

## Attempted Wife Murder in 1860's Barton.

Can your Readers cope with some more trivia from Yours Truly? Well, alright. Here we go. Some long time ago I attended Creative Writing classes at Providence House. Another student, a young lady whose name I cannot recall, but I am sure she will forgive me, asked me about my Mother's family, the Coulams. It had been this student's intention to enquire into and then possibly write about an incident recorded as 'Attempted Wife Murder' in the Hull and Lincolnshire Times of 12th June, 1869. The name Coulam is recorded in the report and the fellow student knew that I was a member of that family. I was given a copy of the Article and extracts of both the Census of 1861 and of 1871. I regret to say that I did not pursue the matter nor, as far as I know, did the person in question. However when taken together the report and the Census details make for interesting reading.

The 1861 Census lists the names and occupations of the residents of the south side of High Street. The varieties of the occupations are very much as one would expect to find when reading about Victorian life and times. Included in the list are Cordwainers, Rope Makers, Druggist and Herbalist, Schoolmaster, Paris White Manufacturer, Tailors, Dressmaker, Joiners and Hairdressers, Groom, Grocers, Tanner and various labourers and shops. The residents are named and Sinkler (Sinclair), Todd and Coulam do not appear on this list.

The 1871 Census records the names of the occupants of 37 premises on the south side of High Street. The type of dwelling is shown but not the occupations of the householders except, of course, where it is plain from the Census records that the premises are occupied by a shop keeper be it grocer, druggist or watchmaker. The 37 comprise of 19 cottages, 4 grocers, 7 private houses and individual shops, Hairdresser, Tailor, Joiner, Shoe shop, Watchmaker, Druggist and 1 Private House with Shop attached.

The newspaper report is part of the Barton News items in the paper, a paper far removed from our sensational tabloids of today. In fact it goes on to report the sale of a portion of the Blue Coat Charity estate. Chapel affairs come next. The news item about the attempted murder is quite lengthy and I will try to be brief. The facts as set out in it are that on a Saturday evening, date not given but clearly on the facts as stated it must have been the 12th June, a man of about 46 yrs, named John Sinclair went to a cottage in High Street, Barton, the home of his estranged wife.

A William Coulam, his wife and 5 children lived next door to Mrs Jane Sinkler (Sinclair) and John Todd, two doors away. It appeared that two years earlier Mrs Jane Sinclair had obtained protection for her property and presumably, herself, as her husband had been 'absent for several years' and had been serving in the Federal Army in the American War! I make the assumption that this was the American Civil War of 1861-65. The article states that Sinclair had returned to Barton, 'ill used', (what ever that means) and threatened to murder his wife. He had been taken before the Magistrates and in default of his failure to find sureties as to his behaviour he was sent to Prison for two

months. Within a week of his release he had returned to Barton and repeated the offence. He was again sent to prison. After his release he threatened to murder his wife and he tried to carry out that threat on that Saturday night by attempting to kill her by stabbing her with a shoemaker's knife. The newspaper goes on to say that without the timely interference of the neighbours he would have succeeded. The report goes immediately to Sinclair's appearance before the Magistrates on the Monday morning when details of the incident began to emerge when various witnesses were called.

John Todd, a relative of Mrs Sinclair's, deposed that he was in the house on the Saturday night when Sinclair came in and there was some conversation. There was further exchange of words and after some foul language by Sinclair Mrs Sinclair told him to leave. Todd told the Magistrates that Sinclair knocked his wife down so he, Todd, " caught him under the chin" and knocked him down. Mrs. Sinclair gave evidence in feeble accents, she appeared to be very weak. She said her husband approached her and put his hand in his bosom, rushed towards her and she fell down. She remembered coming round on the sofa, she was not then aware that she had been injured. Todd then saw that Sinclair had a shoemakers knife ( produced) in his left hand. Todd and other neighbours had taken Sinclair from the house and Constable Blades took him into custody. Sinclair was remanded to the Wednesday when he was ' again placed at the Bar'.

Todd repeated his evidence which now included his having dragged Sinclair from the house. A neighbour named Coulam had come in and assisted Mrs Sinclair. Dr. John Morley had been called and he gave graphic evidence to the Court as to a wound he found that Mrs Sinclair had sustained. He said that the shoemakers knife could have made such a wound. Mrs Sinclair again gave evidence as to how she could have come by the wound. William Coulam told the Court that he was the next door neighbour and gave an account of what he did and what he saw.

Others gave evidence as to the prisoner's behaviour that morning. John Beck, described as a gentleman, told the Bench that he saw the prisoner on the Saturday morning, saying that Sinclair was ' much excited' and witness heard Sinclair say, " before I sleep I'll wash my hands in their heart's blood". Beck said Sinclair was passing his wife's house at the time.

Mr. Morley added to his previous evidence telling the Bench that the wound was near 'the base of the heart' and caused by a downward thrust with a knife. Police Superintendent Thorsby gave evidence as to receiving the clothing and the knife and stated that Sinclair said, " I am not drunk but mad". The report stated that Sinclair was fully committed for trial for unlawfully, maliciously and feloniously wounding his wife. I wonder what the result was. I would also like to know why and how Sinclair got to America and how did he, and maybe others, find themselves in the Federal Army. Some time ago, in 2004 I think, I read an article about an author who was researching the presence of Englishmen in the American Armies of that War. I haven't heard any more about it.

It is interesting to compare the 1861 and 1871 Censuses. In 1861 William Coulam, his wife and one child lived at No. 4, Hunters Lane, Barton upon Humber. The Census enumerator notes that Hunters Lane came immediately after the south side of High Street and immediately before the bottom part of Ferriby Road then Holydyke. It contained 11 houses. One might be forgiven for thinking that Hunters Lane was Hungate but the Town Map of 1855 clearly shows Hungate and High Street as they are now. Was Hunters Lane the name of a separate row of houses? After all, many of my age remember Winship Flags in High Street. And what about Rabbit Pie Row?

The 1861 Census extract included the north side of High Street. The Police Station was there of course but among others on that side were a Clergyman without Care of Souls, two Annuitants, a Brewer and a Common Brewer, a County Court High Bailiff and lastly at the Red Lion, one, Marshall, a Victualler. Where is Barton's own Jane Austen, someone who would do justice to the High Balifs High Street and the residents?

Article kindly supplied by Mr C Watkinson