

The First Chief Constable of Shropshire, Captain Dawson Mayne

By TONY MOORE

Richard Mayne, later Sir Richard, is one of the most famous policemen in Britain, if not the world. With Colonel Sir Charles Rowan, he was appointed by Sir Robert Peel in 1829 to set up the Metropolitan Police in London.

After being joint-commissioner with Rowan for 21 years, until 1850, joint-commissioner with Captain Hay for the next five years, and sole Commissioner for a further 13 years, he died in office in December 1868.¹ But, what is often overlooked is that a younger brother of Richard's, Dawson Mayne, set up the Shropshire County Constabulary and served as its chief constable for the first nineteen years of its existence.

Early Life

Dawson Mayne was born in Ireland on 24 December 1799, three years after Sir Richard. Their father was Edward Mayne, a barrister whose final appointment before his retirement was as a Justice of the King's Bench Division. Edward was a descendent of the Sedborough-Maynes of Ireland and married Sarah Fiddes, the brothers' mother, in June 1780. They were two of thirteen children born to the couple between 1782 and 1807.² Dawson joined the Royal Navy in



*Sir Richard Mayne,
elder brother of Dawson Mayne*

1812 at the age of 13 years. During a successful naval career, he took part in the bombardment of Algiers in 1816 - an attempt by an Anglo-Dutch fleet to put an end to the slavery trade generated from there - where he was wounded, before going on to serve on various ships in the seas around North America and the Caribbean. Returning to England in 1834, he spent the next six years as an Inspecting Commander in the Coast

Guard Service,³ during which he resided, for some of the time at least, at 34 Norfolk Square in London.⁴ He remained on the navy's active list until retiring from it in 1856.⁵

Shortly after his appointment as chief constable, Dawson Mayne married Elizabeth Mary Hewitt, daughter of William Hewitt of Jamaica, on 14 May 1840.⁶ Hewitt was a cousin of Rowland Hill, the Member of Parliament for Shropshire from 1821 to 1832 and, on the re-alignment of boundaries, for North Shropshire from 1832 to 1842 when, on the death of his uncle, he succeeded to the title of 2nd Viscount Hill. Between 1845 and 1875 Viscount Hill was Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire. Whether his future wife's relationship to Hill was influential in his appointment as chief constable is not known, but it would later be the cause his undoing.

Chief Constable

On 6 February 1840 Mayne took up the appointment of Chief Constable of Shropshire, having been selected twelve days earlier from a short-list of four, and immediately set to work creating the new constabulary. He divided the county into six police divisions, each with a superintendent

in charge. In addition to the six superintendents, the initial strength of the force was 43 constables but by 9 March, when it became operational, only 31 constables had been sworn in. Mayne's problems with finding men of the right calibre were similar to those experienced by brother Richard in London. Many only lasted a few days before being dismissed for drunkenness or neglect of duty. The first officer to be sworn in to the Shropshire force, Edward Butler, was caught and convicted of poaching after serving for a mere nine days. For their uniforms, Mayne chose a rifle-green frock-coat and trousers, a black stove-pipe hat, with a stock around the neck and a belt around the waist, each made of leather. An Oxford-grey overcoat was provided to wear in cold weather. For protection they carried a truncheon with the addition of a cutlass at night. Each constable was issued with a rattle with which to summon assistance; a lantern was carried at night. In the first six months of operations, over eight hundred offenders were brought before the magistrates, leading the Shropshire Constabulary to acquire the nickname 'Paddy Mayne's Grasshoppers'.⁷

Given these successes, it must have been a surprise to Mayne that only a year after becoming operational, the June County Quarter Sessions of 1841 appointed a police committee to inquire into the workings of the constabulary. Whether Mayne had sought the guidance of his older brother who had, by this time, been Joint-Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police for eleven years, is unlikely given the committee's report to the October Quarter Sessions. Amongst the criticisms, of which there were a number, it accused the chief constable and his superintendents of not administering the force efficiently, claiming Mayne 'was not sufficiently aware of the importance of frequently inspecting

the operations of his force at their different stations' which he was told he should do 'at least four times a year'. Mayne responded positively and undertook to implement all the recommendations contained in the report.⁸

In 1842, industrial strife, caused primarily by massive unemployment and a reduction in wages for those who were in work, spread through much of England. In Shropshire, the job of the police in preserving order was made more difficult by an influx of Staffordshire miners, who smashed machinery in the pits where Shropshire miners were still working. As a result, in August, Mayne concentrated 50 of his 58 constables in the Wellington area, 'while other parts of the county were left at the mercy of bands of beggars.' Nevertheless, led by Mayne, the Shropshire Constabulary showed itself to be 'capable of handling the disorder' that occurred. In his report to the October Quarter Sessions that year, Mayne described the conduct of his force during a difficult period as being 'exemplary' and he subsequently received letters expressing approval of his actions from the Lord Lieutenant and the Home Secretary.⁹

Older brother Richard was in the habit of sending his wife out of London during the summer months because of the heat and stench that reverberated around the capital at that time of the year. When his third son, Edward William, fell ill soon after birth, it was not surprising that his wife and the sick child should end up at the house of Dawson and Elizabeth in Shrewsbury for the summer of 1844. Unfortunately it was to no avail, for poor Edward died on 25 August. He was less than 2-years-old.¹⁰

From June 1847 to April 1849 there were regular outbreaks of disorder in the county involving navvies from

the railway construction companies. For one ten-day period in 1848, the disorder was so serious in Wellington that Mayne again deployed most of the constabulary force to that area and order was only restored with the help of a detachment of the 87th Prince of Wales' Own Irish Fusiliers. Tragically, right at the end of this troublesome period Police Constable John Micklewright was killed, the only Shropshire officer to be murdered in its 127-year existence.¹¹

In 1850 it was agreed that Bridgnorth Borough Police would amalgamate with the Shropshire Constabulary, but Bridgnorth Corporation insisted that the Constabulary employ its Chief Constable, Richard Evans. Mayne agreed, providing he was found to be efficient. However, Mayne found him to be illiterate and refused to accept him. The Mayor of Bridgnorth therefore reneged on the agreement, even though it had been signed by both parties. Six months later, Bridgnorth Corporation found another post for Richard Evans and the Shropshire Constabulary took over the policing of Bridgnorth.¹² However, Mayne was faced with a more serious problem that year, when one of his senior officers, Superintendent

1. See for instance Reith, Charles (1943). *The British Police and the Democratic Ideal*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Reith, Charles (1956). *A New Study of Police History*. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd.

2. For Dawson Mayne's full family background, see Sedborough-Mayne at www.scribd.com/doc/75988391/Sedborough-Mayne-of-Ireland accessed 17 March 2017.

3. For more details about Dawson Mayne's naval career, see the entry in Elliott, Douglas J (1984). *Policing Shropshire 1836-1967*. Studley, Warwickshire: Brewin Books, p.231.

4. *Morning Advertiser*, 15 May 1838, p.3.

5. *Hampshire Advertiser*, 5 October 1872, p.8.

6. See Sedborough-Mayne, op. cit.2.

7. Elliott, op. cit. 3, p.19-22.

8. Ibid, pp. 27-28.

9. Ibid, pp. 31-34.

10. *Morning Post*, 28 August 1844, p.4.

11. Elliott, op. cit. 3, pp. 48-49; see also *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 27 April 1849, p.3.

12. Elliott, op. cit. 3, p.50.

William Baxter, who had been with him since the beginning, was found to have embezzled a large sum of money. When initially questioned about the missing monies, he decamped to Liverpool. Brought back to face trial,¹³ he was sentenced to three months imprisonment. In its subsequent report, the Police Committee was 'highly critical' of Mayne and it is suggested he was only 'saved from more serious repercussions because of his wife's relationship with the Hill family'. But Mayne had enemies in the county. Sir Baldwin Leighton JP was an early critic of the force's command and administration, and was of the view no chief constable should have personal connections with the magistracy.¹⁴

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary was created in 1856 by The County and Borough Police Act.¹⁵ At the time, there were 246 police forces in England and Wales and each borough and county received a grant from the Exchequer to assist with the running of their respective forces. But before the Exchequer handed over the money, the Inspector had to be satisfied the force was 'efficient in discipline and numbers'. Most of the county forces passed the initial inspection, but Shropshire was amongst seven that did not. The Inspector, General William Cartwright, found the Constabulary 'greatly lacking in numbers' and suggested the number of 1st class constables should be raised from nine to twenty, a new 3rd class of constable should be introduced, and inspectors' pay should be raised by a shilling a week. To their cost, the Police Committee initially ignored Cartwright's recommendations. He therefore declared the Shropshire Constabulary 'inefficient in numbers' and no Exchequer grant was forthcoming for that year. This prompted the Police Committee to quickly authorise an increase of

twenty-six men. Twenty were to be constables, five were to be sergeants, a rank that had not existed in Shropshire previously, and there was to be an additional inspector.¹⁶



*Oil painting of Sir Baldwin Leighton MP
Courtesy Shropshire Museums*

But danger loomed for Mayne. Sir Baldwin Leighton had been appointed Chairman of the Shropshire Court of Quarter Sessions. Another committee was set up to examine the efficiency and discipline of the force, and when it reported that 'in a number of cases investigated by them' it did not appear that 'the intelligence and activity displayed' was of the standard to be expected 'from the chief constable and his superintendents',¹⁷ Mayne's position had become untenable. On 3 January 1859, Mayne wrote to Leighton:

Having for some time been aware that the constabulary committee of this county have not that confidence in me that the chief constable ought to possess and feeling under such circumstances that I cannot, with benefit to the public service or justice to myself, continue to hold that office which I have now done for 19 years, I beg through you, as chairman of

quarter session, to state that it is my intention to resign at such time as the court shall find it convenient to place the duties in other hands.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

*D. Mayne*¹⁸

The resignation took effect from 1 April 1859.¹⁹

Retirement

Following his retirement, Dawson and Elizabeth continued to live in Shrewsbury, attending various social events such as the wedding, in 1867, of Captain Hopton Scott Stewart of the 11th Regiment to Miss Woodward, daughter of Ratcliffe Woodward in the village of Tixall; the toast was proposed by the Earl of Shrewsbury.²⁰ Dawson also attended the funeral of his elder brother, Sir Richard Mayne, at Kensal Green in London on 30 December 1868.²¹

The couple frequently visited his native Ireland following his retirement.²² But, towards the end of his life, it appears he left his wife in England and returned to Killaloe in County Clare to live with his youngest sister, Frances Rebecca Mayne, better known as Fanny, who had never married. He died there on 25 September 1872. Less than a month later, on 23 October 1872, Fanny too was dead. A memorial to them can be seen in St. Flannan's Cathedral in Killaloe:²³

*In memory of
Captain Dawson Mayne
Royal Navy
who died at Killaloe
on the 25th September 1872
in the 75th year of his age.
Also of Frances Rebecca Mayne,
sister of the above
who died at Killaloe
on the 23rd October 1872
in the 65th year of her age.*

Interestingly, the memorial stone makes no reference to him being the Chief Constable of Shropshire for nineteen years!

His wife died less than a year later, on 21 September 1873, at Sidmouth in Devon.²⁴

13. *Wolverhampton Chronicle and Staffordshire Advertiser*, 6 March 1850, p.4.

14. Elliott, op. cit. 3, p.51.

15. For the setting up of the Inspectorate and particularly the role of General William Cartwright, see Cowley, Richard and Peter Todd (2006). *The History of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary: The First 150 Years*. London: HMIC.

16. Elliott, op. cit. 3, pp. 62-64.

17. Ibid, p. 67.

18. *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 7 January 1859, p.6.

19. Elliott, op. cit. 3, p.68; another source suggests Mayne's replacement was in place by 7 March, see Stallion, Martin, and David S.Wall (1999). *The British Police: Police Forces and Chief Officers 1829-2000*. Bramshill, Hampshire: The Police History Society, p.159.

20. *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 27 April 1867, p.4.

21. *The Morning Post*, 31 December 1868, p.5.

22. See *Saunders's News Letter*, dated 19 October and 14 November 1964; 16 November 1968; *Morning Post*, 2 October 1972, p.8.

23. www.igp-web.com/IGPArchives/ire/clare/photos/tombstones/iheadstones/st-flannans-mems.txt accessed on 17 March 1017.

24. *London Evening Standard*, 25 September 1873, p.7.



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Not Many People Know That!

By FRED FEATHER

Whilst consulting the *Stratford Times and Bromley News* for 8th September 1879... No, I am not behind with the newspapers, I was looking for stories of the career of Inspector Tom Simmons of the Essex Constabulary at Romford, murdered in 1885.

I came across the East End story of two boys who were charged with "Robbing a Missionary Box." The officer in the case was reported as Constable 310K Penno von Augiwitz.

Intrigued, I wrote to Keith Skinner of the Friends of the Metropolitan Police for endorsement, and back came the welcomed reply:

Stratford Times were close with his name which was Eugen Benno Von Langiwitz.

If I had known about this chap, I would have definitely worked him into Ripper Street somehow. He was born in Dresden, Germany (Saxony), formerly a baker, he joined the Met on April 28th 1879 as PC K310 aged 22 years and resigned on July 26th 1889 as Constable 117J with a good conduct certificate.

It seemed to me that had Keith, with his Thespian connections, woven Eugen into *Ripper Street* or even better *From Hell*, then Michael Caine (aka Inspector Fred Abberline) would be doing the rounds with this anecdote – Not Me!



The recent memorial to Inspector Simmons placed in near the scene of his murder
L-R: Susan Harrison, retired ACC Essex (now part of England Ladies Football Team Staff); Dennis Rensch, Retired Superintendent and Deputy Lord Lieutenant, Essex; Fred Feather, Treasurer and retired Sergeant; Geoffrey Markham, retired ACC, Essex; Charles Clark, Retired DCC and Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Essex; Andy Bliss, retired Chief Constable of Hertfordshire and former DCC Essex.