

Policing: A Short History
by Phillip Rawlings

Cullompton: Willan (2002) ISBN 1 903240 26 3
(274 pages, £16.99)

Changing Policing: Revolution not Evolution
by Michael O'Byrne

Lyme Regis: Russell House (2001) ISBN 1 903800 4
(152 pages, £14.95)

Reviewed by Colin Roger

Recently, there has been considerable discussion about changes in policing methods and the structure of the public police in the United Kingdom, making the publication of these works a timely and much-needed addition to our collective knowledge.

Phillip Rawlings provides an overview of the history of the police in the United Kingdom, from Anglo-Saxon times through to the present day. The strength of the book lies in the fact that Rawlings helps us to understand that policing did not commence with the introduction of the Metropolitan Police Act 1829, but traces its roots to far more ancient times. This is an important and often neglected area for students of policing, as it contextualises contemporary developments. Rawlings spends considerable time exploring and explaining the role and function of different policing activities, encompassing the 'blood feud' and the Anglo-Saxon laws during the period 600–1400 AD, through to the London watch, including the private and quasi-public watch schemes that existed in the 18th century. This part of the work is concise, clear and to the point, and leaves the reader with a good understanding of the evolution of policing techniques and their similarity, in some instances, to recent proposals for change in policing methods in this country. The remainder of the book traces the introduction of the modern police, and the trials and tribulations associated with the conservative view of the introduction of the police as a new 24-hour social service. However, Rawlings does not dwell unnecessarily on this area, and includes several criticisms leveled at the introduction of the police at the time.

Rawlings' view is that the history of policing has passed through three distinct phases. The first can be seen in what he refers to as the 'blood feud', whereby aggrieved individuals took direct action against the offender. This is followed by the introduction of early forms of communal policing and the attempted bureaucratisation of policing, and finally to the third stage, that of the professionalised version of police and policing as seen in the period up to around 1800. These three aspects of the history of policing, Rawlings argues, form the basis of the introduction of policing during the 19th and 20th centuries.

By using historical analysis Rawlings rightly points out that the public police, since its inception embodied in the Metropolitan Police Act 1829, has never really enjoyed a monopoly in policing in this country, given the vast range of services provided by other agencies. By recognising that policing covers a number of wide and diverse activities it becomes clear that popular and wider community involvement in policing should not only be welcomed, but seen as a continuance of what policing has always been about. With this in mind, the present government's proposals for extending the police family to include various warden schemes becomes less threatening to critics of change.

Michael O'Byrne provides a compact volume that, by the author's own admission, examines the deficiencies in the police service in an effort to seek improvement. It contains some elements about the history of the police in the United Kingdom; these are confined to the first chapter, entitled *Where We Have Come From*. Unfortunately, the historical work concentrates on the development of the police in this country during the 1950s and 1960s, and tends to ignore prior historical influences from before that time. Consequently, one is left wondering what influence the previous 130 years of police history has had on today's police service. From O'Byrne's perspective, one supposes, this influence is very small indeed.

Written by a retired Chief Constable, this work reflects the practitioner's concern with several issues at the forefront of policing in England and Wales today. These include chapters on the policing of diversity and of organised crime, coupled with organisational aspects such as the management and structure of the police. The most useful chapter is that entitled *Diversity: Institutional White Male Chauvinism*. Here the author highlights some of the problems inherent in the police culture, including sexism and issues surrounding racism, which are seen as symptomatic of the reluctance to change. There is a discussion on the topic of institutional racism, with an acceptance that it actually does exist in the police service, although this admission is tempered by the argument that it is an inherent problem throughout the criminal justice system. By concentrating on issues such as diversity and organised crime, the author illustrates that the current police structure in England and Wales is inadequate. In addition, he suggests that under the current managerialist style of policing very often it is a case of 'what gets measured gets done'. There are also useful passages about the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Police Federation and other departments that make up the structure of the police, but these are not covered in any great depth other than to highlight their reluctance to change.

In his concluding chapter O'Byrne draws together four main elements that he considers to be obstacles to progress for the police service in England and Wales. These obstacles are: the cultural resistance to change itself; the lack of leadership and management; the lack of a debate surrounding the structure of the police in this country; and the lack of a new and effective negotiating process which would allow the pay and conditions of senior police officers properly to reflect their responsibilities.

The perception one gains from reading this volume is that it has the feel of a practitioner's manual, with the emphasis on change within the police service seen primarily through the eyes of senior police officers who work closely within the confines of Home Office directives. Consequently it may, on occasions, lack the theoretical context of policing in general and this, in fairness to the author, is acknowledged in the introduction. That said, this book contains several areas of interest in relation to policing in general and provides an insight into some of the problems faced by senior police officers engaged in attempting to institute change.

In conclusion, both volumes deserve a place in the collection of any serious student of policing, but for different reasons. Rawlings' work is a well-researched theoretically-based argument which suggests that evolutionary change in the police is a historical fact which can be traced as far back as the 'blood feud', and places today's proposed changes firmly into context. O'Byrne's book offers practitioner-based experience to try and understand how this change can be diluted or even obstructed by the organisation and culture of the present police structures in England and Wales.

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