

= Dick Turpin =

Richard " Dick " Turpin (bapt . 1705 ? 7 April 1739) was an English highwayman whose exploits were romanticised following his execution in York for horse theft . Turpin may have followed his father 's trade as a butcher early in life , but , by the early 1730s , he had joined a gang of deer thieves and , later , became a poacher , burglar , horse thief and killer . He is also known for a fictional 200 @-@ mile (320 km) overnight ride from London to York on his horse Black Bess , a story that was made famous by the Victorian novelist William Harrison Ainsworth almost 100 years after Turpin 's death .

Turpin 's involvement in the crime for which he is most closely associated ? highway robbery ? followed the arrest of the other members of his gang in 1735 . He then disappeared from public view towards the end of that year , only to resurface in 1737 with two new accomplices , one of whom he may have accidentally shot and killed . Turpin fled from the scene and shortly afterwards killed a man who attempted his capture . Later that year , he moved to Yorkshire and assumed the alias of John Palmer . While he was staying at an inn , local magistrates became suspicious of " Palmer " and made enquiries as to how he funded his lifestyle . Suspected of being a horse thief , " Palmer " was imprisoned in York Castle , to be tried at the next assizes . Turpin 's true identity was revealed by a letter he wrote to his brother @-@ in @-@ law from his prison cell , which fell into the hands of the authorities . On 22 March 1739 , Turpin was found guilty on two charges of horse theft and sentenced to death ; he was executed on 7 April 1739 .

Turpin became the subject of legend after his execution , romanticised as dashing and heroic in English ballads and popular theatre of the 18th and 19th centuries and in film and television of the 20th century .

= = Early life = =

Richard " Dick " Turpin was born at the Blue Bell Inn (later the Rose and Crown) in Hempstead , Essex , the fifth of six children to John Turpin and Mary Elizabeth Parmenter . He was baptised on 21 September 1705 , in the same parish where his parents had been married more than ten years earlier .

Turpin 's father was a butcher and inn @-@ keeper . Several stories suggest that Dick Turpin may have followed his father into these trades ; one hints that as a teenager he was apprenticed to a butcher in the village of Whitechapel , while another proposes that he ran his own butcher 's shop in Thaxted . Testimony from his trial in 1739 suggests that he had a rudimentary education and , although no records survive of the date of the union , that in about 1725 he married Elizabeth Millington . Following his apprenticeship they moved north to Buckhurst Hill , Essex (on the modern boundary of north east London) , where Turpin opened a butcher 's shop .

= = Essex gang = =

Turpin most likely became involved with the Essex gang of deer thieves in the early 1730s . Deer poaching had long been endemic in the Royal Forest of Waltham , and in 1723 the Black Act (so called because it outlawed the blackening or disguising of faces while in the forests) was enacted to deal with such problems . Deer stealing was a domestic offence that was judged not in civil courts , but before Justices of the peace ; it was not until 1737 that the more severe penalty of seven years ' transportation was introduced . However , in 1731 seven verderers became so concerned by the increase in activity that they signed an affidavit which demonstrated their worries . The statement was lodged with Thomas Pelham @-@ Holles , 1st Duke of Newcastle , who responded by offering a £ 10 reward to anyone who helped identify the thieves , plus a pardon for those thieves who gave up their colleagues . Following a series of nasty incidents , including the threatened murder of a keeper and his family , in 1733 the government increased the reward to £ 50 (about £ 7 @, @ 100 as of 2016) .

The Essex gang (sometimes called the Gregory Gang) , which included Samuel Gregory , his

brothers Jeremiah and Jasper , Joseph Rose , Mary Brazier (the gang 's fence) , John Jones , Thomas Rowden and a young John Wheeler , needed contacts to help them to dispose of the deer . Turpin , a young butcher who traded in the area , almost certainly became involved with their activities . By 1733 the changing fortunes of the gang may have prompted him to leave the butchery trade , and he became the landlord of a public house , most likely the Rose and Crown at Clay Hill . Although there is no evidence to suggest that Turpin was directly involved in the thefts , by summer 1734 he was a close associate of the gang , which may indicate that he had been known to them for some time .

By October 1734 several in the gang had either been captured or had fled , and the remaining members moved away from poaching , raiding the home of a chandler and grocer named Peter Split , at Woodford . Although the identities of the perpetrators are unknown , Turpin may have been involved . Two nights later they struck again , at the Woodford home of a gentleman named Richard Woolridge , a Furnisher of Small Arms in the Office of Ordnance at the Tower of London . In December Jasper and Samuel Gregory , John Jones , and John Wheeler , attacked the home of John Gladwin (a higler) and John Shockley , in Chingford . On 19 December Turpin and five other men raided the home of Ambrose Skinner , a 73 @-@ year @-@ old farmer from Barking , leaving with an estimated £ 300 .

Two days later , the gang ? minus Turpin ? attacked the home of a Keeper , William Mason , at Epping Forest . During the robbery Mason 's servant managed to escape , and returned about an hour later with several neighbours , by which time the house was ransacked and the thieves long gone . On 11 January 1735 the gang raided the Charlton home of a Mr. Saunders . For the robbery of a gentleman named Sheldon , one week later at Croydon , Turpin arrived masked and armed with pistols , with four other members of the gang . In the same month two men , possibly from the same gang , raided the home of a Reverend Dyde . The clergyman was absent but the two cut his manservant around the face " in a barbarous manner " . Another brutal attack occurred on 1 February 1735 at Loughton :

On Saturday night last , about seven o 'clock , five rogues entered the house of the Widow Shelley at Loughton in Essex , having pistols & c. and threatened to murder the old lady , if she would not tell them where her money lay , which she obstinately refusing for some time , they threatened to lay her across the fire , if she did not instantly tell them , which she would not do . But her son being in the room , and threatened to be murdered , cried out , he would tell them , if they would not murder his mother , and did , whereupon they went upstairs , and took near £ 100 , a silver tankard , and other plate , and all manner of household goods . They afterwards went into the cellar and drank several bottles of ale and wine , and broiled some meat , ate the relicts of a fillet of veal & c . While they were doing this , two of their gang went to Mr Turkles , a farmer 's , who rents one end of the widow 's house , and robbed him of above £ 20 and then they all went off , taking two of the farmer 's horses , to carry off their luggage , the horses were found on Sunday the following morning in Old Street , and stayed about three hours in the house .

The gang lived in or around London . For a time Turpin stayed at Whitechapel , before moving to Millbank . On 4 February 1735 he met John Fielder , Samuel Gregory , Joseph Rose , and John Wheeler , at an inn along The Broadway in London . They planned to rob the house of Joseph Lawrence , a farmer at Earlsbury Farm in Edgware . Late that afternoon , after stopping twice along the way for food and drink , they captured a shepherd boy and burst into the house , armed with pistols . They bound the two maidservants , and brutally attacked the 70 @-@ year @-@ old farmer . They pulled his breeches around his ankles , and dragged him around the house , but Lawrence refused to reveal the whereabouts of his money . Turpin beat Lawrence 's bare buttocks with his pistols , badly bruising him , and other members of the gang beat him around the head with their pistols . They emptied a kettle of water over his head , forced him to sit bare @-@ buttocked on the fire , and pulled him around the house by his nose , and hair . Gregory took one of the maidservants upstairs and raped her . For their trouble , the gang escaped with a haul of less than £ 30 .

Three days later Turpin , accompanied by the same men along with William Saunders and Humphrey Walker , brutally raided a farm in Marylebone . The attack netted the gang just under £ 90 . The next day the Duke of Newcastle offered a reward of £ 50 in exchange for information leading

to the conviction of the " several persons " involved in the two Woodford robberies , and the robberies of the widow Shelley and Reverend Dyde . On 11 February Fielder , Saunders , and Wheeler , were apprehended . Two accounts of their capture exist . One claims that on their way to rob the Lawrence household the gang had stopped at an alehouse in Edgware , and that on 11 February , while out walking , the owner noticed a group of horses outside an alehouse in Bloomsbury . He recognised these horses as those used by the same group of men who had stopped at his alehouse before the Lawrence attack , and called for the parish constable . Another account claims that two of the gang were spotted by a servant of Joseph Lawrence . Regardless , the three , who were drinking with a woman (possibly Mary Brazier) were promptly arrested and committed to prison . Wheeler , who may have been as young as 15 , quickly betrayed his colleagues , and descriptions of those yet to be captured were circulated in the press . In the London Gazette Turpin was described as " Richard Turpin , a butcher by trade , is a tall fresh coloured man , very much marked with the small pox , about 26 years of age , about five feet nine inches high , lived some time ago in Whitechapel and did lately lodge somewhere about Millbank , Westminster , wears a blue grey coat and a natural wig " .

= = Breakup of the Essex gang = =

Once Wheeler 's confession became apparent , the other members of the gang fled their usual haunts . Turpin informed Gregory and the others of Wheeler 's capture , and left Westminster . On 15 February 1735 , while Wheeler was busy confessing to the authorities , " three or four men " (most likely Samuel Gregory , Herbert Haines , Turpin , and possibly Thomas Rowden) robbed the house of a Mrs St. John at Chingford . On the following day Turpin (and Rowden , if present) parted company with Gregory and Haines , and headed for Hempstead to see his family . Gregory and Haines may have gone looking for Turpin , because on 17 February they stopped at an alehouse in Debden and ordered a shoulder of mutton , intending to stay for the night . However , a man named Palmer recognised them , and called for the parish constable . A fracas ensued , during which the two thieves escaped . They rejoined Turpin , and along with Jones and Rowden may have travelled to Gravesend before returning to Woodford . Another robbery was reported at Woodford toward the end of February ? possibly by Gregory and his cohorts ? but with most avenues of escape cut off , and with the authorities hunting them down , the remaining members of the Essex gang kept their heads down and remained under cover , probably in Epping Forest .

Six days after the arrest of Fielder , Saunders , and Wheeler , just as Turpin and his associates were returning from Gravesend , Rose , Brazier , and Walker were captured at a chandler 's shop in Westminster , while drinking punch . Fielder , Rose , Saunders and Walker were tried at the Middlesex General Session between 26 February and 1 March 1735 . Turpin and Gregory were also named on the indictments for burglary . Walker died while still in Newgate Prison , but the remaining three were hanged at Tyburn gallows on 10 March , before their bodies were hung to rot in gibbets on Edgware Road . Walker 's body was hung in chains . Two days before the hanging , a report of " four suspicious men " being driven away from an alehouse at East Sheen appeared in a newspaper , and was likely describing Gregory and his companions , but the remaining members of the Essex gang were not reported again until 30 March , when three of them (unsuccessfully) tried to steal a horse from a servant of the Earl of Suffolk . Turpin was present with four of the gang at another robbery , reported on 8 March . Jasper Gregory meanwhile was captured , and then executed late in March . His brothers were arrested on 9 April in Rake , West Sussex , after a struggle during which Samuel lost the tip of his nose to a sword , and Jeremy was shot in the leg . He died in Winchester gaol ; Samuel was tried in May , and executed on 4 June . His body was later moved , to hang in chains alongside those of his colleagues at Edgware . Mary Brazier was transported to the Thirteen Colonies . Herbert Haines was captured on 13 April , and executed in August . John Wheeler , who had been instrumental in proving the cases against his former colleagues , and who was freed , died at Hackney in January 1738 . The reason for his death is not recorded , but is assumed to be natural causes .

= = Highwayman = =

With the Essex gang now smashed by the authorities , Turpin turned instead to the crime he became most noted for ? highway robbery . Although he may have been involved in earlier highway robberies on 10 and 12 April , he was first identified as a suspect in one event on 10 July , as " Turpin the butcher " , along with Thomas Rowden , " the pewterer " . Several days later the two struck at Epping Forest , depriving a man from Southwark of his belongings . With a further bounty of £ 100 on their heads they continued their activities through the latter half of 1735 . In August they robbed five people accompanying a coach on Barnes Common , and shortly after that they attacked another coach party , between Putney and Kingston Hill . On 20 August the pair relieved a Mr Godfrey of six guineas and a pocket book , on Hounslow Heath . Fearing capture , they moved on to Blackheath in Hertfordshire , and then back to London . On 5 December the two were seen near Winchester , but in late December , following the capture of John Jones , they separated . Rowden had previously been convicted of counterfeiting , and in July 1736 he was convicted of passing counterfeit coin , under the alias Daniel Crispe . Crispe 's true name was eventually discovered and he was transported in June 1738 . Jones also suffered transportation , to the Thirteen Colonies .

Little is known of Turpin 's movements during 1736 . He may have travelled to Holland , as various sightings were reported there , but he may also have assumed an alias and disappeared from public view . In February 1737 though , he spent the night at Puckeridge , with his wife , her maid and a man called Robert Nott . Turpin arranged the meeting by letter , which was intercepted by the authorities . While Turpin eluded his enemies , making his escape to Cambridge , the others were arrested on charges of " violent suspicion of being dangerous rogues and robbing upon the highway " . They were imprisoned at Hertford gaol , although the women were later acquitted (Nott was released at the next Assize) . Although one report late in March suggests , unusually , that Turpin alone robbed a company of higlers , in the same month he was reported to be working alongside two other highwaymen , Matthew King (then , and since , incorrectly identified as Tom King) , and Stephen Potter . The trio were responsible for a string of robberies between March and April 1737 , which ended suddenly in an incident at Whitechapel , after King (or Turpin , depending upon which report is read) had stolen a horse near Waltham Forest . Its owner , Joseph Major , reported the theft to Richard Bayes , landlord of the Green Man public house at Leytonstone . Bayes (who later wrote a biography of Turpin) , tracked the horse to the Red Lion at Whitechapel . Major identified the animal , but as it was late evening and the horses had not yet been collected by their " owners " , they elected to hold a vigil . John King (Matthew King 's brother) arrived late that night , and was quickly apprehended by the party , which included the local constable . John King told him the whereabouts of Matthew King , who was waiting nearby . During the resulting mêlée , King was wounded by gunfire , and died on 19 May . Potter was later caught , but at his trial was released for lack of evidence against him .

= = Fatal shooting = =

Bayes ' statement regarding the death of Matthew King may have been heavily embellished . Several reports , including Turpin 's own account , offer different versions of what actually happened on that night early in May 1737 ; early reports claimed that Turpin had shot King , however by the following month the same newspapers retracted this claim , and stated that Bayes had fired the fatal shot . The shooting of King , however , preceded an event that changed Turpin 's life completely . He escaped to a hideaway in Epping Forest , where he was seen by Thomas Morris , a servant of one of the Forest 's Keepers . Turpin shot and killed Morris on 4 May with a carbine when , armed with pistols , Morris attempted to capture him . The shooting was reported in The Gentleman 's Magazine :

It having been represented to the King , that Richard Turpin did on Wednesday the 4th of May last , barbarously murder Thomas Morris , Servant to Henry Tomson , one of the Keepers of Epping @-@ Forest , and commit other notorious Felonies and Robberies near London , his Majesty is pleased to promise his most gracious Pardon to any of his Accomplices , and a Reward of 200l. to any Person

or Persons that shall discover him , so as he may be apprehended and convicted . Turpin was born at Thacksted in Essex , is about Thirty , by Trade a Butcher , about 5 Feet 9 Inches high , brown Complexion , very much mark 'd with the Small Pox , his Cheek @-@ bones broad , his Face thinner towards the Bottom , his Visage short , pretty upright , and broad about the Shoulders .

Several newspapers suggested that on 6 and 7 May , he committed two highway robberies near Epping . Turpin may also have lost his mount ; on 7 May an Elizabeth King attempted to secure two horses left by Matthew King , at an inn called the Red Lion . The horses were suspected as belonging to " highwaymen " and King was arrested for questioning , but was later released without charge . Morris 's killing unleashed a flood of Turpin reports , and a reward of £ 200 was offered for his capture .

= = As John Palmer = =

Sometime around June 1737 Turpin boarded at the Ferry Inn at Brough , under the alias of John Palmer (or Parmen) . Travelling across the River Humber between the historic counties of the East Riding of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire , he posed as a horse trader , and often hunted alongside local gentlemen . On 2 October 1738 Turpin shot another man 's game cock in the street . While being rebuked by John Robinson , he then threatened to shoot him also . Three East Riding justices (JP) , George Crowle (Member of Parliament for Hull) , Hugh Bethell , and Marmaduke Constable , travelled to Brough and took written depositions about the incident . They threatened to bind him over , but Turpin refused to pay the required surety , and was committed to the House of Correction at Beverley . Turpin was escorted to Beverley by the parish constable , Carey Gill . Incomprehensibly , he made no attempt at escape ; Barlow (1973) surmises that at this point in his life , Turpin may have been wallowing in self @-@ pity , depressed that his life had thus far been a failure .

Robert Appleton , Clerk of the Peace for the East Riding , and the man whose account details the above incident , later reported that the three JPs made enquiries as to how " Palmer " had made his money , suspecting that his lifestyle was funded by criminal activities . Turpin claimed that he was a butcher who had fallen into debt , and that he had levanted from his home in Long Sutton , Lincolnshire . When contacted , the JP at Long Sutton (a Mr Delamere) confirmed that John Palmer had lived there for about nine months , but that he was suspected of stealing sheep , and had escaped the custody of the local constable . Delamere also suspected that Palmer was a horse @-@ thief and had taken several depositions supporting his view , and told the three JPs that he would prefer him to be detained . The three JPs now presumed that the case was too serious for Palmer to remain at Beverley House of Correction , and demanded sureties for his appearance at York Assizes . Turpin refused , and so on 16 October he was transferred to York Castle in handcuffs .

Horse theft became a capital offence in 1545 , punishable by death . During the 17th and 18th centuries , crimes in violation of property rights were some of the most severely punished ; most of the 200 capital statutes were property offences . Robbery combined with violence was " the sort of offence , second only to premeditated murder (a relatively uncommon crime) , most likely to be prosecuted and punished to [the law 's] utmost rigour " . Turpin had stolen several horses while operating under the pseudonym of Palmer . In July 1737 he stole a horse from Pinchbeck in Lincolnshire , and took it to visit his father at Hempstead . When Turpin returned to Brough (stealing three horses along the way) he left the gelding with his father . The identity of John Turpin 's son was well known , and the horse 's identity was soon discovered . On 12 September 1738 therefore , John Turpin was committed to gaol in Essex on charges of horse theft , but following his help in preventing a jailbreak , the charges were dropped on 5 March 1739 . About a month after " Palmer " had been moved to York Castle , Thomas Creasy , the owner of the three horses stolen by Turpin , managed to track them down and recover them , and it was for these thefts that he was eventually tried .

From his cell , Turpin wrote to his brother @-@ in @-@ law , Pompr Rivernall , who also lived at Hempstead . Rivernall was married to Turpin 's sister , Dorothy . The letter was kept at the local post

office , but seeing the York post stamp Rivernall refused to pay the delivery charge , claiming that he " had no correspondent at York " . Rivernall may not have wanted to pay the charge for the letter , or he may have wished to distance himself from Turpin 's affairs , and so the letter was moved to the post office at Saffron Walden where James Smith , who had taught Turpin how to write while the latter was at school , recognised the handwriting . He alerted JP Thomas Stubbing , who paid the postage and opened the letter . Smith travelled to York Castle and on 23 February identified Palmer as Turpin . He received the £ 200 (about £ 29 @, @ 000 as of 2016) reward originally offered by the Duke of Newcastle following Turpin 's murder of Thomas Morris .

= = Trial = =

Although there was some question as to where the trial should be held ? the Duke of Newcastle wanted him tried in London ? Turpin was tried at York Assizes . Proceedings began three days after the winter Assizes opened , on 22 March . Turpin was charged with the theft of Creasy 's horses : a mare worth three pounds , a foal worth 20 shillings , and a gelding worth three pounds . The indictments stated that the alleged offences had occurred at Welton on 1 March 1739 , and described Turpin as " John Palmer alias Pawmer alias Richard Turpin ... late of the castle of York in the County of York labourer " . Technically the charges were invalid ? the offences had occurred at Heckington , not Welton , and the date was also incorrect ; the offences were in August 1738 .

Presiding over the trial was Sir William Chapple , a senior and respected judge in his early sixties . The prosecution was directed by King 's Counsel Thomas Place and Richard Crowle (brother of George) , and proceedings were recorded by a York resident , Thomas Kyll . Turpin had no defence barrister ; during this period of English history , those accused had no right to legal representation , and their interests were cared for by the presiding judge . Among the seven witnesses called to testify were Thomas Creasy , and James Smith , the man who had recognised Turpin 's handwriting . Turpin offered little in the way of questioning his accusers ; when asked if he had anything to ask of Creasy , he replied " I cannot say anything , for I have not any witnesses come this day , as I have expected , and therefore beg of your Lordship to put off my trial ' till another day " , and when asked about Smith , he claimed not to know him . When questioned himself , Turpin told the court that he had bought the mare and foal from an inn @-@ keeper near Heckington . He repeated his original story of how he had come to use the pseudonym Palmer , claiming that it was his mother 's maiden name . When asked by the judge for his name before he came to Lincolnshire , he said " Turpin " . Without leaving the courtroom the jury found Turpin guilty of the first charge of stealing the mare and foal , and following further proceedings , guilty of stealing the gelding . Throughout the trial Turpin had repeatedly claimed that he had not been allowed enough time to form his defence , that proceedings should be delayed until he could call his witnesses , and that the trial should be held at Essex . Before sentencing him , the judge asked Turpin if he could offer any reason why he should not be sentenced to death ; Turpin said : " It is very hard upon me , my Lord , because I was not prepar 'd for my Defence . " The judge replied : " Why was you not ? You knew the Time of the Assizes as well as any Person here . " Despite Turpin 's pleas that he had been told the trial would be held in Essex , the judge replied : " Whoever told you so were highly to blame ; and as your country have found you guilty of a crime worthy of death , it is my office to pronounce sentence against you " , sentencing him to death .

= = Execution = =

Before his execution , Turpin frequently received visitors (the gaoler was reputed to have earned £ 100 from selling drinks to Turpin and his guests) , although he refused the efforts of a local clergyman who offered him " serious remonstrances and admonitions " . John Turpin may have sent his son a letter , dated 29 March , urging him to " beg of God to pardon your many transgressions , which the thief upon the cross received pardon for at the last hour " . Turpin bought a new frock coat and shoes , and on the day before his execution hired five mourners for three pounds and ten shillings (to be shared between them) . On 7 April 1739 , followed by his mourners , Turpin and

John Stead (a horse thief) were taken through York by open cart to Knavesmire , which was then the city 's equivalent of London 's Tyburn gallows . Turpin " behav 'd himself with amazing assurance " , and " bow 'd to the spectators as he passed " . He climbed a ladder to the gallows and spoke to his executioner . York had no permanent hangman , and it was the custom to pardon a prisoner on condition that he acted as executioner . On this occasion , the pardoned man was a fellow highwayman , Thomas Hadfield . An account in The Gentleman 's Magazine for 7 April 1739 notes Turpin 's brashness : " Turpin behaved in an undaunted manner ; as he mounted the ladder , feeling his right leg tremble , he spoke a few words to the topsman , then threw himself off , and expir 'd in five minutes . "

The short drop method of hanging meant that those executed were killed by slow strangulation , and so Turpin was left hanging until late afternoon , before being cut down and taken to a tavern in Castlegate . The next morning , the body was buried in the graveyard of St George 's Church , Fishergate , opposite what is now the Roman Catholic St George 's Church . On the Tuesday following the burial , the corpse was reportedly stolen by body @-@ snatchers . The theft of cadavers for medical research was a common enough occurrence , and was likely tolerated by the authorities in York . The practice was however unpopular with the general public , and the body @-@ snatchers , together with Turpin 's corpse , were soon apprehended by a mob . The body was recovered and reburied , supposedly this time with quicklime . Turpin 's body is purported to lie in St George 's graveyard , although some doubt remains as to the grave 's authenticity .

= = Modern view = =

Some of the Turpin legend can be sourced directly to Richard Bayes ' The Genuine History of the Life of Richard Turpin (1739) , a mixture of fact and fiction hurriedly put together in the wake of the trial , to satisfy a gullible public . The speeches of the condemned , biographies of criminals , and trial literature , were popular genres during the late 17th and early 18th centuries ; written for a mass audience and a precursor to the modern novel , they were " produced on a scale which beggars comparison with any period before or since " . Such literature functioned as news and a " forum in which anxieties about crime , punishment , sin , salvation , the workings of providence and social and moral transgression generally could be expressed and negotiated . "

Bayes ' document contains elements of conjecture ; for instance , his claim that Turpin was married to a Miss Palmer (and not Elizabeth Millington) is almost certainly incorrect , and the date of Turpin 's marriage , for which no documentary evidence has been found , appears to be based solely on Bayes ' claim that in 1739 Turpin had married 11 or 12 years earlier . His account of those present during the robberies committed by the Essex Gang often contains names that never appeared in contemporary newspaper reports , suggesting , according to author Derek Barlow , that Bayes embellished his story . Bayes ' description of Turpin 's relationship with " King the Highwayman " is almost certainly fictional . Turpin may have known Matthew King as early as 1734 , and had an active association with him from February 1737 , but the story of the " Gentleman Highwayman " may have been created only to link the end of the Essex gang with the author 's own recollection of events . Barlow also views the account of the theft of Turpin 's corpse , appended to Thomas Kyll 's publication of 1739 , as " handled with such delicacy as to amount almost to reverence " , and therefore of suspect provenance .

No contemporary portrait exists of Turpin , who as a notorious but unremarkable figure was not considered sufficiently important to be immortalised . An engraving in one edition of Bayes ' 1739 publication , of a man hiding in a cave , is sometimes supposed to be him , but the closest description that exists is that given by John Wheeler , of " a fresh coloured man , very much marked with the small pox , about five feet nine inches high ... wears a blue grey coat and a light coloured wig " . An E @-@ FIT of Turpin , created from such reports , was published by the Castle Museum in York in 2009 .

Turpin is best known for his exploits as a highwayman , but before his execution the only contemporary report of him as such was in June 1737 , when a broadsheet entitled " News news : great and wonderful news from London in an uproar or a hue and cry after the Great Turpin , with

his escape into Ireland " was published . Although some of his contemporaries became the subject of chapbooks , names such as James Hind , Claude Duval and William Nevison , are not nearly as well @-@ known today as the legend of Dick Turpin , whose fictionalised exploits first began to appear around the turn of the 19th century . It was , however , the story of a fabled ride from London to York that provided the impetus for 19th @-@ century author William Harrison Ainsworth to include and embellish the exploit in his 1834 novel Rookwood . Ainsworth used Turpin as a plot device , describing him in a manner that makes him more lively than the book 's other characters . Turpin is introduced with the pseudonym Palmer , and is later forced to escape on his horse , Black Bess . Although fast enough to keep ahead of those in pursuit , Black Bess eventually dies under the stress of the journey . This scene appealed more to readers than the rest of the work , and as Turpin was depicted as a likeable character who made the life of a criminal seem appealing , the story came to form part of the modern legend surrounding Turpin . The artist Edward Hull capitalised on Ainsworth 's story , publishing six prints of notable events in Turpin 's career .

Ainsworth 's tale of Turpin 's overnight journey from London to York on his mare Black Bess has its origins in an episode recorded by Daniel Defoe , in his 1727 work A tour thro ' the Whole Island of Great Britain . After committing a robbery in Kent in 1676 , William Nevison apparently rode to York to establish an alibi , and Defoe 's account of that journey became part of folk legend . A similar ride was attributed to Turpin as early as 1808 , and was being performed on stage by 1819 , but the feat as imagined by Ainsworth (about 200 miles in less than a day) is impossible . Nevertheless , Ainsworth 's legend of Black Bess was repeated in works such as Black Bess or the Knight of the Road , a 254 @-@ part penny dreadful published in 1867 ? 68 . In these tales , Turpin was the hero , accompanied by his trusty colleagues Claude Duval , Tom King , and Jack Rann . These narratives , which transformed Turpin from a pockmarked thug and murderer into " a gentleman of the road [and] a protector of the weak " , followed a popular cultural tradition of romanticising English criminals . This practice is reflected in the ballads written about Turpin , the earliest of which , Dick Turpin , would appear to have been published in 1737 . Later ballads presented Turpin as an 18th @-@ century Robin Hood figure : " Turpin was caught and his trial was passed , and for a game cock he died at last . Five hundred pounds he gave so free , all to Jack Ketch as a small legacy . "

Stories about Turpin continued to be published well into the 20th century , and the legend was also transferred to the stage . In 1845 the playwright George Dibdin @-@ Pitt recreated the most notable " facts " of Turpin 's life , and in 1846 Marie Tussaud added a wax sculpture of Turpin to her collection at Madame Tussauds . In 1906 actor Fred Ginnett wrote and starred in the film Dick Turpin 's Last Ride to York . Other silent versions appeared for the silver screen , and some adaptations even moulded Turpin into a figure styled on Robin Hood . Sid James appeared as Turpin in the 1974 Carry On film , Carry On Dick , and LWT cast Richard O 'Sullivan as Turpin in their eponymous series , Dick Turpin .