



GRESSENHALL
FARM AND WORKHOUSE
MUSEUM OF NORFOLK LIFE

Murder in the Workhouse Script: Chapter 1

If you wish to follow the script along with the film, tracking times (approx every 30 seconds) are counted down from >09:00< to >00:00< in **red**.

When there are sound effects, these are highlighted in **green**. Images are noted in **blue**.

>09:00< Start of the film

[music] [image of Gressenhall Workhouse with opening titles]

Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse

Murder in the Workhouse

Chapter 1: Arriving at the Workhouse

This is one of a series of short films to look at life in the workhouse through a murder mystery.

The characters in this mystery are fictitious, as is the murder itself. However, all other information about the workhouse is based upon historical events.

Everything you need to solve the murder is contained in these films. It may be helpful to have a pen and paper handy.

>08.48<

Chapter 1: Arriving at the Workhouse

[image of Gressenhall Workhouse c1800]

Detective Lightfoot speaks:

This is Gressenhall Union Workhouse– my name is Detective Lightfoot and I have a murder to investigate: Mr Richard Barker has been killed.

[image of Mr Barker]

I will, of course, need your assistance – we shall meet seven characters from the workhouse.

[image of each character]

Mr Fuller, the master of the workhouse, Mr Scrivener, the school master, Elizabeth Bacon the cook, Greve, the porter, Nancy Flowerdew,

a poor female inmate, William Ploughwright, a poor male inmate and Mrs Sarah Barker, the widow of Mr Richard Barker.

>8:00<

Do not worry about remembering their names now, we will meet them in turn ...

We must interview these suspects and discover everything we can. We will need to find out what the suspects know about the victim and how they feel about each other – most importantly, we need to find out their motives –the reasons why they may want Mr Barker dead. We also need to keep our eyes peeled for any other evidence.

[image of each character shown in their location on a floorplan map of the workhouse]

To help us - we have map of the workhouse and a detective's notebook to record our thoughts about each suspect.

[image of blank map and notebook page]

You may copy this one, or make your own. If you can, write everything down – it will make it a lot easier to piece things together at the end.

>07:09<

Scene 1:

Detective:

It was a Monday morning in the Spring of 1873

[sound of birdsong] [images of workhouse]

As I approached the workhouse all seemed normal, a day like any other day, the birds singing from the full blossomed trees as the early morning sun seemed to light my way.

Now, I am not a superstitious sort of fellow, not given to flights of fancy, and yet it seemed as though the building was shrouded in a cloud, a grey pall if you like. For this was a workhouse-

>06:37<

Mr Fuller, The Workhouse Master, speaks:

‘a place for the poor, poor people with nowhere to go, no one to look after them come here – they receive food, shelter and clothing, but adults must work to help pay for their keep – which is why it is called a workhouse.’

Detective:

There are in total 825 workhouses in this country –

[image of inmates working]

Master:

‘...so that all poor people, where ever they live, may be looked after in the same way ... following the same routine – the same thing happening day after day, week after week, year after year ...’

>6:00<

Detective:

But today things are different - Mr Richard Barker lies dead.

[images of Mr Barker & workhouse boardroom]

He is -was- an important man, the chairman of the board of guardians, well-off people from nearby towns and villages who make sure that the workhouse is run properly – at first it was thought he had taken his own life, but now more evidence has come to light.

[music ends]

>5:30<

Scene 2:

[sound of birdsong] [images of workhouse gates]

Detective:

I made my way to the entrance, a small door to the right of the gates with a heavy iron door knocker ... a clenched fist clasping a ring.

[sound of knocking on door] [image of green door]

Porter:

I'll give you what for, knocking on me door at this time ... so help me if I don't!

[sound of door opening]

>05:07<

[image of Greve, the Porter]

Detective:

The man introduced himself as Greve, the Porter.

His duty was to watch the workhouse gate and made sure that only the right people came in.

Porter:

Oh, you're not a pauper, a poor person, then, are ya? – Very well... my apologies, and how can I be of assistance?

Detective:

[sound of footsteps] [b/w image of courtyard]

We crossed a large courtyard, a colourful flowerbed in its centre, at odds with the grim buildings surrounding it ...

Porter:

They thought he had done himself in.

Detective:

He leaned close to me- too close. I could smell the stale beer on his breath ...

Porter:

[sound of more footsteps]

The Master found the body this morning... he likes to take a walk in the gardens- that really spoiled his day [*spits*]. Here y'ar. Mr Fuller, the Master, will be with you momentarily.

>04:06<

Detective:

I turned to find a nervous looking man standing in the door.

[image of Mr Fuller, the Master]

Master:

Ah, yes, you must be Detective Lightfoot? Robert Fuller, Master of this workhouse. Now I'm sure that you will be able to sort out this unpleasantness without any more ... er ... trouble ... hmmm ... yes? I suppose you will want to see the body?

>03:41<

Scene 3:

[image of workhouse map showing location of morgue]

Detective:

He led me to the morgue, a small building outside the walls of the workhouse – there on a table lay Mr Richard Barker. Mr Barker had been discovered by the Master. He told me-

Master:

It was quite a shock you know ... it is my custom to take a short walk to the gardens before we begin to open wards, those are the rooms in which the poor inmates of this workhouse sleep.

[images of Mr Barker, map, workhouse corridor and gardens]

Gardens do lift one's spirits do they not ... particularly when so much around us is bleak and ... ahh, yes,

[images of pond]

but I digress ... quite horrific it was ... I could not make it out at first and thought it but a sack blown there by the wind. But as I came closer, I saw it to be a body, floating face down, but a few feet from the edge of the pond.

Detective:

[images of Mr Barker and the pond]

The medical officer and the Master had brought Mr Barker to the morgue. No other person had seen the body or knew how he had died. The medical officer had found that Mr Barker had drowned, and suicide was suspected until a wound was discovered on the back of his skull. The skin was broken and bruised in a manner which suggested he had been struck by a heavy blunt object.

[images of heavy blunt objects: wooden stick, cold iron, candlesticks, hammer]

>2:20<

[image of workhouse]

I made a number of additional observations – Mr Barker was only wearing one shoe, his right was missing, and his gold watch chain hung down loosely, the watch itself being lost.

[image of shoes, watch-chain and coat]

Finally, the back of his frock coat was muddied and somewhat torn – but not the front.

I enquired of the master if any of this had been done whilst moving the body – the master replied that he did not think so as great care had been taken.

[image of the Master and stretcher chair]

Master:

Oh, ah, I almost forgot, the medical officer discovered a note in Mr Barker's pocket as he was examining him ... now where did I? Ah, here it is!

Detective:

He handed me a fragment of paper, still damp but just legible ...

[image of note]

'... it is not enough. I will await you after the meeting'.

>1:30<

I asked what this meeting could be.

Master:

[image of boardroom & Mr Barker]

The Board of Guardians meet every Sunday evening to discuss the running of the workhouse. As usual Mr Barker arrived an hour early and opened the meeting at 6 o'clock.

Detective:

[image of oakum]

I was about to take my leave when I noticed something in the top pocket of Mr Barker's coat ... human hair? No, a few strands of string or rope ... interesting ... I placed them in my own pocket for future reference.

[image of main courtyard]

I returned to the main courtyard to begin interviewing suspects.

>1:00<

Scene 4:

Detective:

[Images of notebook, objects and suspects]

I would take this opportunity to record what you have discovered about the murder, objects found, or missing, on the body of the dead man ... and anything we know about suspects we have met, or any other clues we need to find out about.

[image of workhouse map]

Remember, above all, keep your mind open, do not jump to any conclusions, there is much water to pass under the bridge before we can solve this case.

[20 seconds of music] [image of workhouse]

End of Chapter 1

>00:00< Film ends