

Inspector John Thomas Dean

John Thomas Dean was born in East Retford, Nottinghamshire on 8 April 1825, probably the first son to Isaac and Jane Dean who had only married at Clarbrough in February the previous year. Isaac then aged 28 was a local having been born at Stokeham in October 1797.

John may have been a sickly child for he was christened on the day following his birth, clearly he recovered his strength though and moved to both serve in the army and the police in London.

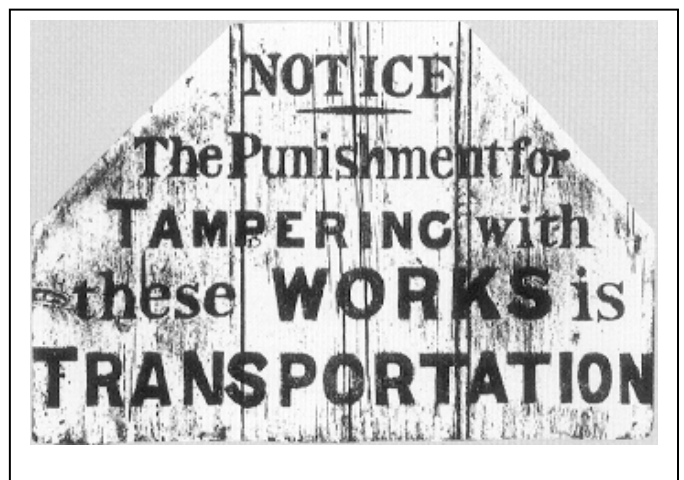
Despite the early detail there is a lot of presumption in the later parts of this story because of conflicting information.

It is known that John Dean was first employed as a sadler, this apparently prompting his later service with the 12th Lancers for five years and 36 days from September 1843 at the age of 18 years.

At the age of 23 he joined the Metropolitan Police on 2 October 1848 and was assigned the warrant number 26276. Posted to 'S' Division in outer north London he remained a constable for six years and then gained promotion to sergeant. On 27 December 1854 he transferred in the new rank to the Enfield Highway area as PS37N.

Marriage to Isabella, six years his junior and from Ham, Surrey took place around the time he joined the police which suggests they met while he was in the army. Their first known child, Arthur, was born in about 1850 but we do not know where. Later confusing census return information tends to distort the truth even more. In spite of 'proof' that John Dean did not serve in the area until after 1854, at least one girl, Isabella, was supposed born in Enfield Highway as early as 1852.

Promotion to inspector – then a quite lofty rank – came to Dean on 8 April 1864. Posted to command the police providing security at the Royal Gun-Powder Factory [RGPF] in Powdermill Lane. Waltham Abbey, a government owned explosives factory which had become a Metropolitan Police responsibility in 1860. He was probably only the second to take charge of security there and also had a similar responsibility in relation to the Royal Small Arms Factory [RSAF] at Enfield Lock.



He stayed just five years. On 23 July 1869 he relinquished his post and moved with his family to Leyton; setting up home in the quarters above Lea Bridge Road police station. The station covered parts of Walthamstow and Leyton. In the 1871 Census John Dean was shown as being 45 years old and living with Isabella and six children, the youngest being Ernest who was still a baby. Within days of the Census, on 10 April, John Dean was promoted to Chief Inspector. He remained stationed at Walthamstow but now had wider responsibilities which effectively included Waltham Abbey.



Lea Bridge Road Police Station was in its time the police station for both Leyton and Walthamstow. It spent most of its later years as an accommodation block for police officers and families. [MP]

By way of confirming that continued connection John Dean appeared to address the Bench at the regular sitting of the Waltham Abbey Petty Sessions at the County Court building in Highbridge Street on 18 March 1872. The purpose of the visit was to thank them for their past courtesies during his service in the town from 1864 to 1869 when he was in charge of policing at the RGPF and RSAF and to acknowledge the presentation of a pocket watch and chain when he left three years earlier.

The following year, on 12 November 1873, he resigned from the police. The reasons given were 'length of service, loss of memory and vision.' Having served the police for twenty-four years and one month he was just 47 years old – no great age. Perhaps the 'odd' reappearance at the Waltham Abbey Court and the inaccurate Census returns were indicative of this type of problem. The sudden debility may well have been brought on by the recent death of his wife Isabella, leaving him a widower with several young children to care for. On leaving John's next-of-kin was shown as his son Arthur, the eldest, who no longer lived at home.

There are some grounds for suspicion that the authorities were again ensuring that the Metropolitan Police were not being faced with a full long term pension commitment. Pensions were by no means as cushioning as they were to become a hundred years later. John Dean's pension was £109.4s.0d payable annually, significantly more than a constable was receiving as a wage at the time but well short of his previous wages as a chief inspector. Fortunately for the public purse he, like most of his colleagues, was leaving earlier than the stipulated 30 years service or 60 years of age and the pension could be halted after a handful of years.

In spite of his supposed debility John Dean not only remarried but also fathered another child. Alice was born in Waltham Abbey in 1877. The 1881 Census showed him living with Caroline Dean, seventeen years his junior, in a property called Melbourne Cottage in Staples Road, Loughton. Caroline had been born in Oxford in about 1842.

It would be pleasant to leave the middle aged ex-policeman living in idyllic circumstances with his younger wife and his large family close at hand and, were it not for the five year rule on pensions perhaps it might have been so.

In September 1905 John Dean died. He was unable to provide for his own burial costs and it would seem that the last 28 years of his life saw him sliding into an increasing depth of poverty. On 23 September 1905 his body was taken from the Workhouse of the Parish of St. Mary's, Loughton and buried in an unmarked common grave at public expense. He shared the grave with two others of similar means.

The five year pension rules were changed for the better from 1873 but the improvement did not take effect in time to assist the likes of John Dean.

The Dean Children

Details from the 1871 Census [Leyton] and the 1881 Census [Loughton]

Arthur	Born circa	1850	at	Not Given
Isabella		1852	at	Enfield Highway
Mary		1858	at	Enfield Highway
Frederick		1860	at	Enfield Highway
Eleanor		1865	at	Waltham Abbey [also shown as Enfield H]
[girl, no name in 1871]		1867	at	Waltham Abbey [probably died young?]
Ernest		1870	at	Leyton [also shown as Waltham Abbey]
Alice		1877	at	Waltham Abbey