



The Changing Police

Having a police force to ensure laws are **obeyed** is a relatively new idea in Britain. Constables were responsible for keeping the peace in each town during the Middle Ages. Men would take it in turns at the role but weren't paid. People were supposed to raise the alarm if they **witnessed** a crime being committed. Every man who heard the shout was supposed to try to catch the criminal. This was called hue and cry. It continued until 1827.

Things were slightly different in London. Night-watchmen were paid from 1663 to keep the peace at night. From the late 1700s, other towns began to pay night-watchmen as well. A man named Henry Fielding formed a group called the Bow Street Runners in 1749. They were a small group of officials who were paid to catch criminals. London was the busiest port in Britain by then. The River Police was **formed** in 1798 to protect the cargo on the rivers.

The people of Britain didn't want a full-time police force. They were worried that the government might use it to **oppress** them. The Industrial Revolution changed everything. Cities grew much bigger, and the old way of doing things didn't work anymore.

It wasn't until 1829 that Britain got its first modern police force. Robert Peel was responsible for creating the Metropolitan Police Force in London. Their offices were based on a London road called Scotland Yard. The Metropolitan headquarters are now known as New Scotland Yard. Peel went on to be Prime Minister twice after creating the police force.

Early policemen were nicknamed Peelers or Bobbies (Bobby is a shortened form of Robert) in honour of Robert Peel. They weren't always up to the task. They wore top hats so that they looked smart. The only weapons they had were truncheons. They didn't get whistles until the 1880s. Every area in Britain was required by law to have its own police force by 1856.

Early detective work relied a lot on basic evidence. Fingerprint technology was **developed** in the late 1800s. This meant that it became easier to tie criminals to a crime scene. The first British criminal to be convicted based on fingerprints was Harry Jackson. He had stolen some billiard

balls from a house in London. Strangely, fingerprints had been used to identify criminals in other countries as far back as ancient Babylon in around 1955 BC!

The first police cars were bought in 1903 when the Metropolitan Police bought two. Oddly, policemen didn't begin using bicycles until after then. The first police bicycles were used in 1909. In 1914, the first policewomen in Britain were appointed.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

Draw a line to match the word to its correct definition. You can use a dictionary to help you if needed.

Word	Definition
Witnessed	keep somebody down or beneath them
Formed	see something happen
Oppress	did as they were told
Developed	made better
Obeyed	created or made

VIPERS QUESTIONS

- I** Why does the author think it is odd that the police used bicycles after they used cars?
- S** Give one way in which policing has changed over the text. Use evidence from the text.
- R** When were the Bow Street Runners formed?
- R** Who were the Peelers named after?
- E** What effect does the use of the words "strangely" and "oddly" have on you as a reader?

Answers:

Word	Definition
Witnessed	keep somebody down or beneath them
Formed	see something happen
Oppress	did as they were told
Developed	made better
Obeied	created or made

I: Bicycles have been around longer than cars so you would have expected them to use them first.

S: Look for explanations that talk about a police force, being paid, using detective work, fingerprint technology and the use of cars and bikes.

R: 1749

R: Robert Peel

E: Look for answers that understand it presents the fact as being unusual or unexpected