



## THE INSPECTOR

*George Hallam*

A few years ago, one of my father's younger brothers, handed over a large stiff envelope, saying - somewhat apologetically, "as the eldest, this is rightfully yours". My father had been the family's black-sheep for many years and had been treated as persona-non-grata. He took little interest in the envelopes content; he'd been born during the depression of the twenties and into a culture in which children were told nothing about who they were. Especially where their parent's outlook did not compare to that of their more salubrious forebears. It is highly likely that this is the cause of many lost or distorted family histories, wherein a lowly ancestry may have been 'bigged-up' (as it were, in the vernacular), whilst those of a more substantial standing, are not spoken of because they were probably 'above themselves'. I can personally vouch for the latter being the case. Since being handed that envelope into my keeping, I have often wondered if there is something in a policeman's genes that I might have inherited, because a detective I soon became. The envelope contained certain documents and papers kept by my great grandfather and which were personal to him. These were not particularly extensive, comprising: his original 1881 Indenture of Apprenticeship to a Nottinghamshire Builder, his marriage certificate, an Indenture of Probate for his sister, neither had I. Though I mean it no offence, it is a dot on my road atlas. The 1851 census has them both under 21 and working as servants at the homes of farmers. and the receipts for her 1916 funeral. However, the items started me on a journey into a policing past that I'd known nothing about. The first alert

came on the Apprentice Indenture - itself a piece of employment history with rules and regulations imposed that could never occur today. However, as such a document was as much a contract with the boy's father as it was with the boy, my great, great grandfather's identity and indeed his signature, adorn. He is described as George Hallam Sergeant of Police as opposed to a Police Sergeant. I was curious. It seemed to infer a greater authority than merely stating a rank within the force. But I let it pass until I was later



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given a school exercise book relating also to the boy. It is undated but bears the boy's name and was from Tuxford Grammar School. It occurred to me that these two tit-bits inferred a certain affluence that one would not apply to a modern policeman. The next alert came in the form of those 1916 funeral receipts for Sarah Hallam, his spinster sister of Sherwood. The fact that we were in the midst of WW1 and that the receipts described a funeral cortège of some finery, made me wonder why. Her policeman father had died in 1891 ranked Inspector. Though her Probate document determined the apportioning of £200 to her brother, and whilst this was a

healthy sum for the time, it hardly warranted what today would equate to a civic funeral which - rather oddly, had not been paid for by her brother, but by someone named William Harrop..?? The answer came thanks to Nottingham's Central Library who produced her newspaper obituary. Though nothing special, it pointed to the place of death as The Judges Lodgings - the home of her sister and brother-in-law Superintendent William Harrop, Deputy Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire. My imagination was already running riot when - out-of-the-blue, came another snippet, a newspaper cutting about a Royal Medal Investiture at Buckingham Palace in 1906. It was for the then Nottinghamshire Chief Constable. Whilst he himself was not one of my ancestors, he was then twice decorated by Royalty, and went on to receive a CBE followed by a Knighthood. The reporting article gave posthumous mention of a Superintendent Thomas Hallam - the previous Deputy Chief Constable, and his older brother Inspector George Hallam whose daughter married the then current Deputy Chief. It occurred to me that this celebrated Chief Constable must have had equally capable Officers which was why they'd received mention. I was stunned. Suddenly I had a direct bloodline to people who mixed with the Victorian elite of their day. After all, the policing then would largely have been at the behest of the local gentry and Civic Governors.

### *The Internet*

I decided to join the Internet and see what more I could discover about them, but as far as Nottingham online is concerned, it came to nought. But by searching the national census collection through Ancestry UK, I managed to bring my two Hallam ancestors back to



life, and take me back in time. Yes, one's imagination does have certain conceptual limitations, but by using one's known timelines, it is not impossible to conjure up visions. These two Hallam boys were born in 1834 (George), and 1836 (Thomas), in a little place called Gamston in Nottingham

shire. Never heard of it? Well, being born and bred in Leeds, neither had I. Though I mean it no offence, it is a dot on my road atlas. The 1851 census has them both under 21 and working as servants at the homes of farmers.

But by 1861 George was a County Police Officer based in Blyth. I cannot place younger brother Thomas at this specific time but suspect that his police career had indeed commenced. 1871 and both are Sergeants but in separate locations. George is at Tuxford, Notts. Thomas is living at the Police Station in Sutton in Ashfield, and has two constables as lodgers. 1881 for George was as I'd already discovered – still a Sergeant, but then at Ollerton. However, as an aside, for some reason his youngest daughter Ada Bush Hallam who should have been aged around 13 years, had gone missing. Not in itself of particular note until ... the 1881 census for Thomas shows her living with him and his wife. They are at the County Police Station, High Pavement, Nottingham, where Thomas is now a Superintendent. 1891 shows that George is now ranked Inspector and living somewhere in East Retford. This was also the year of his death - aged 57. The 1891 census for Superintendent Thomas Hallam is most revealing. He is aged 54, is still at the High Pavement Police Station and County Prison, and is described as Head of County Police. As we now know, this meant Deputy Chief Constable. There is also an inference that his wife Celia was employed as the station's housekeeper. Two men described as 'prisoners' were also listed ... as still, was 'Ada Bush Hallam' his niece, who – it would appear, had lived with her Aunt and Uncle for many years. The significance of this apparent adoption – they had no children of their own, became all too apparent with another revelation appearing on the very same census enumerator form.

### *The end in sight*

On this form are eight other Police Officers resident in the same street ... seven are constables, but the eighth Officer is none other than a certain 'Sergeant William Harrop' aged 28. In case I've lost you along the way, he married Ada Bush Hallam, and succeeded her Uncle Thomas as Deputy Chief Constable of the County. And in 1916, arranged her sister's funeral. As I understand it, there were only

four ranks in the police at that time: Constable, Sergeant, Inspector, and Superintendent. Knowing that the said Supt. Harrop had been Deputy Chief for some time by the 1906 Royal Investiture of his boss, his rise through the ranks seemed to be either meritorious, or nepotistic. Either way, my detective work had gone full circle. As satisfactory as it goes, the timelines nevertheless encompass a host of imponderables with regard to policing in the nineteenth century. Despite the eventual formalisation of the forces nationwide, which took many, many years to establish, most of the century saw the forces doing their own thing. Imagine the reality of that lowly copper in The Hound of The Baskervilles trekking over the moors armed with a truncheon, and a lantern. Then place him in the equally dark outlying rural areas around Nottingham, or anywhere you choose. Bear in mind, that that icon of bicycles – ironically, Raleigh of Nottingham – didn't appear until the late 1880's. Not that there were roads as we know them to cycle on. So how did my two young rural constables get about in 1861? What did it take to be a policeman in the mid 1800's? Fairly well educated, yes – they had to be able to read and write, but big, bold, fearsome, and a bit of a bastard to boot, are probably more likely qualifications. Like many people I have seen fantasy films like 'Sleepy Hollow', and Charles Dickens's 'Great Expectations', both of which have largely indeterminable timelines, but do include uniformed policemen. Nevertheless, they conjure up scenes than can have been little different to those with which our two officers would have known. The odd technological introductions such as steam-engines, railways, and the Davey Lamp, would have done little to improve the daily life of a country copper. Sure, I've let my imagination run loose, but we shouldn't forget that a policeman then, was a product of his own time. I know that Inspector George Hallam died in 1891, and am fairly certain that Supt. Thomas Hallam also died before 1900. So one could ask – did either of them ever see a motor vehicle? Take the TV programme 'Heartbeat' which depicts an almost soap-like fictitious time in the 1960's, but one that to anyone of my 1940's generation, is nostalgically extremely accurate. Then try to imagine what my two officers would have made of it should they have had the opportunity to gaze into a crystal ball! No different to us watching Star Trek really. Cars, radios, television, satnav, stun-guns, helicopters – yeah, now pull the other one!

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