

Let's imagine: police officer

Each week the Museum is going to publish a 'Let's Imagine' activity sheet. This activity sheet will include a picture of an object in the Museum. It will tell you about the object and then it will be up to you to imagine a story, poem and/or picture inspired by this object. The sheet will include at least three questions or statements to help get you started and inspired.

This week's object is a **painting of a police officer (and truncheon)**, which can both be found in the museum collection. Read the information in blue (below) to find out more about this painting.



You have to describe the painting to a friend. What do you say?

Draw a picture of you or a member of your family wearing this uniform and carrying a truncheon.

Write a story or poem about meeting Henry Beck. What are his experiences of law and order in Newbury in 1838? You might like to research law and order in the early Victorian period and Victorian Newbury.



This is a painting in the museum collection. This painting or portrait is of Henry Beck in 1838. He was one of the first local police officers; the police as we know it did not begin in Newbury until 1836. Henry Beck would have been called a constable.

He is wearing a stovepipe hat, a really tall hat, which many people at the time compared to a chimney pot! Although, unlike a chimney pot, it did not allow the heat to escape so was very hot to wear. The rest of the uniform is a long coat and a pair of trousers in thick navy wool – very good in cold winter weather but too warm in the summer sun.

He would have almost certainly carried a wooden truncheon (as pictured above) which would have had a painted decoration saying 'Borough of Newbury'. The truncheon was not only a way to protect himself but to show he was a constable and had the authority to impose law and order, to chase and arrest people committing crimes.