



Plymouth City Police

Plymouth City Police was the city force for Plymouth, Devon, from 1928 to 1967. The force's title was conferred upon it when the borough of Plymouth achieved city status in 1928.

Formation

At the turn of the century, Plymouth was policed by three distinct police forces each responsible for their own borough, those being Stonehouse, Devonport and Plymouth. When Plymouth achieved city status in 1928, the Plymouth Borough Police was renamed Plymouth City Police (or the City of Plymouth Police Force.) By this time, the boroughs of Stonehouse and Devonport had already been absorbed into Plymouth, and so the Plymouth City Police became the sole authority for the area.

Governance

Like most forces at the time, the Plymouth City Police was led by a Chief Constable who was appointed by a Police Watch Committee.

Presentation

The Plymouth City Police uniform was a carryover of the former borough force, with a new force crest designed based on the previous. Like most forces of the UK, Police War Reserves wore the letters "WR" on their collars.

Dartmoor Prison Mutiny

On 24 January 1932, officers of the Plymouth City Force were called into action to help quell disorder at Dartmoor Prison in Princetown, Yelverton. At around 10.30am, the Chief Constable Mr A.K. Wilson left Plymouth in a police car, followed closely by a Western National bus containing thirty-one police officers. Officers of the Devon County Constabulary, including its Chief Constable Mr Lyndon Henry Morris, also made their way to the prison. Morris tried to negotiate with the prisoners, but when this failed the thirty-one strong force entered the grounds and successfully calmed the rioters.

World War 2

Plymouth was heavily bombed during the Second World War, and on 30 April 1940 the force suffered its first casualty when Police Sergeant Edward Gibbs was killed along with his brother Sydney, and nephew David, during a raid on the Royal Dockyard in Devonport. Police infrastructure was severely affected by bombs, leaving the telephone exchange at police headquarters inoperable on 20 March 1941. Other officers to die on duty or in service overseas include seven regulars, two reserves, five Special Constables and three police war reserves.

Women Police Officers

The force had its first woman officers on 18 June 1919 when Miss Audrey Canney and Miss Isobel Taylor were appointed as Inspector and Constable respectively. On 29 November 1946 Miss Iris Martin became the first WPC to perform point duty.

Chief Constables

The first Chief Constable was Herbert Hards Sanders. He was succeeded by Mr K. Archibald Wilson, who held the post until 1932 before leaving to become Chief Constable of the Liverpool City Police. William Clarence Johnson succeeded Mr Wilson, and remained in office until 1936 when he left to become Deputy Chief Constable of Birmingham City Police. Mr George Sydney Lowe led the force from 1936 to 1941 and was succeeded by William Thomas Hutchings, who died suddenly in 1943 making way for Mr John Fawke Skittery, who holds the distinction of being the longest serving Chief Constable of the force, leading it until his retirement on 30 June 1965. He was succeeded by Mr Ronald Gregory until the force was merged with Devon & Cornwall on 1 June 1967.

Headquarters

The headquarters of Plymouth City Police were situated at the Plymouth Guildhall. In 1933 the old prison at Greenbank was selected as the new site for police, fire, courts and weights & measures office. The conversion was completed in 1935 and hailed as a very important step for the city's public services. In 1943 the station at Greenbank was abandoned following a bomb blast and officers temporarily relocated to Widey Court, before returning to Greenbank. The building at Widey Court was selected as a contingency as early as 1941.

Abolition

The Plymouth City Police amalgamated with Exeter, Devon and Cornwall and became part of the Devon & Cornwall Constabulary on 1 June 1967, bringing an end to over 130 years of fragmented policing for the two counties. Plymouth maintains to this day its own relative autonomy as it has its own Basic Command Unit (BCU) led by a Chief Superintendent. Three police stations exist, at Devonport, Charles Cross and Crownhill. Only Charles Cross is open to the public, and Crownhill is the site of one of Devon & Cornwall Police's two control rooms, the other being located at Middlemoor in Exeter. The Ministry of Defence Police have concurrent jurisdiction over the dockyard areas and HMS Raleigh, and the British Transport Police have offices at Plymouth train station.



Devon and Cornwall Police

Devon and Cornwall Police is the territorial police force responsible for policing the ceremonial counties of Devon (including the unitary authority areas of Plymouth and Torbay) and Cornwall (including the Isles of Scilly). The force serves 1.77 million people over an area of 3,967 square miles (10,270 km²).

History

The force was formed on 1 April 1967, by the amalgamation of the Devon and Exeter Police, Cornwall County Constabulary and Plymouth City Police, these three constabularies were an amalgamation of 23 city and borough police forces that were absorbed between 1856 and 1947.

Between 1856 and 1947, police in Devon and Cornwall used a number of different names. They were gradually absorbed into two of the existing forces called Devon and Exeter Constabulary and Cornwall County Constabulary, except Plymouth City Police which remained separate. In 1967 the three remaining forces were amalgamated into one called Devon and Cornwall Constabulary or Devon and Cornwall Police.

Chief Constables

1967–1973 Colonel Ronald Berry Greenwood
1973–1982 John Cottingham Alderson
1982–1984? David Albert East
1984?–1989 Donald Elliott
1989–2002 Sir John Stanley Evans (knighted in 2000 New Year Honours)
2002–2006 Maria Wallis
2007–2012 Stephen Otter
2013–present Shaun Sawyer

Officers killed in the line of duty

Since 1814, the following officers of Devon and Cornwall Constabulary and its predecessors were killed while attempting to prevent or stop a crime in progress:

Town Sergeant Joseph Burnett, 1814 (shot attempting to disarm two drunken soldiers)
PC William Bennett, 1875 (injured arresting a man for assault)
PC Walter Creech, 1883 (stabbed by a man he warned)
PC John Tremlett Potter, 1938 (fatally injured by two burglars he disturbed)
PC Dennis Arthur Smith, 1973 (shot by a suspect he was pursuing)
PC Christopher Francis Wilson, 1977 (Contracted a fatal illness after being spat on during a disturbance at a football match)
PC Joseph James Childs and PC Martin Ross Reid, 1978 (Drowned after their car was swept into the sea during a storm)

Since 5 May 2016, the Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner is Alison Hernandez, who represents the Conservative Party. The police and crime commissioner is scrutinised by the Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel, made up of elected councillors from the local authorities in the police area. Before November 2012, the force was governed by the Devon and Cornwall Police Authority.

Organisation

As of September 2020, the force has 3,273 police officers, 323 special constables, 206 police community support officers (PCSO), 915 police support volunteers (PSV), and 2,167 staff. Training for new recruits is held at the Headquarters in Middlemoor. For constables, it consists of eight months training and a two-year probationary period. For special constables it consists of three months of online learning and practical weekends training and a two-year probationary period or less, dependent on the number of tours of duty. For PCSOs, it consists of 18 weeks training and a 15-week probationary period. Recruits receive their warrant card and uniform in the first two months of training.

The force is divided into four Basic Command Units (BCU), each commanded by a Chief Superintendent. Geographically larger BCUs are further split into Local Policing Areas (LPAs), under a Superintendent, which are further sub-divided into Sectors, each under an Inspector. The Plymouth and South Devon BCUs only contain one LPA, being divided directly into sectors. Most sectors contain a police station, while in Plymouth there are numerous neighbourhood bases or police stations (Crownhill, Charles Cross, Plympton, Beacon Park, Devonport Fore St., Devonport Exmouth Rd., Plymstock).

Each BCU will have several specialist teams, including Patrol, Neighbourhood Policing Teams, a Criminal Investigation Department and various pro-active policing units to target persistent criminals and focus on specific operations.

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly BCU
East Cornwall geographic LPA
Bodmin Sector (also Wadebridge)
Launceston Sector (also Bude, Camelford & Callington)
Liskeard Sector (also Looe, Torpoint, Saltash)
Newquay Sector (also St Columb Major)
St Austell Sector (also St Blazey, Fowey, Lostwithiel, Mevagissey and Grampound)

West Cornwall geographic LPA
 Penzance & St Ives Sector (also Hayle & Isles of Scilly)
 Camborne Sector (also Redruth)
 Truro Sector (also Perranporth and Tregony)
 Helston and Falmouth Sector
 South Devon BCU
 Teignmouth & Dawlish Sector
 Chudleigh & Ashburton Sector (also Bovey Tracey and Moretonhampstead)
 Newton Abbot Sector
 Ivybridge Sector
 Kingsbridge & Dartmouth Sector
 Totnes Sector (also South Brent)
 Torquay Sector
 Paignton & Brixham Sector
 Devon BCU
 Exeter East and Mid geographic LPA
 Exeter "Sidmouth Road" Police Station
 Rural East Devon Sector (Axminster, Seaton, Sidmouth, Honiton and Ottery St Mary)
 Exmouth & Budleigh Salterton
 Mid-Devon Sector (Cullompton, Crediton and Tiverton)
 North and West Devon geographic LPA
 Barnstaple Sector
 Torridge Sector (Bideford, Holsworthy and Torrington)
 North Devon Sector (Ilfracombe, Braunton, South Molton and Lynton)
 Okehampton Sector
 Tavistock Sector
 Plymouth BCU
 Plymouth geographic area
 Plymouth Central Sector (Charles Cross Police Station)
 Plymouth Devonport and West Sector (Devonport Police Office)
 Plymouth East Sector (Charles Cross Police Station)
 Plymouth North Sector (Crownhill Police Station)
 Plymouth South Sector (Charles Cross Police Station)
 Force contact centre

The force contact centre is located at two sites; police HQ in Middlemoor, Exeter and Crownhill police station in Plymouth, both operating 24/7. Calls from all parts of the force are assigned to the next available agent, whichever site they are working from. Calls are answered by trained civilian staff, with police officers in some supporting and supervisory roles. Both 999/112 and non-emergency calls are answered by multiskilled staff, with other duties including the Force Switchboard, found property recording, crime recording, requests from other police forces, emails from the public, and the force website. Radio dispatch officers are located in the control rooms at both sites and deploy police officers following calls for service from the contact centre. The two control rooms use the national Airwave emergency service secure radio system, which is due to be replaced in the early 2020s.

Operations department

The operations department provides uniformed operational support to the force, and is responsible for traffic policing and tactical support.

Roads policing Unit

Devon and Cornwall Police patrol a section of the M5, as well as many other 'A' roads. The unit is split up into seven road policing sectors. The unit also has officers that patrol on motorcycles.

Force Support Group

The Force Support group (FSG), previously called the Tactical Aid Group (TAG), are predominantly responsible for public order, marine operations, searches and dealing with potentially violent offenders. It is divided into several sections, including two trained in firearms and one in marine operations.

The FSG's Marine Support Unit, also known as Force Support Group (FSG) D Section is responsible for underwater search and marine operations.

Dog section

The force has police dogs, which are trained in a variety of roles including drugs dogs, explosives dogs and firearms support dogs. The unit, which is headed up by an inspector, is based at headquarters in Middlemoor, in Exeter.

Armed Response Unit

Devon and Cornwall Police's Armed Response Unit (ARU) is a sub-department of the operations department that is tasked with responding to incidents where firearms are involved. The unit responds to incidents with firearms and are the only officers in the force who are routinely armed.

Air Operations Unit

Air support is provided by the National Police Air Service (NPAS), which operates a dedicated police helicopter out of Exeter Airport.

The now-closed Air Operations Unit previous flew a MBB/Kawasaki BK 117. It took delivery of a Eurocopter EC145 in April 2010, with its call sign being OSCAR 99. The unit was able scramble in two minutes and could reach most areas of the force within 15 minutes.

Force crime department

The force crime department contains the central units of the force's Criminal Investigation Department (CID), which also has detectives attached to the larger police stations. It is headed by the force crime manager, a detective chief superintendent. It also comprises the major crime branch, covert operations unit, intelligence unit, performance and co-ordination unit, scientific and technical services unit.

Other departments

The Firearms Unit is responsible for all firearms training, planning and licensing.

The Contingency Planning Unit formulates long-term plans to deal with major incidents, including security for VIP visits, counterterrorist operations and reaction to terrorist attacks.

The Force Planning and Consultation Unit formulates policy and plans and monitors public opinion on policing matters.

The Professional Standards Unit deals with force discipline and complaints against officers.

Uniforms and equipment

Headgear

In 2020, the force moved to a gender neutral position on headwear, permitting any officer to wear a (traditionally) male or female hat – either the custodian helmet, or a peaked cap with a chequered Sillitoe tartan band, or a bowler hat, also with Sillitoe tartan, under all circumstances.

Traffic police headgear is the same as that for any other vehicle patrol but has a white rather than a black top, originally designed to aid visibility before the advent of fluorescent fabrics.

PCSOs wear a peaked cap or bowler hat, but with a blue band.

Tri Service Safety Officers (TSSOs) wear a peaked cap or bowler, with a grey band.

Uniform

When on operational duty, officers wear black wicken layer tops with black trousers and a black fleece with POLICE written on the chest and back. All officers are required to wear stab vests when on operational duty. Collar numbers for constables and sergeants, along with rank insignia for sergeants and above are worn either on epaulettes on the shoulder, or on patches on the upper arm, depending on the item of clothing. PCSOs wear a similar uniform, but with blue epaulettes rather than black.

Formal dress comprises an open-necked tunic, and a white shirt/blouse with a black tie for officers of all genders. Constables and sergeants have collar numbers on their epaulettes, sergeants wear rank insignia on their sleeve, while all higher-ranked officers wear name badges and their rank on their epaulettes. Gloves are sometimes worn.

Personal equipment

From 2018, both officers and PCSOs were provided with personal issue Combat Application Tourniquets for first aid and self aid purposes.

From 2019, officers were issued with Spit Guards, a transparent mesh that covers a suspects face should they spit at officers.

From 2019, after over a decade of false starts, operational officers and PCSOs were issued with Body Worn Video Police body camera.

Police vehicles contain a variety of equipment, which can include straight batons, traffic cones, road signs, breathalysers, stingers, speed guns and more.

Vehicles

Devon and Cornwall Police use many different makes of vehicles from several different car manufacturers for different purposes. All marked, operational vehicles use yellow and blue retro-reflective battenberg markings, with the force's crest.

Performance

Devon and Cornwall are amongst the safest counties in the UK, with the 4th lowest crime rate per 1000 people in England. Recorded crime dropped by 12% between June 2009 and July 2010, compared to an 8% drop across England and Wales. In this survey, there were drops in all categories of crime except sexual offences and drug crimes, accounted for by increased reporting and more effective targeting of drug offences. Confidence in the police and public perceptions of crime were also better than the national average.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary graded Devon and Cornwall Police as 'fair' for confidence and satisfaction, and 'good' on local crime and policing and protection from serious harm. In detail they were graded as 'excellent' for reducing crime, suppressing gun crime and suppressing knife crime. They were rated 'low/medium' for all sections of 'value for money' including cost of policing, cost per household, number of officers and PCSO's and proportion of policing cost met from council tax.

Budget cuts

Proposed regional merger

In 2006, the Home Office announced plans to reduce the number of police forces in the UK from 42 to 24 in an attempt to save money. The plans were abandoned later that year due to lack of funding for the mergers, however the idea has resurfaced many times. The proposed idea was for Devon and Cornwall Police to merge with Gloucestershire Constabulary, Wiltshire Police, Avon and Somerset Constabulary and Dorset Police. The plans were criticised by all the involved forces, stating that it would lead to poor quality service and a reduction in local policing.

Austerity

The program of austerity from 2011 had an impact on the force:

The rural crime grant, worth £1.8M to Devon & Cornwall, about the cost of 70 officers, was abolished.

The central government grant was cut by 20%.

In comparison to other forces, the council tax precept was low. Rises in the precept were capped by central government.

The organisation was forced to cut officers, from 3,500 to 2,810. It also had to cut PCSOs and police staff, losing around 350 posts.[24] Many stations were closed and sold, controversially including a brand new station at St Columb Major. The service offered to the public was scaled back: for example in the past victims of car crime or burglary would have seen an officer in person. Since the austerity cuts, the majority of these crimes are 'desktop investigated' by a centralised team.

A partial reversal of the cuts was announced in 2019 by the (then) new Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who pledged to replace 20,000 of the 21,000 officers cut in England and Wales since 2011.

Devon & Cornwall officer numbers are not expected to return to their 2010 levels until 2023. There are no plans nationally to reverse the cut in police staff.

Proposed merger with Dorset

Later, from 2015, plans to merge with Dorset Police were brought to an advanced stage and an outline business case supplied to the Home Office. In the final stage of talks, three of the four parties agreed to proceed, being the Chief Constables of both forces and the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) of Dorset. However, Devon & Cornwall PCC Alison Hernandez withdrew her support for the merger, in a U-turn. It is thought her change of heart was a result of pressure from the local authorities, notably members of Cornwall Council and Torbay Council and the plans were shelved.

Other activities

The Devon and Cornwall Police Pipes and Drum Band is a band made up of pipe and drums players who play on behalf of the police force in aid of charity. The band plays at fundraising events for Devon Air Ambulance, Help for Heroes and other events, as well at police occasions such as officer graduations.

The band is made up of officers and employees of Devon and Cornwall Police, as well as some members who are not related to the police. The band is not funded or related to the police force but do have permission to use their name and uniform.

Devon and Cornwall Police Rugby Football Club

The Devon and Cornwall RFC was formed in 1967 following the amalgamation of the Devon, Cornwall and Plymouth Constabularies clubs. A few midweek and Sunday games were played and players were encouraged to play for club sides on Saturdays. However the Saturday team was disbanded in May 1995 due to operational commitments. Today the force still manages to bring together a team when necessary, and play in the National Cup Competition every year.

Social media

In 2015, BBC News Online reported that the force had been involved in a number of social media "blunders", including officers making inappropriate use of Facebook and Twitter, and a Twitter campaign image that had to be withdrawn when it was pointed out that it appeared to depict a police riot officer beating a person lying on the ground with a truncheon.

Stella the Dog

Stella was a dog that was seized in 2014. Devon and Cornwall Police said the pit bull-type dog was considered potentially dangerous. The department put the dog in a 3 ft by 9 ft cage in Devon until 2016 when a destruction order for Stella was passed by Torquay Magistrates' Court. The dog was reported to have not had exercise and was left in the cage for 24 hours a day for nearly two years. The courts had until 8 March 2016 to appeal the euthanasia of Stella. Sgt Allan Knight, from the Devon and Cornwall Police dog handling unit, said: "There will always be some dogs who cannot get walked by staff because of the danger they possess. We are bound by the court process."

Deaths attributed to Devon and Cornwall Police

There have been a number of deaths of members of the public who have come into contact with Devon and Cornwall police.

Thomas Orchard, 32, was arrested and taken to a police station in Exeter, where he was restrained, in October 2012. He died in hospital seven days later.

Marc Cole, 30, died in Falmouth, Cornwall, in May 2017 after a taser was deployed for 42 seconds, resulting in a cardiac arrest. He had taken cocaine the same day. The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) concluded the performance of its officers was not below standard.

Andrew Pimlott, 32, died from burns in April 2013. Pimlott, who had drenched himself in fuel, was tasered, which ignited the fuel and caused his burns.

Leslie 'Les' Douthwaite, 38, died in April 2015 after being restrained, face down, by police.

John Coysh, 35, died in police custody in September 2016, from cardiac arrhythmia during alcohol withdrawal.

Simeon Francis, 35, died in a cell in Torquay police station on 20 May 2020 after being arrested in Exeter.

Safeguarding

The force receives 500 to 800 emergency 999 calls daily, many of which will be in relation to persons in need to immediate help. Devon and Cornwall Police also receive 2,000 to 2,500 non emergency 101 calls each day, some of which will involve ongoing risk issues, such as safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children.[original research?] For example, Devon and Cornwall dealt with 5,151 missing person reports in the year ending January 2016. The force deployed firearms officers on 351 occasions in the year ending March 2020. These same statistics show that police nationally actually fired conventional firearms on only five occasions across England and Wales for the same period.