

## SDI Robert Todman

Robert Todman joined the Metropolitan Police on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1864, he was then aged 28, having spent some years as a tailor and eight years working in the General Post Office. Nothing is known of his early service but he was clearly a person with a high ability, within nine years he held the rank of Sub-Divisional Inspector (SDI).

Dublin born Robert Todman was the SDI in charge of the Woodford sub-Division of the 'N' Division from 1873 to 1881. The then new police station at Woodford and its sub-division included the stations of Chigwell, Loughton, Waltham Abbey and Woodford itself. At the time Chingford was without its own station house and remained under Waltham Abbey.

The Woodford SDI was by 1881 aged about 45 years and had eighteen years police service. As might be assumed of a senior officer almost at the top of his profession he had conducted his duties without any cause for concern throughout.



Throughout the whole of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and most of the 20<sup>th</sup> it was incumbent upon the Sub-Divisional Inspector (SDI) in charge of the subdivision to pay each of his men in cash (mainly gold coin originally) each Wednesday the earnings up to the previous Sunday. Any fines incurred by the individual officer would be deducted before payment was made. Pay parades required attendance of the officers regardless of whether they were on duty or off.

The weekly pay on Wednesday April 20th 1881 was somewhat delayed, under bizarre circumstances, for the men of the Woodford sub-division.

On this particular Wednesday, Todman attended the head police station in Kingsland Road, Islington, and was handed £154.12.0½d, in coin by Superintendent Green. It was just another day, similar to those that had seen a total of £50,000 handed over in similar circumstances over the years.



Robert Todman left Kingsland and set off for Woodford. He did not reappear at the station, although it was later discovered that he had returned to his rooms and exchanged his uniform for civilian attire. When the pay parades failed to materialise men started to look for him, initially upon the assumption that he had been attacked and robbed. The alarm was eventually raised by the most senior officer in the locality affected by the non-appearance of Todman. Chief Inspector Charles Goble of the RGPF, who outranked all others in the immediate area, may well have been the only one to dare suggest that Todman was being tardy in his delivery of the money.

As it became clear that the only foul deed was that undertaken by the missing SDI, his description was circulated in "Police Gazette". In the meantime, other money was obtained from Kingsland Road to pay the men their delayed dues.

It fell to Constable Bardsley, stationed at Lostock Junction, two miles from Bolton, Lancashire, to unearth the identity of the stranger in their midst on Tuesday May 10. Two days later Robert Todman was held in the cells at the Waltham Abbey police station, prior to a preliminary hearing at the local Petty Sessions.

It seems that, because of the recovery of £135 and suggestions of mental imbalance, Robert Todman was found to be "not guilty" by the subsequent jury trial.

The Metropolitan Police were made of far sterner stuff than the jurors. Paying no heed to excuses like the 'stress' suggested in court by a whole host of witnesses.

Robert Todman was dismissed from the Metropolitan Police without back pay or pension, on July 13 1881. There is no record of any attempt at an appeal. He was undoubtedly extremely lucky that the jury took the view it did.