

The Trial of Jack the Ripper

The Execution of Jack the Ripper

April 7, 1903

[Podcast Part 5]

Developed by R. Michael Gordon

April 2021

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“The Execution of Jack the Ripper” is based on eyewitness accounts and newspaper reports of the execution of Severino Klosowski conducted on the morning of April 7, 1903. This is the first time these events have been presented to the general public for over 110 years. This is the execution of Jack the Ripper!

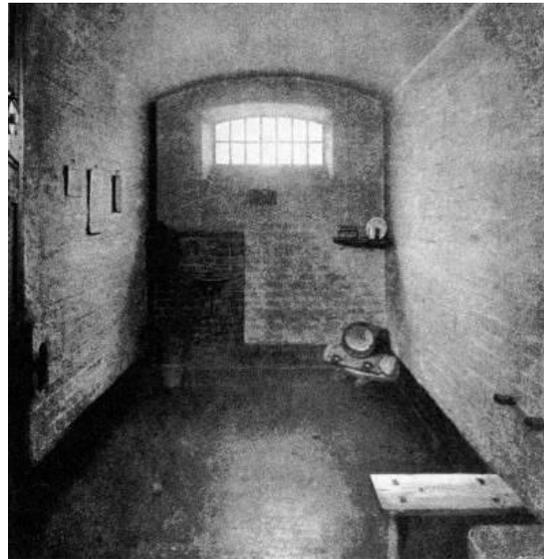
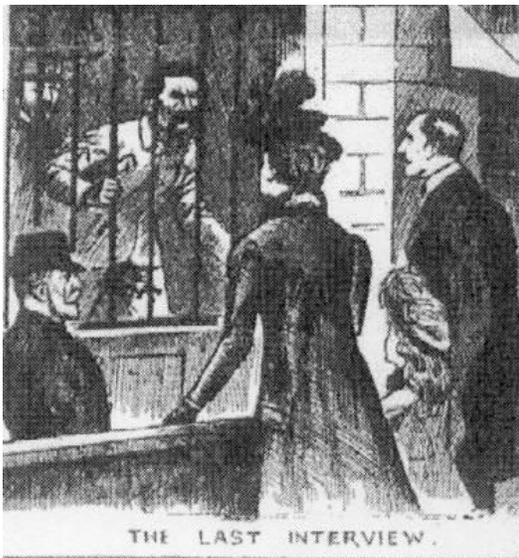


Court Reporter Michael Gosling

Court Reporter Michael Gosling - “Good Morning. I’m Michael Gosling. It is a cold and wet morning here at Wandsworth Prison, as we await the execution of Severin Klosowski for the capital murder of Maud Marsh, convicted and condemned only three weeks ago. Klosowski’s appeal for clemency to the Home Secretary was quickly denied only a few days ago and we expect the sentence of death to be carried out this morning in just a few minutes. As was expected, the Home Secretary did nothing to save the life of this serial killer. Klosowski has been a moody and restless prisoner, and, after this decision, required careful watching. It was thought that he might attempt to commit suicide. When he was asked if he wished to see any of his friends, Klosowski replied in bitter tones ‘I have none.’ The only person whom he did see from the outside was a Roman Catholic priest.

Protesting his innocence he has maintained that he is not Severin Klosowski, but George Chapman, an American citizen. In the face of such overwhelming evidence to the contrary, this seems to have been a last effort to stave off his execution. For his final protest against the fairness of his sentence he used the old stock devise of the defeated criminal, charging those who had given evidence against him with having committed perjury and the police with having falsified evidence.”

“With that in mind it is impossible to understand his desire to retain all kinds of documents, which he must have known could be used against himself. Having openly bought poison in Hastings, he very carefully saved the poison label which was kept in the pages of a book. Has ever a criminal been quite as helpful to the police as this killer was?”



“The Last Interview” attempt by Lucy and daughter – Death Cell

Court Reporter Michael Gosling - “Last night, as is the tradition, Mr. William Billington, the executioner for this area of London, slept within these great prison walls. With him stayed his assistant Mr. Henry Pierrepont. We are informed by prison authorities that Mr. Billington tested the rope last night in the hanging shed by dropping a heavy sandbag on the gallows at about the same weight as the condemned man to test and stretch the rope. That is the normal procedure.”



William Billington and Henry Pierrepoint

[Klosowski has recently been in the death cell with a priest.](#)

Court Reporter Michael Gosling - “The prisoner was awakened at a little after 6 a.m. and we are told that there was real terror on this serial killer’s face. We were also informed that the killer had a very restless night being watched over by guards. He slept on a cot in the 10 foot by 10 foot death cell. One of his guards reported that he ‘looked more like a trapped animal than a man, as he jumped at every noise. A few minutes after he woke, a Catholic priest entered the condemned cell for what must have been an extraordinary confession. To be sure his words will not be released to anyone, placing a great burden on the priest only he will know. There has been a great deal of speculation as to whether or not Klosowski confessed to the Ripper murders. There is no word on that yet. Perhaps Klosowski will make a statement before he meets his fate and put to rest the Ripper mystery once and for all. It would be interesting to discover when the idea of murder for gross personal gratification first germinated in the brain of this unscrupulous Polish adventurer.”

[Prison officials have gathered for the hanging as a large crowd waits outside](#)

Court Reporter Michael Gosling - “At 7 o’clock Klosowski was served a simple meal of bread, butter and coffee which was brought into the cell by one of the guards. The guards have informed this reporter that Klosowski barely ate anything and that the slightest noise gave him a great start.”

“As we reported earlier, a large crowd has gathered outside of the prison with many in the crowd expecting that Jack the Ripper is about to

meet his fate. Certainly many in official London would agree with that conviction, yet we must remember that he was only convicted of one murder. Circumstantial evidence however, to support the theory that Klosowski was Jack the Ripper is not lacking and the theory has been discussed at the highest levels. We have also been informed that Klosowski's wife Lucy is in the crowd outside. Klosowski has continued to refuse to see her."

Governor Knox now walks towards the cell with prison staff.

Court Reporter Michael Gosling - "I see it is almost 8 a.m. now [Pause] and here comes prison governor Major Knox followed by the grim faced execution team with Henry Pierrepoint in the lead. We are about to witness the last few moments in the life of a serial killer and possibly, as far as a good many in London are concerned, Jack the Ripper as the team moves into the death cell."

One of the officers orders Klosowski to stand.
Klosowski - terrified - leans back in a slump,
looks down and then slowly rises.

Court Reporter Michael Gosling - "It is Billington who will do the pinioning on Klosowski and he does seem to be very quick at his work as Pierrepoint and a prison guard move to steady the prisoner. They are strapping the prisoner's arms close to his sides. In days past a condemned man would have his arms strapped to the front but it allowed for too much struggling. As we can easily see Klosowski has a wild look on his eyes as he looks around this crowded room. He does indeed have the look of a trapped animal as his doom draws near."

Klosowski faints.

Court Reporter Michael Gosling - "And the prisoner has collapsed! The stress seems to have been too much for him to bear as the execution team quickly picks him up. I see Major Knox has ordered water for the prisoner as he is steadied by his two sturdy guards."

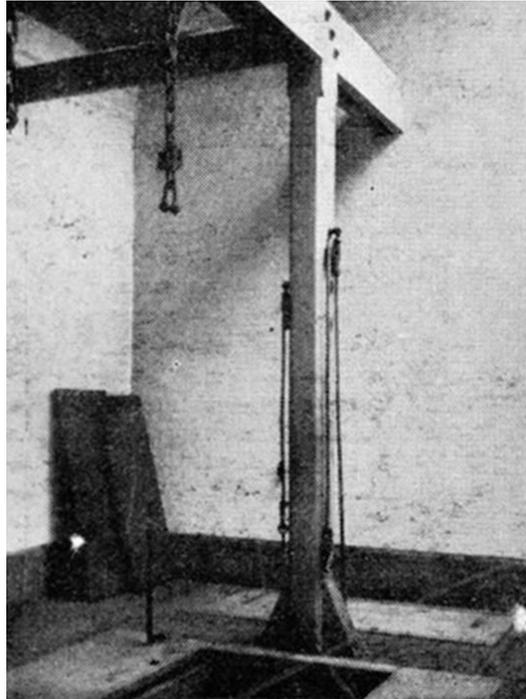
Klosowski takes a drink as Major Knox
leans over to say something to Klosowski.

Court Reporter Michael Gosling - “I can’t hear what Major Knox is saying to the prisoner. Klosowski has not replied, but I can say that all the color has drained from the killer’s face and he is sobbing as he is half carried out of this cell.”

[Klosowski half-walks and half-stumbles as he is almost dragged out of the cell and down the hall.](#)

Court Reporter Michael Gosling - “I can report that Klosowski is ashen pale as he stumbles to his doom. The dread of his rapidly approaching end seems to be too great a strain to his nerves as we enter the open yard.”
[Pause]

“And there is the execution shed only yards away.”



[Klosowski halts and stumbles.](#)

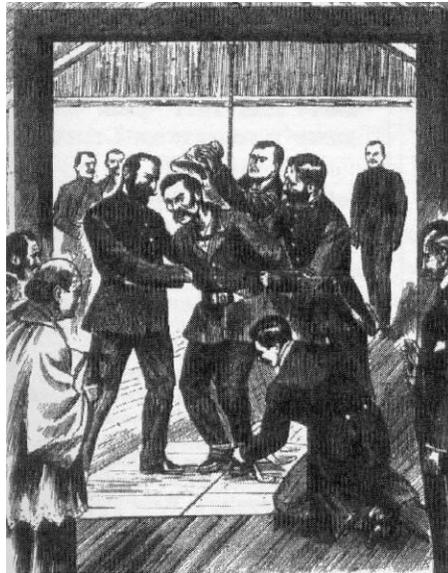
Court Reporter Michael Gosling - “Klosowski clearly sees it now; where he will end his days on this earth and has stumbled again, and the guards are now half-dragging him to the shed. Klosowski is clearly terrified as he continues to sob and make frequent ejaculations and mutters, but I cannot make out what he is saying. It seems to be in German. The prisoner does not seem to be speaking to anyone in particular at this point. Klosowski

is really struggling now as the guards have to almost carry him up and into the shed. It is all becoming far too much for this vicious serial killer, who has destroyed so many lives, to bear as his own death draws ever nearer.”

Klosowski [[Screaming at the guards](#)] - “I curse those who would take my life. My name is Chapman. I am innocent, innocent!”

Court Reporter Michael Gosling - “And as you just heard Klosowski has cursed those who would take his miserable life. Once again he states that he is innocent. Once again the prisoner states that his name is Chapman which of course it clearly is not.”

[The small group enter the hanging shed.](#)



Jack the Ripper is executed!

Court Reporter Michael Gosling - “Billington has now positioned the condemned man over the trap-door and we could hear it give a little as Billington finishes the adjustments by strapping his legs tightly together.”

“Now the white hood is placed over Klosowski’s head and he has a completely terrified and gives a glassy stare as the last he will see in this life will be his executioner. And I must report that from my vantage point I can clearly see Klosowski shaking uncontrollably with tears flowing steadily – [[Pause](#)] and he seems to have lost control of his bladder.”

“Mr. Pierrepoint now hands the rope he was holding at the side to Mr. Billington and Billington places it over Klosowski’s head.”

Klosowski - “Gasp!”

Court Reporter Michael Gosling - “We have just heard an audible gasp from the condemned man as his knees almost buckled. We can hear

mumbling and sobbing from Klosowski as his rope is placed around his neck. It will not be long now as Billington can be relied upon to work quickly as he adjusts the rope tightly around the condemned man's neck."

Billington looks at Major Knox and Knox gives a nod
sealing Klosowski's fate - the two guards let go of Klosowski.
The killer drops as the floor gives way.

Court Reporter Michael Gosling - "And there he goes. The hated killer drops as we could clearly hear the snap of Klosowski's neck! The drop of six feet and six inches seems to have done the job as the killer's body is now swaying back and forth and we can clearly see that it is still twitching. [Pause] We can see that fluids are draining from the body as the body now seems to have stopped twitching. The prisoner seems to be dead."

Doctor Beamish steps forward below the hanging platform.

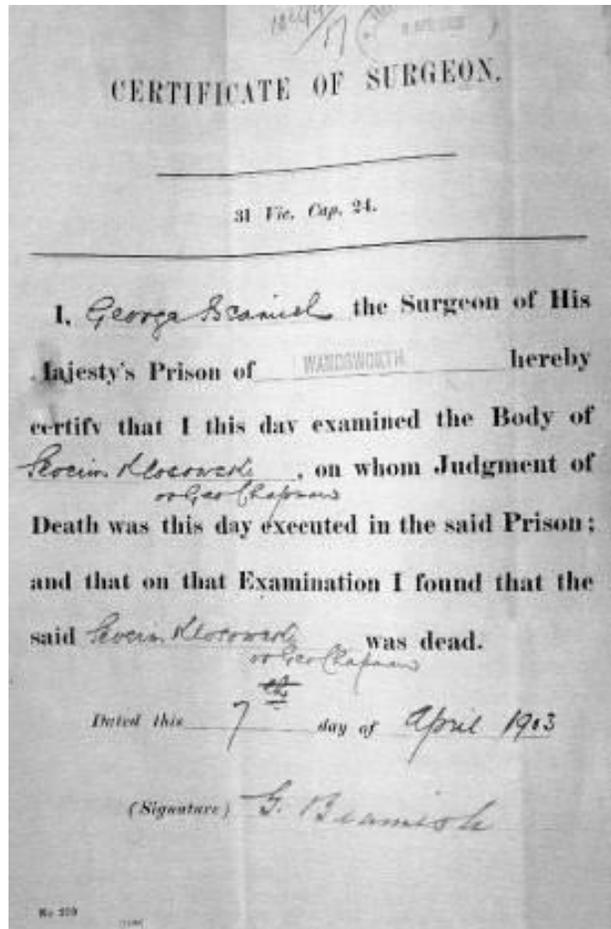
Court Reporter Michael Gosling - "The man stepping forward now is Doctor Beamish who will examine the prisoner for any signs of life and will make the official pronouncement of death."



Doctor Beamish

Klosowski hangs in the background.
Doctor Beamish checks for a heartbeat.

Doctor Beamish - "Life is extinct."



Court Reporter Michael Gosling - “And that is it. It is done. With that Klosowski’s corpse is now the property of the British government. It will be allowed to hang where it is in the locked shed for the next hour before the corpse is removed and examined.”

“The 37-year-old Russian-Pole, Severino Antoniovich Klosowski, sentenced to death for the murder of Maud Marsh, has been executed this morning within the stone walls of Wandsworth Prison. He will soon be buried in an unmarked grave, certainly no more than a hole in the ground, within these walls and allowed to rot with his rope still firmly cut into his neck.”

“As a final observation in this case it has been shown that Klosowski was sane in the narrow sense of the legal definition of sanity; that being capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, he realized the enormity of his behavior and what its legal consequences would be, there can be no shadow of doubt. Like almost all famous murderers, he was exceptionally clever at one moment and a hapless blunderer at the next. He was, above all, a most remarkable example of the over-confident criminal.”

“As far as many here in London are concerned, today British justice has finally ended the murderous career of Jack the Ripper. Undoubtedly, since we do not have a confession, that debate will go on for many years. It remains to be seen whether the likes of Severin Klosowski will ever be heard from in the future. One thing is clear however, the memory and legacy of Jack the Ripper will last forever!”

“This Michael Gosling reporting from Wandsworth Prison in the south of London. Good day.”



Court Reporter Michael Gosling

The black flag of death is raised outside of the prison - the crowd lets out a cheer as the death notice is posted.

NOTICE

*Capital Punishment Amendment Act 1868. 31-32 Vict., c.24, s.7.
The sentence of the law passed on Severino Klosowski (or) George Chapman, found guilty of murder, will be carried into execution at nine o'clock tomorrow. (signed) R. Kynaston Metcalfe, Acting Under Sheriff of the County of London. James Knox, Governor, Wandsworth Prison,
6th April 1903*

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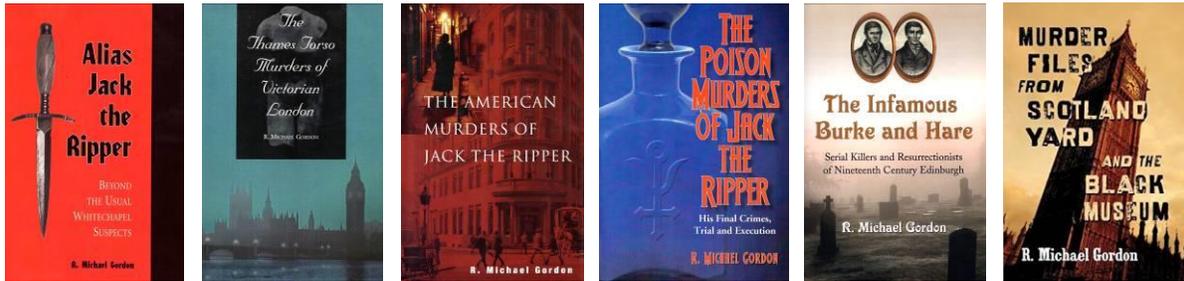
The London Times - April 8, 1903
Execution. - Severino Klosowski, otherwise George Chapman, 37, a Russian Pole, described as a licensed victualler of the Borough, was executed yesterday morning within the walls of Wandsworth Prison for

the willful murder of Maud Eliza Marsh by poisoning her with antimony in October last. Billington was the executioner, and death was instantaneous. At the inquest which was afterwards held by Mr. Troutbeck, Major Knox, the prison governor, said that the convict made no confession. The jury found that Chapman had been duly executed according to law, and a notice to this effect was afterwards posted outside the gaol.

The Execution of Jack the Ripper by R. Michael Gordon



Historic True Crime Books by R. Michael Gordon



R. Michael Gordon was born in Ontario, Canada, and lived in southern England during the 1960s, later moving to Los Angeles, California. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree, magna cum laude, in Geography and Earth Science at California State University at Dominguez Hills. Michael worked as an aerospace Illustrator and Art Supervisor for 25 years at aerospace subcontractor Subia Inc. and later Hughes Aircraft Company, working on Apollo, Skylab, Viking, Voyager and other spacecraft programs. He has maintained a personal library on the United States space program including folders on every American manned flight from Mercury to the Space Shuttle program for decades. Michael began writing full-time in 1998.

R. Michael Gordon podcast Interviews

A podcast interview with R. Michael Gordon on the subject of Jack the Ripper may be heard on Casebook.org “The Chapman Ripper Theory”.

A six part podcast interview with R. Michael Gordon may also be heard on the Wash Ripper + Jude website.

For an entirely different experience, we invite our readers to enjoy a science fiction book series in weekly podcast format titled, “The Aftermath: Of the War of the Worlds.” This 76 part series by R. Michael Gordon explores the aftermath of H. G. Wells’ classic tale of Martians invading the Earth and continues the story. This weekly science fiction series can be found on Mads&Tulle.com.