

## Police Superintendent Thomas Blanshard, an unlucky man

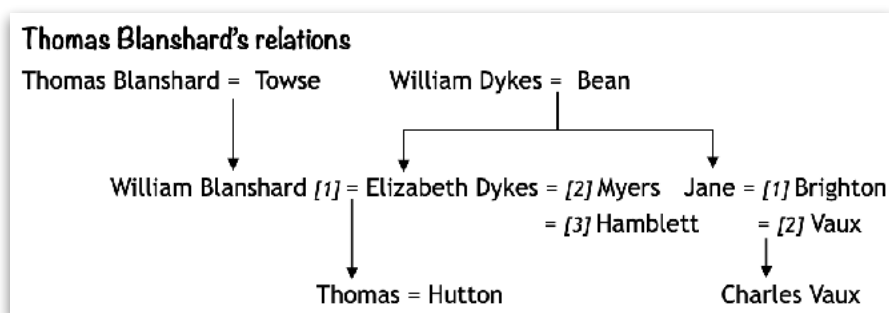
*In memoriam Thomas Blanshard, Supt of Police, Settle, died Nov 11th 1898, aged 41 years. 'In the midst of life we are in death'. This stone was erected by the fellow superintendents of the West Riding Constabulary. OLD D34*

Police Superintendent **Thomas Blanshard / Blanchard** died when he was just 41 and had a fine stone erected by the fellow superintendents of the West Riding Constabulary –that’s good of them isn’t it?

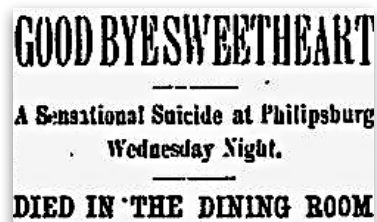
Thomas had humble roots. He was born in 1857 in Wharram Percy, north east of York, to **William Blanshard** and **Elizabeth Dykes**. William, a carpenter, was the second of seven children of **Thomas Blanshard (Snr)** and his first wife **Mary Towse** from Burythorpe, east of York. Thomas and his other sons worked as agricultural labourers and the daughters married agricultural labourers. Elizabeth was the daughter of gardener **William Dykes** and his wife **Hannah Bean** who brought up young Thomas.

Why did they bring up young Thomas? – because William Blanshard ran off to New York America on board the emigration ship ‘*Alfred Storer*’ three months after Thomas was born. William was never heard of again, possibly having changed his name.

Elizabeth worked in domestic service to bring in some money to help her parents look after Thomas. When she was 41 Elizabeth moved to Manchester and gave birth to another son, **Harry Myers Blanshard**, presumably the son of a man called **Harry Myers**, who became a butcher. When she was 45 Elizabeth married **Benjamin Hamblett** but he died two years later. Elizabeth was not a lucky woman. Thomas may not have seen much of his mother and would have no memory of his father.



Elizabeth’s sister **Jane Dykes** was a fertile woman. She had three illegitimate children before marrying a labourer **George Brighton** in 1867 and she had three more with him. George died in 1874 and then she married a miner **George Voakes/Vaux** with whom she had another six children. That’s 12 children so far. Just after the youngest was born the whole family emigrated to Pennsylvania, USA. Their son, **Charles Vokes/Vaux**, became a victim of guns in America, taking his own life in 1902, aged 20, shooting himself in front of his sister because **Alice Patrick**, a cook, did not return his affections [A]. The headline read ‘*Goodbye Sweetheart, a sensational suicide at Philipsburg, died in the dining room, his sister a witness to the tragic fate of the lovelorn young man*’ [P9]. An investigation was conducted by Squire B J Laporte, but there was no inquest as he ‘*obviously had suicide in his head*’.



Settle Graveyard Project



Meanwhile back in Yorkshire, despite his unconventional upbringing, Thomas [ph1] joined the West Riding Constabulary police force and had an extraordinary career. His enlistment documentation shows that he lied about his age pretending he was almost 22 rather than just 20. It describes that he was 5 foot 9 inches with brown eyes and hair. He had been working as a gardener at Fulford Hall, south of York, when he signed up. Thomas may have been aware that distant Blanshard cousins had worked as gardeners at Fulford Hall during the 1850s and 1860s. **William Henry Key [ph2]** was the latest hereditary Lord of the Manor at Fulford Hall. He was a military Captain and magistrate for the East Riding. Fulford found its place in history following a battle in 1066 which was regarded as a major disaster for King Harold as Norwegians defeated northern earls.



Thomas was promoted through the police force ranks quickly – within eight years he was an inspector. He worked in Harrogate, Knaresborough, Rotherham and Bingley before taking up the post as Superintendent in Settle. Whilst in Harrogate he married the mother of his two children, **Margaret Hutton**. Margaret also had an unusual background. She was the eldest child of **James Hutton**, a flax dresser and **Jane Watson**. They had both travelled from Armagh, Northern Ireland to live in Bentham. James had travelled over with five siblings, most of whom had returned to Ireland within ten years. Mum Jane died when Margaret was just eight and James died when she was 16. Margaret married Thomas when she was 19 and quickly had a son, **Robert William Blanshard** and a daughter, **Sarah Elizabeth Blanshard**.

Thomas was involved in all the usual aspects of police enforcement with many cases of theft, drunken behaviour, assault and breaches of the laws related to drinking establishments, lodging houses and weights and measures. At the time of the 1891 census the family lived in Bingley and had a prisoner with them, **William Hardy**. William was arrested on suspicion of ‘*carnally knowing a girl between 13 and 16 years*’ which, if is correct, was rather risky with Thomas’s children in the house – William was discharged. A prisoner convicted at the same hearing was given just 12 months in prison with hard labour for ‘*attempting to carnally know a girl under the age of 13*’.

Thomas Blanshard	Head	M.	34	Inspector of Police
Margaret do	Wife	M.	30	
Robt Wm do	Son		6	Scholar
Sarah Eliza do	Daughter		9	do
William Hardy	Prisoner	S.	28	General Officer

Thomas and family arrived in Settle in February 1895 after Thomas had worked for four years in Bingley. Thomas took over from the burly Superintendent **Thomas Parkinson Inman** who had retired [1]. We’ll find out more about Superintendent Inman another time. Thomas Blanshard was welcomed by Settle solicitor **George Marshall Robinson** ‘*whom he had known for some years*’. He was known as ‘*a genial man, and a painstaking officer*’ and ‘*would be a worthy successor to Mr Inman*’. Thomas was obviously well regarded in Bingley as he was presented with a travelling bag and whip, an electroplated cruet set and £28 from the magistrates and public of Bingley when he moved to Settle [1].

**WELL-EARNED PROMOTION.**—Supt. Thos. Blanshard has been appointed to succeed Supt. Inman as chief of police in this district. Supt. Inman retires on a pension. His burly form will be missed at the public functions he has attended for so many years, but he is taking up his residence near the police-station, where it is hoped he will enjoy his pension for many years. Supt. Blanshard joined the force in 1878, was

Thomas settled in quickly. In 1897 Thomas was one of twelve 'Settle worthies' invited to be in a photograph with Edward Duckett the international multi-millionaire who left Settle at the age of 21 to make his fortune in the Australian Gold Rush. He certainly achieved that, not seeking gold but running his ironmongery business to serve the needs of prospectors and their horses. An account of this is provided separately.

One of Thomas' most interesting cases must surely have been in May 1898 in Wigglesworth, with the suspected murder of an illegitimate infant, **Ralph Tarn**, by his mother **Annie Tarn**, **John William Scott**, a half-nephew of Annie and **Robert Taylor**, Ralph's biological father [2,3,4]. Robert was the innkeeper at the Plough Inn at Wigglesworth and was married with five children. Annie had given birth to little Ralph in November 1897 and had asked another woman, **Mrs Emmott** (whose own baby had died) to nurse him for her. In March 1898 Annie collected Ralph from her and he was never seen again. At the beginning of June 1898 Annie wrote to Mrs Emmott admitting that the baby had been killed and this led to the arrests of Annie, Robert and James William Scott who were remanded in custody at Lancaster Gaol.

### THE ALLEGED CHILD MURDER AT SETTLE

PRISONERS BEFORE THE  
MAGISTRATES.

#### THE SENSATIONAL CASE AT SETTLE.

At Settle on Tuesday Annie Tarn, 26, single woman, of West Thornber, Halton West, was brought up, charged on remand with the wilful murder of her illegitimate son, Ralph Tarn, of which Robert Taylor is alleged to be the father, and James William Scott, 26, of the same address, farm labourer, son of the first-named prisoner's half-sister, and Robert Taylor, about 50, of the Plough Inn, Wigglesworth, innkeeper, farmer and blacksmith, were charged with being accessories after the fact. The facts of the case have already

day). The evidence was read over, and was to the effect that when Sergeant Harrington charged Scott, he replied, "I am not a murderer; but I know I have assisted her. I don't even know where the child is." Taylor, when charged and cautioned, replied, "No; I have nothing whatever to do with it." Superintendent Blanshard's evidence was to the effect that when he arrested the prisoner Tarn at her father's house, she said, "Well, I've nowt to say; you know all the facts. You will find the body somewhere about the Plough Inn, if Taylor has not destroyed it." The prisoners were remanded to Lancaster Gaol till Tuesday next.

Annie made it clear that "you will find the body somewhere about the Plough Inn, if Taylor has not destroyed it". As little Ralph's body was never found the case was dismissed.

matter. On Tuesday it was stated for the prosecution that, although a very diligent search had been made, the police had not been able to find the body. No evidence would therefore be offered. The prisoners were thereupon discharged. It was stated by the

There are no more records for Annie. To this day there are local rumours that a young girl committed suicide in the village after the birth of an illegitimate child and perhaps this was Annie. Annie's father, **Jacob Tarn**, died just a couple of months later at West Thornber, west of Wigglesworth, aged 70, poor chap. Ironically Annie's brother made a living as a policeman. Jacob is buried in a quiet corner of Long Preston churchyard with a fine stone.

*In Loving Memory of Jacob Tarn of West Thornber born Oct 21st 1827 died Aug 10th 1898 "Thy will be done"*



Unsurprisingly, co-conspirator James William Scott quickly left the area and worked as a quarryman in Durham. At the time of the next census, Robert was still running the Plough Inn with his wife and family. His poor wife **Isabella (Hoyle) Taylor** would have just had to put up with Robert's misdemeanours as neither divorce nor living apart were financially viable options for a woman in her situation. By the time of the 1911 census the family were farming in Downham, near Clitheroe and Robert died there in August that year. Isabella died nine years later. The youngest four children worked in farming. Robert and Isabella's eldest daughter, **Sarah Ann Taylor**, married **Richard Samuel Hodgson** who had come to Settle from Dent in 1894 with his brother **John Hodgson** to run the Smithy on Castle Hill. The family stayed in that business until the 1960s.

Meanwhile, just months after this incident, Thomas Blanshard's career was cut short by a tragic accident whilst out shooting with a fellow Superintendent [1]. Thomas, a lover of country sports

and **Superintendent Haynes** were shooting rabbits at Braida Garth [ph3], farmed by **Robert Capstick** on the east slopes of Kingsdale, north of Ingleton. As Superintendent Haynes was turning round, his gun accidentally went off and the charge went into the back of Thomas's spine and groin. Ouch. As he lay dying Thomas wrote in his diary "It was a pure accident – no-one to blame – Blanshard" [5]. He died later that night. According to Dr Griffiths who attended the deceased, 'Blanshard told Dr Griffiths that the affair was an accident and that he exonerated Supt Haynes from all blame.' We'll take his word for it. No wonder Thomas' fellow superintendents paid for his gravestone! Thomas' body was formally identified by his close friend **William Ingham**, the manager of the Langcliffe Mills.

Unsurprisingly Thomas's family moved away. Margaret moved to Halifax and then to Sussex. She died, aged 80 and left an estate of just £27 to an unrelated Bradford artist, **James Robert Granville Exley**, known for portraiture and his drawings of birds. Son **Robert William Blanshard** became a civil servant and worked in South Africa and Australia. Daughter **Sarah Elizabeth Blanshard** married a farm labourer, **William Hartley Henry Swiers** and had three children.

Thomas was replaced as Superintendent by Inspector **Charles Keel**, aged just 32, who had been in charge of the Hillsborough Station in Sheffield.



**SAD SHOOTING CASE AT INGLETON.  
DEATH OF A POLICE SUPERINTENDENT.**

rear of the spine. He immediately fell, and cried, "I'm done, I'm done," and died about 11 o'clock the same night at Braida Garth farm, to which he had been removed. Mr. Haynes remained with deceased until his death, and received from him a pocket-book, in which he had written: "It was a pure accident—no one to blame—Blanshard."—Dr. Griffiths, who



*This account has been compiled by Sarah Lister as part of the Settle Graveyard Project which has recorded gravestone inscriptions, updated church records and researched the lives of those buried. It has been written in good faith with no offence intended. If I have inadvertently included errors or breached any copyright I apologise and would welcome corrections.*

*The life stories of people with italicised names have been researched as part of the graveyard project and can be found on [dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/settle graveyard project](http://dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/settle-graveyard-project). The 'Old Settle' family tree on [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk) includes the families buried in the graveyard. The project is ongoing and welcomes queries and information on [settleresearch@gmail.com](mailto:settleresearch@gmail.com). Latest news and events are on the Facebook page 'Settle Graveyard Project'.*

*The material in this account has been published by YDMT in the book 'Meandering down the Ribble, Born and Bred in the Long Preston Floodplain' who have given permission for it to be included in this account*

*Illustration kindly provided by Teresa Gordon*

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*Settle Graveyard Project*

*site, ph3 – painting of Braida Garth by C Lockwood, submitted to Back in Settle Facebook site by Sandra Cowin*