

The crime museum at scotland yard criminology essay

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Arguments over whether the police should be routinely armed date to the creation of the capital's first force by Robert Peel in 1829. Indeed, senior officers in the 19th century would often carry a side-arm. But British policing took a different direction from that of Europe or America by declining to issue weapons on a routine basis (apart from in Northern Ireland). The reason for this was set out in Peel's principles of policing: he regarded the police as the public in uniform. Not for us the military-style Continental carabinieri of whom the general populace walk in fear and distrust. Our police, said Peel, are civilians, members of the public " who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent upon every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence". This relationship explains why we find the murder of police officers so especially shocking: they act as our proxies, required to place themselves in circumstances that, thankfully, we can stay clear of. This has led to a style of policing that emphasises containment, negotiation and the use of force as a last resort. By and large, it has made this country a less violent place than those where the police are armed. On the other hand, it leaves our police more vulnerable to the cornered gangster, the ruthless drug-trafficker or the evil cop-hater who carry guns and are prepared to use them. There was a time when cadets attending the police training course in Hendon, north London, were shown an episode from the film *The Blue Lamp*, in which a constable is shot after advancing on an armed suspect. Instructors considered this an object lesson in how not to deal with a gunman. The right way was to back off and seek to establish a rapport on the assumption that the suspect would not be mad

enough to kill a police officer. In countries where the police are routinely armed there would more often than not be a shoot-out.

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19 Sep 2012 Ironically, the policeman killed in The Blue Lamp was played by Jack Warner, who went on to become TV's quintessential bobby, Dixon of Dock Green, a name that would be forever associated with a golden age of avuncular policing where villains knew the rules and played by them. One thing they would never do is kill a police officer. But it was never as simple as that. Police officers were killed, even in the age of Dixon. The most notorious shootings – and the biggest loss of life for the police in a single incident on the mainland – took place in Shepherd's Bush, London, in 1966. Three plain-clothed officers approached a van which they suspected was being used for an armed robbery. One of the gangsters, Harry Roberts,

opened fire, and shot dead all three. Roberts remains in prison to this day, one of the UK's longest-serving convicts; had he committed his crime a few years earlier, he would almost certainly have hanged. Indeed, the two inevitable responses to the murders of Fiona Bone and Nicola Hughes in Manchester are for the police to be armed and the death penalty to be restored, specifically for killing an officer on duty. We cannot yet be sure what happened in the house to which the two constables appear to have been lured in what Sir Peter Fahy, the Greater Manchester police chief, called "a despicable act of pure evil". There are many who will argue that the killer's hand might have been stayed had the gallows awaited. But this argument is redundant because Parliament has made clear, on several occasions since 1965, that it does not propose to bring back the death penalty. More than that, the Government has, for good or ill, signed up to a protocol under the European Convention on Human Rights committing the UK to a permanent ban. Hanging is not going to be reintroduced, however loudly proponents may agitate for its return. But arming the police is another matter. Would one or both of the constables still be alive today had they been carrying guns? We tend to assume that even the most desperate criminal will think twice about producing a weapon when confronted with armed officers. But as was seen with the gunman Raoul Moat in Newcastle, there is a breed of criminal for whom a shoot-out with the police is considered a perverted act of bravado. This, after all, is a sub-culture in which guns - even hand grenades - are used to settle scores and extreme violence is endemic, even glorified. When Kieran Stapleton shot dead the Indian student Anuj Bidve in a motiveless attack in Manchester last Boxing

Day, his first action was to get a teardrop tattooed on his face to symbolise the fact that he had murdered someone. With people like this on our streets, can we ask our police any longer to go unarmed? As one former policeman put it after a colleague was shot dead several years ago: " Is it not time we stopped being a tourist attraction and became a law enforcement agency?" Yet the police themselves tend to oppose the routine issue of weapons. They know that if there is any prospect of confronting armed criminals, then a properly equipped response team can always be called up. And these are needed more than ever because over the past 30 years, gun crime has grown inexorably, principally because of the drugs trade. Dealers carry weapons to protect themselves from other criminals, and even a mandatory five-year sentence for possessing a gun is little deterrent for someone who will go to prison for up to 14 years if he is caught trafficking in crack or heroin. For others in the drugs underworld, a gun is little more than a fashion accessory. As we have seen in Manchester, they even use weapons more associated with warfare, mainly imported from Eastern Europe. The murder of a police officer on duty is still a relatively rare event, though there have already been three murders this year and more than 50 over the past half century. None the less, armed patrols are now commonplace at public buildings such as the Palace of Westminster, or transport hubs such as Heathrow Airport. Armed foot patrols are deployed in areas where gun crime is rife and armed response vehicles are used by most forces. This is the unavoidable response to a society in which criminals more readily resort to weapons, and terrorism is an ever-present threat. But these officers are deployed as and when needed. Few want a routinely armed force, not even

those in the front line. A Police Federation survey several years ago showed only 22 per cent of rank and file officers were in favour of routine arming, though 80 per cent wanted more to be trained and issued with guns. As Sir Hugh Orde, president of the Association of Chief Police Officers, said yesterday: "Guns don't necessarily solve the problem. The clear view of the British police service from top to bottom is we don't want to be armed." Most police officers know that, if they carried a gun, it would not necessarily save their lives. In America each year, a dozen officers are killed with their own weapons. Passers-by can also be hurt or killed: in a shoot-out recently in Manhattan, police killed a gunman but also wounded nine innocent onlookers. This country is unusual in having retained an unarmed police force for so long. In theory, it makes the police more approachable and less intimidating - even if their gradual retreat from the streets has made it easier for the culture that breeds gun crime to take root. We have, at least, retained the relationship between the police and the public that Peel envisaged nearly 200 years ago and which many other countries envy. It is a tradition worth preserving, even if that will be of little comfort to the family and friends now mourning two murdered Manchester officers. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/9553111/Do-we-really-want-to-arm-our-police.html>