

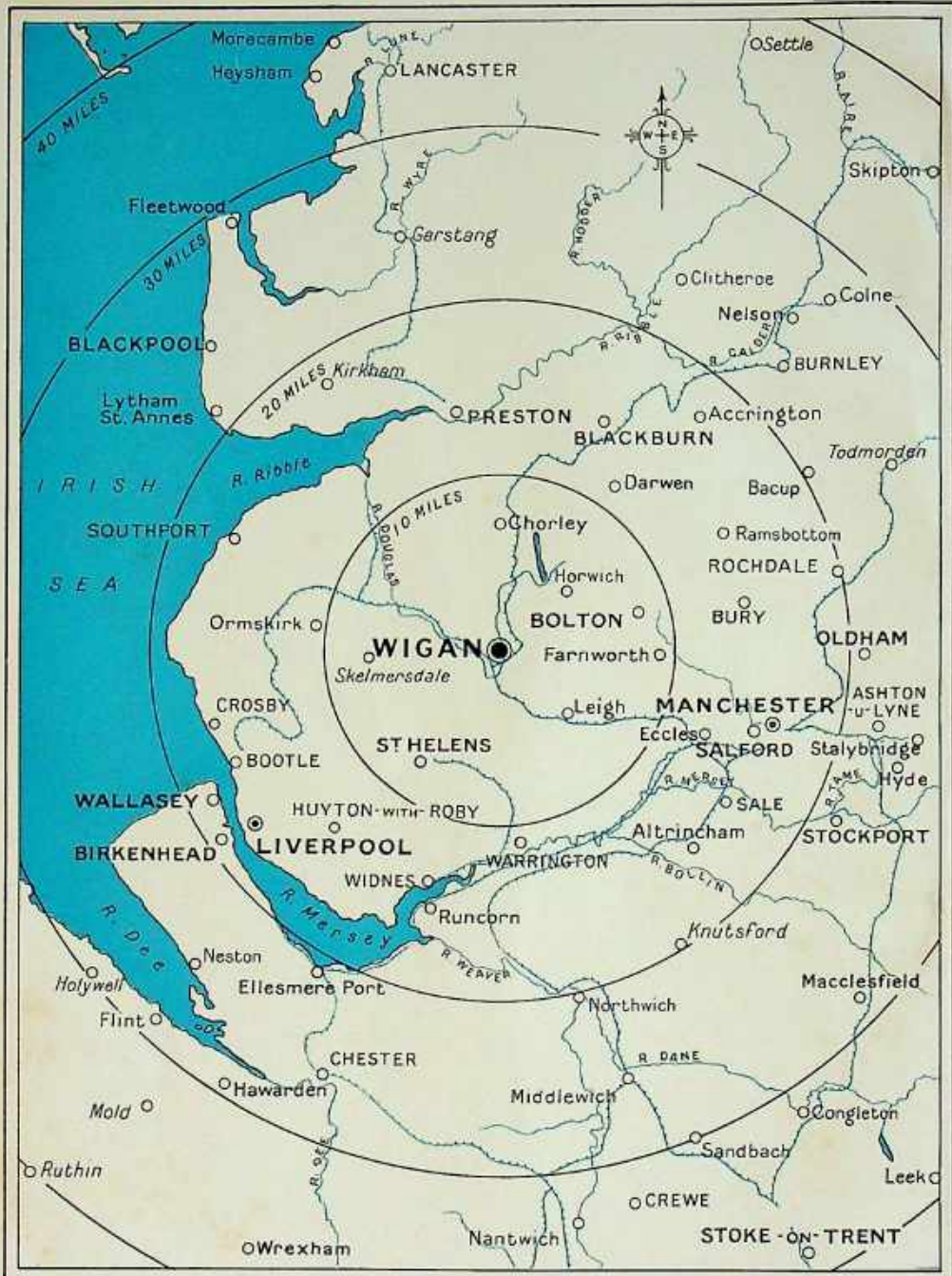
Wigan

Police.





"Gules a Castle with three Towers Argent surmounted by a Crown composed of Fleur de Lis Or, and for the Crest, on a Wreath of the Colours, In front of a King's Head affrontec couped below the Shoulders Proper, vested Gules, crowned and crested Or, a Lion couchant guardant Or". And for Supporters, "On either side a Lion Or holding in the exterior Paw a branch of Mountain Ash proper".



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Map showing the situation of Wigan in relation to the principal towns of Lancashire

WIGAN POLICE.

" True liberty can only exist when justice
is equally administered to all, to the king
and to the beggar!"

Chief Justice Mansfield.

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Introduction.

"The primary object of an efficient police force is the prevention of crime; the next is that of the detection and punishment of offenders if crime is committed. To these ends all efforts must be directed. The protection of life and property, the preservation of public tranquility and the absence of crime will alone prove whether the objects for which the police were appointed have been attained". (1).

How was law and order maintained previous to the professional police forces?

To find the answer to this question means delving into the early history of our country, because that is where the start of our police forces lie, based on customs for securing order through the medium of appointed representatives.

The police force was evolved, not created.

(1). Sir Richard Mayne, 1829. One of the first Commissioners of the Metropolitan Police.

There were three main stages, (a).When the people themselves were responsible for law and order. (b).When the Justices of the Peace, assisted by constables, were in charge of the policing of the country. (c).The paid professional police forces.

The Saxons first introduced a tribal system of police when they settled in this country, in which the head man and members of each settlement were responsible for each others conduct.

As the country became more united, the King, who claimed actual police supremacy as "the highest maintainer of the peace", in return for the allegiance and good conduct of his subjects, guaranteed a state of peace and security known as the "King's Peace". (1).

All were entitled to the "King's Peace", except those who by committing crime had placed themselves outside the pale of society, or those who not having land of their own had failed to put themselves into a tithing. (2).

It was under the wise rule of King Alfred, a thousand years ago that an effective system of police and local government was established for the first time in Saxon England.

In the course of his campaigns he had united under him all the rival factions within the limits of Wessex and Mercia and from then on his policy was a peaceful one. He commissioned one of his (1).G.Howard, in his Book, Guardians Of The Queen's Peace, says, "It is the King of Wessex in the 8th century, who deserves recognition as the originator of the conception of the "King's Peace". Page, 16. (2).The Book For Police, by A.Garfitt. Page, 2.

high officers or Earls in each of the several provinces to keep the peace.(1).

In order to do this more effectively he divided the country into shires,Each of which was placed under the supervision of a shire Reeve or Sheriff. These men were selected by the people and were answerable to the King. The shires in turn were split up into districts known as hundreds and townships and these were divided into groups known as tithings.

Every freeman above the age of twelve years was required to be enrolled in a tithing,for their mutual protection,and for the more easy discovery of offenders amongst them. Each member of the tithing gave security and was bound by his pledge or oath to be answerable for the good behaviour of the others.This was called the 'Frankpledge'.(2).

When one member committed a crime the others were bound to produce him for punishment or to pay a penalty.When any freeman left his neighbourhood,anyone who sheltered him became responsible for his conduct after the second night. If none would be responsible for him he might be seized as a felon.Persons whose reputations were so evil that they could not find any tithing willing to be bound for them were outcasts,subject to all the dangers of outlawry.(3)

(1).The Police Service,by,A.Savill. Page.3.

(2).&(3) Ibid. Page.4.

The headman of the tithing was known variously as tithing-man, headborough or borshelder, from the Saxon word for pledge, borh or borhoc. In each shire the tithings were combined in companies of ten, each of which group would be about one hundred families, settlements or townships. These hundreds were under the jurisdiction of a bailiff or alderman. The institution of the frankpledge system made everybody in the tithing into a constable, in effect, under the control of the headborough. It was the duty of the headborough to raise everyone else to hue and cry in pursuit of a fugitive criminal. When the criminal was caught, the entire community could make the accusation against him, alternatively, the accuser or the surviving relative could appear in court personally. Petty crimes reported by the frankpledge came before the Hundred Court which met frequently, the principal seat of justice was the Shire or County Court; presided over by the Bishop or Earl. (I).

The Sheriff made an annual visit to each tithing and renewed the frankpledge.

The system introduced in the Anglo-Saxon period survived until after the Norman conquest. It then became altered, but not wholly destroyed.

The conquered lands were divided between William's soldiers and the more free institutions of the Anglo-Saxons gave way to feudal organizations which were more of a military nature, however the frankpledge still operated in many areas. Every feudal lord was answerable to his liege for the tranquility of his lands.

The king distrusted the Saxons and appointed sheriffs himself, usually from men of the baronial class.(1). They continued to control the police administration of the country, collected the king's revenues and assumed a new importance over the county courts, which the bishops and earls had previously presided over.

The bishops now retired with their spiritual cases to the new church courts, the earls authority over the county courts disappeared. The sheriff was therefore left as the sole ruler for the king over the shire and also the county court. He went on circuit annually to hold his courts and deal with crimes and offences. Due to the severity of the sheriff's courts they were never popular and they were soon superseded by Baronial or Courts Leet.

The name of Constable comes in at this period(2). He was a local man, elected at the Courts Leet by his neighbours, and stayed in office for a year. His emblem of office was a staff which in later years stood outside the door of his house. Part of his job was to arraign suspects before the court and in the travelling courts of the early Norman kings he was responsible for the outdoor staff and the provisioning of the horses. He gradually took over the job of the old headborough. The name 'constable' appears to derive from the Latin, comes stabuli, Count of the Stable(3).

(1).The Book For Police.Page.43.

(2).Guardians Of The Queen's Peace.Page.25.

(3).Virtue's Simplified Dictionary.

The Assize Of Clarendon,1166, revived the frankpledge system thoroughly. Visiting justices who were local men appointed by the Crown,were commissioned to receive the recognisances and to administrate justice.(1).

In 1170,due to complaints of oppression and extortion against the sheriffs,being proved,the king deposed most of them. Their successors were of lower rank,were more submissive,and were now once more elected by the people.

Efforts were made to improve the police administration and the Statute of Winchester,1285,legally established the Watch and Ward. This was"to be kept in towns,the gates of which were to be kept shut between sunset and daybreak,with six men to guard each gate. Every borough was to have a watch of twelve persons,and small towns according to their size. All male inhabitants were liable to serve their turn on the watch without payment. Watchmen were supervised by constables but were not themselves constables"(2).

A constable known as a petty constable became appointed for all small towns and villages;and there was to be a Head Constable appointed to be responsible for the preservation of peace within the Hundred.

As time passed the justices gradually helped the sheriffs in their police work and as the sheriff's power dwindled,the justices authority increased.

(1).Originally an executive police officer,he was later entrusted with the judicial powers and eventually became known as a magistrate Book For Police,Page44. (2) Guardians Of The Queen's Peace,Page62. Ibid,Page.44.



The 'Charlies' often succumbed to the temptation of a handsome bribe and 'turned a blind eye'.

The paid Watchmen became nicknamed 'Charlies'.

They also gradually became supervisors of the police with the petty constables acting under their instructions.

By the fourteenth century the constable's commitments had expanded greatly. It had become the habit of busy men to pay someone to take their turn at the watch, failure to keep the watch was punishable by a fine. The position of constable was also unpaid, so it was quite common for them to pay people to deputise for them, whilst they did their normal work. The individuals they employed to be their deputies were usually ignorant and entirely unfitted to perform the office. Crime was rampant and it was not safe to venture out at night.

By the seventeenth century there had been little change. The office of constable had suffered a decline, the justices now appointed them because the Courts Leet had failed in this duty. The tithing no longer existed, the parish having taken its place, thus bringing into being the Parish Constable. (1).

It would appear that this period marks the beginning of the paid constable. After 1662 it became possible for the constables to be paid for certain of the duties they carried out. They had always been able to claim their expenses. The wages were only very small, usually sixty shillings per annum. This was very low, even compared to the farm labourer's wage of the day. Anyone who was tempted to be a deputy for this money would be unlikely to be otherwise employed, but nevertheless some men undertook it. (2).

(1) Book For Police. Page. 49.

(2) Guardians Of The Queen's Peace. Page. 64.



The first Metropolitan police wore reinforced leather top hats.

On the evening of 29th September, 1829, the Metropolitan Police patrolled the streets for the first time in their new uniform of blue coats and trousers, reinforced leather top hats, and tough leather cravats around their necks as protection against attack from behind.



"It has always seemed to me that the country has entirely outgrown its police institutions."

SIR ROBERT PEEL

Policing carried on in this unsatisfactory manner for many years but a wind of change started to blow in the eighteenth century. A former novelist and magistrate, Henry Fielding, who officiated at the Bow Street Court became dissatisfied with the state of affairs and formed a group of police known as the Bow Street Runners.

The next step in the changing times was the Middlesex Justices Act, 1792. This Act established seven new police offices, with three paid magistrates, and six paid constables at each. This seems to have been the first paid, organized police force(1).

This was followed in 1798 by a magistrate at Westminster, a Scot, named Patrick Colquhoun, together with a fellow magistrate, John Harriot, forming and running a river police force on the Thames, from the Marine Police Office at Wapping New Stairs.(2).

In the year 1822, Sir Robert Peel became the Home Secretary and in face of much opposition, in 1829 he introduced his Bill for improving the police in and near the Metropolis. Peel had carefully studied the work of Fielding and Colquhoun. Despite opposition in the press and amongst the public generally, both Houses passed the Bill and soon active preparations were in hand. The Metropolitan Police Act became law of the land in 1829 and on the "29th September, Londoners first saw the new professional paid Peeler", or Bobbies, as they were nicknamed, "working under the direct control of the Home Office".(3).

(1). Book for Police. Page. 50.

(2). Guardians Of The Queen's Peace. Page. 115.

(3). The Thin Blue Line. by. G.A. Mintoe. Page. 27.

WIGAN HISTORY.

Wigan is an "Ancient and Loyal" borough. The charter granted to the town by Charles 2nd, in 1662 states. Wigan is designated "an ancient borough", and is granted "as a special token of our favour" for its "loyalty to us" the right to carry a sword before the Mayor. (1).

This was the governing charter of the town until the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, under which the police force was created, came into being.

The origin of the name Wigan has been put forward as being "derived from the Saxon word 'Wig', meaning a fight, and that Wigan is simply the Saxon plural of that word". Local antiquarians and historians have suggested and forwarded this theory, for "sufficient human and horses bones, and implements of war have been found to prove the area to be a veritable graveyard of armies". (2).

Another theory advanced is that the original name was WIGGIN, meaning a building, derived from the Latin word PI, and changed by the Saxons to WI and WIGGIN, and that the name of the town originally applied to the house of worship. (3).

What was Wigan like in the nineteenth century when this police force was created? Even as late as 1816 there was no regular water supply in the town. A few only, of the principle streets were served with water which was brought to them in wooden pipes from a nearby

(1). Wigan Corporation Regalia. By A.J. Hawkes. Page. 6.

(2) & (3). The History Of Wigan. By D. Sinclair. Pages. 7 & 8.



pool, known locally as 'Whitley Pond'. Scaff chairs were still in use, and there was a windmill for grinding ~~corn~~ corn, in Scholes, situated in what is now known as Windmill Yard. Also there was a water mill at the bottom of Scholes. The River Douglas flows under a bridge in the road at this point, so it is quite conceivable that the mill was situated here so that it might derive its locomotive power from this source. (1).

The Wigan coalfield was opened out about this time and by 1818 there were eight cotton mills in use in the neighbourhood of Wallgate, the same area in which even today there are to be found some of the largest mills in Lancashire. (2).

Between the years 1816 and 1820 the town and surrounding district were disturbed by Luddite disorders, and a Wigan Volunteer Troop of Light Horse was raised to preserve order in the locality. (3).

There was a great improvement in the amenities of the town in the year 1822 when one hundred and forty three gas lamps were erected in the streets, some of these survived in use until at least 1953. (4)

The travelling public were greatly assisted by the opening in 1831 of a railway line from Wigan to Newton to connect up with the Manchester to Liverpool line, and a few years later, 1855, the Wigan to Southport line was opened to the public. The first fatal railway accident to occur, that of William Huskisson, the former President of The Board of Trade and Colonial Secretary,

happened near to Wigan when he was run down by the locomotive 'Rocket'.(5).

It is clear from the forgoing that when the Wigan police force was founded the town was already quite a thriving community, with coal mining and the cotton industry providing employment and facilities for travelling to destinations further afield well provided for.

The town was later designated a County Borough in the year 1888 under the Local Government Act of that year. To attain this status, the population of the town at that time must have numbered fifty thousand people.

(1) & (4). The History of Wigan. by J. Monk Foster. Pages.59:57.

(2), (3), & (5). The Wigan Official Handbook. Pages.22.



The Borough Courts, erected 1866-1867.

THE FORMATION OF WIGAN POLICE.

Conditions in London improved so much after the establishment of the Metropolitan police that a few years later it was decided to set up a force for the whole of the country. The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 was passed under which borough corporations were ordered to formulate Watch Committees. These consisted of not more than one third of the borough council. The Mayor, by virtue of his office was an ex officio member. The committee acted by a majority and three members at least must have been present to hold a meeting. (1).

The Watch Committee was responsible for maintaining law and order within the boundaries of the borough of which the corporation was in charge. The area of the borough at this time being about three and a half square miles. The first meeting of the Watch Committee for Wigan Borough was held at the Town Hall, Market Place, (2), on the sixth of January, 1835.

At this meeting the following items were decided. The salary of the Head Police Officer in Wigan would be one pound, five shillings per week. He would have the house at the gaol rent free and coal for his own house and the gaol free also. The Head Police

(1). Watch Committees are now composed of fifty per cent of council members and fifty per cent of Justices of The Peace. They are also renamed Police Committees and have no part in the promotion of the individual ranks of the service. The Police Act, 1964. H.M.S.O.

(2). This Town Hall was demolished in 1869 after new Borough Courts were erected in 1855-7. The Wigan Official Handbook, Page, 24.

Officer would be a married man, and the candidates were required to appear before the Watch Committee of the borough on Thursday, the twenty first of January at twelve mid day at the Town Hall.

The situation of gaol keeper and constable was to be advertised for once only in the Manchester Guardian, Liverpool Mercury, Preston Chronicle and the Bolton Free Press. Proposals and testimonials were required to be sent to the Mayor on or before the eighteenth instant.

A committee of five members was to be appointed to inspect the gaol and the keepershouse and ascertain the expense involved in putting them in a safe condition. The committee should be authorised to employ an architect and builder to make an estimate of the expense of the repairs which the Watch Committee may deem to be necessary. The committee of five should report to the general committee at the next meeting. (1).

The meeting was then adjourned to six p.m. the eleventh of January.

At the adjourned meeting it was reported that it would be useless to expend money on the old gaol as the walls were not in good enough condition to sustain any new erections upon them. A communication from Mr Thomas, the Chief Constable of Manchester was then read out. It recommended a body of preventive police amounting to forty in number, also the following books. A charge book, a bail book, an occurrence book, an information book, a property book, and a men's time and conduct book(2).

(1). Wigan Watch Committee Minute Book. 1835-1844. Page.2.
 (2). Ibid. Page.3.

A list of thirty five names had been received for the position of constable and gaol keeper. A man named Hugh Pagan of Wigan was appointed at a salary of twenty five shillings per week and his house rent, and coal provided free.(1). It was also decided that Mr John Whittle would be appointed Chief Constable with a salary of two hundred pounds per year. At the same time it was decided that William Lancaster be appointed constable of Scholes(2); he was to receive a salary of one pound per week and he was to account for and keep records in a book of all fees which were received by him in his position of constable.

A further three men, William Halliwell, Henry Bolton and Thomas Bradley were appointed as night police at a salary of fourteen shillings per week. It would hardly be possible in these enlightened times to employ a man on night turn for only seventy five per cent of the daytime wage.(3).

The constables were ordered to account to the Watch Committee at every meeting for all the fees and perquisites received and that they must immediately pay over the amount to the borough treasurer. The Mayor was requested to provide such books as he might think necessary for the chief and other constables and to "direct them in the mode of keeping them". It was also decided

(1).Ibid. Page 4.

(2).A district of Wigan which used to be patrolled by policemen in twos at all times, both day and night until relatively recent times, due to the rough element of Irish residents.

(3) Ibid. Page 5.

that the Treasurer should be provided with a certified list of the names of the constables, showing the amount of weekly wages that each man was entitled to, and he should be requested to pay to the Chief Constable, every week, a sum not exceeding the amount to be paid, mentioned in the list as being the total amount payable weekly to the constables for wages.

It was decided also that the Chief Constable should be requested to keep an account of the number of days each constable was in attendance each week, and also an account of the amount of wages due to each man every week. The Chief Constable was authorised to receive from the Treasurer, weekly, the amount of all the constables wages and he was to pay to each constable his weeks wages every Friday morning.

The next Watch Committee meeting was held on the eighteenth of February, 1836. At this time it was resolved that the following rules for the governing of the constabulary force should be adopted for the present and should remain in force until fresh rules should be formulated. (1).

(1). "The day police to consist of a Chief Constable, a second constable and prison keeper combined, and a third constable to reside in Scholes, the same were to be known as the 'day police'.

(2). The 'night watch', was to consist of three in number and that both the day and night force be under the control of the Chief Constable".

(3). Ibid Page, 7.

(3).That the 'day police' attend the police office every mornig at eight-o-clock and remain on duty until eleven-o-clock at night, except on Saturdays upon which days they shall remain on duty as much longer as the Chief Constable shall deem to be necessary.

(4).That the 'night police' do commence at ten-o-clock at night and remain on duty until five-o-clock in the morning. The constables of the 'night watch' will attend daily at the police office at eleven-o-clock in the forenoon and make a report of the previous nights proceedings to the Chief Constable under whose direction they are to be for the remainder of the day, and are to present themselves at the police office nightly before entering upon duty.

(5).That all charges made against persons taken up by either day or night police shall be regularly entered in a book kept for that purpose at the police office, together with the christian names and surnames of the individuals, their residence and occupations.

(6)That the Chief Constable do make such regulation as to the beats of the constables of the night watch so that no night constables have the same round for more than one week together.

(7).That all fees and perquisites received by any of the constables be regularly entered in a book kept for the purpose by the Head Constable and submitted to each meeting of the Watch Committee, and that the amount of such fee and perquisites be regularly ~~be~~ paid over to the borough treasurer."

It will be noted that in rules numbered three and four the police worked for very long hours in company with all other workers

in those days.

In the month of February as a result of constables Bradley and Halliwell neglecting their duty they were called before the Watch Committee and reprimanded. As the outcome a further governing rule was introduced. This was, ~~that~~ "The Chief Constable was to report to each meeting the efficiency, or inefficiency of each one of the subordinate constables, and any neglect of duty, or any other misconduct on their part", and the Watch Committee, "do require the whole of the police force to keep themselves as clean and respectable as possible". (1).

(1). Ibid. Page, 9.

PERSONNEL DIFFICULTIES.

Thomas Bradley was again in trouble and fell by the wayside. He became drunk on duty and absented himself for a whole night, he was taken before the Watch Committee on the fourteenth of April 1836 and was discharged from office at the expiration of that week. Two other constables, named Thomas Birchall and Thomas Calderbank were appointed but in May the Chief Constable reported that Birchall had left his appointment. The Chief Constable was requested to find four fit and proper persons to be sworn in as constables, "to act if required, at wages not exceeding two shillings and sixpence per day." (1).

On Saturday, 7th, May, 1836, Hugh Fagan was seriously hurt when on duty in Scholes, by a blow on the back of the head, inflicted by some person or persons unknown. The Mayor reported that the Magistrates had offered a reward of ten pounds for such information as would lead to the conviction of the offender. (2).

In June, on Thursday, 16th, Mr Whittle reported that William Halliwell was inefficient as a constable, and that he had been convicted for improper conduct in executing a process, and that he was in liquor at nine-o'clock in the evening". He was dismissed from office at the end of the week. (3).

(1). Ibid Page, 10.

(2). Today this offence carries a penalty of twenty pounds fine, or up to six months imprisonment.

(3). Ibid. Page. 14.

Four constables were then appointed as being attached to the new church, but without salary. This seems to be a throwback to the old Parish Constables.

On the 7th, July, 1856, the Chief Constable informed the Watch Committee that, "constable ^N~~R~~ Calderbank had his person hurt, his clothes considerably injured, and had lost his hat in an affray". (1). It was resolved that he should be allowed ten shillings from the borough fund to buy himself a new hat. (2).

On the 1st, September, 1856, Mr Whittle reported that "John Finch was locked up in prison, about nine-o'clock on Sunday morning and remained in until about eight-o'clock at night, at which time he was more intoxicated than when put into prison". He said that, "Peter Finch the prisoner's brother stated that they had several quarts of ale in prison, some of which had been brought in by the prison keepers servant". Fagan, the prison keeper was called into the meeting and admonished. (3).

The Chief Constable reported also that: "On Monday night, constable Bolton was in liquor when on duty and had improperly locked up and imprisoned, Henry Ashworth, and that on Tuesday night he had gone into the Griffin and their drums run given to him by some of the company at half past eleven. He had afterwards quarrelled with one of the men and challenged him to a fight. He then took off his hat and coat, knocked down James Fairbrother and after abusing him, took

(1). The fighting of two or more persons in a public place.

(2) Ibid. Page. 26.

(3). Ibid. Page. 17.

him and locked him up in prison, on a charge of being drunk and disorderly, when in fact he was not drunk. For this behaviour, Bolton was called into the meeting and was admonished. (1).

In the month of October, 1836, the Chief Constable reported to the meeting; "Bolton had a woman with him at ten past twelve one night the previous week, and kept her there until twelve thirty am, with the door fastened inside. Also Bolton had charged him with the coach fare for taking some prisoners to Kirkdale. He had not in fact paid this money and Mr Whittle had to pay it again. He had given this amount of money to Bolton once and the constable assured him that he had previously paid it. For these second offences Bolton was discharged from his office. (2).

In the same month, due to the position of the night police, the Watch Committee came to the decision that the wages they were paying to the constables was insufficient and was only likely to attract men of the wrong calibre. All the night men had finished except one and the day police were having to cover up on the night beats. The wages paid were therefore raised to twenty shillings per week, but two shillings per week was to be retained out of this amount to be expended in the purchase of livery or uniforms. The livery was to consist of a brown coloured coat, with a stand up collar, a brown waistcoat and grey trousers, topped by a hat similar to those which were worn by the London police at that time.

Also at this time the decision was taken to circulate handbills in the borough to give notice that three men were required to act as constables. It was a requirement that these three men would have

(1). Ibid. Page.17. (2) Ibid. Page.20

to be able to read and write.

A short time later, Hugh Fagan, the goal keeper, found himself in trouble. The Chief Constable reported to the Watch Committee in January, 1837, that: "Hugh Fagan having been sent to Leigh with a prisoner, had got drunk and on returning home had taken a persons hat thus causing a disturbance". (1). Fagan was called into the next meeting held in the same month at which time Mr Whittle reported that he had been to Leigh and found that Fagan had charged twenty shillings instead of the fifteen shillings which he had been ordered to charge from Smith the constable at Leigh (2). Fagan replied that he understood from Mr Whittle that he was to charge fifteen shillings expenses and that he had charged a pound and had paid fifteen shillings to Mr Whittle. He had no recollection of what had occurred after he had seen Smith as he had then had a little too much liquor. He was severely reprimanded on this occasion.

By February, 1837, he was again in trouble. Mr Whittle reported, "an unpleasant affair had occurred between Fagan and constable Dobson". Dobson was called into the meeting and stated as follows: "A dispute arose between Fagan and myself from a false copy having been made in the 'Round Book' by Fagan. I pointed it out to him and he abused me and called me hard words. On the

(1). Ibid. Page. 26.

(2). Each County or Borough force had to pay the cost of their own prisoners to be transported. This prisoner would therefore be one arrested in Wigan for Leigh police.

following week after this, Mr Whittle wished ^{me} to go with a woman to the Lock Up House in order that she might identify a man whom she supposed to be there, and who had as she supposed, stolen some of her property. When we got there, the servant said that we must not go in, as her master said that I must not go up there with anyone. I replied that Mr Whittle had sent me and that I should go up. He had never refused me before. At this point Dobson pointed out the false entry to the committee. This time Fagan was dismissed from his position and Dobson was appointed in his place. (I). Fagan had therefore kept his position for just over twelve months.

Constable Lancaster, who joined the force at the same time as Fagan was also in trouble, due to liquor, shortly after Fagan's dismissal. At the meeting held on the 13th, April, 1857, the Chief Constable said that William Heath, another constable, had a complaint against Lancaster. Heath was called into the meeting and stated:- "Lancaster was complaining of having to stop in the Hall from half past four till seven-o'clock on Sunday, alone. I replied that he was not there from half past four till seven alone as I was there till after five with Mr Whittle and five others. Lancaster flew into a passion and told me I was a D-----d liar. I told him an old man ought to know better than to call anyone a liar. He called me so again, several times, with other names, much worse. He also began to shew fight. He was in liquor or I think he would not have gone so far. This happened on Monday night about twelve (I). Ibid. Page. 31.

o'clock. I perceived that he had had liquor an hour or two before this happened. I never saw him so drunk as to be incapable of doing his duty. There were three of the Special Constables by at the time. He has insulted me before, about three weeks before as he was in liquor then. I think it has arisen from his laxity and my slickness in doing business". On being pressed, Heath, with great unwillingness stated that, "Lancaster was in the habit of taking liquor from the publicans, free, when they were on their rounds".

Lancaster at this point came into the room. He denied Heath's statement and left again. (I).

John Cox one of the Special Constables was then called in and stated: "On Monday night, last, about twelve o'clock I was asleep and was aroused by Heath and Lancaster talking loudly. Lancaster called Heath a'd-----d tell tale' and many other hard words, and appeared as if he was going to knock him off the chair. Heath said, I'm not drunk Lancaster if you are. Lancaster was very abusive. Heath was not, but told him he would not stand it, but that Lancaster should hear more of it".

Lancaster was then called into the room once more. The Mayor reprimanded him very severely and informed him that the committee had decided that he should remain in the police force for another month upon trial, and that if in the course of that month he was guilty of any irregularity, he would be discharged.

This event seemed to have subdued the constables because (I). These days the C.C. hears the complaint, and the person complained of is present at all times.

the police force appeared to run smoothly for a considerable period of time afterwards.

In March, 1839, Mr Whittle was requested by the committee to make out a list, containing the names, residence and trades, of two hundred people who were duly qualified to perform the office of Special Constable within the borough, in order that they might be called upon to act in case of emergency. This would appear to be on the basis of voluntary/conscript as there is no mention of the people concerned being asked if they were willing to consider being used in this manner. The list was prepared and produced at the meeting held on the 15th, May, 1839.

At this meeting too, the Chief Constable informed the committee that constable Heath had obtained a situation as an inspector of Police at Manchester and he would be leaving the Wigan force at the end of that week. This meant finding another replacement.

In December, of the same year Mr Whittle informed the Watch Committee that Dobson's conduct had been generally insubordinate and negligent, and that in particular he had been guilty of the following misconduct: " On the 31st, October, last, he ought to have been on duty at night. I went about two o' clock in the morning on the 1st of November and Dobson then got out of bed to let me in to the gaol with a prisoner. He was in his shirt at the time. About six weeks since on a Tuesday night, I am told, he went to the Red Lion public house in the Strand, and asked what they were dancing on the Sunday night for.

The same night I had given him directions to serve a warrant

on a man named Whalley. After having heard the report about the Red Lion I followed Dobson into the Scholes and there found him in the Windsor Castle, drinking with another constable. I asked him if he had served Whalley and he asked me in reply if it would be right to serve it on a Sunday night.

When on duty he frequently goes about in plain clothes instead of in his uniform which he should be wearing.

Another constable had complained that Dobson, whilst on duty slept by the fire, and when he awoke, he made water upon the floor and against the desk". Consequential upon this complaint, Dobson who had succeeded Hugh Pagan in April, 1857, as gaol keeper, was also dismissed from the position. Once more needing someone to fill this vacancy, it was decided to contact Heath, at Manchester, who had left some nine months previously, to see if he would be willing to return to the town and take this position. (1).

At this time, a change in the costume worn by the constables was decided upon. This was so that the uniform would correspond with that which was being worn by the Liverpool police. This appears to have consisted of, a pair of light coloured trousers, over which was worn a 'choker' neck jacket, single breasted with seven bright metal buttons reaching from the neck to the waist. Cut away at the front, and hanging in tails at the back. This seems to be manufactured in either black or dark blue material. The whole topped by a tall black hat. (2). Also to supplement the new uniform

(1).Ibid.Page.70.

(2).Guardians Of The Queen's Peace. Page.97.

there was to be an issue of capes, stocks and belts. Mr Whittle was requested to contact the police office at Liverpool with a view to obtaining the capes from them at the same price that they paid, which was 5/3d. He was to enquire at saddlers in Wigan who were likely to be able to furnish the stocks and belts, so that he could buy the cheapest and best available. (1). He was also to obtain three hand lamps similar to those being used at the time by the Manchester police, for the night police to use whilst on duty. The constables were also to be paid an extra twelve shillings in addition to their salary for the purchase of shoes for duty. (2). These several changes in clothing and equipment marked a further step forward in the evolution of the police.

A letter from ex constable Heath was received by Mr Whittle. He produced this at the meeting in December, 1839, and as a result Heath was appointed gaol keeper in place of Dobson, on the same terms, with the exception that meals for prisoners which had previously been provided by the gaol keeper, were now to be provided by the workhouse. The return of Heath to the force settled the personnel problem for the moment.

(1). Mr Whittle later produced a bill for 6/2d for the purchase of stocks and belts. Wigan Watch Committee Minutes. Page.72.

(2). Ibid. Page.72.

The Downfall Of Mr Whittle.

The next occurrence of any importance to the force happened in July, 1840. On Thursday, 5th, at the committee meeting, a Mr Taylor stood up and informed the other members that a woman named Seddon, from Westhoughton, had complained to him about Mr Whittle's conduct towards her when he had called at her home to execute a warrant and had subsequently misconducted himself. (1).

Mrs Seddon was called into the room and she told the meeting that Mr Whittle came to her house to serve a warrant. He was quite drunk, he put his hand on her bosom, and asked her to give him five shillings for drink and that it took place before he went into Hopedale. The decision was taken to adjourn the hearing of this charge until the following month.

When the next meeting was in session on the 5th of August, 1840, a motion was put forward and carried that in future no reporters or bystanders should be admitted to the meetings, they would henceforth be of a private nature.

An examination of the witnesses in the charge against the Chief Constable was then undertaken. The first one being Mrs Martha Seddon. She said: (2). " Mr Whittle came to my house on the 15th of June, to serve my son with a warrant. I came out of the door and he was very drunk. He put his hand to my bosom the most part of half a dozen times and asked me to give him five shillings for drink,

(1). Ibid. Page. 79.

(2). I have only quoted the relevant parts of the statements because they are extremely long and the majority of them have little bearing on the charge as stated.

and then he said, to spend. At the same time that he did it he winked his eye at me. He was drunk. I told him that he had more money than me. When he put his hand to my bosom he did not do it indecently. I had my nightdress on. I had shoes but no stockings. I don't know with what view he put his hand to my bosom. I thought it was not proper to put his hand on my bosom drunk". (1).

The next witness was a woman called Ellen Hope, her statement was as follows: " I live beside of Mrs Seddon, in the same yard. I saw Mr Whittle that morning that he came to apprehend Seddon, in the yard. I heard Mr Whittle ask Mrs Seddon for five shillings and then he came into our house. He said the five shillings was for spending. Mrs Seddon asked where she must have five shillings from. He then came into our house and asked for bread, butter and beer. I said we had not beer and he went away. When he asked her for the five shillings he asked her twice. When he asked her for the money he was close to her. That was all that took place between Mrs Seddon and Whittle"

Cross examined by Mr Whittle, she said: " You stood about a yard from Mrs Seddon when you asked her for money. You and I stood about the same distance. You stood on one side of the door. You put your hand towards her twice when you asked her. If you had put it more than twice I would have seen you. I am certain you did not put it more than twice, then you went into my fathers". (2).

A woman called Mariane Martin was then called in to give her statement, she said: "I was near them when they were conversing,

I was two or three yards off. I heard him ask for five shillings to spend, heard him twice over, that was all. Mrs Seddon said in reply he had more five shillings than her or something to that meaning. I saw him put his hand to her this way and ask her for it. He then then went into Samuel Hopes. I saw him going up the lane afterwards. they all appeared to be sober except Mr Whittle". (1). On being cross examined she said: "I did not see you wink at her. He did not strike her or push her. He put his hand as if to receive the money".

A statement from Robert Ratcliffe, a constable on the Wigan force says: "I was with Mr Whittle at Westhoughton when he went to apprehend Seddon. He was fresh, he was, so that he could not go steady. I did not see Mr Whittle behave indecently to any female whilst I was in Westhoughton. The Red Lion was between two hundred and three hundred yards from the place where Seddon lived".

After examining all the available evidence it was moved by a Mr Lord that, "It is the opinion of this committee that the charge brought by Mrs Seddon has been proved". Seconded by Mr McClure. For the motion, 10. Against, 9. Majority, 1.

In view of this decision Mr Whittle was discharged from the office of Chief Constable on the 9th, November, 1840, after holding this position for nearly five years. (2).

(1). Ibid. Page. 83.

(2). Ibid. Page. 83.

Post 1840.

The escapade of Mr Whittle at Westhoughton now necessitated the police authority to find a new Chief Constable. The position was advertised twice in both the Wigan Gazette, and the Manchester Guardian. As a result of the advertisements Mr Thomas Iatham was appointed to the office at a salary of one hundred pounds per annum, 'he engaging to devote the whole of his time to the office' (1).

In March of 1841, a Mr Ashall made an application to be protected by the police, due to the colliers turning out from their work. There is no indication given as to who or what Mr Ashall was, but there is little doubt that the miners at this time were a fairly uncouth crowd. This is apparent by what Mr Iatham said in evidence to the Childrens Employment Commission of 1841, it was as follows: "How Long Have you been resident in Wigan? Forty two years. In that time have you had an opportunity of noticing the character and habits of the colliers in this neighbourhood? Yes, I have, and of all classes of working men in this district, excepting only the lower class of Irish, who are probably as bad, the colliers are the most turbulent and riotous; their language is of the most blasphemous description, and the children follow their example. The name of Christ is always in their mouths; their constant oath is 'by the heart of Christ I'll tear your liver out'.

When brought before the magistrates and rebuked do you find any difference in them?

When they are bound over by the magistrates to keep the peace they break it at once; penalties have no effect, the money is raised and

and paid immediately, and often the magistrates commit them to prison for example sake.

is it discreditable for a man to be seen drunk? No, it is considered no disgrace to be seen drunk and disorderly upon these occasions; their wives usually accompany them, and leave the children to fend for themselves.

In visiting the houses of the colliers, are scenes of riot and debauchery frequent? In visiting two houses lately, a policeman reported that he saw the wife on the floor in a state of beastly intoxication and the children half naked, sitting on their heels round the fire.

Have you much difficulty in clearing the public houses of the colliers on Saturday nights? Yes we have; we go round at twelve o'clock and it is generally between one and two before we can get them cleared out, and when they go home they are noisy and quarrelsome in the street. The White Lion was fined yesterday for having between 30 and 40 people in the house at one o'clock on Sunday morning, the 2nd of May, the most of the 40 were colliers. The Crofters Arms and the Windsor Castle in Scholes are great houses of resort for the colliers.

What are their pursuits on Sundays? It is their custom on a Sunday to have a gallon or two gallon bottle of beer and take it to their own house, or bask in the fields if there is sunshine. Sometimes they will sit on the pit bank and drink it. (//)

It can be understood that Mr Ashall was probably justified under the circumstances in requesting protection though he did not wish to

make any payment for his express

use of police time. Mr Latham made enquiries from the county police and found that, 'all private persons requiring the aid of the police, to watch and guard their persons and property, had to pay extra for each policeman so employed'. Mr Ashall was therefore presented with a bill covering the cost of the policeman who had been assigned to his personal protection. (1).

The force seemed to suffer unduly from troublesome gaol keepers. By July of 1842, approximately two and a half years after returning to Wigan from Manchester. Heath the gaol keeper was in trouble on several occasions; mostly through consuming liquor, as it seems that so many of his colleagues had been before him. In August he was dismissed on one months notice, thus making it necessary for him to find another occupation, and also a new home for his family. (2).

Nothing of any import appears to have been worthy of mention in the minute book from this date except routine matters. The book ends on the twelfth of February, 1844, at which time the size of the force was, one Chief Constable and five constables.

The next available official records are for the year 1896. These show that by now the size of the force had expanded to sixty two men, consisting of. A Chief Constable, a Superintendent, a Chief Clerk, two Inspectors, a Detective, a Night duty clerk, a Coroner's officer, four Sergeants and forty seven Constables. The cost of maintaining the force for this year amounted to £6,042. There were forty cases of assaults on policemen recorded, resulting in four persons being imprisoned for these offences. It is interesting (1). Ibid. Page. 97. (2). Ibid. Page. 117.

to note that the Chief Constable at this time was also the Captain of the Fire Brigade, and the Inspector of fish and flesh at the market.

Drunkenness and prostitution appeared to be fairly prevalent in the town in these times because it is on record that two hundred and seventy four persons were proceeded against for being found drunk, and forty seven females were found guilty of prostitution. (1).

The town of Wigan grew in stature in the year 1904. The police became responsible for more citizens due to the borough taking under its wing the nearby township of Pemberton. Thereby raising the area of the town to fifteen square miles from its original three square miles. The police force was enlarged in this year to provide for its extra responsibilities but there is no record available as to the number of men recruited.

An important step forward for policemen was marked by the year 1918. London was the scene of several strikes on the part of the police, due to the conditions of service. These resulted in the Police Act of 1919 being passed. This established the Police Federation, an organization set up for the purpose of enabling members of the police forces of England and Wales to bring to the notice of the police authorities, and also the Secretary of State, all matters, except for discipline, which affect their welfare and efficiency. Every member of these forces below the rank of Superintendent automatically became a member of the Federation.

(1). The County Borough of Wigan Criminal and Miscellaneous Returns of the police force for the year ending 1896.



The last remaining point duty position in the town.

The Wigan police took advantage of mechanisation and started using vehicles for patrol work sometime in the nineteen twenties (1). Also at this time point duty came into being, but it was carried out from near the side of the road, (2) not in the centre as it is at the present time. Traffic control, as it is now known, with police and traffic lights was really inaugurated in the town, under the Road Traffic Act of 1930. This Act brought in the use of traffic lights which replaced a large number of policemen previously engaged in carrying out point duty (3).

A policeman joining the force in 1930 commenced at a salary of £3-10-0d per week, but this was reduced to £3-5-0d in the following year, due to the recession in trade at this time. It stayed at this level until the year 1945. (4)

The salary has risen by degrees from that year, so that a constable at the present time who has served for nine years has an income of £1,040 per annum, a far cry indeed from the wages of a constable of the small band of which Mr Whittle had control in 1835.

(1). (3) and (4). These facts were revealed in conversation with a retired senior member of the force. He told me that he had been unable to find any other official documents of past history of the force. A letter to the Chief Constable confirmed the fact that he is not in possession of any historical documents relating to the force.

(2) There is now only one surviving traffic point controlled by a policeman on point duty.

INCREASE IN WIGAN CRIME

But juvenile cases are down—Chief

Although there was an increase in crime generally in Wigan last year, there was an appreciable decline in offences committed by juveniles. These factors are revealed in the annual report of the Chief Constable (Mr. David Aitken).

The report says that the number of crimes actually committed totalled 1,855 compared with 1,704 the previous year. The increase of 8.88 per cent was the highest ever recorded. Altogether, 2,100 crimes were reported to the Police, but 245 cases were found not to be crimes.

The Chief Constable goes on to say that simple larcenies were mainly responsible for the increase, as there was an increase of 204 in this type of offence. Of the crimes committed 866 or 46.68 per cent were detected.

The number of breaking offences reported to the Police, was 491. Upon investigation, 17 of these proved not to be crimes. This represented a decrease of 6.9 per cent on 1964 when there were 509 such offences. Forty per cent of the 474 breaking offences were detected.

An analysis of the crimes committed shows that there were 85 cases of breaking into houses. Of these 28 were detected. Offences of breaking into shops and warehouses totalled 228 (114 detected) and there were 107 cases of entering with intent, of which 36 were detected. Offences of larceny from unattended vehicles totalled 200, 27 being detected. This was a fall of 21 from 1964.

Sixty-six pedal-cycles were stolen, 10 being recovered. The theft of motor vehicles totalled 13, nine being detected. Cases of receiving stolen goods totalled 53, and all were detected. There were 24 cases of indecent assault on females, and of these 18 were detected.

The Chief Constable states that during the year proceedings were instituted against 407 persons (345 males and 62 females), as compared with 448 (383 males and 65 females) in 1964. Of the persons proceeded against, 262 were of the age of 17 and over, 145 were under the age of 17.

Turning to juvenile crime the

Chief Constable says it gives him great pleasure to record an appreciable decline in the number of juveniles proceeded against for crime and also in the number of crimes known to have been committed by them.

In 1965, 346 crimes committed by juveniles were detected as compared with 504 in 1964. This represents a decrease of 31.3 per cent. Of the crimes of breaking detected last year 45.83 per cent were committed by juveniles as compared with 44.3 per cent in 1964.

The total number of children and young persons proceeded against for indictable offences in 1965 was 145. This was composed of 124 males and 21 females, a decrease of 36.88 per cent compared with 1964.

The value of property stolen during 1965 was £37,647 10s. and a proportion to the value of £10,686 was recovered. The value of property stolen and recovered was the highest since 1956.

WIGAN
OBSERVER.
15/4/1966.

20 COMPLAINTS

The Chief Constable says that during the year 20 complaints were made against members of the Force. Four complaints were made by letter and 16 orally. Upon investigation none of the complaints was found to be justified. In one case senior Officers from another Police Force were called in to conduct an investigation and their report was subsequently submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions for his observations.

The report adds that the establishment of a dog section, containing three dogs, is welcomed. One dog has been purchased and it was hoped to purchase the other two in the near future. Two places have been reserved on a police dog handlers course in May and a further place reserved on a similar course in August.

The strength of Special Constables was 36 males and two females.

POLICE MERGERS: WIGAN TO FIGHT Fear of remote control

Fears that the amalgamation of Borough Police Forces would affect control and incentive for a policeman to do his best were expressed yesterday by the Chairman of Wigan's Watch Committee, Alderman John Holland.

Speaking about the proposed plans of the Home Secretary, Mr. Roy Jenkins, to re-organize 12 Lancashire forces and amalgamate them with the County Council Force, to bring the strength up to 6,723, Alderman Holland said it did not make sense.

"I have been against this all along. I am a member of the Association of Municipal Corporations and we have seen this coming for ten years," said Alderman Holland.

"But I don't think you can get a police force as efficient as a local one because there you have the direct control of the Chief Constable and the Watch Committee," he added.

Alderman Holland said the opposite would happen in an enlarged force, and the men would gradually become regimented and start losing interest.

No better off

"The men will not be any better off as far as promotion is concerned and it could possibly mean that they can be transferred all over the County, which is exactly the reason they prefer to be a Borough policeman. It will give them no choice," said Alderman Holland.

He added: "The same type of thing will happen with the police as has happened with nationalisation—lack of control and incentive to do one's best. And I say that even though I am a Labour man."

Alderman Holland said that the major part of the Council felt the same way as he did, and he imagined that they would put up a strong resistance to the amalgamation of Wigan's 171 strength force with the County Police.

The other forces involved in the proposed amalgamation with Lancashire County are: St. Helens, Warrington, Rochdale, Prestige, Southport, Barrow-in-Furness, Blackburn, Blackpool, Bolton, Burnley and Oldham.

WIGAN OBSERVER.
FRIDAY, 20 / 5 / 66.

Wigan County Borough Force has endured through the leadership of thirteen Chief Constables, and for one hundred and thirty one years. It has seen many changes in its lifetime, both in the town and in police methods. The town has seen the change from sedan chairs, horse drawn conveyances, steam driven trams and waggons and finally to vehicles propelled by the internal combustion engine. The latter now using the roads of the town to an almost impossible degree, consuming a large number of police working hours.

The police force has grown in stature from small beginnings of about half a dozen men to its present day complement of one hundred and seventy one men and women.(1). Assisted by science it has progressed in the fight against crime by using motor vehicles, telephones and now radio, of which each patrolling member below the rank of Inspector carries their own personal transmitter/receiver set. These allow them to be in constant touch with their colleagues and headquarters.

The end of this force, as such now appears to be in sight. The Home Secretary, Sir Roy Jenkins has in mind, a plan to reorganize twelve Lancashire borough forces and amalgamate them with Lancashire county police, by April, 1967, which will then give this force a strength of six thousand, seven hundred and twenty three personnel. Wigan is one of these boroughs. The Wigan Watch Committee appear to have the intention of resisting this movement, claiming better police efficiency through local control via the Chief Constable and themselves.(2).

(1). Chief Constables Annual Report. 1966.

(2). The Wigan Observer. 20.5.66.

In some ways it can be argued that the existence of a police force itself produces unfavourable results. At the time of the frankpledge system the people themselves were responsible for maintaining law and order. Today the attitude of many citizens is that they are absolved from preventing crime occurring because we have the professional police forces to do this work. Individuals still retain the right to make a common law arrest on seeing a felony being committed, but few, if any, ever exercise this right. Indeed, at times the public sympathize with wrongdoers and sometimes try to prevent the police from making an arrest. This attitude very often results in the custodians of the law being placed in an embarrassing situation to say the least.

However, Wigan, in the early 19th century, was, and still is, a factory town. No doubt the harsh treatment meted out to the workers at this time produced difficult social conditions, and it can also be realized that the rapid expansion of the town, due to the Industrial Revolution, produced even more unsettlement amongst the inhabitants. It would seem therefore that at the time of the inception of the Wigan Police, a body of law enforcement officers charged with keeping the peace within the limits of the borough was a necessity.

In our modern socialized community the question arises, is it better for a small town like Wigan to try to support its own police force still, in the face of high costs and labour shortage, or is the population better served by merging with one of the largest and best police forces in the country?

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