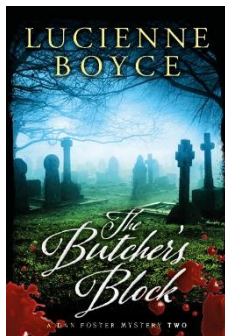


## DAN FOSTER IN SOUTHWARK: *THE BUTCHER'S BLOCK*



**In *The Butcher's Block*, the second full-length Dan Foster Mystery, Dan is working undercover in Southwark in a case that sees him crossing paths with body snatchers, blood-thirsty revolutionaries, French agents and British spies.**

In the eighteenth century Southwark was a smelly, noisy, dirty place, crammed with shipping and its associated wharves and warehouses handling coal, timber, pipe clay, corn and a myriad other goods. Many of its industries were not the sort we'd like to live next door to, such as slaughter houses, leather tanning, brewing, soap and candle making. There were workshops and factories producing hats, glue, sugar, needles, watches, guns and coaches. There were flour mills, distilleries, and breweries such as that owned by Henry Thrale, husband of writer and diarist Esther Thrale.

There were markets at Borough and St George's Market, and men and women on the streets selling food, drink, ballads, ribbons, flowers, bread, and other goods. There were beef shops and chop houses, coaching inns – you could take the coach for Portsmouth from Stone's End, where London's cobbled streets ended – oyster rooms, coffee houses and tea gardens. Dan passes some of his time in the coffee room of the White Hart which was on the east side of Borough High Street. The original building was destroyed in a fire in 1676 and rebuilt; the building was demolished in 1889.

*“Around the quays foul-mouthed lumpers shifted bales and crates. A filthy beggar sat in the road with his back against a wall, his bare ulcerated legs stretched in front of him. A drunken woman peeped out of an alley and slurred, ‘Buy us a drink, me darlings!’ ”* **The Butcher's Block.**

### *The George Inn*



London's only surviving galleried coaching inn, the George Inn, is now owned by the National Trust.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/george-inn>

There were street theatres, musicians and puppeteers. Astley's famous circus at the Amphitheatre opened in 1773. The press gang roamed the streets, along with sailors from

trading nations from around the globe, and prostitutes, pickpockets and beggars – many of them children.

There were also prisons: King's Bench, the Marshalsea, the Southwark Compter, the Bridewell, the Clink (destroyed during the Gordon Riots of 1780). There were dissenting meeting houses, and churches such as the one Dan would have known as St Saviour's, which became Southwark Cathedral in 1905. The church of St John the Evangelist on Horsleydown, where Dan hides to spy out the body snatchers' headquarters, was built in 1733. In the twentieth century it was known as Southwark, St Olave and St John. It was badly damaged during the Second World War and later demolished.

***“They set off in the direction of Blackfriars Bridge, setting their backs to the decrepit gables of the Marshalsea and the smoking chimneys of the King's Bench prisons where men and women languished for want of sufficient to pay their debts and prison fees.” The Butcher's Block.***

***“Ahead lay the filthy slums of Jacob's Island with its vermin-ridden houses, brothels, taverns, cockpits and gambling dens squatting over a sewage-filled creek.” The Butcher's Block.***

There was unbelievable filth, crime and squalor, much centring around the notorious Jacob's Island, where people who lived in rotten tenements used the ditches for both sewage and drinking water. In the midst of its slime, dirt, decay, collapsing houses and industrial waste, cholera raged unchecked.

### ***Guy's Hospital***



Dan visits Guy's Hospital at the start of his investigation. The hospital was founded in 1721 by Sir Thomas Guy.



***“A group of students loafed noisily, heedless of the crowd of herniated, injured and abscessed poor who waited for the outpatients' room to open.” The Butcher's Block.***

### ***Tooley Street***



Dan takes lodgings in Tooley Street at the print shop and home of the Chambers family. Mr Chambers has been prosecuted for selling radical books and has set up a new book and print sellers in Southwark where his wife and young daughters are engaged in a startling “family manufactory”.

### ***Union Hall***



The magistrate’s office Dan visits to consult his friend Reeves. The building was opened in 1781. The original facade has been retained.

### ***Crossbones Graveyard***



Though not one of the graveyards mentioned in *The Butcher’s Block*, the Crossbones Graveyard was close to Union Hall and was an additional burial ground for the overcrowded graveyard of St Saviour’s Church. It was a paupers’ burial ground and as such was a prime target for body snatchers, as the poor dead were buried in shallow graves in flimsy coffins, their bodies easy to steal. It was, of course, conveniently close to Guy’s and St Thomas’s Hospitals.

According to John Flint South, a surgeon at St Thomas’s Hospital, the lecture room at the hospital could “*accommodate two hundred and those in the gallery ninety more; but on surgical lecture nights a large number of students converted the stairs into seats...and in addition to these the floor passage was crowded with sitters on stools, and some even standing, who might be reckoned at least fifty or sixty more. All these seats I have seen times without number crammed; and it is no little pleasure for an old man to recall the time when,*

*year after year, he there enjoyed the benefit of sitting under such an illustrious teacher as Astley Cooper."*

The surgeon Sir Astley Cooper (1768–1841) was deeply implicated in the body snatching business, paying the body snatchers well for the subjects they provided for his dissecting table.

### ***Maze Pond***



All that remains of Maze Pond, named after the fish pond belonging to the Abbot of Battle's palace which stood on the site, is a street sign. The remains of a Romano-British boat and Roman timbers have been excavated on the site. The old network of streets and alleys lies under Guy's Hospital. In 1795 a government spy called Powell reported that the Boatswain and Call in Maze Pond was the meeting place of Division 14 of the London Corresponding Society, the branch that Dan infiltrates during his investigation.

### **Some famous Southwark connections**

- Dick Whittington founded a refuge for unmarried mothers at St Thomas's Hospital.
- Chaucer's pilgrims set off from the Tabard Inn (later the Talbot) on Borough High Street.
- The antiquarian William Stukeley studied at St Thomas's Hospital.
- Mary Wollstonecraft lived in George Street.
- Mary Hays lived in Gainsford Street.
- The pugilist Tom Cribb ran the Golden Lion Inn.
- Oliver Goldsmith practised medicine in Bankside.
- John Thelwall joined a group of moderate reformists in Southwark.
- Charles Dickens set some of his stories in the area – The White Hart is in *The Pickwick Papers*, Jacob's Island in *Oliver Twist*, the Marshalsea in *Little Dorrit*.
- John Keats lived in lodgings near Guy's Hospital when he studied medicine there.
- Ludwig Wittgenstein worked in Guy's hospital pharmacy.
- Richard Dadd was confined to the Bethlam lunatic asylum in St George's Fields after murdering his father.
- The artist Elizabeth Siddal was living in Southwark when she was introduced to the Pre Raphaelite circle.
- The suffragist and pacifist Mary Sheepshanks worked at the Blackfriars Settlement.

***"The pool that had given Maze Pond its name was long gone, aptly replaced by a bewildering network of narrow streets and courts behind Guy's Hospital." The Butcher's Block.***





A medieval roof boss in Southwark Cathedral depicting the Devil swallowing Judas.



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