

BRAINTREE POLICE STATION

1845 - 1892

Braintree's first Police Station was built on a plot of land purchased from Mr. Laver a local builder who also built the station for £1,060.

It was of sound construction and the windows had sash shutters that were used to give privacy. There was a house for the Superintendent's family and cottages for the constables. There were purpose built cells at the station and it is listed that in 1851 two 16-year-old boys, Thomas Joslyn and T. Sutton, both farm labourers from Rivenhall were imprisoned there, for what is unclear.

In 1851, Braintree's first Superintendent Samuel Malings was living in the house with his wife, two sons, three daughters and a female servant. Living in the Police Station Cottages at the back of the Station at that time were Inspector Timothy Rowan with his wife, two sons and mother-in-law. John Saville and his wife, three daughters, one son and a domestic servant. Constables Edwin Middleton, John Pawsey, Charles Archer and Henry Green shared a cottage.

These men had, most probably, been attracted to the police force by the prospects and the pay. Inspectors were paid 25 shillings a week (£100 in today's money) and constables were paid around 20 shillings a week (£80 in today's money).

When the station moved in 1893 it became Hope Laundry. Later the site was converted into housing in the 1960s. The nearest road is named Peel Crescent, after Sir Francis John Peel, who served as Chief Constable of Essex Police between 1933 and 1962.





THOMAS ELSEY

1856 -1897

Thomas Elsey joined Essex County Constabulary on Tuesday, 1 July, 1856. Before joining, Thomas worked as a Seaman. He started in Tendring as a Police Constable. Then moving in around 1871 to Great Dunmow as Superintendent of Police. By 1881 he is the Superintendent at Braintree. He retires in 1897 becoming an Inspector of Weights and Measures.



WILLIAM BARNARD

1872 -1909

William Barnard joined Essex County Constabulary on Wednesday, 20 November, 1872. Before joining, William worked as a Servant at Felsted School.

He was promoted to the rank of sergeant in 1883 and to Inspector in 1895. He reached the rank of Superintendent by the end of 1895, living at Rayne Road Station.

During a lengthy career, he served at Chelmsford, Braintree, East Tilbury, Foulness, Southend, Witham, Maldon, Southend, Halstead and Dunmow. Barnard died suddenly on 4th March 1909.

This is one of the earliest know portraits of a lone officer.

BRAINTREE POLICE STATION

1893 - 1993

Construction of a new Braintree police station began on Fairfield Road in 1892. The Rayne Road site had become inadequate and the new station was in a far more central location.

The new building was being converted within the old Railway Hotel on the corner of Fairfield Road. The guest rooms of the old hotel were converted into a home for the superintendent, as well as offices and a charge room. There were also rooms for two married constables in the old hotel stables. Incorporated into the design of the new police station were two cells for males and one for females. A network of electric bells was installed for communication between the superintendent, constables and prisoners in the cells.

In 1935 a new court house was built at the back of the police station, on South Street. At the same time the police station was updated giving officers recreational facilities including a billiards table!

The police station remained at Fairfield Road until 1993, when the police in Braintree finally moved to a brand new station in The Avenue, behind the Museum. It was purpose built and designed by the same architect as the one in Colchester and the new Force Control Room at the Essex Police Headquarters in Chelmsford.



Front of Braintree Police Station, Fairfield Road, circa 1920s

Image credit: Essex Police Museum CHMPM02608

BRAINTREE CAGE

The building of a Braintree Cage was commissioned and paid for by the church wardens and poor law overseers in 1840 as the police had not been formed yet. It was to contain the drunks and people up to no good. When the local police was formed at Braintree in 1845 they took over the running of the Cage right up until 1875.

The land on New Street was purchased from Samual Tunbridge a local brewer and being 16ft x 6ft it was most probably the most expensive bit of real estate in Braintree costing £30 (approx. £2,000 in today's money).

New Street and Hill's Gant were notorious in the mid-1800s for drunk and riotous behaviour. It had 4 pubs, of which, The Three Tuns, The George and The Green Man, had such poor reputations they were nicknamed "Little Hell", "Great Hell" and "Damnation" on "Hells Gant".

The cage contained two wrought-iron cells and had a sleeping bench along one side. No windows, just a ventilation hatch in the slate roof. It has a studded door which was probably recycled from the old workhouse that used to stand on the current Tesco site.

The cage remained in use until 1875, even though a police station had been built at Rayne Road 30 years earlier. After that it was used by the 12th Essex Volunteer Rifles as an ammunition store until 1911, then slowly fell into disrepair. The Braintree and Bocking Civil Society became instrumental in keeping this small but historically important building in good repair and it received Grade II listed status in 1977. It is currently owned by Braintree District Council.