

The Teapot and Police Constable 107 William Lawrence

By MICK SHAW

The Teapot

At the bottom of the teapot are the markings 'J.D & S', which appears to be the makers. Research on the internet revealed it is one of two makers who had the initials JD & S, one being James Dixon and Sons, the other James Deakins and Sons.

The symbol on the far right of the engraving confirmed it to be the latter; James Dixon had a trumpet as their symbol.

Between the initials and symbol are the letters 'EP', which mean electroplated and the number S7590 4. So I had now discovered that although the teapot first appeared to be pewter, it was now in fact silver plated. I used a small amount of silver polish on the bottom and it confirmed that it was silver under the blackened area. You can also see small amounts of silver on the lid decorations; the



'P.C. William Lawrence FROM THE OFFICERS AND CONSTABLES OF THE NORTHERN DIVISION BUCKS CONSTABULARY ON HIS RETIREMENT Oct. 1896'

The above was engraved on a teapot found by Bill and Vivienne Rhodes when they were having a clear-out at their home in Loughborough. Unable to really remember how it came in their possession, possibly purchased at an auction in a job lot some years ago, they contacted me via my website on the Buckinghamshire Constabulary. After several exchanges by email they

decided they would like to donate the teapot to the Milton Keynes Police Museum. At this time, October 2017, the museum had just been packed away to allow improvements to Central Milton Keynes Police Station, where the museum was located. The improvements are expected to take two years. As all the exhibits are now in storage I agreed to keep it at my home until such time it could be added to the collection and, while in my care, I decided to do some research - both into the teapot and also the recipient, PC William Lawrence.





The teapot lid and the engraved retirement tribute to PC William Lawrence

rest of the teapot has possibly been polished over the years, eventually removing most of the silver plate.

I can imagine how proud both William and his wife would have been of this teapot, probably not using it day-to-day but for special occasions only and when they had visitors. When not in use it would have been proudly on display and regularly cleaned.

I will go into what I have been able to find out about PC William Lawrence in detail later, but he served all his service on the Northern Division of the Buckinghamshire Constabulary, so now the teapot has, in a way, arrived home.

When I first joined Thames Valley Police in 1979 I was posted to Newport Pagnell and given the letter 'D' to wear on my shoulder epaulets along with my number. Newport Pagnell, along with Wolverton, Bletchley and Buckingham, is on the North of the Thames Valley Police area. The 'D' stood for 'D' Division. Thames Valley Constabulary (later Thames Valley Police) was formed in 1968 and was made up by amalgamating five police forces, one being Buckinghamshire. These days the 'D' has been removed and the northern area, slightly changed, is now known as 'Milton Keynes', but as I have said the teapot has now arrived home, eventually to be displayed in Milton Keynes Police Station.



William Lawrence was not an easy person to research. I had his full police record of service on my computer (which I had researched sometime in the past) and this, put together with internet research and newspaper articles (found by Roger Young), allowed me to piece together some details of his life. In other areas I have used a certain amount of minor but obvious assumptions and interpretations from the researched documents and information to help complete a fuller picture of his life.

Police Constable 107 William Lawrence

William Lawrence was born in Little Hinton, Wiltshire in May 1841 to William and Emma, who had three other children: Elizabeth aged 11, Hannah aged 5 and George aged 3. Their father William worked as a labourer. Also living with the family was William's paternal grandfather, also named William, who was 76-years-old, and John, William senior's son, uncle to the children. William junior was baptised at St. Swithun Church, Little Hinton on 30th May 1841 by the rector John Harington. The family was completed in 1845 with the birth of David.

Six years after William was born his grandfather died. Later, John appears to have moved out, leaving

the family of five until 1857, when Hannah married George Gardner, and it would appear that Elizabeth became a housemaid for James and Elizabeth Black at Charlton Cottage, Bishopstone, just a short distance from the family home.

On leaving school William joined his father as an agricultural labourer, eventually becoming a carter, transporting goods around and from the farm, but eventually he decided to move to Battersea, south London where he worked for the South Western Railway Company.

Still not happy with his occupation, at the age of 29 William joined the Buckinghamshire Police. I'm not sure why he picked Buckinghamshire, but he became a 3rd Class Constable on 31st August 1870. On joining he was described as 5 feet 9 inches tall, of stout build, with a fresh complexion and dark brown hair. He was recorded as unmarried with no children.

After his initial training he was posted to the North Western Division of Padbury on the 15th October 1871 and in January the following year was promoted to a 2nd Class Constable. This promotion also included a rise in pay.

It is difficult to say how or when he met his wife Elizabeth, who was around 22-years-old, but they moved in together during his posting to Padbury, which is more than

likely when they married, as being unmarried would not have been tolerated in the police force during this period, unless there were very extenuating circumstances.

Elizabeth was born in Ludgershall, Wiltshire, which is not too far from Williams's birth place, and they possibly met during his visits to his parents' home.

Towards the latter part of 1873 their daughter Elizabeth Emma was born and the new family continued to live in Padbury until William was posted to Sherington on 15th April 1874.

Sherington is a village just outside Newport Pagnell, where the new police station had been completed a year earlier, also including a Magistrates' Court. The police station also housed the local police inspector as well as having four cells, and at the back a stable and hayloft to house the inspector's horse and chaise.

The total cost to build the police station in 1872 was £1,400. It is still in use today, although not open to the public and the inspector no longer lives on the premises; the Magistrates' Court is also no longer used. There is a modern, purpose-built Police Station and a Magistrates' Court in Central Milton Keynes. The picture below

shows a photograph of the police station taken around 1908.

On 11th October 1875 William's promotion to 1st Class constable was confirmed which again included a small but welcome pay rise.

On 29th March 1876, along with Constable 68 Charles Morgan, William found himself up in front of the Chief Constable Captain Tyrwhitt Drake (the 'Captain' being an army rank) for returning home under the influence of drink from the Newport Pagnell Steeple Chase. The general order, written in red ink, stated:

Police Constable 107 William Lawrence for returning home under the influence of drink from the Newport Pagnell Steeple Chases on the 27th instant is severely reprimanded, only on account of this being the first report made against this constable during a period of seven years' service.

Signed J.C. Tyrwhitt-Drake, Chief Constable.

A similar general order was also written with regard to Constable Charles Morgan.

Later that same year William and Elizabeth's second child came along, this time a boy named Frederick William.

On 27th January the following year William received a second disciplinary, but this time he was dealt with more harshly. The General Order read:

Police Constable 107 William Lawrence is reduced to 2nd class constable from the 20th instant for being drunk on that day.

Signed J.C. Tyrwhitt-Drake, Chief Constable.

Also included in this incident was Constable 102 David Merriden, who received a fine of 2/6 for the same offence. The reduction in rank for William also meant a reduction in pay at a time he really needed the money for his growing family.

On 12th February 1877 he was posted to Winslow, still within the Northern Division. This could have been as a result of his disciplines and also to remove him from the influence of the other officers at Newport Pagnell. It was common practice to move officers to other stations after a few years, but it is likely his drinking habits influenced this particular move.

While living at Winslow, their third child, Mary Jane, was born on 20th October 1877. William was still a 2nd Class Constable and, now keeping out of trouble, he was to receive no further disciplines during his service.

This same year saw the death of his father.

4th June 1879 saw another posting, still on the Northern Division, this time to Drayton Parslow. It was during this posting that William was to see his promotion jump two years later from a 2nd Class constable to Merit Class. The General Order read:

Chief Constable's Office, Aylesbury, 22nd January 1881.

The Chief Constable has much pleasure in promoting from this date inclusive Police Constable 107 William



Lawrence from 2nd to Merit Class for the zeal and perseverance displayed by him in apprehending Joseph Keen at Mr Daunceys house Little Horwood at about 1am on the 12th December last.

Signed J.C. Tyrwhitt-Drake, Chief Constable.

Two jumps in rank meant a considerable and welcome pay rise for William and his family.

The newspaper article below give an account of the incident:

Bucks Herald of 18 December 1880:

WINSLOW. Conviction of a Notorious Poacher. —At the Police-court, on Wednesday (before E. W. S.

Lowndes, Esq., and G. R. Greaves, Esq.), Joseph Keen, bricklayer, of Stewkley, was brought up in custody charged with being found on enclosed premises belonging to P. Dauncey, Esq., at Little Horwood, on the inst., for an unlawful purpose; also with assaulting P.C. Lawrence in the execution of his duty, at the same time and place. P.C. Lawrence deposed that he was on duty near Mr. Dauncey's house, and while standing in the carriage drive, near the front of the house, at about a quarter past one in the morning, he saw the prisoner coming towards the gate. Seeing Lawrence he, however, ran away, witness pursuing. When witness got nearly up to him he turned round, saying, "Look out" and immediately witness was struck by a stone in the chest, and was ultimately knocked down by one. He got up and followed the prisoner, who again attacked him with stones, but the witness getting within reach of him knocked him down with his stick and secured him. On visiting the place next morning with Sergt. Bowden, they found a formidable "jemmy" on the ground where the struggle took place, and in the spinney they took up twenty-one snares, seven of which held rabbits. The Magistrates dismissed the charge under the Vagrants' Act; and convicted the prisoner of the assault

on the policeman, and being a very old offender, he was sent to gaol for six months' hard labour.

November 23rd was to see another move for the family as William was posted to Lavendon, still on the Northern Division. This was to be his final posting during his service.

William decided to retire in 1896 and applied for his police pension. The General Order read:

Chief Constable's Office Aylesbury, 20th October 1896:

Merit Class Police Constable 71 John Spall and 107 William Lawrence, having this day been granted pensions of £48.10.8 and £45.2.8 respectively by the Standing Joint Committee to take effect on the 26th inst. will be struck off the strength of the force from that date inclusive

sd/ Otway Mayne Major, Chief Constable.

(Notice the signature of the Chief Constable. Captain Tyrwhitt Drake retired this same year (1896), to be replaced by Major Otway Mayne.)

Having spent his entire service of 26 years on the Northern Division he was well known and respected by officers, sergeants and constables on the Division who presented him with the teapot engraved:

'P.C. William Lawrence FROM THE OFFICERS AND CONSTABLES OF THE NORTHERN DIVISION BUCKS CONSTABULARY ON HIS RETIREMENT Oct. 1896'

Unfortunately, in my collection of over 2,000 Bucks Constabulary photographs I do not have a confirmed photograph of PC 107 William Lawrence, but the photograph opposite was taken between January and August 1896 and contains the majority of the Northern Division, so it is almost certain that he is present as he retired in October that year.

You will see from the legend at that I have managed to identify a number of the officers, and the ones marked N/K are the ones I have not managed to name as yet as I cannot see their collar numbers and I do not recognise them from other photographs I have.

I have managed to date the photograph by working out when all the officers I have been able to name, were on the Division together. This date is between January and August 1896, so as William retired in October it is highly likely he is in the photo.

The photograph contains 25 officers. I have named fourteen of them, leaving eleven. Two of the eleven are senior officers, and two are sergeants. Now we are left with seven.

William is described on joining the force as five feet nine and a half inches tall and of stout build. He would have been 55-years-old when this photograph was taken. That would rule out the two unnamed officers in the front row, who appear to be far too young.

The unnamed constables on the back row I have lettered 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D' and 'E'. Constable 'D' looks younger than 55, ruling him out.

PC 59 is Eliab Batchelor, recorded as being five feet ten inches tall, and comparing his height along with constables 'A' and 'B', they look slightly taller, leaving constable 'C', who is slightly shorter, and constable 'E', who looks a lot shorter, so that would suggest that constable 'C' could be William Lawrence. This is all assuming they are standing on level ground, so really pure guess work, and until I can confirm the officer 'C' is PC 107 William Lawrence the officer will continue as being unnamed.

Back to William, who with his family continued to live in Lavendon after his retirement.

He died during the summer of 1927, the event recorded in the District of Newport Pagnell, so he was probably

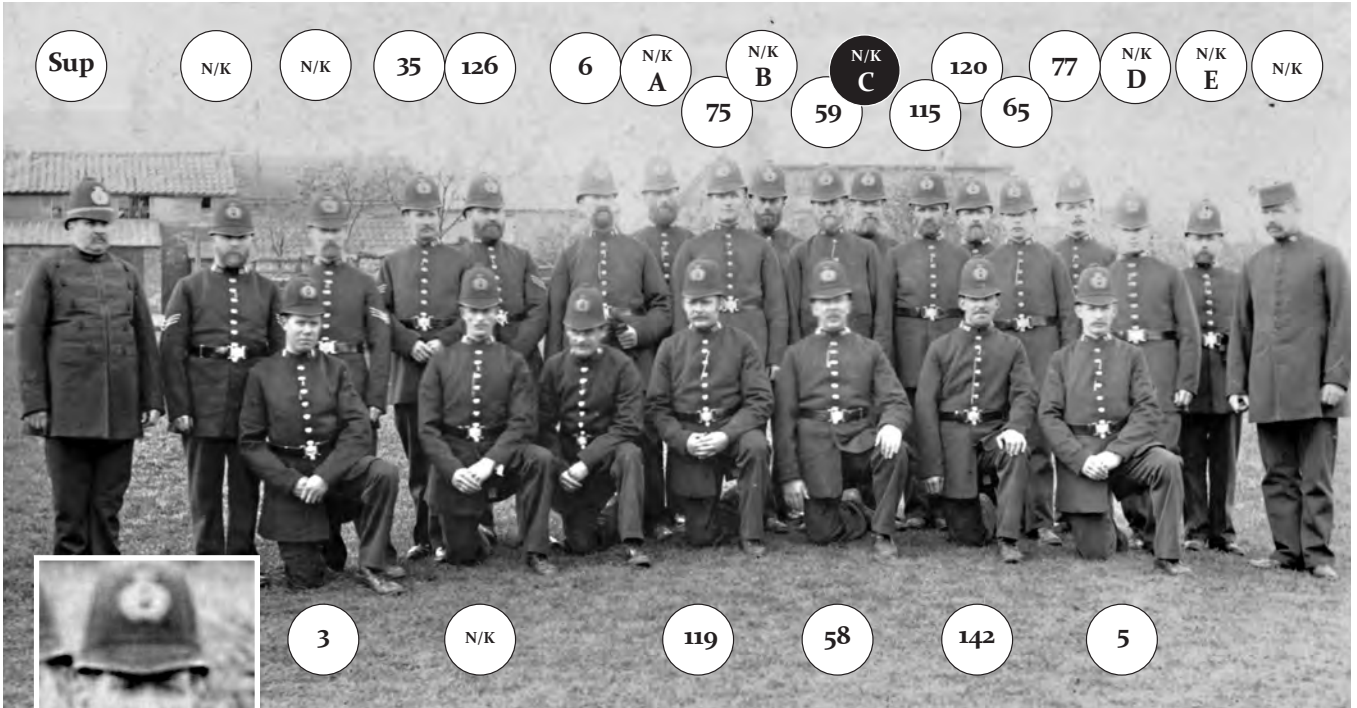


Photo of the majority of the Northern Division taken between January and August 1896. The insert is possibly and, I stress possibly, PC 107 William Lawrence

still living in Lavendon. He is not buried in the grave yard there or at St Peter and Paul cemetery at Olney.

It would have been nice to complete the story, but all my research has been negative on his place of burial.



I have added below a selection of newspaper articles sent to me by Roger Young, showing the type of incidents dealt with by PC Lawrence and other officers at the time:

At Sherington: John Nichols, 16, shoemaker, and John Chaplin, 18, shoemaker, were charged with breaking and entering the dwelling-house of George Hackle, at Sherington, on the 16th February, 1876, and stealing 1 watch and 1 scarf, value 10/-, the property of the said George Hackle. Chaplin pleaded guilty. Mr. O'Malley prosecuted. Ann Hackle, daughter of the prosecutor, deposed that she left her father's house the afternoon, with no one in it, having previously locked the door. When about two hundred yards from the house, on the road to Sherington,

she saw the prisoners, with Thomas Hine, get over fence into their garden. She watched them, and saw Hine get over the fence back again. She went to Sherington, where she afterwards saw all three go into the Castle public-house. She then returned home, where she found that the staple had been burst off the door, and was lying in the passage. She then went upstairs, and found a clothes box turned over. She looked in, and was missing a watch, and scarf, which had been on the stairs. She went to Olney next day where she saw him, and afterwards saw them get together. She was subsequently taken by Thomas Chaplin to the public-house, where he gave her the watch and scarf. No one was present at the time. P.C. William Lawrence deposed that he went to Ann Huckle's house, at Sherington, and afterwards to Olney, where he apprehended John Nichols. Another constable arrested Thomas Chaplin. John Nichols said, "I was there but I never touched anything." John Nichols' statement, made before the committing magistrates, was then read, after which his Lordship summed up, and the jury found the prisoners guilty, each of whom was

sentenced to six months' hard labour. Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press, 1 July 1893



James Orpin, who did not appear, was charged with a similar offence, at Lavendon, on June 17. The case was proved police constable Lawrence, who deposed to defendant using profane language in the public street for about twenty minutes, and refusing to desist. There was a long list of about twelve previous convictions against defendant. Fined 2/- and 11/6 costs, or 7 days.

Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press, 9 September 1893



James Harris, who did not appear was charged with using obscene language at Newton Blossomville, on August 27. Police constable Lawrence deposed that at a quarter to eleven at night defendant was making a great noise in the public road, and using disgusting and profane language. Witness asked him to go home quietly, but he still

continued to use the language, and was very abusive. Before he would desist, witness had to threaten to lock him up. There had been several complaints against him. He had had beer, but was hardly drunk. Fined 2/6 and 14/- costs, or 6 days.

Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press, 30 June 1894



Arthur Clayton, who did not appear, was charged with a similar offence at the same time and place.—Police constable Lawrence deposed that he was in company with Sergeant Stevens, and met the defendant with the defendant in the last case searched him and found he carried one rabbit and a net, which was damp as if recently used. The rabbit was warm. Witness asked him his name, which he gave.—There were 17 previous convictions against this defendant.—Fined 11/-, or two months' hard labour.

It is worth a mention that when William joined the Bucks Constabulary in August 1870 the 'Top Hat' police officers initially wore had been replaced by the helmet but not quite the same as the ones in the above photograph. I have added this photograph, which you will note has the Victoria Crown, to show the helmet William would have been issued with during the early days of his career.

MICK SHAW has been retired from Thames Valley Police for the past 6 years, having served 33 years. He served 17 years as the village Constable for Hanslope and became interested in the Bucks Constabulary and police history in general during 1994, when the local school staged a display on the formation of the Hanslope Parish Council in 1894. As Area Beat Officer of Hanslope Mick was asked to assist with a small display on the police from that period and in particular the village constable. He wrote to the Records Office at Aylesbury and was informed that the officer's name was PC 42 Joseph Lorton. Amazed at the information held on Lorton, even the colour of his eyes, Mick decided to research all the village constables since the formation of the Bucks Constabulary back in 1857. He found that he was the 39th constable. From there he became hooked and started his research; at this point in time he has well over 2,000 photographs and around the same number of full or part records of service of police officers who served in the Bucks Constabulary up until the amalgamation in 1968. Visit his website: www.mkheritage.co.uk/bch.

APPEAL FOR INFORMATION: STEVEN SHEPHERD

PHS member Keith Skinner and a friend are preparing a script for a short film exploring the circumstances surrounding a notorious Wigan tragedy which occurred in the winter of 1967. An 11-year-old boy, Steven Shepherd, disappeared from his home in January 1967 after a visit to the local cinema, sparking off a huge national search as the police suspected foul play in the light of the recent Moors Murders.

It was the first time a reconstruction of a missing person was used on television.

The investigation was led by Supt Harold Prescott of the Lancashire County Police. In March 1967 the remains of Steven's body were found in a ditch next to strawberry fields in the West Lancashire village of Newburgh, ten miles away from Steven's home. Abduction and murder were ruled out and it was surmised his death was the end result of bullying he had received at school.

Keith would be grateful if any PHS Members who might have first-hand knowledge around the case could contact him on:

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