

***SUPERINTENDENT THOMAS BASSON  
1836 - 1909  
A POLICEMAN AND HIS FAMILY***

*by Julie Harrison - his Great Grand-Daughter*

**B**orn on 30 April 1836 at Prestbury, Gloucestershire, the second son of Thomas and Martha (née Ratcliffe) Bason, Thomas grew up in Prestbury and at the age of 14 he was confirmed at St. Peter's Church, Cheltenham by the Rt. Revd James Henry Monk, Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol. At the same time a young lady, Rose Hannah Cole was also confirmed. They became friends and the relationship developed over the next few years. Thomas became an agricultural labourer like so many at that time.

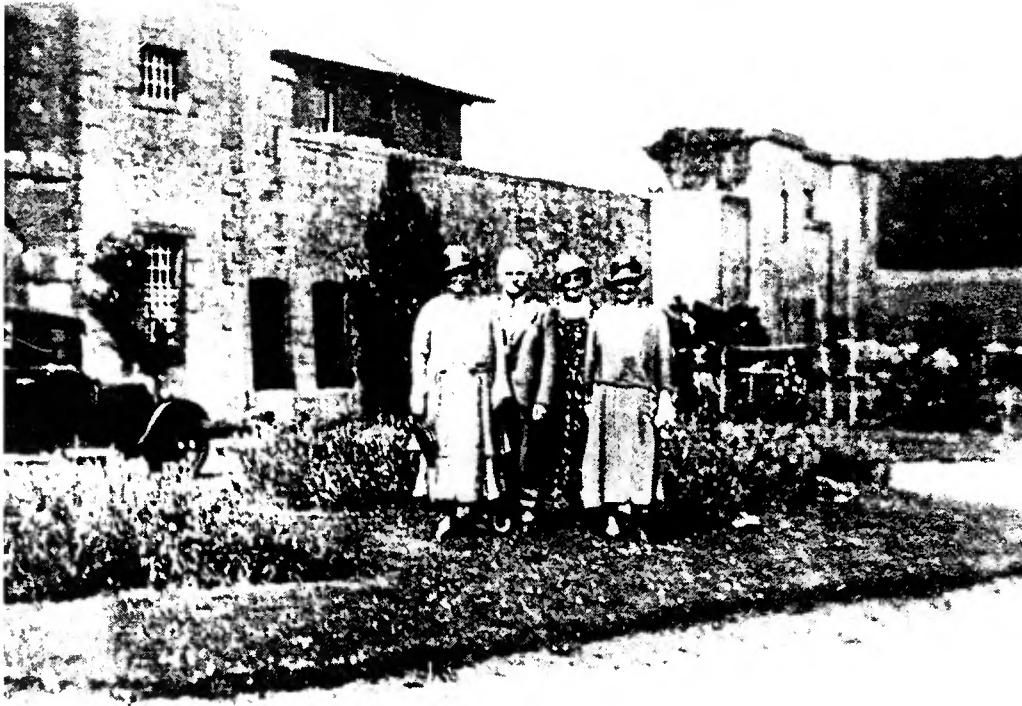
In 1839 the Gloucestershire Constabulary was formed and with the help of a reference from the then vicar of St. Mary's Church, Prestbury, the Revd J Edwards, Thomas was recommended to join the Police Force and this he did on 6 October 1855. His training began at the isolated north Cotswold village of Marston Sicca (now called Long Marston, then in Gloucestershire and now in Warwickshire), where he served as a 1st Class Constable.

On the 1 December 1857 Thomas was appointed to 2nd Class Constable and presumably on this appointment felt able to ask Rose to marry him. On the 19 August 1858 they were married at the Priory Church, Great Malvern by the Revd John Bateman Wathen.

In 1860 Thomas was posted to the Northleach Police Station (formerly a House of Correction and now housing the Cotswold Countryside Collection) and it was here that their first child was born, a son Alfred Thomas. Two more years passed before a second son, William Henry, was born on 12 May 1862, followed by a daughter, Minnie Rose, born on 14 February 1864.

*A Policeman's Lot ...*

Thomas was then posted to Tewkesbury, where on 6 February 1866 a further baby was born - Albert Frederick - he only lived one month, probably due to the poor housing conditions of the time in the station house.



Police Superintendent Thomas Basson with three daughters outside Northleach Police Station

Rose obviously made a speedy recovery for on 28 February the following year she produced another child - a daughter this time - Blanche Emma. On 1 May 1867 Thomas was promoted with another small pay rise. On 12 September 1869 their sixth child, my Grandmother, Alice Martha, was born.

It was the policy of both the Chief Constables under whom Thomas Basson served to regularly move their constables about for reasons of experience as well as on promotion or demotion.

A further move followed for the family - this time to Tidenham, a small village near Chepstow. Here another son, Sidney Albert, was born on 2 February 1872. Promotion to sergeant followed on 1 July 1873, resulting in yet another move, this time back to Marston Sicca where Maud Mary was born on 13 March 1874, followed by Ellen Elizabeth (Nellie) on 3 July 1876.

On 1 November 1878 Thomas was promoted to superintendent of Northleach Police Station/Prison (the headquarters of one of the divisions in the county constabulary) and to complete their celebrations three days later on 4 November 1878 Frederick James was born followed by their eleventh and last child, Mabel Maria, on 13 August 1881.

The accommodation for the superintendent consisted of three bedrooms, a parlour and two closets on the first floor and a kitchen and pantry on the ground floor. From this accommodation Thomas Basson was responsible for a small group of sub-stations in his area for which he was allowed a horse and hay and a trap for travel. The 1881 Census for Northleach shows Thomas (44), Rose (42), Blanche (14) Scholar, Alice (11) Scholar, Sidney (9) Scholar, Maud (7) Scholar and Frederick (2). The first three children had all left home to find employment by this time.

Blanche remained at Northleach, helping her mother with the daily chores. Alice and Maud were sent to Oxford to work in a large department store, Alice learning about haberdashery and Maud, millinery. They lived in a residential house provided by the store where strict rules had to be adhered to; the girls were not allowed out after 9 p.m.! After a few years here, Alice saw an advertisement in a local newspaper for a drapery assistant in a large store in Southampton and decided to apply. She was offered the position. The shop was called Smith Bradbeer of St. Mary's, Southampton. She remained there for some time until once again an advertisement in the local newspaper caught her eye. Staff were required for a new store opening in the town called Edwin Jones (the start of the House of Fraser group). She wrote to her sister Maud, who had remained in Oxford, and to another younger sister, Nellie, who by this time had left school and was looking for work, suggesting that they too should apply to Edwin Jones. They were all three accepted and moved to Southampton.

### *Police Duties*

Thomas meanwhile continued as superintendent of Northleach Police Station. Kelly's Directory shows an entry 'County Police Station - Thomas Basson Supt. And 3 Constables - House of Detention - Thomas Basson Keeper'. With one of his constables, namely Whitehead, Thomas travelled by pony and trap up and down The Fosseway to his sub-stations of Bourton-on-the-Water, Stow-on-the-Wold and Moreton-in-Marsh.

It would appear that in his last few years before retiring he turned a blind eye to several incidents for in the Default Book, the following appears :-

'1888 May 2nd	Mismanaging a case under the licensing act.	It appears to me that this case had been mismanaged. If Mr. Basson had got into The Wheatsheaf when he heard voices, he would have found these persons on the premises and a conviction would probably have followed. H.C. 3/5/88
Aug 11	Not seeing that the order directing a Constable to note in his diary when he proceeds on duty in plain clothes was carried out at Guiting.	I am surprised that Supt. Basson does not see that my orders are carried out. He must not be guilty of such neglect off duty again.  H.C. 13/8/88'

(H.C. stands for Henry Christian - the Chief Constable of the County, 1865 - 1910, Ed.)

On 1 November 1891 Thomas retired, being superannuated on £80.7s.2d. (£80.36p) per annum. He and Rose left Northleach to take up residence in Charlton Kings. They rented a house owned by the landlord of 'The Merry Fellow' public house. Rose re-named the house 'Hampnett Cottage'. Sadly she only lived a further 8 years - she died on 24 September 1899.

After Rose's death Thomas purchased a small Victorian terraced house in Moreton Terrace, Charlton Kings. Blanche, who had been in service, came to look after him. He died there on 18 April 1909. The family decided that Blanche should have everything - the house and what little money there was, so there was no will. She remained in this house until she too died on 17 February 1944.

Thomas, Rose and Blanche are buried together in St Mary's Churchyard, Charlton Kings.

## Superintendent THOMAS BASSON

In the article published in the 1998 edition of Gloucestershire History the photograph was of James Wilfred Plummer, his wife and her two sisters and not of Superintendent Thomas Basson.

We are now pleased to publish a picture of Thomas Basson and his wife Rose Hannah who worked as a wardress attending to the female prisoners in the cells at Northleach. We apologize to Julie Harrison for this error.

