

**Copy of a report on the probable duration of life of the men in the City
Police Force : with general observations on the medical history of the force
/ by G. Borlase Childs.**

Contributors

Childs, G. B. 1816-1888.
Royal College of Surgeons of England

Publication/Creation

[London] : W.H. Collingridge, 1863.

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/y9bvyf82>

Provider

Royal College of Surgeons

License and attribution

This material has been provided by This material has been provided by The Royal College of Surgeons of England. The original may be consulted at The Royal College of Surgeons of England. where the originals may be consulted. This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.



Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>



Scutag

COPY OF A

REPORT

ON

THE PROBABLE DURATION OF LIFE

OF THE

MEN IN THE CITY POLICE FORCE,

WITH

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE MEDICAL HISTORY
OF THE FORCE.

BY

G. BORLASE CHILDS, Esq., F.R.C.S.E. by Exam.,

SURGEON TO THE FORCE,

ADDRESSED TO THE WORSHIPFUL THE POLICE COMMITTEE.

1863.

REPORT.

March, 1863.

TO THE

WORSHIPFUL THE POLICE COMMITTEE.

MY LORD MAYOR, AND GENTLEMEN,

Agreeable to your orders of the 20th ult., "to report upon the probable duration of life of the men in the Police Force, of the peculiar diseases to which they are liable, with general observations upon the medical history of the City Police Force," I have the honour to report as follows:—

1st. "The probable duration of a Policeman's life." It may be as well, perhaps, to premise that the recruitment of the Force is placed under peculiar restrictions. No candidate can be admitted unless, by testimonials or otherwise, he satisfies the Commissioner that his character is such as entitles him to become the trustworthy guardian of life and property. A twelvemonth's good character from his last situation is required, and testimonials in his favour from persons of known respectability. Having passed the Commissioner he has to undergo an examination by the surgeon; the causes of rejection being precisely similar to those which regulate the examination of recruits in the army. The Policeman's is therefore a picked life, and on entering the Force he may be looked upon as a man possessing a high

standard of health, and capable of undergoing a more than ordinary amount of physical exertion. On referring to my returns for five years, I find that from 1852 to 1856, inclusive, 1,345 candidates sought admission into the Force; of this number 534 were rejected by the Commissioner, and 181 by the Surgeon. From this it will be seen that great care is taken not only to recruit the Force from the deserving and intelligent classes of the community, but to prevent men from entering the service whose bodily health and strength are not such as will enable them to bear the fatigues, exposure, and hand-to-hand conflicts necessarily incidental to a Policeman's calling.

Though, surgically speaking, the recruitment of the Force is similar to that of the army, in a moral point of view the test is higher. The members of the Police Force, from education and previous employment, are less prone to damage their healths by those excesses which have a demoralizing and injurious tendency upon other men, whose minds, from want of occupation and defective early training, cannot be prevailed upon to see the responsibilities of their calling, nor the inestimable advantages of that greatest of all blessings, a sound mind in a sound body. This is a truth which cannot be shaken. Let us compare the mortality of the *Home* army with that of the Police Force, whose duty is much more severe; we shall find that whilst in the one case it reached for the same period in the Household Cavalry 11·1, Dragoon Guards and Dragoons 13·5, Infantry of the Line 17·8, Foot Guards 20·4, in the Police it fell to 8·9, per 1,000.

From the year 1852 to 1856, inclusive, the number of men who left the Force, from all causes, amounted to 594, being about 54 more than the average strength of the whole Force for the same period, or at the rate of 118·8 per annum.

The average length of service of those who retired on pensions or gratuities, being unfit for further service (injuries excluded), was 10 years 176 days, of those injured on duty and pensioned, 7 years 182 days, and of those who resigned

without compensation, 1 year 218 days. The total number who left the Force from all causes, including deaths and invaliding, was as follows:—

1852.—3 deaths, 23 dismissals, 29 at their own desire, 7 bad health, 8 reports against them, 18 during probation—118.

1853.—6 deaths, 4 on pensions or gratuities, 19 dismissals, 82 at their own desire, 6 bad health, 14 on reports, 24 on probation—155.

1854.—6 deaths, 1 pension or gratuity, 16 dismissals, 36 at their own desire, 19 from ill health, 4 from reports, 21 on probation—103.

1855.—6 deaths, 11 on pensions or gratuities, 15 dismissals, 43 at their own desire, 8 ill health, 17 from reports, 9 on probation—108.

1856.—3 deaths, 7 on pensions or gratuities, 21 dismissals, 36 at their own desire, 12 ill health, 13 from reports, 12 on probation—110.

Of the 24 cases of death referred to, 1 died from cholera (the only death from this disease since my appointment in 1844), 2 from typhus fever, 2 from small pox, 11 from chest diseases, and 8 from other diseases. Of these, 11 were men on day duty and 13 on night duty; 3 lived in the Station Houses and 21 at their own homes. In the year 1857, 57 men left the Force, who were pensioned or received gratuities in consequence of being “worn out,” or otherwise injured whilst in the discharge of their duties; their period of service varying from ten to seventeen years.

I mention these facts in order that your Honourable Committee may see how changeable is the character of the Police Force; and when it is further known that the average time a man remains in the service is about four years, the difficulty of arriving at any very accurate estimation of the probable duration of the Policeman's life becomes apparent.

Still something may be done in this respect, and an opinion near enough perhaps for certain practical purposes may be arrived at by comparing the Police service with that of men

who follow somewhat similar employment, and whose rate of mortality approximates that of the former—men of out-door trades in towns requiring great or little exercise. In the latter the rate of mortality is 8·538, the Police being 8·9, per 1,000.

In these two classes of occupations it will be seen that the rate of mortality is somewhat higher in the Police. This may perhaps be accounted for from the fact that the amount of physical exercise amongst the Police is less than that of the other class; for it has been found that those accustomed to a great degree of physical exercise are subject to a lower rate of mortality.

The expectation of life, amongst out-door occupations requiring great or little exercise, in ages ranging from 20 to 40 is as follows:—At 20 expectation of life 40·6, at 30 expectation of life 33·35, at 40 expectation of life 26·0, or an average of 33·316. Previous to Lord Herbert's commission, appointed to enquire into the sanitary condition of the army, little or nothing was known as regards the vital statistics of the Police, and I feel some pride in being one of the first to supply that omission. The tables which were at that period supplied by Sir Richard Mayne and myself must form the basis of all future calculations on this important subject. These tables have guided me in the calculations which I now lay before you; and, without regarding my conclusions incontrovertible, I feel that I have brought them to as near an approximation of what is true as I am enabled to do without exceeding the ordinary calculations deducible from published facts.

These figures do not apply to members of the Force who have retired on pensions, for it must be borne in mind that with such the wear and tear of life are diminished; absence of all care and anxiety as to the future, and the non-exposure to those vicissitudes and risks incidental to Police duty, are the means of prolonging life, and afford some excuse for the old adage, "Pensioners never die."

2. "Of the peculiar diseases to which the Police are liable, with general observations on the medical history of the City Police." I have no difficulty in supplying all the information which your Honourable Committee may require upon this important subject. Monthly returns are carefully kept of all cases of sickness which occur amongst the members of the Force; and on referring to my experience of past years, I find that in the year 1862 sufficient evidence is afforded by which you may be instructed upon this point. At the risk of being tedious I am therefore tempted to lay such evidence before you, feeling assured that, as guardians and administrators of the Force, your Honourable Committee is deeply interested in all matters which concern its happiness and welfare.

In the month of January, 1862, the total number of daily sick amounted to 605, the number of diseases being 87; of these, 6 were cases of common continued fever, 1 typhus, 2 chest disease, 31 acute catarrh, 7 stomach and bowel complaints, 18 acute rheumatism, 7 boils and abscess, 1 syphilis, 6 injuries, 8 other diseases; of these, 22 resided in the Station Houses, 65 at their own residences; 45 were on day duty, and 12 on night duty.

In February, the total daily sick amounted to 638, the number of cases of sickness 58; of these, 3 were cases of common continued fever, 1 typhus, 1 chest disease, 14 acute catarrh, 8 stomach and bowel complaints, 17 acute rheumatism, 4 boils and abscess, 2 syphilis, 5 injuries, 3 other diseases; of these, 21 resided in Station Houses, and 37 at their own residences; 31 were men on day duty, and 27 on night duty. In this month there was 1 death from consumption.

In March, the total daily sick was 664, and the number of cases of sickness 72; of these, 3 were cases of common continued fever, 1 typhus, 5 chest disease, 10 stomach and bowel complaints, 17 acute catarrh, 12 acute rheumatism, 4 boils and abscess, 1 syphilis, 6 injuries, 13 other diseases; of these,

30 resided in Station Houses, and 42 at their own residences ; 31 were men on day duty, and 41 on night duty.

In April, total daily sick 517, number of cases of sickness 62, viz., 3 common continued fever, 1 typhus, 3 chest diseases, 11 acute catarrh, 8 stomach and bowel complaints, 14 acute rheumatism, 3 boils and abscess, 1 syphilis, 6 injuries, 12 other diseases ; of these, 27 lived in Station Houses, and 35 at their own residences ; 32 were on day duty, and 30 on night duty.

May, total daily sick 560, number of cases of sickness 69 ; of these, 3 were cases of common continued fever, 1 typhus, 4 chest disease, 8 acute catarrh, 8 stomach and bowel complaints, 14 acute rheumatism, 5 boils and abscess, 9 injuries, 17 other diseases ; 18 lived in Station Houses, 51 at their own residences ; 36 were men on day duty, 33 on night duty. In this month there was 1 death from consumption.

June, total daily sick 457, cases of sickness 69 ; 3 common continued fever, 5 chest diseases, 15 acute catarrh, 2 stomach diseases and bowel complaints, 17 acute rheumatism, 6 boils and abscess, 8 injuries, 13 other diseases ; 24 lived in Station Houses, 45 at their own residences ; 32 were men on day duty, and 37 on night duty. In this month there were 2 deaths, 1 from consumption, and 1 from cancer in the stomach.

July, total daily sick 524, cases of sickness 56, viz., 3 common continued fever, 2 chest disease, 10 acute catarrh, 9 stomach and bowel complaints, 14 acute rheumatism, 4 boils and abscess, 7 injuries, 7 other diseases ; 24 lived in Station Houses, 32 at their own residences ; 27 were on day duty, and 29 on night duty.

August, total daily sick 509, cases of sickness 78 ; 2 common continued fever, 1 chest disease, 17 acute catarrh, 20 stomach and bowel complaints, 15 acute rheumatism, 3 boils and abscess, 1 syphilis, 5 injuries, 14 other diseases ; of these, 26 resided in the Station Houses, 52 at their own residences ; 40 were on day duty, 38 on night duty.

September, total daily sick, 463, cases of sickness 77; 2 common continued fever, 1 small pox, 2 chest diseases, 26 acute catarrh, 14 stomach and bowel complaints, 14 acute rheumatism, 2 boils and abscess, 5 injuries, 12 other diseases; 27 resided in Station Houses, and 50 at their own residences; 41 were on day duty, and 36 on night duty.

October, total daily sick 452, cases of sickness 57; 1 common continued fever, 1 small pox, 1 chest disease, 7 acute catarrh, 12 stomach and bowel complaints, 10 acute rheumatism, 4 boils and abscess, 2 syphilis, 7 injuries, 12 other diseases; 21 resided in Station Houses, 36 at their own residences; 35 were on day duty, and 22 on night duty.

November, total daily sick, 557, cases of sickness 81; 2 small pox, 2 chest disease, 28 acute catarrh, 7 stomach and bowel complaints, 18 acute rheumatism, 3 boils and abscess, 2 syphilis, 6 injuries, 13 other disease; 26 resided in the Station Houses, and 35 at their own residences; 49 were on day duty, and 32 on night duty.

December, total daily sick 533, cases of sickness 73, viz., 1 small pox, 2 chest disease, 30 acute catarrh, 1 stomach and bowel complaints, 12 acute rheumatism, 4 boils and abscess, 4 syphilis, 8 injuries, 11 other diseases; of these 27 resided in Station Houses, and 46 at their own residences, 39 were on day duty, and 34 on night duty.

From these returns it will be seen that for the year 1862 the number of daily sick amounted to 6,479, and that the number of diseases for the same period was 839, which may be tabulated as follows :—

TABLE A.—1862.

Return showing the number of daily sick, with strength of the Force, and comparative amount of sickness between men on day and night duty, those living in Station Houses and at their own residences.

Months.	Total daily Sick.	Dis- eases.	CLASSIFICATION OF DISEASES.										Day Duty.	Night Duty.	At Station Houses.	At their own Residences.	Strength of Force.	
			Common continued Fever.	Typhus Fever.	Small Pox.	Chest Disease.	Acute Catarrh.	Stomach and Bowel.	Acute Rheumatism.	Boils and Abscess.	Syphilis.	Injuries.						Other Diseases.
January....	605	87	6	1	..	2	31	7	18	7	1	6	8	45	42	22	65	615
February ..	638	58	3	1	..	1	14	8	17	4	2	5	3	31	27	21	37	613
March	664	72	3	1	..	5	17	10	12	4	1	6	13	31	41	30	42	612
April	517	62	3	1	..	3	11	8	14	3	1	6	12	32	30	27	35	613
May	560	69	3	1	..	4	8	8	14	5	..	9	17	36	33	18	51	609
June	457	69	3	..	..	5	15	2	17	6	..	8	13	32	37	24	45	600
July	524	56	3	..	..	2	10	9	14	4	..	7	7	27	29	24	32	608
August	509	78	2	..	..	1	17	20	15	3	1	5	14	40	38	26	52	604
September ..	463	77	2	..	1	2	26	14	14	2	..	5	11	41	36	27	50	601
October	452	57	1	..	1	1	7	12	10	4	2	7	12	35	22	21	36	595
November ..	557	81	..	..	2	2	28	7	18	3	2	6	13	49	32	26	55	603
December ..	533	73	..	..	1	2	30	4	12	4	1	8	11	39	34	27	46	597
TOTAL ..	6,479	839	29	5	5	30	214	109	175	49	11	78	134	438	401	293	546	Monthly strength. 605.83

TABLE B.

Return showing the number of diseases or daily accessions to the Sick List.

Months.	CLASSIFICATION OF DISEASES.											Total.
	Common continued Fever.	Typhus.	Small Pox.	Chest Diseases.	Acute Catarrh.	Stomach and Bowels.	Acute Rheumatism.	Boils and Abscess.	Syphilis.	Injuries.	Other Diseases.	
January... ..	4	1	..	..	25	7	15	6	1	4	5	68
February	1	..	..	..	10	7	8	3	1	3	4	37
March	1	..	..	4	13	8	9	3	..	4	12	54
April	1	..	..	1	8	7	11	2	1	2	8	41
May	1	..	..	2	8	8	10	3	..	6	13	51
June	2	..	..	3	15	1	13	4	..	5	9	52
July	2	..	..	1	6	9	7	3	..	5	3	36
August	1	..	..	1	16	18	11	3	1	2	11	64
September	1	..	1	1	21	12	5	1	..	3	4	49
October	1	..	..	1	5	10	8	4	2	4	9	44
November ....	..	..	1	2	26	5	12	2	..	7	10	65
December ....	..	..	..	1	25	4	6	4	..	5	6	51
TOTAL ..	15	1	2	17	178	96	115	38	6	50	94	612

TABLE C.

Return showing the actual number of deaths during the year 1862.

Months.	Consumption and Chest Disease.	Cancer in Stomach.	Total.	Day Force.	Night Force.	Men living in Station.	Men living at Home.	Strength of Force.
February	1	..	1	1	..	..	1	613
May	1	..	1	1	..	..	1	609
June	1	1	2	1	1	..	2	600
	3	1	4	3	1	..	4	Average strength per year. 605·83

Showing a mortality of 6·6 per 1,000.

TABLE D.

Return showing the actual number of deaths for five years—from 1858 to 1862 inclusive.

Years.	Kidney disease.	Chest disease.	Brain disease.	Aneurism.	Suicide.	Injuries.	Small Pox.	Typhoid Fever.	Rheumatic Fever.	Stomach disease.	Day Force.	Night Force.	Residing in Stations.	Residing at Home.	Total.	Average strength of Force.
1858	1	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	1	..	3	3	580.0
1859	..	2	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	3	1	..	4	4	582.916
1860	..	1	2	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	3	2	1	4	5	574.0
1861	..	3	..	..	1	..	1	1	1	..	6	1	2	5	7	602.5
1862	..	3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	3	1	..	4	4	605.83
Total	1	10	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	17	6	3	20	23	589.248

Showing a mortality of 7.8 per 1,000, being 1.46 less than the English male population of corresponding ages.

It will be seen from the above tables that, irrespective of injuries, the prevailing diseases of the Force are acute catarrh, acute rheumatism, stomach and bowel complaints. It is due to the good character and respectability of the Force, and the way in which the men guard their own health, that I should direct attention to the fact that the Police are peculiarly exempt from those diseases which are generally regarded as self-inflicted.

In Table A, column "Syphilis," it will be seen that during the past year, in a Force averaging monthly 605·83, out of 839 diseases only 11 cases of syphilis came under my notice.

Table B shows that the individual cases amounted to 6 only, being an average of 9·1 per 1,000, or somewhat less than 1 per cent., whilst in the Cavalry it reaches 206 per 1,000, and Foot Guards 250 per 1,000.

It may be said that many labouring under such diseases would not apply to the surgeon of the Force; but it must be understood that no man can absent himself from duty on the plea of ill-health without reporting himself to the surgeon.

After an experience of nearly twenty years, it affords me much pleasure to produce this evidence in support of the good conduct and respectability of a body of men, to whom are delegated functions of so much importance in preserving, in its integrity and order, the practical working of an important branch of our complex social system.

On a review of these remarks which I have the honour to submit to your Honourable Committee, it will be seen that the Police are peculiarly exempt from those diseases which endanger life, such as typhus and typhoid fevers, small pox, pneumonia, &c., and, though no doubt a considerable amount of sickness arises, the prevailing diseases, such as acute catarrh, rheumatism, stomach and bowel complaints, are not serious in their results. The prevalence of these complaints may in part be attributed to the slow pace which a Policeman is required to walk when on duty, inducing a

languid state of the circulation, and a defective supply of vital heat to the surface of the body, in consequence of which he becomes more obnoxious to the influences of atmospheric changes, and the impressions of cold and wet. This, as I have already shown in my "Report on the Dress of the City Police," presented to your Honourable Committee, should be combated by the wearing of proper underclothing, and each man on joining should be called upon to supply himself with such necessary articles of woollen as I therein suggested. If such a rule were enforced it could not fail to render their illnesses less severe, and the attacks, which now average 11·944 days, of shorter duration.

It is only necessary to glance at the column "Chest Disease," Table D, to be satisfied of the importance of a careful surgical examination of candidates for admission. Consumption is a disease which in its incipient stage may show little or no outward sign of its approach, and though under certain circumstances it remains dormant for a long time, yet from the influences of exposure or a slight cold it becomes rapidly and fatally developed. The stethoscope alone affords that information we seek, and in no instance in the examination of a candidate for the City Police is the use of this instrument neglected.

The mortality from these diseases amongst the City Police is 3·3 per 1,000, being 6 less than that of the whole male population of England of corresponding ages. These diseases have been estimated to produce a mortality of 13·8 in the Guards, and 10·2 per 1,000 in the Infantry of the Line; and as compared with deaths from all causes in the army, 45·347 in the Dragoon Guards, 46·254 in the Infantry of the Line, and 60·176 in the Foot Guards.

With reference to the management of the sick movement in the Force, it is a matter for consideration whether the establishment of an Infirmary Ward, at one of the principal Station Houses, would not materially aid in shortening the duration of each attack of sickness, and administering to the

comfort of the sick. In the treatment of diseases the Medical Department of the Force labours under very many disadvantages, and peculiarly so in the management of cases occurring amongst the single men at the different Station Houses.

From the arrangements there made, and necessarily so, the night men occupy one set of dormitories and the day men another ; should, therefore, a night man suffer from an illness which necessitates his remaining in bed during the day, all parties labour under the greatest inconvenience ; the men on duty, from broken rest, consequent on the attending on and nursing of the sick, the invalid himself from the want of quietude so essential to a sick room, from the absence of ventilation and the presence of foul air, generated by so many occupying the same apartment. But were there an infirmary the sick would be under strict medical surveillance, diet tables would be framed and acted upon, cleanliness and ventilation enforced, and the whole sanitary administration of the Force greatly facilitated and improved.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord Mayor and Gentlemen,

Your Obedient Servant,

G. BORLASE CHILDS, F.R.C.S.,
Surgeon to the Force.

