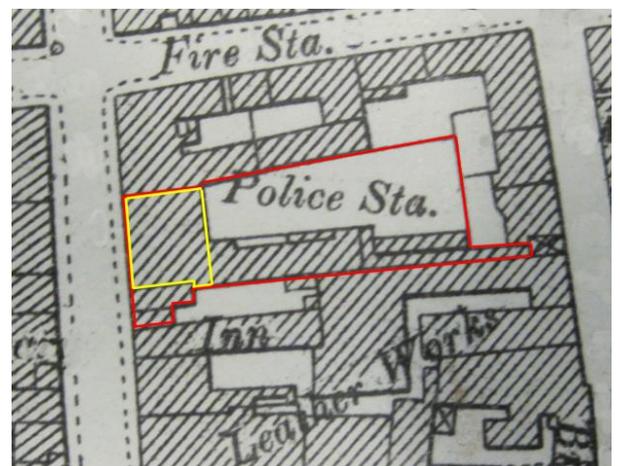




Chief Constable Frank Richardson

Ernest Frank Richardson (1872-1952) was a Chief Constable of Salisbury, Wiltshire. He never used his given name Ernest. He was the first son of Frank and Mary (née Taylor) Richardson and was born in Gloucester on the 2nd January 1872. Soon after his birth his parents moved to Birmingham where his father joined the City Police Force. In 1882 his father was promoted to the rank of Chief Constable of Hereford so the family moved from Birmingham to Hereford. From 1882 to about 1887 he attended the Broomy Hill Academy just on the edge of the city to finish his education. He then moved back to Birmingham in the late 1880's and served in the City of Birmingham Police, Detective's Office, initially as a police clerk, and then joined the Gloucestershire Police Force in Cheltenham in 1891. Within three months he was posted to the City of Gloucester Force on a special assignment. In 1899 he was promoted to Station Sergeant and Chief Clerk to the Deputy Chief Constable of Gloucestershire and was often involved with notable criminal cases and experimenting with developing an index system for fingerprinting records.

On the 12th September 1903 he applied to the Watch Committee for Salisbury for the then vacant post of Chief Constable. He attended a meeting of the Committee on the 3rd October 1903 and was told very quickly he was successful, subject to a medical examination. This was satisfactory and he took up the post on the 31st October 1903. Articles appeared about his appointment and career in the Salisbury Times and Salisbury Journal plus the Police Chronicle and Western Gazette. It was noted that his father was the Chief Constable of Hereford and he had a brother who was Chief Constable of Halifax. This meant the family had three Chief Constables in office at the same time, a fact that was to last for another seventeen years. He also had two brothers in the South African Police Force and another who was in the Birmingham City Police until 1938. Frank Richardson, his wife and subsequent three children lived at 12 Endless Street, Salisbury in the then police complex of buildings. This housed the police station, parade ground, various offices and horses with stabling. Adjacent to this was the city Fire Service building.



One of his first major cases on his arrival in Salisbury involved a national figure named the Reverend George Litten, a radical cleric who refused to pay certain taxes, and who was sent to Winchester Prison on occasions by the Salisbury Magistrates. Duly sentenced to another term of imprisonment in Winchester gaol there were threats of violence from Litten's local supporters on one occasion. Chief Constable Richardson defused the situation by appearing at Litten's house in Salisbury on the day to escort him to Winchester gaol by train, but doing so in a suit and not uniform. Litten was moved to write to the press admiring his tact.

One of his first undertakings after coming into office as Chief Constable was to seek permission from the Watch Committee to purchase bicycles for the Constables and Sergeants of the Force to make them more mobile, and then to ensure that every officer took a course in First Aid. In 1906 he was applauded by his superiors when he organised the Police, Fire and hospital Medical departments into a joint rescue team after the horrific train crash in the city railway station. Passenger lives were saved and injuries treated quickly because his men were able to get to the scene quickly by bicycle and provide First Aid on the spot. He appeared as headlines and photograph with the Mayor and American Consul on the front page of The Daily Mirror on 4th July 1906. The Salisbury Council awarded every member of the city police force £5 and two days extra pay in recognition of the part they played in the rescue work. At this time his work load included prosecuting three cases of Bigamy at the Salisbury Magistrates County Court, a prosecution relating to a livestock farmer for infringing the Swine Removal Order and a Royal Visit by Princess Christian to the city. In 1908 Frank Richardson raised the profile of using horses for crowd control to protect The King and Queen, whose lives were considered to be under threat at the time, when they visited the Earl of Pembroke's estate at nearby Wilton. Frank Richardson brought in extra policemen from surrounding areas who were given specific orders on how to maintain crowd control with the aid of the horses. This was the first time that this had been done in an organised and professional manner. As a result, a special report was circulated by the Home Office to other Chief Constables in England on the success of the methods used, and to advise them to use these methods when Royalty visited their city.

He was prominent in conducting a murder enquiry in Salisbury of a ten year old boy named Teddy Haskell with Inspector Walter Dew from Scotland Yard, who a few years later would arrest Dr. Crippen for the murder of his wife amidst a lot of publicity.



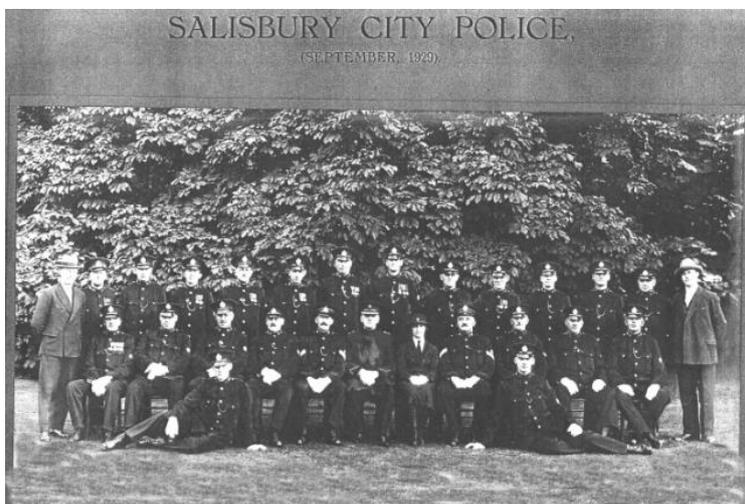
During World War One Salisbury was host to a great many soldiers from military camps on Salisbury Plain. In 1915 the Home Secretary sent a letter to the Chief Constable asking him to ensure well-meaning locals did not purchase intoxicating liquors to wounded soldiers who visited public houses in the city. Frank Richardson had to tell the owners of licensed premises this was not permitted under military law.

Frank Richardson was the first Chief Constable in England to attest a female as a Woman Constable and Detective. Being attested meant she had the power of arrest and had the same rights, including paying into a pension, as male constables. She was Florence Mildred White who was born in December 1873 in Warminster, Wilts. She had been to Baden-Baden, Germany, in 1892 to work as a teacher in a college, and then returned in 1902 to teach at The Godolphin School, Salisbury. In 1914 she left teaching abruptly and joined an unofficial women's street patrols unit in Bath, Somerset, and later in Bristol city. In 1918 she joined the City of Salisbury Police and was attested immediately. Another female, Miss Elsie Moulard, (attesting of females was still very rare) was attested by Frank Richardson in 1925 when Miss White moved to Birmingham City Police where she served with distinction as a Detective Inspector until retirement, with pension, in 1937.

Frank Richardson was tall, ramrod straight, very slim and distinctive. He was known throughout the city as "a man who liked to be seen" often walking the city streets and talking about police and crime matters to the local innkeepers, shop keepers and shoppers. He always attended, in his Number Two uniform (Number One uniform was the Full Dress), important events and indeed is captured on a very early Pathé newsreel of 1918 walking across Victoria Park, Salisbury, to talk to the city Mayor. This was a celebration in the park for the ending of the First World War.

He was very friendly with Ted Fownes, the last official Coachman of England. Fownes retired in the early 1920s and then lived at Parkhouse, Cholderton, Wiltshire until his death in 1944.

Frank Richardson was a popular Chief Constable and at his retirement in 1929 the city officials praised him especially for his fairness and tact in the city magistrates court cases of the last 26 years. He retired to a house near Victoria Park.



Ernest Frank Richardson spent 38 years in the Police Force. He died in 1952 at his home in Castle Road, Salisbury.

Family note:

Frank Richardson married Emily Caroline Hignell Tedder, the step daughter of Nehemiah Philpott, Deputy Chief Constable of Gloucestershire and Elizabeth Ann in Gloucester in 1899. They had three daughters, two who survived, and one son.

Source Material

Further reading at the Salisbury City Library, Police Section, Local Studies Department;
Ernest Frank Richardson, Chief Constable. A biography.
Florence Mildred White. Policewoman, A biography.

Both Frank Richardson and Mildred White can be found in Wikipedia.