

†*The shocking story of Burke and Hare*†

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William Burke, William Hare, Helen M'Dougal, and Margaret Hare were accused of killing 16 people within 12 months in 1828. From January to October 1828, three men, twelve women, and one child were killed. The purpose of these crimes was to sell the bodies to a well-regarded anatomical lecturer, Dr. Robert Knox for money (between £8 to £10).

Burke was born in Ireland and moved to Edinburgh in about 1817, working as a laborer on the Union Canal. He asked his wife to join him, but she refused. Then, Burke met his “new wife”, Helen M'Dougal. William Hare had also come to Edinburgh as a laborer. He got married to a widow, Margaret Hare, in about 1826 and had a child with her.

Suspicious about these men were raised when three murders caught the attention of the public; the murder of Mary Paterson, James Wilson, and Madgy Docherty. Ann and James Gray had noticed that one of the victims they had met, Madgy Docherty, had been in Burke's house the previous night. Her body was found under the bed, and they went immediately to the police. Burke, M'Dougal, William, and Margaret Hare were arrested for Docherty's murder. William and Margaret Hare turned witnesses for the prosecution in return for immunity. Burke and M'Dougal were tried for murder on December 24, 1828. M'Dougal's innocence was proven, while Burke was sentenced to death on January 28, 1829.



Bibliography

“The shocking story of Burke and Hare”. *The Worlds of Burke and Hare*, at <http://burkeandhare.com/index.html>, accessed 9 April 2024

Pictures

<http://burkeandhare.com/bhperps.htm>