

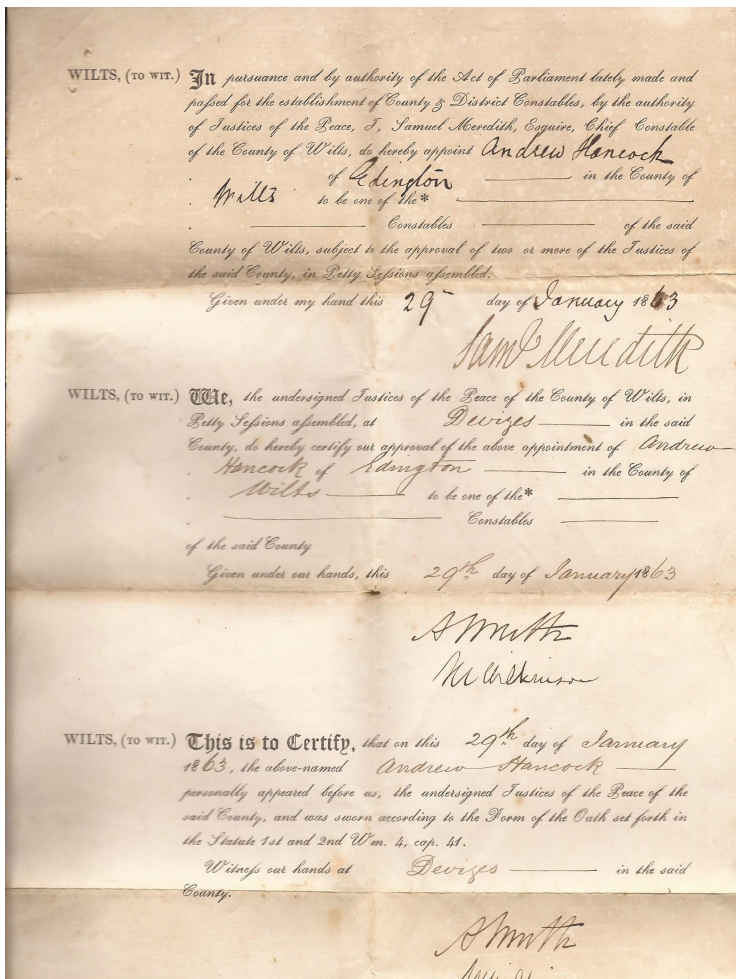


Wiltshire Constabulary Badge

**POLICE CONSTABLE
ANDREW ALBERT REUBEN HANCOCK**

Andrew Albert Reuben Hancock was born in Edington and baptised in the parish church on 30th January 1842. His parents were George and Emma Hancock.

The 1851 census shows Andrew aged 9 at home in Edington with his parents he is not listed as a scholar. In the 1861 census he is still listed as living at home with his parents in Edington and is an agricultural labourer.



PC Hancock was sworn in as a constable in the Wiltshire Police before the Devides Justices on 29th January 1863. He was issued with his warrant (card) which was signed by the Chief Constable and at some point in his career was stationed at Bishopstone near Swindon.

Andrew married Sarah Fitchew on 20th October 1864 at Cricklade St. Sampson and is listed in the 1871 Census as resident of Harlestone House, Mount Pleasant, Bishopstone. We have reason to believe in fact PC Hancock resided in a cottage next to Harlestone House. His occupation is recorded as being a police constable. He is listed with wife, Sarah and 3 sons :- Albert G. born 1866, Ernest F. R. born 1868 both in Broad Blunsdon and Andrew was baptised on 5th May 1870 in Bishopstone. We can assume from this that Andrew senior was stationed at Broad Blunsdon Police Station sometime between 1866 and 1870. Willie Hancock was baptised on 6th March 1872 also in Bishopstone.

Tragedy struck on 31st October 1875, when aged 33, PC Hancock died from injuries received when assaulted whilst quelling a disturbance

five years previously. His death is registered with the General Register Office in the December Quarter 1875 in the Highworth District Registers Volume 5a Page 9.

An extract from the minutes of the Wiltshire Police Committee Book of a Meeting on 1st January 1876 reports the following:-

The Chief Constable reported on the death of 1st Class Constable Andrew Hancock:-

On 31st October last [1875] at the early age of 33 years. He was violently assaulted by four men on 9th September, 1870, and from the medical certificate there is no doubt that the assault hastened his death. He served upward of 12 years in this force and leaves a widow and five children. We recommend that the widow be granted a gratuity of fifty pounds from the Superannuation Fund under 20 Sect 22 & 23 Vic Cap 32.

A medical certificate issued regarding the death of PC Hancock held at WSHC and dated 5th November 1875 was issued by the attending doctor. It states that cause of death was due to "Abscission of the liver [formation of abscesses on the liver] and exhaustion, attributable to assault whilst discharging his duty. The signature of the attending doctor was illegible but his address was recorded as being of Lambourn [Berkshire].

PC Hancock had been assaulted by four men during the evening of 9th September 1870 at either Bishopstone or Hinton Parva since newspaper reports differ as to the exact location. The assault having taken place some five years before he actually died in 1875. The seriousness of the internal injuries to PC Hancock were not discovered prior to the sentencing of the men, hence them being dealt with at Swindon Magistrates Court and not sent to a higher court. At that time for an offence of murder to be brought it was necessary for the victim to die within a year and one day of the assault so this was not an option. Each offender was sent to prison for 6 months with hard labour, plus a further period if court costs were not paid.

The four men were, Richard Yardley, Daniel McCarthy, William West and William Quick. Further information about the assailants can be found further on.

PC HANCOCK'S CAREER INFORMATION

29 January 1863 - Appointed as constable 4th class. PC 64 in Wiltshire Constabulary

31 January 1863 - First posting was to Melksham

1 January 1864 - Promoted to Constable 3rd class

1 January 1865 - Promoted to Constable 2nd class

1 May 1871 - Promoted to Constable 1st class

Newspaper Reports About The Case

FINISHING HIS HONEYMOON IN PRISON. On Thursday at the Swindon Petty Sessions, before Mr. D. Archer, Mr. H. Tucker, Mr. A. D. Hussey-Freke, and Captain Wykeham Martin, two men of this parish [Bishopstone] named Richard Yardley, and Daniel McCarthy, were charged with being concerned with two others, not in custody, in violently assaulting P.C. Hancock, at Bishopstone, in the execution of his duty. Mr. Tombs appeared on behalf of Yardley. Hancock said on the night of the 9th instant he was on duty at Hinton Parva [Little Hinton], when he heard cries of "murder". On going in the direction from whence the sound proceeded he came across the prisoners, who brutally ill-used him, Yardley eventually striking him with an iron bolt two feet long. Mr. W. Dore gave evidence as to the brutal treatment the policeman met at the hands of the prisoners. Mr. Tombs made an appeal on behalf of Yardley. The magistrates, however, said they were bound to protect the police, and being of opinion that the case had been made out, they should be sentence Yardley to six months' hard labour, and order him to pay 17s costs; or further imprisoned for 14 days; and as for McCarthy he was

to go to prison for the same period , and also pay 15s. costs, or be detained in gaol for a further period of 14 days. The policeman Hancock who still bore unmistakable traces of the ill-treatment he received was again called. He denied using his staff, but the bench said, under the circumstances they thought he would have been perfectly justified in doing so. **North Wilts. Herald 17 September 1870**

ALLEGED ASSAULT ON A CONSTABLE At Swindon Petty Sessions, Thursday Sept. 29. Before D. Archer, Esq., W. W. Codrington, Esq., and H. N. Goddard, Esq. William West and William Quick, who were apprehended on a warrant at Hounslow, were charged with assaulting P.C. Hancock, in the execution of his duty at Bishopstone, on the 9th September. Supt. North now applied for a remand, on the ground that the prisoners had only arrived in Swindon about an hour before the Court sat, and, therefore, he could not produce witnesses. The prisoners objected to a remand, when P.C. Hancock gave evidence to the effect that he was on duty at Bishopstone, on the night of the 9th ult., when a fight took place which he stopped, when the prisoners assaulted him. Remanded accordingly. **North Wilts. Herald 2 October 1870**

THE LATE ASSAULT ON A POLICEMAN AT BISHOPSTONE. The two men William West and William Quick, were brought up on remand, charged with violently assaulting P.C. Hancock, on 9th September. The particulars of this case have already appeared in our paper. It will be remembered that Hancock was quelling a disturbance, at Bishopstone, on the night in question, when he was grossly assaulted, by a number of men, amongst whom were Richard Yardley and Daniel McCarthy, who were sentenced to six month imprisonment three week ago for the offence. The two prisoners who were now brought up in custody absconded, but were subsequently apprehended in London. Today Hancock and Mr. William Dore, farmer, of Bishopstone, repeated the evidence given on a former occasion, and Supt. North stated that he could produce evidence to prove that the prisoners had threatened Hancock. West now stated that the policeman first hit him or he should not have struck Hancock, and Quick said he assaulted the policeman because he was hitting his mate. Both begged the Bench to be lenient on account of their wives and families. The Chairman said there was no doubt whatever but that a very gross assault had been committed, and therefore, the magistrates could make no distinction, between those sentenced on a previous occasion and the prisoners than before them. They would therefore be sent to gaol for six calendar months, and in default of paying the costs be further imprisoned for 14 days. **North Wilts. Herald 7th October 1870**

PC Hancock's Family After His Death

Sometime shortly after the death of her husband Andrew, Sarah left Bishopstone. In the 1881 census she is shown living with her three younger sons, Andrew, Willie (William) and Archie in a house at High Street, Cricklade St. Mary. Her occupation was a seamstress. Sarah died on 4th February 1891 at 23 William Street, New Swindon. The informant on her death certificate was her son Andrew Hancock. Cause of death was Phthisis [Tuberculosis].

The Five Sons

Albert George - In 1881 census was boarding as a grocery assistant at Wellington Street Swindon. He became a grocers groom and married in 1889 at Swindon. He remained in the Swindon area.

Ernest Frederick - At the time of his father's death he was believed working as an agricultural labour at Blunsdon. The next information we have on him is his marriage in 1892 at St. Kilda, Victoria, Australia. His bride was a Lucy Muckridge who was born in Tasmania. How he arrived in Australia remains a mystery at present. At the time of his marriage he was working as a billiard hall proprietor. Family rumour has it that he left England prior to his mother's death which was in 1891. Within a few years his wife and he had moved to Western Australia where he later owned billiard halls, an hotel and an up market guest house. He also owned farm land from which he grew and then sold vegetable and fruit crops. Advertisements in the Perth newspapers of the day confirm this.

Andrew – In 1881 census he was with his mother living in Cricklade. After the death of his mother in 1891, with the involvement of a charitable trust he boarded a ship called the Etoura and travelled from

Liverpool to New Orleans, USA. From there he went to work on the trusts farm at Kern in California. He married there and brought up his family in the Bakersfield area of California. He spent much of his later working life working for the US Postal Service.

Willie (William) - In 1881 he was with his mother at Cricklade. In 1896 he married in Swindon and ran a milk delivery business in Swindon with his younger brother Archie. The business had financial problems and closed down. Shortly afterwards in 1911 his wife and he with their young family emigrated to Western Australia. There they acquired land under a government group settlement scheme and became farmers.

Archie - In the 1881 census he was with his mother. Then he worked in the family milk delivery business. After its closure he worked as a drayman with a horse and cart around Swindon delivering coal for the Great Western Railway. He married in Swindon in 1902 and remained in the town for the rest of his life. He died in Swindon aged 56 years old in 1930.

Family rumours pertain that after the death of Andrew, Sarah was left with almost no money to look after herself and her children and that she had not been able to afford a headstone for Andrew's grave. This rumour would explain why there is no marker in the churchyard to commemorate PC Hancock.

THE ASSAILANTS BACKGROUNDS AND LATER LIVES

RICHARD YARDLEY (1845–1927)

Richard Yardley, 2nd son of William, a bricklayer, and Mary Yardley, born in Windsor in 1844 or 45; birth registered in March Quarter of 1845 and according to the 1851 Census was living at Grove Cottage, New Windsor, Berkshire.

He married Alice Hicks of Hinton Parva on 5th September 1870 at St. Swithun's, Little Hinton. The marriage taken place just 4 days before the fatal assault. Richard's father, William, continues working as a bricklayer. Richard was living in Hinton at the time of his marriage.

In the Census of 1871 (April 2nd), he is listed as a bricklayer, living at 4 Horse Fair Street, Cricklade with his 22 year old wife, Alice nee Hicks, his mother-in-law, Susan Hicks, a widowed 44 year old dress-maker and her niece, Emily Hicks aged 9. In 1881, they are to be found at Cotteshall Hatch, Godalming, Surrey: Richard, bricklayer, and Alice Yardley are living as boarders in the household of Ellen Taylor, a 41 year old widowed laundress, and her four children. In 1891 they have moved again this time to 4 Beasley's Cottages, Clewer New Town, Windsor, Berkshire: Richard, bricklayer, and Alice, domestic servant. The 1901 Census finds them listed at 25 Albert Road, Egham, Surrey: Richard, bricklayer and Alice working as a dressmaker on own account. There were two daughters Elizabeth and Alice. By the time of Census of 1911, the address has changed to 11 Helena(?) Road, Windsor (living in a single room): Richard, bricklayer (builder/worker) and Alice, laundress (home/employer). Alice is described as "invalid caused by accident". By 1911, the couple had been married for 43 years; Alice had given birth to 7 living children, 4 of whom had later died. Alice died in 1914 (March Quarter) in Windsor at the age of 67; Richard was 81 when he died in 1927 (September Quarter) also in Windsor.

DANIEL McCARTHY (born c.1837)

Born c.1837 in Ireland.

On Census night of 1871 (April 2nd) he was lodging with the Richens family in Nell Hill, Bishopstone: listed as a 34 year old unmarried bricklayer's labourer. Possibly in the 1881 Census he is recorded at Lambeth Workhouse, as a bricklayer's labourer aged 46, a widower of Newcastle, County Limerick, Ireland. Between 1891 and 1900 there appears to be several admissions to London Workhouses (?)

There is no trace of William Quick or William West in the 1871 census and they may well have still be serving out their punishment at the time. We have been unable at this stage to determine where the prisoners served their gaol sentence.

Source Information:-

We are deeply grateful for the use of the material supplied by the sources listed below and especially to Clive, Karin and Steve without whose input the story in full may never have been pieced together.

Clive Gray, Great Grandson of PC Hancock, Australia Police Roll of Honour Trust

Karin Thomson, Hinton Parva

Steve Bridge

John Pope, OPC for Bishopstone

UK Census

British Newspaper Library

Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre, Chippenham