



1883 - 2007

Timeline of Female Police Officers
within the United Kingdom

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(2008)

Buckinghamshire New University

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Another exciting and pioneering development at Buckinghamshire New University has been the growth of our Police Studies degrees. Three degrees are currently offered;

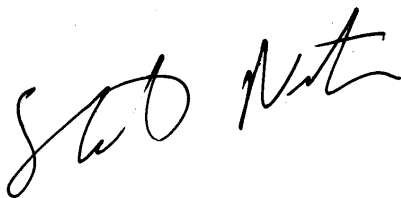
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Together with assistance from Thames Valley Police and other policing agencies the courses have grown to be the most popular within the School of Human Sciences and Law. The students have the opportunity to study policing from an academic view point whilst gaining practical experience either as a police volunteer, Special Constable or part-time Police Community Support Officer (PCSO).

One of our greatest supporters of the courses have been the British Association for Women in Policing (BAWP) who have provided a number of guest lectures to students at all levels on the degrees as well as offering a support network to our students. This relationship has now grown and we are proud to be the first academic institution to have corporate membership with BAWP and to provide student focused research for them.



Stuart Norton

Portfolio Leader; Law, Criminology & Police Studies



The Researchers

The project involved two third year final students on Police Studies BSc (Hons) obtaining information on a timeline of female officers within policing in the United Kingdom.

William Salter is currently completing his dissertation on youth subculture and gun crime. He is looking into gun crime and the reasons behind gang formation within the United Kingdom focussing primarily on England. He is reviewing operation Trident (Metropolitan Police Service) along with current police strategies to curb gun related violence. His dissertation also includes an analysis of relevant media, political and social influences in relation to gun crime and gang formation.

Elizabeth Watson is focussing her dissertation around female prisoners looking at mental health, drug use and motherhood within prisons. Her study involves a critical analysis of current legislation as well as a review of levels of care within prisons. Her undergraduate thesis will provide recommendations within her conclusion based on the literature review she is conducting.

Can you help?

Do you have any photographs that are relevant to this document?

Can you provide any pictures of the time period under discussion?

This document is designed to evolve over time – we would be delighted to include any pictures that are relevant to the document, perhaps your police service will grant rights for historic pictures to be used or you may know someone with personal pictures of certain eras or events that could be scanned and sent electronically to us. If you can help please contact Liz Owsley, National Coordinator for BAWP via email: coord@bawp.org

The timeline document will be updated with any new developments that are relevant. However, we are aware that certain points may have been omitted or possibly not included at the time this document goes to print. If you have any updates to the document please email: coord@bawp.org and the electronic and online versions will be edited.

1883 - 2007

Timeline of Female Police Officers within the United Kingdom

1883

In 1883 the Metropolitan Police began to employ a female visitor to visit women convicts on a licence and under police supervision; three years later a second such visitor was appointed (Emsley, 1996: 127).

1889

In March 1889, fourteen more women were employed to act formally as Police Matrons. Their duties, hitherto undertaken largely by the wives of policemen, were to supervise and search female and child offenders while in police stations and the courts. Other forces also began to employ such matrons, but there remained considerable hostility to women working in this way, commonly couched in terms of the deleterious effects that the foul language, drunkenness, and violence of prisoners would have on respectable women (Emsley, 1996: 127).

1899

[Kent Police Museum website](#)

The wives of the lock-up keepers were paid a shilling a day or part thereof for their services. The cells were double locked, one key being held by the matron and the other by the lock up keeper.

1903

[Spartacus Educational Web Site](#)

The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was set up by Emmeline Pankhurst and her two daughters Christabel Pankhurst and Sylvia Pankhurst. As they believed their new methods will help women obtain the vote.

1909

The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU)

Mary Allen walked to the Home Office to make her protest of women getting arrested and Mr Asquith's refusal to accept their members. Throwing a stone through Whitehall's glass windows lead to her arrest and consequent imprisonment. In the same day this spurred thirteen other women to do the same except they were only fined £5 plus 2/6d costs, or a month in prison, which is what they opted for. Whilst being sent to prison Mary Allen and others decided they were going to follow Marion Wallace Dunlop's lone example a week before. They were going to resist being treated as criminals and demand to be regarded as political prisoners; until that was conceded, they would refuse all food. After 156 hours without food Mary was released and was the first to be presented with the Hunger-Striker's Medal by her beloved Mrs Pankhurst who then referred to her as the "Dear soldier in the woman's army" (Lock, 1979: 12).

1910

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

18th November is "Black Friday", when the suffragettes and police clash violently outside parliament following the failure of the first Conciliation Bill. One suffragette, Ellen Pitfield, later dies from her injuries.

1914

[Kent Police Museum website](#)

A national appeal for special constables happened on the eve of outbreak of the

Great War, and two women were appointed in Sandgate 'To keep a look out for suspicious persons and lights on the beach'. It was about this time that a **Women's Police Volunteers** organisation was formed in London by a leading Suffragette, Nina Boyle, and a wealthy philanthropist, Mrs. Margaret Damer Dawson and the Metropolitan Commissioner of Police agreed that they could train women and patrol in London on a purely voluntary and unofficial basis.

1914

[Metropolitan Police Service](#)

Margaret Damer Dawson, an anti-white slavery campaigner, and Nina Boyle, a militant suffragette journalist founded the Women's Police Service in 1914.

1915

[Kent Police Museum website](#)

The Women's Police Volunteers Organisation was renamed the Women's Police Service.

1915

The outbreak of war gave the opportunity for two separate groups to organise women police patrols: the Women Police Volunteers, who became the Women Police Service in February 1915, were organised by former militant suffragettes and the morality campaigner Margaret Damer-Dawson; the Voluntary Women Patrols were organised by members of the National Union of Women Workers. Both groups were particularly concerned with the control of the public, and at times even the private, behaviour of working and working-class women (Emsley, 1996: 127).

1915

[International Association of Women Police](#)

The history of the International Association Women Police (IAWP) can be traced

back to 1915. In that year, an organisation was formed in the USA called the International Policewomen's Association. Formed with assistance, support and approval of the International Association of Chiefs of Police. (British Association for Women in Policing 2007:3)

1916

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps is set up under the leadership of Mona Watson and Helen Gwynne-Vaughan.

1916

[Kent Police Museum website](#)

The Police Act made it possible for women to be appointed as women constables although Home Office policy was that they should not be sworn in.

1917

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The Women's Land Army is established.

1917

Grace Costin was appointed and trained for general police duties, she has been acclaimed to be Thames Valley area's first woman police officer.

1918

Some of the Voluntary Women Patrols were incorporated into the police forces as women police in 1918, and in May of that year Lady Nott-Bower addressed the Annual General Meeting of the Chief Constables Association on the subject of 'women police'; but many watch committees and standing joint committees remained implacably opposed to the idea (Emsley, 1996: 128) and (Levine, 1994).

1919

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The Sex Disqualification Removal Act is passed ensuring women's entry into the professions. For the first time women could become lawyers, vets, and civil servants.

1919

Macready had authorised a nucleus of 110 women police attached to the Metropolitan Police in 1919; significantly, he drew his women police from the Voluntary Women Patrols rather than the Women Police Service which, though more professional, had a cadre of former militant suffragettes (Emsley, 1996: 157).

1919

When the first 25 police women appeared on the streets of London they were required to patrol in pairs, followed at a distance of from 6 to 10 yards by two tough uniformed policemen, who were given strict orders not to let the women out of their sight, and to go to their aid at once if they were in trouble. Later, however, at all events in the C.I.D., it seems that their male colleagues recognised that police women were much better able to deal with cases involving women and girls than they were, a view strongly held by the inspectors of constabulary from the beginning (Critchley, 1978: 218).

1920

In 1920 the Baird Committee (its Chairman, John Baird, was then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office) reviewed the whole question of the employment of policewomen in peacetime, and concluded that the experience of the war had proved their value in undertaking police duties which hitherto had been exclusively by men (Cmd. 877). There was an urgent need for substituting policewomen for men in thickly populated areas for some duties, but discretion

whether or not to employ them should be left to the local police authorities. At that time most policewomen were not attested as constables, but the committee recommended that they should be (many, however, were still not attested in 1939), that they should be highly trained, and that they should form an integral part of a police force (Critchley, 1978: 216).

1920

[South Wales Police Website](#)

On the appointment of the Baird Committee in 1920, which looked at the employment of policewomen, 43 police authorities in England and Wales were employing 238 women. The committee found that the experience of war had proved the value of women police in a limited capacity, and it recommended an increase in the number appointed.

1920

[Kent Police Museum website](#)

The Chief Constable of Kent had already reported in September 1920 that he did not consider there was any necessity for the employment of women police in the County.

1920s

Committees during the 1920s which reported on the efficiency of women officers urged that Women Police should be expanded across the country, while recognising that the final decision remained in the hands of the chief constables and the police authorities (Emsley, 1996: 157).

1921

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The Six Point Group is founded by Lady Rhonda (1883-1958), to push for women's equality on six points: political, occupational, moral, social, economic and legal.

1921

A private tuition college called the Bristol Training School for Police Women and Patrols has been established offering to prepare suitable women for police work and to pass them on to the appointing authorities wherever required (Rawlings, 2002: 198).

1922

[Metropolitan Police Service](#)

Women Constables reduced to an establishment of 20 in the Metropolitan Police Service

1922

When the 'Geddes Axe' fell in 1922 the Home Secretary, Sir Edward Shortt, proposed the complete abolition of the women's section of the Metropolitan Police. His insistence that the work of women police was 'welfare work... not proper', and that they only kept crime down 'with the sense in which the schoolmaster keeps down crime, and the clergyman and the Sunday-school teacher' (Hansard, 1922). This roused some MPs to fury, notably Nancy Astor. In the end Shortt was persuaded to leave a squad of 24 women constables attached to the Metropolitan Police (Emsley, 1996: 157).

1924

[South Wales Police Website](#)

Women were employed in the Metropolitan Police District, six County Forces and 27 City and Borough Forces, the total strength being 110.

1924 (November)

[Kent Police Museum website](#)

The Home Secretary sent a letter to all Police Authorities suggesting that consideration should be given to appointing women officers to deal with cases involving women and children.

1929 – 1931

The situation of women police officers improved marginally with the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Police Powers and Procedure in 1929, and in October 1931 the Home Office issued a set of regulations defining the function and status of police women wherever and whenever they were employed; but there was still no compulsion to recruit women and many continued to believe that police work was men's work and that women in police uniform somehow lost their femininity (Emsley, 1996:158) and (Amidon *et al.*) .

1930

In 1930 the Home Office raised the issue of women police officers with the Police Council who reflected general apathy toward women in their duties and for their need in the police. Their role in which was to their local force's discretion which meant there was no obligation for them to be employed. The Home Secretary nevertheless made some police regulations for women. These standardised their pay and conditions of service and laid down that their main duties were to include patrolling, duties in connection with women and children reported missing, found ill, destitute or homeless, or in immoral surroundings, taking statements from women and children, and dealing with female prisoners (Critchley, 1978: 218).

1931

[South Wales Police Website](#)

Viscountess Astor, MP, spoke in Cardiff on the issue of women police.

1932

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

Lilian Wyles is appointed the first woman Chief Inspector in the police force. She joined London's Metropolitan Police in 1919 and the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) in 1922.

1935

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

Dame Lilian Barker (1874-1955) is appointed Assistant Commissioner of Prisons with responsibility for all female inmates.

1936

There were just 175 women police officers in England and Wales (Rawlings, 2002: 198).

1938

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The Women's Voluntary Service for Civil Defence (later the Women's Royal Voluntary Service) is set up by Lady Stella Reading (1894-1971).

1938

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), the women's army, is formed.

1939

The National Council of Women (whose initiative in the First World War had provided the women police patrols from whom some of the earliest police women were recruited) complained in early 1939 that the Government's recently published National Service Handbook had no plans for enrolling women as special

constables, a fact that reflected the indifference of the Home Office and most chief constable to the value of policewomen. A Women's Auxiliary Police Corps, instituted in August, 1939, for women between the ages of eighteen and fifty-five was the result. In the early part of the war the women were allowed to carry out only a restricted range of police duties, which typically included the driving and maintenance of motor transport, and clerical, telephone, radio, and canteen work, but many were later attested as constables, so that their duties expanded over the whole range of law enforcement (Critchley, 1978: 224-225).

1939

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The Women's Land Army is re-launched under the leadership of Lady Gertrude Denman.

1939

[South Wales Police Website](#)

The start of the Second World War in 1939 was to again place the spotlight on women in the police. Members of the Women's Auxiliary Police Corps, including those in Glamorgan, were employed in supporting roles such as clerical duties, typing, canteen work and driving.

1939

Only 45 police forces out of a total of 183 were employing policewomen, and in London their number had risen to about the total it had been in 1921 (Critchley, 1978: 218).

1939 – 1949

Between 1939 and 1949 the number of police women rose from 246 to 1148, whereas in 1939, 138 out of 183 forces employed no police women (Rawlings,

2002: 199).

1940

Newport recruited its first woman police officer (Rawlings, 2002: 198).

1941

[Thames Valley Police Website](#)

Reading Borough Police first attested its first female officers, these were WPC Elizabeth Young and Jenny Timberlake.

1941

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The Trades Union Congress pledges itself to the principle of equal pay.

1942

Growth of the Women's Auxiliary Corps was slow but as women's organisations enlisted the support of the Archbishop of Canterbury in pressing their case to the Home Secretary they seem to have done something to overcome prejudice. For by March, 1942, the 226 regular policewomen employed on the outbreak of war had risen to 2,800 regular and auxiliaries (Critchley, 1978: 226).

1942 – 1945

Later as the country's shortage of manpower became increasingly acute and the Ministry of Labour's controls extended to the employment of women, a substantial number of women were directed into the police, where they proved highly successful, particularly in keeping order in the vicinity of the camps in which American and British troops were concentrated before the Normandy landings (Critchley, 1978: 227).

1944

[Staffordshire Police](#)

The first women police officers, six in total, joined the Staffordshire Constabulary in 1944. Initially their remit was to deal with problems associated with women and children.

1945

By the end of the war the Women's Auxiliary Police Corps had risen to 3,700, and in addition there were over 400 regular police women (Critchley, 1978: 227).

1946

Women police officers were also serving in the Berkshire Constabulary and Oxford City Police

1947

Six years after Reading Borough gained its first female officers, its Chief Constable reported of the “Women Police Department” that “although this is a comparatively new department, and in spite of the fact that in many quarters the introduction of policewomen was strongly opposed, experience has proved conclusively that such a department is not only desirable but that it is indispensable”.

1948

[South Wales Police Website](#)

The first two policewomen in the Glamorgan Constabulary, WPC1 Elsie Baldwin and WPC 2 Florence Knight, were appointed on the 13th March.

1948

Liverpool City Police only appointed police women in 1948 (Rawlings, 2002: 199).

1949

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The ATS (the Auxiliary Territorial Service) was transformed into a permanent force, the Women's Royal Army Corps, (WRAC).

1950

[British Transport Police](#)

The first female BTP sergeants were appointed when WPC's Snell (Paddington) and Barrett (Liverpool Street) were promoted.

1950

[South Wales Police Website](#)

The first female special constable was first appointed in Glamorgan Constabulary and she was WSC 1 Elizabeth Rees on the 3rd July.

1956

The International Policewomen's Association was dissolved in 1956 to re-emerge as the International Association of Women Police. (British Association for Women in Policing 2007:3)

1963

The IAWP introduces annual training conferences. (British Association for Women in Policing 2007:3)

1967

A report by the Police Advisory Board found that police women numbers had peaked at 3108 in England and Wales but this represented a short fall of over 806 female officers. The findings of the report was that height, eye sight, qualification restrictions needed to be relaxed in order to attract A- level leavers (Rawlings, 2002: 197).

1969

[UNISON Black History Month 2006](#)

Sislin Fay Allen made the headlines when she became the Metropolitan Police's first black female officer.

1970

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The first national meeting of the women's liberation movement in Britain takes place at Ruskin College.

1970

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The Equal Pay Act enshrines in law the principal of equal pay for women.

Mid 1970s

Up until the mid 1970's occupational segregation was perfectly legal, with female officers having a separate rank structure within their own departments. Women were often located in a physically separate part of the building, with their own offices and changing facilities, and a similarly segregated set of tasks to carry out (Home Office, 2000). Cited in (Westmarland, 2001: 22).

1971

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

On 6th March over 4000 women take part in the first women's liberation march in London.

1973

[Metropolitan Police Service](#)

Women police were integrated directly into the Metropolitan Police Service.

1975

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

Several key pieces of legislation are passed: The Sex discrimination Act, which came into force on 29th December 1975. This makes it illegal to discriminate against women in education, recruitment and advertising; the Employment Protection Act introduces statutory maternity provision and makes it illegal to sack a woman because she is pregnant; the Equal Pay Act takes effect.

1975

[South Wales Police Website](#)

In accordance with the Sex Discrimination Act, the Policewomen's Section of South Wales Constabulary ceased to exist, and with the discriminatory prefix WPC.

1975-1976

[Kent Police Museum Website](#)

The Sex Discrimination Act was passed and so, from January 1976, the Women Police ceased to exist as a separate specialist body and all women were absorbed into the general police system.

1976

IAWP expands to include male officers as full IAWP members. (British Association for Women in Policing 2007:3)

1976

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The Equal Opportunities Commission comes into effect to oversee the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts.

1976

[Suffolk Police](#)

Following legislation in 1976, women were given the same status, responsibilities and salary as their male counterparts.

1976

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The Domestic Violence Act enables women to obtain a court order against their violent husband or partner.

1977

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The first Rape Crisis Centre opens in London.

1979

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

Agnes Curran is the first woman governor of a male prison, Dungavel in Scotland.

1983

[Museum of Liverpool Web Site](#)

Alison Halford applied for the post of Assistant Chief Constable on Merseyside and became the highest-ranking policewoman in the country. Her career had seen many 'firsts'. She was the first woman to take operational charge of a police station - Tottenham Court Road, lead investigator in setting up rape crisis centres and helped to set the standard for abused women and children being interviewed by female police officers. Her training strategies were adopted throughout the country. A professional, articulate, independent woman, her career was a major part of her life.

1984

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The Equal Pay Act (Equal Value Amendment) introduces equal pay for work of equal value.

1984

[Metropolitan Police Service](#)

Whilst policing a demo in St James Square, WPC Yvonne Fletcher was shot in the back and mortally wounded by shots fired from the Libyan Peoples Bureau. Her murder led to the creation of the Police Memorial Trust, an organisation dedicated to placing memorials at the locations of fallen officers.

1986

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The Sex Discrimination Act (Amendment) enables women to retire at the same age as men. It also lifts the legal restrictions which prevent women from working night shifts in factories.

1987 - (1st March)

15 women from 8 forces (including 2 from MOD) met to discuss the formation of a British section of the IAWP.

The following month saw a second meeting and it was then that the British Association of Women Police was formed using the constitution of the IAWP as its guide

1989 - (23rd March)

[European Network of Police Women](#)

This was founded at the International Conference for Police Women held at Noordwijkerhout in the Netherlands.

1990s

Throughout the 1990's women were recruited into Domestic Violence units, sometimes called 'Child and Family Protection Units' (Westmarland, 2001).

1990

[Merseyside Web Site](#)

The Gay Police Association (GPA) was formed. The GPA aims to work towards equal opportunities for lesbian and gay police service employees, offering advice

and support to employees and promoting better relations between the police service and the lesbian and gay community. There are also 16,000 officers being supported by the GPA police staff, representing the largest minority group employed by the police service.

1991

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

Stella Rimington becomes the first woman to head MI5.

1991

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

Patricia Scotland is the first black woman to become a Queens Counsel(QC).

1992

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

Barbara Mills, becomes the first woman Director of Public Prosecutions. This position is responsible for ensuring the independent review and prosecution of criminal proceedings started by the police in England and Wales.

1993

[Museum of Liverpool Web Site](#)

Alison Halford released the story of her fight for equality with the book, 'No Way Up The Greasy Pole' in which she talks candidly about her 30 years in the police force.

Following this story the Equal Opportunities Commission participated in the development of all future police force promotion policy. The EOC said that her case "had a major impact in raising the profile of the issue of Sex Discrimination

of women in the police and of women in top jobs generally.”

1994

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

A House of Lords ruling gives equal rights to part-time workers.

1994

[Metropolitan Black Police Association](#)

The Metropolitan Black Police Association formed following discussions between black staff and the MPS. The association, which formed in September 1994, was launched by the then MPS Commissioner Sir Paul Condon.

1994

78% of applicants were male and 22% per cent were female; from this group, however, only 8 per cent of the men were appointed, compared with 12 per cent of the women (HMIC 1996). Cited in (Westmarland, 2001: 20-21).

1995

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

Pauline Clare is appointed Chief Constable for Lancashire, the first woman to hold this senior rank.

1996

[European Network of Police Women](#)

ENP was officially granted the status of NGO, which implies that ENP may designate official representatives to the United Nations- to the UN Headquarters

in New York and to the UN Offices in Geneva and Vienna.

1996 - (October)

[National Black Police Association](#)

With interest having grown across the country in the work of the BPA, a National Communications Network was formed. This network consisted of Black Staff members spanning the length and breadth of the country.

2000

As a percentage of the Police Service women represented around 17 per cent of the total number of officers in England and Wales with just over 20,000 female officers in total (Home Office, 2000) Cited in (Westmarland, 2001: 22).

2001

[Woman's Hour : Women's history timeline](#)

The Isle of Man government passes its first ever Sex Discrimination Bill, some thirty years after the UK.

2001

BAWP was involved in the launch of a document and philosophy entitled the "Gender Agenda". This was created by a group of individuals, mostly women, who between them represented most of the staff associations and organisations for police officers in the UK. The executive summary to this is available by clicking [here](#). (British Association for Women in Policing 2007:7)

2003

[National - PCSO's Web Site](#)

The police community support officers (PCSO's) were created by then Home

Secretary David Blunkett to be a high-visibility presence on streets.

2005 - (November)

[The Guardian Web Site](#)

The murder of the Bradford constable Sharon Beshenivsky by an armed robber has reignited the debate on arming British police, with calls yesterday for more officers to be trained to use guns and balloted on whether they want to carry them. However it was found that 80% of officers did not want to carry guns out of fear from alienating them from the public.

2006 – (October)

Gender Agenda 2 was launched. In line with both BAWP policy to be totally inclusive, and current practice in the police service, the needs of all female personnel were included in the new document, not just police officers. The full text is accessible [here](#). (British Association for Women in Policing 2007:7)

2007

[South Wales Police Website](#)

South Wales Police service boasts 641 serving female police officers and 1140 female civilian staff, supporting its first female Chief Constable, Miss Barbara Wilding.

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Above sites accessed between July 2007 to January 2008.