

## THE MURDER OF PC GEORGE CLARK, 1846

### Part 2 of 4: Brutal and shocking killing

Search parties immediately began combing Clark's beat, concentrating on ditches and ponds in case he had fallen in and drowned. A letter was sent to Clark's family in Bedfordshire, asking if he'd gone home or contacted them at all. He was due to be married soon to Elizabeth How, a young lady from Eversholt, near his home village. Had he abandoned his duties to be with her? But the reply was negative – nobody had heard from him.

Four days later, on the evening of Friday 3 July, the search reached Thornton's Farm in Rush Green, just outside the area of Clark's beat.

After the police had dragged the farmyard pond, the farmer's wife Elizabeth Page told them about another, smaller pond nearby. She ordered two of her sons to show them the way.



A farmhouse near Dagenham (Thorntons Farm),  
watercolour by Thomas Dibdin (*Valence House*)

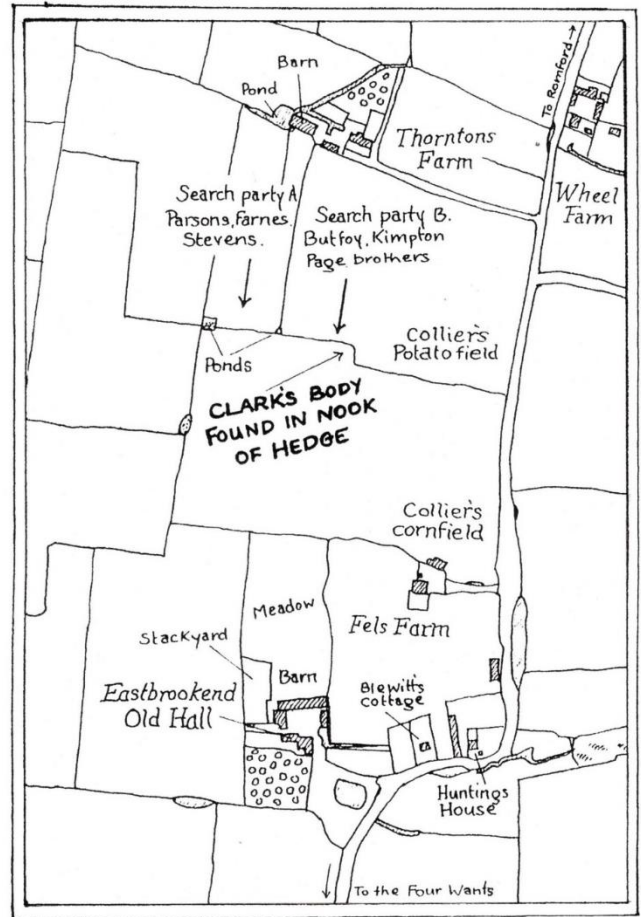
They needed to cross a potato field, go through a gap in a hedge, cross a ditch and then follow the edge of a cornfield known as Barn Field. PC Thomas Kimpton, leading the way, was the first to see a police truncheon lying on the ground.

As he and PC Abia Butfoy stopped to look at it, 12 year-old William Page scampered ahead and found Clark's cutlass stuck into a hedge. He pulled it out, turned and immediately saw the body. Clark was lying on his back, one leg crossed over the other. His right hand was tightly clutching a handful of corn.

A surgeon, Joseph Collin, was summoned from Romford. He saw that Clark had been the victim of a ferocious attack. "I saw a large opening in the skull six or eight inches wide. Bits of skull were embedded in the ground and had to be dug out with a knife. There was also a deep wound in the throat, and another one under his right ear coming out on the other side of the neck".

Plan of the murder scene, drawn by Lee Sheldon based on the 1844 tithe map of Dagenham.

The spot is now inside the car park of Barking & Dagenham College (pictured below)



Clark's body was lifted onto a door, carried to one of Farmer Ralph Page's carts and driven away. Hunter's Hall Farm in Oxlow Lane happened to be vacant, so the body rested there overnight, probably in an outbuilding.

The South and West Essex Coroner, Charles Carne Lewis, opened the inquest at Hunter's Hall the following afternoon, Saturday 4 July. After hearing evidence from the police and the surgeon, the coroner adjourned the inquest for a fortnight.



Hunters Hall Farm  
(LBB Archives at Valence House)



Although George Clark had only lived in Dagenham for six weeks, it was decided to bury him in the parish churchyard the following day. The ceremony was led by the Vicar of Dagenham, Thomas Lewis Fanshawe. Mourners included Clark's mother Charlotte, many local residents and a large contingent of police.

Miniature of the Reverend Thomas Lewis Fanshawe (*Valence House*)



Crown Street, Dagenham, leading towards the church. Clark's funeral procession would have passed along here on Sunday 5 July 1846 (*LBBB Archives at Valence House*)

**See also:**

- Part 1: Introducing the George Clark case
- Part 3: The murder investigation
- Part 4: George Clark remembered

*Text by Linda Rhodes, Lee Shelden and Kathryn Abnett, July 2022*