'y 1894

Character of Fred Taylor



QUESTIONS.	ANSWERS.
1. How long have you known the Applicant?	about 2 1/2 years
2. What has been his trade or employment?	hull hand - x
3. Is he of sober and industrious habits?	yes.
4. Does he bear a good moral character?	yes - very good
5. Do you consider him honest and trustworthy?	yes.
6. Is he of good temper?	yes.
7. Are his connections and associations respectable?	yes.
8. Has he ever been in a police force? If so, where?	No.
9. Can you fairly recommend him as a suitable person to be employed in a situation of responsibility?	yes.

Signature: William Thorsby
 Address: The Hollins, Sowerby Bridge

GENERAL REMARKS:
 4th Comm. not certain
 2nd last year

Character reference for Fred Taylor when he applied to join the police force in 1894.

museum quickly developed into what is probably one of the largest police museums in the country. Six rooms of displays relate the history of policing. Fortunately the original Charge Office and Victorian cell block survived largely unchanged and so it has been possible to reconstruct these two areas as they would have appeared at the turn of the century. The station's original riot gates, which protected the building from attack by the Victorian 'mob' also survive. Among the displays on the upper floor is one devoted to Manchester's most successful forger, Herbert Winstanley. Working from two rented rooms in Rusholme, he perfected his own versions of One Pound and Ten Shilling notes and circulated them at race tracks for about six years without detection.

Two store and archive rooms contain over six thousand documents and artefacts, from bound volumes of legal statutes to letters and memoirs of individual officers. Major collections include the Manchester Chief Constable's Annual Criminal and Statistical Returns for the years 1874 to 1913, the Watch Committee Proceedings for Manchester (not the printed Minutes) for 1895 to 1940 and the appointments register for all officers joining the Manchester City Police between 1856 and 1941. The appointment registers record every officer, even if, as in the case of one Thomas Bartram, they only spent a day in the force before being dismissed. The register appears to have been written up by the headquarters' clerks from bundles of single forms filled in by recruitment officers during an interview with successful applicants. The officer's name and number is recorded as well as a personal description such as height, colour of eyes and hair. Sometimes religion is noted and marital status. Place of birth is given, both parish and county. This has proved useful for researchers tracing Irish family history as usually the census return merely

states "Ireland" whereas our records give more exact information. Previous employers are also given as is the trade of the officer. Thus a complete breakdown of the social background of the Manchester police is possible. For ease of reference, the three volumes, numbering some 15,000 names, have been transferred to an alphabetical card index system.

As an example of the information contained in the appointment register, if we were to take the year 1874, we know that the actual strength of the force at that time was 725. Appointment records show that the majority of police who joined in 1874 were labourers or semi-skilled tradesmen. The record also highlight one of the major problems of the Victorian police service — a high turnover in staff. Of the 262 men who joined in 1874, only 29 were eventually pensioned at the end of their service. The remaining 233 resigned, were dismissed or died before being eligible for pension. More importantly, of that 233, over 60 per cent (145), had left the force by the end of 1874. Recent research carried out on a wider range of appointment records shows that in general this pattern was repeated throughout the Victorian period.

Using records held at the Greater Manchester Police Museum, it is possible to look closer at that year, 1874, which was also the year in which the newspaper articles on *Criminal Manchester* appeared. Manchester's population at that time numbered about 400,000. The Chief Constable's report for that period reveals that of this total 20,103 or about 5 per cent of the population were arrested by the police during the year. Dealing with individual categories of crime a total of 5,905 cases of robbery of all kinds were reported to the police. Of these 3,674 were burglaries, housebreaking or thefts from premises generally. Under the heading larceny from the person,

699 cases were reported and there were 52 robberies with violence. There were also 22 reported stabbings, 9 cases of manslaughter, 2 reported rapes and three murders. It could be argued from these figures that some crimes, particularly rape and stabbings were not generally reported to the police. Drunkenness figures largely in the report: a total of 9,835 were arrested for being drunk and disorderly. In general terms, nearly 60 per cent of all those arrested were drunk at the time of arrest. The report also recorded the ability of each arrested person to read and write and also their place of birth. Of the 20,103 arrested, 19,562 could either only read or read and write with difficulty or were completely illiterate. Thus according to these figures at least, the typical person arrested by Manchester police in 1874 was a semi-illiterate drunken Englishman. Assaults on police are also recorded; in 1874, 596 persons were arrested for assaulting police officers, eight of these were aged between 10 and 16 years old.

The museum also contains a large collection of photographs covering the region dating mainly from 1870 to the present day. Certificates, personal papers and newspaper cuttings also give an insight into policing in past years. A small collection of secondary source material and published papers complete the archive. The vast majority of the collection is catalogued and currently the information is being transferred to computer to make retrieval of detail more efficient. Though much information centres on Manchester, this is an accident of

inheritance and not of current collecting policy for the museum is eager to collect material from all of Greater Manchester. Even now, with the current interest in local history, large amounts of police related material remain undiscovered in private hands: even the simplest of letters and memos can shed a new light on the careers of ordinary police officers. A scrap of paper recently handed in turned out to be part of a nineteenth-century police notebook, the earliest known example yet acquired by the museum.

Fact sheets covering various aspects of police history have been prepared and are available on request. It is the policy of the museum to encourage visits by all age groups including local history societies, school and college parties. In 1986 the museum was visited by over 6,000 people, two-thirds of whom were children. The museum also publishes the *Museum Pictorial*. In the format of the Victorian 'Penny Dreadful', it contains an assemblage of verbatim articles relating to police and crime from the Victorian period, giving an impression of the mood, attitudes and sometimes prejudices of society at that time. It is hoped that it will be of use to schools studying the period and requiring access to original source material. Access to the museum to view the displays or undertake research is by appointment only. Enquiries should be addressed to: The Curator, Greater Manchester Police Museum, Newton Street, Manchester M1 1ES. Tel. 061-855 3290.

A scene in the Charge Office, 1910.

