

Settle Superintendents

For centuries policing was a local community issue. Parish constables and night watchmen were appointed by the local aristocracy to patrol and deter crime. The local JPs could impose punishments and curfews as they felt necessary. Most crime in Settle was vagrancy and poverty related, together with breaches of drinking regulations, burglary and occasional assault, often committed by illiterate residents or passers by. If you found yourself in a spot of bother, the easiest way to escape justice was to move to another parish or, if the worst came to the worst, emigrate to another country for a fresh start. The development of a national police force came about because of the concern over the potential threat of disorder caused by increased crime in ports and the Chartist and Luddite riots. Glasgow had the first organised local police force, and Ireland had the first national police force.

In 1856 the government passed an Act enforcing county boroughs to establish police forces. The new West Riding Police Force commenced officially on 1 January 1857 [1]. Policing was a physical job and so most

THE NEW WEST RIDING POLICE.—The New Police commenced on the 1st of January. In Staincliffe West they are 11 in number and are stationed as follows, one at each place: viz:—Settle, Giggleswick, Wigglesworth, Hellifield, Gisburn, Bolton by Bowland, Slaidburn, Bashall Eaves, Newton, Grindleton, Malham, and one for Littondale who has not yet arrived.

policemen were tall, strong men. They were expected to be role models with no weaknesses for vanity, alcohol, women, bribery, yet neither too innocent. This applied when they were off duty too and so a significant proportion of constables were dismissed for being drunk when off duty. Standards varied considerably – Charles Dickens portrayed a rather bumbling PC Bucket in *Bleak House*.

In 1877 the National CID (Criminal Investigation Department) was established to provide a central record of crime and criminals. New photography technology enabled the introduction of classic ‘convict’ photographic records such as this one of **Henry Whindem**, an alias for **Henry Whinnerah**, also known as Henry Edwards. These photos decreased the chances of escape by having an alias or moving to a different part of the country. The loophole was closed!



The new local force included uniformed officers and plain clothes detectives, although the 19th century ‘detective’ was a very different role to today’s officers. Without any fingerprints or modern technology, hiding in a cupboard to apprehend a burglar was a routine part of the work. The forces needed a Superintendent to oversee proceedings, responsible for maintaining order and enforcing discipline in the ranks to prevent crime. They were called to more serious cases with occasional murders. They were the public face of the local division and also had the privilege of writing summaries of crime and policing for the local boards.

We have been able to find most of the Superintendents who served in Settle during the second half of the 19th century, summarised on the table below. The table includes **PC Thomas Whincup**, the West Riding Constabulary’s first detective, who became a Superintendent after he left Settle but has a great story to share. Our superintendents lived at the County Lockup next to the Court House on New Street, later renamed

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Dates of service	Name	Birthplace	Father's occupation	Children?	Reason for leaving, age
1857 - 1871	William Henry Cockshott	Skipton	Cotton manufacturer	1, died an infant	Death, 50
1858 - 1870s	Thomas Whincup	Leeds	Wool-stapler	3, one died	Promotion
1871 - 1878	Christopher Copeland	Lancaster	Coachman	2	Retired, 51
1878 - 1881	James Robert Croft	Manningham	Blacksmith	5	Death, 59
1881 - 1895	Thomas Parkinson Inman	Kilnsey	Innkeeper	3	Death, 65
1895 - 1898	Thomas Blanshard	Thixendale, east of York	Father absconded	2	Death, accidental shooting, 42
1898 - 1902	Charles Keel	Middlesboro'	Ironmonger	3	Transfer, 36

Station Road, now used by the Operatic Society and this had a facility for holding prisoners on a temporary basis. The Police station later moved to Cragdale on the opposite side of the main road.

Whilst our first Superintendent came from an affluent background, others came from more humble roots. The county police forces provided a new employment opportunity for ambitious men to break away from their background family circumstances and occupations. All of these men were born in the north of England and joined the police force at the bottom, working their way up. These officers, who made it to the top, had remained in the West Riding Constabulary for their whole careers. Some stayed in Settle for a long time, others for just a few years on their way up the promotion ladder. The world of the West Riding Constabulary was a close-knit community and officers travelled to support others for specific events, so these men will have known each other. We have some newspaper reports documenting their presence together at some events.

There was an expectation that superintendents would be married. Wives of policemen were not permitted to take employment as they could then be subject to split loyalties and even bribery, but were expected to help at the police station. Typically, wives searched female prisoners as they were brought into custody or were used to go on surveillance, women being regarded as less suspicious than men! So, the wives were busy too and, whether it's related or not, Settle superintendents and their wives did not have many children compared to many other Victorian families.

Looking at our first six superintendents, this was a dangerous job as four of them died whilst in service. It was, and still is, a very stressful job. Superintendent Copeland did well to retire in time to enjoy his last few years in Morecambe!

Newspapers and census returns suggest a number of men who served as Superintendents in Settle in more recent times:

1902 Supt Hicks, 1911 Supt Arundel, 1921 Supt Walter Burgin, 1927 Supt W Huddleston, 1928 - 30 Supt Harry P Varley, 1931 - Supt Herbert Stone 1931 - 33 Supt Gordon, 1935 - 1937 Supt Albert Elliott, 1938 - 1945 Supt Thomas Eastham, 1947 - 1949 Superintendent Alexander Hunter, 1949 - ? Supt T Denvir



Settle's first Superintendent, William Henry Cockshott

Before the formation of the West Riding Constabulary the local police division had been ably led by Superintending Constable William Henry Cockshott, who was the logical choice to run the new force as Superintendent. He had been appointed in October 1852 on a salary of £125, the best of ten candidates, following three years as a sergeant in Manchester [LG]. The newspaper notes Superintending Constable Cockshott was required to keep a horse and dedicate his time solely to police work. Reports suggest he undertook his role dutifully although rather officiously. During the 1850s William worked with two unpaid constables but this increased through the century – by the early 1900s there were four. He was one of the first men appointed to the new constabulary, on 6 November 1856, before it formally commenced.

and deciding on the merits of each. There were ten candidates. The gentleman selected was Mr. James Henry Cockshott, who was duly appointed to the office, at the West Riding Quarter Sessions, held at Knaresbro', on Monday last. The division of Staincliffe West comprises 42 townships. Mr. Cockshott will be required to keep a horse, and to devote the whole of his time to the duties of his office, at a salary of £125 a year. He is a son of Thomas Cockshott, Esq., of Skipton, and has been for 3 years a serjeant of police at Manchester.

William was from Skipton, the son of Thomas Cockshott, a successful cotton manufacturer and could have been distantly related to another family of Cockshotts in Wigglesworth. William had married Margaret Preston from Elslack near Skipton. Her father was the innkeeper of the Cock and Bottle on Swadford Street in Skipton. William and Margaret's only daughter, Sarah Ann Cockshott, was born a year before his appointment as superintending constable but she died in infancy and was buried in Manchester.

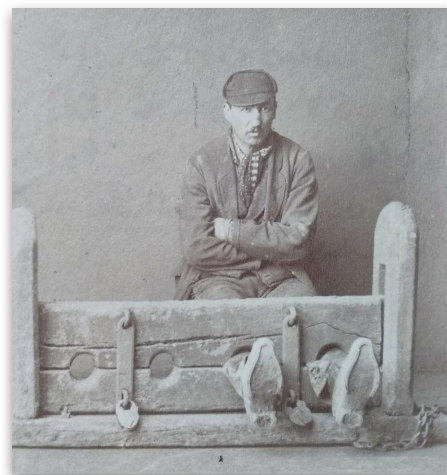
During his time as Superintending Constable, William provided annual summaries of crime in Settle, which demonstrated that crime rates, under his leadership, fell over time. This report of 1856 is typical [2]. It is no surprise that the vast majority of those arrested were male, poorly educated, and unemployed or in poverty. Superintendent Cockshott's possible relation, John 'Macco' Cockshott [ph1] was one such criminal, frequently convicted of being drunk and disorderly and spending time in the stocks whilst waiting for his hearing. The common lodging houses had a bad year in 1856 with several keepers convicted for various offences, more so than in previous years.

The following is a summary of the offences with which the prisoners were charged :—

Breaking into dwelling-houses.....	2
Burglary	2
Simple Larceny.....	17
Obtaining money or goods by false pretences	2
Assault common.....	10
Vagrant suspicious characters	6
Vagrants begging	21
Vagrants paupers.....	8
Vagrants neglect of family.....	6
Vagrants bastardy	2
Misdemeanour by threatening the life.....	2
Misdemeanour with intent to steal ...	1
Offence against the railway act.....	2
Drunk and creating a breach of the peace	5
Receiving stolen property.....	1
Deserters from the army	2
Rape	1
Forgery	1
Misdemeanour common.....	7
Total.....	98

As we know, constables' wives were not allowed to work but were expected to assist. Margaret had to make sure the courthouse was clean for which she received £1 10s in 1860.

There are numerous reports of PC Cockshott in action [SC,CH,3,4]. The offenders include several of our churchyard residents. He accused lodging housekeepers **Stephen Taylor** and **Mary Clapham** of 'permitting persons of opposite sexes to occupy the same sleeping apartments', and 'allowing a man to sleep in the house part of the building' (The Folly), rather than the dormitory. PC Cockshott also accused **Obadiah Baynes** of 'keeping his beerhouse open during the hours of divine service' and 'refusing to admit the constable', but Obadiah's loyal clientele disputed PC Cockshott's evidence and so the charges were dropped. **Ambrose Preston**, another regular offender, was fined £2 for poaching rabbits. **John Slinger** was found guilty of 'using fish roe to fish in the River Ribble' but the fines were dropped as he had such a large family of nine children, and on the condition that he gave up his fishing tackle.



There was only one glitch in William Henry's career. In 1854 he was found guilty of the 'assault' of **Matthias Wildman**, a Settle shoemaker who lived next to the King William Beerhouse (now a guesthouse) [5]. When Matthias came down a hill on his horse, quite fast, William Henry slapped him on his back, causing him to fall. William Henry alleged it was just friendly banter. In an article entitled 'A constable at fault' 'The Bench considered Mr Cockshott had exceeded his duty' and found him guilty. William Henry was only fined 1 shilling, so the court obviously didn't think it was too serious a crime.

A CONSTABLE AT FAULT.
Mr. Cockshott, of Settle, Superintending Constable, was charged by Mr. Matthias Wildman, a respectable farmer, living at Roulster, near Giggleswick, with an assault committed on the 28d of May.

William Henry worked until his death in 1871, aged 50, still in Settle. Newspapers reported that he had worked for 'upwards of 18 years in the capacity of Superintendent' and was 'an inspector of weights and measures' 'the duties of both he discharged to the satisfaction of the public and his superior officers. He was known in the police force as a zealous and faithful officer'[5]. He left an estate of £3,000, an enormous sum, to his widow and is buried with his brother and sister in Barnoldswick. Widow Margaret retired to Skipton with plenty of money to live on. William Henry was replaced as Superintending Constable by **Mr Christopher Copeland** from Otley. Mr Copeland had his work cut out to deal with the increase in crime as his appointment coincided with the influx of navvies for the building of the Settle to Carlisle railway.

DEATH OF MR. W. H. COCKSHOTT.—Our readers will regret to hear of the death of [Superintendent] of police which took place on Sunday last. He has been resident of [Settle] for upwards of 18 years in the capacity of [Superintendent]; he was also inspector of weights and measures for the west Staincliffe and Ewcross Divisions, the duties of both of which offices he discharged to the satisfaction of the public and to his superior officers. He was known in the police force as a zealous and faithful officer, and his death will be deeply regretted. His funeral took place on



Settle Graveyard Project

This account has been compiled 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.

Life stories 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 includes the families buried in the graveyard. The project is ongoing and welcomes queries and information on settleresearch@gmail.com. Latest news and events are on the Facebook page 'Settle Graveyard Project'. The life stories of people with italicised names have been researched as part of the graveyard project.

Newspaper cuttings with the kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1,3,5 – Lancaster Gazette, 2 – Kendal Mercury, 4 – Yorkshire Post, 5 – Lancaster Observer

ph1 – with the kind permission of the Museum of North Craven Life

CH - with the kind permission of the Craven Herald and Pioneer

SC – Settle Chronicle, with thanks to the Museum of North Craven Life