

CONSTABLE ALEXANDER LAMONT (1843-1888)

LANARKSHIRE CONSTABULARY 1872 to 1888

On the 13th of February 1843 Alexander 'Sandy' Lamont was born at Gortendonnell on the Isle of Tiree in Argyll. His father, Archibald, was a farmer. He was raised and educated on the island.

He left Tiree around the time of his father's death in 1864 and travelled to Glasgow where he was employed as a Milk Cart driver. He was living at Main Street in the Gorbals. He married Mary Brown on the 12th of February 1869 at Strathaven. Mary was a Silk Cotton Handloom weaver who came from Strathaven. The family settled in Woolfords near to Carnwath where he worked as a ploughman. They had two children whilst living there.

Around 1872 Alexander joined Lanarkshire Constabulary and was posted to Stonehouse where he served until 1882, living at 4 Lawrie Street. He was transferred to Coatbridge and stationed at Whifflet, living at the police station at Lockwood, which was located between what would now be known as Calder Street, Coatbridge.

Coatbridge was a busy place for the police and Alexander was kept active with various types of work. At about 1.30am on the 17th of August 1884, Constables Lamont and Lockhart were on duty in Whifflet. They had received information that a premises and house owned by a Catherine Craig or McShane at Penman Row on Coatbank Street was being used as a Shebeen (Illicit bar or club).

The officers kept a watch on the premises and heard voices from within. They moved closer and noticed an open window. They heard a male voice ask for whisky and they looked inside the premises and saw a female and two males. They recognised the female as McShane. They saw her go over to a bed and lift the covers, she took out a bottle of what appeared to be whisky and filled two glasses. One of the men said that he would pay for the whisky and handed something to McShane which she put in her pocket.

The door to the premises was open and the two officers entered. The two males were used as witnesses and McShane was arrested. The officers searched the premises and found a Gallon jar containing 14 gills of whisky, under the bed they found a quart bottle with 3 gills of whisky. They also took possession of glasses and filters.

McShane's husband was already serving a prison sentence for similar crimes and was due to be released on the day of her trial. When she appeared on the 30th of August 1884, she maintained a plea of Not Guilty, however after a short trial the Justices found her guilty. She was sentenced to a £1 fine or 10 days in prison with additional costs of £1 17 shillings and 6d. She refused to pay and was sent to the same jail that her husband was being released from that day!

On Tuesday the 7th of October 1884, Alex and Constable Lockhart had to deal with a notorious troublemaker, Edward Slaven. Slaven was a formidable character who had spent the last 9 months in prison, only recently being released. A large crowd had gathered near to Whifflet Cross and were becoming unruly. The police were called, and Alexander attended and attempted to disperse the crowd. As he did so, Slaven began shouting and swearing and threw stones at the officers, one struck Alexander on the head causing a large cut on his forehead, which began to bleed heavily.

Although injured, Alexander and his colleague arrested Slaven and charged him with Breach of the Peace, Assaulting a Police officer and Prevention of Crimes Act. Sheriff Muir was not too impressed when he appeared at Court and pled guilty. He sentenced him to another 3 months in prison.

On Thursday the 20th of December 1888, Constable Lamont was on Nightshift together with Constable Milne. They were checking property on Main Street, Coatbridge, when Alexander said that he wasn't feeling too well. He said that he would try to walk it off. His colleague continued to check the property.

At about 0300 hours Constable Milne returned to where he had left Alexander but could not see him. He looked for him and found him lying dead at 'Cullen's Court' on the Main Street. He had his pipe and a match in his hand.

Constable Milne raised the alarm and the Sergeant attended. Dr. Farquharson also attended and pronounced life extinct. Alexander's body was removed to the police mortuary. The cause of death was recorded as Apoplexy and weakness of the heart. Alexander was only 45 years of age. He was survived by his wife and three children.

Alexander's funeral took place on Saturday the 22nd of December 1888. The Reverend James Robertson of Garturk Church conducted a service in the house at Whifflet Police Station and the coffin was carried to the hearse by four of his colleagues from Coatbridge.

The cortege then travelled from the Police Station to Old Monkland Cemetery escorted by over 60 officers from Lanarkshire Constabulary, Superintendents Stewart and Dods led the contingent. The streets on the way to the Cemetery were lined with members of the public paying their respects. At the cemetery officers bore the coffin to the graveside where a short service took place before he was interred.

After the funeral, his colleagues started a fund to erect a memorial at his grave. In April 1889, the memorial was placed at his grave with Superintendents Dods and Stewart again in attendance with members of Alexander's family and colleagues. It is a handsome Memorial standing 9 ½ feet high. It is made of freestone from Overton Quarry in Lesmahagow. It is topped with a partially covered urn and below is the image of a descending dove. The words '*Amatum Omnibus*', meaning '*All Beloved*', are inscribed on the memorial

The collection more than covered the purchase of the memorial, which was due to Alexander's popularity. Constable McCann and colleagues attended at Mrs. Lamont's home and presented her with a purse containing 10 sovereigns.