

THE MURDER OF PC GEORGE CLARK, 1846

Part 4 of 4: George Clark remembered

George Clark has always been one of Dagenham's local heroes. He was summed up by the writer Refero in 1898 as "A brave young constable, who so long ago, in the performance of his duty, was faithful even unto death".

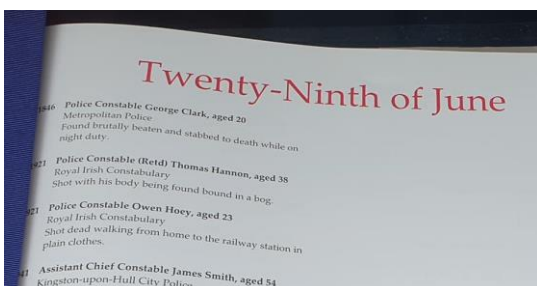
In 1996 a series of events took place to mark the 150th anniversary of his murder. These included the restoration of his memorial in Dagenham parish churchyard and an exhibition at Eastbrook School.

Also, a tree was planted to Clark's memory in Eastbrookend Country Park, close to his beat (pictured right)



To mark the 175th anniversary in 2021, this memorial bench was placed in Eastbrookend Country Park, close to the Discovery Centre. The inscription reads "In memory of PC George Clark 313K, brutally murdered in a cornfield at Eastbrookend while on duty on the night of the 29th or morning of the 30th June 1846 aged 20. No-one was ever brought to justice for his killing"

George Clark is also commemorated on the National Police Memorial in the Mall in Central London (right). It contains a Roll of Honour book. The pages are turned each day, and Clark's name appears on 29 June



The changing local scene

Much of Old Dagenham Village has disappeared since Clark's day. Buildings to survive include the parish church of St Peter & St Paul, the adjacent Minor Hall, the Old Vicarage and the Cross Keys pub.

However, the roads that Clark knew around Eastbrookend haven't greatly changed. The expanse of cornfields has been replaced by the landscape of Eastbrookend Country Park. The Farmhouse Venue (formerly the Farmhouse Tavern) was an actual farmhouse in 1846. Nearby Hooks Hall Farm still exists as the base for Eastminster School of Riding. Clark would also recognise the Bell House in Dagenham Road (right), which in his day was called Huntings. Eastbrookend Old Hall, where Clark is said to have confronted the corn stealers, has been demolished. Thorntons Farm is also lost to us.



Does Clark's ghost still walk his lonely beat along Dagenham Road?

A century ago, local inhabitants used to say "He haunts that road, you know". During the 1970s and 1980s a broad-shouldered figure wearing a cape was reportedly seen several times, walking from Eastbrookend to the Wantz crossroads and then turning into Rainham Road North. There were stories that Thorntons Farm was haunted by the apparition of a headless man. Interestingly, this legend links to a ghost seen in a house in Hooks Hall Drive in the 1960s. This figure was also headless and wore a shoulder cape.



Resources at Valence House

You'll find more information about Dagenham Village and other aspects of our local heritage at Valence House (pictured above), Becontree Avenue, Dagenham RM8 3HT. Dagenham's only surviving manor house, it houses Barking & Dagenham's Museum, Archives and Local Studies Centre.

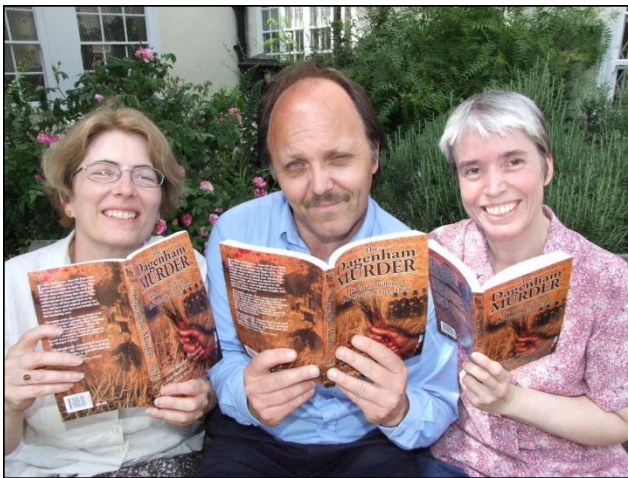
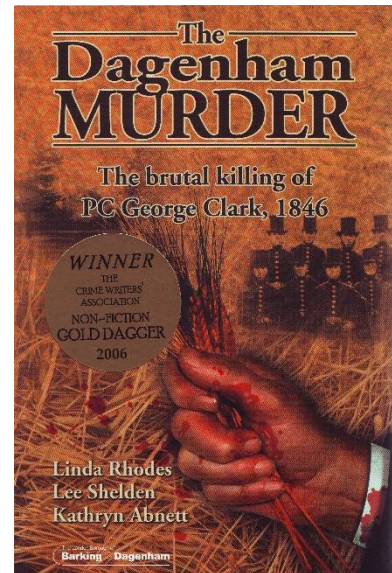
Website: <http://www.valencehousecollections.co.uk>

The Dagenham Murder book

The only full-length work on the case is *The Dagenham Murder: the brutal killing of PC George Clark, 1846* by Linda Rhodes, Lee Shelden and Kathryn Abnett. It was published in 2005 by the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham.

The following year it was awarded the prestigious Crime Writers Association Gold Dagger for Non-Fiction at a ceremony held at London's Waldorf Hilton. By a strange coincidence, this event occurred on 29 June 2006 – the exact 160th anniversary of the murder!

The book is on sale at the Eastbrookend Discovery Centre and at Valence House in Dagenham.



The authors (left to right) Linda Rhodes, Lee Shelden and Kathryn Abnett



Close-up of the Gold Dagger



Linda Rhodes being presented with the Gold Dagger (photo credit CWA)

See also:

- Part 1: Introducing the George Clark case
- Part 2: Brutal and shocking killing
- Part 3: The murder investigation

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