



HISTORY BIOGS

FIGURES FROM HISTORY

DICK TURPIN

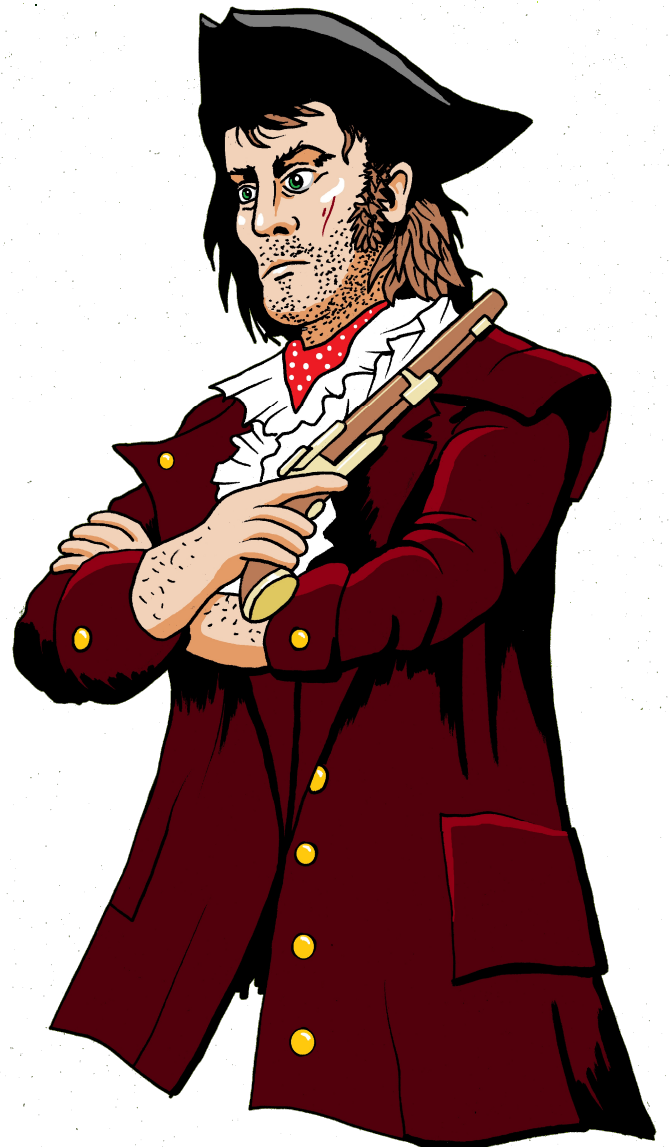
Dick Turpin has become a legendary figure, a heroic dandy, with ballads written about him, popular theatre shows in the 18th and 19th century, and even Film and TV shows. In reality though, he was far from dandy, and was a vicious and violent criminal!

Richard (Dick) Turpin was born at the Blue Bell Inn in Hempstead, Essex, the fifth of six children, his father John Turpin was a butcher and Inn keeper and his mother was Mary Elizabeth Parmenter. He was baptised on 21 September 1705. Several stories suggest that Dick Turpin may have followed his father into the family business; but one hints that, as a teenager, he was apprenticed to a different butcher in the village of Whitechapel, while another states he ran his own butcher's shop in Thaxted.

At his trial in 1739 his Testimony suggests that he had a little education and, although no records survive that corroborate it, it is believed he married Elizabeth Millington in 1725.

Following his apprenticeship, they moved north to Buckhurst Hill, Essex. where Turpin opened a butcher's shop.

By the early 1730s things seem to change for the worse for Turpin. He joined a gang of deer thieves and, later, became a poacher, burglar, horse thief and killer.





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Turpin's involvement with 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 Turpin may have accidentally shot and killed.

Turpin fled from the scene and shortly afterwards killed a man who attempted to apprehend him.

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. Turpin's true identity was revealed by a letter he wrote to his brother-in-law from his prison cell. Amazingly the postman delivering the letter had actually taught young Dick to read and write, and he immediately recognized Turpin's handwriting.

On 22 March 1739, Turpin was found guilty on two charges of horse theft and sentenced to death. He was hanged at Knavesmire on 7 April 1739.

In Victorian times, Novelist William Harrison Ainsworth based a story on Turpin, giving him a horse called Black Bess and inventing a 200 mile overnight dash from London to York, almost 100 years after the real Turpin's death. This story, among others, have fueled the legend of Dick Turpin.

Here at **HISTORY.PORTAL** we love a good story about brigands and scoundrels. Check out our musical.

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