

Anne Carlisle explains the history and work of Britain's police detectives.

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Way back in 1828, the world's first modern police force was created by Sir Robert Peel. The Metropolitan Police Force of London made its home at the famous Scotland Yard and quickly became the model for police forces around the world. But it would be another decade before the Detective Branch of Scotland Yard was set up. This branch later became the Criminal Investigation Department (commonly known as CID) and to this day remains the main police department in Britain responsible for major crime investigation.

Becoming a plain-clothes detective in the CID is no easy task. Firstly, a police officer needs to have served for at least two years as a uniformed officer. (1) ____ Once this period has been completed the officer can then apply to go to a detective training school. However, there's no guarantee they will be accepted.

In order to become a detective, an officer needs to possess a wide range of skills and qualities, the most obvious being complete honesty and good character. They also need to be highly observant and to have good judgement. (2) ____ An officer with all these skills could more than likely find themselves being accepted to train as a detective.

Most of these 'detectives-to-be' discover that the really hard work begins once they get to the training school. There, the officers receive intensive instruction in all areas related to solving major crime. For instance, they will have to learn about psychology, which will come in handy when they are questioning suspects and witnesses. Perhaps the most difficult subjects, though, deal with learning all about the modern scientific methods now used in crime detection.

Once our future Sherlocks have completed their initial training, they begin life as detective constables and start working on unsolved crime cases in the CID. Most of the work they do is not nearly as glamorous as it seems on TV and in novels. (3) ____ Not exactly fascinating work, but essential all the same.

Apart from having to do painstaking investigative work, detectives also have a lot of paperwork to deal with. (4) ____ Every detail of a crime and its investigation must be recorded. Most detectives find the amount of clerical work they have to do the most frustrating part of their job.

Nonetheless, it can be a very rewarding job; a detective gets great satisfaction knowing they have solved a major crime. However, a detective's job is still not over after a suspect has been arrested and charged. (5) ____ Only when the offender is actually behind bars is the detective's goal achieved. Then there's always the next case to tackle, of course.

In many ways, the detectives of today are similar to the ones of the past. Much of the work has hardly changed at all. Detectives still have to ask questions and find answers. (6) ____ Whether it is using computers or looking through a microscope, it all helps to get the crime solved. In the end, just like the detectives we avidly watch on TV, they are heroes doing everything in their power to get the bad guys off our streets.

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1 — Last but not least, a high degree of patience is an absolute must as, believe it or not, crime investigation can often be a very lengthy and boring process.

2 — During this time, the officer learns all the basics of general police work.

3 — So great is the volume, that the police have set up road shows where victims can search for their property.

4 — Typical mundane tasks include going house to house asking questions or searching carefully through a suspect's phone records for clues to a crime.