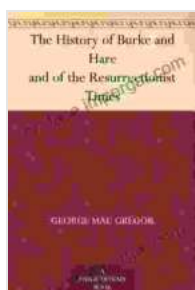


# The History of Burke and Hare: A Macabre Tale from the Resurrectionist Times

In the shadowy underworld of 19th-century Edinburgh, a sinister duo emerged, leaving an indelible mark on medical history. William Burke and William Hare, known as the notorious resurrectionists, engaged in a gruesome trade that would shock and horrify the city.



## The History of Burke and Hare and of the Resurrectionist Times

by Dr. William H. Reid MD MPH

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 516 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 384 pages  
Lending : Enabled



## The Anatomy Act and the Rise of Resurrectionists

In the early 1800s, Scotland's medical schools faced a shortage of cadavers for anatomical research. The Anatomy Act of 1828 attempted to address this issue by legalizing the sale of unclaimed bodies for dissection. However, the demand for corpses quickly outstripped the supply, giving rise to a clandestine market known as resurrectionism.



## **Burke and Hare: The Business of Death**

William Burke, an Irish immigrant, befriended William Hare, a lodging-house keeper. Together, they stumbled upon a gruesome business opportunity. Instead of exhuming graves, they would murder homeless people or unsuspecting lodgers, stealing their bodies for sale to Dr. Robert Knox, a prominent anatomy lecturer.

Burke and Hare's cold-blooded killings continued for several months, with their victims numbering at least 16. They lured their victims into Hare's lodging house, drugged them with whiskey, and then suffocated them. The bodies were then sold to Knox, who paid handsomely for the freshest specimens.

## **Public Outcry and the Trial**

As the murders continued, rumors and suspicion spread throughout Edinburgh. In October 1828, after a failed attempt to kill a woman named Mary Paterson, Burke and Hare were apprehended. The public was outraged by their gruesome crimes.

Burke and Hare were tried and found guilty of murder. Burke was executed in January 1829, and his body was publicly dissected in front of a large and horrified crowd. Hare, who turned King's evidence against Burke, was sentenced to transportation but later escaped from prison.

## **Aftermath and Legacy**

The Burke and Hare case sent shockwaves through the British Empire and beyond. It exposed the dark underbelly of the medical profession and the lengths to which some would go to obtain cadavers. The incident led to the establishment of the Anatomy Act of 1832, which prohibited the sale of unclaimed bodies and regulated anatomical research.

# WTF fun fact #9428

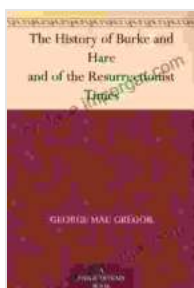
William Burke, who killed with his partner 16 persons and sold their bodies for use as specimens in anatomy classes of Edinburgh Medical School, was hanged and his corpse was publicly dissected and preserved in the anatomical museum of the same school.



Today, the story of Burke and Hare remains a chilling reminder of the desperation and depravity that can exist in society. Their crimes have been immortalized in literature, art, and popular culture, ensuring that their legacy as the notorious resurrectionists of Edinburgh will never be forgotten.

The history of Burke and Hare is a tale that intertwines the pursuit of medical knowledge with the horrors of murder and body snatching. It serves as a stark reminder of the ethical dilemmas that can arise when science and commerce collide.

Through their gruesome crimes, Burke and Hare exposed the dark secrets of the resurrectionist trade and forever changed the landscape of medical education. Their story continues to captivate and horrify, leaving an enduring mark on the annals of medical history.



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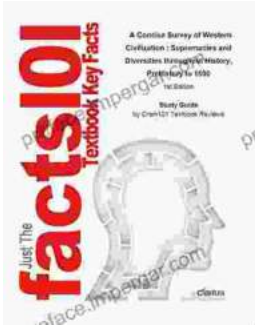
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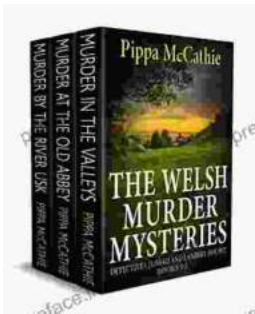
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