



# St Paul's Times

Sound Architect Creative Media and St Paul's C of E Primary School, Brighton

October 2016



## Over 100 years ago

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### The world was very different in 1914.

Women were not permitted into some professions and most married women were not allowed to work at all, plus, no woman could vote. Yet in this time, before Britain joined the War, Margaret Damer Dawson founded the Women's Police Service. The children in Year 3 of St Paul's Primary School in Brighton: those who are 7 and 8, undertook a special project to explore how women came to join the Women's Police Service, and all about Margaret Damer Dawson, who was actually born in Hove. They looked at the life of this extraordinary pioneer, and also the other women whose spirit changed history, and paved the way for women to be accepted in the Police Force today.



Women in Policing Exhibition



Trying on uniforms at Brighton Old Police Cells Museum



Creating an old map of Brighton with the girls from year 5



### How it Started...

On the eve of the outbreak of the First World War there was a national appeal for special constables. It was during this time that a Women's Police Volunteers organisation was formed in London by a leading Suffragette, Nina Boyle, and a wealthy philanthropist, Mrs Margaret Damer Dawson. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner agreed that they could train women and patrol in London on a purely voluntary and unofficial basis. A year later in 1915 the Women's Police Volunteers Organisation was renamed the Women's Police Service.

The outbreak of war gave the opportunity for two separate groups to organise the women police patrols: the Women Police Volunteers/Women Police Service, were organised by the morality campaigner Margaret Damer Dawson and the Voluntary Women Patrols were organised by members of the National Union of Women Workers. Both groups were particularly concerned with the control of the public and at times even the private behaviour of working and lower class women.

Hayley Martin, Volunteer

*"We wouldn't be where we are, we wouldn't be in policing today, if it hadn't been for the pioneer women of the 1900's"*

DI Jacqui Jenkins, Sussex Police



# The Women's Police Service

## Margaret Damer Dawson

Born in Hove in 1873, moved to Grantham

**Police Connection:** Founded the Women's Police Service and became its first Commandant.

**Important achievements:**

- Committed to the protection of animals, particularly anti-vivisection. She was awarded silver medals in Finland and Denmark for campaign work for animal rights.
- Protection of women and children, morally and from white slavery.
- Parted company from Nina Boyle, with whom she set up the Women Police Volunteers in 1914, when asked to enforce a curfew in Grantham on women, on morality grounds, which she agreed to do. She stayed as Commandant, supported by the Women Police Volunteers, and then renamed it to the Women's Police Service.
- Set up a home for abandoned babies in Grantham.
- Designed the Women's Police Uniform herself.
- Trained with Police in London, then worked in Grantham with Mary Allen, as there was a huge army camp just outside. Their role was to talk to and protect women who may be in moral danger.
- They were volunteers, receiving no pay.



Margaret Damer Dawson was 'Head of Transport' of a committee formed by Chelsea people, who greeted and helped Belgian refugees escaping from the Germans, she had been involved in an incident whereby a couple of the refugees had been 'spirited' away by 'white slavers', she needed a group of women in uniform - women police in fact. She commenced recruiting 'women police' in September 1914. When she learnt of Nina Boyle's plans, they decided to join forces and Nina became her deputy. They became the 'Women Police Volunteers' W.P.V.



## Mary Hare

Born in London in 1866, and moved to Brighton

**Police Connection:** She ran Brighton Women Police Volunteers during the First World War.

**Important achievements:**

- She founded a school for deaf children, and pioneered their education rather than asylum.
- She was a suffragette and wrote across her 1911 census form: women don't count therefore they will not be counted".
- She set up a uniformed women's police force in Brighton and Hove in 1915 to assist the towns' vulnerable women and children.



Mary Hare by Hugo



1919  
The Home Secretary sent a letter to all Police Authorities suggesting that consideration should be given to appointing women officers to deal with cases involving women and children.

1924  
Women Police established at the Metropolitan Police in London.



Lorna Thomas 1930 - 1945 era

1937  
Women Police were authorised to take fingerprints.



Janet Skeef - she was appointed in 1951 and was the first female detective in Sussex in 1956

1946  
Women Police allowed to take part in VE Parade.

1961  
Police Federation Act 1961 gave Women Police full representative and voting rights.

1970  
Women appointed to Mounted Branch.

1914  
Margaret Damer Dawson starts the first Women Police Service in Grantham.

1923  
Women first attested and given power of arrest. They were to be sworn in as 'constables'.

1932  
Lilian Wyles is appointed the first woman Chief Inspector in the police force. She joined London's Metropolitan Police in 1919 and the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) in 1922.

1939  
Only 45 police forces out of a total of 183 were employing policewomen. Between 1939 and 1949 the number of police women rose from 246 to 1148.

1947  
W.P.S. (CID.) Alberta Watts was the first woman officer to be awarded the Kings Police Medal for Gallantry, for courage and re-channelled resource in a case of robbery with violence.

1968  
First black woman police officer - Sislin Fay Allen.

1971  
Police women in with police dogs in 1960's



## Nina Boyle

Born in Bexley in Kent in 1865, moved to London

**Police Connection:** Established the Women's Police Service with Margaret Damer Dawson.

**Important achievements:**

- She spent time in South Africa and was a nurse in the Boer War.
- She was a journalist and also wrote books.
- She was a member of the Women's Freedom League and a Suffragette.



- Worked with Margaret Damer Dawson to establish the first Women's Police Service, to safeguard women under the law and when being arrested. However, she disapproved of the curtailing of women's civil liberties, especially the imposing of a curfew in some towns, so distanced herself from the Women's Police Service headed by Dawson.



## Mary Allen

Born in Cardiff in 1878

**Police Connection:** Was second in command to Margaret Damer Dawson, and when Dawson retired from ill health in 1919, took over as commandant of the Women's Police Service.

**Important achievements:**

- Was an active militant Suffragette, but also involved in far right and fascist politics.
- Wrote articles and books about her life, including as a Police Woman.
- Committed to the protection of animals, particularly anti-vivisection, as was Dawson.
- Wanted the Women's Police Service to be officially recognised after the War, but this was refused. They were allowed to continue on a voluntary basis. The name changed to Women's Auxiliary Service in 1921.



In February 1909 Mary Allen was a member of the Women's Political and Social Union (WSPU) deputation to the House of Commons.

Between 1909 and 1914 she was a very active WSPU member, being arrested and sent to prison twice, going on hunger strike in prison and being force fed, receiving a medal from the suffragette movement for hunger striking in prison, and various accounts over the years of breaking windows in government buildings including the Prime Minister's house.



# Edith Smith

Born in 1880 approximately, lived in Grantham

**Police Connection:** The First woman Police Officer with the power of arrest. Based in Grantham.

**Important achievements:**

- She trained with Margaret Damer Dawson in London, is known to have used her umbrella to poke couples in Hyde Park, to prevent their lewd behaviour in public.
- She worked "as and when needed" – so had no days off.
- Set up a blacklist of 100 wayward girls who were not allowed in cinemas.
- Dealt with girls and women who were pregnant, to "go away" to have the babies, or last resort the workhouse.



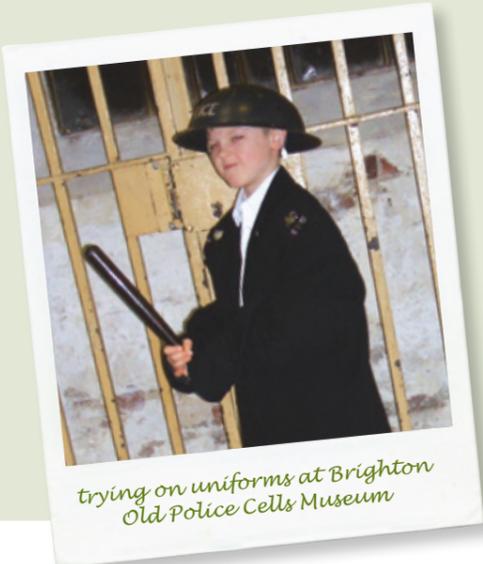
Learning about handcuffs at the Metropolitan Police Museum, London

Grantham was the first provincial force to ask the WPS to supply them with occasional policewomen, recognising them as particularly useful for dealing with women and juveniles. In December 1915, Grantham swore in Mrs Edith Smith, she was the first woman to be sworn in as a police constable with official powers of arrest. She had the same powers as an ordinary policeman, was employed as a member of the local police force. Her appointment was controversial. The Home Office advised that women could not be sworn in because they did not count as 'proper persons' in the eyes of the law. In Grantham, however, the Chief Constable and Watch Committee continued to give Smith their full support because they thought her work was vital given the very particular problems that the town faced as a result of war conditions.

Her work was also controversial within feminist quarters. In the years before the war, suffragettes such as Nina Boyle had argued that women police were needed so that female victims of crime might receive fair and sensitive treatment in courts and police stations. However, the Annual Report that Smith wrote at the end of her first year suggests that her work focused on the regulation and control of the 'prostitutes' and 'frivolous girls' who flocked through the streets of Grantham at night attracted by thousands of servicemen stationed in the town's two army camps. Smith also provided information

for 'husbands placing their wives under observation during their absence', effectively acting as an official spy for servicemen concerned about spousal fidelity. It was this emphasis on the moral regulation and oppressive surveillance of women that led other feminists, such as Boyle, to sever their ties from the movement to promote the employment of policewomen.

Steve & Vicky Davill, Volunteers



trying on uniforms at Brighton Old Police Cells Museum



1973

Integration. Equal opportunities. Women police were integrated directly into the Metropolitan Police Service.

1976

First Woman Chief Superintendent appointed to take charge of a subdivision.

1988

Women no longer precluded from becoming authorised firearms officers.

1991

Stella Rimington becomes the first woman to head MI5.

2003

Sharron Kerr - first woman in charge of the Flying Squad.

Women appointed dog handlers. Previous rules stated dog handlers needed a wife to look after the puppy while they were at work.

1974

Equal pay. Female officers got pay parity with their male equivalent.

1984

The Equal Pay Act (Equal Value Amendment) introduces equal pay for work of equal value.

1989

22 women trained as Authorised Firearms Officers (AFO's).

1993

8th January - last time women were given separate warrant nos. from the men.

2014

In 2014, 35,653 of police officers in England and Wales were women.

# Gladys Moss

Born in Gloucester in 1884, moved to Worthing

**Police Connection:** first woman Police Officer for West Sussex Constabulary, and first policewoman motorcyclist in the Country.

**Important achievements:**

- Became part of the Women's Police Service in London, under Margaret Damer Dawson, and had to stop after the War ended.
- Also worked in a munitions factory during the War, and outside of that, worked as a governess.
- Was appointed to West Sussex Constabulary in 1919, posted in Worthing.
- As a first aider, she was also occasionally called on to crew the Worthing Police Ambulance.

Gladys Moss first WPC to ride a motorcycle



Top: Retired Gladys Moss presents the Baton of Honour to the first female officer to receive it: WPC Maggie Short



## Women's Police Uniform

There were two notable women around 1914 who started up the first women's law enforcement groups. They were Margaret Damer Dawson in Grantham and Mary Hare who started the Women's Police Volunteers in Sussex. They wore military styled uniforms fashioned from a dark blue woollen serge fabric with the letters W.P. (Women's Police) in metal letters on their shoulders. They also wore either a military style cap (Dawson) or a low crowned bowler hat with large brim (Hare).

By the late 1980s male and female police uniforms were almost identical with policewomen no longer required to wear skirts. Uniform today is made from lighter, easy-care and quick drying poly cotton or poly woollen fabric and shirts are often made on moisture wicking sports style fabrics.

From the 1990s it became accepted that patrols would be made in 'shirt sleeve order' meaning that no formal jacket was required. In 1994 black trousers, a blue NATO jumper, duty belt, stab vest and reflective jacket became standard uniform. The women's stab vest weighs 3kgs whereas the men's vest weighs 5kgs. This new uniform allows more freedom of movement.

Annika Roojun, Parent Volunteer



# The Metropolitan Police Museum in London

“On Tuesday me and my class went to the Police Museum to find out about Women Police Service. It was great. Downstairs, we held some old and new handcuffs and also a rattle. The rattle was used to make a loud noise. A guy showed us a women police suit. That was what they would wear. Then we went upstairs to watch a video clip. We saw pictures of women called the suffragettes trying to vote and be a police lady. We asked questions. This was my question: why do they wear rough clothing?” *Mabel*

“We learned all about gear and gadgets in the belt and pockets, like the rattle, whistle and handcuffs. Also the man told us about a Police Officer who got bit by a tiger who ate his arm!”

*Ella*



“I think the day was very exciting and I learnt that you got badges for bravery. I want to know why in the olden days why men didn't think women were strong.” *Candy*

“My favourite bit was they gave us weapons to hold! We all had a great day.” *Billy*



Right: Phillip Barnes-Warden talking to the children and their TA Miss Main

Looking at some original Police helmets



## The Old Police Cells Museum, Brighton

“We walked inside and sat down on the floor. Some nice men called Alex, Ken and Phil talked to us. We were shown a scary murder scene! Alex also told us about the bombing at the Grand Hotel. Finally Phil told us some exciting murder stories. What a great day out!” *Lila*



The children learn about the Old Police Cells before going down there, from Phil Armstrong, Alex Durie, and Ken Scrase

“we all got dressed up, it was really fun.” *Rose*

“First we went to the women's cells. We saw that the cells had wooden floors and that there was not very much space. We were told that the women prisoners only got one piece of bread a day to eat. After that, we moved on to the men's cells. The men's cells were more creepy. They had a cold concrete floor, but were larger than the women's cells. We found out that the male prisoners also got more to eat than the women – two pieces of bread a day! Then we went to a dressing up room. I dressed as a Police Chief and got to hold a truncheon. Have you ever seen a truncheon? They are big, bold and wooden.” *Leo*



“There were a lot of pictures about women police and Margaret Damer Dawson. We did lots of different things and I had a great time.” *Ronnie*



Right: inside one of the male Police cells

### Sound Architect Creative Media would like to thank:

St Paul's Primary School year 3 and the girls in year 5, their teachers and supporters, and all their parents and family members who helped or volunteered;  
Evolve  
Grantham Museum  
Metropolitan Women Police Association  
Sussex Police  
The Friends of the Metropolitan Police Historical Collection  
The Keep  
The Metropolitan Police Museum in London  
The Old Police Cells Museum in Brighton

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Alex Durie, Annika Roojun, Christine Robbins, DI Jacqui Jenkins, Hayley Martin, Ken Scrase, Paul Hooton, PC Claire Kilroy, Phil Armstrong, Phil Meeson, Phillip Barnes-Warden, Polly Wren, Siobhan Clark, Steve Darvill, Vicky Darvill

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Susanne Crosby, Annabel Clements, Joe Tunmer, Tim Robertson, Vicky Richards

