

## SAUNDERSFOOT AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

For the third lecture in the 2018-19 programme a large audience was present to hear former inspector Hugh Colley give an illustrated talk on Policing in Pembrokeshire. The Metropolitan Police Act of 1829 ushered in the first paid and fully organised police force but only for the area of London outside the City. A number of more local Acts quickly followed, allowing for the creation of police forces in small towns, until the County and Borough Police Act 1856 made it compulsory for the county magistrates sitting in Quarter Sessions to levy a rate to support a professional police force in their areas.

The first chief constable in Pembrokeshire was Colonel Anthony Bowen Stokes and it was quite usual until relatively recent times to appoint ex-military men to supervise what was a civilian force. His pay was around £250 a year whereas a constable third class received eighteen shillings a week, assuming the latter was not dismissed for drunkenness, a common weakness in the early days of the police.

During the First World War the loss of so many men to the armed forces saw the appointment of auxiliary officers but during the Second World War women were drafted in from 1942, as well as retired officers, to support the depleted ranks. Pembrokeshire of course had a significant military presence with twelve airfields in the county and thousands of personnel both based here and passing through after disembarkation. With the end of the war women officers were dismissed and it was not until 1954 that the first regular woman officer was appointed – Mary Catherine Coleman. Their role for many years was restricted to the activities of the women and children's department and away from general duties.

The appointment of George Terry as chief constable in 1958 saw a rapid modernisation of the Pembrokeshire Constabulary, with the building of a new headquarters in Haverfordwest, the introduction motor bikes, affectionately known as Noddy bikes, and the use of police dogs for a variety of special tasks, including searching for drugs, firearms, explosives and bodies. The 1960's saw a step-change in the organisation of police forces following the report of the Royal Commission into Policing. A new Police Act of 1964 reduced the number of forces in Britain from 120 to 43, wages were increased and the emphasis shifted from villages to towns, leading to the closure of most rural stations. The Pembrokeshire force was amalgamated with neighbouring forces to form the Dyfed -Powys Police and thus created the largest policing area in Wales and England.

Our speaker was warmly thanked for his entertaining and informative lecture. Our programme of lectures will resume in the new year but before that members are reminded that the Society's Christmas Party takes place at the Begelly Arms on 19 December at 7.00 with a buffet meal to be served at 7.30.