



The **POLICE** and the **COMMUNITY**

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This booklet has been published by the Cheshire Constabulary to further the cause of Police — Community relations

THE POLICE AND THE COMMUNITY

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

Those words, written in 1829, the year the first police force was established, are as true today as they were then. The pattern of life, however has changed considerably since those days and, naturally, the role of the police has changed. Where previously they were purely a peace-keeping and law enforcement body with an easily defined role, in today's complex society their duties and responsibilities are much wider, and it becomes increasingly obvious that the arm of the law should continue to be an integrated, and integral part of the society it serves.

Keeping the peace and maintaining the law must become organised functions of society as a whole and not simply left to the police. A professional core, the police, will be needed, but the peace and the law will increasingly be preserved and sustained by the conscious organised efforts of citizens themselves.

It is not generally appreciated how many of the normal police duties are unpleasant and hard: removing the injured from the scenes of accidents, breaking the news of bereavement to relatives, interviewing the next-of-kin at the time of sudden death. If a policeman has to give assistance at

things like housing riots or racial demonstrations, or at some of the more tiresome Trafalgar Square meetings, it is not always easy to maintain an open-minded attitude to the intelligence and sense of justice of the British public. Added to all this is the sense which some policemen may have, that, if they are involved in a physical brawl, even in the most righteous cause, they are not likely to be able to rely on the support of the general public. There have been incidents in which policemen have been injured in the course of their duties, and have received no help from onlookers.

Then again, we ask our police to be exposed to the vicious, unpleasant world of crime. Not only do they need to be physically tough to face this; they also need other qualities of mind and spirit if they are not to give way to cynicism and disillusion about human nature. Very little can be done to help policemen in this respect, and it is a tribute to the natural resilience of the human spirit that for year after year police officers keep a reasonable balance of outlook.

It may be that in some sections of the community the very sight of a policeman instantly produces a re-

action of suspicion, hostility and fear. But this reaction is far from general. For most people, most of the time the policeman represents a "presence" in their midst which is reassuring and on their side. They approach him readily to seek advice or merely to ask the way. They see him on the kerbside where children cross busy roads on the way to or from school, as willing to halt the traffic for one child as for a crowd. After an accident, they see him first tending the injured and not busy with book and pencil until the injured are in competent hands. Even in the context of traffic and motoring they know him first as a regulator who prevents collisions and confusion, and only secondly as a pursuer or prosecutor for an infringement of the traffic laws. However representative he is of the law and however much his presence in the community stands upon law, his normal encounter with most people is not in terms of law, nor is it to do directly with law; it is in terms of a service to the community for which his uniform is his warrant: it guarantees, in the public eye, a standard of competence and a readiness to help which the public have now come to expect. If, indeed, they now take it for granted a little too readily, this is an indirect tribute to the men who, by their service have created the expectation.

The police are the legally appointed representatives of the law-abiding section of the community, with few more powers than the people they serve - a fact not generally realised. The laws they seek to uphold are made by the people's representatives in Parliament, and to the police falls the unenviable task of impartially ensuring they are observed. It would seem, therefore, there are two sides of the policeman's life which the public

sees: the one which is basically friendly and reassuring to the majority, the other which is potentially hostile to the offender. It is out of a compound of these two senses, friendliness and hostility, that public attitudes are formed.

LAW'S A PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY

However, it is the law which gives the policeman his status and which defines both the occasions and the manner of his interventions in the lives of his fellows. Police and community relationships cannot be studied, therefore, except in the context of public law. The making of this law is a public and not a police responsibility it is therefore important to remember that the police have nothing to do with the imposition of penalties. They are imposed by courts within the law. If either the law itself, or its enforcement by the courts, meets with public disapproval or with only mild and conditional support, the police are the first to suffer from the deterioration of public support or even confidence although, of course, helpless really to remedy the situation. The quality of the relationship between police and public is based upon the correct and impartial enforcement of those laws.

There are certain laws and regulations necessary to the life of society, the usual consequence of the breach of which amounts to little more than a social inconvenience. Offences against them are not generally regarded as highly immoral, and offenders do not find themselves in serious social difficulties with their friends and neighbours.

While there is clearly maximum support of the police by the public in the detection and prevention of those

offences we call serious crimes, some members of the public are obviously not so willing to recognise their duty in other directions, which can cause friction in police/public relations.

The multiplicity of today's necessary traffic laws are notably one area in which relations between the police and community are placed under strain when essential enforcement of these laws appear to work to the disadvantage of the individual. The ensuing resentment of the offender towards the police will be increased should a penalty later imposed by a court be considered inordinately severe. It was the initial action of the police which led to the punishment, consequently they must bear the burden of public resentment.

At such times the police rely on the individual viewing the situation as objectively as possible, appreciating that the police action was necessary for the good of the community as a whole, overcoming his very natural feelings of resentment and continuing to hold the police in the same esteem as previously. This, it is appreciated, can at times require no small effort to achieve.

MODERN POLICING

Another cause of criticism of the police by the public is the reduction of foot patrol police in an age when crime is on the increase. While the police themselves very much regret any feeling of loss of contact between police and public, this may be more imaginary than real for we go to great lengths to preserve that contact while changing our methods to deal with the changing pattern of modern crime.

Formerly, when the source of crime tended to be localised, the presence

of the policeman on the beat was by itself a deterrent. He knew who was likely to be responsible for misdemeanours of a certain nature and where to look for them. Local "villians" were aware of this and were perhaps less bold as a result. But the mobility of modern day criminals has made it essential that the police should be similarly equipped as far as transport is concerned and with much better means of communication. They would be making a foolish mistake if, for traditional reasons, they sought to preserve archaic methods of policing. We can be sure the ineffectiveness of the police resulting from this would lead to even greater criticism by the public.

Notwithstanding what has just been said, Cheshire Constabulary have effected what is considered by many other police forces to be a most beneficial compromise, linking together the old and new methods of policing, which gives the community the advantages of both. This has been achieved by the development of the Unit Beat Scheme, under which a constable is personally responsible for the area in which he lives, varying his hours of duty and getting to know the people in that area, and enabling them to get to know him. Although it is said that a policeman is never really off duty, obviously an officer could not be on duty for twenty-four hours a day, so to ensure adequate cover he liaises with the drivers of panda cars to ensure twenty-four hour policing. You can be sure one is never far away if needed.

An important meeting place between police and public is on the occasion of processions and demonstrations, especially those which are political

objectives. In a free society such as ours the making or changing of the laws are the functions of Parliament, although a demonstrator may consider it his duty to seek to change the laws. It is not that of the policeman; it is his duty to enforce the existing laws as they are. Anarchy, in however mild a form, may seem to some demonstrators a reasonable price to pay for change, but anarchy is precisely what the policeman is appointed to prevent. Conflict is inevitable in some cases, but justice, as it must be understood by the police, requires obedience to existing laws. They are there to maintain law and order and in an age in which there is ever growing opposition to all forms of authority the police depend increasingly on the willingness of the community to continue to recognise that their support is essential, if the police are to fulfil their function in society.

In a publication such as this there is not space, nor is it perhaps necessary, to detail the many more obvious ways in which the public can help the police.

THE CHESHIRE POLICEMAN IN THE COMMUNITY

After reading the foregoing you may wonder how many policemen there are, what sort of person becomes a policeman and what contribution they later make to the life of the community.

The Cheshire Constabulary has a force of a little under 3,000. Many entered the Police Service as cadets straight from school; others on attaining the necessary age, perhaps after a spell in commerce or industry; and some as graduates from universities. All are expected to have one thing in common: a spirit of service to the community — a sense of vocation.

During cadet and police probationer

We can, however, mention one less apparent way in which the community can help in maintaining a stable and orderly society, and this is in the standard of behaviour taught and observed within the family. A great responsibility in this area: relies upon all thinking and responsible persons, be they policemen or members of the public. The implanting of standards during a child's or an adolescent's formative years can go a long way towards turning him into a responsible and contributing member of the community later in life.

To summarise what has been said, it is obvious that if the police are to be an effective part of the society to which they belong, to enforce the law and generally assist in the smooth running of our society, they must be able to rely on the active support and co-operation of the vast majority of the people. For this support to be forthcoming the community needs to be well informed on police work if misunderstandings are not to arise.

training this spirit is developed in several ways. For cadets there will be periods of secondment to industry, welfare service organisations, hospitals and institutions for the mentally and physically handicapped. In Cheshire during 1971 sixty cadets took part in such secondments. In addition to these secondments many cadets render voluntary service in their own time to such organisations as play and leadership schemes, the Toc H, YMCA, etc. Assistance is also given with swimming clubs and holidays for disabled persons and similar activities.

The police work closely with various social welfare agencies, a typical example of which is the juvenile liaison work, in which the Policewomen's Department are particularly interested. Much work and consultation take place between the Department and the bodies responsible for juvenile welfare to ensure the best course of action is taken to enable a young person not only to realise he has done wrong, but to give him a chance of becoming a useful member of society.

The day-to-day involvement in this type of work leads many police officers to feel they have a contribution to make by continuing their work in a voluntary capacity. Some of the organisations which have benefited from this are the Scout and Guiding Movements, various youth associations, old people's welfare bodies, community associations, life-saving and swimming organisations and first aid, the latter most notably through the St. John Ambulance.

Efforts have been made to establish contact with those gangs of young people who belong to no particular organised group and who have a natural aversion to any form of authority.

For instance, in one division a police officer provided a gang of 'ton-up boys' with a motor cycle engine, and gave instruction on maintenance; in another case an officer gave riding instruction to a group of young motor cyclists: just two examples of many similar efforts being made to integrate into society young persons who tend to regard themselves as people apart and who have no desire to be identified with any worthwhile cause. There is reason to believe that police voluntary work in this direction has led to more understanding relationships, which can only be to the public good.

Officers have also organised five-a-side football competitions during the school holidays, to keep youngsters out of mischief — believing prevention to be better than cure!

During an influenza epidemic in one area the police were the medium for establishing contact between old people and youth clubs, to ensure that no old person needed to be without help during the time of ill health.

In another Division of the Cheshire Constabulary visits are made to a "halfway" home for the rehabilitation of mental patients who are without relatives or friends.

In addition to the talks given by advisory services of the Force, such as the Crime Prevention and Road Safety Departments, a small group of officers has been formed to hold discussions with Teacher Training Colleges and Universities and to give talks for the betterment of police and community relations to district councils, grouped churches, county conferences, schools, WRVS, venture scouts, youth organisations, school prizegivings, chambers of trade, rotarians, soroptimists and similar organisations. Many charitable bodies have benefited by the efforts of the Force Band and the Police Dogs Section. The Band has given concerts and joined with other bands in fundraising efforts, and the police dogs giving displays at fetes, carnivals, etc., have contributed as one of the attractions.

We feel that the examples quoted give a fair picture of police involvement in voluntary, social and welfare work, and we hope that the reading of this leaflet as a whole will provide food for thought among those wishing to maintain and improve the quality of the relationship now enjoyed by Britain's police and public.

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