



*John Kempster, (1836-1916)  
founder of The Police Review and Parade Gossip in 1893*

**JOHN KEMPSTER  
AND  
THE POLICE REVIEW  
1893-1916**

John Kempster founded *The Police Review and Parade Gossip* in 1893. At that time there was no weekly newspaper devoted to the instruction of policemen or to the furthering of their interests, which was surely indicative of the indifference of the government and public of the day. The *Review* was immediately accepted by the Police as their mouthpiece journal.

Born in Congleton, Cheshire in 1836, Kempster had spent his life in journalism, but what encouraged him to establish a police newspaper, at the age of fifty-seven, is unknown. His interview in 1892, with Sir Edward Bradford, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, who assured him that 'the authorities had ample means of communicating with the men', convinced him that exactly the opposite was the case. Thus *The Police Review and Parade Gossip* appeared in January 1893.

John Kempster remained the Editor right up until his death, aged eighty, in 1916. During those twenty-three years, he campaigned continually for police officers of all forces who had no other means of getting their grievances redressed, as by then, the Inspectorate of Constabulary was fast sinking into its post-1890 lethargy; and it would be another twenty-six years before the Police Federation was to be established as a direct consequence of the great police strikes of 1918 and 1919, and the ensuing 'earthquake' of the 1919 Desborough Report.

Much of the developments of the modern police service stem directly from the campaigns of John Kempster, who, it must be remembered, was never a police officer, nor, as far as can be ascertained, did he have any police connection before 1893. Not all of Kempster's campaigns are listed here, lack of space precludes.

**1893** Kempster opened a subscription to enable PC Cant to make an appeal to Quarter Sessions. The Cant Case established the right of a police officer to count for pension his previous service on transfer to another police force.

**1894** The Great Boot Campaign gave the Metropolitan Police a 'Boot Allowance' to purchase their own boots, rather than being crippled by the issue boots.

Under the heading 'Policemen for Police Appointments' Kempster criticised the Kent Standing Joint Committee for the appointment of an army officer to be Chief Constable of Kent, even though he had had no police experience whatsoever. This referred to the appointment of thirty-nine year old Major Henry Herbert Edwards, on Wednesday 15 August 1894, and who just happened to be the son-in-law of the chairman of the County Council.

Kempster was to pursue vigorously this campaign to stop higher posts in the police service being given to non-police officers, purely because of their social standing or family connections. After his death, the campaign was continued by his successors, although it is perhaps ironic that even into the 1960s, the *Police Review* still called Chief Constables by their army ranks rather than their police ranks.

This campaign did register a small measure of success however, when Regulation Nine of the Police Regulations of 1920 (formulated after the great police administrative upheavals of 1919) stipulated exactly that - policemen for police appointments, but with the proviso : 'unless [the candidate] possesses some exceptional qualification...or there is no candidate from the police service who is considered sufficiently well qualified'. Unfortunately, this get-out clause was used on numerous occasions, and subsequent Home Secretaries rode rough-shod over Regulation Nine whenever it suited them. In October 1925, for instance, the Home Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, blocked the appointment of Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Bartlett to be Chief Constable of Westmoreland and Cumberland on the grounds of lack of police experience. But just a few months later in 1926, appointed Rear Admiral Charles Royds straight from the Royal Navy to be Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, despite the same lack of police experience.

In the Kemp Case, Kempster drew attention to the lack of accountability of county Chief Constables. Superintendent Kemp had been dismissed from Worcestershire Constabulary on alleged charges of misconduct. At the Birmingham Assizes, Kemp was found not guilty and won a considerable amount of damages. The Chief Constable, (Lieutenant Colonel!) George Carmichael, refused to reinstate Kemp or to reimburse his pension he had lost by being dismissed, and the Worcestershire Standing Joint Committee was powerless to intervene. To add insult, Kemp never received the damages due to him either, and died a broken man a few months later.

**1895** In this year, Kempster started agitation for a lighter summer uniform to be issued, instead of winter weight clothing having to be worn the year round. This took two years to come to fruition, but finally in 1897, much lighter jackets were issued.

**1898** For the first time, Kempster drew attention to the 'positively cruel condition' in which policemen's widows were left. He cited the case of the widow of a Superintendent who had been in charge of 700 men, and who was reduced to living in one room relying on charity from her neighbours.

**1899** The City of London pensioners grievance. The rateable deductions from pay under the 1890 Police Pensions Act was sixpence per week. The City police authority, loathe to deduct this sum from the already low wages, increased the wages by sixpence to cover the deduction. But the pension authority deducted the sixpence, and calculated the pensions on this lower sum. *The Police Review* took up the cause, and eventually the city fathers granted the pension on the full amount, plus arrears.

The Upperton Appeal case was assisted by a fund from *The Police Review*, and was fought right up to the House of Lords. For some reason unknown, police pensions had been granted on 364 days instead of 365 days per year. PC Upperton won his case, and henceforth pensions were to be paid on 365 days per year.

**1900** At the General Election of this year, Parliamentary candidates were approached and asked to champion police grievances such as the provision of a system of appeal in all cases of pensions disputes; the provision of a general system of promotion rather than private patronage; previous police service as a compulsory qualification for appointment as a chief constable; and the provision of one day's rest in seven. It is perhaps this last recommendation that would prove to be Kempster's lasting legacy.

**1901** The Metropolitan Police were given a lodging allowance, but only for the men living in the inner city. *The Police Review* started a campaign to extend this to all of London, and eventually in 1904, this was granted.

**1905** John Kempster took up the case of PC Austin of Brighton Borough Police. Brighton Watch Committee had quite arbitrarily made deductions from his approved service of periods of five years and three years for 'misconduct'. Consequently, when PC Austin came to retire, his pension was based on twenty years service, instead of the actual twenty-eight years he had served, and paid. With the backing of *The Police Review*, PC Austin appealed to Quarter Sessions, but lost. An appeal was made to Parliament, with the effect that a year later, The Police Act 1906 was passed, Section Seven of which stated that deductions of service should not exceed the actual periods of misconduct or sickness.

**1906** Similar to the 1900 General Election, Parliamentary candidates were approached. James Remnant, the MP for Holborn (later Baron Remnant), stepped up to the mark, and urged on by John Kempster, within one month of the new Parliament, was asking the Home Secretary, Herbert Gladstone, about the desirability of giving the Metropolitan Police one day off in seven. The Home Secretary naturally deferred, giving as his excuse the cost, especially as it would inevitably follow, that it would have had to be introduced for the whole country.

**1908** This did not deter Kempster and Remnant, who introduced into Parliament a Bill to give one day's rest in seven. The Bill was allowed to drop when a Select Committee was established to look into the question. Kempster immediately conducted a poll of the readers of *The Police Review* and received 6,000 replies. He appeared twice before the Select Committee.

**1909** The report of the Select Committee was published in May, and recommended that one day's rest in seven be granted. A Bill was placed before Parliament, and on Saturday 10 July, the Police (Weekly Rest Day) Act was passed. However, it recommended a period of four years for the implementation of the Act in County Boroughs and in other forces, at a date to be fixed by an Order in Council.

**1910** Not satisfied with this, Kempster began a campaign to get the Act implemented straight away. He continually published the names of those backsliding forces not introducing the weekly rest day. Eventually by 1913, a Home Office return was presented to Parliament, and the matter was then resolved fully.

**1913** The question of a Police Union had been raised, and the Home Secretary, Reginald McKenna, stated that under no circumstances would this be granted, and any officer joining any such organisation would be dismissed. *The Police Review* insisted however, that the police had 'a right to confer', and suggested an alternative to a union, the National Police Federation.

**1914** *The Police Review* outlined a scheme for setting up Representative Committees in the Metropolitan Police. The Home Secretary again rejected the idea, but in order to ameliorate the situation, granted a pay rise to the Metropolitan Police, which fortuitously was granted just before the outbreak of The Great War.

**1915** Kempster drew attention to a police authority who had refused to pay over to the dependents of a police officer killed on active service, the rateable deductions which had been taken from his pay.

**1916** Kempster succeeded in getting an amendment to the Police (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act which *did* force police authorities to return to the dependents of police officers killed on active service, all the rateable deductions taken from their pay.

This was to be the last 'triumph' of John Kempster, as he died on Wednesday 13 December 1916, and was buried in Hendon churchyard. He would never live to see the 'right to confer' bestowed upon the police service by the establishment of the Police Federation in 1919, which he had agitated for six years earlier. And he would never see the culmination of his campaign for 'policemen for police appointments' enshrined in Regulation Nine of the Police Regulations of 1920 - but he would also never see the continual ignoring of it, even as late as the 1940s.

After John Kempster's death, *The Police Review and Parade Gossip* passed to his son-in-law, David Harris, who injected capital and fresh ideas. In the late 1920s, the '*and Parade Gossip*' was dropped from the title, and in 1934, the '*The*' was also dropped, and the magazine became *Police Review*, with a much simplified title page. Latterly, *Police Review* had been taken over by the Janes Information Group, but in 2011, the magazine was discontinued. Today there is no magazine which gives anywhere near the same information as *Police Review* did throughout its 118 years of being the voice of the officers actually on the street, 'down at the sharp end'.