

Constable John Goodall

John Goodall [sometimes appearing as Goodhall] represents one of the earliest police constables identified as serving the Waltham Abbey police area. He is assumed to have been posted to the rural Chingford area for a large part of his service, he was nevertheless a Waltham Abbey officer in a period before Chingford had its own police station.

John was a Yorkshireman with his roots in Shipley, Bradford. Born in 1812, the son of an inn-keeper James Goodall and his wife Elizabeth. As far as can be ascertained he had a brother, a half brother and a sister. On 11th June 1832, aged 20 years, he married Sarah Scott, 19, in Bradford; they were to have at least eleven children but only half survived him.

He was in his late twenties by the time he joined the Metropolitan Police in London on 13th January 1840 at the time of the major expansion into the outer areas including Waltham Abbey. The two referees, or references, he called upon when applying to join the police were both from Shipley, the first was J S Waine and the second W Nicholl, an inn keeper. The second appears to have been William, his half brother who had probably taken over the inn from their father who died in the summer of 1833.

Throughout his service he was dressed as a typical Peeler – a swallow tailed jacket and top hat. It was a hard life entailing an 8-12 hour day seven days each week with very few days off duty each year. Initially at least he would have been prohibited from discarding his uniform for civilian attire at any time. The original purpose of the striped duty band on the left sleeve was to denote to all whether he was on or off duty.

The area he first worked is unknown; he probably arrived in the London area alone and worked for the first period in central areas learning his duties. There was no training school, all knowledge was imparted on the street, and that was easier undertaken in the city centre. By 1845 he was working as a constable in the area of Epping Forest. He was living with his wife and their children in Fairmead Lodge a large remote wooden building situated between Fairmead Road and Church Road near the present Suntrap building.

At the time this section of Epping Forest was policed from Waltham Abbey as the major station with its officers either living in the town or dispersed to houses in other parts of the forest and rural environment. There were few built up areas and Chingford was typical of the period in only having farms and clusters of a few houses with little need for intensive policing. The few prisoners will have been walked or transported to Waltham Abbey – although there was an ancient lock-up on the green that provided a temporary place of incarceration until the police station arrived in

1888. Any members of the public wanting to communicate with John Goodall and his colleagues had first to find them and they in turn had to be very self sufficient – there was no hope of a swift back-up from colleagues.

On 17th August 1845 John and Sarah took two of their children, Abraham and Mary Ann, to be baptised at the nearby Church of St. Paul, High Beech. In that period the church for the area, built in 1836, was a modest building in Church Road (hence the name) rather than the current, 1873 build, Church of the Holy Innocents. The late christening for one of the children may have been a consequence of a family separation enforced by John's initial arrival in London.



Within six years the family had moved house again and, in the 1851 Census, they were shown to be living on the green in Chingford with six of their children. According to that census record three of the children were born in Yorkshire and the others Essex. The six year old was born in Sewardstone in 1846 and the others, 4, 2 and a few months were shown to be born in Chingford.

On 16th March 1853 Police Orders announced that the Commissioner Richard Mayne had promoted John to the rank of sergeant.

<p>16th March 1853</p>	<p>P.O. The Gratuities of the following Division by the Commissioner to be received; D & Thame, The Sec^y of State has promoted a Constable to the rank of Sergeant; John Goodall Promotion dated 14th - Reinstated P.C. John Mills C. Div. Dismissed P.C. William J. Lane et. drunk on duty fined 5/- paid to 13th -</p>
<p>17th March</p>	<p>P.O. The Gratuities of the following Division</p>

The following year, just three years after the census listed the complete family, John Goodall was widowed at the age of 45 years. Sarah was buried in the churchyard of the 1844 built church of St. Peter and St. Paul on Chingford Green. Today the grave is unmarked. John never remarried despite having a young family to bring up.

He left the police after serving just 17 years on 4 August 1857. By that time it is said he had earned fifteen awards.

It may be that he was one of many police in the period who found the pace of work expected of him too onerous to maintain – ‘worn out’ in fact. This will have been exacerbated by having a still young family to bring up but that may simply have been the whole reason to leave. He seems to have had long term health issues including an ulcerated throat and bronchitis.

Having not yet reached his 60th year or completed 30 years service – an almost impossible attainment - he was placed on the customary short term - five year - pension and then needed to find new employment.

In 1863 he was appointed an officer to the Enfield Local Board, he moved on to become Inspector of Nuisances and then in 1878 Road Surveyor. By the end he had served at least sixteen years with Enfield, almost as many as his time with the police. During his time in Enfield he also served as Beadle and Coroners Officer.



John Goodall and his sons



After a final illness lasting three weeks in April 1879, he died of the effects of the bronchitis in his home in Chase Green, in the centre of Enfield. He was 68 years old and as a mark of the respect the local people obviously had for him a number of shops shut. He left behind six surviving children, five sons and a daughter. Twenty-five years after her death he was laid to rest beside his wife in the churchyard in Chingford as the bell tolled for two long hours as a mark of the esteem that was clearly felt for him. It is unlikely that the Metropolitan Police played any part in the farewell to John Goodall, the short term pensions then in force will have ensured that they would have had no contact with him for many years.

There was still no police station in Chingford at the time, that development was still nearly ten years away.