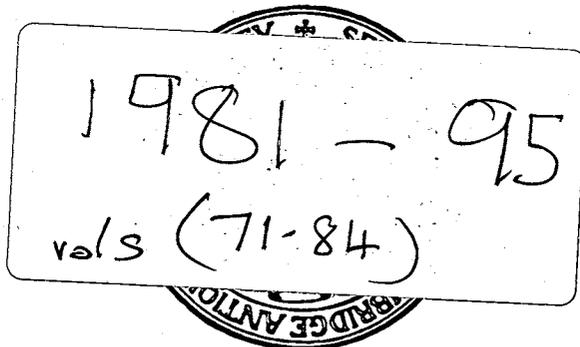

Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society

(incorporating the Cambs and Hunts Archaeological
Society)

Volume LXXXIV

for 1995



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Erratum

In volume LXXXIII, p. 6, Journals exchanged with the *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*:

Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, Macclesfield, Cheshire
should read

Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, Manchester

Wayside Graves and Crossroad Burials

Robert Halliday

The burial of the dead beside the highway, particularly by crossroads, was carried out in England until 1823, as a posthumous punishment for those who consciously took their own lives. Although there is an extensive literature on suicide, there has been little previous study of the practice of wayside and crossroad burial. This article will examine documented Cambridgeshire examples.¹

Criminals who die while committing a crime, or who are executed in punishment for their crimes may continue to be regarded with abhorrence after their deaths, and so be refused normal funeral rites. There is archaeological evidence for the denial of proper burial to criminals during the Anglo-Saxon period. Between 1924 and 1931 archaeological excavations were directed by Cyril Fox, W.M. Palmer and T.C. Lethbridge, on the course of the now levelled Bran Ditch at Fowlmere (TL 409 439).

About sixty skeletons were uncovered in shallow, irregular graves, at a spot called 'Gallows Gate' (i.e. Gallows Way) adjoining 'Hangman's Field', where 'The Joint Way', a pre-enclosure track, once crossed the ditch. (There were difficulties keeping count of the skeletons, as they were mixed together, and some were missing skulls or other bones.) No grave goods were discovered, but associated finds suggested that the burials belonged to the Anglo-Saxon period. Mostly adult males, they included two women (one interred with a newborn child), and some youths who may have been only twelve years old. Many skeletons were decapitated, others had distended necks, or showed signs of poleaxing or throat slitting, and there were indications of decomposition prior to interment. It seems plausible that this represented an Anglo-Saxon **cwealmstow**: a cemetery for criminals, who had been executed and displayed

at a crossing point of the Bran Ditch before a hasty burial.²

In 1977 Alison Taylor, the county archaeologist, directed a rescue excavation at a crossroad of a Roman road, on the parish boundary of Dry Drayton and Oakington (National Grid reference TL 395 630) where road works had uncovered about twelve skeletons, (many of which were disarticulated or damaged by the road works prior to excavation). The *Quo Warranto Rolls* mentioned a gallows owned by the Abbot of Crowland at Dry Drayton, and a map of 1809 referred to a neighbouring field as 'Gallas Field' (i.e. Gallows Field). It may therefore be surmised that the skeletons uncovered here were executed criminals.³

The use of rural crossroads for the execution and burial of criminals may have created an aversion to these spots. At the start of the eleventh century Ælfric of Eynsham described crossroads as burial sites and the haunt of spirits in his *Homilies*:

Witches still go to crossroads and to heathen burials with their delusive magic; and call to the devil; and he comes to them in the likeness of the man who is buried there, as if he arise from death; but she cannot bring it about that the dead arise through her magic.⁴

Ælfric did not specify who these 'heathen burials' may have been, but implied that they were regarded as evil.

Crossroads may have been chosen for this type of burial to hinder the deceased's ghost from finding its way back to its home, while the cross of the road would disperse evil energy from the corpse. The limit of the settlement or parish may have been preferred because it would be distant from human habitation, and also because it represented the death boundary. Passing traffic might press down to prevent the

ghost from rising. Passers-by would see the grave, and be deterred from following the example of the person buried there. The highway may also have been used for such burials in preference to other ground, as it would not encroach on private property.⁵

The practice of burying suicides at crossroads is documented from the Elizabethan period. William Harrison's *Description of England*, first published with Raphael Holinshead's *Chronicles* in 1577, says 'Such as kill themselves are buried in the field with a stake driven through their bodies'.⁶ In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, act three, scene two, Puck says how:

. . . Damned spirits all
That in crossways and floods have burial
Already to their wormy beds are gone.

Crossroad burials were not normally entered in parish registers, which were only intended to record burials in the relevant parish church or churchyard. But Castle Camps parish registers contain an entry for 9 December 1665, describing how George Miller hanged himself in Langley Wood, and was buried in a field by the highway on the parish boundary. Possibly a parish official thought the episode did not belong in the register, for the entry was crossed out, but it can still be deciphered.⁷

A possible instance of a suicide burial at a rural crossroads may be mentioned in an account of a perambulation of the boundaries of Barham Manor at Linton on 1 January 1761. The route traversed ran:

all the way to a place called *Nan Saxby's Grave*, where the road from Linton to Balsham crosses at right angles the Wool Street Road aforesaid on the Cambridge side, at which place of the road from Linton to Barham by the side of the ditch aforesaid.⁸

Wool Street cannot now be identified, but Nan Saxby's grave may have been at the crossroads of the B 1052 (National Grid reference TL 575 492) or of the Harcamlow Way to Balsham (National Grid reference TL 584 488). Linton parish registers record baptisms and marriages of members of several Saxby families between 1648 and 1688, with four burials between 1655 and 1708. These may have included 'Nan' Saxby or her relatives. No other information about 'Nan' Saxby or the circumstances of her burial is available, but it is not inconceivable that she had taken her life and been buried by Linton parish boundary. *Mark's Grave*, shown on the Ordnance Survey Map, at the junction of the parishes of Linton, Balsham, Horseheath and West Wickham (National Grid reference TL 595 484) may be the site of a similar burial, but P.H. Reaney in his *Place Names of Cambridge-*

shire suggests the name may instead be derived from the Anglo-Saxon *mearc*, or boundary.⁹

The expression *suicide* did not enter the English language until the mid-seventeenth century, and only became common usage during the Victorian period. ('Suicide' did not appear in Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755)). During the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries the preferred expression for the taking of one's own life was *self-murder*.¹⁰

Popular and intellectual consensus held self-murder with particular abhorrence. The legal attitude was described by Michael Dalton in his *Countray [sic.] Justice*, (1618), where he wrote: 'if a man kill himself with a mediate hatred against his own life, or out of distraction or other humour, he is called *felo-de-se*,'¹¹ (i.e. a felon of himself). Michael Dalton specified that only those who conciously and deliberately took their lives were classified *felo-de-se*. As murderers their goods and chattels were forfeit to the crown (but not their estate, which still passed to their heirs). Dalton added 'if one that wanteth discretion killeth himself, as an infant, or a man *non compos mentis*' they were guilty of a lesser crime, and their goods were not forfeit to the crown.

The third, (1635), edition of Dalton's *Countray Justice* expanded on this to show that self-murder was reprehensible:

for the heinousness thereof, it is to be observed, that it is an offence against God, against the king, and against nature, also it is within the degree of, or the quality of murder . . . yea it holds to be a greater offence than to kill another man.¹²

Self-murder, like all cases of sudden, unexpected or violent deaths, was investigated by a coroner. This office was created by Richard I in 1194, with the title *custos placitorum coronae*: keeper of pleas of the crown, to ensure that appropriate penalties were imposed on criminals. Coroners investigated deaths to determine whether murder or foul play had taken place, and ensure that the culprits were punished.

The office of coroner was modified over time. Originally drawn from those of knightly status, by the eighteenth-century coroners were normally minor members of the gentry class, particularly lawyers, as the office required knowledge of legal procedure. In 1752 a statute of 25 George II cap. 29 restricted the office primarily to investigating deaths.¹³

Eighteenth-century modifications to coroners' duties led Edward Umfreville to write a coroners' manual, *Lex Coronatoria, Or the Office and Duty of Coroners* (1761). When a sudden,

unexpected or violent death occurred the coroner was to convene an inquest in the community where this took place. Here witnesses with personal knowledge of the circumstances leading to the death or discovery of the body made statements, after which a jury of twelve local men determined the cause of death.

Umfreville wrote that the crime of *felo-de-se* was the worst form of murder, and the only punishment that could be directly applied under the circumstances was denial of Christian burial. Thus, if a coroner's jury found the deceased to be *felo-de-se* the coroner was to direct the constables or churchwardens of the parish where the inquest was taken to bury the deceased in a public street or highway. Umfreville gave no reason for this practice. It is uncertain whether common belief was incorporated into official thought and practice, or if official procedure influenced popular tradition. Umfreville repeated Dalton's pronouncement, that the goods of a *felo-de-se* (and his wife, if he were a married man) were forfeit to the crown, although the deceased's inheritance remained within his or her family.

Umfreville specified that a self-murderer could not be classified as a *felo-de-se* if he or she could be shown to be mentally unbalanced (a lunatic or an idiot in eighteenth century parlance), or a child under fourteen, or 'one distracted through sickness, grief, infirmity or accident'. Under these circumstances the deceased could be in a churchyard, but without ceremony.¹⁴

Bartlow parish registers record an instance of Edward Freeman, being buried in the parish churchyard on 14 June 1785: 'in consequence of recommendation from the coroner, whose verdict was lunacy, he having died from his own hands'.

Crossroad burial can be documented from the second half of the eighteenth century through the *Cambridge Chronicle*. Jane Bennet of Molesworth, who became pregnant in 1763, married her child's supposed father on 10 June 1764; although her husband later swore that he could not be the father. Jane Bennet complained of ill-health on 11 June, and next morning at one o'clock, when her husband described her as a 'wicked girl', she fled the house. People seeking her discovered that she had drowned herself and her daughter in a pond. Being declared a *felo-de-se* Jane Bennet was buried at a crossroad (*Cambridge Chronicle* (*Camb. Chron.*) 16 June 1764: 3, cols. 1-2). In 1765 Thomas Howard, a schoolmaster and clerk at Litlington, fell into arrears with rent. When his landlord, Peter Wedd of Fowlmere, came to his house on 9 November to seize goods

in lieu of rent, Howard took a fowling piece from a cupboard and shot Wedd in the chest. Howard then cut his own throat. Being declared a *felo-de-se* Thomas Howard was buried in the highway. Peter Wedd died on 3 January 1766 (*Camb. Chron.* 16 November 1765: 2, col. 4; 23 November 1765: 3, col. 1; 11 January 1766: 2, col. 3). The *Cambridge Chronicle* reports how John Ashby, a Fen Drayton horsekeeper who hanged himself in his master's stable on 15 March 1775 was buried in the highway, while John Stanford, who hanged himself at Kneesworth on 16 November 1779, was buried at a crossroad (18 March 1775: 2, col. 4; 20 November 1779: 3, col. 2). On 30 December 1805 a man whose identity was not known went from Alconbury to Buckden. Staying at the George Inn at Buckden, he appeared to be clear-minded when retiring to bed, but next morning was found to have poisoned himself, leaving a letter suggesting this was due to disappointment in love. A coroner's inquest on 1 January declared him guilty of self-murder, and he was buried in the road from Buckden to Huntingdon. (*Camb. Chron.* 18 January 1806: 2, col. 3). Local newspapers mention a man only identified as a discharged soldier, who poisoned himself with vitriol at Godmanchester on 25 July 1814, and was interred at the crossroad leading to Offord.¹⁵

Cambridgeshire Record Office holds records kept by Hugh Robert Evans, an Ely lawyer who held the post of Coroner for the Isle of Ely and Witchford Hundred from 1796 until 1832.¹⁶ Between September 1796 and June 1823 Hugh Robert Evans convened 271 inquests. These showed that the commonest cause of unexpected death to have been drowning, with 60 cases, almost certainly due to the large number of lakes and waterways in that region. The second most frequent cause of death was 'visitation of God', in 56 cases. This was a general term for sudden death with no obvious external cause, which might now be ascribed to a stroke or heart attack. There were 44 cases of burning or scalding, and 32 accidents involving carts and wagons. Self-murder was the fifth commonest cause of death, in seventeen cases. Of the remaining 62 deaths, eight were 'found dead' (the jury being unable to determine cause of death); eight were milling accidents; seven were killed by horses or cattle; eight by falls; five by accidental injury; five by manslaughter and two by murder; while one person was killed by another in self-defence. Changes in medical knowledge may have led to six deaths being diagnosed as apoplexy between 1816 and 1819, and there was one case of typhus in 1819, and two cases of 'fits' during

1820. Five individual accidental deaths were due to crushing by a beer barrel; suffocation after swallowing a penny; and being struck by an anchor, a timber gill, and a lighter pole, respectively.¹⁷

Self-murder accounted for 6% of the inquests at which Hugh Robert Evans officiated. Of the seventeen people who took their lives, twelve were declared lunatics and five declared *felo-de-se*. Depositions survive for fifteen of these, including all five cases of *felo-de-se*. When the death was discovered an inquest was convened at a public house in the parish where the body lay. Inquests took place on the day, or the day after, the discovery. Witnesses who had knowledge of the deceased's actions immediately before his or her demise, and the people who first found the dead body gave testimony, from which affidavits were written, which the witnesses signed. The jury then consulted and returned a verdict, after which Hugh Robert Evans pronounced the cause of death, and, if appropriate, made directions for burial.

John Layton, a porter of Ely, hanged himself on 30 June 1799. At an inquest in the *Anchor* public house at Ely on 1 July Robert Jervis told how he found John Layton's body, and called Benjamin Feast and John Bearcock to help take it down. John Layton's cousin, Mary Woodbine, testified that a week previously he asked for the return of a rope he had lent her, when she noticed 'great wildness' in his eyes. Thomas Cunningham saw John Layton on 29 June, when he appeared 'quite as sensible as he ever saw him'. Robert Bristow, a fellow porter had discussed a case of suicide at Barnwell with John Layton, when he seemed sensible. When John Layton was declared *felo-de-se* Hugh Robert Evans directed that he be buried at Barton Pits, on the road between Ely and Stretham. The *Cambridge Chronicle* records that ten weeks later a subscription was raised to place a stone over the grave, with an inscription on three sides saying:

All ye that pass by, pray to God to preserve and keep you from the crime of Self Murder; on which occasion this stone was erected in memory of John Layton, 1799.¹⁸

This memorial cannot now be found.

On the night of 6 August 1807 Jacob Sallis came into the Woolpack public house at Ely, where he was recognised by Richard Butcher, a Littleport labourer, as a fellow Littleport native who had been absent from that community for several years. Leaving the Woolpack, the two walked to Littleport, while Jacob Sallis complained of an unhappy domestic life, saying

he disliked his wife and would become a sailor. Richard Butcher believed that Jacob Sallis appeared wholly clear-minded throughout their conversation. At 4 a.m. next morning two people found Jacob Sallis hanging from a chestnut tree.

Hugh Robert Evans held an inquest in the *Marquis of Granby* public house at Littleport that same day, 7 August. The *Cambridge Chronicle* says the jury debated the case for five hours before returning a verdict of *felo-de-se*, whereupon Hugh Robert Evans directed that the parish constable and churchwardens bury Jacob Sallis below Portway Hill at Littleport.¹⁹ The inquests for John Layton and Jacob Sallis include printed certificates produced by T. Jones of Clifford's Inn Gate, Fetter Lane, London, giving an outline declaration that the deceased was a *felo-de-se*, with blank spaces for the coroner to insert appropriate details of names, dates and places, and directing the churchwardens and constables to bury the deceased by the highway at midnight.

On Sunday 5 January 1807 William Lofts discovered George Gay's body hanging in a house at Littleport. William Lofts had known George Gay for two and a half years. Three other acquaintances testified that they had never seen derangement or insanity in George Gay, who was accordingly declared a *felo-de-se*. But Hugh Robert Evans' report does not say what burial arrangements were made, nor does the local press mention the case (Cambridge Record Office (CRO), Es/Co/P.70).

Elizabeth Carter of Little Downham was found to have hanged herself at 1 pm on Saturday 6 May 1809. At an inquest at the *Anchor* public house in Little Downham on Sunday Elizabeth Brown, an acquaintance, testified that Elizabeth Carter had been unhappy and unsettled for several years. Sarah Tingley said she had spoken about committing suicide over the previous two weeks, and hoped that she might still be buried in the churchyard. Although the coroner's jury declared Elizabeth Carter *felo-de-se*, neither the inquest nor the *Cambridge Chronicle* mention any burial arrangements, but the *Bury St Edmunds and Norwich Post*, which also reported the case, said she was buried in the highway.²⁰ The fifth case of *felo-de-se* in this sequence was Richard Hubbard of Little Downham, who took laudanum on 25 May 1816. At an inquest at the *Windmill* public house at Little Downham on 26 May William Tingley (probably a relative of Sarah Tingley who testified at Elizabeth Carter's inquest), and Robert Murrel stated that Richard Hubbard appeared sober and clear-headed after taking poison, and had said that he would have

done so the previous day if he had made his peace with God. Hugh Robert Evans' report does not mention burial arrangements, neither was Richard Hubbard's suicide reported in the local press. Possibly the news was overshadowed by agricultural demonstrations then taking place at Littleport and elsewhere (CRO, Es/Co/P.115).

In the other twelve cases of self-murder for which reports survive (the depositions never use the expression 'suicide') the verdict was 'that the deceased, being a lunatic did hang, (or poison, or drown) himself (or herself)'.²¹ James Read, aged twelve, who hanged himself at Stretham on 21 October 1800 (described by two witnesses as 'a boy of weak intellect, not like other boys') was considered mentally unbalanced because of his youth (CRO, Es/Co/P.29). When John Golding hanged himself at Wentworth on 8 October 1796 a female acquaintance testified that he had been 'melancholy and uneasy in mind' for six months (CRO, Es/Co/P.2). When William Johnson, an Ely tailor, drowned himself in a well on 25 June 1799, his wife and two other people said he frequently showed signs of depression, especially after drinking, and believed he had neglected his family (CRO, Es/Co/P.20). There was at least one witness to attest to depression or mental instability when William Murfitt and Ann Sears of Manea hanged themselves on 27 June and 18 October 1803, when Ann Freeman of Littleport poisoned herself on 27 March 1810, when Thomas Talbot of Ely drowned himself on 29 November 1811, and when John Hopkin of Downham hanged himself on 17 August 1816 (CRO, Es/Co/P. P.46; P.47; P.93; P.104; P.117). When Thomas Curtis of Manea cut his throat on 23 April 1816 several people observed that violent efforts were made to restrain him, leaving little doubt as to his mental condition (CRO, Es/Co/P.114).

The two cases of self-murder where a lunacy verdict was returned but where depositions have not survived were Ann Craddock who drowned herself in a well on 1 August 1799, and Sarah Gile who hanged herself on 21 July 1804.²²

Coroners' juries may have exercised discretion in returning verdicts. When Gotobed Goody of Witchford hanged himself on 27 August 1805 his wife testified that he had been in sound mind, but it is possible that the jurors returned a lunacy verdict to save her distress, and prevent the State seizing his goods (CRO, Es/Co/P.61). Conversely, available information on Jane Bennet and Thomas Howard, who took their lives in 1764 and 1765, suggests that they were mentally unstable, possibly from the

situation in which they found themselves. But since they killed another person in the process of taking their own lives the jurors may have wished to punish them for murder, and accordingly authorised roadside burial.

The tradition of driving a stake through a suicide's corpse during burial may have derived from a belief that this would prevent the ghost from rising. Umfreville wrote: 'This practice hath no countenance from the coroner's warrant, though it may serve to make the ignominy the more notorious'.²³

There is one documented Cambridgeshire example. At Oakington on 15 June 1768 Richard Cole, a horsekeeper, hanged himself.

As it did not appear to the coroner's jury that he was or had been disordered in his senses, or in any other ways affected by misfortunes, they brought in their verdict *felo-de-se*, and he was accordingly buried in a cross-way, with a stake drove through his body.²⁴

The tradition of a tree growing from the stake driven through a suicide or murderer's body symbolises life arising from death, or the cycles of death, burial and rebirth, and planting and harvest. Parallels include the legend of the trees that grew and intertwined from the graves of Tristram and Iseult. 'The Cruel Tree', which may have marked the site of a gallows at a crossroads of the Great North Road between Buckden and Brampton, was said to have grown from a stake driven through the body of a murderer who had been hanged there. A print in the Norris Museum at St Ives shows the tree with three blocks at the base, which may either have been tombstones, or stakes driven through corpses. 'The Cruel Tree' was destroyed by roadworks in 1865.²⁵

Enid Porter published a study of the diary of Willie Tredgett, a Victorian resident of West Wrattling. In 1885 Willie Tredgett described a journey to Castle Camps, passing 'Barrack's Tree', which had grown from an ash stake driven through the body of 'Barrack', a highwayman who was executed and buried by the road. Possibly this was associated with George Miller's burial, mentioned previously, as nobody called Barrack is mentioned in Castle Camps parish registers.²⁶

Perhaps the best known wayside grave in Cambridgeshire is 'The Boy's Grave', on the B 1506 (part of the Icknield Way) at the junction of the parishes of Chippenham and Kennett with Moulton in Suffolk, (National Grid Reference TL 687 661). My grandmother, Mrs Margaret Halliday (née Starling) was born nearby in Ashley in 1878, and lived with considerable vitality until 1976. She said a shepherd boy believed he had lost a sheep. Afraid of being blamed for its theft, and hanged

or transported to Australia, he hanged himself. When the sheep were counted none was missing. As a self-murderer he was buried at a crossroads on the parish boundary. At the start of this century the grave was marked by a large, grass-covered mound, which was maintained by road workers. When I first saw 'The Boy's Grave' as a child, in the early 60s, it was marked by a small earth mound, about three feet long and two feet high, usually covered with flowers, on the northeastern angle of the crossroad. This mound has since disappeared, but there is now a patch of ground about ten feet from the main road which is still tended and marked with fresh flowers. Efforts to trace the truth behind the story of the shepherd have been unsuccessful. The details of the story can neither be proved nor disproved, but the grave is at an appropriate location for a suicide burial. If, as my grandmother asserted, the shepherd boy was afraid of being transported to Australia for sheep stealing, his death would have taken place between 1787 and 1847, when this punishment was enforced. Presumably he was aged at least fourteen at his death. From about the 1930s a tradition held that the boy had been a gypsy, and that gypsies tend the grave in secret. Although gypsies are excellent horsemen, they do not normally keep sheep. This recent tradition may represent a belief that a family or wider community could claim the body by tending the grave.²⁷

The true story behind one Cambridgeshire wayside grave can be established. At Peterborough on May 22 1811 Elizabeth James, a young woman of 22, being disappointed in hopes of marriage, took arsenic. She regretted her action, but died twelve hours later. (Umfreville stated that a person might take action to end their life, and then regret this, but the crime could not be purged by repentance.)²⁸ The fact that a person regretted the action might indeed have been taken as proof of their sanity. Elizabeth James was buried near the Spalding Road, attended by six female relatives dressed in white, before many onlookers (*Stamford Mercury* 31 May 1811: 3, col. 2; *Camb. Chron.*, 7 June 1811: 3, col. 2). Andrew Percival's *Notes On Old Peterborough* (Peterborough, 1905: 31-2), said the *Girl's Grave* was once marked by a small gravestone in a cottage garden at the crossroads of Crawthorne Lane (now Burghley Road) and Park Road (which lay in the general direction of Spalding). This must have been Elizabeth James' grave. Percival added that a stake was driven through the girl's body, but this probably was not the case, not being mentioned in contemporary accounts of Elizabeth James'

burial. Although the grave was known and recognised, it took less than a century for the suicide's identity to be forgotten.

Catherine Parsons and Enid Porter recorded traditions concerning Cambridgeshire 'wise women' or witches. 'Daddy Witch', a notorious Horseheath witch, was supposedly buried in the middle of the road between the main village settlement and Horseheath Green. Local folklore said that the grave stayed dry in the rain, and one could obtain good luck by nodding nine times before passing over it. A Bartlow witch was also supposed to have been buried at a crossroad in the village, where a mound was seen as late as the 1930s.²⁹

The practice of roadside burial was abolished by an act of 4th George IV c. 42 on 8 July 1823. After this those who took their lives were to be buried in cemeteries between 9 pm and midnight, without ceremony.³⁰ Hugh Robert Evans held an inquest on Elizabeth Atkin of Ely, who poisoned herself on Saturday 1 August 1823, and was declared a *felo-de-se* (CRO, Es/Co/P.133). The *Cambridge Chronicle* reported how 'the poor woman was buried by torch light at ten o'clock on Saturday night' (15 August 1823: 3, col. 4).

From the nineteenth century there may have been a change in attitudes to those who took their own lives, as shown by the manner in which the expression 'suicide' was to replace the stronger phrase 'self-murder'. There was greater sympathy for those who took their own lives, who were seen increasingly as objects of pity, rather than loathing. Hugh Robert Evans' inquests show that by the late eighteenth century coroners and their juries were more likely to return a verdict of lunacy rather than *felo-de-se* when a person took their life. There appears to have been a general predisposition to declare a lunacy verdict unless there was strong evidence to the contrary. With eighteenth- and nineteenth-century population growth, and improvements in transport, rural crossroads may have seemed less remote, and there may have been greater aversion to burying the dead in areas that were no longer seen as so distant from settlement, or not designated as official burial grounds. (Even executed criminals were to be buried in the prison where they were hanged.) Most burials mentioned in this article failed to pass into popular memory, and may have been forgotten quite rapidly. By the nineteenth century the practice may no longer have been regarded as a deterrent to prevent others from taking their lives. Some burials have been remembered due to the melodramatic quality of the story behind them, such as those of the *Boy's Grave* on the county boundary, or

that of Elizabeth James of Peterborough, even so it only took a century for the identity of the person buried there to be obscured. The abolition of roadside burial represented part of a general change in the popular perception of death.

Endnotes

- ¹ For a survey of the literature on suicide and attitudes to this subject see M. MacDonald, 'The secularization of suicide in England, 1660-1800', *Past and Present* 111 (May 1986), 50-99.
- ² David Hill, 'Bran Ditch: the burials reconsidered', *PCAS* 66 (1975), 123-8; W.M. Palmer, C. Fox & W. Duckworth, 'Excavations in the Cambridgeshire dykes: Bran or Heydon ditch, first report', *PCAS* 27 (1924-5), 16-42; W.M. Palmer & T.C. Lethbridge, 'Excavations in the Cambridgeshire dikes: Bran ditch, second report', *PCAS* 30 (1927-8), 80-88; W.M. Palmer, T.C. Lethbridge & C. Leaf, 'Further excavations at the Bran Ditch', *PCAS* 32 (1930-31), 54-6.
- ³ 'Medieval Britain in 1977', *Medieval Archaeology* 22 (1978), 186; A. Taylor, 'A saxon glass beaker from a possible round barrow, and a medieval gallows site at Dry Drayton', *PCAS* 71 (1981), 90-91.
- ⁴ J. Pope (ed.), *Homilies of Ælfric*, Early English Text Society, (London, 1968), ii: 259-60; cited in A. Meaney, 'Ælfric and idolatry', *Journal of Religious History* 13 (1984), 130-31.
- ⁵ On the folklore surrounding these subjects see James Hastings (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (London, 1908-26) sv Crossroad; Suicide.
- ⁶ William Harrison, The description of England, book 2, chapter 11, in Raphael Holinshead, *The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1807 edition) i: 312.
- ⁷ All parish registers cited in this article can be consulted in the Cambridge Record Office (CRO).
- ⁸ Pembroke College Library Manuscripts, Barham, S.14.a, p. 5.
- ⁹ P.H. Reaney, *The Place Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely*, English Place Name Society, vol. xix (Cambridge, 1943), 110.
- ¹⁰ MacDonald 1986, 52-7; *The Oxford English Dictionary* (London & Oxford, 1989), sv suicide.
- ¹¹ Michael Dalton, *The Country Justice* (1st ed., 1618), 208-9.
- ¹² Michael Dalton, *The Country Justice* (3rd ed., 1635), 235.
- ¹³ For a history of the office of coroner see R. Hunnisett, *The Medieval Coroner* (Cambridge, 1961). Also of local interest is D.V. Durell, 'Some historical notes on the Cambridge City Coronership', *Bulletin of the Cambridgeshire Local History Council* 35 (1980), 14-17.
- ¹⁴ Edward Umfreville, *Lex Coronatoria, or The Office and Duty of Coroners* (1st ed., 1761), i: 1-10, 358-65.
- ¹⁵ C.F. Tebbutt, *Huntingdonshire Folklore* (St Ives, 1984), 19, citing *The Huntingdon, Bedford and Peterborough Gazette and Weekly Advertiser* 30 July 1814, 179, col. 2; *The Cambridge Chronicle (Camb. Chron.)*, 29 July 1814, 3, col. 2 mentions the event, but does not give details of the burial.
- ¹⁶ Hugh Robert Evans took his sons, 'Hugh Robert Evans the younger' and William, into partnership, to start Evans and Sons, which operated in Ely until the 1960s. Documents from Evans and Sons, solicitors, can be seen at CRO, class number 283.
- ¹⁷ Notebooks detailing inquests from September 1786 to April 1808, CRO, Es/Co/R1; April 1808-May 1816, CRO, Es/Co/R2; July 1816-October 1827, CRO, Es/Co/R3. Forms detailing Hugh Robert Evans' travel expenses as coroner, CRO, Es/Co/P.263. Depositions from September 1786 to June 1823, CRO, Es/Co/P.1-131.
- ¹⁸ CRO, Es/Co/P.21; *Camb. Chron.* 6 July 1799, 3, col. 3; 21 September 1799, 3, col. 3.
- ¹⁹ CRO, Es/Co/P70; *Camb. Chron.* 10 January 1807.
- ²⁰ CRO, Ex/Co/P89; *Camb. Chron.* 13 May 1809, 3, col. 3; *Bury and Norwich Post* 10 May 1809, 2, col. 3; see also *Norwich Mercury* 13 May 1809, 3, col. 5.
- ²¹ Verdicts are entered in Hugh Robert Evans' notebooks, CRO, Es/Co/R.1-3.
- ²² Details of Ann Craddock and Sarah Gile appear in Hugh Robert Evans' notebooks, CRO, Es/Co/R.1-3.
- ²³ Umfreville, *op. cit.* (1761), i: 8.
- ²⁴ *Camb. Chron.*, 18 June 1768, 2, col. 4.
- ²⁵ Tebbutt, *op. cit.* (1984), 17-18.
- ²⁶ Enid Porter, 'Willie Tredgett's diary', *Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and Peterborough Life* January 1969, 28-30.
- ²⁷ The earliest published account of the story appears in Charles G. Harper, *The Newmarket, Bury, Thetford and Cromer Road* (London, 1904) 168-9. Versions of the story also appear in Enid Porter, *The Folklore of East Anglia* (London, 1974), 40, and *Folklore, Myths and Legends of Britain* (Reader's Digest Association, 1977), 240. *The Newmarket Journal*, August 15 1985, 6, reported that Angela Redshaw, a woman from Northolt in Middlesex had maintained the grave. A file of material on the grave, collected in 1935, can be seen in the archives of the now defunct Eastern Counties Folklore Society, Cambridge University Library, additional manuscripts 7515, but this contains little further information of significance.
- ²⁸ Umfreville, *op. cit.* (1761) i: 4.
- ²⁹ C. Parsons, Notes on Cambridgeshire witchcraft, *PCAS* 19 (1915) 39; E. Porter, *Cambridgeshire Customs and Folklore* (London, 1969), 161, 163-4.
- ³⁰ A copy of the 1823 act is filed with Hugh Robert Evans' papers, CRO, Es/Co/P.285.

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Books: Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Vol.3*, ed. by William Smith (London 1862) pp.23-4.

Theses: Mark Campbell, 'The changing residential patterns in Toronto, 1880-1910' (unpubl. M.A. thesis, University of Toronto 1971).

Articles: K.R. Dark, 'Archaeological survey at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, 1984', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* 74 (1985) pp.81-4.

Chapters in books: John Patten, 'Changing occupational structures in the East Anglian countryside, 1500-1700', in H.S.A. Fox and R.A. Butlin (eds), *Change in the Countryside: Essays on Rural England, 1500-1900* (London 1979) pp.103-21.

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