

= Cock Lane ghost =

The Cock Lane ghost was a purported haunting that attracted mass public attention in 1762 . The location was an apartment in Cock Lane , a short road adjacent to London 's Smithfield market and a few minutes ' walk from St Paul 's Cathedral . The event centred on three people : William Kent , a usurer from Norfolk , Richard Parsons , a parish clerk , and Parsons ' daughter Elizabeth .

Following the death during childbirth of Kent 's wife , Elizabeth Lynes , he became romantically involved with her sister , Fanny . Canon law prevented the couple from marrying , but they nevertheless moved to London and lodged at the property in Cock Lane , then owned by Parsons . Several accounts of strange knocking sounds and ghostly apparitions were reported , although for the most part they stopped after the couple moved out , but following Fanny 's death from smallpox and Kent 's successful legal action against Parsons over an outstanding debt , they resumed . Parsons claimed that Fanny 's ghost haunted his property and later his daughter . Regular séances were held to determine " Scratching Fanny 's " motives ; Cock Lane was often made impassable by the throngs of interested bystanders .

The ghost appeared to claim that Fanny had been poisoned with arsenic and Kent was publicly suspected of being her murderer . But a commission whose members included Samuel Johnson concluded that the supposed haunting was a fraud . Further investigations proved the scam was perpetrated by Elizabeth Parsons , under duress from her father . Those responsible were prosecuted and found guilty ; Richard Parsons was pilloried and sentenced to two years in prison .

The Cock Lane ghost became a focus of controversy between the Methodist and Anglican churches and is referenced frequently in contemporary literature . Charles Dickens is one of several Victorian authors whose work alluded to the story and the pictorial satirist William Hogarth referenced the ghost in two of his prints .

= = Background = =

In about 1756 ? 57 William Kent , a usurer from Norfolk , married Elizabeth Lynes , the daughter of a grocer from Lyneham . They moved to Stoke Ferry where Kent kept an inn and later , the local post office . They were apparently very much in love , but their marriage was short @-@ lived as within a month of the move Elizabeth died during childbirth . Her sister Frances ? commonly known as Fanny ? had during Elizabeth 's pregnancy moved in with the couple and she stayed to care for the infant and its father . The boy did not survive long and rather than leave , Fanny stayed on to take care of William and the house . The two soon began a relationship , but canon law appeared to rule out marriage ; when Kent travelled to London to seek advice he was told that as Elizabeth had borne him a living son , a union with Fanny was impossible . In January 1759 therefore , he gave up the post office , left Fanny and moved to London , intending to " purchase a place in some public office " in the hope that " business would erase that passion he had unfortunately indulged " . Fanny meanwhile stayed with one of her brothers at Lyneham .

Despite her family 's disapproval of their relationship , Fanny began to write passionate letters to Kent , " filled with repeated entreaties to spend the rest of their lives together " . He eventually allowed her to join him at lodgings in East Greenwich near London . The two decided to live together as man and wife , making wills in each other 's favour and hoping to remain discreet . In this , however , they did not reckon on Fanny 's relations . The couple moved to lodgings near the Mansion House , but their landlord there may have learnt of their relationship from Fanny 's family , expressing his contempt by refusing to repay a sum of money Kent loaned him ( about £ 20 ) . In response , Kent had him arrested .

While attending early morning prayers at the church of St Sepulchre @-@ without @-@ Newgate , William Kent and Fanny met Richard Parsons , the officiating clerk . Although he was generally considered respectable , Parsons was known locally as a drunk and was struggling to provide for his family . He listened to the couple 's plight and was sympathetic , offering them the use of lodgings in his home on Cock Lane , to the north of St Sepulchre 's . Located along a narrow , winding thoroughfare similar to most of central London 's streets , the three @-@ storey house was in a

respectable but declining area , and comprised a single room on each floor , connected by a winding staircase . Shortly after Mr and Mrs Kent ( as they called themselves ) moved in , Kent loaned Parsons 12 guineas , to be repaid at a rate of a guinea per month .

It was while Kent was away at a wedding in the country that the first reports of strange noises began . Parsons had a wife and two daughters ; the elder , Elizabeth , was described as a " little artful girl about eleven years of age " . Kent asked Elizabeth to stay with Fanny , who was then several months into a pregnancy , and to share her bed while he was away . The two reported hearing scratching and rapping noises . These were attributed by Mrs Parsons to a neighbouring cobbler , although when the noises re @-@ occurred on a Sunday , Fanny asked if the cobbler was working that day ; Mrs Parsons told her he was not . James Franzen , landlord of the nearby Wheat Sheaf public house , was another witness . After visiting the house he reported seeing a ghostly white figure ascend the stairs . Terrified , he returned home , where Parsons later visited him and claimed also to have seen a ghost .

As Fanny was only weeks away from giving birth Kent made arrangements to move to a property at Bartlet 's Court in Clerkenwell , but by January 1760 it was not ready and so they moved instead to an " inconvenient " apartment nearby , intending only a temporary stay . However , on 25 January Fanny fell ill . The attending doctor diagnosed the early stages of an eruptive fever and agreed with Kent that their lodgings were inadequate for someone at so critical a stage of pregnancy . Fanny was therefore moved , by coach , to Bartlet 's Court . The next day her doctor returned and met with her apothecary . Both agreed that Fanny 's symptoms were indicative of smallpox . On hearing this , Fanny sent for an attorney , to ensure the will she had had made was in good order , and that Kent would inherit her estate . An acquaintance of Kent 's , Stephen Aldrich , Rector of St John Clerkenwell , reassured her that she would be forgiven for her sins . She died on 2 February .

As sole executor of Fanny 's will , Kent ordered a coffin , but fearful of being prosecuted should the nature of their relationship become known , asked that it remain nameless . On registering the burial he was , however , forced to give a name , and he gave her his own . Fanny 's family was notified and her sister Ann Lynes , who lived nearby at Pall Mall , attended the funeral at St John 's . When Ann learned of the terms of Fanny 's will , which left her brothers and sisters half a crown each and Kent the rest , she tried but failed to block it in Doctors ' Commons . The bulk of Kent 's inheritance was Fanny 's £ 150 share of her dead brother Thomas 's estate . This also included some land owned by Thomas , sold by the executor of his estate , John Lynes , and Kent received Fanny 's share of that too ( almost £ 95 ) . Her family resented this . Legal problems with Lynes 's sale meant that each of Thomas 's beneficiaries had to pay £ 45 in compensation to the purchaser , but Kent refused , claiming that he had already spent the money in settling Fanny 's debts . In response to this , in October 1761 John Lynes began proceedings against Kent in the Court of Chancery . Meanwhile , Kent became a stockbroker and remarried in 1761 .

= = Haunting = =

Echoing the actions of Kent 's previous landlord , Parsons had not repaid Kent 's loan ? of which about three guineas was outstanding ? and Kent therefore instructed his attorney to sue him . He managed to recover the debt by January 1762 , just as the mysterious noises at Cock Lane began again . Catherine Friend had lodged there shortly after the couple left but moved out when she found the noises , which had returned intermittently and which were becoming more frequent , could not be stopped . They apparently emanated from Elizabeth Parsons , who also suffered fits , and the house was regularly disturbed by unexplained noises , likened at the time to the sound of a cat scratching a chair . Reportedly determined to discover their source , Richard Parsons had a carpenter remove the wainscoting around Elizabeth 's bed . He approached John Moore , assistant preacher at St Sepulchre 's since 1754 and rector of St Bartholomew @-@ the @-@ Great in West Smithfield since June 1761 . The presence of one ghost , presumed to belong to Fanny 's sister , Elizabeth , had already been noted while Fanny lay dying , and the two concluded that the spirit now haunting Parsons ' house must be that of Fanny Lynes herself . The notion that a person 's spirit might return from the dead to warn those still alive was a commonly held belief , and the presence of

two apparently restless spirits was therefore an obvious sign to both men that each ghost had an important message to disclose .

Parsons and Moore devised a method of communication ; one knock for yes , two knocks for no . Using this system , the ghost appeared to claim that Fanny had been murdered . It was conjectured that the mysterious figure in white which so terrified James Franzen , presumed to be the ghost of Elizabeth , had appeared there to warn her sister of her impending death . As the first ghost had seemingly vanished , this charge against Kent ? that he murdered Elizabeth ? was never acted on , but through repeated questioning of Fanny 's ghost it was divined that she had died not from the effects of smallpox , but rather from arsenic poisoning . The deadly toxin had apparently been administered by Kent about two hours before Fanny died and now , it was supposed , her spirit wanted justice . Moore had heard from Parsons how Kent had pursued the debt he was owed , and he had also heard from Ann Lynes , who had complained that as Fanny 's coffin lid was screwed down she had not been able to see her sister 's corpse . Moore thought that Fanny 's body might not show any visible signs of smallpox and that if she had been poisoned , the lack of scarring would have been something Kent would rather keep hidden . As a clergyman with inclinations toward Methodism he was inclined to trust the ghost , but for added support he enlisted the aid of Thomas Broughton , an early Methodist . Broughton visited Cock Lane on 5 January and left convinced the ghost was real . The story spread through London , The Public Ledger began to publish detailed accounts of the phenomenon , and Kent fell under public suspicion as a murderer .

= = Séances = =

After reading the veiled accusations made against him in the Public Ledger , Kent determined to clear his name , and accompanied by a witness went to see John Moore . The Methodist showed Kent the list of questions he and Parsons had drawn up for the ghost to answer . One concerned William and Fanny 's marital status , prompting Kent to admit that they never married . Moore told him he did not think he was a murderer , rather , he believed the spirit 's presence indicated that " there was something behind darker than all the rest , and that if he would go to Parson 's house , he might be a witness to the same and convinced of its reality " . On 12 January therefore , Kent enlisted the aid of the two physicians who attended Fanny in her last days , and with Broughton , went to Cock Lane . On the house 's upper floor Elizabeth Parsons was publicly undressed , and with her younger sister was put to bed . The audience sat around the bed , positioned in the centre of the room . They were warned that the ghost was sensitive to disbelief and told that they should accord it due respect . When the séance began , a relative of Parsons , Mary Frazer , ran around the room shouting " Fanny , Fanny , why don 't you come ? Do come , pray Fanny , come ; dear Fanny , come ! " When nothing happened , Moore told the group the ghost would not come as they were making too much noise . He asked them to leave the room , telling them he would try to contact the ghost by stamping his foot . About ten minutes later they were told the ghost had returned and that they should re @-@enter the room . Moore then started to run through his and Parsons ' list of questions :

" Are you the wife of Mr. Kent ? " ? Two knocks

" Did you die naturally ? " ? Two knocks

" By poison ? " ? One knock

" Did any person other than Mr. Kent administer it ? " ? Two knocks

After more questions , a member of the audience exclaimed " Kent , ask this Ghost if you shall be hanged " . He did so , and the question was answered by a single knock . Kent exclaimed " Thou art a lying spirit , thou are not the ghost of my Fanny . She would never have said any such thing . "

Public interest in the story grew when it was discovered that the ghost appeared to follow Elizabeth Parsons . She was removed to the house of a Mr Bray , where on 14 January , in the presence of two unidentified nobles , more knocking sounds were heard . A few days later she was returned to Cock Lane , where on 18 January another séance was held . In attendance were Kent , the apothecary , and local parish priest and incumbent of St John Clerkenwell , Stephen Aldrich . On that occasion , when a clergyman used a candle to look under the bed , the ghost " refused " to

answer , Frazer claiming " she [ the ghost ] loving not light " . After a few minutes of silence the questioning continued , but when Moore asked if the ghost would appear in court against Kent , Frazer refused to ask the question .

When they lived at Cock Lane William and Fanny had employed a maid , Esther " Carrots " Carlisle ( Carrots on account of her red hair ) . She had since moved to a new job and knew nothing of the haunting , but seeking evidence of Fanny 's poisoning , Moore went to question her . Carrots told him that Fanny had been unable to speak in the days before she died , so Moore invited her to a séance , held on 19 January . Once there , she was asked to confirm that Fanny had been poisoned , but Carrots remained adamant that Fanny had said nothing to her , telling the party that William and Fanny had been " very loving , and lived very happy together . " Kent arrived later that night , this time with James Franzen and priests William Dodd and Thomas Broughton . Frazer began with her usual introduction before Moore sent her out , apparently irritated by her behaviour . He then asked the party of about 20 to leave the room , calling them back a few minutes later . This time , the séance centred on Carrots , who addressed the ghost directly :

" Are you my mistress ? " ? One knock , followed by scratches

" Are you angry with me , Madam ? " ? One knock

" Then I am sure , Madam , you may be ashamed of yourself for I never hurt you in my life . "

At this , the séance was ended . Frazer and Franzen remained alone in the room , the latter reportedly too terrified to move . Frazer asked if he would like to pray and was angered when he apparently could not . The séance resumed and Franzen later returned to his home , where he and his wife were reportedly tormented by the ghost 's knocking in their bedchamber .

= = Investigation = =

On 20 January another séance was held , this time at the home of a Mr Bruin , on the corner of nearby Hosier Lane . Among those attending was a man " extremely desirous of detecting the fraud , and discovering the truth of this mysterious affair " , who later sent his account of the night to the London Chronicle . He arrived with a small party which included James Penn of St Ann 's in Aldersgate . Inside the house , a member of the group positioned himself against the bed , but was asked by one of the ghost 's sympathisers to move . He refused , and following a brief argument the ghost 's supporters left . The gentleman then asked if Parsons would allow his daughter to be moved to a room at his house , but was refused . For the remainder of the night the ghost made no sound , while Elizabeth Parsons , now extremely agitated , displayed signs of convulsions . When questioned she confirmed that she had seen the ghost , but that she was not frightened by it . At that point several of the party left , but at about 7 am the next morning the knocking once more recommenced . Following the usual questions about the cause of Fanny 's death and who was responsible , the interrogation turned to her body , which lay in the vaults of St John 's .

Parsons agreed to move his daughter to Aldrich 's house for further testing on 22 January , but when that morning Penn and a man of " veracity and fortune " called on Parsons and asked for Elizabeth , the clerk told them she was not there and refused to reveal her whereabouts . Parsons had spoken with friends and was apparently worried that Kent had been busy with his own investigations . Instead , he allowed Elizabeth to be moved that night to St Bartholomew 's Hospital , where another séance was held . Nothing was reported until about 6 am , when three scratches were heard , apparently while the girl was asleep . The approximately 20 @-@ strong audience complained that the affair was a deception . Once Elizabeth woke she began to cry , and once reassured that she was safe admitted that she was afraid for her father , " who must needs be ruined and undone , if their matter should be supposed to be an imposture . " She also admitted that although she had appeared to be asleep , she was in fact fully aware of the conversation going on around her .

Initially only the Public Ledger reported on the case , but once it became known that noblemen had taken an interest and visited the ghost at Mr Bray 's house on 14 January , the story began to appear in other newspapers . The St. James 's Chronicle and the London Chronicle printed reports from 16 ? 19 January ( the latter the more sceptical of the two ) , and Lloyd 's Evening Post from 18

? 20 January . The story spread across London and by the middle of January the crowds gathered outside the property were such that Cock Lane was rendered impassable . Parsons charged visitors an entrance fee to " talk " with the ghost , which , it was reported , did not disappoint . After receiving several requests to intercede , Samuel Fludyer , Lord Mayor of London , was on 23 January approached by Alderman Gosling , John Moore and Parsons . They told him of their experiences but Fludyer was reminded of the then recent case of fraudster Elizabeth Canning and refused to have Kent or Parsons arrested ( on charges of murder and conspiracy respectively ) . Instead , against a backdrop of hysteria caused in part by the newspapers ' relentless reporting of the case , he ordered that Elizabeth be tested at Aldrich 's house . Meanwhile , Elizabeth was again the subject of study , in two séances held 23 ? 24 January . Parsons accepted the Lord Mayor 's decision , but asked that " some persons connected with the girl might be permitted to be there , to divert her in the day @-@ time " . This was refused , as were two similar requests , Aldrich and Penn insisting that they would accept only " any person or persons , of strict character and reputation , who are housekeepers " . Aldrich and Penn 's account of their negotiations with Parsons clearly perturbed the clerk , as he defended his actions in the Public Ledger . This prompted Aldrich and Penn to issue a pointed retort in Lloyd 's Evening Post : " We are greatly puzzled to find Mr. Parsons asserting that he hath been always willing to deliver up the child , when he refused a gentleman on Wednesday evening the 20th inst . [ ... ] What is to be understood , by requiring security " ?

Elizabeth was taken on 26 January to the house of Jane Armstrong , sleeping there in a hammock . The continued noises strengthened the resolve of the ghost 's supporters , while the press 's ceaseless reporting of the case continued . Horace Walpole , 4th Earl of Orford , announced that with the Duke of York , Lady Northumberland , Lady Mary Coke and Lord Hertford , he was to visit Cock Lane on 30 January . After struggling through the throngs of interested visitors though , he was ultimately disappointed ; the Public Advertiser observed that " the noise is now generally deferred till seven in the morning , it being necessary to vary the time , that the imposition may be the better carried on " .

= = Exposure = =

With Lord Dartmouth Aldrich began to draw together the people who would be involved in his investigation . They chose the matron of a local lying @-@ in hospital as principal lady @-@ in @-@ waiting , the critic and controversialist Bishop John Douglas , and Dr George Macaulay . A Captain Wilkinson was also included on the committee ; he had attended one séance armed with a pistol and stick ; the former to shoot the source of the knocking , and the latter to make his escape ( the ghost had remained silent on that occasion ) . James Penn and John Moore were also on the committee , but its most prominent member was Dr Samuel Johnson , who documented the séance , held on 1 February 1762 :

On the night of the 1st of February many gentlemen eminent for their rank and character were , by the invitation of the Reverend Mr. Aldrich , of Clerkenwell , assembled at his house , for the examination of the noises supposed to be made by a departed spirit , for the detection of some enormous crime . About ten at night the gentlemen met in the chamber in which the girl , supposed to be disturbed by a spirit , had , with proper caution , been put to bed by several ladies . They sat rather more than an hour , and hearing nothing , went down stairs , when they interrogated the father of the girl , who denied , in the strongest terms , any knowledge or belief of fraud . The supposed spirit had before publicly promised , by an affirmative knock , that it would attend one of the gentlemen into the vault under the Church of St. John , Clerkenwell , where the body is deposited , and give a token of her presence there , by a knock upon her coffin ; it was therefore determined to make this trial of the existence or veracity of the supposed spirit . While they were enquiring and deliberating , they were summoned into the girl 's chamber by some ladies who were near her bed , and who had heard knocks and scratches . When the gentlemen entered , the girl declared that she felt the spirit like a mouse upon her back , and was required to hold her hands out of bed . From that time , though the spirit was very solemnly required to manifest its existence by appearance , by impression on the hand or body of any present , by scratches , knocks , or any

other agency , no evidence of any preter @-@ natural power was exhibited . The spirit was then very seriously advertised that the person to whom the promise was made of striking the coffin , was then about to visit the vault , and that the performance of the promise was then claimed . The company at one o'clock went into the church , and the gentleman to whom the promise was made , went with another into the vault . The spirit was solemnly required to perform its promise , but nothing more than silence ensued : the person supposed to be accused by the spirit , then went down with several others , but no effect was perceived . Upon their return they examined the girl , but could draw no confession from her . Between two and three she desired and was permitted to go home with her father . It is , therefore , the opinion of the whole assembly , that the child has some art of making or counterfeiting a particular noise , and that there is no agency of any higher cause .

Disappointed that the ghost had failed to reveal itself , Moore now told Kent he believed it was an imposter , and that he would help reveal it . Kent asked him to admit the truth and write an affidavit of what he knew , so as to end the affair and restore Kent 's reputation , but Moore refused , telling him that he still believed that the spirit 's presence was a reminder of his sin . Moore 's view of the couple 's relationship was shared by many , including Mrs Parsons , who believed that the supposed ghost of Elizabeth Kent had disapproved of her sister 's new relationship .

Another séance on 3 February saw the knocking continue unabated , but by then Parsons was in an extremely difficult ? and serious ? situation . Keen to prove the ghost was not an imposture he allowed his daughter to be examined at a house on The Strand from 7 ? 10 February , and at another house in Covent Garden from 14 February . There she was tested in a variety of ways which included being swung up in a hammock , her hands and feet extended . As expected , the noises commenced , but stopped once Elizabeth was made to place her hands outside the bed . For two nights the ghost was silent . Elizabeth was told that if no more noises were heard by Sunday 21 February , she and her father would be committed to Newgate Prison . Her maids then saw her conceal on her person a small piece of wood about 6 by 4 inches ( 150 by 100 mm ) and informed the investigators . More scratches were heard but the observers concluded that Elizabeth was responsible for the noises , and that she had been forced by her father to make them . Elizabeth was allowed home shortly after .

On or about 25 February , a pamphlet sympathetic to Kent 's case was published , called *The Mystery Revealed* , and most likely written by Oliver Goldsmith . Meanwhile , Kent was still trying to clear his name , and on 25 February he went to the vault of St John 's , accompanied by Aldrich , the undertaker , the clerk and the parish sexton . The group was there to prove beyond any doubt that a recent newspaper report , which claimed that the supposed removal of Fanny 's body from the vault accounted for the ghost 's failure to knock on her coffin , was false . The undertaker removed the lid to expose Fanny 's corpse , " and a very awful shocking sight it was " . For Moore this was too much and he published his retraction :

In justice to the person , whose reputation has been attacked in a most gross manner , by the pretended Ghost in Cock @-@ lane ; to check the credulity of the weak ; to defeat the attempts of the malicious , and to prevent further imposition , on account of this absurd phenomenon , I do hereby certify , that though , from the several attendances on this occasion , I have not been able to point out , how , and in what manner , those knockings and scratchings , of the supposed Ghost , were contrived , performed , and continued ; yet , that I am convinced , that those knockings and scratchings were the effects of some artful , wicked contrivance ; and that I was , in a more especial manner , convinced of its being such , on the first of this month , when I attended with several persons of rank and character , who assembled at the Rev. Mr. Aldrich 's , Clerkenwell , in order to examine into this iniquitous imposition upon the Public . Since which time I have not seen the child , nor heard the noises ; and think myself in duty bound to add , that the injured person ( when present to hear himself accused by the pretended Ghost ) has not , by his behaviour , given the least ground of suspicion , but has preserved that becoming steadfastness , which nothing , I am persuaded , but innocence could inspire .

It was not enough to keep him from being charged by the authorities with conspiracy , along with Richard Parsons and his wife , Mary Frazer , and Richard James , a tradesman .

= = Trial = =

The trial of all five was held at the Guild Hall in London on 10 July 1762 . Presiding over the case was Lord Chief Justice William Murray . Proceedings began at 10 am , " brought by William Kent against the above defendants for a conspiracy to take away his life by charging him with the murder of Frances Lynes by giving her poison whereof she died " . The courtroom was crowded with spectators , who watched as Kent gave evidence against those in the dock . He told the court about his relationship with Fanny and of her resurrection as " Scratching Fanny " ( so @-@ called because of the scratching noises made by the " ghost " ) . James Franzen was next on the stand , his story corroborated by Fanny 's servant , Esther " Carrots " Carlisle , who testified later that day . Dr Cooper , who had served Fanny as she lay dying , told the court that he had always believed the strange noises in Cock Lane to be a trick , and his account of Fanny 's illness was supported by her apothecary , James Jones . Several other prosecution witnesses described how the hoax had been revealed , and Richard James was accused by the prosecution 's last witness of being responsible for some of the more offensive material published in the Public Ledger .

The defence 's witnesses included some of those who had cared for Elizabeth Parsons and who presumably still believed that the ghost was real . Other witnesses included the carpenter responsible for removing the wainscoting from Parsons ' apartment and Catherine Friend , who to escape the knocking noises had left the property . One witness 's testimony caused the court to burst into laughter , at which she replied " I assure you gentlemen , it is no laughing matter , whatever you may think of it . " Thomas Broughton was also called , as was a priest surnamed Ross , one of those who had questioned the ghost . Judge Murray asked him " Whether he thought he had puzzled the Ghost , or the Ghost had puzzled him ? " John Moore was offered support by several esteemed gentlemen and presented Murray with a letter from Thomas Secker , Archbishop of Canterbury , who sought to intercede on his behalf . Murray placed the letter in his pocket , unopened , and told the court " it was impossible it could relate to the cause in question . " Richard James and Richard Parsons also received support from various witnesses , some of whom although acknowledging Parsons ' drink problem , told the court they could not believe he was guilty .

The trial ended at about 9 : 30 pm . The judge spent about 90 minutes summing up the case , but it took the jury only 15 minutes to reach a verdict of guilty for all five defendants . The following Monday , two others responsible for defaming Kent were found guilty and later fined £ 50 each . The conspirators were brought back on 22 November but sentencing was delayed in the hope that they could agree on the level of damages payable to Kent . Having failed to do so they returned on 27 January 1763 and were committed to the King 's Bench Prison until 11 February , by which time John Moore and Richard James had agreed to pay Kent £ 588 ; they were subsequently admonished by Justice Wilmot and released . The following day , the rest were sentenced :

The Court chusing that Mr. Kent , who had been so much injured on the occasion , should receive some reparation by punishment of the offenders , deferred giving judgment for seven or eight months , in hopes that the parties might make it up in the meantime . Accordingly , the clergyman , and tradesman agreed to pay Mr. Kent a round sum ? some say between £ 500 and £ 600 to purchase their pardon , and were , therefore , dismissed with a severe reprimand . The father was ordered to be set in the pillory three times in one month ? once at the end of Cock ? Lane ; Elizabeth his wife to be imprisoned one year ; and Mary Frazer six months in Bridewell , with hard labour . The father appearing to be out of his mind at the time he was first to standing in the pillory , the execution of that part of his sentence was deferred to another day , when , as well as the other day of his standing there , the populace took so much compassion on him , that instead of using him ill , they made a handsome subscription for him .

Parsons , all the while protesting his innocence , was also sentenced to two years imprisonment . He stood in the pillory on 16 March , 30 March and finally on 8 April . In contrast to other criminals the crowd treated him kindly , making collections of money for him .

= = Legacy = =

The Cock Lane ghost was a focus for a contemporary religious controversy between the Methodists and orthodox Anglicans . Belief in a spiritual afterlife is a requirement for most religions , and in every instance where a spirit had supposedly manifested itself in the real world , the event was cherished as an affirmation of such beliefs . In his youth , John Wesley had been strongly influenced by a supposed haunting at his family home and these experiences were carried through to the religion he founded , which was regularly criticised for its position on witchcraft and magic . Methodism , although far from a united religion , became almost synonymous with a belief in the supernatural . Some of its followers therefore gave more credence to the reality of the Cock Lane ghost than did the Anglican establishment , which considered such things to be relics of the country 's Catholic past . This was a view that was epitomised in the conflict between the Methodist John Moore and the Anglican Stephen Aldrich . In his 1845 memoirs , Horace Walpole , who had attended one of the séances , accused the Methodists of actively working to establish the existence of ghosts . He described the constant presence of Methodist clergymen near Elizabeth Parsons and implied that the church would recompense her father for his troubles .

Samuel Johnson was committed to his Christian faith and shared the views of author Joseph Glanvill , who , in his 1681 work *Saducismus Triumphatus* , wrote of his concern over the advances made against religion and a belief in witchcraft , by atheism and scepticism . For Johnson the idea that an afterlife might not exist was an appalling thought , but although he thought that spirits could protect and counsel those still living , he kept himself distant from the more credulous Methodists , and recognised that his religion required proof of an afterlife . Ever a sceptic , in his discussions with his biographer James Boswell , he said :

Sir , I make a distinction between what a man may experience by the mere strength of his imagination , and what imagination cannot possibly produce . Thus , suppose I should think I saw a form , and heard a voice cry , " Johnson , you are a very wicked fellow , and unless you repent you will certainly be punished ; " my own unworthiness is so deeply impressed upon my mind , that I might imagine I thus saw and heard , and therefore I should not believe that an external communication had been made to me . But if a form should appear , and a voice tell me that a particular man had died at a particular place , and a particular hour , a fact which I had no apprehension of , nor any means of knowing , and this fact , with all its circumstances , should afterwards be unquestionably proved , I should , in that case , be persuaded that I had supernatural intelligence imparted to me .

Johnson 's role in revealing the nature of the hoax was not enough to keep the satirist Charles Churchill from mocking his apparent credulity in his 1762 work *The Ghost* . He resented Johnson 's lack of enthusiasm for his writing and with the character of ' Pomposo ' , written as one of the more credulous of the ghost 's investigators , used the satire to highlight a " superstitious streak " in his subject . Johnson paid this scant attention , but was said to have been more upset when Churchill again mocked him for his delay in releasing Shakespeare . Publishers were at first wary of attacking those involved in the supposed haunting , but Churchill 's satire was one of a number of publications which , following the exposure of Parsons ' deception , heaped scorn on the affair . The newspapers searched for evidence of past impostures and referenced older publications such as Reginald Scot 's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* ( 1584 ) . The ghost was referenced in an anonymous work entitled *Anti @-@ Canidia : or , Superstition Detected and Exposed* ( 1762 ) , which sought to ridicule the credulity of those involved in the Cock Lane case . The author described his work as a " sally of indignation at the contemptible wonder in Cock @-@ lane " . Works such as *The Orators* ( 1762 ) by Samuel Foote , were soon available . Farical poems such as *Cock @-@ lane Humbug* were released , theatres staged plays such as *The Drummer* and *The Haunted House* .

Oliver Goldsmith , who had in February 1762 published *The Mystery Revealed* , may also have been responsible for the satirical illustration , *English Credulity or the Invisible Ghost* ( 1762 ) . It shows a séance as envisioned by the artist , with the ghost hovering above the heads of the two children in the bed . To the right of the bed a woman deep in prayer exclaims " O ! that they would lay it in the Red Sea ! " Another cries " I shall never have any rest again " . The English magistrate and social reformer John Fielding , who was blind , is pictured entering from the left saying " I should



be glad to see this spirit " , while his companion says " Your W ? ? r 's had better get your Warrant back 'd by his L ? rds ? p " , referring to a Middlesex magistrate 's warrant which required an endorsement from the Lord Mayor , Samuel Fludyer . A man in tall boots , whip in hand , says : " Ay Tom I 'll lay 6 to 1 it runs more nights than the Coronation " and his companion remarks " How they swallow the hum " . A clergymen says " I saw the light on the Clock " while another asks " Now thou Infidel does thou not believe ? " , prompting his neighbour to reply " Yes if it had happen 'd sooner ' t would have serv 'd me for a new Character in the Lyar the Story would tell better than the Cat & Kittens " . Another clergyman exclaims " If a Gold Watch knock 3 times " , and a Parson asks him " Brother don 't disturb it " . On the wall , an image of The Bottle Conjuror is alongside an image of Elizabeth Canning , whose fraud had so worried Samuel Fludyer that he had refused to arrest either Parsons or Kent .

Playwright David Garrick dedicated the enormously successful *The Farmer 's Return* to the satirical artist William Hogarth . The story concerns a farmer who regales his family with an account of his talk with Miss Fanny , the comedy being derived from the reversal of traditional roles : the sceptical farmer poking fun at the credulous city @-@ folk . Hogarth made his own observations of the Cock Lane ghost , with obvious references in *Credulity , Superstition and Fanaticism* ( 1762 ) . This illustration makes a point of attacking Methodist ministers , one of whom is seen to slip a phallic " ghost " into a young woman 's bodice . He again attacked the Methodists in *The Times* , Plate 2 ( 1762 ? 1763 ) , placing an image of Thomas Secker ( who had tried to intervene on behalf of the Methodists ) behind the Cock Lane ghost , and putting the ghost in the same pillory as the radical politician John Wilkes , which implied a connection between the demagoguery surrounding the Methodists and Pittites . The print enraged Bishop William Warburton , who although a vocal critic of Methodism , wrote :

I have seen Hogarth 's print of the Ghost . It is a horrid composition of lewd Obscenity & blasphemous prophaneness for which I detest the artist & have lost all esteem for the man . The best is , that the worst parts of it have a good chance of not being understood by the people .

The 19th @-@ century author Charles Dickens ? whose childhood nursemaid Mary Weller may have affected him with a fascination for ghosts ? made reference to the Cock Lane ghost in several of his books . One of Nicholas Nickleby 's main characters and a source of much of the novel 's comic relief , Mrs. Nickleby , claims that her great @-@ grandfather " went to school with the Cock @-@ lane Ghost " and that " I know the master of his school was a Dissenter , and that would in a great measure account for the Cock @-@ lane Ghost 's behaving in such an improper manner to the clergyman when he grew up . " Dickens also very briefly mentions the Cock Lane ghost in *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Dombey and Son* .

According to a 1965 source , the site of Parson 's lodgings corresponded to the building with the modern address 20 Cock Lane . The house was believed to have been built in the late 17th century , and was demolished in 1979 .