

**A CENTENARY TRIBUTE TO
FREDERICK GOODYER, LEICESTER'S
FIRST CHIEF CONSTABLE
1836-1876**

by

CLIFFORD R. STANLEY

Some years ago—during the autumn of 1950 to be more precise—I came across by chance in the Chief Constable's Office at "Ashleigh", 420 London Road, Leicester, a bound collection of newspaper cuttings relating to the men and affairs of the Leicestershire Constabulary of the mid-Victorian era. Amongst them was a leader column of the "Leicester Chronicle and Mercury" featuring the career and death in office on 12 September 1876 of Leicestershire's First Chief Constable, Frederick Goodyer, an original member of Peel's New Police in London. His career has no equal in that he was the only Chief Constable during the creation of the numerous New Police Forces that sprang up during the early years of Queen Victoria's reign, to establish with marked success, two entirely separate, autonomous constabularies in the same locality, in an age when individual police systems and non-co-operation was the order of the day. Part of this tribute read:—

"Seldom, if ever, has an example occurred of an officer holding a position like that of Mr. Goodyer who has had so important a role in that position. Having been recommended to the notice of the Borough Authorities by the Home Office to establish the Borough Police in the month of February 1836, he passed into the service of the County in December 1839 when he joined the first body of County Constabulary. By his anxious care, constant vigilance and remarkable ability in administration, Mr. Goodyer has established a Force which the Police Committee may, with just pride, point as second to none in the country".

This account of Frederick Goodyer's remarkably successful police career in the Metropolis during Peel's time, and in Leicester and the County, briefly revealed in the newspaper, made me curious to know more about him and his achievements. Thus began a self-imposed research task into his background and career (and those of his successors) which has not diminished with the passing of the years. It is appropriate in the year of the centenary anniversary of his death to record some interesting and not-too-widely-known facts about the modern origin of the Leicestershire Constabulary, and especially the notable part played by Frederick Goodyer in laying the foundations of both

the City and County Police Forces of Leicester, which were to be merged 130 years or so later.

Before attention is concentrated upon Frederick Goodyer and his creation of a police service organized and controlled on the London system, it is worth casting a backward glance into the background of law enforcement in this country. Britain was very late in acquiring professional police forces. The essential feature of English local government since the days of the Tudors was that its officers performed their duties unpaid. From the gentry were drawn the justices of the peace, and from each parish there were chosen annually parish officers, such as churchwardens, overseers of the poor and parish constables. They carried out their parish duties in addition to their normal occupations. For hundreds of years the system worked: and it was popular because it was cheap. In the eighteenth century, and particularly in the nineteenth century, conditions changed. More industrialization led to the growth of towns and the concentration of population. It was also a period of rampant crime and disorder when the death penalty was inflicted for a mere invasion of property. In the eighteenth century, London, the greatest city in the world, was also the most lawless and had reached a pitch of corruption reminiscent of the Prohibition Era in Chicago of the 1930s. Corruption was the key to positions in the Civil Service, the Army, the Navy and the Church. Even the Prime Minister relied on Parliamentary corruption for his majorities. Justice was a trade. Everyone connected with law enforcement, including the judicature, had a vested interest in crime. Small wonder that the parish constable system completely broke down in the Gordon Riots of June 1780, when 60,000 rioters (No Popery!) in a four-day rampage, attacked the Bank of England and forced the prisons. Charles Dickens described the riots in "Barnaby Rudge". Even so, it was not until the creation of Peel's New Police in London in 1829 that a civil force came into existence which was capable of controlling an angry crowd.

In 1836, the penultimate year of William IV's reign, England seemed in the throes of a political and social revolution. Improved methods of agriculture had led to land enclosure by the great landowners and the drifting of landless labourers into the towns searching for employment. With industrialization came the problems of housing, working conditions, public health and public order. Pressure to extend the franchise to the middle classes had led to the Reform Act of 1832, but when the working classes realized they had gained nothing from the Act they expressed their indignation in revolutionary ways. The Grand National Consolidated Trades Union was formed in 1834 and in 1836 a group of working-class men held a meeting in London and founded the London Working Men's Association, the origin of Chartism, which later had serious national repercussions.

The preservation of law and order in the growing town of Leicester before the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, which authorized the setting up of stipendiary police forces in the boroughs, was, as in many other towns, left entirely to local discretion. The Government attitude was that, if any town felt itself inadequately protected, the remedy was in its own hands. By the early decades of the nineteenth century, almost every provincial town had

supplemented its parish constables by a body of paid watchmen. Leicester was no exception. Since the fifteenth century the town had been divided for police purposes into 12 Wards. These areas had a detachment of 75 parish constables under the supervision of a salaried Head Constable, Mr. George Owston, who was paid £50 a year. There were also five Parish Watchmen and two further parish constables employed under the Watching and Lighting Act of 1833 and one or two other Watchmen paid by private subscription. Records reveal that the duties of these Ward Constables and watchmen were inadequate, ineffective and illperformed to such an extent that some were even indicted for neglect. Crime was widespread and burglaries, robberies and street brawls were frequent. In dealing with the problem the Reformed Corporation were fully in agreement that the creation of a professional police force on the London model was imperative and upon Frederick Goodyer fell the difficult and onerous task of establishing order out of chaos.

Mr. Goodyer first appeared on the Leicester scene on 22 January 1836, a time when the maces, civic regalia and plate were being sold by public auction by the newly-elected Corporation. During this momentous period the new Metropolitan Police was being used as a model for police forces in the provinces and for some years London's police officers were being constantly requested by provincial police authorities to establish or advise on the formation or development of their new forces. Requests for their services poured into the Home Office from all parts of the country and it was only through the personal intervention of a sub-committee of the Leicester Watch Committee at Scotland Yard, that Colonel (later Sir Charles) Rowan, one of the two joint Metropolitan Police Commissioners, allowed Frederick Goodyer's release for duty at Leicester. It is interesting to note that Frederick Goodyer was one of the very early officers of Peel's New Police in London who had served under Colonel Rowan and Mr. (later Sir) Richard Mayne, only two years after the creation of the Force in September 1829. Appointed 23 October 1831 under Warrant 11051, he was attached to "A" Division which policed Whitehall and its environs. This Division, under the superintendency of Mr. John May, who also acted as Staff Officer to the two Commissioners, policed the district from a station house in Great Scotland Yard. A *corps d'elite*, which included some of the best officers in the Force, it had dual functions. It not only housed the Commissioners' Office and staff but a special reserve from which reinforcements could be sent anywhere, as required, in London. Administratively and operationally, the Division thus provided all the experience necessary for a young and ambitious officer. Frederick Goodyer's abilities proved of such a high order that he was entrusted by Sir Robert Peel, then Home Secretary, with an important commission in Norfolk (unfortunately the exact nature is not known) which, it was reported, "he discharged in a highly, satisfactory manner."

Frederick Goodyer, a man of exceptional ability and enterprise, belonged to an old South of England family. His great grandfather, John Goodyer, was Mayor of Guildford in 1729 and his grandfather served with the rank of Captain in the British Army during the war carried on to maintain the supremacy of George III over the American Colonies. His father Landen Goodyer

had a responsible post in a Fire Office and his niece had married John Hick, Member of Parliament for Bolton. Shortly after his arrival in Leicester (he must have travelled by stage coach for there was no Midland Railway until 1840), Mr. Goodyer surveyed the town, divided it into 31 beats and inspected his new Force of 50 officers which had been recruited from advertisements in the 9th and 16th of January editions of the "Leicester Chronicle" by the new Town Clerk (Samuel Stone of Stone's Justices Manual fame) of the Reformed Corporation. Of these, 5 Sergeants were appointed and paid £1. 1s. 6d. a week; the 45 constables each received 18/- a week and Mr. Goodyer was given a salary of £100 a year (£1. 18s. 6d. a week). An Order Book of directions and instructions from the Watch Committee based upon the London system was given to Mr. Goodyer to which he was "to constantly refer and thoroughly initiate the men in the new routine of duty about to be introduced". The new Chief was also directed to furnish every officer with a printed copy of instructions to digest and thoroughly understand. Notices were displayed in the Old Town Hall (the Guildhall) and churches informing the public of the formation of the New Police in the Borough and of their commencement of duties on 11 February 1836. The men, who were dressed in blue tail coats and top hats armed with truncheons and carried rattles to summon assistance, were sworn in before the first Mayor of the Reformed Corporation, Thomas Paget, Esq., banker and former Member of Parliament, at the Town Hall on 10 February.

They were required to take the following oath:

"I promise and swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord the King in the office of one of the constables of the Borough of Leicester until I shall from thence be discharged. During my continuance in the office, I will in all things well and faithfully demean and behave myself according to the best of my skill and judgement therein. So Help Me God".

For 40 years from the establishment of the Force in 1836, the 14th Century Guildhall was used as the town's First Police Station. Extensively modified for police requirements, it included a house for Mr. Goodyer and his family which has survived to this day. Three cells were also built and on one memorable occasion one of them had to accommodate 17 prisoners. It happened on the last night that public houses in the town were allowed to remain open all night—the Licensing Act of 1872 compelled them to close at 11 p.m.—and it was evident that the pub-crawlers had made up their minds to have a never-to-be-forgotten binge.

By May 1836, three months after formation, the Force began to show its worth. A Town Council Minute of this time enthused:

"That the Council, having taken into consideration the subject of the Borough Police and the excellent state of organization to which it had been brought in consequence of the very efficient services of the Watch Committee beg to express their best thanks to that Committee for their valuable assistance on the introduction of the present improved system of Police".

In other quarters there was much distrust and prejudice and the "Leicester Journal" commented:

"In the New Police Force we see nothing but the expenditure of a vast annual sum, utterly useless, as regards the wants of the Town and intended only as a cloak for the organization of a Force which may be used as occasion may require in support of either the political or tyrannical views of their masters".

Another edition referred to them as "the new gendarmerie" and declared that they were a threat to the liberty of the subject; a view no doubt shared by the criminal fraternity. The lot of these very early policemen must have been hard, especially among the Irish inhabitants in Abbey Street or in the unexplored areas of Wharf Street. Assaults upon them were so commonplace that in the period from the formation of the Force in February 1836 to the end of that year, records show that 116 charges were preferred of assaulting the police and 15 of rescuing or attempting to rescue persons being taken or, in fact, taken into custody.

Mr. Goodyer's job was no sinecure. He had to organize, equip and regulate his Force from scratch. Unfortunately, he immediately ran up against the problem which has troubled the Police from the start, that of obtaining the right material. Watch Committee Minutes reveal that by the end of 1839 there were only four men who had been sworn in at the formation. Many had been fined heavily or dismissed for mis-conduct of one kind or another and so many were the resignations and dismissals that supernumerary police had to be appointed. There was of course no traffic problem as we know it today, for most of the vehicles were horse-drawn, driven on the newly-invented macadamized roads maintained by Turnpike Trusts, involving tollgates and the levy of tolls upon travellers. Coinciding with Mr. Goodyer's arrival in Leicester, the new Highway Act of 1835 had become law which required carriages to be driven on the left of the road. It also created the offence of obstruction and gave power of arrest for furious and negligent driving. His command was, however, bedevilled by vagrancy and drunkenness, the latter not only rife in the community, but amongst his officers. In fact, the Leicester constables found it difficult to abandon the free pleasures of their old life and the situation was no better in January 1856, twenty years after the formation of the Force, when a reader of the Leicester Chronicle under the pseudonym, "An Old Whig", sent this open letter to the newspaper, part of which read:

"It seems that in the Borough Police (numbering 60 men), there have been six constables who have among them, been up 40 times before the Watch Committee for cases of drunkenness—each man's share being nearly 7 offences on average: but as 4 out of 6 are retained and are still on the Force, let us hope that the 2 discharged had a great share to themselves".

Meanwhile, as the result of a Royal Commission, came the Rural Police Act of 1839, a so-called "Permissive Act", which gave justices in Quarter Sessions the power to establish stipendiary police forces in the counties, if

they so wished. In the early days very few counties took advantage of these powers but Leicestershire did; chiefly through the efforts of Charles William Packe, Member of Parliament for South Leicestershire and Chairman of Quarter Sessions, who urged his fellow magistrates to inaugurate a properly constituted constabulary on the lines of the New Police in London, to consist of six superintendents and 18 constables. That the motion met with complete unanimity, was quite remarkable considering the feeling against the New Police in other parts of the country at the time. A month later an advertisement for a Chief Constable at a salary of £250 per annum, age not exceeding 45 years, appeared in "The Times" and "Morning Chronicle". Nineteen candidates applied for the position. Over half of them were from serving and retired Army Officers of Highland Infantry and Dragoon Regiments, while a naval officer, a midshipman, and a 53-year-old sergeant major quartermaster, who had served under the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsular Campaign and at Waterloo completed the service element. A West Indies stipendiary magistrate, a London law stationer and two serving police officers (one a chief constable) also applied. The choice of the magistrates finally lay with Frederick Goodyer whose vigilance and exceptional abilities in the Borough had impressed the Lord Lieutenant, the 5th Duke of Rutland¹, and Charles Packe, to such an extent that on 7 December 1839 he was chosen to become Leicestershire's First Chief Constable. In recommending him for the post, the Watch Committee recorded this tribute:

"The Leicester Police Force was organized under his direction and maintained in a very efficient state of discipline. In his management, he evinced the most entire impartiality and the Watch Committee are perfectly satisfied with every part of his conduct since he became their Officer. From his general intelligence and respectability, he is well qualified for any office with the Constabulary Force".

We know in retrospect that the County's choice was a wise one for Frederick Goodyer was a man of remarkable integrity, sureness and decision, well ahead of many of his contemporaries in his perception of police affairs and endowed with a quality of being able to inaugurate and develop a new enterprise with insight and comprehension, discipline and courage and a profound loyalty. Unfortunately, however, for his successor, when the Watch Committee's decision not to promote a local man was made known, Mr. Goodyer took along with him to the County 3 Sergeants and 9 constables; 6 of whom he made Superintendents at a salary of £75 a year. To make matters worse, the newly-formed Midland Counties Railway also attracted a number of men which left the Borough Force numerically at a very low ebb.

In 1839 the county was in a very disturbed state. There were numerous house-breakers and the roads to the markets were dangerous owing to footpads who committed assaults on wayfarers. Highwaymen harried the countryside. Shooting outrages, obstruction of watchmen and sheep stealing—a capital offence until 1872—were commonplace. In the towns the streets frequently exhibited the most disgraceful scenes of drunkenness and excesses of every kind and each morning brought to light the history of burglaries, thefts and

depredations which had been committed the night before. It was very apparent that there was no concerted effort to ensure the safety of the citizens or their property by the parochial constabulary who for the most part were uncontrollable, untrained and as bad as they could be. In the market towns watchmen, reminiscent of old time "Charlies", so named after the body of watchmen established in the City of London in Charles II's reign and who were so very often in later years depicted and lampooned in old prints, patrolled the streets wearing soft, felt hats, long caped coats and carried thick sticks and lanterns. It was their duty to call the cry of the hour and the weather. At Ashby-de-la-Zouch there were three of these watchmen. They were employed only on Saturday nights during the summer months at 1s. 6d. a night. During the winter months they were paid 9/- a week. Castle Donington had two watchmen, the one in charge was paid £2 a year and the other 2/- a night when on duty. At Hinckley there was one night watchman and one day watchman. The former was paid 16/- a week and the latter 10/6d. a week. Both were supplied with free uniforms. One sergeant and five watchmen did duty at Loughborough. During summer months the sergeant was paid 14/- and the watchman 12/- a week. In wintertime the sergeant received 16/- a week and his watchman 14/- a week. Market Harborough had but one watchman who was only employed from October until Lady Day and he was paid 12/- a week. At Melton Mowbray there were two watchmen. One was paid 16/- a week and lived in a house adjoining the lock-up. The other was paid 18/- a week and was resident in the town lock-up which he had charge of. With the exception of the day watchman at Hinckley who was appointed by the Lord of the Manor, all the others were appointed by the Inspectors under the Lighting and Watching Act of 1833.

The officers of the new, so-called Rural Police, initially comprising 6 Superintendents and 18 Constables (the latter's starting pay was 18/- a week) began their duties in the County, in uniforms similar to those of their Borough counterparts², under Mr. Goodyer's direction on 21 December 1839. Unskilled in public relations and lacking in precedent, they went out into the county districts to bring the lawless to heel under the scrutiny of a public alert to ensure that the New Police were not going to become their masters. This newly-established Force became the 6th county constabulary in succession to be created in England under the Rural Police Act of 1839—pride of place going to the Wiltshire Constabulary which had come into being on 28 November 1839. Their first Headquarters was the dingy, cramped Georgian three-storey building in the Market Place South, Leicester, opposite the "Saracen's Head Hotel", and between the newly-built Leicester Building Society premises and the County Rooms.³ It included a private residence for Mr. Goodyer and his family and similar accommodation for his Deputy, two cells and an office. For many years it was called "The County Public Office" and was in fact used as a police court until August 1887 when magisterial proceedings were from that time dealt with in Leicester Castle. Following strong complaint by Mr. Goodyer, shortly after his appointment, of the loathsome state of the parish lock-ups, "station houses and strong rooms" were built during 1843 at Lutterworth, Melton Mowbray, Bottesford and

Hinckley. It was not until 1860 that a police station and cells was erected at Loughborough.

The county was divided into six "hundreds" and comprised the districts of Framland, Gartree, East Goscote, West Goscote, Guthlaxton and Sparkenhoe under which, for administrative purposes, Mr. Goodyer placed a Superintendent in charge. In January 1841, petty sessional divisions were formed and the county for police purposes, was divided into police divisions consistent with the new petty sessional divisions. At this time, Leicestershire contained 810 square miles and the county exclusive of the Borough of Leicester, contained upwards of 158,000 inhabitants. Each constable had a beat of thirty-two square miles and something like 6,000 persons for surveillance and protection. The cost of the force was met out of the county rate and the first total police expenditure covering the first nine months which included wages, cost of uniform clothing and equipment, horses and forage, stationery and oil, amounted to a little over £1,695. In October 1840 the Police Committee, on the recommendation of Mr. Goodyer, agreed to levy a rate of five-eighths of a penny in the pound which it was declared "would more than cover the cost of maintaining a force of twenty-five".

The only transport facilities existing in the Force in the early days were two horses and traps used by the six Superintendents in turn who found it more convenient to hire a horse. In October 1856 the Police Committee agreed to each of them being provided with horse transport and an annual allowance of £40 for the upkeep of the horse. The only means of communication was by the newly-invented electric telegraph which came with the new railways, delivery by messenger, and from 1857, the new penny postal system. The Force had to wait until 1894 for telephonic installation although "the new-fangled thing" had been exhibited to a Leicester audience in 1877 who did not believe it would work, and if it did, would not last. Gentry used their own landaus and broughams, and travellers the new coal-fired Midland Railway locomotives belching clouds of black smoke, drawing open carriages, which was first opened for traffic in May 1840. The inadequacies of the period were surmounted by one Coalville constable in his own unique way. When he made an arrest he took his prisoner home, handcuffed him to the oven door knob and left him in the temporary custody of his long-suffering wife who provided the prisoner with a cup of tea while her husband walked to the Snibston Inn for a fast trotter and high-wheeled trap to convey his prisoner to the lock-up at Ashby.

By virtue of the Rural Police Act of 1839, a number of justices were appointed at the quarter sessions to form a Police Committee. They were empowered to formulate and amend rules governing pay, clothing, accoutrements and necessaries and could recommend, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State, additional appointments on the basis of "always that a number of constables should not be more than one man for every 1,000 inhabitants according to the last Parliamentary enumeration". Upon the committee's directions Mr. Goodyer compiled a comprehensive instructional handbook, "Rules and Regulations for the Leicestershire Constabulary", which following magisterial approval, were printed and published locally. Copies,

which have survived, were sent to the Secretary of State (Sir George Grey), all county magistrates and each member of the constabulary.

The handbook provided scales of uniform clothing which included a top hat (supplied by a local hatter at a cost of 12/- until April 1864 when the helmet made its debut at the Grand National Steeplechase at Melton Mowbray), a tail coat and a rattle. For sudden emergencies, especially during the Chartist insurrection, constables were armed with short cutlasses. Every constable had to possess "a decent suit of plain clothes" and was obliged "to have a haircut each month". Another regulation prohibited walking sticks and umbrellas from being carried by officers "on or off duty or dressed in police uniform".

In accordance with the law of the period the regulations expressly forbade constables, under pain of instant dismissal, from voting at any election of a Member of Parliament, a restriction not lifted until 1887. Constables were to prevent if possible, prize fights taking place in their districts and in the event of the intended combatants being chased out of the county and attempting to fight on the borders of adjoining counties, the officers were instructed to do all they could to prevent the offence being committed. Superintendent John Iliffe (1839-1874) of Hinckley, one of the inaugural Divisional commanders, provided a good illustration of what actually happened in such circumstances. When he was a young constable at Bottesford he crossed the border into an adjacent village in Lincolnshire. Aware he was a Leicestershire officer a crowd of roughs who had assembled to see the fight, disputed the constable's right to interfere and pulled and jostled him about until his tunic was like "a thing of shreds and patches." Single-handed P.C. Iliffe sturdily stood his ground and stopped the fight. At the County Quarter Sessions the magistrates testified their admiration of his conduct by awarding him a gratuity. These early policemen worked for spells of anything from 14 to 16 hours a day, 7 days a week and continued to do so until the reforms of 1910 although Superintendents were exhorted "to arrange duties in such a manner to afford all members of the Force an opportunity of attending on Sundays a place of worship".

During the "Hungry Forties", as in other parts of the country, poverty, distress and miserable living conditions were rampant in Leicestershire. The general agitation of the period was increased by the activities of the Chartist extremists—a powerful political movement advocating a series of electoral reforms. In August 1842 there were riotous meetings of the Chartists in Leicester, which culminated on the 19th of that month, in a gathering of 500 industrial strikers armed with stones and bludgeons marching from Humberstone Gate to Loughborough through Belgrave, and on to Mowmacre Hill where they were overtaken and challenged by Mr. Goodyer and a contingent of Regular and Special Constabulary officers, strengthened with a mounted troop of the Leicestershire Yeomanry. Mr. Goodyer rode in front and as soon as the military with drawn sabres neared the marchers they split up and ran in all directions chased by constables across fields and ditches. Four men were arrested but the leaders escaped. Long after this clash with the Chartists it was derisively referred to as "The Battle of Mowmacre Hill".

That same day a similar outbreak of mass disorder broke out at Loughborough, the centre of Chartist intrigue and activity in the County, where Superintendent Thomas Burdett, on the instructions of Mr. Goodyer, temporarily took over the policing of the town from the watchmen. Three hundred Special Constables were hurriedly sworn in and Leicester Borough policemen were seconded for duty in the County. That evening near the Royal Oak Inn on the Leicester Road, a savage mob of between 300 and 400 industrial strikers en route to Mountsorrel, some carrying banners and flags, others brandishing sticks over their heads, shouting and swearing and singing Chartist songs, were overtaken by Police. During the fierce struggle which ensued the strikers unsuccessfully tried to surround the officers. Seven arrests were made. The strike continued until the following week during which 17 further rioters were brought before the magistrates. An old Police Committee book recorded the Committee's approval of the handling of the situation in these words:

“Since the last Sessions the state of the County has unhappily been such as to put to a severe test of character of these men and we feel bound to say that their discipline, courage and zeal have been through long course of fatiguing duty most willingly borne. In the direction of the Force we are of the opinion that the judgement, the persevering spirit and the disregard of fatigue as well of danger which has been manifested by the Chief Constable, have entitled him to the highest approbation of the Court”.

As a postscript it should be added that by 1848 Mr. Goodyer's unrivalled knowledge and experience of the Movement was of such importance, that during August of that year, he was instructed by the Home Office to interrogate some Chartist leaders held in custody at Scotland Yard for unlawful activities in London, with the object of tracing their connection with their colleagues in the provinces.

While in the early stages of the modern police organization in Leicestershire there was a natural aversion on the part of the public to the establishment of the force, a gradual reconciliation to its necessity became apparent. An encouraging indication of this was exemplified in the fact that by February 1847, Market Harborough abandoned its own parochial police system, a year later Melton Mowbray followed suit, followed by Hinckley in March 1848. In December 1848, Loughborough dissolved its force of watchmen and the constabulary force was ultimately increased by 8 additional officers. There were, of course, still instances of hostility, particularly when industrial strife and poverty provoked violence, but in the main it was true to say, that Sir Robert Peel's vision of a Police Service based on the authority of public opinion had been finally accepted in Leicestershire.

One of the most significant events of Mr. Goodyer's command was the visit in the January of 1857 of Britain's First H.M. Inspector of Constabulary, General William Cartwright, D.L., J.P., of Flore, Northamptonshire; an event without a precedent and which had its origin in the County and Borough Police Act of 1856. Everything passed off very smoothly although the General advised the introduction of the rank of Inspector and that Super-

intendents should also undertake the duties of Weights and Measures Inspectors, an extraneous duty which was not disposed of until as recently as March 1951, when the amalgamation with the Rutland Constabulary was about to take place. Records reveal that Charles Packe during this period, disclosed to his fellow justices in Quarter Sessions that the General, the son of a long-established Member of Parliament for Northamptonshire, who was a close friend had recently stayed with him at his London home in Whitehall, and had said to him:

“I don’t flatter your Force at all. The Leicester County Force is in admirable order and I think you are very fortunate in having Mr. Goodyer as your Chief Of the 25 counties I have inspected I place the Police of Leicestershire very high”.

The challenge of the Chartists and Parliamentary elections which were always charged with tension and excitement and often involving riotous scenes was met by the strenuous efforts of Mr. Goodyer and his officers to keep the peace. This did much to instill the confidence of the public in the new Rural Police. The public saw the success of his officers also in the detection of crime particularly so in a double murder at the Thorpe Tollgate, Melton Mowbray. In accordance with his usual practice where serious crime was concerned, Mr. Goodyer carried out the investigations himself and in so doing provided a good example of inter-force co-operation of a 120 years ago. It appeared that during the early hours of 19 June 1856, an elderly gatekeeper, Edward Woodcock, was found dead in the Thorpe Tollgate house with knife and gunshot wounds. His 10-year-old grandson was also dead, all but decapitated. Suspicions turned towards William Brown, alias “Peppermint Billy”, a convict-on-licence, living rough locally who had suddenly disappeared. There ensued the most sensational manhunt since the formation of the Force nearly 17 years previously. A hue and cry was raised for Brown which echoed from Land’s End to John O’Groats. His description was given to the press and appeals made to the public for any information of his whereabouts. Three days went by, then William Eccles, a parish constable at Wetherby in Yorkshire, as a result of seeing a paragraph in the Leeds Mercury, recognized and arrested Brown. A telegram was sent to Mr. Goodyer, who accompanied by P.C. Edward Bishop, left for Wetherby, and to quote the language of the day, “the right man was in the right place, to wit, safe keeping”. In February 1956, almost a 100 years later, a barrister’s brief was found in the offices of Messrs. Oldham, Marsh and Son, a Melton Mowbray firm of Solicitors, by Mr. A. P. Marsh, O.B.E., then H.M. Coroner for the Framland District of the County and principal of the firm. The document not only presented a picture of a side of life 100 years ago but also concerned people with names still borne by well-known county families, notably Mr. John Arnold Clayton, Assistant Chief Constable of Leicestershire at this time and whose grandfather, John Clayton, parish constable of Thorpe Arnold, was the first police officer to be called to the gruesome scene. The brief revealed:

“The Prisoner, a native of Scalford, is a desperate character and his father and all his family are bad characters. Two of the prisoner’s

brothers are now undergoing sentence of transportation for horse stealing”.

In 1843, the document also declared, Brown had appeared before Leicestershire Quarter Sessions for stealing silver spoons at Newtown Linford when he was sentenced to 10 years' transportation to Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania). Nothing else was known of him until his return to London in May 1856—a much embittered man. A witness declared that he had overheard Brown during his return voyage to England say that he would murder the person who had caused him to be deported. Part of Mr. Goodyer's deposition which is worth reproducing read:

“I am Chief Constable of the County of Leicester. From information received on Monday morning 23rd June last, I proceeded to Wetherby in the County of York and in the lockup there I found the prisoner. I apprehended him, William Brown, on the charge of murdering Edward and James Woodcock at Thorpe Toll Bar in the parish of Melton Mowbray on the 19th June last. He said, “Yes, Sir. My name is William Brown and I did sleep in a hovel near the place”. I conveyed him with the assistance of Parish Constable Eccles to Leicester . . .”

Brown appeared before the Melton justices on 27 June, 1856 and was committed for trial at the Leicestershire Assize on 14 July where Lord Chief Justice Jervis sentenced him to death. On Friday 1 August, the last act of the tragedy took place with the public execution of Brown on a temporary drop outside Leicester Prison. Many Borough and County policemen were required to control a great number of people who had converged there to witness what was to be the last public execution at Leicester Prison, the building of which had been started in May 1825 and first used in November 1828. Public executions ceased in England in May 1868.

In June 1876 Mr. Goodyer gave notice to the Police Committee of retirement after service of 45 years, 36 of which had been in the County of Leicester. He was then 68 and by this time his Force had reached an establishment of 134. However, at the request of the justices he agreed to remain in office for a further three months and in the meantime instruct his successor in the many duties connected with the management of the Force. In recording their appreciation of Mr. Goodyer's outstanding service both operationally and administratively, the Police Committee referred to his unremitting and laborious attention to detail in the preparation of the Constabulary accounts and concluded:

“We believe that every member of the Court of Quarter Sessions will cordially join at the loss of an officer who has done so much to raise the tone and maintain the discipline of the important Force under his command”.

In August 1876, Captain R. V. S. Grimston, Adjutant of the Leicestershire Militia, who had fought in the relief of Lucknow during the Indian

Mutiny of 1857-8, was chosen from 140 applicants to be the Chief Constable Elect.

It is sad to record that during the afternoon of Tuesday 12 September 1876, Mr. Goodyer had a severe heart attack from which he never recovered. His unexpected passing gave the County a bad shock and it was fortunate that the Force had ready a qualified successor in Captain Grimston. The regret felt at his resignation had created a desire of all ranks that the connexion should not be severed without the presentation to Mr. Goodyer of some token of esteem. Arrangements had been made to present him with his portrait in oils and unknown to him there had also been drawn up a suitable address signed by the Superintendents and Inspectors on behalf of the entire force. The address which was richly illuminated, and mounted in a gilt frame, was later handed over to Mrs. Goodyer together with her husband's portrait as souvenirs of the esteem and sympathy of the Leicestershire Constabulary.

Mr. Goodyer was not only a very able officer but a remarkable man in many ways. His outstanding characteristic was his clarity of vision added to which he possessed the great gift of getting on good terms with all sorts and conditions of people, with whom he became associated in his many duties, especially during the early Victorian era, which brought him in rough collision with large bodies of unruly members of society. He enjoyed the confidence not only of the magistrates but of all his officers—a confidence based on his leadership, his diplomacy, powers of suasion, knowledge of law and justice in decisions. A striking illustration of the popularity which he enjoyed amongst his officers may be gathered from the fact that in January 1854—a year when a great struggle was to be waged on the Continent with England, France and Turkey against the might of Imperial Russia—Mr. Goodyer received a testimonial from them in the form of a richly embossed service of silver plate upon which was engraved:

“This Service of Plate was presented to Frederick Goodyer, Esq., Chief Constable of Leicestershire, on the 16th January 1854, by the Superintendents, Sergeants and Constables of the Force under his command, in testimony of the high esteem they feel for him as a Man, the unbounded confidence they place in him as an Officer, and gratitude for his uniform kindness to the members of the County Constabulary during a period of 15 years”.

To establish a police force, first for the borough of Leicester, and then for the county, without any kind of preparation called for administrative powers of a very high order. By his constant vigilance and exceptional ability both as an organizer and as an administrator, he established in Leicestershire a constabulary which attained a pre-eminence described by Colonel C. A. Cobbe, who succeeded General Cartwright as H.M. Inspector of Constabulary, as “second to none in the Kingdom”.

“He might have shown what man”, commented the Leicester Chronicle shortly after his retirement was announced at the Quarter Sessions, “dressed in brief authority will sometimes show an imperious, overbearing, brutish disposition, and thus brought into ill odour and unpopularity, a body which

by its very nature cannot be expected to be always popular, but he, on the contrary, manifested so considerate a feeling for all, even for those whose misdoings have placed them under his control, that he has not made a single enemy during his long career: while it may be affirmed, he leaves his office amid the deep regrets of all who have known him best and longest, accompanied by the respect and esteem of the public generally”.

With the long years of dedication to the office of Chief Constable of Leicestershire, Frederick Goodyer must have been well satisfied with these words of public praise and with the realization that he had fulfilled his responsibilities faithfully and well, despite innumerable difficulties and indeed hostility in the early days when his New Police were an unknown quantity and not as yet part of the accepted British way of life.

NOTES

The author gratefully acknowledges the co-operation and help of the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery staff for placing at my disposal the original Minute Books of the Leicester Watch Committee for the period 1836-1839; the Chief Constable for providing access to Frederick Goodyer's handwritten Reports to his Police Committee and to the Librarian and staff of the Leicester City Reference Library for the use of their 19th-century newspaper files.

1. Acknowledged leader of the great Whig families of the 19th century, John Henry Manner's (the 5th Duke of Rutland) statue, now in Leicester's Market Place, was erected to mark his jubilee of Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire (1799-1857)
2. In a recorded interview published in Lloyds Weekly News in 1913, Charles Hammersley, who following army service in the Crimea, served in the Leicestershire Constabulary from 1853 until his retirement as a Sergeant in 1880 disclosed:
 “When I first joined the Leicestershire Police we wore the old Peeler's uniform—a long tailed coat and a top hat. Instead of a whistle we carried a wooden rattle. Not that it was much good rattling or calling for help in some of the quiet country districts, for there would be no one of any help for miles around”
3. Originally designed as a hotel it is reputed to be one of the five best pieces of architecture in Leicestershire. Built by Leicester-born John Johnson (1732-1814) whose major schemes included houses for the nobility in London's Pall Mall

