

An interesting sidelight into the school's history was found in a recent review of our Archive listings. These include two letters and a petition concerning the murder of Edith Jeal (aged 5). One letter was from Thomas Griffiths, builder and contractor of 106 St George's Road, Brighton, to H. Hebbert [School Treasurer], enclosing a letter from Robert Burmann, Arlington House, Eastern Road, Brighton, 17 Dec 1891, and a petition to the Trustees of St Mary's Hall from local residents requesting the demolition of the shed or barn which was the site of the murder. There is also a copy of the reply from HH, 22 Dec 1891.

Edith was murdered on 10 December 1891, and her body was found in a shed in a field from St Mary's Hall by RB, as a playground for Arlington House School. George Henry Wood was found guilty of the murder and hanged at Lewes Prison on 26 April 1892.

**CRUEL MURDER AT BRIGHTON.**

On Friday a very painful impression was created in the east part of Brighton by the discovery of the dead body of a little girl in a shed situate in an enclosed school playground abutting on the Eastern-road, near the Sussex County Hospital, under circumstances which indicate that a foul crime had been committed. The name of the unfortunate victim is Edith Jeal, aged five years, who lived with her parents in Bedford-buildings, Upper Bedford-street. She was out on the previous evening with her little brother, making small purchases at neighbouring shops, and it appears that when she had come out of a greengrocer's store the girl, whom he had left outside, had disappeared. He at once went home and reported the fact, whereupon the police were communicated with, and search was made throughout the night, but without success. About 11 on Friday morning a man in the employ of the Corporation had occasion to enter the shed, and there he discovered the remains of the child, horribly disfigured, and bearing traces of the foulest ill-usage. The police having been communicated with, the body was removed to the mortuary at the district police-station in Freshfield-road, where a medical examination revealed that the poor girl had been outraged and then strangled to death. It is believed that the murderer brought his victim over the wall enclosing the field at a point where it is not high, the darkness of the night and the boisterous weather favouring his movements. Great sympathy is felt for the bereaved parents. The father is a respectable man employed at a local dairy, and he has eight other children.

On Friday Detective-inspector Jupp arrested a single man, named George Henry Wood, aged twenty-nine, employed in the Goods Department at the Brighton Railway Station, on the charge of murdering the child. Accused was brought to the Town Hall, and placed with other men. Several children who had been accosted by a man were called, and they picked out Wood as the person who had spoken to them. A circumstance that led to the arrest of Wood was that a man dressed in railway attire was seen on the previous night drunk in the neighbourhood where the murdered girl lived and was also observed to speak to several children. One person saw a railway man drunk close to the spot where the body was found, with a child in his arms. Accused says he was at the circus, in another part of the town, at eight o'clock in the evening, but a constable states that he saw him in one of the streets near where the child lived at the time. Wood lives within 200 yards of the scene of the murder.

The man George Wood was brought up at Brighton Police Court, on Saturday. Prisoner stood with folded arms, and appeared unconscious at his position. Edward Villiers, who found the child, said that her clothes were disarranged, and she had apparently been outraged. The witness's description of the body caused a great sensation in Court. William Stanford corroborated, adding that the mark on the child's throat seemed to indicate that she had been strangled. The girl's father deposed to vainly searching for her nearly all Thursday night. Detective Inspector Jupp said that prisoner faintly said, "No, sir," when charged. When stripped in the cell blood was found upon his shirt and other clothing. The shirt had apparently been washed, and witness considered the marks on prisoner's leggings were mingled blood and dirt stains. In answer to a question, prisoner said that he understood the charge adding, "I don't remember one particle about it." Prosecution having intimated their intention to communicate with the Treasury the prisoner was remanded.

George Henry Wood, railway porter, was again remanded at Brighton, on Tuesday charged with wilfully murdering the little girl Edith Jeal. It was stated that the public prosecutor would take up the case, also that stains upon the prisoner's clothes would be carefully examined by an expert, and had been sent to Dr. Stevens for that purpose.

The funeral of the little girl, Edith Jeal, took place on Wednesday. The coffin was covered with flowers.

*Some Painful Lines on the*  
**DIABOLICAL MURDER**  
 OF LITTLE  
**EDITH JEAL,**  
 AGED 5 YEARS,  
 IN A FIELD, AT KEMP TOWN, BRIGHTON,  
 On Thursday, December 10th, 1891,  
 Written by C. F. BROWN, BRIGHTON.



Come, listen to my painful story,  
 And unto you I will unfold  
 Of a little girl who, in her glory,  
 Now is lying stiff and cold.  
 She left her home, and with her brother,  
 On an errand they were sent,  
 To get something in for their dear mother,  
 Hearts full of glee, these two, they went.

**CHORUS.**

Now she's gone—she knows no sorrow—  
 From this sinful world of ours;  
 But she'll wake again to-morrow,  
 Up in Heaven's sunny bowers.

To a certain shop, these dear beloved ones  
 Made their way, some things to buy;  
 The boy went in to make the purchase,  
 And left the little girl outside.  
 When he came out he could not find her,  
 He then soon made his way for home,  
 But without his darling little sister,  
 Who's missing form became soon known.

She soon was missed, and many people  
 Searched all night the child to find—  
 Father, mother, sisters, brothers—  
 Filled with grief and stricken minds.  
 Some wretched villian had betrayed her,  
 And took her in his arms away;  
 And nothing more was heard of Edie,  
 Until the morning of next day.

Dear Edith Jeal, she is the victim  
 Of this most cruel and horrid deed;  
 And by a vile and wretched villian,  
 There's not the slightest doubt to be.  
 In cold blood, this most disgusting monster,  
 Heaven bless the little child,  
 Although so loving and so innocent,  
 Cruelly murdered and defiled.

This wretch had taken his little victim  
 To a shed that dreary night;  
 And when they found her little body,  
 It was in a most distressing plight;  
 Maltreated, and with strangulation,  
 Soaked with blood were all her clothes;  
 Stiff and cold her little form lay,  
 What she went through God only knows.

Let us hope they've found the right and guilty,  
 The rope is far too good for him,  
 To serve him as he served his victim,  
 Who never knew the thought of sin.  
 We know her soul has gone to Heaven,  
 Where there is no grief or pain;  
 Let's hope her dear beloved parents  
 Their child one day will meet again.

WEST, Printer, Edward Street Brighton

Douglas d'Enno, whose book "East Brighton and Ovingdean Through Time" is referenced on our History page, covered this incident in his book "Foul Deeds and Suspicious Deaths Around Brighton" and references it also in "Brighton Crime & Vice 1800-2000" has most generously shared the relevant pages (with images) from both volumes with us to complement this item.

Mr d'Enno is a prolific author whose titles can be found [here](#).