

Development of Policing in Kent – April 2011 meeting

At our meeting on 5th April John Endicott, a career police officer for 30 years described the development of policing in Kent from its earliest beginnings.

The role of constable is ancient with records showing their existence in the 9thC, when they were responsible for maintaining the peace and enforcing the law. When towns grew larger, constables were also required to light the street lamps and call the time during the hours of darkness. Following the Napoleonic wars the country was almost bankrupt, and so the government increased taxes on almost everything, but particularly on wines, spirits and tobacco. This resulted in a great surge of smuggling which the police were required to suppress. To aid their efforts they were armed with hangers, which were similar to a cutlass; and in some areas police were issued with five shot revolvers.

Modern police forces were formed as a result of laws passed following the Peterloo Massacre in 1819 ,when 18 people were killed and 700 seriously injured by badly disciplined militia men, who were ordered to disperse a peaceful demonstration in Manchester.

A very small Kent Police Force was formed in 1832, with its senior officers recruited from the military. As the roads of the County were improved and the numbers of motor vehicles increased criminals were able to easily travel from their home area to carry out crimes far from home and police numbers had to grow larger, and a traffic Division was formed to deal with these changes.

In May Dr. Frank Andrews will present an illustrated talk-The Last Revolution-The effects of the railways on East Kent

Our group meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm in the Institute hall in Canterbury Road at Herne. New members are welcome.

Further information from Chairman Alan Dilnot on 01227 373695, or Sylvia McKean on 01227 281257.