



Thomas Fury – A Drunken Sailor

The grisly murder of Maria Fitzsimmons by sailor Thomas Fury took place in 1869, just at Baines Lane. This story begins in February 1869 when Fury left his ship on the River Wear for a drinking session on shore. While he became familiar with the local pubs and taverns he met a woman described by the police as "a disorderly character". The pair continued to drink together along the High Street and finally went back to Maria's lodgings on Baines Lane, an area that was being redeveloped for the laying down of James William Street. Fury was so drunk he collapsed at her lodgings 'dead drunk.' When he finally woke from his stupor he found he had been robbed of his money and possessions. He accused Maria and demanded she return his possessions. An argument followed, then Fury attacked Maria fleeing the scene and leaving her to die. Fury then returned to his ship on the Wear. Maria's body was not discovered until the following night, by then Fury was long gone on his next voyage.

This murder would have remained one of the many unsolved murders until he was arrested in 1879 for robbery in Norwich. During this period of imprisonment Fury became ill and near to death. Suffering nightmares and worrying he would be going to Hell for his sins, Fury confessed his crime.

In 1882 Durham Magistrate passed the death sentence, and 13 years after the deadly deed he was punished for his crime!