

## Vere Street Injustice July 1810

After the arrest of twenty-seven men at the White Swan in Vere Street some of the most terrible injustices in gay history occurred. John Hepburn (46) and Thomas White (16!!!!) were convicted of the act of sodomy as part of this raid and hanged on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 1811. Others had to suffer through the following ordeal as written up in the *Star*:

*“The disgust felt by all ranks in society at the detestable conduct of these wretches occasioned many thousands to become spectators of their punishment. At an early hour the Old Bailey was completely blockaded. ... The shops from Ludgate Hill to the Haymarket were shut up, and the streets lined with people, waiting to see the offenders pass. ... The miscreants were then brought out and placed in the caravan ... having cast their eyes upwards, the sight of the spectators on the tops of the houses operated strongly on their fears, and they soon appeared to feel terror and dismay. At the instant the church clock went half past twelve, the gates were thrown open. ... The caravan went next, followed by about 40 officers and the Sheriffs. The first salute received by the offenders was a volley of mud, and a serenade of hisses, hooting, and execration, which compelled them to fall flat on their faces in the caravan. The mob, and particularly the women, had piled up balls of mud to afford the objects of their indignation a warm reception... At one o'clock four of them were exalted on a new pillory, made purposely for their accommodation. The remaining two, Cook and Amos, were honoured by being allowed to enjoy a triumph in the pillory alone. ... Upwards of fifty women were permitted to stand within the ring, who assailed them incessantly with mud, dead cats, rotten eggs, potatoes, and buckets full of blood, offal, and dung, which were brought by a number of butchers' men, from St James's Market. ... The remaining two, Cook (who had been the landlord) and Amos, alias Fox, were desired to mount ... and in one minute they appeared a complete heap of mud and their faces were much more battered than those of the former four. ... Cook appeared almost insensible, and it was necessary to help them both down and into the cart, whence they were conveyed to Newgate by the same road they had come, and in their passage they continued to receive the same salutations the spectators had given them going out. Cook continued to lie upon the seat in the cart, but Amos lay down among the filth, till their entrance into Newgate sheltered the wretches from the further indignation of the most enraged populace we ever saw.”*

I learned about this scandal and news paper article in the amazing book “Beyond The Law: The Politics of Ending the Death Penalty for Sodomy in Britain” by Charles Upchurch.