



SOUTH WALES POLICE
MUSEUM

The History of Policing in Wales



An early Glamorgan Constable, PC 128 James Bussell, Treforest, in 1861

The History of Policing in Wales

Policing as we know it today in Wales, did not come into being until after 1829, following the introduction by then Home Secretary Robert Peel, of the first organised Police Force in the United Kingdom, the Metropolitan Police.

From Celtic times to when King Henry VIII united England and Wales by the Acts of Union in the mid C16, traditional law was the cornerstone of civilised life in Wales.

Although successive Welsh rulers supported traditional Welsh laws and added new ones of their own, they were not responsible for policing them. Throughout Wales the family was the most important social group and it was the elders of these families who were responsible for upholding Welsh law.

After the Norman Conquest of the Borders and South Wales, the conquered lands were divided up and given to Norman Lords as rewards for loyal service. These were known as Marcher Lordships.

Each Lord tried to replace traditional Welsh laws with his own. Policemen were not used in Wales until the early C19.

From Norman times to when the Marcher Lordships were abolished by the Acts of Union, Lords used their own soldiers and corrupt manorial courts to uphold unjust laws.

The Acts of Union replaced the traditional laws of Wales with English laws and legal systems. Magistrates, called Justices of the Peace, were appointed who were responsible for upholding the law. From this time on, once a year the people

of every Parish chose a member of their community to be their Parish Constable.

Although not a paid or a trained policeman, the Parish Constable would have had some duties similar to the Police of today, such as serving warrants and arresting suspected criminals.

Each Parish Constable was given a long truncheon which was usually decorated with the name of the Parish. The truncheon acted as their proof of identity, as they had no recognisable uniform and were often called staffs of office. They were handed on year after year to each successive constable.

In the mid C18 many parts of the country, but especially London with its rapidly expanding population, decided that Parish Constables were not enough to keep law and order in the towns and cities. The practice of bribing Constables was rife and law and order was effectively breaking down across the United Kingdom.

In 1750, Henry Fielding, a novelist and magistrate of Bow Street, London, concerned by these events and influenced by continental policing methods, piloted the Bow Street Runners.

The Bow Street Runners, were a band of 6 hand-picked, honest constables, paid for from the pocket of Henry Fielding himself. They wore no special uniform and could be described as the equivalent of today's plain clothes detectives. Soon the "Runners" were feared by all criminals.

Enormously successful, it was they who were the blue print for the "Bobbies" of 1829 pioneered by Robert Peel.



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1821 2005

A Chronology of Policing in South Wales

- 1821** John Luce was appointed as the first paid policeman in the Borough of Swansea with the authority to "Seize all beasts and swine found wandering in the town and to impound them in the common pound."
- 1835** The Government passed the Municipal Corporations Act which established a system of elected Borough Councils, with the authority to control their own police force. The following year the Boroughs of Cardiff, Swansea and Neath established small professional forces, all controlled by the Boroughs sub-committee, called the Watch Committee. These forces were very small, Swansea had 7 men, Cardiff had 5 and Neath had only 1 constable.
- 1836** The town of Bridgend started to employ its own policeman. His name was John Loosmore and his duty was to supervise the Parish Constables.
- 1839** The Government introduced the Police Act which made it possible for country areas as well as Town Boroughs to establish their own professional police forces. John Crichton Stuart, the second Marquis of Bute, and Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant for the County of Glamorgan, pushed the idea of the establishment of a County Police Force for Glamorgan. However the Justices of the Peace decided that the rural areas of the County did not need a professional police force. They did, however, decide that some police should be employed in the rapidly industrialising areas around Caerphilly.
- 1840** Six paid policemen and a superintendent were appointed for the parishes in the Caerphilly area.

FORMATION OF THE *Glamorgan Constabulary*

- 1841** Lord Bute finally persuaded the Justices of the Peace to replace the unpaid petty constables and the handful of paid policemen in the county with a single county wide police force. The Glamorgan Constabulary was formed.

Captain Charles Frederick Napier was appointed the first Chief Constable of the Glamorganshire Constabulary. He then appointed 4 superintendents and 34 constables and sergeants. The force area was divided into 4 districts: Ogmere, Newbridge, Merthyr and Swansea.

- 1905** Cardiff became a city and the name of the police force changed to the Cardiff City Police.

*"Seize all
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Traffic patrol side-car machine and crew 1930s

A Chronology of Policing in South Wales

1821 2005

Cardiff City
Motor Vehicle
Inspection, 1933



- 1908** Merthyr pulled out of the County force and formed its own Borough police force.
- 1939** The outbreak of the Second World War brought the formation of the Women's Auxiliary Corps which provided support to the police. Its members were employed in supporting roles such as clerical duties, typing, canteen work and driving.
- 1947** The Neath Borough Police Force was absorbed by the Glamorganshire Constabulary.
- 1952** The Glamorganshire Constabulary formed a traffic department. Glamorgan ceased to use Cardiff and Swansea's radio masks building their own at Eglwysilian, St Hilary and Cwmavon.
- 1953** The Glamorgan Constabulary established a driving school.
- 1963** The Glamorganshire Constabulary established a dog section. They also established a motorcycle section of their traffic department, and began to issue light motorcycles equipped with radios to officers covering large rural beats.
- 1964** Cardiff City Police started a dog section.
- 1965** The Glamorgan Constabulary established scenes of crime specialists in Bridgend, Pontypridd and Neath, whose job it is to search and evaluate clues left by criminals. A sub-aqua search team was established at the Glamorgan Constabulary Headquarters, Bridgend.
- 1966** The Aberfan Disaster witnessed a combined effort from Merthyr and all the local forces, assisted by many volunteers.
- 1967** Great changes in technology made it possible for all forces to adopt the Unit Beat Policing system. Bobbies on the Beat were provided with the famous Blue and White Panda Cars and were able to respond rapidly to calls for help via wireless communication with the control room.



The Glamorganshire Constabulary established a dog section, 1963

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Amalgamation

1969 Under provisions of the 1964 Police Act which promoted greater efficiency for the police service, the police forces of Glamorgan, Cardiff, Swansea and Merthyr Tydfil amalgamated. The new force, South Wales Constabulary, came into being on the 1st of June 1969.

A Road Safety Department was set up at Headquarters.

1972 Firearms training was initiated.

1975 Special Patrol Groups were established throughout the South Wales Constabulary area, which consisted of highly trained and experienced officers who formed a rapid deployment force to combat crime, violence and vandalism.

In accordance with the Sex Discrimination Act the Policewomen's Section ceased to exist, and with it went the discriminatory prefix WPC.

1977 Following the completion of the M4 motorway through Glamorgan, a traffic motorway was created consisting of a chief inspector, 4 sergeants and 32 constables.

1979 South Wales established a Press and Public Relations Department to professionally deal with the media.

1982 South Wales Constabulary police the visit of Pope John Paul II.

1983 The Honeywell Information Systems Limited Computerised Incident Resource and Information System, known as I.R.I.S. became fully operational.

1995 Introduction of the South and East Wales Air Support unit utilising a shared Bell 206LT Long Ranger helicopter to cover the force areas of South Wales and Gwent Constabularies. An upgraded helicopter was brought into use in 1997.



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Unit Beat Policing in Merthyr, 1967

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- 1996** The South Wales Constabulary changed its name to South Wales Police.
- 1998** The force successfully polices the European Summit in Cardiff.
- 1999** Rugby World Cup comes to Cardiff. The force meets the challenge.
- 2000** Investigations into unsolved cases are launched following breakthroughs in DNA evidence and testing.
- Chief Constable Mr Tony Burden becomes President of A.C.P.O.
- 2001** Following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, South Wales Police start to resource the Airport Policing Group, a commitment it still undertakes. Sir Anthony Burden, Q.P.M., Chief Constable of South Wales Police, headed the association of Chief Police Officers as its President.
- 2001** Representatives of the force invited to 10 Downing Street after delivering one of the best reductions in crime in the United Kingdom.
- 2002** On 1st March 2002, the Chief Constable Sir Anthony Burden receives a knighthood at an Investiture in Cardiff Castle.
- 2004** Sir Anthony Burden retires and is replaced by Ms Barbara Wilding, the first female Chief Constable ever to take the helm at South Wales Police.
- 2005** South Wales Police opens a state-of-the-art Scientific Support Unit, costing 5 million pounds at Police Headquarters in Bridgend, exactly 20 years on from the discovery of genetic fingerprints by Professor Jeffries of Leicester University.

KNOWN POLICING *Firsts*

- 1851** Swansea Borough Police Force appointed its first detective, Noah Owen. His duties were to "watch and detect thieves, visit low lodging houses, serve summons and execute warrants, to attend the police court and generally perform such duty as the Superintendent may direct."
- 1859** Photography was used for the first time by Superintendent Dunn of Swansea Borough Police. He employed a local photographer to "strike off several well executed photographs of the body of an unknown child....and post them around town."



Ronald Baker and Wife, who were stationed at Barry.
Ronald was the founder of the South Wales Police Museum, 1950

PC 80 Walter Ward of Swansea Borough Police using a telephone in one of the Swansea Police Boxes shortly after '999' was introduced in 1946



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Last horse drawn Black maria, driven by PC 85 Blackmore 1920



999
introduced
in 1946

One of the first Glamorgan Constabulary policewomen, possibly WPC Vera Williams, photographed in Barry at the end of the 1940s



- 1902** Cardiff City Police and the Glamorgan Constabulary adopted fingerprinting techniques for the detection and identification of criminals, following the visit of Inspector Stedman of the Metropolitan Police.
- 1908** Swansea Borough Police acquired its first motor vehicle, which was an ambulance bought for the Borough by the Swansea Police Recreation Club.
- 1914** The first women police officers were employed on police duties during the First World War (1914-1918). "Matrons" had been used previously on duties such as supervising, escorting and searching women and looking after children in custody.
- 1927** The Chief Constable of Swansea Borough Police Force, Mr Thomas Rawson, introduced the use of Police Boxes placed at distant points on selected beats. These were the first to be used in Wales.
- 1930** The first operational police vehicles were used by the Glamorgan Constabulary. Six BSA motorcycle combinations were bought by the force. Although senior officers had used cars for transport before this date, these were the first to be used by county policemen operationally.



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Miss Barbara Wilding, QPM
South Wales Police first female Chief Constable

A Chronology of Policing in South Wales



SOUTH WALES POLICE MUSEUM

If you wish to make an appointment to visit the South Wales Police Museum, please contact:

Ms Julia Mason
South Wales Police Museum
Police Headquarters
Cowbridge Road
Bridgend CF31 3SU
Telephone: 01656 303207

Admission is free

Opening Hours

Visits are by appointment
Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm,
with out of hours visits subject
to prior arrangement.

School Visits

Curriculum linked activities at the Museum include the Victorian police, the extended role of the police during World War 2 and fingerprinting. The visit includes a free follow up worksheet pack for every child and teacher.

- 1946** The 999 Emergency telephone line was established. Although meant for emergencies only, the first message received in Swansea was "This is the Shoulder of Mutton Public House, will you tell the detective that we can manage cold meat and pickles for supper."
- 1947** The first two police women in the Glamorgan Constabulary were appointed, WPC 1 Elsie Baldwin and WPC 2 Florence Knight.
- 1959** The Glamorgan Constabulary became the first police force in Britain to use a colour photograph in a court of law.
- 1964** The Glamorgan Constabulary introduced the first radar speed meter, and traffic wardens were seen for the first time on the streets of Cardiff.
- 1965** The first personal radios were issued to officers in the Glamorgan Constabulary. 10 Sornophone sets were allocated, on an experimental basis to officers in Barry. At the end of the year the last 6 police boxes in Neath were pulled down in anticipation of the personal radio communication system.
- 1966** In consequence of the 1967 Road Safety Act, the police force of South Wales introduced breathalyser equipment in the form of the "Alcotest" meter.
- 1969** The South Wales Constabulary became the first force in Britain to use a dog trained to sniff out explosives, used as a security measure for the investiture of HRH the Prince of Wales.
- 1986** Two mobile telephones were purchased for use by senior officers who identified the need for instant communications when supervising major incidents or serious crime.
- 2002** South Wales Police became one of the first forces to use the DNA examination of an exhumed body to result unsolved murder investigations.
- 2004** South Wales Police appoints its first female Chief Constable

Pontardawe char-a-banc

