

Charlotte Harris ID 1727 per *Anna Maria* 1852

Charlotte Harris

Somerset Summer Assizes July 1849

Murder

Death

Series – HO 18

Piece Number – 274

Sentence delayed until after her delivery

Conditional pardon – 2 years in prison and then transportation for Life. – 27th April 1850

This statement adverts to the demoralizing effect of Public Execution and submits the case of the prisoner to favourable consideration on account of her sex and the circumstances in which she is placed.

To Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria

The humble Petition of the Women of England.

Sheweth

That your Petitioner's relying on the known clemency and the Christian enlightenment of your Majesty earnestly beg to turn your gracious attention to the case of CHARLOTTE HARRISS who now lies in Taunton Gaol, condemned to DEATH for the murder of her husband. That while your Petitioners do not approach your Majesty with any attempt to palliate her grievous offence, they beg to state their sincere conviction that the woefully increasing passion to murder is fostered, rather than prevented by Capital Punishment; that scenes of public [terror] and death gratify the depraved appetite of the uneducated masses for violence and blood, and instead of being salutary warnings become stimulants to further crime.

That such being the firm belief of your Petitioners they are anxious to call your Majesty's attention to the peculiar case of the said criminal, in which the extreme penalty of the law is rendered doubly repugnant to the common feelings of humanity in the hearts of your Majesty's female subjects.

That the unhappy woman is now lying under the sentence of DEATH which is postponed on account of her pregnancy; that she is to be preserved and rendered through the pains and anxieties of child birth, and raised again from her bed of suffering not that she maybe led to a repentant and amended life, through mercy and a better teaching, but that she should be so spared, so tended so restored only to endured violent and revolving death, only that the bond between herself and her child may be violently rendered; only that nature may be outraged in her unhappy person, and society revolved by a deed as monstrous as her own crime.

That your Petitioner looking up to your Majesty not only as the Queen and the first woman in this great empire, but as reverencing in your person the vertues which while they belong to our common nature grace your Majesty in a peculiar manner – pity and maternal love – humbly beseech of you to look down on this unhappy woman and in the case of another criminal whose circumstances were similar, permit that the sentence of DEATH be commuted to some fitter and more efficient punishment.

And your Petitioners will ever pray

10th December 1849

Sir

I have the honour to inform you that Charlotte Harriss a convict under sentence of death in this prison and who was respited on the 1st November last “until further signification of Her Majesty’s Pleasure” was delivered of a male child this morning.

I am Sir

Your most obedient servant

James Gane

Governor

Notes;

There are a further 44 Petitions with the collective name of “The Women of England”. Over 6000 signatures were gathered from most counties of England and Ireland. There were over 12 newspaper cuttings and 20 letters, some stating that the hanging should go ahead and others not, some were not signed and others were.
