

## Charlie Peace – criminal and murderer

Our speaker at the March meeting was Michael Eaton who has spent a lifetime researching the life of a man whose exploits have been transformed into a legend.

Charlie Peace was born in Sheffield probably in May 1852. His father was a travelling showman training lions and tigers. Charlie inherited his father's showmanship together with some musical ability. However, his violin case hid the tools of his more lucrative trade, housebreaking and robbery. In spite of spending time in and out of jail, Charlie had an attraction for women, some stayed remarkably loyal to him. The turning point of his life came one night in Manchester when he shot and killed a policeman. He was now a murderer and it was while on the run that he came to Nottingham and disappeared in the hovels of Narrow Marsh.

Our speaker had first heard the story from his grandmother who had grown up in that area. At first Michael thought she had made it up but when he was ten, reading the comic "Buster", he realised the hero of the comic strip was the burglar and murderer of his grandmother's nursery rhyme. Since then, his research has revealed poems, ballads, films, songs and even waxworks. Michael confessed the highlight of his professional life as a writer was Nottingham Playhouse staging his own play "Charlie Peace – His Amazing Life and Astounding Legend".

Michael Eaton concluded the evening with a showing of an old black and white silent film of "The Legend of Charlie Peace." He was thanked and warmly applauded.

