

The 'Shocking Murder' of Tilsworth

Around 7.15pm on 15th August 1821, a local man made a disturbing discovery. He came across the body of a young woman in Blackgrove Wood in Tilsworth. Wearing a light cotton gown, sprigged with small pink and blue flowers, she lay lifeless. Her dark false curls about her face hung above her cut throat and somewhat mangled and bruised body.

Her body was taken to a public house in Tilsworth where she remained for a week. Bedford coroner, Thomas Times, conducted an inquisition of the unnamed woman. She was thought to be around 30 years of age and carried with her a gentleman's neckerchief with the initials 'T.S' stitched in blue. Further reports published in the Northampton Mercury on September 3rd consisted of sightings of the woman at the Plough Inn in Kensworth accompanied by a man with dark hair dresses in a fine shirt, yellow waistcoat and a stick holding a small bundle tied in a light coloured handkerchief. He was likened to a gentleman's servant. The pair were seen walking towards Blackgrove Wood and it is thought the murder was a result of a domestic dispute.

The identity of the woman of Blackgrove Wood has never been discovered and the person who took her life has also remains a mystery although a man named Evestaffe was tried for her murder but subsequently acquitted through lack of evidence but it is said he confessed to her murder on his deathbed.

A tragic end befell the woman of Blackgrove Wood and a sad memory of an individual who was unknown and unclaimed will remain forever, but forever she lies at rest in All Saints Church in Tilsworth with a poignant stone erected for her presence in this life to be known, even though her identity will always be a mystery.

*This Stone was erected
by subscription
TO THE MEMORY OF
A FEMALE UNKNOWN
found murdered in Blackgrove Wood
AUG 15 1821
Oh pause my friends & drop the silent tear,
Attend & learn why I was buried here;
Perchance some distant earth had hid my clay
If I'd outliv'd the sad, the fatal day.
To you unknown my case not understood
From whence I came or why in Blackgrove Wood
This truth's too clear & nearly all that's known
I there was murder'd! & the villains flown
May God whose piercing eye persues his flight
Pardon the crime but bring the deed to light*

Dedicated to the lady of Blackgrove Wood