

# London Metropolitan Archives

Information Leaflet Number 43

## Records of City of London police officers



## **Policing before 1839**

From the 17th century, policing in the City was the responsibility of two Marshals and their six Marshalmen. Their varied duties included keeping the peace at executions & other public occasions, and ensuring that the Watch, of elected Ward Constables and Watchmen, was kept at night. In 1737, the Nightly Watch was reorganised, but no effective daytime police existed in the City until 1784, when the Court of Common Council agreed to finance a City Patrol as a temporary expedient. Although small, it was subsequently discontinued by the Court as an unnecessary burden on the City's finances, in 1793.

Extra Constables were occasionally appointed by the Court of Aldermen to assist the Marshals as need required. By 1796 they were regularly patrolling the City's streets & soon evolved into a Day Patrol and a Night Patrol numbering 16 men by 1803, and 49 by 1815 (including those employed at Smithfield Market). In 1824 the patrols were put under the command of a Superintendent.

The Night Patrol was disbanded in February 1831 and its members transferred into an enlarged Day Patrol which, with a new uniform, then became known as the City Day Police. Policing in the City at night was left to the Nightly Watch. The following year, the Court of Aldermen authorised the expansion of the Day Police to 100 men, modelled on the ranks, pay and conditions of the recently established Metropolitan Police. It became fully operational on 2 April 1832. In November 1838 an Act of Common Council finally merged the two City police forces into one, called the Day Police and Nightly Watch, which had a combined establishment of 501.

## **Creation of the City of London police**

By the City of London Police Act (2 & 3 Vict. c. 94), passed on 17 August 1839, the City of London Police as it now became known, was given statutory approval and pre-empted an attempt to merge the City's police into the Metropolitan Police. A Commissioner of Police appointed by the Court of Common Council was given responsibility for the day-to-day running of the force, although his orders and regulations required the approval of the Home Secretary and Court of Aldermen, who could also dismiss him. The Police Committee of the Court of Common Council was given responsibility for supplying and equipping the force. The Commissioner's annual reports to Common Council are a useful source for tracing the later history of the force.

## **Police divisions**

Six Watch Houses were designated as the first Police Stations by the Lord Mayor in February 1817, although the divisions into which the police were organised did not

become fixed until the late 1830s. Six divisions were initially established (numbered 1-6), with purpose-built stations eventually built at Moor Lane, Snow Hill,

Bridewell Place, Cloak Lane, Minories, and Bishopsgate, with the Chief Office at 26 Old Jewry, where it was to remain until 2002. In 1914, the force was reorganised into four Divisions (identified as A-D), & both Bridewell Place & Minories Police Stations were closed. A Division ceased to exist when Moor Lane Police Station was destroyed on 29 December 1940, and in 1965, Wood Street Station replaced Cloak Lane as the D Division Station. In 1984, the force was reduced to two territorial divisions (B and C based at Bishopsgate and Snow Hill Stations respectively) when Wood Street ceased to be used as a Police Station.

## **Records of City police officers in LMA (CLA/048)**

Day and Night Patrol registers, 1806-1812 (not indexed), list the names of those Constables on duty daily with the Day Patrol, Night Patrol, at Smithfield Market, & on special occasions. After 1815 the Repertories\* (indexed to 1857) and Printed Minutes of the Court of Aldermen\* (after 1853) occasionally list newly-appointed Constables. After 1839 they also contain regular lists of Extra Constables employed for private service (i.e. as extra security for local businesses, the Stock Exchange etc) in addition to the annually authorised establishment of the force. The Minutes of the Police Committee of the Court of Aldermen 1825-1843 (not indexed) contain some references to recruits and promotions. The Repertories of the Court of Aldermen also contain occasional references to financial rewards to Constables for particularly meritorious conduct. From 1839 the Minutes of the Police Committee of the Court of Common Council\* mention allowances granted to disabled constables and constables' widows, and also increases in superannuation allowances to retired constables. Occasionally they will also contain information on police officers injured on duty, complaints, resignations, and the award of medals. These minutes are particularly useful when the more detailed personnel file (see below) does not survive, as they can confirm the age, length of service, and rank of a police officer. Although the Cumulative Indexes to the Printed Minutes of the Court of Common Council 1811-1926 and 1927-1949 include a variety of references under the broad term 'Police', they are quick to search and do occasionally mention names in relation to widows' and disability pensions granted by the Court. The latter volume is particularly useful as, under the additional term 'Police, Staff' it provides references to many police officers of all ranks, as well as the police hospital matron, storekeepers, surgeon, typist and widows.

\*Unfortunately, all indexes are subject-based and do not usually provide names and can therefore be time-consuming to search.

Warrant books and police personnel files were kept from 2 April 1832 (the date at which the enlarged City Day Police was deemed to be at full strength). The books are

indexed alphabetically, and act as a register of new recruits. They list the name, age, marital status, date of joining, collar number, and division to which a recruit was assigned, and the date and reason for leaving. Unlike the warrant books, the files are not comprehensive, but up to 95% are believed to survive. A file typically consists of an officer's Declaration or application form, which provides the address of the applicant, parish of birth, parents' names and addresses, and gives a physical description. Previous military, police or railway service is listed, which was very common amongst 19th century recruits. Previous occupation and employment is given, often with written testimonials. From c1860, the application form is joined by a printed Record of Service, list of Rewards & Commendations, and Injuries received on Duty. Copies of birth and marriage certificates, pension details and, for those who left the police temporarily to join the armed forces during the 1st and 2nd World Wars, the military unit in which they served can also be found. Please bear in mind that more recent records may not be open for public inspection.

Despite the appointment of the first woman police officer in the UK in 1915, the creation of the Metropolitan Women Police Patrols in 1919 and the work of the Women's Auxiliary Police Corps (WAPC) throughout the Second World War, the first Woman Police Sergeant and six Woman Police Constables were only appointed by the City of London Police in July 1949. The personnel files of these and of the WAPC are included amongst the main series of police personnel files mentioned above.

## Other sources

A policeman known to have lived outside the City, or who belonged to a police division outside the range 1-6 or A-E, is likely to have served with the Metropolitan Police. You should contact The National Archives (Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU, telephone 020 8876 3444, contact <http://apps.nationalarchives.gov.uk/Contact>, website: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

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