

POLICING NORTH EAST VICTORIA IN THE 1870s – Chief Inspector (Ret.) Ralph Stavely

This is an abbreviated version of the presentation at ‘Ned and the Law’, Greta 22 February 202 - printed with permission.

On Saturday 26 October 1878 four policemen were ambushed at Stringy Bark Creek, three of the policemen were murdered.

The offenders were four young men who later became known as the Kelly Gang. After committing the murders, the gang took to the bush and disappeared into the rugged ranges of North East Victoria

Even today the area is remote and in places virtually inaccessible to all but those with local knowledge.

Police resources in North East Victoria were insufficient to mount an effective search for the offenders. Additional police were seconded from across the Colony to assist in the search.

In many ways they are “forgotten men” as their identities and the lives they lived take second place to “main players” such as Ned and his gang and the senior police involved.

My talk today aims to shed more light on the average policeman’s life and working conditions at the time of the Kelly Outbreak.

POLICING AND POLITICS

Victoria Police was established in 1853, two years after the creation of the Colony of Victoria. The Colony had experienced remarkable growth since gold was discovered in 1851.

In 1853 Victoria’s population was 222,436 (146,456 men and 75,980 women).

In other words, it was a male dominated society, roughly only a third of the population were female. Social infrastructure had to be created from scratch and the population explosion placed heavy demands on all areas of government, including policing.

The Force’s control and management was vested in the Chief Commissioner of Police. However, political interference in policing was rife during the 19th Century.

By 1878 Victoria’s population was 929,918 (438,077 men and 391,481 women).

In 1878 the Chief Commissioner was Frederick Charles Standish. He had been appointed Chief in 1858, allegedly via the “Old Boy” network. While he was an intelligent man, both his probity and judgement have been questioned. Allegedly he was too close to government and the “establishment”.

The period from 1856 to 1880 was a time of political instability, there were 20 governments in 24 years, and this impacted on all government departments.

POLICE LEADERSHIP

Victoria Police was a rigid, hierarchical organisation, slow to respond to change. It was micromanaged, even the most mundane correspondence had to be approved by the Chief. For administrative purposes Victoria was divided into “districts” controlled by Superintendents. They were supported by a small number of commissioned officers. None of the officers were trained for their role. In many cases quality of leadership was an issue. Many senior police had big egos and there was much rivalry.

A big ego doesn't necessarily equate to incompetence, but egoists often refuse to accept that ideas other than their own may present a better solution to a problem. Major operational planning was reliant on these senior officers. Commonly their planning was impromptu, unclear and lacked monitoring and evaluation. Record keeping was poor.

Superintendent John Sadlier was in charge of the North East District in the late 1870s. According to him, during that period the Kelly country was neglected, police stations were broken up, or else constables quite unequal to the task of keeping "evil doers" in check, were placed in charge.

For all of these reasons the organisation was fatally flawed, on a day to day basis everything seemed in order, but once put under pressure the weaknesses become apparent.

POLICE WORKING ENVIRONMENT IN 1878

For the average person the "public face" of policing was the local constable. Recruiting was subjective, as a result poor-quality recruits could be inducted before their unsuitability was identified.

Training was non-existent, this contributed to the policing problems of the age. The police oath required constables to "see and cause Her Majesty's Peace to be kept and preserved, and prevent ... all offences against the same".

They were expected to show discretion while enforcing the law (while a policeman may be acting within the law it may not be fair or reasonable to proceed to prosecution).

The Police Manual was the only practical guide to police duties, but it hadn't been updated since its introduction in 1856.

Police came from a wide variety of backgrounds and all levels of society, although generally they were working class. Due to its risks and complexities policing occupies a unique position as an occupation. However, this was unrecognised at the time.

According to police historian Robert Haldane, the social position of police was more than that of a labourer but judged to be less than that of a skilled tradesman.

The government took advantage of this lack of clarity by saving money and paying police on a level commensurate with that of labourers.

Despite the introduction of the male franchise in the 1850s, police were denied the vote

In an age when unionism was emerging, police unionism was forbidden – they had no power to redress grievances. There was no protective clothing and the police uniform (including the cape) provided little protection from the elements.

Members had to pay for their uniform and generally had to cover the cost of any damage to it. There were insufficient firearms available and little if any firearms training.

The concept of "community policing" did not exist, nor was there any specialist interaction with Youth. Police were required to perform a wide range of extraneous duties such as collecting agricultural statistics and acting as Inspectors of Slaughterhouses.

Single men were required to live in Barracks, which provided the most basic accommodation. Permission had to be obtained if the member wished to be "out of barracks" at night. No female visitors were permitted in barracks. No vehicles were available – constables either walked or went on horseback. If an arrest was made and transport was required, police would hail a passing cab.

Police worked in a hard and dangerous environment. They were expected to cope with any situation which arose, including attacks by gangs of larrikins.

Through necessity two different policing styles evolved. Beat policing was used in urban centres, mounted patrols in outlying areas. Beat policing involved constables walking a set route between "points" to a set timetable. Constable walked 20 kilometres or more in a shift. Senior constables would supervise beat members by regularly visiting them at their "points".

The system lacked flexibility and constables complained if policy duty prevented them making their "point" on time, they were disciplined by their supervisor. It was claimed some beat duty police avoided danger by skulking up back lanes to avoid violent offenders in the main streets.

Police worked "split shifts" – e.g. 5.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m. then had a break of four hours before resuming duty from 1.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m.

The entire shift, including meal breaks, was performed on the beat. Members often carried their meal in their helmet.

The public were expected to identify "on duty" members by their duty stripe.

Police could be posted to country stations while lacking bushcraft. Some country police got bushed while out on patrol, one even disappeared and was never found.

Detectives were in a separate branch of the service, generally they were not under the authority of local uniformed officers and had great discretion in how they operated.

The use of informers, which was widely criticised, was the province of the detectives and rarely involved uniform members.

POLICE DISCIPLINE AND POLICE HARRASSMENT

Although police corruption was a problem in the 1870s, it was centred in the City of Melbourne, where there was a teeming population, an established criminal fraternity, and a high concentration of hotels, theatres and prostitutes. Policing was rotten at the core because corrupt behaviour was ignored by District Supervisor Superintendent Winch, who was himself corrupt. Winch was a close associate of Chief Commissioner Standish.

Outside Melbourne, corruption was far less an issue, although there is ample evidence of a degree of inappropriate behaviour amongst some police.

However, police personnel records provide numerous examples of such members being charged, fined and frequently dismissed from the service for their infractions.

Sub-officers and officers were not shirking their duty, if anything, records show they could be draconian in their treatment of the men.

Overall, most police did their job to a reasonable standard and some performed exceptionally.

Men such as Sergeant Kennedy at Mansfield or Constable Robert Graham, who was posted to Greta after the siege at Glenrowan, made strong connections with their local communities.

Graham is said to have formed a good working relationship with Ned's mother, which greatly helped in easing tensions in the Greta District.

The behaviour of others, such as Sergeant Steele and Inspector Brooke-Smith, caused resentment amongst both police members and the public.

Brooke-Smith was accused of cowardice, laziness and harassing behaviour by his own staff.

Sergeant Steel's conduct at the Glenrowan siege suggest his actions on the day were not acceptable.

An area of concern is the claim of police harassment of the Kelly family, and in particular Ned's mother and his siblings. However, as is so often the case where both sides give opposing accounts, it can be difficult to establish the truth beyond doubt.

To reach a reasonable conclusion, allegations must be subject to rigorous investigation to locate all the evidence.

Such enquiries do not seem to have been conducted at the time, resulting in the loss of evidence, the Kelly's allegations appear to have been dismissed out of hand.

Investigations can also be more difficult when witness accounts, whether by the police or the Kelly's, are biased in their own favour.

This isn't to say the allegations of harassment are not correct, just that to prove this was the case relies on evidence which may not now be available, if indeed it ever was.

However, for the record I believe it more likely than not the allegations of harassment against Brooke-Smith are correct, if for no other reason than that the police themselves were sceptical of his behaviour.

The other problem, of unnecessary violence by police poses a different question. In many cases police evidence was accepted by the courts and resulted in a conviction.

After so many years it is hard to work out whether or not the courts rightly accepted police evidence or should have been more sceptical of what police alleged had occurred.

Knowing what we do of the attitudes of the times, it wouldn't take much imagination to suspect that if a young thug violently resisted police and then received a thrashing, they would have been regarded as receiving their "just deserts", and the police actions would be overlooked on the basis the offender "gave as good as they got".

PROFILE OF THE POLICE SEARCH PARTY

The police members included in this category included the police members recorded as seconded to take part in the search, those present at the siege at Glenrowan and those listed as having received a reward. Obviously, many others were involved in the search, including police stationed in the local area and detectives – they will be included in research to be undertaken later this year.

There were also other police used on guard duty at townships in neighbouring districts - as far as is known details of those personnel were never included in official returns in relation to the use of police resources. No evidence has been found indicating any special criteria were applied to the selection of the searchers

There is no evidence of any special training/briefing for members entering what was a very dangerous situation.

Profile of searchers from the "Muster Rolls":

Birthplace

- 53% Irish

- 27% Australian
- 22% born in Victoria
- 9% English
- 4% Scottish

Average age of the searchers in 1878

- 46% in their 20s
- 34% in their 30s
- 17% in their 40s
- 3% in their 50s

41% of the searchers had left Victoria Police by 1889

Circumstances of leaving Victoria Police

- 46% age retirement
- 14% resigned
- 13% Police Medical Board
- 11% died in service
- 8% discharged
- 7% dismissed

Despite the risks involved there is no record of the searchers being provided with something as obvious as First Aid kits to treat injuries received in the field.

Nor were they provided with adequate protective clothing to shield them from the elements while in the bush.

All the members who took part in this search showed courage, as they were operating under circumstances where there was a high risk of injury from either the bushrangers, or from the demanding conditions under which they were worked, but they undertook this duty without demur.

They well knew there were a large number of Kelly sympathisers watching them, dogging their every move and then passing this information back to the gang.

Police also ran the risk of some of the gang's associates turning on them if they saw a chance to do so.

In the later stages of the search the decision by senior police to use police probationers as searchers was a high-risk strategy, as none of the probationers had operational experience.

There were no bravery awards for police at this time, all they could expect was official praise by their superiors being included in their Record of Conduct and Service, but many would not have received even this recognition.

Nor was the searcher's bravery recognised by any form of official Group Commendation, as such an award did not exist at that time.

POLICE HEALTH AND SAFETY

The police involved in the search for the Kelly gang suffered considerable privations. This was not unusual as death and illness had always been accepted as “part of the job”.

The risks of policing can be seen in the following examples:

- Violence was the norm and resulted in the death and incapacitation of many police
- 10% of all police who joined between 1853 and 1920 died during their service
- These deaths include 70 killed on duty (including those murdered)
- For a variety of reasons there are undoubtedly many more service-related deaths we will never identify
- There were a high number of early retirements brought about by violence, accident or disease which led to premature death, but the details are unknown
- In 1862 the Police Surgeon reported that the 356 admissions to the Police Hospital in the previous two years included 60 men suffering from gunshot wounds, broken bones, lacerations and contusions
- In 1885/6 (earliest figures available) 53% of police retirements were due to infirmity or disablement
- Issues involving lifestyle and diet also led to ill health and premature death
- Many diseases then endemic, were unable to be treated and led to death (typhoid, consumption, etc)
- A member’s illness or death left their family destitute

In extreme cases policemen’s children were sent to the Industrial Schools (a form of reformatory) as there were no other options if a parent was not present.

Sunstroke killed a number of police.

Because of the limitations of medical science, many deaths attributable to police duty were written off as “natural causes”. Police instituted their own Widows and Orphans fund because of the lack of government assistance.

By the age of 50 many police were “old men”, physically incapable of performing their duties, but forced to keep serving in order to maintain a living wage for themselves and their families.

The department’s instructions for the welfare of troop horses were far more stringent than those for the welfare of police members

CONSTABLE FITZPATRICK

The Kelly outbreak started with Constable Fitzpatrick’s actions on 15 April 1878. At the time he went to the Kelly home he was 22 years old, three months younger than Ned, and had been a policeman for less than 12 months.

Fitzpatrick was an immature young man whose actions on the day, even accepting his story as correct, were ill considered. Having been told by his Sergeant to take care and not to go to the Kelly’s on his own, he acted on impulse and went anyway.

His actions tell us much about failings in discipline and supervision within Victoria Police at that time. His selection for the police force would also have to be questioned, together with the decision to allow him to work on his own essentially unsupervised.

CRIME SCENE EXAMINATION

Although Stringy Bark Creek is Australia's most famous crime scene, there is still disagreement as to the exact location. This is because crime scene examination did not exist in 1878. Even something as basic as fingerprints were not introduced until 1904.

There was no formal examination or record made of the scene at Stringy Bark Creek. Police attendance at the scene was rushed because of fear of the Kellys returning. The postmortem examinations of the deceased were not undertaken to the standard which would occur today – evidence was lost.

Although detectives of the era did make crime scene searches, it was not to the level we would expect today – and in any event no detectives attended the crime scene.

Arguably Black Trackers were the first “crime scene examiners” used by Victoria Police. They had been successfully used by police in earlier years. But by the 1870s no local trackers were available as “development” had destroyed their way of life.

But after trackers were brought down from Queensland their use proved a turning point in the hunt for the gang.

Having previously “made their appearance pretty frequently” for the fifteen months after the tracker's arrival, the gang “were never seen on horseback”, “nor did they once willingly show themselves to anyone whatsoever, except to the two or three persons whose loyalty they could trust”.

It is worth speculating on what might have happened if Constable McIntyre had been killed at Stringy Bark Creek and the gang had made good their escape – it is conceivable some of them might have gone undetected.

COULD NED HAVE CLAIMED SELF DEFENCE?

Ned and his family consistently claimed Inspector Brook- Smith and other police harassed Mrs Kelly and her younger children, and threatened Ned would be shot if he did not surrender.

Ned and his family appeared to believe the threats to be true. Ned often claimed this as his justification for “getting in first” at Stringy Bark Creek.

Ned's solicitor David Gaunson also claimed Ned was not guilty of murder, as the police search party was out to kill him and thus Ned fired in self-defence. This argument was not presented at Ned's trial.

Given the temper of the time's such an argument would have been most unlikely to have been acceptable to the court. Nor, as the law now stands in Victoria, would it be acceptable nowadays.

While far from excusing him, it isn't hard to see how the perception of police violence could have caused Ned to think he and his associates were police targets.

It would be a tragic irony if indeed a policeman's threats backfired, and caused Ned to attack rather than to surrender.

Interestingly, Gaunson was later the solicitor of choice for many policemen, and for a period in the early 20th century he was their political representative in state parliament.

THE FELONS APPREHENSION ACT

This Act provided “legal authority” for what was in effect extrajudicial killing, some would see it as legalised murder. To me it reflects a similar mindset to that of Ned Kelly, when Ned tried to justify his killing of the police at Stringy Bark Creek.

To our minds today it is an unacceptable option, but many at that time, particularly those in government and the media, wanted immediate action apparently without thought of the consequences.

Apart from the morality of ambushing and killing the wanted men, who were still to be proven guilty of the murders at Stringy Bark Creek, any action taken under this Act would have involved a high risk of death or injury to innocent people.

It is not hard to envisage what might have occurred had the gang had been caught in the company of hostages, or if some group of local people had been wrongly identified as the gang.

In the event the Act was ineffective, the police never got close enough to the gang to shoot at them, and in time the legislation lapsed.

The act also enabled the arrest of supposed Kelly sympathisers, a tactic reminiscent of the incarceration of Boer sympathisers in concentration camps during the Second Boer War (1899 to 1902).

GENDER ISSUES

As generally told the Kelly story is very much a male story. Women and children appear in secondary roles, usually as victims.

This applies irrespective of whether they were associated with the Kellys or the police. The only “official” role for women at this time was as police cooks, cleaners or female searchers.

I find it ironic that women, who made up some 42% of Victoria’s population in 1878, were ineligible to take part in the political process which shaped the environment in which they lived. An environment which all too often led to the suffering of so many of them.

I think it also worth considering the reality that the lack of social services then available (e.g. widow’s pensions), together with her cultural background, gave Ellen Kelly little or no recourse but to turn to her extended family for support after she was widowed.

Although some members of her family were involved in illegal activity, and this potentially posed a risk to her growing family, the imperative to protect her children probably made such matters a secondary consideration. The reality is when people are down and have few if any other options available to them, they do what they feel they must do in order to survive. The government certainly had no mechanism in place to help her at that time.

I’ll leave the last word on this to Abigail Adams, the wife of John Adams, the second president of the United States of America.

Abigail wrote to her husband and asked him to “**remember the ladies**” when making laws for the new republic. She also advised him “**Do not put unlimited power in the hands of husbands**” she wrote “**Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could**”.

THE KILLING OF AARON SHERRITT

The murder of Aaron Sherritt is probably the best-known killing of a police informer in Australia’s history. The police members guarding Sherritt were virtually set up to fail, because no thought was given to the risks involved in this strategy.

Obviously, the risk of an attack on Sherritt was foreseen, otherwise the guard would not have been appointed. Additionally, everyone involved in the search must have been aware they were dealing with ruthless men with a demonstrated ability to be able to quickly adapt to changing circumstances and adopt unconventional tactics to gain an advantage.

Then, when the inevitable attack did occur on the Sherritt household, the guards were made scapegoats and dismissed from the service. Although common sense should have suggested to the guards the potential for their being caught in a trap, ultimately, it was the responsibility of their superiors to ensure this risk was identified and negated.

It seems obvious that only by either relocating Sherritt, or by posting a guard or guards outside the premises, could a surprise attack have been prevented.

This incident suggests little had been learned about risk mitigation by police leaders during the arduous nineteen-month search for the Kelly gang.

THE SIEGE OF JONES' HOTEL

Police action at Jones' Hotel caused extreme risk to the hostages involved, the public and even the police themselves. Even by 19th Century standards it was an extreme measure.

Contemporary accounts of the siege suggest the lines of command and control were unclear. The manner in which the siege was conducted involved the maximum risk to all concerned.

Individual police members acted on their own initiative at the site, exacerbating the problem and placing themselves and others at risk of injury or death. Police could have contained the site and attempted to "sit out" the Kellys and negotiate.

Instead they just kept shooting at the building and gave no sign they cared about the risk to the innocent hostages within Jones Hotel. The shooting continued even as women and children tried to escape the building.

The quote attributed to Sergeant Steele that he had "*shot Ma Jones in the tits*", suggests that for at least one policeman both personal discipline and moral conduct had been forgotten in the heat of the moment.

The police strategy of burning down the Hotel is bizarre and again, no thought was given to the potential risk to the innocent. The lack of public censure of the police after the siege suggests a wider mindset that the end justified the means.

The fact the Kelly's armour and other items could be "souvenired" after the siege tells us much about police indiscipline and the prevailing standards of the times.

It is also interesting to contrast police actions after the siege with those of the Kelly's when they looted the bodies of their police victims at Stringy Bark Creek.

THE HUMAN COST OF THE KELLY OUTBREAK

The Kelly outbreak resulted in the untimely deaths of at least thirteen people through murder, illness, accidental shooting or judicial execution:

- Sergeant Michael Kennedy, Stringy Bark Creek
- Constable Thomas Lonigan, Stringy Bark Creek
- Constable Michael Scanlan, Stringy Bark Creek
- Constable Thomas McIntyre claimed "several (i.e. more than two but not many) of the men (search party) got ill and some died from disease caused by exposure"
- Corporal Sambo (Aboriginal tracker), died Wangaratta

- Aaron Sherritt, Woolshed near Beechworth
- John Jones, Glenrowan
- Martin Cherry, Glenrowan
- George Metcalf, Glenrowan
- Joe Byrne, Glenrowan
- Dan Kelly, Glenrowan
- Steve Hart, Glenrowan
- Ned Kelly, Melbourne

Many others whose lives were affected by the Kelly outbreak suffered financial loss, physical injury, stress, mental problems, the death of close relatives and their own premature death.

Amongst the sufferer's special mention should be made of the widows of the police who were killed at Stringy Bark Creek, who in addition to their heartbreaking loss suffered miscarriages as the result of the shock.

The potential slaughter of those on board the "special" train Ned proposed to derail at Glenrowan, could have added considerably to the numbers of dead and injured.

THE MONETARY COST

Despite the immense amount of resources expended to capture the Kelly gang, the only costs reported on in the Royal Commission report relate to police "Expenses Incurred in Search For the Outlaws" and the "Expenses incurred by employment of detachments of the Victorian artillery corps in the north-eastern district in connection with the "Kelly affair," between the 15th December 1878 and 5th January 1880".

However, these figures are unsatisfactory. They are insufficiently detailed to enable us to determine their completeness or accuracy. There is also the concern that the commission uncovered evidence of poor financial management by police during the search.

Confidence in the figures is further lessened when in at least one instance they relied on an assumption. The assumption was that the costs of maintaining artillerymen on detachment in north east Victoria was the same as the cost of maintaining them in barracks in Melbourne, without any further explanation being given. Without further detail it seems hard to believe there would not have been some differences between these figures.

But to understand the total monetary impact on the community there are more factors to consider than just the cost of the police and the garrison artillery. Other costs, which were ignored by the Royal Commission, include the:

- pensions awarded to the police widows (which continued for decades)
- proper compensation for all damage or injury done by police
- the £8000 reward paid out after the capture of Ned Kelly and the destruction of his gang
- damage to railway property (including to the track, telegraph lines and the damages associated with the "Special" train to Glenrowan)
- damage to and theft of money and property from banks and private citizens by the Kelly gang
- the costs associated with either the burial of those killed or the medical treatment of those injured during the outbreak

- the cost of the search undertaken by NSW police

Even the claims as to the police costs vary.

Information provided by Superintendent Nicholson to the Longmore Royal Commission claimed the police costs for the search were £22,225/16/9.

Francis Hare in his book “Last of the Bushrangers” said that despite official claims it had cost from £30,000 to £40,000 it actually cost (if salaries are included) £115,000.

But even if £22,225 is accepted as the true figure, it still amounts to a very large sum in today’s equivalent.

- In 2018, the relative price worth of £22,225 0s 0d from 1878 is: \$2,760,000.00 using the Consumer Price Index
- The relative wage or income worth of £22,225 0s 0d from 1878 is: \$21,200,000.00 using the nominal GDP per capita

In relation to cost, John Sadlier makes an excellent point in his book Recollections of a Victorian Police Officer –

“To me, writing from the police point of view, the Kelly outbreak has this one moral – prevention is better than cure. The whole cost of this evil business, in life and treasure, might have been avoided by a better administration of police affairs in the north east district”.

THE AFTERMATH - DID ANYTHING CHANGE?

When the Kelly search was over the police force was put under the spotlight by the Longmore Royal Commission into “the circumstances of the Kelly Outbreak, the Present State and Organisation of the Police Force”.

Despite political interference having been rife throughout this time, politicians were one group who were not in the Royal Commission’s spotlight. Instead, it was all about the failings of the police force.

Of particular concern was the flawed decision making of senior police and police use of informers.

The Commission ground on for two years before tabling a voluminous report which contained many suggestions for much needed change.

Ironically, many of the changes mooted by Longmore were originally suggested by police from the lower ranks but had never been acted upon by Standish or his senior officers.

Internally and externally the senior police were seemingly committed to maintaining the status quo. Despite this, the reality was policing had not greatly changed and would not do so for decades

The police force of the 1880’s was not given to introspection, and when neither the politicians, nor the media nor the public didn’t push for change it’s no surprise police leadership, with its mindset of maintaining the status quo, did nothing

There was a marginal increase in police numbers, from 1,013 in 1879 to 1,103 in 1882, but:

- Health and safety for police didn’t improve
- Support for police members and their families didn’t improve
- Working conditions and wages remained poor

- Violence against police remained a real issue
- Political interference continued
- Police continued to be poorly paid - the special nature of police service and the need for appropriate remuneration was not recognised until 1978

One unintended outcome of the Commission was that it started the agitation for a police union, but it took a further 37 years to achieve that goal.

From the political viewpoint things soon returned to “normal”

The description of Victoria Police in the 1883-84 Yearbook suggests the government had “moved on” from the problems of the Kelly search.

According to the Victorian Yearbook:

‘The Victorian police force is an admirably organized body of men, and, although smaller in proportion to population than the police of any other of the Australian colonies, their efficiency, combined with the orderly character of the population, is such that serious offences, as has been already shown, are much less rife in Victoria than in any of the other colonies. The total number of police of all ranks is 1,188 or is one policeman to every 790 of the population’.

From a return kindly furnished by the Chief Commissioner of Police, it is found that there is one policeman to every 722 of the population of South Australia, one to every 644 of the population of New South Wales, and one to every 468 of the population of Queensland. Mr. Chomley also finds that one policeman keeps in order and protects as many as 675 persons in Melbourne, whilst there is one to every 566 in Sydney, one to every 375 in Adelaide, and one to every 253 in Brisbane.

Real changes in policing were only achieved 40 years later, when for a time after World War One, ex-AIF generals were appointed to lead the Force.

The introduction of structured training for police recruits did not begin until 1919. Special training for detectives was not introduced until 1937, until then it was assumed detectives could only learn by experience. Amazingly, it wasn’t until the mid-1950s that Officer Training was introduced, and even then, it was greeted with a great deal of scepticism by police.

Despite the many changes which have taken place since the 1870’s, particularly in technology, in many ways the people and the environment confronting the police searchers at that time, is not entirely dissimilar to that faced by police today.

Ultimately, just as was the case then, we still rely on the bravery and common sense of police in the field to resolve high risk situations which imperil Victorians every day.

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