

S.A.L.H.S

website: www.salhs.org.uk

Stanstead Abbotts Local History Society

Issue 41

Editor—Terry Collins

Murders In Hertfordshire

January 2022

November saw the welcome return of Nik Pringle from Hertfordshire Police with a very interesting talk on the above topic. Nik began by telling us how he came to be so involved in so many murders, it was due to the fact that he spent many years as the coroners officer for the police force. Nik believes that there are only four reasons for murder, they are Sex, Greed, Religion and Mental illness and we are fortunate that Hertfordshire has a very low murder rate with only 4 to 10 per annum. He then went on to tell us about some of them through the years, and I will just enlarge on a few beginning in the 18th century with the following:

The Tring Witches

In 1745 in the village of Long Marston a woman named Ruth Osborne was begging at a local farm and when told to leave by the farmer named Butterfield she walked off muttering to herself. When Butterfield's calves fell sick and he himself became ill he gave up farming to run an inn. Some of the village locals jokingly claimed that his misfortunes were the cause of witchcraft by Osborne and her husband, both of whom were over 70 and quite harmless, never the less, they were both kept in hiding for the safety. A mob formed and forced the parish overseer to reveal their hiding place, they were taken from there and stripped and their hands tied to their toes and thrown into Longmarston pool, after ducking a few times Ruth was taken from the pool and she died after a few minutes. The authorities



Ducking of Ruth & John Osborne

needed to make an example and a local chimney sweep Thomas Colley who had taken a leading part in the outrage, was arrested and tried for wilful murder. He was tried at Hertford Assizes where he was found guilty and sentenced to death and was hanged on 24th August 1745

The Kid Glove Murder

On Friday 7th September 1956 three young boys were cycling along Green Lane in Leverstock Green when they saw a parked car with two people in it. One of the boys thought one was a naked woman so they went back to look again, but this time they found the semi naked body of a woman in some bushes. So began the hunt for 'the kid glove killer' so called because it is believed that the killer was wearing white kid gloves. The woman was identified as Diana Suttee a 36 year old prostitute who lived in Harrow she had been strangled with a pink and white scarf and it was believed that she was killed shortly before her body

was discovered. The suspect's car was seen by a number of people and was described as a pale blue saloon with the registration number SUU 138 but when this was checked it was found to belong to an electric milk float. By the end of October more than 30,000 cars had been checked and this number rose to more than 150,000 as far north as Aberdeen. The suspect was seen by several people including a local woman walking her dog, a local farmer, the boys who were cycling and three boys who saw a man dumping the body. An artist's impression of the suspect was issued by the police and the suspect was described as a white male, aged about 50-55 with brown hair, grey at the sides. He was wearing a dark blue or brown suit and was described as being of Latin appearance. Diana had been seen at the Crows Nest café between Markyate and Redbourn earlier and had said that she would catch a lift outside. The crime made headlines and police forces across the country were involved. On 15th September the main trunk roads to the north police stopped and interviewed hundreds of motorists without success. Despite these searches and interviews the suspect was never found and to this day the crime remains unsolved, or does it. While working at a police station being used for storage Nik found a box of files relating to the case, after he had studied them he felt that there was enough information to write a book on the crime. He then discovered that all the other files had been sent to the National Archives at Kew as the Metropolitan police had taken over the case. *Continued on page 2*

Murders in Hertfordshire

Continued from page 1

After getting permission from his Chief Superintendent who told him he would be opening a can of worms he began his work, when he had completed his draft he took it back to his superior officer only to be told that somebody had come forward with new evidence and as this had become a live case he could not publish his book. He began to think that maybe the killer was known but had not been made public and he began to wonder who it could be, was it, perhaps a minor Royal or a foreign diplomat, will we ever know now?

The Woman Who Vanished



On 29th December 1969 a woman named Muriel McCay (above) was abducted from her home in Wimbledon and was never seen again and her body was never found. Inside the house the contents of her handbag were found scattered about and the telephone had been torn from the wall but there was no trace of Muriel. She was reported missing by her husband Alick on his return from work. The police upgraded the crime from a burglary after finding items that were foreign to the house, at 1.00am a telephone call was received from a man calling himself M3 demanding a million pounds ransom. During the following 40 days the same man made 18 more calls and sent three letters written by Mrs McCay to prove she was still alive together

with of fabric cut from her clothing. Two attempts to deliver half of the money failed, the first due to a heavy police presence.

The second attempt was made on February 6th 1970 and the kidnappers requested that Diane Dyer, Mrs McCay's daughter, was to deliver the ransom, mostly fake banknotes in 2 suitcases, as she had been the main person who dealt with the kidnappers. Two police officers in disguise took the fake cash to a street in Tottenham, where they received further instructions eventually leaving the suitcases at a garage in Epping after they had been given four locations in Essex, London and Hertfordshire. The police had the garage under surveillance and noticed a blue Volvo sedan with registration number XGO 994G with a broken tail light and a single male occupant drove slowly past the garage four times. The vehicle was registered to a man living at Rooks Farm near Stocking Pelham. Police reports showed that witnesses had seen a similar vehicle in the vicinity of Rooks Farm and parked on the McCays driveway and it had also been seen near the first drop off point. With this information the police raided Rooks Farm at 8pm on February 7th. The farm owners were two brothers from Trinidad Arthur and Nizamodeen Hosein. There was a third brother, Adam who was suspected as being the mastermind but had an alibi. At the farm a notebook was found which held fingerprints matching items found at the McCay house in addition Nizamodeens voice matched that of the man called M3. With this evidence the brothers were arrested and charged and sent for trial on 14 September 1970. At the trial it came to light that Arthur was in financial difficulty with the farm which he had purchased in 1968. During the trial the brothers blamed each other although Arthur was the dominant one. They had decided to kidnap the wife of Rupert Murdoch after seeing him on television and they followed Murdoch's car to the house in Arthur Road assuming that it was Murdoch's house unaware that Mr Murdoch had

loaned the car to Alick McCay while he was in Australia. Both brothers were charged with murder, kidnapping and blackmail and were convicted on 6th October 1970, and sentenced to life imprisonment and in Arthurs case an additional 25 years and an extra 15 years for Nizamodeen. They were both sent to Winsong Green Prison.

They appealed their sentences in 1971, 1987 and 1994, Arthur died in prison in 2009 but Nizamodeen served 20 years and was deported to Trinidad after his release. Despite investigation no trace was ever found of Muriel McCay.

Terry Collins

There have been further developments in the Muriel McCay murder. In December 2021 *The Times* wrote that police have reopened the investigation and are reviewing all the material, as the surviving brother Nizamodeen Hosein had confessed to a lawyer that Muriel had died from a heart attack, while watching television about the case, shortly after the kidnap and is buried at Rooks Farm.

The family have met the specialist cold case unit based at Putney police station and have shared the tapes on which Hosein made his confession. The current owner of Rooks Farm has refused access to the farm to excavate but has said that if the police were to direct a search then he will co-operate.

Hosein has told the McCay family the whereabouts of their mothers body on Rooks Farm. At the weekend, 14/15th January, access was gained to land adjacent to the farm and using ground penetrating radar there were signs of ground disturbance at a depth of about six feet and it appears that the soil has been disturbed and then back filled and is consistent with the remains of a body. Hosein had tuned in to the operation by video call and was directing the radar. Officers on the case met the family on 18th January to discuss the next steps.

Terry Collins

AMWELL POOL AND COTTAGE

The original channel of the New River where Amwell Pool now is, was dug out in 1605 as a six feet wide and four feet deep cut. The channel followed the line of the bank at the back of today's pool at the base of the steep bank below the church. Nearly two hundred years were to pass before Robert Mylne Chief Engineer of the New River Company started to create Amwell Pool between 1794 and 1796. This was part of his initial scheme to landscape the land around his retirement home "Amwell Grove" that he was building at the time. By 1797 he was able to create the largest of the islands and landscape and plant up his new island and the steeply sloping land above the pool. He was unable to create the second upstream island as there was a New River Company maintenance yard on that part of the site. By 1800 his new house and all the surrounding landscaping and planting was completed to his satisfaction.

He topped off his efforts by erecting on the new island a memorial to Sir Hugh Middleton a man closely associated with the construction of the New River, some two centuries previously. Surrounding the new memorial, he planted some shrubs as well as a couple of relatively small willow trees which were to grow into fine specimens over the years that added a great deal to the picturesque nature of Amwell Pool.

In 1810 Robert retired and his son William Chadwell Mylne took over his father's role as Chief Engineer to the New River Company. Sadly, Robert Mylne did not enjoy a very long retirement passing away the following year. William was to complete his father's plans for the land surrounding the family home at Amwell Grove. He arranged for the company's maintenance yard to be relocated and was thus able to create the second smaller island upstream of his fathers. All was completed by 1818 when William erected a monument on the second island. Not as spectacular as his father's but a simple upright rectangular stone with a poem about Amwell and its springs composed by his friend Arch Deacon Nares.

The Mylne family had created a gravel road alongside the pool by 1811, although this had to wait some 30 odd years before the construction of Amwell Lane, before a through public route all the way to St. Margarets became available. However, it indicated the Mylne families plans for future enhancements to the area around their home. In 1828 William was able to buy Thorpe's Farm, now River Cottage and in 1838 he was

January 2022 Zoom Meeting

Unfortunately there will be no report in this or forthcoming Newsletters, on the above, as David Shorts talk on the development of Hertfordshire Towns and Villages was not suitable for reporting and there were a number of maps that could not be copied.

Terry Collins



Amwell Pool and Cottage 1975

able to persuade the Lord of The Manor to sell him Emma's Well and the land associated with it. Thorpe Farm's farmyard was closed down and the old farm buildings removed to form a garden. It was recorded that the farmhouse was quite easily converted into an attractive riverside residence. Emma's Well was transformed into a brick lined rectangular pool with the surrounding land turned into lawned gardens. The well was in later years to become a tourist attraction with steps leading down from what had become a public road above.

Robert and his son William in creating, what was for them an attractive landscape around their grand home, have left later generations a wonderfully attractive little spot just below Great Amwell Church. A legacy much enjoyed by many locals as they take a walk in the pleasant and attractive landscape that surrounds their homes.

Stuart Moye

An article which covers this topic in greater detail can be found in the media section of the Society's website.

Further articles by Stuart can also be found on the SALHS website which cover a wide range of topics relating to the village and surrounding area.

December's Meeting

It was with great regret that we had to cancel the Xmas social meeting but we hope that you understood the reasoning behind it. Let's hope that this year things will return to some semblance of normality that lasts! We would like to wish you all a Happy and Healthy New Year.

From your committee.

Bill Kitt Boatman

Many pictures of the river bridge in the village taken between 1900 and the 1920s show two steam launches moored by Stanstead Wharf behind the old Rose and Crown pub. These leisure craft belonged to Mr William [Bill] Kitt who lived with his family in the High Street.

In 1901 William's occupation was recorded as a steam engine driver with his wife and all three daughters working as laundress workers. Their home well as a home. It is thought that William began to operate steam pleasure launches on the river from Stanstead Abbots during the 1890s. These boats were often used to provide river Pleasure Gardens a much favoured leisure destination for those who lived in East London. By 1911 Bill Kitt had become a Jobbing Engineer working on steam engines, a job that involved keeping the steam engines in the area. This type of contract work would have kept him busy in the colder months and would have fitted in well with his own family run business of running the summer steam launches on the River Lea.

Bill Kitt offered boat trips as far as focused on the leisure traffic associated with the Rye House Pleasure Gardens. The main events at Rye House weekends and especially Bank Holidays enjoyed a day out in the country. Much custom was available for journeymen on the river between Rye House, Stanstead Abbots and Broxbourne the main destinations attracting these events organised at The Rye House groups of some size who sometimes arranged a short cruise up and down the river as part of their festivities.

to the Christies [Brewery] Company of venue continued to provide the river craft with a steady trade for many years. Mr Kitt drew on a small group of trusted village men to provide crews for his boats, for them it was a much welcomed additional income. When he started his business the golden period of the East End visitors coming to Rye House was drawing to an end. Even so Mr Kitt's boats were a common site on the Lea for some 20 years providing him and his family with a summer income when his main employment was least required.



Bill Kitt photographed in 1909

ly run business of running the summer London with some of the work being ed with the Rye House Pleasure Gardrew very large crowds on some days when many "Bean Feasters", Despite the Teale Family selling up Hoddesdon in 1904 the Rye House

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Stuart Moye

There is an article on this topic with more pictures etc. on the SALHS website

The SALHS Committee

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Data Protection Act

In accordance with the above act we have to advise that the Society holds information on computer in respect of each member. This information is used for routine membership purposes only and remains confidential.

Forthcoming events

February	11th 2022	Slavery in Hertfordshire by Marion Hill – ZOOM
March	11th 2022	An Evening with Old Relics by Tim Turner
April	8th 2022	A walk with The Admiral by Richard Thomas
May	13th 2022	AGM. Speaker TBA
June	10th 2022	What People had in their Homes 1600-1700 by David Short
July	8th 2022	Saxons In the Lea Valley by Neil Sankey

Unless stated otherwise all meetings are at the Parish Hall at 7.30pm
Members Free Non Members £2.00 Tea Coffee and Biscuits included