

JULY 2018

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MELTON MOWBRAY SHOCKER  
HORROR HANGING OF  
PEPPERMINT BILLY

# DETECTIVE

CHERISH,  
8, LURED  
AWAY  
FOR A  
HAPPY  
MEAL



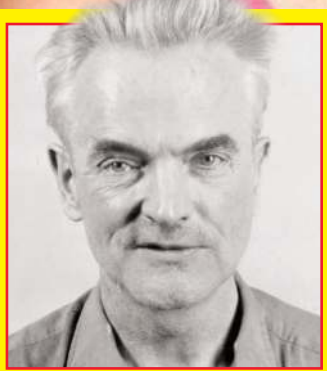
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**KILLER  
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**WIPED  
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**THREE-TIME  
KILLER  
PAROLED...  
TO MURDER  
AGAIN!**



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EDITION



**YOUNG  
GIRLS IN  
MURDEROUS  
ATTACK**



**"The Slenderman Made Me Do It"**

**Murder  
In Your  
Village**



**This month:  
St. Erth, Cornwall**

**A SCOTTISH FIRST...HANGED BEHIND CLOSED DOORS**

# InsideMD

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July 2018

**J**ailed in 1943 for a horrific murder, notorious New York State criminal Frederick Wood had already killed twice before. Unfortunately, he'd got away with those slayings – neither police nor the parole board knew anything about them – and in June 1960 he was let loose. Three weeks later, Wood was killing again – and this time he would never taste freedom again. Turn to page 26 and *US Executions – The Forgotten Decade: Three-Time Killer Paroled... To Murder Again*, for the full story.

A sleepover seemed like a fun idea to Payton Lautner, 12. Trouble was, her two pals were intent on becoming violent proxies for a digital myth called The Slenderman. See page 24 and *Young Girls In Murderous Attack*.

Finally, don't forget to enter this month's special crime quiz, on page 20, with MD subscriptions and a £100 first prize up for grabs. *Enjoy the read!*

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**I**T WAS her mother's despair that sealed the fate of pretty eight-year-old Cherish Lily Perrywinkle. As Cherish's mother Rayne tearfully explained to her daughters that she couldn't afford to buy them new dresses, a predator was nearby.

Donald Smith, 57, overheard Rayne's sad tale in a Dollar General Store at Northside, Jacksonville, Florida – and, seeing his chance, stepped in like the Good Samaritan.

We can't know the exact words he used, but it must have been something along the lines of: "I've got a \$150 gift voucher for Walmart. How about I meet you there with my wife? It's no problem. And a McDonald's – my treat!"



**Cherish Perrywinkle. It took almost five years to bring her killer to justice**

What Rayne didn't know was that Donald Smith had no wife. He had been released from prison three weeks earlier after serving 14 months on charges of child abuse and impersonating a public employee.

Smith had been a registered sex offender for 10 years. In 1993, he had been convicted of an attempted kidnap and selling obscene materials.

Rayne, oblivious to the threat he posed, looked gratefully at the kindly old man with a neatly trimmed moustache. "I should have told him no," she would say later that day. "But my girls needed clothes so bad. I'm so sorry."

That's how Rayne and her daughters came to be at Walmart at the appointed time to meet Smith. He presumably explained away the fact that his wife hadn't come with after all.

Security cameras at Walmart recorded the moment that Smith peeled little Cherish off from the rest of the family, perhaps saying something like, "We'll pick up the Happy Meals!"

It was getting late. The McDonald's at the front of the store was closed,

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## Report by Donald Carne

and Smith probably knew that. He led Cherish off towards his van, perhaps saying, "There's another place nearby! Let's go!" No one noticed. The pair looked like a grandfather and a granddaughter.

It was the last time Cherish was seen alive. At some time in the next few hours, Smith would rape and kill her. It was June 21st, 2013.

**W**hen the pair failed to return, Rayne grew anxious. She borrowed a phone and rang emergency to say her

He had told his mother he was going out to a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous.

When he was told by detectives that they had security footage of him from Walmart, he agreed that Cherish had climbed into the van with him. "She jumped out at a red light," he said, adding that he hadn't seen her since.

**I**t took almost five years to bring Donald Smith to justice, partly due to wrangling over Florida's execution protocol. He was brought before Judge Mallory Cooper in a Jacksonville sitting of the Fourth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida in January 2018, charged with the first-degree murder of Cherish Lilly Perrywinkle.

**The moment Cherish (below) is led out of Walmart by Donald Smith (right)**



# CHERISH, 8, LURED AWAY FOR A HAPPY MEAL

daughter was missing. She described her concern: "He wanted her to buy these really tall shoes that were women's shoes and I told him no. I said, they're too high for her - I wouldn't even wear shoes that high.

"Maybe he was grooming her? I hope to God he doesn't kill her and I hope to God he doesn't rape her. I had a strange feeling about him when I first met him."

Jacksonville Sheriff's Office responded slowly at first. Rayne was locked in a custody battle over her three youngest daughters and the Sheriff's Office was suspicious. But the result was that an Amber Alert was not issued for several hours. Officers were later disciplined for the delay.

Cherish's semi-naked remains were found outside Highlands Baptist Church the day after she was abducted. By that time, Smith had already been picked up, his van recognised by an alert police officer on Interstate 95.

He was wet, had mud on his shoes and was covered in scratches. He said he didn't know Cherish and he'd been smoking crack with prostitutes all night.



**Sex offender Donald Smith, and right, on CCTV inside a shop where he saw a chance, stepped in and posed as a good Samaritan**

**MD "This Was As Bad As It Gets"**

The trial was short – less than two days. Smith’s defence attorney Julie Schlax called no witnesses and the jury would take less than 10 minutes to reach its verdict.

“Cherish Perrywinkle was eight years old,” said State Attorney Melissa Nelson in her opening statement. “Separated from her mother, from her little sisters, from all she knew that was safe in this world, she spent the last petrifying hours of her life with him. Every mother’s darkest nightmare became Rayne Perrywinkle’s reality.

“Cherish did not die quickly and she did not die easily,” she continued. “In fact, hers was a very brutal and tortured death. He gagged her, raped her, he sodomised her, then he strangled her. He gagged her with such force, her gums and nostrils bled. He strangled her with such force, her eyeballs bled.”

For the defence, Ms. Schlax said, “You have just heard an emotionally charged opening statement designed to anger you. What we are asking you to do is to live up to the burdens of proof.”



**Cherish Perrywinkle – a brave little girl who fought back**

**“To the untrained eye he looks like Uncle Joe who is shopping with Rayne and the kids. He made her feel safe through his lies and deception and then he preyed upon her”**

For the prosecution, Ms. Nelson showed the jury images of Cherish’s remains after she had been raped and killed by her predator. The images reduced many of them to tears. Smith turned his back to the court as the images were projected onto a screen.

The testimony of Jacksonville Chief Medical Officer Valerie Rao caused horrified gasps in court. Dr. Rao, in tears, had to pause for five minutes during her delivery to collect herself.

“She had so much trauma that her anatomy was totally distorted by the injury she suffered,” Dr. Rao said. “She died after she sustained tremendous force on her neck such that she could not breathe.”

Cherish, a gentle, sunny girl with freckles on her nose, had not died easily. It had taken three to five minutes to strangle her. The pressure around her throat was so intense that a tear of blood appeared from her right eye.

The post-mortem report showed she had suffered contusions all over her body. She had been beaten and dragged. And she had been strangled with an item of clothing.

The brave little girl had fought back – testament to that was a wound on Smith’s penis from when he tried to rape her orally.

The defence asked the judge to

declare a mistrial. They suggested Dr. Rao’s tearful display would prejudice the jury. Judge Cooper denied the request.

The court now heard recordings made secretly in prison, in which Smith bragged about his crime. “She had a lot for a white girl,” he said to another inmate, meaning she had a rounded posterior.

Charles Wilkie, a police dog handler, was the officer who found Cherish in some swampy ground by a tidal creek of the Trout River. She was still wearing her orange dress with a fruit print. “All I could do was stand by and preserve the evidence,” he said. He paused. “My

daughter has the same dress.”

Smith’s DNA was found all over Cherish.

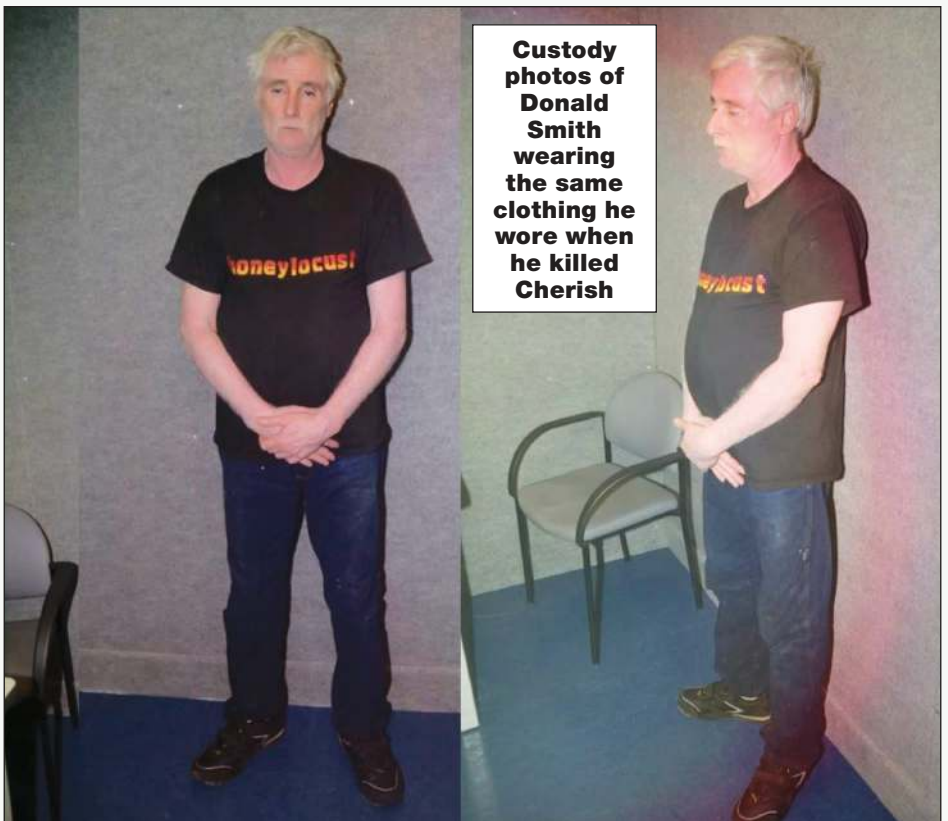
It emerged that Smith had a record that stretched back to 1977. He had been convicted at the age of 21 for indecent assault on a child under the age of 16. In 1992, he was in prison again for attempted kidnapping and two counts of showing obscene material to a minor.

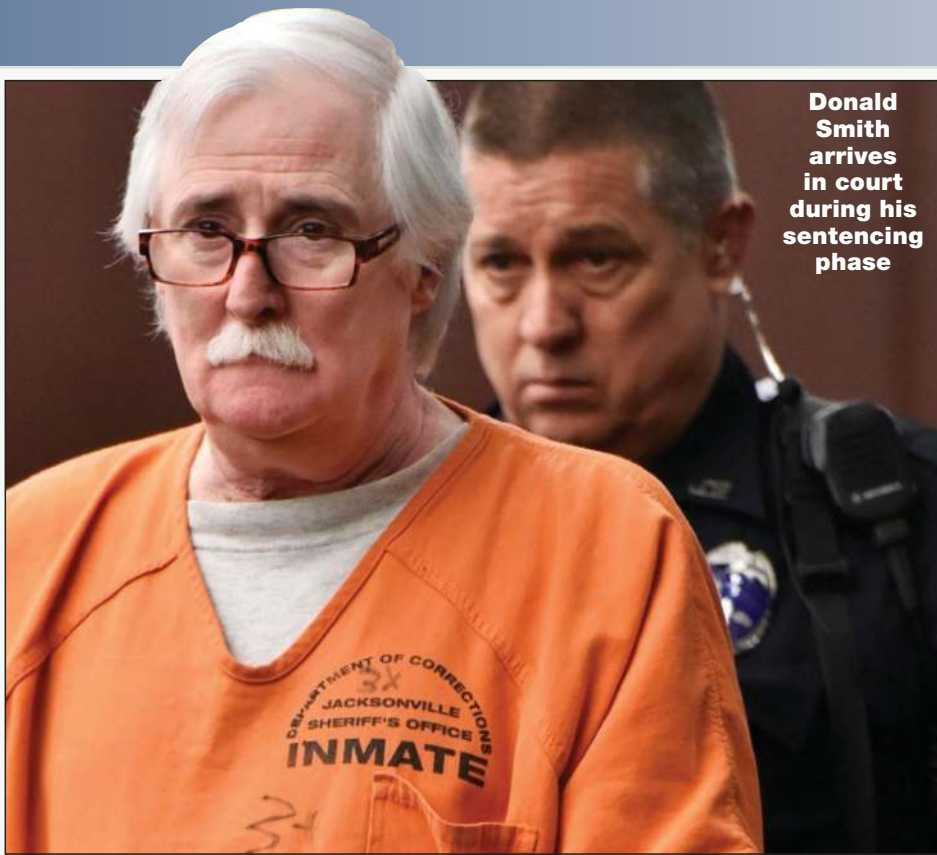
An angry Rayne Perrywinkle told the court: “He told me I was safe. He looked into my face and told me I was safe. He was scoping for a child. If it wasn’t my daughter, Cherish, it would’ve been someone else. This monster should have never been let out – ever. When is it gonna stop?”

In closing remarks, prosecutor Mark Caliel explained: “To the untrained eye he looks like Uncle Joe who is shopping with Rayne and the kids. He made her feel safe through his lies and deception and then he preyed upon her. He drove her out of that parking lot of the Walmart to where no eyes could see and no ears could hear.”

Smith, looking trim in a smart white shirt and checked tie, showed no emotion as the verdicts were read: guilty on all counts.

**D**uring the sentencing phase the following week, Smith arrived shackled in an orange prison jump suit. His lawyer asked plaintively if his client could be unchained so he could make notes. In fact, Smith had been entitled to attend in civilian clothes; the prison suit was a tactical ploy intended to make him look old, pathetic and helpless. More of a victim than a predator, in fact.





**Donald Smith arrives in court during his sentencing phase**

Carrie Ann Buck, a mother-of-four from Syracuse, told the court how Smith had attempted to abduct her when she was 13 years old in 1993.

Through tears, Carrie described how she hid in a tubular slide at a playground. "I was scared, I was slipping, I was afraid I would fall out and he would find me," she said. "I know you're in there, you little b--ch, and I'm going to find you," he called. I knew he was going to hurt me," Carrie sobbed.

Smith had been arrested a few days later when he showed up outside Carrie's home. He served six years for that.

Dr. Heather Holmes, a

psychologist, said that during an interview she had with Smith, he "did not exhibit remorse," leading her to believe he "can't be cured." She added that he was "one of the most dangerous" people she had analysed: manipulative, lacking in empathy and remorse. Bizarrely, she added, Smith "was angry with Cherish for getting in the van with him."

Dr. Joseph Wu said Smith had suffered brain injuries at the ages of nine and 20. This, he said, could have led to his paedophilia and addictive personality.

Smith's cocaine addiction now came under discussion. Dr. Daniel Buffington said that Smith had used cocaine in the Walmart rest-room on the evening he killed Cherish. Later that night, he woke from sleep with the thought, "I'm a convicted sex offender. How am I going to explain this?"

Smith had been on a cocaine binge

two weeks before the attack and had tried to check into a hospital. "He felt that he was not safe. He reported being unable to get off cocaine and go to sleep, and having homicidal thoughts," said Defence Attorney Charles Fletcher.

Fletcher added that Smith could not control his urges, even though he was sane and knew right from wrong. "Nobody says, 'I think I'll be a paedophile for the rest of my life,'" he added. "It's a mental disorder."

Smith was sick and "wired differently" to the rest of us, said Defence Attorney Julie Schlax.

"Sometimes, mercy is given to someone who doesn't deserve it," she prompted.

"Do we execute the mentally ill?"

But it was the closing remarks of Assistant State Attorney Mark Caliel that carried the day. "'Mama, he's got a one hundred and fifty-dollar gift card and we're going to McDonald's.' Those were the last words of Cherish Perrywinkle to her mother," said Caliel. "Innocent, trusting."

"The death penalty is appropriate. The death penalty is just. The death penalty is what he deserves for what he did to that little girl."

The jury agreed with Caliel. Two hours of deliberation led to a recommendation of the death penalty for Cherish's killer.

**State Attorney Melissa Nelson agreed. "Life in prison was not an appropriate penalty for this crime. If not for this murder, then for what?" she asked. "This was as bad as it gets."**

**"The death penalty is appropriate. The death penalty is just. The death penalty is what he deserves for what he did to that little girl"**

## Paul Donnelley's

# MURDER MONTH July

### Death of a tycoon's wife...

Cuthbert Wiltshaw and his wife Bobby lived in a 14-room house called Estoril on Station Road in the Potteries village of Barlaston. And it was making pottery that gave the Wiltshaws their opulent lifestyle – they owned Wiltshaw & Robinson.

On July 16th, 1952, Mrs. Wiltshaw, 62, was bludgeoned to death by someone using a heavy poker, which was left by the side of her body. Mrs. Wiltshaw's body was found by her husband when he came home from work.

She had been hit over the head, her skull smashed and her jaw broken, and had been stabbed several times in the stomach. Some £3,000-worth of jewellery was missing. The couple's servants were all off-duty when the murder occurred and there was no sign of a forced entry.

It was surmised that the killer or killers must have been au fait with the house and its occupants.

In May 1952, two months before Mrs Wiltshaw's death, the couple had sacked Leslie Green, their 29-year-old ex-Borstal boy chauffeur, for using one of the family cars for personal business.



**Disgraced chauffeur: Leslie Green**

At the start of July, 1952, Green had vanished from his house in Longton. He was not seen until July 23rd when he came forward after a police appeal. Green denied all knowledge of the killing and said that on the afternoon and evening of the murder he had been at the Station Hotel in Stafford, a dozen miles from Barlaston. Then he had caught a train to Leeds.

Green was a married man with a young daughter but he chatted up a nurse in Leeds and proposed to her. He gave her two rings after the murder but she was suspicious and returned them.

An RAF mackintosh was discovered in a lost property office and it was found out that Green had worn it on July 16th – the date of the murder.

In the pocket was a letter containing an address in Leeds. There police found the rings that the nurse had returned. As expected they were part of a haul stolen from the Wiltshaws. The remainder of the jewellery was never found.

**Leslie Green went on trial at the Stafford Assizes and pleaded not guilty to murder. However, forensic evidence placed him at the scene and he was found guilty. Albert Pierrepoint hanged him at Winson Green Prison, Birmingham, two days before Christmas 1952.**

# EUROPEAN

## CRIME REPORT

# THE BODY ON THE BATTLEFIELD

**Seventy-four years ago the dark forest had been a landscape of corpses in the last great battle of the Second World War. Now here was another body – and the victim had suffered a terrible death**

**E**VEN TODAY it is a place that shudders with death. This is the Forest of Ardennes once a landscape of corpses where, three-quarters of a century ago, thousands of American troops died in the snow and the bitter cold, fighting between the pine trees in the Battle of the Bulge – Hitler's last desperate gamble to throw out the invading Allied forces.

The Ardennes, straddling Belgium and Luxemburg, has a vicious winter climate, and with its memories of that savage battle, fought in the bleakest of winters, it's hardly the place where you want to go walking in January. Nevertheless, on January 11th, 2015, a couple of hardy hikers ventured into the forest.

And there, half hidden in the snow and ice, was another corpse.

This was not the remains of a German or American soldier, but a woman. There was just enough of her visible to identify her as blonde, dressed in jeans and with her pullover above her stomach, as if she had been dragged through the snow.

The hikers called the police and the frozen body was taken off across the former battlefield to the morgue. The report on her was every bit as horrific as if she had been in combat.

She had been beaten and kicked and stabbed 13 times before her attacker sprinkled her with petrol and set her alight – while she was still alive. She died not from her injuries but



The forest setting where the corpse of Muriel Slachmuylders was discovered



**Above left, murdered newsagent Muriel Slachmuylders. Above right, US soldiers in the Forest of Ardennes at the time of the Battle of the Bulge**

asphyxiated by the smoke from her burning flesh and, according to the post-mortem report, she must have suffered atrociously in the last few minutes before she died.

If her killer burned her in order to conceal her identity he made a hash of it, because she was still wearing rings and a necklace, and that was enough to identify her.

She was Muriel Slachmuylders, who ran the newsagent's shop in the centre of Bastogne. This is a town whose name was written large in the story of the

Battle of the Bulge.

Bastogne was the epicentre of the fighting, a key position which changed hands between the Americans and the Germans as the battle raged. And, of course, it was almost completely destroyed as a result.

Muriel, 56, was known by almost everyone in Bastogne. An elegant divorcee, she was a consummate professional much admired by the other shopkeepers. They were perplexed – no one could think of any reason why someone should want to kill her.

But the murderer was soon identified. Twenty-eight-year-old David Giner, a local hairdresser, actually boasted about the killing to two of his neighbours a week before the body was discovered. Almost as if to confirm his guilt, he had left his DNA in Muriel's car.

That would seem to make this an open-and-shut case, except that by the time he arrived to face a murder charge in Neufchateau, Giner was denying all the evidence and very soon the prosecution was floundering.

There was no doubt, the prosecutor maintained, that the DNA at the scene was Giner's. But was there other DNA there, too, the defence wanted to know? Yes, came the reply, but they didn't know whose DNA it was because they hadn't bothered to check it out.

This was doubtless to save costs, and it led to another problem for the prosecution. Also for cost-saving reasons, this was not an assize court, where a murder case would normally be heard, but a "correctional tribunal." The Belgian Ministry of Justice had decided to save time and money by putting "simpler" cases into correctional tribunals. This would mean no dock (the accused would sit on a

**There was no doubt, the prosecutor maintained, that the DNA at the scene was Giner's. But was there other DNA there, too, the defence wanted to know?**

chair next to his lawyers) and no jury, but a hearing before three professional magistrates.

And to show the world that the system really did save money, the Neufchatel tribunal were going to get this case done and dusted in just one day.

Small wonder that the footsteps of the first witness seemed to hurry across the courtroom to the witness-box. There was no time to lose!

He was called Brian, and he was one of the two men who were neighbours of David Giner.

"David came to me one evening and told me he had killed someone," said Brian. "He opened his case and took out a knife, some cigarettes, and two lottery tickets. He said, 'I had a rush of adrenaline, and I struck her.'"

"That doesn't accord with your statement to the police," the court president observed.

The next witness, Thomas, wasn't sure either of what he had said in an earlier statement. It might have occurred to someone by this time that the pigeons involved in doing justice on the cheap were coming home to roost.

The floundering meanwhile was



**Above, David Giner - he boasted about the killing to his neighbours. Below, the newsagent's in Bastogne where he and Muriel worked**

delighting David Giner's mother, who was volubly showing her contempt for the proceedings. "Madam," said the court president at length, "if you do not calm down you will have to leave the court."

The problem was that with no jury, the accused sitting on his chair in open court, and his mother doing the



scoffing, things were getting out of hand. Would David Giner's evidence calm things down?

His hair standing up on end, a bit of beard around his chin, Giner said he had left his job at the hairdresser's and since then, from time to time, had been lending a hand to Muriel Slachmuylders in her shop.

During the evening of January 5th, 2015, she gave him a kitten as a present and in return he took a box of magazines to her home in the Rue des Roches. He had a coffee with her while he was there, and then went home, carrying the kitten.

"Next day she sent me a text asking me how the kitten was getting on," he said. "I tried to call her, but she never replied."

"But why was your DNA found on the bedclothes in her bedroom?" he was asked.

"I never had any relationship with her," Giner protested. "But there were sheets and blankets everywhere in her lounge and I could easily have touched them on a previous visit."

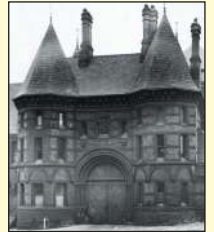
On the night in question he was at

● Continues over page

## MURDER MONTH July

**A deadly disagreement...** On July 27th, 1922, an argument broke out between tenants in Hulme, Manchester. George Edisbury, a man who was fond of drink, got into a confrontation with Winifred Drinkwater who rented two rooms on the first floor with her husband, Peter, and their daughter Mary.

Edisbury's common-law wife Annie Grimshaw alleged that Mrs. Drinkwater had started it. Peace was restored after Mr. Drinkwater spoke to Edisbury.



**Strangeways Prison**

Two days later in the afternoon, Mr. Drinkwater walked into the kitchen and found the Edisburys there, the worse for wear. Leaving them to it, he went to his bedroom to see his wife.

About 6 p.m., she went out to do some shopping. Mr. Drinkwater followed his wife some time later and after shopping they went to a pub. After one drink, Mrs. Drinkwater left. Her husband told her he would stay for "one more." It was an hour before he left the pub and, as he turned into his road, his rooms' landlord, John Oakes, informed him that his wife had just left, presumably to find him.

After walking around for a short while, Mr. Drinkwater decided to go home, figuring his wife would go back there eventually. At 9.57 p.m., he went home to find a crowd standing outside his front door and, getting closer, he found they were encircling his wife's prone body.

Her throat had been cut and Mr. Drinkwater looked up just in time to see Edisbury running away. Edisbury went to the home of his niece, Alice, where he demanded a cup of tea. The drunken Edisbury sat down and said, "I've cut a woman's throat. She said I had been getting a pension under false pretences. She's been nagging me for days."

After 20 minutes, Edisbury left the house and went to the home of Janet Knott, his married sister, where he repeated his murder confession. Seeing her brother was drunk, she didn't believe him. He slumped to the floor and his sister left him there to sleep off the alcohol. At 9 a.m. the next day, the police arrived and arrested Edisbury.

His trial was at the Manchester Assizes on November 27th, 1922, before Mr. Justice Acton. Found guilty of murder, he appealed on the basis that he had been provoked and the proper verdict should have been guilty of manslaughter.

**His appeal was rejected and on January 3rd, 1923, he was hanged at Strangeways.**



### Giner escorted by police officers

home looking at his computer. Experts told the court that Giner's computer was active at his home that night, but, one of them added, "that doesn't prove that he was physically there himself."

Giner pointed out that the case against him rested on the testimony of his two neighbours. So why did they testify against him, he was asked? "Because they wanted my apartment – they wanted to get rid of me"

It was becoming complicated, and one thing was certain, they could never finish this in a day. The

**“We need to know about other DNA samples found at the crime scene. We also need to check out the statements of the two neighbours”**

president of the court gave up. "We need to know about the other DNA samples found at the crime scene," she said. "We also need to check out the statements of the two neighbours. Adjourned until January."

In the new year the issues were solved to the satisfaction of the court. The magistrates were critical of Giner's "contradictions and lies." His DNA, it was stated, was also found on the petrol can used to spray Muriel, and also on a bloodied knife, the murder weapon.

The evidence suggested that the victim was beaten and stabbed in her home, and then driven to the forest in her own car where, still alive, she was sprayed with the accelerant and set on fire, to die an agonising death.

But why? The tribunal was unable to establish a motive. Was it just "a rush of adrenaline," as Giner told his neighbours? Or was there something deeper?

**One thing was for sure – this trial didn't last a day, or even two days after it was adjourned. For having listened to more evidence in January 2016, the tribunal decided to postpone sentence until March 21st, four months after the trial, scheduled to last a single day, opened. On that day finally David Giner was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. So much for fast-track justice!**

**Tricking his way into the family home, he raped the youngest boy and then slit the throats of the mother, her two sons, and a visitor – before going home to take his dog for a walk**

# LIFE FOR THE BEAST WHO CANNOT BE NAMED

**C**ARLA SCHAUER was preparing her three children for school four days before Christmas 2015 when at breakfast time there was a knock on the door of her smart, detached home in Rapperswil, Switzerland. Carla's husband had gone off to work half an hour earlier, so she answered the door.

On the threshold was a well-dressed, well-built young man. "Good morning, I am an educational psychologist working for the children's school," he began pleasantly, "I would like to have a few words with you about your children."

Carla, who followed her children's academic progress with enthusiasm, beamed. The goodwill spirit of Christmas was in the air.

"Come in," she said gaily. And the educational psychologist, known only as Thomas N. on account of Switzerland's peculiar privacy laws, stepped into the front hall.

What happened next was almost as unbelievable as it was horrific.

The "psychologist" produced a lethal-looking knife. Then, menacingly, he rapped out orders to Carla.

"Tie him up!" he rasped, indicating her 19-year-old son Dion. Puzzled, alarmed, frightened, Carla, 48, did his bidding. Pointing the knife at Dion's 21-year-old girlfriend, Simona Fas, who was staying with the family, he said, "Tie her up as well." Again Carla, now truly frightened, did as she was told.

Thomas N. – the Swiss are quite determined that you must not know the name of any monster who might endanger your life, because a monster's privacy has to be protected – then seized Carla's younger son, 13-year-old Davin.

The brute now told Carla, "I want you to go to the nearest bank and withdraw all the available cash in your account. You are to return here at once with the money and without speaking to anyone. Failure to comply..." He drew the knife threateningly across the neck of the terrified young boy.

Carla grabbed her handbag and fled



**The Beast of Rapperswil: killer-of-four Thomas N.**

to the nearest bank. Someone who saw her there withdrawing cash thought she looked nervous and agitated. When she returned home she sighed with relief to find Davin still alive, and handed over the equivalent of £11,000 to the intruder.

Thomas N. then tied up Carla and in front of the family raped Davin, before systematically cutting the throats of the four captives.

He wasn't finished. He set fire to the house hoping to cover up his crimes and left by the front door, vanishing apparently into thin air.

The alarm was raised when a neighbour of Carla's, who intended to invite Carla out to lunch, saw smoke coming through an upstairs window. Police broke into the house and found the four charred bodies.

The horrific murders shocked Switzerland and led to the highest-ever reward – £75,000 – being offered to catch the killer.

But Thomas N. had evaded the





Above, a firefighter outside the murder house in December 2015. Below left to right, a tense Carla Schauer at a cashpoint on the day of her murder; Carla in happier times with sons Davin (left) and Dion



manhunt for five months before the reward was offered. When he was finally caught, he confessed immediately.

After he was arrested in May 2016 investigators found a backpack containing a knife and material used to tie up victims. They also determined that he had been spying on two families, in Berne and in Solothurn, in the north,

**“Thomas N. acted in cold blood, in a primitive manner, without pity or empathy”**

evidently planning a repeat of his macabre plan.

Besides the two families he was stalking, he sought out further sexual victims on the internet. The names of 11 boys aged between 11 and 14 were in a notebook found at his home.

Thomas N., 34, was a football coach who lived with his mother in Ruppertswil, the same village as his victims. He set his sights on 13-year-old Davin Schauer and stalked the family to get to know their habits.

He bought one weapon, a large kitchen knife, which has never been

found, some months before the murders, and made several trips to stake out the neighbourhood where the Schauer family lived.

In March 2018 he pleaded guilty in court in the neighbouring town of Schafisheim to charges of murder, extortion, kidnapping, hostage-taking, rape, arson, and possessing thousands of pictures and videos showing child sex abuse.

Thomas N. openly acknowledged in court: “I am a paedophile.”

The court was told that after the murders he went home, took his dog for a walk, and later joined friends at a restaurant and casino in Zurich.

The killer, who had no criminal record, “took the motorway of horror,” the judge said when reading the guilty verdict. He added: “Thomas N. acted in cold blood, in a primitive manner, without pity or empathy.” He was sentenced to life imprisonment, which in Switzerland doesn’t mean life.

**You will never know his full name but curiously under Swiss law we can show you a picture of him, as large as life. In the sleepy village where he killed cold-bloodedly, they don’t bother with his name, however. They simply refer to him as the Beast of Ruppertswil.**

## ALL ALEXIA WANTED WAS A BABY...

**She was 29, and she had been married for more than two years. Why couldn’t her husband give her what she wanted? As her resentment built up, the tension between the young couple became as taut as a bowstring**



Alexia and Jonathann Daval on their wedding day

ALEXIA DAVAL wanted a baby. At 29 and after more than two years of married life she dreamed of becoming a mother. In the classic contemporary cliché her biological clock was ticking, and anxiety was building up.

“When are you having a baby?” friends would ask her when she was out shopping.

“Soon, I hope,” she would say, pulling a wry face. “We’re trying.”

Alexia was even undergoing a fertility course to enhance her chances of conception. Husband Jonathann, 33, wasn’t so fussed. He and Alexia even had rows about it. Was he inexperienced, or just not interested? One of his friends remembered that he had never been seen with a girlfriend before he married Alexia.

Whatever the cause, the baby problem faded into the background when on October 28th, 2017, a very distressed Jonathann walked into the police station at Gray-la-Ville in eastern France to announce: “My wife went out jogging and she hasn’t come back. I’m worried something might have happened to her.”

Gendarmes, accustomed to such declarations, studied the young man on

● Continues over page

the other side of the counter.

“Where did you get those scratches on your forearm?” one of them asked.

“We had a row,” Jonathann said. “She scratched my arm.”

Well, that was pure honesty. Anyone with something to hide would have invented a story. The gendarmes nodded sympathetically as a tear rolled down Jonathann’s cheek. They registered Alexia as a missing person and tried to reassure her husband.

Two days later the body of Alexia Daval was found in the forest of Velet-Esmoulins, a mile or so from Gray village. She had been strangled and her body was partly burned. Gendarmes sealed off the area and



**Above, Jonathann Daval seen after Alexia’s death. Left, police arrive at his home to arrest him on suspicion of her murder**



studied bank accounts, tracked mobile phone movements, while life seeped slowly back towards some sort of normality in the village.

Some of the mobile phone conversations intrigued the police. In one of them Alexia talked about the difficulties she was having conceiving, and then she called into

question the virility of her husband in a way which many men might have found demeaning. One thing was certain: nothing much had been happening in the Daval conjugal bedroom.

Another clue as to what this might be about surfaced at the crime scene,

him with a surprise visitor. This was Madame Fouillot, Alexia’s mother, whom he had supported through the difficult months since her daughter was murdered.

The detectives spread a piece of charred cloth, retrieved from the site where Alexia’s body was burnt, in front of the bereaved mother and asked her if she recognised it. Yes, she said, it was part of the edging of the bed cover of Jonathann and Alexia’s matrimonial bed.

The detectives studied Jonathann’s face. If it was part of his bedspread, and it was found burnt where her body was burnt, then the irresistible inference was that the bedspread must have been used to transport the body to the forest.

Madame Fouillot now had reason to regard her son-in-law in an entirely new light. Was the man she had supported for four months in their mutual grief in fact her daughter’s killer?

According to the police, this was the moment when Jonathann Daval decided to come clean. “Yes, I did it,” he was alleged to have said. “But it was an accident.”

He lost control of himself, he is alleged to have said, after the umpteenth row with Alexia over her desire to become a mother. She fought him, scratched him, and finally he strangled her. Then he put her trainers on the body and concocted the story of her jogging. At 8 a.m. next day he took the body to the forest.

**But he emphatically denied burning her corpse. He did not do that, he said, leaving a theory in the minds of the police that he might have had an accomplice, perhaps. Or maybe not. All that will be examined at his forthcoming trial for murder.**

began a hunt for her murderer.

When Alexia was buried on November 8th, Jonathann was near to collapse – supported by his mother-in-law and father-in-law. The comforting in their grief had clearly been mutual. Alexia’s father, speaking at the funeral, declared: “I would hope that everyone has a son-in-law like Jonathann.”

Meanwhile, the police were wondering what exactly happened to Alexia while she was out jogging. The only witness who had seen her was now not so sure, and retracted his statement. It was strange that on the busy track where she disappeared no one else had seen her.

Then there was Jonathann. Alexia was only 30 minutes overdue from her jogging when he was already expressing concern that something might have happened. He went to work that Saturday – which would have been a day off for him – possibly so that all his colleagues were aware of his distress.

But all this added up only to a bit of suspicion. No one could suggest on that sort of “evidence” that Jonathann was guilty of any mischief.

Jonathann spent more time than ever with his in-laws, even staying with them for Christmas, while painstakingly, methodically, detectives continued to search for clues. They interviewed more than 200 people, colleagues, neighbours, friends of the Davals. They

where tyre tracks resembled those made by Jonathann’s Citroën.

Jonathann’s mobile phone records revealed that he moved once in the night after Alexia disappeared and once the next morning – to a position close to the Esmoulins forest. But the gendarmes remembered that he had categorically told them he hadn’t been out at all during that period.

At 9 a.m. on January 29th, 2018, detectives moved in and brought Jonathann to the police station for an interrogation. For the whole of that day he was confronted by items that contradicted his story, yet he continued to deny all knowledge of Alexia’s death.

Next morning they presented

**Join us next month for further astonishing European cases**

## “Savage” Deserves To Rot

Your case report “*Husband Whipped His Wife To Death*” (*European Crime Report* – June) was probably one of the most horrific I have ever read in any of your magazines. Halima Aghouiles was guilty only of falling in love with a sadistic, warped, child-abusing racist, named as Mustafa B. Why his full name was not given at court at Versailles in October 2017 I will never know. This “savage” whipped beautiful Halima to death and was believed to have been interfering with his children for a long time. All this was done in the name of religion. No religion on this planet supports this savagery. This evil excuse for a man made up his own beliefs as he saw fit. He is an outcast to religion of any kind, and yes, a racist. Halima was a mother of four. She died aged 25. May she rest in peace. The savage got 30 years in jail. May he rot there.



**Whipped to death: Halima Aghouiles**

Michael Minihan, Limerick

## Blame “Heartless” America

Some MD articles leave me wondering what went wrong? Could this crime have been avoided? “*Three Years In The Shadow Of The Gallows*” (May) featured the 1960s case of executed Joe Self, 32, who shot dead hard-working taxi driver Ralph Gemmill for a measly \$17. This and other true crime articles confirm how the American way of life itself contributes to crimes occurring. Americans, it seems, never care for each other. If they did, many senseless crimes such as this would not happen.

Self was broke, friendless and with

no place or organisation to assist him in his desperate situation. He resorted to robbery. He should have asked somebody for help. Moreover, his life history was deplorable. He lost his mother aged seven; his father aged 12. In any other civilised country Self would have been brought up by someone who cared more for children than money. What contributed to this crime? The heartless American way of living, that’s what.

Robbie Bluck, Birmingham

## Fifty Shades Of Manson

I enjoyed the feature “*The Manson Massacres*” (May and June). Your author asks why the Manson Family remained in the public consciousness for so many years. The fact that they killed a heavily pregnant woman made their slaughter spree especially memorable and the fact that another female had committed the murder made it even more shocking, this being before the equally heinous murders committed by Rose West. The Manson Family’s links to several music maestros also fascinated the public, though these maestros later recognised that they had befriended a sociopath and took care to avoid him: this doubtless saved them from becoming victims themselves.



**Powerplay sex: Charles Manson**

Manson also remains memorable for experimenting openly with powerplay sex, having his many lovers kiss his feet and obey his every whim. Powerplay sex has always been the most popular fantasy but he was putting his fantasies into action many years before *Fifty Shades* made it more acceptable.

Finally, the lost and lonely are always looking for someone to lead them so a small number of recruits remained loyal to Manson after he went to jail. Incredibly, he also gained followers every year until his death.

C. Davis, Weston-super-Mare

## Manson And The Beatles

I was interested to read your report by Brian Marriner on “*The Manson Massacres*” (May and June).

Charles Manson hoped that the murders would be blamed on black Americans, to provoke a race war in Los Angeles. Hence the murder scene graffiti “Death to Pigs” and the misspelt “Healter Skelter,” taken as a reference to a Beatles song.

In fact, Manson’s Beatles inspiration was their entire “White album,” which featured the songs “Helter Skelter” and “Piggies.” He thought it was proof that they shared his vision.

Nick Warren, Pinner

## Long Wait For Justice

The long-running BBC television programme *Crimewatch* began in 1984, and one of the first cases featured on it was the murder of Colette Aram in Keyworth, Nottinghamshire, on October 30th, 1983. The killer was not discovered until 25 years after Colette’s murder. He was sentenced in 2009. It would be great to read a full account of the case.

Stuart Davies, Barnstaple

We’ve never featured the case in MD. So watch this space for a full account!

## Clerkenwell Terror

It was with great interest that I read about the case of Michael Barrett, the last man to be hanged in public in England (“*Clerkenwell Bombing Led To Final Public Hanging*” – June). This case is quite well known, unlike the case of Robert Smith who was executed in Scotland two weeks earlier. Originally, Barrett had been due to hang on the same day. I saw you had a small piece on Smith. Why don’t you cover the case fully?

Also, why not do the case of the first man hanged in private in England after the change in the law? I believe it involved a youth who shot dead a station-master in Kent.

Peter Niall, Havant

Thanks Mr. N. – would other readers like to know more about the Smith case?

## WIN MY SILENT WAR

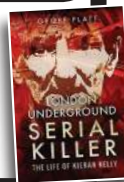
In the annals of espionage, one name towers above all others: that of H. A. R. “Kim” Philby, the ringleader of the legendary Cambridge spies. A member of the British establishment, Philby joined the Secret Intelligence Service in 1940, rose to the head of Soviet counterintelligence, and, as M16’s liaison with the CIA and the FBI, betrayed every secret of Allied operations to the Russians, fatally compromising covert actions to roll back the Iron Curtain in the early years of the Cold War.

Written from Moscow in 1967, *My Silent War* shook the world and introduced a new archetype in fiction: the unrepentant spy. It inspired John Le Carre’s Smiley novels and the later espionage novels of Graham Greene. Kim Philby was history’s most successful spy. He was also an exceptional writer who gave us the great iconic story of the Cold War and revolutionised, in the process, the art of espionage writing.

For a chance to win a copy of *My Silent War – The Autobiography of a Spy* (published by Arrow; ISBN 978-1-787-46128-4; £8.99) by Kim Philby, just answer this question: Who wasn’t one of the “Cambridge Five” spies?

■ Illya Kuryakin ■ Guy Burgess ■ Anthony Blunt ■ Donald Maclean

Send your answer, with your name and address, to MD July Competition, PO Box 735, London SE26 5NQ, or email [masterdetective@truecrimelibrary.com](mailto:masterdetective@truecrimelibrary.com), using the subject line “MD July comp.” The first correct entry out of the hat after the closing date of **July 11th** will win. The winner will be announced in the September issue. The winner of the MD May competition, with the correct answer *Northern*, is Mr. M. McHale from Yorkshire. Well done! Your prize of *The London Underground Serial Killer* will be with you soon.



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# A SCOTTISH FIRST – HANGED BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

**The silliest thing a killer can do is to leave clues that can identify him at the murder scene. There was no chance detectives would fail to catch George Chalmers – he left all his old clothes just a few feet away from the body**

**T**IME WAS running out for Scotsman John Miller. At 64 he was old for a 19th-century man; he was also unmarried, solitary, in bad health and needed a stick when he was walking.

Time was running out for him too because he was a tollhouse keeper, and in this year of 1869 toll roads were going out of fashion. They had been going out of fashion in fact for the past 10 years, since local authorities began financing road maintenance themselves, and although travellers still paid at tollgates, many were just waved through free of charge.

**By Matthew Spicer**

John Miller's tollhouse was the Blackhill Toll Bar at Braco, a small Perthshire village, where the road to Dalginross and Comrie branches off the Braco-Crieff road. You can still see his old tollhouse on the north side of the B827, as lonely as it ever was. The road is not like Piccadilly Circus, and evidently anyone trying to live off a percentage of the tolls paid by passing traffic nearly a century and a half ago, would be having a meagre existence.

That didn't worry John Miller because his needs were scant. Here he would collect a penny toll from passing vehicles and riders, and when there was no traffic, which was frequently, he knitted his own socks, patched his clothes and played draughts with his friends.

One such good friend was a local shepherd named Walter, who called at the tollhouse at about 8 p.m. on Tuesday, December 21st, 1869. The two men sat in Miller's parlour, drinking a couple of beers before Walter had to hurry on to his wife and home.

"I'll not lock the door after you," Miller said as Walter was leaving. "I'm half expecting Archie McLaren to call later for a game of draughts." He watched Walter disappearing into the freezing night before returning to the warm fire in the parlour.

As it happened, Miller's friend Archie McLaren didn't call at the tollhouse that night. Instead, he took an alternative route home. And when John Miller went to bed at around 10 p.m.

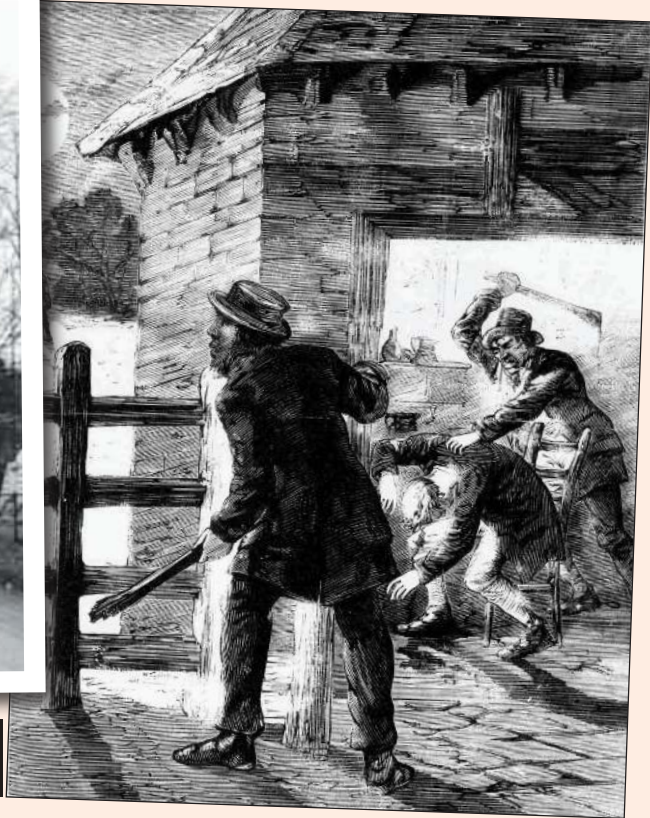


**Killer George Chalmers photographed after his capture. He always maintained his innocence of the crime...**

**SCOTLAND'S  
CLASSIC CASES**



Above, Braco in the 19th century. Right, an illustration of the murder of tollhouse keeper John Miller. Below, the former Blackhill Tollhouse



he forgot to lock the door he had left unlocked for his friend.

Next morning, at 6.30, McLaren and farmhand Peter McLeish passed the tollhouse on their way to work. "John must be still in his bed," McLeish said. "The place is still locked and shuttered."

"This isn't right," McLaren said. The two men took a cursory look round the outside of the house, and then McLaren went off to Arloch, about a mile away, and came back with John Miller's sister Mary. While she watched, he cut a pane of glass out of a window and forced opened a shutter with an axe.

Mary knew the layout of the house. On each side of the hallway was a single room – the parlour on one side and the bedroom on the other. She went first into the bedroom, where the body of her brother lay on his bed, his face a mask of congealed blood. John Miller had been murdered during the night.

The police were summoned from Dunblane. They noted there was no physical sign of a break-in. What had happened was evident for all to see: Miller had been struck down by a heavy blow to his right forehead, completely smashing the rim of his hat, and then beaten as he lay on the floor. The killer left the murder weapon alongside the body – a crowbar, still showing evidence of congealed blood and hair sticking to it.

Medical evidence put the time of the murder between 9 p.m., after Walter left that night, and 10 p.m., when the toll keeper would normally have gone to bed. It also revealed that John Miller had lived for some time after the attack.

There were footprints leading

from the front of the house to a toilet window at the back, which had a clear view to the parlour. The killer must have watched the old man from the toilet window; he would have seen John Miller eating his frugal supper and watched as he afterwards made his way across the passage to the bedroom.

Then he had run round to the front of

### **Miller had been struck down by a heavy blow to his forehead, completely smashing the rim of his hat, and then beaten as he lay on the floor**

the house, entered via the unlocked front door and beaten the toll keeper senseless.

The motive was equally clear: robbery. Mary Miller knew there was always cash from the tolls kept in a box in the bedroom. This would have amounted to around one pound – a useful haul for a smash-and-grab robber. Miller's silver

watch and chain were also missing.

The intruder left by the front door, locking it behind him and tossing the key into the garden, where the police later found it.

The area was well known as a haunt of tramps, and next day three of them were arrested and taken in for interrogation. Hopes that the killer would be found by Christmas Day evaporated when all three suspects were able to furnish solid alibis.

The police were clearly being over-zealous. The real clues were still back at the tollhouse, which hadn't been properly searched. A whole week had gone by before Mary Miller reported that her brother's shoes, shirt and suit were missing. Another week went by before a couple of detectives made a thorough search of the parlour and found bloodstained clothes hidden behind a pile of logs.

These clothes were not John Miller's, his sister said, so the killer must have been wearing them and swapped them for Miller's clothes. This was slack investigating, because if the clothes had been found at the time of the murder the police would have known exactly what the killer was wearing as he roamed off across the hills.

The killer's own clothes – those hidden behind the logs – were in a parlous state, suggesting a down-and-out who had reached the lower depths of Skid Row. In the pockets there were a pawn ticket, a knife, an awl, scissors, bits of a pipe and various other odds and ends.

Their owner was soon identified. He was 45-year-old George Chalmers, a vagrant released from Alloa Prison on December 20th. He had been in the prison serving a 10-day sentence for exposing himself in Alloa while drunk.



# MURDER MONTH

## July

**T**riple-murder in a sleepy village...Matfield is a village five miles south-east of Royal Tunbridge Wells in Kent. Its only real claim to fame was as the birthplace of war poet Siegfried Sassoon. But in the summer of 1940 it was the scene of a triple-killing.

On the afternoon of July 9th, Dorothy Fisher, 47, Freda, her 19-year-old daughter, and their servant Charlotte Saunders, 50, were all shot to death at Crittenden, the cottage they shared.

The cottage was left a mess; broken crockery was scattered everywhere along with jewellery and money. The police found four broken cups and saucers but who the identity of the fourth person was remained a mystery.

It could not be Mrs. Fisher's husband as they had been living apart since October 1939. There was no talk of divorce and both took new lovers. Police found a white hogskin glove between Dorothy and Freda Fisher. They suspected the killer was a woman.

Indeed, a woman had been seen outside the cottage and she was also seen walking to Tonbridge, where she caught a London-bound train at 4.25 p.m. She was carrying a long, brown parcel – most likely the murder weapon.

The woman was soon identified as a widow, Florence Ida Ouida Ransom, 34, who lived with Dorothy Fisher's husband, Walter Lawrence, on Carramore Farm at Piddington, near Bicester, Oxfordshire.

Also at the farm were an old housekeeper, Mrs. Guilford, and Fred, a cowhand. The pair were found to be Florence Ransom's mother and brother. Mr. Fisher did not know he was employing his lover's relatives and not even under her real name – he thought it was Julia. Her brother had been teaching her how to fire a shotgun. She had borrowed it on July 8th, returning it two days later.

Florence was picked out of an identity parade and the glove fitted her snugly. She was arrested on July 13th.

On November 7th, 1940, she appeared at the Old Bailey charged with the murder of Mrs. Fisher. She pleaded not guilty and denied she was related to the housekeeper and the cowhand.

Interestingly, this was the first Old Bailey murder trial where the jury was allowed to go home for the night. This was because of the air-raid conditions.

**Florence Ransom was found guilty after the jury deliberated for 47 minutes, and sentence of death was passed on November 12th. On December 9th, 1940, her appeal was denied but, on December 22nd, she was declared insane and sent to Broadmoor.**



**Florence Ransom**



**Perth Prison where George Chalmers was held in the death cell**

At Alloa Prison they identified the clothes left in the tollhouse as belonging to Chalmers – warders remembered he was wearing them on the day he was discharged. But where was he now? Almost certainly still in Scotland, but nothing else was known about his whereabouts.

**A** reward of £50 was offered and a description was circulated. Winter passed, and there was still no sighting. A couple of vagrants were arrested, found to be innocent, and released.

But in the middle of the night on May 14th, 1870, nearly five months after John Miller was murdered, lynx-eyed Dundee police constable Edward Billington stopped a vagrant in the High Street.

**“These clothes were taken from me when I left Alloa Prison. I’ve never been to Braco. I walked from the prison to Stirling”**

“Where are you going?” the officer asked.

“I’m on my way to Aberdeen. I’ll be going east, via Arbroath,” came the reply.

There was nothing suspicious about that. PC Billington chatted to the vagrant for a minute or two and then sent him on his way. When he went off duty later that night he reported the encounter to his desk sergeant, and as a result of their conversation Billington realised that the vagrant he had talked to answered the description of George Chalmers, wanted for the Braco murder.

For what was left of the night Dundee police hunted through the streets, but Chalmers, no doubt aware of the danger he was in, had scarpered.

PC Billington was evidently a man with a mighty conscience and a zeal for his vocation. For when he came off duty that night he changed into his ordinary clothes, got on his bike, and set off towards Alloa. And miraculously,

although Chalmers had a four-hour lead on his pursuer, Billington caught up with him near Clayports Farm, on the Broughty Ferry road.

“You probably remember me,” Billington said. “I’m the police officer you spoke to during the night. What’s your name?”

“Andrew Brown,” Chalmers replied. It was a name he had often used before.

“I don’t believe you,” Billington said. “I’m arresting you for the murder of John Miller.”

Chalmers, who had evidently been reading the newspapers avidly, did his best to look surprised. “Na, na, there’s a few been taken up for that already,” he said. “You’ll need to let me awa’ also.”

Interestingly, at the moment of his arrest, Chalmers was wearing none of John Miller’s clothes, and had nothing on him that would have linked him to the tollhouse murder.

Billington took his prisoner to the local railway station and from there by train to Dundee. All through the journey Chalmers stuck to his story: he was Andrew Brown, and he had never been in Alloa Prison. Gradually the story changed – yes, he was Chalmers, and yes, he had been in Alloa Prison, but he knew nothing about the Braco tollhouse murder.

Despite his denials, on Tuesday, September 6th, 1870, Chalmers was charged at the circuit court of Perth. He was short, with reddish-brown hair round shoulders and a vague expression that made people think he was mentally retarded, especially as he seemed totally uninterested in the proceedings.

At some stage, though, he must have wondered why he left such obvious clues as his worn-out clothing at the murder scene. Witnesses identified the clothing as his, testified that he was wearing it when he left prison, and testified that he had left it hidden in the tollhouse.

They even recalled the contents of his pockets, the knife, the pawn ticket and the awl.

“These clothes were taken from me when I left Alloa Prison,” he declared. “I’ve never been to Braco, na, never.”

I walked from the prison to Stirling and then to Edinburgh for Hogmanay, and then I was awa' to Glasgow and Newcastle, where I had a job driving cattle.

“And from there I went around the north of England to Carlisle and back into Scotland, and from there to Dundee, where the law took me in.”

There was a refuge for vagabonds in Edinburgh where the entry book showed that an Andrew Brown spent Wednesday night, December 22nd, there – which was the night after the murder. If Chalmers had been there under his assumed name then it was unlikely, but not impossible, that he murdered John Miller at Braco on the previous night. But the entry log apart, there was no supporting evidence for his story.

The jury listened to the evidence for nearly two days and then on Wednesday, September 8th, less than hour after retiring, they found Chalmers guilty of killing John Miller, by a majority of 13 to two. When the verdict was announced Chalmers burst into tears, his sobs almost drowning out the judge's words.

**N**ew legislation had banned public executions, and Chalmers was the first to benefit from it. His was to be the first execution inside a prison in Scotland.

He was sentenced to die on Monday, October 3rd, at 8 a.m. in Perth Prison. In the death cell he enjoyed unlimited access to religious advice, food and rest. His complaint, which was constant, was that the police and warders in Alloa Prison had lied about his clothes. He claimed that some of the clothes they said he had on when left the prison were in fact left behind at the prison.

“I may have led a sinful life, but I wasn't involved in the Braco murder,” he repeated time and again. But the warders shrugged, knowing that what was done was very unlikely to be undone.

In Chalmers's hometown of Fraserburgh the residents did try to undo it, though. They launched two petitions that were sent to the Home Office. One claimed the evidence against him was not sufficient to justify a capital sentence; the other said that Chalmers was suffering from “a defective mental condition.”

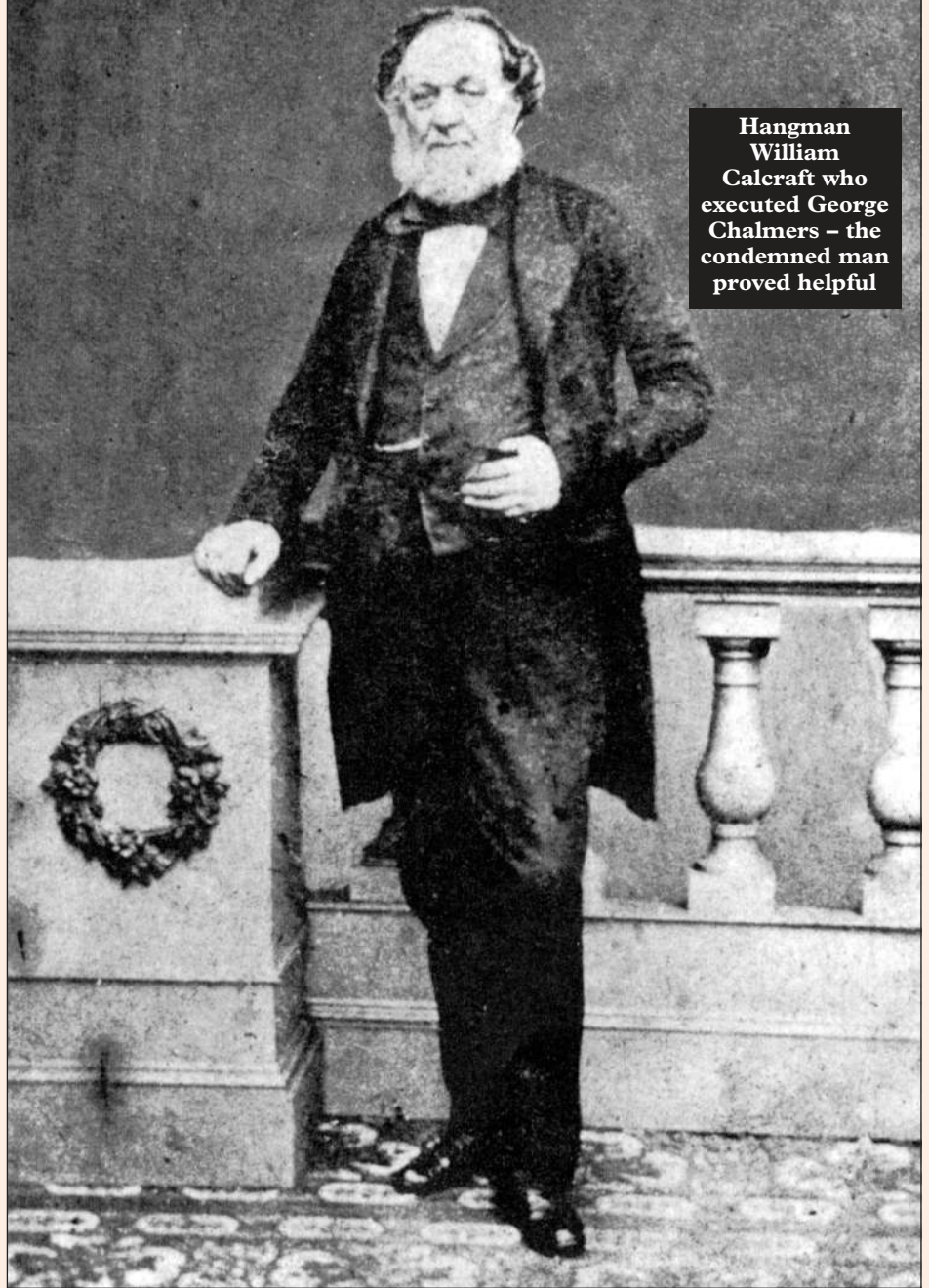
The petitions caused the execution to be postponed for 24 hours. The Home Office then announced that there would be no reprieve, and the execution would take place on Tuesday, October 4th, the day after it was originally scheduled.

There appears to have been real frustration by the authorities that the prisoner would not confess to his crime. At the door of the execution chamber a clergyman confronted Chalmers almost menacingly.

“Do you not have anything at all to say?” he asked the condemned man.

“Yea, I do,” Chalmers replied. “Here's a letter to my sister. Will you post it for me, and ask her to put it in the papers.”

It was hardly the response expected,



**Hangman William Calcraft who executed George Chalmers – the condemned man proved helpful**

so another clergyman stepped forward to confront Chalmers.

“It is my duty as a minister to tell you that sin unconfessed may expose you to everlasting ruin,” he said. “If you go into eternity, that is now before you, with a lie on your lips, you will be on the brink of ruin, on the verge of the bottomless pit.

“I therefore ask you, in the sight of God, to relieve us from the very distressing position in which we are now placed, and to say whether of not you are guilty of the awful crime for which you are now about to suffer, because, remember, you are about to enter the great eternity. As you value your salvation, answer truly.”

Chalmers was unimpressed. He simply said, “No, sir. I am innocent. I was not there at all. That is all I can say.”

The clergy, not to be outdone, then led the official witnesses into singing a hymn and listening to a Bible reading, on the threshold of the execution chamber.

Chalmers, taking no notice of this bit of last-minute melodrama, remained completely calm, even helping executioner William Calcraft to tighten the straps binding him. He walked briskly to the scaffold, where the

hangman, rather curiously, asked him again if he were guilty.

Chalmers replied: “No, I know nothing about it. I will die like a man for it, yes I will. Lord have mercy on me. Goodbye to you all forever more. I'm quite innocent. May God have mercy on me.”

Calcraft pulled the lever at eight minutes past eight and Chalmers died instantly. One man who must have been content with the outcome was PC Edward Billington. He received the £50 reward for the capture of John Miller's killer – a considerable sum of money in 1870.

There would be three more executions in Perth, in 1908, 1909 and the last in 1948. In the light of this, it seems bizarre that a new, modern, state-of-the-art execution chamber was built at the prison in 1965, 17 years after the last execution there. It was, of course, never used.

**When the death penalty was abandoned, in November 1965, the redundant execution chamber was used as a training facility, and in 2006 it became Britain's last execution chamber to be demolished.**

**T**HE HEADY aroma of split melons and peaches in their display boxes mixed with the scent of magnolia as Janie Lou Gibbs carried her newborn grandson along 24th West and 7th – Main Street in Cordele, Georgia.

“My, ain’t he just as cute as a button!”

“Well, I declare – bless his little heart!”

“Well, I’ll be – it’s good to see you again, Janie Lou!”

People had a lot of time for Janie Lou Gibbs, 35. It was August 1967, and everyone in the small town knew her or at least knew of her. That was because of the tragedies in her life. In the last 18 months, Janie Lou had lost her husband, Charles “Marvin” Clayton Gibbs, 39, an appliance repairman, and her two youngest boys, Marvin Ronald Gibbs Jr., 12, and Lester Melvin Wates Gibbs, 16.

It would have been more than enough to break the mind and soul of any normal woman but Janie Lou had clung to her faith and her friends. And they had seen her through.

All she had left in the world was her eldest boy, Roger Ludean Gibbs, 19, and his newborn baby, Ronnie. Who would deny Janie Lou this last chance to grasp happiness?

Life had never been easy for Janie Lou. Her father Ephraim Hickox had died at the age of 36 when Janie Lou was only four years old.

By her teens, she could no longer remember him. But she was very

# MDforum

Your Questions, Answers & Updates

MD Forum, PO Box 735, London SE26 5NQ

masterdetective@truecrimelibrary.com

Patrick Hughes wrote in via email to ask about a shocking case from 1960s Georgia: “Have you ever featured an article about black widow Janie Lou Gibbs? If not I would be so grateful if you could feature this poisonous woman.”

**Thanks for your suggestion, Mr. H. We’ve never before featured a full account of this disturbing case in any of our magazines – so it’s high time we put that right! For all our readers, here’s our report by Donald Carne**

arms of burly Charlie Gibbs, five years her elder. Their first boy, Roger, came along when she was only 15 years old and already married.

**B**y the time of her 33rd birthday – Christmas Day, 1965 – Janie Lou’s marriage had degenerated into little more than a daily routine of servitude. She cooked, washed and swept for her husband and three boys. She took in local children on a daycare basis for the extra cash they needed – and every new day was pretty much the same as the previous one. Was this all life had to

evening meal at the same time as always. Barely noticing Janie Lou’s presence or what was placed before him, he ate methodically until the plate was clean.

As the evening wore on, Charles complained of stomach pains. Janie Lou offered him some seltzer but the pains got worse. Before nightfall, Charles collapsed in agony. An ambulance came and scooted him off to hospital.

He appeared to rally somewhat a few hours later and was pleased when Janie brought him some fresh homemade soup. But then he took a turn for the

# KILLER GRAN OUT HER ENTIRE

aware of the poverty she suffered as a result of his absence, working long, back-breaking hours in the cotton fields picking cotton. Janie

Lou resented her mother, Annie Lou; for some reason, she could never love her the way that she should.

Teenage Janie had one thing going for her: she was pretty – a true auburn-haired Georgia peach with freckles and sun-kissed cheeks. As soon as she could, she rushed into the

offer her?

Four weeks later, on January 21st, 1966, Charles sat down to his

worse and died later the same night.

Charles’s demise was put down to a heart attack brought on by a previously unrecognised liver complaint. How

tragic, people said. Just like her father, Janie Lou’s husband had died at such a young age.

“Her heart must be breaking,” they said.

“Taken in his prime like that.”

At least on this occasion, Janie Lou had been provided for. A generous insurance policy would see her all right. A pillar of the congregation at the evangelical Pleasant Grove







Above, Janie Lou Gibbs in court during her later years. Below left, two views of the killer in her younger days

# N WIPED RE FAMILY

Baptist Church, Janie Lou donated 10 per cent of the endowment to the church.

The rest of the money came in handy when her old home in Arabi burned down. She moved to a more pleasant location in nearby Cordele.

After a suitable period of mourning, Janie Lou started up her daycare centre for working mothers again. Things pretty much returned to normal during the fine Georgia spring and early summer, filled with the sweet scent of jasmine on the warm evening breeze.

In August, her youngest boy, Marvin fell ill. It lasted for a few days but his deterioration was rapid and confused.

Before doctors could fathom it out, Marvin died on August 29th. His death certificate said hepatitis.

Janie Lou took it bravely. The insurance payment may have helped; as before, she made a donation to the church. Her friends described her as "kind" and "courageous" during this difficult time in her life.

Another six months passed before tragedy hit the Gibbs household once again. Janie Lou's middle boy, Melvin, grew sick shortly after Christmas. At

## Poison arrest shocks Georgia

CORDELE, Ga. (UPI)—Residents of this south-central Georgia city expressed shock today over the arrest for arsenic murder of a 35-year-old widow so treated she ran a nursery for children of 25 working mothers.

Plump, auburn-haired Mrs. Janie Lou Gibbs appeared at a bond hearing Tuesday on charges of murdering Roger, her last living son, by lacing his coffee with arsenic.

Officials also said they are investigating the deaths of Mrs. and a grandson and that they may examine the bodies for examinations.

"It is possible that disinterment may be made of some of these persons," said Capt. Hugh Smith of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

Police alleged that Mrs. Gibbs systematically dosed her 13-year-old son's coffee with arsenic.

But her neighbors described Mrs. Gibbs, who once "worked like a horse" picking cotton, as a kind-hearted soul.

"She is a wonderful person... and a grandson and that they may examine the bodies for examinations."

nal Christian as I knew her," said Mrs. Jack Dowdy, wife of the minister of the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, where Mrs. Gibbs was pictured as a "devoted worker."

Mrs. Gibbs was arrested Saturday, following an autopsy which revealed several milligrams of arsenic from rat poison in the body of Mrs. Gibbs' son.

## MURDER MONTH July

**The Red Spider's murderous spree...** On July 23rd, 1964, the naked body of Danuta Maciejowicz was discovered in a park at Olsztyn, 130 miles north of Warsaw. The 17-year-old had been raped and disembowelled.

She had been to watch a parade celebrating Liberation Day.

Eighteen days before, Marian Starzynski, the editor of Warsaw's *Przeegląd Polityczny* political review, received a letter in a strange spidery red ink, which read, "There is no happiness without tears, no life without death. Beware! I am going to make you cry."



An artist's impression of Lucian Staniak

On July 24th, the Warsaw newspaper *Kulisy* received a red-letter note, "I picked a juicy flower in Olsztyn and I shall do it again somewhere else, for there is no holiday without a funeral."

On January 17th, 1965, 16-year-old Aniuta Kaliniak vanished after another national holiday parade. A red letter arrived revealing that she was in the basement of a factory, opposite her home. She had been garrotted, raped and a spike impaled in her vagina.

On November 1st, 1965, All Saint's Day, the murderer struck in Poznan. Janka Popielski, 18, a hotel receptionist, was raped, stabbed to death with a screwdriver and mutilated.

On November 2nd, the Poznan newspaper, *Courier Zachodni*, received a red-ink letter quoting Stefan Zeromsky's 1928 novel *Popioly*: "Only tears of sorrow can wash out the stain of shame; only pangs of suffering can blot out the fires of lust."

The next killing was on May Day 1966 – Marysia Galazka, 17, went looking for her cat in Zoliborz, a Warsaw suburb. Her father found her body, entrails draped across her thighs. She, too, had been raped.

On December 24th, three soldiers found the mutilated body of 17-year-old Janina Kozielska on a train. In the post carriage was a red spidery letter, "I have done it again."

The police surmised she knew her killer. A check showed her 14-year-old sister, Aniela, had been butchered in Warsaw two years earlier. Both had been art club models. Lucian Staniak, a 26-year-old translator, was a club attendee. In his club locker were found knives. Police went to his Katowice home on January 31st, 1967, but he was out killing his next victim – Bozhena Raczkiwicz, 18, a student. This time he left a fingerprint at the scene.

**Staniak confessed to 20 murders, but he was only charged with six. Found guilty in 1967, he was sentenced to death and then sent to an asylum for the insane.**

first, it wasn't so bad – a dizziness, some headaches. Perhaps he put it down to stress or puberty or being in love.

It grew worse. By late January, he was suffering from severe stomach cramps, his legs gave way, he jerked and spasmed. His girlfriend, pretty Ellen Penny, visited him. "I'm thirsty," he said, his head cradled in her arms.

Janie Lou, standing nearby, handed Ellen a glass of water, from which Ellen helped him to sip. Melvin died later that day, almost a year to the day after his father, on January 23rd, 1967.

Doctors, baffled again at how a healthy teenage boy could wither and die so rapidly on the vine, logged it to a rare muscular disorder. Another donation made its way into the church fund.

**A**ll told, Janie received \$31,000 from the three deaths, giving 10 per cent to the church. Her friends at the church provided what solace they could.

"Remember His words," they said. "I will not cause pain without allowing something new to be born (Isaiah 66:9)."

Janie Lou's eldest son, Roger, carried the tragedy heavily on his shoulders. But he found some consolation in his girlfriend, who provided him with a son in August 1967. Could things be finally looking up for the "cursed" Gibbs family?

Sadly not. In October, baby Ronnie died suddenly. There appeared to be no reason – he'd been a normal healthy baby but he "just upped and died." An autopsy was performed by Emory University pathologists. "It was a very puzzling case to us," said one. "It didn't add up – these changes in the various organs."

Little more than a month later, on Christmas Eve, the day before her birthday, Janie Lou went to lead the Sunday School class at the church. When she returned, she found Roger dead. He had been suffering over the previous few weeks, becoming steadily more and more unwell – in a manner not dissimilar to his father and his brothers before him.

This was all too much for the Crisp County Sheriff Earlie Posey, Roger's girlfriend and the family doctor. They asked the state crime lab to investigate Roger's death and carry out an autopsy. The result came back promptly: Roger had died from arsenic poisoning.

Janie Lou was arrested on Christmas Day and charged with the murder of her son. But the Sheriff was not satisfied yet.

"How is it so many of your family passed on in the last year?" he asked.

"I don't question God's work," Janie Lou replied. "The Bible says they will get their



**Janie Lou and her boys. Below, Judge McMurray**

reward and I'm sure they will."

The bodies of the remainder of the Gibbs family, tucked away in the hillside cemetery above Cordele, were exhumed and examined by command of the GBI (Georgia Bureau of Investigation). Time was of the essence so the autopsies were carried out in the cemetery with the bodies rested on tarpaulin.

News spread rapidly through the town and the event became a circus. Carloads of locals turned up and ringed the cemetery walls to view the occasion. There hadn't been this much excitement since local boy Buster Brown had raced up the charts with



Fannie Mae.

Arsenic was found in all the remains. Janie Lou, it seemed, had been doctoring her family's food and coffee with rat poison.

Now she found herself charged with five murders. But Janie Lou's neighbours rushed to her defence. "She is a wonderful person – very considerate, kind, congenial, Christian," said Mrs. Jack Dowdy, wife of the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church minister.

The media showed less support, naming Janie Lou "The Black Georgia Peach" and "The Georgian Black Widow."

Janie Lou now entered a form of catatonic state, staring for hours at the prison wall, locked away from the events that spiralled around her. Her lawyer urged her to plead insanity, and even the prosecutor, Cordele

## Woman Held In Poisoning Ruled Insane

**CORDELE, Ga. (UPI) —** A former nursery school operator charged with the arsenic poisoning of her teen-aged son was committed to a mental hospital Wednesday after a superior court jury found her insane.

The jury of 11 men and one woman deliberated only 40 minutes in the case of Mrs Janie Lou Gibbs, 35, after a psychiatrist said the plump widow freely admitted poisoning her 19-year-old son, Roger, along with four other members of her family who died within the past two years.

Dr. Allen Turner of Albany, a psychiatrist employed by the defense and the only witness to actually testify at the hearing, quoted Mrs. Gibbs as telling him: "Yes, I poisoned him. They say I did it. I must have

Circuit Solicitor General D.E. Turk, said it was "one of the saddest cases he had ever worked on."

Janie Lou was declared unfit to stand trial by a Superior Court jury of 11 men and one woman in February 1968. It took them only 40 minutes to reach a verdict after hearing the testimony of Dr. Allen Turner, a New York psychiatrist.

"Yes, I poisoned him," Janie Lou had told Dr. Turner when asked about Roger. "They say I did it. I must have done it – but I don't believe he's dead." Nor did she believe any of her previous acts had proved fatal, said the doctor.

"I do not believe the patient is responsible for the alleged acts of murder," Dr. Turner concluded. "I do not believe she is properly able to participate in her defence. She displayed no evidence at any time of feeling guilty about the alleged acts and could not understand herself as to why she did not feel guilty."

Superior Court Judge William LeRoy McMurray ordered that Janie Lou be detained at Central State (Mental) Hospital, Milledgeville, for an indefinite period.

At that time, Milledgeville was the largest mental hospital in the world with 13,000 residents. Parents throughout

**"They say I did it. I must have done it – but I don't believe he's dead"**

the state would threaten naughty children with being sent to Milledgeville if they didn't stop acting crazy.

Janie Lou Gibbs, the acknowledged poisoner, worked in the Milledgeville kitchens as a cook.

**I**n May 1976, Janie Lou, although in poor mental health, was declared fit to stand trial. She was found guilty after four hours' deliberation by a jury of seven men and five women. Judge Duke sentenced her to five life sentences.

She was supported at the trial by her brother, Air Force Major A.E. Hickox, and her lawyer, Frank Martin. "I think she understood the jury's verdict that they didn't think she was insane when the action was committed," Martin said. "She did not understand the sentences or the fact that they were consecutive."

In 1999, after being refused parole on 17 occasions, Janie Lou was released into her sister's care when diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. The ravages of prison life were plain to see on her shrunken face and frame. Confined to a wheelchair, she died, aged 77, in a nursing home in Douglasville, Georgia, on February 7th, 2010.

**Janie Lou was once visited in prison by her sister, anxious to understand what had happened. "Why did you kill your family, Janie?" she asked. Janie Lou stared straight ahead. "I don't know," she said.**

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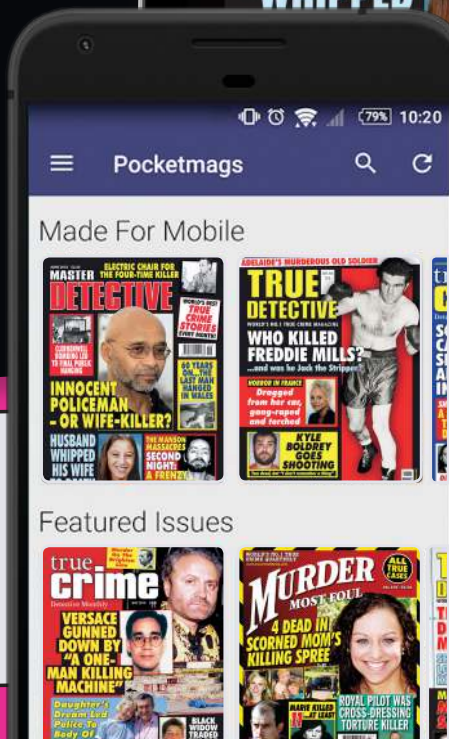
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# Are You MD's Crime

## Question 1



In which English county was serial killer Fred West (above) born in September 1941?

- A) Somerset
- B) Herefordshire
- C) Worcestershire
- D) Surrey

## Question 2



In which year did the American serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer (above) claim his first victim?

- A) 1978 B) 1980
- C) 1982 D) 1984

## Question 3

Who was the murdered London estate agent Suzy Lamplugh (above) supposedly going to meet with when she was abducted in July 1986?



- A) Mr. Slipper
- B) Mr. Kipper
- C) Mr. Flipper
- D) Mr. Dipper

Here's a special quiz to test your knowledge of true crime – with some special prizes for the lucky winners. Fill in the answer sheet on the right with your name and details and send it back to us for a chance to win. Best of luck!

## Question 4

What nickname was given to the notorious New York city mobster Arthur Flegenheimer (above)?



- A) Dutch Schultz
- B) Pretty Boy
- C) Baby Face
- D) Golf Bag

## Question 5

In which US city did the Saint Valentine's Day Massacre (above) take place on February 14th, 1929?



- A) New York
- B) Boston
- C) Chicago
- D) Washington

## Question 6

In which London road was Dr. Hawley Crippen living when he murdered his wife Cora in January 1910?

- A) Rillington Place
- B) Hilldrop Crescent
- C) Lower Belgrave Street
- D) Cranley Gardens

## Question 7

Who portrayed real-life US Great Depression-era robbers Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow (right) in the 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde*?



- A) Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor
- B) Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway
- C) Woody Allen and Diane Keaton
- D) Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers

## Question 8

In which prison is Yorkshire Ripper Peter Sutcliffe (now Peter Coonan) currently incarcerated?

- A) Wakefield
- B) Long Lartin
- C) Frankland
- D) Full Sutton

## Question 10

Which South American country became the long-term home of fugitive Great Train Robber Ronnie Biggs?

- A) Colombia
- B) Venezuela
- C) Argentina
- D) Brazil

## Question 9

What was the name of the British killer (right) who was dubbed the Acid Bath Murderer?



- A) John Christie
- B) John George Haigh
- C) Dennis Nilsen
- D) George Joseph Smith

## Question 11

In which US city was former Beatle John Lennon (right) murdered in December 1980?



- A) Boston B) Washington
- C) New York
- D) Los Angeles

# Mastermind?

## Question 12

How did glamour model **Eve Stratford** (right) meet her violent end at her east London flat in 1975?



- A) Asphyxiated
- B) Stabbed to death
- C) Shot to death
- D) Drowned in a bath

## Question 13



In which year did British executioner **Albert Pierrepoint** (above) die?

- A) 1982 B) 1992
- C) 2002 D) 2012

## Question 14

Name the 17-year-old heiress kidnapped and murdered by Black Panther **Donald Neilson** in 1975?

- A) Stephanie Slater
- B) Lesley Whittle
- C) Sarah Payne
- D) April Jones

## Question 15

In which Scottish city is HM Prison **Barlinnie** located?

- A) Edinburgh
- B) Aberdeen
- C) Perth
- D) Glasgow

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## Question 16

Which US serial killer is said to have once described himself as “the most cold-hearted son of a bitch you’ll ever meet”?

- A) John Wayne Gacy
- B) Richard Ramirez
- C) Ted Bundy
- D) Dennis Rader

## Question 17

“You can go a long way with a smile. You can go a lot farther with a smile and a gun,” said which notorious US gangster?

- A) John Dillinger
- B) Frank Nitti
- C) Albert Anastasia
- D) Al Capone

## Question 18

With which Berkshire town is British baby farmer **Amelia Dyer** (above) associated?



- A) Windsor B) Reading
- C) Wokingham
- D) Bracknell

## Question 19

Dubbed the **Beast of Birkenshaw**, this Scottish serial killer (right) was convicted of murdering seven people in the 1950s. Can you name him?



- A) Robert Black
- B) Peter Manuel
- C) Archibald Hall
- D) Angus Sinclair

## Question 20

British author **Helen Bailey** (below) was murdered by her fiancé **Ian Stewart** in 2016. Where in the couple’s home was her body found hidden?



- A) In a pond
- B) In a cesspit
- C) Under floorboards
- D) In a cupboard

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Just tick your answers below – then send this form back to us at the address above by July 21st, 2018, for a chance to win! The first entry with all or the most correct answers pulled out of the hat will win a prize of £100. The next three will win six-month subscriptions to *Master Detective*. (If you’re already a subscriber, don’t worry – we’ll extend your subscription.) The winners – and the answers – will be announced in the September 2018 edition.

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Q20	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Good luck!

**● Worked out your answers? Fill in the form for a chance to win!**

# MURDER IN YOUR VILLAGE

Story by  
MATTHEW SPICER

**R**OWLAND TREDREA was only nine, but however long he lived he would never see anything as horrific as the spectacle he had just witnessed. Looking down from the top of the stairs at his home in St. Erth, Cornwall, he had seen his sister being murdered.

The events which led to this had begun in November 1907 with the arrival in the village of 23-year-old William Hampton. Five years earlier he had accompanied his parents when they left St. Erth for the United States. His father had returned in 1905, and now Willy had followed him, finding work in a tin mine at Camborne and lodgings in St. Erth with his father's old friends, the Tredrea family who lived at an end-of-terrace cottage near the gates of the drive to the vicarage.

Although Mrs. Grace Tredrea had four children – the youngest still a baby – and her cottage had only four rooms, she somehow accommodated the lodger because she needed the money. It was soon noticed that Hampton and the family's eldest child, 15-year-old Emily, were attracted to each other, and Mrs. Tredrea did not disapprove. But with her husband away working as a miner in South Africa, she needed every penny she could get, and Hampton's rent was a godsend.

At Christmas 1908, a few weeks before Emily's 16th birthday, the couple announced their engagement. Mrs. Tredrea was pleased, and her husband John wrote from Johannesburg that he had no objection.

The couple said they planned to marry when Emily was 20 and they had saved enough money. Meanwhile as the months passed Hampton became increasingly frustrated. Emily was already tiring of him. For although Willy Hampton was well-built, dark and handsome, he was morose, preferring to stay in every evening instead of going to the pub. A villager was later to describe him as "a glum sort of chap."

Although he and Emily were now known in the village to be committed to each other, they were seldom seen out together. Village gossip had it that Emily felt she was too young to pledge herself to Hampton, although for her parents' sake she dutifully told her friends that she loved him.

With the arrival of spring it was noticed that while Emily attended Sunday picnics Hampton remained in the cottage. Finally, on April 30th, 1909, Emily told her mother that she no longer loved her fiancé and wanted to stop seeing him.

Mrs. Tredrea did not know what to do. She needed Hampton's rent, but

## THIS MONTH: ST. ERTH, CORNWALL



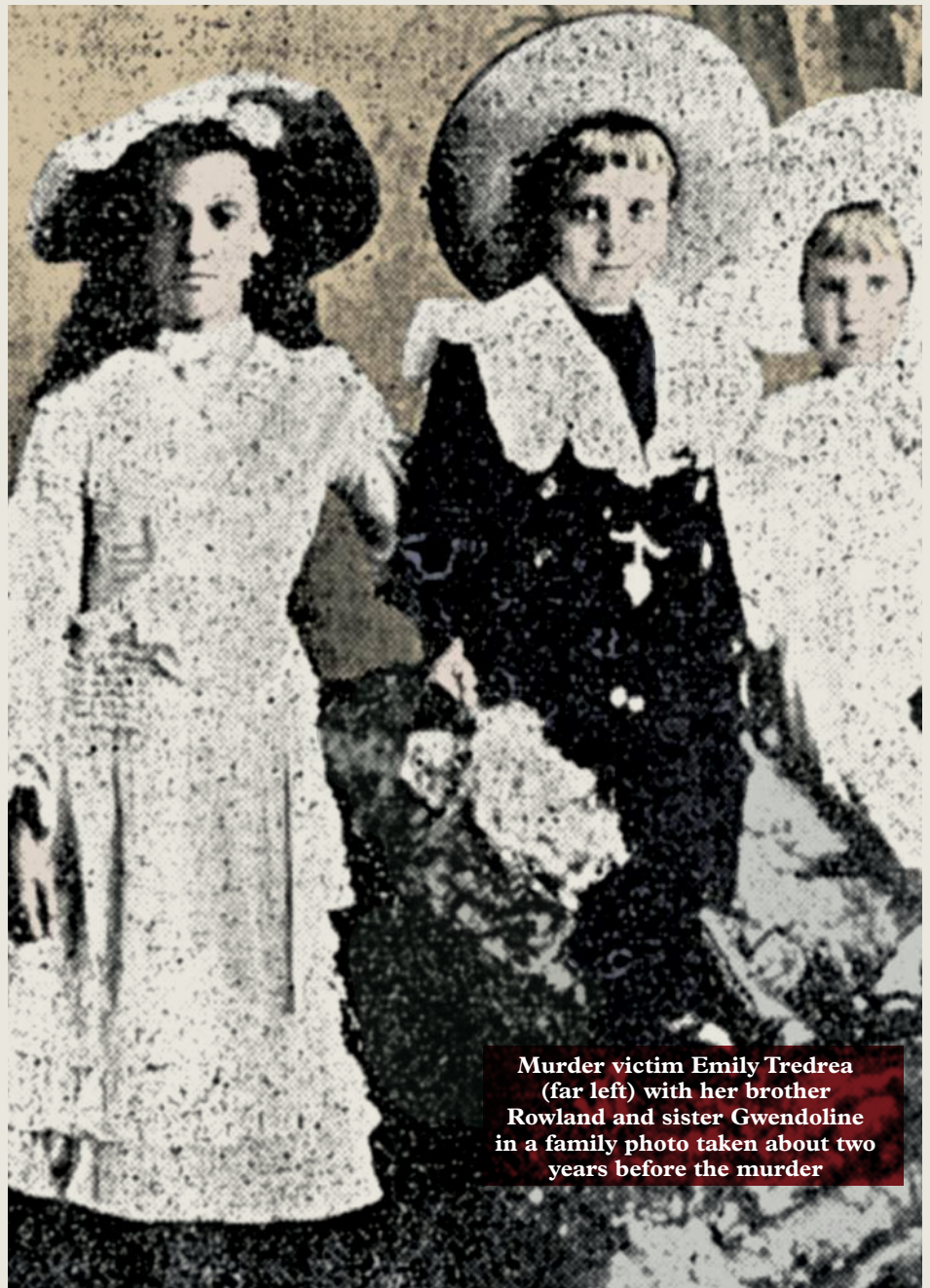
Above, The Star Inn, St. Erth

now that Emily had turned 16 she could simply walk out if she wished. Hampton was after all abstemious and hard-working, and Mrs. Tredrea hoped that the couple would patch things up.


**O**n the morning of Sunday, May 2nd, Hampton went to nurse his grandmother, who lived in St. Erth's Church Street and was laid-up with a bad leg. On his way he met Emily coming out of church. She told him she was going to help with the Sunday school.

Hampton was home by tea-time, Emily returning shortly before 10 p.m., having spent the evening with a girlfriend. Mrs. Tredrea then went out to apply a poultice to the leg of Hampton's grandmother, leaving him and Emily looking after the baby in the kitchen.

Rowland Tredrea was upstairs, sharing a bed as usual with his six-year-old sister Gwendoline. Shortly after 10 o'clock he was startled by a noise. He got out of bed, and on peeping through the banisters on the landing he saw Emily lying on the kitchen floor. Hampton was kneeling on her stomach, grasping her throat.



Murder victim Emily Tredrea (far left) with her brother Rowland and sister Gwendoline in a family photo taken about two years before the murder



A large crowd gathered in the field by Bodmin Gaol (below) hoping to witness what was to be the last execution there

# THEY CAME TO SEE WILLY HANG

## *The Last Execution At Bodmin*

“Get back!” Rowland shouted, but the lodger ignored him so the boy went back to his bedroom and hurriedly dressed. On returning to the landing he saw that Hampton had moved Emily, placing her on the floor against the side door that opened onto the garden.

When Rowland asked Hampton what he was doing, the lodger replied that he was trying to help Emily as she was sick. Rowland saw him put her in a kitchen chair, but she rolled off it and fell to the floor. The boy wanted to run for help, but the lodger was blocking his way out through the side door. Then, while Hampton tried to put Emily back on the chair, Rowland seized his chance and ran out into the street to fetch his mother.

Shocked by what he told her, she was hurrying home with him when they met the village policeman, Constable Ashford. The officer accompanied them to the house where they found Emily slumped in a chair, her neck displaying clear marks of strangulation. Ashford tried artificial respiration, but she was dead.

Hampton had vanished, and Police Sergeant Kent promptly launched a search for him. Then at 11.30 p.m. the wanted man approached two constables patrolling the nearby town of Hayle, saying, “I think I have killed a maid at St. Erth.” The officers had yet to hear of the murder, but they took Hampton to the police station where he said: “I choked her with my hands. I think she is

dead right enough, because I picked her up and she could not stand, and then I put her in a chair and her head fell over on one side, meat came out of her mouth and her lips were black...I was going with her and now she won’t have anything to do with me. I suppose it was temper that caused me to do it.”

A constable hurried to St. Erth to inform Sergeant Kent of Hampton’s arrest, returning with PC Ashford who charged the prisoner with Emily Tredrea’s murder. Hampton then made a statement in which he said he was sitting in the kitchen when Emily told him she would have no more to do with him. “So I got mad and rushed at her.”

He added that he had not given himself up at St. Erth because he feared

the reaction of enraged villagers if they got hold of him.

**A** doctor called to the scene by PC Ashford had found that Emily appeared to have received no injuries other than those to her throat. Confirming that she had been strangled, he estimated that it had taken her attacker about four minutes to kill her.

Rowland Tredrea told a reporter: "I was in bed when I heard something rattling. I got up and looked down over the stairs and saw Willy on her. He had his two thumbs together, pressing on her throat. My sister was on the floor in the kitchen, and he was kneeling with one knee on her.

"I dressed and came downstairs, and said I wanted to go out. He said, 'Step back, I am going out in a minute and you can go out with me.'

"When he was putting her on a chair, she tumbled over and he put her in another chair. I went out of the door then, and just after I heard the door close. I turned round and saw him jump over the hedge across the road, and I went for mother."

At the inquest on the following Tuesday, Mrs. Tredrea said that on the

*"I asked him what was the matter with Emily," the boy told the court, "and he said, 'She's only sick'"*

previous Friday or Saturday she had heard Emily tell Hampton that she was not "going with him any more." Nothing else was said at the time, and Mrs. Tredrea said she had never heard anything else which would point to any difference between them.

"Was this engagement to marry with your consent?" asked the coroner, Mr. Edward Boase.

"Yes."

"Your daughter was rather young, wasn't she?"

"Yes."

"But you thought old enough to be engaged?"

"I was myself at that age."

"You have never seen any quarrel between them?"

"Only a little difference, but no quarrel."

"What do you call a little difference?"

"Just a word or two at times."

"What sort of word?"

"She would be vexed if he swore."

Rowland Tredrea testified that it had taken him only about a minute to dress after he saw Hampton kneeling on Emily and gripping her throat. He said he saw Emily try to breathe. Hampton removed his hands from her neck but kept one knee on her stomach. Then he grasped her throat again, afterwards moving her across the floor to lie by the side door, which was shut.

"I asked him what was the matter with



**Bodmin Assizes where William Hampton went on trial**

Emily," the boy told the court, "and he said, 'She's only sick.'"

Rowland went on to say that when he attempted to leave the house Hampton pushed him back, saying "Wait a minute." The boy added that he then made his escape while Hampton was trying to put Emily into a wicker chair which he had pulled out from beneath the kitchen table.

Constable Ashford testified that on being charged, Hampton had told him: "I did not see you last night. If I did I should have come and given myself up to you. I heard the mother scream. I was then up by the vicarage gate. This is a bad job...I suppose Mrs. Tredrea is feeling it very bad. Emily was quite dead when I left. She did not scream when I held her down - I had hold of her too tight for that."

Police Constable Wherry told the court that he had arrested Hampton, who had approached him saying he believed a girl he had choked in St. Erth was dead because "she has gone dark about the face and her lips are swollen."

Wherry then read the court a statement in which Hampton said he had been courting Emily for about 12 months. "Tonight whilst in her mother's house she said to me, 'I have given you

## BODMIN'S RECONSTRUCT

**Originally built in 1779 during the reign of King George III, the jail closed in 1929 and is now a tourist attraction - with a unique feature...**

**B**ODMIN JAIL is a fascinating destination for those interested in seeing the only working execution pit in the UK. Discovered during renovation works in 2005, the pit was restored to full working order, with the assistance of author Gary Ewart.

He told *Master Detective*: "In July 2008 I rebuilt the gallows at Bodmin Gaol just as they had been and in working order, so that members of the public could see how the British method of execution worked. Bodmin's is now the only working execution



shed in Britain, and if you have time a visit to the gaol is well worthwhile just to see how they worked in the days of Hampton's execution."

Gary provided some splendid pictures showing his reconstructed gallows (including those of a strapped, hooded and noosed Chris Wilkes, Bodmin Gaol's business development manager). *The Execution of William Hampton at Bodmin Jail*, a book by Gary Ewart, is





up. I shall not go with you any more.' She was standing at the table eating a piece of cake and drinking a cup of tea. I jumped up from the chair where I was sitting and caught her by the throat with both my hands and held her till we fell backwards to the floor. I held her there until she was dead. I am sure she is dead as I saw the froth coming out of her mouth. I lifted her up in the chair and ran out of the house and got into the field, and then came on to Hayle."

The coroner's jury returned a verdict of wilful murder against William Hampton, and on June 24th, 1909, he pleaded not guilty when he appeared before Mr. Justice Phillimore at Bodmin Assizes.

For the prosecution, Mr. Raymond Asquith said that in his boyhood Hampton had been a friend of the

Tredrea family, and after his engagement to Emily it was understood that he would shortly return to America to work with an uncle. Then, when he had saved sufficient money, he would return to St. Erth to marry his fiancée. There was no evidence, Mr. Asquith added, that Hampton had wanted Emily "to submit to his desires." He had murdered the girl simply because she told him, "I shall not go with you any more."

Questioned by Mr. R.G. Seton, defending, Mrs. Tredrea agreed that Emily had occasionally fainted – once when Hampton was romping with her.

In his concluding speech Mr. Asquith told the jury that no amount of provocation justified the killing of a person, though a certain amount of provocation might reduce the charge of murder to manslaughter. But there was no such provocation in this case. The act had not been committed upon a sudden impulse. Hampton had borne a grudge against Emily for some time, had waited for the most favourable moment to execute vengeance, and that moment had

arrived when they were alone.

Seeking a manslaughter verdict, however, Mr. Seton claimed there had been no premeditation. He pointed out that although deadly weapons in the form of kitchen knives had been within reach, none had been used. He also reminded the jury that Emily had been prone to fainting. It would therefore not require a great deal of pressure on her throat to kill her, he argued, and Hampton – who had exceptionally strong wrists – would not be aware of this.

Summing-up, the judge said that in law the provocation which Hampton had received was insufficient to warrant a verdict of manslaughter, which could only be reached if the jury were satisfied that he had not intended to kill Emily when he



**The funeral of Emily Tredrea (by courtesy of the late Eslea Lashbrook and his family, via Gary Ewart; Eslea was the village blacksmith in St. Erth)**

squeezed her throat.

It took the jury only 15 minutes to decide that Willy Hampton was guilty of murder, but they coupled their verdict with a recommendation to mercy, saying they believed he had acted out of passion and jealousy because of his immaturity.

Hampton was then sentenced to death, his case going to appeal on July 2nd. His defence counsel argued that Mr. Justice Phillimore had failed to warn the jury that the evidence of a witness as young as Rowland Tredrea should be "carefully scrutinised." Mr. Seton also claimed that Hampton was guilty only of manslaughter because he had acted in a moment of rage, intending only to give Emily "a hard nip" but accidentally squeezing her throat too severely.

Dismissing the appeal, the Lord Chief Justice said that in his experience a truthful or apparently truthful boy of nine was a more reliable witness than older people who were able to reason, and who sometimes thought they had seen things which they had not in fact observed.

There was no reprieve, and as he awaited execution William Hampton was visited by his grandmother and an uncle, his father being too ill to go to see him. He was reported to have told his visitors that "there were circumstances connected with the affair, the depth of which nobody would ever know – those secrets were locked in his bosom and would die with him."

**Then on Tuesday, July 20th, 1909, he walked firmly to the gallows at Bodmin Prison. A large crowd had gathered in a neighbouring field overlooking the prison, hoping to witness Willy Hampton's hanging in the prison's yard. But their view was blocked by a canvas awning and they had to make do with the sound of the lever being pulled and the trap-door banging open as Henry and Thomas Pierrepont carried out what was to be Bodmin's 55th and last execution.**

## ED GALLOWES



Two images of Gary Ewart's authentic 2008 version, clearly showing the open trap-doors, the lever and noose



available at the jail shop.

● Details of the attractions and exhibitions and how to visit Bodmin Jail are available at [www.bodminjail.org](http://www.bodminjail.org)

# US EXECUTIONS THE FORGOTTEN DECADE

*It was the third time the killer had committed murder. He had got away with the first two, and was only jailed for the third because he confessed it. Seventeen years later he killed twice more – in his first month on parole*

**R**EGINA GALEK, 24, had an incredible story to tell. She'd been pooped, she said, when she got home late on Sunday night from her weekend away on October 10th, 1942. She threw off her clothes, jumped into the Davenport sofa-bed in which she slept, and fell fast asleep. She didn't notice the dead man under her bed.

Next morning she rushed to work without even unpacking her bag. That night she got home late from the office and again went straight to bed and slept, still totally oblivious of what lay beneath her.

The following morning, Regina continued, she rose early. It was time to

## Case recalled by John Sanders

catch up. She borrowed her landlady's vacuum cleaner, swished it around, pulled out the sofa-bed and then let out an ear-piercing scream.

The man's corpse was lying face-down on the floor, surrounded by drops of blood, arms and legs twisted weirdly. Regina didn't wait to see any more – she fled still screaming and in panic to her landlady's rooms on the other side of the East Church Street apartments, in Elmira, New York State.

The landlady, Mrs. Ena Tebo, fetched another lodger for moral support and they went to the room. One look, and this, they decided, was a matter for the police.

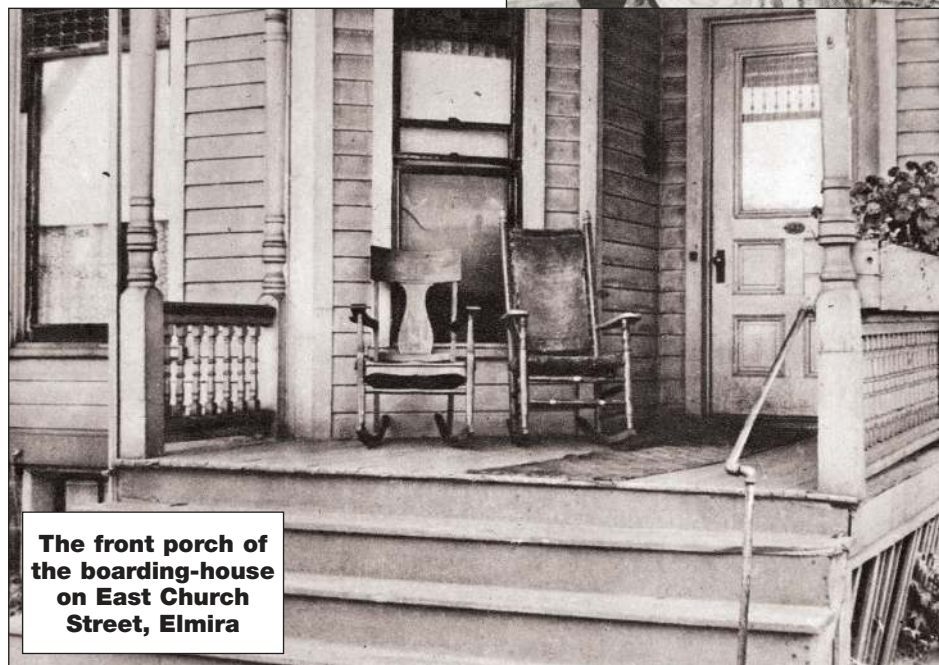
The New York cops, accustomed to savagery, were even so taken aback. The victim had been bludgeoned almost beyond recognition. He had been beaten over the head with a beer bottle – probably more than one beer bottle – causing a compound fracture of the skull. He had also been stabbed in the

chest, the knife puncturing his lung.

The mystery was that the time of death was set at Sunday night – about the time Regina arrived back from her weekend in the country. That put her straight on to the list of suspects.

“And are you really telling us that you didn't know he was under your bed for nearly 48 hours?” Deputy Sheriff Frederick Duhl asked her suspiciously.

An officer points to the spot beneath the sofa-bed on which Regina Galek slept and where she saw a man's protruding foot



The front porch of the boarding-house on East Church Street, Elmira

Thoughtfully, he added, “You didn't even smell him?”

“I swear I didn't know,” Regina said.

“I was so tired, I just fell asleep.”

“Do you know who he is?”

She peered closely at the corpse, suppressing an involuntary shudder.

“I think he's Albert Lowman, a friend

of mine,” she said at length. “He's a carpenter by trade, a nice guy. I've been out with him a couple of times. Nothing serious – just friendship.”

“Tell us what happened when you came home on Sunday evening. I mean, how do you think he got under your bed?”

# THREE-TIME KILLER PAROLE



of 19 arrests spanning a dozen of his 30-odd years, for almost every crime in the book, including robbery, car theft, felonious assault with a gun, molesting women, disorderly conduct, and numerous other crimes.

Investigators quickly confirmed that Wood had been in Regina's room. His fingerprints were everywhere. Next to the body there was the butt of a cigarette he might have smoked, which they kept for future analysis. As an aside, they wondered how on earth a woman as presentable as Regina Galek had got mixed up with a shameless rogue like Frederick Wood.

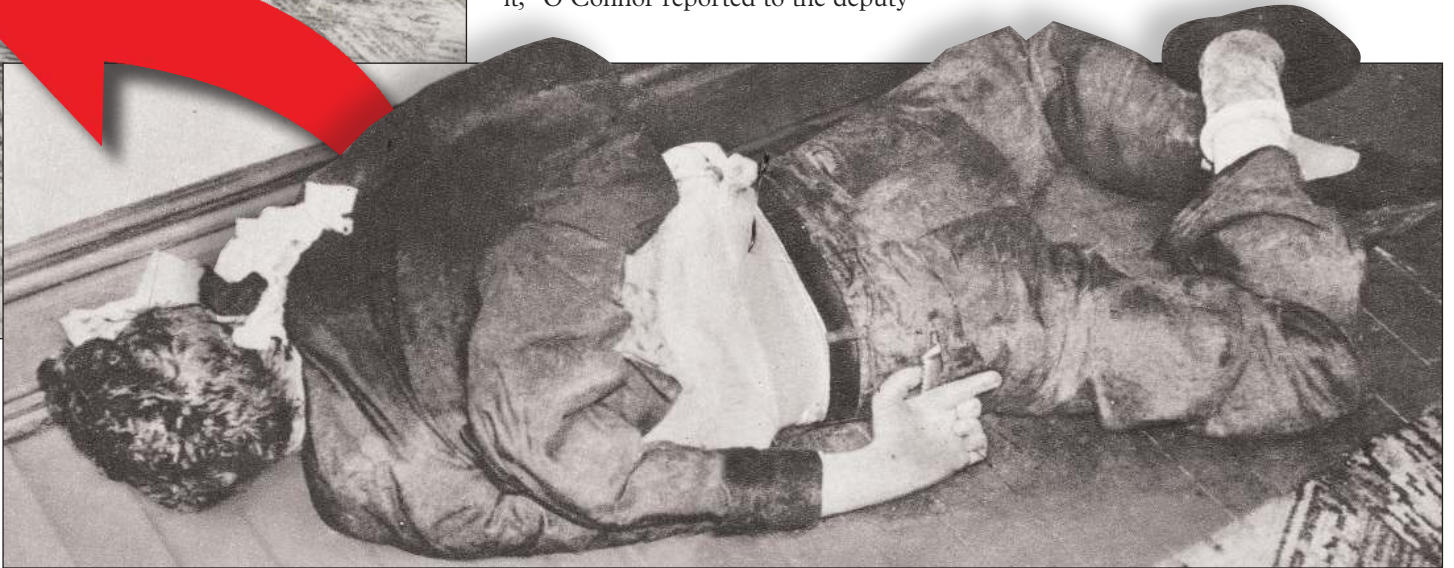
Detectives John O'Connor and George Beardsley were directed to go to Wood's last known address and bring him in. But they returned empty-handed.

"I guess we can leave Wood out of it," O'Connor reported to the deputy

sheriff. "We don't even have to ask him for an alibi. He says he's never met anyone called Lowman. He was in jail on Sunday night, and he's been in jail ever since."

O'Connor then explained how that had happened. Wood lived with his parents in Elmira and on Sunday he arrived home early in the evening in a sullen mood, had a row with his mother and father, and went to his room. At about 10 o'clock that night he went downstairs to the sitting-room and asked his parents for some money. His father refused.

He then went into the kitchen, seized a knife and threatened to kill his parents unless they coughed up. A neighbour heard Frederick's mother scream and called the police. Carted off to jail for the night, Frederick was hauled before the court next day and sentenced to five



**Above, Albert Lowman's twisted and bludgeoned body is revealed after the removal of the sofa-bed. Below, a police photo of suspect Frederick Wood taken in March 1943, five months after the discovery of the body**

"The door was locked, just as I had left it. There was no sign of forced entry, and Albert Lowman didn't have a key to my apartment."

"So how - ?"

Regina couldn't answer the obvious question. She was as mystified as the cops - or at least she claimed to be. But then the landlady, who had been listening to the dialogue, whispered in the Deputy Sheriff's ear.

"There was a guy named Freddy who was with Miss Galek last week," she said. "Perhaps he knows something."

"So who's Freddy?" the deputy asked Regina.

Freddy, she said, was Frederick Charles Wood, and the cops knew him instantly. He was an ex-convict well known in the area, with a record



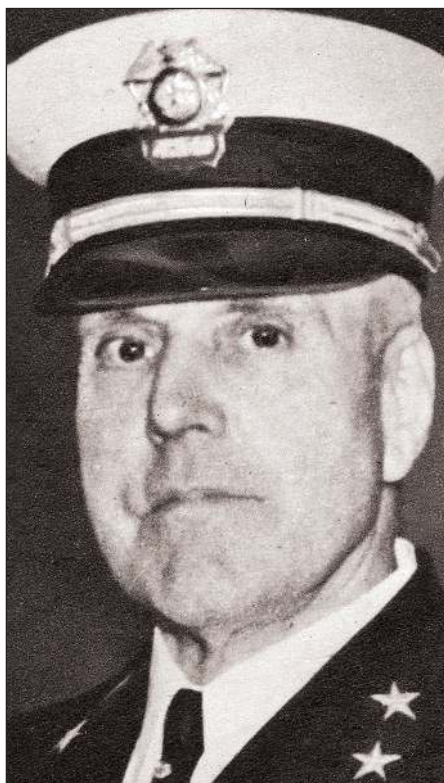
**...TO MURDER AGAIN**

days behind bars as a disorderly person.

O'Connor shrugged his shoulders. "Our own blotter says he didn't kill Albert Lowman," he said.

By now the centre of the investigation had shifted from Regina's room to the local police headquarters, where Police Chief Elvin Weaver asked Regina Galek what she knew about Frederick Wood.

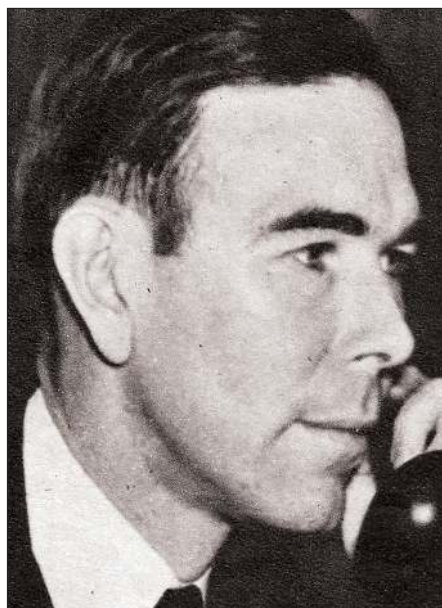
"So, OK, he's been in my apartment," she said. "But I'm sure he and Albert Lowman didn't know each other."



the early evening with a young man he didn't know. But he recalled Lowman called the stranger "Freddy."

The barman was shown a photograph and immediately identified Wood as the carpenter's drinking buddy.

Wood had already told the police that he had never met Lowman, so that part of his alibi was effectively broken. It was easy to reason out the rest: Frederick went home, kicked up a fuss with his parents, locked himself in his room,



**Left, Police Chief Elvin Weaver; above, District Attorney Walter Reynolds; and below, Detective John O'Connor (standing) and Sergeant Beardsley examine the suspect's lengthy record**

But that was far from the truth, as detectives were finding out. Frederick Wood was in love with Regina Galek, and bitterly jealous of his rival, Albert Lowman. The theory now was that Wood knew Regina would be away for the weekend, so he planned Lowman's murder.

Knowing Lowman to be a drinking man, Wood would get him drunk, take him to Regina's room, for which Wood had a key, kill him there and leave his body under the bed for Regina to discover when she returned from her weekend away.

He reasoned that Regina wouldn't be accused because of her weekend alibi, so all he had to do was to provide himself with a cast-iron alibi of his own. Then, with no suspects and no leads, the police would drop the case and he'd have his girl.

Far-fetched? It certainly sounded more like pure guesswork than a well-thought-out theory. But detectives had been busy putting together the scaffolding for it by studying Wood's movements in recent weeks.

First they had toured the city's bars in order to discover whether Lowman – a drinking man, remember – had been in any of them that Sunday night. One barman remembered seeing him in

then sneaked out and met Lowman again.

He persuaded the carpenter to go with him to Regina's room, killed him, stole back into his own room without his parents knowing, and then had himself arrested – his perfect alibi. It all

went according to plan.

District Attorney Walter Reynolds listened to the police case, and called in Wood. But when the District Attorney began talking about the murder, all he got from the suspect was a scornful laugh.

"You're not thinking of pinning that one on me, are you?" he jeered incredulously. "I suppose you reckon that just because I've got a record I'll be an easy catch. Get it out of your head. I read the papers in jail. I know when Lowman was killed – Sunday night. Where was I on Sunday night? Right in your own jail!"

"After you murdered Lowman, perhaps," Reynolds replied evenly.

"Can you get a doctor to swear Lowman was killed before 10 o'clock that night?" Wood responded.

Reynolds retorted that they had evidence that he'd been seen drinking with Lowman. More important, they had taken a saliva test of the cigarette butt found in Regina's room – a cigarette butt that was stained with Albert Lowman's blood.

"We also took saliva tests of cigarette butts you smoked here in jail – and the laboratory test shows it's the same saliva. You may not know that the saliva of every person is different, and the evidence is as good as a set of fingerprints."

Wood did not know that, and it took the wind out of his sails. But he still insisted that he had never killed anyone. "I've done lots of things, but I've never killed another man," he declared.

He was lying, as the District Attorney knew. "That cigarette was dropped

by the man who killed Lowman," Reynolds said. "That man was you. So I'm arresting you for Lowman's murder."

After Wood was taken away to a cell, the District Attorney told Police Chief Weaver: "A jury will be struggling with the science we're going to have to put before them. We'll have a hard time proving murder. Apart from that, all we've got is the witnesses who saw Wood and Lowman together. That really doesn't mean anything. We've got to get that girl talking."

But that girl – Regina Galek – wasn't talking. She was in a state of unbridled terror. So the

investigators turned their attention to the rooming-house where Regina lived. They still couldn't understand how Lowman could have been killed without anyone there hearing the commotion.

Landlady Mrs. Ena Tebo had the answer to that. She said that she and



her other lodgers had all gone to the cinema on Sunday night. They left the rooming-house about 8 p.m. and returned after 11. That left a good three hours during which the house was empty.

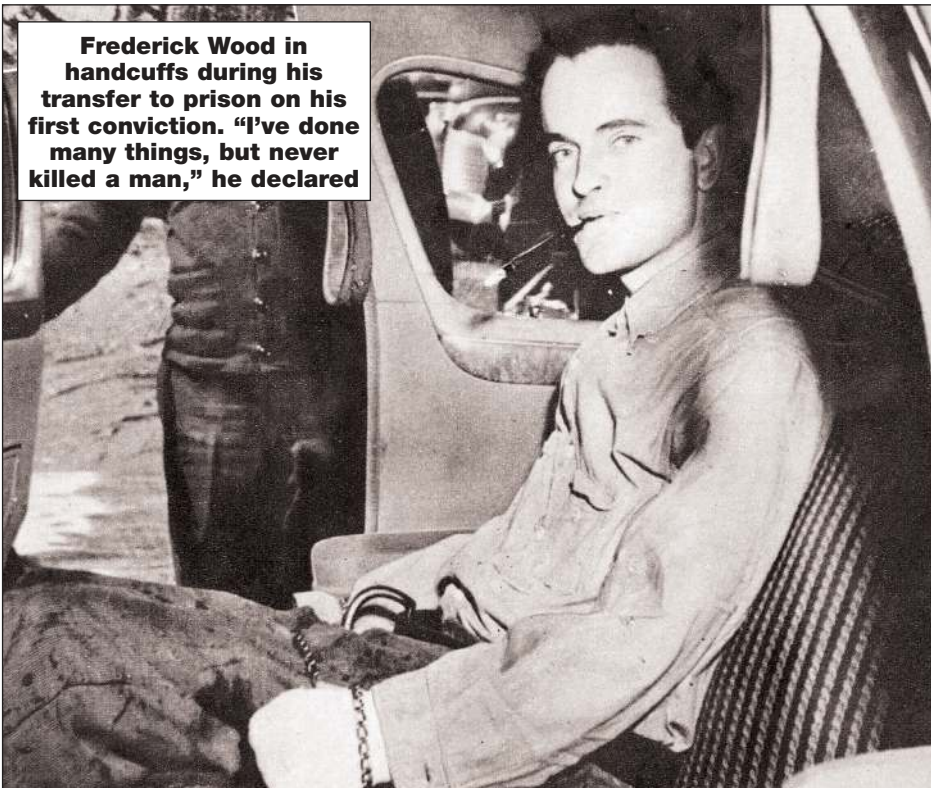
"Wood must have known the place was deserted when he took Lowman there around nine o'clock after they'd been drinking," Chief Weaver said. "He had plenty of time to commit his murder, then hurry home and establish his false alibi by going to bed early."

So, with the case almost done and dusted, Weaver had one last go at Regina Galek. This time, to their

second-degree murder and sentenced to serve 20 years to life. The judge recommended: "The prisoner should serve the maximum term – or life – for the protection of society."

That was to prove a wise recommendation – and one which no one took the slightest notice of.

While awaiting transfer to prison from the county jail, Wood tried to commit suicide by removing a light bulb from the ceiling socket, smashing it, and cutting both his forearms and wrists with the broken glass. Guards found him in time, and it required 32 stitches to close the wounds.



**Frederick Wood in handcuffs during his transfer to prison on his first conviction. "I've done many things, but never killed a man," he declared**

surprise, she was willing to talk.

"Freddy told me all about it," she said. "He told me he got into an argument with Albert Lowman because Albert said something unkind about me, and he killed him. Then he threatened to kill me if I told anyone what I knew. I was petrified.

"He came with me to my room that Sunday night and told me the body was under the bed. Then he took me to his own home where he made the rumpus that caused him to end up in jail. He said I could easily prove that I was away when Albert was killed, and that he'd get me if I didn't do what he said."

She bust into tears. "I had to obey his instructions," she wept. "And that meant staying in my room with Albert's body under the bed. It was horrible."

**F**rederick Wood went on trial for murder on March 10th, after several postponements due to Regina's mental condition. Finally the prosecution proceeded without her as the state's key witness.

The trial lasted three days, and ended in Wood being found guilty of

As the doctor worked over him, Wood said, "Save your energy, Doc. I just want to die."

He then wrote a note in which he said: "I am fairly positive I could never go on beating down the years behind bars...I have already spent 11 years and two months in weary confinement and my life has been a living hell..."

Depressed and dispirited, he was committed to a hospital for the criminally insane, but later transferred back to a penitentiary.

Somehow he managed to get through the years until it was time, in 1960, to apply for parole. His application was fiercely resisted. The former District Attorney who prosecuted him, now in the Supreme Court, warned: "Don't release this man. You will never get anywhere with him." A police chief said, "I've known Wood since his boyhood – we went to school together. He was a bad egg. I know the sort of things he's capable of committing."

Another police chief said. "Wood is an undesirable who would never adjust to life outside prison. He should be kept inside for the rest of his life."

The opposition to parole, which included a substantial part of Elmira, where Wood grew up, drew up a list of his crimes to support their case. By the time he was 18 he had many arrests and stints in prison on his record. In 1930 he mugged a man to steal 25 cents and was sent to a reformatory. Paroled, he was sent back again for 10 years after being drunk and indecently assaulting a woman.

Every time he was paroled Wood violated, so when, after he'd served 17 years for killing Albert Lowman, parole came up yet again, the people of Elmira led the charge against freeing him.

Incredibly, though, no one seemed to know that Wood had not killed just once – but three times.

His first killing had occurred when he was just 15. He had fallen in love with Cynthia Longo, a 22-year-old, in the town of Hornell, New York State, and became madly jealous when she began spending time with other men.

### ***He dragged her into bushes where he crushed her skull with an iron bar and stabbed her 142 times***

To ensure that she stopped for good, he bought a cream puff, knowing it was one of her favourites, and poisoned it before giving it to her. Cynthia ate the puff and promptly died.

A doctor certified the cause of death as "dilation of the heart caused by excessive vomiting." Murder wasn't suspected – and Wood got away with it.

He committed his second murder after catching a venereal disease from a prostitute. The experience embittered him towards all women and in an effort to seek revenge on women in general he selected 33-year-old Pearl Robinson, who was completely unknown to him.

On July 6th, 1933, Wood followed Pearl from a tram in Hazel Street, Elmira, and slung a rope around her neck. He dragged her into bushes where he crushed her skull with an iron bar and stabbed her 142 times.

No one saw the killing, and, when the body was discovered, police grilled a number of suspects. One of them was Wood, but again he got away with it. A month later he was jailed for another crime, which put him out of the direct line for further questioning.

Neither of these historical murders was known at the time Wood was jailed for killing Albert Lowman, and they still were not known when he came up before the parole board 17 years later.

Despite the opposition to his application for freedom he was successful and on June 6th, 1960, the man with three murders behind him walked out of prison to freedom once again.

There were conditions. He was to stay away from Elmira. He had to agree to stop drinking. He had to take a job with a laundry in Albany, in upper New York State, and he was given a government "minder" to ensure he toed the line.

Three weeks after his release he gave the minder the slip, caught a bus to Manhattan and rented a room. And just days after that, on July 4th, Independence Day, two elderly bachelors, both pensioners, were found dead in their shared home in Astoria, Long Island.

That hot Independence Day, 1960, most of Long Island's residents had gone to the beach. One who didn't was Angela Wright, who had decided to spend the day gardening. She was tending the rose bushes behind her house when she became aware of a noxious odour coming from the open window of a cottage in nearby Hoyt Avenue South.

This was the home of Frederick Sess, 78, a retired foundry worker, and John Rescigno, 62, a disabled army pensioner. They lived together in the small shingled cottage of two tiny bedrooms, kitchen and bathroom.

Angela recalled that someone had

***"I took a beer bottle and smashed his skull while he was lying in bed. He opened his eyes and stared at me"***

said locally that they hadn't seen Fred or John since the previous Thursday. Curious, she edged her way to the window of Sess's bedroom and looked in.

What she saw made her drop her secateurs and run screaming to the apartment-house landlord who also owned the cottage rented by the two men.

"Something's wrong inside the cottage!" she yelled. "I saw a pair of feet sticking out from the bed – and I think I saw blood!"

The landlord, who had just begun his dinner, dropped his knife and fork, rushed to the cottage, took one look, and went off to find Patrolman Peter Dispenza, on traffic duty, whom he knew.

Using the landlord's passkey they went into the cottage and were almost overcome by a choking, sickening odour. "This place has the smell of death," remarked Patrolman Dispenza.

Opening the door of John Rescigno's bedroom they were met with a scene of incredible violence. Rescigno, in his underwear, was sprawled on the blood-drenched bed. His skull was battered and crushed, his neck appeared to have been slashed with a jagged weapon like broken glass, in the region

of the jugular vein, and the rest of his body was perforated with stab wounds.

Broken beer bottles littered the floor, and the matchstick furniture had been heated over. And over everything hung that smell of death.

In the second bedroom they did not have to look beyond the bed. The body of Fred Sess was wedged between the bed and the wall. His skull was crushed and blood-crusts like Rescigno's, and his arms and legs, too, were perforated with stab wounds.

As in the previous room, the floor was littered with smashed beer bottles, and many of the crushed pieces were bloodstained.

A small iron shovel used to put coal into a pot-belly stove lay alongside Sess's body. There was a chair with two broken legs, and both pieces bore telltale stains of blood.

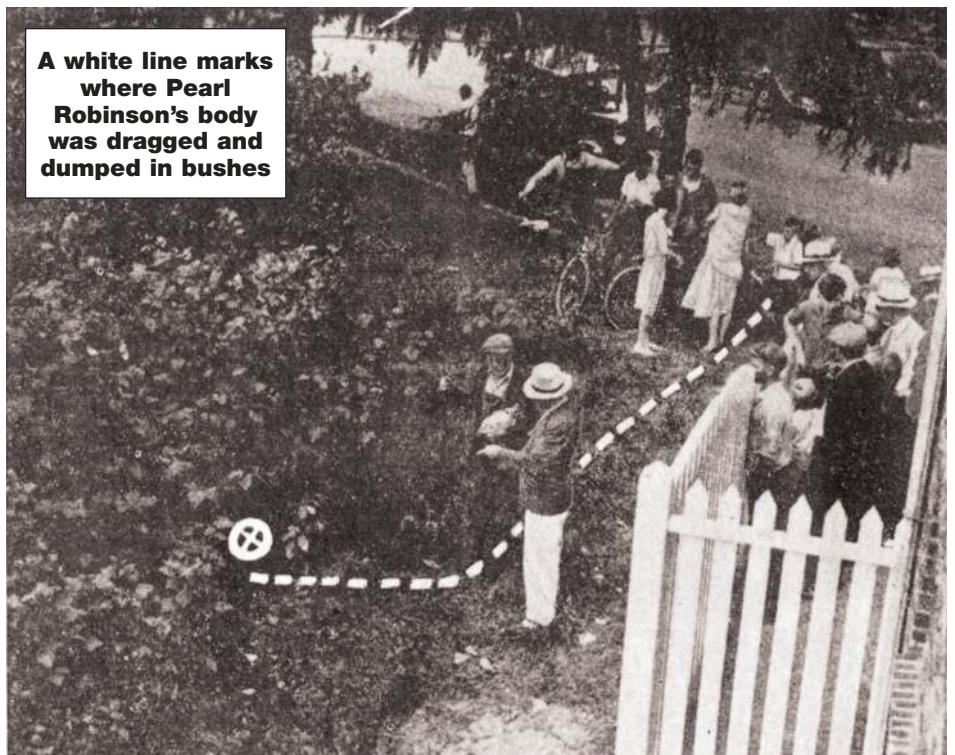
The landlord broke the shocked

the neighbours who were spending the holiday at home for information about the two men. But it was in the kitchen that the most significant clue was revealed.

It was a small piece of cheap paper lying on a worktop. Written on it was a cryptic message: "What do you think of these two murders? I'm so sorry. God bless the people on the Parole Board. They are real intelligent."

Detective Lieutenant Steve McCormack, who had arrived to take charge, studied the piece of paper and observed: "The killer deliberately placed this message where he knew we would find it."

He told his detectives: "We've got to find this guy. This kind of killer can strike again – you never know where or when. He's an ex-convict, someone who's had experience of the Parole Board."



silence. "These guys were harmless old men," he said. "Who could have wanted to kill them?"

In short time, 30 policemen and detectives were on the scene. With them was a police doctor who told Detective Sergeant Jim Fulton, the officer in charge, that the victims had been dead for about three days.

"They were probably killed on Thursday evening, June 30th," he said. "The bludgeoning of their skulls was enough to cause death. Sess was struck with the shovel and the chair, as well as with a beer bottle. The other victim's head was probably battered with the bottles. The killer must have broken five or six of them over his head."

"It looks like we've got a mad killer on our hands," observed Sergeant Fulton.

Detectives searched the rest of the cottage for clues and quizzed those of

Instructions were radioed out from police headquarters in Manhattan: any police force on the Eastern Seaboard that arrested a "hot" suspect for a local crime – or even knew of anyone capable of such a crime – was to notify New York Police at once.

Because of the extreme brutality of the killings, the derisive hand-written note, and the absence of any attempt to cover up the crime, detectives at the scene were convinced they were dealing with a deranged murderer who was killing to satisfy his blood lust – but who, paradoxically, had a compulsive and subconscious desire to be caught.

"And one way to get caught," said Lieutenant McCormack, "is to kill again."

But he also warned his detectives that the murders could also be the work of a grudge killer, possibly even a sex pervert.

Meanwhile, the first of the victims' relatives to arrive was August Sess, Fred's brother, who lived nearby in Astoria.

August Sess was at a loss to explain his brother's death. "He was a fine man, a very decent guy," he said. "He didn't have anyone who disliked him."

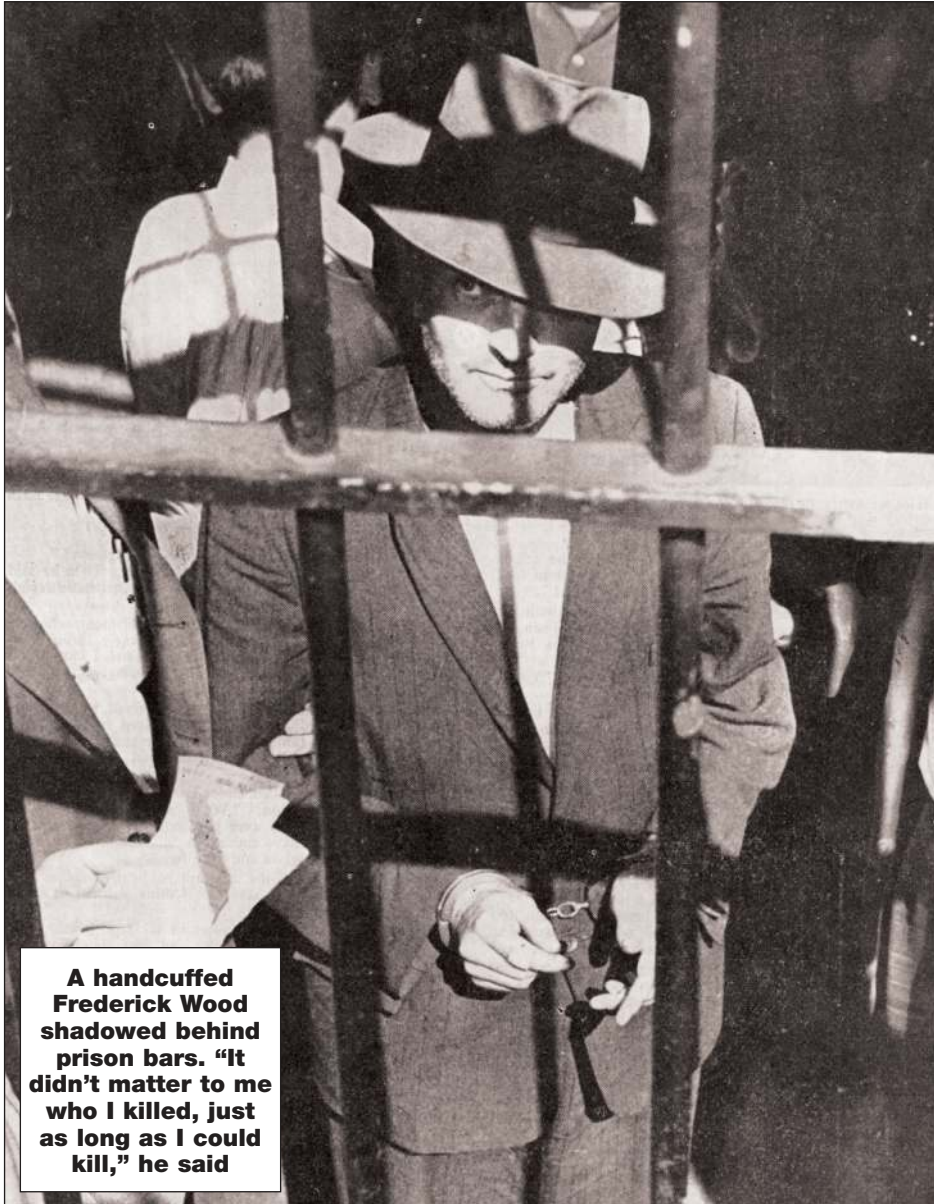
John Rescigno's brother William lived next door to the murder cottage, and heard nothing of the commotion that must have been caused while the two men were being killed.

After viewing his brother's battered body, William gave the investigators

then 34, was behind the bar alone when four armed men sauntered in and demanded the money from the cash register.

When Frank moved too slowly to satisfy the hold-up men, they shot him dead. No one was ever convicted for his murder.

As for Fred Sess, five years ago he was accused of stabbing a Brooklyn man in the garden of the cottage during an argument. His room-mate at the time – not John Rescigno, but another man – was arrested with Sess. They were released when a Grand Jury failed



**A handcuffed Frederick Wood shadowed behind prison bars. "It didn't matter to me who I killed, just as long as I could kill," he said**

a valuable clue. "I saw a man walk to the cottage last Thursday night," he said. "He was about 45 years old, five feet nine inches, medium build, with greying hair and wearing a grey suit. I'd never seen him before."

As detectives delved deeply into the background of those involved, they came up with some surprising facts. In 1941 the Rescignos – William and John, and another brother, Frank – were partners in a saloon bar just across the street from the murder cottage. On the night of February 28th, 1941, Frank,

to indict them for lack of evidence.

As detectives painstakingly continued to question and probe everyone in Astoria, Detectives Tom O'Brien and Edgar Sands were making a routine call on a downtown saloon bar. Did the owner remember anyone who could fit the picture of the suspect, they wanted to know?

"Yes, I do," the bar owner said. "There was a guy in his late forties, dressed in a grey suit, who came here late on Thursday night, June 30th, for a couple of hours.

## MURDER MONTH July

**The farmer takes a life...**As 10 plain-clothed police lay in wait for a suspected burglar to return home at around 2 a.m. on July 15th, 1951, they heard shots ring out.

The thief, Alfred Moore, a poultry farmer, lived at Whinney Close Farm in Kirkheaton in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Rushing to the sound of the shots, the police found two of their comrades fatally wounded.

An ambulance was summoned but Detective Inspector Duncan Fraser, 46, who had been hit three times, died on the way to the hospital. The police stayed outside the farm waiting for armed backup.

When the backup arrived they approached the door at 5 a.m. Moore, who said he had been asleep at the time of the shootings and heard nothing, opened it. Police searched the farm and found a pair of shoes that were wet, live ammunition and some spent bullet casings and a large number of keys.

The keys were for safety deposit boxes, safes and car ignitions. They also came across gold and silver cigarette cases and in the fireplace were the smouldering remains of hundreds of stamps and dollar bills. These appeared to have been set on fire after the shots were fired.



**Alfred Moore**

The other wounded policeman, PC Arthur Jagger, 42, was taken to Huddersfield Royal Infirmary where he made a statement saying he saw Moore entering his home around 2 a.m. He tried to arrest him but the farmer pulled a gun and shot him. As the policeman lay immobile, Moore shot Detective Inspector Fraser.

An identity parade was held at PC Jagger's hospital bedside and he picked out Moore as his assailant. The local magistrate was called to hear the policeman's evidence from the bed.

PC Jagger died at 8.15 a.m. on July 16th and Alfred Moore was charged with two murders. He appeared before Leeds Assizes in December 1951 but, despite intensive searching, the murder weapon could not be found.

The jury took 50 minutes to find him guilty and he was sentenced to death. He jumped to his feet and cried out, "My Lord, I protest my innocence, I am not guilty."

**Languishing in the death cell, he filed his appeal, the last sentence reading, "I am convinced that one day my innocence will be established." He was hanged at Armley Prison on February 6th, 1952.**

● *Much more about Moore in MD September – watch for it!*

"I remember him because I noticed blood on his hand. I asked him what had happened and he said he'd been in a fight. He was casual about it. I didn't think anything of it at the time."

Pressed for a more detailed account of the customer, the bar owner gave almost exactly the same description as that of the mysterious visitor seen going to the cottage earlier that Thursday night.

To that description was now added that the suspect might have cuts on his hands – information added to the newsflash that had already gone out to newspapers and radio stations along the Eastern Seaboard. One man listening carefully was Michael Morgan, news director of a local radio station in Elmira.

As the story came through on the

teletype machine, the words "God bless the people on the Parole Board. They are real intelligent," struck the news director forcibly.

Searching back through his mind, Morgan recalled a furore that had arisen between law enforcement officials in Elmira and the New York State Parole Board over the release of a convict who had served 17 years of a 20-year sentence for murder.

Frederick Wood, no less.

Now Michael Morgan remembered that Wood was supposed to be under "intensive supervision." Hadn't the Parole Board promised that his conduct would be exemplary?

The newsman recalled too that Wood had carefully planned and executed the murder of Albert Lowman, and that crime was remarkably similar to

the murder of the two pensioners in Astoria. Morgan decided to call the police.

It was then that it was discovered that Wood had certainly been confined to the Albany district during his parole period – but he had upped and left the district. Effectively, he had vanished.

No one was worried, however, because almost at once it was reported that Wood had already been picked up by the Elmira parole supervisor, and was back in jail.

He had been clapped into the famous old Tombs prison in Manhattan as a parole violator since the previous Sunday, when he was tracked down to a hotel in the Bowery.

Brought to police headquarters, he professed total ignorance about why he was there. "I'm just a parole violator," he said. "I've been in a cell since Sunday. You can't pin anything on me."

After relentless questioning he did agree he was in Astoria the previous Thursday. But of course he had nothing to do with the murders there.

He held to his story for several hours, and then cracked. "OK, you're nice guys," he yelled. "I'll make it easy. I killed those two – and a few other

***"The psychiatrist's report on Wood was not a favourable one, but we weighed all the factors and decided to release him"***

people as well!"

His confession was chilling. This is what he said:

"It didn't matter to me who I killed, just as long as I could kill.

"I came to New York City after running away from Albany. I got disgusted with that laundry job. I couldn't take it any more. When I got here, I booked a hotel in the Bowery. I figured I could lay low there for a while.

"On Thursday, I went up to Times Square. I was running a little low on dough. While I was walking along Broadway I met John Rescigno. We got friendly and we bought a bottle of wine.

"After a few drinks we took the subway to Union Square, bought another bottle of wine, then went by subway to Rescigno's place in Astoria.

"It was about dusk. Fred Sess was asleep in his room. But I didn't know that then. We went on drinking. Finally Rescigno got soused and began to bother me. I pushed him away. He went off to bed, and as he lay there I got the idea I ought to kill him.

"I took a beer bottle and smashed his skull while he was lying in bed. He opened his eyes and stared at me. But there was no fight in him. He gave me no argument. I hit him again. The bottle broke in my hand.

# true crime

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July

Detective Monthly




**CRUEL KILLING OF A PREGNANT WIFE**  
What Was His Motive?



**"KILL MY DAD THEN WE'LL HAVE SEX," SAID MORGAN**



**JOANNA'S MURDER SOLVED AT LAST?**




**GANGLAND CONFIDENTIAL**  
**VITO GENOVESE... MYSTERY MAN OF THE MOB**

## MAJOR BRITISH MURDER CASES



## JOYCE AND FRED'S DEADLY DATE

**WAS NORA'S KILLER INSANE?**

**On sale at your newsagent from June 28th or see the offer on page 44**

## DEATH ON THE RAILWAY



**The Aldersgate St. Tube Bombing**



“Then I hacked away with the broken glass at his jugular vein. I just hacked until I’d cut his neck and made sure he’d bleed to death. When he was dead I took out my knife and chopped at his body.

“After that I looked into the other room. Sess was sleeping there all the while. I didn’t know he was there. I took an iron coal shovel and cracked him over the head with it. He never woke up. He just rolled over to the wall, moaning. After that he never budged.

“Then I smashed a beer bottle on his head. The bottle broke in my hand again. After that I took a chair and whacked him over the head until I was sure he was dead. As I hit him on the head, one of the chair legs broke off.

“It was dark then. I was confused. I had a hard time getting out of the joint.

17 years for the murder.

But Captain Bill Thompson, remembering the prisoner saying he was going to unburden his mind of “some other people I killed,” asked him some direct questions. Wood reasoned at this point that the police probably didn’t know anything about his first two murders. He was delighted to oblige.

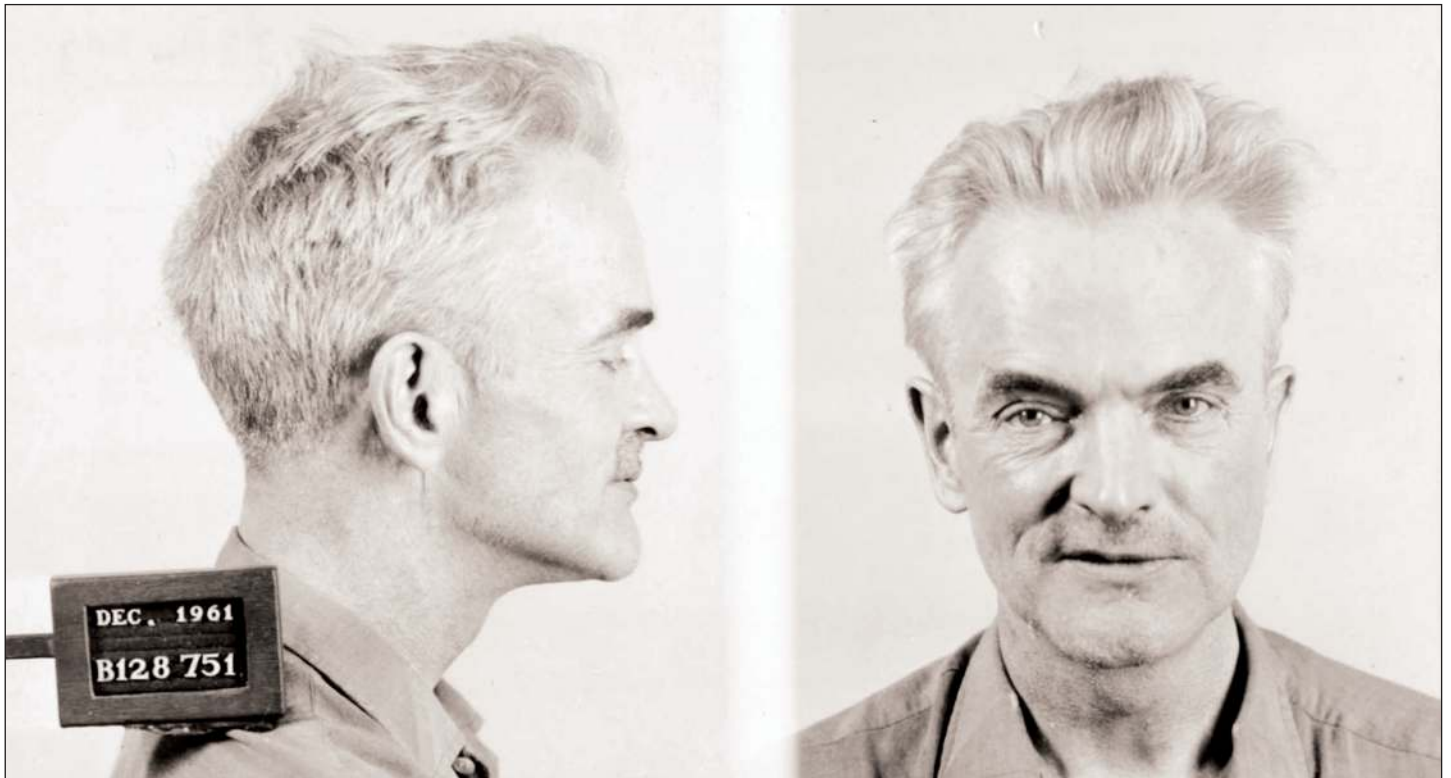
“Sure,” he said, “let me tell you first about the woman I killed. That was in 1933. She was Mrs. Pearl Robinson.

“I got a rope and a knife that night and went out looking for someone to attack. I saw three dames walking down the street. I followed them, but they were walking too fast. I walked to the end of the Broadway tram line and I saw Mrs. Robinson getting out of a car. I followed her.

*Parolee Confesses 5 Brutal Murders* hit the streets, the red-faced chairman of the Parole Board was hauled up to face the music. Lamely he said: “The psychiatrist’s report on Wood was not a favourable one, but we weighed all the factors and decided to release him.”

Wood had now admitted five murders, and been punished for only one of them. He looked like a certain candidate for the electric chair. On July 14th, 1960, a Grand Jury indicted him for first-degree murder for two of them – the killing of John Rescigno and Frederick Sess.

After psychiatric reports declared him sane, the case was about to go to an all-male jury when Wood astonished the court by pleading that he should be electrocuted, rather than be confined in



**Frederick Wood pictured in December 1961. “I am now 50 and have spent 30 years in jails, penitentiaries and hospitals,” he told the court. Two years later he was sentenced to death and executed in Sing Sing prison**

I finally found my way out and went to buy a couple of beers. Afterwards I took the subway back down to the Bowery, where I had my room. I stayed there two days.

“And then on Sunday – well, you know what happened. The parole guys caught up with me.

“Funny thing. When they picked me up they never asked me about the killings. I guess they didn’t know about them then. I haven’t seen anything in the papers, because the bodies weren’t discovered until Monday.”

When he had finished his confession, he insisted on telling the Astoria cops all about how he killed Albert Lowman two decades previously. This was the first time he had admitted the Lowman killing, but so far as the investigation was concerned the admission didn’t add much to the case, since the authorities knew the details, and Wood had served

“I sneaked up on her, got the rope around her neck and stabbed her.”(This was an understatement. The post-mortem revealed 142 knife wounds.)

It was a sordid tale of homicide that shocked even the veteran cops whose daily dose of brutality never matched the cold disregard for human life that this killer manifested.

“Anyone else?” Captain Thompson asked icily.

“Yes, one more. This one happened a long time ago. I was only 15. That was back in 1926. I killed my girlfriend Cynthia Longo, at a party in Hornell.

“I was getting the run-around from her, and boy, was I getting mad. I decided to poison her. I bought some arsenic and stuffed it into cream puffs that were on the table at the party we went to. She died. And I was so happy.”

When the newspaper headline

prison or a mental hospital.

“I am now 50,” he told the court. “I have spent 30 years in jails, penitentiaries and hospitals. I don’t relish going back to a prison or an insane asylum. At the time I committed the last two murders I knew the nature and I knew the quality of my acts.”

On September 30th, 1961, the jury granted his wish. After one hour and 15 minutes’ deliberation, they found Wood guilty on both counts of first-degree murder. The verdict called for a mandatory death penalty.

**On March 21st, 1963, Frederick Charles Wood was led into the execution chamber at Sing Sing Prison. When asked if he had any last words, he bowed politely to the assembled witnesses and said: “Gentlemen, observe closely as you witness the effect of electricity on Wood.”**

# THIS SUMMER'S BEST TRUE CRIME STORIES...

...and where to find them

■ **HIS WIFE** and son stood in the bathroom staring at the naked body of Lanny Horwitz (left) as it twitched and gurgled in the pool of crimson water brimming over splintered tiles and glass. Blood was pumping from gunshot wounds to his arms and torso, but most conspicuously from the gaping red hole



that had once been his mouth.

Not content with merely killing him, Lanny's murderer had shoved the gun between his lips as he cried out in agony.

Crime of passion or cold-blooded execution? Find out in this year's *True Detective Summer Special*...

■ **WHEN JEFFREY** Pyne was charged with bludgeoning and stabbing his mother Ruth (right) to death in the garage of their Michigan home in May 2011, the case bewildered many people – from seasoned lawyers and legal commentators to family, friends and the community that even now continues to support him. He was sentenced to 20 to 60 years in jail.



Read his story in *True Detective Summer Special* and see what you think. Is he innocent or guilty?

■ **WHY DID** it take so many years to solve? – the murder of an attractive young Australian woman living in London and going about her shopping for a dinner when she was ruthlessly abducted...and was she naive to advertise selling her car in the window of the car itself, inviting approaches from strangers who could be dangerous?



Learn how Janie Shepherd's (above) vicious killer stayed one step ahead of the police for so long in *True Detective Summer Special*.

■ **"HOW YOU** disposed of her body must remain a mystery. It will serve no purpose for me to speculate as to what happened, but all the indications are that you burnt at least a part of her in the woodburner."



The horrific story of the ex-abattoir worker (above) and the little girl he abducted...in *Master Detective Summer Special*.

■ **SUNDAY BREAKFAST** was a leisurely affair at Mrs. Bryan's small boarding-house in County Durham. The house in Parker Terrace, Ferryhill, catered for working men and, as Sunday was their day off, the meal was unhurried, with time for conversation.

"I had a strange dream last night," Mrs. Bryan remarked as she served breakfast on Sunday, February 12th, 1928. "And it was about you," she told one of her lodgers.

"Well, if it was about me it must have been a nightmare," laughed William Byland Abbey, a 31-year-old cashier at a local bank.

"Yes," Mrs. Bryan continued, "I dreamt you were attacked at work and murdered!"

Tragically, that nightmare would come true...find out how in *Master Detective Summer Special*.

■ **ON THE DAY** before her 16th birthday Yvonne Blower told Billy McDonald she didn't want to go out with him again. The next time their paths crossed was in the mortuary of Blackburn's Royal Infirmary...

Read "The Butlin's Beauty Queen Murder" in *Master Detective Summer Special*.

■ **IN THE** SPRING of 1986 a cruel, perverted maniac (right) struck terror into the hearts of sick and elderly folk in south London...



Full astonishing case report in *Master Detective Summer Special*.

■ **DOING NINE** life sentences for nine murders, Pee Wee (below) couldn't resist just one more – and this while he was in a maximum-security penitentiary. It was a step too far – a step that finally took him to the chair... find out how in *True Crime Summer Special!*



■ **SUMMER RUST** (below) dreaded the sound of his key in the door. She knew there'd be a battle. But it was one she had to win. The children sensed her fear, and wanted more cuddles than usual before bedtime.

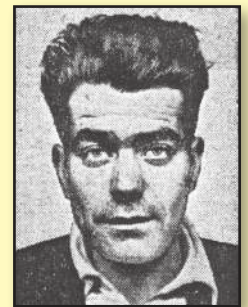


She loved the way they snuggled up on the sofa together in their fleecy pyjamas, falling asleep one by one. Three-year-old Evynn was the first to

nod off, then Teagin who was a year older, and finally the twins Kirsten and Autumn who were seven...

Find out what happens next – in *True Crime Summer Special*.

■ **THE CROWD** jostled to read the execution notice pinned on Leicester Prison's gates. Dennis Goodger stood apart from them, alone with his thoughts. There seemed nothing exceptional about this man in his brown bib-and-brace overalls and brick-dust-encrusted boots; nothing to link him with Joseph Reynolds (right) who had just gone to the scaffold.



But Dennis Goodger had a strong personal interest in Reynolds's execution. "I'm the luckiest man alive in the world today," he told a reporter. "I'm the one Reynolds really intended to kill."

And this was true...To find out why, read *True Crime Summer Special*.



How to make sure you don't miss out on this year's Summer Specials: see page 51

## Melton Mowbray Shocker

# HORROR HANGING OF PEPPERMINT BILLY

He'd copped 10 years' transportation for stealing some spoons, and now, back in Britain, he was seeking revenge. Which was why, just three weeks after his return, he was in court again – this time facing a date with the hangman...

**R**EVENGE. IT was all the ex-convict could think of as he gazed at the grey sea churning below the rolling sailing ship heading home for England. Revenge, for the leg irons and the neck collars, for the rock breaking, the whippings and the never-ending punishments for trivial offences, and often for no offence at all.

Revenge...for the years of having to live the life of an animal.

Watching the sea, his mind rolled with the waves back over those years, to the scene where he was sentenced at

By Matthew Spicer

Leicestershire Quarter Sessions in 1843.

"William Brown," the Recorder had intoned, "you have been found guilty by the jury of stealing 12 silver spoons from a private house at Newton Linford in this county. The sentence of the court upon you is that you be transported to the penal colony in Tasmania to serve 10 years' hard labour."

Now William Brown, ex-convict, known as Peppermint Billy to his friends because his father manufactured mints, was on his way home. He had done his time – 10 years for stealing 12 silver spoons – and miraculously he had survived. And all he could think of was revenge.

Transportation was second only to death as a punishment of the day. The five-month voyage had, if anything, hardened his desire for vengeance.

The last five months, the length of the sea voyage from Tasmania to London, had been almost as punitive as the sentence. A convict ship in the mid-19th century, even for those who had served their sentence, was no picnic. There were still the rats, the lice, the weevils in the flour and the storms to endure.

"Thank God we're getting near home," Brown remarked to the ship's carpenter. "I will be off again after I've murdered



Britain's Last Days Of Public Execution



the person who sent me down."

The carpenter shuddered involuntarily. He was used to these discharged convicts and their bold talk, but this one really did seem to have come back to his long-lost land only to kill. This one gave you the creeps; he had a peculiar stare, and a strange way of blinking at you every time he spoke.

The ship berthed at last at the end of May 1856. Less than three weeks later, on June 19th, 33-year-old William Brown was back in the dock at Leicestershire Assizes. He had done his killing, and now faced a double-murder charge, and a date with the hangman.

Yet astonishingly, the two people he murdered had nothing to do with his transportation to Tasmania. It seems that he chose them almost at random – just to honour his pledge.

After spending a few days around London he travelled north and at 2.30 in the morning on an early June day he arrived at the tollgate house on the Leicester to Grantham road, about half a mile outside Melton Mowbray, the town where he was born.

Tollgates, now remnants of the past in the UK, were often guarded by single men, because their isolation made the tollgate keeper's life a lonely one. They provided a meagre source of revenue for a village to pay for the upkeep of its main road.

At that hour of the morning it was customary for a traveller to shout "Gate!" to awaken the tollgate keeper and pay over his penny toll. William Brown's shout woke the keeper, Edward Woodcock, a 79-year-old widower, and, still in his nightshirt, he went downstairs to open the front door in the expectation of receiving his toll.

Instead, Brown raised a pistol and

Left, double-killer William "Peppermint Billy" Brown

fired at the old man, shattering a rib and smashing through his right lung. The shot would probably have killed most men outright, but Woodcock had incredible strength. Despite his wound and the blood pouring from his chest he grabbed the barrel of the gun and he and Brown fell backwards through the door.

There on the floor the two men fought like furies. Brown produced a knife and repeatedly slashed the tollgate keeper until the older man's strength began to fade away and he fell back dying from his multiple wounds.

Raising himself on one elbow Brown listened to the stillness of the house and slowly became aware that upstairs in the darkness there was someone else.

He was right. Edward Woodcock's grandson, 10-year-old James, was staying at the tollgate house that night. His parents lived close by, and he liked to spend his evenings with his grandad. Most nights he went home to his own bed, but this night he had decided to sleep over.

When the noise of Brown's forced entry began to reverberate through the house he woke up and, terrified, hid under his bedclothes.

Brown climbed the stairs slowly, his fist clenched around his bloodied knife. The terrified boy heard the muffled tramp, tramp, tramp of his footsteps on the wooden stairs and buried himself farther into his bed. But Brown stepped through the open door and saw the shape of the young body under the sheets.

He lunged forward, pulled back the bedclothes, stabbed the boy in the groin, ripped open his stomach, and as young James screamed in dreadful pain, Brown slit his throat.

The ex-convict had murdered Edward Woodcock for the sake of a few shillings, but the appalling killing of a defenceless boy was barbaric and without any motive. And neither of the two victims had any connection whatsoever with Brown's transportation to Tasmania 10 years previously.

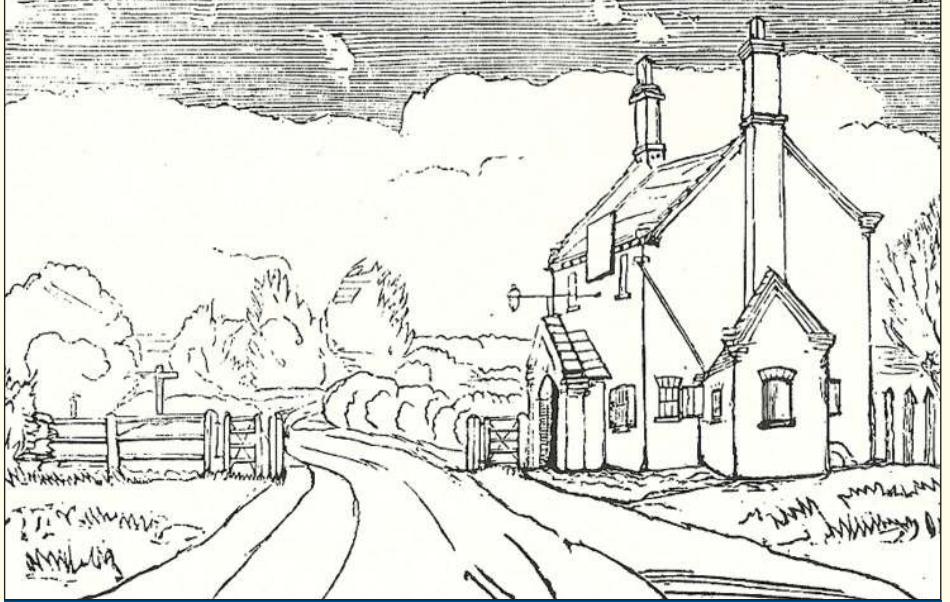
The double-murder was discovered an hour later when Alfred Routen, a baker, arrived at the tollgate house. He was travelling from Asfordby to Grantham, and shouted "Gate!" as he reached the tollgate. But on this May morning there was no reply.

Finding the door open, Routen went stealthily into the tollgate house. What he saw there was graphically described by the *Leicester Chronicle*, whose reporter was overwhelmed:

"Upon entering the house a sight was witnessed too horrible to be accurately described."

The reporter, however, managed to pull himself together to add: "On the discharge of our duty we feel bound not to shrink from the scene, painful though it was."

In the hallway the baker found the body of Edward Woodcock, who had been shot in the chest and repeatedly stabbed. He did not wait to see if there were other victims. Instead, he turned his cart round



A sketch of the tollgate house where the murders were committed

and drove his horse furiously to Thorpe village, where the local constable, John Clayton, was asleep in his bed.

Routen roused the constable, who called on a couple of other villagers, and led them back to the tollgate house. Later they were joined by Police Superintendent Condon from Leicester, who set up a door-to-door investigation in search of strangers in the neighbourhood.

It didn't take long for the name of Peppermint Billy to be raised. He was born in Melton Mowbray and quite a few folks had noticed he was back there after a prolonged absence.

More than that: he had apparently been travelling up and down the road outside the tollgate. On one occasion he paid his penny and asked Woodcock for a glass of water. "He refused it to me," Brown indignantly told a friend.

Perhaps Woodcock had scented Brown

### He lunged forward, pulled back the bedclothes, stabbed the boy in the groin, ripped open his stomach and slit his throat

was trouble; perhaps the ex-convict was making a nuisance of himself, perhaps the story was pure invention. We shall never know.

One thing we can be sure about is that there might have been some public sympathy for a man transported for 10 years for the theft of 12 spoons, but all that would have evaporated when the full nature of his mindless savagery against young James Woodcock was revealed.

Which was doubtless why Brown headed for what he hoped would be the safety of the north of England as soon as the murders were discovered. By a circuitous country route through some of middle England's smaller villages he arrived at Nottingham where at around 2 p.m. he was seen getting on a train to Leeds.

Next day he was in Wetherby, and feeling surer than ever he would not

be captured.

Back in Leicester the county's Chief Constable, John Goodyer, fretted. He had called in for questioning one Joseph Burbidge, who told how Brown had asked him whether Woodcock lived alone in the tollhouse – and also a farm lad named Henry Read, who had told how Brown complained to him that Woodcock would not give him a glass of water.

The county constabulary put up a £20 reward for Brown's capture. Bloodhounds were brought into the manhunt. A vagabond was arrested, but proved not to be Brown.

The man they were looking for was distinctive. Peppermint Billy was tall and thin, with a receding chin. Then there was that constant blink. Chief Goodyer was certain someone would spot him. But the days were fleeing by.

Then came the sighting from Wetherby – even in the mid-19th century news could travel at least as fast as a fugitive. And, it could be added, especially a fugitive as brainless as Peppermint Billy.

For instead of hiding himself in some corner where he had a fair chance of evading capture, he walked into a Primitive Methodist Chapel and started drawing attention to himself.

First he refused to remove his hat when asked, and then, the service over, he walked ahead of some of the congregation straight into the Blacksmith's Arms, introduced himself as John Parker, and ordered a pint.

As he sat in a corner of the pub sipping his drink, landlord James Mason, always hospitable to strangers, politely asked him questions about where he had come from and where he was going. Peppermint Billy's monosyllabic replies were in a dialect unrecognisable locally, and when some of his later answers contradicted what he had said earlier the landlord grew suspicious.

Haven't I seen this fellow's face somewhere, he asked himself? He pulled a copy of the *Leeds Mercury* out from under the bar and studied a drawing of the man wanted for the tollgate house murder. The landlord looked at Brown and then back at the drawing and, recognising they were one and the same,

sent his boy out to fetch the police.

Brown, unaware of what was happening around him, finished his beer and strolled outside the pub, where he sat on a fence 100 yards away and talked to some children playing. That was where Police Constable Eccles found him and placed him under arrest.

Next day he was escorted back to Melton station. The story of the brutal murder of young James had been front-page news in the local papers, and an angry mob was waiting as the train pulled in.

"I hope they swing you!" yelled someone. And someone else shouted: "You deserve all you get, Peppermint!"

Brown would surely have been lynched there and then had it not been for strong police reinforcements arriving to keep the mob at bay. Cat-calling and throwing things, the mob ran beside the cart that took him to the relative safety of Leicester Prison, in Welford Road.

**W**hile he was in custody someone must have told him that the prosecution would have a hard task proving he had committed the murders, for when he arrived in the dock at Leicester Assizes on Monday, July 14th, he was smiling and brimming with confidence.

The prosecutors had done their job as well as circumstances allowed. They had recovered Brown's bloodstained clothes from a ditch near the crime scene and these were on exhibit in the court. The prisoner, it was suggested, had dumped his clothes after the murders and bought other clothes from a tramp for a shilling.

They also produced two items found at the tollhouse after the murders: the murder weapon, a pistol, and a tobacco stopper.

The pistol was clearly the murder weapon because it fired a two-ounce ball, and the ball that passed through Edward Woodcock was a perfect fit. An expert told the court this type of pistol was not generally found in England but abounded in the colonies.

The tobacco stopper was in common use in the UK, used to press down tobacco in a pipe. This one had been seen by a watchmaker who told the court he saw Brown pull it out of his pocket while in his shop some three days before the murders.

The same tobacco stopper? Yes, the watchmaker said. It was the same one.

The prosecution retraced Brown's route across England after he left the ship in London. His first call was at the home of his brother John. He was in and out of John's house for several days, and his presence caused friction because of his interest in John's wife Anne. It seems that William Brown and Anne disappeared

together for a couple of days during this period and, when they returned, husband John was incandescent with rage.

"You've been sleeping with my wife!" he stormed at his brother.

The truth or otherwise of that was lost in the ensuing conversation, during which William Brown produced a pistol. As the

heated atmosphere cooled, Brown brandished his pistol again and remarked, "This is an unusual type of weapon in this country."

The pistol could not be said for certain to have been the tollgate house murder weapon, although it looked like it. Set against that is the fact that witnesses claimed they never saw Brown armed, nor with a knife, nor with bloodstains on his clothes, despite the fact that a knife was used in the fatal fight, and despite the fact that he hid his bloodstained clothes.

The judge, the Lord Chief Justice Sir John Jervis, must have thought the jury had a problem when he summed up.

"The evidence regarding the pistol and the tobacco stopper is not of that conclusive character that it should be in order to justify you returning a guilty verdict," he said.

"The prisoner was near the place where the murder was committed, some time previously he had made some silly inquiries about the old man (Edward Woodcock); and he talked about the old man refusing him a glass of water. But do you for one moment believe that the fact of him refusing him a drink of water could have induced the prisoner to go to the old man's house in the dead of night,

### **The pistol was the murder weapon – it fired a two-ounce ball, and the ball that passed through Woodcock was a perfect fit**

and take away his life?"

The defence had been right to claim that all the evidence was circumstantial, the judge went on, and there was nothing before the court that could be said with certainty to place Brown at the scene of the crime.

If all this worried the judge, it didn't worry the jury. They found Peppermint Billy guilty, and still protesting, "It's all false, it's all spite and malice and nothing else," he was sentenced to hang. He was still protesting, "I'm as innocent as a child," as he was led away.

Subsequent attempts by petitioners for clemency on the grounds that he was insane were quickly dismissed – the question of his mental state had never been raised at the trial and the authorities

were not going to entertain it at this late stage.

In fact, the prison chaplain, who might have been more sympathetic than most, thought Brown was a self-deluded and hardened criminal.

In a macabre eve-of-execution scene, the prisoner was led out of his cell into the prison grounds and shown his freshly dug grave under a group of trees. The idea, apparently, was a last-ditch attempt to get him to confess to the "awfulness" of his crimes.

It did no such thing. Instead he looked at the grave and remarked enthusiastically, "Ah! It's a nice place, ain't it! I shall like lying there under the trees!"

The next day, July 25th, 1856, was the hanging day. It dawned bright and sunny, prompting a crowd of 25,000 supervised by 150 policemen to turn out. As it happened, this was to be Leicester's last public hanging. A local paper reported: "There was an immense crowd to witness the execution, mostly composed of men and boys."

One of the calmest people around that morning was Brown himself. He



slept well, ate a big breakfast and seemed resigned to his fate. His "official" confession was on sale to the audience, but his promise to make a final speech from the scaffold didn't materialise.

Out among the crowd, in one of the best seats across the road at the Turk's Head Tavern, was his father, the peppermint maker. He had arrived early for the spectacle, having been asked the day before, on a last visit to his son, "to come along and see me turned off."

For some hours Brown *père* sat at the tavern window drinking beer with his friends, waiting for the clock to chime eight and the arrival of his son on the scaffold. When that happened, he waved a handkerchief to the doomed man, and appeared to be recognised.

After that Brown's father settled back in his seat. He watched hangman William Calcraft spring the trap and saw his son's body hang at the end of the rope, twisting and turning for a full two minutes in its final agony, for Peppermint Billy died hard that day.

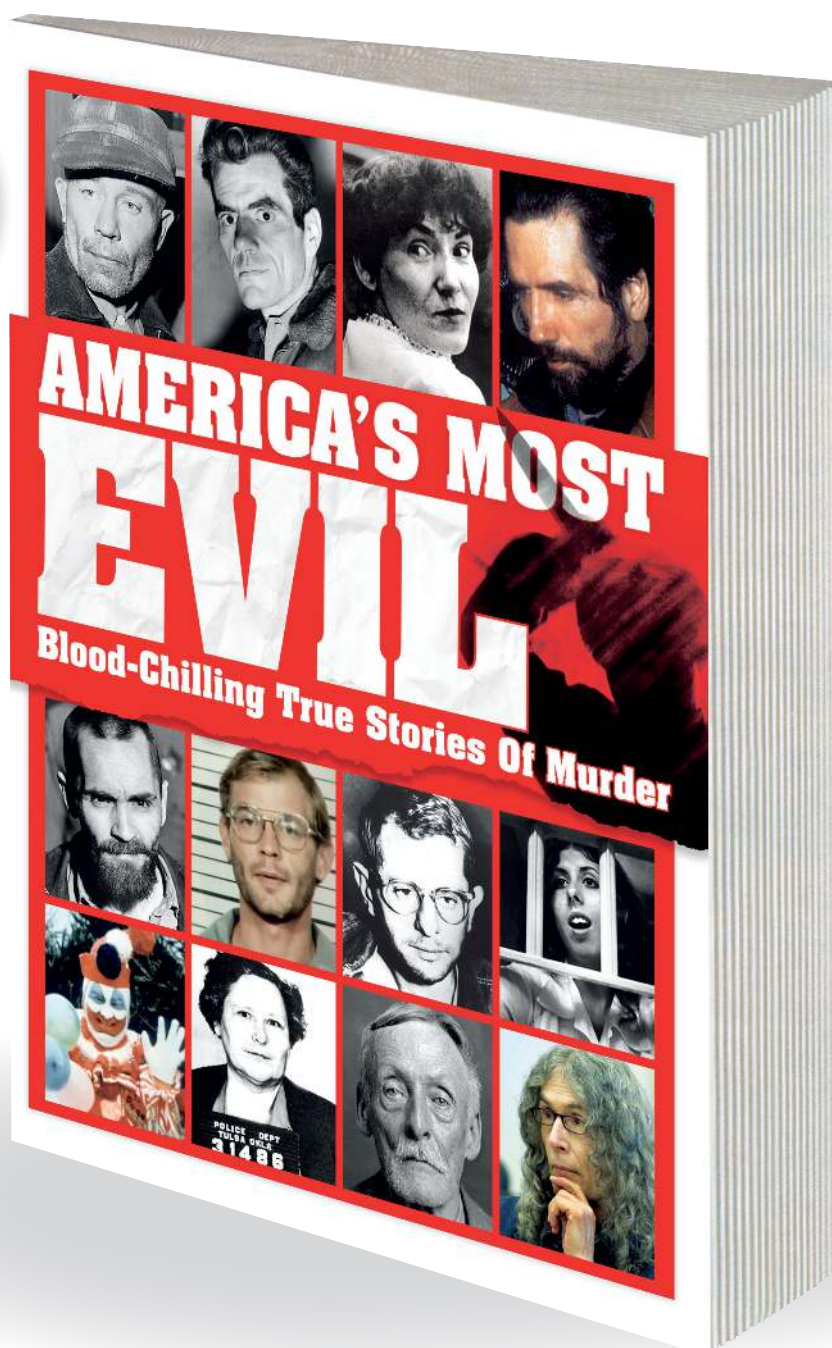
**As his body finally went limp, his father was heard to say with evident satisfaction, "Well done, Billy. Tha's died a brick."**

● *Another tollgate, another murder, another baying crowd...see page 12*



**Above, trial judge Sir John Jervis. Right, Leicester Prison – the condemned man was hanged outside**

# ***Prepare to be shocked at the evil men – and women – do...***



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# Young Girls In M

Every little girl looks forward to her first sleepover. At the same time every parent is just a little apprehensive.

Their youngster will be staying overnight with a friend or two at the home of responsible parents not far away.

What could possibly go wrong? Nothing...surely.

Payton, Morgan and Anissa were 12-year-old school friends and they had been planning the fun night for weeks. It was late as they chatted and played on their laptops before falling asleep. The next morning they played dressing up; they tried on make-up and had donuts and strawberries before going out for a walk in the nearby woods, late-night raindrops sparkling in the early sunshine.

What could go wrong? Nothing... although there were clouds in the distance. Perhaps a shower was on the way.

Hide and seek was the plan and the

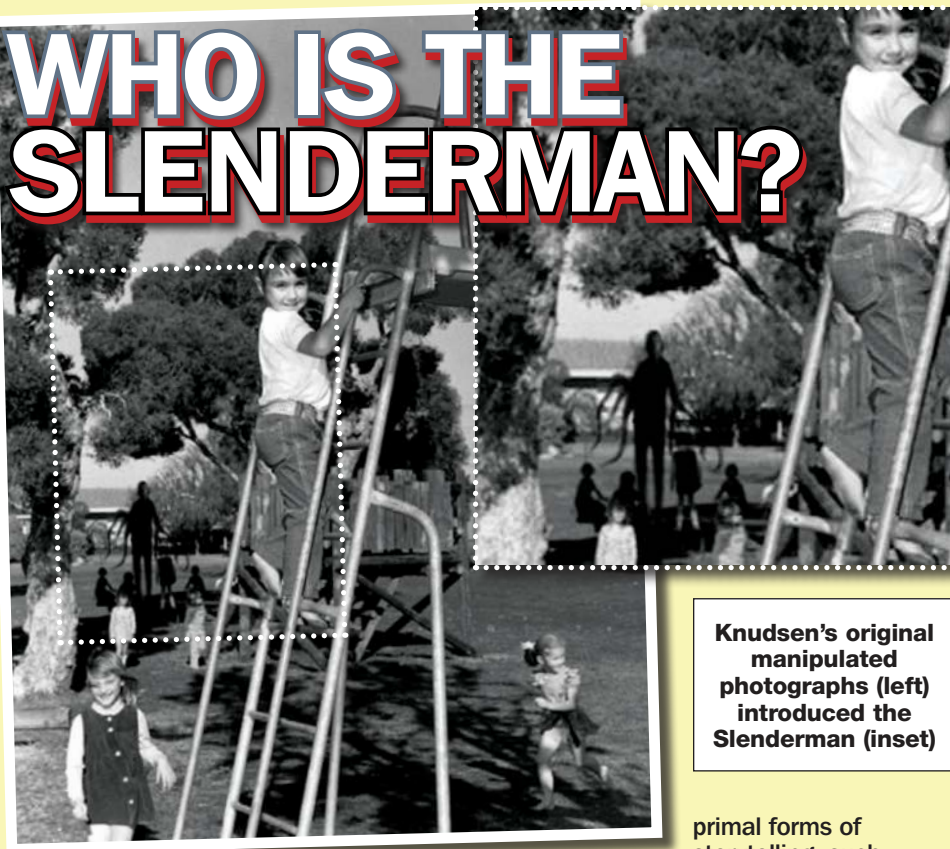
Report by  
**MARK DAVIS**

girls scampered off to have more fun. Payton was enjoying the sleepover. She was looking forward to telling her family all about it when she got home.



A Slenderman drawing from Morgan's notebook was shown to the court

## WHO IS THE SLENDERMAN?



Knudsen's original manipulated photographs (left) introduced the Slenderman (inset)

It didn't quite work out that way. When she next saw her mother and father later that day she was in hospital having 19 stab wounds treated. One of them had missed a main artery by a couple of millimetres. She was desperately ill.

## "The Sle

reported in London in 1837, and quickly spread through the dense population to other urban regions. Within a year alleged attacks were being reported in *The Times* and other newspapers. As an early "urban legend" the character's exploits were still making headlines until the early 20th century.

Digital folklore may be considered a technology-driven version of such "urban legends," with examples created online, in an often highly-collaborative manner but – rather than rising and developing over extended time periods in isolated regions – the modern global reach of social media means a story can evolve and spread rapidly, with the fictional origins often quickly becoming obscured.

The Slenderman may be seen as being created and dispersed in the manner of an urban legend, while returning to the traditional folkloric woodland realms, preying on children much like a character from a fairy tale.

The Slenderman was created on June 10th, 2009, in a discussion on the Something Awful Internet forum.

**D**ESPITE BEING a fictional character with a clearly identified and well-documented origin, the Slenderman is considered by some to be a part of the developing cultural form of "digital folklore."

Before the 19th century, folklore characters and tales traditionally developed via "word of mouth," from

as oral tradition and campfire tales. In many ways the devil-like figure of Spring-Heeled Jack, born in the sprawl of the modern Victorian metropolis, with his fiery red eyes, blue flaming breath and steel claws, is a precursor of the Slenderman.

While Jack was certainly not the first such character, the tales of his assaults and superhuman attributes were first

primal forms of storytelling, such



# Murderous Attack

Police didn't have to look far for the attackers of little Payton Lautner. They quickly arrested her friends Morgan Geyser and Anissa Weier and recovered a large kitchen knife which Morgan had slipped into her bag before they went out to play.

And they didn't have to look far for a motive, for the two girls said they wanted to become violent "proxies" for a digital myth whose fame was growing. None of the officers at first could quite understand where a mysterious and weird creature from the dark side of the internet fitted into it all. They couldn't ask "The Slenderman," as he was known. He didn't exist other than in the fevered minds of his many followers...

The ensuing trials transfixed America. Every parent with a pre-teen daughter held them just a little closer and requests for sleepovers were met with anxious frowns and an exchange of worried glances.

**P**ayton "Bella" Lautner had been looking forward to the weekend ever since two of her school friends had invited her for her first sleepover. She was going to stay at Morgan Geyser's house for Morgan's birthday. Morgan's best friend Anissa Weier, also 12, would be there as well.

All three girls were in the first year of



The mug-shots of the 12-year-olds – Morgan Geyser and Anissa Weier

Horning Middle School at Waukesha, a rather bleak western suburb of Milwaukee on the shores of Lake Michigan, north of Chicago.

make-up, dressing up, staying up late and chatting in their pyjamas, Bella had been so excited, all the more so as it was her first sleepover.

## Slenderman Made Me Do It"

The thread was a Photoshop contest in which users were challenged to "create paranormal images."

Forum member Eric Knudsen, under the pseudonym "Victor Surge," added two black-and-white images which featured groups of children. Placed unobtrusively in both images was an unnaturally tall, thin figure dressed in black. His captions named the character "The Slender Man" and described the abduction of groups of children.

Knudsen later mentioned the influence of the works of authors Stephen King, H.P. Lovecraft and William S. Burroughs, and several colourful folklore characters, including Mothman (a modern West Virginia folklore which began in 1966) and the Mad Gasser of Mattoon.

The character rapidly became popular online in stories (such as the girls read) and altered photographs and videos. But the ambiguities of the character are what make it open to interpretation and, as on this tragic occasion, misappropriation...

Morgan would later say she resented Bella for being a social butterfly while she and Anissa, who were socially awkward and came from difficult homes, found it hard to assimilate with other kids their age. It was no surprise that Morgan and Anissa, who lived near each other and took the same school bus every day, struck up a friendship, especially when other kids in their year called them "creepy mental cases."

"The girls had a dangerous concoction of mental illness, obsession, and isolation at a young age," said film-maker Irene Taylor Brodsky, who would later make a documentary for HBO called *Beware The Slenderman*. "It was a perfect confluence of circumstances." Anissa's parents Bill and Kristie Weier co-operated in the film. Bill urged parents to stay on top of their kids online: "Technology is advancing faster than adults can keep up with it. People need to be aware."

There was nothing leading up to Morgan's birthday weekend that indicated such a horrific act had been planned and was about to be executed. A weekend of pancakes, trying on

Bella was the most social of the three. The other two, in the words of one mother of a fellow-student, were "misfits – not girly girls, not interested in boys and a little immature." But Bella was intrigued by the two, especially Morgan, with whom she shared several classes.

Morgan and Anissa had been planning the weekend for some time, but their plans were rooted in evil fantasy and their actions would be murderous. Or so they hoped.

**W**aukesha didn't have much for the local kids to do except watch the endless freight trains shunt through the downtown area and the odd gang of bikers meet up at one of the few bars in town. The only place for youngsters to go to was Skateland, an indoor roller rink where teens would gather every weekend.

That's where Morgan's dad took the three girls on the night of Friday, May 30th, 2014, to start the weekend. He later picked them up and took them home to play on their laptops while pretending to go to sleep in Morgan's room.

The next morning they did girly things and had breakfast before they went out to play. They went off to the woods near Interstate 94 on Big Bend Road. As Bella walked ahead, Morgan and Anissa lagged behind. Morgan showed her friend a kitchen knife she had pulled out of her black and white plaid jacket. She had taken it from the kitchen.

The two girls exchanged sideways glances. "I thought, 'This is really going to happen,'" Anissa later told police. All the months of fantasising were coming down to this day. The Slenderman would be impressed...

The girls began a game of hide and seek. Bella ran off and was hiding in the bushes, crouching down among the flowers. Anissa told Morgan she was too squeamish to use the knife. Morgan took it back, pushed Bella over on to her back and stabbed her 19 times, in her arms and legs and also puncturing her liver, her pancreas and just missing a major artery near her heart. Anissa didn't use the knife, but helped to hold the girl down as she struggled.

"Morgan told me, 'I'm not going to stop until you tell me to,'" Anissa later said. "I started to walk away, but when I had gone about five feet, I stopped. Kitty (one of Morgan's nicknames because she loved cats), went ballistic, crazy. She told Bella, who had always been terrified of



**Morgan and Anissa (right) in court**

morph into mini-monsters, not unlike the way humans who have been bitten by vampires are said to become vampires themselves.

The faceless, black-suited bogeyman has gruesomely long arms and legs and can teleport, control minds and sprout tentacles from his fingers and back.

become servants to Slenderman," Morgan later told officers. "Then he would not kill us or our families.

"As his 'proxies,' he would protect us," she explained. "To be a proxy you have to pass an initial ritual that requires a blood sacrifice."

Morgan pointed out that they had shown their bloodied friend some consideration: "We told Bella to be quiet, so she wouldn't lose blood so quickly. And we headed off," she told detectives who were still shaking their heads and no doubt thinking of the youngsters in their own families.

But instead of going to find The Slenderman, the two girls wandered around Waukesha for a couple of hours, crying, singing, wilting in the heat and buying drinks from a lemonade stand outside a Walmart store until they were picked up by police near a lay-by on the Interstate highway.

The girls were serious enough about their plans to have packed water bottles, money stolen from their parents, backpacks and a few energy bars as well as the knife they had used in the attack.

**B**ella, dripping blood but still alive, found the strength to crawl her way out of the woods in a desperate search for help. She was spotted by a passing cyclist and paramedics were soon at the scene. They managed to slow down the blood loss from all the cuts and slashes and rushed her to hospital where she was immediately taken into surgery. Before the anaesthetic took full effect, she identified her two attackers.

A surgeon who operated on Bella said the girl was "a couple of millimetres from death," because the five-inch blade was that close to piercing a coronary artery. She would have bled to death within moments of the attack.

Her mother said: "Bella told me the last thing she said to the girls who attacked her: 'I hate you. I trusted you.' I asked her how she found the strength to crawl out of the woods. Her response



**The mutilated dolls belonging to Morgan were shown to the court during her trial**



Slenderman, 'Don't be afraid, I'm only a little kitty cat' as she kept stabbing."

Somehow, Bella was still alive, and the girls took her deeper into the woods as she struggled to walk, trying to dress her wounds with a leaf before they fled.

They had planned to trek 300 miles to Slenderman's mythical mansion in Nicolet National Forest in northern Wisconsin. When they got there, they planned to tell Slenderman about their blood sacrifice, and would themselves

He first appeared on the internet in a 2009 faked photo, and took on a life of his own as fans spread the myth with doctored photos, short stories, online games, endless reinterpretation by horror fanatics, and bogus scholarly articles.

The girls spent months dreaming up their demented plot to win the favour of the imaginary creature. Police, most of them not up to speed with pre-teen fantasy worlds, shook their heads.

"We tried killing Bella so we would

was simple. She said: ‘Mom, I wanted to live.’”

When her mother asked doctors how close her daughter had come to death, one of the surgeons pinched their thumb and index finger together before separating them as slightly as possible. “This much,” was the reply.

The nation was shocked that two young girls could plot and launch such a murderous attack on a schoolmate, not to mention the potential lure of horrid, fictional characters on the internet.

Morgan’s teachers regarded her as odd and in one of the notes found in her bedroom she describes herself as “a mental case.”

Details also emerged about her troubled family life. Her mother was laid off from her job at a hospital while her father was receiving government assistance for mental illness. When he was a teenager, he’d been hospitalised four times for schizophrenic breakdown. His Instagram name was “Deadboy 420,” and two months before the stabbing he proudly posted a drawing Morgan had made of The Slenderman, commenting: “Only Morgan draws Slenderman in crayon on a napkin when we are out to dinner.”

**B**oth girls were charged with first-degree intentional homicide and in accordance with Wisconsin law such charges meant they would be charged as adults. They were held in a juvenile detention facility in Washington County, about 30 miles from their homes, as their lawyers attempted to convince the court they should be tried as juveniles.

That effort failed when Judge Michael Bohren, citing the particularly vicious nature of the crime and the months of premeditated planning to murder which went back to late the previous year, ruled to maintain their status as adults.

Morgan’s behaviour continued to become more disturbing. In one interview, she said: “If Slenderman told me to break into someone’s house and stab them, I would have to. It’s odd because I feel no remorse.”

Under 24-hour watch, she was diagnosed schizophrenic and guards would testify that she frequently had conversations with people who weren’t there. She hugged ghosts while eating her meals on the floor with her back to the door. Sometimes she would regard the ants in her cell as her friends and feed them off her meal tray. She believed she had developed “Vulcan Mind Control” (a *Star Trek* reference).

The two girls became notorious in the juvenile facility, which is usually used as a stopover for juveniles on their way to other institutions for offences such as drug-using, carjacking and gang-related activities. Morgan and Anissa were kept apart, staying in separate living quarters and using separate classrooms. They would steal glances at each other if they passed in the main hall.

Anissa showed herself to be a model inmate. Compliant, polite and an

educational overachiever, she spent much of her time mentoring other juvenile girls passing through the system, by helping them with their studies.

“Anissa followed every rule to the letter,” said Gary Cross, one of the teachers in the centre. “No gang talk, no threats, no rough-housing, not even using a stapler unsupervised. She was a model prisoner and wanted nothing to do with Morgan.”

Mentally, Morgan was a mess. Unable to explain her steps that fateful day or fully accept responsibility for her actions, she was put on suicide watch after one of the other girls in her class called her “a monster.”



Anissa in September 2017

**A**lthough Judge Bohren ruled the girls mentally competent and their crime serious enough to be heard in an adult court, many experts felt it was purely a legal judgment, not a moral one, and that the girls, in every meaningful way, were still children. The girls’ lawyers indicated that their clients would plead not guilty and said that Morgan, in particular, was in the grip of schizophrenic illness when she attacked Bella.

Anissa’s lawyers would argue that she was in the throes of a “shared delusion,” an impressionable girl in awe of her friend. At a pre-trial hearing, Anissa’s lawyer Maura McMahon argued: “Was her behaviour normal that day? Should she have run away and summoned an adult? Most certainly. But, given what she was dealing with, she did what she could.”

“The girls were prepubescent at the time of the attack. They were old enough to believe in friendship, but young enough to believe in Santa. I can’t accept



Morgan in 2016

how 12-year-olds with mental problems could be tried as adults. Would you honestly want these girls on a jury if you were in trouble? Because that’s what it means. They’d give you life because they don’t like your shirt.”

In August 2017, Anissa Weier, in an attempt to avoid jail time, pleaded guilty to attempted second-degree homicide. She was sentenced to 25 years in a mental facility.

In February 2018, Morgan Geyser pleaded guilty to first-degree intentional homicide. She described the attack: “I came up from behind her. I jumped on her and she fell to the ground. I was on top of her.”

Morgan, then 15 years old, got the maximum sentence the state had been seeking. In sentencing her to 40 years in a mental institution, Judge Bohren said: “What we can’t forget is that this was an attempted murder. I believe the defendant remains a risk to herself and others and this is an issue of community protection. I am still troubled by the length and detail of planning that went behind this horrific act.”

As for Bella, she went back to school and has done well. She’s had a few friends over for sleepovers, and she and her family attend weekly therapy sessions. She has undergone several plastic surgery operations to repair the damage done in the attack. To pay for her medical help, a fund was set up, and donations from around the country have topped \$250,000.

Bella’s family also released a statement after the trial and sentencing, which said: “With this closure, Bella is a heroic survivor – and no longer a victim.”

Judge Bohren had asked Morgan if there was anything she wanted to say. She sobbed: “I just want to let Bella know...I’m sorry.”

**The Slenderman didn’t put in an appearance.**

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**L**OOKING AT a photo is like looking through a window in time.

The stack perm with wing waves worn by Joyce McLain, 16, anchors the blue-eyed blonde with the golden curls forever in 1980. Some things from that year are eerily familiar today. President Carter was issuing sanctions against Moscow; Sicilian president Piersanti Mattarella was killed by the Mafia – and a Trudeau reigned as Canada’s prime minister.

Probably none of this was of much interest to the popular high school student from East Millinocket, Maine. Bubbly, bright-eyed Joyce was a skilled clarinetist and devoted her time to the school orchestra. She even composed her own music. Already an honours student, she was a cheerleader and sat on the student council – in short, one of those kids who bring sunshine to any community.

At 7.30 p.m. on Friday, August 8th, 1980, Joyce went jogging. She took a route that led behind the soccer fields of Schenck High School and through the woods of birch, poplar and maple. She was never seen alive again.

Two days later at 6 a.m., Joyce’s semi-naked body was found, beaten to death, in the woods by teen volunteer Peter Larlee.

“I saw Joyce,” he later said. “She wasn’t moving. Her body, I think, had been beaten. I knew that she wasn’t alive. I started screaming her name. After that I turned and ran home and called the police.”

Joyce, medical examination confirmed, had not been sexually assaulted.

A number of theories emerged. There had been a softball tournament in the town that week and teenagers were partying in the high school area. Could Joyce’s killer have been a transient in the woods, some people asked, or one of the workers at the local paper mill?

No solution could be found and the case quickly went as cold as the grave.

**P**hillip Scott Fournier was 19 at the time when Joyce disappeared. Later that same night, in the early hours,



Joyce McLain, aged 16, in 1980

*Why had 19-year-old Phillip Fournier got drunk and stolen and crashed a vehicle on the night Joyce McLain was murdered? After eight days in a coma...*

# **JOYCE’S KILLER COULDN’T STOP CONFESSING**

**MD** “I Killed Joyce McLain,” Fournier Said To His Mother In Tears. “I Didn’t Mean To, Mama”

he stole an oil tanker and crashed it close to the high school. He had been drinking and had a bottle of whisky with him. He suffered a fractured skull and spent eight days in a coma.

He was interviewed by police on May 15th, 1981, almost a year after Joyce was killed. A strange young man, prone to fantasy, he claimed at that interview: "I raped Joyce and I hit her with a (glass) telephone insulator and I kicked her."

It was a confession, sure enough, but investigators were confused. Joyce had not been raped – and all the other information had been in the press. But then, in a later interview, Fournier threw a spanner in the works. "I remembered these things, but I know that they weren't a part of my memory – they were things I made up. I told them I did that, which I didn't, because I'm

not that way. I said I did it because I thought I had done it."

To put it bluntly, Fournier came across as damaged goods and he was sent on his way.

A month later, though, he made another confession. This time, he made it to Pastor Vinal Thomas, the minister at Calvary Temple church. Pastor Thomas called Fournier's mother and stepfather and he confessed to them as well.

"I killed Joyce McLain," Fournier said to his mother in tears. "I didn't mean to, Mama."

"Phillip stated that he hit Joyce McLain in the back of the head with an object," Pastor Thomas told investigators in a June 20th interview. Once again his confession was not pursued – there was still no firm evidence.



Fournier in custody

This time, though, Fournier had accurately described parts of the crime scene and the facts that Joyce had her hands tied behind her back, that she lay on her stomach, that her hair was tied back in a ribbon – and that she was menstruating.

Most of those things – apart from the last – he could have picked up from the papers, it's true. The last could have been a lucky guess – but it would be an unusual thing to declare, wouldn't it?

A series of officers took over the investigation over the next few years and, as it passed from hand to hand, the hunt for Joyce McLain's killer appeared to take on a lower priority.

It fell to Joyce's devastated mother to provide the momentum that would keep the case alive for nearly 40 years. She encouraged other agencies to take over the case, including an approach to the FBI in 2012; she worked with true crime TV shows such as *Unsolved Mysteries* and *Cold Justice*; she followed suspects around the town – and she formed an advocacy group, Justice for Joyce.

Crucially, she succeeded in raising enough money to have Joyce exhumed for a second autopsy in 2009. It attracted new media coverage from *People* magazine and a team of investigators agreed to review the case.

The same year, Phillip Fournier was sentenced to six years on a pornography charge, eventually being released in 2015. At the time of his arrest his ex-wife told the *Bangor Daily News* that she believed he had been involved in the death of Joyce. And as he was sentenced US District Judge John Woodcock declared Fournier to be a person of interest in the Joyce McLain murder.

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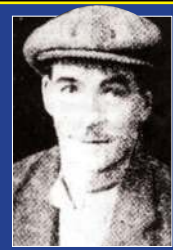
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ON SALE AT YOUR NEWSAGENT FROM JULY 5TH OR SEE THE OFFER ON PAGE 44

Things appeared to be coming together but still the years ticked by. What the police lacked was firm evidence. After a further case review in 2016, the District Attorney's office decided it was time to make a move or the case would be forever shelved. They believed they had enough to bring charges – more or less. Fournier was arrested.

The prosecution now had a stroke of luck – a new witness came forward. A former janitor named John De Roche, who had worked with Fournier in 1989, said he had heard about the case on the news and that Fournier had confessed to him back in 1989.

"We got the call and we said, 'Who is this guy? Who in the world is John DeRoche?' He's not in the case file," said State Police Sergeant Darryl Peary.

"What's important about this is that, eight years later, Fournier is still saying and acknowledging that he killed Joyce McLain when his memory wouldn't have had any of that retrograde amnesia," Assistant Attorney-General Leane Zainea said.

**B**rought before Justice Ann Murray at the Penobscot Judicial Center,



**Above, Phillip Fournier is arrested by the Maine Police, and below, after more than three decades he finally faces trial in 2018**



Bangor, for a two-week judge-only trial in January 2018, Fournier, dressed in a light grey suit and checked tie, pleaded not guilty.

Leane Zainea led the prosecution using Fournier's confessions and Joyce's autopsy data for the main thrust of her argument. In particular, Fournier's comment to Pastor Thomas that he didn't rape Joyce because 'it was her time of the month' was a key refrain. How could he have known that?

John De Roche, now 78, was the star witness. Quietly spoken, consistent, firm and rational, he said Fournier had confessed to him in 1989 when they

worked together at Husson College. Boastfully, Fournier claimed to have outsmarted the police.

De Roche said he had informed Husson security staff at the time but not the police. He simply assumed they would pass on the information.

Joyce's mother described how the news had been broken to her on Sunday, August 10th, 1980, by a crestfallen East Millinocket police officer. "When I saw him coming up the walk I knew it was bad news," she said. "I asked him if they'd found Joyce, and he nodded his head yes. I asked him, 'Dead?' He nodded his head yes

again. I asked him, 'Killed?' He said, 'Yes.'"

Fournier's defence attorney, Jeffrey Silverstein, claimed that any confessions his client had made were unreliable due to the brain injuries he had sustained when he crashed the oil tanker on the night Joyce died. There was no physical evidence linking Fournier to Joyce, he added. A downpour that August had washed away any chance of fingerprints or DNA.

Nevertheless, on February 22nd, 2018, Phillip Fournier was found guilty of first-degree murder by Judge Murray. Fournier showed little emotion but his attorney said he was disappointed. "Judge Murray's decision today, finding him guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, stands in stark contrast to 35 years' worth of police who diligently worked this case, who knew all of the facts that she knew – with the exception of Mr. De Roche – who felt that there wasn't even probable cause for arrest."

In April 2018, Judge Murray sentenced Fournier to 45 years. He will most likely die in prison. "This was a cruel and violent act," she said.

"It took 37½ years, and you'll never see a happier mother than this one is right here, right now," Joyce's mother said outside the court. "While I spent most of those 38 years seeking justice for Joyce, Fournier spent them, using his own words, outsmarting the state police. He told police that Joyce kicked him as he was attacking her. I hope he feels that kick for the rest of his life."

**Thinking of her daughter, she added: "We have had a lot of backing, and we made it to the last mile. We made it, girl, we made it. We done this together!"**

**H**E WAS 21, she was 46. But when you're in borstal you can't be choosy, and Kenneth Strickson fancied the matron.

"Her figure's not bad for her age," he told his pal Enoch Roberts at Nottingham's Sherwood Borstal.

"You don't fancy her, do you?" asked Roberts. "She's old enough to be your mother."

"I'm going up to the chapel to have a go at her," Strickson said. "I'm going to see what I can get out of her."

Later that morning of Thursday, November 18th, 1948, he told the matron Mrs. Irene Phillips that he liked her bust. Then he reported back to Roberts that she had replied, "It's a good thing I'm broad-minded."

The next morning, according to Roberts's testimony, Strickson told him he was going to see the matron again in the chapel. Whether she liked it or not, he was going to have her. If she resisted, he'd cosh her over the head.

Roberts told him he would get three years for it, and that he was liable to be put down to the penal class which would mean he would not get out so soon. "Oh, she wouldn't do that," Roberts quoted Strickson as saying, "she would only fight against me."

#### Case recalled by Matthew Spicer

Later that morning Strickson set out to look for the matron. He asked three fellow-inmates if they knew where she was, and at 11 o'clock he was told she was on her way to the chapel.

Half an hour later another inmate went to the chapel. Seeing blood at the door, he hurried off to raise the alarm. Meanwhile Strickson had gone to see the borstal's chief officer, Mr. Christopher Morrow. "Will you go to the chapel, sir?" he asked. "I have killed the matron."

Mrs. Phillips was found lying in a pool of blood in the vestry. At 12.15 p.m. she was admitted to Nottingham General Hospital, where she died 45 minutes later.

Charged with murder and transferred to Lincoln Prison, Kenneth Strickson stood in the dock at Nottinghamshire Assizes on Thursday, March 1st, 1949, and heard his defence counsel submit a plea of insanity.

Mr. Arthur Ward KC, prosecuting, told the court that Irene Phillips had been a matron at Sherwood Borstal since 1947, and had been highly regarded and liked by everyone. After describing Strickson's conversations with his fellow-inmate Roberts, the prosecutor said that at 10.10 on the morning of the attack Strickson had gone to the kit-room asking for Mrs. Phillips. The inmate in charge told him, "She is not in."

Strickson then made further inquiries about the matron's whereabouts, and at 10.30 she came through the gates and returned to the borstal.

Strickson's duties included helping to clean the chapel's vestry, under Mrs. Phillips's supervision. "Whatever took place in that vestry," Mr. Ward told the



# MATRON M IN BORSTAL

## Whether She Liked It Or Not

jury, "we shall not be able to tell you. He [Strickson] is the only person who can tell you."

At 11 a.m. an inmate named Harry Bradshaw went to the vestry, wanting to speak to the matron. Arriving at the door, he knocked and called out, "Matron." There was no reply. He again called out "Matron," but still there was no response. Trying the handle of the door, he found it was locked.

He was turning away when he heard what he described as "heavy breathing and the scraping of a foot," and he looked through the keyhole to see what was happening. As he got down to do so, he put his hand on the floor and found it

was wet with blood.

"Within one minute or so," Mr. Ward continued, "Strickson went to the gatekeeper and said, 'I want you to let me go and join the builders' party.'" This was outside the gate, and the keeper said he could not let Strickson out because he had no pass. He would have to get one from the chief officer, Mr. Morrow.

"He went to Mr. Morrow," the prosecutor continued, "but not for a pass." Instead Strickson had confessed to attacking the matron.

Going to the vestry with another officer, Mr. Morrow found it locked and opened the door with his own key. Inside he found Mrs. Phillips lying in a pool of





blood, her head appallingly injured. Both chairs in the vestry had been smashed to pieces.

"Mr. Morrow will tell you that Strickson was nervous and white in the face," said the prosecutor. "He will also say that the prisoner had been in hospital from the previous Saturday to the previous Monday with influenza. Two police officers who went to the vestry will tell you that it was in a state of great disorder. Blood was splashed in all directions. Some spots of blood were 10 feet high up the walls from the floor, and parts of the broken chairs had blood and human hair on them."

Enoch Roberts told the court that when Strickson told him he intended to have his way with the matron, "I replied, 'You will get yourself three years.' Strickson said, 'If it goes as far as that I would go the rest of the way.'"

Mr. R.T. Paget KC, defending, told Roberts: "I suggest that your evidence is

a pack of lies."

"No, sir."

"You have had a day out today and you had one at the police court."

Replying to further questions, Roberts admitted that he was in borstal for breaking into a garage and stealing guns.

"Before that," said Mr. Paget, "you raped a girl and got eighteen months, didn't you?"

"That has nothing to do with this case."

"Answer the question," said Mr. Justice Lynskey.

**Left, the chapel at Nottingham's Sherwood Borstal, and right and below, broken chairs lay smashed to pieces inside the vestry where the matron was murdered**



# MURDERED L CHAPEL

**He Was Going To Have Her, He Boasted**



**A horrific police photograph of the victim**



"Yes, sir."

The defence counsel continued: "I put it to you that you have made up this story to 'do' Strickson and get your ticket earlier."

"No, sir."

Harry Bradshaw told the court how he had gone to the chapel, found the vestry door locked, and knelt to peer through the keyhole when he heard suspicious noises. "I put my hand in something sticky on the floor. When I looked at my

hand it was covered with blood."

Mr. Morrow told the jury that he found Mrs. Phillips lying in a twisted position, her head severely injured. She was still alive, but unconscious.

Asked by Mr. Paget if he had familiarised himself with Strickson's background, Mr. Morrow said he knew that Strickson's father had been an inmate of a mental hospital, and that Strickson had lived with his grandfather in Grantham and had been in an

approved school.

Professor J.M. Webster, director of the Home Office Laboratory at Birmingham, said that his post-mortem examination had found that Mrs. Phillips had bruises to her arms, chest and abdomen, abrasions on the left side of her face, lacerations on the back of her right hand and her head, and fractures of the skull and spine. There was gross damage to her brain, and she had died from shock and haemorrhage from multiple injuries. The direction of the flow of her blood at the crime scene showed that most of her head injuries had been inflicted as she lay on the floor. There was no evidence of sexual assault.

Detective Inspector Reginald Corbett said that when he told Strickson he was believed to be responsible for the matron's injuries, Strickson replied, "Yes, I don't know why I did it." He appeared to be very frightened and cowed and spoke in a whisper.

"Something of appalling savagery happened there?" Mr. Paget asked the detective.

"Yes."

"Somebody had gone berserk in that vestry?"

"I agree."

"Strickson was pale and shaking?"

"Yes, he was certainly suffering from shock."

"Can you confirm that his maternal grandfather died in an asylum?"

"I have no knowledge of that."

Addressing the jury, Mr. Paget said: "I am very glad indeed that I have not got your task. You have got to judge what it is most difficult for all men to judge; you have got to judge a man's mind and a human's life depends upon it. One thing I regret is that the wretched Roberts should have ever come here to confuse matters. You have seen him, and you can form your own judgment as to his demeanour."

The defence counsel added that according to medical evidence flu and fever could bring on bouts of insanity when insanity was present, "and surely insanity was there that morning."

After the judge's summing-up on March 2nd the jury took only 22 minutes to decide that Kenneth Strickson was guilty. They made no reference to his mental condition and no recommendation to mercy.

Fair-haired and wearing a blue jacket and a grey open-necked shirt, Strickson replied quietly, "No, sir," when asked if he had anything to say. Mr. Justice Lynskey then sentenced him to death.

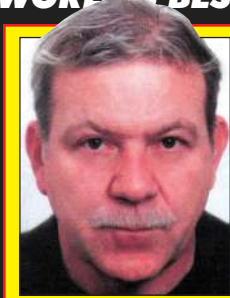
**There was no appeal and no reprieve, and 20 days later Kenneth Strickson was hanged at Lincoln Prison.**

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