

THE BLACK ARCHIVE RESEARCH

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE AUDITING & MEDIA DUE DILIGENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENTIARY AUDIT - EXECUTIVE FINDINGS

Pre-Broadcast Script Review: The Crippen Case

Illustrative production scenario using publicly available historical evidence. This sample demonstrates the structure and decision-use of a TBAR client deliverable; it is not a client report, legal opinion, broadcaster compliance sign-off or expert-witness report.

REFERENCE	TBAR-EAD-SAMPLE-001	AUDIT DATE	September 2026
CLIENT	Illustrative factual-production scenario	SUBJECT	Hawley Harvey Crippen, 1910
PRODUCTION STAGE	Pre-broadcast / final script review	AUDIT SCOPE	Claim-by-claim source verification
LEAD	The Black Archive Research	STATUS	Revision recommended before lock

EXECUTIVE FINDING - REVISION REQUIRED

The proposed script may accurately retain the conviction, the wireless-assisted manhunt and the fact that the 1910 jury accepted the prosecution case. Two common narrative formulations require material qualification: the identification of the cellar remains is not evidentially settled in light of the later DNA challenge, and the familiar arrest 'confession' wording is a later memoir formulation rather than the wording recorded at trial. Claims of Ethel Le Neve's knowing complicity should not be presented as established fact.

DECISION SUMMARY

SCRIPT PROPOSITION	EVIDENCE STATUS	PRODUCTION ACTION
Remains were conclusively identified as Cora Crippen	DISPUTED	Qualify
Crippen confessed when arrested	CONTRADICTED AS QUOTED	Correct / reframe
Wireless telegraphy enabled the interception	SUPPORTED*	Retain with limitation

*Supported as to the substance of the wireless-assisted pursuit; the exact original telegram wording is not treated as independently verified in this sample.

CLAIM REGISTER

What the evidence supports - and where qualification is required.

Evidence status and production priority are separated deliberately. Evidence status describes what the record supports; production priority describes how urgently the wording should be corrected before lock. Priority is an editorial workflow tool, not a legal or regulatory classification.

01	The remains found beneath 39 Hildrop Crescent were conclusively identified as Cora Crippen.	HIGH
The 1910 prosecution relied materially on Bernard Spilsbury's interpretation of a mark on preserved skin as consistent with an old surgical scar. The defence disputed that interpretation. A 2011 peer-reviewed study reported a mitochondrial DNA non-match to traced maternal relatives and results consistent with male tissue from the tested slide.		DISPUTED / OVERSTATED
Production action: State that the remains were accepted at trial as Cora Crippen's, but that the identification has subsequently been challenged. Do not describe the identity as scientifically settled.		PRODUCTION ACTION QUALIFY
02	Crippen effectively confessed when arrested aboard the Montrose.	HIGH
The familiar wording repeated in later retellings traces to Walter Dew's 1938 memoir. The account given at trial records different wording centred on anxiety, followed by Crippen stating that Ethel Le Neve knew nothing of the matter.		CONTRADICTED AS QUOTED
Production action: Use the wording recorded in the trial account, or paraphrase it accurately. Do not characterise the later memoir formulation as a contemporaneous confession.		PRODUCTION ACTION CORRECT / REFRAME
03	Wireless telegraphy enabled the police to intercept Crippen during the Atlantic crossing.	MEDIUM
The substance of the wireless episode is corroborated across the trial record, contemporary reporting and the later forensic paper. The existing TBAR audit does not treat the exact original telegram wording as independently obtained.		SUPPORTED WITH LIMITATION
Production action: Retain the wireless-assisted pursuit. Avoid presenting invented or unverified verbatim telegram wording.		PRODUCTION ACTION RETAIN WITH LIMITATION
04	Ethel Le Neve knowingly assisted Crippen in covering up the murder.	HIGH
Le Neve was tried separately for complicity and acquitted. The trial account also records Crippen stating on arrest that she knew nothing. Those facts do not prove what she privately knew, but they do not support presenting knowing complicity as established historical fact.		UNSUBSTANTIATED AS FACT
Production action: If included, attribute the allegation as speculation or prosecution-era suspicion and state the acquittal. Do not narrate knowing complicity as settled fact.		PRODUCTION ACTION ATTRIBUTE / QUALIFY

DETAILED FINDING 01

The identity of the cellar remains

FINDING

The 1910 jury accepted the prosecution identification. The surviving record reviewed by TBAR does not justify describing that identification today as scientifically conclusive.

1910 EVIDENTIAL POSITION

At trial, pathologists Augustus Pepper and Bernard Spilsbury addressed a mark on preserved skin from the remains. Spilsbury regarded it as consistent with an old surgical scar associated with Cora Crippen; the defence disputed that interpretation and argued that the feature was a natural skin fold, including reference to hair follicles that scar tissue should not show.

The conviction did not rest on that identification alone. The prosecution case also included the purchase of hyoscine, Crippen's explanations for Cora's disappearance, his flight with Ethel Le Neve and a dated pyjama fragment. The correct production treatment is therefore not 'the later DNA finding proves the conviction false', but that the identity evidence was contested and later materially challenged.

2011 DNA CHALLENGE - AND LATER REVIEW

A forensic team led by David Foran examined tissue from one of nine surviving pathology slides. The peer-reviewed 2011 paper reported a mitochondrial DNA non-match with traced maternal relatives of Cora Crippen and additional testing consistent with male tissue; the authors repeated the DNA isolation and analysis. Those findings materially challenged the 1910 identification. The evidential position did not end there. Hallie Rubenhold's 2025 Story of a Murder contains an appendix by geneticist Professor Turi King (listed in the published table of contents at page 450). Contemporary Times reporting quotes King's assessment that the earlier DNA evidence was 'not up to standard' and states that she called for the testing to be re-examined. Because this workflow has not directly inspected King's full appendix, TBAR does not attribute more detailed technical criticisms to her. The appropriate production position is therefore that the 2011 study materially challenged the 1910 identification, but did not finally resolve it.

PRODUCTION REDLINE

AVOID	"The remains were conclusively identified as Cora Crippen, proving the prosecution's forensic case."
USE	"The remains were identified at trial as Cora Crippen's, but that identification was contested at the time, challenged by DNA testing published in 2011, and remains disputed following later calls for re-examination."

WHY THIS MATTERS

The more defensible wording is also the stronger story. A documentary can present the 1910 identification, the contemporary challenge, the 2011 DNA challenge and the later call for re-examination rather than flattening the evidence into a single verdict.

EVIDENCE LIMITS TO PRESERVE

- The 2011 study tested tissue from one of nine surviving pathology slides.
- A DNA non-match is evidence against the tested tissue being Cora Crippen's; it is not proof of whose tissue it was.
- This sample does not claim to have exhausted every surviving physical archive relating to the original pathology.

DETAILED FINDINGS 02-04

Misquotation, technology and complicity

02 Arrest wording	CONTRADICTED AS QUOTED
The familiar arrest quotation used as an implied confession does not appear in the trial account in that form. The trial record instead reports Crippen saying that the anxiety had been too much and then stating that Ethel Le Neve knew nothing about the matter. TBAR's public audit traces the popular formulation to Walter Dew's 1938 memoir, published twenty-eight years after the arrest. Production action: Correct the quotation or paraphrase the trial wording accurately. Do not present the later memoir version as a contemporaneous confession.	REVIEW BEFORE LOCK
03 Wireless pursuit	SUPPORTED WITH LIMITATION
The substance of the SS Montrose wireless episode is supported across the trial record, contemporary reporting and the later forensic paper. Captain Henry Kendall recognised the fugitives from newspaper descriptions and alerted Scotland Yard by wireless before the vessel moved out of range. The existing audit does not treat the exact original telegram wording as independently obtained. Production action: Retain the event and its significance. Avoid invented verbatim telegram text or any claim that depends on wording not independently verified.	REVIEW BEFORE LOCK
04 Ethel Le Neve	UNSUBSTANTIATED AS FACT
Le Neve travelled with Crippen disguised as a boy and was later tried separately on a complicity charge, but she was acquitted. The trial account also records Crippen stating at arrest that she knew nothing. These facts do not establish what she privately knew; they do prevent a responsible script from narrating knowing complicity as settled fact. Production action: If the production explores suspicion of complicity, attribute it as suspicion or interpretation and include the acquittal. Do not state knowing assistance as established fact.	REVIEW BEFORE LOCK

RELEVANT CHRONOLOGY

31 Jan 1910	Cora Crippen last seen alive by friends.
July 1910	Police investigation resumes; human remains are found beneath the cellar floor at Hilldrop Crescent.
20-22 Jul 1910	Crippen and Le Neve board the SS Montrose from Antwerp; Captain Kendall alerts Scotland Yard by wireless.
31 Jul 1910	Crippen arrested aboard the Montrose in the St Lawrence; trial account records his statements on arrest.
18-22 Oct 1910	Crippen tried at the Central Criminal Court and convicted.
25 Oct 1910	Ethel Le Neve tried separately and acquitted.
5 Nov 1910	Crippen's appeal dismissed.
23 Nov 1910	Crippen executed at Pentonville.
2011	Peer-reviewed forensic paper reports DNA findings challenging the identification of the tested tissue.
SOURCE LINEAGE	How the evidential position changed
1910	Trial evidence identifies the remains through pathological evidence accepted by the jury; the defence disputes the scar interpretation.
1938	Walter Dew's memoir adds a later recollection layer, including the popular arrest wording repeated in many retellings.
2011	Foran et al. publish DNA findings materially challenging identification of the tested tissue as Cora Crippen.
2025	Hallie Rubenhold's Story of a Murder includes an appendix by Professor Turi King. Contemporary Times reporting quotes King describing the earlier DNA evidence as 'not up to standard' and calling for re-examination. TBAR has not directly inspected the appendix text in this workflow.

SOURCE PROVENANCE & VERIFICATION TRAIL

What the findings are built on

This sample demonstrates TBAR's source discipline: later retellings are not treated as equivalent to trial evidence, contemporary reporting is not treated as a verbatim court record, and modern scientific testing is classified according to what it actually establishes. The purpose is traceability, not volume.

SOURCE	EVIDENTIAL ROLE	USED FOR
Filson Young (ed.), <i>The Trial of Hawley Harvey Crippen</i> (Notable British Trials, 1920)	Edited but complete reproduction of the 1910 proceedings, checked directly in the underlying TBAR audit.	Trial chronology; prosecution and defence evidence; arrest wording; acquittal context for Le Neve.
Foran, Wills, Kiley, Jackson & Trestrail, 'The Conviction of Dr. Crippen: New Forensic Findings in a Century-Old Murder', <i>Journal of Forensic Sciences</i> 56 (2011): 233-240	Peer-reviewed modern forensic research; primary for the 2007-2011 scientific testing, not for the events of 1910.	mtDNA non-match; male-consistent tissue result; methodology and contamination discussion.
In re Crippen, Decd. [1911] P. 108 (Probate Division)	Contemporary law report arising from the estate consequences of the conviction.	Independent confirmation used in the TBAR audit for chronology, including the appeal date.
1910 British and North American press coverage	Contemporary narrative layer; useful for reception, manhunt chronology and corroboration, but not treated as a substitute for the court record.	Wireless/manhunt context and contemporary public reporting.
Walter Dew, <i>I Caught Crippen</i> (1938)	Later memoir by the arresting officer, published twenty-eight years after the events.	Source lineage for the popular arrest quotation; treated as later recollection rather than contemporaneous evidence.
Hallie Rubenhold, <i>Story of a Murder</i> (2025), Appendix by Professor Turi King (Google Books table of contents lists the appendix at p. 450); The Times, "Dr Crippen DNA evidence was 'not up to standard'"	Appendix existence and placement verified from the published contents. King's detailed appendix text was not directly inspected in this workflow. The Times is used only as secondary reporting of King's public position.	Supports a qualified conclusion: the 2011 DNA findings materially challenge the 1910 identification, but later specialist criticism means the identity should be treated as disputed rather than resolved.

KNOWN LIMITATIONS IN THE UNDERLYING CASE FILE

OPEN ARCHIVAL GAPS

The existing TBAR methodology record states that original coroner's inquest material, Bow Street session papers, original pathologists' reports and the Metropolitan Police investigative file remained unopened at the point of the public methodology sample. A client dossier should preserve that limitation rather than imply exhaustive archival closure.

SOURCE VERIFICATION NOTE - The 2011 forensic paper is directly identifiable through its peer-reviewed *Journal of Forensic Sciences* record (Foran et al., 56(1), 233-240, DOI 10.1111/j.1556-4029.2010.01532.x). The existence of Professor King's 2025 appendix is independently confirmed by the book's published contents. Any final client reliance on King's detailed scientific reasoning should follow direct inspection of the appendix itself.

SOURCE-CONTROL RULE - A material claim is traced to its earliest identifiable evidential basis and then tested against the strongest available sources for provenance, reliability, independence and context. 'Earlier' is not automatically treated as 'better'; source purpose and quality remain part of the assessment.

PRODUCTION ACTION PLAN

How the evidence changes the script without flattening the story

The function of the audit is not to remove every disputed proposition. It is to ensure that the script represents each proposition at the level of certainty the evidence can bear.

#	ACTION	ISSUE	PRODUCTION RESPONSE
1	QUALIFY	Identity of the remains	Present the 1910 identification as the basis accepted at trial, then disclose the 2011 DNA challenge and the later call for re-examination. Treat identity as disputed rather than scientifically settled.
2	CORRECT	Arrest quotation	Replace the later memoir wording with the account recorded in the trial proceedings, or paraphrase it without implying a confession.
3	RETAIN	Wireless manhunt	Keep the wireless-assisted pursuit as a supported part of the story; do not invent verbatim telegram wording.
4	ATTRIBUTE	Le Neve complicity	If suspicion of knowing complicity is narratively relevant, attribute it as suspicion or interpretation and include her separate acquittal.
5	ESCALATE IF NEEDED	Unresolved archival points	Where a high-value production requires exhaustive closure, scope physical archive retrieval or specialist access separately rather than presenting the existing record as complete.

METHODOLOGY

01 SOURCE HIERARCHY Trace the origin of each material claim and distinguish trial/administrative records from contemporary narrative, later memoir and modern secondary retelling.	02 PROVENANCE & RELIABILITY Assess authorship, date, purpose, transmission, independence and proximity to the event.
03 CONTRADICTION MAPPING State material conflicts explicitly rather than smoothing them into a single preferred narrative.	04 EVIDENTIAL CLASSIFICATION Classify what the evidence supports, what it only partly supports and what remains disputed, unsupported or contradicted.
05 PRODUCTION ACTION Translate findings into retain / qualify / attribute / revise / remove / research-further decisions.	06 LIMITS & SOURCE SCHEDULE Record what was reviewed, what remains unavailable or unchecked and what additional work would be required for stronger closure.

SCOPE STATEMENT

IMPORTANT

This illustrative sample demonstrates historical evidence analysis and production-facing research recommendations. It does not provide legal advice, defamation clearance, broadcaster compliance approval, expert-witness opinion or a guarantee against complaint, challenge or later discovery of additional evidence.

WHAT A COMMISSIONED DOSSIER CAN INCLUDE

EXECUTIVE FINDINGS Decision-ready summary of material claims, evidential status and priority actions.	CLAIM REGISTER Claim-by-claim classification with source basis, contradiction notes and production response.
SOURCE SCHEDULE Traceable references, repository details, source type and known limitations.	PRODUCTION ACTIONS Retain / qualify / attribute / revise / remove / research-further recommendations.

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