

PRESTIGIOUS CAREER OF BURNLEY CHIEF INSPECTOR RICHARD WILLIAMS: 11th November 1933



A thrilling horse race by a mounted Burnley police officer with the late Fred Archer, who was the world record holder took place at a race meeting at Shrewsbury, when Archer won by a short head, was recalled by the death in Burnley, of ex Chief Inspector Richard Williams aged seventy six. Ex Chief Inspector Williams, a native of Shrewsbury, joined the force at nineteen, after serving there for eleven years he came to Burnley as a Sergeant. He followed PC Harrop who also left Shrewsbury to become Burnley's first Chief Inspector. Inspector Williams served under three Chief Constables, Messrs Harrop, Rawle, and Smith, and on two occasions pending the appointments of new chiefs, Chief Inspector Williams had full charge of the force for periods of six months.

THIRTY SEVEN YEARS SERVICE

In the absence of a Chief of the force, Inspector Williams conducted police cases in the court, and in addition to his police duties

he carried out those of a drill instructor and instruction lecturer to the force; food and drug inspector; and common lodge house inspector. He took a prominent part in many raids, and during his thirty seven years of police service he had not been absent through sickness for more than two months, a remarkable record. He had seen the Burnley force increased from about forty to one hundred and twenty at the time of his retirement in 1913.

He had a reputation for discharging his duties with the utmost tact and discretion, and his retirement was regretted by everyone. He had the Kings medal for long police service. Exceptionally well known throughout the town and district he resided at 41, Accrington Road.

RACE WITH ARCHER

It occurred during one of the annual Shrewsbury race weeks, every constable in Shrewsbury was mounted on that occasion. Inspector Williams said "The horses we rode were lent by surrounding gentry, and the Chief Constable had a fine filly that belonged to the squire, which at some time or other had been a racer. Arriving at the course the Chief Constable beckoned me to exchange horses with him. To take some of the spirit from her I decided to take her round the course, a distance of about three miles. After this she quietened down and I took up the place which had been allotted to me at the starting post".

"Amid the peculiar hush usual to the start of the race, the starter dropped the flag and away went the horses. For a moment I had forgotten my professional duties and was eagerly watching the horses get away. Suddenly and without any warning, I felt the beast between my knees lurch forward, and not after half a second after the falling of the flag my filly was away down the course,

her hoofs hardly touching the familiar turf as she joyously padded her way after the swift moving professionally employed jockeys and horse."

AMID DEAFENING CHEERS

" For several minutes I hardly knew what to do. My helmet had slipped off my head and was hanging by my chin strap round my neck. When I got a grip of my thoughts I clutched at the reins and endeavoured to pull the fleeing horse up. It was useless however, and with deafening cheers of the multitude ringing in my ears, I gave her her head. We past one or two of the other racers, as we did we could hear them swearing and raving.

When we approached the last three hundred yards, the filly went at it for all she was worth. Two hundred yards from the winning post I came up with the first jockey. It was Fred Archer, and together we raced neck and neck for the post and flashed past it almost together, Archer won by the shortest of necks ".

THE HANGMAN

On one occasion at Shrewsbury, Inspector Williams was associated with James Berry the hangman. "When he visited Shrewsbury in his professional capacity," said Inspector Williams to a reporter, "the populace of the town had decided to give him a warm reception. We managed to get Mr Berry to the prison all right, and the execution took place without a hitch, but the trouble was to get him back to the station again. It was a nasty crowd that awaited us that day, so we decided to disguise ourselves and go out at another door at the prison. The ruse proved successful and we got away, just in time for Berry to catch the train".

BURNLEY MURDERS

The most serious case which Inspector Williams had to deal with was that of William Crossley, the murderer. Crossley was a mill worker, and lived with an older woman of whom he was terribly jealous. Coming home one breakfast time from the mill, he found a stranger in the house. After the man had gone, Crossley never spoke a word to the woman, but quietly picked up a hatchet and proceeded upstairs with it concealed under his coat. When the poor woman had her back turned for an instant Crossley cleaved her head with the hatchet. After this Crossley proceeded to the public house nearby to drink his last drink on the earth.

Chief Inspector Williams was the first man on the scene of the crime. He arrested Crossley and saw him go to his execution. Another murderer he had under his care was a sailor who came to Burnley and killed a little boy of about four years of age. The man told him he was tired of life, and expressed a wish that he would like to be hanged at once.

On another occasion, when serving as a policeman in Shrewsbury, he found a man evidently seriously ill, lying in the road. After carrying him some distance to a surgery he learned that the man was in an advanced state of smallpox. Strangely enough although he carried the man, PC Williams did not suffer the slightest ill effects, but needless to say the doctor soon cleared his surgery. PC Williams was congratulated upon his promptness in dealing with the situation, and it was stated that he probably averted a serious epidemic.

Ex Chief Inspector Williams' funeral took place at Burnley cemetery and was preceded by a service at Holy Trinity Church where he was a frequent attender. He leaves two sons and one daughter.