

MEMORIES

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Looking back at our bobbies on the beat



In parade formation outside Canterbury East Railway, top, and in the rear yard of the city police station

City of Canterbury Constabulary

The Municipal Corporations Act 1835 required each incorporated borough to appoint a town clerk and a treasurer, together with a watch committee to form a police force.

The County of the City of Canterbury Watch Committee was formed in December 1835.

In 1836 the watch committee appointed a superintendent, two inspectors and 15 constables, for a population of about 14,000. The first parade of the City of Canterbury Constabulary was held on March 7, 1836, in Crown Alley, for inspection by local dignitaries. The first police station was a disused abattoir in Crown Yard, Stour Street, which continued in use for 15 years.

In 1850, part of the old City Workhouse of Poor Priests' Hospital in Lamb Lane was converted to provide six cells, offices and accommodation for the superintendent's family.

Twenty years later, in 1870, the constabulary moved to a new police station in Pound Lane, converted from what had previously been the city gaoler's house, located next to the

former city gaol. Pound Lane police station was extended in 1907 to provide a parade room and cells. By the end of the 19th Century, the total strength of the constabulary had risen to 24. In addition, supernumerary constables, sworn in as special constables, were appointed to work part-time as required and paid for each day's duty. Powers contained in the 1835 Act enabled boroughs to appoint special constables annually and keep lists of them. Additionally, the Special Constables Act 1831 enabled justices of the peace to swear in as many men as necessary to deal with "tumult, riot and felony".



City of Canterbury officers
Pics: Kent Police Museum

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The "Rules and Regulations for the Government and Instruction of the Police Force of the City and Borough of Canterbury" stated that the main objectives of a police force were: first, the prevention of crime; second, the detection of crime; and third, the apprehension and punishment of offenders.

There were up to two thousand soldiers stationed in the garrison city.

Kent County Constabulary

An attempt by magistrates to form a rural constabulary under the optional provisions of the Rural Constabulary Act 1839, for the areas in Kent outside boroughs, was defeated. It was not until The County and Borough Police Act 1856 was enacted, with the mandatory requirement for every county to form a police force, that Kent County Constabulary was created - on January 14, 1857.

Chief Constable John Henry Hay Ruxton took up his appointment on April 1. Twelve superintendents, 18 sergeants and 191 constables were

appointed. The new county police force was organised into 12 divisions and sworn in on May 10, 1857. The first headquarters - at Wrens Cross, Stone Street, Maidstone - was rented for use by the police until 1860, when the force purchased the building for £1,200.

At this time there were police forces in Canterbury, Deal, Dover, Faversham, Folkestone, Gravesend, Hythe, Maidstone, Margate, Rochester, Ramsgate, Sandwich, Tenterden, and Tunbridge Wells.

Under the 1856 Act, the 14 borough police forces became eligible for a government grant to pay one quarter of their costs, providing they were prepared to be inspected by the newly created Inspectorate of Constabulary and were declared to be efficiently run.

Kent County Council would not be created for another 33 years, following which a joint committee with the watch committee was formed.

The small police forces of Deal, Faversham, Hythe, Sandwich and Tenterden were compulsorily amalgamated with the county force in 1889, after the Local Government Act

1888 had created Kent County Council.

Preparation for the Allied landing in Normandy

Two years after the evacuation from Dunkirk in May 1940, the army had been sufficiently re-equipped for the war cabinet to begin preparing for the western front invasion of the European mainland. Improving communications in the south east was essential.

On April 1, 1943, the City of Canterbury Constabulary was temporarily amalgamated with Kent County Constabulary, along with each of the other borough police forces in Kent, to improve preparations for the build up to the allied landing in Normandy for the invasion of Europe. Temporary amalgamations of borough police forces with their county force also occurred through the south east, to improve vital communications.

The war cabinet made the temporary amalgamation arrangements under powers contained in the Defence Regulations 1942.

Lamb Lane was subsequently renamed and became part of Stour Street.



A view from the beach of the landings in Normandy

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