

# The Role of the new Metropolitan Police Force

By the late nineteenth century the police presence in London had changed dramatically from the occasional Bow Street Runner and JP. It was more organised and efficient than previous systems. The most important role of this new police force in London during the nineteenth century was to control and prevent crime. The 1829 Metropolitan



Police Act was just the first stage in reforming law and order in London. A Detective Department was established at Scotland Yard for the Metropolitan Police in 1842. Communication was speeded up by the introduction of the telegraph from 1867, and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) was set up in 1878. Records were not centralised but held at separate police station in London. Scotland Yard only held records on the most notorious of criminals. All of these changes were brought about in order to help the new police force to prevent crime and bring criminals to justice.

However, the new police force was not just responsible for preventing and solving crimes but had other roles in London society. This new 'streamlined' Metropolitan Police Force had huge responsibilities in London and was certainly kept busy in the East End – usually Whitechapel. They had six main responsibilities once on duty.

1. Crime prevention was not the only business of the new police force as they inherited many functions of the old watchmen and became responsible for providing other public services.
2. Lit London's lamps and called time out in the city.
3. The police had to control civil disturbances and riots instead of the army!
4. Watched out for fires that might start in London!
5. Policemen walked the streets armed with a truncheon, keeping an eye out for trouble.
6. They made every effort to solve crimes once they had been committed.

## Quick Task

1. What new police institutions were set up to help the Metropolitan Police prevent crime?
2. What responsibilities did the new police force have except preventing and solving crimes?