History Revision

Whitechapel

**Living Conditions**

General

Whitechapel is located in the East-end of London and was one of the poorest districts. 30,000 people lived there (176,000 people lived in the wider H division police zone). The majority of the population was middle class, but there were rich people and businesses as well, however they lived along the larger roads.

Pollution and Poor Sanitation

London suffered from pollution due to coal and gas fumes from industries (Eg the London smog). Sewerage and sanitation were poor, and clean drinking water was unreliable. This led to the spread of many diseases, such as cholera and typhus.

Typical Housing

Most of the Whitechapel housing were slums or “rookeries”. They were overcrowded, unsafe, and dirty. There was often up to 30 people living in one house. In 1881, 30,709 people lived in 4,069 houses – an average of 7.5 people per house.

The population of Whitechapel was 189 per acre compared to the 4.5 per acre in London. There were also “lodging houses”, where the homeless could sleep in 8-hour shifts. They were terribly unhygienic and were often found to be full of diseases and rats.

Flower and Dean Street

Flower and Dean Street was one of the worst streets in Whitechapel. There were:

* 38 houses
* 143 rooms
* 298 people living there

These houses were very unsafe, had little to no sanitation, and was very cramped.

Peabody Estates

George Peabody was an American who was horrified by the living conditions in Whitechapel. He funded the construction of flats which were much safer and cleaner. However, the average rent was 3-6 shillings a week.

Post 1888

After 1888, the Houses of the Working Classes Act replaced the slums with affordable housing. The Public Health Amendment Act promoted improvement for sanitation and refuse collection.

Key Sources for Poverty, Housing, and Workhouses

* The census (1871, 1881, 1891, 1901) – Sent to a property, it is a set pf questions about the people living there. Date of Birth, Religion, Occupation, Ect. We can use it to see the population, religion, age ranges and occupation at the time it was recorded.
* Board of Trade reports – Government department responsible for working conditions
* Boards of Works reports – Government department responsible for the condition of buildings and slum clearing
* Local Government records – Inspections into living and working conditions
* Workhouse Records – Inmate’s name, age, occupation, relationship to other inmates, ect.

**Workhouses**

Workhouses were built in the early 19th century to offer food and shelter to the poor. However, there was a bad stigma (social disgrace). Most people avoided going to the workhouses and struggled to leave.

Inmates included the poor, old, disabled, and sick. Vagrants only stayed 1 or 2 nights, they were considered a bad influence and were kept separately.

Conditions were deliberately poor to reduce running costs (as it was paid for by charities) and to deter people from staying for too long. It was often likened to a prison, and many called it the “inmate experience”

**Social Unrest**

Charles Booth

Charles Booth was a social reformer who wanted to collect information about London’s population, so that they could put pressure on the government to make improvements. He employed 80 people to collect detailed evidence on the streets. Booth’s maps are helpful for measuring poverty at the time.

Immigration

Irish immigration expanded quickly from the 1840s. They were mostly employed as low-skill manual labour. There was a lot of hostility towards them, as they have a reputation for being violent and drunk.

An Irish terrorist group called the “Fenians” were involved in a series of attacks, further ruining the reputation of the Irish even more. They were a group of people fighting for Ireland’s independence.

There was also a large amount of Jewish Immigration from Russia in the 1880s. There was also a lot of hostility towards them, as they were considered to be separate and unintegrated into the community. The prejudice was mainly based on physical looks, language, culture, and language. They were also supposedly linked to socialist and anarchist political groups.

The Jewish were also unpopular due to their business success and alleged bad business practices, such as paying low wages, and undercutting British prices. However, this is exactly what the British factories were doing as well.

Anarchism

Anarchists wanted a revolution where there would be no laws and authority. They committed several political assassinations in Europe and America. There was a concern that anarchist groups may commit crimes in Britain.

Socialism

Socialists wanted to bring down the existing capitalist system and redistribute the property of the rich to create equality. There was evidence of growing working-class support, which the authorities saw as dangerous. There were also some links between socialist groups and the Jewish community.

Bloody Sunday

On Bloody Sunday in 1887, a working-class socialist demonstration in Trafalgar Square was aggressively broken up by the police and the army. Commissioner Warren supported this approach and received significant press criticism and hostility as a result.

**Crime**

Policing Problems

Whitechapel had a reputation for high levels of crime; much of it was linked to high levels of poverty and unemployment. Crime was made easier due to the maze of alleyways and courtyards. Cultural and language barriers also added to these problems. Some areas, such as Ewer Street, were considered so dangerous that the police would not go there.

Prostitution

In 1888, there were around 1,200 prostitutes in Whitechapel. The poorest of them worked on the streets, which made them vulnerable to assault and rape. Other prostitutes worked in brothels (62 in Whitechapel) where they were safer but were also more easily exploited. Public attitudes towards prostitutes were often unsympathetic.

Alcohol

There were many pubs in Whitechapel, and drinking was very common to escape the terrible life. There was (and still is) strong links between alcohol and violence.

Protection Rackets and Gang Crime

Gangs, such as the Bessarabian Tigers, and gang crime were common. Many gangs organised protection rackets, where businesses were intimidated into paying gangs for protection. If they wouldn’t pay, they would be attacked.

**Policing Whitechapel**

Outside London

Britain did not have a single national police force. In 1900, Britain had 47,000 police officers in 243 separate forces. These forces were mostly controlled by local watch committees.

The Metropolitan Police

The Met police, which covered the London area, was the largest and most important force. It was led by the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. (Missing info)

Criminal Investigation Department (CID)

The Metropolitan Police also had a detective force called the CID. They had 249 detectives. The CID was setup in 1878 by Howard Vincent after the previous detective group was found to be corrupt.

Typical Recruits

Typical Recruits were young, working-class men of good honest character (more important than intelligence). You must be able to read and write and could have a maximum of two children. They were often from the countryside, as they are heathier. The job was well paid, secure, and after 30 years, you would be guaranteed a pension. They were given 2 weeks training in military drills, 1 week on beat duty with another officer (only in B and C division). Recruits had to be over 21, but under 32, and at least 5’ 9”.

The “Beat”

A “Beat” is a regular foot patrol by each police officer around a set area, which normally lasted around 90mins. Police officers had a truncheon, handcuffs, a whistle, and a lamp. Constables kept records in a diary and met with a sergeant regularly to discuss events. They focused on observation, stopping and questioning, and apprehending criminals.

The H Division

Whitechapel was the H division of the Met police. It was run by a superintendent, a chief inspector, 37 sergeants, and 500 constables. There were also 15 CID detectives attached to the H division. This force was responsible for policing 176,000 people, with a police officer to person ratio of 1:300.

Useful Sources for Crime and Policing

* Home Office Records – Government agency responsible for policing in Britain, and receives records from police forces about officers, crimes, arrests, ect.
* Metropolitan Police Records – The Met police kept detailed records about crimes, criminals, and investigators.
* Criminal Investigative Department – Kept detailed records of the detective’s findings
* Whitechapel H Division Records – More precise than the Met’s records
* Officer’s Beat Diaries – Notes taken by each officer whilst patrolling.
* The Police Code – Manual explaining how to question suspects and gain evidence.

Police Investigation Methods

* Post-mortem and coroner’s reports
* Leads from journalists
* Eye-witness accounts
* Posters asking for information
* House to house searches
* Mass questioning
* Police in disguise
* Bloodhounds

Whitechapel Vigilance Committee

George Lusk, a local builder, believed that the police were not doing enough. He setup his own vigilance committee, which also included two private detectives. Lusk’s committee sent the police unreliable evidence which had to be investigated. Lusk also received hoax letters, which the police also had to investigate.

Lack of Forensic Techniques

* Fingerprinting – only used after 1900
* Blood and DNA – DNA only used in the late 20th C
* Photography – no central database of photographs and measurements until 1894
* Crime scene photography just developing

Poor Communication

The police could only summon help with a whistle. They had a telephone line to the Met police, and an exchange in their headquarters by 1907. Bicycles were introduced in 1909 (or 1896 in Kent!)