

Evington Local History and Heritage Group

Wednesday 14th February 2024, 2.30pm, St. Denys Parish Centre

Background to subject of talk:

The tale of 'Peppermint Billy' has become almost a Leicestershire folklore tale over the years, with the murderer becoming something of a mythical bogeyman. Now, for the first time, the true story is told in full.

In the summer of June 1856, the whole of Leicestershire was horror-struck at news of the gruesome double murder of a seventy-year-old tollgate keeper and his nine-year-old grandson at Melton Mowbray.

William Brown, a native of nearby Scalford, was the prime suspect. A returned convict who had been previously sentenced to ten years' transportation; 'Peppermint Billy' had supposedly sworn vengeance against the person who had sent him to the other side of the world.

Tracked down and put on trial for the gruesome murders at the Thorpe Road tollgate, William Brown was the last person publicly hanged in Leicester.

From his father's lawless Judge and Jury Clubs to William's ten-year transportation sentence and incarceration in the notorious New Norfolk Lunatic Asylum in Van Dieman's Land, the author examines the troubled life of 'Peppermint Billy' and the events leading to the double murder and his execution.