Chapter:

4. Learning the blues: the establishment and legitimation of professional policing in Britain 1829-2018

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This chapter first looks at the history of British professional policing between 1829 and 1856, when the police idea was highly controversial. It compares the new police with the old forms, the motives for police reform, and the social impact of the new police. It also considers the basis of opposition to the police, and describes how the role of policing in social order became recognized. There follows an analysis of the legitimation of the modern British police in the face of widespread opposition. This partly relates to such operational strategies as bureaucratic discipline, subjection to the rule of law, non-partisanship, accountability, a service role, and preventive policing. These were facilitated by cultural changes, notably the incorporation of the working class, into the fabric of civil, political, and socio-economic citizenship. After the 1970s, with the
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emergence of neo-liberalism, these processes reversed and the police became increasingly controversial and politicized.