**Dick Turpin, the Man, the Myth, the Oak Tree**

By David Hobbs

In April 1739, Richard Turpin, a pockmarked Essex Butcher, was hanged at York for crimes against His Majesty’s Highways. He smiled, swaggered, gave keepsakes to the crowd and caused a stir by giving a married lady a gold ring before throwing himself off the hanging platform and dying immediately. It was the way a highwayman was meant to behave. However, as James Sharpe shows in his book *Dick Turpin: The Myth of the English Highwayman*, it is probably the only time that reality matches the myth.

**Gregory gang**

Born in 1705, the son of an Essex butcher and innkeeper, Turpin was a member of the Gregory Gang and progressed from poaching deer to raiding farmhouses around London, stealing valuables and terrorising the occupants. Justice moved fast and, by late 1735, all but Turpin and a coin clipper called Thomas Rowland had been caught.

The pair now turned their attentions to highway robbery, staging hold-ups on the main coaching routes out of London, concentrating on the rich pickings of Barnes, Putney and Richmond. These were not the glamorous encounters, but scrappy, violent ambushes where you could lose far more than just your dignity.

**Little evidence**

According to Sharpe, there is little evidence that Turpin even owned a horse called Black Bess and certainly not the one crowned, the other, “the uncrowned King of Finchley”.

Dick Turpin, probably owes at least as much to myth as it does to history.

(Dick Turpin: The Myth of the English Highwayman, by James Sharpe, published by Profine, £15.99)

---

**Good Food, Good Company**

Park House’s future may be uncertain but in the past it had a valuable function for local elderly people. In November 1975, the forerunner of Finchley local Neighbourhood Association, carried the following article and letter:

“Park House has opened its doors to the senior citizens of E.F. The atmosphere is congenial with the attraction of food, television and good company. Lunch is available for 25p but they can only cater for 15 people at a time. Obviously we need somewhere larger to cater for more people. Here is a letter from George and Lily Jarman.”

“It is now three weeks since Park House has been available to senior citizens of East Finchley: comfortable surroundings, excellent food and relaxation from 10 till 4, Monday to Friday. . . . The cheerfulness of all the staff here has to be seen to be believed. Our humble thanks to the warden, Amos Santalaya. . . . The needs of the elderly in East Finchley far exceed the number of meals available. I look forward to the time when we will have a dining hall somewhere in the High Road where 40 or 50 dinners could be served. Old people’s welfare is priority no. 1 in East Finchley.”

---

**The East Finchley Dental Centre**

Dedicated to making you smile!

- NHS & Private Patients Welcome
- Friendly, Experienced Dental Team
- Special Care for Nervous Patients, Children, Disabled and The Elderly
- Preventative Care
- Cosmetic Treatment, Teeth Whitening,
- Mercury Free White Fillings
- Crowns, Bridges and Dentures
- 24 Hour Emergency Cover
- Open 9am - 6pm Weekdays
- Sat (by arrangement)

Tel: 020 8444 3436
144, High Road, East Finchley, London N2 9ED

---

**KF ELECTRONICS**

Local Independent Retailer in Electronics and Computers

We deal in all makes and models of Plasma, TV, DVD, VCR, DAB, House Utensils, Radion, Alarm Clocks, Telephone Accessories, Washing Machines, Fridge Freezers, Refrigerators, Microwave, Cameras, Computers and many more.

We handle all upgrade computers and all computer parts are available.

Undeniable Prices

Tel: 020 8815 9898
93 High Road, East Finchley, London N2 8AG