

The Execution of Vivian Teed

6 May 1958

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SAFRDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1957

South Wales Evening Post

LATE
TOWN
FINAL

21d.

Assistant, arriving for work at a Swansea sub-post office, saw body through the letter-box

POSTMASTER MURDERED

Scotland Yard called in, says Police Chief

37-YEAR-OLD SUB-POSTMASTER WAS BATTERED TO DEATH WITH A HAMMER AT HIS HOME AT 370, CARMARTHEN-ROAD, FFORESTFACH, SWANSEA, LAST NIGHT. HE WAS WILLIAM WILLIAMS, A WIDOWER, WHO LIVED ALONE AT THE PREMISES WHERE HE WAS "CARRIED ON BUSINESS." "THIS IS SUSPECTED MURDER," SAID THE CHIEF POLICE OFFICER, MR. D. V. TURNER.

DETECTIVES OF THE LOCAL CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT ARE TODAY TRYING TO PIECE TOGETHER THE STORY OF MR. WILLIAMS'S LONE STRUGGLE TO DEATH WITH AN INTRUDER. HE SUSTAINED SEVERE HEAD INJURIES AND HIS BODY WAS FOUND IN AN UNBATTERED PASSAGE-WAY OF HIS LIVING QUARTERS.

Known as a "quiet sort of man," he was due to retire soon.

The Chief Constable announced this afternoon that Scotland Yard had been called in.

Detective Superintendent George Miller and a detective sergeant of Scotland Yard's Murder Squad left this afternoon for Swansea.

When his body was discovered at about 7.30 a.m. today he was dressed in day clothes, which suggests the attack occurred last night before he went to bed. A neighbour said she noticed a light at the post office all night and thought it unusual.

Safe intact

A safe in the post office was undisturbed. The safe cannot have been tampered with since the postmaster was found on a rug in the living room. The safe was intact and the contents were safe. Photographs were taken. Forensic experts were also there.

Blood spots

One spot of blood impregnated with iron particles was found in the passage. It was only a few inches from the door. The door was closed.

By 'EVENING POST' REPORTERS

Intent

Going through the post office's records, they could not find any entries for the postmaster. It is understood that the postmaster was not in the office at the time of the attack.

Along the entire strength of the Swansea S.D. was on the scene.



SCENE of the crime — Fforestfach Post Office where the postmaster, Mr. William Williams, was found dead today.

MINER'S UNEXPECTED HELP FOR MURDER INVESTIGATORS

POLICE investigating the case made his way to the door, so it is understood that



relative of the dead man, Mrs. Mary Roberts, was told of the death of her husband by the postmaster's assistant, Mr. Williams.

RODIES TAKEN

Swansea
Vivian Frederick Teed
May 1958

*The last man executed in Swansea
Gaol*

Whether Vivian Teed should have been hanged at all is an entirely different question. What is certain is that he was guilty. He beat an old man to death with a hammer. He hit him so hard and so often that the hammer broke. The only possible argument concerned his state of mind at the time of the killing. Just how disturbed was he? Some experts believed that he had a psychopathic personality. Others disagreed. He was a normal man who had done a horrible thing. Whilst on remand in Swansea prison he had been closely observed and appeared to be dangerously jealous, especially when his partner Beryl Doyle came to visit. But there were no apparent signs of mental impairment. He was sane enough to be executed.

Vivian Teed lived at 19 Manor Road in Manselton and at the time of the murder he was 24.

One of nine children there had been plenty of trouble in his life. He had joined the RAF but had frequently gone absent without leave. He had been imprisoned twice for assault. Teed had been living with Beryl in Limeslade but in late October 1957 she had a miscarriage and he was left to

his own devices. He had been unemployed since August but the last job he'd done, labouring for a builder, had been at 870 Carmarthen Road in Fforestfach. It was the post office and he knew his way around.

On the night of 15 November 1957 he went back. The post master was William Williams, who was 73 years old and had worked there for many years. Teed forced his way in at about 7.00 pm.

When Margaret John turned up for work in the Post Office the next morning she could not open the door. She looked through the letter box and saw Mr. Williams lying in the hall. The police forced their way in and found the floor slippery with blood. There were fragments of bone on the door mat and a trail of blood in the street. William Williams had been beaten to death with a hammer.



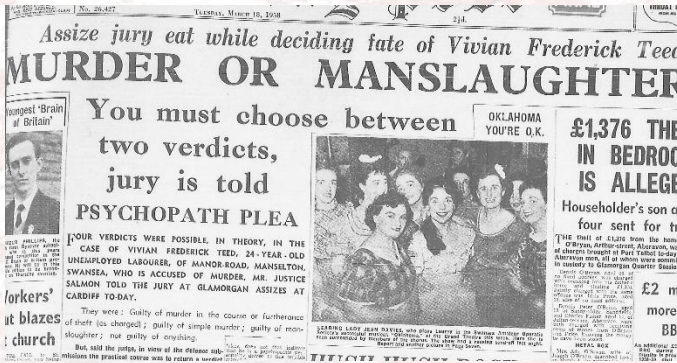
Teed was arrested three days later, initially denying any involvement in the crime. The Police then found blood on his jacket, trousers and shoes and very soon he confessed.

The first thing I did was to push him back. Then he started yelling and struggling with me. There was a hammer in my pocket which I had brought in case I had to force an entry. I knew that if I struggled with him too long somebody would hear and come and investigate, so I pulled the hammer out of my pocket and hit him. But he continued to struggle, so I kept on hitting him. In the end, he fell to the floor and dragged me down with him. Then he went quiet. I went and tried all the drawers to see if there was any money. I had a look around like. He was still moving and groaning, and then he started as if to get up. I didn't want him to see me, so I switched off the light and made for the door. Then he started to get up again. He had been struggling to get up all the time, but he couldn't get a footing. It was too slippery in the blood. The last thing I saw he was up on his knees. Then I left by the front door. That's all I want to say.

Teed had taken the hammer from his father's tool box. He had delivered at least 27 separate blows. Bones had been driven into the brain and the shaft of the hammer had broken.

His defence was the only one that was open to him. That some inner demons forced him to do it. But his original confession to the police suggested otherwise. Not only that, but also after the murder he had gone to the Cwmbwrla Inn and then to a café, where he had told Ron Williams that he'd attempted to rob the post office,

though he spared him the gruesome details. He clearly knew what he was doing.



The jury considered long and hard. Was his responsibility really diminished? They twice failed to reach a unanimous verdict. But on the third occasion they returned a guilty verdict. It was murder and he was sentenced to death. Whilst waiting in prison he was examined by Home Office psychiatrists and in their opinion there was no mental impairment. Petitions for mercy were rejected. He lost his appeal and there was no reprieve from the Home Secretary.

On 6 May 1958 at 9.00 am Vivian Teed was hanged, the last man to be executed in Swansea prison.

There is a chilling document in the West Glamorgan Archive. It once belonged to Reverend Norman, the chaplain of Swansea Prison, and it is his copy of the Order for the Day of Execution of Vivian Frederick Teed.

The day before the equipment had been thoroughly tested by the governor and the engineer. Then on 6 May all staff had to be on duty by 6.45 am.

'Breakfast to the condemned cell at 7.30 am and the Chaplain to attend at 8.00 am.'

Reverend Norman was asked to sit at the table in the cell with Teed. Then, once the gates of the prison had been locked, the Governor would enter the condemned cell with the Executioner at 8.58 am. The execution would take place at 9.00 am, with the medical officer's inspection of Teed at 9.02 am and the burial at 12.05 pm. The bureaucracy of death so precise and ordered, the banality of the organisation at odds with the thing they were carrying out. At the bottom of the Order there is also a handwritten note, addressed to Rev Norman, probably dictated by the Governor to his secretary.

As soon as executioner enters, stand up and move away from table in case there is a bit of a do. When prisoner leaves the condemned cell for the execution chamber follow. If he wants you to say a prayer do so – if he wants you to accompany him do so. If not keep clear of those engaged in this work won't you? Note: very short burial service at about 12.05 (robe in my office.)

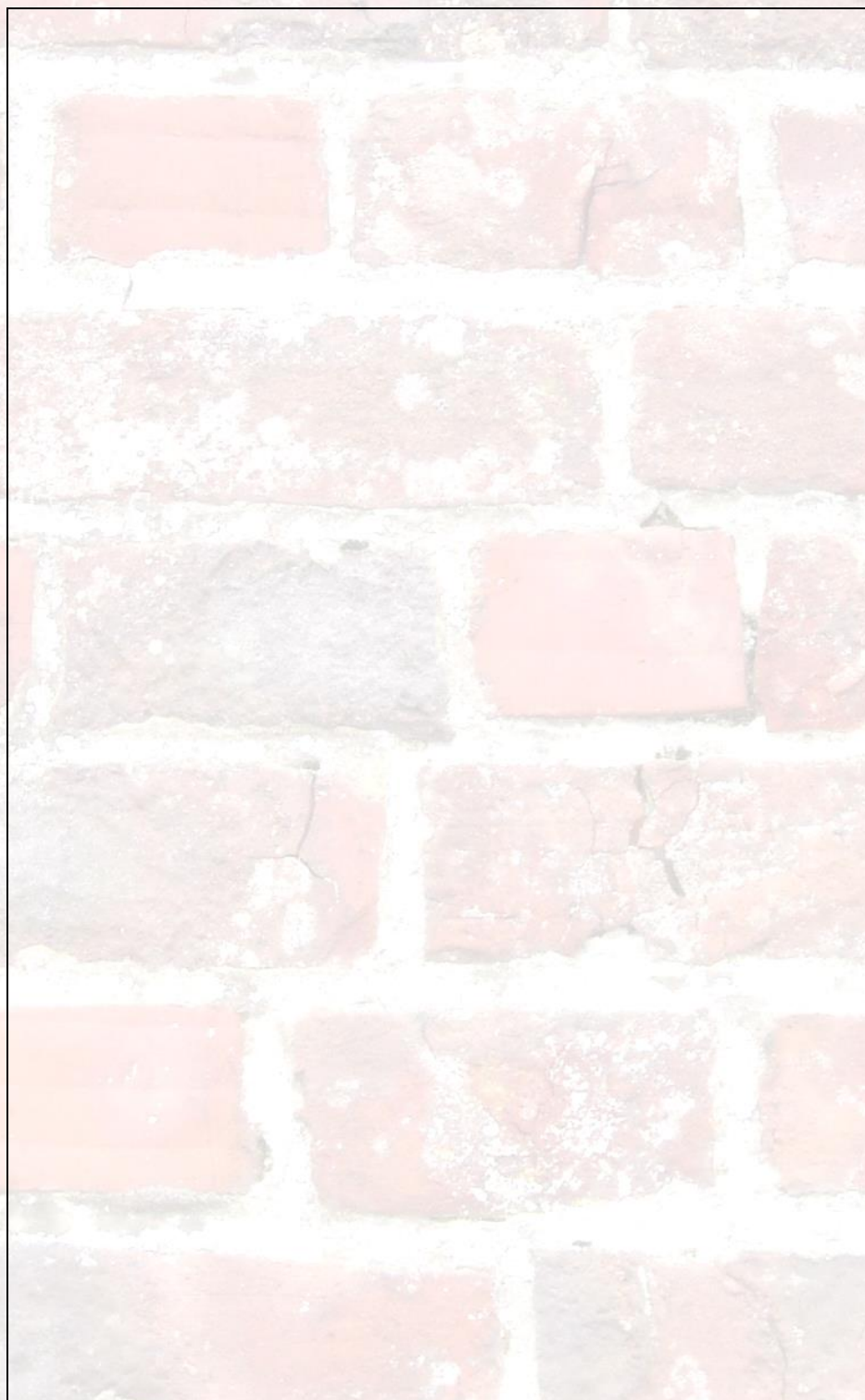
You can find this story in my book ***Swansea in the 1950s*** which is available in bookshops and on Amazon.

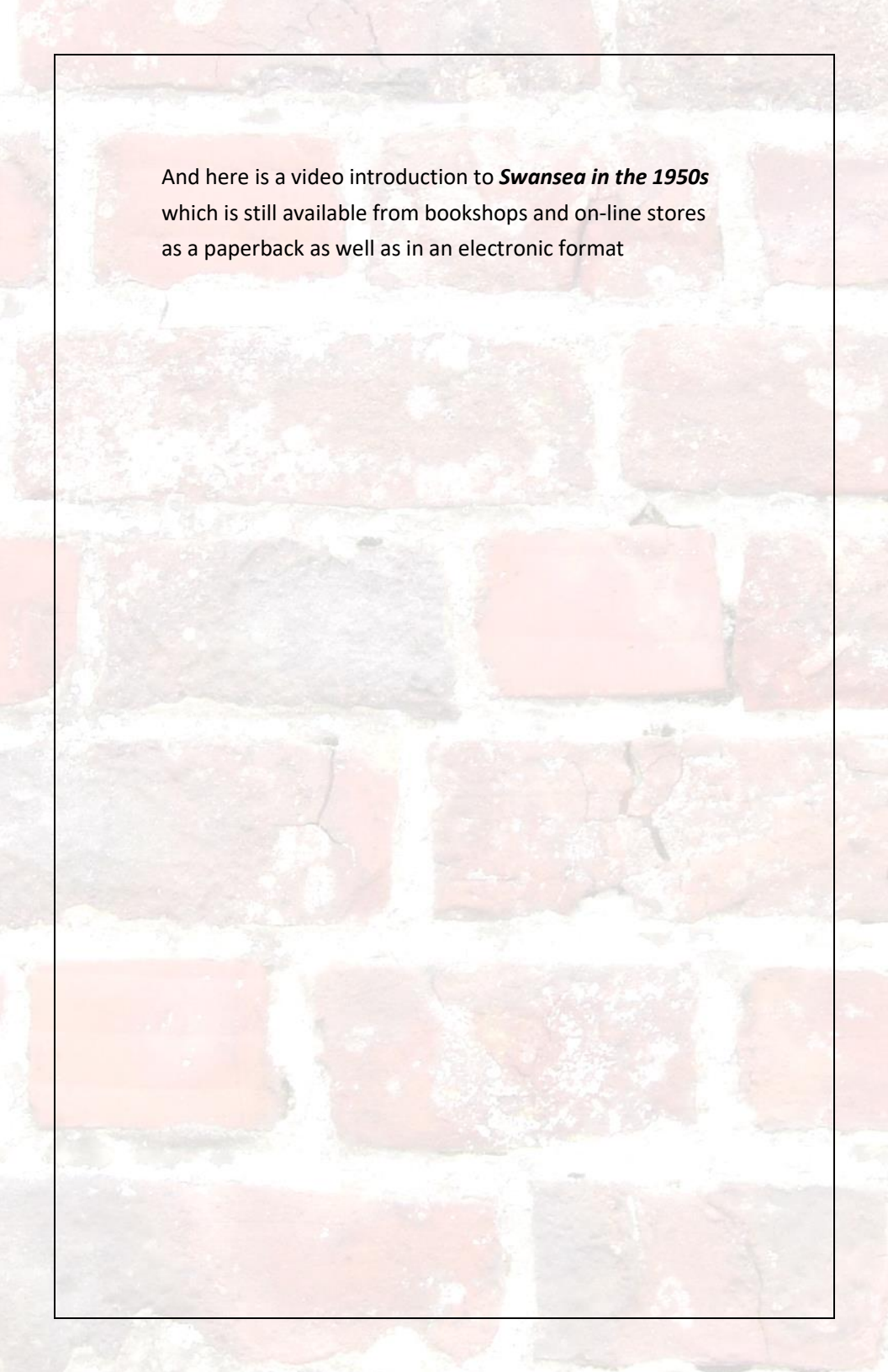


I do, however, have copies of another of my books, ***Swansea Murders*** available for sale on my website.

Go to www.geoffbrookes.co.uk

On the next page you can find a brief video which will introduce you to some of the stories that you can find inside





And here is a video introduction to ***Swansea in the 1950s*** which is still available from bookshops and on-line stores as a paperback as well as in an electronic format