

## **William Henry Emeris Burke**

**Leigh Chronicle and Weekly District Advertiser - 10 February 1888**

### **MURDER AND ATTEMPTED SUICIDE.**

Shortly before eleven o'clock on Saturday night a deliberate murder, followed by an attempted suicide, was enacted at Monk Bretton, a populous colliery village near Barnsley. Mr. William Henry Emeris Burke, surgeon, deliberately shot his own daughter in the breast, causing instantaneous death, and afterwards shot himself, also in the breast, but not fatally. The girl was only nine years of age. It is stated that Burke and his wife, who was the daughter of the late Rev. Arthur Lambert, of Monk Bretton, have led an unhappy life, having frequently been separated. A fortnight ago they resumed cohabitation after a separation of two months. Since then Burke had been drinking heavily. On Saturday evening he prevailed on Mrs. Burke to awake the deceased, who was asleep in bed, to accompany them to Barnsley in their carriage. They started, but on reaching the Norman Inn – the village hostelry which Burke frequented – he entered with his wife and child, and called for a small bottle of champagne. They were in the “best room” by themselves, when the wife ran out, screaming that her husband had a revolver. Police-constable Emslie, who was at the door, ran to the room, and saw Burke deliberately shoot the child in the breast, killing her instantly. Burke immediately discharged another barrel into his own breast, walked across the room, and said “I’ve missed,” and then sank on a seat. Medical aid was procured, and Burke was removed to the Beckett Hospital, Barnsley, where the bullet was extracted. Burke, who is quite conscious, is expected to recover. He never refers to the sad tragedy. He wrote a letter to his wife while at the Norman Inn during Saturday afternoon. This letter was found upon him. It did not suggest that a tragedy was contemplated, although domestic troubles were mentioned.

**Morning Post – 27 March 1888**

**THE ALLEGED MURDER BY A SURGEON.** – William Henry Emeris Burke, late a surgeon of Monk Bretton, near Barnsley, was charged before the Barnsley magistrates yesterday with the wilful murder of his daughter Eileen, early in February. Prisoner, who immediately after shooting the child attempted suicide with the same weapon, has been in hospital since the 5<sup>th</sup> ult., and is still very ill. He pleaded not guilty, and was committed for trial.

**Derby Mercury – 28 March 1888**

### **THE MONK BRETTON TRAGEDY**

William Henry Burke, surgeon, was committed at Barnsley, on Monday, on a charge of murdering his daughter, Aileen Ethel Burke, aged nine years, at Norman Inn, Monk Bretton, on the night of the 4<sup>th</sup> February last, by shooting her with a revolver. Mr. Mellor, who appeared for the prisoner, said the defence was that the revolver went off accidentally.

**SENTENCED TO DEATH**

**A SURGEON'S CRIME**

At Leeds Assizes to-day, William Henry Burke, aged 42, surgeon, of Monk Bretton, near Barnsley, was found guilty of murder of his daughter, aged 9 years, on February 4<sup>th</sup> last, and was sentenced to death. The prisoner had become addicted to drink and, after quarrelling with his wife, he took the deceased to a public-house where he shot her [*the daughter*] dead with a revolver and afterwards tried, though unsuccessfully, to kill himself in the same manner.

**Hampshire Advertiser – 23 May 1888**

**GENERAL NEWS.**

**REPRIEVE OF DR. BURKE.** – A message from the Home Office was received at Armley Gaol, Leeds, on Sunday, reprieving Dr. Burke, of Barnsley, who was to have been executed yesterday morning for the murder of his daughter, aged nine, by shooting her. He afterwards shot himself. The reprieve has been petitioned for chiefly by medical men.

**Derby Daily Telegraph – 26 November 1889**

**UNEQUAL JUSTICE.**

William Henry Burke, surgeon, of Monk Bretton, near Barnsley, who shot his daughter in February last year, was sentenced to death at Leeds Assizes, and ultimately respited, will be liberated this week from the convict prison in the Isle of Wight “owing to the delicate state of his health.” James Richardson, who shot his foreman at Barnsley and was sentenced to death at the same assizes, was hanged, his friends being in poor circumstances and not able to make themselves heard at the Home Office.

**Shepton Mallet Journal – 6 December 1889**

**DEATH OF DR. BURKE.**

William Henry Burke, surgeon, of Monk Bretton, who murdered his daughter in that village in Feb. last year, was sentenced to death at Leeds Assizes, and then reprieved, has died at Parkhurst prison, Isle of Wight. After committing the murder he shot himself, inflicting a serious wound in his breast, from which he never thoroughly recovered. Last week his solicitor at Barnsley was officially informed that Burke, owing to the delicate state of health, was about to be released. It was arranged that he should be given into the care of his friends, but was too ill to travel, became worse, and has died in prison.

*Transcription by Tony Barton for the Friends of Newport & Carisbrooke Cemeteries © 2018*

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