

PAPER PURSUIT

A Brief Account of the History of the Police Gazette

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Origins

The Police Gazette of today originates from the work of Henry and John Fielding in the 18th century.

Henry Fielding set up his office in Bow Street as a Justice of the Peace for Westminster and Justice for Middlesex in 1748. Within a relatively short time as he started to develop his ideas Henry Fielding realised the potential benefits to law enforcement of; (a) Public advertising and; (b) Communication with other Justices elsewhere in the country.

In 1752 in his own publication, the Covent Garden Journal, Henry Fielding regularly advertised the activities of his court at Bow Street inviting the victims of crime to contact him with their complaints. When he ceased publishing the Covent Garden Journal, similar advertisements appeared regularly in one of the most popular newspapers of the day, the Public Advertiser.

Henry's half brother, John Fielding, became a Magistrate for Westminster in 1751. Henry's health started to fade during 1753 and by April 1754 John Fielding had taken over Henry Fielding's work at Bow Street. The following is the detail of an advertisement which regularly appeared in the Public Advertiser from October 17 h, 1754 and which set the scene for the foundation of the Police Gazette.

"Whereas many thieves and robbers daily escape justice for want of immediate pursuit, it is therefore recommended to all persons, who shall henceforth be robbed on the highway or in the streets, or whose shops or houses shall be broken open, that they give immediate notice thereof, together with as accurate description of the offenders as possible, to

JOHN FIELDING, Esq., at his house in Bow Street, Covent Garden: By which means, joined to an advertisement, containing an account of the things lost (which is also taken in there) thieves and robbers will seldom escape; as most of the principal pawnbrokers taking this paper, and by the intelligence they get from it assist daily in discovering and apprehending rogues.

And if they would send a special messenger on these occasions, Mr. Fielding would not only pay that messenger for his trouble, but would immediately despatch a set of brave fellows in pursuit, who have been long engaged for such purposes, and are always ready to set out to any part of this town or kingdom, on a quarter of an hours notice.

It is to be hoped that the late success of this plan will make all persons for the future industrious to give the earliest notice possible of all robberies and robbers whatever."

Sir John Fielding's Plan

In his "Plan of Police" Sir John Fielding (as he then was) during the period 1761-1763 proposed

"that a paper be established by law in which everything relative to the discovery of the offenders should be advertised and that all persons be bound to take notice of whatever is advertised therein; and if they have purchased or taken into pawn any stolen goods therein described to give information thereof to one of the commissioners, otherwise to be liable to be prosecuted as the receiver of them: and that all persons who knowingly harbour or assist the offenders to escape should be liable to a penalty to be levied by any two of the said Commissioners and, if a publican, to forfeit his licence for three yea s."

John Fielding's "Plan of Police" was not adopted but nevertheless he continued to exploit the medium of advertising for the purposes of justice. In 1771 John Fielding was involved in one notorious case which demonstrated the value of advertising. A robbery and murder had taken place in the Kings Road, Chelsea and a gang of several Jews were suspected of the crime.

The crime aroused strong public feelings at the time and John Fielding was in charge of the enquiry and promptly issued and circulated a hand bill seeking information to trace the offenders and setting out the rewards available to an informant. After this circulation and advertisements in the London Gazette, one member of the gang turned King's Evidence and gave Fielding a description of the remaining offenders. Fielding then promptly circulated the description of the remainder of the gang to Post Office Officials and Officers of Custom and Excise throughout the country distributing great numbers of printed advertisements to be prominently displayed. This action obviously fueled anti-semitic prejudices of the time and suspicious looking Jews were arrested in a number of towns. However, the desired result was also achieved and four principal members of the gang were arrested in Birmingham and brought back to London by "Mr. Fielding's people." Subsequently six of the gang were tried at the Old Bailey and four were condemned to death and executed in front of a crowd "greater than at any execution within the memory of man."

The Quarterly and Weekly Pursuit

Sir John Fielding was by this time intent on the publication of a Police advertising periodical and used the success of the Chelsea outrage to attempt to persuade the government to set up such a publication. His efforts met with little immediate success and so it appears that he commenced a limited publication on his own account. In circulars to Mayors and Chief Magistrates in 1772 and 1773 Sir John stated that it was his intention to circulate throughout the country each quarter details of felons who had fled from the Metropolis. It was his hope that these would be republished in each locality and copies given to Constables and copies displayed in prominent public places. Sir John also proposed sending a newspaper gratis every week to the Mayors and Chief Magistrates containing advertisements relating to offences and offenders. Persons connected with law enforcement were invited to ensure that details of offences were properly transmitted to Bow Street. These publications were known as the "Quarterly Pursuit" and the "Weekly Pursuit".

These publications met with some success and in 1773 Sir John was urging Lord Suffolk to put his plan on a proper footing with public funds in the order of £400 per year. Ultimately this had the desired effect and on 26th August, 1773, Sir John Fielding wrote of an audience that day with Lord North who advised him that the general preventive plan had been represented to His Majesty "who had been graciously pleased to afford it his loyal countenance."

The Public Hue and Cry and Police Gazette

Six years after Sir John Fielding's death in 1786 his successor, Sir Samson Wright converted the Weekly Pursuit into a more newspaper like affair and changed the title to "Public Hue and Cry". By 1795 the title had changed again to "The Hue and Cry and Police Gazette", by this time the periodical was published every Saturday and was publicly available at the price of 3½d.

The Gazette is mentioned in the evidence given to the Committee appointed to enquire into the state of the Police of the Metropolis which reported on 1st July 1816: The then Chief Magistrate at Bow Street, Sir Nathaniel Conant stated that the Gazette was sent to all Magistrate, in the Kingdom who desired it and to the Clerks of the Peace of the Counties and Mayors and functionaries of the great towns. The Gazette was under the control of an Editor appointed by the Secretary of State. The Editor at that time was John Stafford, the Chief Clerk at Bow Street. Sir Nathaniel Conant revealed that the Editor had considerable discretion as to the contents of the Gazette which included the acceptance of paid private advertisements. The receipts from this income went towards the printing charges and the Editor received £70 per year as salary for this function. The Gazette was sent free to those official recipients listed above.

The Police Gazette

In 1828 the name of the periodical was shortened to "The Police Gazette."

On 20th March, 1835 a return was placed before the House of Commons showing the costs in each of the previous five years of printing and circulating the Police Gazette. John Stafford remained the Editor receiving an allowance at that time of £100 per annum. The following table shows the costs in each year for printing and circulating the Gazette and the numbers printed and circulated.

Year	Cost	<u>Numbers Printed</u>
	£	
1830	1,365	148,100
1831	1,577	169,750
1832	1,535	167,560
1833	1,596	156,832
1834	1,612	161,200

The return shows that the gazette was then circulated to the "Mayors and Principal Officers of every city and town in the Kingdom, to Justices of the Peace in Petty Sessions assembled or their clerks, Keepers of Jails and Houses of Correction, the Metropolitan Police, the War Office, Horse Patrol, Police Offices, the Commanding Officers of each Regiment and to several military depots in Great Britain and Ireland." There was obviously even at this time some confusion over the title of the publication as the return to the House of Commons includes the footnote that "The Police Gazette and The Hue and Cry are one and the same publication." The return to the House of Commons suggests that circulation was by this time restricted to official agencies of law enforcement. This may not have been strictly the case as an item from the Cambridge Chronicle of the 2nd September 1836 relating to a robbery at Mildenhall in Suffolk commences, "Information was on Monday published in the government Hue and Cry of the following robbery. . ."

The Gazette continued to be issued by the Chief Clerk at Bow Street long after the establishment of the Metropolitan Police. The Criminal Record Office at Scotland Yard was established in 1880 following from the Commissioner's records kept in accordance with the Prevention of Crimes Act 1871. In 1883 the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police took over

responsibility for the production of the Police Gazette and from this time some illustrations started to appear in the text. By the 1890's occasional illustrated circulars supplemented the Police Gazette and from those sprang various supplements to the Gazette in the 20th Century. By 1914 the Gazette was being issued on a daily rather than a weekly basis.

By 1936 the Commissioner was able to report that the Police Gazette was edited in the Criminal Record Office and "information received in the morning appears in print the same day and is in the hands of the Forces the same evening or by first post the next morning. To make this possible the editorial and printing department are obliged to work at high pressure as items have to be in the hands of the printer before 9.30 a.m. each morning, the first batch of Police Gazettes being despatched to the railway terminal about noon daily." The Commissioner stated that the criminal record office were prepared to supply gratis to all forces sufficient copies to enable every police station or constable's cottage used as a station to receive one. By this time there were six supplements to the Gazette. These were:-

Supplement A - issued fortnightly - details of active travelling criminals.

Supplement B - issued weekly - convicts on licence, etc.

Supplement C - Aliens wanted for crime and alien offences.

Supplement D - Absentees/deserters.

Supplement E - (Commenced 1933) photographs of Active criminals not sufficiently important to be included in Supplement A.

Supplement F - Deaths and re-convictions of criminals previously circulated.

Since 1772, this periodical has contained detailed information relating to crime, criminals and police officers throughout England and Wales. It contains a wealth of information of interest to police and local historians and is a virtually untapped source. No one record office, library or museum contains a complete run of this periodical and the following table gives details of what are believed to be the only survivals outside private collections. It is hoped that this source list will be of value to police historians.

The Committee of the Police History Society recognised the value of the Gazette and currently negotiations are taking place which it is hoped will lead to a republication of Gazettes up to 1900 in Microfiche format. It is hoped that this will ensure that this valuable source of information becomes more readily available in libraries and record offices thus contributing to our knowledge of police history.

Bibliography

The Life and Work of Sir John Fielding	R Leslie-Melville
History of English Criminal Law, Volume 3	Leon Radzinowicz
A Trueborn Englishman	M.P. Willcocks
A House in Bow Street	Antony Babington
The Covent Garden Journal	G.E. Jensen
A History of Police in England	W.L. Melville Lee
A History of Police in England and Wales	T.A. Critchley
Sir John Fielding's Plan of Police 1761-1763	
Report of the Committee appointed to enquire into the state of the Police of the Metropolis 1816	
Catching Thieves on Paper	Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police
Henry and Sir John Fielding	Patrick Pringle
Scotland Yard	George Dilnot
Cambridge Chronicle 2nd September 1836	
Blue Book 1835 XXXVII Page 663 re. Return to House of Commons on Police Gazette.	

CHECKLIST OF PRE-1900 POLICE GAZETTES AND THEIR LOCATIONS

Key C = Complete Year

P = Partial Year

S = 1 to 5 Single Issues

1790			
1791			
1792			
1793	10S	17S	
1794	19P		
1795	1S	20S	
1796	19S		
1797	19P		
1798	19P		
1799	19C		
1800	19C		
1801	19P	3S	
1802	19P	3S	
1803	19P		
1804	19P		
1805	19P		
1806	19P		
1807	19P		
1808	19P		
1809	19S		
1810	19P		
1811	24C	10S	19S
1812	24C	19P	
1813	24C	19S	
1814	24C	19P	
1815	24C	19P	3S
1816	24C	19P	17S
1817	24C	19P	
1818	24C	3C	19P
1819	24C	3C	19P
1820	24C	3C	19P

1821	24C	3C	19P		
1822	24C	3C	19P		
1823	24C	3C	19P		
1824	24C	3C			
1825	24C	3C			
1826	24C	3C			
1827	24C	3C	19S	28S	
1828	23C	13C	3C	IS	2S
1829	23C	13C	3C		
1830	23C	13C	3C		
1831	23C	13C	3C	17S	
1832	23C	13C	3C	17S	
1833	23C	13C	3C		
1834	23C	3C			
1835	23C	IS			
1836	23C				
1837	23C				
1838	23C	17C	9P		
1839	23C	9P			
1840	23C				
1841	23C				
1842	23C	26P	17S		
1843	23C	26C			
1844	23C	26C			
1845	23C		17S		
1846					
1847					
1848	8C				
1849	8C		2S		
1850	8C				
1851	8C				
1852	8C				
1853	8C				
1854	8C				
1855	8C				
1856	8C				
1857					
1858	1P	3P			

1859			21C				
1860			21C				
1861			21C				
1862			21C				
1863			21C				
1864			21C				
1865			21C				
1866	SC		21C				
1867	SC		21C				
1968	SC		21C				
1869	SC		21C				
1870	SC		21C				
1871	SC		21C	29S			
1872	SC		21C				
1873	SC		21C				
1874	SC						
1875	SC		21C	31S	1S		
1876	SC		21C	29C			
1877	3C	SC		21C			
1878	3C	SC		17S			
1879	3C	SC		2S			
1880	3C	SC		113	2SP		
1881	3C	SC		31C	2SP		
1882	3C	SC		21C	25P	27S	30P
1883	3C	SC		21C	2SP		
1884	3C	SC		21C	31C	26S	
1885	3C	SC		21C	23S		
1886	3C	SC		29C	31C	16S	
1887	3C	SC		7P	2SP	27S	
1888	3C	SC		31C	2SP	26S	30S
1889	3C	SC		2P	27S		
1890	3C	SC		31C	26P	1S	
1891	3C	SC		31C	30S		
1892	3C	SC		29C	31C		
1893	3C	SC		31C	25P		
1894	3C	SC	31C	2SP			
1895	3C	SC	31C	22S	25S		

1896	3C	15P	7S	25S	30S			
1897	3C	SC	2S	4S	12s	14S	22S	26S
1898	3C	SC						
1899	3C	SC	31C	4S	14S			
1900	3C	SC						

LOCATION CODES

1. The Bodleian Library, Broad Street, Oxford, OX1 3BG
2. Bristol Record Office, The Council House, College Green, Bristol. BS1 STR
3. British Library - Newspaper Library, Colindale Avenue, London. NW9 SHE
4. Caernarfon Area Record Office, County Offices, Caernarfon, Gwynedd.
5. Cambridgeshire Constabulary Historical Society, Police Headquarters, Hinchingsbrooke Park, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE18 8NP.
6. Cheshire County Record Office, The Castle, Chester. CHI 2DN
7. Cumbria Record Office, County Offices, Kendal. LA9 4RQ
8. Durham County Record Office, County Hall, Chelmsford.
9. East Sussex County Record Office, The Maltings, Castle Prcincts, Lewes Sussex. BN7 1YT
10. Essex County Record Office, County Hall, Chelmsford. CMI 1LX
11. Glamorgan Record Office, County Hall, Cathays Park, Cardiff. CF1 3NE
12. Gampian Police Headquarters, Queen Street, Aberdeen.
13. Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London. EC2P 2EJ
14. Gwynedd County Archiviati, County Hall, Caernarfon.
15. Lancashire Constabulary, Police Trainirtg School, Hutton Hall, Preston.
16. Lincolnshire Police, P.O. Box 999, Lincoln.
17. Metropolitan Police Museum, New Scotland Yard.
18. National Library of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin 2.
19. Northamptonshire County Record 9ffice, Delapre Abbey, Northampton NN4 9AW
20. Northamptonshire Police, Force Museum, Wootton Hall, Northampton NN4 OJQ
21. North Yorkshire Police Headquarters, Newby Wiske, Northallterton.
22. Pembrokeshire Record Office, The Castle, Haverfordwest, Dyfed. SA61 2EF
23. Public Record Office, **Kew**, Richmond, Surrey. TW9 4DY
24. Somerset County Record Office, Obridge Road, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7PU
25. South Yorks County Record Office, Elling Street, Sheffield SL21 S. Yorks
26. Sussex Police Headquarters, Lewes, Sussex.
27. Tayside Police, West Bell Street, Dundee
28. Warwickshire County Record .Office, Priory Park, Cape Road, Warwick CV34 4JS
29. West Mercia Constabulary, Fo ce Museum, Hindlip Hall, Worcester.
30. West Yorkshire Archive Service, Registry of Deeds, Newstead Road, Wakefield. WF1 2DE
31. Wiltshire Constabulary, Police Headquarters, Devizes. SN10 2DN