



COLLECTIONS GUIDE 6

POLICE RECORDS

Contacting us

We recommend that you contact us to book a place before visiting our searchrooms.

WYAS Bradford

Central Library
Prince's Way
Bradford BD1 1NN
Telephone +44 (0)1274 435099
e-mail bradford@wyjs.org.uk

WYAS Calderdale

Central Library
Northgate House
Northgate
Halifax HX1 1UN
Telephone +44 (0)1422 392636
Facsimile +44 (0)1422 341083
e-mail calderdale@wyjs.org.uk

WYAS Kirklees

Central Library
Princess Alexandra Walk
Huddersfield HD1 2SU
Telephone +44 (0)1484 221966
Facsimile +44 (0)1484 542297
e-mail kirklees@wyjs.org.uk

WYAS Leeds

2 Chapeltown Road
Sheepscar
Leeds LS7 3AP
Telephone +44 (0)113 214 5814
Facsimile +44 (0)113 214 5815
e-mail leeds@wyjs.org.uk

WYAS Wakefield

Registry of Deeds
Newstead Road
Wakefield WF1 2DE
Telephone +44 (0)1924 305980
Facsimile +44 (0)1924 305983
e-mail wakefield@wyjs.org.uk

The Parish Constable

The immediate forerunner of modern law enforcement was the parish constable who operated in townships and parishes throughout the country. The constable was appointed by the Justices of the Peace, executed their warrants, followed their orders, and attended them at court sessions, bringing before them any offender that had been apprehended. His many other duties included leading the hue and cry (calling for the capture of a criminal), carrying out removals of paupers to other parishes, inspecting alehouses, and collecting and accounting for the county rate under the direction of the High Constables.

The oldest police force was established at Bow Street, London in the early 18th century. An Act of 1839 allowed the creation of county forces, but this was only made compulsory by the 1853 County and Borough Police Act. With this Act the post of the parish constable finally became redundant in all counties.

The West Riding Constabulary

The West Riding Constabulary was established in 1856. This new county force operated alongside separate borough police forces until 1968 when amalgamation began to take place.

Borough Police Forces

In many towns, some form of policing or 'watch' had long been in operation. A number of boroughs within the West Riding established their own police force prior to the creation of the West Riding Constabulary.

Policing West Yorkshire

The borough police forces for Wakefield, Dewsbury, Halifax and Huddersfield combined with the West Riding Constabulary to form the West Yorkshire Constabulary in 1968. With changes to local government boundaries and the establishment of new county areas in 1974, the borough forces of Leeds and Bradford finally amalgamated with the West Yorkshire Constabulary to form the West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police force from 1974. This force became known as the present West Yorkshire Police from 1986.

Borough Police	Collection Reference	Dates	WYAS Offices
BATLEY BOROUGH WATCH			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch Committee Minutes 	KMT7	1869-1950	Kirklees
BRADFORD CITY POLICE			
Bradford became a borough in 1847 when the watch committee first sought full-time officers. The force came to prominence in the area of fingerprinting evidence in 1903 and within wireless history for motor-cycle transmission in 1934.		1848 – 1974	Wakefield / Bradford
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel records (incomplete) • Photographs • Annual Reports • Watch Committee Minutes 	WYP/BR WYP/BR WYP/BR BBC1/5/1-39	1870s–1973 1890s-1960s 1873–1972 1847–1968	Wakefield Wakefield Wakefield Bradford
DEWSBURY BOROUGH POLICE			
The Dewsbury Police force was created after the town had been granted a Charter of Incorporation in 1862.		1862 – 1968	Wakefield / Kirklees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel records (incomplete) • Photographs • Reports of the Chief Constable • Watch Committee Minutes 	WYP/DE KA235 WYP/DE WYP/DE CB/D+KA235 CB/D	1940s 1873 – 1953 1910–1966 1929–1967 1886-1968 1862–1968	Wakefield Kirklees Wakefield Wakefield Kirklees Kirklees
HALIFAX BOROUGH POLICE			
The Halifax Borough Police were established when the town was granted its Royal Charter in 1848.		1848-1968	Wakefield/ Calderdale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel records • Photographs • Registers of thieves • Watch Committee Minutes 	WYP/HA WYP/HA WYP/HA HXM:185-214 HXM:597-605	1853 – 1968 1893 – 1959 1888 – 1924 1848 – 1943 1943 – 1965	Wakefield Wakefield Wakefield Calderdale Calderdale
HUDDERSFIELD BOROUGH POLICE			
Huddersfield's Improvement Commissioners had appointed police officers from 1848. In 1868 the township became a County Borough and the area of the force was extended to take in parts of the county constabulary. The original headquarters were replaced by new premises in Peel Street in 1896.		1868 – 1968	Wakefield/ Kirklees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel records • Photographs • Watch Committee Minutes • Criminals' records (incomplete) 	WYP/HU WYP/HU KMT98-99 CH/P/cr	1860s–1960s c.1897 – 1968 1820 – 1968 1859-1968	Wakefield Wakefield Kirklees Kirklees

Borough Police	Collection Reference	Dates	WYAS Offices
LEEDS CITY POLICE		1836 – 1974	Wakefield/ Leeds
<p>Leeds City Police was the first force established in West Yorkshire. The basic Leeds Police uniform adapted from the London Metropolitan Police uniform. Up to 1903 mounted duties were carried out by members of the Fire Brigade. In 1903 a new mounted detachment was inaugurated.</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel records • Photographs • Annual Reports • Watch Committee Minutes 	<p>WYP/LE WYP/LE WYP/LE LC/Police</p>	<p>1833 – 1974 1870s–1970s 1878 – 1972 1912 – 1956</p>	<p>Wakefield Wakefield Wakefield Leeds</p>
WAKEFIELD CITY POLICE		1848-1968	Wakefield
<p>Wakefield City Police force was established after the town had been granted a Charter of Incorporation in 1848. The original Police Station and lock-up was condemned in 1876 and new premises built. Records survival for this force is poor.</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel records (very few) • Wakefield Watch Committee records 	<p>WYP/WA WWC3</p>	<p>1852 – 1932 1848 – 1968</p>	<p>Wakefield Wakefield</p>
County Police	Collection Reference	Dates	WYAS Offices
WEST RIDING CONSTABULARY	WYP1	1856 – 1968	Wakefield
<p>Created in 1856 this force was originally divided into 31 police districts within the county. In 1928 the first patrol car made an appearance and a Road Traffic Division was created in 1938 - a driving school being established at Wakefield in 1944. Women first joined the force in 1925.</p>			
WEST YORKSHIRE CONSTABULARY	WYP2	1968 – 1974	Wakefield
<p>This force was created by the amalgamation of the West Riding Constabulary with the Wakefield, Halifax, Dewsbury and Huddersfield forces.</p>			
WEST YORKSHIRE METROPOLITAN POLICE	WYP3	1974 – 1986	Wakefield
<p>The new county force combined West Yorkshire Constabulary with the newly amalgamated Leeds and Bradford forces.</p>			
WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE	WYP4	1986 – present	Wakefield

County Police	Collection Reference	Dates	WYAS Offices
WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY		1968 – present	Wakefield
<p>The key statutory duty for a police authority is to secure the maintenance of an efficient and effective police force in its area. The West Yorkshire Police Authority consists of seventeen Members comprising:</p>			

Nine Councillors
 Three Magistrates
 Five Independent Members

Background Information about Yorkshire Police Forces

Publications about local police forces include:

- Shaw, B. (1970) *The History of the West Riding Constabulary* (Tadcaster: Barry Shaw)
 Clay, E.W. (ed.) (1974) *The Leeds City Police 1836-1974* (Leeds: Research and Planning Department, Leeds City Police)
 Holberry, S. (no date) *A Pictorial History of the Huddersfield and District Police Force* (unpublished)
 Jackson, C. (1983) *Wakefield Constabulary 1848-1968* (Wakefield: Sybil M. Jackson)
 Smith, G. (c.1973) *Bradford's Police* (Bradford: City of Bradford Police)
 Wild, J. (1968) *Halifax Borough Police* (unpublished)

For general historical background information and police memorabilia, why not visit

Yorkshire Law and Order Museums at Ripon

Web site: www.riponmuseums.co.uk
 Telephone: +44 (0)1765 690799

The Courthouse Museum, Minster Road, Ripon
 The Prison and Police Museum, St Marygate, Ripon
 The Workhouse Museum of Poor Law, Allhallowgate, Ripon

Access to Police Records

Some police records under 100 years old are subject to legal restrictions on access. You will be informed of any restrictions which apply when you contact the relevant West Yorkshire Archive Service office. For further information, please see the West Yorkshire Archive Service Policy on Access to Records, which is available from our web site.

This Collections Guide summarises the main series of police archives relevant to family history research. It also includes the primary administrative records, such as annual reports and watch committee minutes. It is not a complete listing of the police records held by West Yorkshire Archive Service - for further information please see our online catalogue at <http://dserve.wyjs.org.uk/> or contact West Yorkshire Archive Service, Wakefield.