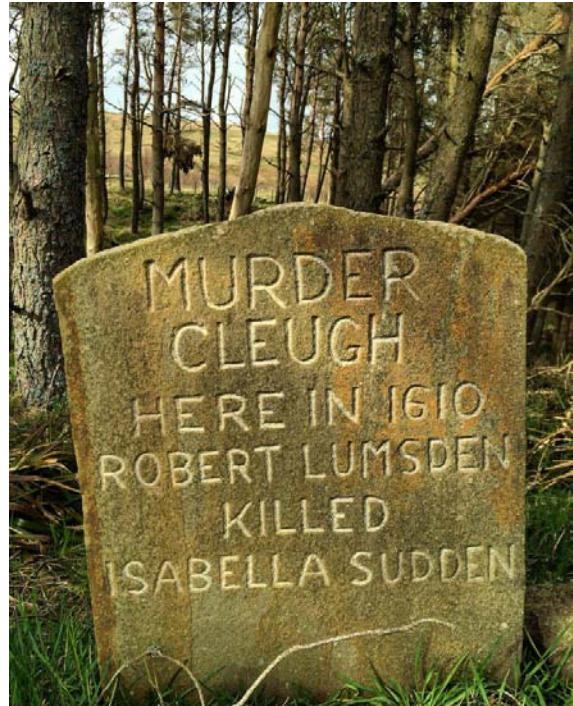


Murder Cleugh

On the corner of a wood and track that leads to Trows sits – quite unassumingly – a headstone. The inscription reads “Here in 1610 Robert Lumsden killed Isabella Sudden”.

This thin sliver of woodland is Murder Cleugh; the spine-shivering site of this grizzly murder over 400 years ago. Lumsden was a local landowner with a penchant for married women and violence. Sudden was a young married woman of lower social class who was due to bear Lumsden’s illegitimate child. On 20th July 1610 Lumsden chased down Sudden over the hills and stoned her, dealing what would – after 15 agonising days – become a fatal wound to the stomach. Her body finally succumbed to the blows on 4th August leaving her husband, Andrew, a widower.



The Kings officers were instructed to arrest Lumsden for the murder and rode the two days from their base in Durham to his house in the valley. Upon their arrival, he was alleged to say “I care nothing for the King, I care nothing for the Queen and I care nothing for you” before taking their pistols and swords and beating them. They fled back to Durham, undoubtedly with their tails between their legs.

Lumsden was eventually arrested in Newcastle before being tried and made to renounce his sins in the market place in Alnwick. He was excommunicated from the Church and spent a month in jail. You’d get more than that these days for petty theft – Lumsden almost quite literally got away with murder!