

Women in the police forces in Britain: 1880-1931.

Audrey CARTRON

Master 1 ASPECTS à l'Université Paris 7-Denis Diderot et à l'ENS Cachan

Mémoire de recherche en civilisation britannique
Sous la direction de Myriam Boussahba-Bravard

Soutenu le 24 juin 2015

Membres du jury : Myriam Boussahba-Bravard et Stéphanie Prévost

Année universitaire 2014-2015

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Myriam Boussahba-Bravard, my MA thesis supervisor, for her valuable advice and innumerable comments and Lynn O'Mahony, Assistant Librarian at the UK National Police Library, for her help and for the useful documents she sent me.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	3
Introduction	5
I) Structural obstacles to the recruitment of women in the police forces: 1880-1914.....	9
A) A masculine social order: the ideology of separate spheres and of women's inferiority ..	9
1) The theory of separate spheres and its origins	9
2) Patriarchy and women's confinement to domesticity and inferiority	10
B) Reasons why police jobs were considered as unfit for women	12
1) Violence, masculinity and police culture	12
2) Incompatibility of everyday life in the police with womanhood and motherhood.....	14
C) When the need for a police female force spread.....	16
1) A favourable context: the spread of feminism.....	16
2) The necessity of women in an entirely masculine judicial system	17
3) Enough is enough: the Contagious Disease Act, child prostitution and Jack the Ripper.....	18
1) Family and social background	20
2) Duties	21
3) A parallel between reality and fiction.....	22
II) From matrons to policewomen: 1914-1919	24
A) Two major organisations: the Women Police Service and the National Union of Women Workers	24
1) A favourable context.....	24
2) The creation of the Women Police Service and of the National Union of Women Workers's patrols	25
3) Similarities and differences.....	27
B) Policewomen's duties, limited powers and the reactions of the local population	30
1) Munitions factories, patrol work and other duties	30
2) Blurred status and limited powers.....	34
3) The reactions of the local population.....	36
C) Policewomen and feminism.....	39
1) Testing the boundaries of masculine and feminine and promoting women's rights	39
2) Debunking the feminist and revolutionary dimension of women's entry into police work.....	41
3) Policewomen's ambitions for the post-war future and the first encouraging steps	43
III) Post-war fight for the official recognition of policewomen: 1919-1931	46
A) Specific work: emphasis on difference.....	46

1) A splitting of feminist ideology in favour of gender difference	46
2) Specialist work.....	47
3) “Their work was not police work, no matter how noble”	49
B) Ambivalence of the post-war years regarding women in the police in peacetime	51
1) A certain post-war withdrawal.....	51
2) A widespread recognition	54
3) The ambivalence of the authorities	56
C) Towards a certain acceptance of women as part of the police organisation.....	60
1) Policewomen’s strategies.....	60
2) Major changes	62
Conclusion.....	65
Appendices	67
Bibliography	70

Introduction

Women are particularly adapted for work which comes outside the scope of the ordinary detective but unfortunately it is sometimes unsafe to trust a woman with an important investigation [or case] where young men are concerned. They are swayed by emotion. They can't help it: it is their nature, and they have been known to fall in love with the man they have been sent to watch.¹

This declaration of a Scotland Yard spokesman in 1916 is one of the innumerable manifestations of hostility endured by women from the very beginning of their entry into the police. Throughout the end of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, the campaign for the employment and for the official recognition of policewomen in Britain met with many structural obstacles. Campaigners had to convince sceptical or strongly opposed opponents from society at large but also from within the police forces, which remained for a long time exclusively masculine. "Police" refers to "the bureaucratic and hierarchical bodies employed by the state to maintain order and to prevent and detect crime".² The modern shape of these bodies was designed in 1829 by Robert Peel when he created the Metropolitan Police Service, the territorial police force responsible for law enforcement in Greater London. If major changes in the acceptance and the status of women in the police were experienced and initiated by the Metropolitan Police, local variations throughout the country also deserve to be studied. In theory, the Home Office was the head of British police forces but, in fact, it only played –and it is still the case today– an advisory role. Thus the Home Office had concrete power over the London Force but in the rest of the country the decisions were left in the hands of local authorities. This principle of local discretion was both an advantage and a disadvantage in the fight for the establishment of women police because, depending on the local chief constables, the idea of the appointment of women could be either opposed and obstructed or welcomed and actively supported. Hence, this dissertation will focus on women in the Metropolitan Police, and thus in London, but also in forces all over the country in order to tackle the wide range of situations experienced by pioneer policewomen throughout Britain. Besides, the emphasis will largely be put on the campaign for the entry of women into police work, on institutional changes but also on the in-the-field aspect, tackling the interactions

¹ Young, M. (1991). *An Inside Job: Policing and Police Culture in Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 200.

² Emsley, C. (1991). *The English Police: a Political and Social History*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, p. 1.

between women constables and their male colleagues but also between policewomen and the rest of the society, with who they were directly in contact in the streets for instance.

The period 1880-1931 encompasses major improvements regarding the acceptance, role and status of policewomen but also represents a particularly interesting period of British history, especially concerning the evolution of the status of women in the whole society. Women were first employed by the Metropolitan Police as matrons in 1883 thus choosing the year 1880 as a first chronological limit leads me to study a key period of the history of women in the police in Britain but also to deal with the debate preceding the entry of women in the police. The year 1931 was marked by a major improvement when the Home Office issued the first official regulations defining the function and the status of policewomen wherever and whenever they were employed. These statutory regulations can be considered as a turning point because they established an institutional framework and were one of the first major steps towards official acceptance of women into the British police forces. Moreover, such chronological framework will also obviously enable me to study social, political and cultural changes and evolutions that occurred in Britain between 1880 and 1931. The First World War for instance had enormous consequences on the British society in general but also on the police in particular because the war was an accelerator precipitating the entry of women into police work. The interconnections between the evolutions of the status and acceptance of policewomen with the changes experienced by the British society of the time have been barely studied.

Indeed, it appears that there is a gap in the literature dealing with the British police. First of all, only a few books were published about women in the police. This subject is often briefly tackled in many books dealing with the history of police but is hardly ever really treated, analyzed and studied in depth. Hence, many books from brilliant historians such as Thomas Critchley or Clive Emsley,³ considered as pioneers of the historiography on the history of the English police, only briefly and quickly –in some paragraphs or even some lines– refer to the status, the perception and the role of women in the police. Such a niche can be explained by the fact that women appeared very late among the police forces and remained –for a long time– in small numbers. Nevertheless, the development of gender studies in the 1980s led some historians to start studying the history of policewomen. Among recent interesting, relevant and well-informed works on the subject, the writings of Joan Lock, John Carrier, Angela Woollacott, Philippa Levine and Louise Jackson can be

³ Critchley, T. (1967). *A History of Police in England and Wales*. London: Constable ; Emsley, C. (1991). *The English Police: a Political and Social History*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

quoted. Biographies can also be very useful when studying the subject: hence the autobiographies of Lilian Wyles, Dorothy Peto and Mary Allen for instance deserve to be taken into account, providing an internal approach of the profession, an example of personal experiences of the job. Finally, paradoxically, it can be interesting to study works entirely focusing on men, police culture and masculinity.⁴ Indeed, such books provide food for thought concerning for instance the absence of women in the police before the First World War or the difficulties they could have experienced penetrating a typically masculine profession. In the historiography, works directly dealing with the evolutions of the status and role of policewomen but also with an analysis of the reasons why women were not employed by the police before and of the debate launched by such a change are scarce. Another aspect barely studied is the interplay between the changes experienced by the police institution and the profession and the changes occurring within the society of the time. Indeed, “the acceptance of women into traditional male occupational groups depended on the view taken of the role of women”⁵ in society at large. Thus, the evolution of the role and status of women in the police deserves to be contextualized, analyzed in depth in the light of the social, political and cultural changes of the time.

Therefore, my MA dissertation will aim at answering this question: to what extent did the evolutions of the role, the status and the perception of women in the British police reflect the social, political and cultural changes of the time?

I will first highlight the structural obstacles to the recruitment of women in the police forces between 1880 and 1914, showing that, paradoxically, women entered a masculine world at a time when they were subordinate to men in everyday life, in a society in which the ideology of separate spheres was dominant and severely rooted. Besides, to the patriarchal basis of the late-Victorian and early-Edwardian society was also added another obstacle: the masculine, authoritarian and violent dimension of police work, which was considered in mainstream opinion as unfit for women. Nevertheless, despite these structural obstacles, an active campaign for the appointment of women into the police forces of Britain led to the employment of the first police matrons. Secondly, I will show that the First World War was a turning point in the history of women in the police and that between 1914 and 1919 their status evolved from voluntary matrons to voluntary policewomen and eventually to official policewomen. The war created needs for special

⁴ For instance Barrie, D., & Broomhall, S. (2012). *A History of Police and Masculinities, 1700-2010*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

⁵ Carrier, J. (1988). *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*. Aldershot: Avebury, p. XV.

police duties attributed to women who experienced support but also indifference or even hostility from the local populations. Furthermore, if the feminist impetus for the appointment of voluntary policewomen cannot be denied, the interconnections between policewomen and feminism deserve to be qualified. Thirdly, I will study the fight for the official recognition of policewomen between 1919 and 1931, showing that, despite a certain post-war withdrawal and the ambivalence of the authorities, major changes were achieved. Indeed, during this period, the presence of women in the police was ensured in the long-term as well as the delimitation of a special sphere of activity saved for policewomen who finally achieved statutory recognition in 1931.

I) Structural obstacles to the recruitment of women in the police forces: 1880-1914

A) A masculine social order: the ideology of separate spheres and of women's inferiority

1) The theory of separate spheres and its origins

The late-Victorian and the Edwardian society were characterized by a masculine social order pervaded by the theory of separate spheres and by women's inferior status. Many scholars dealing with these periods of the British history refer to dichotomies between "male and female", "the dominating and the dominated", "public and private spheres", "work and home", "mind and body", "reason and desire". As Amanda Vickery underlines "the separate spheres framework has come to constitute one of the fundamental organizing categories, if not the organizing category of modern British women's history".⁶ Indeed, there was a strong dichotomy between "a male sphere that [was] public" including trade, business, law, government and "a women's sphere that [was] private" encompassing home, family and children.⁷ The common assumption that the world and sphere of women were different from that of men was assimilated by the huge majority of the population, in a society pervaded by patriarchy which is defined as "the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and in society in general".⁸ Therefore, women were confined to the domestic and private sphere, to domesticity, prudery, inferiority, subordination to their male relatives, weakness, frustration and motherhood. This established social order made the entry of women into the police almost impossible, especially as the police are a typically masculine, public and authoritarian body. Such a theory of separate spheres and of women's inferiority was rooted in religious and biological arguments.

Ellen Jordan states that the basis of the doctrine of separate spheres lies in the biblical description of the creation in which God says "It is not good that man should be alone: I will make him a helper fit for him" (Genesis 2:18). The historian writes that at the time God was thought to have "created separate spheres for men and women, and it was only in these divinely ordained spheres that they could fulfill the destiny for which they were created".⁹ Moreover, the ideal of womanhood was also associated with the image of "the angel in the house", a phrase borrowed from the title of a poem by Coventry Patmore in which he

⁶ Vickery, A. 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History.' *The Historical Journal*, 36 (2), (June, 1993) 383-414, p. 389.

⁷ Kuersten, A. (2003). *Women and the Law: Leaders, Cases and Documents*. Santa Barbara (California): ABC-CLIO, p.16.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁹ Jordan, E. (1999). *The Women's Movement and Women's Employment in Nineteenth Century Britain*. London: Routledge, p. 42.

describes his paragon of the perfect wife. This ideal of “the angel in the house” epitomized a wide-spread moral imperative stating that “women had been created noble and angelic for the purpose of serving husband and family”.¹⁰ This idea was highly appealing at the time, even –and maybe above all– for women, because it implied that “though in every practical way inferior to men, [women] could feel morally superior”.¹¹ This idea highlights the paradoxical status of women who were inferior to men in the hierarchy of human beings but superior to them as far as morality was concerned.

Besides, Patricia Jalland and John Hooper highlight that “the nature of women in Victorian and Edwardian Britain was conceived by contemporaries primarily in biological terms”¹² and that reproduction was seen as “the most important element of women’s lives”.¹³ This idea of a biological destiny is exemplified by Eliza Lynn Linton’s words:

it is [...] an absolute truth –the *raison d’être* of a woman is maternity. For this and this alone nature had differentiated her from man, and built her up cell by cell and organ by organ. The continuance of the race in healthy reproduction, together with the fit nourishment and care of the young after birth, is the ultimate end of woman.¹⁴

Such biological and sexual differences were used by her contemporaries as arguments of a biological devaluation justifying a division of labor. Indeed, menstruation for instance was associated with female illness and considered as proving women’s incapability to work.¹⁵ Furthermore, this idea of a biological female inferiority was strengthened by social Darwinism, which is the “application of Darwin's theory of natural selection to the evolution of human society”.¹⁶ Indeed, social Darwinism emphasized the dichotomy between the strong (men) and the weak (women), reinforcing the existing gendered differentiations.

2) Patriarchy and women’s confinement to domesticity and inferiority

The nineteenth century was characterized by a wide-spread idea stating that religion, nature and science demanded women’s exclusion from employment and wider social life, restricting women’s realm to domesticity and family. Indeed, “the family in Victorian England was the site of confined domestication whose grip on women was firm and

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.54.

¹² Jalland, P. & Hooper, J. (1986). *Women from Birth to Death: the Female Life Cycle in Britain 1830-1914*. Brighton: Harvester, p. 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁴ Linton, E. ‘The Wild Women as Politicians’ *Nineteenth Century*, 30 (July 1891) 79-88, p.80.

¹⁵ Jalland & Hooper, *Women from Birth to Death: the Female Life Cycle*, p. 56.

¹⁶ Rogers, J. ‘Darwinism and Social Darwinism.’ *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 33 (2), (1972), 265-280, p. 265.

frequently total”.¹⁷ The Fabian author Edith Nesbit for instance declared that “most women wanted a mate and a child more than vote, education or civil rights”.¹⁸ The dominant ideology of the time was to consider women as maternal beings, confined to the public realm and in charge of the family. In her article, Amanda Vickery provides the following description of the typical life of a middle-class woman of the nineteenth-century:

A near prisoner in the home, Mrs Average led a sheltered life drained of economic purpose and public responsibility. As her physicality was cramped by custom, corset and crinoline, she was often a delicate creature who was, at best, conspicuously in need of masculine protection and, at worst, prey to invalidism. [She was] ever-attentive and subservient to the needs of her family. Only in her matronly virtue and radiant Christianity did she exercise a mild authority over her immediate circle. She was immured in the private sphere and would not escape.¹⁹

Paradoxically, women’s private spheres were in fact highly public. Indeed, women’s private lives were absolutely controlled, constantly under surveillance and publicly debated, even as far as the most intimate domains –such as sexuality– were concerned.

The emphasis on the maternal role of women and their confinement to the private realm were strongly linked with the devaluation of women’s work. On the 27th of November 1888, Lucy Cavendish wrote to her friend Mary Gladstone:

I think those [who are in favor of women’s work] are really running in counter of Nature’s clearest indications, and are perverse in wishing women to go at men’s work till they drop, or at any rate till their poor babies and home come to grief. [...] I don’t only mean wives and mothers; single women have many motherly and home duties.²⁰

In other words, if a woman worked, she was doing so at the detriment of her family, even if she was single. Lucy Cavendish also insists on “[women’s] special *strengths* for their own special duties”.²¹ We can here highlight the paradoxical dimension of women’s status at the time: even if they were considered as inferior and weak beings, nevertheless it existed a sort of exceptionalism of women reigning on the private and domestic realm. This ambivalence echoes the idea previously evoked stating that women were considered as inferior for religious reasons but yet remained the “angels of the house”, morally superior. Nevertheless,

¹⁷ Levine, P. (1990). *Feminist lives in Victorian England: private roles and public commitment*. Oxford: Blackwell, p. 10.

¹⁸ Delap, L. ‘Feminist and Anti-Feminist Encounters in Edwardian Britain’. *Historical Research*, 78 (201), (August 2005), 377-399, p. 394.

¹⁹ Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres?’, p. 387.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

²¹ *Ibid.*

even if the ideology of separate spheres was prevalent at the time, it would be wrong to assess that every woman of the Victorian and the Edwardian era were confined to the private sphere and absent from the paid-work force. Indeed, the industrialization reinforced the employment of working-class women who deserve to be mentioned. Nonetheless, such an access to work and thus to the public sphere was rarely perceived by these women as any sort of emancipation but rather as a necessity motivated by economic needs. Moreover, as Ellen Jordan puts it, working-class women worked under patriarchal conditions and were confined to female jobs.²² Indeed, the 1881 census shows that 36% of all working women were in domestic service and 35% in the textile and clothing industries and at the end of the century, teaching and nursing were expanding.²³ Hence the late-Victorian and the Edwardian period were characterized by a “polarization of the masculine and feminine identities”.²⁴ On the one hand, womanhood was commonly associated with weakness, inferiority and subordination and thus incompatible with the status of a police officer who, by essence, embodies the law and establishes his authority over the other members of the society. On the other hand, Victorian and Edwardian “manliness [...] was based on physical vigour, bodily hardness [...] athleticism”²⁵ and superiority; and such masculine values were precisely at the very centre of the identity of policemen, one of the main reasons why women were considered as unfit for the job.

B) Reasons why police jobs were considered as unfit for women

1) Violence, masculinity and police culture

David Barrie and Susan Broomhall underline that “ideologies about masculinity have shaped police culture, practice, policy and institutional organization from the eighteenth century to the present day”.²⁶ Indeed, mainstream opinion associated police culture with virility, manliness, even male chauvinism, force, physique, violence, authority and even brutality; all these elements are the exact opposite of feminine values. In their everyday life, policemen had to face violence, either using it or enduring it. On the one hand, “policemen in England in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often relied upon strength and

²² Jordan, *The Women's Movement and Women's Employment in Nineteenth Century Britain*, pp. 62-84.

²³ Carrier, J. (1988). *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*. Aldershot: Avebury, pp. xi-xii.

²⁴ Fletcher, A. ‘Patriotism, the Great War and the Decline of the Victorian Manliness’. *The Journal of the Historical Association*, 99 (334), (2014) 40-72, p.41.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

²⁶ Barrie, D., & Broomhall, S. (2012). *A History of Police and Masculinities, 1700-2010*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, p. 1.

aggression to establish authority and reputation in the district they patrolled”.²⁷ Thus violence and brutality were often necessary to assert their authority. Both their uniform and their wooden truncheons were signs of strength. On the other hand, police constables were often violently assaulted when they were on their beats: “an officer was liable to be hurt everyday on his beat and would certainly not go five years without being injured”.²⁸ Thus some of the central elements of the policeman’s role were to face violent assaults, armed offenders, provocation, hostility and danger on a regular basis. Hence, policemen’s capacity to use physical force was not only essential to their reputation but also to their own safety, in a society in which there were “high levels of violence crime, drunkenness, vandalism, racist attacks, sexual assaults and harassment, child sexual abuse, terrorism [...] gang violence”.²⁹ Policemen also dealt with crowds, controlled riots –one of the severer riots that occurred between 1880 and 1914 was the Bloody Sunday in 1887³⁰– and pre-war strikes on the eve of the First World War. Of course, the idea of a woman dealing with such a dangerous job was barely thinkable –if not thinkable at all.

In order to face everyday violence, the emphasis was very often put on a “physical police masculinity”³¹ : “all recruits to the police had to be exceptionally tall, sturdy, healthy, young and capable to sustain physical exertion”.³² In his memoirs entitled *At Scotland Yard*, John Sweeney emphasizes the importance of his early athleticism, detailing his abilities at boxing, running, wrestling, cricket and hockey.³³ This cult of athleticism and of masculine values –such as strength, force, physique, authority– in the police left absolutely no room for women. At the time under study, exercise was even considered as dangerous for women. Many works published throughout the nineteenth century denounced the detrimental effects of female exercise. An article published in 1910-1911 in *Eugenics Review* argues that an emphasis on games and athletics is likely to do irreparable damage to women’s health.³⁴ Women’s alleged incapability to adopt such masculine standards was a major obstacle to their

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁸ Dodsworth, F. ‘Men on a Mission: Masculinity, Violence and the Self-Presentation of Policemen in England, c. 1870-1914’. In Barrie, D., & Broomhall, S. (2012). *A History of Police and Masculinities, 1700-2010*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, p. 123.

²⁹ D’Cruze S. (2000). *Everyday Violence in Britain, 1850-1950: Gender and Class*. Harlow: Longman, p.1.

³⁰ A demonstration in London on November 13, 1887 to protest against unemployment and the British repression in Ireland.

³¹ Dodsworth, ‘Men on a Mission: Masculinity, Violence and the Self-Presentation of Policemen’, p. 131.

³² Shpayer-Makov, H. ‘Shedding the Uniform and Acquiring a New Masculine Image: The Case of the Late Victorian and Edwardian English Police Detective’. In Barrie & Broomhall, *A History of Police and Masculinities*, p. 142.

³³ Dodsworth, ‘Men on a Mission: Masculinity, Violence and the Self-Presentation of Policemen’, p. 134.

³⁴ Hargreaves, J. (1994). *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women’s Sports*. London: Routledge, p. 105.

entry in the police. Rebecca Horn and Clive Hollin highlight the discrepancy between the characteristics attributed to men : hard, logical, rational, scientific, force, centrality, defining, revered, inside, tough, authoritarian ; in contrast with those attributed to women during the period under study: soft, emotional, irrational, instinctive, service, marginality, defined, rejected, outside, weak, submitted.³⁵ Furthermore, the police training received by new recruits was also characterized by a strong emphasis on masculinity and virility. Joanne Klein refers to the instruction books given to the new recruits and which presented “a clear image of the ideal police officer as the epitome of the masculine worker”.³⁶

The difficulty to penetrate a typically masculine profession was reinforced by the existence of strong ties between policemen who were forming a circle of men identifying with police culture. Indeed, they shared interests and experience, worked in pairs –and hence relied on each other– and created strong bonds and solidarity during long hours and night shifts, faced everyday violence together, had the important mission to impose control, discipline and law, they had the same habits and the same uniform. To sum it up, they had the impression to form a community. This idea is emphasized by Haia Shpayer-Makov: “engagement in law enforcement by nature created a distance between the policeman and the public and in turn strengthened group attachment. [Policeman’s job] limited [his] socialisation outside the police and fostered stronger bonds with his work mates”.³⁷ Thus there was a dichotomy between insiders sharing the same police culture who were policemen sharing the same experience and values and outsiders who were the other members of the society and especially women whose values were the extreme opposite.

2) Incompatibility of everyday life in the police with womanhood and motherhood

Several aspects of the policeman’s everyday life were considered as incompatible with womanhood but also with the very essence of women, motherhood. Policemen faced everyday violence, they worked in rough environments and in places considered as unsuitable for respectable women: they patrolled in poor areas pervaded by drunkenness, violence, debauchery, crime, sins and vice.³⁸ They dealt with vagrants, drunkards, prostitutes, street

³⁵ Horn, R., & Hollin C. ‘Police Beliefs about Women who Offend.’ *Legal and Criminal Psychology*, 2 (2), (1997) 193-204, p. 194.

³⁶ Klein, J. ‘Quiet and Determined Servants and Guardians: Creating Ideal English Police Officers, 1900-45’. In Barrie & Broomhall, *A History of Police and Masculinities, 1700-2010*, p. 201-216, p. 201.

³⁷ Shpayer-Makov, H. ‘The Making of a Police Labour Force.’ *Journal of Social History*, 24 (1), (Autumn 1990), 109-134, p. 114.

³⁸ Dodsworth, ‘Men on a Mission: Masculinity, Violence and the Self-Presentation of Policemen’, p. 125.

trades, having a close watch on public houses, brothels and fairs.³⁹ Moreover, the job was exhausting: “most of the days consisted simply of many hours of patrolling the long unmade country roads, hot and dusty in summer, muddy and wet in winter”.⁴⁰ They also had night duties, “off-duty the men were liable to be called on at all times in case of an emergency”.⁴¹ All these aspects of the job and the harsh working conditions were incompatible with what was considered as the very essence of a woman: bearing and raising children. Thus motherhood and entire devotion to the family was not compatible with the fact that “once enrolled, the policeman embarked on a way of life that demanded almost unremitting hard work” seven days a week”.⁴² Thus it was impossible to reconcile a job demanding outside duties at all hours for trouble-makers as opposed to home duties at all hours for children and household.

Furthermore, Clive Emsley highlights the military nature of the police, referring to the “hierarchical structure of the force, the uniforms, the rigid discipline”.⁴³ Indeed, a parallel can be drawn between the police and the army. The police hierarchy was characterized by strict controls, a rigid chain of commands in which the subordinates owed total obedience to their superiors⁴⁴ and punishments were imposed arbitrarily.⁴⁵ Moreover, policemen also wore a uniform (blue uniform, top hats) which “conferred [them] power and authority [...] and served to enhance [their] standing as representing the patriarchal state”.⁴⁶ As Haia Shpayer-Makov underlines “a unifying depiction in the mainstream press was that the policeman met the prime attributes of hegemonic manliness –impressive physique, authority, and virility”.⁴⁷ It is interesting to highlight that such masculine and hegemonic values were shared by men working in the army, a body in which women’s appointments for tasks similar to male ones were absolutely unthinkable at the time.⁴⁸ Hence the militarisation of the police constituted another major obstacle to the entry of women in the police forces.

³⁹ Jones, D. ‘The New Police, Crime and People in England and Wales, 1829-1888.’ *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 33, (1983) 151-168, pp. 160-161.

⁴⁰ Critchley, T. (1967). *A History of Police in England and Wales*. London: Constable, p. 159.

⁴¹ Shpayer-Makov, ‘The Making of a Police Labour Force.’, p. 115.

⁴² Critchley, *A History of Police*, p.150.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁴ Shpayer-Makov, ‘The Making of a Police Labour Force.’, p. 118.

⁴⁵ Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales*, p. 152.

⁴⁶ Shpayer-Makov, ‘Shedding the Uniform and Acquiring a New Masculine Image’. In Barrie & Broomhall, *A History of Police and Masculinities*, pp. 141-142.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁴⁸ British women entered the army for the first time in 1917 with the creation of Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). They were not allowed to join the ranks of the infantry and Armored Corps, i.e. to serve on the front line and it is still the case nowadays. Nevertheless, such a ban is currently highly debated and will probably be abolished in the years to come. See the online article of *The Guardian* (Dec 19, 2014) ‘Women could get combat

Thus, the very essence of police work and police culture could not even be considered for women by most of the contemporaries because of the emphasis put on violence, masculinity, authority, strength, absolute night-and-day commitment. As Barrie and Broomhall write: “police institutions [...] are closely intertwined with the distribution and operation of power in society”.⁴⁹ Thus masculine hegemony in the police –and in the legal system in general– reflected the gendered social order of the Victorian and the early-Edwardian England. Nevertheless, this established gendered order did not remain unquestioned between 1880 and 1914.

C) When the need for a police female force spread

1) A favourable context: the spread of feminism

The second half of the nineteenth century is characterized by the development of a “vigorous, diverse and prescient” feminism.⁵⁰ Feminists started to fight more and more vehemently for women’s access to public life and justice. Lucy Delap underlines that at the time “the ‘woman question’ [was] less about voting and more about sexual relations and the inferiority of most women”.⁵¹ Indeed, the historian states that “even ‘anti-[suffrage]’ women were determined to form an alliance with moderate suffragists, and to work towards an extension of women’s political influence [on] social policy and local government”.⁵² The late-nineteenth and early twentieth century was marked by a growing critique of the gendered order of the society: publications such as Charlotte Carmichael Stopes’ *British Freewomen* (1894) and Christabel Pankhurst’s *The Great Scourge and How to End It* (1913) can be quoted among many others. In her treatise, Christabel Pankhurst writes that “the power of maternity is something that women have in addition to their other powers”,⁵³ underlining the fact that marriage and family were not the only destiny of women. The private and domestic role of women was not the only one to be questioned: feminists called for a “fundamental redefinition [of the] institutional structures of their society”,⁵⁴ leading them to campaign for the employment of women in male domains such as courtrooms or police stations.

roles in British army by 2016’ quoting the Defence Secretary Michael Fallon advocating women serving in frontline infantry roles.

⁴⁹ Barrie & Broomhall, *A History of Police and Masculinities*, p. 1.

⁵⁰ Levine, *Feminist lives in Victorian England*, p. 176.

⁵¹ Delap, ‘Feminist and Anti-Feminist Encounters in Edwardian Britain’, p. 392.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 386.

⁵³ Wright, M. ‘The Women’s Emancipation Union and Radical-Feminist Politics in Britain, 1891-1899’. *Gender & History*, 22 (2), (August, 2010) 382-406, p. 385.

⁵⁴ Levine, *Feminist lives in Victorian England*, p. 106.

2) The necessity of women in an entirely masculine judicial system

One of the main factors motivating the campaign for the employment of policewomen was the growing awareness of –and the will to fight against– a biased judicial system entirely run by men. Indeed, the existence of women in the legal system came down to three states: victims, offenders and subordinated beings.⁵⁵ Instead of protecting the weak and the inferior, the law acted at their expense. Indeed, female victims had to face, at best denial, at worst accusations. According to Shani D’Cruze, euphemisms used in court reports such as “committed the outrage”, “committed the act”, “confirmation of her injuries” to refer to a rape acted to “disguise the true events”, reflecting the society’s contemporary denial.⁵⁶ Moreover, the historian also writes that “in the courtroom in particular, gender stereotypes often operated to the detriment of any woman involved, especially female complaints [considered] as less reliable”.⁵⁷ In the case of a rape for instance, the blame was very often put on the woman and on her ingenuity and male sexual predators were often left unpunished. Many contemporary feminists, child welfare groups and morality campaigners united in their criticism of a criminal justice system run exclusively by men: “if a young woman of 15 alleged assault by a man, she would face medical examination by a male surgeon, questioning by a male policeman and, if the case went to trial, she would find herself surrounded by male lawyers, judges and jurors”.⁵⁸ Indeed, “when a trial involving a sexual offense took place, it was not unusual for the magistrate to protect Edwardian sensibilities by clearing the room of all women apart from the witness”.⁵⁹ Another example of female victims oppressed by the law is the case of married women: in the nineteenth century, they had no status in law and were absolutely dependent on their husbands.⁶⁰ Thus such a status made it difficult (if not impossible) to resist domestic violence. This violence was even legitimized by the ideology of

⁵⁵ The subordination of women to their male relatives was institutionalized by the law.

⁵⁶ Stevenson, K. “‘Ingenuities of the Female Mind’: Legal and Public Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Victorian England, 1850-1890. In D’Cruze S. (2000), *Everyday Violence in Britain, 1850-1950: Gender and Class*. Harlow: Longman, pp. 89-103, pp. 89-90.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-94.

⁵⁸ Jackson, L. ‘Women Professionals and the Regulations of Violence in interwar Britain’. In D’Cruze S. (2000), *Everyday Violence in Britain, 1850-1950: Gender and Class*. Harlow: Longman, pp. 119-135, p. 119.

⁵⁹ Woodeson, A. ‘The First Women Police: A Force for Equality or Infringement.’ *Women’s History Review*, 2 (2), (2006) 217-232, p. 218.

⁶⁰ Nevertheless, this changed in 1882 with the Married Women’s Property Act which entitled married women to a separate legal identity independent of their husbands. This is one of the first victories of late-nineteenth century feminists.

the time: “the domestic ideal could excuse violence against those wives whom their husbands perceived as failing to fulfil their domestic responsibilities”.⁶¹

Moreover, the legal system was highly unequal, multiplied the disparities in sentencing and institutionalised the principle of double standards⁶²: Alison Woodeson writes that “women could receive nine months hard labour for soliciting when men got as little as three months in the second division for committing grievous bodily harm on a woman”.⁶³ Hence more and more women but also men, associations, unions, welfare groups and social purity campaigners⁶⁴ started to advocate the appointment of women in jobs and professions held by men, following Beatrice Hastings’s motto: “women alone know what women need”.⁶⁵ The Women’s Freedom League for instance ran a campaign “in the pages of *The Vote*, calling for women magistrates, women jurors and women police”.⁶⁶ It was in such a context that the question of the appointment of women in the police emerged, in order to deal with cases concerning women and children.

3) Enough is enough: the Contagious Disease Act, child prostitution and Jack the Ripper

Some feminist battles that took place between 1880 and 1914 provided other essential arguments in favour of the appointment of women in the police. The struggle against the Contagious Disease Act⁶⁷ for instance was one of them. “One of the most widespread health problems in England and its Empire during the long nineteenth century was sexually transmitted diseases [which were] associated in the popular mind with prostitution”.⁶⁸ In 1864, the growing fear of the diffusion of venereal diseases led to the Contagious Diseases

⁶¹ Clark, A. ‘Domesticity and the Problem of Wife Beating in 19th Century Britain: Working-Class Culture, Law and Politics’. In D’Cruze S. (2000), *Everyday Violence in Britain, 1850-1950: Gender and Class*. Harlow: Longman, p. 29.

⁶² A double standard is « a rule, principle, judgment etc which is more severe for one set of people, situation etc than another, especially the rules of sexual behaviour, which are more severe for women than for men” (Summers, D. (2005). *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*. Harlow: Pearson Longman, p. 410.

⁶³ Woodeson, ‘The First Women Police: A Force for Equality or Infringement.’, p. 219.

⁶⁴ The British Women’s Temperance Association published pamphlets “publicly drawing attention to the problems met by women taken into police custody, and they suggested women police ‘matrons’ should be appointed to ensure propriety and protection.” Woodeson, ‘The First Women Police: A Force for Equality or Infringement.’ p. 218.

⁶⁵ Delap, ‘Feminist and Anti-Feminist Encounters in Edwardian Britain’, p. 394.

⁶⁶ Jackson, ‘Women Professionals and the Regulations of Violence in Interwar Britain’, in D’Cruze *Everyday Violence in Britain*, p. 119.

⁶⁷ Originally passed by the Parliament in 1864 then edited in 1866 and 1869.

⁶⁸ Steinbach S. (2005). *Women in England 1760-1914: A Social History*. London: Phoenix, p. 126. ; Nevertheless, Steinbach underlines that in reality venereal disease was also passed from clients to prostitutes, from husbands to wives and between lovers, see p. 127.

Act which “allowed police in ports and garrison towns to apprehend any women who were suspected of prostitution”.⁶⁹ The campaign to repeal this act, one of the major feminist campaigns of the nineteenth century, was not successful until 1886. As Susie Steinbach puts it: “the repealers were appalled by [...] the trampling on women’s civil rights and by the degradation of the [forced] examinations, which they called ‘instrumental rape’”.⁷⁰ This Act also caused many scandals due to police mistakes. Indeed, sometimes women apprehended and then examined were not prostitutes but “simply working-class women who were walking in a place or at a time which aroused a constable’s suspicions”.⁷¹ Clive Emsley also underlines that, even after the abolition of the Contagious Diseases Act, working-class women could be under threat from zealous policemen. He quotes the example of a respectable English-woman treated “with rudeness and even violence” by a policeman in May 1893. When the case went to trial, the police denied the charge and Herbert Henry Asquith, the Home Secretary, responded “I do not see any reason for doubting the accuracy of the police statement”.⁷² This statement echoes the previously evoked idea that women complaints were considered as less reliable. Therefore, the idea of a need for women in an all male system started to spread.

Two other contemporary scandals, the “white-slave trade” of young English girls and the case of Jack the Ripper, reinforced the idea that women were not protected by such a man-only system and that they had to take in charge their own protection in a society that “was not yet ready to acknowledge the real vulnerability of [women’s] position or to offer effective correction to male sexual predation”.⁷³ In July 1885, William Thomas Stead published a series of controversial newspaper articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. They were untitled ‘Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon’ and exposed the traffic of young girls for home and foreign sale, “throw[ing] open the whole conspiracy of silence”⁷⁴ and provoking moral panic in contemporary London. It brought female sexuality at the very centre of on-going debates and provided an excellent argument for feminists fighting against the denial of women’s rights. This scandal questioned the ability of the existing legislative system to protect women and led to the implementation of the Criminal Law Amendment (1885) that raised the age of consent

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Emsley, C. (1991). *The English Police: a Political and Social History*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, p. 73.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁷³ Stevenson, “‘Ingenuities of the Female Mind’: Legal and Public Perceptions of Sexual Violence”. In D’Cruze *Everyday Violence in Britain*, p. 101.

⁷⁴ Beales, H. (1950). ‘Victorian Ideas of Sex’. In British Broadcasting Corporation, *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians: An Historic Revaluation of the Victorian Age* (pp. 351-364). London: Sylvan Press), p. 356.

from 13 to 16 years old and defined the penalties for sexual abuse on women and minors. This was one of the first women's victories in the battle against the "brutal, unjust, man-made, judge-law[s]" denounced by Elizabeth Wolstenholme.⁷⁵ Jack the Ripper's crimes at the end of the 1880s attracted the attention of the press because of the nature of the murders. They involved female prostitutes working in the poor districts of London who were killed and mutilated. This case also highlighted the failure of the police because the killer has never been identified.⁷⁶ Thus, to a certain extent, these cases epitomized the incapacity of the masculine order to protect women and invited women to take care of their own defence. Hence the late-Victorian and the early-Edwardian era was marked by a growing concern about the incapacity of a class-biased male-dominated judicial system whose concern was officially to protect "the weak", namely women and children, but that did not do it very well. Personal and collective actions (associations, child welfare groups, social purity campaigners, feminists) advocated the employment of women in typically masculine professions, including the police. The multiplication of such pressure led to the appointment of an increasing number of police matrons.

D) The first police matrons

1) Family and social background

The official employment of the first woman by the Metropolitan Police dates back to May 1883. Her task was to guard female convicts and women under police supervision. The second woman was appointed in September 1886. In March 1889, fourteen women were employed as "police matrons" to supervise women and children in court. Then the number of women employed by the police all over the country slowly increased during the following years but there was no major improvement before the First World War. Who were these first official police matrons? First of all, their family and social background is interesting to study. Philippa Levine lists the family background of the fourteen women employed as police matrons in March 1889 and concludes that all of them had relatives familiar with the legal system.⁷⁷ Indeed, "six were jailers' wives [...]; a seventh was the aunt of a jailer[,] one woman was married to a warrant officer, one to a constable, and another was a constable's widow". Regarding the fact that they were familiar with the system, they were not complete outsiders

⁷⁵ Wright, 'The Women's Emancipation Union and Radical-Feminist Politics', p. 387. ; Elizabeth Wolstenholme was a suffragist, essayist and poet who founded the Women's Emancipation Union in 1891.

⁷⁶ Shpayer-Makov, 'From Menace to Celebrity: the English Police Detective and the Press, 1842-1914.', p. 686.

⁷⁷ Levine, "'Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should": Women Police in World War I.', pp. 36-37.

and knew both the “demands made on policemen [and] their place within the system”. Policemen were recruited from the working class so the first police matrons quoted above belonged to the same social class. Besides, other women were appointed in police stations to visit female convicts but, contrarily to matrons, these women were “socially-superior”, standing as “a model of womanhood” and being well-educated.⁷⁸ They were called “lady-visitors”.

2) Duties

Despite the fact that denominations such as “police matrons”, “lady visitors”, “female officers”, “female warders” are very often equally used, a distinction can be made between “lady visitors” and “matrons”. Indeed, there was a difference between matrons who were recruited mostly from the working-class and lady visitors who came from the middle and the upper-classes.⁷⁹ On the one hand, working-class women’s main duties were: searching female suspects, transporting women and children to and from the courts and prisons, chaperoning medical examinations, guarding female prisoners and cleaning the stations. Sometimes they also took statements and were employed as informers.⁸⁰ Thus, these tasks seemed to be similar to the ones of their male colleagues but in fact confined them to what was considered as feminine tasks; they had low wages and low statuses. Indeed, they had a semi-official status: they were not always officially employed, often on a temporary basis for occasional work and they had no regular income and no social protection.⁸¹ Moreover, the denomination “matron” is highly interesting and meaningful because it clearly emphasizes a certain feminine dimension. Indeed, the word “matron” comes from the Latin *mater*, *matr-* which means “mother”. Thus, even if these women infiltrated the typically masculine world of policemen, they were constantly reminded of their female and even maternal status. Moreover, this designation “had a professional association linked to prisons, hospitals and schools and strictly separated them into their own female category”.⁸²

⁷⁸ Johnston, H. ‘Gendered Prison Work: Female Prison Officers in the Local Prison System, 1877-1939.’ *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 53 (2), (May 2014), 193-212, pp. 206-205.

⁷⁹ The first president of the National Lady Visitors’ Association in 1900 is Adeline Russell, the Duchesse of Bedford.

⁸⁰ Shpayer-Makov, ‘Shedding the Uniform and Acquiring a New Masculine Image’. In Barrie & Broomhall, *A History of Police and Masculinities*, p. 144.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁸² Klein, ‘Quiet and Determined Servants and Guardians’. In Barrie & Broomhall, *A History of Police and Masculinities*, p. 210.

On the other hand, lady visitors were “often higher-class women with philanthropic and charitable leanings”⁸³ and were assigned with the mission of putting female prisoners back on the right tracks. Charity work in general led women with privileged social background to experience day-to-day misery and to realize that the “male dominated state had failed for so long to improve social condition”.⁸⁴ In the late-Victorian and early-Edwardian period, women sent to prison were those who had broken the accepted norms and were charged with sexual promiscuity, drunkenness, common assault, thefts and crimes. Hence they were breaking “both the law and the conventions of appropriate feminine behaviour [and] the primary focus of the disciplinary prison was to return these women to ‘acceptable’ femininity through regimes based on domesticity, moral and religious education, medicalisation and appropriate feminine role models”.⁸⁵ The very essence of the lady visitors’ role was that “through individual attention, the hearts of female offenders could be turned away from a life of criminality and their appropriate womanhood restored”.⁸⁶ Hence lady visitors delivered speeches, expressed their sympathy with them, “soothe[d] them with words of gentleness and kindness, [evoked] the innumerable advantages [of] a life of sobriety, [...] honesty and virtue” and educated them. In other words, the lady visitor was “the representative and the guardian of her sex and she ought to be a bright example of its purity, disinterestedness and love”.⁸⁷

3) A parallel between reality and fiction

Professional female detectives (either private or official) for instance appeared in fiction long before they appeared in the real life. Indeed, Joseph Kestner writes that “the origins of the female detective in fiction are actually in the 1860s”⁸⁸ whereas the first real official woman detective was appointed in 1922. He underlines that “texts about female detectives represent women in situations demanding rationality, enterprise, daring and empowerment”,⁸⁹ values that are the extreme opposite of stereotypes associated with women in the Victorian and Edwardian culture. Nevertheless, Haia Shpayer-Makov states that “the growing number of fictional female detectives [...] from the 1860s [...] indicates that the idea was not uncommon, and that some men did not think it unreasonable for women to be

⁸³ Johnston, ‘Gendered Prison Work.’, p. 196.

⁸⁴ Thane, P. ‘What Difference did the Vote Make? Women in Public and Private Life in Britain since 1918.’ *Historical Research*, 76 (192), (2003) 268-285, p. 270.

⁸⁵ Johnston, ‘Gendered Prison Work.’, pp. 193-194.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁸⁸ Kestner, J. A. (2003). *Sherlock’s Sister, the British Female Detective, 1864-1913*. Aldershot: Ashgate, p.1.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.230.

competent criminal investigators, both as amateurs and employees of the police”.⁹⁰ Obviously, such an idea was acceptable particularly because it was fiction and entertainment. Patricia Craig and Mary Cadogan argue that it would be wrong to suggest that the creation of fictional female detectives represented a serious expression of feminism and wrote: the “stories that featured [...] women were just firmly escapist”.⁹¹ Likewise, the entry of women in the police in 1883 and afterwards cannot be associated with a major feminist step epitomizing the entry of women into the public and masculine sphere. Indeed, most matrons did not consider themselves as feminists and the social norms remained unshaken, due to the fact that women working in the police were still confined to feminine duties with female denomination, seeking their own distinctively womanly individuality rather than equality and absolute emancipation.

⁹⁰ Shpayer-Makov, ‘Shedding the Uniform and Acquiring a New Masculine Image’. In Barrie & Broomhall, *A History of Police and Masculinities*, p. 144.

⁹¹ Craig, P. & Cadogan, M. (1981). *The Lady Investigates: Women Detectives and Spies in Fiction*. London: Victor Gollancz, p. 23.

II) From matrons to policewomen: 1914-1919

A) Two major organisations: the Women Police Service and the National Union of Women Workers

1) A favourable context

Different factors led to a more favourable context for the appointment of policewomen. Firstly, the outbreak of the war enabled women to enter a wide range of occupations, including typically masculine ones, due to the chronic shortage of civilian men who left for the front. Indeed, “women entered not only wartime factories, but also banks and places of business and government as clerks, typists and secretaries. They were found running trams and buses, delivering milk, and even joining newly-created armed forces’ auxiliaries and becoming police officers”.⁹²

Secondly, wartime conditions occasioned “a general expansion in police activity”, especially as far as moral behaviour was concerned.⁹³ Indeed, many contemporaries expressed their fear that “long hours working with men, journeys to and from work at night, and the existence of large numbers of soldiers in barracks near big towns, would all lead to a rising tide of immorality and illegitimacy” and many rumours spread about “women of the mass [...] freed from the control of fathers and husbands [...] neglecting their homes, plunging into excesses, and burdening the country with swarms of illegitimate infants”.⁹⁴ The broad concern about moral danger due to wartime conditions was exemplified by the development of a “burgeoning literature on female immorality, prostitution, and venereal disease”.⁹⁵ Sexual promiscuity between married women and military men while husbands were fighting in the frontline, the drift into prostitution of young women deprived of male protection,⁹⁶ the spread of the venereal disease –also called “the kaki fever” – among those destined for the battle zone were feared by many contemporaries. It was these shared anxieties that women police campaigners exploited to achieve their goals. As Philippa Levine puts it: “it was the

⁹² Grayzel, S. (2002). *Women and the First World War*. London: Longman, p. 27.

⁹³ Levine, P. (1990). ““Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should””: Women Police in World War I.’ *The Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1), (March, 1994) 34-78, p. 42.

⁹⁴ Braybon, G. & Summerfield, P. (1987). *Out of the Cage: Women’s Experiences in Two World Wars*. London: Pandora Press, p. 107. In fact, few women actually gave birth to illegitimate children and the illegitimacy rate even fell during the war.

⁹⁵ Levine, ““Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should””: Women Police in World War I.’ p. 43. Concerning the fear of the spread of the venereal disease, see for example Pankhurst, C. (1913). *The Great Scourge and How to End It*. Michigan: Michigan Publishing.

⁹⁶ This echoes the fear of the « white slave trade » in the 1880s (see chapter I, p. 19).

widespread perception of a need to control female sexuality that allowed women police campaigners to gain a foothold”.⁹⁷

Thirdly, in order to participate to the war effort, women of the middle and upper classes “turned their energies to private enterprise, launching a wide variety of unofficial women’s organisations aimed at serving the national cause”⁹⁸. Two of these organisations played a major role in the establishment of women police forces during the war: the Women Police Service and the National Union of Women Workers. They recruited women especially from the middle and upper classes, trained them and then managed them as policewomen all over the country. These three factors were combined with the fact that the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century growing awareness of the necessity of a police female force was reinforced by suffrage campaigners’ experience of imprisonment in the pre-war years. Indeed, many of them discovered “how very unpleasant it [was] for an alleged woman culprit to be handled by men”.⁹⁹ Thus all these elements combined to form a context which was in favour of the establishment of the first so-called “policewomen”.

2) The creation of the Women Police Service and of the National Union of Women Workers’s patrols

In her memoirs, Dorothy Peto tells that, as soon as the war began, “the strength of Police Forces fell rapidly as men of all ranks left to join the Colours”.¹⁰⁰ As a result, the Home Office issued a national call for special constables. Nina Boyle, a journalist and political activist campaigning for women’s rights in the Women’s Freedom League, then wrote to Sir Edward Ward, organizer and commandant-in-chief of the Metropolitan Police, offering to recruit women to serve in his force. Without waiting for his answer, she issued a public call for recruits on August 21, 1914.¹⁰¹ Eventually, Sir Edward Ward “decided that, since he [had] been instructed by the Home Office to raise twenty thousand able-bodied *men*, he could not go outside his instructions”.¹⁰² Despite this negative answer, Nina Boyle went on recruiting, declaring that she would “maintain the infant force as a private venture”, calling it the “Women Police Volunteer” (WPV).¹⁰³ Meanwhile, Margaret Damer Dawson, “a leisure

⁹⁷ Levine, ““Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should”: Women Police in World War I.” p. 43.

⁹⁸ Douglas, R. (1999). *Feminist Freikorps: the British Voluntary Women Police, 1914-1940*. Westport: Praeger, p. 9.

⁹⁹ Allen, M. (1925). *The Pioneer Policewoman*. London: Chatto & Windus, p. 13.

¹⁰⁰ Peto, D. (1970). *The Memoirs of Miss Dorothy Olivia Georgiana Peto*. [copy of the original tapuscrit from the National Police Library of the British College of Policing], p. 5.

¹⁰¹ Boyle, N. “Women Police Volunteers”, *Modern Woman* (November 20, 1915).

¹⁰² Lock, J. (1979). *The British Policewoman: Her Story*. London: Robert Hale, p. 19.

¹⁰³ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p. 10.

gentlewoman of aristocratic parentage”¹⁰⁴ who worked for the Criminal Law Amendment Committee, also started to be interested in the idea of a women police force. One day, while she was dealing with Belgian women refugees, Dawson observed “the presence of women she believed to be ‘white slavers’ seeking to ‘lure away’ some of her charges [and] decided to organise her friends to patrol the railway stations and keep potential procurers at bay” to protect women from sexual exploitation.¹⁰⁵ These two leaders learned of each other’s plan and “to avoid the current sin of ‘overlapping’ and to strengthen their hands through great numbers, they met and amalgamated”.¹⁰⁶ Dawson’s influence transformed the WPV “from a largely nominal body into a viable and active organization”, providing it with more attention, more energy but also the financial support of many affluent friends.¹⁰⁷ The social background and the influence of this new leader probably played some part in the fact that, as soon as November 1914, the first three policewomen –Margaret Dawson, Mary Allen and Ellen Harburn– were appointed in Grantham.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, the leadership of the force was divided by an internal dissent which paved the way for the early 1915 open confrontation between Dawson and Boyle over the WPV’s methods, especially regarding the curfew on women in Grantham that Boyle considered as an attempt to deprive women of their liberty whereas Dawson helped the local authorities to ensure that the curfew was respected. In February, as the majority of the members of the force sided with Dawson, Boyle split away from the organization; she was replaced by Mary Allen and Dawson renamed the force the Women Police Service (WPS).

At the same time, the National Union of Women Workers (NUWW)¹⁰⁹ started to organise their own patrols. Initially, the NUWW (founded in 1895) was a non-political organization of upper and middle-class women dedicated to improving the lives of working women. In the 1910s, the NUWW turned its attention towards a broader range of social work and set up several Special Committees to focus on specific issues. One of them was the Women Patrol Committee, due to the alarm felt by the NUWW leaders “at the spectre of drunkenness and disorder prevalent around large military camps”.¹¹⁰ The president of the Committee was Mrs Creighton who was also a prominent member of the International Bureau

¹⁰⁴ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁶ Lock, *The British Policewoman: Her Story*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁷ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p.12.

¹⁰⁸ This is not a coincidence that Dawson’s brother-in-law, Captain Kensington, was a Staff Captain with the 11th Division which was stationed, with 25,000 men, outside the town of Grantham (population = 20,000).

¹⁰⁹ Latter renamed the National Council for Women.

¹¹⁰ Woodeson, A. ‘The First Women Police: A Force for Equality or Infringement.’ *Women’s History Review*, 2 (2), (2006) 217-232, p. 222.

for the Suppression of White Slave Traffic and who gave talks on purity.¹¹¹ Thus the organisation proposed to set up a system of Voluntary Patrols of women whose aim was to “influence, and if need be, restrain the behaviour of women and girls who congregated in the neighbourhood of camps”.¹¹² Unlike Boyle’s initiative, the NUWW action did not meet the same initial resistance. Alison Woodeson explains: “their suggestion appeared to offer the now-pressed authorities the opportunity to demonstrate to the moralist lobby that something was being done”.¹¹³ Thus the Central Patrol Committee received the “general approval of the Home Secretary for the scheme in the last months of 1914” and established their Headquarters Office in Westminster.¹¹⁴

3) Similarities and differences

These two distinct organisations shared some aims in common but were also highly different. As far as the similarities are concerned, in both organisations, the members were coming from the same social background i.e. middle and upper-classes.¹¹⁵ The fact that recruits were frequently older, married, socially-privileged –many of them had private means– and often well-educated legitimised their role in controlling “the follies of youthful exuberance” and exerting “a maternal [and moral] influence” on fallen girls and women.¹¹⁶ Moreover, in both cases the impetus for the creation of a women force was a growing concern about the dangers of prostitution and proximity between women and young girls and military men. Thus the fear of immorality, of the white slave traffic and of the spread of the venereal diseases, and hence the protection –but also the policing– of women, motivated the founders of such women forces. Another feature in common shared by the two organisations was the problem of funding. Indeed, none of the organisations succeeded in obtaining governmental financial support despite the sustained expansion of both organisations. Hence facing money shortages as soon as mid-1915, Dawson and Allen intensified their campaign promoting the appointment of policewomen: they wrote letters, gave interviews to the national, local and women’s press, “they campaigned energetically and successfully”.¹¹⁷ They lobbied to secure the appointment of WPS members all over the country and used the influent friends of the leadership to gain support. Likewise, “the NUWW found it increasingly hard to find funds as

¹¹¹ Lock, *The British Policewoman: Her Story*, p. 21.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹¹³ Woodeson, ‘The First Women Police: A Force for Equality or Infringement.’, pp. 222-223.

¹¹⁴ Peto, *The Memoirs of Miss Dorothy Olivia Georgiana Peto*, p. 7.

¹¹⁵ Their social and economic background contrasted with the male force which was massively working-class.

¹¹⁶ Levine, “Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should”: Women Police in World War I.’, p. 46.

¹¹⁷ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps: the British Voluntary Women Police, 1914-1940*, p. 29.

the number of patrols grew”.¹¹⁸ Thus the leadership sent more and more letters and campaigned energetically for their force. Moreover, the two organisations attempted to cooperate in 1915 with the creation of a unified training school for women patrols and women police: the British Training School.¹¹⁹ The School “relied almost entirely on voluntary contributions, and subscriptions for its income”.¹²⁰ Its objective was to “find promising women and to test their fitness for Patrol and Police work”.¹²¹ In her memoirs, Dorothy Peto refers to the 1918 Report in which the ideal recruit for the Police Service is thus described: “In addition to a good education she could possess “a good, normal physique, be rather large, rather benign and convey the impression that she sees good in the people she meets, rather than evil”.¹²² There were three months of training with the following schedule:

For the first month recruits attended police courts in the morning, wrote reports, learnt First Aid, drill and criminal law in the afternoon, and did patrol duty in the evening. For the second month they were attached to the Bristol Civic League and concentrated on patrol work, and for the third month they would be sent to other towns for practical experience.¹²³

Such a training was relatively similar to the one received by male recruits, with one major exception: no room was left for physical training. Indeed, the aim was rather to provide them with a “clear vision when dealing with the social and moral problems which she must encounter in [their] future career”.¹²⁴ Furthermore, it is not surprising that the training but also the everyday life of policewomen sometimes deterred some volunteers who were from upper and middle classes. In the article ‘Why I Left the Women Police Service’ published in the *Weekly Dispatch* in August 19, 1917, one of them declares:

The shock of hearing and seeing things I did in my three weeks’ training altered my whole outlook on life. We spent the mornings at the police courts, hearing unspeakable things and the nights in patrolling [...] seeing unspeakable things, the intervals being filled up with lectures on subjects mostly, to my mind, quite indecent.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ Carrier, J. (1988). *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*. Aldershot: Avebury, p. 13.

¹¹⁹ The Bristol Training School was initially headed by Mrs Burrow Hill, Oakhurst, Leigh Woods, then replaced by Dorothy Peto in 1917.

¹²⁰ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 14.

¹²¹ B. M. ‘Social Service: Bristol Training School for Women Patrols and Police.’ *The British Journal of Nursing* (January 19, 1918) 48-49, p. 48.

¹²² Peto, *The Memoirs of Miss Dorothy Olivia Georgiana Peto*, p. 23.

¹²³ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 14.

¹²⁴ Peto, *The Memoirs of Miss Dorothy Olivia Georgiana Peto*, p. 23.

¹²⁵ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, pp. 51-52.

Nevertheless, the NUWW and the WPS's attempt to cooperate was of short duration and rapidly failed because the two organisations had two very different –and to a certain extent irreconcilable– understandings of what policewomen meant and the Bristol Training School quickly became the NUWW patrols' school.

As far as differences between the two forces are concerned, one of the main disagreements lied in the fact that the WPS was a professional and permanent women's force whereas NUWW policewomen were part-time volunteer patrols. Indeed, "in contrast to the WPS, who wanted to work full time and were prepared to go wherever they were sent, the women patrols of the NUWW were purely voluntary and were required to work locally for only two or three hours a week".¹²⁶ The WPS's aspirations were much more ambitious because the organisation "saw itself as an independent body that could coerce appropriate social (and sexual) behaviour from men and particularly women, and root out the ills of the male police force as well".¹²⁷ The NUWW's patrols were less ambitious, working "on the lines of the Special Constabulary" and thus easier to control, which was probably one of the reasons why they stood better in the eyes of the authorities.¹²⁸ Indeed, they worked for only a few hours per week, they were amateurish and received no pay. The NUWW women patrols were the largest patrol movement and the Union trained over 4,000 women during the war.¹²⁹ WPS policewomen were fewer "but the range of work was more varied", including patrol work but also the running of hostels, canteens and clubs for soldiers, the policing of munition and other war production workers.¹³⁰ In fact, after July 1916, the bulk of the WPS' work was policing in munitions factories: 91% of WPS members were employed by the Ministry of Munitions.¹³¹ Another important difference between the two forces was their hierarchical organisation and the WPS's evolution towards militarism. Indeed, the WPS soon became "strongly militarist in its discipline, practice" and hierarchy.¹³² The WPS used the titles of Commandant, Sub-Commandant, Superintendent, Inspector, Sub-Inspector, Sergeant and Constable, "all of which were military or police ranks".¹³³ Moreover, "superior officers were saluted and addressed as "Sir" by subordinates [...], orders were obeyed unquestioningly; and drilling and parade-ground work became one of the most important elements of the WPS's

¹²⁶ Lock, *The British Policewoman: Her Story*, p. 32.

¹²⁷ Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 36.

¹²⁸ Peto, *The Memoirs of Miss Dorothy Olivia Georgiana Peto*, p. 7.

¹²⁹ Young, M. (1991). *An Inside Job: Policing and Police Culture in Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 197.

¹³⁰ Levine, "Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should": Women Police in World War I.' p. 67.

¹³¹ Jackson, L. (2006). *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance in the Twentieth Century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 18.

¹³² Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p. 19.

¹³³ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 46.

training regime”.¹³⁴ This turn towards militarism was reinforced by the fact that the force quickly took a markedly masculine appearance. Many members of the hierarchy adopted close-cropped military-style haircuts and, above all, a new uniform was introduced and adopted by all ranks. Obviously, the uniform bears an important signification in the police culture: it is a means of identification and wishes to intimidate offenders, plus it “confer[s] [the bearers] power and authority [...] and serve[s] to enhance [their] standing as representing the patriarchal state”¹³⁵. The new uniform incorporated many elements borrowed from male police constables’ uniforms: more elaborated, with numerous pockets and belted-tunic. On the other hand, the NUWW patrols had no uniform, wearing the usual plain dark coat, skirt and hat with –and that was the only distinctive sign– regular police armlets they wore on their left arm, above the elbow instead of around the wrist like their male counterparts, and in which the letters NUWW were written.¹³⁶ Due to WPS objectives, their militarist aspect and their methods, many members left the WPS to join either the NUWW patrols or the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps.¹³⁷ Indeed, WPS’ methods were often qualified –and denounced– by contemporaries as highly intrusive.

The outbreak of the war precipitated the creation of the first women police forces by two different organisations which had the same initial objectives and socio-economic background but different –if not drastically opposed– conceptions of a women force, regarding the appearance, the duties, and the management of policewomen. These two different visions of women’s police work were irreconcilable and throughout the war the competition between the two organisations intensified.

B) Policewomen’s duties, limited powers and the reactions of the local population

1) Munitions factories, patrol work and other duties

The outbreak of the war led to increasing munitions production and state-owned armament factories. To replace the hundreds of thousands men who were leaving for the front, an important propaganda was launched, urging women to “do their bit” and participate in the war effort.¹³⁸ Indeed, the “feminine and heroic worker [...], the women who went into the factories, quite literally providing the hands that armed the men of the war zones” were

¹³⁴ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p. 20.

¹³⁵ Shpayer-Makov, ‘Shedding the Uniform and Acquiring a New Masculine Image’. In Barrie & Broomhall, *A History of Police and Masculinities*, pp. 141-142.

¹³⁶ Peto, *The Memoirs of Miss Dorothy Olivia Georgiana Peto*, p. 7.

¹³⁷ The Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps was a female auxiliary organisation formed in 1917 by Sir Neville Macready (under the auspices of the War Office) to support combatant men.

¹³⁸ Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 12.

one of the central figures in wartime propaganda.¹³⁹ Thus the war brought many women into wartime factories but also “brought to the surface anxiety about this ‘new’ female force” and the need to supervise them.¹⁴⁰ As a result, such a task was given to the WPS policewomen who worked on behalf of the Ministry of Munitions as soon as April 1916. The first agreement relied on women volunteers doing police work –in other words, they were employed but not paid by the Ministry; but a second agreement in October 1916 granted the WPS financial support for the Ministry. Moreover, policewomen also worked in private industries contracted to war production.¹⁴¹ These types of cooperation allowed the WPS to acquire some pride –with the government and the public opinion– in contributing to the war effort. Policewomen’s duties in factories¹⁴² included “patrol[ing] the grounds, act[ing] as timekeeper, check[ing] on workers and search[ing] them for incoming contraband [mostly matches, cigarettes, lighters and alcohol] and outgoing theft, and attended police court when necessary”.¹⁴³ They were also expected to deter strike actions, to “examin[e] work permits and passes out at the factory gate, [to] contro[l] the canteen [...] and pay office queues” and to handle the frequent disciplinary problems.¹⁴⁴ Policewomen’s working conditions were hard and difficult and worsened throughout the war with the intensification of the war effort. They had to endure the noise, the smell, the dangerous contact with chemicals and were constantly exposed to dangerous situations “from the proximity of dangerous machinery to exposure to poisonous fumes [and] the possibility of an explosion or fire”.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, policewomen often experienced “considerable hostility from the women they searched and supervised”.¹⁴⁶ Many munitions factories worked night and day. Thus as Philippa Levine summarizes: “This was neither easy nor particularly pleasant work”.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, in most factories policewomen “were earning less than many of the semi-skilled women workers over whom they exercised control” whereas their male counterparts obtained salary increases.¹⁴⁸ Moreover they had to pay their own equipment and travel allowances. Philippa Levine also refers to “inadequate training” and “hurried promotion of inexperienced officers” to face the

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁴¹ Levine, “Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should” p. 45.

¹⁴² The most famous example is the Gretna Factory which was the largest munitions factory and attracted a large population. Hence, 167 women police stationed at Gretna working in the factory and in the town. (Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 59.)

¹⁴³ Levine, “Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should” p. 67.

¹⁴⁴ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 59.

¹⁴⁵ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p. 47.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁴⁷ Levine, “Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should” p. 67.

¹⁴⁸ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p. 50.

increasing demand.¹⁴⁹ As a result, in mid-1917 the morale of the WPS factory munitions policewomen were visibly in decline and the complaints about pay and working conditions multiplied. Moreover, factory work also implied lower standards of living for middle and upper-class women who “have been accustomed to comfortable homes and privacy” and who had to live in barracks or workers’ hostels.¹⁵⁰ Concerning the attitude of the leadership – Dawson and Allen– about these working and living conditions, Raymond Douglas underlines that they preferred to put political interests first, to the detriment of policewomen. They considered as secondary the representation of employees’ interests, in favour of the preservation of good relations between WPS Headquarters and the Ministry.¹⁵¹ As a result, this led to a decline in efficiency and a growing number of resignations. During the war, a total of 985 WPS policewomen worked for munitions factories.¹⁵² The reason why the government favoured the employment of WPS members rather than NUWW members probably lied in the fact that it was a “perfect compromise” for the government because employing WPS policewomen in factories would literally get them “off the streets and out of the public eye”.¹⁵³ John Carrier underlines that factory work was an opportunity for Sir Edward Henry –the Head of the Metropolitan Police– “to find something for the WPS [...] so that they would leave the [patrolling work] to his chosen organisation the patrols of the NUWW”.¹⁵⁴ The reason for such a preference was probably that the NUWW patrols were less ambitious, did not have the militarist and separatist features of the WPS, they were easier to control and thus less threatening to traditional police authority.

The First World War also precipitated the appearance of women patrolling the streets.¹⁵⁵ In 1914, the NUWW “reached agreement with the Metropolitan Police Commissioner in London to set up women patrols” and then the NUWW women patrols rapidly became a nation-wide body and the largest patrol movement in Britain. Dorothy Peto indicates that “throughout the First World War, thousands of women all over Britain –school-teachers, health visitors, housewives, shop assistants and professional women of all sorts– put in two-hour tour of patrol duty not less than twice a week, winter or summer, wet or fine”.¹⁵⁶ They were working as “part-time paid police assistants” employed by the Metropolitan Police

¹⁴⁹ Levine, “Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should” p. 68.

¹⁵⁰ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p.49.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.50.

¹⁵² Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 54.

¹⁵³ Levine, “Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should” p. 68.

¹⁵⁴ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 56.

¹⁵⁵ Levine, “Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should” p. 34.

¹⁵⁶ Peto, *The Memoirs of Miss Dorothy Olivia Georgiana Peto*, p. 7.

Service.¹⁵⁷ Their main duty consisted in performing “preventive and welfare work among women and children and [...] patrol[ing] [...] in the company of a police constable during the evenings”.¹⁵⁸ They patrolled generally in pairs, in streets, parks and railway stations and towns surrounded by military camps. NUWW women patrols were “primarily concerned with a fear for female morality”.¹⁵⁹ They played an important role in the attempt to regulate prostitution. An article published in the *London Times* in December 17, 1917 underlined that what was most feared was not the women already engaged in prostitution but the “diseased ‘free-lance’ girl”.¹⁶⁰ Such a fear was exemplified by a letter from the Home Office sent to chief constables in November 20, 1914 and explaining that women patrols were “being organised primarily with a view to take care of girls and women who [were] not prostitutes and would not ordinarily come under the notice of the police”.¹⁶¹ Women’s patrol work was based on prevention rather than intervention.¹⁶² Moreover, NUWW patrols also created clubs, rest rooms and hostels for girls to take them out of the streets. They also helped in calming and organizing women and children during the raids.¹⁶³ Thus patrol women’s work can be qualified as preventive and welfare work. Nevertheless, the line between preventive, welfare work and intrusive even harassing work can easily be crossed and was crossed by WPS members doing patrol work. Despite the fact that the NUWW women patrols were the largest patrol movement and that the bulk of the WPS work was munitions factories duties, some WPS also patrolled the streets on an independent, unofficial and voluntary basis. In addition to ordinary patrol duties, several times, the WPS members “demanded power to enable them to inspect and report upon poor housing conditions; examine borstals and other juvenile places of detention; supervise the operation of public houses and hostels” and even of private houses; in other words, demanded powers to perform more and more intrusive and repressive work. For instance in Grantham, policewomen were granted emergency powers, including the right to enter into any house within a six-mile radius of the Army Post Office, paving the way for inquisitive and excessive searches and inspections. Indeed, they used this right to “go into women’s houses and to see if the girls were in bed and [...] who was in the house”, crossing the line between preventive work and work based on intrusive and even harassing methods.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁷ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 46.

¹⁵⁸ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p. 33.

¹⁵⁹ Young, *An Inside Job*, p. 197.

¹⁶⁰ Levine, “Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should” p. 44.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² The patrols did not have the power of arrest and thus could not arrest the offenders.

¹⁶³ Lock, *The British Policewoman: Her Story*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁴ Testimony of Dawson in front of the Baird Committee in 1920. In Douglas, *Feminist freikorps*, p. 16.

2) Blurred status and limited powers

Throughout the war, the legitimacy of policewomen was often questioned, due to their blurred status and limited powers. As far as the official status of policewomen is concerned, one major point is that their status depended on the local authorities. Despite the fact that the 1916 Police Act allowed women to be appointed to the role of women constables, important obstacles remained. Indeed, in order to provide flexibility to local needs, the Home Office played –and it is still the case nowadays– “a mainly advisory role and usually [had] only final say in matters of State Security [...]”.¹⁶⁵ Thus the decisions were left in the hands of individual chief constables, encouraging “extreme conservatism in some forces and daring innovations in others, according to the calibre of the men in control and the local police authorities”.¹⁶⁶ Chief constables’ reactions were mixed, from refusal and obstruction to active support but also indifference “as long as they kept out of the way”.¹⁶⁷ For instance, at the end of 1915, Miss Edith Smith became the very first policewoman in the British Isles to be sworn in and given the power of arrest, due to the approval and support of Grantham Chief Constable.¹⁶⁸ On the other hand, the Chief Constable of Manchester for example adamantly refused to recognize women patrols and maintained his position throughout the war.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, policewomen –especially WPS– were often authorized but not officially recognized: they bore identity-cards provided by Sir Edward Henry introducing the bearer as “an authorized worker of the unofficial organization known as the Women Police”.¹⁷⁰ This blurred status can also be found in the identification cards given to NUWW patrols and signed by local chief constables. In Reading for instance, the Chief Constable accepted to sign these cards only if he could add “I the undersigned, am in no way responsible for the conduct of this patrol”, which tended to invalidate them.¹⁷¹ The general confusion occasioned by such a blurred status was reinforced by the fact it was hard to know exactly who employed or who paid the policewomen – especially as the Home Office refused any financial contribution from central government funds for the appointment policewomen.¹⁷² Once again, a wide range of situations existed. NUWW policewomen were paid from the Police Fund, but through their organisation rather than directly by the police.¹⁷³ WPS patrols had “the financial support of [local] vigilance

¹⁶⁵ Lock, *The British Policewoman: Her Story*, p. 47.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹⁶⁹ Levine, “Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should” p. 32.

¹⁷⁰ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps* p. 54.

¹⁷¹ Lock, *The British Policewoman: Her Story*, p.32.

¹⁷² Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 12.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

societies and women's local government associations".¹⁷⁴ As far as WPS members working in factories were concerned, they were employed by the Ministry of Munitions. Moreover, the women patrols of the NUWW and the WPS "were often confused in the minds of the general public".¹⁷⁵ In her pamphlet published in 1919, Edith Tancred denounced the general confusion due to a huge variety of situations, evoking "the 'mixed multitude' of pseudo-policewomen, self-authorized or paid by committees and philanthropic societies, mostly working as paid patrols".¹⁷⁶ In *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, John Carrier provides an interesting table (Appendix 1) illustrating this important variety of policewomen's situation and status in 1917.¹⁷⁷ Hence the legal framework in which the first policewomen evolved was complex and poorly defined.

Moreover, policewomen's powers were also considerably limited. In *The instructions to Policewomen* handed out during the period of training, recruits learned that they were "not attested and invested with the full power of a Police Constable".¹⁷⁸ First of all, they did not have the power of arrest.¹⁷⁹ Sir Herbert Samuel –the Home Secretary– justified such a refusal by stating that "it would not be helpful to women to give them powers which they would be physically incapable of exercising [...] [and that] that it would be repugnant to human nature to expect women to be exposed to the same risks as men".¹⁸⁰ The Home Office remained firmly opposed to the swearing-in of women police. Moreover, it was not only about giving women a typically masculine authority but also about the legitimation of their political rights and political responsibility: "accountability as police officers could not long coexist with their non-accountability as women".¹⁸¹ Furthermore, policewomen could even be sued for wrongful arrests: for instance, "a female officer apprehending a woman thought to be suffering from venereal diseases might find herself prosecuted for assault".¹⁸² In order to overcome their lack of official power, policewomen –especially WPS members– found subterfuges such as: employing blackmail, threatening soldiers' wives suspected of improper behaviour to notify it to the Army Pay Office which would lead to a possible withdrawal of separation allowances, preventing conversations between men and women by "physically

¹⁷⁴ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p. 53.

¹⁷⁵ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 46.

¹⁷⁶ Levine, "Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should" pp. 65-66.

¹⁷⁷ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 38.

¹⁷⁸ Levine, "Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should" p. 58.

¹⁷⁹ Regarding the power of arrest, Miss Edith Smith previously evoked was one of the pioneers but also one of the few exceptions of the wartime period to be authorized to use this power.

¹⁸⁰ Lock, *The British Policewoman: Her Story*, p. 38..

¹⁸¹ Levine, "Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should" p. 59.

¹⁸² Ibid.

interposing themselves between the two parties or by attaching themselves to couples and following them closely wherever they went”.¹⁸³ They also took advantage of the confusion caused by the multiplication of wartime emergency regulations and sometimes invented their own authorisation “by citing an impressive-sounding provision of the Defence of the Realm Act”.¹⁸⁴ The WPS members learnt “that the combination of uniform and the assumption of authority often worked even with no power to back it up. Confidence was the key. Confidence and class”, education and courage.¹⁸⁵ Another limitation of their powers was that they could not play any role in police courts: they could be in charge of women and children but could not charge or question them, or in some cases, testify. Philippa Levine refers to an example of public humiliation and frustration in the courtroom when “women patrols who had witnessed a case of ‘gross indecency’ [...] had their ability as witness questioned in the summer of 1916” because “the supposed offense to their feminine sensibilities” was in question.¹⁸⁶ Policewomen also had to be accompanied by a male constable, “they had no power to move on any group or individual in the street, they could not demand the name and address of a person, they were not pensionable”.¹⁸⁷ Thus, it was difficult for the first policewomen to feel confident about their authority when they patrolled “without uniform, without the power of arrest, with a temporary contract and [...] with colleagues expressing contempt”.¹⁸⁸ As a result, they experienced some difficulties because of their lack of official status, of power and even of uniform: quite logically, legitimacy was often questioned by the local populations.

3) The reactions of the local population

The reactions of the local population varied according to the methods used by policewomen and to the local needs. Because of their undefined status, policewomen had to rely on local community support which sometimes was effective. Joan Lock tackles the growing popularity of the policewomen, referring to publications in the newspapers giving “glowing accounts of their work”, [...] letters of support sent to the Commissioner and Home Secretary”.¹⁸⁹ An article published in January 1918 evoked the “increasing appreciation by the public of the work of [police] women”, stating that they were saving “girls stranded for the

¹⁸³ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p. 55.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Lock, *The British Policewoman: Her Story*, pp. 25-26.

¹⁸⁶ Levine, “Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should” p. 60.

¹⁸⁷ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 33.

¹⁸⁸ Bovingdon, T. ‘Sex(ism) and the Service: What it was Like for the First Women Police Officers.’ *Police Review* (December 4, 2009) 22-23, p. 22.

¹⁸⁹ Lock, *The British Policewoman: Her Story*, p. 80.

night [and] girls excited by drink”.¹⁹⁰ The article also referred to a case of rape and to the almost heroic intervention of the women police: one “night on Brandon Hill[,] [t]he Patrols on duty heard a scream and found a woman on the ground with a man belabouring her. When the Patrols came into sight the group about them raised a cry of “Here are the Police” and the man took to his heels”. The article concluded by promoting women police’s work, stating that “examples might be multiplied of the good work done” and tackles the “very useful avenue of work, not sufficiently well known, now open to women”. Throughout the war and especially at the end of the war, there was a multiplication of this type of praising publications. They were often aided, abetted and even instigated by policewomen themselves who were trying to legitimate their work and justify their usefulness –including on the long term. Thus the objectivity of such reports can be questioned. Nevertheless, it seems that the growing recognition among the public was effective. The approval and sometimes active collaboration of women’s local organisations can also be quoted. The creation of clubs, rest rooms and hostels by the women police also seemed to have gained the support of the local population. Angela Woollacott gives the example of one mother who “expressed relief and gratitude that women patrols were providing ‘a patriotic room’ which would give her daughters a safe place to go in the evening”.¹⁹¹ Thus the growing recognition of policewomen’s work was effective, especially as far as the NUWW patrols were concerned. Indeed, both the local authorities and the local population were rather in favour of the NUWW patrols –who received many letters from women grateful for their intervention– mainly because their methods were considered as less intrusive than the WPS’s: public opinion was “impressed by [their] work and [...] in favour of expending their work, in the hope of controlling prostitution”.¹⁹² Moreover, the reactions of the local population were also influenced by the official status of the women police forces. Indeed, the NUWW patrols often worked in cooperation with the local authorities and police force and “the women police were treated with more respect once it were known that they were attached to the force”.¹⁹³ Furthermore, policewomen’s work was relatively accepted by mainstream opinion during the war because they were dealing with female tasks: welfare was considered as “suitable for women but unappetizing for men”.¹⁹⁴ Additionally, policewomen also received strong backings from religious bodies worried about the spread of immorality.

¹⁹⁰ Bovingdon, ‘Sex(ism) and the Service: What it was Like for the First Women Police Officers.’, pp. 22-23.

¹⁹¹ Woollacott, A. “‘Khaki Fever’ and its Control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War.’ *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29 (2), (1994) 325-347, p. 339.

¹⁹² Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers.*, p. 44.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁹⁴ Young, *An Inside Job*, p. 220.

Nevertheless, the local population did not always express support and acceptance of policewomen and hostile reactions such as taunting or openly defying policewomen were numerous. The respect expressed towards policewomen depended on their official status and relation with the local force and authority. Indeed, when the local press published articles about policewomen's lack of power of arrest for instance, they were discredited in the eyes of the population and lost their credibility, paving the way for mocking and hostile attitudes: a policewoman was advised to "stay home and bring up [her] family instead of walking the streets in the way no decent woman should".¹⁹⁵ Thus policewomen sometimes experienced pressures to resign by civilians, by their family. Nonetheless, "women police seldom encountered more than verbal abuse".¹⁹⁶ One of the main reasons was the respect due to them as "ladies" and class deference played an important role. Furthermore, the line between helping and persecuting women was easy to cross and policewomen, especially WPS, were accused of harassment and voyeurism. It is easy to understand why WPS members' entry into women's houses in Grantham –to inspect their bedrooms, see if they were in bed and who was in the house– was not well received by the local population. Such inquisitive and excessive searches and inspections led by an organisation that controlled both public and private behaviours were highly criticized. The fact that both organisations "articulated little distinction between what they saw as immoral behaviours and those that were specifically forbidden by law" was also blamed.¹⁹⁷ Because of such methods, women police lost the support of some feminist organisations defending women's rights. Moreover, women patrols were also accused of "flashing electric torches in the faces of respectable persons sitting on seats in [...] [p]arks after dark".¹⁹⁸ One last important criticism concerned the uniform of the WPS. Indeed, the masculine uniform adopted by the force was highly criticized –even among some of their strongest supporters. In November 1916, Mr Head, the magistrate at Marlborough Street, denounced the uniform as "an imitation of the uniform of police constables", even underlining that the Section 17 of the 1839 Metropolitan Police Act rendered this imitation "a criminal offence".¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ Levine, "Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should", p. 64.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁹⁸ Lock, *The British Policewoman: Her Story*, p. 35.

¹⁹⁹ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 42.

C) Policewomen and feminism

1) Testing the boundaries of masculine and feminine and promoting women's rights

Regarding the fact that the police was considered as a typically masculine body associated with a police culture based on patriarchy, manliness, force and authority, the entry of women into police work can be interpreted as the questioning of the boundaries between feminine and masculine, and at large of the established gendered order of the society. The First World War

illuminate[d] the long-term change in definitions of women's authority from the nineteenth century hegemonic concept of female moral authority to a latter-twentieth century at least partial acceptance of women's professional and official authority on the basis of competence and rights.²⁰⁰

Indeed, the war offered women the opportunity to establish their authority outside the confines of the home and over other members of the society. As far as their socioeconomic background was concerned, the huge majority of policewomen was from middle and upper-classes. Before the First World War, these women were associated with the private sphere and were confined to housing and family. The war gave them the opportunity to leave their home and to gain certain independence. During the war, women's authority was publicly exercised, providing them access to a professional authority and then to a "major form of social power", questioning the pre-war domestic ideology.²⁰¹ The war enabled women to have public authority and to prove their potential. The existence and visibility of women police challenged traditional femininity: "they were violating the public space in the name of law and order, [...] challeng[ing] symbolic boundaries in claiming female authority in public arena".²⁰² Moreover, most part-time NUWW's patrols were paid –even if indirectly– by the local police force, which allowed them to cross the frontier between unpaid voluntary work and paid work, enhancing their legitimacy in the realm of public authority and of masculine work. Thus the women police movement encompassed both "resistance to the sexual status quo and authoritarianism, subversion of pre-war social norms and preservation of [the middle and upper-class] moral values".²⁰³ The WPS also questioned the established gendered order of things as they developed a separate body, identity and voice that led them to adopt masculine appearances and values –militarist hierarchy and discipline, uniform–, testing the boundaries of feminine and masculine. The appointment of policewomen in war factories can be

²⁰⁰ Woollacott, "Khaki Fever" and its Control., p.86.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Levine, "Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should" p. 62.

²⁰³ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p. 2.

interpreted as “an acknowledgment in official circles of the valuable and responsible work performed by policewomen”.²⁰⁴ Policewomen’s work in factories emphasized their abilities to supervise workers, administer rules, discipline and control young working-class women in public.²⁰⁵ Hence, policewomen enjoyed a great success during the war and the two organisations (NUWW patrols and WPS) not only remained but also expanded throughout the war. The entry of women into police work –especially work dealing with women and children– also led to a major rethinking of the role of the police, emphasizing the necessity of welfare work: in an article published in 1919, Dawson underlined that “women police were doing police work that had never before been done, and that could be done only by women”.²⁰⁶ Indeed, the entry of women into police work highlighted the necessity of the welfare dimension in police’s role, leading to the development of a new “*social philosophy of policing as practised by women*”.²⁰⁷

The initial impetus for the creation of women police forces was the wish to protect women and to introduce women in an almost entirely masculine area. The late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries were characterized by a growing awareness of –and the will to fight against– a biased judicial system entirely run by men, which played an important role in the pre-war campaign for the appointment of policewomen. We can wonder to what extent the women police movement can be associated with feminism. The WPS for instance was obviously rooted in the pre-war militant suffrage campaign. One of its founders, Nina Boyle, was a women’s rights campaigner, member of the Women’s Freedom League and among the first recruits of the WPS there were many middle-class veterans of the Women’s Social and Political Union. During the war, almost everywhere in the country, policewomen were supported –including concerning financial backing– and often directly employed by women’s organisations. Policewomen could count on the approval and often active collaboration of women’s local organisations such as the British Women’s Temperance League, the British Women’s Patriotic League, the New Constitutional Suffrage Society, the NUWW, the Women’s Institutes, the Women’s Cooperative Guild, the Criminal Law Amendment Committee, the Penal Reform League, and the Women Writers’ Suffrage League.²⁰⁸ Many of them had been fighting for women’s rights. Besides, the war allowed women to lay the foundations of “a permanent, if still constrained, role for women in a closely guarded

²⁰⁴ Levine, “Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should” p. 67.

²⁰⁵ Woollacott, “Khaki Fever” and its Control”, p. 101.

²⁰⁶ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p. 21.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

²⁰⁸ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p.16.

masculine environment”.²⁰⁹ Nevertheless, it seems that feminism was only part of what propelled women into police work during the war and that the connections between women police and the feminist movement quickly loosened.

2) Debunking the feminist and revolutionary dimension of women’s entry into police work

Even if the initial impetus for women police was rooted in feminism, in fact, only a tiny minority of policewomen were actually feminist activists. First of all, the entry of women in police work coincided with the beginning of the First World War which led most feminists to lay aside their political claims to participate to the national unity and the war effort. Feminists within the police movement were either silenced or discredited and the association of policewomen with militant politics was even used as a “weapon of ridicule and marginalization” by mainstream opinion.²¹⁰ Moreover, a process of de-radicalization was initiated and policewomen were required to sign a “Declaration of Allegiance” which “forbade them the public expression of political opinions” and to take part in suffragette propaganda.²¹¹ Such a measure secured policewomen’s political neutrality and kept women’s rights issues at bay. Furthermore, the creation of the WPS was indeed rooted in active feminism but it was not the case of the NUWW patrols –which is probably one of the reasons why they were constantly favoured. Indeed, despite its name, the National Union of Women Workers was “largely middle-class organisation in no manner associated with militancy”.²¹² Thus the huge majority of policewomen cannot be considered as feminist activists or militants. Some actions of the women police can even be regarded as anti-women. Indeed, women police did not protest when the government restricted women’s liberties and even participated in such curtailments by controlling working women’s lives both in public and in private. Indeed, in Grantham for instance, policewomen helped the authorities in ensuring that women were respecting the curfew and they entered women’s houses and inspected their bedrooms. Nina Boyle protested in vain against these methods, stating that “women police were shifting from the realm of helping to that of persecuting their sisters”.²¹³ She finally left the force in 1915. In fact, “punishment, suspicion, and disbelief [were] far more in evidence

²⁰⁹ Levine, “Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should”: Women Police in World War I.’ p. 78.

²¹⁰ Ibid.,’ pp. 64-65.

²¹¹ Ibid., pp. 47-48.

²¹² Ibid., p. 39.

²¹³ Ibid., p. 53.

than any sympathy with or concern about the rights of women”.²¹⁴ Moreover, in March 1918, regulation 40D of the Defence of the Realm Act “allowed the detention and prosecution of infected women accused of having sexual relations with any member of the armed forces”.²¹⁵ The women police forces did not protest against this measure whereas feminist groups did so vigorously because parallels could be made between this regulation and the contested Contagious Diseases Acts.

The entry of women in police work, “far from liberating women from traditional female stereotype, can be seen as an anti-feminist step, designed to protect the traditional view of the family life” and of femininity.²¹⁶ Indeed, women police constantly emphasized the importance of motherhood, womanhood, piety, chastity, sobriety and morality, which were values attached to the so-called women’s sphere before the war. Thus instead of debunking the gendered order of the society, they defended it. Another proof that the patriarchal basis of the society remained unshaken is the fact that policewomen’s work essentially concerned women and children, establishing a distinction between separate sex-based tasks. Indeed, the development of the women police went along with “a gender-specific specialization of tasks within policing that has had a sustained long-term impact”.²¹⁷ As a result, policewomen did not really challenge the existing masculine patterns of authority because it was rather about “how feminine qualities might complement the work done by men, leaving men theoretically free to pursue the task of catching ‘real’ criminals”.²¹⁸ Dawson justified the fact that women’s work was not overlapping men’s work stating that “women police were not called upon to exert their muscles, but to exert their intelligence, their tact their ready wit”.²¹⁹ Thus, even the WPS –led by Dawson– questioned the limitations between feminine and masculine only to a certain extent. Another article published in March 1918 in *Police Chronicle* called policewomen to use their “love, courage, understanding, hope, patience, tact, faith and so on” to help “girls and women who are working hard for us”.²²⁰ Thus, qualities associated with policewomen were typically female qualities unchallenging the patriarchal order. Finally, the entry of women into police work also reinforced the established social order. Indeed, the hierarchy between working-class women and middle and upper-class women remained unshaken and was even reinforced: middle and upper-class women “drew a line of continuity

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 55.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 52.

²¹⁶ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. XXI.

²¹⁷ Levine, “Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should” p. 58.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 74.

²¹⁹ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p. 21.

²²⁰ Ibid., p. 63.

between the old and new forms of authority, that of authority based on class superiority”.²²¹ In industries and in streets, middle and upper-class women imposed on working-class women their standards of morality and good behaviour. Policewomen tended to reinforce the existing “distrust” of working-class women by infantilizing them. Thus the feminist and revolutionary aspect of the entry of women into police work deserves to be questioned. Instead of fighting for women’s rights, police women reinforced the patriarchal order of the society and consolidated existing gendered and social ideologies. Even if feminist causes encouraged the creation of women police forces, only a few policewomen can indeed be related to feminist activism. The huge majority was neutral and even participated in the curtailment of women’s rights and liberties. Hence, paradoxically, on the one hand policewomen seemed to question the established order by entering a typically masculine profession but on the other hand they reinforced it.

3) Policewomen’s ambitions for the post-war future and the first encouraging steps

Regarding the fact that policewomen’s role was determined by wartime conditions, the end of the war raised the question of the persistence of a women force in peacetime. Both the WPS and the NUWW patrols underlined that women police would play an important role in post-war reconstruction and advocated the appointment of women police as attested –and thus sworn-in– officers. The war was the occasion for many recruits from both organisations to face for the first time poverty, areas pervaded by drunkenness, misery and immorality, abandoned children. Such experiences led them to assess the necessity of women’s contribution to welfare work. Nevertheless the two organisations had different ambitions for the post-war future and dissensions remained. On the one hand, the WPS maintained their separatist view, stating that they would remain an independent body of women dedicated to welfare work, women and children. They wanted “an entirely separatist organisations structure, based on a nationally centralised Women Police Service with authority and ascendancy over chief constables, run by women and uncontaminated by male intervention” and that women officers should be trained by women.²²² On the other hand, the NUWW had the ambition to see its part-time paid patrols become full-time policewomen who would be an integral part of the police service, under the authority of chief constables. Thus contrary to the WPS, the NUWW did not want to control or supervise their recruits. Nevertheless, both forces

²²¹ Woollacott, “‘Khaki Fever’ and its Control.”, p. 103.

²²² Jackson, L. (2006). *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance in the Twentieth Century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 21.

emphasized the importance of morality and the fact that their work in the post-war future would still be dedicated to women and children, in order not to overlap their male counterparts' duties and to legitimize their force and assess the necessity of their existence. As a result, Miss Lite, member of the Criminal Law Amendment Committee which campaigned actively for the employment of women as police officers, expressed her organisation's "fear that the women police might ultimately function as nothing more than a morals police".²²³ Indeed, from the very beginning policewomen claimed they were doing a different job from that of men and their duties were mostly about making sure that moral standards and behaviours were respected. Furthermore, another interesting point as far as the shape of the future women police was concerned was the socio-economic background of policewomen. Indeed, during the war, policewomen were coming from middle and upper classes but many historians assess that there was a widespread recognition that policewomen of the future would be "women who were forced to earn their living by work and not so much the educated, who now took smaller pay for the sake of helping people".²²⁴

The first encouraging steps in favour of the persistence of women police forces in peacetime were made at the very end of the war. On 31 August 1918 the police went on strike. The women police forces were not involved but the strike led to Sir Edward Henry's resignation and to the appointment of Sir Nevil Macready at the head of the Metropolitan Police. During the summer 1918, a committee was held by the Home Office and the Ministry of Munitions "to discuss the feasibility of appointing Home-Office-controlled women police patrols".²²⁵ Leaders from both organisations were interviewed. On 20 October 1918, Macready proposed to employ women as an integral part of the Metropolitan Police and submitted the first official scheme for women to become official and permanent members of police forces. He tackled important points such as pay, training, criteria of selection, duties and compensations and stated that he would have "direct control over recruitment as well as every other aspect of the employment of women by the Metropolitan Police".²²⁶ A new force was created: the Metropolitan Women Police Patrols. Not surprisingly, most of the recruits were former NUWW policewomen and the WPS hierarchy was almost entirely ignored because Macready wanted to "eliminate any women of extreme views".²²⁷ On 23 December 1918, a Police Order was issued, officially inaugurating the new force and a few days later the

²²³ Levine, "Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should" p. 50.

²²⁴ Lock, *The British Policewoman: Her Story*, pp. 78-79.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

²²⁶ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 82.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

first twenty-five recruits entered a training school in London. In 1919, 110 policewomen were attached to the Metropolitan Police.²²⁸ In the rest of the country, a few chief constables who acknowledged the important role played by women police during the war kept “tiny numbers” of women on their strength.²²⁹

²²⁸ Emsley, C. (1991). *The English Police: a Political and Social History*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, p. 148.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

III) Post-war fight for the official recognition of policewomen: 1919-1931

A) Specific work: emphasis on difference

1) A splitting of feminist ideology in favour of gender difference

The First World War transformed feminists' understandings of masculinity and femininity, two omnipresent concepts as far as the entry of women into police work is concerned. Indeed, "the aggression unleashed in the war, so unprecedented, so destructive, so horrifying" convinced many feminists that masculinity was essentially characterized by violence, aggression and brutality whereas womanliness was associated with antagonistic values such as peace and procreation. Thus, as new feminists understood it, "not equality but sexual difference characterized the relationship between men and women".²³⁰ In other words, a distinction can be made between "new feminists" of the post-war period and pre-war "old feminists" (equally referred to as "equalitarian"). "Old feminists" insisted on equality with men and suggested a sex war whereas "new feminists" defended an "ideology that emphasized women's special sphere – a separate sphere, in fact"²³¹ and that "the chief occupation of all women was motherhood".²³² As Catherine Gasquoine Hartley put it at the end of the war, women must accept

the responsibilities and limitations of their womanhood. And by this [she meant] a full and glad acceptance of those physical facts of their organic constitution which make them unlike men, and should limit their capacity for many kinds of work. It can never be anything but foolishness to attempt to break down the real difference between the two sexes.²³³

The 1920s were characterized by a splitting of feminist ideologies from claiming equality to defending difference, by a new feminist approach emphasising "gender difference rather than equality, arguing that women should be valued for their special feminine role".²³⁴ Hence, rather than weakening and debunking the ideology of separate spheres, the war may have reinforced them, granting a new legitimacy to patriarchy and male natural dominion. Moreover, "the perceived blurring of gender lines occasioned by the upheaval of the war [probably] compelled society to re-establish sexual difference as a way to recreate the

²³⁰ Kent, S. K. 'The Politics of Sexual Difference: World War I and the Demise of British Feminism.' *Journal of British Studies*, 27 (3), (1988) 232-253, p. 241.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 244.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

²³⁴ Jackson, L. 'Women Professionals and the Regulations of Violence in Interwar Britain'. In D'Cruze S. (2000), *Everyday Violence in Britain, 1850-1950: Gender and Class*. Harlow: Longman, p. 122.

semblance of order”.²³⁵ Indeed, pre-war feminism appeared to have become associated in widespread opinion with the conflict recently ended whereas “new feminism”, because it insisted on women as mothers and housekeepers, was rather associated with passivity and peace and thus was more acceptable. Obviously, many parallelisms can be drawn between this new wave of feminism and pre-war antifeminist views. Indeed, new feminism can be interpreted as attempting to re-establish the theory of separate spheres –which was questioned during the war– promoting an ideology stressing traditional femininity and motherhood. Thus paradoxically, the aims defended by this new wave of feminism are highly different –if not the exact opposite– of Richard Evans’s definition of the concept of feminism that he characterizes as “the doctrine of equal rights for women, based on the theory of the equality of sexes”.²³⁶ On the contrary, after-war feminists seemed to have emphasised that women and men were not and could not be equal, having specific tasks. This renewed approach of femininity and of women’s role highly pervaded the campaign for the employment of policewomen and the definition of women constables’ role.

2) Specialist work

As soon as women entered police forces, police work was pervaded by notions of gender difference: “women, it was argued, had particular skills associated with a distinct sphere of activity”.²³⁷ In order to “negotiate identity, gender and their place in the organisation”²³⁸, appointed policewomen did not seek for equality with their male colleagues but rather stressed gender difference and integrated difference as a part of their own identity. Indeed, policewomen created their own area of work, their special sphere of usefulness primarily –in not entirely– dedicating themselves to women and children,²³⁹ stating that such a work was far better performed by women than by men. One of the main arguments used in favour of policewomen was that “it was appropriate, ethically, for women officers to deal with female victims or offenders and, moreover, that women possessed specific qualities and skills that made them ‘experts’ with children”.²⁴⁰ Moreover, campaigners argued that

²³⁵ Kent, ‘The Politics of Sexual Difference.’, p. 247.

²³⁶ Evans, R. (1977). *The Feminists: Women’s Emancipation Movements in Europe, America and Australasia, 1840-1920*. London: Croom Helm.

²³⁷ Jackson, L. ‘Care or control? The Metropolitan women police and child welfare, 1919-1966.’ *The Historical Journal*, 46 (3), (2003) 623-648, p. 624.

²³⁸ Davey, K. ‘Women’s Accounts of Organizational Politics as a Gendering Process.’ *Gender, Work & Organization*, 15 (6), (2008) 650-671, p. 655.

²³⁹ This was obviously a continuation of the work initiated during the First World War.

²⁴⁰ Jackson, L. (2006). *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance in the Twentieth Century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 4.

policewomen “were more likely to get an accurate account of events because of their ability to gain the trust of women and children”.²⁴¹

This “specialist” work consisted in searching prisoners, taking charge and escorting, giving first aid, finding shelters and beds, dealing with lost children, finding missing girls, observing attempted suicides in hospitals, cautioning girls and women “in cases of indecency, loitering, soliciting and riotous behaviour”²⁴² and helping in the regulation of prostitution in displaying “feminine authority and [...] searching out [...] vulnerable girls under the age of 17”.²⁴³ Many press articles praised the work done by women and their special ability. For instance an article published in *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* in 1922 underlined that “women police have also been employed on duties in connection with the detection of indecency or criminal conduct [...] particularly in relation to children and young persons, when the changes of detection by a male officer would probably have been far less”.²⁴⁴ Moreover, these feminine tasks were, obviously associated with typically feminine qualities: emotion, empathy, supportiveness, and being caring.²⁴⁵ The rigid dualities between masculine and feminine qualities in the police culture can be thus summarized²⁴⁶:

masculinity	feminity
hard	soft
scientific	instinctive
force	service
control	care

Hence, many campaigners in favour of policewomen thought that “women were useful by virtue of their sex”.²⁴⁷

Detection and prevention of child abuse, neglect and female delinquency were the bulk of policewomen’s work and such a preventive work was considered as extension of the caring and nurturing role attributed to women in society at large. Indeed, the maternal dimension of child care for instance cannot be denied. Thus, by entering the police forces, women maintained their gender role and did not challenge existing gender patterns: “the physical and

²⁴¹ Jackson, ‘Women Professionals and the Regulations of Violence’. In D’Cruze, *Everyday Violence in Britain*, p. 124.

²⁴² Unknown. ‘The Women Police.’ *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 1 (2), (1922) 13-14, p. 13.

²⁴³ Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance*, p. 175.

²⁴⁴ ‘The Women Police.’, p. 14.

²⁴⁵ Davies, A., & Thomas, R. ‘Talking Cop: Discourses of Change and Policing Identities.’ *Public Administration*, 81 (4), (2003) 681-699, p. 684.

²⁴⁶ Young, M. (1991). *An Inside Job: Policing and Police Culture in Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 209.

²⁴⁷ Jackson, ‘Women Professionals and the Regulations of Violence’. In D’Cruze, *Everyday Violence in Britain*, p. 125.

masculine skills perceived as intrinsic to police had never been seriously questioned”.²⁴⁸ Indeed, the emphasis on difference rather than equality could not be considered as a direct threat to male labour. Furthermore, women officers became “the gentle arm of the law”²⁴⁹ and participated in –if not instigated– the development of “soft-policing”. By rescuing “young people who might become either offenders or victims if left untreated”,²⁵⁰ policewomen became associated with “soft policing” opposed to the hard policing of crime-fighting.²⁵¹ Hence the entry of women into police forces led to a redefinition of police work which from then on included welfare and prevention, emphasising care as much as control with the development of a social/welfare-oriented work. The entry of women in the police led to the development of a new kind of policing based on detection and prevention, in other words “social work”. Indeed, “women’s emotional and practical skills were deemed to suit them for their involvement in ‘social work’, which was [described] as a specifically feminine activity”.²⁵² Then this is not a coincidence that Thomas Critchley, in his well-known *History of Police in England and Wales*, tackles the appointment of women in the police in a chapter entitled “Towards a Police Service”.²⁵³ The definition of police work was, to a certain extent, reshaped in favour of “a role at the intersection of policing and social work”.²⁵⁴ Nevertheless, this strategy based on gender difference, on the importance of a “specialist work” and on marginalisation to “soft-policing” was not entirely efficient because women police’s legitimacy was questioned by those thinking that “their work was not police work, no matter how noble”.²⁵⁵

3) “Their work was not police work, no matter how noble”

The danger to emphasize the distinction between preventive “soft-policing” and “hard policing of crime-fighting and thief-taking” was to provide a counterargument at the expense of policewomen themselves that is to say that their work was not “real” police work. Despite the fact that the Metropolitan Police *General Instructions Book* first published in 1829, “had

²⁴⁸ Levine, “‘Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should’: Women Police in World War I.” *The Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1), (March, 1994) 34-78, p. 74.

²⁴⁹ Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance*, p. 88.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

²⁵¹ McCarthy, D. ‘Gendering “Soft” Policy, Multi-Agency Working, Female Cops, and the Fluidities of Police Culture/s.’ *Policing and Society: An International Journal of Research and Policy*, 23 (2), (2012) 261-278, p. 275.

²⁵² Jackson, ‘Women Professionals and the Regulations of Violence’. In D’Cruze, *Everyday Violence in Britain*, pp. 120-121.

²⁵³ Critchley, T. (1967). *A History of Police in England and Wales*. London: Constable, pp. 176-222.

²⁵⁴ Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance*, p. 199.

²⁵⁵ Lock, J. (1979). *The British Policewoman: Her Story*. London: Robert Hale, p. 137.

sought to establish that ‘the prevention of crime’ was the ‘principal object’ of policing’,²⁵⁶ male police culture had always dominantly emphasised thief-taking, i.e. the detection and arrest of criminals, physical prowess and taking control of potentially dangerous situations. Thus “soft-policing” activities were at the exact opposite and “have been traditionally considered as inferior forms of police work compared with more authoritarian functions”.²⁵⁷ Hence opponents to the appointment of women in the police stated that women were “unsuitable for duties which required the exercise of physical force, and that most of the duties they carried out [...] were extra to police duty proper”.²⁵⁸ The line between legitimate police activity and welfare work was not clearly defined and Louise Jackson refers to the “ambivalence as to whether [policewomen] were, in fact, welfare workers rather than ‘proper’ police officers”.²⁵⁹ Throughout the 1920s, policewomen constantly tried to solve this dilemma and many of them rejected the “‘welfare’ label, although with mixed success”.²⁶⁰ Lilian Wyles for instance tried to justify that policewomen’s duties required police status and could not be done by welfare workers and thus volunteers: “Police are not welfare officers, and welfare officers are not police. The dividing line must be clearly drawn”.²⁶¹ Nonetheless, she further acknowledged that “welfare work [was] an integral part of all police work” and that “liaison between women police and all welfare organizations should [...] be of the closest character”, highlighting distinct, separate but overlapping spheres of expertise.

This aspect of policewomen’s work was used as an argument against them. Indeed, in 1922, the Home Secretary, Sir Edward Shortt, proposed the complete disbandment of the Metropolitan women police, underlining that “the work of the women police was ‘welfare work [...] not police work proper’ and that they only kept down crime ‘with the sense in which the school master keeps down crime, and the clergyman and the Sunday-school teacher’”.²⁶² In other words, policewomen’s work “was not police work, no matter how noble”.²⁶³ Moreover, even among those who conceded that women were better qualified than men as far as duties concerning women and children were concerned, “nevertheless they

²⁵⁶ Jackson, ‘Care or control? The Metropolitan women police and child welfare, 1919-1966.’, p. 624.

²⁵⁷ McCarthy, ‘Gendering “Soft” Policy, Multi-Agency Working, Female Cops, and the Fluidities of Police Culture/s.’, p. 263.

²⁵⁸ Carrier, J. (1988). *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*. Aldershot: Avebury, p. 98.

²⁵⁹ Jackson, ‘Care or control?’, p. 632.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Wyles, L. (1952). *A Woman at Scotland Yard: Reflections on the Struggles and Achievements of Thirty Years in the MET*. London: Faber and Faber, pp. 85-86.

²⁶² Emsley, C. (1991). *The English Police: a Political and Social History*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, p. 148.

²⁶³ Lock, *The British Policewoman: Her Story*, p. 137.

preferred to see them enrolled in voluntary organisations rather than in police forces”.²⁶⁴ As a result, in the continuity of the post-war situation, many “matrons were appointed as statement-takers [...] without being attested as police”.²⁶⁵ Therefore, it was difficult for women to be seen as “real” police officers, especially in a particularly hostile profession and with the widespread idea that it was men’s task to catch “real” criminals. Nevertheless, policewomen’s duties remained essential and along the 1920s, despite a certain withdrawal in practice, they gained widespread recognition.

B) Ambivalence of the post-war years regarding women in the police in peacetime

1) A certain post-war withdrawal

Many historians, such as June Hannam, analysed the immediate after-war period as being characterised by “a backlash against women”.²⁶⁶ Indeed, “the end of the war and demobilisation displaced most waged women workers from their wartime occupations, particularly in fields that had traditionally been the province of men”²⁶⁷: many contracts of employment during the war had been based on agreements stating that women would only be employed “for the duration of the war”. Public opinion was hostile to women’s employment:

former women war workers [...] found themselves criticised harshly in the popular press [...] any evidence of male unemployment, particularly of veterans unable to find work, was seen as demonstrating that women were depriving men of work by refusing to leave it and return home.²⁶⁸

Domestic ideology was also rooted in several laws. For instance, the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act in 1919 whose aim was to exclude women from many industrial jobs they carried out during the war or the marriage bar which “became increasingly important in the depressed 1920s and 1930s when unemployment rates averaged 10 per cent”.²⁶⁹ As a result, there was a massive withdrawal of women –and especially married women because of the common assumption that single and widowed women had a prior right to employment over married women– back into their homes, return to full-time domesticity or to domestic service or other works considered as more feminine.

²⁶⁴ Critchley, *A History of Police*, p. 215.

²⁶⁵ Jackson, ‘Women Professionals and the Regulations of Violence’. In D’Cruze, *Everyday Violence in Britain*, p. 123.

²⁶⁶ Hannam, J., ‘Women and Politics’. In Purvis, J. (1995) *Women’s History: Britain, 1850-1945*. London: UCL Press, p. 234.

²⁶⁷ Grayzel, S. (2002). *Women and the First World War*. London: Longman, p. 101.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.107.

²⁶⁹ Humphries, J. ‘Women and Paid Work’. In Purvis, J. (1995), *Women’s History: Britain, 1850-1945*. London: UCL Press, p. 100. The marriage bar meant that women were required to leave work when they married.

Policewomen were no exception. Indeed, the belief that “a return to normalcy depended on women’s return to traditional femininity, characterized by passivity and dependence, rather than independence, initiative, and activity”²⁷⁰ but also that “women were taking men’s jobs and placing their allowances in jeopardy”²⁷¹ also pervaded police ranks and many women came back to pre-war traditional role. Moreover, the absolute disbandment of munitions factories –which employed a large number of policewomen during the war– reduced drastically the need for policewomen. To these elements can be added the fact that women in uniform represented “a potent symbol of the gender disruption of wartime”.²⁷² Women police were also accused of “not earning their keep” and this was “probably true in many cases but at least partly due to the fact that most had no power of arrest and their work had been deliberately curtailed”.²⁷³ Thus, despite the fact that they gradually succeeded in establishing their own area of police work, policewomen were also struck by the immediate after-war backlash. The moment when the appointment of policewomen was the most threatened was in 1922. In August 1921, Great Britain was in dire financial straits and the Geddes Committee was set to cut public spending to provide an answer to post-war recession. As a result, the Committee recommended the total disbandment of the Metropolitan Women Police Patrols and “the proposal was endorsed by the representative body of the male force, the Police Federation, which hoped to divert the Committee’s attention from its own membership by offering the MPWP as a sacrificial lamb”.²⁷⁴ There was almost no opposition from the Home Office “many of whose permanent officials were at best indifferent to the notion of women police, whom they tended to regard as welfare workers in uniform”.²⁷⁵ Thus in February 1922, Mrs. Sofia Stanley –head of the MPWP– received a letter telling her to disband her force within six weeks. Nonetheless, a vigorous campaign in Parliament in favour of the Metropolitan Police Women prevented the force from being completely abolished and the Home Secretary authorized a remaining nucleus of about twenty policewomen. Thus in London in 1922, the number of policewomen employed “was [drastically] cut from 112 to twenty-four” with the promise that the number would be expended when things improved.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁰ Kent, ‘The Politics of Sexual Difference.’, p. 249.

²⁷¹ Lock, *The British Policewoman*, p. 135.

²⁷² Noakes, L. ‘Demobilising the Military Woman: Constructions of Class and Gender in Britain after the First World War.’ *Gender and History*, 19 (1), (2007) 143-162, p. 148.

²⁷³ Unknown. ‘Pandora’s Box: 150 Years of Professional Policing in Great Britain.’ *Police Box*, (1979) 3-7 [from the National Police Library of the British College of Policing], p. 7.

²⁷⁴ Douglas, R. (1999). *Feminist Freikorps: the British Voluntary Women Police, 1914-1940*. Westport: Praeger, p. 85.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

²⁷⁶ Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales*, p. 217.

As far as the effect of the Geddes Axe in the provincial forces was concerned, absolute disbandment was not compulsory but “roughly half of the thirty or so County and Borough Forces which had already appointed women for police duties, now either dispensed with them altogether or reduced their number”.²⁷⁷

Some people remained hostile to women and one of the main opponents of the entry of women into the police forces was the Police Federation. The members of this representative association were opposed to women’s entrance into what they considered to be “naturally a male occupation”.²⁷⁸ They opposed the appointment of women in 1919 and continually expressed hostility towards them in the following years. This situation led to the impossibility for policewomen to be rightfully represented. This was reinforced with the Police Act of 1919 which “made it unlawful for police officers to meet together to discuss pay and conditions other than through the Police Federation” and women were not allowed to join the Federation until 1948.²⁷⁹ Besides, women also experienced hostility from their male colleagues. The first policewomen “faced, at times, the ‘downright malice and vindictive spirit’ of some of the men”.²⁸⁰ During the war, policewomen were relatively accepted by policemen because they were not officially part of the police, “everyone had been pulling together, and they were not sufficient men to go round”²⁸¹ but with the end of the war, the granting of an official status to women police and the return of men, male colleagues “deprecated this utterly foolish experiment”.²⁸² Thus women were “treated with extreme hostility and insults from male colleagues, who constantly told them to get back to their washtubs” and underlined that they were not suitable for police work.²⁸³ Hence many memoirs from pioneer policewomen refer to “the resentment and animosity of male officers” and insults were “one of the many challenges against which they had to ‘prove’ themselves”.²⁸⁴ Other contemporary critics of the first policewomen denounced the fact that “women in police uniform, especially dealing with unpleasantness on the streets, somehow lost their femininity”.²⁸⁵ This argument was used by the press and many cartoons and comic representations of policewomen were published and presented them “either as seductresses or as ‘manly’ and ‘unnatural’”.²⁸⁶ Representations of

²⁷⁷ Peto, *The Memoirs of Miss Dorothy Olivia Georgiana Peto*, p. 44.

²⁷⁸ Young, *An Inside Job: Policing and Police Culture in Britain*, p. 202.

²⁷⁹ Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance*, p. 34.

²⁸⁰ Critchley, *A History of Police*, p. 218.

²⁸¹ Lock, *The British Policewoman: Her Story*, p. 94.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 94.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

²⁸⁴ Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance*, pp. 35-36.

²⁸⁵ Emsley, *The English Police: a Political and Social History*, p. 149.

²⁸⁶ Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance*, p. 48.

policewomen “as severe, masculine and authoritarian were vividly displayed in music hall during the 1920s”.²⁸⁷ Furthermore, many policewomen cultivated androgynous personal images. Thus when Dorothy Peto first joined the Metropolitan Police in 1920, “she was photographed with cropped hair, a tie and trilby”.²⁸⁸ Women in uniform adopting masculine appearances were thus perceived as being aping men. Moreover, the confinement of policewomen’s duties to cases concerning women and children was justified by the following argument formulated in 1930 by a magistrate: “it must hurt a man’s feeling to be arrested by a woman”.²⁸⁹ All these elements led Thomas Critchley to write that the history of policewomen in the interwar period is “a depressing one of apathy and prejudice”.²⁹⁰ Nonetheless, such a pessimistic view deserves to be qualified. Indeed, despite a certain withdrawal in practice and a remaining hostility towards policewomen –especially from within the force– policewomen gradually obtained a widespread recognition during the 1920s which were marked by an active campaign in favour of the appointment of women in the police.

2) A widespread recognition

The 1920s were characterized by an active campaign for the appointment of policewomen, drawing together a broad coalition of viewpoints: feminist arguments about the legal rights of women and children, moral and protective arguments such as stating that it was indecent for a woman to be questioned by men about intimate matters, traditionalist arguments such as underlining that the sphere of social and welfare work was feminine. Moreover, the campaign also gathered people and organisations with highly different aspirations. Women’s societies were particularly active: professional associations (e.g. the National Union of Women Teachers), suffrage societies (the Women’s Freedom League and the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship), groups with religious affiliations (the Catholic Women’s League), former vigilance societies (the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, the National Vigilance Association), associations from all social classes (the middle-class organisation the National Council of Women and the Women’s Co-operative Guild with predominantly working-class members).²⁹¹ All these organisations lobbied directly the Home Office or local authorities in order to ensure the appointment of police women all over the country. They were highly active in 1922 when the future of the London women police was in

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²⁸⁹ Lock, *The British Policewoman*, p. 175.

²⁹⁰ Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales*, p. 215.

²⁹¹ Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance*, p. 19.

danger and many delegations were organised to lobby the Home Office. One of these delegations was headed by Mrs. Wilson Potter from the National Council of Women on 21 March 1921. She ended her “passionate plea” in front of the Home Secretary, Mr Shortt, declaring that “[their] country [could not] afford the extravagance of allowing its young people to become criminals” and begging “that the Women Patrols be not disbanded” and “given [...] the power of arrest so that they may show their full economic value”.²⁹²

Moreover, the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 opened the doors of Parliament to women members and two of them, Viscountess Astor²⁹³ (Conservative) and Mrs Wintringham (Liberal), took their seats in the House of Commons and “did valiant battle in the cause of women police”.²⁹⁴ In her memoirs, Miss Dorothy Peto praises Lady Astor’s interventions, especially when the future of the Metropolitan Women Police Patrols was threatened in 1922:

she rose, on the eight of March [...], to open the debate on which hung the future of women police [...], fearless in attack and swift in retort, she gave a factual account of the preventive work achieved by the Metropolitan Women Police Patrols on behalf of the thousands of young girls whom they found on the brink of disaster; winding up a brilliant defence of the rights of policewomen to recognition as forming an essential part of the British Police Service.²⁹⁵

In an article published in *The Daily Telegraph* in March 1922, Lady Astor also stood against the argument that policemen’s wives could do the job when women were needed and underlined that “policemen did not select their wives for their ability to do such work”.²⁹⁶ Women police were also supported in the House of Lords against the provisions of the Geddes Committee in 1922, including by male members such as Lord Aberdeen. The latter argued that economic savings would not be effective for “the building which was the headquarters of the women police would still be used by the Metropolitan Force and therefore would have to be maintained, and current expenditure costs such as fuel and lighting would have to be incurred”.²⁹⁷ He also underlined that women were not eligible for pension and referred to the “social costs of disbandment”, stating that “there are some duties which certainly can be performed better by the women police than by even the best and most

²⁹² Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 118.

²⁹³ Lady Nancy Astor was the first woman member in Parliament in 1922. Nevertheless, the number of women actually elected in Parliament remained small.

²⁹⁴ Peto, D. (1970). *The Memoirs of Miss Dorothy Olivia Georgiana Peto*. [copy of the original tapuscript from the National Police Library of the British College of Policing], p. 37.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁹⁶ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 121.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

experienced men”.²⁹⁸ Such parliamentary support throughout the 1920s was essential to the survival of women police and saved them from the Geddes Axe in 1922.

Sometimes, support even came from within the force. Some men within the police force welcomed –either from the very beginning or gradually– the entry of women into the force. Indeed, some of them took the opportunity to pass on their least favourite jobs to women. In 1920, Lady Nott-Bower was appointed at Richmond Police Station to take a statement from a female rape victim. The reactions of local police officers were thus described: one said “If you only knew how glad we should be to have women to deal with these cases! They are cases we hate” and another said “how afraid they were of the cases as charges might be made against them”.²⁹⁹ Indeed, such cases put men in embarrassing positions and rape victims were seen as “potential threats who might make ‘false’ allegations of harassment against ‘innocent’ officers”.³⁰⁰ Thus, the 1920s were marked by an active campaign in favour of policewomen. They gradually became accepted –if not defended– by their contemporaries and this widespread recognition ensured the future of women police.

One major event at the end of the 1920s, the Savidge Case, had positive consequences for women police. In April 1928, Sir Leo Chiozzo Money and Miss Irene Savidge were accused of public indecency and arrested. Miss Savidge was interrogated in Scotland Yard “without giving her the opportunity to communicate with her friends or legal advisers, and subjected [...] to close and persistent examination” without a female officer being present.³⁰¹ A huge amount of publicity was generated by this case and “the press reaction to the case was full of criticism of police methods”.³⁰² *The Observer* published two long articles on ‘Police and Public’, written by J.L. Garvin who “insisted that women should now take an equal part in all police matters ‘particularly concerning their own sex’”.³⁰³ This case had consequences on the employment of women police but also on their powers and status, paving the way for the Royal Commission of Police Powers and Procedures and for the regulations of 1931.

3) The ambivalence of the authorities

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

²⁹⁹ Jackson, ‘Women Professionals and the Regulations of Violence’. In D’Cruze, *Everyday Violence in Britain*, p. 123.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

³⁰¹ Chief Inspector Collins, in charge of the case, received the order to accept the assistance of a policewoman, Lilian Wyles. Both of them escorted Miss Savidge from her place of work to Scotland Yard but, after they arrived at the Yard, Collins told Wyles she could go and she did so. Then he went on with interrogating Miss Savidge. See Lock, *The British Policewoman*, pp. 158-160.

³⁰² Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 203.

³⁰³ Lock, *The British Policewoman*, p. 163.

Pressures for the appointment of policewomen led to the appointment of two committees of inquiry and one Royal Commission between 1919 and 1930 to discuss the employment of women police. The attitudes of the authorities during this period and especially when these inquiries were held were particularly ambiguous. Indeed, despite the fact that each committee of inquiry testified the value of policewomen, their effects were limited.

The first Committee, the Baird Committee –named after its chairman John Baird–, was set in 1920 and “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”³⁰⁴ and that “in thickly populated areas, where offenses against the laws relating to women and children are not infrequent, there is not only scope, but urgent need for the employment of policewomen”.³⁰⁵ Recommendations concerning status, duties, training and selection, control, age of entry and hours of duty were issued and Dorothy Peto recalled that “when the Committee presented its report in July, we felt that women police had been given a very fair deal”.³⁰⁶ Nonetheless, the effective consequences were limited and the hopes raised by the recommendations of the Committee were short-lived. First of all, the ambivalence of the authorities lies in the fact that

on the surface, support and approbation was given to the wartime work women had done, but underneath there was an unwillingness to alter the structures to ensure that such positions remained open to them. Consequently, although the Committee’s recommendations were supportive of the idea of women police, in practice this meant little since the employment and the nature of their duties were still to be left to the discretion of the individual chief constables.³⁰⁷

Indeed, the employment of policewomen was left to the discretion of local commissioners. This example enables to understand and to capture the ambiguity and the ambivalence of after-war legislations especially regarding the employment of women in areas that had previously been male monopolies. As a result, “the combined prejudice of police authorities, chief constables, and the Police Federation ensured that very few women were recruited”.³⁰⁸ The Baird Committee justified that regulations should not be drafted “so as to avoid ‘causes

³⁰⁴ Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales*, p. 216.

³⁰⁵ Peto, *The Memoirs of Miss Dorothy Olivia Georgiana Peto*, p. 39.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³⁰⁷ Woodeson, A. ‘The First Women Police: A Force for Equality or Infringement.’ *Women’s History Review*, 2 (2), (2006) 217-232, p. 229-230.

³⁰⁸ Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales*, p. 217.

of friction and petty jealousy' between the female and the male force".³⁰⁹ Moreover, post-war financial restrictions certainly did not support the employment of policewomen. Besides, the Home Office sent copies of the committee's report to the constabularies and added to them "circulars advising them to ignore the recommendations for better pay and power of arrest".³¹⁰ Hence this circular invalidated the content of the recommendations and almost ensured that they would be ignored by police authorities.

The second inquiry, the Bridgeman Committee in 1924 –led by William Bridgeman–, also officially recognised the value of policewomen and "was on the lines of the recommendations by the Baird Committee".³¹¹ Indeed, it "recommended the employment of policewomen wherever a police authority wanted them".³¹² In London, the number of Metropolitan Police Women Patrols was increased to 50.³¹³ Nonetheless, the autonomy of local police authorities was, once again, absolutely not questioned and these recommendations met with little immediate response. Indeed, "chief constables who believed in the value of women police had already appointed them, and those who did not so believe were reluctant to embark on the experiment".³¹⁴ It was then probably considered as useless and counterproductive to try to force those who were not convinced of policewomen's value to employ them. As a result, a wide range of situations existed throughout the country: from sworn-in policewomen to unattested policewomen but also no women employed at all in the force.³¹⁵ The main difference between the reports of the Baird Committee and of the Bridgeman Committee was that the latter acknowledged that the preventive and detective roles of women officers were of equal importance. Indeed, the Baird Committee rather emphasised considerably the importance of women in preventive work whereas with the Bridgeman Committee, "it was felt that the employment of policewomen in criminal investigations was no longer a matter for debate and undoubtedly improved the efficiency of any police force".³¹⁶

Finally, the third inquiry considering the appointment of policewomen, the Royal Commission on Police Powers and Procedures, was held in 1929 and also spoke out in favour of the employment of policewomen and even "in favour of an increase in the number of

³⁰⁹ Lock, *The British Policewoman*, p. 121.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

³¹¹ Peto, *The Memoirs of Miss Dorothy Olivia Georgiana Peto*, p. 57.

³¹² Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales*, p. 215.

³¹³ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p. 93.

³¹⁴ Peto, *The Memoirs of Miss Dorothy Olivia Georgiana Peto*, p. 57.

³¹⁵ See Appendix 2 and 3 illustrating this important variety of policewomen's situation and status in 1919, 1924 and 1928. From Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, pp. 109 & 179.

³¹⁶ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 150.

women police”,³¹⁷ writing in its conclusion that “the time [was] ripe for a substantial increase in their numbers, more particularly in cities for patrol work in uniform” but also for plain clothes work.³¹⁸ One of the main differences between this Commission and the two previous Committees was that it paved the way for concrete and effective improvements for the situation of women police and aimed at concretely implementing the recommendations of the Baird and Bridgeman Committees. Indeed, the Commission led to the establishment of regulations which standardized pay and conditions of service for women officers wherever and whenever they were employed –and thus to the establishment of an institutional framework. One of the contemporaries claimed that “it [was] good to see that they contemplate the use of real policewomen for real police work, not a corps of Cinderellas and chaperones”.³¹⁹ The establishment of an institutional framework meant that the employment of women in the police was inevitable and, from then on, regulated.

Another example of the ambivalence of the authorities regarding policewomen is the case of voluntary women police. On the one hand, “while recognizing the usefulness of the voluntary organisations during the war, [the Baird Committee] was unable to see any permanent place for them in the police system”³²⁰ but on the other hand, local authorities all over the country continued to employ them. As soon as the war ended, “the WPS announced its intention to continue patrolling in London”³²¹ but the growing opposition in the Home Office and in New Scotland Yard led to the eradication of the voluntary organisation in the city. The Head of the Metropolitan Police Sir Macready who had instigated the creation of the Metropolitan Police Women Patrols (MPWP) in 1918 campaigned then against the WPS. Members of the MPWP also accused the WPS to bring the official force into disrepute. In her memoirs, Lilian Wyles underlined that WPS members were sometimes mistaken for attested policewomen by members of the public and criticized

Commandant Damer Dawson herself and several of her officers [who] still continued to function as self-styled police officers. Without any authority they appeared on the streets in uniform, patrolling, and pulling up couples or girls who they felt deserved corrective advice as to their present and future behaviour [...]. Thinking they were

³¹⁷ Unknown. ‘The Report of the Royal Commission on Police Powers and Procedure.’ *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 2 (4), (1929) 336-348, p. 366.

³¹⁸ Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales*, p. 217.

³¹⁹ ‘The Report of the Royal Commission on Police Powers and Procedure.’, p. 336.

³²⁰ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 101.

³²¹ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p. 75.

official representatives of police, these people immediately went to the nearest station to lodge their complaints against the new and officious policewomen.³²²

Due to this growing hostility in London, the WPS were forced to change their name –they became the Women’s Auxiliary Service– and uniform. The voluntary organisation also lost “many sources of external support upon which Dawson had been able to draw” when she died in May 1920.³²³ Nevertheless, local authorities throughout the country continued to employ WPS members to take charge of police duties in cases concerning women and children. They were also employed in Ireland during the Irish War of Independence and Commandant Allen opened the WPS Scottish Training School in Edinburgh in June 1920. Thus to a certain extent, this diversity of situation throughout the country echoes the ambivalence of the authorities and the disagreements concerning the case of policewomen. Besides, the WPS, led by Mary Allen, gradually turned towards radical ideas and fascism and progressively lost many members.

C) Towards a certain acceptance of women as part of the police organisation

1) Policewomen’s strategies

One of the first strategies adopted by pioneer policewomen was based on the celebration of gender difference, described at the beginning of this chapter. Indeed, policewomen were slowly accepted because of the very reason that they justified the necessity of their appointment to do a “specialist work” that was “not particularly favoured by male officers”.³²⁴ Besides, the fact that women police were separate structures developed within the official police body meant that separate hierarchies also existed and thus that men and women were not competing for promotion or even appointment. Additionally, women could not find themselves in position where they could give orders to men. Thus early policewomen adopted a long-term strategy based on the gradual acceptance of women into separate structures within the police forces. Such a strategic line allowed to ensure the long-term acceptance of women into the police forces but one major disadvantage was that it confined – and it did so until the 1970s– women to specific duties limited to women and children cases.

Moreover, other aspects of women’s adaptation to this highly masculine body deserve to be studied. Two different strategies can be adopted: to become “extra-feminine” or to

³²² Wyles, *A Woman at Scotland Yard: Reflections on the Struggles and Achievements of Thirty Years in the MET*, pp. 99-100.

³²³ Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*, p. 75.

³²⁴ Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance*, pp. 35-36.

become “one of the boys”.³²⁵ The first strategy, becoming a policewoman meant to emphasize the female aspect of the work and to underline that they had specific womanly qualities for womanly tasks in the framework of social service and care. The other strategy consists in adopting male standards and becoming a *policewoman*. In fact, many policewomen found it “easier to accommodate rather than confront the aggressively masculine attitudes of many of their male colleagues”.³²⁶ One example of such adaptation strategy was Lilian Wyle’s opinion on the reliability of women victims’ words: “Taken as a whole there are not a large number of cases of genuine rape, though there are many spurious and doubtful complaints alleging that offense”.³²⁷ Such a reluctance to believe the words of women victims can be interpreted as the duplication of traditional masculinist approaches.³²⁸ The first pioneers also constantly had to struggle in order to become accepted by their male colleagues. At first, “they had to exercise a lot of pressure to get any work at all to do, but gradually, the men soon became adept at passing on their least favourite jobs such as the escorting to the station of lost children and dogs” and then, “very slowly, [policewomen] managed to acquire some other duties”.³²⁹ Some women also adhered to the cult of masculinity, adopting a masculine appearance. Hence, the jacket they wore “inevitably seem[ed] to deny the bust, while the cap hides the hair [...]. Many career women [...] adopted a total masculine style and with cropped hair, their uniform, and stout build they have earned themselves a partial right to manoeuvre more easily in male social space”.³³⁰

Another example of a pioneer policewoman who embraced masculine standard was the reaction of Lilian Wyles in the Savidge case when she was interrogated about Inspector Collins. In her memoirs, Lilian Wyles told how Collins “had railed against the ridiculous instruction that a woman should accompany him, and was furious at having to wait for her”.³³¹ Nonetheless, instead of seizing the “golden opportunity to take a revenge for ‘years of insults, slights, frozen faces [...] the heartbreak and the struggle and icy indifference’”, Miss Wyles “kept her answers brief and managed to convey a favourable impression”.³³² By doing so, she showed loyalty towards her colleague, one of the main characteristics of police

³²⁵ Horn, R., & Hollin C. ‘Police Beliefs about Women who Offend.’ *Legal and Criminal Psychology*, 2 (2), (1997) 193-204, p. 195.

³²⁶ Emsley, *The English Police: a Political and Social History*, p. 202.

³²⁷ Wyles, *A Woman at Scotland Yard*, p. 121.

³²⁸ Jackson, ‘Women Professionals and the Regulations of Violence’. In D’Cruze, *Everyday Violence in Britain*, p. 127.

³²⁹ Lock, *The British Policewoman*, p. 95.

³³⁰ Young, M. (1991). *An Inside Job: Policing and Police Culture in Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 211.

³³¹ Lock, *The British Policewoman*, p. 159.

³³² Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 200.

culture. In other words, women were forced to “emulate existing practice simply in order to survive” in an organization having highly masculinist lines.³³³ In fact, denying male colleagues’ hostility and discrimination against them as women was rather common among pioneer policewomen. It allowed them to justify “their unproblematic place as women in the organisation” and to deny “that barriers existed that might raise questions of the legitimacy or wisdom of their position”.³³⁴ Mrs Stanley, in front of the Baird Committee, thus declared that “there had been no friction whatsoever” between female and male police whereas “the friction has been both extreme and continuous”, as it is shown in many memoirs written by the first policewomen.³³⁵

2) Major changes

Between 1919 and 1931, major changes occurred as far as the status and the conditions of service of policewomen were concerned. The 110 policewomen who were employed by the Metropolitan Police in 1919 were unattested, i.e. they did not have the power of arrest. In the summer of 1919, the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act was passed. It stated that “a woman shall not be disqualified by sex or marriage from the exercise of any public function”. Hence, this legislation “removed any legal objection to the swearing-in of women constables and reinforced the arguments of those who wanted to have the power of arrest”.³³⁶ Sir Nevil Macready and Mrs. Stanley, among others, campaigned actively in favour of policewomen’s quest for power of arrest. The main argument was that they would be much more effective with such a power. Nevertheless, Macready and Stanley both advocated “a limited power of arrest to operate only over women and children under sixteen” because, Mrs Stanley explained in front of the Baird Committee, “You could not expect a woman to arrest a burglar”.³³⁷ The campaign became successful on 31 January 1923 when the Metropolitan Police published in the press a notice stating that “women were to be sworn in as constables with ‘exactly the same standing and powers as male members of the force’”.³³⁸ Hence women were granted the powers of arrest and detention. Besides, one more step was made towards official and long-lasting recognition with the declaration, in the same notice, that the official title of the policewomen of London was changed from “women patrol” to “women

³³³ Levine, “‘Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should’: Women Police in World War I.” *The Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1), (March, 1994) 34-78, p. 78.

³³⁴ Davey, ‘Women’s Accounts of Organizational Politics as a Gendering Process.’, p. 657.

³³⁵ Lock, *The British Policewoman*, p. 112.

³³⁶ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 87.

³³⁷ Lock, *The British Policewoman*, pp. 109-112.

³³⁸ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 142.

constable”. Names are indeed linked with perceptions; therefore, such a change can be considered as an important and meaningful step. Furthermore, policewomen also received a uniform which was almost the same as men, except for the trousers replaced by a long skirt. Louise Jackson underlines that “women felt self-conscious the first time they stepped into uniform because it transformed a ‘mere’ woman into a symbol of official authority”.³³⁹ Women also undertook the same basic training as men and, as Dorothy Peto tells, “it was refreshing to be learning police duty from the bottom up, instead of trying both to learn and to teach it by deduction from police court proceedings and from police instruction books”.³⁴⁰

Swearing-in, power of arrest and training were not the only changes experienced by the women police. Another major difference with the wartime period was the social background of the recruits. During the war, policewomen were rather middle or upper-class women. Yet, in 1919, the first batch of policewomen was from “all walks of life –shop-girls, a laundress, a tram conductress, typists, nurses, schoolmistresses and a few with university degrees”.³⁴¹ Despite Macready’s initial frustration “that they were not attracting the class of women they wanted [i.e. middle and upper class women], due to low pay and lack of prospects”,³⁴² there was a growing interest of chief constables for lower-class policewomen who “would understand the life and habits of the class with whom they would have to deal”.³⁴³ Thus, post-war police forces integrated a broader constituency of women from a huge diversity of socio-economic backgrounds, including “graduates and those trained in nursing, teaching and social work, as well as policemen’s widows and former domestic servants”.³⁴⁴

One last major change was statutory recognition acquired thanks to the regulations issued by the Home Office in 1931 –and following the Royal Commission on Police Powers and Procedures of 1920. The regulations exhaustively listed the duties that may be assigned to policewomen:

patrol duty, escorting women and children and taking statements from them in relation to sexual offences, watching and searching female prisoners or those who had attempted suicide, clerical work, plain-clothes duty and detective work,³⁴⁵

³³⁹ Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance*, p. 102.

³⁴⁰ Peto, *The Memoirs of Miss Dorothy Olivia Georgiana Peto*, p. 46.

³⁴¹ Young, *An Inside Job*, p. 218.

³⁴² Lock, *The British Policewoman*, p. 98.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

³⁴⁴ Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance*, p. 47.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

but also duties in connection with “women or children reported missing, found, ill, destitute of homeless, or in immoral surroundings”.³⁴⁶ Therefore, on the one hand the Commission legitimized welfare work as being an official aspect of police work and on the other hand gave women the opportunity to do general as well as special work. Moreover, pay, conditions of service and uniform were also standardized. Thus these regulations defined the role and status of policewomen wherever and whenever they were employed and allowed the establishment of an institutional framework concerning the employment of women into the police forces. Once again, the major disadvantage of these regulations was that it was still not compulsory to recruit women because of the remaining principle of discretion. As a result, the regulations did little in increasing the number of policewomen but at least they initiated a process of standardization throughout the country, leading “some of the largest employers of women police to decide to attest their policewomen; these were Birmingham, Sheffield, Bristol, Nottingham, Gloucester and Lancashire”.³⁴⁷ Hence achieving statutory recognition was one of the major steps towards “higher status for women in police work, and a higher standard of service to the public”³⁴⁸ and it ensured the permanent place of women in the police forces in Britain.

³⁴⁶ Young, *An Inside Job*, p. 202.

³⁴⁷ Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, p. 241.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

Conclusion

Writing the history of pioneer policewomen thus does not only mean writing “a depressing [story] of apathy and prejudice”³⁴⁹ but also a progressive one of constant fight and major achievements. Indeed, if a comparison is made between 1880 and 1931, there is a shift from a situation where there was not a single policewoman and no institutional framework to the broad acceptance of women into the police and official statutory regulation and standardization of pay and conditions of service. Between these two dates, the campaign for the employment of policewomen was constant and allowed women to gain a semi-official and then a fully official status as members of the British police forces. The acceptance of women into the police was strongly linked with the evolution of the status and perception of women in general in the society at large. Indeed, between 1880 and 1914, women were considered as relatively inferior to men and confined to typically feminine occupations and these contemporary beliefs constituted structural obstacles to the appointment of women in the police forces. Then during the First World War, gender lines were subverted and new opportunities were offered to women who entered a wide range of occupations previously dedicated to men, including police work. Then, during the years which followed the war, women became generally more and more accepted in the public life and, despite a certain confinement to matters concerning women and children, policewomen gained a widespread recognition and ensured their place in the British police in the long-term when they were finally granted full police powers and statutory recognition in 1931. Therefore, the role, status and perception of policewomen evolved along with –and mirrored– the changes of the time.

Nevertheless, if major achievements and improvements cannot be denied, a lot remained to be done. The remaining principle of local autonomy continued to be a major obstacle to the appointment of policewomen throughout the country. Indeed, if pay and conditions of service were standardized in 1931, the decision to employ or not women in the police was left to local chief constabularies and some of them were still reluctant. As a result, in 1939, “only 44 police forces out of a total of 183 were employing policewomen”.³⁵⁰ Moreover, the choice in favor of a strategy based on gender difference rather than gender equality prejudiced against policewomen on the long-term. Indeed, for a long time, they remained confined to “soft-policing”, typically feminine duties and women branches of the police forces: “women police continued to be associated with ‘specialist’ work with women

³⁴⁹ Critchley, T. (1967). *A History of Police in England and Wales*. London: Constable, p. 215.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

and children from their initial appointment in 1919 until their official integration on the same terms as male officers between 1969 and 1973”.³⁵¹ Besides, the campaign for the employment of policewomen, from its very beginning, emphasized that women were needed in the judicial system to fight against the double standard. Yet, the definition of women’s police work as a specialist field “mainly confined to moral and sexual matters [...] “inevitably [made] female officers complicit in the control of their own sex in ways in which men’s behavior was not controlled”.³⁵² The path towards equality within the police forces between male and female officers was long and equality was finally achieved with integration in 1973³⁵³, even if partially. Indeed, Francis Heidensohn underlines that “while there have now been many generations of female officers in the police, it is still possible to find women who are the first in their own field, either for all British forces, for their own, or in achieving a particular rank”.³⁵⁴ Hence, despite the fact that formal integration took place in the 1970s, the police remain a predominantly masculine body. An interesting parallel can thus be drawn between reality and fiction. If the presence of professional female detectives in fiction is nothing new, nowadays the omnipresence of recent television shows—and especially crime fictions—featuring women detectives is striking and the popularity of series such as *Castle*, *The Mentalist* or *Happy Valley*—which are three examples among an infinite number—in the Anglo-American popular culture but also throughout the world cannot be denied. Therefore, a severe discrepancy still exists between reality and fiction, between a highly male-centered police structure and culture and female-centered TV shows following the inquiries of charismatic women detectives.

³⁵¹ Jackson, L. ‘Care or control? The Metropolitan women police and child welfare, 1919-1966.’ *The Historical Journal*, 46 (3), (2003) 623-648.

³⁵² Heidensohn, F. (1992). *Women in Control?: The Role of Women in Law Enforcement*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 52.

³⁵³ In 1973, women branches of the British police forces were abolished and women were fully integrated.

³⁵⁴ Heidensohn, *Women in Control?: The Role of Women in Law Enforcement*, p. 135.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Distribution of women police in boroughs, July 1917

Town	Number Employed	By Whom Paid	Weekly Salary	Sworn In
Grantham	1	Town Council	£2 and uniform	Yes
Carlisle	12	Ministry of Munitions	£2, uniform not given	Yes
Hull	2	Town Council	£1 10s and uniform	No
Bath	2	Town Council	" " "	No
Oxford	1	Town Council	£2 and uniform	Yes
Bexhill	2	Local Committee and public	£2, uniform not given	No
Reading	2	subscription Town Council	included £1 10s and uniform	The Chief Constable intends to have them sworn in shortly
Birmingham	2	" "	-	No
Birkenhead	6	" "	-	No
Huddersfield	1	Chief Constable	Police Assistant, no uniform	No
Southampton	2	Town Council	£1 10s, no uniform	No
Glasgow	1	Corporation	-	No. Works in CID

From Carrier, J. (1988). *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*. Aldershot: Avebury, p. 38.

Appendix 2:

Numbers of policewomen employed in England and Wales, 29 Sept 1919

	Attested	Non-attested
Reading, Berks	-	2
Cambridge	-	2
Birkenhead, Cheshire	-	6
Carlisle, Cumberland	-	1
Plymouth, Devon	-	2
Durham (county)	-	4
Sunderland	-	1
Essex (county)	-	2
Colchester	2	-
Gloucestershire (county)	15	-
Bristol	-	13
Portsmouth	-	2
Southampton	-	6
Folkestone	-	1
Ramsgate	-	1
Tunbridge Wells	1	-
Lancashire (county)	6	11
Bolton	-	5
Bootle	-	1
Liverpool	-	2
Manchester	-	3
Preston	-	2
Great Yarmouth	1	-
Norwich	-	2
Northampton	4	-
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	-	4
Nottingham	-	1
Oxfordshire	-	5
Oxford (city)	2	-
Shropshire	-	4
Somerset	-	2
Walsall, Staffs	1	-
Brighton	2	-
Eastbourne	-	1
Hove	-	2
Birmingham	-	9
Salisbury	1	-
Huddersfield	-	5
Leeds	-	1
Sheffield	-	2
WALES	none	none
TOTALS		
Counties (60)	21	128
Boroughs (129)	<u>16</u>	<u>79</u>
	37	207
City of London	none	104
Metropolitan Police District		
GRAND TOTAL	<u>37</u>	<u>311</u>

Only 8 counties (out of 60), and only 34 boroughs (out of 129) had policewomen.

Appendix 3 :

Numbers of policewomen employed, comparison of 1924 and 1928

Force	1924		1928	
	Attested	Unattested	Attested	Unattested
Reading	-	2	-	2
Cambridge	2	-	2	-
Carlisle	-	1	-	1
Chesterfield	-	-	1	-
Sunderland	-	1	1	-
Colchester	-	1	1	-
Bristol	-	6	-	5
Southampton	-	1	-	2
Hertfordshire	-	-	2	-
Gravesend	1	-	-	-
Folkestone	-	-	1	-
Lancashire	19	-	18	-
Bolton	-	4	5	-
Bootle	1	-	1	-
Liverpool	-	3	-	3
Manchester	-	2	-	4
Oldham	1	-	1	-
Great Yarmouth	1	-	1	-
Norwich	1	-	1	-
Northampton	2	-	2	-
Newcastle	-	4	-	3
Nottingham	2	-	2	-
Oxfordshire	2	-	2	-
Oxford	2	-	1	-
Shropshire	-	2	2	-
Stoke	2	-	2	-
Walsall	2	-	1	-
Ipswich	-	1	1	-
Eastbourne	1	-	1	-
Hove	-	2	-	1
West Sussex	1	-	1	-
Birmingham	-	-	-	7
Salisbury	1	-	1	-
West Riding of Yorkshire	-	-	3	-
Bradford	-	-	1	-
Huddersfield	-	1	-	1
Leeds	1	-	1	-
Sheffield	-	1	2	-
TOTALS				
Counties (60)	26	2	34	2
Boroughs (123)	22	35 (121)	31	31
	48	37	65	33
Metropolitan Police District	20	-	48	-
TOTAL				
England and Wales	68	37	113	33

(1923 Figures: attested 62, unattested 43)

From Carrier, J. (1988). *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*. Aldershot: Avebury, p. 179.

Bibliography

Primary sources:

Allen, M. (1925). *The Pioneer Policewoman*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Boyle, N. "Women Police Volunteers", *Modern Woman* (November 20, 1915).

B. M. 'Social Service: Bristol Training School for Women Patrols and Police.' *The British Journal of Nursing* (January 19, 1918) 48-49.

Dixon, A. 'The English Police System.' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 146, (1929) 177-192.

Linton, E. 'The Wild Women as Politicians' *Nineteenth Century*, 30 (July 1891) 79-88.

Pankhurst, C. (1913). *The Great Scourge and How to End It*. Michigan: Michigan Publishing.

Peto, D. (1970). *The Memoirs of Miss Dorothy Olivia Georgiana Peto*. [copy of the original tapuscript from the National Police Library of the British College of Policing].

Stopes, C. (1894 [2010]). *British Freewomen: Their Historical Privilege*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Unknown. 'Pandora's Box: 150 Years of Professional Policing in Great Britain.' *Police Box*, (1979) 3-7 [from the National Police Library of the British College of Policing].

Unknown. 'The Women Police.' *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 1 (2), (1922) 13-14.

Unknown. 'The Report of the Royal Commission on Police Powers and Procedure.' *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 2 (4), (1929) 336-348.

Secondary sources:

Barrie, D., & Broomhall, S. (2012). *A History of Police and Masculinities, 1700-2010*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Beales, H. 'Victorian Ideas of Sex'. In British Broadcasting Corporation (1950), *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians: An Historic Reevaluation of the Victorian Age* (pp. 351-364). London: Sylvan Press).

Bovingdon, T. 'Sex(ism) and the Service: What it was Like for the First Women Police Officers.' *Police Review* (December 4, 2009) 22-23.

Braybon, G. & Summerfield, P. (1987). *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in Two World Wars*. London: Pandora Press.

Brewer, J. 'Hercules, Hippolyte and the Amazons – or Policewomen in the RUC.' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 42 (2), (1991) 231-247.

Cahalane, C. 'Police Training.' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 146, (Nov. 1929) 166-169.

Carrier, J. (1988). *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*. Aldershot: Avebury.

Clark, A. 'Domesticity and the Problem of Wife Beating in 19th Century Britain: Working-Class Culture, Law and Politics'. In D'Cruze S. (2000), *Everyday Violence in Britain, 1850-1950: Gender and Class*. Harlow: Longman, pp. 27-40.

Craig, P. & Cadogan, M. (1981). *The Lady Investigates: Women Detectives and Spies in Fiction*. London: Victor Gollancz.

Critchley, T. (1967). *A History of Police in England and Wales*. London: Constable.

Davey, K. 'Women's Accounts of Organizational Politics as a Gendering Process.' *Gender, Work & Organization*, 15 (6), (2008) 650-671.

Davies, A., & Thomas, R. 'Talking Cop: Discourses of Change and Policing Identities.' *Public Administration*, 81 (4), (2003) 681-699.

D'Cruze S. (2000). *Everyday Violence in Britain, 1850-1950: Gender and Class*. Harlow: Longman.

Delap, L. 'Feminist and Anti-Feminist Encounters in Edwardian Britain'. *Historical Research*, 78 (201), (August 2005), 377-399.

Deslandes, P. 'The Male Body, Beauty and Aesthetics in Modern British Culture.' *History Compass*, 8 (10), (2010) 1191-1208.

Dodsworth, F. 'Men on a Mission: Masculinity, Violence and the Self-Presentation of Policemen in England, c. 1870-1914'. In Barrie, D., & Broomhall, S. (2012). *A History of Police and Masculinities, 1700-2010*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, pp. 123-140.

Douglas, R. (1999). *Feminist Freikorps: the British Voluntary Women Police, 1914-1940*. Westport: Praeger.

Downs, L. 'War work.' In J. Winter (2014), *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, vol.3 (pp.72-95). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Emsley, C. (1991). *The English Police: a Political and Social History*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Evans, R. (1977). *The Feminists: Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe, America and Australasia, 1840-1920*. London: Croom Helm.

Fletcher, A. 'Patriotism, the Great War and the Decline of the Victorian Manliness'. *The Journal of the Historical Association*, 99 (334), (2014) 40-72.

Fletcher, I. 'Opposition by Journalism? The Socialist and Suffragist Press and the Passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1912.' *Parliamentary History*, 25 (1), (2006) 88-114.

Grayzel, S. (1999). *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

_____ (2002). *Women and the First World War*. London: Longman.

_____ 'Changing Lives: Gender Expectations and Roles during and after World War One.' *British Library: World War One: Articles* (date unspecified). Retrieved January 15, 2015, from <http://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/changing-lives-gender-expectations>

Hannam, J., 'Women and Politics'. In Purvis, J. (1995) *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945*. London: UCL Press, p. 234.

Hargreaves, J. (1994). *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sports*. London: Routledge.

Heidensohn, F. (1992). *Women in Control?: The Role of Women in Law Enforcement*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Horn, R., & Hollin C. 'Police Beliefs about Women who Offend.' *Legal and Criminal Psychology*, 2 (2), (1997) 193-204.

Humphries, J. 'Women and Paid Work'. In Purvis, J. (1995). *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945*. London: UCL Press, pp. 85-105.

Jackson, L. 'Women Professionals and the Regulations of Violence in Interwar Britain'. In D'Cruze S. (2000), *Everyday Violence in Britain, 1850-1950: Gender and Class*. Harlow: Longman, pp. 119-135.

_____ 'Care or control? The Metropolitan women police and child welfare, 1919-1966.' *The Historical Journal*, 46 (3), (2003) 623-648.

_____ 'The Unusual Case of 'Mrs Sherlock'. Memoir, Identity and the 'Real' Woman Private Detective in the Twentieth-Century Britain'. *Gender & History*, 15 (1), (2003), 108-134.

_____ (2006). *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance in the Twentieth Century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Jalland, P., & Hooper, J. (1986). *Women from Birth to Death: the Female Life Cycle in Britain 1830-1914*. Brighton: Harvester.

Johnston, H. 'Gendered Prison Work: Female Prison Officers in the Local Prison System, 1877-1939.' *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 53 (2), (May 2014), 193-212.

Jones, D. 'The New Police, Crime and People in England and Wales, 1829-1888.' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 33, (1983) 151-168.

Jordan, E. (1999). *The Women's Movement and Women's Employment in Nineteenth Century Britain*. London: Routledge.

Kay, J. 'It Wasn't Just Emily Davison! Sport, Suffrage and Society in Edwardian Britain.' *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25 (10), (2008) 1338-1354.

Kent, S. K. 'The Politics of Sexual Difference: World War I and the Demise of British Feminism.' *Journal of British Studies*, 27 (3), (1988) 232-253.

Kestner, J. A. (2003). *Sherlock's Sister, the British Female Detective, 1864-1913*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Klein, J. 'Quiet and Determined Servants and Guardians: Creating Ideal English Police Officers, 1900-45'. In Barrie, D., & Broomhall, S. (2012). *A History of Police and Masculinities, 1700-2010*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, pp. 201-216.

Kuersten, A. (2003). *Women and the Law: Leaders, Cases and Documents*. Santa Barbara (California): ABC-CLIO.

Lambertz, J. 'Feminists and the Politics of Wives-Beating.' In Harold L. Smith (1990), *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century*. Aldershot: Edward Elgar.

Levine, P. (1990). *Feminist lives in Victorian England: private roles and public commitment*. Oxford: Blackwell.

_____. "Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should": Women Police in World War I.' *The Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1), (March, 1994) 34-78.

Lock, J. (1979). *The British Policewoman: Her Story*. London: Robert Hale.

Martin, S. 'Police Force or Police Service? Gender and Emotional Labor' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 561, (January, 1999), 111-126.

McCarthy, D. 'Gendering "Soft" Policy, Multi-Agency Working, Female Cops, and the Fluidities of Police Culture/s.' *Policing and Society: An International Journal of Research and Policy*, 23 (2), (2012) 261-278.

McGregor, O. 'The Social Position of Women in England 1850-1914.' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 6 (1), (March, 1955), 48-60.

Montgomery Byles, J. 'Women's Experience of World War One: Suffragists, Pacifists and Poets.' *Women's Studies International Forum*, 8 (5), (1985) 473-487.

Noakes, L. 'Demobilising the Military Woman: Constructions of Class and Gender in Britain after the First World War.' *Gender and History*, 19 (1), (2007) 143-162.

Park, J. 'Women of Their Time: The Growing Recognition of the Second Sex in Victorian and Edwardian England.' *Journal of Social History*, 21 (1), (October 1, 1987) 49-67.

- Parker, K. 'The Police Service after the War: Structure and Administration.' *Public Administration*, 68 (4), (1990) 453-475.
- Pedersen, S. 'Gender, Welfare, and Citizenship in Britain during the Great War.' *The American Historical Review*, 95 (4), (1990) 983-1006.
- Prokos, A., & Padavic, I. ' 'There Oughtta Be a Law Against Bitches': Masculinity Lessons in Police Academy Training.' *Gender, Work and Organization*, 9 (4), (August 2002) 439-459.
- Purvis, J. (1995) *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945*. London: UCL Press.
- Rabe-Hemp, C. 'POLICEwomen or policeWOMEN? Doing Gender and Police Work.' *Feminist Criminology*, 4 (2), (April 2009) 114-129.
- Rogers, J. 'Darwinism and Social Darwinism.' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 33 (2), (1972), 265-280.
- Segrave, K. (1995). *Policewomen: A History*. Jefferson (North Carolina): McFarland.
- Shelley, T., Schaefer, M., & Tobin-Gurley, J. 'Gendered Institutions and Gender Roles: Understanding the Experiences of Women in Policing.' *Criminal Justice Studies: A Critical Journal of Crime, Law and Society*, 24 (4), (2011) 351-367.
- Shpayer-Makov, H. 'The Making of a Police Labour Force.' *Journal of Social History*, 24 (1), (Autumn 1990), 109-134.
- _____ 'From Menace to Celebrity: the English Police Detective and the Press, 1842-1914.' *Historical Research*, 83 (222), (2010) 672-692.
- _____ 'Shedding the Uniform and Acquiring a New Masculine Image: The Case of the Late Victorian and Edwardian English Police Detective'. In Barrie, D., & Broomhall, S. (2012). *A History of Police and Masculinities, 1700-2010*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, pp. 141-162.
- Steinbach S. (2005). *Women in England 1760-1914 : A Social History*. London: Phoenix.
- Stevenson, K. "'Ingenuities of the Female Mind': Legal and Public Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Victorian England, 1850-1890". In D'Cruze S. (2000), *Everyday Violence in Britain, 1850-1950: Gender and Class*. Harlow: Longman, pp. 89-103.
- Summers, D. (2005). *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*. Harlow: Pearson Longman.
- Thane, P. 'Late Victorian Women'. In Gourvish, T., & O'Day A. (1993), *Later Victorian Britain, 1867-1900*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- _____ 'What Difference did the Vote Make? Women in Public and Private Life in Britain since 1918.' *Historical Research*, 76 (192), (2003) 268-285.

Tylee, C. “Maleness Run Riot” – The Great War and Women’s Resistance to Militarism.’ *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 11 (3), (1988) 199-210.

Unknown. ‘The History of Women in Policing’. *Police* (November 2014), 14-21. [from the National Police Library of the British College of Policing]

Vicinus, M. (1980). *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*. London: Indiana University Press.

Vickery, A. ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History.’ *The Historical Journal*, 36 (2), (June, 1993) 383-414.

Woodeson, A. ‘The First Women Police: A Force for Equality or Infringement.’ *Women’s History Review*, 2 (2), (2006) 217-232.

Woollacott, A. “‘Khaki Fever’ and its Control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War.’ *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29 (2), (1994) 325-347.

_____ ‘From Moral to Professional Authority: Secularism, Social Work, and Middle-Class Women’s Self-Construction in World War I Britain.’ *Journal of Women’s History*, 10 (2), (1998) 85-111.

Wright, M. ‘The Women’s Emancipation Union and Radical-Feminist Politics in Britain, 1891-1899’. *Gender & History*, 22 (2), (August, 2010) 382-406.

Wyles, L. (1952). *A Woman at Scotland Yard: Reflections on the Struggles and Achievements of Thirty Years in the MET*. London: Faber and Faber.

Young, M. (1984). ‘Police Wives: A Reflection of Police Concepts of Order and Control.’ In H. Callan & S. Ardener, *The incorporated wife*. London: Croom Helm.

_____ (1991). *An Inside Job: Policing and Police Culture in Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Web bibliography:

BBC (2011). *Women on the Home Front in World War One*. Retrieved December 27, 2014, from http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwone/women_employment_01.shtml

Dominici, M. (2012). *Les Suffragettes, ni paillassons ni prostituées*. [documentaire produit par Arte] from <http://boutique.arte.tv/f7290-suffragettes>

Greater Manchester Police Museum. (date unspecified). *History of Women in Policing*. Retrieved December 27, 2014, from http://www.gmpmuseum.co.uk/?page_id=1280

Lee, Helen [Producer], Murray, Jenni [Presenter], Jackson, Louise & Antrobus, Jane [Interviewed Guests]. (November 14, 2014) *Women’s Hour: Policewomen 100 Years Ago*. [from 24min22 to 33min35] Online on BBC Radio 4 : <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04nvgq3>

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography [Last consulted June 03, 2015] :

- Allen, Mary. From <http://www.oxforddnb.com.rproxy.sc.univ-paris-diderot.fr/view/article/39176?docPos=1>
- Astor, Nancy. From <http://www.oxforddnb.com.rproxy.sc.univ-paris-diderot.fr/view/article/30489?docPos=1>
- Boyle, Nina. From <http://www.oxforddnb.com.rproxy.sc.univ-paris-diderot.fr/view/article/37212?docPos=1>
- Creighton, Louise. From <http://www.oxforddnb.com.rproxy.sc.univ-paris-diderot.fr/view/article/38640>
- Dawson, Margaret Damer. From <http://www.oxforddnb.com.rproxy.sc.univ-paris-diderot.fr/view/article/45544>
- Hartley, Catherine Gasquoine. From <http://www.oxforddnb.com.rproxy.sc.univ-paris-diderot.fr/view/article/55594?docPos=1>
- Henry, Sir Edward. From <http://www.oxforddnb.com.rproxy.sc.univ-paris-diderot.fr/view/article/33822?docPos=1>
- Linton, Eliza. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.rproxy.sc.univ-paris-diderot.fr/view/article/16742>
- Macready, Nevil. From <http://www.oxforddnb.com.rproxy.sc.univ-paris-diderot.fr/view/article/34822?docPos=1>
- Peel, Robert. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.rproxy.sc.univ-paris-diderot.fr/view/article/21764?docPos=2>
- Peto, Dorothy. From <http://www.oxforddnb.com.rproxy.sc.univ-paris-diderot.fr/view/article/76095>
- Wolstenholme, Elizabeth. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.rproxy.sc.univ-paris-diderot.fr/view/article/38638?docPos=1>

Metropolitan Police (date unspecified). *Women in the police*. Retrieved February 01, 2015, from <http://content.met.police.uk/Article/Women-in-the-Police/1400015656544/1400015656544>

Metropolitan Women Police Association (date unspecified). *History of Met Women Police Officers*. Retrieved December 27, 2014, from <http://www.metwpa.org.uk/history.html>

The Guardian (December 19, 2014). *Women could get combat roles in British army by 2016*. Retrieved March 1st, 2015, from <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/dec/19/women-combat-roles-british-army-infantry-armoured-units>

The National Archives (date unspecified). *Women and the First World War*. Retrieved December 27, 2014, from http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/document_packs/women.htm

The Open University and Metropolitan Police Authority (2009). *The Women Police*. Retrieved December 27, 2014, from <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/history-from-police-archives/Met6Kt/WomenPolice/wpIntro.html>

UK Parliament. *Transcripts of Parliamentary Debates*. Retrieved February 01, 2015 from Hansard (<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/index.html>)