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THE METROPOLITAN POLICE

The Metropolitan Police Force in London, with a strength of about 21,000 officers, is the largest police force in the United Kingdom, serving over 7 million people. Established by the Metropolitan Police Act 1829, it is now responsible for an area of 786 square miles (2,035 sq km) within a 16-mile (26-km) radius of the centre of the capital (excluding the City of London which has its own police force).

Administration and Organisation

Like all regular police forces, the Metropolitan Police has a Uniform Branch, which deals primarily with the prevention of crime and the protection of life and property, and a Criminal Investigation Department, chiefly responsible for the detection of more serious crimes and bringing offenders to justice. A scheme has been introduced for the systematic interchange of personnel between the two sectors. The force has additional departments and branches to deal with special aspects of police work in the capital, including ceremonial duties and the policing of the Palace of Westminster, where Parliament is held.

The strength of the force is 21,000 (20,300 men and nearly 700 women). Some 17,600 work in the Uniform Branch and 3,400 in the Criminal Investigation Department. Entry to the force is generally open to people between the ages of 18½ and 30. Cadet training prepares boys and girls between 16 and 18½ years of age for a career in the service. More than 15,000 civilian staff are employed in administrative and other duties.

The British police service comprises 52 independent forces linked, in almost all areas, with local government. Each force is maintained by a police authority normally consisting of local government councillors and magistrates, and is responsible for law enforcement and the maintenance of public order in its own area. In the case of the Metropolitan Police Force, the police authority is the Home Secretary, a central Government minister. The operational head of the force, in charge of its general direction and administration, is the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. Its chief administrative officer is the Receiver, who is responsible to the Commissioner both for the proper co-ordination of the work of finance, supply and property management and for the recruitment and personnel management of the civilian staff employed by the force.

The Metropolitan Police District has 25 divisions (24 land divisions and the Thames Division — see p 3), which are grouped into four areas, each subject to inspection by an area inspector with the rank of deputy assistant commissioner, whose responsibility is the efficiency of the police system within his area. Each of the divisions is in the charge of a commander, the land divisions having sub-divisions, each under a chief superintendent. Within these sub-divisions a unit system functions — that is, a single station area under the full operational control of a chief inspector or inspector. Including the river stations of Thames Division, there are over 190 police stations serving the public and all linked to each other and to headquarters at New Scotland Yard. The Mounted Branch (see p 2) and the Traffic Department (see p 4) are integral units.

New Scotland Yard

The headquarters of the Metropolitan Police was established at 4 Whitehall Place, with an entrance in Scotland Yard, in 1829. Because of expansion it moved to the building known as New Scotland Yard on the embankment of the river Thames in 1890. It was extended in 1939 but in 1967 moved into modern premises in Broadway, Westminster. In the Broadway building, still known as New Scotland Yard, are accommodated the main departments of the force, although some of the branches are housed in other parts of London.

The broad duties and functions of the organisation at New Scotland Yard are undertaken by four main departments, each the responsibility of an assistant commissioner. They are:

Administration and Operations Department, which is concerned primarily with all operations of the Uniform Branch, police dogs and horses, methods of policing, new schemes and communications (it also contains the force's 'anti-corruption squad', the *A10 Branch*, which investigates serious complaints against officers);

Traffic Department (see p 4), which is responsible for traffic accident research and has direct control over all officers and auxiliaries employed on traffic duties;

Criminal Investigation Department (see p 4) which deals with all aspects of crime;

Personnel and Training Department, which covers all matters affecting police personnel (except discipline), recruiting, welfare and training.

In addition, general services are provided by such departments as the directorates of administration and finance, the solicitors' department and the public information department. The last of these provides news and information for the press, television and radio, and assists in the production of a regular weekly programme on independent television in the London area, in which appeals are made for help from the public over specific cases, which receive a wide and useful response. The department initiates publicity in all its forms, and also mounts exhibitions and provides information to schools, through visits by police and films. It is also responsible for publicity on crime prevention and recruitment.

The Information Room

The information room at New Scotland Yard is a clearing centre where information about matters requiring police attention is received and distributed. More than 2,500 police vehicles, boats and motor-cycles are equipped with radio sets and are in two-way communication with the information room. It is staffed by experienced police constables who are responsible for receiving telephone calls, the accurate recording of information and the initiation of action. During 1975 over 1.3 million telephone messages were received in the information room.

The Uniform Branch

The Uniform Branch is the largest in the Metropolitan Police and deals primarily with the maintenance of public order, the prevention of crime and the protection of life and property. The main way in which these functions are carried out is by regular street patrols and observations, both on foot and in motor vehicles. In the course of their duties, uniform police may have to arrest people committing offences or (in certain cases) suspected of acting in an unlawful way, prevent disturbances or obstruction of the highway, deal with road accidents, work on crime prevention, and give assistance or information to any member of the public who asks for help. Other duties of the Uniform Branch are community relations, communications and the inspection of places of public entertainment, and it is responsible for enforcing the law relating to obscene publications.

A vital part of the work of the Uniform Branch is in the service of the community by, for example, making inquiries on behalf of people who seek assistance at a local police station. During 1975, 5,018 people were recorded as missing, including 350 boys and 264 girls under 14 years of age. Over 134,000 lost articles were reported to the police, and some 127,000 were found in the street and in taxis and deposited at police stations.

All recruits to the Metropolitan Police work for their first two years in uniform on ordinary divisional duty.

The Mounted Branch

There are about 210 officers and 200 horses in the Mounted Branch, which is probably the oldest unit within the Metropolitan Police Force. The distribution of the branch throughout the Metropolitan Police District is governed by the need for mounted patrols in particular areas, and is frequently reviewed in the light of changing circumstances. Mounted police not only perform the day-to-day policing of London's streets, but also play an important role on ceremonial occasions. In addition, they are used to help to control large crowds at sporting events and demonstrations.

The officers are trained at the Mounted Branch Training Establishment at Imber Court in Surrey. Constables may volunteer for mounted duties after completion of their two years' probation.

Police Dog Section

Police dogs, of which there are over 250 in the Metropolitan Police District, are used mainly in patrol and other police work. Most police dogs are alsatians specially bred for the purpose. Training is carried out for them and their handlers at the Dog Training Establishment at Keston in Kent. Dogs are used primarily for tracking after a crime has been committed, searching for missing people, searching premises to locate criminals, and for recovering articles left at the scene of a crime. They are also used as an aid to ordinary police patrols for crime prevention work. In addition, some dogs are trained in the detection of dangerous drugs, and they are frequently required to assist customs officers, the prison service, British Rail and a number of provincial forces. Other dogs are specially trained in the detection of explosive substances.

Thames Division (River Police)

The river police of the Thames Division, incorporated in the Metropolitan Police in 1839, patrol some 54 miles (87 km) of waterways in London. The division uses 30 duty boats and three launches to patrol the river, and is served by seven police stations, from each of which a specified part of the river is patrolled day and night. The personnel are volunteers drawn from various divisions of the Metropolitan Police, a large number of whom have served in the Royal or Merchant Navies.

The system of patrols is similar in principle to that carried out on land, the main object being the protection of life and property on ships and barges on the river, wharves and the water-side. In addition to the performance of general police duties, police of the Thames Division are called upon to deal with vessels in collision, fires on ships, barges or wharves, salvage of property adrift and the securing of drifting barges. They are also responsible for enforcing the by-laws of the river and the Merchant Shipping Acts, and in this connection may have the right to board and inspect vessels. A considerable number of dead bodies are recovered from the river each year and many persons are rescued by police boats' crews.

In addition to the duties already mentioned, it is the responsibility of the Commissioner of Police, through Thames Division, to warn occupiers of vulnerable property bordering the river when danger is threatened by abnormally high tides.

The plain-clothes crime division has its own officers who investigate all cases of crime occurring on the river.

An *Underwater Search Unit* is kept at Wapping Station, down river from Tower Bridge, and is available for use anywhere within the Metropolitan Police District. It is used to search rivers, flooded gravel pits and quarries, ponds, canals and waterways to recover missing persons, stolen property, weapons and articles used in crime. The unit comprises two sections — a mobile section for dragging rivers, and a section consisting of eight fully equipped frogmen with an inspector in charge. The two sections can either operate together or individually.

The Airport Division

At the end of 1974 a special Airport Division was formed to take over responsibility for the policing of London's Heathrow Airport (this responsibility had previously been held by the British Airports Authority Constabulary).

The Special Patrol Group

The Special Patrol Group was formed in 1965 to provide a mobile reserve to the force, supplementing the strength of divisional police and helping to provide maximum coverage in areas with a high incidence of crime or hooliganism. The range of assignments undertaken has steadily expanded, including searching for missing persons, searches and house-to-house inquiries in murder cases, help for the Serious Crime Squads (see p 5) in arresting major criminals, and assistance in combating football hooliganism at grounds or near railway stations. Patrol groups are also used to act as

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reserves at demonstrations, and help local police in other ways when there is a sudden demand on their resources. The officers of the group pay special attention to offences involving drugs.

The Diplomatic Protection Group

The Diplomatic Protection Group, formed in 1974, comprises volunteer officers whose duties are solely concerned with the protection of overseas countries' embassies and missions in London and the private residences of diplomatic staff.

Community Relations Branch

The Community Relations Branch was set up in 1968 to deal with community relations in general and race relations in particular. At the same time the branch was given responsibility for the introduction of new procedures to deal with young offenders under the Children and Young Persons Act 1969.

Each metropolitan division has a community liaison officer, with the rank of chief inspector. He is concerned with race and community relations and the direction and control of matters concerning young people. His terms of reference are, broadly: the co-ordination and encouragement of divisional activities affecting race relations and the promotion and maintenance of good relationships with immigrants and immigrant organisations; and the provision of lectures, talks and discussion with outside organisations on matters relevant to race relations. He is also concerned with decisions in respect of young people in trouble, and with the development and co-ordination of close local contact, understanding and liaison with courts, local authorities and agencies concerned with young people and their welfare.

Training in community relations is given throughout the Metropolitan Police in the form of courses and seminars. Many senior officers have attended community relations courses lasting five days, while officers of all ranks have attended one-day seminars in divisions.

Traffic Department

Some 1,300 officers serve in the Traffic Department. They deal with the police aspects of road safety, and traffic control and regulation. Every day some 2.5 million vehicles travel on London's 8,600 miles (13,840 km) of road.

The police operate mobile traffic patrols throughout London and escort abnormal loads, convoys and special vehicles where necessary. They have powers under the Removal and Disposal of Vehicles Act 1968 to remove or order to be removed vehicles that are left in a dangerous or obstructive position or in contravention of a statutory provision or restriction. In 1975 nearly 68,000 vehicles were removed to special police car parks or police stations.

An accident intelligence section has been developed to identify stretches of road with a bad accident record, and to study and recommend ways of improving them.

There is a traffic control room at New Scotland Yard, with a large-scale map linked to a computer system. A system of television cameras watches danger points and traffic hold-ups in parts of London, while the computer controls traffic signals which regulate traffic flow.

Routine traffic control and offences are dealt with by the Metropolitan Police Traffic Warden Service, a force of auxiliaries to the police created in 1960. Traffic wardens take over some of the duties and responsibilities of the police, releasing them for tasks more appropriate to their special training and authority. There are some 1,800 wardens – men and women – of all grades in London. They work from 36 traffic warden centres in various parts of the Metropolitan Police District, and new centres are being opened as the service expands.

Criminal Investigation Department

The best-known department of the Metropolitan Police Force is the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), set up in 1842. Most of the plain-clothes officers in the department work from one of the police stations in the Metropolitan Police District. The whole of the CID is headed by the Assistant Commissioner for Crime at New Scotland Yard.

The CID has 13 branches:

The Central Office (C1) is the heart of the department, from which operate the *Murder Squad*, with three teams of detectives constantly on 24-hour stand-by duty to deal with cases of homicide in London and with requests for help from overseas or provincial forces, and the *Serious Crimes Squads* which comprise a *Forged Currency and Hi-jacking Squad*, a *Passport Squad* (also concerned with illegal immigration), an *Arts and Antiques Squad* (and, under it, the *Philatelic Squad*), a *Special Reserve Squad* of senior officers on stand-by to deal with serious crimes, and an *Organised Crime Squad*.

The C2 Branch deals with general crime correspondence and national registration offences.

The Fingerprint Branch (C3) has developed its methods from the introduction of the present system of fingerprint classification in 1901 by the then Assistant Commissioner in charge of the CID. An automated system for the storage and retrieval of over 2 million fingerprints, being introduced in 1976 and 1977, combines video-tape recording and computer techniques; it will store fingerprint impressions on video-tape and display magnified images on a split-screen television monitor for comparison purposes. The branch is also the home of the police photographers and the scenes-of-crime officers, who are civilians.

The Criminal Record Office (C4) stores some 3 million records at New Scotland Yard. Half of them, now dormant, have been put on microfilm. The office is staffed by more than 100 police officers and several hundred civilians. It maintains a comprehensive crime index divided into several sections (for example, aliases, types of crime, wanted persons and lost or stolen cheques and credit cards). Every year over 4,000 eye-witnesses look at the office's 'rogues gallery', photograph albums of known criminals. The *Police Gazette*, compiled by the office, contains particulars of people wanted for crime and details of stolen property, and is supplied to British and certain overseas police forces. A special murder office acts in liaison with the *Murder Squad*.

The C5 Branch deals with internal CID matters such as promotion, commendations, establishment and discipline. It has a section which liaises with the Police National Computer Unit (the computer is being developed for rationalising the keeping of records and speeding up the dissemination of information).

The Metropolitan and City Police Company Fraud Branch (C6) contains the *Fraud Squad*, formed in 1946 and staffed by officers of both the Metropolitan Police and the City of London Police. At the end of 1975 the squad had 462 major investigations in progress involving a total sum at risk of about £250 million. The branch also operates a commercial intelligence bureau to send information to police forces in Britain and overseas.

The C7 Branch comprises the administrative sections for the scenes-of-crime officers, explosives officers and laboratory liaison staff. It also has an *Equipment Unit*, staff of which operate and develop technical aids for police use.

The Flying Squad (C8) was formed after the first world war (1914 - 18) in order to provide a mobile-body of detectives for special duty to deal with particular outbreaks of crime. Large-scale thefts, especially bank and payroll robberies, are investigated by the squad and the *C12 Branch* of the CID, the *Number 9 District (South East) Regional Crime Squad*. The latter, one of a number of regional crime squads employed in England and Wales to investigate major crimes involving inquiries in more than one police area, consists of officers from the Metropolitan and the City of London forces together with members of neighbouring forces. The *Flying Squad* and the *Regional Crime Squad* both work very much under cover, and tend to act on 'information received', the source of which is never divulged. In 1975 the two squads were together responsible for over 1,800 arrests and the recovery of property worth nearly £2.4 million.

The Metropolitan and Provincial Police Crime Branch (C9) was formed to combat the problems arising from the fact that the effects of a crime committed in London are, in an age of greater

mobility, no longer confined within the Metropolitan Police District. The branch is staffed not only by Metropolitan officers but also by members of the Kent, Surrey, Thames Valley, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Essex police forces.

The Stolen Motor Vehicle Investigation Branch (C10) comprises specialist officers who examine suspected cars, especially the products of 'ringers', thieves who 'ring the changes' on cars by building them up from stolen parts.

The Criminal Intelligence Branch (C11) collects and collates information about major criminals and their associates and habits. The branch includes a *Central Drugs and Illegal Immigration Unit* and the *United Kingdom Interpol Bureau* which includes officers from other British forces, and handles the business of the International Criminal Police Organisation on behalf of the United Kingdom.

The Number 9 District (South East) Regional Crime Squad (C12) — see reference under the *Flying Squad (C8)*.

The Anti-Terrorist Branch (C13) was formed in 1972 (as the *Bomb Squad*) to combat the increasing use of explosives, particularly by politically-motivated groups.

Two other sections of the CID are:

The Special Branch, formed in 1884, which is concerned with the protection of politicians and other important public figures and with all matters relating to national security in which the police might have a role to play.

The Forensic Science Laboratory, which, apart from serving the Metropolitan Police, also analyses specimens sent by all the police forces around London. Its essential function is to conduct scientific investigations into material discovered by the police and to present scientific evidence in court. Staffed by highly qualified scientists, the laboratory is split into four divisions: biology, chemistry, documents and firearms.

Women Police

Women first became part of the force in 1919 and in 1973 they were completely integrated into the structure of the force. There is now no separate rank structure and women police are the responsibility of the commanders of the divisions or branches to which they are posted. Women may hold any post, in any rank, in the force.

Throughout their service women receive the same training as men and take the same promotion examinations. In addition, however, they receive specialist training for duties in respect of women, children and young people. They deal with 'care cases' involving the protection of children from neglect or moral danger. In this type of work women police co-operate closely with social services departments, probation officers and voluntary organisations. The constructive and sympathetic handling of these cases plays a valuable part in the prevention of offences by young people.

Further Information

Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. *HMSO Annual*.

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