

Chief Inspector Henry Craggs

Henry Craggs was born in Chelsea, London, on 10 March 1848. The Census of 1851 showed him as 3 years old and living at Foxbush House, Hildenborough, near Tonbridge in Kent. His father John Joseph Craggs was a schoolmaster aged 40, born in Stepney, London, and his mother Jane 36 and born in Poultry in the City of London. He had a brother - Walter - who was 2 months old and had been born in Hildenborough.

Foxbush House was apparently a large building with extensive grounds. It was later rebuilt in 1866 for Charles Kemp, a London accountant, and it then had various owners before being used to house an artillery unit during the Second World War. Between 1949 and 1970 it was home to the music producer Phil Spector and it is now the private Sackville School.

Shortly after the census, on 24 October 1851, at Tonbridge County Court, John Joseph Craggs, of Foxbush House, Hildenborough, entered a plea for bankruptcy. It appears that this led to the breakup of the family and the Census of 1861 showed Henry Craggs as a scholar aged 13 living in Victoria Road, Surbiton, Surrey.

He joined 'L' (Lambeth) Division of the Metropolitan Police at Kennington Lane Police Station on 12 August 1867 and he was given the warrant number 48,782. He transferred to 'C' (St. James's) Division on 30 October 1867. He married Sarah Ann Austin in the Poplar Registration District of London in the first quarter of 1869 and his wife had been born at New Shoreham in Sussex in 1843. The Census of 1861 showed her as 18 years old and she was a domestic servant living at Ham Common in Shoreham. Her father was a Master in the Merchant Navy and she lived with her mother Sarah and her brothers and sisters.

He transferred to 'M' (Southwark) Division on 13 September 1869 and the Census of 1871 showed him as a police constable aged 23 born in Middlesex; his wife Sarah was then 28 and their children were Emma (2, born in Bow) and Hilda (9 months, born in Surrey). The family lived at 11 Bath Place in Newington, Southwark, a street which no longer exists.

He remained in 'M' (Southwark) Division for some years, being promoted to Sergeant on 18 March 1872 and to Inspector on 19 August 1878. He transferred to 'N' (Islington) Division on 9 October 1879 and the Census of 1881 showed him as an Inspector of Police aged 35; his wife Sarah was 38 and their children were Emma Jane (12), Hilda (10), Alfred (9), George (8) and William (4). Emma Jane had been born in Bow and the others in Southwark. The family was living at Lea Bridge Road Police Station in Leyton, London E, where Craggs was in charge.

He was promoted to Sub-Divisional Inspector on 5 November 1887 having been awarded the Jubilee Medal a few months earlier as an Inspector in 'N' (Islington) Division. The Census of 1891 showed him still at Lea Bridge Road Police Station in Leyton; he was a police inspector and lived with his wife Sarah and five children - Emma (21), Hilda (20), Alfred (19, a commercial clerk), George (18, a steam engine fitter) and William (14, a scholar).

On 28 May 1892 he was promoted to Chief Inspector in 'N' (Islington) Division and from that date until his retirement he was specially employed in command of the Metropolitan Police detachment at the Royal Gunpowder Factory at Waltham Abbey and the Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield Lock. He received the 1897 clasp to his Jubilee Medal whilst in this post.

It was intended that command of the detachment was to be given to an Inspector and this was the case until 1874 when Inspector Clements, a popular figure with the mainly military hierarchy at the Gunpowder and Small Arms Factories, was promoted to Chief Inspector. This meant that he outranked his theoretical superior at Sun Street Police Station which was the main charging station for the area.

This tradition was carried on with the following incumbents - Charles Goble and Henry Craggs - but when the latter retired the post reverted to an Inspector.

Henry was finally pensioned on 27 December 1898 and a photograph was taken to mark the event; he is seated in the centre of the group with Sub-Divisional Inspector Jones, and 29 other officers (mostly identified).



His pension papers confirmed that he retired as a Chief Inspector in 'N' (Islington) Division on 25 December 1898 with a pension of £143.17s.4d per annum. He was 50 years old and had served for 31 years and 136 days, latterly with pay of £4.3s.0d [£4.15p] per week. He was 5'11" tall with light brown hair, blue eyes and a fresh complexion; he had no "particular marks". He had been injured once during his service when he suffered a contused knee on 8 June 1884.

He was still married, and lived with his wife Sarah at 8 Amersham Road, New Cross, London S.E., where he intended to live after retirement. The Census of 1901 showed him at the same address. Amersham Road still exists and is just off the A2 (New Cross Road) opposite New Cross railway station. He was shown as a retired Chief Inspector of Police aged 53 and his wife Sarah was 58. Also shown were his daughters Emma (31) and Hilda (30) and his son William (24, a carpenter). The Census of 1911 showed him as 63 years old and living in Greenwich, London S. E.