Section A: Context – Liverpool and policing in the eighteenth century

Map of Liverpool in 1725 showing the Old Dock

William Enfield's 1773 publication, *The History of Liverpool*, funded by public subscriptions, boasts that 'Through the vigilance of the magistrates, and the general spirit of the inhabitants, order and decorum are better preserved in this town than in most other places of the same size.' (Enfield, 1773, p. 92)

Liverpool's origins as a chartered town in 1207 by King John initially served a strategic military purpose, specifically for troop deployment to Ireland. Its early growth was modest, overshadowed by established centres like Chester. However, the gradual silting of the River Dee in the later medieval period began to re-route trade, diverting it from Chester towards Liverpool, which already held a role in the export of coal and salt. By the mid-seventeenth century, it became an important military base again during the English Civil War, again as a point of embarkation for Ireland.

By the eighteenth century, Liverpool became wealthy through its connection with the Transatlantic Slave Trade, but also from the spoils of privateers; ships that attacked the colonies or ships of other countries. There was also a more general shift in trading patterns that benefitted the town, as American colonies moved the focus of trade from Europe to the Atlantic.

The first enclosed commercial dock in Britain, known as the Old Dock (currently located beneath John Lewis in the Liverpool One complex), opened in 1715. It was designed to manage Liverpool's involvement in the growing Atlantic trade. This commercial expansion directly fuelled rapid population growth, as more and more docks were added to the system.

How accurate was William Enfield's view that order was better maintained in Liverpool than anywhere else in the UK by the late eighteenth century?

Impact of urbanisation and industrialisation on crime

'Thomas Raffles, a Liverpool magistrate, starkly articulated the prevailing concern over crime in the city in 1878, describing 'Crimes of violence and disorder [as] the monster evil...' His speech, delivered at 13 Williamson Square and reported in the *Liverpool Mercury* on 4 January 1878, highlights the perceived severity of the problem (Archer, 2011, p. 3).

Unlike other major industrial centres such as Manchester, Liverpool's economic development did not follow the typical industrial model of large-scale factory production (for example, the Ancoats district of Manchester). Instead, Liverpool's economic structure was predominantly shaped by its port, relying on warehouses and smaller-scale industries that directly supported shipping. Consequently, crime in Liverpool was often more closely associated with the transient population linked to the port, particularly alcohol consumption and prostitution, common issues among sailors passing through.

However, the rapid pace of urbanisation was a far more significant driver of crime in Liverpool than industrialisation. The poor lived in overcrowded, insanitary conditions. By 1884, Liverpool's population density reached approximately 1,200 people per acre, a figure exceeding even that of London during the same period. A more direct link to crime was the instability of employment opportunities. The combination of poor living conditions and a lack of work often led to crime, driven by desperation and the need to survive.

As the town's population increased, so did the number of criminals and the number of potential victims.

Rapid growth of Liverpool in the eighteenth century

Painting of the Liverpool waterfront at Wapping, 1875, by John Grimshaw

Liverpool experienced rapid growth throughout the eighteenth century as a result of the transatlantic slave trade, privateering, and trade in goods from all parts of the UK and beyond. The new docks and warehouses built at the start of the nineteenth century created a substantial demand for labour, attracting numerous builders. Concurrently, the burgeoning shipping industry required a large workforce of sailors. The promise of work drew people in from the surrounding countryside, but increasingly from Wales, Ireland and Scotland. The population doubled between 1801 and 1831 and, by the 1850s, Liverpool had become the second-largest urban centre in the UK, surpassed only by London. With this wealth and expansion also came poverty, and with poverty came crime. By 1900 Liverpool had an international reputation for drunkenness, crime and for violence.

This rapid increase in crime, resulting from the growth in wealth and population, served as the primary driver for Liverpool's adoption of a modern police force. It became one of the first towns in the UK outside of London to establish a policing model akin to that introduced by Sir Robert Peel in the capital, notably before Liverpool officially achieved city status with the creation of the Diocese of Liverpool in 1880.

Extremes of wealth and poverty

Liverpool's rapid growth led to a stark segregation between its wealthy and impoverished populations. As the town became increasingly overcrowded, the affluent began to relocate. Initially, they moved to exclusive Georgian townhouse estates such as those found on Canning Street, Rodney Street, and Abercrombie Square. Over time, this outward migration continued further into suburbs like Allerton and Mossley Hill, where large houses were constructed around expansive open spaces such as Sefton Park. Notably, residents in the grand houses adjacent to Toxteth Park even funded their own private police force to safeguard their properties.

These large houses with their extensive gardens and proximity to large open spaces, stood in great contrast to the cramped, overcrowded tenements and slums built around dark courtyards and alleyways found in the poorer parts of town. In these deprived parts of the town, residents, who possessed little to no wealth, lived in constant fear of diseases such as typhoid, typhus and dysentery, with cholera becoming an additional threat from the 1830s onwards.

Wealthy individuals often managed to avoid prosecution for crimes, particularly those committed under the influence of alcohol. A notable example is the gang of men who avoided a manslaughter charge after killing a nightwatchman in Rainford Gardens. In contrast, poorer individuals resorted to taking the law into their own hands, leading to tragic outcomes. An incident in 1802 saw the shooting of drunken sailors attempting to break into a Bridge Street brothel; the shooter was subsequently dragged into the street and beaten to death by the crowd.

Housing for rich merchants in Liverpool

Slum housing for poorer people in Liverpool

In Liverpool's growing urban environment, the rich and poor had fewer connections with each other than they would have had in older rural communities. The poor resented the luxurious lifestyles of the rich, while the rich, in turn, often demonised the poor as a violent and unruly mob.

Increasing problems with gang violence, alcoholism and prostitution

Alcohol was a major contributor to crime in Liverpool during this period. Problems arose from the excessive drinking of cheap beer or gin, readily available from over 400 public houses. Disorder also stemmed from the availability of smuggled rum. While individual drunken attacks were problematic, a greater challenge came from roaming gangs of drunken men. When economic times were good, and well-paid jobs were available, alcohol consumption increased. This led not only to more public violence but also to a rise in domestic disputes and violence.

Alcoholism proved a difficult issue for politicians. Tory councillors on Liverpool's council were influenced by brewers, resisting restrictions on alcohol access, especially for beer. Meanwhile, Whig councillors opposed telling people what to do. Ultimately, it was left to the police to manage the problem. New licensing laws, introduced in 1848 and strengthened in 1872, attempted to limit public house opening hours and what could be sold.

Closely linked to alcoholism was prostitution, particularly prevalent around the docks, from Castle Street to Paradise Street and sometimes extending to Lime Street. In 1836, Liverpool was estimated to have around 300 brothels, employing over a thousand prostitutes, with many more women working from private premises. Women and girls turned to prostitution when there was no legitimate work, a problem made worse by the variable employment levels depending on the number of ships in port. Drunkenness and violence were often connected to brothels, making them dangerous places for the women working there and the surrounding community.

Thieving was also a common crime. The same 1836 survey that documented prostitution also estimated that £700,000 was stolen annually in Liverpool. Reports indicated 1,000

adult thieves and 1,200 child thieves operated in the town. Dark alleyways, brothels, backstreet theatres and beer cellars all provided ideal opportunities for petty thieves and pickpockets.

Pre-reform law enforcement – constables and the night watch

Rising crime in eighteenth-century Liverpool challenged historian Enfield's view that crime was well-managed. Growing concerns about the parish-based policing system led to calls for reform. For example, in 1777, after Mary Clarke's badly beaten body was found in the River Mersey, a public campaign began to raise money for better policing. By 1779, authorities imposed a night-time curfew, enforced by troops from Yorkshire.

Cartoon showing a nightwatchman with his rattle and lantern scaring off body snatchers

The traditional system of nightwatchmen and parish constables was not designed for high levels of criminal activity. Lawmakers had hoped the harsh punishments of the Bloody Code would deter crime. Public punishments, like the whipping of Ellen Berry and Ann Melling in 1776 for stealing towels, aimed to prevent petty theft. More serious offences still faced execution, but by 1834, only an estimated 1 in 55 trials resulted in a death sentence. This suggests judges became more lenient, and reflects the reduction in crimes punishable by death during the 1820s and 1830s.

By the time the borough police force was created in 1836, three separate constabularies operated in the town:

1. **The Corporation Constabulary:** Organised by the town council, they patrolled town streets during the day.

2. **The Night Watch:** Run by the Commissioners of the Watch, Scavengers and Lamps, they patrolled the town at night.

3. **The Dock Watch:** Controlled by the Dock Committee, they patrolled the warehouses and landing stages of the docks.

Overall, these early policing organisations were ineffective. They lacked proper training and leadership, and violent rivalries often formed between constables from the different groups.

Focus on catching criminals rather than preventing crime

Throughout this period, the focus of early policing in Liverpool was on law enforcement – primarily catching criminals after a crime had occurred. It was assumed that the threat of the Bloody Code would deter most people from committing offences, meaning only hardened criminals would need to be found and arrested. Before the Liverpool Borough Police was founded, nothing was done to try and prevent crime.

Section B: Features of policing in Liverpool between 1787 and 1900

Policing in Liverpool from 1787

Attempts were made to improve policing. In 1787, the basic parish system of constables and nightwatchmen was changed. The town was divided into four districts, each with a head constable and two assistants. They relied heavily on witnesses to report crimes, and magistrates encouraged people to report what they saw.

As the town grew, further re-organisation was needed. Under the 1811 Liverpool Port and Town Act, Liverpool was divided into seven districts, each with a head constable and two assistants. This still meant a town of 100,000 people had only 21 policemen.

By the 1830s, three different groups of constables patrolled Liverpool:

1. **The Corporation Constabulary**: Organised by the town council, they patrolled town streets during the day but avoided the docks. There were too few of them, and newspapers often complained they were nowhere to be seen during crimes. They stuck to narrow patrol routes and often avoided areas with criminal gangs like Everton. They had a reputation for being lazy, hard to find and easy to bribe. Criminals also avoided them by moving to uncontrolled areas on the town's edge, like Edge Hill and Wavertree.

2. **The Night Watch:** Run by the Commissioners of the Watch, Scavengers and Lamps, they patrolled at night. Many people did not take them seriously. They had no weapons against armed criminals, and their lamps and rattles warned offenders they were coming. They were often found drunk on duty and could be trapped in their sentry boxes or beaten up.

3. **The Dock Watch:** Controlled by the Dock Committee, they patrolled the docks' warehouses and landing stages. Their focus was more on preventing goods theft than on crimes between people. Dock constables disliked day constables or nightwatchmen entering their territory and would often lock them up.

The whole system relied heavily on public co-operation. These constables lacked leadership, co-ordination, training and motivation. This is why the town council began to look for a better way to police Liverpool, perhaps similar to the re-organisation of police forces in London.

1830 recruitment of Lieutenant Parlour

The Metropolitan Police Force, set up in London in 1829 by Home Secretary Sir Robert Peel, was the first of its kind in the UK. Its success came from its training, discipline and effective organisation. Given the crime levels Liverpool's constables faced, the Metropolitan model seemed a good way to tackle the problem.

To help start this change, Lieutenant William Parlour was brought from the Metropolitan Police Force in 1830 to become the Superintendent of the Night Watch. He was tasked with beginning the re-organisation of Liverpool's constables to make them more effective and disciplined. This moved Liverpool closer to establishing a single, unified police force, though the town council did not yet have the power to do this before the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835.

1835 Municipal Corporation Act and the 1836 Liverpool Borough Police

Map of Liverpool in 1836

In 1835, Parliament, under a Whig government, passed the Municipal Corporations Act. This law significantly increased the power of town councils and allowed middle-class men, who had gained the right to vote in the 1832 Reform Act, to have more influence in town governance. One new power given to towns was the authority to create a Watch Committee, made up of councillors, to form a police force based on the Metropolitan model.

Liverpool's Whig-controlled council, led by prominent merchant John Holmes, voted to establish a Watch Committee at the start of 1836. This committee oversaw the creation of a new, unified police force: the Liverpool Borough Police. The existing day constables and nightwatchmen were brought together into this single force. A year later, the Dock Watch was also added to the Borough Police.

Before this re-organisation, there had been 60 Corporation Constables, 166 Nightwatchmen, and 144 in the Dock Watch. The Watch Committee took about half the day constables, 53 nightwatchmen, and most of the dock constables into the new force. This happened despite the past rivalries between these separate forces and accusations of bribery, corruption and drunkenness against them. Most of the inspectors also remained. This meant there were initially around 300 police constables to 240,000 people. Numbers would greatly increase: to 700 constables by 1845, 1,002 by 1859, and 1,804 by 1900. This made Liverpool the most heavily policed location in the UK outside of London.

Role of Michael J. Whitty in organising the new force

Michael J. Whitty's grave

Michael J. Whitty became the Head Constable of the new Liverpool Borough Police in 1836. Before this, he had been the superintendent of the Corporation Constabulary, which policed the town during the day. His main job was to re-organise policing in Liverpool following the model Sir Robert Peel used in London.

Part of this re-organisation involved dividing his force into two divisions, similar to London. The Northern and Southern divisions were split by a line from Water Street to Low Hill. The Northern Division was based at Rose Hill Police Station, with bridewells at Vauxhall Road and Exchange Street. The Southern Division was based at Seel Street Police Station, with bridewells at Brick Street and Duncan Street. Each division had a superintendent and was further divided into eight districts, each led by an inspector. Each district was considered a reasonable beat for a constable to walk during their twelve-hour shift.

Another key part of the re-organisation was to recruit the best possible constables. This proved difficult because the job was demanding: twelve hours a day, seven days a week. The pay of 18 shillings a week was the same as dockers earned for far fewer hours. For decades after 1836, police also had to serve as the town's fire brigade, adding to the challenge.

However, despite initial difficulties, Whitty's system gradually improved the quality of constables. Problems with discipline, excessive violence and drunkenness significantly decreased over time. In 1836, only one-third of constables had prior experience but, by 1868, Liverpool had more veteran constables than most other forces, including Manchester.

Lark Lane Police Station, Liverpool

In 1836, the rules for Liverpool police recruits required them to:

- be 22 to 35 years old
- be at least 5 feet 8 inches tall
- be able to read and write
- learn the 800 points of rules and law in the new Book of Instructions introduced by Whitty.

Initially, literacy requirements were less strict, and court records suggest many officers struggled with literacy for years. By the 1850s, as recruitment pressures eased, applicants had to write a letter of application, provide character references, and pass an interview and medical examination.

Recruits received a uniform, truncheon, whistle and rattle (for calling for help). They started as probationers, gaining experience by shadowing seasoned officers in court and on their beat. They could then be promoted from a third-class constable with experience, though the rank of sergeant was not introduced until the 1880s.

A regular shift system was established, adapted slightly for the time of year. Each shift began with constables marching out behind their inspector, peeling off to their assigned beat upon arrival. Each constable had a specific beat, which they walked in a consistent pattern so people knew where to find them. If a suspect needed to be taken to the bridewell, they would inform nearby constables to ensure their beat was covered. Increasingly, their focus shifted towards preventing crime by getting to know the people on their beat, earning respect and understanding local activity.

Head Constables of the Liverpool Police during this period

- **Michael Whitty (1836–1844)**: Founded the force in 1836.
- **Henry Miller (1844):** Believed in harsh discipline but was forced to resign for disobeying Watch Committee orders.
- **Mathew Dowling (1845–1852):** Had legal training and Metropolitan Police experience; re-organised the force due to new docks and warehouses but was sacked for removing a report he disagreed with.
- **John Greig (1852–1881):** Possessed military, naval and police experience; increased the force size with 20 extra constables; promoted crime prevention by encouraging parks and public spaces; encouraged officers to give bread and soup coupons to the poorest to prevent food riots.
- **John Nott Bower (1881–1902):** Trained as an Army officer, worked in Dublin police; re-organised the force into five divisions in the 1890s to match city growth; introduced wagons, based on New York's, to support constables on their beat.

1857 inspection of the Liverpool Borough Police Force

Changes in the Liverpool police appeared quickly. By 1839, the Watch Committee reported significant improvements in police behaviour. Even so, over 2,000 disciplinary offences were recorded for the 574 officers that year. However, this was a large improvement from before the new force's creation in 1836.

As the force became more accountable, excessive violence by Protestant officers against the mainly Catholic Irish community played a part in Head Constable Mathew Dowling's replacement in 1852. When John Grieg took over, he severely punished officers who broke rules, either fining or sacking them.

Under the 1856 Police Act, forces needed to pass a government inspection to get funding. Liverpool was one of the first forces inspected in 1857. Despite the challenges of setting up the force and policing a rich, growing town like Liverpool, Colonel Woodford, the government's Constabulary Inspector, highly praised the force, calling it 'the model Force in the kingdom'.

This reputation drew author Charles Dickens to Liverpool in 1860. He served as a special constable for one night while researching his book *The Uncommercial Traveller*. Based at Campbell Street bridewell, he patrolled Wapping, Liver Street, and Canning Place, covering the Salthouse and Albert Docks. This was one of Liverpool's toughest areas, with cramped housing courts, brothels, and public houses where assaults and robberies were common. Dickens had only praise for the Liverpool Police, stating in his 1861 book:

'The Liverpool Police Force is composed without favour of the best men that can be picked, it is directed by an unusual intelligence'.

New police departments

Alongside the main police force, there was a need for specialist units to support them. These developed gradually over time:

The Detective Unit

Detectives were introduced quite early, first mentioned in 1844, based at a police station and led by a detective superintendent. This was around the time Scotland Yard's Detective Branch was developing in the Metropolitan Police, formally set up in 1842. Originally, eleven detectives worked in plain clothes to find and capture criminals and gather evidence. Only first-class constables could apply to be a detective. Information from informants, interviews or observations was recorded in log books for court proceedings.

People were suspicious of detectives, fearing they were being spied on. Pub landlords disliked possible interference in their business. Many in the Irish Catholic community saw them as similar to agents Protestant landlords used in Ireland. Detectives worked alongside regular constables but were not fully integrated into the Liverpool force until 1881.

The River Police

The River Police were established in 1865 to deal with crime around the docks, harbours and on the River Mersey. Their main focus was on securing cargo and monitoring sailors' behaviour. This sometimes included intervening when ship crews tried to 'shanghai' unwilling recruits to make up their numbers. This unit had twenty constables but was under-resourced for years, lacking its own boat and borrowing or commandeering one when needed. This was dangerous work, especially on the river, with some constables dying from falling into the river or their boats sinking.

The Special Constabulary Corps

Under the same rules that allowed town councils to set up police forces, the Watch Committee could also bring in temporary constables to handle expected disturbances. This included violence during election campaigns or earlier protests like those by the Chartists. This is how Charles Dickens could serve as a constable in Liverpool for one night in 1860.

Mounted Police and Transport Department

Founded in 1886, this was the first formal division of its kind in the country, with specially trained officers and horses led initially by an army cavalry officer. Before this, inexperienced officers might be asked to commandeer and ride horses if necessary. All police transport, and that of the fire brigade, depended on horses, making a specialised unit necessary. By 1896, the department had 36 horses.

Parks Police Division

Public parks were considered the private property of town councils under the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act, so town police were not allowed to patrol inside them. Police could only enter a park to deal with a specific incident that had already occurred, rather than patrolling to protect the public. In 1865, Park Keepers were introduced to solve this. They had no police powers of arrest but could hand suspects over to the town police if needed.

Sefton Park, Liverpool

In 1871, following public complaints about criminals gathering in Stanley Park, Park Keepers were sworn in as Special Constables, and an inspector based in Sefton Park was appointed to lead them. As concerns continued about Park Keepers' ability to handle crime, it was decided in 1882 to make all Park Keepers full Park Constables, formally establishing the Parks Police Division.

Section C: Significance of policing in Liverpool 1787–1900

Ineffective policing in the face of rising crime

Liverpool's growing population and prosperity led to crime levels that severely challenged the long-established system of parish constables and nightwatchmen. The lack of training and motivation among those involved in this early policing, along with their often-deserved reputations for drunkenness and corruption, created major problems for the town's authorities in dealing with crime.

By the 1830s, statistics highlight this problem. By 1836, Liverpool had 300 brothels and at least 1,200 prostitutes. Additionally, there were 1,000 adult thieves and 1,200 child thieves operating in the town. By 1838, it was calculated that one in sixteen people in Liverpool had been charged with a crime, compared to one in twenty-four in London during the same period. This difference may have been due to varying policing levels, as London had one policeman for every 356 people, while Liverpool had one for every 422 people that year.

Overall, the quality and quantity of policing in Liverpool by the 1830s were insufficient to meet the challenge of rising crime levels in the town.

Private police forces

By the late eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, some businesses felt they couldn't rely on the old parish constables and nightwatchmen. So, they set up their own private police forces, which existed alongside the town council's policing for a time.

The Market Police

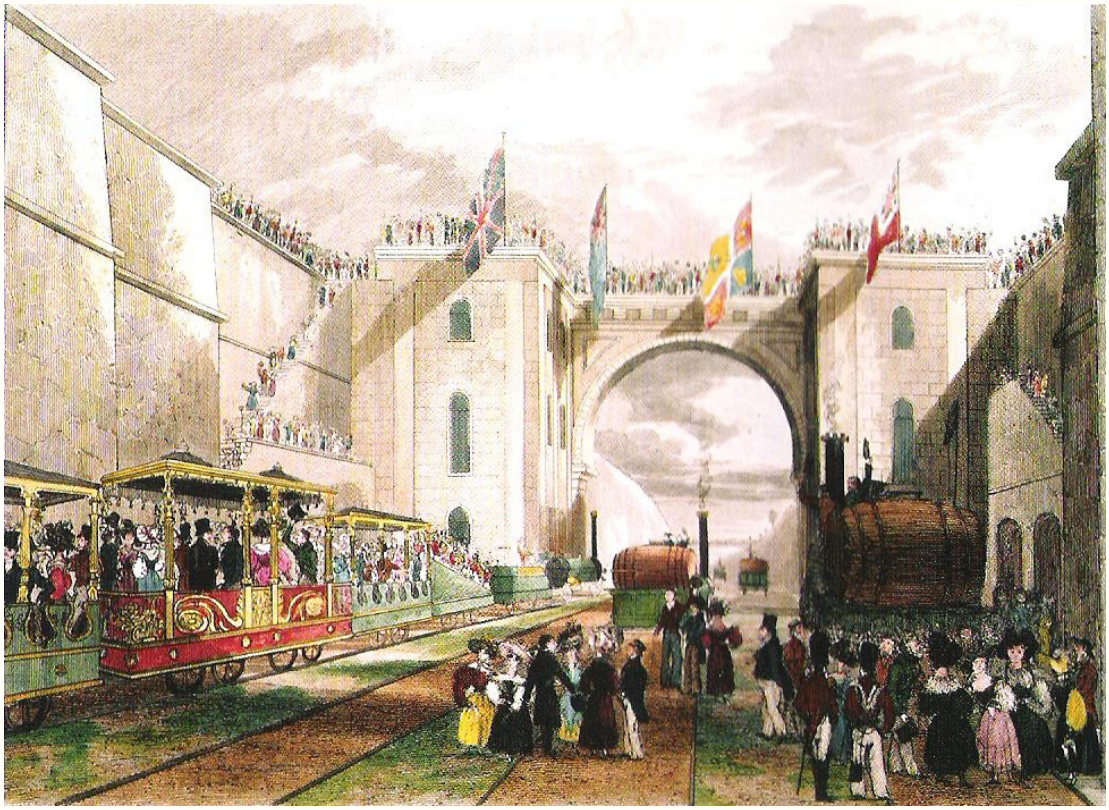
Markets had been in Liverpool since its town charter in 1207. By 1793, the town council regained control of Liverpool's markets. Liverpool had several large markets where goods from nearby farms, factories and businesses were sold alongside imports from the docks. St. Johns Market was the biggest, but Queens Street and North Markets were also significant.

Since theft was a major risk, a small number of Market Constables, led by a Head Constable, were hired to protect traders and shoppers. The earliest record of this term dates to at least 1837. Market Constables focused on crime within the market premises but also had authority outside. Though records are scarce, this force wasn't disbanded until 1972.

The Liverpool and Manchester Railway Police

The Liverpool and Manchester Railway Company, offering regular passenger and goods services between the two cities, completed its line in 1829. When the line opened in September 1830, the Company established its own police force. Sir Robert Peel, who had founded the Metropolitan Police a year earlier, praised this force for keeping order on the very busy opening day, which he attended. This was one of the first organised police forces outside London.

Railway policemen were sworn in as Special Constables, using powers from a 1673 Act. They used stations along the line as their base and trains to communicate. This might be the origin of the phrase 'police station'. Shelters were placed about a mile apart along the track to protect constables on duty. Each constable carried a truncheon engraved with the railway company's name and symbol. Their job was to protect passengers, the railway line, and its stock. They used hand signals to communicate with trains and a red flag by day or a lamp by night to stop a train. In 1834, the Liverpool and Manchester police joined other railway forces to form the Grand Junction Railway Police.



The opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway Line, September 1830

The Leeds and Liverpool Canal Police

This police force was created due to the 1840 Canal Offences Act, which required companies to maintain peace on canals. The Leeds Liverpool Canal stretched 127 miles. As no existing employees were suitable to be constables, in 1841 the canal company hired Thomas Batho, formerly of Manchester Police, to be the superintendent and recruit constables.

The superintendent and three constables patrolled the canal to prevent robberies, catch thieves, and stop misuse of the canal area, including the towpath. Thefts had to be reported to the superintendent. For instance, in 1843, these canal constables recommended that four lock keepers be fired for stealing from boats.

A new superintendent, Abraham Beanland, took over in 1848, but the company shut down the police force in 1851. There's no clear reason for this decision, but economic factors likely played a part.

Piecemeal policing

Before the unified Liverpool police force was created, law enforcement in the town was very inconsistent, relying heavily on the individuals involved. The system of parish constables dated back to medieval times, and the power to appoint special constables, especially as nightwatchmen, went back to 1673 under Charles II.

However, this law enforcement system was meant as a last resort. The Bloody Code, a system of laws where nearly every crime could be punished by death, was supposed to deter people through fear of terrible punishment. For those not executed, other punishments included transportation, physical mutilation or public humiliation.

By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, rising crime levels clearly showed this system was no longer working. Policing was not keeping up with this increase. Attempts were made to re-organise the system in 1787 and again in 1811. Even after this, the system in Liverpool remained very patchy, with three separate groups of constables: the Corporation Constabulary (Day Watch), the Nightwatchmen (Night Watch), and the Dock Constables (Dock Watch).

Coverage of the town was inconsistent. Although the Dock Watch was seen as the most disciplined and effective force, bribery undermined the Day Watch, and the Night Watch were mostly considered drunk or very lazy. A rivalry between these groups also meant they did not work together, preventing them from being effective.

Founding of a Metropolitan Police Force in 1836

There was a clear attempt to set up a police force in Liverpool modelled on Sir Robert Peel's Metropolitan Police, established in London in 1829. While no specific law yet gave town councils the power to create new forces, Liverpool town council used its existing powers over constables and nightwatchmen to start improving its system.

The appointment of Lieutenant Parlour to lead the Day Watch was a chance to use his experience from London to benefit Liverpool's policing. He began to co-ordinate the Day Watch, Night Watch and Dock Watch, making them more unified like the London force.

By 1835, the Municipal Corporations Act allowed Liverpool town council to set up its own police force under a new local Watch Committee. They brought the three existing forces into one new unified force led by Head Constable Michael J. Whitty. He re-organised the town's policing to make it more effective and also set rules for recruiting and keeping more disciplined officers, just as had been done in London.

Improving the reputation and effectiveness of the force

The first members of the Liverpool Police Force were a mix of the best old constables and new recruits, who often joined because they couldn't find other work. They faced tough conditions: seven days a week, twelve hours a day, for the same pay as casual dock workers. Over time, Head Constable Whitty's rules gradually reduced problems like bribery, drunkenness and excessive violence. This is why the force was so highly praised in its first inspection report in 1857.

When John Nott Bower became Head Constable in 1881, he continued improving officer discipline. He increased education programmes to ensure officers were more literate. The rank of sergeant was introduced in 1885 for closer supervision of constables. Police wagons, inspired by those in New York, were brought in during 1892 to transport suspects faster and get constables back to their beats.

Officers no longer had to work seven days a week. They also received thirty days holiday a year and could join a pension scheme for retirement. These changes didn't make the Liverpool police complacent; they made them more efficient. By the end of the century, the crime rate had fallen so much that fewer police officers were needed.

Impact of the expansion of the city boundaries in 1895

Despite the difficulties faced earlier in the nineteenth century, by the end of the century, Liverpool City Police could much more effectively handle new challenges. When the city expanded in 1895 to include the suburbs of Wavertree, Walton and West Derby, Head Constable Nott Bower efficiently re-organised policing to account for this.

Liverpool City Police was now divided into five divisions instead of two, covering 18 districts. The new divisions were:

A – The central city business and shopping districts, plus river landing stages, covering 15,000 residents and a large number of transient people (workers, shoppers, visitors).

B – The industrial and residential area just outside the city centre, including the oldest terrace housing for the poorest, with a population of 108,000.

C – The area along the River Mersey, including warehouses, docks and nearby housing, with a population of 74,000.

D – The poorest housing in the city along its main road, with a population of 36,000.

E – The docks heading north from the town centre towards Bootle.

While it took years to make the unified force effective after its formation in 1836, the changes in 1895 were implemented quickly and efficiently.

Reduction in policing numbers

When Liverpool expanded its city boundaries in 1895 to include Walton, Wavertree and West Derby, the miles of streets the police had to patrol increased from 191 to 399. Logically, this should have led to an increase in officers. Twice as many street miles should have meant twice as many officers.

However, the opposite occurred. Liverpool City Police had become so effective at solving and preventing crime that the Watch Committee decided to experiment with having 100 fewer police officers in 1898. This change became permanent in 1899, and by 1900, the police in Liverpool were considered one of the most effective forces in the country.

zMaps showing details and evolution of Liverpool during this period:
https://historic-liverpool.co.uk/old-maps-of-liverpool/

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