

Will the real Turpin stand up?

WHEN Peter Jackson and his children moved next door to the pub in Hempstead where Dick Turpin was brought up they decided to find out more about the notorious villain.

And when they discovered that no books giving really thorough details about Dick Turpin had been published they promptly decided to write one themselves.

They completed the book in three years and on October 27 "The Life of

by PAM JENNER

Dick Turpin, Notorious Highwayman" will be published.

Peter Jackson, a widower, has spent the last 44 years as a builder and runs his own company. Neither his daughter Elaine, nor his sons Mark and Stephen, had ever contemplated writing a book before but that did not deter them.

"Once we had started collecting material the book took over," said Mr Jackson, who now lives in Ickleton.

"I've always been fascinated by Dick Turpin," he added.

"I can remember as a little boy of seven going to Hempstead and talking to some really old villagers about him."

Peter Jackson, who is 57, and Dick Turpin were both born in old cottages in Essex villages, Peter at Debden and Dick at

Family working on new book

Hempstead.

It is there, however, that the similarity ends. Dick went on to become one of the most wanted men in Britain for his crimes as a highwayman and eventually died on the gallows in York, just over 250 years ago, at the age of 33.

Peter has had a tame life by comparison. He was educated at the Boys British School in Saffron Walden and has spent all his working life in the building trade.

He found writing the book was a "mammoth task" and almost gave up when he was a third of the way through.

The family all pulled together, however.

Elaine helped with writing and typing out the manuscript.

Fortunate

Mark took many of the photographs used in the book and Stephen drove them all up and down the country on the Dick Turpin trail, even acting as a model of Dick for the cover of the book, which Elaine designed.

"I would defy anyone to do a book like this on their own," said Peter.

"We all worked together. I would get up at around 3.30am in the mornings to do the writing and I was

fortunate that I could fit it in around work as I run my own business.

"What spurred us on was the friendliness of the people we met when we were researching the book. They were all so friendly and enthusiastic."

Elaine feels that "a lot of nonsense" has been written about Dick Turpin in the past.

"Lots of pubs say he stayed there but they have no real proof," she said.

Villain

There is also no doubt in the minds of both Peter and Elaine that Dick was a real villain.

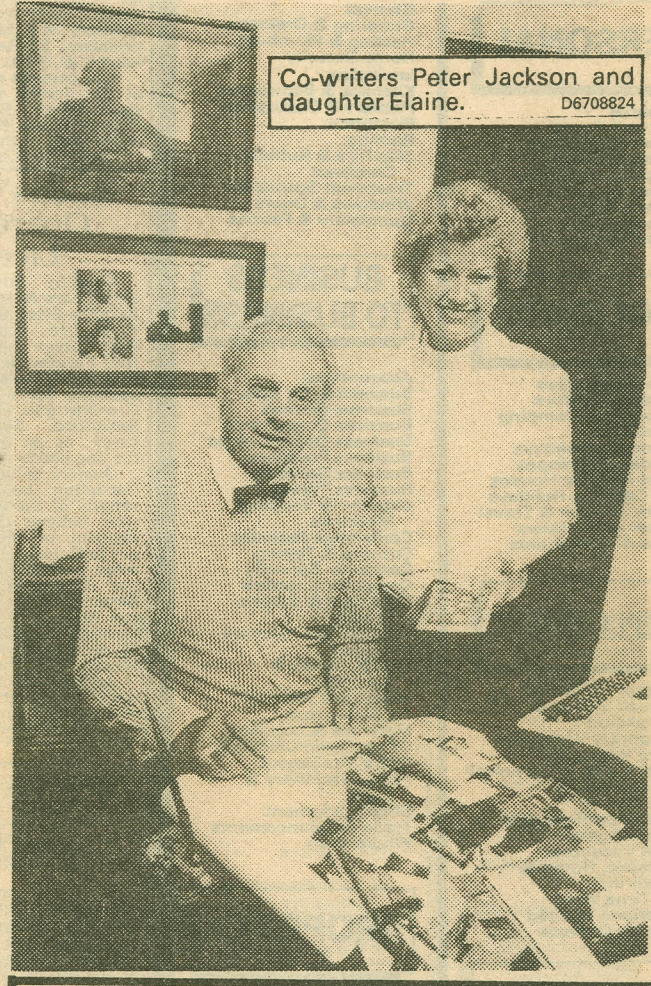
"No stagecoach was safe," said Elaine.

"He was very clever. He could rob two stage coaches at once but he remained very elusive. He evaded the authorities for years despite the fact that he was very bold."

Now that they have finished their first book, Peter and his family are all set to start on another.

Once again they will be researching the life of a famous man.

They will not reveal who it is, but Peter said: "It will involve a lot more work than Dick Turpin, but now we have the experience of one book behind us we can't wait to get on to the next."



Co-writers Peter Jackson and daughter Elaine. D6708824

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