

BRUTAL MURDER IN MUSWELL HILL

This notorious murder publicised Muswell Hill at the time of its extensive building expansion, some of which is my research subject.



In 1896 Henry Smith, a 79-year-old wealthy widower living alone in Muswell Lodge (see drawing, courtesy of Hornsey Historical Society), Tetherdown (where Burlington Road now is), was blind-folded, gagged and battered to death. This was despite his security precautions including a trip-wire which could fire a gun in his garden backing onto Coldfall Wood. His gardener found him on the 14th February, a few hours after his murder. The victim's home had been ransacked and considerable booty stolen. The perpetrators of this crime were traced through a lantern which they left behind. Within months they were brought to trial, convicted and hanged.

The murder was immediately reported in the Hornsey Journal of 15th February, drawing much attention to Muswell Hill. The next edition of February 22nd reported that the morbid curiosity of this dreadful deed had prompted the public to descend upon Muswell Hill the previous Sunday. Crowds sought their way to the Lodge. It was estimated that 1,500-2,000 visited the neighbourhood that day. The Lodge would have been a mile from the Muswell Hill railway station (now demolished).

Liz Jack, March 2018