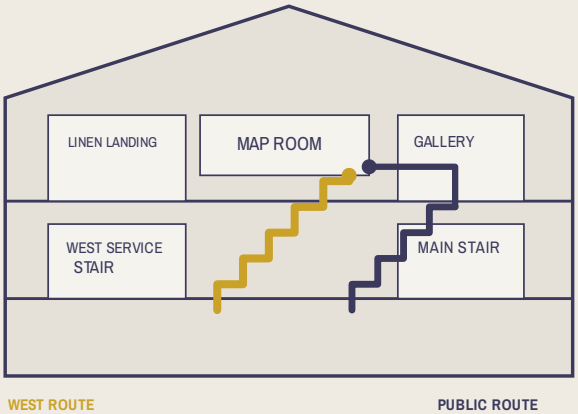


CASE 017

THE WEST STAIR AT WYCH HOUSE

The gallery was watched. The house had another way upstairs.



FILE DETAILS

ARCHIVE COPY · KEEP THE DISPOSITION SEALED

Wych House · Aldridge

18–19 October 1973

Review reopened 2026

Classification: homicide and concealed access

20 numbered documents

THE FILE

On Thursday evening, 18 October 1973, Beatrice Wych was found dead in the upstairs map room of her house. Her secretary, Nora Bell, had worked at a desk on the main gallery throughout the likely interval. Nora said no one passed her on the main stair or through the map room's public door. The first investigation took that statement as proof no visitor could have reached Beatrice.

The house was preparing an inventory of atlases and papers. Builders had left the service door at the back of the map room usable, and the household recorded a key issued during the evening. Beatrice had also called her solicitor for a meeting the next morning about a gift of part of Wych House. The draft never received her signature.

Your task is to separate *what Nora could see* from *all routes that existed*. Then decide who had opportunity, why Beatrice's decision mattered, and which records support the killing rather than only a possible walk through the house.

HOW TO PLAY

Read pages 3–26, then complete Worksheets A–C. Use hints on page 30 only when needed. Fold and tape page 31 before handing out the player packet. Keep page 32 for the host. Print single-sided so the backs of cut-outs are blank.

CONTENTS: orientation 03–04 · documents D01–D20 05–26 · worksheets 27–29 · hints 30 · sealed disposition 31 · host solution 32.

THE PEOPLE

BEATRICE WYCH, 67 / owner of Wych House. MARION WYCH, 38 / daughter. FELIX WYCH, 42 / nephew. CORA LINN, 56 / housekeeper. NORA BELL, 31 / secretary. GIDEON PRICE, 47 / surveyor. RUTH VALE / family solicitor. The last is a correspondent, not an evening house guest.

THURSDAY 18 OCTOBER 1973

16:00	West service-door latch removed for Friday inventory work.
18:45	Cora inspects the map room: hook unfastened, service door usable.
19:10	Beatrice leaves a note for Ruth Vale about next morning's gift-deed meeting.
19:25–20:12	Nora works at the main-gallery desk.
19:35–20:05	Medical estimate for fatal injury. It is not an exact clock.
20:17	Cora finds Beatrice in the map room. Constables are called.

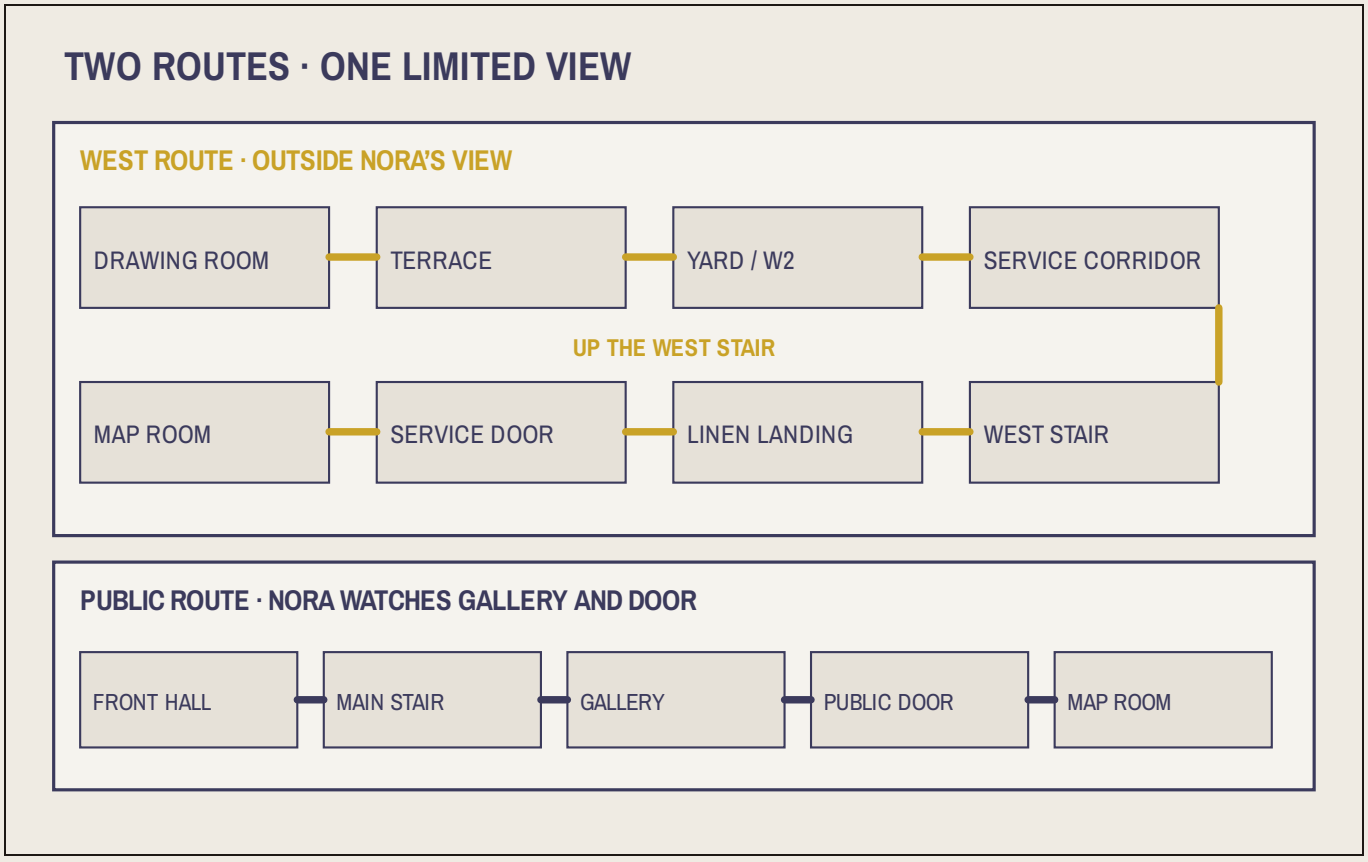
The dossier preserves times from different human and written sources. A log may establish a key's issue, a room's condition or a person's witnessed presence; none automatically establishes every movement between entries.

THE PUBLIC ROUTE

From the front hall, the main stair climbs to the gallery. The public map-room door opens from that gallery. Nora's desk faced both the upper stair and this door. A visitor using this route while Nora was at the desk would probably have crossed her view.

THE WEST ROUTE

The drawing-room terrace door leads outside to the kitchen yard. Key W2 opens the yard entrance into a short service corridor. That corridor meets the kitchen and the west stair. Upstairs, the west stair reaches the linen landing and the map room's service door. Someone already in the kitchen could also reach the stair without W2. The route is ordinary household circulation, shown on the builder's plan and used for inventory work. It does not pass Nora's gallery desk.



The latch once secured the service door, but it was removed that afternoon. A small interior hook remained and was unfastened at the 18:45 inspection. D08–D09 establish those facts. The question is not whether a secret door existed. It is whether a truthful witness on one route excludes movement along the other.

ALDRIDGE COUNTY CONSTABULARY

OCCURRENCE 73-221

INCIDENT AND MEDICAL SUMMARY **DOCUMENT D01**

18 OCT 1973 · Officer H. Renn, 21:15

At 20:17 Cora Linn found Beatrice Wych on the floor beside the map-room table. Secretary Nora Bell was on the main gallery. Constables entered at 20:34. The public door and the service door were both shut; neither was locked when officers tried them. The service door's interior hook was hanging free. The atlas cabinet was open. No weapon was identified in the first search. A document folder on the table bore the pencilled heading “West Wing / Vale”; it was empty.

COUNTY MEDICAL OFFICER · 19 OCT

Death resulted from a single blunt-force injury to the head. Findings are consistent with injury between approximately 19:35 and 20:05 on 18 October. This interval cannot be narrowed reliably to a minute. The injury does not identify a particular object or assailant. No conclusion in this file depends on an individualizing trace or a claimed sequence of blows.