

## The History of the British Association for Women in Policing

### Introduction

This document has been prepared as a personal project by a founder member, so that others can realise how far BAWP has progressed in its first 20 years.

It has to be dedicated to Tina Martin, without whose enthusiasm and foresight BAWP would never have existed, but also to all those who have helped along the way. It just goes to show that leadership is not necessarily a function of rank, as Tina was a constable for all of her service.

BAWP has always prided itself on not being rank conscious – probably because the founder members were mostly constables and sergeants, but I also think that being women may be a factor – and it is a great delight to see everyone on first name terms at our events. It has been interesting for me to see how individuals have developed personally and professionally during their time with BAWP, and many have valued the networking opportunities offered by belonging to a predominantly female group.

In the early days, not only did all work for the Association have to be done voluntarily, largely in our own time, it was also predominantly funded out of our own pockets. One reason it probably did not grow as quickly as it might is that we never had the resources available to produce and disseminate publicity material, and we were always very careful not to spend money that we did not have. Thus, the initial grant from the Home Office in 2000 was, for me, the start of what has really been an amazing rate of development for BAWP.

I must also acknowledge the tremendous support that has been provided over the years and through several editors by “Police Review” magazine. Some of the material for this booklet has been obtained by researching their past articles, and it reminded me of how valuable their assistance has been on occasions.

I am always surprised at the power of networking – a much maligned term in some quarters – but that is the main strength of BAWP. In putting together this booklet and the House of Lords Reception I have been able to trace many of the original members with whom contact had been lost, mostly through one person knowing another.

Although I am not sure how much longer I shall be actively involved in BAWP’s organisation, I see a rosy future for the Association, and look forward to continuing to read about its lobbying and achievements.

Carolyn Williamson  
Secretary, BAWP.

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## **In the beginning**

In 1985, a small article about the International Association of Women Police (IAWP) was featured in 'Police Review' magazine. The originator, Joan Lock, a retired Metropolitan Police Officer and an accomplished author, was unwittingly responsible for the formation of the British Association of Women Police. This article, together with two others by Joan Lock in 1986, prompted Constable Tina Martin from Derbyshire Constabulary to discover more about the Association. She attended the IAWP's Training Conference in the States in 1986, at her own expense, and came back enthused to do something similar in the UK.

Tina placed a letter in 'Police Review' inviting policewomen from around the UK, to attend a lunchtime meeting at Chesterfield, Derbyshire on 1st March 1987. 15 women from 8 forces (including, interestingly, two from the MOD Police) attended this meeting, along with Joan Lock and a lone male officer - the local Superintendent, representing Derbyshire Constabulary's Chief Constable. The cost was £7.50 each for a 3 course meal and afternoon coffee!

At this meeting, various issues were discussed but principally the formation of a British section of the IAWP. The following month saw a second meeting and it was then that the British Association of Women Police was formed using the constitution of the IAWP as its guide. Officers at the meeting elected a Committee and it was decided that a British section would benefit from being affiliated to the IAWP but needed to retain a separate identity so as to ensure that the needs of British policewomen were served to the full. The first funding was a £50 grant from IAWP and £1 from each of those present at the April meeting.

Although at that time the Association was aimed principally at policewomen, male colleagues have always been able to join as full members, and police support staff (as they were called at that time) were able to join as Associate members initially, but this was amended in 1998 to give them full recognition.

## **Links with the IAWP**

Although this was the start of the current BAWP, it was not the first time that British women had been involved with the IAWP. Indeed, Margaret Damer Dawson, founder of the Women Police Service, was on the original committee.

The history of the IAWP can be traced back to 1915. In that year, an organisation was formed in the USA called the International Policewomen's Association. Formed with assistance, support and approval of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Association was dissolved in 1956 to re-emerge as the International Association of Women Police. The constitution was revised and updated and its objectives clearly defined.

The IAWP has evolved steadily since 1956 with the introduction of the Annual Training Conferences in 1963 and the inclusion of male officers as full IAWP members in 1976. The 1970s saw the beginnings of real change in the roles undertaken by women officers. At the fourth regional seminar in May 1972, Sgt Rita Ostrander, a past president of the IAWP, told her audience, '... the stereotype of policewomen is rapidly changing from the muscular, masculine, middle-aged matron in orthopaedic shoes who knits between prisoners; to a picture of femininity with Sergeant's stripes, in the Chief's office, or a long haired hippy in the Narcotic Squad'.

In 1978, Constable Hilary Pownall from the Sussex Constabulary gave a presentation to that year's Annual Training Conference while she was in the USA on a Churchill Scholarship.

The 1980s saw the Annual Conferences being addressed by Daphne Skillern, retired Metropolitan Police Commander, on the subject of women and leadership, and Constable Gail Thompson from Lothian and Borders who spoke on the life and work of the British policewoman.

The 25th IAWP Annual Training Conference in New York saw the attendance of 9 police officers from a number of different forces. Tina Martin, by then the BAWP Chairman, was also awarded the IAWP honour of International Officer of the Year for 1987 in recognition of her work to develop membership of the IAWP.

Links with the IAWP have remained strong, with the 34th IAWP Conference (in 1996) and the 43rd (in 2005) being held in the UK, in Birmingham and Leeds respectively. Additionally, Jane Townsley, one of the organisers of the Leeds conference, after a spell as Regional Co-ordinator, became 1st Vice President in 2006, and has been one of the leaders in reforming the way in which the IAWP conducts its business.

### **Onward and Upward!**

In the years that followed, membership growth and recognition for the BAWP was slow but the 1990s saw renewed and stimulated interest in all aspects of women in society. Career breaks, part-time working and the promotion of equal opportunities thrust the concept of the BAWP into the foreground.

Through the hard work of some members of the Committee, support was gained from some individual senior police officers, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Police Federation of England & Wales. Membership began to increase and interest was stimulated throughout the United Kingdom. BAWP has always included the non-geographic and military police forces in its membership, making it unique amongst police associations.

BAWP has also formed a close association with the European Network for Policewomen (ENP), which was founded in the Netherlands in 1989 and was initially funded by the Dutch government. The ENP inspired the European Conference 'Quality Through Equality' at the Police Staff College, Bramshill, in March 1992 and the British Association of Women Police assisted behind the scenes in the organisation and running of the Conference. Mr Baden Skitt, the then Chief Constable of Hertfordshire Constabulary and Equalities Spokesman of ACPO, addressed the Conference on the opening day by acknowledging and welcoming support groups within the police service, and giving some graphic examples of the inequalities then being experienced by some women.

Although it may not have been realised at the time, this conference was something of a watershed in furthering the cause of equality of opportunity for women in the police service, and certainly didn't do any harm to those involved! Some of those on the organising committee for this event were Acting Chief Inspector Julie Spence of Avon & Somerset Constabulary, now Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire Constabulary and President of BAWP; Chief Inspector Anne Summers, also Avon & Somerset, who eventually retired as Deputy Chief Constable of West Midlands Police; and Superintendent Della Cannings of Devon & Cornwall Constabulary, who retired in 2007 from being Chief Constable of North Yorkshire Police.

The ties with the IAWP and ENP were further strengthened in 1996 when BAWP, as an affiliate organisation, hosted the 34th IAWP Training Conference in Birmingham and invited ENP to hold its own biennial conference alongside it. This was the first time that the IAWP conference had been held outside North America, and showed what could be achieved. It was also the first time that a training event on this scale was open to all ranks of police

officer and staff, not just a specific sector. Since then, it has been held in Canberra, Australia in 2002, again in the UK in 2005, and is in Darwin, Australia in 2008. In addition, BAWP was instrumental in getting ENP formally represented on the IAWP Board of Directors.

In 1997 BAWP took another step forward when it created the position of President, and elected Commander Judy Davison of City of London Police as the first incumbent. The benefit of having an ACPO ranking woman openly supporting the Association once again raised the Association's public profile, and this has been increased even further by her successor, Julie Spence. When Julie took over the mantle, in 2000, she was Assistant Chief Constable in Thames Valley Police, and has since progressed through the ranks, becoming Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire Constabulary in 2005.

### **Recognition at last!**

During 1999, under Judy Davison's leadership, the Home Office finally acknowledged the existence and value of BAWP and, following a meeting with the then Secretary of State, Charles Clarke, was offered a grant for 2000/2001. At the time, in an article in 'Police Review' she said "At present a small committee of dedicated people do all the work for BAWP in their spare time. We need a full time coordinator to carry out all the important tasks such as over-viewing and co-ordinating national research. We need a coordinator to expand our work and meet the demands we know exist." It enabled BAWP to establish a proper administrative structure and expand both its membership base and the services it can offer to those members. Since then funding has continued and has gradually increased, enabling BAWP to develop far beyond the wildest dreams of its founders.

The first National Co-ordinator was in fact only part time (officially!), and was a recently retired Superintendent from Greater Manchester Police, Irene Divine. Thanks to her hard work and persistence, BAWP became accepted as an organisation the Home Office wanted to do business with, and she was able to raise the profile of BAWP nationally. The reins were passed to Inspector Liz Owsley in 2005, who was seconded full time from the Metropolitan Police Service – another milestone. Liz has been able to build on Irene's work and achieve even greater recognition for BAWP. She has also been able to work more closely with other support organisations, develop a network of regional contacts, and another of women in specialist roles.

One indication of the general acceptance of BAWP as a serious and legitimate organisation came in 2002 when it was invited to participate in the police contingent that marched down the Mall in London to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee. A group of 19 women officers from 15 different police forces assembled in a meeting room at the House of Commons on Tuesday 4 June before joining the rest of the group in Horse Guard's Road for much-needed marching practice in the morning. They then returned to the House of Commons to get changed prior to moving off at 15.46, passing Her Majesty the Queen outside Buckingham Palace at 16.06 – planned with military precision! Those who participated were given their Golden Jubilee Medals on the day, ahead of the main distribution, and will never forget the roar of the crowds as they marched down the Mall. The day ended in spectacular fashion with a real grandstand view of the Red Arrows and Concorde flypast from the roof of the House of Commons.

### **Gender Agenda**

In 2001 BAWP was involved in the launch of a document and philosophy entitled the "Gender Agenda". This was created by a group of individuals, mostly women, who between them represented most of the staff associations and organisations for police officers in the UK, or who were interested parties in the effort to get things moving. At the time it concentrated principally on the needs of women officers, but acknowledged that other

women in the service, and some men, experienced similar challenges. It was always intended to be a living document, and regular reports were posted on progress. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Police (HMIC) included involvement in the Gender Agenda as one of the points covered by its Basic Command Unit inspections, and reference has been made to it in several Home Office documents.

By 2005, however, it was felt that the time was ripe for a total revamp of the Gender Agenda, and 16 workshops were held across the UK in early 2006 in order to get updated information on the issues raised in the original document, and to look for any new ones. The information received from these workshops was processed, and emerged in October 2006 as the new "Gender Agenda 2". In line with both BAWP policy to be totally inclusive, and current practice in the police service, the needs of all female personnel were included in the new document, not just police officers.

### **BAWP into the 21st Century**

In furtherance of one of its aims, BAWP now runs at least two professional development days a year. The theme is chosen to reflect current concerns, and they have covered a very wide range of topics - a few being Body Armour for Women; Violence against Women; Building Alternative Working Practices; and Women's Health.

The other aspect of BAWP that has improved beyond measure is its 'shopfront' quarterly magazine "Grapevine". What started as a few sheets of typing on a stencil to produce a duplicated black and white newsletter has evolved into a professionally produced full colour magazine with photographs. The website has also been through a few versions, the latest being professionally designed with additional features, and is accessed by a wide range of people seeking information on relevant issues. A series of information leaflets has also been produced and updated.

In 2006 BAWP inaugurated its own Annual Awards to recognise the contributions of women within the police service. These are awarded in a number of different categories, and the winner in each then goes forward to the IAWP awards. The calibre of nominees is shown by the fact that, in each of its first two years, three of the BAWP winners went on to be recognised by the IAWP, and interest has been expressed by another sponsor to establish another category.

As we move into the 21st century, BAWP is playing a full part in providing a platform for the views of women in the police service to be put forward at the highest levels. It has representatives on numerous Home Office working groups, and is regularly consulted on issues affecting women. Its corporate membership extends to most UK police forces, some individual specialist departments and command units, the Association of Police Authorities, some Police Authorities, and commercial organisations. It is unique in that it encompasses national and geographic police forces from all over the UK, military police, and organisations with law enforcement responsibilities.

Although it is no longer used, when it was founded, BAWP adopted the motto 'Animo et Scientia' which translated means 'with courage and knowledge' – surely the qualities of the professional police officer!

There is much more that could be said, but that will have to wait for another publication, and final thanks must go to the various companies and organisations that have supported BAWP in many ways over the years, including Police Mutual Assurance Society for its assistance with the publication of this booklet.

## **Appendix**

### **Founder Members**

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Karen Austin        | Merseyside Police                        |
| Shelley Costall     | South Yorkshire Police                   |
| Christine Disley    | Merseyside Police                        |
| Pauline Fedrick     | Derbyshire Constabulary                  |
| Sara Fleming        | Hertfordshire Constabulary               |
| Ann Green           | Gloucestershire Constabulary             |
| Pat Hales           | Derbyshire Constabulary                  |
| Kay Hollis          | MOD Police                               |
| Christine Kirk      | South Yorkshire Police                   |
| Mary Lea            | Metropolitan Police                      |
| Lynne Lees          | Merseyside Police                        |
| Joan Lock           | Retired Metropolitan Police & Journalist |
| Jane Maguire        | Lincolnshire Constabulary                |
| Tina Martin         | Derbyshire Constabulary                  |
| Judith Newland      | Merseyside Police                        |
| Annette Payne       | Metropolitan Police                      |
| Christine Priestley | Ex Derbyshire Constabulary               |
| Maxine Swansbury    | MOD Police                               |
| Carolyn Williamson  | West Midlands Police                     |
| Karen Wright        | Derbyshire Constabulary                  |

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766 4056 or by emailing [sec@bawp.org](mailto:sec@bawp.org).*