



GRESSENHALL
FARM AND WORKHOUSE
MUSEUM OF NORFOLK LIFE

Murder in the Workhouse Script: Chapter 2

If you wish to follow the script along with the film, tracking times (approx every 30 seconds) are counted down from >05:29< to >00:00< in **red**.

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

>05:29< Start of the film

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

Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse

Murder in the Workhouse

Chapter 2: Meeting the Master

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

Everything you need to solve the murder is contained in these films. You will need a pen and paper to record your observations.

A script is available to download if you wish to follow the dialogue.

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

>05:15<

[image of workhouse in c1800 with chapter title]

Chapter 2 Meeting the Master

Detective:

This is Gressenhall Workhouse. My name is Detective Lightfoot- and I have a murder to investigate.

[image of Mr Barker]

Mr Richard Barker lies dead. He was found drowned in the workhouse pool, and was thought to have killed himself until a wound from a heavy object was discovered on the back of his skull.

>05:00<

[image of workhouse]

In Chapter One, I arrived at the workhouse and saw the body of Mr Barker. Now we must interview the suspects. There are seven in total.

[image of blank notebook]

Remember to use your detective's notebook to record everything you have found out- I have a feeling that this case may prove quite challenging.

[sound of birdsong]

[image of Mr Fuller & workhouse map]

I decided that the first person I should interview was Mr Fuller, after all he was the master and he had discovered the body. I found him in the master's quarters, seated at a desk, making some notes. He paused when I came in.

>04.44<

Mr Fuller, the Workhouse Master:

Ah! Detective Lightfoot ... please do sit down ... it is most distressing, most distressing. To think that I was one of the last people to see Mr Barker alive! That is, apart from his lady wife, Mrs Barker – and the murderer, of course!

[images of Mrs Barker, Mr Barker, Mr Greve & Miss Bacon in locations on map]

Though everything was a bit out of sorts last night, Mr Barker was staying late ... Greve and I saw him in the boardroom at quarter past eight I think. Then Greve returned to the Porter's lodge and I went to the kitchen and spoke to Miss Bacon, the cook, just before the bell struck half past eight. She was behind after the Guardian's meeting. I then went to begin locking up the men's wards and heard voices from the boardroom as I passed.

>04:15<

Detective:

His hands twitched as they shuffled a few papers on his desk. He put down his pen.

Mr Fuller:

But may I speak frankly, Detective? The fact is, Detective, I felt that all was not well with Mrs Barker yesterday. Last night after the meeting I spoke to Mr Barker in the boardroom, and as I left at a quarter past eight, she entered. I thought at first perhaps she was angry with *me*, she is a ... er ... formidable lady. But on reflection I think someone else had displeased her.

[image of Mrs Barker]

Mrs Barker:

Mr Fuller, how delightful, but surely you have work to do? I wish to speak to my husband alone.'

[image of Mr Barker, workhouse and pond] [music]

Mr Fuller:

Now, I do not know what this was about, but people have said that Mr Barker had been acting rather strangely recently – spending longer at the workhouse than usual and not at all himself ... it seemed perfectly possible when it was suggested he may have killed himself ... but apparently not ...

>03:45<

[image of Mr Fuller]

Detective:

He looked at me for a moment, no, not at me- through me ...

[images of weighing scales, workhouse dolls, wheelchair]

Mr Fuller:

After all, it costs a lot of money to look after the poor – they need food, heating, clothing and medical care ... And who pays for it all, Detective? Not I – I am just the master. No, it is the taxpayers, well-off people from the towns and villages around the workhouse, who pay to look after the poor. As Mr Barker was always reminding me.

[images of Mr Barker & wealthy taxpayers]

Mr Barker:

Mr Fuller, understand this, man!: the taxpayers do not wish to spend their hard-earned money on the poor! The idea of the workhouse system is simple: make life tough, make things unpleasant in the workhouse so people only come in if they are truly desperate. The fewer people who come in, the less taxes we pay!

>03:10<

[images of Mr Fuller & workhouse inmates]

Mr Fuller:

And, Detective, this system works ... There are hardly any able-bodied poor people here. The inmates are mostly those in need; people who are very old, very sick or very young. Sometimes I wonder ... why should they suffer when they have done little wrong?

Detective:

He stared down at his desk and sighed.

[image of workhouse clock]

Do you know, Detective, that the workhouse clock does not even work properly? It runs 15 minutes fast all the time and there is no money to fix it. Oh yes, speaking of that I must go and see Greve ... we are expecting the clockmaker ... again.

>02:50<

[image of Greve the Porter] [music ends- sound of footsteps]

Detective:

We crossed the courtyard to the porter's lodge ... and there lounging outside was Greve, the porter.

Greve:

Mr Fuller, Sir, I am afraid I have to inform you that the men's ward doors were left open again last night Now, Mr Fuller ... You have had a lot on your mind with Mr Barker's death have you not? You must have forgotten to close the doors to the wards.

[image of workhouse corridor]

But you need not worry, I will not tell the Guardians ...

Detective:

Mr Fuller spoke briefly to Greve and we came away. Mr Fuller was clearly upset.

[image of Mr Fuller, cell door] [sound of footsteps]

Detective, we lock all the doors to the inmates' wards as a matter of safety and security. We cannot have paupers wandering about. I am ashamed to admit that I may have left the ward doors open once before. It was weeks ago ...

[image of Ploughwright the poor inmate]

That poor inmate, Ploughwright was found to be wandering about the workhouse after dark, trying to see his family, I understand. He was punished for it yesterday at the Guardian's meeting. But I am certain, Detective, that the ward doors were closed last night.

>02:10<

[images of Greve the Porter, Miss Bacon the Cook and Mr Scrivener the Schoolmaster]

[images of rural Victorians]

Detective:

I asked him about the workhouse staff ...

Mr Fuller:

You get what you pay for in this life, Detective. My staff are undertrained and underpaid. I have only 12 members of staff to look after between 350 and 450 poor people. The number changes during the year, you know, there are more poor people in here in the winter when there is less work in the farms.

[image of Greve in location on workhouse map]

Of course, you have met Greve? Let us say he takes some encouragement to do his work properly. He is lazy and idle, a drunkard and a bully. I regret to say that it is well-known that Greve is not only a bad porter, but a worse man.

>01:50<

[image of Mr Scrivener in location on workhouse map]

Detective:

And what of Mr Scrivener the schoolmaster?

Mr Fuller:

Hmm, Scrivener, is a decent enough chap but he finds life in the workhouse hard. We have had our differences.

Scrivener:

It's asking an awful lot, isn't it, Mister Fuller? Working from dawn til dusk in this place with no adult company. I care about the children, my scholars, but it is hard to be at their beck and call from the moment I wake, to the moment I go to bed. A chap needs a bit of light relief now and then; a couple of drinks, a game of cards and a bit of entertainment.

[image of Mr Scrivener's dog]

Mr Fuller:

Mr Scrivener had a dog, you know ... he kept it in the workhouse ... well, Greve found out and told me about it and I had to tell the Guardians ... Mr Barker was not impressed.

[image of Mr Barker]

Mr Barker:

This is a workhouse, not a zoo, Mr Fuller, have the animal removed and destroyed!

[image of Mr Scrivener and his dog]

Mr Fuller:

It made him Mr Scrivener very upset you know. He called me some awful names, and said terrible things about Mr Barker. He is happier now that the Board of Guardians have allowed him one night out of the workhouse every week, but the loss of his dog still hurts.

>01:15<

[image of Mr Fuller, image of Mr Scrivener in location on workhouse map]

Why, Detective ... that reminds me! I saw Mr Scrivener last night - I am sure it was him - leaving the girls' school room just before 9.30. He must have got the boys settled in earlier than usual.

Detective:

And Miss Bacon, the cook?

[image of Miss Bacon]

Mr Fuller:

Miss Bacon? I believe she was in service in Mr Barker's house sometime before she came here to work-

Miss Bacon:

I was a kitchen maid and then the second cook in Mr Barker's household for three and a half years.

[image of Mr Fuller & Mrs Barker]

Mr Fuller:

She came to us with excellent references, Mr Barker wrote-

>00:58<

Mr Barker:

Elizabeth was a hard-working and valued member of my household. I have the pleasure to recommend her for the position of workhouse cook.

[images of Miss Bacon & pot of gruel]

Mr Fuller:

She is different to most of the staff, I can assure you; hard-working and kind, and her cooking is - well, it is adequate.

[images of Mr Fuller & Harriet Kettle]

Now, you have taken up a great deal of my time Detective and workhouses don't run themselves. Most of the inmates of this workhouse are just old and tired and sick ... but some ... Harriet Kettle has been taunting Matron again and I fear what she may do next. So if you will excuse me..?

Detective:

Mr Fuller left, and I was just about to go, when the school master came bustling in.

>00:33<

[image of Mr Scrivener]

Scrivener:

Mr Fuller? Oh, it is you Det Lightfoot ... ah, well, I suppose you should know then- they have just found something in the burial ground, lying by the path ... it is a shoe!

[image of shoes, workhouse, Mr Fuller, Mr Scrivener, Mrs Barker]

Detective:

A shoe- interesting! But before we speak further to the school master we should pause. What have we discovered? There is anger and frustration in this place. A workhouse master worn down by his duties, who seemingly

forgets to lock the doors at night, a schoolmaster angry at the loss of his dog, and Mr Barker's wife obviously displeased at - who knows what?

[image of workhouse c1800 with closing titles]

End of Chapter 2

>00:00< [film ends]