

POLICE FAMILY HISTORY AND DNA

Old English saying: **Trust not the roper to craft his own noose.**

It may be considered that due to having my DNA tested that I joined the Police History Society. For several years, especially since retiring my wife and I have been researching our family history. In earlier days before the



widespread use of computers and on line facilities it was necessary to visit local county and city record offices to obtain the information of our ancestors. My particular interest was of course the Roper family and due to what has often been described as the Ropers being a Police family there was a great deal of scope.

Compiling a list of names with dates of birth, marriage and death is all that some people seem to do. I find it fascinating to link in the social history of the time as well as some of the events that these ancestors were involved with. We shall see that my immediate family's involvement in Policing was dramatically extended when the DNA test results came through. I am mindful that one of the objectives of the Police History Society is not that of family history.

However in my case Police and family History are inexorably linked as we shall see later. Records show that my Roper family originated from the County of Suffolk in the 18th Century and were there for generations prior to then. My branch of the family moved to London when the Railways arrived in Suffolk in the mid 1800's and were there for one generation and my grandfather and family moved to Plymouth around 1914 and have *been there ever since.*

Ephraim John ROPER was the eldest of 9 children 8 boys and 1 girl. 5 of which joined the Police Force but only 3 served until pensionable age.

Ephraim ROPER joined the Devon Constabulary, on 1st January, 1926 served throughout Devon and retired with the rank of Superintendent on 31st October, 1961.

Albert Henry ROPER joined the Devon Constabulary on 1st January 1928 and retired with the rank of Superintendent on 30th June 1959. He took part in Policing Dartmoor prison following the riot in 1932. He served at Torquay, Okehampton and Plympton. In March 1945 he attended a Home Office Course for Police Instructors, at Peel House. Later he was an instructor at Falfield Police Training Centre. He attended the Police Staff Colleges Course B in 1954.

George Frederick ROPER joined the Devon Constabulary on 1st January 1931 and was pensioned from the force on 31st October, 1956 as Detective Sergeant. He died in June, 2008 at the age of ninety nine and a half.

Where possible it is useful for Police and Family History researchers to record the verbal recollections of those that are still with us. This is a short item of verbal comments made to me by George Frederick ROPER. His first station was Newton Abbot and whilst there was posted to Exeter for special duty. He was part of the escort taking Dartmoor prisoners to Princetown for their trial. The prisoners had rioted at Dartmoor in 1932 and the ring leaders were held on remand at Exeter Prison. Speaking to him on Wednesday 7th December, 1994, he recounted some of his memories of that time. His landlady gave him breakfast at 6 a.m. and this consisted of fried mackerel. The vehicle for transporting the prisoners and the escort was a lorry that was normally used by the force for moving the furni-

ture of Police Officers. It had solid tyres and the journey to

Princetown took sometime

through Dunsford, Morten-

hampstead and Postbridge.

His breakfast did not always

last the journey.



There was some fear that an attempt would be made to free the prisoners and George was given a revolver for protection. He had never handled a firearm prior to this

time. He was in civilian clothes dressed in an overcoat and

a peaked cap. On reaching Princetown the prisoners

were put in a special dock. This had been made locally of

wrought iron and the prisoners were handcuffed to it. He

recalls that the son of George Robey was Kings Council

together with a Mr Palin. The prisoners started stamping

their feet and disrupting proceedings.

The magistrates then dealt with them one at a time

thereby prolonging the hearing. He retired in 1956 and

died 6 months short of his 100th birthday in 2008.

Alec ROPER joined the same force on 1st October

1933 but only served for 7 years and 28 days. He

left and joined the Cunard Shipping line as a

purser.

Beatrice ROPER the only woman in this generation

joined the Devon Constabulary on 5th June, 1949.

She resigned on 29th February 1952 on the occa-

sion of her marriage. This was a time when mar-

ried policewomen were not accepted within the

Police Force. She served at Torquay and Barn-

staple. She attended Eynsham hall in 1949

Course 34 Class 2.

David ROPER, son of Ephraim served with the Devon

Constabulary from 28th December, 1951 until

retiring as an Inspector 6th February 1977. He

was seconded to Cyprus during the troubles on

that island.

Timothy ROPER son of David joined the Wiltshire

Constabulary in 1981 and left in 1984 to join the

Bermuda Police. Resigned in 1991.

Michael ROPER, son of Albert Roper joined the

Devon Constabulary on 1st July, 1955 and retired

on pension after 30 years service with the rank of

Inspector.

Derek John ROPER joined the Devon Constabulary

on 31st July 1959 and retired in March 1991 with

the rank of Superintendent. He served through-

out Devon.

Perhaps moving to Princetown in 1966 brought recollec-

tions back the facts that both Uncles Albert and George

Roper had been involved in policing the prison riot of

1932. Little did I know at this time I arrived as the sole

Police Representative in this isolated area that until the

end of 1966 there were to be 23 prisoners that escaped

from the prison. Prisons nationwide were experiencing a

similar problem with escapes. In 1967 the government set

up the Mountbatten enquiry with Sir Robert Mark, former

Metropolitan Commissioner having a leading role.

Paul ROPER served throughout Devon and Cornwall.

He joined that force on 4th September 1971 and

retired on 31st October 2001.

Elaine Mary Roper joined the Dorset Constabulary in

1972 and served until 1977 when she left to get

married. Sister to Derek and Paul.

John Peter Henry ROPER was born on 25th Decem-

ber, 1950. He joined The Devon and Cornwall

Constabulary 1969. He died on the 10th

June, 1974 as a result of a Road Traffic Accident.

Paul Stuart ROPER son of George was born on 25th July, 1967. He joined the Avon and Somerset Constabulary on June 2nd 1986 and left because of back injury in 2000.

Hugh ROPER was born 1 Jun 1970 He joined the Hertfordshire Constabulary in 1997 and is still a serving officer. He is the great, great, great, great grandson of Thomas Theopolis ROPER.

Peter YATES, nephew of Derek and Paul Roper.

Joined the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary on 1st October, 2000 and is still serving.

Thomas Theopolis ROPER was born at Tannington; Suffolk circa 1821. He was an Inspector in the East Suffolk County Constabulary in 1840. We do not know his length of service but it must have been in excess of 20 years.

Deoxyribonucleic acid - DNA has evolved since those early discoveries at the Old Cavendish Laboratories in Cambridge. The use in criminal investigations, paternity, family history and archaeology are a few disciplines that are well known. Some years ago I wrote an article for Suffolk Family History Society which was included in their quarterly magazine. A short time later I received an e mail from L.Dave Roper, Professor Emeritus of Physics, College of Arts and Sciences Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia.

Whilst there were around ten different unrelated Roper families listed he asked if I was prepared to have my DNA tested in order to establish to which group if any my family belonged.

I duly sent for a test kit which came from Houston, Texas.

Their web site <http://www.familyreedna.com>

12 markers were initially tested but later I had this upgraded to 36. The current results can be seen at <http://www.roperld.com/RoperGenetics.htm>

This opened the field of family research to 'cousins' that had the same common ancestor as my Roper family. Not only was this of great interest from a family tree perspective it also added to the Police History that I was collating.

In October 2006 an international union of Ropers was held in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. Ropers from America, Canada and the UK attended and I met with some of those to which we were related. There were some nine different

Roper families some connected by close relationships and other by D.N.A. The others whilst having the name Roper

had no ancestral connection whatsoever. One person I met was Ian ROPER and his wife whose son was serving in the Hertfordshire Police. My next task was to try to link the families that had been connected by DNA to records held in record offices and other depositories. In 2009 I

visited the Suffolk Record Office and looked at records for the 18th Century. One that was of interest was a marriage.

*1848 MAR 26th DECEMBER AT St Mary's Woodbridge.
Thomas Theopolis Roper, Bachelor, Inspector of Police
Lowestoft Married Lavinia Gross Spinster.*

Asking the archivist if there was any other record of Thomas Roper she produced The Police and Constabulary List 1844 issued by The Police History Society. Much to

my regret this was the first time that I was aware of the existence of the Police History Society. An entry under East Suffolk County Constabulary Force showed that on

23rd April 1840 Thomas Theopolis Roper was appointed Police Inspector in the village of Botesdale with the Police Station being in Botesdale Street. This gave a Police con-

nection from 1840 to the present day.

In the 1851 Census, Thomas Theophilus Roper was an inspector of police, aged 31. Ten years (1861) later he was master of Barham Workhouse. Lavinia was the matron. It was there that they had their children. 1891 census showed that they were residing at "Indiana Villa", Felixstowe Road, Ipswich. He would have been using the Vagrancy Act 1824 which the modern Police would have been well aware of.

After his Police service Thomas he became the Master of the workhouse at Barham in Suffolk.

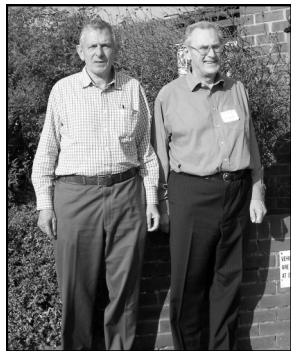


Many ex military and Police were engaged as Masters of Workhouses at this time. The Poor Law of 1834 had laid the foundations for workhouses throughout the country. We often think that modern Governments have the welfare of the poor, ill and elderly at heart but many things do not change. Parishes had aided the poor and paupers in their area. Costs on householders had become more than house owners were willing to pay. They were keen to help those in greatest need but the poor who could work and help themselves should not be subsidised by their fellow residents. The Poor Law stated that 'whosoever will not work ought not to live'. Even in living memory the Workhouse had a stigma attached to it. Male and female were kept separated as were children and the elderly. It would appear that these Ropers have a common ancestor a James Roper born Suffolk circa 1700. In 1740 one of his descendants emigrated to Virginia working for Lord Fair-

fax. In 2007 we visited Maryland and Virginia meeting other Ropers to whom we were connected. One was Anthony Roper, Sheriff of Clark County, Virginia. His son is a trooper in the local Police Department. At the time we met he was offering himself forward for another term as Sheriff having to be elected to the post. How long before we have something similar? Not only did the DNA test give an insight into other living Ropers and those that can be traced from records it was shown that we were included in Haplogroup G. My current DNA shows me in Haplogroup G and further code as G2a3b1a2 -- predicted L497+ As I understand it our ancestors were from a pocket of humanity that survived one of the world's upheavals. This group originated thousands of years ago in an area north of present day India and Pakistan and migrated north and west to Europe and eventually into East Anglia. So how can DNA aid Police History and family research? It is only in recent years that family surnames have been prominent. Unless you were a member of the ruling classes or of a titled family little may have been recorded. Police History can be confidently traced back over the last two hundred years with records being kept as well as photographic records from the mid 1800's. In early history when the people of mid Asia commenced their migration eastwards and northwards there were no written records. We can go back to Roman times to find some records but the Roman Army became the power that kept law and order after having conquered the majority of present day Europe including most of Britain. They had a civilian administration that ruled the provinces that they occupied often using local heads of indigenous communities to keep the peace. Recent reports suggest that more than half of our population are descended from Northern Europe. After the de-

cline of the Roman Empire Britain was left to its own resources until the last invasion of these shores by the Normans in 1066. The office of Constable is ancient but over the centuries has had different connotations. Throughout the country there is evidence of Police History covering many centuries. An example of the Policing history over a long period can be seen at Lincoln Castle. It was one of the first Norman Castles built in 1068 on the site of an old Roman Fort. The Normans were a minority in this country but built their castle to subdue the population that they had conquered. The Castle at Lincoln stands in a prominent position near the Cathedral. The Castle contained soldiers commanded by a Constable and was used by the Sherriff to dispense justice at the Shire Court. Within the Castle the Georgian and Victorian prisons can be visited together with the condemned cell. Currently the Crown court for the area is situated within the Castle walls. The link with law and order stretches from 1199 and during the period 1608 to 1878 was used as a prison with a courthouse.

Those interested in Police history will find that throughout the Country there are often links to law and order stretching back many centuries.



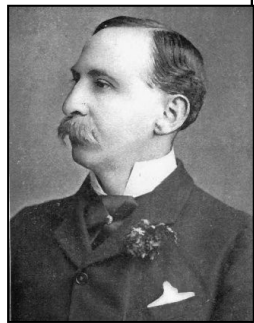
Overall DNA and researching Police and family History has resulted in the Roper family involved in Policing from Suffolk, Devon, Hertfordshire, and Virginia in America. This covers a period from the 1840 to the present day.

Service in total is in excess of 240 years.

DEREK ROPER

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Howard Vincent and the birth of the Criminal Investigation Department
 By Adrian James



The uncovering of police corruption has often been a driver of great organisational change. In 1877, concerns about the effectiveness and efficiency of the Metropolitan Police detective force were greatly amplified by the very public proceedings that have come to be known as the 'Turf Fraud' trials or the 'Trial of the Detectives'. The trial followed the discovery of a network of fraudsters into which senior detective officers: Chief Inspectors Nathaniel Druscovich; George Clarke; William Palmer, and Inspector John Meiklejohn had been drawn (see Wade, 2007 for more details of this case). The trial precipitated a swift reaction from the state. In 1878, within days of Druscovich, Palmer and Meiklejohn's conviction (and Clarke's acquittal), the Home Office convened a 'Departmental Commission' on the 'State, Discipline and Organisation of the Detective Force of the Metropolitan Police' (otherwise known as the Ibbetson Commission). The Commission concluded that the arrangements for the oversight of the detective police were inadequate and that a new detective department should be established. The Commission was firmly of the view that only an 'outsider' (who was untarnished by any link to police corruption) could be trusted to deliver that change and it strongly recommended that an Assistant Commissioner, preferably a lawyer having magisterial experience, should be appointed at the head of the detective branch (cited in Jeyes, 1912).

The decision to appoint a legal professional to the post was of course entirely consistent with the approach that had been taken in setting up the Metropolitan Police. On appointment, the first Joint Commissioners of the Metropolitan Police, Richard Mayne and Charles Rowan had been sworn in as Justices of the Peace rather than as police officers. Moreover, Mayne, a qualified barrister (who had died in post only ten years before these events), had become the more significant figure not least because of the length of time he had held the post and the number of changes in the force that he singly and successfully had overseen.