# Notable and mysterious cases from Gwent's history spanning over a century



Across the historic Gwent region, a number of notable and often puzzling cases have left lasting impressions over the years, spanning from the late 19th century through the 21st century. These cases feature a variety of circumstances ranging from mysterious deaths to unexplained disappearances and tragic crimes.

One case dates back to March 27, 1959, when 17-year-old Eirwen Jenkins tragically died in Oakdale following an illegal abortion procedure. Police discovered her deceased in a chair at a local house. Post-mortem examinations indicated that she died as a result of a haemorrhage, though it could not be conclusively proven whether this was due to natural causes or directly related to the procedure. At the time of her death, Miss Jenkins was four and a half months pregnant and passed away nine days after the operation. A woman, formerly a ward nurse at Cefn Mably from 1939, was prosecuted for performing the miscarriage using instrumental methods. The charge of manslaughter was not pursued due to insufficient evidence linking the haemorrhage directly to the procedure. Sentenced to nine months in prison, the judge highlighted the seriousness and danger of the crime while expressing relief that murder was not established. The South Wales Argus notes the renewed relevance of this case following recent changes to abortion laws in the United States.

Another unresolved death involved Dr Robert Ellison, aged 39, whose body was found in Camp Wood, Gwehelog near Usk on January 15, 1959. He had gone missing on May 14 of the previous year. Despite his initial intention to visit patients near Lydney, he was discovered approximately 30 miles away. His car was located in a Chepstow car park eight days after his disappearance. The inquest, held in Pontypool, returned an open verdict with police concluding there was no evidence of foul play.

In Newport, the mysterious disappearance of Stephanie Whittaker has baffled authorities since March 23, 1990. At age 34, Stephanie vanished during a brief walk from her home on Llanthewy Road to a local hall where she was due to meet a friend. Despite a Crimewatch appeal in 1994 and ongoing police interest, no significant leads have emerged, and the case remains unsolved with Gwent Police continuing to list her as missing.

The stabbing death of 25-year-old Otto Sandelin aboard the SS Gunnel, docked in Newport on August 5, 1955, also remains an area of historical curiosity. Sandelin died of multiple stab wounds, and a 48-year-old Finnish crew member was charged with his murder. The case was remanded awaiting further instructions, but subsequent details or outcomes have not been documented in available reports.

The body of John Henry Hayes, a 53-year-old colliery surface worker, was found at the base of a 12-foot seawall at Peterstone near the Bristol Channel on August 10, 1951. Found with significant head bruising inconsistent with a fall from the seawall, the inquest noted missing personal items including one shoe, false teeth, glasses, and a bottle of medicine scattered across the area. The coroner returned an open verdict, citing pulmonary congestion following coma due to head injuries and exposure as the cause of death.

In another tragic case involving infants, the body of a newborn baby boy was discovered aboard a Great Western Railway train at Old Oak Common sidings in Hammersmith on March 9, 1945. Similarly, a newborn baby boy was found on January 29, 2016, on wooded wasteland near Imperial Park industrial estate in Coedkernew, Newport. The infant was wrapped in a white towel bearing the inscription ‘St Anne’s’. Despite police appeals, neither the baby’s identity nor that of the mother has been established.

The death of Dean David Norman, aged 23, in Swansea in November 2002 marked a more recent fatality linked to violence. Mr Norman suffered injuries after an incident at the Time Nightclub on November 1, followed by a confrontation outside. Despite initially returning home with injuries, his condition worsened, and he died from head trauma after being admitted to Morriston Hospital. A 24-year-old man from Swansea was charged with murder in January 2003, and police sought information from witnesses present at the nightclub incident.

Going further back to November 26, 1899, the stabbing death of Michael Kenneally in Newport drew significant legal attention. The incident arose from a dispute involving Kenneally and six Spanish sailors near the Caledonian and Richmond public houses. The altercation ended with Mr Kenneally being fatally stabbed in the throat. Despite all six men being charged with murder owing to their involvement in the fight, they were acquitted after the trial. Evidence included blood-stained clothing and witness statements implicating multiple participants, but no single individual was conclusively identified as the attacker.

These historical cases from the old Gwent region remain points of interest and highlight a range of tragic and enigmatic events affecting the local communities over the decades. The South Wales Argus (Newport) carries these accounts, preserving their memory and offering insight into the region’s past.

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

## References

* <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/18955728.historical-true-crime-cases-newport-area/> - This article from the South Wales Argus covers various historical true crime cases in the Newport area, including the case of Eirwen Jenkins and other notable deaths and disappearances in Gwent region, corroborating the overall context and many case details presented.
* <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000104/19590330/200/0009> - This archived newspaper from 1959 reports on the case of Eirwen Jenkins’ death following an illegal abortion in Oakdale and the subsequent legal proceedings against the woman involved, matching the details about the cause of death and sentencing.
* <https://www.police.uk/pu/gwent/news/2020/missing-person-stephanie-whittaker/> - Gwent Police official missing persons page includes the case of Stephanie Whittaker, confirming her disappearance in 1990 from Newport and ongoing efforts to resolve the case with no current leads.
* <https://www.casemine.com/judgement/uk/5a8ff7e640233e7f57ac93b1> - A legal case record related to a criminal investigation into a stabbing aboard the SS Gunnel, supporting the information about Otto Sandelin’s stabbing death and the involvement of a Finnish crew member.
* <https://newportpast.com/1951-john-henry-hayes-death/> - This local history archive describes the 1951 death of John Henry Hayes at Peterstone, including details of the bruising, personal items found, and the open verdict delivered, validating the facts from the article.