

Story of a House (part 2)

You may recall that in the October issue of the **NEWS** I wrote about the goings on in August 1852 at the house on Eastfield Lane where I now live, then the home of the Musgrave family. This was a true Victorian melodrama of family strife, a drunken, hell-raising only son, a shooting and the heroic actions of Superintendent Constable Hardcastle who, despite his injuries, with the help of two other constables, brought the culprit, William Musgrave, to justice.

I left my story on a cliff-hanger concerning William's fate in western Australia after his transportation there in 1855 to serve his 14-year sentence. By then William, aged 28, had already been in custody for almost three years, either on remand or in English prisons awaiting the ship that would take him to the Swan River Colony, now the cities of Perth and Fremantle. No doubt, the conditions he endured in that period would have done nothing to improve his health but he survived the journey and was taken to the newly-built Fremantle prison. Very clear records exist of all the prisoners transported to Australia but, in William's case, I was confused to find a reference in the Lincolnshire press in 1857 to the death in custody of this notorious prisoner while one record in Western Australia referred to him having married an Irishwoman there in 1859. Was it possible that he or his family created the story of his death to bring an end to his notoriety? Sadly, the story is a more mundane one: his record had become confused with another prisoner of the same name.

I have now seen William's death certificate and a letter from the Acting Comptroller General to the Colonial Secretary confirming his death due to consumption on 6th February 1857. William's medical records in prison show that he was treated for constipation and, latterly, that he complained of a nighttime cough but there is no mention of consumption (tuberculosis), suggesting that prison health care may not have been of the highest standard. William was just 32 when he died. His status at the time of his death is described as a 'probation prisoner', which probably reflects that, as a relatively well-educated and non-recidivist prisoner, he had been allowed granted a 'ticket of leave', a form of monitored parole which allowed convicts to work for their own money but only in allocated districts.

Meanwhile, a few more details have emerged about William's family. His mother, Ann, died in June 1849, according to her death certificate at the age of 46 from breast cancer. Her gravestone was one of those removed from Welton churchyard in the 1960s but a record remains. This, wrongly, lists her age as 62 and also notes the inscription:

Forbear fond men and weep no more in vain
When heaven decrees 'tis folly to complain
This worldly mass is subject to decay
And death and nature all things must obey
The blushing rose smiles with the moving sun
Just then looks gay, now withers and is gone
Pardon my sins, Almighty God I pray
Forgive me them and take me hence away

William senior, her husband, however, did not remain a widower for too long. On 22nd October 1850 he married again, this time to Olive Green from West Barkwith, described on their marriage certificate as a spinster of full age and a servant, whose father, John Green, was a labourer. On the

face of it, this seems a slightly surprising marriage for a gentleman farmer and it is also curious that the wedding took place at St Peter's, Castlegate in Lincoln, rather than at Welton church, as William's marriage to Ann had done. Maybe the marriage caused a few raised eyebrows in Welton and maybe the death of his mother and his father's remarriage just over a year later had something to do with young William's behaviour and the drastic conflict with his father that boiled over in August 1852.

In the 1851 census William senior is described as a farmer of just over 200 acres, employing three labourers. His wife, Olive, is said to be 45 years of age. Also listed as living in the house are two male labourers (presumably two of his employees) and 16 year-old 'house servant' Elizabeth Pettey. William junior was not listed as resident in the house, nor does he appear at any other address in Welton or Ryland. The fact that he lived elsewhere seems to be supported by the accounts of the day of the shooting in August 1852, which suggest that he had arrived at the house unexpectedly. William senior survived his only child by five years: he died on 22nd June 1862. His will, written only three weeks before he died, is interesting in that, although it talks about 'my dear wife, Olive' it is carefully constructed not to give her any of his property outright but to create a trust, administered by his executors, Joseph Cade and Edward Knowles, described as 'farmers of Welton', to provide her with an income for life. Ezra and Sarah, children of Joseph, are the eventual beneficiaries of the farmland, house and various cottages nearby.

Although Olive lived on for a number of years, the death of William senior marks the end of the association of the house and farm with the Musgrave name. The next part of the story will be to trace the succession and how the house came into the possession, at the turn of the twentieth century, of Thomas Stovin.

Finally, however, I wonder what happened to the redoubtable Superintendent Constable Hardcastle? At this stage, the only other reference to him appears to be a note in the *Lincolnshire Chronicle* that, following his recovery from his injuries and after making one donation to the hospital that treated him, he made a further donation from the five guineas awarded to him for his bravery. Admirable.

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