THE DOGGED DETECTIVE
The Life and Times of David Scott
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HISTORY NOTEBOOK NUMBER 23
The harder you work the luckier you get, could well apply to the career of David Scott who died in 1924 and left behind a legacy of achievement which even today is still the subject of interest amongst authors and readers of local history.

David Scott was born at West Bergholt in 1864 to Benjamin and Martha Scott, his father being variously described as a labourer or woodman. Their lives were spent close to the soil at a time when the fate of many country children was to follow their parents onto the land at the earliest opportunity and where schooling was considered an encumbrance to the more important task of earning enough to feed the family.

What made Scott choose the Police as a career?

The 1880's were a time of depression and hardship and as he looked around at the poverty of those who worked the land, the thought of spending the rest of his life in those fields may have provided the spur to seek his livelihood elsewhere.

In April 1883, just a month before his twentieth birthday he applied to join the Essex County Constabulary. His basic training was at Old Court, the original headquarters in Arbour Lane, Springfield, from where he emerged four weeks later as P.c. 9 Scott. His pay then was twenty-seven shillings (£1.35p) a week, which was more than he would have earned as a farm labourer.

His first posting was to the newly-built Grays Police Station where he joined the three resident constables under the command of Inspector Allen. Grays was a pretty rough area as building of the Tilbury Docks was taking place. He got off to a bad start when, within a year, he fell foul of authority and was charged with neglect of duty. What this involved is not known but appears sufficiently serious for him to be moved to Halstead at his own expense.

It was during his time at Grays that he met Esther Baldwin, a twenty-one year old domestic servant from West Tilbury and after a brief courtship, no doubt hastened by his sudden removal, they were married at West Bergholt on Christmas Day 1884.

Soon after his arrival at Halstead he was sent on a "special assignment" to Audley End House, the home of Lord Braybrooke, which lay in the Walden Division. However there was nothing exciting about this, for as a result of a recent burglary two constables were tasked with patrolling the grounds at night. This lasted some three months until February 1885.

His efforts were rewarded not with a return to beat duties but as groom to Superintendent Simpson at the divisional headquarters at Newport. It was at this time that the building of the new police station at Saffron Walden was nearing completion, signalling a move from the old Newport Gaol which had housed the divisional headquarters since 1840 (this building still stands). In August of that year (1885) he accompanied Simpson to become the first occupants of the new station.

“Before the Crime”
After a year at Saffron Walden, Scott was sent on detachment to Farnham, near Stansted Mountfitchet. There with a fairly free rein he spent the next four years making a series of good arrests and earning himself a number of commendations.

In April 1890 he was posted to Stock in the Chelmsford Division, where he remained for the next six years, during which he received several more commendations from the Chief Constable. When he left the village he received a number of farewell gifts from grateful locals.

In March 1896 he was promoted Acting Sergeant and posted to nearby Widford, a village straddling the busy London to Great Yarmouth road, where he was to perform special duties in the role of detective sergeant.

His first major case came in June 1898 and illustrated how simple gut feeling could turn what seemed to be an unfortunate but commonplace form of death into a capital crime.

The Admiral Rous Inn was a rather grand name for a small weather-boarded mid-Victorian beerhouse built when Galleywood enjoyed a reputation amongst the horse-racing fraternity as a fine point-to-point venue. The Inn, named after a man whose passion was racing, stood on a narrow uneamed track behind the grandstand. The grandstand has long since disappeared but the Inn remains to this day as a private cottage.

Samuel Crozier, a fifty-three year old widower and regular customer of “The Fleece”, later “The Golden Fleece”, in Chelmsford, where he met one of the barmaids, thirty-four year old Cecilia Jane Savage and they were married in January 1898. Three months later and despite being described as having “given way to drink” he was appointed the landlord of the Admiral Rous. There his truculence turned to violence brought on, he was later to say, by his wife’s neglect of him. Customers who commented on her cuts and bruises were simply told that she kept falling down.

Matters came to a head on the 28th June when the previous landlord of the Admiral Rous, Josiah Cook, met Crozier on the common. He was startled to hear him say that his wife was at that moment lying dead at home. Crozier explained that he had gone to bed the previous night and the next morning had found her lying dead on the floor.

P.c. Marking the Galleywood officer was the first on the scene and he sent for Sgt Scott and Dr. Bodkin. They saw that the deceased had suffered two black eyes and cuts to her nose and chin. Scott examined her further and found further bruising to the body arms and legs. Crozier explained that the marks to her body were old and had been caused when she fell down in a drunken state, whilst the bruises to her face had been caused the previous day when she had fallen against a heavy wooden settle in the bar. Bodkin seemed satisfied that her death was accidental and authorised her funeral, but Scott was far from convinced and began making enquiries among the Inn’s customers. The more he probed the more he

"After the Crime"
was able to break down Crozier’s version of events and to uncover a trail of ill treatment and abuse. He applied for a warrant for the arrest of Crozier on a charge of manslaughter. Just four days after the discovery of the body and weeping at the graveside for his ‘dear wife’ he was led away.

Scott asked for the body to be exhumed and was present when it was examined by Home Office pathologist, Dr. Augustus Pepper, in a tent by the graveside. His evidence of her injuries, along with that of many witnesses, proved that Crozier had ill-treated and beaten his wife over a period of weeks if not months.

Crozier was charged with murder and his trial took place at Chelmsford in November 1898. It lasted two days before the jury found him guilty. He was hanged at Chelmsford Prison on the 5th December.

For his work in this case Scott was commended by the Coroner, while the Chief Constable awarded him the Merit Badge, confirmed his promotion and posted him to Headquarters.

Another case in which Scott was involved concerned the murder of twenty year old Maud Garrett, a single girl living with her father at Brentwood and occurred in 1903. The accused was a twenty-year old soldier, Private Bernard White of the 2nd Battalion Essex Regiment based at Warley Barracks.

Maud was engaged to another soldier at the camp, but had previously been friendly with White before his regiment had been sent to South Africa. On his return the two once again met.

The mutilated body of Garrett was found at The Gap, a lonely spot near the camp. Within the hour news of the murder was all over the camp. White approached his Regimental Sergeant Major and volunteered the fact that he had been with the girl the previous evening, but had left her at the camp gate. Superintendent Marden from Brentwood, assisted by Scott, interviewed White and seized his clothing for examination. On his uniform trousers spots of blood were found and his boots and belt also bore traces of blood.

At his trial at Chelmsford Assizes in November 1903, White was found guilty of the murder, sentenced to death and hanged at Chelmsford Prison.

Scott was also involved in the investigation of the Moat Farm murder in 1908 and after four weeks digging discovered the body of Miss Holland buried in the drainage ditch.

Two years after the Moat Farm murder, Scott was promoted to Inspector and three years later to the rank of Superintendent (1909) in charge of the Dunmow Division. Three years later came a round of divisional changes and he was placed in charge of the newly formed Rochford Division.

He was to remain at Rochford throughout the First World War before retiring from the force in September 1920, having completed thirty-seven years service. He had suffered a number of heart attacks during his service and finally succumbed to another on the 12th August 1924.

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