# Book bound in skin of infamous murderer discovered at Bury St Edmunds museum



A book bound in the skin of one of the UK’s most infamous murderers has been discovered in the office of Moyse's Hall Museum, located in Bury St Edmunds, England. The skin in question belonged to William Corder, who was hanged in 1828 for the murder of his lover, Maria Marten. This heinous crime, known as the Red Barn Murder, took place in 1827 and became a sensational case that captivated the public.

Maria Marten, who was led to believe that she and Corder would elope to Ipswich, met a tragic fate when she was shot by Corder, who subsequently concealed her body beneath the floorboards of a barn in Suffolk. Following a thorough investigation, Corder was apprehended, tried, and publicly executed on August 11, 1828, a grim spectacle that drew large crowds. Post-execution, portions of his skin were preserved for a book documenting the details surrounding his crime and trial, which has been part of the museum's collection since 1933.

The recently found book, discovered last year, is a second volume also crafted from Corder’s skin, although it is noted that this edition features skin only on the binding and corners, a contrast to the original volume which is fully bound in skin. Dan Clarke, the heritage officer at the museum, explained that the second book likely utilised leftover pieces of skin from the first volume's binding.

Clarke commented on the historical significance of the books, stating they hold "incredibly important" value, while also noting that in his 11 years at the museum, he has never received a complaint regarding the original book's display. The museum aims to present human remains and historical artefacts in an educational context, as heritage assistant Abbie Smith remarked, “If you did not tell people it was bound in human skin, I do not really think you would realise.”

However, opinions on the display of such items are not universally positive. Terry Deary, the author of the children's series "Horrible Histories," described the books as "sickening artefacts" and expressed a desire to see them destroyed. Deary highlighted that for many criminals of the time, the fear of dissection after execution was more dreadful than the hanging itself.

The practice of binding books in human skin, known as anthropodermic bibliopegy, was more common in the 19th century, typically undertaken either as a grim form of punishment or by medical professionals wishing to preserve a memento of their work. It is noted that a similar instance occurred in March 2024 when Harvard University removed a book bound with the skin of an unidentified woman from their collection, acknowledging previous failures in managing such artefacts responsibly.

The story of William Corder and the murder of Maria Marten continues to resonate in popular culture, having inspired numerous books, films, and plays over the years. The chilling tale and its associated artefacts remain emblematic of a darker chapter in British criminal history.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)