

Over 100 years ago

Sound Architect Creative Media Project Manager Susanne Crosby

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.



"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

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



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



In uniforms, in the men's section of the Old Police Cells



Some of the Police equipment at the Metropolitan Police Museum, London



Trying on uniforms at Brighton Old Police Cells Museum



Women in Policing Exhibition



The Metropolitan Police Museum in London

"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

"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



The Old Police Cells Museum, Brighton



"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 onto 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

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.



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' WPV.

- 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.



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



POLICE STATION

Grantham

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



The children explore what it was like for Police men and women 100 years ago, with DI Jacqui Jenkins

DI Jacqui Jenkins

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

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 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' a vulnerable women and children.



Mary Hare by Hugo



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

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



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

- 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

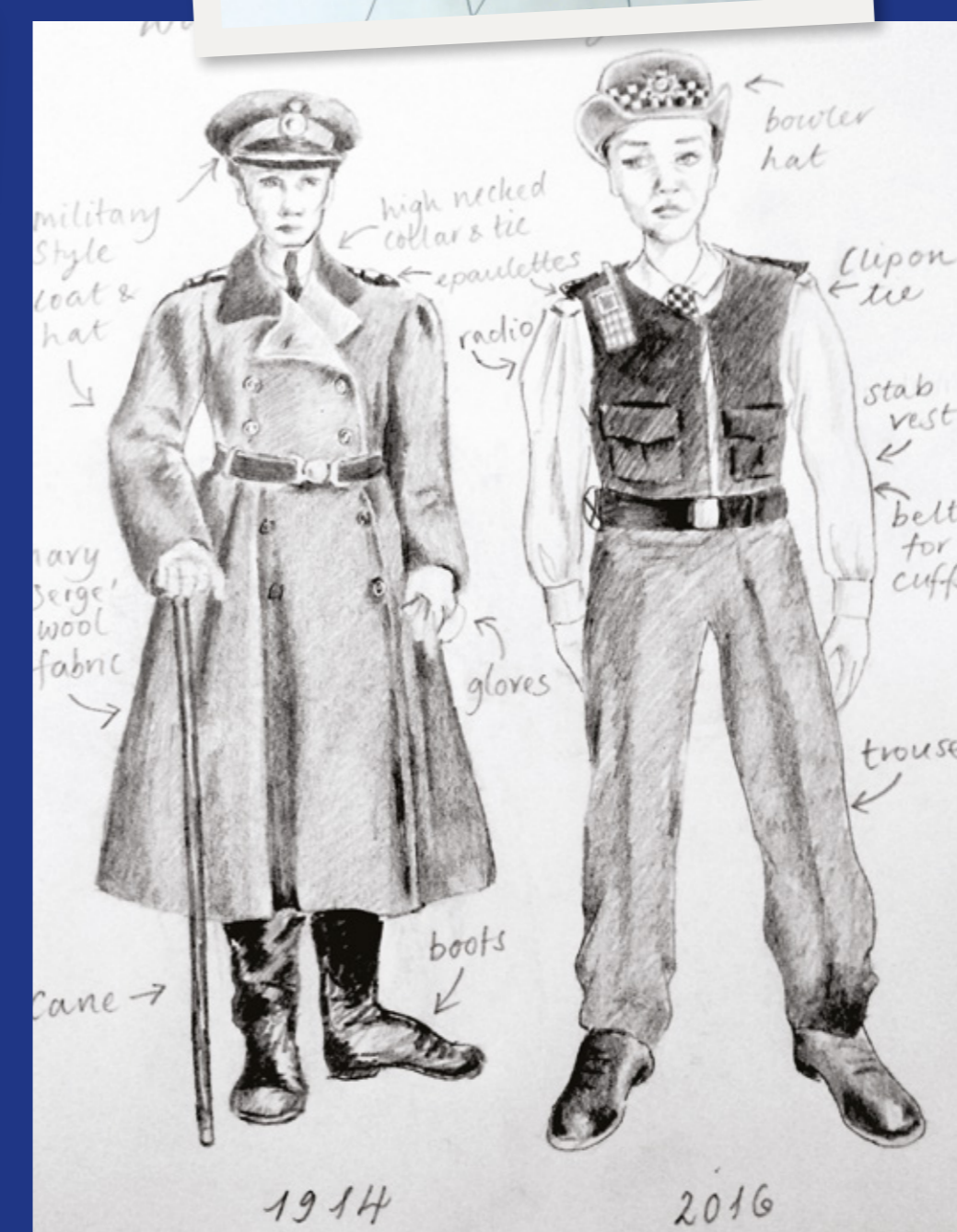


Women's Police Uniform

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 weights 5kgs. This new uniform allows more freedom of movement. Annika Roojun, Parent Volunteer



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