

◆ Antipathy to ambivalence

POLITICS AND WOMEN POLICE IN SUSSEX, 1915–45

By Derek Oakensen

The genesis of women's entry into policing can be found in social changes generated by the First World War and by the pre-war women's suffrage movement. But acceptance and integration were entirely different matters. Quite apart from any fear of proponents' political motivation, the idea that women should be allowed to patrol the streets represented a fundamental challenge to long-standing orthodoxies. Real decision-making power lay, in any case, with antipathetic police authorities and chief constables of the six forces in the county rather than with central government; and lobbying, however well-organised, could take years to precipitate change. What emerged were six distinct approaches which changed with time over the following 30 years. But, in most of Sussex, decision-makers remained ambivalent: the notion that women could be constables and a permanent feature of policing structures was not to be finally settled until well after 1945.

INTRODUCTION

In 1914 there were separate county constabularies in East and West Sussex, and four borough police forces in Brighton, Eastbourne, Hove and Hastings.¹ Borough watch committees in particular were fiercely protective of their decision-making powers, not infrequently disagreeing with their respective councils on matters of policy. Whilst chief constables of borough forces could be constrained by their watch committees they were by no means always subservient to them. County chief constables (since the Rural Constabulary Act 1839) enjoyed an even greater autonomy enshrined in statute. It extended to relationships with central government and the Inspectorate of Constabulary. As one senior civil servant later put it, 'compliance with Home Office wishes, particularly if additional expense was likely to be involved, depended largely on persuasion.'² This independence, in its different forms, was to affect directly the nature and pace of the evolution of women's role in policing.

1914: WOMEN CAN'T BE CONSTABLES?

Male domination of policing at this time should not be underestimated. If women had any role at all it was subordinate, clearly defined and separate from operational functions. When, in 1895, the Brighton watch committee had decided to respond to criticism from the Inspector of Constabulary (a rare event in itself) and replace its Grafton Street police station with a new one in Freshfield Road, it created a self-contained unit with a charge

room, cells, and mortuary on the ground floor and, on the upper floor, living accommodation. Seven single constables shared three rooms, but a married constable was provided with a sitting room, bedroom and kitchen and paid the same rent as his unmarried colleagues. However, it was clearly understood that the wife of the married constable would be responsible for cleaning the police station, preparing meals for the single officers and looking after any female prisoners detained there. The first paid female employees of the Hove, Hastings and Brighton police forces were matrons in the cells at their central police stations, appointed in 1907, 1908 and 1909 respectively.³ This defined marginalisation was also reflected in official views about policemen's wives. In January 1914 the chief constable of West Sussex issued a 1200-word memorandum of instructions to his force, a quarter of which was directed towards wives and the standards expected of them. It was, he directed, essential that every policeman should 'have a clean, comfortable home to return to ... if it is very dirty or untidy it tends to make him [sic] slovenly and untidy, and his work will become slovenly.' To reinforce the point he reminded the force that he would 'invariably consider the home conditions of an officer when contemplating promotion.' In 1919 the chief constable of Hastings was still arguing against the need for paid women police in the borough, partly on the grounds that 'women detained in the Sub-Stations are attended to by the wives of policemen who reside in rooms over or adjacent to police stations.'⁴ Women, therefore, as Carolyn Steedman has argued, could be 'auxiliary

policemen' when the organisational need arose, but not 'real ones'.⁵

Underpinning it all was the belief that women should not be constables because they were prohibited by law and, in any case, were emotionally unsuited to the office. When, in 1788, the King's Bench Division heard the case of *R. v. Alice Stubbs* the judges determined that Alice Stubbs was not only qualified to be an overseer under the Elizabethan Poor Law, but also that there was no reason why a woman should not be nominated as a constable. They differentiated, however, between 'ministerial' offices (such as that of constable), to which a deputy could be appointed actually to do the work involved if a woman were nominated, and 'judicial' offices which required the exercise of judgement and could not be delegated, and for which women were unsuited.⁶ Early policing statutes, especially those involving special constables, were gender neutral. Whether this was intended by legislators or not is a moot point, but even after the passing of the Special Constables Act 1914 there was no specific statutory bar against women becoming special constables. Full-time regular constables, especially as far as late-19th century policing legislation was concerned, were still assumed to be men. But whether chief officers of police would tolerate women as special constables, or magistrates would agree to swear them in, thus giving them the same powers of arrest as male constables, could be another matter entirely.⁷

Even when women's suitability to become constables, and the perceived inappropriateness of them performing street patrol duty,⁸ were not considered to be barriers, there was a widely held belief within police forces that those who promoted these changes were uncomfortably linked with the women's suffrage movement.⁹ Whilst much of the more militant action of the few years prior to the First World War had been outside Sussex, the county was not immune to protest and contained a sophisticated network of suffragist pressure groups, especially in the coastal towns of Brighton, Hove, Hastings, Eastbourne and Worthing, though important groups were also based in Cuckfield, Midhurst and East Grinstead.¹⁰ Regular reports of suffragist 'outrages' elsewhere appeared in the local press, and police forces were informed by circulars from other forces and through the national *Police Gazette* published by the Metropolitan Police.¹¹ On 20 May 1913 a mob attacked suffragists leaving

their headquarters at 8 Trinity Street, Hastings, motivated, it would seem, by the mistaken belief that they were responsible for a recent arson attack at a house in St Leonard's. Several women were injured and took refuge in a nearby hotel which was then attacked and damaged. The women themselves paid for repair of the damage but then successfully sued Hastings Corporation for their costs, under the Riot (Damages) Act. Despite putting the local detective inspector in charge of investigating the disturbance the Hastings police seem not to have exerted themselves. Several women gave statements identifying the (male) ring leader of the mob, but surviving papers suggest that their correspondence was largely ignored.¹²

Two months later the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies organised a national march to Hyde Park with contingents coming from across the country. On 23 July, the day that those from East Grinstead were due to join others from Sussex, a small procession of around a dozen suffragist supporters, including at least two men, was attacked by a crowd estimated by the local press to be 1500 strong. The *East Grinstead Observer* was critical only of the mob. In emphasising that the suffragists were from the 'non-militant section of the advocates of securing women's suffrage' the *Observer* concluded that the crowd had 'disgraced ... the main streets of East Grinstead'.¹³

With the declaration of war suffrage societies announced a truce and eschewed more militant forms of protest. But for some in the suffrage movement the conflict simply changed the emphasis of their campaign. Rather than simply get caught up in patriotic fervour they recognised that the war could create new inequalities for women and exacerbate existing ones. Nina Boyle and Edith Watson of the Women's Freedom League (hereafter WFL) were amongst those who were determined to continue campaigning. The unequal treatment of women as both witnesses and defendants in police courts had been a longstanding concern of the WFL, and women police were seen as one way of mitigating unfairness. When, in August 1914, the Home Secretary announced a recruitment drive for special constables Boyle moved quickly to argue that women could be ideal candidates. Her suggestion was summarily rejected, but she continued anyway to form the Women Police Volunteers (hereafter WPV). A short while later the WFL-sponsored WPV merged with a similar new organisation

also recruiting women for police work led by the 'wealthy and well-connected' Margaret Damer Dawson. Dawson became Commandant of the new WPV and Nina Boyle was Deputy Commandant. It was a pragmatic arrangement which allowed Boyle to continue her campaigning, particularly against the increasing use of the Defence of the Realm Act to restrict women in military areas through the use of curfews, but it also masked underlying differences of opinion within the WPV over what women police could and should be doing. Matters came to a head in February 1915 when Nina Boyle forced a vote of no confidence in Damer Dawson's leadership at a special meeting of the WPV and lost heavily. Dawson reformed the group, changing its name to the Women Police Service, and Boyle and a few allies retained the name (if not much else) of the WPV.¹⁴ In Boyle's view it was 'regrettable that suffragists, and especially Women Freedom Leaguers, should be so ready to drop their principles for the sake of a little police favour and temporary official countenance.'¹⁵

OFFICIAL VERSUS UNOFFICIAL: WOMEN POLICE IN BRIGHTON, 1915

For the most part, the historiography of women police seems to assume that this lost vote then caused Nina Boyle, Edith Watson and one or two others to move the WPV to Brighton and establish themselves there. But, whilst the policy split with Damer Dawson and the consequent lost vote had been a watershed, some sort of move to create a branch of the WPV on the south coast was not entirely unplanned. One press report, for instance, suggested that work to form a Brighton branch had started no later than January 1915.¹⁶ Apart from Boyle and Watson the driving force behind the WPV in Brighton was Mary Adelaide Hare, the proprietor of a school for deaf children in Hove, secretary of the Brighton branch of the WFL since 1911, and an active supporter of suffragist campaigns since at least 1906. Mary Hare had probably been a member of the WPV in London by October 1914 (Fig. 1). In that month she had warned Nina Boyle that the Plymouth watch committee wanted to introduce powers similar to those of the old Contagious Diseases Acts, enabling Boyle to move quickly and mobilise local resistance against the proposal.¹⁷ The Brighton and Hove branch of the WFL was particularly well organised and, despite the war, had continued campaigning. It was business as



Fig. 1. Mary Hare in the early uniform of the WPV, 1915. The origin of the quatrefoil lapel badges on the uniform is uncertain but they may well have been a badge of rank. *Mary Hare Foundation*.

usual and on 6 March 1915 Mary Hare had chaired a meeting of the League in Brighton. Neither policing in general nor the WPV in particular seems to have been discussed at the meeting; this may well have been a deliberate tactic to avoid alerting the authorities locally.

On 18 March the WPV was launched in Brighton at a public meeting, chaired by Mary Hare and with a main speaker (a Mrs Tanner) from the National Executive Committee of the WFL (Fig. 2).¹⁸ The meeting received wide coverage in the local press, but not all was perhaps the sort that the WPV wanted. The *Brighton Herald*, for instance, concentrated on image: 'they present a very smart appearance, and they look so attractive that you feel you would not at all mind being arrested by them. But if you don't go quietly look for yourself; for these athletic ladies have learned the noble art of ju-jitsu.'¹⁹ The journalist's reference to ju-jitsu was unintendedly prescient. The WPV had photographs taken of their

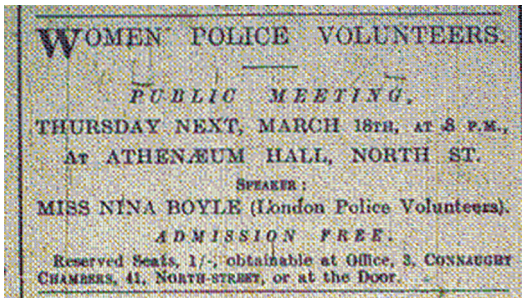


Fig. 2. Advertisement for the first public meeting of the breakaway WPV in Brighton, 1915. *Victor Markham.*

training in Brighton and after their formal launch supplied them to London newspapers (Figs 3 and 4). The *Daily Mail* published one showing a ju-jitsu training session, whilst the *Daily Mirror* published another showing 'Brighton policewomen doing their daily exercises ... they keep themselves in the peak of condition by a regular course of physical drill.' That, of itself, would not have endeared either Mary Hare or the WPV to the Brighton chief constable and watch committee; however they had gone further, suggesting to the national press that both the chief constable and the mayor had witnessed, and supported, their training. Neither had: it was wishful thinking, so it was unsurprising that the first letter from Mary Hare to the Brighton watch committee met with a frosty response on 22 March. The committee was asked to allow a deputation to speak about some of the things going on in the town which the WPV felt the local police should know about, including public houses that were regularly keeping late hours. It considered the letter only very briefly before deciding that it would only communicate via the chief constable, William Gentle. When Mary Hare did meet the chief constable shortly afterwards his message was terse: 'they should cease their work'. In any case, he and the watch committee had already decided actively to support another new organisation, the Women Patrol (hereafter WP).²⁰

Organised under the auspices of the National Union of Women

Workers (hereafter NUWW), and largely untainted through association with the suffrage movement, the WP was much less threatening to the policing orthodoxies of the time.²¹ In Brighton and Hove it success was due in no small measure to its politically influential organisers and supporters.²² The meeting formally to launch the Patrol was held in the Town Hall Council Chamber on 20 March 1915, and by then it had reportedly attracted over 60 women volunteers. Its acceptability to local power elites was reflected by the main speakers, the chief constable, a superintendent from the Brighton Special Constabulary, and the town clerk. Gentle saw an opportunity to use the WP to deal with the contemporary moral panic of 'khaki fever' and unsupervised fraternisation with the military; as he put it, 'young girls ... who had scarcely attained the age of mature judgement ... talk to young men and soldiers, regardless of the unfortunate result that might ensue.' He also used the meeting to make his position clear on the two different organisations. The Women Patrols, he said, 'had full police authority to act and he would personally be glad to give all the help he could.' As a measure of this official support they were given use of the police court at Brighton Town Hall as a headquarters. The WPV, on the other hand, 'were acting without his authority ... in a dangerous way'; he was considering 'what steps he should take ... with people who, without official authority, called



Fig. 3. The Brighton WPV practicing ju-jitsu, 1915. One of at least three known photographs of their training supplied to the press. *Old Police Cells Museum, Brighton/ Sussex Police Archives.*



Fig. 4. The Brighton WPV practicing first aid, 1915. Ironically this picture appeared in the official 1968 history of Brighton Police, under the heading 'Policewomen, 1918', none of which was actually correct. *Old Police Cells Museum, Brighton/ Sussex Police Archives.*

themselves "police", and this could well include being arrested for impersonating police.²³

In case the arrival of two separate organisations had caused confusion the *Brighton Herald* quickly sought to explain the difference. In an editorial that represented the consensual view of the corporation and the watch committee, it drew attention to the WP as 'a body of ladies acting under official recognition', who were also (and this may be just as relevant) 'ladies of position in the town'. The WPV on the other hand were 'an entirely independent and unauthorised body, composed in part, if not entirely, of Suffragettes.' If that were not enough, readers were reminded that with the Patrol 'ju jitsu or force of any kind finds no place.'²⁴ Following her rebuff from the chief constable Mary Hare again wrote, this time simply asking 'to submit a statement of facts in regard to the conditions in the town'; the watch committee waited nearly six weeks before simply noting the letter's arrival and then effectively ignoring it. By then the WPV seem to have concentrated most of their efforts in Hove. At another meeting, on 25 October, to drum up support, and this time addressed by Nina Boyle, Mary Hare was still optimistic. Despite opposition in Brighton, she reported, the WPV had met with 'courtesy, support and kindness' from magistrates and the chief constable in Hove, even to the point where the watch committee

had agreed to close Hove Lawns at dusk following a WPV report. But this meeting seems also to have marked the beginning of the end for the WPV; it then disappears from local press reports (even from mention in the unusually supportive *Brighton Graphic*). Contemporary reports suggest that the WPV was almost wholly funded by members' contributions, and the disputes with authorities in Brighton cannot have helped. Politically, the new WPS in London was making progress that the WPV could not realistically hope to match. In June 1916 the WFL at a national level formally recorded the demise of the WPV, but in Brighton it was possibly gone six months before.²⁵

THE WOMEN PATROLS

The Women Patrol represented the preferred model of women in policing as far as Sussex chief constables were concerned until the end of the war, and was by far the largest organisation. In October 1914 Louise Creighton of the NUWW and eight others (which included Alice, Countess of Chichester) wrote to *The Times* to announce the formation of the patrol. They were looking for 'a certain number of women of common sense and experience who will, under authoritative sanction, render such quiet service as they can in influencing and, if need be, restraining the behaviour of the women and girls who congregate in the neighbourhood of the camps now scattered over the country.'²⁶ Nationally the WP had a strong leadership and co-ordinating structures, but outside London would only provide temporary support to a new branch through a paid organiser. On one thing WP policy was clear: militant suffragists would not be allowed to become local patrol organisers.²⁷ Whether sponsored by an NUWW branch or not, any new patrol network had to have a Women Patrol Committee (hereafter WPC) which was willing and able to provide funds, attract volunteers and negotiate the necessary co-operation with chief constables and the like. Although the WP volunteers did not wear uniform as such they were instructed to wear dark clothing and were issued

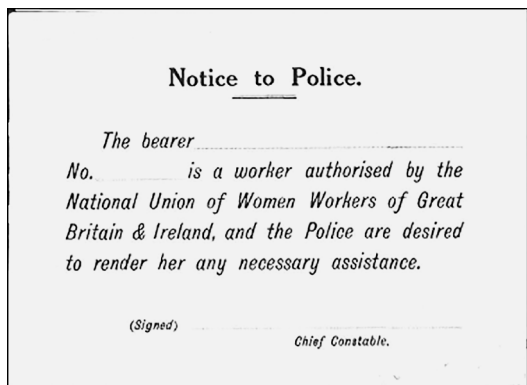


Fig. 5. Identification card issued to members of the NUWW's Women Patrol, 1915 to 1918. *Old Police Cells Museum, Brighton.*



Fig. 6. Star badge issued to members of the patrol, to be worn on their armband, for each year of completed service. The Brighton committee was one of those which urged the national committee to adopt this badge in late 1915. *Old Police Cells Museum, Brighton.*

with a distinctive NUWW numbered armband and a card signed by the local chief constable (Figs 5 and 6).

In West Sussex, although the constabulary's Standing Joint Committee (hereafter SJC) and its chief constable seem not to have involved themselves directly in moves to promote volunteer patrols, the Bishop of Chichester openly supported the WP. The first WP branches had appeared by February 1915 in Chichester, led by the bishop's wife and the Mayoress of Chichester, and in Worthing, and were primarily driven by concern for the welfare of women and girls in the vicinity of the large military camps. Both were closely associated with the Chichester Diocesan Purity Association

and supported by branches of the Mothers' Union in the diocese, though the members of the Worthing patrol quickly complained to the national committee about their organiser's 'religious allusions in her speaking'.²⁸

In East Sussex, in March of the same year a WPC was formed in Eastbourne by Wilhelmina Brodie-Hall under the auspices of the local branch of the NUWW and supported financially by the Church of England Temperance Council. It got the approval of Eastbourne watch committee to organise patrols for the specific purpose 'of looking after the interests of girls between the ages of 14 and 17'. This reflected Miss Brodie-Hall's longstanding campaigning interest, and the watch committee approved the appointment of six women. Within a month the numbers recruited by the Eastbourne WPC exceeded 40, and shortly afterwards it expanded its remit to include the interests of adult women.²⁹ Later that same year, as well as the large group formed in Brighton and Hove, a much smaller patrol was established in East Grinstead. But whereas the Brighton group (and others in Sussex) had considerable official support, that at East Grinstead did not. During September 1915 a number of complaints were made to the district council about the interfering behaviour of patrols at Mount Noddy Recreation Ground 'shining flashlights at couples' and the council formally debated the matter. It was critical of the patrol and suggested that the patrols might be much more useful if, instead of interfering, they brought influence to bear on parents 'to stop their daughters parading in the streets'. The secretary of East Grinstead WPC, Miss W L Woodland, challenged both the complaints and the council's lack of support, but showed no sign of backing down. In the event it would seem that, whilst the criticism slowed recruitment of patrols for a while, they nevertheless carried on much as before, generating a further flurry of correspondence in the local press a couple of months later.³⁰

The Eastbourne WPC, despite having obvious links with the NUWSS, enjoyed an unusual level of support from the watch committee. Indeed, shortly after getting the committee's blessing to start a patrol, the local branch of the Women's Suffrage Society asked for, and quickly got, permission for a fundraising flag day in the town. In 1916 Eastbourne's chief constable, Major Teale, felt able to report to the Chief Inspector of Constabulary

that the WP were doing ‘very good work’, though he still had concerns that women would be ‘most unsuitable for general police work’. He was certainly not contemplating the idea of women as part of his police force, but by the next year the watch committee agreed to help the local WPC by paying a proportion of the salary of the full-time patrol leader.³¹ In Hastings, however, there was strong resistance both from the watch committee and the chief constable, towards even the relatively unthreatening WP model. They could hardly argue that they knew nothing of developments elsewhere. Correspondence and reports appearing in the local Hastings press included the introduction of WPs in both Brighton and Eastbourne, the start of the WPV in Brighton, and the existence of support for the concept of a WP within Hastings Deanery. As early as March 1915 the *Hastings and St Leonards Observer* had carried an editorial strongly advocating the introduction of a patrol in Hastings on the lines of that in Brighton, and in February 1917 the same newspaper urged the watch committee to appoint two policewomen for the town, adding that ‘they can be sent down here for the payment of a moderate sum’. Eventually the Hastings watch committee formally approved the patrol, on 9 February 1917. Apart from the split of the Brighton and Hove WPC, and the formation of a separate WPC for Hove in May 1917, the Hastings WP was the last formed in Sussex. It was probably the last active unit in the county of the unattested WP, most of the WPCs having disbanded in 1919, and continued well into 1922 before it folded. The watch committee, despite considerable local lobbying, decided to withdraw support even for the idea of women volunteers as far as policing in Hastings was concerned.³²

THE BEXHILL EXPERIMENT, 1917–19

Concern over the impact of the large training camps around Bexhill had led to the creation of an *ad hoc* Social Services Committee in the town (hereafter BSSC) which, though not part of Bexhill Borough Council, was led by the long-serving and influential Vicar of St. Barnabas and his wife, and included at least two local councillors amongst its organisers. It is difficult to establish what triggered this committee’s desire in 1917 to employ uniformed women police supplied by the WPS, rather than go down the route of the by now well-established WP, but by this time the WPS was actively seeking

placements for its trained women and could supply them almost immediately, whereas a local WPC could take months to organise.³³

Lobbying of the borough council resulted in almost unanimous support for a proposal that two policewomen should be employed on a month’s trial at the council’s expense. The chief constable and the chairman of the East Sussex SJC seem also to have agreed that, if the experiment were successful, the county constabulary fund would meet the cost of employing them thereafter. With this level of support in place two policewomen supplied by the WPS, Inspector Gertrude Cooke (who had been employed by Folkestone watch committee during the first half of 1916) and Sergeant Braddon, started work in Bexhill on 12 July 1917. Though both were uniformed, neither was sworn as a constable. Things did not go entirely to plan. The SJC at its May 1917 meeting had rejected the proposal, much to the annoyance of Bexhill council, but after further lobbying the SJC then agreed in July to fund two policewomen, working to the superintendent of Bexhill Division ‘during the continuance of war conditions in the borough’.³⁴ The *Bexhill Observer* editorial declared its support for the new women police: ‘they are destined to form an integral part of every well equipped force in the social government of this country, and the troglodytes of Bexhill need not be alarmed because this town is early in the field in securing this useful addition to the constabulary.’³⁵

Although the two policewomen were involved in some cases of preventative and welfare work to the satisfaction of the BSSC they also seemed to have spent as much time on routine patrol. Rather like the special constables in the town this included (if reports of cases in local magistrates’ court are any indication) the prosecution of householders and motorists for breaches of lighting regulations.³⁶ More puzzling, however, is their apparent exclusion from the investigation of a sexual assault on a 15-year-old girl at Belle Hill in October 1917 by a 19-year-old soldier from a Young Soldiers Battalion at Cooden. A deal struck at Bexhill magistrates’ court led to the charge being reduced to one of indecent assault. The offender was sentenced to two months’ hard labour, but neither policewoman is mentioned as having been involved at any stage of the police enquiry.³⁷

Both of the Bexhill policewomen were, by the standards of the time, very experienced, but

their apparent exclusion may well suggest either that serious crime was considered to be outside their remit or that the enthusiasm of the county constabulary for women police was already waning. A new police superintendent started at Bexhill the same month and he submitted through the chief constable to the SJC a report about the policewomen. The report has not survived, but its tone can be surmised by the fact that it generated a motion at the SJC to 'terminate the services of the policewomen forthwith'. The motion was lost, but the damage was probably already done.³⁸ At its January 1918 meeting letters from the Commandant of the WPS, Margaret Damer Dawson, to both the chairman of the SJC and the chief constable were read. They complained about the 'conditions of service' of the two policewomen, and noted that both had resigned.³⁹ The policewomen, however, remained in the town, now occupying an office provided by the BSSC, which was now paying their wages. At first the committee's finances had been healthy, with a significant income from regular subscribers, but by June 1919, the war having ended, income had dropped to an insufficient level. Although the BSSC remained enthusiastic about the need for policewomen in the town to undertake preventative work, the policewomen's participation in the Bexhill victory parade on 19 July 1919 was probably their swansong: the Social Services Committee had run out of money, and East Sussex Constabulary had lost interest (Fig. 7).⁴⁰

WOMEN POLICE EMPLOYED BY POLICE FORCES, 1918

Since August 1916, section 4 of the Police, Factories, &c. (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1916 had enabled police authorities to reclaim from the government half the cost of employing women who were 'employed by a police authority to perform any of the duties of the police and are



Fig. 7. Part of a postcard picture of Peace Day parade in Bexhill, 19 July 1919. The two Bexhill policewomen are in the centre, just behind a contingent of Red Cross nurses. *Bexhill Museum*.

required to devote the whole of their time to such employment.' When agreeing in July 1917 to fund two policewomen at Bexhill the East Sussex SJC must have known that. But apart from that (temporary) change of view in East Sussex, there is little evidence of this provision immediately altering the views of policing authorities in Sussex. However, in Hove by early 1918 there was considerable support for the idea of employing policewomen, doubtless in part stemming from the mayoress heading the WP there. In May of that year the watch committee voted in favour, and in August the borough council agreed by a large majority, but decided to postpone such a radical change until after the chief constable's expected retirement at the end of the war. Two policewomen were eventually appointed in July 1919.⁴¹ In June 1918 the West Sussex chief constable put together a plan to employ eight women as special constables. West Sussex had been hit particularly hard by the call-up of military reservists from the constabulary,

for the chief constable (an ex-military man who in 1914 had been refused permission to re-enlist) had continued to encourage policemen to join up. As recruitment of male special constables was not keeping pace with demand, women were the only option left. It was not envisaged, however, that these women special constables would be used for patrol duties. Although the SJC gave its permission, only two women seem to have been appointed. Both were close relatives of senior police officers at the force headquarters and, though attested as constables and uniformed, they were employed only on inside clerical work.⁴²

An unattested but uniformed 'policewoman', funded by the Church of England Temperance Council in Eastbourne rather than by the watch committee, had been working there since early in 1918. But the only women actually employed by a police force in Sussex on outside or patrol duties at the end of the war were those in Brighton, though due more to the efforts of a strong lobby in the town, especially the Brighton & Hove Women's Local Government Association (hereafter WLGA), than to the enthusiasm for women police of either the watch committee or the chief constable. In November 1917 the WLGA had written to the Brighton watch committee to ask it to hear a deputation. The committee, perhaps mindful of the political difficulties created when the WPV came to Brighton two years before, peremptorily refused on the grounds that, as it could not recommend to the council the appointment of policewomen, there was no 'useful purpose' in seeing the deputation. The views of the WLGA, however, carried more weight than those of the WPV ever had, and in February 1918 the question of women police was debated at a council meeting, when it was claimed that, although the council had directed the chief constable to report on the matter, the watch committee had refused to allow this. The WLGA had held a sizeable conference in the town on 6 February to discuss women police, and had voted overwhelmingly in favour. It wrote again to the watch committee. At its March meeting the committee became a little less intransigent and determined that, if the chief constable considered that women police were 'desirable', then it would give the proposal 'due consideration'.⁴³

The report presented to the council was ambivalent and was rejected: the watch committee was told that the chief constable should report to

it again, this time specifically stating his position on whether he was for or against women police in the Brighton force. On 10 April Sir William Gentle (who had been knighted in 1916) acknowledged the work done by the WP, but argued that the 'proposed policewomen would be required for entirely different work in direct relation to the Regular Police Force, and would be required to wear uniform.' That said, he still had not finished looking into the matter and would 'submit ... a definite recommendation' when he had done so. The council again rejected this and reminded the watch committee that it had had more than enough time in which to reach a decision. The watch committee (and the chief constable) knew the likely political fallout from a Pyrrhic victory, so on 12 June when Gentle recommended that three policewomen be appointed 'as special constables', the committee agreed. Brighton council had, eventually, got what it wanted, and the first two policewomen, former members of the WPS, joined the Brighton force in July 1918 at a salary of £2 5s. a week each. Mrs Burkitt, the long-serving police matron, was dismissed with four weeks' pay in lieu of notice as soon as the policewomen arrived. The *Brighton Herald*, still fixated with appearance, weighed in with its own comment: 'The latest fortress of officialdom to be captured by a woman is the prisoner's dock at Brighton Police Court. While standing in the dock on trial, women prisoners are now guarded by a woman officer, very smart, and rather severe, in her peaked cap and trim, shapely uniform. The male gaoler, in the case of Brighton the very incarnation of bearded urbanity, stands with them.' Women police may have arrived in Brighton, and were soon engaged in street patrol work, but clearly they were not quite trusted enough to take on court prisoner duties alone.⁴⁴

MIXED MESSAGES, 1919-39

The war had established the principle that women might have a role within police forces, but the notion that they could and should perform outside patrol duties or even be part of regular police establishment was by no means widely accepted. In many respects the debate about the nature (and indeed value) of that role, which had been encapsulated in the arguments within the early national WPV organisation (and which had led to it splitting in February 1915) continued. In early



Fig. 8. Women Police Service membership card, 1917. James Treversh Collection.

February 1919 an advisory letter from the Home Office to all police authorities reminded them, *inter alia*, that employing women still attracted grant support from central funds. The Hove and Eastbourne borough and West Sussex county forces recruited full-time policewomen shortly afterwards, whilst Bexhill council took the opportunity to ask the East Sussex SJC to fund the two policewomen now being paid through local subscription and whose future was uncertain. The SJC thought about it between its July and October meetings before declining. Changes in the Metropolitan Police, where the WPS rapidly fell out of favour and was replaced by a directly-employed workforce drawn mainly from the NUWW's patrols, also seem to have been locally ignored; the majority of women police recruited to Sussex forces in the immediate aftermath of the war were former members of the WPS (Fig. 8).⁴⁵

The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 removed any lingering doubt about whether or not women could be constables and part of police forces, but the important Desborough Committee

on national police conditions of service of the same year unhelpfully determined that policewomen were outside its terms of reference. Instead the Home Office convened a separate committee 'on the employment of women on police duties' (the Baird Committee) which reported in July 1920. Though broadly supportive of women police, its recommendations, unlike those of Desborough, were advisory rather than compulsory. A Home Office circular letter to police authorities accompanying copies of the Baird report made it clear that crucial decisions such as on rates of pay, pension arrangements, and whether or not women should be attested to give them the full powers of a constable, remained matters of local discretion. In West Sussex the new policewoman was sworn as a constable, but Hove chose not to do so immediately, though without any apparent difference in the range of duties undertaken. Both forces adopted rates of pay similar to those of male constables (albeit with a lower ceiling in incremental pay) and included the women in the same pension arrangements. The Eastbourne

Borough force appointed its first policewoman in May 1921 and another in 1922, both of whom were drawn from the ranks of the town's WP. They, too, were given salaries and pension arrangements similar to those in the West Sussex and Hove forces, but they were not sworn as constables until October 1923. In Brighton however the turnover of women 'special constables' was, even by the standards of the time, high. By 1920 the established strength was reduced from three to two (one a sergeant), and the remaining two women left in May and September 1921 respectively and were not replaced.⁴⁶

The disappearance of the Brighton policewomen did not go unnoticed: the WLGA was still vigilant. But Charles Griffin, the new chief constable appointed in June 1920, saw little need for policewomen and was less minded to compromise. In addition the independence of the watch committee had been reinforced by the provisions of the Police Act 1919. The pattern of the debate within the Brighton Corporation was a familiar one. The watch committee met with an influential deputation from the National Council of Women (hereafter NCW) in October 1921, and asked their chief constable to report on the matter. His response was simply to suggest that two police matrons would be sufficient: policewomen were unnecessary. The watch committee asked Griffin to reconsider his position. He did so and came to the same conclusion, and his report was then considered by a full meeting of the council in December. Council members were less than pleased and instructed the watch committee to have the chief constable report again, this time giving reasons for his position. This was swiftly followed in January 1921 by a letter to the watch committee on behalf of '23 Brighton Organisations' urging the replacement of policewomen in the Brighton force. This time the watch committee refused to allow the chief constable to respond. When the matter returned to the council later that month the watch committee's position was again rejected, albeit that, in doing so, the council also recognised that it had only limited powers over the watch committee. By now the watch committee had closed ranks, and when Alderman Stevens asked, in March 1921, why it had taken this position he was simply told 'it would be injurious to the Police Service for them to comply with the request' for information. It was a policy that the Brighton watch committee was to maintain for the next two decades.⁴⁷



Fig. 9. Woman constable Dorothy Watson, Hove Borough Police, from a group photograph, c. 1924. *Old Police Cells Museum, Brighton.*

Griffin was one of those called in 1924 to give evidence to the Home Office Departmental Committee (the Bridgeman Committee) on the employment of policewomen. His position was uncomplicated and reflected his watch committee's view: policewomen were of little use because there was not enough work for them. In his first few months in post, he said, he had instituted preventative patrols of policewomen in streets where there had been increased arrests of prostitutes, but



Fig. 10. Woman constable Mabel Read, Hove Borough Police, being presented with her Jubilee medal by the Mayor of Hove, 1936. *Old Police Cells Museum, Brighton.*

these were ineffective because, as there were so few policewomen, they were quickly recognised in plain clothes. He also drew an unusual comparison with the medical profession. 'In Brighton we have 200 medical practitioners. Of that 200 I should imagine there are not a dozen lady practitioners. I have never heard that the lady practitioners are over-worked. I have heard the men are.'⁴⁸ Though the Bridgeman Committee reported in favour of women police, despite the nascent Police Federation having reversed its earlier policy and now firmly opposing policewomen, it continued the principle that, as far as women police were concerned, local watch and police committees retained considerable autonomy.

Notwithstanding the conclusions of the Baird and Bridgeman committees, the financial cuts imposed on the police by the Geddes Committee of 1922 were, in practice, more pressing concerns on watch and police committees. In Hove, for instance, there were significant reductions in allowances as well as an immediate 2.5% cut in pay and a decision to hold five vacancies in a force establishment of 71. The Hove chief constable had seen what was coming the year before and had put a strong case to his watch committee for retaining both policewomen



Fig. 11. Woman constable Gladys Moss, West Sussex Constabulary, with the motorcycle which she used on police duty, c. 1930. She is wearing the standard white-topped cap issued in West Sussex during the summer months. *Malcolm Barrett Collection.*

as part of the force's authorised establishment rather than as supernumeraries (Figs 9 and 10). In the West Sussex force the single policewoman, now stationed at Worthing, was retained, and was trained to ride a motorcycle so that she could travel across the county more easily (Fig. 11); and the Eastbourne Borough force decided to retain its two (ex-WP) policewomen, though they were soon required to undertake matron duties in the cells to save expense. Both Brighton and Hastings chief constables had used questionnaire surveys of other police forces primarily, it would seem, to back up their own watch committees' views on the suitability or otherwise of women police. They were not alone, many chief constables did the same at around this time and whilst the results of those undertaken from Brighton and Hastings have not survived, one conducted by the chief constable of Rochale Borough in 1924 has and includes the views

of Sussex chief constables. Unsurprisingly, neither the Hastings nor the East Sussex chief constables bothered to reply, and the response from Brighton was unequivocal: there were no policewomen left in the borough, and no plans to recruit any. In contrast the West Sussex chief constable replied that 'one or two in a force are a great asset', his counterpart in Hove noted that they had a 'real value in rescue and preventative work amongst women and children' and the Eastbourne chief constable drew attention to the 'cordial working relationship with the male officers' and opined that policewomen in his force were 'quite a success'. But even those opposed to women police in Sussex did not go as far as one (unidentified) chief officer who, in answer to a question about the most suitable work for policewomen, replied 'Attending to household duties'.⁴⁹

Although there was some reduction in numbers during the late 1920s, with Hove and Eastbourne each reduced to one policewoman, by the outbreak of war in 1939 both vacancies had been filled. In the Hastings area a campaign lasting more than 15 years finally resulted in an unwilling chief constable, who argued that there was a need only for one part-time matron, and a reluctant watch committee eventually being pressured into appointing a single policewoman. But it was not something they intended to hurry. The local branch of the NCW seems (probably justifiably) not to have trusted them and so formed a special committee to 'secure the appointment of a policewoman'. The watch committee's decision (by only a single vote) was taken in February 1936, but it was not until March the next year that constable Joan Edwards was appointed. She resigned to return to working as a teacher in July 1939 and despite the assertion of Hastings councillor Mrs Foxon (to a meeting of local branch of the NCW) that she was 'very happy in her job', the reality was probably rather different.⁵⁰ In Brighton the official history of the force, *Police centenary 1838–1938*, published by the watch committee significantly contained no mention whatsoever of policewomen, though the police matrons were listed as a part of the force establishment.⁵¹

EFFECTS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

In contrast to the unpreparedness of police forces for wartime conditions in 1914, a great deal of



Fig. 12. Women's Auxiliary Police Corps overall badge. *James Treversh Collection.*



Fig. 13. Women's Auxiliary Police Corps off-duty lapel badge. *James Treversh Collection.*

planning had been undertaken by police in the years before 1939. But, although the use of male police auxiliaries was anticipated, the involvement of women either as police officers or as auxiliaries received little consideration either nationally or locally.⁵² Following pressure from the NCW a national Women's Auxiliary Police Corps (hereafter WAPC) was somewhat belatedly instituted in August 1939 (Figs 12 and 13). The Home Office envisaged that members of the WAPC would carry out only a restricted range of duties, primarily clerical, communications, canteen and driving work, so most would not need to be attested as constables. Importantly, the costs of employing women in the WAPC were chargeable against the police grant.⁵³

Even so, the concept was slow to catch on in Sussex and it was not until August 1940 that the Hove watch committee agreed to form a WAPC unit with ten attested and ten unattested members. Their role had by now been widened to include some enforcement duties (though not, in Hove, any street



Fig. 14. Member of the Eastbourne WAPC, c. 1944. *Old Police Cells Museum, Brighton.*

patrols) and for these the watch committee felt that the powers of a constable were essential. In the same year both East and West Sussex constabularies also formed WAPC units, albeit primarily of female staff already employed in police stations, and in East Sussex the new Police Auxiliary Messenger Service, originally designed for young men under military age, unusually also included young women of 17 and 18. Late in 1941, following receipt of an unusually assertive circular letter requiring forces without a WAPC unit either to form one or to explain why not, the Brighton watch committee reacted quickly. But, though 20 strong, it only contained 5 new recruits. The other 15 were existing female employees at force headquarters whose jobs were simply transferred into the WAPC. In the Hastings and Eastbourne borough forces WAPC units were not formed until mid-1942 (Figs 14 and 15).⁵⁴

Support for the WAPC was one thing, however, but it was, and was always intended to be, an 'hostilities only' organisation; the question of

whether or not to appoint permanent full-time policewomen as part of force establishments continued to exercise most police authorities in Sussex. In Hastings it had taken nine months to replace their policewoman, and following the retirement of West Sussex's policewoman in 1941 the chief constable now concluded that 'in practice there were no duties undertaken by women police that could not just as well be done by a male constable accompanied by a matron.' In both East Sussex and in Brighton the eventual recruitment of women police reflected the continuing pressure of local lobbying, not only by the NCW, but also by Women's Institutes. The East Sussex chief constable, still unconvinced of the need for policewomen, engaged in considerable correspondence with his own SJC after it had voted in November 1941 to support women police, and two constables were finally appointed in February 1942, provided they did not become 'involved in moral welfare work'. The Brighton watch committee eventually capitulated to the contrary view of the full council in May 1942, and reluctantly agreed to recruit a policewoman sergeant and two constables, despite the chief constable's argument that there was not enough work for them to do.⁵⁵

The forced amalgamation of police forces in Sussex to form a Sussex Combined Police on 1 April 1943 was ostensibly to facilitate planning for the invasion of Europe. In transferring operational decisions to the new Sussex Police Authority



Fig. 15. Members of Hastings WAPC with the local divisional commander, September 1944. *Old Police Cells Museum, Brighton.*

SUSSEX POLICE FORCE

APPPLICATIONS are invited for Policewomen (constables); pay and conditions of service in accordance with the Police (Women) Regulations. Candidates must be unmarried or widowed, between 22 and 35 years of age, and not less than 5 ft. 4 in. in height.

Applications, in candidates' own handwriting, on forms to be obtained from the below-stated address, must reach me by the 15th June.

J. F. FERGUSON,
Chief Constable of Sussex.

Chief Constable's Office,
"Fairmile,"
Oathall Road,
Haywards Heath,
Sussex.

Fig. 16. Advertisement for policewomen constables, May 1944. *Old Police Cells Museum, Brighton.*

(hereafter SPA) and a single chief constable new to the county (formerly a deputy assistant commissioner with the Metropolitan Police), it also eventually shifted attitudes towards women police, not least because operational policy became centrally determined and women officers could now be posted across Sussex in line with the chief constable's view rather than that of six different police authorities. In May 1944, following further lobbying from the Eastbourne watch committee and the coincidental arrival of a prescriptive Home Office Circular, the SPA decided to appoint six more policewomen (Fig. 16), raising the total establishment to 24 by September the same year, and 30 in 1946. Ironically, there was little interest from potential recruits and many policewomen vacancies remained, any gaps being filled by using attested members of the WAPC.⁵⁶

CONCLUSION

The eventual acceptance, after the Second World War, that women could have a permanent place in policing hierarchies reflected quite dramatic changes in attitude and perception, not only amongst powerful chief constables but also within the political orthodoxies of watch and police committees over 30 years. Early opposition to women undertaking police work, especially when conflated with fears of militant suffragism, was eventually mitigated by the pressing needs of wartime social conditions. But in many parts of Sussex, once the armistice came, opposition instead became centred around the concept of need and, inevitably, towards defining the scope of policing itself and of the role of women within it. It was a debate within which persistent women's lobby groups played a frequently under-recognised part.⁵⁷ Mixed responses were an almost inevitable result of the Home Office, despite officially encouraging women police, allowing police authorities to determine their own policy. And they inevitably did: some police authorities in Sussex adopted a wider definition of the role of police than others and included so-called social-work functions. They tended to be supportive of women police. Others, seeing social work as properly the function of others, were much less so. A fairly clear distinction can be drawn between the police authorities of Hove and Eastbourne on the one hand and Hastings and Brighton on the other, with the county constabularies of East and West Sussex somewhere in the middle. Some of these differences eventually, of course, became clouded through the agency of a centralised police authority across Sussex from 1943 to 1947. Though individual forces (except for Hove) were reinstated in 1947 any residual scope for outright antipathy towards women police was effectively removed by stronger national policy, including prescribed conditions of service and an enhanced government Inspectorate of Constabulary. Even so, ambivalence towards the role and function of policewomen was to remain endemic for some years afterwards.⁵⁸

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in Chichester and Worthing; Julian Porter (curator of Bexhill Museum); Harry Wynne (North Eastern Police History Society); and the teams at East Sussex Record Office, Heathfield Library and Worthing Library.

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NOTES

- ¹ The Local Government Act 1898 saw the amalgamation of three small borough police forces, in Arundel, Chichester and Rye, into their respective county constabularies. Much to the irritation of the Home Office, whose long term strategy involved reducing the number of forces, a new Eastbourne Borough Police was formed in 1891.
- ² A. L. Dixon, 'The emergency work of the police forces in the Second World War' (unpublished report, Home Office, 1963), available at <http://www.dtels.org/assets/documents/Emergency-Work-of-Police-Forces-in-WWII.pdf>.
- ³ G. W. Baines, *History of the Brighton Police, 1838–1967* (Brighton: Brighton Borough Police, 1967), 26. East Sussex Record Office (hereafter ESRO); DB/B 12/9, 5 Oct. 1881, 13 Dec. 1882; DB/B 12/11, 2 Sep. 1885; DO/A 17/5, 25 Nov. 1908; SPA 5/6/8. On the wider picture of the use of police matrons, see J. Radford, 'Women and policing: Contradictions old and new', in J. Hanmer, J. Radford and E. A. Stanko (eds), *Women, policing, and male violence: International perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1989) 15–17.
- ⁴ M. Barrett, *West Sussex Constabulary, 110 years of history, April 1857–December 1967* (Tangmere: M. & M. Barrett, 2009), 79–80; ESRO, SPA 5/1/6, 11 Apr. 1919.
- ⁵ C. Steedman, *Policing the Victorian community. The formation of English provincial police forces, 1856–80* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 118. In this sense, policemen's wives were regarded in much the same way as policewomen, even up to 30 years later: B. Weinberger, 'A policewife's lot is not a happy one. Police wives in the 1930s and 1940s', *Oral History*, 2 (2) (1993), 46–53.
- ⁶ W. Blackstone, C. H. Elsley and J. Clitherow, *Reports of cases determined in the several courts of Westminster-Hall, from 1746 to 1779*, 1 (London: S. Sweet, 1828). E. W. Cox, *Reports of all the cases decided by all the superior courts relating to magistrates, municipal, and parochial law* (London: Law Times Office, 1870), 302.
- ⁷ See for example, Special Constables Act 1831; Town Police Clauses Act 1847, section 3; Municipal Corporations Act 1882, sections 191 and 196. The Special Constables Act 1914 not only removed the longstanding requirement for actual or threatened disorder as a precursor to the appointment of special constables, but also required that they now be under the direction and control of the respective chief officer of police. Attestation, the process of formally swearing-in a constable before a magistrate, was crucial if women were to get powers of arrest beyond those of any citizen. Most policewomen were unattested until the early 1920s. In Sussex, by the end of 1918, only five women had been employed as attested policewomen, and only three of these ever patrolled the streets.
- ⁸ Reflected, for instance in the title of Phillippa Levine's paper: P. Levine, 'Walking the streets in a way no decent woman should: Women police in World War 1', *Journal of Modern History*, 88 (1) (1994), 34–78. As Helen Jones points out, this developed into 'walking a tightrope in developing a career based less on moral and more on legal authority': H. Jones, *Women in British public life, 1914–50: Gender, power and social policy* (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 31.
- ⁹ The Commissioner of the Metropolitan police was 'most disquieted' over 'the suffrage question' when considering the matter of policewomen in 1914, and had recruits sign a Declaration of Allegiance: Levine, 'Walking the streets'. The *Sussex Daily News* (hereafter SDN) of 1 May 1915, reporting the arrival of the new women police in London, notes that they were being called 'copperettes', and asserts that they 'have come to be associated, quite erroneously no doubt, with the women who used to break windows, and shout "Votes For Women" in Parliament Square': cited in J. Lock, *The British policewoman: Her story* (London: Robert Hale, 1979), 68, and also 66. 'Copperette' is supposed to have been a conflation of 'copper' and 'suffragette'. The local Brighton press, reflecting the views of the chief constable and the watch committee, reported that the uniformed Women Police Volunteers that had recently appeared in the town, were not only unauthorised by the chief constable, but also 'composed in part, if not entirely of, Suffragettes': *Brighton Herald* (hereafter BH), 27 Mar. 1915. Clive Emsley argues that the Metropolitan Police Commissioner chose not to recruit his post-1919 policewomen from the Women Police Service because 'though more professional, [they] had a cadre of former militant suffragettes': C. Emsley, *The English police: A political and social history* (London: Harvester, 1991), 148.
- ¹⁰ A. Woodeson, 'The first women police: a force for equality or infringement?', *Women's History Review*, 2 (2) (1993), 217–32. M. Jackson, *The real facts of life: Feminism and the politics of sexuality c. 1850–1940* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2012), 49–52. L. Bland, 'In the name of protection: the policing of women in the first world war', in J. Brohy and C. Smart (eds), *Women-in-law: Explorations in law, family, and sexuality* (Oxford: Routledge, 1985). C. L. Eustace, 'Daring to be free: The evolution of women's political identities in the Women's Freedom League' (unpub. DPhil thesis, University of York, 1993). J. Carrier, *The campaign for the employment of women as police officers* (Farnham: Ashgate, 1988), 1–39. Lock, *British policewoman*, 11–17. A particularly good summary of the range of suffragist groups in Sussex is in E. Crawford, *The women's suffrage movement in Britain and Ireland: A regional survey* (Oxford: Routledge, 2013), 194–200.

- ¹¹ ESRO, SPA 5/6/4. This bundle, part of a file entitled 'Militant Suffragettes' kept by Hastings Borough Police, contains a circular letter from Bristol City Police warning about suspected suffragettes buying large numbers of wicker baskets that were thought to be being used to disguise bombs, and a lengthy supplement to the *Police Gazette* of 16 July 1914. The *Gazette* contained photographs and descriptions of convicted suffragettes, those whose identities were sought, those subject to recall to prison and men thought to be actively helping their cause.
- ¹² The local branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies advertised its meetings at the Suffrage Club at 7 Havelock Road regularly, and to emphasise the point called itself 'Hastings, St Leonards and East Sussex Suffrage Society (NON MILITANT)' in the local press. Crawford, *Women's suffrage*, 197, identifies the arsonist as a member of the militant Women's Social and Political Union, Kitty Marion. *Hastings and St Leonards Observer* (hereafter *HasO*), 10, 24, 31 May 1913, 1, 8 Nov. 1913. ESRO SPA 5/6/4.
- ¹³ *East Grinstead Observer*, 19, 26 Jul. 1913.
- ¹⁴ The detail of the background of the protagonists and the ideological differences between them is discussed in Lock, *British policewoman*, 18–30.
- ¹⁵ Cited in Brophy and Smart, *Women-in-law*, 34.
- ¹⁶ *Brighton Graphic* (hereafter *BGr*), 4 Apr. 1915.
- ¹⁷ The Contagious Diseases Acts were especially opposed by suffragists, not least because all of the legislative sanctions were openly discriminatory. Amongst other things they had allowed police to detain women and subject them to forced medical examination for venereal disease. In doing so there was, in practice, little distinction shown between prostitutes and women who just happened to be amongst the lower classes. Though these Acts were repealed in 1886 the Portsmouth watch committee was reportedly considering using contemporary Defence of the Realm laws to reinstate the powers: L. E. N. Mayhall, *The militant suffrage movement: Citizenship and resistance in Britain 1860–1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 128; Jackson, *Real facts of life*, 52–8.
- ¹⁸ A. J. Boyce and E. Lavery, *Lady in green: Biography of Miss Mary Hare 1865–1945* (Warrington: British Deaf History Society Publications, 1999). Mayhall, *Militant suffrage*, 128. E Crawford, *The women's suffrage movement: A reference guide 1866–1928* (Oxford: Routledge, 2003), 274–5. *SDN*, 19, 22 Mar. 1915; *BH*, 20 Mar. 1915; *Brighton Gazette* (hereafter *BG*), 10, 20, 24, 27 Mar. 1915.
- ¹⁹ *BH*, 20 Mar. 1915.
- ²⁰ ESRO, DB/B 12/30. *Daily Mirror*, 25 Mar. 1915; *The Times*, 27 Mar. 1915; *SDN*, 22 Mar. 1915, 26 Oct. 1915. The press in Hastings, having reported the arrival of the WPV in Brighton, then had to print a retraction once Gentle's views became known: *Hastings and St Leonards Observer* (hereafter *HasO*), 27 Mar., 17 Apr. 1915.
- ²¹ Apart from a stark contrast with the newly forming and uniformed WPV in London, the NUWW model of patrols offered 'the now hard-pressed authorities the opportunity to demonstrate to the moralist lobby that something was being done' (Woodeson, 'First women police'). In October 1917 the National Union of Women Workers changed its name to the National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland.
- ²² For instance, Alice, Countess of Chichester was president of the Brighton and Hove Women Patrol Committee and the Mayoress of Brighton was chairman (sic). Chief constable Gentle and the mayors of Brighton and Hove sat on the committee. When a separate committee was established in Hove in 1917 the Mayoress of Hove became Chief Patrol.
- ²³ *SDN*, 22 Mar. 1915; *BG*, 24 Mar. 1915; *The Times*, 27 Mar. 1915.
- ²⁴ *BH*, 27 Mar. 1915. Alison Woodeson describes the early WPV in London (who became the WPS in February 1915) as being 'keen to create a professional, well-trained organisation which would protect women's rights and take over much of the work of policemen' whilst the NUWW's patrols were 'part-time, amateurish, and saw their role as one of "restraining" women and young girls who, although it was not often directly stated, would be of "certain class"' (Woodeson, 'First women police'). Paradoxically Mary Hare's WPV in Brighton, though uniformed, was perhaps closer ideologically to the WP than it was to the new, increasingly militaristic, WPS; the WPV did not seek attestation and, with it, police powers to arrest.
- ²⁵ ESRO, DB/B 12/30. *BGr*, 14 Oct. 1915; *SDN*, 26 Oct. 1915; *BG*, 27 Oct. 1915. Nina Boyle's appetite for campaigning remained undiminished. South African born, earlier in October she had been arrested for refusing to account for her movements under a new Aliens Restriction Act of that year. She later successfully sued the Bristol police for unlawful imprisonment. There seem to have been two branches of the post-February 1915 WPV, the largest being in Brighton. The other, in London was apparently still operating in February 1916, but the Brighton branch was probably long gone by then. Though it is difficult to be precise, membership of the Brighton branch probably never exceeded more than a couple of dozen at any one time (Eustace, 'Women's Freedom League', 273; Mayhall, *Militant suffrage*, 134).
- ²⁶ *The Times*, 13 Oct. 1914. Carrier, *Campaign for employment*, 14.
- ²⁷ Lock, *British policewoman*, 33.
- ²⁸ *Bognor Regis Observer* (hereafter *BROb*), 10 Mar. 1915; *Chichester Observer* (hereafter *ChiOb*), 10 Mar. 1915; *SDN*, 10 Feb., 10 Mar. 1915; *HasO*, 6 Feb. 1915; Levine, 'Walking the streets', 49; A. Readman, 'Keeping city's "roughs" on the right side of the law', *West Sussex Observer*, 24 Jul. 2008. The links with the Church of England were unsurprising given that, from the outset, the NUWW had appealed strongly towards the active moralist lobby in arguing the need for patrols, by women, to protect women.
- ²⁹ *Eastbourne Gazette*, 17 Mar., 17 Apr. 1915. R. A. Elliston, *Eastbourne's Great War* (Seaford: SB Publications, 1999), 78. On Wilhelmina Bodie-Hall's links with suffragism and the Eastbourne branch of the NUWSS, see Crawford, *Suffrage reference guide*, 198.
- ³⁰ *Kent & Sussex Courier*, 3, 10 Sep. 1915; *SDN*, 7 Sep., 13 Oct. 1915; *East Grinstead Observer*, 13 Nov. 1915. Interestingly, the local police seem to have avoided becoming embroiled in the debate. In most places where the WP operated there were occasional letters of complaint in the press, usually about the way in which they challenged

couples, and single women whom they considered at risk, especially after dark. The official antipathy shown towards the East Grinstead WP was, however, unusual within Sussex. It may be due to the fact that the East Grinstead patrol appears to be the only one in Sussex that did not trouble to seek official support from the local council before it was formed, and kept itself at a distance thereafter.

³¹ ESRO, DE/A 6/6, 19 Jul. 1918, 21 Feb. 1919. Carrier, *Campaign for employment*, 24.

³² HasO, 6 Feb., 27 Mar., 4 Sep. 1915, 1 Apr., 2 Sep., 4 Nov. 1916, 3, 9 Feb., 3, 10 Mar. 1917. ESRO, SPA 5/1/16.

³³ The Folkestone watch committee had decided in February 1917 to dispense with its two policewomen (employed by arrangement with the WPS) and instead rely on the WP. These events were reported in great detail in the East Sussex press so the BSCC should have been well informed about the merits of the different models. Women supplied by the WPS would also have brought a presence of uniformed female patrols to the streets of Bexhill which the WP would not. *HasO*, 24 Feb. 1917, 3, 10, 17 Mar. 1917.

³⁴ ESRO, C/C 12/1/7, 17 Apr., 10 Jul. 1917; DR B1/29, 11 Jun. 1917; *Bexhill on Sea Observer* (hereafter *BexO*), 21 Apr., 12 May, 17, 23 Jun., 14 Jul., 4 Aug. 1917.

³⁵ *BexO*, 14 Jul. 1917. It further informed its readers that 'the employment of women police has been endorsed by the county police authorities, who have consented to the retention of these officers during the continuance of war conditions in the borough.'

³⁶ See for example, *BexO*, 30 Jun., 18 Aug., 29 Sep. 1917. *SDN*, 13 Oct. 1915, for instance, contains three separate letters complaining about over-zealous special constables and their activity in reporting alleged lights showing at night.

³⁷ *BexO*, 13 Oct. 1917. Though the press report does not say so, the clear implication is that the original charge may well have been one of attempted rape. By charging the offender with an offence that could be tried summarily a guilty plea was more likely, meaning that the 15-year-old victim did not have to give evidence. It also saved the costs of a case at the Assizes.

³⁸ ESRO, C/C 12/1/7, 23 Oct. 1917; *BexO*, 3, 17 Nov. 1917. At this meeting of the East Sussex SJC the Revd Howes of Rye asked for permission to employ a policewoman at Rye, to be supplied by the WPS, and paid for from local contributions; the application was refused.

³⁹ ESRO, C/C 12/1/7, 15 Jan. 1918; *BexO*, 9 Feb. 1918.

⁴⁰ Bexhill Museum, BEXHM:1986.173, photographs of Bexhill Peace Day Parade, 19 Jul 1919. *Bexhill Chronicle*, 13 Apr. 1918; *BexO*, 22 Jun. 1918, 14 Jul. 1919.

⁴¹ *BH*, 10, 17 May 1918.

⁴² *ChiOb*, 8 May 1918; *BROb*, 13 Feb. 1918; *SDN*, 6 Jun. 1918. The two women were Florence Ellis (daughter of the deputy chief constable) and Emily Thorn (sister-in-law of Inspector Brett). In calling them special constables the SJC would have known that there was no legal bar to their attestation. Special constables were, by definition, supernumeraries. Their employment was ended shortly after the armistice.

⁴³ ESRO, DB/B 12/32, 12 Dec. 1917, 13 Mar. 1918; DB/B 78/69, 21 Mar. 1918. *BH*, 2 Mar. 1918.

⁴⁴ The pay scale of the women police at that time was £1 10s., with a 15s. war bonus. Overall, it was slightly

less than the pay of a male constable. The matron, Mrs Burkitt, was paid only 10s. weekly; her sacking probably more reflected the watch committee being churlish than a serious desire to economise. ESRO, DB/B 12/32, 10 Apr., 12 Jun., 17 Jul. 1918; DB/B/78/69, 18 Apr. 1918. *BH*, 10 May, 22 Jun., 29 Jun., 27 Jul. 1918. *BG*, 9 Jul. 1918.

⁴⁵ *HasO*, 21 Jun. 1919, ESRO, C/C 12/1/8; DO/A 2/45; DE/A 6/6. *Municipal Journal*, 11 Apr. 1919. *Policewoman's Review*, 3 (Dec. 1929). N. W. Poulson, 'Alphabetical list of police officers who served in the pre-1968 police forces of Sussex' (Lewes: Sussex Police, 1990), copy at ESRO, LIB/501530. On immediate post-war changes see: Lock, *British policewoman*, 98–106; Carrier, *Campaign for employment*, 71–80. The annual report of HM Inspector of Constabulary for 1918 shows that on 21 September 1918, 276 women were counted on the strength of 15 county and 42 borough police forces in England and Wales. In the year 1917–18, 7 counties and 24 boroughs employed 176 women.

⁴⁶ And, incidentally, Mrs Burkitt got her job back. Carrier, *Campaign for employment*, 93–116. Barrett, *West Sussex*, 145–6. I am grateful to Malcolm Barrett for supplying hitherto unpublished information about WPC Gladys Moss. ESRO, DO/A 2/45; DE/A 6/6; DB/B 12/33; DB/B 12/34.

⁴⁷ Griffin had previously held chief constabships in both the Clitheroe Borough and the Luton Borough police forces, neither of which had considered employing women police. ESRO, DB/B 12/34, 17, 23 Oct., 22 Nov. 1921, 17 Jan., 14 Mar. 1922. Yet, apparently, in the Hove Borough force there was plenty of work for policewomen to do: ESRO, ACC 6572/2, 'Copies of correspondence and reports concerning the work and duties of policewomen in Hove, Oct 1921'.

⁴⁸ Perhaps paradoxically, Sir William Gentle was a member of that committee, ostensibly as a magistrates' representative: *Home Office Committee on Employment of Policewomen, minutes of evidence*, Cmd 2224 (1924), 17–21. Carrier, *Campaign for employment*, 146–62.

⁴⁹ ESRO, DO/A 17/9, 29 Mar., 26 Apr. 1922, 30 Jul. 1924; ACC 6572/2, Oct. 1921; DE/A 6/6. North East Police History Society Archives, Questionnaire responses to a circular letter from the Chief Constable of Rochdale to English chief constables, July 1924. I am indebted to Mr Harry Wynne for identifying this document and for providing a copy of it.

⁵⁰ *HasO*, 31, 11 Jan. 1925, 15 Feb., 31 Oct. 1936, 6 Mar. 1937, 19 Dec. 1938, 15 Jul., 5 Aug., 25 Nov. 1939. V. Seymour, *Court in the act: Crime and policing in WWII Hastings* (Hastings: Victoria Seymour, 2004), 21–2. Seymour cites a retired police constable who remembered Joan Edwards as 'a reserved, well-educated upper class sort of woman. The men used to give her a hard time, making fun of her or just ignoring her. She left in the end.'

⁵¹ *County Borough of Brighton: Police Centenary 1838–1938* (Brighton: Brighton Borough Police, 1938), copy at ESRO, SPA 3/10/1. In its 31 pages this book lists many innovations and achievements by the Brighton police but women police are not one of them. As a matter of record, the centenary of the force was in 1930, not 1938.

⁵² Dixon, 'Police forces in the Second World War', 13–28. Men were recruited into the First Police Reserve (primarily

police pensioners, but occasionally ex-servicemen), the Police War Reserve (men without police experience) and the Special Constabulary. By the end of 1938 almost 150,000 First Police Reserves and Special Constables had been recruited across England and Wales. In Clive Emsley's argument it 'took the depletion of the ranks of male policemen ... to see any marked expansion in women police': Emsley, *The English police*, 149.

- ⁵³ Dixon, 'Police forces in the Second World War', 25, 180–2. The formation of the WAPC also ensured that the much expanded Special Constabulary during the Second World War was, certainly in Sussex, an exclusively male organisation.
- ⁵⁴ ESRO, DO/A 17/16, 28 Aug., 25 Sep. 1940, 30 Jul. 1941; DB/B 12/45 26 May 1942; .DE/A 6/9, 26 May, 11 Sep. 1942. Barrett, *West Sussex*, 144. R. V. Kyrke, *History of East Sussex Police* (Lewes: East Sussex Police, 1969), 128, copy at ESRO, LIB/502144. *Sussex Agricultural Express* (hereafter *SAE*), 15 May, 24 Jul. 1942.
- ⁵⁵ ESRO, C/C 89/31, 18 Sep. 1940, 22 Nov., 21 Dec. 1941, 21 Apr., 21 Nov. 1942; DB/B 12/45, 15 May, 17 Jul. 1940, 17 Sep., 19 Nov. 1941, 14 Jan., 18 Mar., 15 Apr., 13 May, 17 Jun. 1942. *Justice of the Peace and Local Government Review*, **106** (1942), 266. *SAE*, 25 Jul., 7 Nov. 1941, 13 Feb. 1942; *HasO*, 16 Mar. 1940.
- ⁵⁶ Home Office Circular 96/44 urged police authorities to increase numbers of policewomen to deal with the large concentrations of military forces especially in southern England. At the end of 1944 there were just under 3800 members of the WAPC. The wartime Sussex Police Force was one of only 8 forces that employed more than 100 members of the WAPC (78 forces employed 10 or fewer). It is difficult to explain why the SPA found the recruitment of policewomen, rather than members of the WAPC, so problematic. ESRO, DE/A 6/9, 11 Apr. 1944; DB/B 12/46, 16 Jan., 18 Sep. 1946. *SAE*, 12 May, Jun. 1944. *West Sussex Gazette*, 22 Jun. 1944.
- ⁵⁷ L. Jackson, *Women police: Gender, welfare and surveillance in the twentieth century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 18, 27. K. Seagrave, *Policewomen: A history* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013), 203–4. Woodeson, 'First women police'. Lock, *British policewoman*, 22, 38, 102, 136, 170.
- ⁵⁸ In May 1946, for instance, the SPA agreed to pay for and send Policewoman Sergeant Court on a Detective Training Course (usually, for male officers, a precursor to a detective posting), at West Yorkshire's police training centre at Wakefield. But she was not transferred to CID after her return to Brighton and remained in the Policewomen's Department: ESRO, C/C 12/12/1, 2 May 1946.