

# The Big Men

Joe Pieri

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The Northern Division used to be the name given to the police force which operated within the Glasgow City boundaries until the creation of the Strathclyde Police Force. Its recruits were largely drawn from exservicemen who were demobbed after the Second World War and, as a result, they became known as 'The Big Men'. Their name was well-deserved as they set about clearing Glasgow's streets on the gangland 'neds' who had overrun the city during the war. They did not 'take prisoners' and they gained a fearsome reputation for no-nonsense street policing. This biography is written by a man who was close to them. Joe Pieri's cafe, the Savoy in Cowcaddens, used to be a haunt for policemen on the beat with a blue police box situated just outside. The back shop of the Savoy often had a policeman in it, keeping an eye on the blue light atop the box as he made out his beat journal or drank a welcome coffee. The Cowcaddens beat was the toughest in the city, one which helped form the reputation of Glasgow as 'no mean city'. But from the friendships which Joe made with the policemen on this beat, he has been able to maintain a living record of what those days were really like. The 'hard' image which Glasgow was tagged with for years has finally been laid to rest and it is now very similar to many other cities of similar size in the UK. The fact that it is regarded as a city of culture now has a great deal to do with the way in which crime was kept in check after the Second World War by the 'Big Men.' This is a revealing insight into the men on the beat who are now part of police folklore. Numerous interviews with retired bobbies give a unique portrait of the old Glasgow.



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