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# The Wigan Murder: Examination and Confession of John Healey

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# THE WIGAN MURDER,

## EXAMINATION

AND

## CONFESSION

OF

# JOHN HEALEY.

John Healey, who stands charged on his confession with having been concerned with four others in the murder of James Barton, at the Button or Bawkhous Pit, Haigh, near Wigan, on the morning of the 3 d of January, 1863, was re-examined at Wigan, yesterday. The confession having been read over, Mr. Lamb asked the prisoner if it was correct. He said: it is not all correct, sir. I own to it that I had liquor with the men, but then I do not recollect where I went.—Mr. Lamb: But that portion about the murder?—Healey: I can then recollect the men and then getting drunk, but I do not know what occurred after.—Mr. Lamb: Well, then, how was it you made that statement? A man may be in drink and not know what he is doing.—Mr. Lamb: You were not in drink when you made the statement.—The prisoner: No.—Mr. Lamb: Then how was it you made it? The prisoner made no reply. Evidence was then tendered as to the de-covery of the few remains of Barton, but nothing fresh was elicited. The only evidence bearing upon the confession of Healey, was that of Jane Little, a collier girl. She deposed that on the morning of the murder she was assisting to load a boat with coal at the Bridge or Pigeon Pit, situated on the canal bank, between the Bawkhous Colliery and Wigan. The towering path was on the oppsite side of the canal to the colliery, and the path was lighted by a light on the pit bank. About a quarter-past two she was in the boat, and a man, named Jordan, was above lowering the coals. He was approaching with a full tub when she saw four men come in the direction of Haigh. Jordan was just lowering a tub as they came near, and when the men saw him they stopped suddenly by a heap of ashes. Whilst he was fetching another tub they walked sharply past and over the bridge, where they waited till Jordan had gone away again. The men had caps on.—Having been charged in the usual way, the prisoner said he had nothing to say, and he was committed for trial at the next Liverpool assizes.—The evidence of Little is, so far as it goes, corroborative of Healey's confession, and as it was never made public till yesterday, there is no probability that the story of the prisoner with regard to the four men can have been manufactured from the newspapers or from hearsay.

Come all you wild and wicked youth,  
Listen to me I will tell the truth  
For that sad and dreadful deed  
Has caused my very heart to bleed,  
I could not sleep or take my rest,  
I compelled was to confess.

### CHORUS.

Though justice strictly searched about,  
They could not find the murderer out.

Two long years have gone and pass'd,  
And I, John Healey, have confessed  
At last to my grief and sad downfall,  
I was taken to Wigan Town Hall,  
Where I had to face Justice Lamb,  
To answer was I the guilty man.

John Healey is my name,  
It was strong whiskey did my head inflame,  
With four companions at their desire,  
At Button Pit near Wigan  
To thrust poor James Barton in the furnace  
flames of fire.

### Though &c.

A warning take young men I pray,  
For fear like me you should be led astray,  
For nights rambling is my downfall,  
And strong drink is the ruin of all;  
I have taken father,  
The mother left orphans to deplore,  
May the Lord have mercy on his soul,  
They will never see him more.  
Alas in Kirkdale Goal I lay,  
A-waiting for the trial-day.