

# SAMUEL PLANT

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Over the last few years I have been trying to unravel the life of my great grandfather Samuel Plant. Different records had recorded him as a baker, a policeman and a railway shunter, living in several Staffordshire towns or villages. I think I have now resolved most of my puzzles!

Samuel was born about 1831 in Bird Street Lichfield, and christened in St Mary's Lichfield on February 6<sup>th</sup> 1831. His father James was recorded on the baptism record as a Horsekeeper at the Swan Inn, Bird Street, Lichfield and his mother was named as Elizabeth. In the 1841 census he is still listed living in Bird Street with his parents, two sisters and a brother – Sophia, Jane and William. By 1851 he is a journeyman baker and servant/apprentice to Charles Bond a baker and maltster in Bird Street.

The next 13 years are still a bit of a mystery. I have not yet been able to find him in the 1861 census. However on 11 February 1864 he was married by Banns to Susannah Dean in Great Haywood, and I have obtained that certificate. Two sons, John and Charles, were born in 1865 and 1866 both baptised in Great Haywood., but in 1867 Susannah died.

On 14<sup>th</sup> October 1867 Samuel was appointed to the Staffordshire Police force as a 2<sup>nd</sup> class officer, promoted later to a 1<sup>st</sup> class officer. The original (enormous!) ledger is at Stafford Record Office and gives a physical description of Samuel – 5 feet 7 inches tall, blue eyes, light brown hair and a fresh complexion. His age however seems to have “lost” 3 years! The record also describes him as a Baker by trade and a widower, but even more interesting to me as I try to fill in the gaps, it records under “Particulars of other public service” that Samuel was in the 85<sup>th</sup> regiment and the Walsall Police for over 10 years. It is not clear how much time was spent in each and unfortunately it doesn't look as if the Walsall police records still exist.

To follow up the reference to the 85<sup>th</sup> regiment (King's Light Infantry) I visited the regimental museum in Shrewsbury Castle This threw some light on what may have been Samuel's career – though this is speculation. It seems unlikely that he signed up for a long-term career in the regular army but seems more probable that he was recruited to the new Volunteer movement set up in 1859/1860 because of the fear of conflict or invasion from the French. There were lots of local volunteer groups established and these then joined together with the 85<sup>th</sup> regiment in the Shropshire and Staffordshire area. It would then seem to be a natural step to enrol in the police force – initially in Walsall It looks as if the transfer to the Staffordshire police could be as a result of his wife's death – maybe to get help with care for two young sons?

On 29<sup>th</sup> April 1869 Samuel married Mary Rogers of Uttoxeter in the Independent Chapel Uttoxeter. He resigned from the police on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1871 – unfortunately the records don't give a reason. His son Samuel Henry (my grandfather) was born at Sudbury Hall on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1872, when Samuel's occupation is given as Railway shunter. I have visited Sudbury Hall but haven't reached a conclusion as to why they were there!

By 1881 Samuel is living in Derby and “Labouring in the gas works” This census record was definitely an example of “less-is-more” in the hunt. Plant is transcribed as Bland, so I only found the record by entering “Samuel” + year and place of birth. Fortunately of the three records that appeared it was obvious which was correct!

Samuel must have died before September 1884 when Mary re-married in Burton on Trent. I have a probable date of death in 1883 in Burton when he would have been 52 years of age. Interestingly on the marriage certificate of his son Samuel Henry in 1894, Samuel is still recorded as “Journeyman baker (deceased)”

So Samuel's story is nearly complete. Seeing the places he lived and worked has been fascinating, and the day spent in Stafford Record Office well worth it!

However if you happen to come across him on the 1861 census or elsewhere I would be delighted to know!

*(Frances, my Grt Grt Grandfather Samuel Plant of Crewe was also a Railway Shunter PJ)*

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