

ACCIDENTAL SHOOTING

17TH SEPTEMBER 1881

The story of the death of Dorothy Hogg appeared in The Hexham Courant on Tuesday 20th September and in the Newcastle Courant on Friday 23rd September.

Dorothy lived at Halfway House, near Lincoln Hill, with her widowed father, three sisters Margaret, Ellen and Mary and a 5-year old nephew called Thomas Charlton. Her brother, John William, known as William, lodged in the village with Mr Hudson Douglas and his wife Isabella. Mr Douglas is described on the census as a butcher and farmer, as he is in the Newcastle Courant article.

There were two other families living at Halfway, a John and Margaret Taylor and Mary Robson, who shared her home with her niece, Isabella Robson. Both Margaret Taylor and Isabella Robson were witnesses at the inquest.

Unlike today's procedures, Mr Lynn, the coroner, held the inquest very soon after the event. It took place at The Crown Inn, in Humshaugh, on Tuesday 20th September, three days after the shooting. The innkeeper at the time was Mrs Ann Herdman.

The Jurors were all local men, who must have been convened at very short notice. One wonders if they were picked on the day from the clientele of The Crown. They were:

Christopher Reed	49	Farmer
Thomas Elliott	42	Cordwainer
Alexander White	46	Tailor (lodger - Hopewell Hse)
Richard Bruce	53	Agricultural labourer
George Fairless	31	Grocer & Methodist preacher
Thomas Charlton	30	Mason
William Herdman	44	Joiner
Thomas Herdman	38	Joiner
Matthew Charlton	43	Gardener
Henry Thompson	57	Blacksmith
William J Edwards	28	Schoolmaster – Hopewell Hse
Robert Herron	26	Carpenter

The joiners, William and Thomas Herdman, were sons of the 80-year old innkeeper, Ann Herdman. George Fairless was a Methodist preacher and also ran a grocer's shop with his widowed mother, Ann. The jurors all lived in the village, although apart from William John Edwards, the schoolmaster and his lodger, Alexander White, who lived at Hopewell House, we do not know exactly where. The 1881 census did not give this level of detail in small villages. Only larger, significant houses were named.

Only one witness statement has survived. This is:
The evidence of Isabella Robson

‘I am a spinster living at Halfway House near the cottage of John Hogg. On Saturday afternoon at about half past four, John William came running to my house and he was crying. He shouted for me to come immediately.

Margaret Taylor and I went at once to John Hogg’s house and heard John William crying, ‘Dorothy, Dorothy speak to me.’ We found the deceased lying on the hearth rug with a cushion placed under her head. I asked the boy what was the matter and he said, ‘Dorothy was shot’ and showed me where the wound was. There was a hole in which I might have placed three fingers and below the hip joint. The wound was bleeding but not very much. I got wet cloths to put upon it and ---- to seek a doctor. The deceased then spoke and died about five minutes after I went into the house. Dr Lowes came a little after 5 and Dr Stainthorpe came at half past 5. I examined the body after death and found no other wound or bruise except the wound I have described.’

Dr Stainthorpe was Thomas G Stainthorpe of Battle Hill, Hexham. The Hexham Courant article disagrees with Isabella Robson’s evidence, saying that he did not arrive until about 7 o’clock, which is understandable. Dr Lowes does not appear on the Humshaugh census in 1881, so is impossible to identify.

Hogg Family Background

Dorothy's father, John Hogg was a stone-mason, born in Barrasford. Her mother, Jane, had died in 1872. On the 1891 census, John was living at Walwick North Farm with a new partner, Mary Ann. By 1901, the couple had a grocer's shop in Wall. A daughter had been born in 1895 and was named Dorothy after the girl who had died.

Dorothy's sisters, who were living at home in 1881, are difficult to trace, as they had most likely married. An elder sister, Jane, was already married to Stephen Charlton and was mother of the child, Thomas, living with his grandfather in 1881. Stephen Charlton was a farm worker and, in 1891, the family was living at Keepersfield. In 1901, they were at Plane Trees Cottage, Wall. By 1911, Stephen had retired and they were in Linden Terrace, Humshaugh. Six of their children were still living at home and perhaps there are still descendents of this family in the area.

Despite the verdict of accidental death, John William Hogg must have been a very troubled young man and has been impossible to trace beyond the 1881 census. He is more than likely to have left the area, possibly changing his name. He may even have emigrated.

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