

## Plan# 448

Holloway, Celia (MI-9-448-819)

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*Beneath this path are deposited/Portions of the remains of/Celia HOLLOWAY/ who was brutally murdered/ in the lovers Walk in this parish/ in the year of Christ 1831/aged 32 years/Resting till that day when there shall be no more sin*

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<https://brightonmuseums.org.uk/discover/2012/12/17/the-murder-of-celia-holloway/>

Celia was working in service in Brighton in the 1820s when she met John Holloway, a young petty criminal, at the racecourse. She fell in love with him and, although it seems he didn't care for her – according to some contemporary accounts he wouldn't even be seen with her in daylight – they became a couple of sorts and Celia became pregnant. Holloway refused to marry her, however, so she returned to her birthplace near Ardingly and applied for parish relief. She stated that John Holloway was the father of her unborn child and, as a result, he was sent to Lewes prison until he agreed to marriage. After five weeks in jail, he relented.

The couple returned to Brighton, where their baby was stillborn. Celia became pregnant again, eventually giving birth to a baby girl who also died. Holloway, meanwhile, had gone to sea and, while he was away, he met and illegally married a young woman called Ann Kennett. Despite this, he didn't sever his connection with Celia definitively; by the summer of 1831, both women were expecting children fathered by Holloway and his behaviour towards Celia had become increasingly violent. The authorities had ordered him to pay her maintenance of two shillings per week which, even with his job as a painter on the Chain Pier, he was unable to do. In desperation, he resorted to murder.

On 13 August 1831, a local fisherman noticed that some earth had been recently disturbed in a wooded path known as Lover's Walk, near Preston Park. Further investigation revealed fragments of clothing and, before long, the grim discovery of a dismembered body. Blood-stained fragments of wood were found nearby, and gradually – amidst much gossip and speculation – the truth emerged.

One night in July, Holloway had arranged to meet Celia at a property in North Steyne Row, also known as Donkey Row; the street, just behind Grand Parade, was described as 'principally consisting of the most miserable habitations'. He claimed that this would be the start of their new life together and poor Celia must have believed him. But while pretending to embrace her, he slipped a rope around her neck and, with Ann's help, strangled her. The following day, Holloway returned to the scene of the crime to dispose of the body. First, he cut off her head, arms and legs – he had once worked as a butcher's boy and it was noted in the local press that Celia's limbs had been 'amputated with skill'. Witnesses reported seeing a wooden trunk and wheelbarrow outside the house, and it was these that enabled him to conceal and transport the torso to a shallow grave in Lover's Walk. The other body parts were later found in a privy in Margaret Street, where Holloway lived at the time of the murder.

Holloway and Kennett were both apprehended and were present at the inquest, where numerous people gave evidence. The case was covered in graphic detail in the local press; witness statements, post-mortem accounts, even the letters written in prison by Holloway to his mother and sister were published. He made several contradictory confessions and these, too, became public. According to one report:

'Perhaps more prevaricating statements were never produced from the brain of man, than the confessions. At times there seemed a disposition to speak the truth, and then he was, if possible, more ambiguous than when his bungling attempts at falsehood were more obvious.'

Holloway was found guilty and, on Friday 16 December 1831, he was hanged at Horsham Gaol. The next day, his body was brought back to Brighton and displayed at the Town Hall, where it drew a crowd of 'upwards of 23,000 persons'. Ann Kennett was cleared of wrongdoing. Celia Holloway is commemorated by a plaque at St Peter's Church, Preston, close to the spot where her body was found.

See also An Authentic and Faithful History of the Atrocious Murder of Celia Holloway PDF  
 (https://ia802703.us.archive.org/14/items/anauthenticandf01hollgoog/anauthenticandf01hollgoog.pdf)

 <p>A seated illustration of a young man, identified as John William Holloway, wearing a dark coat and a white cravat. The name 'John William Holloway' is written in cursive below the portrait.</p>	 <p>An engraving of a large, two-story building with a gabled roof and multiple chimneys. A large crowd of people is gathered in front of the building, and a horse-drawn carriage is visible. The scene is set in a street.</p>
<p>'likeness' of John Holloway, The Brighton Murder an Authentic and Faithful History of the Atrocious Murder of Celia Holloway</p>	<p>The Crown &amp; Anchor at Preston where the inquest into Celia's death was held, The Brighton Murder an Authentic and Faithful History of the Atrocious Murder of Celia Holloway</p>
<p><b>MURDER OF CELIA HOLLOWAY.</b>          [FINAL EXAMINATION OF THE FEMALE PRISONER KENNETT.]          Bench of Magistrates, Thursday, Sept. 1, 1831.          Present—Sir DAVID SCOTT, Bart., S. F. MILFORD and W. SEYMOUR, Esqrs., and Capt. FULLER, R.N.          So intense was the curiosity of the public to become acquainted with the fate of the prisoner, that long before the examination commenced the seats in the Magistrates' room were filled by persons of the greatest respectability, including several ladies and tradesmen's wives. The street leading to the room was thronged by persons anxious to obtain entrance, but none were allowed to enter without permission of the police. Early in the morning the prisoner was</p>	
<p>Brighton Gazette, 8 September 1831</p>	