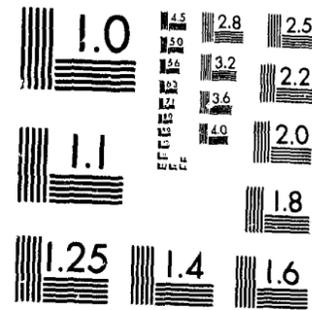


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National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration
United States Department of Justice
Washington, D. C. 20531

DATE FILMED

4-9-80

FSB/B5
Classification 3(c)
November 1975



Prepared for British Information Services by the Central Office of Information, London

Fact sheets on Britain

The Police Service

The police service in Great Britain consists of 51 independent forces linked with local government. Central Government ministers, the Home Secretary (for England and Wales) and the Secretary of State for Scotland, have an overall responsibility for the preservation of law and order. Each force is responsible for the enforcement of the law and the maintenance of public order in its own police area, but there is constant co-operation among them. The police service in Northern Ireland is organised in a single force.

Police Forces in Great Britain

There are 43 regular police forces in England and Wales and eight in Scotland. Outside London most counties (regions or islands in Scotland) have their own forces, although in the interests of efficiency several have combined forces. In London the Metropolitan Police Force, with headquarters at New Scotland Yard, is responsible for an area within a radius of about 15 miles (24 kilometres) from the centre, but excluding the City of London (about one square mile - 2.6 sq km) where there is a separate force.

The strength of the regular police force in Great Britain is about 118,000 (including some 6,000 policewomen), the size of individual forces varying considerably according to the character and population of the areas they serve. The strength of the Metropolitan Police Force is about 21,000.

In addition to the regular police forces, constabularies are maintained by the British Railways Board and some other public authorities, and by the Ministry of Defence. Considerable numbers of people are employed by commercial security organisations (which are subject to the ordinary law of the land).

Police Authorities and Chief Constables

Each police force is maintained by a police authority. In England and Wales the authority is a committee consisting of local councillors and magistrates. Combined police authorities, which also comprise councillors and magistrates, contain

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representatives from each constituent county. The police authority for the Metropolitan Police Force is the Home Secretary. In the City of London the Court of Common Council is the police authority, although it usually appoints a standing committee to deal with all police matters on its behalf. In Scotland the police authority is the regional or island council. Where there are combined forces there is a joint police committee or board.

The primary duty of a police authority is to provide an adequate and efficient police force for the area for which it is responsible. Its functions, some of which are subject to ministerial approval, include appointing the chief constable and deputy and assistant chief constables and, if necessary, calling on them to retire; fixing the establishment of the force and the number of officers in each rank; appointing traffic wardens; and providing and maintaining buildings and equipment. In the Metropolitan Police area the chief officer of police and his immediate subordinates are appointed by the Crown on the recommendation of the Home Secretary.

Chief constables are responsible for the direction and control of their forces and for the appointment, promotion and discipline of all ranks below deputy or assistant chief constable. They are also responsible for the direction of traffic wardens appointed by their police authority; for the appointment, direction and control of special constables and police cadets; and for arrangements for the inter-force co-operation and mutual aid. Although not subject to higher authority in relation to the use of their men or to action taken in individual cases, chief constables are generally answerable to their police authority on matters of efficiency, and are required to submit an annual written report.

Central Authorities

The Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland are concerned both in the overall organisation of the police service and in its administration and operation. They must approve the appointment of chief constables, and may require a police authority to retire a chief constable in the interests of efficiency, call for a report from a chief constable on any matter relating to the policing of his area, or cause a local inquiry to be held. They also have the power to make regulations, with which all police authorities must comply, concerning such matters as rank; qualifications for

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appointment, promotion and retirement; discipline; hours of duty, leave, pay and allowances; and uniform and equipment. Some of these regulations are first negotiable on the Police Council (a negotiating body on which are represented the police authorities, police staff associations and ministers); others are discussed on representative advisory bodies, together with any general questions affecting the service.

All forces in Great Britain (except the Metropolitan Police for which the Home Secretary is directly responsible) are subject to inspection on behalf of ministers. Inspectors of constabulary carry out, under Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland, a formal annual inspection of the forces in their regions, when they visit and inquire into the state and efficiency of the forces and report to the Home Secretary or the Secretary of State for Scotland. Annual reports are published, covering the whole range of police matters. The inspectors maintain close touch with the forces for which they are responsible, and have various advisory functions.

Finance

The income of police authorities derives from central Government, the 'rates' (a form of local property tax), and various other local sources. The Government's contribution, which is a half of approved expenditure (except in the case of the City of London where it is a third), is conditional on the Home Secretary or the Secretary of State for Scotland being satisfied that a force is being efficiently administered and maintained.

Officers and Ancillary Staff

In general, entry to the regular police service is open to men between the ages of 18½ and 30 and to women between the ages of 18½ and 35 (30 in Scotland). A chief constable may approve the appointment of especially suitable older men and women.

The standard police ranks in Great Britain (outside the Metropolitan Police area) are: chief constable, assistant chief constable, chief superintendent, superintendent, chief inspector, inspector, sergeant and constable. The chief officer of the Metropolitan Police, the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, is assisted by a deputy commissioner and four assistant commissioners; next in rank are deputy assistant commissioners, and then commanders; from chief superintendent the ranks are the same as in the rest of the country. In the City of London the chief officer is the Commissioner of Police, the second in command is an assistant commissioner, and there is one commander.

Recruits must be of good character; must satisfy minimum physical standards (which vary somewhat from force to force); and must have the educational qualifications (which also vary) re-

quired by the force that they wish to join. To increase the proportion of recruits with a high educational standard, there is a special graduate entry scheme which provides accelerated promotion opportunities after the two-year probationary period as constables that all recruits are required to serve. In England and Wales there are about 600 graduates serving in the police and 50 police officers reading for degrees. A constable is eligible for promotion to sergeant after he has completed his probationary period; a sergeant can become an inspector after two years' service in that rank. Promotion is by selection after qualifying examination. Promotion to ranks above inspector is by selection only.

Police training is organised under three main heads: probationer training which extends over the first two years of service of every constable; specialised training for men and women who show an aptitude for duty in some particular branch of police work; and higher training to prepare officers for the most senior posts in the service. In England and Wales police scholarships at universities are awarded to young police officers who have shown special promise at the police college.

Police Cadets: Cadet training is designed to prepare boys and girls aged between 16 and 18½ for a career in the police service. They have no police powers but, in addition to their educational studies and physical and adventure training, are instructed in elementary police work. During the latter part of their training they do practical work on attachment to a local force.

Civilian Staff: In order to release as many uniformed police officers as possible for operational duties, police authorities employ over 35,000 civilians on administrative (pay, records, finance and other general subjects), technical (fingerprint, scenes of crime and control room work) and other duties, including catering and domestic work.

Traffic Wardens: Traffic wardens (of whom there are over 7,000) are extensively employed as civilians by police authorities to discharge specified duties connected with road traffic, vehicles and pedestrians, normally undertaken by the police. In this connection chief officers may authorise them to issue 'fixed penalty notices' for a range of minor stationary traffic offences to which the fixed penalty system applies; to man car-pounds (except in Scotland); to enforce some aspects of the vehicle excise laws; and to obtain the names and addresses of people alleged to have committed certain types of traffic offence. They may also be authorised to direct traffic, and to act as parking attendants at street parking places, and as school-crossing patrols. Traffic wardens remain under the control of the chief constable of the force to which they are attached, who decides which of the specified duties they may perform.

Special Constables: Each police force has an attachment of special constables, who are volunteers willing to perform police duties without pay in their spare time. In England and Wales the function of special constables is to act as auxiliaries to the regular force when required. In Scotland they

are employed only in emergencies, although they may be assigned for duty for training purposes.

Duties

A police officer in the United Kingdom is an independent holder of public office and exercises powers as a constable by virtue of his office. He is an agent of the law of the land, not of the police authority nor of the central Government and, although his chief officer has vicarious liability for any wrongful act he may commit in the performance of his functions as a constable, he himself may also be sued over his own wrongful act.

No member of the police service may belong to a trade union, since it is a basic principle of the service that its members must not only be free of political bias, but must be seen to be free of it. All ranks, however, have their own associations which can make representations to ministers or to police authorities on matters of interest or concern.

Because of the small number of police officers in relation to the population as a whole (roughly one officer to 500 people), the limitations on their powers and the fact that they do not normally carry firearms (their only weapon is a wooden truncheon), the sanction of the police in enforcing the law rests to a very considerable extent upon common consent. The basic concept of the service is that its members serve the public that they represent, and receive assistance from the public that they serve.

Officers are required to discharge their duties by persuasion and with tact, and may only use force in self-defence or to restore order when all other means have failed. Chief officers must by law record and investigate complaints by the public against members of their forces. Misconduct by a police officer may lead, as in the case of any other citizen, to criminal prosecution; in addition officers are subject to police disciplinary procedures. Police authorities and inspectors of constabulary must keep themselves informed of the manner in which chief officers deal with complaints. (It is proposed to introduce an independent element into the way complaints are investigated.)

Conversely, it is an offence for any member of the public to obstruct, or to attempt to obstruct, a police officer in the execution of his duty or to refuse assistance in circumstances where this can reasonably be required. Members of the public are expected to help police work as much as possible.

Increasing emphasis is nowadays placed on the role of both the service and the individual officer in local communities, particularly when children or race relations matters are involved.

The many functions of a police constable range from the protection of people and property, street patrolling and traffic control to crime prevention, criminal investigation and the apprehension of offenders.

Police Departments

The main departments in all police forces are the uniform department, the criminal investigation department, and the traffic department; many

forces also have specialised departments, river or marine police (in districts which include long stretches of navigable waterway or coastline), a mounted branch, and police dogs. The bulk of police work devolves upon members of the uniform department, who are generally responsible for the preservation of the peace, the prevention of crime, the protection of people and property, and the maintenance of public order. In most urban areas these duties are carried out under a system known as 'unit beat policing' which, by combining with police cars foot patrols using personal radio sets, provides great flexibility of manpower deployment and makes full use of modern communications techniques. The functions of the uniform department also include the inspection of places of public entertainment and the investigation of reports of lost property. Criminal investigation departments, in addition to investigating crime, deal with the checking and classification of crime reports, with the collection of all kinds of information relating to crime in the district, with the preparation of crime statistics and with crime prevention measures.

Traffic departments, as well as enforcing road traffic laws, are concerned with traffic management, road safety and related matters. Traffic patrols also perform any other police work which they may find necessary in the course of their duties.

Common Services

A number of common services are provided by the central Government for the benefit of all forces, to supplement those provided by the police authorities for their own use, and by communal arrangements made between the forces themselves. The most important of these are: training services which, in England and Wales, provide training centres for recruit training and a central police college for higher training, and, in Scotland, a central police college with courses of recruit training and higher training; a forensic science service in England and Wales, which provides eight regional laboratories, in addition to the Metropolitan Police Laboratory; telecommunications services, including depots which, in England and Wales, supply and maintain wireless equipment for the police; and central and criminal records which are available to all forces. In addition, regional crime squads, consisting of teams of experienced detectives from several forces who operate under a committee of chief constables, are employed in England and Wales to investigate crimes involving inquiries in more than one police area. The Scottish Crime Squad assists Scottish police forces in the investigation and prevention of crime. Arrangements are also made for everyday assistance by one force to another.

Certain special services, such as liaison with the International Criminal Police Organisation (*Interpol*), are provided for other forces by the Metropolitan Police Force. Three inter-related branches of the Home Office Police Department are devoted to scientific research and planning. The Police Scientific Development Branch, staffed by scientists, and the Police Research Services Unit,

comprising senior police officers, "are concerned with operational research into police methods and the development of equipment for police forces. The Economic Planning Unit, composed mainly of economists and accountants, is responsible for the development of a planning-programming-budgeting system for the police; this work includes the production of programme accounts and studies of the use of resources.

In all aspects of police work the application of scientific aids has reached an advanced stage. About £25 million is spent annually on police equipment, including about £3.9 million on radio communications. A police national computer has been set up to provide central records which can rapidly be consulted and brought up to date through terminals situated at every regular police force. Both visual-display and printer terminals are used.

Northern Ireland

The Police Authority for Northern Ireland has a statutory duty to maintain an adequate and efficient police service. As in the rest of the United Kingdom, the chief constable is responsible for the control and direction of the force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, which has a strength of nearly 4,800. Ranks, conditions of service, pay and general duties follow closely on the lines of the service in Great Britain. The regular force is assisted in its duties by the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, a largely part-time body of men and women.

Reading List

Official Publications	£
Criminal Justice in Britain (COI reference pamphlet). ISBN 0 11 700763 3.	
<i>HMSO, 1975</i>	0-65
<i>Annual Reports</i>	
Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis	
<i>HMSO</i>	
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary	
<i>HMSO</i>	
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland	
<i>HMSO</i>	
Other Publications	
ALDERSON, J. C. and STEAD, P. J. (eds). The Police We Deserve. ISBN 0 7234 0515 8.	
<i>Wolfe, 1973</i>	2-25
BELSON, WILLIAM A. The Public and the Police. ISBN 0 06 318025 1.	
<i>Harper & Row, 1975</i>	1-85
JACKSON, R. M. Enforcing the Law. ISBN 0 14 021146 2.	
<i>Penguin, 1972</i>	0-60
LEIGH, L. H. Police Powers in England and Wales. ISBN 0 406 84540 9.	
<i>Butterworths, 1975</i>	5-60
WEGG-PROSSER, CHARLES. The Police and the Law. ISBN 0 85120 165 2.	
<i>Oyez, 1973</i>	1-25

Prepared by Reference Division,
Central Office of Information, London.

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