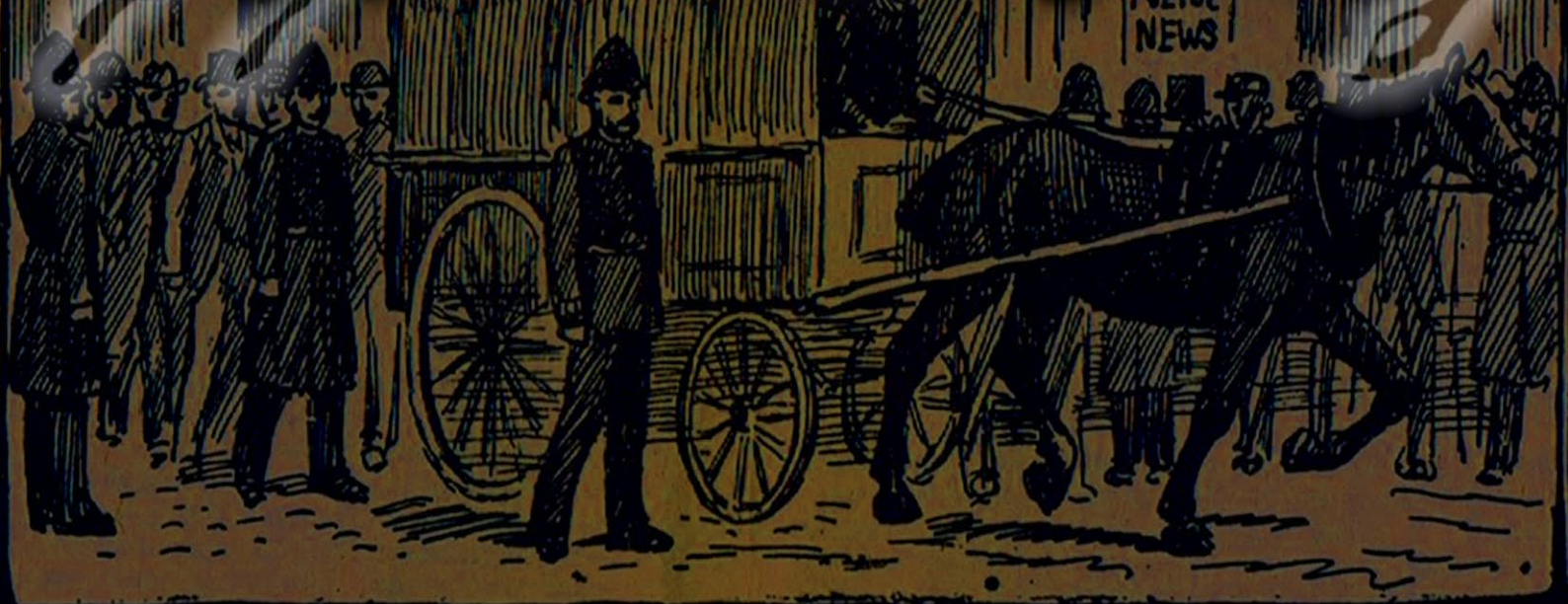


The Journal of Jack the Ripper, East End and Victorian Studies

# Ripperologist

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## MARY KELLY HER BURIAL AND RESURRECTION



LINDSAY SIVITER  
JONATHAN MENGES  
UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER  
DORSET STREET REVISITED  
BRUCE COLLIE  
NINA AND HOWARD BROWN  
VICTORIAN FICTION - PRESS TRAWL  
THE LATEST BOOK REVIEWS



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# Editorial THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY

ADAM WOOD

**It's undeniable, but for many there's something about Mary Jane Kelly which seems to set her apart from the rest of the so-called canonical five. She is often named as a commentator's 'favourite' of the victims – for want of a better description – afforded 'special' status.**

Why is that? What is the fascination?

Is it because she was younger, at around 25-years of age, than Polly Nichols, Annie Chapman, Catherine Eddowes and Elisabeth Stride, all in their forties? Yet both Catherine Mylett (29-years-old) and Frances Coles (31), non-canonical but very much part of the Met's official Whitechapel Murder file, could quite rightly point to their own youth.

Is it because Mary was reportedly the most attractive of the victims? Walter Dew, in 1888 a young Whitechapel constable who claimed to know her 'quite well' by sight, wrote in his memoir that she was "quite attractive", and Melville Macnaghten, who took office after her death, still wrote that she possessed "considerable personal attractions". But, again, Frances Coles was widely reported to have been blessed with good looks.

But Frances nor Catherine Mylett feature much at all in popular mainstream dramatisations, and as a result we've seen producers of films and television treatments of the Ripper story deliberately cast younger, attractive actresses as Mary Kelly to accentuate the point that she was 'special'; Lysette Anthony (*Jack the Ripper*, 1988), Heather Graham (*From Hell*, 2001), Edina Ronay (*A Study in Terror*, 1965).

Most Ripper movies and fiction books (and some nonfiction!) present the murder of Mary as the key to the whole mystery, with her death ending the series.

It is probably a combination of all the above, combined with the fact that she was the only victim killed indoors (subsequently suffering horrendous mutilations far beyond anything the Ripper had carried out before), and that so little of her life story as told to paramour Joe Barnett has been confirmed as fact, lends her an air of mystery and intrigue. 132 years after her death, we are still in the dark about her true identity.

One man determined to get to the bottom of this last mystery is Wynne Weston-Davies, who believes that Mary was in fact his great-aunt Elizabeth Weston Davies, living in Whitechapel under a pseudonym. Since his book *The Real Mary Kelly* was published in 2015, Wynne has been campaigning for the exhumation of the remains buried in St Patrick's Cemetery under the grave marker dedicated to Mary Jane Kelly. The author recently joined Jonathan Menges, Paul Begg and Jon Rees to talk about his efforts, and a report of the discussion appears in this issue of *Ripperologist*. We are also grateful to Dr Turi King and her team at the University of Leicester for permission to republish their report (commissioned by Patricia Cornwell) on the problems facing such as exhumation and identification.

Elsewhere in this issue we have an in-depth article by Lindsay Siviter on the history of the Shoreditch Mortuary, where Mary Kelly's remains lay before their interment, and rounding off a collection of Kelly-related features we have a history of Dorset Street and Miller's Court.

If that wasn't enough, also included in this edition are regular columns from Bruce Collie, Eduardo Zinna, and Nina and Howard Brown, a Press Trawl chronicling the reporting of a clue at Goulston Street, and the latest book reviews by Paul Begg and David Green.

Enjoy the issue!

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# MARY JANE KELLY'S MORTUARY

By LINDSAY SIVITER

**This is the first of a series of articles exploring various topics connected to Jack the Ripper victim Mary Jane Kelly. The main black and white photographs in this article have not to my knowledge appeared in any article or book before on Jack the Ripper. I believe they show the actual mortuary where Mary Jane Kelly's mortal remains were taken after her murder.**

On the day of the inquest into her death on Monday 12th November 1888, after the jurors had arrived at Shoreditch Town Hall and were duly sworn, they were taken by Inspector Abberline to view Mary Jane Kelly's body a few minutes' walk away at the Shoreditch Public Mortuary. This was located at the rear of St Leonard's Church in Shoreditch. Afterwards they proceeded to visit the crime scene at 13 Miller's Court, subsequently returning to the Shoreditch Town Hall to hear witness testimony. Presided over by the coroner for North East Middlesex, Dr Roderick Macdonald MP, the short inquest was duly concluded with a verdict of 'Wilful murder by person or persons unknown'. The mortuary thus played its part in the tragic story of Mary Jane Kelly, and many researchers over the years have looked in vain for a photograph of it.

Where did I then find these amazing images of the mortuary building, I hear you cry! The answer begins with a conversation with author Dr Jonathan Oates, who is currently writing a book on a famous murder case from 1914 and whose comments inspired me to do further research and indeed write this article.

The murder of 5-year-old William 'Willie' Starchfield in 1914 made national news after this boy's poor little body was discovered lying underneath a train seat on the North London Railway on 8th January 1914. His body was subsequently taken to the Shoreditch Mortuary, and the inquest was held at Shoreditch Town Hall. The jurors, like those in the case of Mary Jane Kelly, were accompanied to the mortuary to view the body of the deceased. In Victorian times such visits were bizarrely often enjoyed. Dr Wynn Westcott, in his short, often humorous account

of his career as a Coroner for the part of London which included Shoreditch, wrote a section about jurors, saying 'It is a very rare event in N.E. London for a juror to object to the view of the body; in general the jurors are found to take great interest in the view, often more than in the verbal evidence'.<sup>1</sup> Humans are sometimes a macabre species.

I do not propose to go into any more detail regarding the Starchfield murder case as I do not want to spoil Dr Oates' forthcoming book. However, it was during a conversation about his research that he made a passing comment about the fact that Willie Starchfield's body had been taken to the Shoreditch Mortuary, the same mortuary as Ripper victim Mary Jane Kelly.

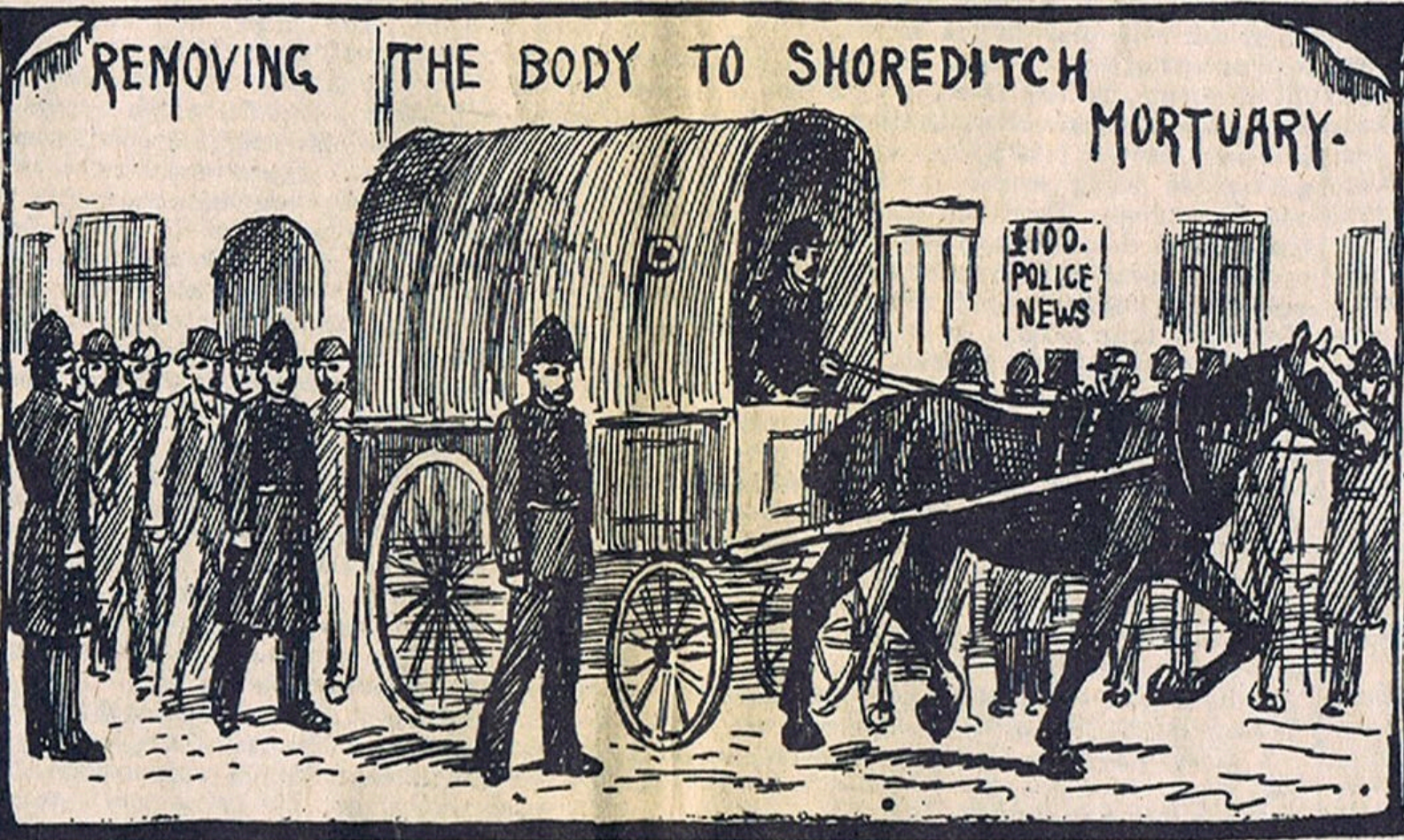
When I got home I started looking online for any possible image sources for this story, and to my utter surprise I discovered several what appear to be press images of the mortuary in question on the Ancestry website. On the reverse of the photograph showing the building in most detail, with a group of people standing outside, was the note "The Jury go to the mortuary to view the body". Written on the top right hand corner is the date the photograph was taken, 15th January 1914. So, at last, it seems we have an image of the mortuary connected to Mary Jane Kelly. The other image of the building shows a side view.

Many newspapers reported how, on the afternoon of 9th November 1888, after a careful examination of the horrifically mutilated remains of Mary Jane Kelly at the crime scene by several doctors, the remains were placed in a coffin shell, 'put into a one-horse carrier's cart, with the ordinary tarpaulin cover'<sup>2</sup> and taken to the Shoreditch public mortuary located at the rear of the Parish Church of St Leonards, Shoreditch.

1 W. Wynn Westcott, *Twelve Years Experiences of a London Coroner*, 1907 p8.

2 *Pall Mall Gazette*, 10th November, 1888.





The story of the development of mortuaries is itself a fascinating topic. In her brief but very illuminating essay, 'Houses for the Dead: The Provision of Mortuaries in London, 1843-1889', Dr Pam Fisher writes very succinctly a summary of this whole subject in just a dozen pages. She argues the provision for mortuaries can be divided essentially into three main stages. Firstly, 'Acknowledgment' (1842-66), secondly, 'Protest and Appeasement' (1866-1875) and finally 'Action' (1875-1889).<sup>3</sup> The dates of these three stages completely echo the story and life of what was to become the Shoreditch Mortuary, and it is through this simple theoretical framework I will explore the history of Mary Jane's mortuary.

### STAGE 1 - 'ACKNOWLEDGEMENT': 1842-1866

In his Sanitary Report of 1843 Edwin Chadwick drew attention to the living conditions of the hundreds of poor families living in London, stating that thousands often had to share their small homes – often just one room – with a decomposing corpse on the death of a loved one. Chadwick recommended that public mortuaries should be provided where corpses could be securely and respectfully kept until their burial, as 'London's dead were killing the living'.<sup>4</sup>

The need for such mortuary facilities were beginning to be recognised by Parish Vestries and Burial Boards, but little was achieved. In 1852 the Metropolitan Burials Act meant the closure of London's graveyards by the Crown

for public health reasons.

Although there was now recognition that new burial grounds were needed, there was little interest in building mortuaries. The first London borough to actually provide one was St Anne's Soho in 1854, which was created inside the old parish Watch-House (after its resident, one Sergeant Hinton was evicted from his home by the Metropolitan Police, who owned it!). Shoreditch, however, would not get their public mortuary until twenty years later.

The first mention I have found regarding a new mortuary for the parish of Shoreditch can be seen in a document dating from 1864. In the Medical Officer of Health's report for Shoreditch we are informed he had written to the association of Metropolitan Officers of Health discussing much-needed improvements regarding the storage of dead bodies. He clearly deemed a public mortuary important and a priority for the area, as it appears first on his list: "1st – The establishment of public mortuaries for the reception of the dead bodies pending arrangements for interment."<sup>5</sup>

3 Dr Pam Fisher, 'Houses for the Dead: The Provision of Mortuaries in London, 1843-1889', *The London Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 1, March 2009, p1-15.

4 Ibid, p2.

5 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report*, 1864, p72.



Sadly nothing materialised, and by 1866 the issue of having no permanent public mortuary was causing a problem. On 15th August 1866, by the advice of the medical officer to the Vestry, the Committee “gave instructions to the Surveyor to the Vestry to provide a temporary Mortuary in the stone yard in Hoxton Street, for the temporary reception of the bodies of persons who had died of cholera.”<sup>6</sup> This was erected as the workhouse staff did not want such infectious bodies in their own mortuary. Evidently something had to be done; a new separate public mortuary building was needed for the Parish, if for no other reason, for situations such as this.



Rev. Thomas Evans

## STAGE 2 – ‘PROTEST AND APPEASEMENT’: 1866-1875

Reasons for the opposition of mortuaries were both cultural and financial. Religious reasons, old legendary customs, established rituals, fear of dissection and the selling of loved ones bodies and the idea that houses near such buildings would lose value were all contributing factors. These reflect the difficulties faced by the authorities to get acceptance for their use, and although many parishes took first steps towards providing public mortuaries, objections by local people often led to plans being dropped in order to keep people happy. The Sanitary Act in 1866, however, saw a surge in medical men actively

promoting public mortuaries. Builders and architects also saw a financial opportunity not to be missed.

The second stage of people protesting against the creation of a mortuary in Shoreditch is successfully illustrated in the following sections from various Medical Officer of Health Annual reports located within the Shoreditch Vestry Annual reports. These primary documents, now available online, are a valuable resource and provide the main source of information about the mortuary. The first article I have traced about the Shoreditch mortuary was published in November 1869 and was titled ‘The Proposed Mortuary for Shoreditch’:

A difficulty has arisen against erecting the mortuary which was proposed a short time since, in the parish of Shoreditch. It will be remembered that the site chosen was the churchyard, but the vicar of the church, it is stated, has stipulated that should it be erected, its architecture should correspond with that of the church, and that he should retain the right of ordering its demolition, if ever it should be found offensive to the congregation, or otherwise become a nuisance. Various places, it is added, had been submitted to the vicar, but he did not approve them finding some too gaudy and elaborate, others too mean and sombre. The chairman of the Shoreditch vestry and the churchwardens have arranged to wait on the vicar to make an amicable arrangement for the erection of the building.<sup>7</sup>

The vicar in question was Rev. Thomas Simpson Evans, who was vicar for of St Leonard’s Church for nearly 40 years (1841-1880) and whose incumbency covers the whole period of the history of the development of the Shoreditch Mortuary.<sup>8</sup> Before joining St Leonard’s Church, Evans was a former curate and lecturer in the rich Kensington district of London. He must have got a shock when he moved to the poverty-stricken East End. *Crockford’s Clerical Directory* tells us that in 1860 his gross income was £656, and the population of Shoreditch was 25,111. By 1880 his gross income was £690 and the population was 13,100.<sup>9</sup> So after twenty years he earned almost the same money, yet interestingly his potential flock was half its size.

6 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report, 1866, p27.*

7 *Morning Advertiser, 22nd November, 1869.*

8 Rev. Thomas Simpson Evans born June 25, 1798. St Alban Hall Oxon BA, deacon 1822, priest 1823. Vicar of St Leonard’s Shoreditch 1841-1880. He died on 30th January 1880 and was buried in Buckland by Dover in Kent.

9 [www.victorianweb.org](http://www.victorianweb.org) article by Eunice Shanahan ‘Reverend T. Simpson Evans’ accessed 2nd November 2020.



The second example appears in the 1870 report:

The Medical Officer has long urged the provision of a Public Mortuary, as a great sanitary necessity, and the Vestry has endeavoured to provide one, but the difficulty of securing a site has hitherto prevented that object from being realised. Negotiations for the erection of one in the Church-Yard of St. Leonard, failed from various causes. The Vicar and Churchwardens of St John's, Hoxton, very liberally gave their consent for the erection of an ornamental building in the Burial-ground of that Church, provided that the inhabitants of that district parish would consent. But upon the proposal being submitted to a meeting, it was rejected by a large majority, and as far as St John's was concerned there was an end of the project. Negotiations with the North London Railway for a site of ground in near of the Town hall, have not yet assumed a definite shape, and for the present the subject stands in abeyance.<sup>10</sup>

On 31st July 1871 a meeting of the Shoreditch Vestry took place at the Town Hall on Old Street, Shoreditch. Led by Churchwarden Mr Cranston, various topics of local interest were discussed including financial matters, charity trust board decisions and sanitary problems. As part of the latter discussion, plans for the erection of a public mortuary was debated:

Mr Dennis suggested that Red Lion Court should be selected as the site of the proposed mortuary and Mr Freeman recommended that it should be placed on ground between the casual ward and the canal. A brief discussion ensued on the propriety of selecting a proper site and the motion to adopt the report was carried by a large majority.<sup>11</sup>

In 1872 the Medical Officer of Health reported that

a preliminary agreement has been made between the Vestry and the North London Railway for the exchange of land, by which a suitable site for a Mortuary will be placed at the command of the Vestry. It is situated in William Street, Curtain Road, thoroughly screened from observation, and altogether free from the objections which hitherto have made the provision of a Mortuary in the Parish next to impossible.<sup>12</sup>

The following year, in 1873, the officer reported that the Vestry had

decided against erecting a Mortuary on the ground in rear of the Town Hall. The whole question is at present in abeyance, but there are some prospects of an arrangement being made by which such a provision made be made in the Parish Church Yard.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the report for 1874 offered exciting news! Readers learnt that "the preliminary arrangements between the Vicar of the Parish and the Vestry, respecting the erection of a Mortuary in the Parish Church Yard, are nearly completed, and there is some prospect that this necessary convenience will shortly be provided."<sup>14</sup> I'm sure some of the parishioners said "Hallelujah!", believing good old Rev. Evans to have saved the day!

Sadly not, however, as yet again nothing happened. Then in July 1875 the *London Evening Standard* featured an article titled 'Mortuary at Shoreditch Workhouse'. This had been the only mortuary facility in the Shoreditch area but some were beginning to question the continuation of this arrangement:

Mr Puleston asked the President of the Local Government Board whether his attention had been called to the report of the Local Government Inspector on the condition of the Shoreditch Workhouse where it was stated decomposing bodies were brought into proximity with the wards of the infirmary, the health of the patients and of the people of the neighbourhood being endangered thereby; and whether action could be taken to ensure the immediate erection of a suitable mortuary... it appeared that the mortuary at Shoreditch Workhouse had been unduly and improperly used by the vestry of the parish... notice was given to the vestry that the mortuary could no longer be used for the purpose of the parish... he was happy to say that he had received a letter from the vestry clerk, stating that, after great difficulties, they had succeeded in making arrangements which would enable them to provide a mortuary for their own use. The house would not be surprised to hear that there had been difficulty in procuring such a place, because there was no power of compulsory purchase in respect of land for a mortuary.<sup>15</sup>

### STAGE 3 – ACTION: 1875-1889

From 1875 onwards we see a firmer determination from officials regarding action being taken in the creation

10 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report*, 1870, p19.

11 *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette*, 9th August, 1871.

12 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report*, 1872, p.8.

13 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report*, 1873, p.7.

14 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report*, 1874, p8.

15 *London Evening Standard*, 24th July, 1875.

of new mortuaries. It is in this period we also see a move away from inquests being held in public houses to more respectful sites. (Clearly this was not the case in Chiswick even as late as 1889, as the inquest on Ripper suspect Montague John Druitt was held in the Lamb Tap public house.) The Public Health Act passed in 1875 also finally gave Local Government Boards powers to enforce local authorities in the provinces to provide mortuaries. Various Boards of Works in London were consequently inspired and started to pressurise London Vestries.

The next mention in the press of the much-needed new public mortuary in this period in Shoreditch can be seen in a local paper in an article entitled 'The Shoreditch Mortuary' at the beginning of February 1876:

The mortuary for the parish of Shoreditch, to take the place of the old one adjoining the workhouse, is rapidly nearing completion. The new dead-house is situated in the parish churchyard, and will be replete with all the most approved appliances for the proper conduct of post-mortem examinations.<sup>16</sup>

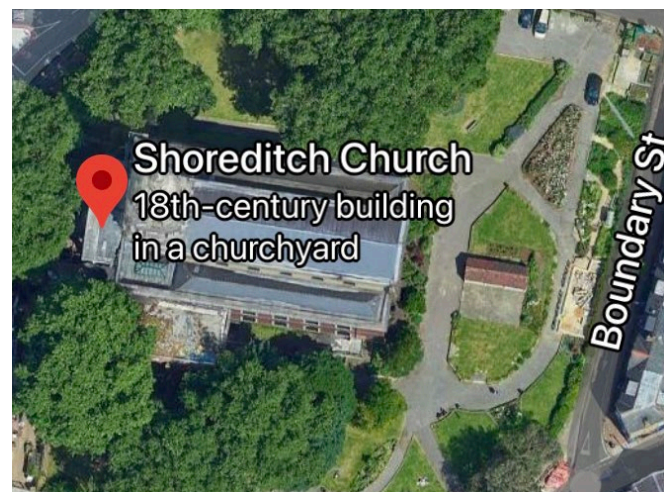
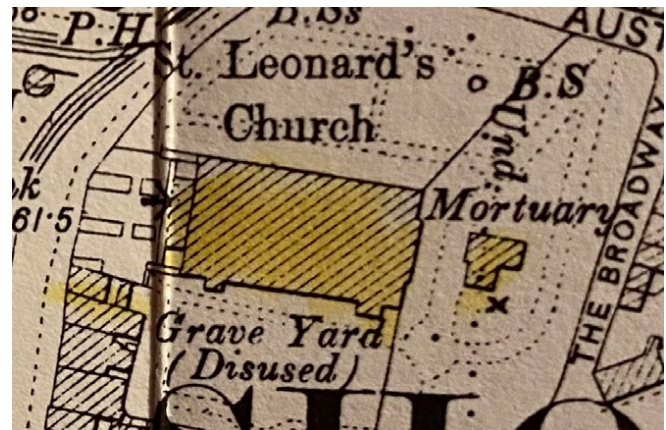
Two months later, on 5th April, a meeting of the Shoreditch Guardians took place in the Board Room on Kingsland Road with Mr C Stevens in the chair. One of the matters discussed was the mortuary, as the parish was still using the one attached to the workhouse. The Clerk read a letter from Mr Forbes, medical officer, notifying that the time had expired for the reception of bodies at the mortuary at the workhouse and he wanted to know what the Board were doing about the situation. It was resolved that no alteration would be made until the new public mortuary was completed. Interestingly, one member then moaned by commenting that funerals from St Leonard's Shoreditch were more frequently behind time than those in any other parish, one complaint having been made that they waited for nearly an hour after their arrival at 12 noon.<sup>17</sup>

A few days later the official opening of the new public mortuary occurred, with the local paper informing us in their feature 'The New Mortuary at Shoreditch':

The formal opening on the new dead-house, situated at the rear of Shoreditch Church, took place on Friday. The building, erected by Messrs J.M. Brown and Sons, of 61A Worship Street, comprises two apartments, one being a room wherein to perform the post-mortem examinations, and the other being the depository of deceased persons. Both rooms are asphalted, and the ceilings are match-lined. The mortuary itself is 30 feet long by 15, and the post-mortem room is about 15 feet square. Various quotations from scriptures are placed in and about the building, and the whole of the arrangements carried out in connection with it reflect great credit upon the builders, the firm

mentioned, and the authorities of the parish of St. Leonard's Shoreditch. In addition to this improvement it is proposed to have the churchyard laid out in a befitting manner. The entrance to the mortuary is by way of Boundary Row, where a gateway has been constructed. The opening service was performed by the Vicar of Shoreditch, assisted by the Rev. Dr Finch and S. Davty.<sup>18</sup>

Contemporary maps, including this one from 1893, locate the Mortuary directly behind the Church.<sup>19</sup>



The above article provides some great detail about the building itself, and if we compare it to the photographs from 1914 this building matches quite well to the description of the one given in the above account. We can see what appears to be a building with two parts, one smaller one set slightly further back than the larger one which contains the main entrance, and there appears to be a Biblical quotation above the door. However, do not be deceived as this is sadly not the building in which Mary Jane Kelly's remains rested. All will be revealed shortly.

16 *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette*, 2nd February, 1876.

17 *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette*, 7th April, 1876.

18 *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette*, 12th April 1876.

19 Old Ordnance Survey Maps, Shoreditch 1893 published by Alan Godfrey Maps.



Interestingly, this smallish local mortuary story made it into newspapers outside London including the *Staffordshire Advertiser*! Maybe they were slow for stories that day:

The mortuary in Shoreditch Churchyard, London, was opened on the 7th inst, by a service performed by the vicar, who was assisted by the Revds Dr Finch and S. Davty. The building is situated at the back of Shoreditch Church and comprises a post-mortem room, as well as an apartment for the reception of the dead.<sup>20</sup>

In the Medical Officer of Health's report the following year we are told:

The new public Mortuary erected in the Churchyard of this Parish, the completion of which was announced in our last report, was opened in April 1876. It has satisfactorily answered its purpose. No complaints whatever have reached the Vestry concerning its management. A few trifling additions have been made to it, such as providing utensils, laying on gas etc. The number of bodies admitted since its opening to the 25th March last was 124.<sup>21</sup>

A year later, at a meeting of the Shoreditch Vestry on Tuesday 9th April 1878, amongst items discussed was a complaint against the Bethnal Green Guardians after an undertaker had kept a body for several days in his yard from that parish. They kindly offered that "until they had a mortuary of their own, the Shoreditch Vestry would not object to lending them their mortuary, provided that the bodies were brought in a decent condition." The clerk then stated that he had been informed that a body had since been brought to the mortuary from Bethnal Green but he had not had an opportunity of finding out whether it was in a proper condition.<sup>22</sup>

This situation was also mentioned in the Health Officers' report for the same year:

The provision of this place has proved to be of considerable advantage to the Parish, and the bodies of persons from Bethnal Green have also been admitted, under pressing circumstances, pending the provision of a similar institution for that Parish... no complaints as to any annoyance or nuisance have been made.<sup>23</sup>

Clearly there were fears that there would be complaints, but thankfully their fears proved unfounded.

A newspaper article in September 1878 in the *South London Press* provides an interesting insight into other mortuaries in London, and helps us to put the Shoreditch one in some sort of context:

It is our sad duty to record the fact that notwithstanding the attention devoted of late years to sanitary science, public health, and even common decency, but three metropolitan parishes made any attempt to surround the burial of the dead with decency and propriety. In all the other parochial centres, post-mortem enquiries are held at taverns, under circumstances of a most objectionable character. The only defence ever urged in favour of holding inquests at public houses – viz that no other convenient places are available for the purpose, is more plausible than correct. Take for instance the parish of Shoreditch. The Vestry and Burial Board of this parish have combined to erect a mortuary and dissecting room at the moderate cost of £600. It is erected in the churchyard under a faculty which would not be necessary, we take it, if the mortuary had been erected elsewhere. There is no Coroner's room attached to the building; but Shoreditch like most other parishes has a Vestry hall, and here the Coroner holds his court. If the Shoreditch vestry hall can be made available for such purposes, we fail to see why similar buildings in other parts of London cannot be used for a like purpose...

....the holding of inquests at taverns, public opinion should be, and will be, powerful enough to put an end, now and forever, to a system which is an outrage on public decency and order. We have selected the Shoreditch case for remark, as it appears to furnish a complete answer to the assertion so often made, that the licensed victualler is the only available place in the absence of a specifically constructed Coroner's room.

In two other parishes Islington and Clerkenwell – the local authorities have erected suitable court-rooms and mortuaries. The Islington Court room was built at an expense of £654, the greater portion of which was borrowed from the Metropolitan Board of Works; whilst Clerkenwell has erected a substantial and imposing building, replete with every convenience, at a cost of £2, 435, and this amount also has been advanced by the Metropolitan Board of Works.

Turning from the north to the south side of the Thames, we come to a very different state of things. The parish of Lambeth has a small mortuary, the Wandsworth district has two mortuaries but no Coroner's room; St Saviours District Board of Works has fitted up a railway arch for mortuary purposes and the same maybe said of Newington. St Olave's has made a better attempt, for it has actually expended

20 *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 15th April, 1876.

21 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report, 1877*, p. 10.

22 *East London Observer*, 13th April 1878.

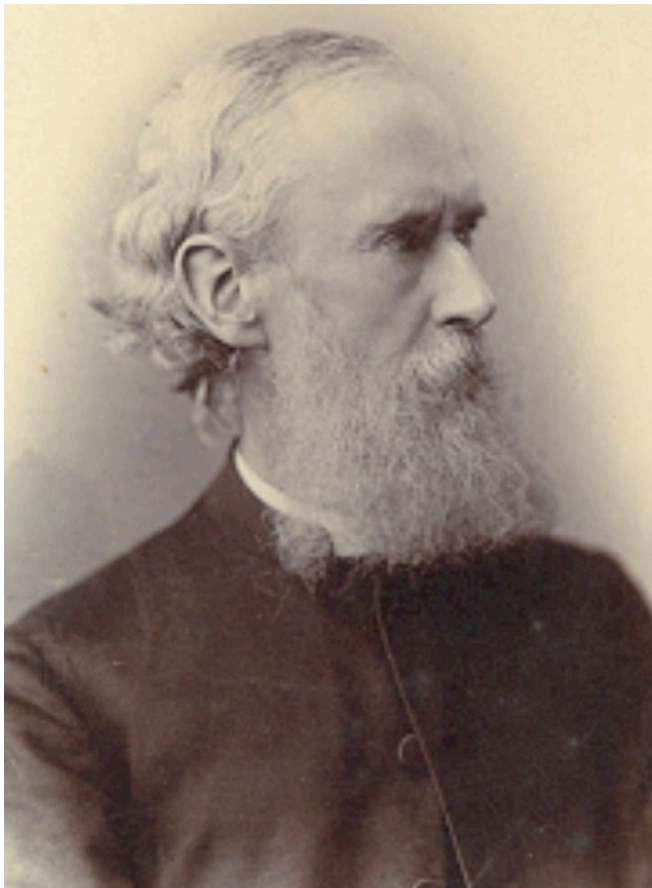
23 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report, 1878*, p15.

£322 in a dead house, whilst St George's Southwark has passed a resolution to erect one – nothing more.<sup>24</sup>

In the *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Sanitary Institute of Great Britain* published in 1880, a list of mortuaries appears. The entry for Shoreditch says:

A mortuary on grounds adjoining the church. Glass coffins for recognition of unknown dead. Disinfecting apparatus, and suitable means and convenience for conducting post-mortem examinations.

It is quite possible Mary Jane Kelly's body was placed in a similar glass coffin when George Hutchinson identified her remains there. It is not clear where Thomas Bowyer and John McCarthy identified her; perhaps they too saw her at the mortuary.



Rev. Septimus Buss

It is worth comparing Shoreditch to the Corporation of the City of London mortuary. This was where the body of Ripper victim Catherine Eddowes was taken. The entry reveals what money can buy in luxury even in the mortuary world. The City of London Mortuary built in Golden Lane cost £12,000, and was provided in 1871 by the Commissioners of Sewers. Designed from a plan by Colonel Haywood C.E, the building contained a Mortuary Chapel with 12 slate tables, a Mortuary Keeper's House and office, a Coroner's Court, Laboratory, Weighing Room,

Consulting Room, a dead room fitted up for post-mortem examinations, disinfecting apparatus, an ambulance shed and a shed for disinfected clothing.<sup>25</sup> They got a lot for their money, but then the Shoreditch Mortuary had only cost £600.

At the beginning of 1881, on 30th January, Rev Thomas Simpson Evans, who had been instrumental in the building of the Shoreditch mortuary, sadly died. His replacement was Rev Septimus Buss, who remained Vicar of St Leonard's until his resignation in 1899.<sup>26</sup> It was Rev Buss who would have supervised the organisation and removal of Mary Jane Kelly's body from the mortuary on the day of her funeral, 19th November 1888. In their obituary of Buss, the Royal Astronomical Society (of which he was a member) recalled "at Shoreditch he laboured with great zeal in social and religious work for eighteen years. He was particularly active in the causes of temperance and municipal reform."<sup>27</sup>

In their usual fortnightly meeting on Tuesday June 19th 1883, the Shoreditch Vestry met with Rev Buss occupying the chair. One of the main things they discussed was the issue of the Churchyard surrounding the mortuary. They had been informed that repairs were required for several of the pathways, and in a letter the Burial Board had asked whether they would agree (once these had been done) to open the churchyard for the use of parishioners and residents including children, suggesting a salaried caretaker be employed to maintain the area. One member was pleased to find that poor children would at last be allowed to go into the churchyard. All were in agreement, and a motion was passed to agree to all the requests as well as to Mr Cox's request to the Burial Board 'to screen the mortuary'.<sup>28</sup> I personally think this may have been the time when the mortuary first had its metal gates and a metal fence erected around it. As access to it (including by children) was about to increase, they most likely did not want prying eyes.

20 *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 15th April, 1876.

21 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report*, 1877, p. 10.

22 *East London Observer*, 13th April 1878.

23 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report*, 1878, p15.

24 *South London Press*, 28th September, 1878.

25 As sourced by Roy Corduroy on his post on Casebook.org, 9th October, 2009.

26 Rev Septimus Buss, LLD, Kings College BA 1858, Deacon 1860, held various curacies before St Leonard's. Like his predecessors he lived at The Vicarage which was, and still is, located in Hoxton Square.

27 *Royal Astronomical Society Journal*, 1915 Vol 75, p236.



From its opening in 1876, and for several years, the mortuary had favourable reviews and people seemed to be happy with the new building and the facility it offered for the Parish. After reading dozens of Medical Officer of Health reports, I compiled various statistical lists for the mortuary from 1876 to 1952. Although I do not intend to publish all those figures in this article, we can see from the following short table that the facility was clearly well-used by the number of bodies it housed over a ten year period commencing from its opening :

Year	Bodies
1876	95
1877	124
1878	147
1879	130
1880	183
1881	208
1882	183
1883	249
1884	135
1885	232
1886	290
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,976</b>

It would make an interesting future study to compare these figures with other Parish mortuaries throughout London. Also added could be tables of figures containing the number of those recorded as having been admitted with infectious diseases, the number of inquests held and the number of post-mortems held in the Shoreditch building and others. In my research I have spent hours collating those statistics for Shoreditch, but it would be interesting for scholars to do the same for other areas for comparative studies. An analysis of such statistics I am sure would provide an illuminating insight into the social history of the life and death of parishioners and mortality rates.

By 1885, however, all was not well with the Shoreditch Mortuary. On Saturday 22nd August 1885 the *Shoreditch Observer* printed a letter<sup>29</sup> sent to their editor with the headline question of 'WHERE'S THE INSPECTOR?':

"Sir – Together with several of my neighbours, I was summoned as a juryman to attend on an inquest at the Town Hall, Shoreditch, yesterday, when on visiting the mortuary at Shoreditch Church to view two bodies, my brother juryman and myself found the stench so horrible that we were obliged to smoke our pipes to alleviate the smell.

I certainly think, that when juryman are requested to view bodies there, there should be some disinfectant needed as we failed to observe anything of the kind yesterday.

Hoping you will find room in your paper to insert this letter –

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

S. Blake

101, Worship-street, EC

August 19th, 1885

Maybe with such a damning, critical letter the authorities might have been forced to deal with the situation, but apparently not; not until the following year anyway. At a meeting of the Shoreditch Vestry on 4th May 1886, after a discussion of a caretaker being engaged for the churchyard for 15 shillings per week, Mr J. Staff objected that the mortuary in the parish churchyard was in such a dangerous condition that it would be unsafe for children to go near it. He suggested that if someone was employed they should be instructed to warn children away from it. The Clerk responded by saying this was partly the reason for the position being needed. A subsequent comment by Mr Waynforth provides us with useful knowledge as to the mortuary's construction, as he said:

The building was erected over a disused vault which had given way, and he should not be surprised if it fell down at any time.<sup>30</sup>

Apparently the General Purposes Committee went to the Vestry and asked to be allowed to get the work done, but the Vestry had refused. When one member asked why the Burial Board couldn't pay for the repairs, he was informed by the Clerk that although the Burial Board constructed the building, they had handed it over to the Vestry to look after it and undertake any repairs needed. One of the Clerk's comments reveals clearly just how bad the building was: "there was no doubt it was a dangerous structure, and one he expected every day to have condemned."<sup>31</sup>

Clearly the above reports eventually forced action, as on 9th July 1886 the *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette* reported:

The much needed repairs to the Shoreditch mortuary are being proceeded with. The defects were caused, it is said, by a subsidence of the foundations, which had rendered the building exceedingly dangerous.<sup>32</sup>

By the end of the month an advert had been placed in local papers by the Vestry of St Leonards Shoreditch re: 'Building the Public Mortuary' stating:

28 *Shoreditch Observer*, 25th June, 1883.

29 *Shoreditch Observer*, 22 August, 1885.

30 *Shoreditch Observer*, 8th May, 1886.

31 Ibid.

Tenders are hereby invited for the taking down and re-erection of a public MORTUARY situated in the Burial-ground adjoining the Church of St Leonards, Shoreditch. Plans and specifications can now be seen at the Surveyors office, Town Hall, Old Street, EC

Tenders for the whole work must be delivered at this office before five o'clock on the 6th September next, properly sealed, addressed to the undersigned, and endorsed 'Tender for Mortuary'. No pledge is given that the lowest or any tender will be accepted by the Vestry.

E. Walker Vestry Clerk  
Town Hall, Old Street, EC  
July, 1886<sup>33</sup>

The same advert appeared weekly throughout August and up to the date of the submission deadline. Maybe the fact the church itself was that summer celebrating the 146th anniversary of its dedication as a place of worship influenced the need to get the sad state of the mortuary building rectified. At the end of August 'a notable festival' had occurred at the church celebrating with 'bright and cheerful services', with local press reporting 'the sacred edifice was very chastely decorated with flowers, ivy etc for the occasion'.<sup>34</sup> Maybe a sense of civic pride and duty had finally kicked in. The annual Health Officer's report later that year summarised the activity:

The public Mortuary, situated at the rear of Saint Leonard's Church, having become dilapidated and dangerous through defective foundations and drainage, was pulled down during the past year and rebuilt by contract, under supervision of the Assistant Surveyor.<sup>35</sup>

The cost of the repairs, shown below, were summarised in the auditors' report of Expenditure for the Parish published in 1887. The total cost for the actual mortuary

work was £316 5s 3d, which is roughly £26,000 today. The costings included shoring up the mortuary, surveyors' fees, foundation work, plumbers work and the rebuilding of the mortuary.<sup>36</sup>

So who was the lucky company who had won the advertised tender? The answer is revealed in the document previously mentioned on page 64. Jarvis & Sons won the contract, and a detailed summary of the complete costings shows additional costs not listed in the previous figure. These include lime-whiting the crypt after its use as a temporary mortuary, drainage of the churchyard and other incidental works, bringing the total cost to £511 18s 8d<sup>37</sup> (roughly £42,000 today).

So from all the above information we can now deduce that the photographs of the mortuary from 1914 do not show the original mortuary opened in 1876, but a rebuilt one from 1886 (though with some possible later additions, as we will see).

In the same year the above report was published, the Shoreditch Mortuary made the national news when the Vestry allowed the mortuary to be used by some of the seventeen victims of the appalling disaster at the Hebrew Dramatic Club at the rear of 3 Prince's Street (today's Princelet Street), Spitalfields.

On the night of Tuesday 18th January 1887, after an enjoyable performance of 'The Spanish Gypsy Girl',

32 *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette*, 9th July, 1886.

33 *Shoreditch Observer*, 31st July, 1886.

34 *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette*, 30th August 1886.

35 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report*, 1886, p63.

36 *Ibid*, p33.

37 *Ibid*, p64/65.

EXPENDITURE.				£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brought forward ...							299	54	5 3
MORTUARY—									
Shoring up Mortuary	...	...	...	3	9	0			
Surveyor's Fees	...	...	...	10	10	0			
Foundation	...	...	...	132	19	3			
Plumbers' Work	...	...	...	19	2	0			
Re-building Mortuary on Account				150	0	0			
				<hr/>			316	0	3



sometime between 11.15 and 11.30pm a gas pipe in the gallery was broken and gas started to escape. The meter was turned off which made some of the lights go out, and in the panic of semi-darkness somebody apparently cried "Fire!" Though a false alarm, this cry nevertheless caused members of the audience to panic and utter chaos followed.<sup>38</sup> Within the building were several hundred people, and during the panic stair bannisters gave way and in the confined vestibule area where the lower and upper audiences met, seventeen people tragically lost their lives in the crush. All but one died from suffocation. The following day the inquest took place inside the theatre's main hall and the police were represented by Superintendent Arnold, Chief Inspector West and Inspector Abberline, all of whom were part of the Ripper investigation the following year. The inquest was subsequently adjourned, and at a later date was reconvened at Shoreditch Town hall. The *Shoreditch Observer* subsequently reported:

The Coroner delivered a carefully prepared summing, prefacing his remarks with an expression of thanks to the Shoreditch Vestry for the use of their mortuary and their convenient hall as a coroners court. The verdict of the jury was Accidental Death.<sup>39</sup>

In the wake of the above disaster "it was resolved on the recommendation of the General Purposes Committee that Mr Rendall provide a moveable bier for the mortuary at a cost of £12."<sup>40</sup> A funeral bier is a flat-framed stand on wheels, usually constructed of wood on which a corpse or coffin is placed to lie in state or to be carried to the grave. It is very likely Mary Jane Kelly's body lay on this bier the following year.

In 1888 the mortuary where the remains of Ripper victims Polly Nichols and Annie Chapman were taken to was the Whitechapel Mortuary. Located in Eagle Place, off Old Montague Street, Brick Lane, many contemporary commentators described the small building as an unsatisfactory place. Just a shed, it had become run down and clearly unfit for purpose. It was eventually replaced by a larger public Mortuary and Coroner's Court in George Yard, the scene of Martha Tabram's murder in August 1888. Opened on 17th March 1892 it was built by the District Board of Works, but closed in 1901 and was subsequently demolished.<sup>41</sup>

On the day following the removal of Mary Jane Kelly's body to the Shoreditch mortuary in November 1888, the newspapers were full of headlines and coverage of the event, one reporting:

#### THE WHITECHAPEL ATROCITIES: POST MORTEM EXAMINATION TODAY

A post mortem examination was made at the district mortuary Shoreditch this morning of the murdered woman's remains by Dr Bond, Westminster Hospital, Dr Gordon Brown, Surgeon to the City police and Dr Phillips, Divisional Surgeon.<sup>42</sup>

Retired Coroner Dr Wynn Westcott, MB, DPH, JP, revealed in his memoir written in 1907 that he did not like having to deal with the press, commenting that 'only harm is done by printing gruesome details of deaths from violence and felony. Many canards and much false news in respect to the dead also get into print, and cause much annoyance'.<sup>43</sup> One could argue this might be the case for all the Ripper's victims.



Dr Wynn Westcott

Another press report informs us of the fact Mary's post mortem took a long time, which is not surprising with all her injuries:

The doctors were engaged for some hours yesterday morning, at the mortuary in Shoreditch Churchyard, making a post-mortem examination. Every portion of the body was accounted for, and at the conclusion of the investigation the various pieces were sewn together and placed in a coffin... During yesterday a

38 See [www.jack-the-ripper-tour.com](http://www.jack-the-ripper-tour.com) blog by Richard Jones, 'The Spitalfields Disaster', posted 23rd May 2016.

39 *Shoreditch Observer*, 12 February, 1887.

40 *Shoreditch Observer*, 7th May, 1887.

41 Post by Roy Corduroy on Casebook.org on 2nd October 2013.

42 *Belfast Telegraph*, 10th November, 1888.

43 W. Wynn Westcott, *Twelve Years Experiences of a London Coroner*, 1907 p18.

large number of persons called at the mortuary, and asked permission to look at the remains. All such requests were, of course, refused.<sup>44</sup>

Were all those who went to see her body at the mortuary really her friends, or were they just curious sightseers eager to see the horrific sight? Perhaps both. Published late on Monday 12th November, on the very day of the inquest, a greatly detailed, first-hand account of the inquest and viewing of Mary's body in the mortuary was reported in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Due to its detail and the atmosphere it creates, it deserves to be recounted in full:

...So the jury put on their hats, tightened their lips, and marched out, accompanied by a few pressmen. By this time quite a crowd had gathered around the hall and followed us quietly to the gloomy gate of the Shoreditch Church. The little rusty iron wicket was guarded by a policeman, who held it open as we passed into the melancholy churchyard, with an acre of grey, soot-covered gravestones, and sorrowful grass and weeds. The path ran alongside the church, and as we turned sharp round to the left there was a little brick mortuary, a red oasis in the desert of tombstones and soft, dank soil. The door was open, and disclosed a cool and lofty apartment, lighted by a couple of windows placed high up, which shed a good light on the fearful spectacle upon which we were all gazing.

There, in a coarse wooden shell lay the body of the Ripper's latest victim. Only her face was visible: the hideous and disembowelled trunk was concealed by the dirty grey cloth, which had probably served to cover many a corpse. The face resembled one of those horrible wax anatomical specimens which may be seen in surgical shops. The eyes were the only vestiges of humanity; the rest was so scored and slashed that it was impossible to say where the flesh began and the cuts ended.<sup>45</sup>

This report provides a dramatic account of going to the Shoreditch mortuary. Through its haunting description, written by someone who actually viewed the body, it gives us a unique and valuable insight into a tragic event we can only read about today and reconstruct in our heads.

The funeral of Mary Jane (or Marie Jeanette Kelly as many newspapers reported) took place on Monday 19th November at St Patrick's RC Cemetery in Leytonstone. It was paid for by the verger and clerk of St Leonard's, Henry Wilton. Who was the man who kindly paid for her coffin and funeral expenses? Find out in my next article, where you will see a hitherto unpublished portrait of the man himself and have an exclusive look around the building where he lived for over 50 years!

An hour before the remains left the Shoreditch

mortuary, hundreds of onlookers assembled in the vicinity and watched while the final arrangements were being made. An interesting report by the *Shoreditch Observer*, however, reflects a somewhat condescending attitude and almost snobbishness of the Shoreditch inhabitants towards those from Spitalfields:

It is not quite easy to understand why the poor mutilated creature from Miller's Court, Spitalfields, was brought to the Shoreditch Mortuary. The local public was a little taken aback at the throngs which surrounded the churchyard on Saturday, and the Shoreditch jury grumbled at being taken off to Spitalfields to view the scene of the murder... the deplorable appearance of some of the witnesses who came to the Town Hall on Monday was a terrible indication of the depths to which vice and depravity reduce their victims. There must be something radically wrong in the conditions of life which allow the existence in our midst of a state of things worse than obtains amongst barbarians.<sup>46</sup>

But what of the mortuary following the death of Mary Jane Kelly in 1888? Five years later, in the Medical Officer of Health's report of 1893, we learn that in the autumn the ventilation of the building was improved and the whole of the interior was thoroughly cleansed, limewashed and painted. In addition, the existing glass partition was extended up to the roof, so as to make a small lobby at one end of the mortuary. This arrangement allowed protection from infection for jurymen and others viewing bodies, as there was then no necessity to go beyond the glass partition which shut off the lobby from the rest of the mortuary. The alterations cost £32.<sup>47</sup> The glass partition may have possibly been in situ in 1888 when Mary Jane Kelly was there.

1896 saw the creation and publication of the first ever bylaws concerning the mortuary written by the Vestry regarding the management of the building. Passed by the Sanitary Authority at their meeting on 28th April 1896 and approved by the Vestry the same day, they were agreed by the Local Government Board on 21st October. In summary, they included the times of removal for burial of infectious and non-infectious bodies, and rules for the proper conduct of persons employed in the removal of bodies.

44 *Pall Mall Gazette*, 12th November, 1888.

45 *Pall Mall Gazette*, 12th November, 1888.

46 *Shoreditch Observer*, 17 November, 1888.

47 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report*, 1893, p20.



They consisted of a list of five rules. Firstly, any body brought in from an infectious disease must be removed for burial within three days from the date of death. Secondly, other non-infectious bodies brought in must be removed for burial within five days from the date of death. Thirdly, anybody employed in depositing or removing bodies from the mortuary will conduct themselves with decency and propriety. Fourthly, anybody using a coffin shell not provided by the Sanitary Authority shall after transferring the body remove the coffin from the premises; and finally, anybody who breaks these laws shall be fined a penalty of £5 and in cases of continuing offences shall be fined a further penalty of 40 shillings for each day after.<sup>48</sup>



Front of St Leonard's, Shoreditch

1897 saw the Shoreditch Mortuary in the news again, with the reception of a body from a possible suspicious death. Author Oscar Nearly, in a website blog titled 'Tom Hart's Bones', recounts the story of Tom Hart, who died in 1897 and whose body was taken to the Shoreditch Mortuary for a post-mortem for a suspicious death. The police thought he may have been murdered, as on the night of his death he was heard screaming in agony. The author then says the following:

The Shoreditch mortuary had been badly neglected since its brief dramatic role in the Ripper murders, since crowds pushed around the building as it housed the remains of his final victim Mary Jane Kelly. A new Whitechapel mortuary had opened in 1892 in its wake, the neglected St Leonard's deadhouse started to crumble. Henry Wilton, the local sexton, duty parish clerk and undertaker, did what he could to clean the mortuary, but he was growing old and blind. Damp rose up the walls of the cramped shed. The windows barely let in enough sun to navigate the room, still the doctors lit Davy lamps to cast flickering sallow light over Hart's body...<sup>49</sup>

If this account is accurate and from a contemporary source (and I have contacted the author to find out), then evidently Old Father Time (nine years since Mary Jane Kelly lay in the building) had not been kind to the building, though perhaps it was inevitable with constant use and dampness from the churchyard.

A period of modernisation now takes place. The Health Officer's report for 1898 stated that in the summer of 1897

the mortuary and post-mortem chambers were limewashed and painted throughout, and the walls of both chambers were tiled with white glazed earthenware tiles to a height of 5 feet from the floor. Thereby cleansing is facilitated and the appearance of the mortuary chamber is immensely improved. The artificial lighting of the post-mortem room has also been improved and a supply of hot water has been provided by means of a gas heating apparatus. The provision of a suitable place in connection with the mortuary for the reception of empty shells when not in use came under the consideration of the Public Health Committee. Formerly the crypt of the adjoining church was used for this purpose, but this arrangement being no longer deemed advisable, it was decided to erect a small additional chamber opening into the mortuary for this purpose.<sup>50</sup>

1898 was a key year in the history of Shoreditch Mortuary and indeed for St Leonard's Church, for it was the year Henry Wilton, the famous sexton and local undertaker who had worked at the church for over 50 years, retired. This historic event is reflected in the Health Officer's report for the year. Medical Officer Lewis T Fraser Bryett stated that Mr Wilton was the Vestry's late mortuary keeper (and as we know the kind gentleman who had paid for Mary Jane Kelly's funeral). In early September 1898 an advert was placed in the *Shoreditch Observer* advertising for a new Mortuary Attendant:

The Shoreditch Vestry invite applications for the post of Attendant at the public Mortuary in St Leonards Churchyard'. The wages will be 30s per week and the man to be appointed will be required to devote the whole of his time to his duties, and to live within a limited distance of the mortuary. Applications must be made by letter endorsed "Mortuary Attendant" and must reach the undersigned before 12 noon on Thursday, 8 September, 1898, By order H. Mansfield

48 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report, 1898*, p57 and 58.

49 'Tom Hart's Bones' by Oscar Nearly on [www.domoobaal.com](http://www.domoobaal.com).

50 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report, 1898*, p30.

Robinson, Solicitor and Clerk to the Vestry, Shoreditch  
Town hall, EC, 27th August, 1898.<sup>51</sup>

Henry Wilton had lived right next door to the church for over 50 years in The Clerk's House, which still stands today. We could argue that it is inferred in this advert that perhaps Wilton's many other church duties at times prevented him from devoting enough time to his mortuary duties. Though he had been mortuary keeper since its opening in 1876, I am sure that over the years the workload increased along with its usage, and it was no doubt a physical job at times.

Wilton's successor was announced formally in the Health Officer's report for 1898:

Consequent upon the resignation of Mr Wilton the late mortuary keeper, who had held the post for more than twenty years, by reason of age, Mr Watson, who had had several years' experience as a mortuary and post-mortem porter at the London Hospital, was appointed by the Public Health Committee on October 6th, to be mortuary attendant at a salary of 30s per week, and to give his whole time to the duties of his office.<sup>52</sup>

In the same report new regulations regarding the duties of the mortuary attendant were also laid out, and make fascinating reading:

1. Bodies shall be received into the mortuary at any hour of the day or night. (persons desirous of making use of the mortuary are requested by notice affixed to the entrance to make applications between the hour of 8am and 8pm. During the night time in cases of emergency only)
2. The mortuary attendant shall reside in or near Calvert Avenue.
3. The mortuary attendant shall be responsible for the general management of the mortuary, for the enforcement of the vestry by-laws as to the maintenance of cleanliness, decency, and good order therein, and he shall keep such books or registers as the Vestry may from time to time prescribe.
4. He shall ascertain and record in the case of each corpse received upon the premises the following particulars; (a) Christian name and surname of the deceased, (b) sex (c) age (d) cause of death (e) number of house and name of street or other description of the place whence the body has been brought to the mortuary (f) name and address of the person by whose order the body has been brought to the mortuary and (g) date of the removal of the body for burial.
5. The mortuary attendant shall not be justified in refusing to admit a corpse on the ground that the above mentioned particulars cannot be given at the time when the application for admission is made to

him.

6. The mortuary attendant shall be responsible for the safe keeping of the shells belonging to the mortuary, and he shall be empowered to lend them to undertakers or other responsible persons for the conveyance of bodies to the mortuary.

7. The shells when not in use shall not be allowed to remain in the mortuary chamber, but shall be deposited in the place provided for the purpose.

8. Each shell after being used shall be thoroughly cleaned before being so deposited

9. No dead body shall be received upon the premises unless it is enclosed in a shell or coffin.<sup>53</sup>

A previous table in this article illustrated that in the period 1876-1886 just under 2,000 bodies were brought to the mortuary but in the table below, for the ten years from the Ripper murders in 1888 to when Henry Wilton left in 1898, we can see that the number has more than doubled!

Year	Bodies
1888	288
1889	300
1890	337
1891	346
1892	375
1893	471
1894	350
1895	384
1896	404
1897	421
1898	446
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,122</b>

In the Health Officer's report for 1899, it is stated that:

The public mortuary continues to be very largely used by the people of Shoreditch, 494 bodies received for that year. In the spring a small chamber, 10ft long by 7 in width, was added to the mortuary, at a cost of £70. It is lighted by a skylight and a window in the east wall, and is entered from the lobby of the mortuary. A suitable place in connection with the mortuary for the reception of empty shells when not in use had long been necessary, and the chamber in question has been provided to meet this requirement.<sup>54</sup>

51 *Shoreditch Observer*, 3rd September 1898.

52 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report*, 1898, p30.

53 *Ibid*, p30.

54 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report*, 1899, p29.





*The jurors enter Shoreditch mortuary to view the body of Willie Starchfield, January 1914*

This new additional chamber may be the one we see in the 1914 photograph. However, the small window we see on the end wall of the building is on the south side, not the east. Perhaps the newspaper made a mistake, as it does look similar to the description given.

The mortuary does not seem to appear in the press again until 15 years later, when the murder of Willie Starchfield took place as previously mentioned on 8th January 1914. His body was taken to the Shoreditch Mortuary and two days later Dr Bernard Spilsbury, the Home Office Pathologist, undertook the post-mortem examination. At the inquest he informed those present that the body was 3ft 9 inches long, and was well-nourished. He formed the opinion that the boy had died from strangulation, and the wound in the neck was traceable all round. He believed the wound was caused by a string tightly pulled. On the left arm near the wrist he found a wound caused, he argued, as if the boy had raised his arm to protect himself. Dr Spilsbury was subsequently handed the cord found on the railway line and said such a cord would likely have caused the wound on the boy's neck. In his opinion death would have occurred in about a minute. Spilsbury had also discovered some recent bruises on the back of the head,

which might have been caused by it being pressed against something hard. Three of the teeth were displaced as if some pressure had been put on the mouth. He concluded that the greater part of the food found in the stomach was of a starchy kind, mostly composed of currants and raisins.<sup>55</sup>

John Starchfield, the boy's father, became chief suspect but the case against him collapsed and he died two years later still protesting his innocence. The case remains officially unsolved.

The mortuary continued to be used into the 1930s, and was maintained and repaired. A report from 1933, however, reveals yet again it was suffering:

The Shoreditch mortuary is an old building, the structure of which is exposed to danger from subsidence by reason of the fact that the site is honeycombed with old graves. Further, the accommodation that the mortuary affords for post-mortem examinations and general arrangements regarding dead bodies does not in all respects confirm

<sup>55</sup> *Portsmouth Evening News*, 1st April 1914.

to modern standards regarding such matters.<sup>56</sup>

In May 1933 the London County Council focused on the condition of the mortuaries attached to Coroners' Courts in London and a request was made for a report on the Shoreditch building. After submission at the end of the year the question of the amount of work to be undertaken by the Borough Council stood deferred until the policy of the LCC regarding the future of the mortuary was known. In 1934 a report stated no action had been decided, though it seemed obvious that the problem would have to be tackled 'at no very distant date'.<sup>57</sup> The report for 1936 commented that although certain structural features of the building were discussed and a fan had been installed, no action had been taken regarding the provision of a new mortuary building. In 1937 the situation remained the same, and still nothing had happened regarding a new mortuary although the officer stated: 'I think the time is fast approaching when this will be necessary'.<sup>58</sup>

Several years later matters came to a head and the fate of the mortuary was finally determined. However, the decision was made not by the local Vestry but by a certain Mr Hitler. During WWII St Leonard's Church, although not directly hit, suffered considerable

damage from V1 rocket strikes and bombs that fell nearby. Priceless medieval stained glass was lost; the beautiful East window behind the altar was destroyed and the church roof was also severely damaged. During my early research I wondered when and why the Victorian mortuary building had been demolished. Knowing the above information about the church, I looked online for a map showing the location where bombs had been dropped ([www.bombsight.org](http://www.bombsight.org)). I discovered that three had actually landed near the church. I hypothesised that the mortuary had most likely suffered damage at the same time too. My suspicions were confirmed when I found the Health Officer's report from 1947, which explained:

Public mortuary: as a result of enemy action in 1944, the Council have no premises in the Borough, but

56 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report, 1934, p19.*

57 *Ibid, p19.*

58 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report, 1937, p39.*

*The rear of the Shoreditch mortuary, January 1914*





under an arrangement with Bethnal Green Borough Council their mortuary is staffed by a mortuary keeper employed by this Council who serves both boroughs.<sup>59</sup>

The above arrangement continued until 1954. In July of that year the Bethnal Green Borough Mortuary was closed down and then a joint service for the three boroughs of Poplar, Bethnal Green and Shoreditch was established at Poplar Mortuary, each of the boroughs contributing to the scheme. The Shoreditch mortuary keeper was transferred to the staff at Poplar.<sup>60</sup>

However, this arrangement was discontinued two years later in 1956 when the coroner for the Northern District proposed to move bodies from Shoreditch into Hackney mortuary, and an arrangement was made with the Hackney Borough Council for the use of their mortuary from 1st April 1956. This appears to have continued into the early 1960s, but I have not found out yet when this scheme was stopped.

So farewell to the Shoreditch Mortuary. I have calculated from the statistics I compiled that in its 69-year history (and despite 13 missing entries) between 1876 and 1944 the mortuary received 17,600 bodies, thus providing a

valuable and vital service for the Parish of Shoreditch.

If you visit the site at the rear of St Leonard's Church today, you will see a glorious colourfully-painted shed used by the Church to store gardening and other equipment. I suspect it was erected in the 1950s, once the church had been repaired and re-opened in 1949. There is no memory of the site's former use and gloomy morbid past; today the space is full of happiness. The original white step can be seen, and if we align that with the 1914 photograph we can even see the original tree in the background.

If in the future you ever happen to passing St Leonard's Church and see the vibrant shed, pause for a moment to remember that once upon a time many people including Mary Jane Kelly spent some time on that very site. May all those who passed through its gates rest in peace.

59 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report, 1947, p9.*

60 *The Medical Officer of Health Report in the records of the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Leonard, Shoreditch, Middlesex Annual Report, 1954, p7.*

*The rear of St Leonard's showing the site of the mortuary, November 2017*





### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Dr Jonathan Oates, Robert Clack and Adam Wood, and finally my husband who patiently endured hours of listening to me talk about mortuaries and dead bodies.



LINDSAY SIVITER is a trained historian who has worked in museums and archives throughout the UK. As an historical adviser and consultant to companies including the Museum of London and the BBC, she has also appeared in many television documentaries including *Unmasking Jack the Ripper* (2005), *The World of Jack the Ripper* (2008) and *Jack the Ripper: The Definitive Story* (2011).



*The site of Shoreditch mortuary with the original steps to the entrance in situ, November 2020*

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# FLYING BLIND WITH WYNNE WESTON DAVIES

By JONATHAN MENGES

**In July of 2020 author Wynne Weston Davies appeared on the Casebook.org message boards and made a surprising announcement. He claimed to have evidence that suggested that Mary Jane Kelly was not buried in a communal grave, as previously believed by researchers and restated by the team led by Dr Turi King at the University of Leicester, but rather that her remains resided in a single grave and ground penetrating radar had located it. Having accomplished the task of identifying the exact location of Mary Kelly's final resting place and discovering that the sole casket buried in the plot was no more than one meter down in the earth, he seemed confident that an exhumation could proceed and that "DNA evidence would be forthcoming within the next twelve months". This would clear a major hurdle in proving Mr Davies' claim that Mary Jane Kelly was in reality his great aunt Elizabeth Weston Davies, as he put forth in his 2015 book *The Real Mary Kelly*.**

Readers who have followed Wynne Weston Davies' quest to exhume the remains of Mary Kelly in order to prove his familial relationship to her will also be familiar with 'The Mary Kelly Project', the aforementioned desktop study led by renowned genetics expert Dr Turi King at the University of Leicester (reprinted in full in the following pages). The team identified several criteria put in place by the Ministry of Justice that would need to be solidly in place before any exhumation could proceed.

One: there must be compelling and unambiguous evidence that Mary Jane Kelly is Elizabeth Weston Davies. Two: the precise location of the grave of Mary Kelly must be proven; Three: Kelly's remains must be accurately identified prior to extracting any DNA; and Four: if there is any possibility that the graves of others might be disturbed, consent from their next of kin would be required.

Since these very high standards had not changed in the three intervening years between UoFL's study and Mr.

Davies' new pronouncements on the Casebook message boards, Ripperologists Paul Begg, Jon Rees and myself were keen to ask Wynne Weston Davies some questions, and Davies agreed to sit down with us for what became a baffling 90-minute interview.

The fact of the matter is Wynne Weston Davies was blissfully ignorant of the University of Leicester's report. He did not know it existed and therefore hadn't read a single word of it. This, to us, was shocking. Major articles about The Mary Kelly Project were published in *Forensic Magazine*, *Science Daily*, and reported by many media outlets. The University of Leicester had issued a press release and published its full report online. Going in, we assumed that Mr. Davies would be the one person most informed about the status of his own "30 year-long quest" but, surprisingly, it was left to the three of us to bring him up to date and explain to him why his newly found confidence is sadly, entirely misplaced.

Shortly after the publication of Davies' book, several researchers looking into his claims had determined that the evidence put forth that Elizabeth Weston Davies was Mary Jane Kelly, while interesting, was highly circumstantial and ultimately fell far short of being convincing. The UoFL report agrees with those researchers and addresses the identification issue at length. Davies' theory is not compelling enough or unambiguous. Strike one.

The Project report explains in detail the history of the burials that took place in St. Patrick's and positively identifies Kelly's grave in what was once a large communal burial area containing nearly 100 rows with 20 plots in each row. The precise location of Mary Kelly's plot cannot be determined, only the large, general area. In 1947 several meters of soil were added to this existing ground in order to build it up for more burials. No 19th century graves would be detected 'one meter or less' down due to this additional earth build. They describe the practice

of using a single plot for multiple burials, one on top of another, and identify by name those individuals sharing Kelly's plot. I provided Mr. Davies with the map of the cemetery done by UofL on this area and read to him the names of each individual resting underneath Kelly, as he was unaware of any of this data. Davies claimed that ground penetrating radar had located a coffin less than one meter below ground with nothing else, like another burial, immediately underneath it. Its location, conveniently enough, is right below her current headstone. Davies was unaware that this GPR study was provided to Dr. King's team and is discussed in an addendum in their report where they explain that the 'reflections' detected by the radar matched up perfectly with the post-1947 layout of the cemetery. There would be no possible way to prove where Mary Kelly's grave lies and then exhume her grave without disturbing those on top or beneath her. That's two more requirements that fail to be met.

But let us assume this: IF one could precisely identify the location of Kelly's grave and IF her remains could be exhumed without disturbing other burials, that leaves us with the requirement that one proves the remains to be tested are those of, not Mary Jane Kelly, but Elizabeth Weston Davies. Wynne must establish beyond any doubt that the true identity of Mary Jane Kelly is his great aunt Elizabeth before DNA can be extracted. Those familiar with the scant amount of true evidence about the real Mary Kelly could arguably view this an impossibility.

So, unless the Ministry of Justice reverses its strict guidelines on the exhumation of Mary Kelly's remains, Wynne Weston Davies is fighting an unwinnable battle. One would hope that if he continues to pursue this effort, he does so fully aware of the facts, with a knowledge of the research and that he comprehends the reality of the challenge he's accepted.



*Clockwise from top left: Wynne Weston Davies, Jon Rees, Paul Begg and Jonathan Menges*

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# THE MARY JANE KELLY PROJECT

By Dr Turi King, Mathew Morris, Professor Kevin Schürer and Carl Vivian,  
University of Leicester

**The Mary Jane Kelly Project was a desk-based assessment of the identity and burial location of Mary Jane Kelly at St Patrick's Catholic Cemetery, Leytonstone for Patricia Cornwell by Dr Turi King, Mathew Morris, Professor Kevin Schürer and Carl Vivian, to whom we extend our thanks for permission to republish their report in these pages.**

## PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

In summer 2015, it was widely reported in the British media that a new book purported to reveal the real identity of Mary Jane Kelly and her killer (see bibliography for examples of press reports). The author, Wynne Weston-Davies, claimed that the woman known to everyone as Mary Jane Kelly was living under a pseudonym and was in fact his great-aunt Elizabeth Weston Davies. The press reported that Weston-Davies planned to exhume Kelly's remains so that DNA testing could be carried out, and that the Ministry of Justice had indicated that it would issue an exhumation licence.

In August 2015, Dr Turi King of the University of Leicester was approached by the author Patricia Cornwell regarding the putative testing of DNA from the remains of Mary Jane Kelly and matching them against those of Wynne Weston-Davies, with whom she had been in contact.

The discovery in 2012 of the remains of King Richard III (d.1485) under a city centre car park in Leicester, and their subsequently successful identification in a multi-disciplinary project led by the University of Leicester had highlighted how a combination of archaeology, osteology, forensics, genetics, genealogy and other scientific techniques could successfully identify anonymous skeletal human remains that were more than 500 years old. Patricia Cornwell hoped that a similar project might successfully identify Mary Jane Kelly's remains.

During initial discussions, two issues arose:

1. The Ministry of Justice had not, in fact, already agreed to issue an exhumation licence but rather, had acknowledged that they would consider such an application if submitted. Therefore, the claim that Mary Jane Kelly was Wynne Weston-Davies great-aunt would need to be assessed to support any exhumation application.

2. The precise location of Mary Jane Kelly's grave was unknown. To complete any exhumation application to the Ministry of Justice detailed information on the location would be required, not only for the exhumation of Kelly's remains, but also to determine if any other remains might be disturbed in the process.

Subsequently, in April 2016 it was agreed with Patricia Cornwell that a desk-based study would be carried out to determine if the grave site could be located.

The study would seek to address the following questions:

1. Could the critical requirement of being able to accurately identify Mary Jane Kelly's remains be achieved in order to carry out DNA testing to determine if there was genetic evidence consistent with a DNA match between Wynne Weston-Davies and the remains of his great-aunt, Elizabeth Weston Davies, the individual putatively buried under the alias Mary Jane Kelly?

2. Where was Mary Jane Kelly buried and could her grave site be accurately located using surviving records?

3. What was the likely condition and survival of her remains, if an exhumation was carried out?

## THE RESEARCH TEAM

Dr Turi King, Reader in Genetics and Archaeology, University of Leicester; Mathew Morris MA ACIfA, Field Officer for Archaeological Services (ULAS), University of Leicester; Professor Kevin Schürer, Professor of English Local History, University of Leicester; Carl Vivian, Video

Producer/Photographer, University of Leicester

## METHODOLOGY

The Chartered Institute of Field Archaeologists (CifA) defines a desk-based assessment as ‘a programme of study of the historic environment within a specified area or site on land, the inter-tidal zone or underwater that addresses agreed research and/or conservation objectives.’ Its aim is to identify and determine, as far as is reasonably possible from existing records, the nature, extent and significance of any assets within the study area that are likely to be effected by, or have an effect on the agreed Project objectives, in order to inform future strategies of work, research and conservation (CifA 2014).

The following report has been prepared based on information current and available as of February 2017. The following sources have been consulted as part of the project:

- Cemetery burial records (held at St Patrick’s Catholic Cemetery, Leytonstone).
- Archaeological records (Historic Environment Records for Leytonstone and surrounding area).
- Historic Ordnance Survey and other maps of the area (EDINA Digimap website, National Library of Scotland online map library).
- Geological maps (British Geological Survey website and EDINA Digimap website)
- Other online digital sources (e.g. British History Online, the Archaeological Data Service, Heritage Gateway, British Newspapers Online).
- Other background material (e.g. University of Leicester Library).

A site visit to St Patrick’s Catholic Cemetery, Leytonstone was undertaken by the Research Team on 3rd May, 2016 in

order to examine the burial area. Research was carried out in the cemetery’s burial records and a survey of marked graves in the area around Mary Jane Kelly’s modern grave marker was undertaken (Figure 1). Particular attention was paid to the current land use of all parts of the study area and its likely impact on the condition of any buried human remains.

The team is indebted to John Sears, the cemetery superintendent of some 30 years (his father-in-law being the previous superintendent for some 40 years before him), for his advice and support during the project.

## GENEALOGY AND SUGGESTED DNA ANALYSIS

DNA testing of the remains of Mary Jane Kelly would allow for a comparison to be made between those remains and Wynne Weston-Davies in order to determine if the genetic data is consistent with them being related as suggested, and therefore lending support to the theory that these remains are those of Elizabeth Weston Davies.

Elizabeth Weston Davies (b.1856) is the sister of Weston-Davies’ paternal grandfather, John (b.1861), and is therefore Weston-Davies’ great-aunt (Figure 2, overleaf). Elizabeth, as a female, will not carry a Y chromosome, meaning Y chromosome testing will not be possible in this case. Furthermore, given that the link between Elizabeth and Weston-Davies is not through an all-female line, mitochondrial DNA typing will also not be possible.

However, in an ideal situation, it would be possible to use forensic techniques or, indeed, analysis of the wider genome, in order to assess whether the results of any DNA testing are consistent with the remains of Mary Jane Kelly being those of Elizabeth Weston Davies.

## Reasoning

Individuals will share half their DNA with each parent and, on average, half their DNA with each sibling.



*Figure 1: The research team and John Sears discuss the state of knowledge surrounding the location of Mary Jane Kelly’s grave.*



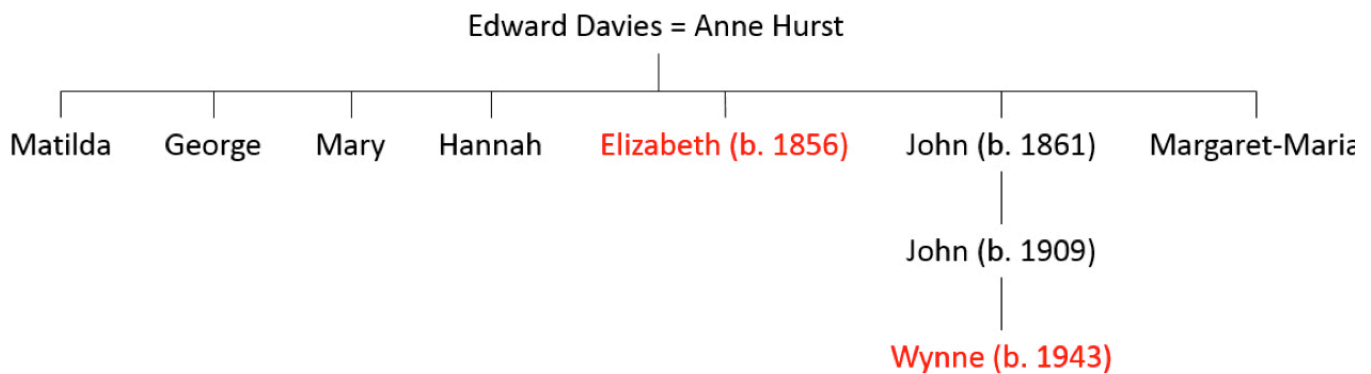


Figure 2: Diagram showing the genealogical link between Elizabeth Weston Davies and Wynne Weston-Davies.

Therefore, Elizabeth would be expected to share  $\sim 1/2$  her DNA with her brother, John (b.1861),  $\sim 1/4$  with her nephew, John (b.1909), and  $\sim 1/8$  of her DNA with her great-nephew, Wynne (b.1943). Should any usable DNA remain, assessment of the DNA quality in the remains would guide the decision in terms of best approach to carry out the genetic analysis. Either forensic DNA typing using the newer approaches with a combination of genetic markers, or analysis of the wider genome, of both the remains and of Wynne Weston-Davies would allow comparison between them to determine whether the results are consistent with the two being related.

### Issues to consider regarding recovery of DNA from buried remains

There are a number of issues to consider in projects involving the extraction of DNA from ancient remains.

1. Provenance of the remains. It is vital in cases such as this, which hinge on a DNA comparison between two individuals to confirm or disprove relatedness, that the provenance of the remains is correct. Without this, a mismatch could be interpreted incorrectly.

2. DNA degradation. DNA degrades after death, the rate of degradation being determined by the burial conditions, with DNA becoming ever more damaged and fragmented until there is no useable DNA left to analyse. The state of preservation of the DNA in the remains is not known until it is assayed.

3. Contamination. Given the scarce and damaged nature of DNA in ancient remains, contamination with modern DNA (i.e. from the excavators exhuming the remains) is a serious risk which could lead to an incorrect interpretation of the results. Precautions would have to be taken if an exhumation were to take place to keep the risk of modern DNA contamination to a minimum.

### THE CASE FOR MARY JANE KELLY BEING ELIZABETH WESTON DAVIES

In 2015, Wynne Weston-Davies published a book, *The Real Mary Kelly* (also published as *Jack the Ripper: A True Love Story*), in which he claimed to know the true identity of both Mary Jane Kelly and Jack the Ripper. What follows is a summary of his conclusions as to their identities as presented to the Project team in December 2015.

Elizabeth Weston Davies was born on 24th July 1856 in Corris, Merionethshire, with the family moving shortly after to Aberangell, Montgomeryshire. Weston-Davies states that his great-aunt moved to London in about 1880 (aged 24) to become a lady's maid to the Marchioness of Londonderry, but following the death of the 5th Marquess in November 1884 his widow retired back to Wales and Elizabeth left her service, remaining in London and becoming a prostitute. Apparently, her brother John (Welsh Ianto) told his son, Weston-Davies' father John, that he was aware that his sister was a prostitute who came to a 'bad end'. She had worked in a French brothel in South Kensington run by an Anglo-French madam called Héleine (or Ellen) Macleod until, on 24th December, 1884 she married Francis Spurzheim Craig at Fulham Registry Office. The later divorce petition initiated by Craig states that she gave a false age and a false name, Elizabeth Weston Jones, on the Marriage Certificate.

Craig was the only son of well-known socialist pioneer E.T. Craig, who founded the Co-Operative movement. Weston-Davies states that Craig is well-documented as having suffered from a severe personality disorder. The new couple lived together in Argyle Square in Bloomsbury but Elizabeth left after only four months, in April or May 1885, and Craig spent the next three years employing private detectives to search for her, with little success. Apparently, the divorce petition suggests that she returned to prostitution, again working for Mrs Macleod,

but it appears that she left the Bloomsbury/Camden area of London in about August 1885 and moved, Weston-Davies presumes, to the East End to avoid the unwanted attentions of her estranged husband, although there is no evidence to confirm this.

In April 1886, Craig commenced an action for divorce but the papers were never served on Elizabeth, presumably because her whereabouts were unknown. Weston-Davies states that no positive identification of his great-aunt under the names Craig, Davies or Jones after August 1885 has been found after extensive investigation, although there is some evidence from family sources that she remained in contact with her brother John, who lived close to her former home in Argyle Square, for some months after she apparently left the West End. Contact was later lost and no-one in her family ever heard from her again or knew what had become of her, despite extensive attempts to trace her.

It is Weston-Davies' belief that his grandfather John (Johnto) suspected that Elizabeth was Mary Jane Kelly and passed some information to that effect on to his son John shortly before his death. He also believes that Francis Spurzheim Craig is Jack the Ripper, killing Mary Jane Kelly in a particularly brutal manner because she was his estranged wife; the previous victims being killed as practice or to mask his true target, Elizabeth.

Soon after the last killing, Craig apparently left his lodgings in the East End and returned to live with his parents in Hammersmith. Fifteen years later he cut his own throat with a razor, after a long period of mental instability during which he told friends that he was wanted for murders that he committed whilst under great strain and 'pressure of nerves'.

In order to make an application to the Ministry of Justice for a licence to exhume Mary Jane Kelly's remains, the case for Kelly being Elizabeth Weston Davies needs to be compelling, not least because to test the theory by exhuming the remains will almost certainly involve disturbing the remains of other individuals buried in the vicinity. To assess the evidence, a table of comparison (Table 1 on next page) based on that supplied by Wynne Weston-Davies (pers. comm. & 2015), is presented. Where possible, references to relevant supporting documents is supplied. However, to date the Research Team has not been able to view all the supporting evidence cited by Weston-Davies as part of this project.

At present, without full review of the evidence cited by Weston-Davies, much of the case for Mary Jane Kelly and Elizabeth Weston Davies being the same individual appears to be circumstantial or conjectural. For instance, there is no evidence that Elizabeth moved to the East End

after she left her husband, this is merely surmised.

Indeed, her absence from any records after 1885 is not uncommon. On the one hand, she may have died before the next census in 1891, but census data is also not infallible. It offered a snapshot of the nation on one Sunday every ten years. People in transit or with no fixed abode, or who had no family, establishment or organisation to represent them could easily fall through the cracks, especially if they did not want to be found. Illiteracy, language and dialect, particularly amongst large migratory populations such as those in London's East End also caused problems for the census enumerators. One common mistake in census returns is the misspelling or misinterpretation of names. For example, Elizabeth's surname Davies could be spelt as Davis, Davie, Davyes, Davise, Daviss, Daavis etc.; whilst the other name she is known to have used, Jones, could also be written down as Joens, Joans, Jomes, Jobes, Johns etc. She could also be using a diminutive of Elizabeth: Beth, Bess, Bessie, Betsy, Betty, Libby, Liz, Lizzie to name a few. If Elizabeth stopped using Weston in her name, and was simply living as Elizabeth Davies or Elizabeth Jones she would be very difficult to trace. Davies and Jones are very common surnames, Jones is ranked 2nd most common in Britain in the 1881 census, whilst Davies is ranked 6th (gbnames.publicprofiler.org) and Elizabeth Jones is the 4th most frequently used female name (Vick 2013). Other potential discrepancies between Mary and Elizabeth include, their ages, where they were born and raised, and how many brothers and sisters they had.

However, regardless of whether the evidence as it presently stands is insufficiently compelling to prove that Mary and Elizabeth are the same person, the merit of the case may be insufficient to persuade the Ministry of Justice that it warrants disturbing the remains of other individuals to test the theory. It becomes a moot point whether Mary Jane Kelly and Elizabeth Weston Davies are the same person if the number of other graves that need to be disturbed and/or the number of individuals who would need to be contacted to gain permission to disturb such remains is considered to be too great to allow the granting of a licence (see below).

## EXHUMATION LICENCE APPLICATIONS

Current law relating to the exhumation of human remains in England and Wales is contained in Section 25 of the Burial Act of 1857, which states that it is unlawful to remove any body or the remains of any body, which have been interred in a place of burial, without licence from the Secretary of State or, in certain circumstances, the Church of England - when the grave in which the deceased is buried is in ground consecrated according to the rites of



Table 1: Points of comparison between Mary Jane Kelly and Elizabeth Weston Davies

	MARY JANE KELLY	ELIZABETH WESTON DAVIES
Age in 1888	‘about 25’ on her death certificate but some newspapers reported that she looked about 30. <sup>4,8</sup>	31. <sup>1</sup>
Occupation	Prostitute. <sup>6,8</sup>	Lady’s maid, subsequently prostitute. <sup>3</sup>
Place of work prior to arrival in the East End	West End brothel run by a Frenchwoman, ‘near Kensington’. <sup>6,8</sup>	South Kensington brothel run by Héleine (or Ellen) Macleod. <sup>3</sup>
Date of disappearance from the West End	Late 1885. <sup>6,8</sup>	About August 1885.
Date of arrival in the East End	Unknown, but probably late 1885 or early 1886. <sup>6,8</sup>	Unknown, circumstantial evidence suggests that she may have moved to the East End in late 1885.
Appearance	Broad consensus amongst her contemporaries suggests that she was 5ft 7in with a fair complexion, ‘buxom’ or of stout build and had blue eyes and long thick hair. Nicknames appear to have included ‘Fair Emma’, ‘Ginger’ and ‘Black Mary’, which all might suggest that frequently changed her hair colour. Post-mortem photos of her body appear to show dark hair but this could be because it is bloodstained. <sup>6,7,8</sup>	Unknown, although other family members including her brother allegedly had dark hair.
Education	Reported to be intelligent and well-spoken. <sup>6,8</sup>	Remained in school until at least the age of 16.
Social background	Newspaper and witness reports suggested that she was from a middle-class background. <sup>6,8</sup>	Lower middle class (father was a quarry agent at the time of her birth). <sup>5</sup>
Ethnicity	Witness reports state that she had told people that she was Welsh on first arriving in the East End but later changed to saying that she was Irish but had been bought up in Caernarfonshire or Carmarthenshire, Wales. <sup>6,8</sup>	Welsh father, English mother but born and brought up in Merionethshire and Montgomeryshire, Wales. <sup>1,5</sup>
Native Welsh speaker	At least one witness report suggests she spoke Welsh. <sup>8</sup>	Yes.
Habits	Said to drink to excess on occasion and to be voluble and argumentative when drunk. <sup>6,8</sup>	Described by husband and his friends as a ‘drunken bad wife’. <sup>3</sup>
Siblings	According to Joseph Barnett, she had said she had seven brothers and a sister. <sup>6,8</sup>	Two brothers and four sisters. <sup>5</sup>
Brother called Johnto	Henry (nicknamed ‘Johnto’). <sup>6,8</sup>	John (Johnto or Ianto in Welsh). <sup>5</sup>
Used the name Davies in the East End	Yes. <sup>6,8</sup>	Unknown.
Claimed to be a widow	Yes. <sup>6,8</sup>	Yes (falsely). <sup>2,3</sup>

1. Birth certificate of Elizabeth Weston Davies.
2. Marriage certificate of Francis Spurzheim Craig and Elizabeth Weston Jones.
3. Petition and supporting Affidavit for the divorce of Francis Spurzheim Craig and Elizabeth Weston Craig (née Davies). This apparently includes evidence of the addresses of the Petitioner and his wife at various times following their marriage, evidence of Elizabeth Weston Craig’s occupation and that she worked for Héleine Macleod, the date of her desertion of her husband, and his addresses between April 1886 and March 1889 (National Archives: J 77/354/692).
4. Death certificate of Marie Jeanette Kelly otherwise Davies (registered in Spitalfields in Whitechapel, no. 526 for 1888).
5. Census returns for 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891 and 1901 relating to Francis Spurzheim Craig, Elizabeth Weston Davies/Craig (the latter not recorded after 1881) and Héleine Macleod.
6. Report of the inquest of Marie Jeanette Kelly (London Metropolitan Archive: MJ/SP/C/NE/0376/001-011).
7. Post-mortem report on Marie Jeanette Kelly by Dr Thomas Bond and Dr George Bagster Phillips.
8. Numerous contemporary newspaper articles relating to the Whitechapel murders and Marie Jeanette Kelly, with witness accounts of her age, background, appearance and movements before and after her arrival in the East End.

the Church of England and is to be reburied in consecrated ground ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/20-21/81/section/25](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/20-21/81/section/25) accessed 19/05/2016). An application for an appropriate licence must be made to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) who will normally require the consent of all the next of kin (Question 7 of the application) – considered to be the spouse or civil partner, children, parents, siblings, grandchildren and grandparents. Emphasis is placed on the applicant tracing and contacting the next of kin of the deceased and anyone with an interest in the grave (i.e. third parties such as the local burial authority, grave owner and/or land owner and other parties).

Significantly, the guidance states: “If there are other human remains in the grave, then the consents of the next of kin for those remains will be required as will the consent of the burial authority to open the grave. A separate form will be required for each set of remains. Where there are a large number of remains within a grave it is unlikely licences will be granted.” – MoJ Application for a licence for the removal of human remains (including cremated remains) in England and Wales, published 2 February 2012 (see [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/systems/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/326818/application-exhumation-licence.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/systems/uploads/attachment_data/file/326818/application-exhumation-licence.pdf) accessed 19/05/2016).

With this in mind, several questions must be considered. An exhumation has the potential to disturb an unknown number of individual burials in proximity to Mary Jane Kelly. Who are they? Beyond identifying a potential location for the grave it must be established how many people are buried in the same communal plot and where in the sequence Kelly is buried (i.e. is she buried beneath other people who will need to be exhumed to access her remains). As it is unlikely that Kelly’s grave location can be precisely located or excavated, the number of individuals buried in adjacent graves must also be taken into consideration, as do people buried in the vicinity post-1947, after the area was reclaimed (see below).

### ST PATRICK’S CATHOLIC CEMETERY

Today, St Patrick’s Catholic Cemetery lies to the north of Langthorne Road amidst the suburban sprawl of Leytonstone in the London Borough of Waltham Forest (E11 4HL) (Figure 3 and Figure 4). The cemetery opened in 1861 to cope with the rapid population expansion in Hackney in the mid-19th century. It originally occupied a c.12-acre plot on Unionhouse Lane (now Lanthorne Road), situated in open fields halfway between the villages of Low Leyton (1km to the north-west), Leytonstone (1km to the north-east) and Stratford (1km to the south). The Great Eastern Railway passed close to its north-western edge and Low Leyton Station was just a five-minute walk away to the west, whilst the West Ham Union Workhouse

was c.300m down the lane to the south-east.

By the end of the 19th century, the cemetery had been engulfed in the rapid suburban development of these settlements, expanding to c.23 acres (its present size) in the early 20th century to cope with growing demand. Today, over 170,000 people are buried in the cemetery, predominately of Irish, Italian and Polish ancestry, reflecting its Roman Catholic status. To cater for continuing demand, land has since been reclaimed, in the 1940s. Originally by clearing monuments to allow new burials to take place and more recently by raising the ground level in some areas of the cemetery by adding c.2m of soil over old graves (Powell 1973; Mellor & Parson 2011; Ordnance Survey 25” maps – London XII, 1870 edition; London XXXII, 1897 edition; London III.13, 1916 edition; J. Sears pers. comm. May 2016).



Figure 3: The entrance to St Patrick’s Catholic Cemetery, Leytonstone.

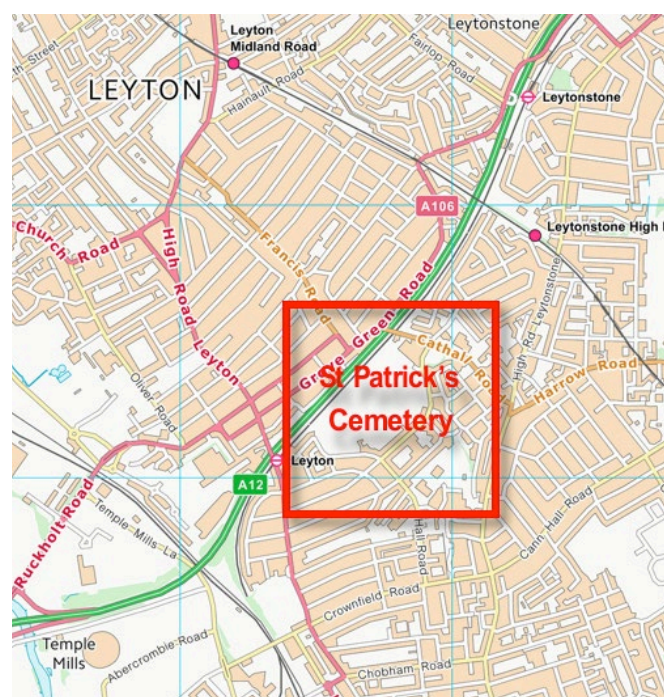


Figure 4: The cemetery location.



## THE BURIAL OF MARY JANE KELLY AND LIKELY CONDITION OF HER REMAINS

Mary Jane Kelly was buried at the cemetery on Monday 19th November, 1888. The following account of the funeral, published in the *London Standard* the following day, provides useful details on the manner of the burial, particularly the nature of the coffin – described as being of ‘polished elm and oak... with metal mounts... the coffin plate was engraved: “Marie Jeanette Kelly, died 9th Nov. 1888, aged 25 years.”

### THE WHITECHAPEL MURDER

The remains of Mary Janet Kelly, who was murdered on the 9th of November in Miller’s-court, Dorset-street, Spitalfields, were interred yesterday in the Roman Catholic Cemetery at Leytonstone. The body was enclosed in a polished elm and oak coffin, with metal mounts. On the coffin plate was engraved:- “Marie Jeannette Kelly, died 9th Nov. 1888, aged 25 years.” Upon the coffin were two crowns of artificial flowers and a cross made up of heartsease. The coffin was carried in an open cart drawn by two horses, and two coaches followed, from the Shoreditch Mortuary. An enormous crowd of people assembled at an early hour, completely blocking the thoroughfare, and a large number of police were engaged in keeping order. As the coffin appeared, borne on the shoulders of four men, at the principal gate of the church, the crowd was greatly moved. Round the open car in which it was to be placed men and women struggled desperately to touch the coffin. Women with faces streaming with tears cried out “God forgive her” and every man’s heart was bared. The sight was remarkable and the emotion natural and unconstrained. Two mourning coaches followed, one containing three, and the other five persons. Joe Barnett was amongst them, with someone from McCarthy’s, the landlord; and the others were women, who had given evidence at the inquest. After a tremendous struggle, the car, with the coffin fully exposed to view, set out at a very slow pace, all the crowd appearing to move off simultaneously in attendance. The traffic was blocked, and the constables had great difficulty in obtaining free passage for the small procession through the mass of carts and vans and tramcars which blocked the road. The distance from Shoreditch Church to the Cemetery at Leytonstone by road is about six miles, and the route traversed was Hackney-road, Cambridge Heath, Whitechapel-road, and Stratford. The appearance of the roadway throughout the whole journey was remarkable, owing to the hundreds of men and women who escorted the coffin on each side, and who had to keep up a sharp trot in many places. But the crowd rapidly thinned away when, getting into the suburbs, the car and coaches broke into a trot. The cemetery was reached at two o’clock. The Rev. Father

Columban, with two acolytes and a cross-bearer, met the body at the door of the little chapel of St Patrick, and the coffin was carried at once to a grave in the north-eastern corner. Barnett and the poor women who had accompanied the funeral knelt on the cold clay by the side of the grave, while the service was read. The coffin was incensed, lowered, and then sprinkled with holy water, and the simple ceremony ended. The floral ornaments were afterwards raised to be placed upon the grave, and the filling up was completed in a few moments, and was watched by a small crowd of people. There was a very large concourse of people outside the gates, who were refused admission until after the funeral was over.

Coffins and their fittings do not survive well in earth graves, and there is relatively limited archaeological evidence for late 19th century burials in general as they are infrequently excavated, although funeral catalogues do provide useful typological evidence. By the late 19th century, the most popular form of burial container was the single-break coffin made of polished wood and no longer covered in fabric, as had been the trend in the earlier 19th century. Mass production meant greater consumer choice and a wide variety of designs were readily available to meet individual taste and price. These were typically made of oak or elm but pitched pine or more exotic woods could be substituted. Coffin furniture could be of lead, copper or brass but by the end of the 18th century mass-produced tinplate fittings (tin-dipped iron, known as ‘silver’ in the trade) was the common choice (Cherryson et al. 2012, 45-80; Mytum 2015, 276-85).

The account of Mary Jane Kelly’s funeral suggests that her coffin was typical of the period, made of polished wood with simple metal fittings, most likely tinplate (reports do not state brass fittings as has been suggested by some authors, but merely metal fittings). Tinplate does not survive well in the ground. The iron content quickly corrodes and expands leaving the coffin plate illegible. Geology beneath the cemetery is sand and gravel overlying clay (BGS OpenGeoscience). Previous exhumations, of burials as recent as the 1950s, have found the ground waterlogged with coffin preservation poor and little or nothing surviving of the deceased inside (J. Sears, cemetery superintendent, pers. comm. May 2016). If this is the case, little is likely to have survived to identify Kelly’s coffin and it is unlikely that her skeletal remains will be well preserved, if they have survived at all.

### LOCATING MARY JANE KELLY’S GRAVE

Visit St Patrick’s Catholic Cemetery today and you can find a grave marker commemorating Marie Jeanette Kelly in Plot 10, Row 21/22, c.70m east-north-east of the



Figure 5: The modern grave marker in plot 10-21/22 commemorating Mary Jane Kelly.

mortuary chapel close to the south-eastern boundary of the cemetery (TQ 38742 86151) (Figure 5). This is the latest of several modern markers which have commemorated Kelly since the 1980s and its location is likely to have little or no relevance to the real location of her grave. The present marker reads "In Loving Memory of Marie Jeanette Kelly, none but the lonely hearts can knot my sadness, love lives forever". Problems surrounding the location of the grave stem from the fact that this area of the cemetery was reclaimed in 1947, with earlier grave positions being swept away to make way for new burials. Plot 10, Row 21/22 is the position of the modern marker in the post-1947 numbering system, not the original location of the grave.

In the cemetery's archive, entry number 371201 (folio 120) in the *Register of Burials* for 1887 to 1891 records that Marie Jeanette Kelly (as she was named), aged 25, was buried in plot number 16-67, a 'Com. [communal]

Grave' having been brought from Shoreditch Mortuary (Figure 6). The ceremony was performed by Fr. Columban Ellison. Contemporary newspaper accounts, such as the one above, place this in the communal burial area along the south-eastern boundary of the cemetery, north-east of the chapel of rest.

No map of the original 19th-century plot layout appears to survive. However, from studying the burial registers an idea of the plot layout can be ascertained. The plot numbers are in effect a co-ordinate system, indicating, respectively, rows running approximately south-east to north-west (SE-NW) and north-east to south-west (NE-SW). This is illustrated schematically in the diagram below (Figure 8).

With reference to the diagram (Figure 8), the first number represents the SE-NW axis, with plot numbers running from 1 to 20, whilst the second number represents the NE-SW axis, the plot numbers running from 1 to 98. Thus, plot 01-01 would have been somewhere in the north-east corner of the cemetery, and at the other extreme, plot 20-98 would have been by the back entrance to the existing chapel of rest.

The order in which the plots were filled in, at first sight, appears to be somewhat random. What is clear, is that they did not start with plot 01-01 and work all the way through to 20-98 in sequential fashion. Rather, it appears that they opened up a number of plots running along the NE-SW axis simultaneously, moving gradually north-west and south-west as each block of graves was filled in. Given that these were communal plots, with multiple burials in each, then one can see a certain logic to this. Since there were often over five (adult) burials a day in some years during the later 19th century, this would avoid, as far as was possible, having one burial after another within the same plot, which may have been disconcerting for the

ST. PATRICK'S CATHOLIC CEMETERY.					LEYTONSTONE ROAD, STRATFORD.					
Date, 18 FF	Number.	Name.	Age.	Brought.	From.	Catacomb.	F. Grave.	Com. Grave.	Ceremony performed by.	Cost received.
1887/194	1	JAMES WILK	52	18 Winton West Pla Road	(Died in the York H. S. R.)		6X 80/47	Donald Byrne &		
" 95	2	JAMES BYRNE	60	14 Upper Road	West Ham			16-66 Donald Byrne		
" 96	3	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Wellington Place	W. E. E			16-66 Donald Byrne		
" 97	4	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 98	5	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 99	6	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 100	7	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 101	8	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 102	9	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 103	10	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 104	11	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 105	12	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 106	13	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 107	14	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 108	15	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 109	16	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 110	17	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 111	18	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 112	19	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 113	20	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 114	21	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 115	22	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 116	23	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 117	24	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 118	25	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 119	26	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 120	27	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 121	28	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 122	29	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 123	30	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 124	31	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 125	32	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 126	33	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 127	34	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 128	35	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 129	36	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 130	37	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 131	38	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 132	39	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 133	40	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 134	41	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 135	42	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 136	43	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 137	44	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 138	45	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 139	46	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 140	47	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 141	48	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 142	49	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 143	50	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 144	51	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 145	52	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 146	53	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 147	54	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 148	55	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 149	56	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 150	57	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 151	58	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 152	59	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 153	60	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 154	61	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 155	62	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 156	63	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 157	64	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 158	65	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 159	66	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 160	67	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 161	68	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 162	69	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 163	70	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 164	71	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 165	72	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 166	73	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 167	74	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 168	75	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 169	76	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 170	77	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 171	78	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 172	79	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 173	80	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 174	81	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 175	82	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 176	83	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 177	84	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 178	85	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 179	86	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 180	87	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 181	88	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 182	89	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 183	90	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 184	91	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 185	92	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 186	93	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 187	94	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 188	95	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 189	96	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 190	97	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		
" 191	98	WILLIAM GRACE	18	10 Upper Place	W. E. E			66-2 Donald Byrne		

Figure 6: The entry in the burial register for Marie Jeanette Kelly (as she was named), entry number 371201 (folio 120) arrowed.



North-west (SE-NW axis)															
South-west (NE-SW axis)	18-74	18-73	18-72	18-71	18-70	18-69	18-68	18-67	18-66	18-65	18-64	18-63	18-62	18-61	18-60
	17-74	17-73	17-72	17-71	17-70	17-69	17-68	17-67	17-66	17-65	17-64	17-63	17-62	17-61	17-60
	16-74	16-73	16-72	16-71	16-70	16-69	16-68	16-67	16-66	16-65	16-64	16-63	16-62	16-61	16-60
	15-74	15-73	15-72	15-71	15-70	15-69	15-68	15-67	15-66	15-65	15-64	15-63	15-62	15-61	15-60
	14-74	14-73	14-72	14-71	14-70	14-69	14-68	14-67	14-66	14-65	14-64	14-63	14-62	14-61	14-60
South-east (SE-NW axis)															

Figure 8: Schematic diagram showing how the burial plots were laid out.

mourners. Indeed, the registers show that rarely was the same adult plot used twice in succession (children were buried in a different part of the cemetery in large communal plots, often with upwards of 20 burials in each).

In the case of Mary Jane Kelly, plot 16-67 was one of a group of seven plots (16-61 to 16-67) which were being worked together in rotation (Figure 8). It took twenty days to fill these seven plots, following which plots 17-61 to 17-67 were opened up and filled within nineteen days.

Each plot within this section of the cemetery was used multiple times. Kelly was one of six buried in plot 16-67 (from the bottom up these are Thomas McMahon, aged 36; Johanna Regan, aged 28; Elle Callaghan, aged 50; Catherine O'Brian, aged 70; Daniel Lynch, aged 60; and lastly Kelly). However, the number of burials within each plot varied: plot 16-66, for example, was used just four times; while plot 15-65 was used seven times. There is no obvious apparent reason why some were used more and others less. It may have been linked to the depth they could dig, water-logging in plots, or the number of burials that took place in coffins rather than shrouds.

What is perhaps slightly unusual about Mary Jane Kelly is that she was buried in the same plot as the previous person to be buried (Daniel Lynch). That said, the previous burial was two days earlier, on Saturday 17th November – there being no burials on Sundays. Curiously, although they must have dug open some if not all of plots 17-61 to 17-67 prior to Kelly's burial, since plots 17-61 and 17-62 were both used on 14th November (five days before Kelly was buried), and plots 17-63 and 17-64 were both first used on the day following Kelly's burial (20th November), it was decided to bury her in 16-67. This meant that plot 16-67 could be filled in and sealed off immediately after her burial rather than leaving it open, as in the case of the newly dug grave plots in row 17 which would remain open for some days to come. Given the notoriety of the burial, the cemetery may have, and with good reason, wanted to fill in and cover over the grave as soon as possible.

In the absence of a map of the original 19th-century plot layout, the exact location of plot 16-67 is impossible

to determine, since it is not known precisely (a) where the digging of plots began and finished along each of the two axes, nor, (b) if the size of the plots was evenly distributed. Thus, only an approximation of the location of 16-67 can be made.

Burial registers show that there were 1,960 grave plots in the original 19th century communal burial area in which Mary Jane Kelly was buried (i.e. 98 rows each containing 20 plots), with row 1 to the north-east and row 98 to the south-west as explained above. Official regulations accompanying the Burial Laws amendment act of 1880, required that 'grave spaces for persons above twelve years of age be nine feet (2.74m) long and four feet (1.22m) wide' – this being the space taken up by the coffin and enough additional space around the burial to separate it from neighbouring grave spaces (Cunningham & Cunningham 1881, 355). This allows us to calculate a hypothetical burial area 882 ft long (NE-SW) and 80 ft wide (SE-NW), or 268.83m by 24.38m.

However, cartographic evidence from the late 19th century (25" Ordnance Survey maps of 1870 and 1897), and surviving 19th-century features within the present cemetery layout (i.e. family plots dating to the late 19th century which still mark the north-western edge of the communal burial area), show a maximum nominal burial area of c.280m by c.19m (Figure 9 overleaf) – an area both longer and narrower than official regulations dictate. This would suggest that the grave plots were much narrower than the required 4ft, closer in reality to 3ft (0.91m) in width, otherwise a row of 20 graves would not physically fit into the available space. This allows us to generate a possible location on the SE-NW axis.

Mary Jane Kelly was buried in plot 16, which is, therefore, theoretically between 14.56 and 15.47m north-west of the cemetery's boundary (assuming an even plot width of 3ft or 0.91m). However, a line of mature trees inside the modern cemetery boundary (probably a historic hedge line predating the cemetery), the fact that the boundary itself is not straight, and the possibility of graves not being of uniform width and spacing, adds a degree of uncertainty to the precise start of the burial row

and the position of individual plots within the row. It is therefore felt that a minimum error of  $\pm 1$  grave plot must be employed in all calculations (i.e. an area taking in the grave and its eight immediate neighbours, nine plots in all). Taking this into account, this means that plot 16 could be anywhere between 13.65m and 16.38m north-west of the boundary.

Resolving the grave's location on the NE-SW axis is more problematic. On the ground, the maximum available length of the burial area is longer than the hypothetical length of 98 rows of 9ft (2.74m) graves by at least c.11m (c.280m rather than c.269m), and at its northern end, where the rows start, the boundary tapers making it impossible to establish precisely where row 1 should begin. Working backwards from row 98 in the south-west has better possibilities, as maps suggest that this end of the burial area was more squared. In theory, row 67 should be thirty-one rows or, assuming each row is the regulation length, between 84.94m and 87.68m from the south-western end of the burial area. Again, because of the imprecision in locating the south-western end of the burial area, and not knowing the spacing between each row, a minimum error of  $\pm 1$  grave must be added, meaning row 67 could be anywhere between 82.2m and 90.42m

north-east of the boundary. Using these calculations, a hypothetical search area of 22.44 sq m (8.22m x 2.73m) can be proposed (Grave Area 1 - Figure 9).

However, this assumes that each grave plot is the regulation length. As it has already been established that the plots are much narrower than the required 4ft, their length cannot be taken for granted either, and it is possible that the graves are much shorter. Further complicating the calculations is the fact that grave plots appear to have been dug en masse, possibly as long trenches one plot wide and seven rows long (as discussed above). This makes it impossible to know how much space was used for, and between, each grave row.

Still, it is safe to assume that at a minimum, a grave must be long enough to accommodate the coffin being buried in it, and that in a communal burial area such as this a grave must be large enough to accommodate a variety of coffin lengths. By the late 19th century, adult-sized coffins came in stock measurements. Using the coffin choice in the catalogue of Ingall, Parsons, Clive & Co. (est. 1888), one of the leading coffin manufacturers of the period, it can be established that stock sizes ranged from 5ft up to 6½ft in length (Mytum 2015, table 12). Therefore, the grave (at a minimum) must be 6½ft or 1.98m long. Recalculating

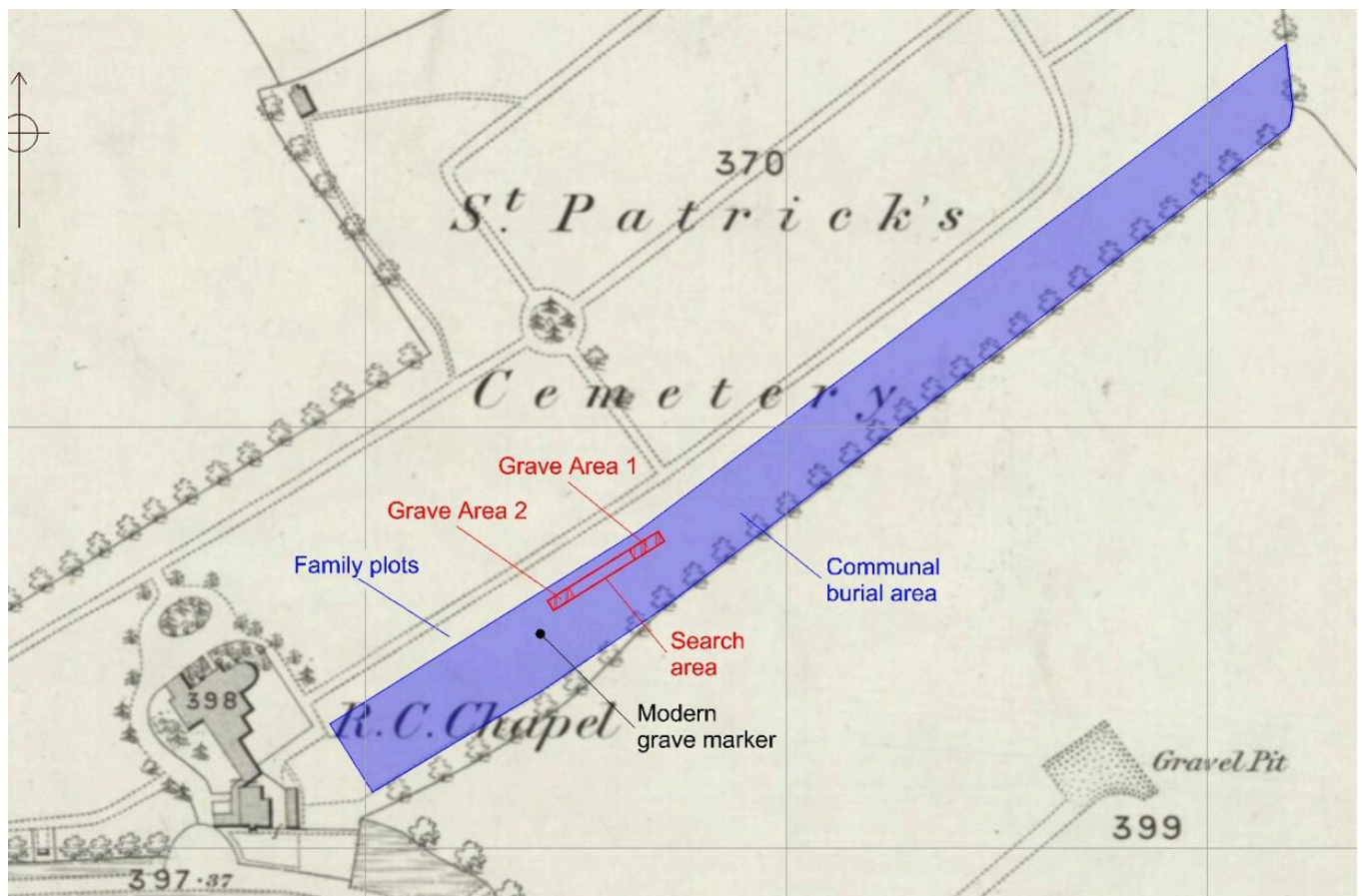


Figure 9: Plan showing the communal burial area (blue) and two hypothetical locations for Mary Jane Kelly's grave (red), marked on the 1st edition 25" Ordnance Survey map (published 1870).



the grave position on the NE-SW axis, using these figures establishes a grave plot between 61.38m and 63.36m from the south-western end of the burial area, or between 59.4m and 65.34m with the added error of  $\pm 1$  grave (Grave Area 2 – 16.22 sq m, 5.94m x 2.73m, Figure 9).

Neither area overlaps the other, and herein lies the problem with these calculations. There are too many variables which cannot be reliably accounted for – including the size of individual grave plots, the spacing between each plot, the starting point of each row and so on. Thus, it is impossible to know which calculation provides the more accurate grave location, if either. Instead, what these areas do represent are the minimum and maximum dimensions of a hypothetical search area, which encompasses both areas as well as the space between them. With the added error of  $\pm 1$  grave, this calculates to a search area 31.02m long and 2.73m wide (84.68 sq m) – it should be noted that the present grave marker does not lie within this area, although it is nearby (Figure 9).

If either of the two grave areas is targeted as the likely location of Mary Jane Kelly's final resting place, one would most likely have to excavate an area encompassing a minimum of 9 grave plots (depending on their size and position in relation to the search area). If both areas are targeted, this would amount to 18 grave plots. However, it is more likely that the entire search area will need to be investigated, an area encompassing anywhere up to 48 grave plots. Examining an area this size is the only way of possibly locating Kelly's remains.

Therefore, because of this uncertainty, one might have to exhume anything between 45 and 240 sets of remains from the 19th-century burial layout in order to find Mary Jane Kelly (assuming an average of 5 individuals per grave spread across a search range of 9 to 48 grave plots). This of course, depends on how far down it is decided to dig. Whilst Kelly appears to have been buried at the top of her grave, being the last person of six interred in it, it is likely that many of the burials in these plots would have over time collapsed down on top of each other as coffins rotted. As such, it is impossible to give a precise figure to the number of burials that might need exhuming. As already noted, the number of individuals buried within each plot is not constant, so the exact number will vary according to which plots the search area happens to centre on, which can only be determined retrospectively.

To further complicate matters, the cemetery started reusing this communal grave area following the Second World War. The rows of headstones and plots that can be seen today relate to this 1947 reorganisation. However, it is impossible to say with any precision how the 1940s layout relates to the original 19th century layout. It may

have followed the same layout, but equally it may not have. This problem is compounded by the fact that a revised numbering system was used after the reorganisation. Although the new layout uses broadly the same axes as the old, the numbering is reversed so that plot 01- 01 today is located by the back entrance to the chapel or rest with numbers increasing as they go north- east and south-east. Hence, why the modern grave marker commemorating Mary Jane Kelly is in plot 10-22 in the post-1947 numbering system.

Further confusion arises from the fact that these grave markers have been 'tidied-up' in recent years to improve access for grass cutting, and it is no longer known if they accurately represent grave locations (John Sears pers. comm. May 2016). Earthworks in the communal grave area, showing where ground has settled into graves, appear to relate to 20th-century plots and not the underlying 19th-century layout, but without digging a sample trench, and therefore disturbing remains, it is impossible to determine the extent to which the two systems overlay and/or overlap one another, or the extent to which the post-1947 graves have dug through the 19th century graves.

Today, ground in this part of the cemetery is raised some c.0.4-0.6m above the adjacent path and 19th- century family plots to the north-west. As no records appear to exist for what happened when the area was reclaimed in 1947, it is unclear whether this is built-up soil from 19th-century grave digging, soil imported during the 1947 groundwork, or the build-up of soil from 20th-century grave digging, or a combination of the three. It is also unknown whether groundwork in 1947 simply cleared grave markers to make way for new burials or whether a programme of disinterment of older graves also took place.

What is known is that each of the 20th-century plots appears to contain between one and three burials in a mixture of family and communal graves. So, if we assume a similar number of 20th-century plots exist in the grave/ search area, there could be between 9 and 144 individuals buried in the late 1940s and 1950s, on top of the potential 45 to 250 individuals buried in the 19th century. This means it might be necessary to exhume anywhere between 54 and 394 individuals, any of whom could be Mary Jane Kelly.

It is also impossible to determine, without excavation, the extent to which the newer 20th-century graves dig down into the earlier 19th-century ones, potentially disturbing and/or destroying earlier burials. In this context, it is important to remember that Kelly was buried at the top of her grave. With five individuals below her, it is unlikely that the top of her coffin was more than a

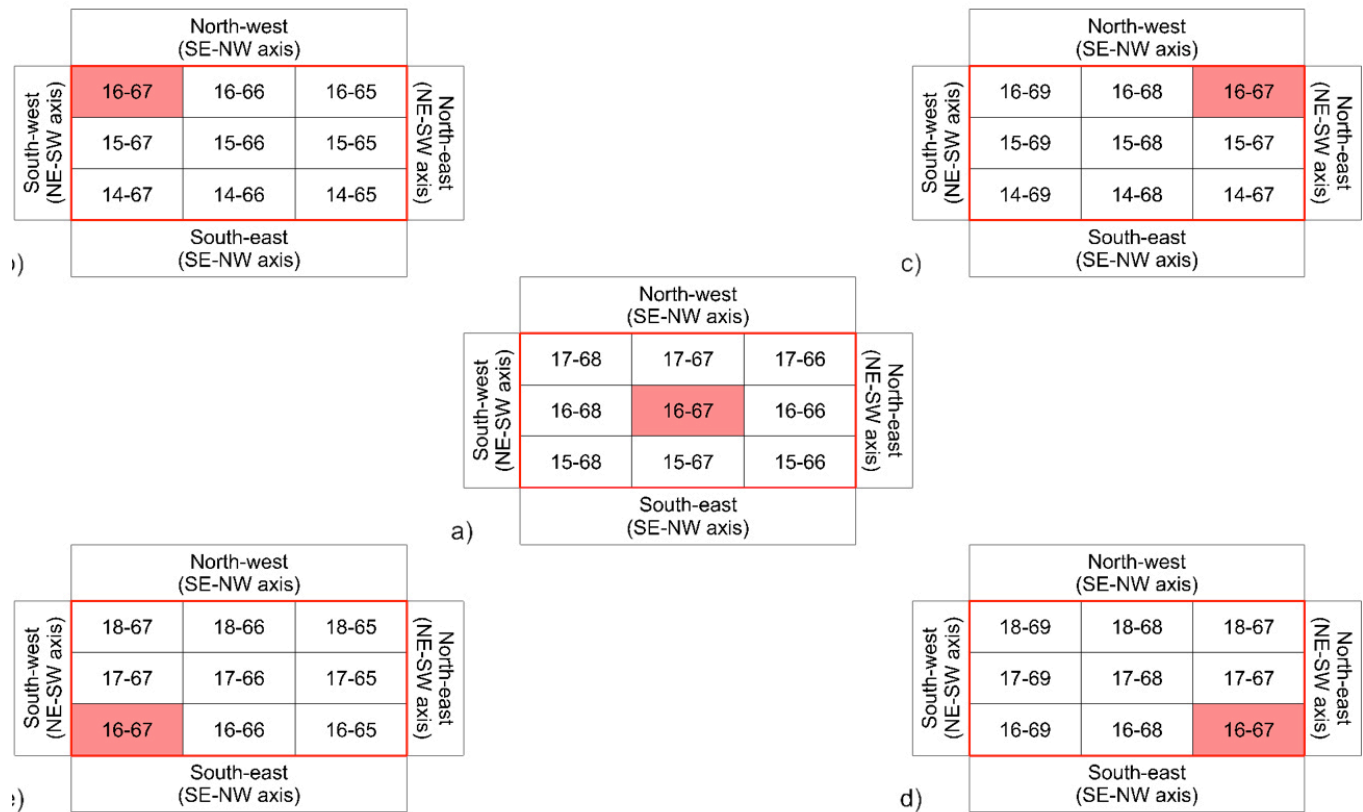


Figure 10: Schematic plans showing how grave plots in the search area could change depending on the location of plot 16-67 in relation to the search area.

few feet (c.0.6m) below ground level, the grave probably being close to 12-14ft (3.66-4.27m) deep to accommodate the six burials with enough room at the top to securely backfill it. As each of the 20th-century graves is likely to be at least 6-8ft (1.83-2.44m) deep, to accommodate up to three burials, it is very likely that Kelly's grave has been disturbed or destroyed by more recent grave digging.

These calculations assume that, at a minimum, Plot 16-67 might be in the centre of either Grave Area 1 or Grave Area 2 (encompassing rows 15 through 17 on the SE-NW axis and rows 66 through 68 on the NE-SW axis – Figure 10a), but equally, depending on the margin of error, it could lie anywhere on the periphery (Figure 10b-e). This expands the range of plots with the potential to be in the search area to rows 14 through 18 on the SE-NW axis and rows 65 through 69 on the NE-SW axis, a total of 25 graves containing a varying, and therefore unknown, number of individuals. If both grave areas are looked at, this potential doubles to 50 graves; and if the entire search area is investigated (hypothetically encompassing rows 14 through 18 on the SE-NW axis and rows 52 through 82 on the NE-SW axis if the minimum grave size is used), the search could impact on anywhere up to 155 grave plots.

Because plot 16-67 cannot be precisely located, it is impossible to determine in advance who the other 53 to 393 individuals may be. One could make a reasonable

estimation if one assumes that plot 16-67 is in fact in the centre of the hypothetical area to be examined, but given the lack of any certainty as to how this area relates to the 19th and 20th-century grave plots, it means that these 53 to 393 sets of remains could potentially be those of some 149 to 1,239 named individuals in the burial records. Given that all these 149- 1,239 individuals were buried either in the 1880s/early 1890s or the late 1940s/1950s it probably would be possible to trace current-day relatives for most. Yet such a large-scale exercise would most likely take years of genealogical research, they would all probably have to give their consent to any exhumation, and all being said, there is still no guarantee that Mary Jane Kelly is buried in this hypothetical search area.

This calculation also assumes that plot 16-67 falls completely within the grave/search area. If it lies on the periphery, partially outside the search area numbers increase to a potential 95 to 543 individuals who might potentially be disturbed, who could be any of 293 to 1,847 named individuals. It is, therefore, extremely doubtful that an application to exhume human remains in this area of the cemetery would be successful.

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

In short:

- If sufficient DNA were available, testing of



the remains of Mary Jane Kelly would allow for a comparison to be made between those remains and Wynne Weston-Davies in order to determine if the genetic data is consistent with them being related as suggested.

- There is no compelling evidence that Mary Jane Kelly and Elizabeth West Davies are the same individual.
- Ground conditions in the cemetery do not appear to be favourable for the good preservation of coffin material or human remains. Any skeletal remains that survive are likely to be in poor condition which will affect the DNA quality.
- Most coffin plates will likely be of tinplate and will no longer be legible.
- It is impossible to accurately locate Mary Jane Kelly's grave (plot 16-67) using surviving cemetery records.
- Hypothetical grave areas can be generated by reconstructing the 19th-century burial layout from burial registers and historic Ordnance Survey mapping. These move and change in size, depending on the dimensions of the grave plot used in the calculation.
- The modern grave marker does not lie within any of the search areas.
- The search area could contain anywhere between 45 and 240 sets of remains from the 19th-century burial layout.
- Between 9 and 44 additional burials relating to the 20th-century burial layout may be present in the search area.
- In total, between 54 and 394 individuals may be buried in the search area, of whom Mary Jane Kelly may be one.
- The other 53 to 393 sets of remains could potentially be those of some 149 to 1,239 named individuals.
- It is very likely that Mary Jane Kelly's grave has been disturbed or destroyed by later grave digging.
- Genealogical research could take years to trace present-day relatives for the 149 to 1,239 potential individuals, all of whom would have to give their consent to any exhumation.
- All said, there is still no guarantee that Mary Jane Kelly is buried in the search area.

## CONCLUSION

Today, with modern documentation and advances in forensic science, particularly the use of DNA, it can be hoped that successful identification of the unknown recently deceased is a relatively straightforward process. But how easy is it to identify the ancient dead? Mary Jane Kelly, the subject of this project, only died a little under 130 years ago. One might assume, therefore, that identifying her remains would be simple. Her burial is

almost within living memory and extensive archives of genealogical information, census data, burial records, coroners' reports, newspaper articles, oral histories, even photographs all exist from her time; material that could be invaluable to any forensic analysis. Yet even with this wealth of information at our fingertips, as this research has concluded, being able to get the written record and any archaeological evidence to correspond in order to convincingly identify her remains, something which is critical for the DNA analysis, is likely to be an impossible task.

As information presently stands, a successful search would require a herculean effort that would likely take years of research, would be prohibitively costly and would cause unwarranted disturbance to an unknown number of individuals buried in a cemetery that is still in daily use, with no guarantee of success. As such, it is extremely unlikely that any application for an exhumation licence would be granted. The simple fact is, successfully naming someone in the historical record only happens in the most exceptional of cases. Most human remains found during excavations remain stubbornly, and forever, anonymous and this must also be the fate of Mary Jane Kelly.

## ADDENDUM – FEBRUARY 2017

Subsequent to Version 1 of this report being written in May 2016, a ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey was carried out in the cemetery in June 2016. This was undertaken independent of the project by Sandberg LLP for Mr Mason Cardiff, who commissioned the work and has kindly supplied a copy of the results to the Research Team (Sandberg LLP 2016). A summary is provided below.

The GPR survey examined an c.8m square with the modern grave marker for Marie Jeanette Kelly at its centre. Whilst this does not alter the findings of the Project's research, which has concluded that the grave marker is wrongly positioned, its results provide a useful insight into the level of disturbance in this area of the cemetery.

The maximum GPR signal penetration achieved below ground was about 1.6-1.7m, and the survey detected reflection patterns consistent with graves and burials (i.e. reflection hyperbolas from caskets and areas of multiple reflections indicative of ground disturbed by previous excavation), mostly in a depth range of 0.5- 1.5m below the ground. In plan, these areas of disturbance are rectilinear and appear to form four rows of graves which are comparable with the post-1947 cemetery layout (i.e. they appear to match up with extant headstones). No evidence for earlier 19th-century graves can be identified.

What is clear from the survey, is that from present ground level down to 1-1.5m, soil is extensively disturbed by graves dug post-1947. It is currently unknown if

deeper portions of earlier graves survive below this zone of disturbance. In theory, original 19th century graves should extend much deeper than 1.5m and a GPR survey with deeper signal penetration might be able to detect them, but this could be moot. Mary Jane Kelly was the last of six burials to be interred in her grave plot. The top of her coffin, therefore, may be as shallow as c.0.5-0.6m below the ground, putting her remains in the zone of post-1947 disturbance as revealed by the survey. If this survey data is consistent across the communal burial area, it supports the conclusion of the Research Team that it is unlikely that her remains survive intact, and that in all probability they have been entirely destroyed.

## REPORT HISTORY

Version 1 of this report was completed by the research team in May 2016 and submitted to Patricia Cornwell in June 2016. Subsequently, the University of Leicester, with Patricia Cornwell's permission, has made the report available to the public. This is Version 2, completed by the research team in February 2017. Changes in Version 2 are the inclusion of more detailed background material and the re-ordering of the report structure to provide more context for the general reader, and expanded discussion on the location of Mary Jane Kelly's grave. Otherwise, the research results and the conclusions of the project remain the same.

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FROM THE ARCHIVES

# DORSET STREET REVISITED

**The murder of Mary Kelly is seen by some as perhaps the most important in the series, and certainly Dr Thomas Bond, Sir Robert Anderson and Sir Melville Macnaghten voiced their opinion that this was the last by Jack the Ripper. It was the only one committed indoors, of course, and in the article which follows (first published in *Ripperologist* 97, November 2008) we take a look at the scene of the crime.**



## THE MURDER OF MARY KELLY IN WHITECHAPEL.

Dorset street, lying almost under the shadow of Spitalfields Church, is a short street, composed largely of common lodging houses, in one of which Annie Chapman, a previous victim, used sometimes to lodge. About half way down this street on the right hand side is Miller's court, the entrance to which is a narrow arched passage, and within a few yards of which, by the way, there loomed grimly through the murky air a partly torn down bill announcing a reward of £100 for the discovery of the murderer on the last occasion.

There are six two roomed houses in Miller's court, all of them owned by a grocer, whose shop in Dorset street forms one corner of the entrance to the court. The houses are let out in separate rooms 'furnished' – that is to say, there are in each of them a bed and a table, and, perhaps, one or two odds and ends. For these rooms rents are supposed to be paid daily, but of course they will sometimes get a good deal in arrears. This was the case with one of the tenants, who had occupied a ground floor room on the right-hand side of the court for about twelve months. This was the poor young woman, Mary Kelly, the victim of the murderer familiarly called 'Jack the Ripper'.<sup>1</sup>

Of all the murder sites, Miller's Court was arguably the most unsavoury in reputation – which, when one considers the competition in the area, is quite a dubious accolade.

The narrow entrance to Miller's Court was situated between No. 26 and No. 27 Dorset Street, a short thoroughfare which ran west to east from Crispin Street to Commercial Street.

It was lined by old, brick-built properties mainly dating from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, most of which were crumbling and fit only for demolition, as were many of the residents. Nos. 26 and 27 were built some time after 1709, although the exact date is not known, but the architecture would suggest that it was built somewhat later in the 18th century.

The eastern entrance to Dorset Street was almost directly opposite the famous Christ Church, or more accurately the disused graveyard of the church, known affectionately as 'Itchy Park', which was used by vagrants to doss in when they could find nowhere else. The western end of Dorset Street was exactly opposite the Providence Row Night Refuge and Convent, which stood at No. 50 Crispin Street. Tradition alleges that Mary Kelly stayed here for a while, although there is no evidence to support it.

Dorset Street was originally called 'Datchett Street', which over time became corrupted to 'Dorset Street', and in the 17th century the whole area was pasture land covered by footpaths. When the landowners closed the footpaths they built the road that was later to become Dorset Street.<sup>2</sup> It was officially given the name 'Dorset Street' on 22nd November 1867, although it had been known by that name for some time, and its reputation was already established as the place you didn't want to visit if you were attached to your pocket watch.

Much of the area around Dorset Street, and certainly most of the street itself, was run by small-time crooks and 'bullies', in the form of slum landlords like John McCarthy and Alfred Coates.

1 *Penny Illustrated Paper*, November 17th 1888.

2 Paul Begg, *Definitive History* p290.



DORSET STREET

Alfred Coates, for instance, had a common lodging-house in Flower and Dean Street, Dorset Street's main rival for the 'Worst-kept street of the year' award. In addition to his shops, John McCarthy was also the landlord of the properties in Miller's Court – these being referred to as 'McCarthy's Rents' in some newspapers. He also owned the lodging-house at No. 30. It's not certain whether or not these rival slum landlords got along together in business, although it's probable they presented a united front against the authorities, covering each other's back if needed – just as was the case in the East End in the 20th century, when the Krays would co-operate with other gangsters in the area, in an uncomfortable and mistrustful alliance simply for the sake of self-preservation. McCarthy and the other slum landlords were hardly in competition with each other, in the sense that there were far more weary bodies to occupy their doss houses than they could possibly ever accommodate.

Whether Dorset Street deserved its reputation as 'The Worst Street in London', it was certainly one of the most dangerous and notorious streets in the area. The *Daily News* of November 10th 1888 reported that the lodging-houses there housed 'mainly thieves and some of the most degraded women'. Dorset Street and the surrounding streets were often referred to as 'Tiger Bay' because of

its notorious reputation, and the vicious nature of its residents.<sup>3</sup>

Rev. Samuel Barnett, who spent many years trying to educate the local poor in the virtues of righteous living, called the area the 'wicked quarter-mile', and Charles Booth, when constructing his poverty map in 1887, designated the area 'black' – the lowest of his ratings – describing it, justifiably, as 'vicious and semi-criminal'.

That's not to say that the entire population of the area were Hellbound; many of the locals were simple, decent folk who were just trying to make a life of some kind, living on subsistence wages and making the best of a very bad lot, but there was certainly a predominance of those on the wrong side of the law.

Inspector Walter Dew wrote in his memoirs that one of the worst problems in the area was the presence of organized gangs, who extorted money from prostitutes, demanded protection money, and generally made life difficult for the authorities and locals alike.

East Ender Arthur Harding, reflecting back on his life in the area at that time, wrote:

3 Ed Fisher, 'Bluegate Fields' [article by reader of [www.victorianlondon.org](http://www.victorianlondon.org)]



Dorset Street had an even worse reputation than Flowery Dean Street. That's where Jack the Ripper done some of his murders. We just used to call it 'the street'. There was such a large number of doss-houses there that they called it 'Dossier's Street' and they abbreviated it again just to 'the street' which is what we called it. There were doss-houses on one side, furnished rooms on the other. McCarthy owned all the furnished rooms down there. He was an Irishman, a bully and a rough guy. Marie Lloyd used to see him, because there was a pub round the corner she used to go to. All his daughters were in show business on account of Marie Lloyd. They had plenty of money. McCarthy lived down there..."<sup>4</sup>

In the Victorian era the word 'bully' did not necessarily mean someone that beat up people smaller than themselves or intimidated weaker individuals, although many of them probably did, quite often and with some enthusiasm. The Victorian dictionary on [viclondon.org](http://viclondon.org) gives this definition of it:

Bully: a cowardly blustering fellow, pretended husband to a bawd or prostitute.

A wider definition in general use by the lower classes was someone who ran a brothel, or some other disreputable establishment. The slum landlords of Dorset Street generally fitted the bill.

An article in the *Daily Mail* of July 16th 1901 ran a report confirming that, even a decade or more later, Dorset Street was still deserving of the title 'The Worst Street in London'. It gave the account under the subheading: 'Where Our Criminals Are Trained':

The lodging-houses of Dorset Street and of the district around are the head centres of the shifting criminal population of London. Of course, the aristocrats of crime – the forger, the counterfeiter, and the like do not come here. In Dorset Street we find more largely the common thief, the pickpocket, the area meak, the man who robs with violence, and the unconvicted murderer. The police have a theory, it seems, that it is better to let these people congregate together in one mass where they can be easily be found than to scatter them abroad. And Dorset Street certainly serves the purpose of a police trap.

Dorset Street fell within H Division of the Metropolitan Police, and was one of the streets that was allegedly double-patrolled to protect the bobbies on the beat, who were reportedly sometimes set upon and beaten if they dared to venture out on their own. Inspector Walter Dew, who admittedly was not renowned for understating things, wrote:

A single constable would have been lucky to reach the other end unscathed.

The fact is, there is at least one report of a constable walking down the street on his own, so he was either an outstandingly brave/foolhardy individual, or as with many of the reminiscences in Dew's memoirs, a little poetic license was used.

For much of the time, residents would hang about in the streets, overspilling from the pubs and music halls that lined the pavements, waiting to get a doss for the night. Most of their lives would have been spent outdoors, as many of the lodging-houses would not allow residents in until a certain time and would throw them out again very sharply in the early morning. Some would be on the streets trying to earn money for the doss, either gambling,<sup>5</sup> or in the cases of the women, prostituting themselves – taking their clients to one of the numerous alleys that ran off Dorset Street, for a fourpenny 'knee-trembler' – fourpence being the price of a night's doss.

The street was well-lit from the vast number of lights over the doors of the numerous lodging-houses until about 2.00am, by which time most of the area had either gone home for the night or found a bed in one of the lodging houses.<sup>6</sup> Then the street would quieten down for a few hours, and the only people left on the streets were those who could find no lodging or who were on their way to or from work.

The vast majority of the buildings in Dorset Street were common lodging-houses, both registered and unregistered, which could hold as many as 1,200 men and women on any one night.<sup>7</sup> The large, once-luxurious buildings, designed for the wealthy silk-weavers and their families or for prosperous merchants, were ideal for housing several hundred desperate individuals on any one night.

It was far too easy for any enterprising soul with a few spare pounds to start a lodging-house in the East End in the 1880s. Furniture could be bought for a pittance, as long as they bought only furniture that was completely unsaleable otherwise. Furniture, for instance, that was bought from the Small Pox Hospital at King's Cross when it was pulled down, provided enough furniture for four lodging-houses. Small Pox no extra charge.<sup>8</sup>

4 Raphael Samuel (1981) *East End Underworld: Chapters in the Life of Arthur Harding*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul p100.

5 *Daily Telegraph*, November 10th 1888.

6 *The Scotsman*, November 10th 1888.

7 *East London Observer*, November 10th 1888.

8 *London Labour and the London Poor; 1851, 1861-2*; Henry Mayhew.



*Dorset Street 1901, showing Crossingham's lodging house  
(with arched entrance)*

Deputies were appointed to run these lodging-houses, and they acted as managers, running them as they saw fit. As long as the landlord received a good return, they were left to their own devices. It's quite certain that most, if not all of them, were skimming money from the landlord's takings, and it's also quite certain that the landlords knew they were; but as long as they didn't get greedy, then they would turn a blind eye, as any deputy they appointed would be sure to do the same.

Deputies could be male or female, or a couple, legally married or otherwise, and it was quite a cushy number for them, with many little perks.

These deputies were paid between 7 and 15 shillings a week each, depending on how much they had to do to keep the houses running, which was a good wage considering they also got free bed and board thrown in.

Some of the deputies were decent enough and did their jobs conscientiously, while others allowed more or less anything to go on under their roof for a cut of the takings. This included prostitution and the fencing of stolen goods.

Their job required that they inspect the bedrooms, especially at night, to make sure that nothing untoward was going on, or if it was that they got a share of it; to see there was no trouble, and to keep the place clean.

The better of the lodging-houses would not admit anyone after midnight, and none later than 1.00am,

unless they knew them well. There were exceptions to this where weekly tickets could be bought, such as the Victoria Working Men's Home, and then the residents could come and go as they pleased at any hour.

The police would go into the property regularly to make sure that they were being run properly, and inspectors would be sent to make sure that they were abiding by the Common Lodging Act of 1851, which had certain regulations that were to be followed. The authorities certainly turned a blind eye to much that went on there, simply because there was no possible way to prosecute all of the offenders, which probably amounted to 97 percent of the local population. It is also certain that at least some of the police officers on the beat were taking bribes to look the other way. In reality, the whole lodging-house scheme had a solid foundation of corruption that permeated through every facet of the operation.

The average takings of a lodging-house would be between 17s 6d and 20s a night, but when one considers that many of the lodging houses had 400 beds, at fourpence a time, and were almost always full up, it's not hard to work out that a great deal of money could be made by some of the larger lodging-house proprietors. Landlords like McCarthy and Crossingham were raking money in from many sources.

The newspapers at the time of the Whitechapel murders reported that the lodging-house owned by William Crossingham, which was directly opposite the entrance to Miller's Court, was the one at which Annie Chapman stayed regularly and which she was evicted from on the night of her murder, but in fact the Crossingham's opposite Mary Kelly's room was Nos. 16-19 and accommodated some 300 persons, being fully occupied every night.<sup>9</sup> The Crossingham's at 35 Dorset Street was on the same side of the road as Miller's Court, closer to Little Paternoster Row.

Other known lodging-houses at the time were Nos. 9, 10, 11-12 and 28-29. In all, around 750 beds were officially provided in Dorset Street, but in reality half that number again would be lodging there, especially when the weather was too cold to sleep in the open air. Most of the properties that were not registered lodging-houses were rented out to families on a room-by-room basis, with as many as ten people sleeping in one small room.

There were very few legitimate businesses in the street, as evidenced by the *Post Office Directory* of 1888, and those there were solely catered for the needs of the local population of dossers and slum tenants. To all intents and purposes, this meant filling their bellies with cheap cooked food and rot-gut alcohol or beer, and

<sup>9</sup> *Times*, November 10th, 1888.





*Entrance to Miller's Court in 1928, just prior to demolition, with McCarthy's shop to the left of the alleyway*

providing them with some entertainment while they were consuming it.

In addition to the Britannia pub on the corner of Dorset Street and Commercial Street, there was also the Blue Coat Boy at No. 32, run by William James Turner, and just over the road from Dorset Street was the notorious Ten Bells, which it was said Mary often frequented.

Grocery shops were sited at Nos. 7 and 36, run by Barnett Price and Alfred Coates respectively. Shopping in Dorset Street was a risky venture in its own right, as

hygiene was hardly high on the shopowner's list of priorities. If a pork pie dropped on the floor, and it didn't get snaffled by a passing dog, it was brushed down and put back on the counter. Waste not, want not. Most of the residents of the street would hardly have been bothered anyway, as the alternative was starving to death.

Because of the absence of freezers and refrigerators, shopping had to be done not just on a daily basis, but often several times a day. The grocers in Dorset Street would have expected to see the local women, particularly, in their shops every day if not more to purchase not just food, but such things as candles, and firewood. People would generally shop at the grocers nearest their houses, and for the most part the women of Miller's Court would have used McCarthy's Chandler's shop at No. 27, and therefore have been well known to him.

Most grocers, if not all, would have allowed credit to certain customers. Having items 'on tick' was a way of life for most East Enders at the time, as there were invariably days when they had no money for food, and if the shop owners knew them well and knew they could be trusted to pay the money when they were able, they would allow them some items on credit. Mary Kelly was known to be considerably in arrears with her rent, and it's more than likely that she owed money in McCarthy's shop as well.

John McCarthy lived in the rooms above the shop with his wife Elizabeth, and their children John Jr, Margaret and Elizabeth. His brother, Daniel, also lived with them until 1890, when he took over the grocer's shop at No. 36, presumably from Alfred Coates. Although the premises of Nos. 26 and 27 were large, with several rooms upstairs in each property, McCarthy and his family were hardly living in the lap of luxury.

There was a coal dealer, Miss Jane Brooks, at No. 39,

although it is uncertain when she started in business, providing the other necessity for those living in the cramped and often damp rooms that were let out in places like Miller's Court. Coal was relatively cheap at the time; the transport system allowing for plentiful supplies to be delivered to London. The coal dust and smaller lumps of coal was within the budget of most families, although it would be used sparingly. A penn'orth of nutty slack went a long way in those days.

The Brooks family was resident at No. 39 in or before 1881, so it is possible that they were operating there as early as that date, but were just not registered in a directory before then.

There is little evidence of other businesses being conducted from Dorset Street in the 1880s, but in the 1890s there were two milk contractors listed at Nos. 13A and 14A run by William Wright and Amos Payne. There were also several stables along the street.<sup>10</sup>

The Britannia public house was also known as 'Mother Ringer's' – hardly surprisingly as it was owned by 'Mother' Matilda Ringer, who was said to do a great deal of good

work in the neighbourhood. It was demolished in 1928 to make room for the expansion of Spitalfields Market.

This was one of the public houses where Mary Kelly was allegedly seen drinking in company with a man shortly before her murder. John McCarthy was reported to have said that at 11.00pm on the Thursday night, Mary was seen in the Britannia with a young man with a dark moustache. She was drunk. The young man appeared to be very respectable and well-dressed.

The Horn of Plenty stood on the opposite end of Dorset Street, on the north corner of Crispin Street and Dorset Street. Its address was No. 5 Crispin Street, and in 1888 the proprietor was Christopher Bowen. Again, there was probably an uneasy alliance between the various pub landlords, who, although in competition with each other, would still need to support one another to survive in business. For instance, if a beer delivery was late, then a landlord would often borrow a barrel of beer from one of the other pubs. Mutual co-operation was a necessity.

10 *East London Observer*, November 10th 1888.

*The Horn of Plenty on the corner of Dorset and Crispin Streets, with the Providence Row Night Refuge on the left*







There were two small courts leading off Dorset Street, Miller's Court and New Court, which was about midway along Dorset Street, between Nos. 33 and 34. Both were similar in character, and allegedly of an even lower class than those that frequented the lodging-houses. It was reported in at least one newspaper that 'the lowest class of unfortunates. Immorality is carried on in these houses, openly and with impunity'.<sup>11</sup>

These courts seem to have been built to try and alleviate the district's dire housing situation some time around the 1850s, although the exact date has never been ascertained. The name 'Miller's Court' is first mentioned in the census of 1861, when No. 26 Dorset Street was occupied by a glass-blower named Abraham Barnett. There is a mention of 'Miller's Rents' in Spitalfields situated in exactly the right place in an 1851 directory, so it is possible that it was built as early as 1850. There were only three houses there at that time, though, and not the six that were there in 1888.

The plot of land occupied by Miller's Court would once have been the back yards of Nos. 26 and 27 Dorset Street, at least in part, as the houses were built a considerable time before the court was.

The *Daily Mail* of July 16th 1901 reported:

The lodging-houses are bad, but they are the best side of a bad street. They at least have certain official inspection, and a certain minimum amount of sanitation and decency is there secured. But the furnished rooms so-called are infinitely worse.

Farming furnished rooms is exceedingly profitable business. You take seven or eight-roomed houses at a rent of 10s or 11s a week, you place on each door a padlock, and in each room you put a minimum amount of the oldest furniture to be found in the worst second-hand dealers' in the slums. The fittings of the average furnished room are not worth more than a few shillings. Then you let the rooms out to any comers for 10d or 1s a night. No questions asked. They pay the rent, you hand them the key. If by the next night they have not their 10d or 1s, again ready you go round and chuck them out and let a new-comer in.

Miller's Court was approached from Dorset Street via an unlit flagged passage that ran under an arch, little more than a yard wide and about twenty feet long. According to one newspaper:

A big man walking through it would bend his head and turn sideways to keep his shoulders from rubbing against the dirty bricks.<sup>12</sup>

A very big man indeed, if he needed to do an impression of a crab to get through a three-foot wide tunnel, but allowing for hyperbole here, it was a narrow passage and certainly it would have been very difficult for two people to pass each other going through it.

<sup>11</sup> *East London Observer*, November 10th 1888.

<sup>12</sup> *Evening Star*, November 10th 1888.

Roughly half-way down this passage, on the right hand side, was an entrance and staircase leading to the top floor of No. 26, and then a little further down on the right-hand side the door that led to Mary's room.<sup>13</sup>

Directly opposite the entrance to Miller's Court was Crossingham's lodging house at Nos. 16-19, which was fully occupied on the night of the murder, and which had people standing around outside most of the time – although all residents were usually required to be in their beds by midnight or 1.00am at the very latest, which would mean that anyone who was going to stay there that night would already be indoors at the time of Mary's murder. The gas light outside was extinguished at around 3.00am.

There was another well-frequented lodging-house next door to McCarthy's, at 28-29, that was within a yard or two of the entrance to the court; although again, as busy as it was, all the residents would have been tucked in for the night by 2.00am.

Lighting in the court was patchy. There was a gas wall lamp directly opposite the door to Mary's room, which was alight until around 4.00am, the light from which was thrown nearly on to the passage and which would certainly have thrown light on Mary's door.<sup>14</sup> However, the rest of the court would have been in darkness, apart from any meagre candlelight filtering from the windows of the houses.

In 1888, Miller's Court had four units on the left (the last not being used as accommodation, although it's uncertain what it was used for), and three on the right. These were whitewashed to the level of the first floor, to

help alleviate the dampness, and the windows had green shutters, which would have been closed at night to stave off the cold and for extra security.<sup>15</sup>

The six occupied houses in Miller's Court were divided into upstairs and downstairs rooms, thereby making twelve residences in the court rather than six, which is why Mary's room was designated number 13 – although strictly speaking it was not part of Miller's Court, but the back of No. 26 Dorset Street.

Numbering started with No. 1, downstairs on the left, with No. 2 above it, running down the left side and back up on the right so that No. 12 was upstairs, thus making Mary Kelly's room No. 13.

Downstairs room 1: Julia Venturney

Upstairs room 2: Mrs Keyler. Visiting her that night was Sarah Lewis

Downstairs room 3: Man engaged as a market porter (*Daily Telegraph*)

Downstairs room 5: Mary Ann Cox

Downstairs room 7: John Clark

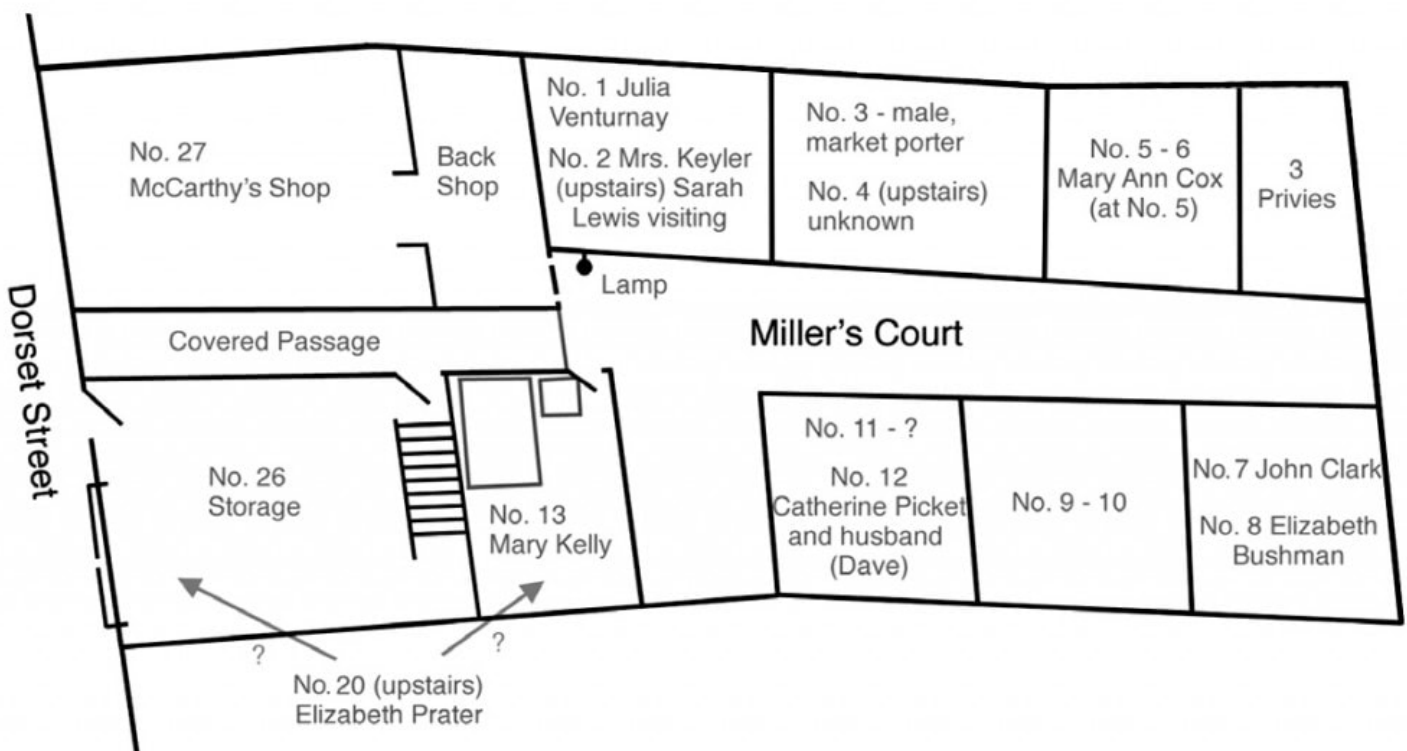
Upstairs room 8: Elizabeth Bushman

Somewhere above Mary's room was No. 20 of 26 Dorset Street, although it's never been worked out how it came to be numbered thus, or where it was exactly. The *Daily Telegraph* of November 10th 1888 reports that there were

<sup>13</sup> According to the *Daily Telegraph*, November 10th 1888, No. 26 had seven rooms.

<sup>14</sup> *The Scotsman* November 10th 1888.

<sup>15</sup> *Daily Telegraph* November 10th 1888.





seven rooms in No. 26, which would mean that there were quite a few rooms upstairs. A woman called Elizabeth Prater lived there at the time of the murder, along with her kitten Diddles.

There were three toilets at the far end of the court for the residents to use, as the houses had no internal plumbing.<sup>16</sup> At night, the residents would use a chamber pot or bucket to perform their ablutions, which they would take in the morning and empty down the toilet. It's hard to imagine what sort of state these toilets would have been in, and probably best not to think about it.

Water for washing and cooking would be obtained from the pump, which was directly outside Mary's window. The dustbins were also located there. This is possibly one of the better reasons for discounting a daytime murder for Mary, as the pump yard would have been quite busy from about 5.00am onwards with people going to get water. The fact that the pump was literally outside Mary's window is rather disquieting, as quite a few people would have been getting their morning water supply, not realising that just a few feet away lay the terribly mutilated body of Mary Kelly.



*Police photograph of Kelly's room, taken on the day of her murder*

The houses in the court were mainly let out to women, according to the *Daily Telegraph* of November 10th 1888. Many of these women were prostitutes, although not all of them by any means. There were married women and families living in the court as well, but the newspapers of the day strongly suggested that many of the women

engaged in prostitution and hinted that they did not really swallow the line that McCarthy didn't know what was going on:

Mr. McCarthy, the proprietor of this shop, has no hesitation in avowing his knowledge that all his six houses were tenanted by women of a certain class. They were let out in separate rooms 'furnished,' that is to say, there is in each of them a bed and a table, and, perhaps, one or two odds and ends, all of the roughest and most trumpery description, since if any of the things had any appreciable value in the market they would be certain to disappear. For these rooms rents are supposed to be paid daily, but of course they will sometimes get a good deal in arrears.<sup>17</sup>

It seems unlikely that McCarthy wasn't aware that many of the women in the court were engaged in prostitution, as they would have used his shop constantly. He would have seen them going in and out of the court, and could hardly have been unaware of some of their nocturnal activities. Of course, he would have had to deny knowledge, as each count of allowing a premises to be used for immoral purposes carried a mandatory sentence of one month with hard labour. He may not have been taking part of their earnings, but it seems very likely that he was happy to take the rent without asking too many questions.

No. 13 would originally have been either the kitchen/scullery of No. 26, or at least a back parlour, which was partitioned off at some time to make it into a self-contained room for letting. Looking at the crime scene photograph, the partition was made up of old bits and pieces of wood, possibly retrieved from slum dwellings in the area as they were demolished to make way for the new model dwellings. One of the pieces of partition, at least, looks as if it once served as a door. The rent on the room was 4s 6d per week, which was 2d a week cheaper than buying a double bed in a doss house.

The deplorable state of Mary's damp and squalid room was typical of such properties, and little was done by the landlords to improve the lot of the tenants. The fact that McCarthy was apparently unable to locate a spare key when required is not unlikely, as the attention he paid to the properties was hardly conscientious, judging by the state they were in. His approach to repairs seems to be quite in keeping with the general attitude of landlords at the time:

Some landlords do repair their tenants' rooms. Why, cert'nly. Here is a sketch of one and of the repairs we saw the same day. Rent, 4s a week; condition

16 *Whitechapel Board of Works Annual Report* for 1878.

17 *Daily News*, November 10th, 1888.

indescribable. But notice the repairs: a bit of a box lid nailed across a hole in the wall big enough for a man's head to go through, a nail knocked into a window frame beneath which still comes in a little fresh air, and a strip of new paper on a corner of the wall. You can't see the new paper because it is not up. The lady of the rooms holds it in her hand. The rent collector has just left it for her to put up herself. Its value, at a rough guess, is threepence. This landlord has executed repairs. Items: one piece of a broken soap-box, one yard and a-half of paper, and one nail. And for these repairs he has raised the rent of the room threepence a week.<sup>18</sup>

Some newspapers at the time reported that the front of No. 26 was a 'shed', which McCarthy allowed the homeless to use as a doss on occasion. This suggestion has been largely discredited by photographs of the front of No. 26, taken in the 1920s, as it would seem that the frontage at that time was an ordinary house with no access for barrows, making it impossible to be a storage shed. However, one contemporary newspaper sketch shows the frontage of No. 26 with boarding across it, which seems to be the entrance to a shed, making the story more viable than had been previously thought.<sup>19</sup> Presumably this would mean that the front had been rebuilt at some time between 1888 and when the photograph was taken by Leonard Matters in the late 1920s.

Mary's room was approximately 12ft square, although some reports say that it was 12x10ft; either way, it was extremely small and cramped, and was certainly damp and unsanitary.

Opposite the door was a small fireplace, and on the right-hand side of that a low cupboard, which contained a small amount of crockery and some stale bread; pathetic reminders of just how poor Mary was. There were also some empty ginger-beer bottles.

On the left of the door were two windows, one of which had a couple of broken panes stuffed with rags. One broken pane was close enough to the door to be able to reach through it and unbolt the door from inside, when the only key to the door was lost.

The meagre furniture in Mary's room consisted of a small delapidated washstand, two chairs – one of which had a broken back – and two old wooden tables.

To the right of the door one of the tables was so close that the door would bang into it when opened. Against the make-shift partition wall was a bed, with the headboard against the door wall. Over the fire place there was a cheap print entitled 'The Fisherman's widow'. There has been much discussion about which version of the painting this was. Some have suggested that it might have been a cheap black and white print of the painting by Frank Bramley,

which was first exhibited in 1888. It's also not known whether the print was part of the original furnishings, or whether Mary or Joe might have bought it to brighten up the miserable room a little.

The door to the room was fitted with a spring lock. This meant that the door could be locked with a key from the outside, but once inside a catch could be dropped to lock the door securely. If the catch was pushed in, then the door could be left 'on the jar' – that is unlocked – so that it could just be pushed open from outside.

It's likely that the door would be left 'on the jar' for much of the time, as there was very little in the room worth stealing, and especially after the key of the door was lost it would have been far easier to leave it on the latch than to keep putting an arm through the window to unbolt the door from the inside. If Mary was only popping to a neighbour's or to a local shop, it's very likely she would not have dropped the latch, but just left it 'on the jar'.



One of the last people to see Miller's Court standing was Leonard Matters, who gives this account in his book, *The Mystery of Jack the Ripper*:

What Dorset Street was like seventy years ago can only be imagined from an inspection of the district today and a walk through narrow lanes and byways leading off Commercial Street and Brick Lane. Duval Street itself is undergoing change, and the buildings on the left-hand side going east have nearly all been torn down to make room for extensions to Spitalfields Market.

At the time of my first visit to the neighbourhood most of the houses on the left-hand side of the street were unoccupied, and some were being demolished. The house in which Kelly was murdered was closed, save for one front room still occupied by a dreadful-looking slattern who came out of Miller's Court into the sunlight and blinked at me.

18 *How the Poor Live*, by George R. Sims, 1883, Preface, Chapter 1.

19 *Scotland Yard Investigates*, Stewart P. Evans and Don Rumbelow, p. 181.



When she saw me focus my camera to get a picture of the front of the house, the old hag swore at me, and shuffled away down the passage.

I took what is probably the last photograph of the house to be secured by anybody, for three days later Miller's Court and the dilapidated buildings on either side of it were nothing but a heap of bricks and mortar. The housebreakers had completely demolished the crumbling wreck of the slum dwelling in which 'Jack the Ripper' committed his last crime!

Miller's Court, when I saw it, was nothing but a stone flagged passage between two houses, the upper stories of which united and so formed an arch over the entrance. Over this arch there was an iron plate bearing the legend, 'Miller's Court.' The passage was three feet wide and about twenty feet long, and at the end of it there was a small paved yard, about fifteen feet square. Abutting on this yard, or 'court', was the small back room in which the woman Kelly was killed – a dirty, damp and dismal hovel, with boarded-up windows and a padlocked door as though the place had not been occupied since the crime was committed.

But the strange thing was that nobody in the neighbourhood seemed to know the history of Miller's Court...

It is quite hard to trace the residents of No. 13 Miller's Court after Mary's death. The *Birmingham Daily Post*, July 18th 1889 ran the following story:

It is a somewhat curious coincidence that the room in the court in Dorset Street where Mary Jane Kelly was murdered and mutilated on 9th November last, remained empty until Saturday last when it was let to a new tenant, whom the news of the last crime has quite unnerved.

Considering the date of the article, the 'last crime' mentioned refers to the death of Alice McKenzie in Castle Alley.

The 1891 census shows the following persons being resident at 13 Miller's Court:

Head: Thomas Kelly aged 35, born Spitalfields.  
Waterside labourer

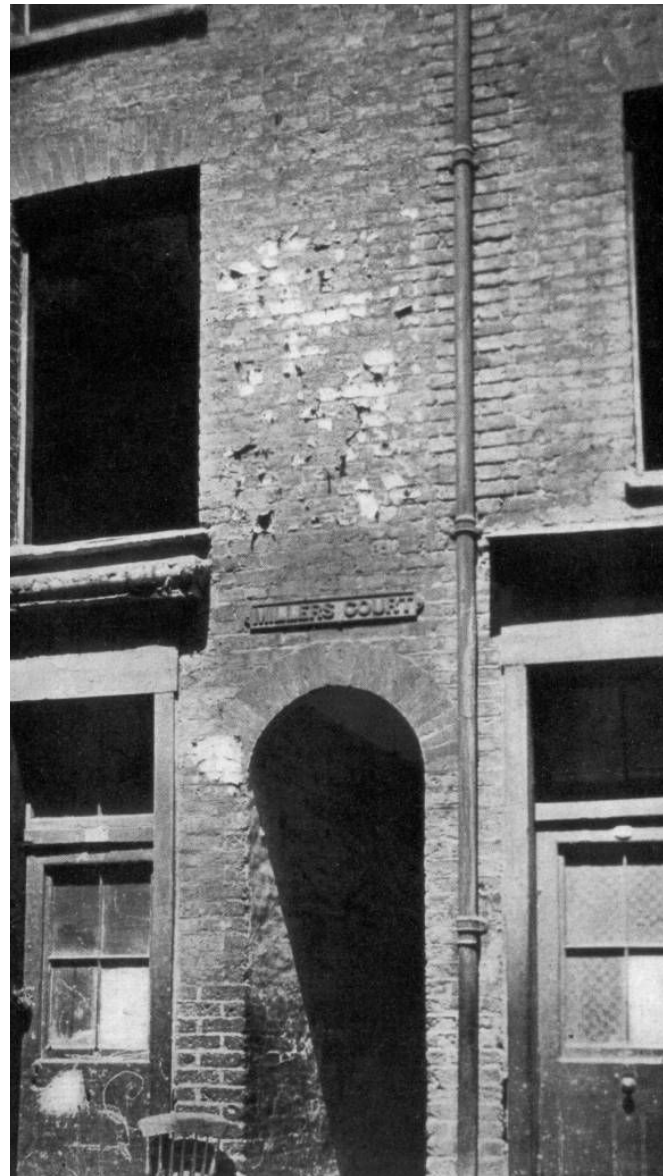
Wife: Ann Kelly, born Ireland

Head: Elizabeth Harper (Widow) aged 39, born Wapping. Needlewoman

Brother: James Harper aged 42, born Finsbury.  
Firewood bundle maker

Head: Mary A Clark (Widow) aged 49, born Lancashire. Laundress

Son: Charles Clark aged 13, born Hornsey



*Leonard Matters' photograph of the entrance to Miller's Court*

The problem here is that it's impossible for that many people to have been living in a room the size of No. 13. True, overcrowding was rife at the time, and whole families did live in one room, but here we have what would appear to be three different families, and to suggest that they all shared that small room that was only large enough to accommodate one bed is not really tenable.

One possible explanation is that they were not all living in that one room, but in other rooms of No. 26, or were in other houses in the court and there was just a mistake with the census.

Elizabeth Prater's old room was renumbered 12 at some time between Mary's murder and 1909. There has been lengthy debate about which room she actually occupied. The press reports generally seem to favour No. 20 being directly above Mary's room, although at least one detailed report states that Elizabeth said that she lived 'over the shed' at the front of the building. The *Telegraph* of 10th

November 1888 stated that Prater occupied the front room of the building, and that a couple lived in the room directly above No. 13, reporting that they slept soundly throughout the night and heard nothing. There seems to be a good argument for both sides of the debate, and at the moment the question has to be labeled 'unresolved'.

Since the death of Mary Kelly there were other murders in Dorset Street, one of them in the room that was formally rented by Elizabeth Prater.

In 1909 Kitty Ronan was found in bed with her throat cut. It was alleged that Kitty was a prostitute, and – like Mary Jane Kelly – her murderer was never found. John McCarthy was still the landlord of the property, and this suggests that McCarthy was either incredibly naive, or he was well aware that prostitutes were using his properties for immoral purposes.



**GHASTLY MURDER IN SPITALFIELDS.**  
A BRIGHT YOUNG GIRL CRUELLY DONE TO DEATH.

The *Illustrated Police News* made the most of this murder, and published this account on July 10th 1909:

Several neighbours ran upstairs and found the girl lying in bed with a terrible gash in her throat. The room of the tragedy was the top apartment of a two-roomed house. There was about half a dozen white walled houses in the court and the opposite houses are only a few feet apart. Two doors away, on the right-hand side near the entrance, is the house in which one of the last 'Jack the Ripper' murders was committed. Andrew Stevens, a 17-year-old market porter, who went into the house when the discovery was made told the following story. "I was standing out in the street opposite the court about five minutes to twelve last night and I saw Kitty come down the street with a strange man, pass up the court and enter her

house. About 12.20am I saw him come down the court again. He looked round sharply once or twice and the walked briskly up to Commercial Street. From what I remember of him he struck me as being a man of military appearance or perhaps a sailor; but he was well set up.... he had a moustache and was wearing a dark suit and a dark cloth cap. When I went upstairs I saw Kitty was lying in bed fully-clothed. There was blood on the bedclothes.

The room did not appear to have been disturbed in any way and there were no signs as if there has been a struggle. It looked to me as if she had been strangled first, and then her throat cut afterwards. On the floor I saw an ugly looking knife with blood on the it. It was a pocket knife but the blade was a thin one. I should think it was about three and a half inches long. The point of the knife was about half an inch in length. At the time of the crime the court was quite deserted. You can hear everything in the ordinary way, but nobody heard a sound or a scream.

The only sound was the footfalls of the man coming out of the court. One of the neighbours I believe heard the sound of footsteps coming down the stairs, but nothing else."

Dorset Street was renamed Duval Street on 28th June 1904, according to Walter Dew because of the notoriety it earned over the murder of Mary Kelly – but if that is the case, the council certainly took their time in doing it.



*The demolition of Miller's Court, 1928*

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# NEVILL SWANSON

16 November 1937 – 11 July 2020

## A REMEMBRANCE BY ADAM WOOD

**We were saddened to learn of the death in July of Nevill Swanson, great grandson of Chief Inspector Donald Sutherland Swanson and custodian of the so-called 'Swanson marginalia' in which the retired detective revealed the fate and identity of Jack the Ripper. Below, Executive Editor Adam Wood, who liaised with the Swanson family extensively while researching his book on Donald Swanson, gives his memories of Nevill.**



How quickly time passes. It only seems months ago that I began work on an article for *Ripperologist* on the history of the Swanson marginalia, a follow-up to my similar in-depth piece on the Macnaghten memorandum. Yet it was the summer of 2012. After getting in touch with researcher Keith Skinner to quiz him over his own research into the marginalia, Keith surprised me by asking whether I would like to be put in touch with the Swanson family to see whether they might help with the article. Needless to say, after exchanging emails with Nevill Swanson we arranged to meet for lunch. Luckily, it turned out that we lived relatively close to each other and Nevill suggested meeting at a certain pub in the Cotswold countryside; he'd never been, but it had been recommended by his daughter Liz. We met at the train station at Kingham, which turned out to be a good half-hour walk along a country road from the pub. It was so narrow that we had to walk in single file – not the ideal way to start what I hope to be a fruitful meeting! But within a few minutes of settling in the otherwise empty pub Nevill showed me his father's copy of Paul Begg's *The Uncensored Facts*, which had been marked with vertical lines in red felt pen, identical to those seen in Donald Swanson's marginalia. Although he didn't realise it, Nevill had solved that particular mystery over a ham and mustard baguette.

And I soon learned that was how it was with Nevill – very down-to-earth and matter of fact.

He had taken over the mantle of custodian of the family archive from his father Jim, who first revealed the existence of the marginalia first in 1981 and then 1987, when it was published for the first time in the *Daily Telegraph*. Luckily for me, the family had recently decided to collate every document, photograph and surviving personal item related to Donald Swanson with a view to a potential sale. While I was working on the article, therefore, I was extremely fortunate to have unlimited access to this treasure trove of material. It didn't take me long to realise there was more, so much more, to Donald Swanson than the marginalia and his work on the Ripper case. This was why Jim Swanson had campaigned so long and hard – the story of a magnificent career which deserved to be told. When I next met Nevill (over a curry – he liked his food), I asked whether the family would be ok with me writing a book on their famous ancestor. Nevill deadpanned: "We can't stop you." But the truth was that

I greatly valued his input, along with the rest of the family, and I think Nevill enjoyed helping out and offering insights, all the while seeing widespread recognition of his great-grandfather's exploits getting closer.

And part of that journey resulted in a permanent reminder of Donald's career when Alan McIvor, historian at Swanson's hometown of Thurso in the far north of Scotland, invited Nevill and myself up to unveil a memorial stone to Donald's memory. The event was reported on BBC News Scotland, and we were interviewed for the segment. Long before my book was eventually published, Donald Swanson's name had become known across the country of his birth.



*Nevill Swanson with Adam Wood at the unveiling of the memorial to Donald Swanson at Thurso*

Yet it's Nevill's down-to-earth personality and dry sense of humour which I remember most on our journey to getting the book in print. On the morning of the memorial unveiling we met for breakfast, suited-and-booted. "Bloody Hell, you scrub up well," he remarked. And agreeing to meet author Neil Bell and myself to show us the pistol presented to his great-grandfather after one particular case had been solved, Nevill calmly placed the gun on the pub table we were sitting at and carried on chatting in between mouthfuls of a cheese and onion sandwich. He was a genial, entertaining man. I'll miss him.



Nevill Alexander James Swanson – 'Nev' – was born on 16 November 1937 and educated at King's School Canterbury and St Edmund Hall, Oxford, subsequently following a career in international sales and marketing of metals and chemicals. Aside from putting the nation's press right on the identity of the Whitechapel murderer, his interests included cricket and good ale. Following a long illness he passed away on 11 July 2020. The funeral took place on 30 July 2020 at the Vale Crematorium, Pershore. Having been pre-deceased by wife Angela, he is survived by his children James, Duncan and Liz.

# CENTRAL NEWS

## DEATH AT EDMONTON WORKHOUSE

By BRUCE COLLIE

**The Edmonton Workhouse and Infirmary, situated at Tanners End, opened their gates in January 1842. It had been designed to accommodate 500 men, women and children. The main work assigned to the inmates was the breaking up of granite rocks. The material was used for road building, and as London grew in all directions, so did demand. This created pressure to deliver, and there are examples in the press of cruelty on the part of the work supervisors with regard to the already overworked and poorly-fed occupants. Some of the poorest in the city refused to return to the workhouse, and subsequently died of starvation. It was into this environment that the gates of Edmonton opened, forty-five years later, for Mary Ann Nichols.**

The women who entered the workhouse had a sad tale to tell, often of deprivation, illness and abuse. One such was Fanny Church. It was on Tuesday, 8th January 1907 that the inquest into her death opened, as recounted in the following article which appeared in the *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette* two days later:

### **SERIOUS CHARGE AGAINST A TOTTENHAM PAINTER**

At Edmonton Workhouse an inquest was held into the assault on Fanny Church aged 37, whose husband a painter, of Tottenham, is in custody on a charge of maliciously wounding her with an iron footstand.

The principal witness was the son of the parties, aged 13, who stated that he saw his father strike his mother on the head with the stand, which he held in both hands. The woman was removed unconscious to Tottenham Hospital, suffering from a fracture of the skull and jaw.

The inquest was postponed awaiting medical evidence. The attack had been perpetrated on 27th October the previous year and the husband, Frederick Church, had been in custody ever since. He had previously been before

the magistrates twelve times for assaulting his wife; the last time he was sent to prison for stabbing her in the neck. She would spend six weeks in Tottenham hospital, and seemed to be making a recovery. Dr Renton confirmed that "she was an intelligent woman, and during the last two weeks in the hospital had been about the ward daily, sewing and doing duties". On 6th December she was moved to the Edmonton Workhouse Infirmary. Fanny was eight months pregnant at the time.

The inquest resumed at Edmonton Workhouse on Monday, 14th January:

### **LET ME DIE**

Detective Sergeant Tupper, stationed at St Ann's Road police station, stated that he was present at the Edmonton Infirmary on December 28th, where a statement was made in the presence of Mr W.D. Cornish, a Justice of the Peace. She was first asked if she was in fear of death, and she replied that she was.

### **DECEASED'S DYING STATEMENT.**

The statement was as follows – "I Fanny Church, having the fear of death, and being without hope of recovery, hereby make the following statement: I resided at 48 Cornwall Road Tottenham. My husband struck me with a hobbing foot in the boy's bedroom at 3.30am. I was not asleep. He has always been a terror to me, and stabbed me once, and always been a wretch and cruel man. I don't wish to live. Let me die. What I have previously told the officer is perfectly true. I know what I am talking about."

Detective Tupper said that "she was unable to sign the statement, which was read over to her". The prisoner stated that "he wanted to contradict that statement; it is the other way around". He produced a postcard that had been sent to him from the hospital, stating that his wife had recovered.<sup>1</sup>

1 *Tottenham and Edmonton Weekly Herald*, 18th January 1907.





Fanny would pass away just three days later, on New Year's Eve. When she was transferred from the hospital to the workhouse, the ambulance and blankets within had been used to move some sick children earlier in the day. It was later found that she had contracted scarlet fever from the infected materials. While at Edmonton Workhouse she had given birth to a son.

Medical evidence was provided by Dr Wilcox of St. Mary's Hospital, who was scientific analyst to the Home Office. After describing the various injuries, he discussed the condition of the main organs. He found each had microbes present, proving that the deceased suffered from blood poisoning. He concluded, however, that the cause of death was meningitis, caused by the blow to the head and not the scarlet fever that had been contracted from the ambulance. It had been disinfected later in the day, but too late for the deceased. The Coroner found no neglect on the part of the Workhouse, as it had been rectified as soon as it had become known. Dr Wilcox could find no issues with the treatment she had received from the Tottenham hospital either, stating that operating on her would not have only have put her life at risk, but also that of her unborn child.

After a short break the Jury returned a verdict that death was caused by the blow to the head, inflicted by the husband. This now meant that the charge was changed to one of wilful murder, and Frederick Church would be tried in the Central Court at the Old Bailey.

On 30th January 1907, at the Central Criminal Court, the case of wilful murder was heard against Frederick Church. The judge was Mr Justice Kennedy. Prior to the

start of the trial, proceedings were halted due to the following incident.

#### **JUROR AND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT**

Addressing his Lordship, a Juror said: "My Lord, I don't wish to shrink my duty as a Juror or citizen. I am willing to serve on other Jury if you will kindly allow me to be excused in this case. May I give my Reason?" The Judge: "It would be better." The Juror: "Well my Lord, I do not believe in capital punishment." The Judge: "Then it would be better for you to leave the box." Another Juror: "If everyone was asked his views as to Capital Punishment, no doubt the same method of getting excused would be adopted." The Judge: "If I am told by a person that he has a conscientious objection to capital punishment, it is obviously undesirable in my mind that such a person should serve on the Jury." The juror was excused and another sworn in.<sup>2</sup>

The trial began.

#### **THE EDMONTON TRAGEDY HUSBAND ON TRIAL FOR HIS WIFE'S DEATH**

Mr Charles Mathews was prosecuting for the Treasury and Mr Percival Clarke defending the prisoner Frederick Church, who had pleaded Not Guilty. Mr Mathews, in stating the facts to the Jury, said that the case was a remarkable one, and he did not propose to offer any evidence on the serious charge. He believed that it could not be proved to the Jury without doubt what had led to the death of the deceased, and it could only be speculated upon. It could have been the blow

2 *Morning Post*, 31st January 1907.



to the head, the fever or natural causes. The Judge agreed with this course which the learned council proposed. The Jury returned a verdict of Not Guilty on the charge of murder. Prisoner was then indicted for causing grievous bodily harm; to this he pleaded Not Guilty. A witness, a neighbour called Mr Harman, went in response to the cries he had heard. The prisoner threatened him with the same, and shouted "You saved her once but you are too late this time". The prisoner's thirteen-year-old son and eleven-year-old daughter both gave evidence through tears, and this also effected Frederick Church. Miss Harman stated that "Mrs Church had been so scared of Mr Church that she hadn't slept for over a week." There were rumours of the prisoner's jealousy of another neighbour, a Mr Aylott, however these seem to have been unfounded, and a figment of the prisoner's imagination.

#### PLEA OF INSANITY

Mr Clarke, addressing the jury for the Defence, said the question was not to whether the prisoner had struck his wife, but as to whether he was in such a state of mind to be responsible for his actions. It was revealed that he had at one time been detained in a lunatic asylum, his actions on certain occasions being very strange. He had been found wandering about the streets and had attempted suicide in the past. However, nothing had been done to help him, or to protect his wife. Mr Clarke believed that he could not be made responsible for his actions at the time of the attack. Dr Scott of Brixton Prison was called,

the prisoner had been under his observation since October of the previous year. He stated that although Church, at the time he committed the act, was able to appreciate the nature of the attack, he was not able to appreciate the quality of the act. The Prosecution and the Defence addressed the Jury, and Judge Justice Kennedy summed up.

The Jury found Frederick Church Guilty of causing grievous bodily harm, and added that he was insane at the time. The Judge sentenced him to be detained in Brixton Prison until His Majesty's pleasure be known.<sup>3</sup>

The newborn son of Fanny Church would also pass away at Edmonton Workhouse, before his father had been sentenced. The following year, in 1908, also at Edmonton Workhouse, the life of one Edward John Nichols would also come to an end. He was the eldest son of Mary Ann Nichols, and was forty years of age – the same age as Fredrick Church when he was sentenced.

3 *Leicester Daily Post*, 31st January 1907.



**BRUCE COLLIE** is an administrator on a number of Facebook groups debating the Whitechapel murders case and police history in general. He has been interested in Victorian crime and policing for several years, and enjoys combing the Nineteenth century press for reports of interesting crimes and their investigation, and various photographic archives for rarely-seen images relating to Victorian crime. Bruce has assisted authors, television reporters and journalists with research for books, programmes and newspaper articles.



# THE RESCUE OF AMEER BEN ALI

By NINA and HOWARD BROWN

**In the last issue, along with the photograph of Ameer Ben Ali, an article was transcribed which featured a prominent stage actor proclaiming he had been told by Ali's court interpreter that Ali had confessed to being in the same room as murder victim Carrie Brown and inferred that he had committed the heinous crime.**

Whether Ali stated that he committed the crime is irrelevant, since he didn't murder Carrie Brown. He didn't have the key which was necessary to lock the door to Room 31. Within days, a handful of people associated with the real killer's employer knew that and it would not be until a decade had passed that this miscarriage of justice would be resolved, resulting in the pardon and exoneration of the Algerian. There were three efforts towards pardoning Ali; one following the sentencing, another in 1897, and finally in 1901.

The proof of his innocence all along was the key to Room 31 at the East River Hotel being taken by the killer and left by the same at the residence of his then employer, 51-year-old George Damon of Cranford, New Jersey.

Damon was the proprietor of a printing firm at 44 Beekman Street, Manhattan, which was not far from the Brown murder site. Damon was a pillar of his community in Cranford, situated in Union County 18 miles from Manhattan. In addition to his printing firm, he dabbled in real estate, held patents, and was a member of the Chamber of Commerce. The photo opposite is of the Damon residence as it looked 100 years ago.

There are a few articles already available on JTRForums.com which refer to the activity that ensued after the murder of Carrie Brown, covering the murderer's flight and the build up to Ali's pardon some ten years after the murder. Most are from New York, with a few from other sources in the States.

With that in mind, we thought it might be interesting to share the following article from George Damon's home

town newspaper, the *Cranford Chronicle*. The article previously appeared on June 1st in the *New York Sun*.



## DAMON COMES TO FRENCHY'S AID

*Cranford Chronicle*  
Cranford, New Jersey  
June 4th, 1901

### PUBLICITY'S PET

Truth is stranger than fiction. Nothing that the most ingenious press agent ever devised for the purpose of keeping his employer in the public eye will bear comparison with the actual events which from time to time thrust George Damon into the very focus of popular attention.

Who was the hero of the famous Euchre Row of three or four years ago? George Damon. Whose name is now upon a million lips as the discoverer of the key to Room 31 of the East River Hotel and the key to the Old Shakespeare murder mystery? And echo answers – George Damon.



The *New York Sun* of June 2 had an extraordinary story about the discovery that George Damon has possession of a key that may be of material assistance in clearing Ameer Ben Ali, better known as Frenchy, of the murder of the woman known as Old Shakespeare. The tragedy took place in April 1891. Frenchy was convicted of the crime and sentenced to life imprisonment.

The key comes to light through George Damon, a dealer in printer's materials at 44 Beekman Street [Manhattan], who lives at Cranford, N.J., with the history of its finding and retention at his home on account of an unwillingness to face the publicity of coming forward with it at that time, a belief that "Frenchy was of a character such that he should be in jail anyway, and a fear of the big, ugly Dane,<sup>1</sup> who Mr. Damon believes committed the murder."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Damon says that about a month before the murder of 'Old Shakespeare' on April 23, 1891, having some grading to do at his place in Cranford, he went to Castle Garden and hired a big foreigner whom he knew only as Frank and whom he took to be a Dane. After the grading was finished the Dane was retained as an assistant about the stable and grounds, Mr. Damon's regular man being partly incapacitated by reason of an accident. On the morning of April 24, about 6 o'clock, Damon went out to his stable and not seeing the Dane about asked his other man where Frank was. His man told him that the Dane was upstairs asleep, that he had been out all night and had come home very ugly, and that Mr. Damon would be likely to have trouble if he disturbed him. Mr. Damon therefore didn't disturb him, but came to the city as usual about 8am.

Between five and ten days later,<sup>3</sup> Mr. Damon says, Frank left his employ abruptly. He disappeared in the night and Mr. Damon has never heard of him since. When he came to Mr. Damon's he brought with him only a small bundle

of clothes. When he went away he took this with him. When Mrs. Damon sent one of her maid servants to the barn to clean out the room Frank had occupied, the girl found there a bloody shirt and a brass key, the only articles the Dane had left in the room. The key was attached to a brass tag on which was stamped the number 31. This was the number of the room in which 'Shakespeare' was murdered, and the key to which had been taken away by the man who occupied the room with her.

The newspapers had told all about the missing key. The *Sun* had published a picture of another key belonging to the same hotel just like the missing one.



The maid told Mrs. Damon of the finding of the bloody shirt and the key in the barn room, and remarked that the number on the tag attached to the key was the same as the number of the room in which 'Old Shakespeare' had been murdered. When Mr. Damon came home he was informed of what had been found and the next day when he came to the city he took one of his employees and went around to the saloon hotel where the murder was done and sitting down ordered some cigars. From the table they studied the keys to the other rooms of the hotel hanging on the keyboard and saw that they were like the one found at Cranford.

While they were smoking, a man came downstairs from the hotel and, laying a key down on the bar, went out. Damon and his employee walked up to the bar and

1 This newspaper's description of the Dane doesn't jibe with eyewitness Mary Miniter's description. While both Kelly – the night clerk at the Glenmore Hotel – and Miniter described the man as being 5'8" or 5'9", Miniter described him as being 'thin in build' (see *New York Evening World*, April 25 1891).

2 The most likely reason that Damon didn't come forward was the negative publicity any connection to the East River Hotel murder would generate for himself, being a pillar of the Cranford community, his family, and his business. One article we found concerning Damon had him firing his pistol at some burglars, and another had Damon getting involved in rough-house activity on a ferry. Damon also had male manual laborers on his premises too, so the 'fear' factor seems less believable than the more likely reason of negative publicity that his name and that of his family would have being associated with a murderer of a prostitute in the seamiest part of New York.

3 It seems unlikely that the Danish farmhand left '5-10' days later, as reported in some newspapers. We think it more likely that his departure was immediate (same day, or probably the following morning). As to his seeking a room at the Glenmore Hotel, it doesn't seem likely that he would ask the clerk at the counter for a room on the cuff. Kelly didn't know him, and wouldn't issue a key to an unknown man or woman. If he didn't have any money as he claimed, the issue of how he made it back to New Jersey (one, possibly two ferry rides and a train ride) is presented. We know that the farmhand had a coin purse from the testimony of Mary Miniter. Evidently, he had enough to cover the room, the pail of beer for Brown, and the subsequent escape home.



*The Glenmore Hotel (left), Chatham Square*



ordered some beer, and while there compared the key just laid down with the one they had brought with them and found that the two were exactly alike. Mr. Damon says that his familiarity with type enables him to say that the number '31' on his key was stamped on the brass tag with the same die which had made the numbers on the tag attached to the other key and the numbers also on the rest of the keys hanging up. The two men left the hotel and for reasons already mentioned Mr. Damon refrained from coming forward and informing the authorities of what he had found out. He did tell his discoveries, however, to a friend, John Lee, the well-known contractor and it was partly on Mr. Lee's advice, he says, that he kept his information to himself after that. An affidavit by Mr. Lee saying that Mr. Damon told him of this ten years ago has been sent to Gov. Odell, and there is among the papers also an affidavit by Mr. Damon's employee corroborating Mr. Damon. Brennan works for Damon as a truck man.

Ever since the trial and conviction of 'Frenchy', there has been a wide-spread conviction in this town (NYC) that the Algerian was 'railroaded' to prison as means to stop the public clamor that someone should be punished for the murder. 'Frenchy' has become insane in his imprisonment and is now in the hospital for the criminally insane at Matteawan, where Gov. Odell saw him not long ago.



*Ameer Ben Ali*



The following excerpt from an article published during Ali's trial may give the answer to what happened to the 'Danish farmhand' (In one newspaper, the *Daily People*, he is referred to as a Swede). Personally, we consider the story that the old seaman who came forward told

as being credible. It may also explain the reason why a decade later articles were published which stated that the Danish farmhand/seaman had left for the Orient and that it was known that he had subsequently died. It's not known whether the NYPD investigated the sailor's claims at any point or, for that matter, if Ameer Ben Ali's defense team did either.

*New York Evening World*  
June 25, 1891

### HE KNEW THE RIPPER

A Sailor Who Fled This City in April and Went to China

\*

Mariner Yansen Comes to the Court  
Where Ben Ali is Being Tried

\*

While the lawyers and jurors waited for the opening of court, a gray-haired ancient mariner entered the building inquiring of those he met for lawyer Friend (One of the three attorneys for the defense). He said he believed he had information that would startle the court.

In a quaintly twisted English, the old man said he was Charles Yansen, a Swedish sailor. That he said from this port on the West Indiaman Meridian two days after New York was startled by the discovery that Jack the Ripper, or his close imitator, had been operating in the lowest slums of New York. "I think I can prove the man here is not the Ripper," said Charles Johnson solemnly. (*Note: The beginning of the article states his name as Yansen*)

Then he related that on the Meridian was a young man of medium height, light moustache and tattooed skin, who shipped as a sailor.

(*Note: George Damon picked the 'Danish farmhand' up at Castle Garden in lower Manhattan, the area where recent arrivals and immigrants debarked*).

This young man seemed to know all about the butchery of 'Old Shakespeare', and he said the New York police would never catch him. "I asked him why he thought so and he said he would bet a sovereign that he knew. Then he laughed and said. 'We are outside of the law of the United States now, aren't we?'"

Johnson says that this young man, who answers the description of Carrie Brown's companion of the night of the murder, shipped on a coolie ship at Jamaica, bound for China. He told the story to lawyer Friend and it will be investigated.



NINA and HOWARD BROWN are the proprietors of JTRforums.com.

## PRESS TRAWL

# A CLUE IN GOULSTON STREET

**Few aspects of the Whitechapel murders case are as divisive as the writing on the wall in Goulston Street, both now and on the very night of its discovery. While there's no doubt that the portion of Catherine Eddowes' apron found by PC Long in the passageway of Wentworth Model Dwellings was left there by her killer, was the graffiti found above it related? Here, we present a collection of newspaper reports on the discovery and its ramifications for the Metropolitan and City Police forces.**

*South Wales Echo*

Monday, 1st October 1888.

A woman's apron was yesterday found in Goulston Street which is believed to have belonged to the deceased woman. It is suggested, therefore, that the murderer travelled to Mitre Square, the scene of the second murder, by way of Goulston Street, and took away the apron for the purpose of cleaning his weapon upon it. In the case of both of the murders, the assassin had a very narrow escape from detection. The evidence that is forthcoming establishes the fact that the murderer commenced operations first in Berner Street. Here the crime was committed as nearly as possible at one o'clock, and it is very probable that the man was proceeding to the commission of further outrages when he was disturbed by the arrival of Diemschitz. Having failed in his purpose – which, as in the other cases, appears to have been to secure certain portions of the body – he betook himself towards the city, and in Mitre Court his second victim was done to death. Berner Street, it may be mentioned, is within a stone's throw of Hanbury Street, where Annie Chapman was recently murdered, and adjacent also to Buck's Row, where Mary Ann Nichols met her death, and to Osborne Street, wherein still another of these unfortunates was shamefully mutilated. It lies to the right of Commercial Road, going east, and is about eight minutes' walk from Mitre Square, so that the murderer has confined his operations to a radius of about a quarter of a mile, and it is within that area that the police expect to find him – if, indeed, he be ever found.



*Belfast News-Letter*

Monday, 1st October 1888.

Up to half-past seven this evening the police had no clue except the discovery of the woman's apron, mentioned elsewhere, which apron, by the way, turned out to belong to the woman murdered in Mitre Square, nor had either of the dead persons been identified. A strong opinion is expressed in the neighbourhood tonight that the Government should be appealed to on the question of offering a substantial reward for the discovery of the murderer. This, it is thought, would put the whole of the residents on the alert, and lead them to keep a sharp look-out each upon the doings of his neighbour, and to report to the police any suspicious proceedings. In view of the identification of the apron belonging to the woman murdered in Mitre Square, it appears that the murderer must have gone to his home by way of Goulston Street, and so lives in all probability in the district between Houndsditch and Commercial Street.

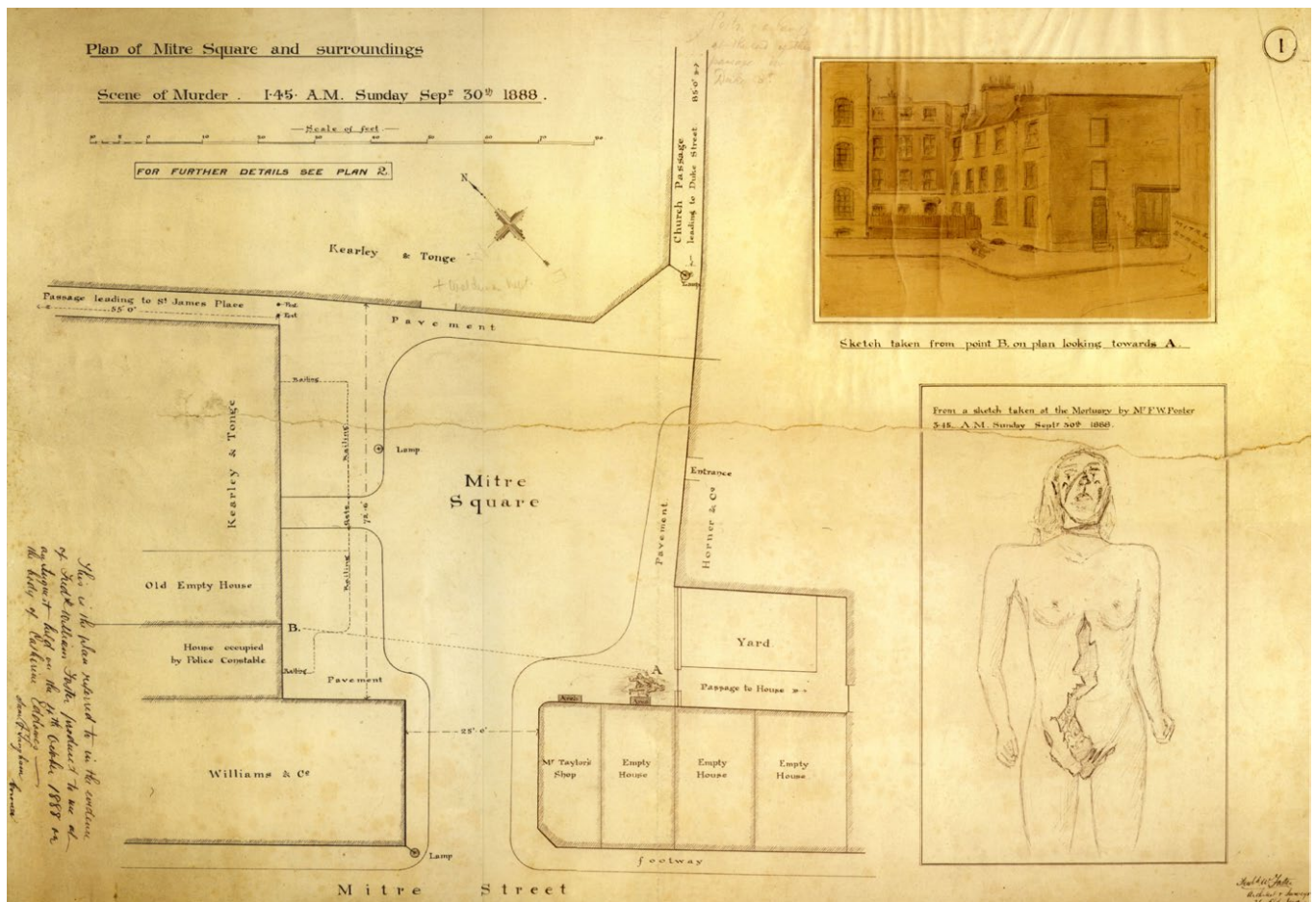


*Suffolk and Essex Free Press*

Wednesday, 3rd October 1888.

The only trace of the murderer's movements after committing the crime in Mitre Square is that afforded by the discovery of a piece of an apron in Goulston Street, just 1,550ft from Mitre Square. The fragment, which corresponds with part of an apron found on the murdered woman, was stained with blood in such a manner as to prove that the murderer wiped his hands with it as he walked away in the direction of Commercial Road East. One theory to the effect that the murderer has two domiciles –





Frederick Foster's diagram of Mitre Square

one to which he can retreat without attracting the notice of other persons in the house, and there removing the traces of his crime; the other his ordinary lodgings, which he could enter at any time without attracting attention.



*London Daily News*  
Friday, 5th October 1888.

### THE ATROCITIES AT THE EAST END INQUEST ON THE MITRE SQUARE VICTIM

Next came Mr. F.W. Foster, architect and surveyor, son of the highly-respected superintendent of the City police, who produced carefully elaborated plans of the scene of the murder. The chief point of interest in his evidence was that which apparently bore on some theory in the mind of the City Solicitor as to the course the assassin had taken after the perpetration of the deed. A person going from Mitre Square to the lodging-house in Flower and Dean Street in which these people had lived would, it was proved, probably go through Goulston Street. In Goulston Street it was subsequently shown that a portion of the woman's apron with marks of blood upon it – blood undoubtedly, but the doctor was unable to say positively

that it was human blood – was picked up. This fact, taken in connection with the City Solicitor's persistent attempt to elicit evidence as to the entrance of a person into the lodging-house between one and two, clearly indicated a conviction, or at least a suspicion, that the criminal, whoever he was, had gone from the square through Goulston Street to the lodging-house. It will of course occur to everybody to ask how in such a case could the murderer have got rid of the blood upon him.

*Huddersfield Daily Examiner*  
Saturday, 6th October 1888

### THE MITRE SQUARE MURDER

Dr. Gordon Brown, surgeon to the City of London police, described the results of his examination of the body. The woman, when he first saw the body, had been dead only a few minutes – certainly not more than thirty or forty. A post-mortem examination was made at half-past two on Sunday afternoon. The throat was cut right across to the extent of six or seven inches, and the large vessels on each side of the neck were severed. The larynx was severed, as were also all the deep structures. The cause of death was hemorrhage from the throat. Death must have

been immediate. The injuries on the lower portions of the body must have been made after death. There would not be much blood on the hands of the murderer. The cuts were made by someone probably kneeling on the right side, and below the middle of the body. The left kidney had been carefully taken out of the body and carried away, and he came to the conclusion that someone who knew the position of the kidneys had done it. Portions of other organs had been removed. He believed the woman was lying on the ground when the injuries were inflicted. The injuries must have been done with a sharp-pointed knife, at least six inches long. The perpetrator must have considerable knowledge of the position of the particular organs in the body and the way of removing them. The parts removed could be of no use for a professional purpose. A person who was accustomed to out up animals would have such a knowledge as he had described.

Mr. Crawford: Do you think the perpetrator was disturbed while he was at work? I think he had sufficient time, or he would not have nicked the lower eyelids. It would have occupied at least five minutes.

Can you as a professional man assign any reason why these parts of the body should be taken away? I cannot. I feel sure there was no struggle and am not surprised that the deceased made no noise.

The witness further said he had examined a portion of an apron found on the deceased with blood spots upon it of recent origin. He had also seen another portion of the apron found in Goulston Street, which had smears on it as if hands or a knife had been wiped upon it. The mutilation of the face he thought was simply to disfigure the corpse. There was no reason to believe that any drug had been administered.



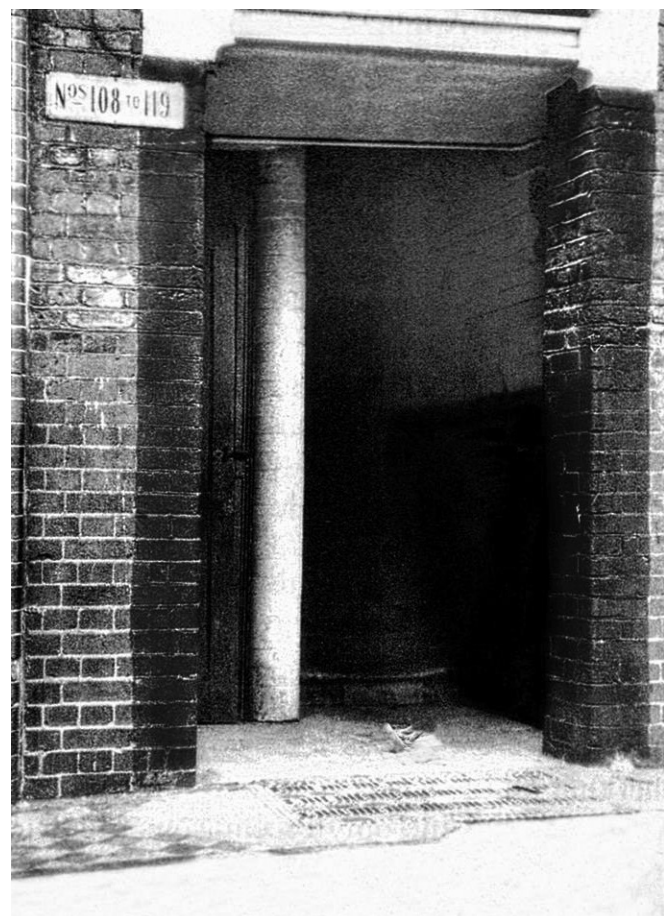
*Pall Mall Gazette*

Monday, 8th October 1888

### **A STRANGE STORY ABOUT JACK-THE-RIPPER**

The following extraordinary story has been sent to us by the Central News. We publish it with all reserve, and without at present attaching to it any special importance. The Central News Agency says: "A startling fact has just come to light. After killing Catherine Eddowes in Mitre Square the murderer, it is now known, walked to Goulston Street, where he threw away the piece of the deceased woman's apron upon which he had wiped his hands and knife. Within a few feet of this spot he had written upon the wall, "The Jews shall not be blamed for nothing." Most unfortunately one of the police officers gave orders for this writing to be immediately sponged out, probably with a view of stifling the morbid curiosity

which it would certainly have aroused. But in so doing a very important link was destroyed, for had the writing been photographed a certain clue would have been in the hands of the authorities. The witnesses who saw the writing, however, state that it was similar in character to the letters sent to the Central News and signed 'Jack the Ripper,' and though it would have been far better to have clearly demonstrated this by photography, there is now every reason to believe that the writer of the letter and postcard sent to the Central News (facsimiles of which are now to be seen outside every police-station) is the actual murderer. The police, consequently, are very anxious that any citizen who can identify the handwriting should without delay communicate with the authorities.



*Express and Echo*

Tuesday, 9th October 1888.

The only practical outcome of the detective operations in the East End, so far, is an outbreak of irritation in the relations subsisting between the City and Metropolitan police. One would have thought that in presence of the existing epidemic of murder those responsible for law and order would have stood united in the public interest. Unfortunately, it would almost appear that the police authorities are not governed by considerations of



common sense, and the search for the missing assassin consequently is being embarrassed by a species of official vendetta. The result of this extraordinary state of affairs will be seen on Thursday at the resumed inquest. An attempt will then, it is said, be made on the part of those acting for the City police to fasten upon Sir Charles Warren the sole responsibility for the tactical blunder which was committed in moving, without first photographing, the writing that appeared on the wall just after the Mitre Square murder. The facts are alleged to be as follows, and they are certainly extraordinary enough to justify their rescue from the oblivion in which there is a natural desire to leave them. It is said that the writing in question, which ran "The Jews shall not be blamed for nothing," and appeared not far from the scene of the tragic occurrence, was noticed by one of the inspectors of police. Sir Charles Warren had just arrived upon the spot, and his attention was drawn to it, but, observing that such language would do no good, he, it is alleged, rubbed his hand across the wall, and the words were at once obliterated. It is possible that there is no connection between the literary remains of 'Jack the Ripper' and the inscription upon the wall in Goulston Street; nevertheless it is now felt that the precipitation of Sir Charles Warren may have destroyed an important clue, and for this responsibility it will be the pleasant game of the rivals of Scotland Yard to make the Chief Commissioner responsible.



*The Daily News*

Friday, 12th October 1888.

### THE WRITING ON THE WALL

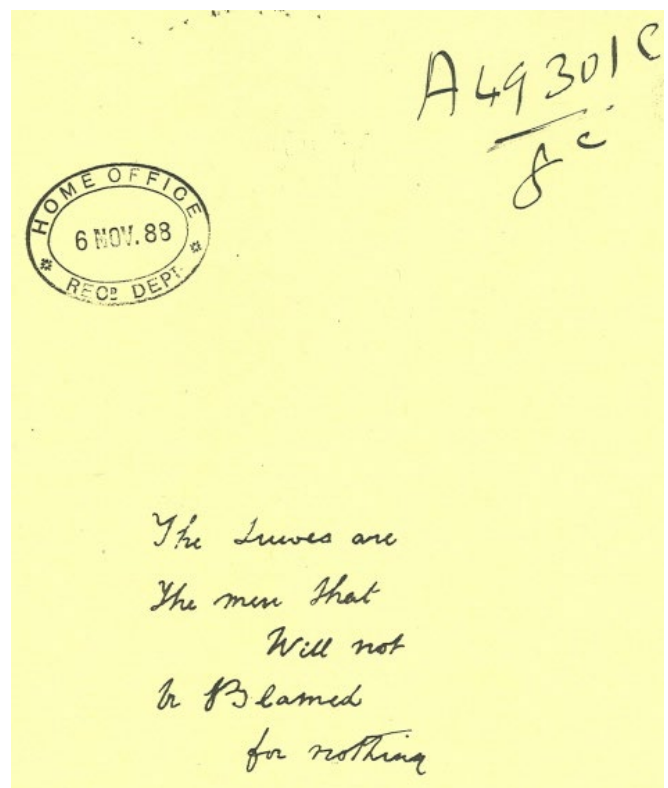
Detective Halse, detective officer of the City police, stated: On Saturday the 30th of last month, on instructions received from the detective office, 26 Old Jewry, I directed a number of plain clothes officers to patrol the City all night. At about two minutes to two on Sunday morning I was called to Houndsditch by Aldgate Church in company with Detectives Outram and Marriott. I heard a woman had been murdered in Mitre Square. We all three ran there and saw the body. I immediately gave instructions to have the neighbourhood searched and every man stopped and examined. I went by the way of Middlesex Street, to the East End of the City, into Wentworth Street, where I stopped two men. They gave me a satisfactory account of themselves and I allowed them to depart. I came through Goulston Street, where the apron was found, about twenty minutes past two. I then went to the mortuary. I saw the deceased stripped and noticed that a portion of the apron was missing. I accompanied Major Smith back to Mitre Square, and found that a portion of the apron had been

found in Goulston Street. I then went to Leman Stree Police Station with Detective Hunt, and from there to Goulston Street, and saw the place where it was found. I saw some chalk writing on the wall on black fascia. I remained there while Hunt went on to arrange for having the writing photographed. Directions were given for that purpose, but it was thought it might cause a riot if the Jews saw it on the Sunday morning, or an outbreak against Jews. We decided to have it rubbed out, as the people were bringing stalls out into Goulston Street to get a prominent position. When Hunt returned with Mr McWilliam an inquiry was made at every tenement in the building, but we gained no tidings of anyone going in after the murder.

By Mr. Crawford: Before stopping the two men in Wentworth Street I had not passed over the spot where the apron was found. I suggested that the top line of the writing should be taken out. The Metropolitan officer suggested the word "Jews" should be taken out.

Before it was taken out had you taken a note of it? - As plain as I could see it in the dark - for I had no light - I wrote down "The Juewes are not the men that will be blamed for nothing."

Did the writing appear to have been recently written? - Yes. It was written in white chalk on a black fascia.



By the jury: It was the suggestion of Metropolitan Police that it should be rubbed out, and it was on their ground.

Mr Crawford: I am obliged to ask this question - Did you protest against its being rubbed out? - I did, Sir. I protested.

A juror: How did you account for its being recent? Because it seemed fresh, and if it had been long written it would have been rubbed by people passing. It was written on the black brick in good schoolboy's handwriting. The capitals would be under an inch high, and the italics in proportion. The bricks are painted black up to about four feet high, like a dado, and above that are white.



*Shields Daily Gazette*  
Friday, 12th October 1888.

### THE WRITING ON THE WALL

The Central News learns the police authorities attach great importance to the spelling of the word Jews in the writing on the wall in Goulston Street. The mode of spelling the word, in the dialect common amongst the East-End foreigners, would be "Juwes." The evidence seems, therefore, to point to the commission the crime by a foreigner.



*Belfast News-Letter*  
Friday, 12th October 1888.

This afternoon's proceedings at the inquest on the body of the victim of the Mitre Square murder showed undoubted signs that there is a considerable amount of friction existing between the City and the Metropolitan police. In one respect, at all events, the two forces have not been working with that complete harmony which ought to prevail in the presence of unparalleled atrocity. It may be remembered that on a wall in Goulston Street, just outside the city boundary, certain writing near where a piece of the murdered woman's apron was found was discovered by a member of the City police. The written words were – "The Jews are the men that will not be blamed for nothing." While the City police were taking steps to have the writing photographed, a Metropolitan police constable washed out the strange sentence by the authority of his superiors at Scotland Yard. In this way, as the City police allege, the only tangible clue that has yet been discovered was destroyed. The motive of the Metropolitan police in obliterating the hand-writing on the wall was to prevent the collection of a crowd. This, however, might have been avoided by the erection of a hoarding, and by the simpler

device of covering the writing with a piece of cardboard. To say the least, it was a very injudicious action on the part of the Metropolitan police. Contrary to expectation, Sir Charles Warren did not attend the inquest.

*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*  
Friday, 12th October 1888.

It will be remembered that the first announcement respecting the writing on the wall in Goulston street was made by the Central News Monday last, and attempt was made at the time throw doubts upon the accuracy of the statement. But the scepticism is sufficiently disposed of by the evidence given on oath before the coroner. We may add that the order to erase the words on the wall was given by a very highly-placed officer in the Metropolitan police force, with the humane intention of averting an increase of the anti-Jewish feeling which at the time was unfortunately, but undoubtedly, very general in the East End London. So real were the apprehensions of the police authorities in this connection that the Sunday night of the murders the chief police stations in the East End were reinforced by constables. It is obvious, however, that every purpose would have been served by the obliteration of the offensive inscription after, and not before, it had been photographed, and the feeling is general and most marked that the officer whose orders the sponge was passed over was guilty, to say the least, of a very grave error of judgment. We may add that we were in possession of the facts connected with the writing on the wall on the Monday following the murders, but decided, in view of the excited state of popular feeling, not to make it public. On Monday last, however, it came to our knowledge that it had been decided to make a clean breast of the matter at inquest, and there was, therefore, no need for further silence on our part.



*Pall Mall Gazette*  
Friday, 12th October 1888.

### THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

"Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin!" Sir Charles Warren at least will recognize the quotation, and know how appropriate it is to his present plight. Mr. Matthews is probably more familiar with Lord Byron than with the Prophet Daniel:



In that same hour and hall, the fingers of a band  
Came forth against the wall, and wrote as if on sand:  
The fingers of a man – a solitary hand.  
Along the letters ran, and traced them like a wand.

And this is the interpretation which applies equally to the Home Secretary and to the Chief Commissioner: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." Strange that it should have been the blood-red hand of the assassin which should have traced upon a wall in the East-end a message, the obliteration of which has supplied the last conclusive demonstration required of the utter unfitness of Sir Charles Warren for the place which he holds. The case against the Chief Commissioner is overwhelming. The evidence given at the inquest yesterday proves that in all human probability the murderer left behind him in Goulston Street an invaluable clue to his identity. The *Times* this morning says that it is "unreasoning petulance" to blame the police for not discovering a murderer who is cunning enough to leave no clue behind him by which he can be traced. But in the case of the murder in Mitre Square the murderer *did* leave behind him a clue, an invaluable and unmistakable clue, in the shape of an inscription in his own handwriting on a wall immediately above the place where he threw away the piece of his victim's apron on which he had wiped his gory fingers. Here was a clue which, in the absence of all other clues, was of simply incalculable importance. Yet it has been destroyed, and destroyed by the direct act of Sir Charles Warren himself.



Strange, almost incredible though it appears, this excellent Major-General, whose first thought is ever how to repress disorder, and to whom the detection of crime is but a secondary consideration, actually persisted in destroying this clue, in face of the protests of the City police and of the suggestion of one of his own men. If we had been called upon to imagine what would afford the public an exact measure of Sir Charles Warren's utter incapacity for the work he has on hand, we could not have conceived anything more cruelly conclusive than this. If Sir Charles Warren had but read pages 248-9 of Mr. Howard Vincent's *Police Code*, he would have seen how flagrantly he was violating the first duty of a policeman in a case of murder. He was destroying evidence that might have been of priceless value, and he did that avowedly from a political motive. He feared that if the words remained on the wall, a crowd might assemble and there might be an attack on the Jews! So, rather than take the trouble of covering them up with a cloth and preventing access to the spot until the inscription was photographed, he rubbed it out, all out, refusing even to be content with erasing the one word "Juwes," as it appears to have been written in Yiddish, and so perished the only clue which the murderer has left us by which he might be identified.



*Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*  
Friday, 12th October 1888.

#### THE WHITECHAPEL MURDERS THE INQUEST ON THE MITRE SQUARE VICTIM

Police-constable Alfred Long proved finding the bloodstained apron in Goulston Street, just before three o'clock on Sunday morning; and stated that on the wall, just above the place where it was discovered were written chalk the words "The Jews are the men that will not be blamed for nothing." He had previously passed the spot at 2.20, when the apron was not there. After searching the neighbourhood he reported the matter at Commercial Street. Mr. Borrows: Was not this the sentence, "The Jews are not the men that will be blamed for nothing?" Witness replied that thought he had copied the writing verbatim, but admitted that the first copy was in his pocket-book, which he had not got with him. He would not swear that the word "Jews" was not written "Juehs." Detective-Inspector Halse, of the City police, proved that when the writing the wall was reported to him he sent an officer to make arrangements for having it photographed. Definite directions to this effect were given, but before a photographer could arrive the Metropolitan police authorities, fearing that the words might lead to an outbreak against the Jews, had them rubbed out. Did no-

one suggest that it would be sensible to rub out the word "Jews" only? Witness: I suggested that the top line alone be rubbed out and the rest photographed. The words seemed to have been recently written in white chalk on the black bricks, and were "The Juews (sic) are not the men that will be blamed for nothing." By Mr. Crawford: The fear of riot was suggested by the Metropolitan policemen, and that was the only reason why the writing was not photographed. He protested against the writing being rubbed out, but as it was the Metropolitan ground he had no authority. Police-constable Long, further examined, produced his book, and read the words quoted him in his previous evidence. He did not make any inquiries in the tenements adjacent to the spot where he found the apron, but he searched the nearest staircase. He had heard of the murder, and went to the station, leaving the constable on the next beat in charge the passages. He searched the staircase because he thought a body might be there. The Coroner summed up briefly in an almost inaudible tone. He was understood to say there was nothing to suggest that more than one person was concerned in the murder, and therefore suggested that their verdict should be of

"Wilful murder against some person unknown." A verdict was accordingly returned to this effect. A correspondent says it will have been noticed that at the inquest yesterday Detective Halse, of the City police, stated, in reference to the writing on the wall in Goulston Street, that instructions were originally given for the inscription to be photographed, but that at the instance of a member of the Metropolitan police, who feared riot, the words were rubbed out notwithstanding the witness's protest. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, having announced that the order for the removal of the writing was given personally by Sir Charles Warren, who visited the spot shortly after the discovery was made, our representative saw Sir Charles Warren's private secretary, who returning from the Chief Commissioner's room, stated that "Sir Charles Warren was in Goulston Street shortly after the murders, and if he had wished to make any communication to the Press on the subject would have done so then." In reply to further question as whether he was to understand from this that Sir Charles Warren preferred to say nothing about the allegation, our representative was informed that such was the case.





VICTORIAN FICTION

# THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

By Edgar Allan Poe

Edited with an introduction by Eduardo Zinna

**Plague and pestilence have always loomed large in the history of humankind. Since time immemorial infectious diseases have appeared without warning, decimating populations, demoralising armies, wrecking fortunes, destroying cultures, annihilating empires. It is not known, even today, what plague it was that ten centuries before Christ ravaged Babylon. Since then the plague has reappeared again and again, wearing different disguises and bearing different names, to waste Egypt, Syria, Ethiopia, Greece, the Roman Empire, Europe, Asia, America and the rest of the world. People flee it, physicians struggle with it, prophets invoke it. It is still with us.**

In the absence of any other explanation, divine retribution was often the only conceivable reason why such misfortune as the plague should befall the human race. The Book of Exodus lists the plagues sent to force Pharaoh to let the Israelites go; Esdras, Ezekiel and Jeremiah, the Lord's punishments: plague, famine, sword and evil beasts. In the Christian era, Luke, Mark and Matthew speak of plagues, famines and earthquakes. In the Book of Revelation, John of Patmos describes his vision of four horsemen who will be present at the end of days. The first horseman rides a white horse, carries a bow and wears a crown; the second horseman rides a red horse and carries a great sword; the third horseman rides a black horse and carries a pair of merchant's scales; and the fourth horseman rides a pale horse. Power has been given to them over the fourth part of the earth to kill with sword, and with famine, and with plague, and with wild beasts.

Whether through divine intervention or some other

agency, plagues have continued to descend upon the earth, ever more vicious and injurious. There was a time when a pestilence raging in China, or India, or Persia, was so recondite and so remote that the European mind could not imagine it as a threat to its own shores. Yet as commerce between the Orient and the Occident developed, caravans and ships carried the germs of disease alongside their trade goods. Early in the 14th century, droughts in China led to swarms of locusts, famine and pestilence. Soon the plague was moving through Central Asia to India, Syria, Armenia and the Crimea. In October 1347, 12 Genoese galleys entered the harbour of Messina, in Sicily, with dead and dying men at their oars. The bubonic plague, better known as the Black Death, had arrived in Europe. Within three years it had swept the whole continent and before it ran its course had killed off one third of its population.

Most of the victims belonged to the poorest classes, but the plague forgave no one on account of name, wealth or birth-right. A reigning monarch, King Alfonso XI of Castile, died, as did Queen Leonora of Portugal, a score of members of royal families and many aristocrats, clergymen, scholars, physicians, merchants and artists. Among the victims were Laura, the beloved of the Italian poet Francesco Petrarca, and the natural daughter of King Robert of Naples, Maria d'Aquino, immortalized as Fiammetta by another poet, Giovanni Boccaccio.

Nobody knew how to cope with the plague, either through prevention or treatment. Those who could afford to, fled from it. In his *Decameron*, Boccaccio told how ten young people, seven ladies and three youths, retired to a country palace some distance away from any roads,

surrounded by delectable gardens and meadows, with wells of cool, refreshing water and cellars stocked with precious wines. While the plague raged in Florence these young patricians whiled away their days tasting fine meals, drinking fine wines, enjoying one another's company and telling stories which were faithfully retold by Boccaccio himself.

Five hundred years later another poet told a story about a group of people who sought shelter from the plague in a secluded and isolated palace. It was not the Black Death they fled. This time it was the Red Death.

During his brief, unfortunate existence, Edgar Allan Poe was haunted by penury, adversity and contradiction. He considered himself a gentleman, but he was the child of itinerant actors; he thought of himself as a Southerner, but he was born in Boston, lived at various times in London, Stoke Newington, Baltimore, New York and Philadelphia, and died in Baltimore in mysterious circumstances; he was exemplary as a soldier enlisted under a false name in the United States Army, but was discharged dishonourably from the Military Academy at West Point for intentional neglect of his duties as a cadet; he declared his passion to be poetry, but he wrote most of his verse at a very young age and is now best known for the film adaptations of his tales of mystery and horror.

Poe was born Edgar Poe in 1809. His father vanished from all records about the time of Edgar's birth and is believed to have either died or deserted his family. His mother died soon afterwards and Edgar was taken into the household of John Allan, a tobacco exporter from Richmond, Virginia. Poe added his foster-father's surname to his, but his relationship with the dour, parsimonious Scotsman was never a happy one. A brilliant student, Poe was nevertheless forced to withdraw from the University of Virginia because Allan would not furnish him with the funds necessary to sustain his life as a gentleman. During the rest of his life Poe struggled constantly with poverty, but was turned down by Allan, the only father he ever knew, every time he asked for help. He made a living from his work as a journalist, critic and editor of several literary

magazines, but never enjoyed financial security.

Poe was excitable, quarrelsome and given to excessive drinking, all features that aptly describe some characters in his tales. In 1836 he married his cousin, Virginia Clemm, who was 13 at the time, and would die of tuberculosis in 1847. In *The Philosophy of Composition*, published the previous year, Poe had written 'The death of a beautiful

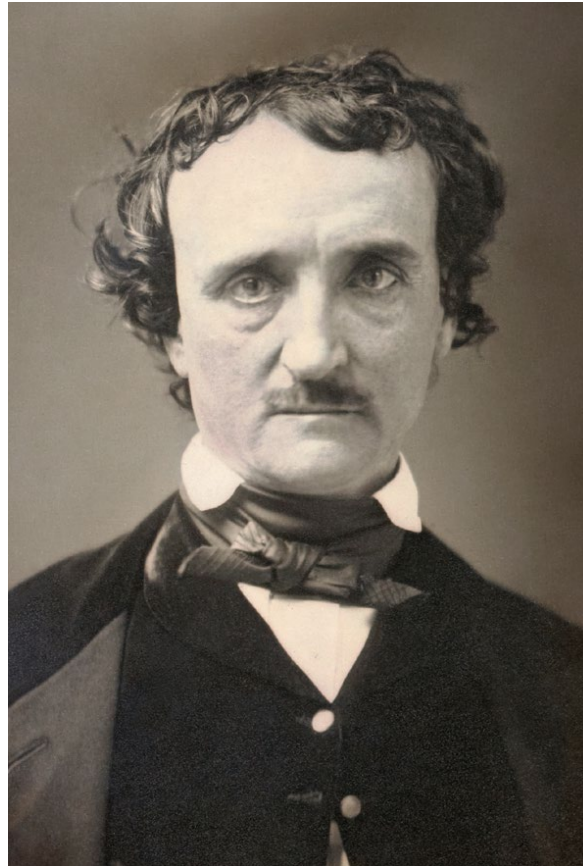
woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world.' Women on the point of death feature in his stories *Ligeia*, *Eleonora*, *Berenice*, *Morella* and *The Fall of the House of Usher*, and the poem *Annabel Lee*.

Between 1827 and 1831, Poe had published three volumes of verse, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*, *Al Aaraf* and *Poems*. *Tales of the Grotesque and the Arabesque* appeared in 1840 and, in 1845, *The Raven and other Poems*, which brought him fame, but not security. While his best known stories – *The Cask of Amontillado*, *The Pit and the Pendulum*, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Black Cat* – are fantastic tales in the Gothic tradition, Poe was also a precursor of science fiction in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* and single-

handedly created mystery fiction, complete with great detective and bumbling, devoted narrator, in *The Murders of the Rue Morgue*, *The Purloined Letter* and *The Mystery of Marie Roget*.

In September 1849 Poe was in Richmond on a stop in a lecture tour. He was considering marriage to a woman he had courted in his youth. But before taking any further steps in that direction he wanted to visit New York and settle his affairs there. Friends found him ill and feverish, but still he took the boat for Baltimore and then New York on 27 September. Nearly a week later he was found lying in the streets of Baltimore in a semi-conscious state and wearing clothes which were obviously not his. He was taken to hospital where he remained delirious for several days and died on 7 October 1849. He was 40. There are many theories about Poe's death, but what happened in the last days of his life can never be known now.

*Ripperologist's* choice for its present Victorian Fiction offering is *The Masque of the Red Death*, which was first published in *Graham's Magazine* in 1842 and appeared in final form in the *Broadway Journal* in 1845.





# THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

Edgar Allan Poe

The 'Red Death' had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal — the redness and the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution. The scarlet stains upon the body and especially upon the face of the victim, were the pest ban which shut him out from the aid and from the sympathy of his fellow-men. And the whole seizure, progress and termination of the disease, were the incidents of half an hour.



But the Prince Prospero was happy and dauntless and sagacious. When his dominions were half depopulated, he summoned to his presence a thousand hale and light-hearted friends from among the knights and dames of his court, and with these retired to the deep seclusion of one of his castellated abbeys. This was an extensive and magnificent structure, the creation of the prince's own eccentric yet august taste. A strong and lofty wall girdled it in. This wall had gates of iron. The courtiers, having

entered, brought furnaces and massy hammers and welded the bolts. They resolved to leave means neither of ingress nor egress to the sudden impulses of despair or of frenzy from within. The abbey was amply provisioned. With such precautions the courtiers might bid defiance to contagion. The external world could take care of itself. In the meantime it was folly to grieve, or to think. The prince had provided all the appliances of pleasure. There were buffoons, there were improvisatori, there were ballet-dancers, there were musicians, there was Beauty, there was wine. All these and security were within. Without was the 'Red Death'.

It was towards the close of the fifth or sixth month of his seclusion, and while the pestilence raged most furiously abroad, that the Prince Prospero entertained his thousand friends at a masked ball of the most unusual magnificence.

It was a voluptuous scene, that masquerade. But first let me tell of the rooms in which it was held. These were seven — an imperial suite. In many palaces, however, such suites form a long and straight vista, while the folding doors slide back nearly to the walls on either hand, so that the view of the whole extent is scarcely impeded. Here the case was very different, as might have been expected from the duke's love of the bizarre.

The apartments were so irregularly disposed that the vision embraced but little more than one at a time. There was a sharp turn at every twenty or thirty yards, and at each turn a novel effect. To the right and left, in the middle of each wall, a tall and narrow Gothic window looked out upon a closed corridor which pursued the windings of the suite. These windows were of stained glass whose colour varied in accordance with the prevailing hue of the decorations of the chamber into which it opened. That at the eastern extremity was hung, for example in blue—and vividly blue were its windows.

The second chamber was purple in its ornaments and

tapestries, and here the panes were purple. The third was green throughout, and so were the casements. The fourth was furnished and lighted with orange – the fifth with white – the sixth with violet. The seventh apartment was closely shrouded in black velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls, falling in heavy folds upon a carpet of the same material and hue. But in this chamber only, the colour of the windows failed to correspond with the decorations. The panes here were scarlet – a deep blood colour.

Now in no one of the seven apartments was there any lamp or candelabrum, amid the profusion of golden ornaments that lay scattered to and fro or depended from the roof. There was no light of any kind emanating from lamp or candle within the suite of chambers. But in the corridors that followed the suite, there stood, opposite to each window, a heavy tripod, bearing a brazier of fire, that projected its rays through the tinted glass and so glaringly illumined the room. And thus were produced a multitude of gaudy and fantastic appearances. But in the western or black chamber the effect of the fire-light that streamed upon the dark hangings through the blood-tinted panes, was ghastly in the extreme, and produced so wild a look upon the countenances of those who entered, that there were few of the company bold enough to set foot within its precincts at all.

It was in this apartment, also, that there stood against the western wall, a gigantic clock of ebony. Its pendulum swung to and fro with a dull, heavy, monotonous clang; and when the minute-hand made the circuit of the face, and the hour was to be stricken, there came from the brazen lungs of the clock a sound which was clear and loud and deep and exceedingly musical, but of so peculiar a note and emphasis that, at each lapse of an hour, the musicians of the orchestra were constrained to pause, momentarily, in their performance, to harken to the sound; and thus the waltzers perforce ceased their evolutions; and there was a brief disconcert of the whole gay company; and, while the chimes of the clock yet rang, it was observed that the giddiest grew pale, and the more aged and sedate passed their hands over their brows as if in confused reverie or meditation. But when the echoes had fully ceased, a light laughter at once pervaded the assembly; the musicians looked at each other and smiled as if at their own nervousness and folly, and made whispering vows, each to the other, that the next chiming of the clock should produce in them no similar emotion; and then, after the lapse of sixty minutes, (which embrace three thousand and six hundred seconds of the Time that flies,) there came yet another chiming of the clock, and then were the same disconcert and tremulousness and meditation as before.

But, in spite of these things, it was a gay and magnificent

revel. The tastes of the duke were peculiar. He had a fine eye for colours and effects. He disregarded the decora of mere fashion. His plans were bold and fiery, and his conceptions glowed with barbaric lustre. There are some who would have thought him mad. His followers felt that he was not. It was necessary to hear and see and touch him to be sure that he was not.



He had directed, in great part, the movable embellishments of the seven chambers, upon occasion of this great fête; and it was his own guiding taste which had given character to the masqueraders. Be sure they were grotesque. There were much glare and glitter and piquancy and phantasm – much of what has been since seen in 'Hernani'. There were arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were delirious fancies such as the madman fashions. There were much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust. To and fro in the seven chambers there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams. And these – the dreams – writhed in and about taking hue from the rooms, and causing the wild music of the orchestra to seem as the echo of their steps. And, anon, there strikes the ebony clock which stands in the hall of the velvet. And then, for a moment, all is still, and all is silent save the voice of the clock. The dreams are stiff-frozen as



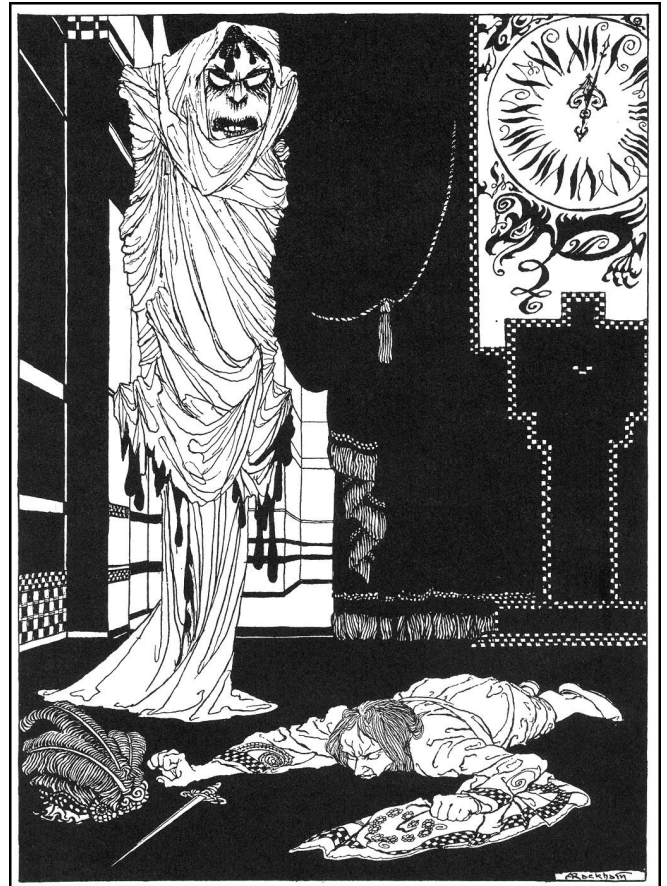
they stand. But the echoes of the chime die away – they have endured but an instant – and a light, half-subdued laughter floats after them as they depart. And now again the music swells, and the dreams live, and writhe to and fro more merrily than ever, taking hue from the many tinted windows through which stream the rays from the tripods. But to the chamber which lies most westwardly of the seven, there are now none of the maskers who venture; for the night is waning away; and there flows a ruddier light through the blood-coloured panes; and the blackness of the sable drapery appals; and to him whose foot falls upon the sable carpet, there comes from the near clock of ebony a muffled peal more solemnly emphatic than any which reaches their ears who indulged in the more remote gaieties of the other apartments.

But these other apartments were densely crowded, and in them beat feverishly the heart of life. And the revel went whirlingly on, until at length there commenced the sounding of midnight upon the clock. And then the music ceased, as I have told; and the evolutions of the waltzers were quieted; and there was an uneasy cessation of all things as before. But now there were twelve strokes to be sounded by the bell of the clock; and thus it happened, perhaps, that more of thought crept, with more of time, into the meditations of the thoughtful among those who revelled. And thus too, it happened, perhaps, that before the last echoes of the last chime had utterly sunk into silence, there were many individuals in the crowd who had found leisure to become aware of the presence of a masked figure which had arrested the attention of no single individual before. And the rumour of this new presence having spread itself whisperingly around, there arose at length from the whole company a buzz, or murmur, expressive of disapprobation and surprise – then, finally, of terror, of horror, and of disgust.

In an assembly of phantasms such as I have painted, it may well be supposed that no ordinary appearance could have excited such sensation. In truth the masquerade licence of the night was nearly unlimited; but the figure in question had out-Heroded Herod, and gone beyond the bounds of even the prince's indefinite decorum. There are chords in the hearts of the most reckless which cannot be touched without emotion. Even with the utterly lost, to whom life and death are equally jests, there are matters of which no jest can be made. The whole company, indeed, seemed now deeply to feel that in the costume and bearing of the stranger neither wit nor propriety existed. The figure was tall and gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave. The mask which concealed the visage was made so nearly to resemble the countenance of a stiffened corpse that the closest scrutiny must have had difficulty in detecting the cheat. And yet all this might

have been endured, if not approved, by the mad revellers around. But the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the Red Death. His vesture was dabbled in blood – and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror.

When the eyes of the Prince Prospero fell upon this spectral image (which, with a slow and solemn movement, as if more fully to sustain its role, stalked to and fro among the waltzers) he was seen to be convulsed, in the first moment with a strong shudder either of terror or distaste; but, in the next, his brow reddened with rage.



'Who dares,' – he demanded hoarsely of the courtiers who stood near him – who dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery? Seize him and unmask him—that we may know whom we have to hang, at sunrise, from the battlements!'

It was in the eastern or blue chamber in which stood the Prince Prospero as he uttered these words. They rang throughout the seven rooms loudly and clearly, for the prince was a bold and robust man, and the music had become hushed at the waving of his hand.

It was in the blue room where stood the prince, with a group of pale courtiers by his side. At first, as he spoke, there was a slight rushing movement of this group in the direction of the intruder, who at the moment was also near at hand, and now, with deliberate and stately step, made closer approach to the speaker. But from a certain



nameless awe with which the mad assumptions of the mummer had inspired the whole party, there were found none who put forth hand to seize him; so that, unimpeded, he passed within a yard of the prince's person; and, while the vast assembly, as if with one impulse, shrank from the centres of the rooms to the walls, he made his way uninterrupted, but with the same solemn and measured step which had distinguished him from the first, through the blue chamber to the purple – through the purple to the green – through the green to the orange – through this again to the white – and even thence to the violet, ere a decided movement had been made to arrest him. It was then, however, that the Prince Prospero, maddening with rage and the shame of his own momentary cowardice, rushed hurriedly through the six chambers, while none followed him on account of a deadly terror that had seized upon all. He bore aloft a drawn dagger, and had approached, in rapid impetuosity, to within three or four feet of the retreating figure, when the latter, having attained the extremity of

the velvet apartment, turned suddenly and confronted his pursuer. There was a sharp cry – and the dagger dropped gleaming upon the sable carpet, upon which, instantly afterwards, fell prostrate in death the Prince Prospero. Then, summoning the wild courage of despair; a throng of the revellers at once threw themselves into the black apartment, and, seizing the mummer, whose tall figure stood erect and motionless within the shadow of the ebony clock, gasped in unutterable horror at finding the grave cerements and corpse-like mask, which they handled with so violent a rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form.

And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revellers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall. And the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flames of the tripods expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.

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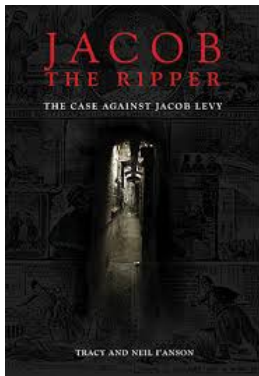
# NON-FICTION REVIEWS

Included in this issue:

*Jacob the Ripper, Pictures of the Abyss and more!*

## **JACOB THE RIPPER: THE CASE AGAINST JACOB LEVY**

Neil and Tracy l'Anson  
London: Mango Books, 2020  
[www.MangoBooks.co.uk](http://www.MangoBooks.co.uk)  
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220pp; illus; appendices; index  
ISBN: 978-1-911273-93-6  
softcover £15



You know the story – it had been raining hard and the three men waited for it to stop before heading home. They hurried along, barely noticing the man and woman talking on the other side of the road, but in the chill of a mortuary the following day one of the men positively identified a murdered woman by the clothes she wore as the woman he'd seen talking the night before. As for the man, he was insistent that he would not be able to identify him again. However, one of the other men, a butcher named Joseph Hyam Levy, had seen the couple and declared to his companions, "I don't like going home by myself when I see these sorts of characters about. I'm off!" What he meant by 'these sorts' of people is not known, but to many newsmen his behaviour seemed so strange that one newspaper even remarked that Levy 'refuses to give the slightest information. He leaves one to infer that he knows something, but that he is afraid to be called on the inquest.' (*Evening News*, 9 October 1888).

In *Ripperologist* 26, December 1999, a contributor named Mark King wrote that Joseph Hyam Levy's butcher shop wasn't too far from a butcher shop run by another Levy, Jacob Levy, and he speculated that if they weren't related, their businesses being so close and their names being the same, it was almost beyond doubt that they

knew each other. And Mark King speculated that Joseph Hyam Levy may have recognised Jacob Levy as the man in the company of the woman seen across the street on that rainy night.

Ever since Mark King's article was published, Jacob Levy has been the subject of speculation, but nobody has put him under the microscope – until now.

But before getting to the important bit, *Jacob the Ripper: The Case Against Jacob Levy* is not suitable for the newcomer to Ripper studies. There isn't anything in the book that's difficult to understand or even demands a depth of knowledge, but the book is a very close examination of what the l'Ansons have discovered about Jacob Levy, and an indication of how detailed it is, there are fifty pages of information about almost every family member Levy ever had. Well, maybe not every family member, but a lot of information in those fifty pages, all of it a godsend to the researchers, but perhaps not to the general reader. But don't let that put you off; this book is definitely a worthwhile purchase and one you'll regret not having.

First though, it is not without its problems. The book provides an overview of the victims' lives, their murder, and the key points of the police investigation, but the authors haven't kept up to speed with the latest research, especially the tremendous work done in recent years investigating the background of Mary Kelly. This won't be a problem for most readers, but the more seasoned Ripper researcher may get the feeling they're back in the Noughties, and in a few cases even longer. A very minor example, and I stress 'minor', is where they write that Catherine Eddowes and John Kelly returned to London from hop-picking in Kent because they 'either didn't earn much money or spent it all'. No such speculation has been necessary; John Kelly told the inquest that they didn't do well in Kent and so 'hoofed it' back to London; the weather

that summer was appalling and many hop crops had been utterly ruined, and work for pickers was extremely limited. Eddowes and Kelly could have earned very little, and we know that they spent what little money they had when then stopped in Maidstone, buying a jacket and a pair of boots. They were broke by the time they reached London.

The I'ansons also write of Mary Kelly that she lodged with a Mrs Buki and 'then moved in which a man named either Morgan Stone or Morganstone' As said, in recent years some sterling research has been done into 'Mrs Buki' and 'Morganstone', and it is highly probable that they have been identified as an Elizabeth Boaaka and Johannes Morganstern. In fact, a lot of work has also been done into the people of Pennington Street, where Kelly was said to have lived before moving to Whitechapel. This research is hugely important, both for the information about these people, but more significantly for the implication that if these details of Mary Kelly's life are true, other details, such as the West End bordello and visit to France stories, could be true too.

What matters, though, is the theory about Jacob Levy, and as theories go, it's a good one.

I don't know – and I asked around to see if anyone else knew – how Mark King came across Jacob Levy or why he researched his life, but he discovered that Jacob Levy was insane, ending his life at 7.52pm on 29 July 1891, in the City of London lunatic asylum, Stone, Kent. He died from General Paralysis of the Insane – syphilis, a suggestion that he dallied with the local prostitutes. These details made Jacob Levy a compelling suspect and Mark King's article intrigued a lot of people, including father and daughter Neil and Tracy I'anson. This book is the result, and what really grabbed my attention was a throwaway comment in an American newspaper: the I'ansons cite the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, 16 September 1889, but I'd known it from the *Wisconsin State Journal* two days earlier. The date's not important, except that it pushes back the story ever closer to the end of August, the importance of which will soon become clear. The throwaway comment simply said "The London Police have a theory that "Jack the Ripper" is a crazy Jewish butcher."

And the importance of late August? On Monday, 29 August 1889, a well-known detective working on the Whitechapel murders case gave an interview in which he said that although the police had no clue who the murderer was, they were watching three men, one of whom was 'a curious sort of fellow' who had a business to which he never attended, leaving it to his wife and daughter to run, and who was 'out at all hours of the night'. The story was widely reported, one version adding

that the man consorted with women of 'the lowest class', yet hated them because of his 'physical suffering, for which, like most men of his class, he holds himself perfectly irresponsible.' Nothing in these reports say that this shopkeeper is a butcher or a Jew, but surely he has to be Jacob Levy. Except that his daughter would have been too young to help run the shop, he fits the details like a well-tailored glove.

Neil and Tracy I'anson are refreshingly open with their admission that they have not proven that Jacob Levy was Jack the Ripper, but in many respects Levy does make a good candidate: he lived in the area and had done for years, he would have known the back alleys well, he died from syphilis, a condition suggesting that he consorted with the local prostitutes, and he was a butcher, a profession which would have given him the skills necessary to mutilate the victims in difficult conditions. And he fits the details of the businessman discussed by the 'well-known detective' and he was 'a mad Jewish butcher'.

If all the pieces of the Levy jigsaw really do fit together as neatly as one hopes, Jacob Levy was someone on whom the police were maintaining surveillance, but as the well-known detective said, 'Whether he has anything to do with the crime, it is, of course, impossible to say...' And one small droplet of water that just might herald rain on this particular parade, in 1889 many newspapers reported that the police suspected that Jack the Ripper was a Jewish butcher who worked aboard one of the cattle boats arriving in the Thames. It was a variation on an old story and wasn't widely reported in the press, but it clearly caused a stir sufficient to prompt Hermann Adler, the soon to be Chief Rabbi, to issue a rebuttal, pointing out that the Shochet, or ritual slaughter man, was highly trained and akin to a priest rather than a butcher (*Toronto Daily Mail*, 20 July 1889). Furthermore, on 18 July 1889, the *Cork Constitution* reported that appropriate instructions had been issued to the detective department, and when the Pinchin Street torso was discovered in September, Detective Inspector Regan of the Thames police led a number of his officers on a search of vessels in London docks, paying special attention to cattle boats (*Lancashire Evening Post*, 12 September 1889). It leaves open the possibility that the 'crazy Jewish butcher' was not the man being watched by the detective, but someone who worked on the cattle boats. And if the 'crazy Jewish butcher' wasn't Jacob Levy, does that shed doubt on Levy being the man discussed by the well-known detective?

I only mention this as a point possibly worth pondering. In the meantime, the I'ansons (and Mark King) have turned up someone who was very probably a suspect, might possibly be an alternative to Kosminski (although I



don't think so), and who could have been Jack the Ripper. This is a must have book.

## PICTURES OF THE ABYSS

Andrew Firth

Foreword by Richard Jones

London: Mango Books, 2020

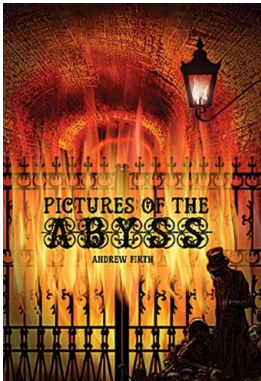
www.MangoBooks.co.uk

hardcover

142pp; illus; index.

ISBN: 978-1-91173-94-3

£25.00



In the world of ice-cream, this would be a very big bowl of chocolate-mint – my favourite; ice-cream doesn't come better than that. Just to make this comparison clear, you'll have to search hard to find a better book of Ripper/East End related photographs than *Pictures of the Abyss*. Andrew Firth's previous book, *Ripperland* (also

published by Mango Books) was impressive, but *Pictures of the Abyss* exceeded expectations by a very long way. It's a magnificent volume consisting of nearly 142 A4 pages of tremendous photographs and montages, complemented by Mango's customary high design and production values.

Jack London, the American journalist and author, called London's East End the 'Abyss'. An abyss is a deep chasm from which it is impossible to escape; and in a religious context it is a passageway leading to Hell.

Jack London visualised the East End as the bottom of the 'Abyss', the resort of people crushed beneath the forces of society, the 'feeble, besotted, and imbecile', who looking up saw only men and women 'far fitter than they, clinging to the steep slope above, and struggling frantically to slide no more.'

Jack London had come to London in the summer of 1902 and quickly resolved to experience the East End first-hand, by living there. It was a both a brave and foolhardy experiment, but he took the precaution of finding a lodging to which he could occasionally retreat, clean up, change his clothing, and return to civilization. He was directed there by a retired Metropolitan Policeman, Sgt Thick, a figure well-known to students of the Ripper mystery, who London refers to by his nickname, 'Johnny Upright'. London's description of ex-Sgt Thick and his family is a valuable, albeit brief insight into his life. London's account of his brief but insightful sojourn in the East End, *The People of the Abyss*, was both a damning indictment of and a goldmine of descriptive passages about the East End at

the turn of the 19th century.

One of the great boons of that book, apart from London's golden prose, were its many photographs which have been of considerable importance to researchers and appear over and over again in histories of the area. Over the years, I have often wondered if there were other photographs, unused, and what happened to them if there were. Are they still contained in some mouldering files in the dusty depths of London's publisher's archives? What gems might they contain, if they exist?

On the downside, the photographs in London's book were secondary to the text. As Andrew Firth points out, they were intended to give readers a 'feel' of what London saw and described, rather than show precise locations. That's a small deficiency Firth has done much to rectify with this collection.

But, of course, Andrew Firth's great skill – almost his innovation – is the montage. Instead of the usual then and now photographs showing how the location looked back then and how it looks today, Andrew Firth has gone to enormous trouble to locate the street where the original photograph was taken, and using his detective skills identified the location from which the photograph was taken. He has then taken a photograph of the place as it is today and managed to insert the 'back then' photo as precisely as he can into the modern picture. Pavements match up, so do windows and doors. How he does this, I don't know – I think he's sold his soul to the Devil – but the resulting picture-in-picture is remarkable. An excellent, but simple one, on page 66, is of the portico of Christ's Church. Little has changed, except back then 'there were whole rows of men lying asleep...' You can walk past that portico and not give it a second thought – I must have done it a dozen times – but once you've seen Firth's picture, I bet you'll see those sleeping men in your mind's eye. And you'll shake your head in wonderment, as London must have shaken his, and wonder what idiotic powers that be made it illegal for the homeless to sleep at night!

*Pictures of the Abyss* is a terrific book. The cover price is a big chunk of loose change, especially for a book of photographs, but I don't think this is a collection you'll quickly glance through and set aside. I have gone back to it several times, especially when taking a break with a cup of tea. *Ripperland* has become a very collectable book, and I reckon that *Pictures of the Abyss* is going to be much sought after in the years to come (probably in the months to come; maybe even as you read this review) and you are going to kick yourself if you don't have a copy on your shelf.

## MEDIA AND THE MURDERER: JACK THE RIPPER, STEVEN AVERY AND AN ENDURING FORMULA FOR NOTORIETY

Rebecca Frost

Jefferson, North Carolina: Exposit (McFarland), 2020

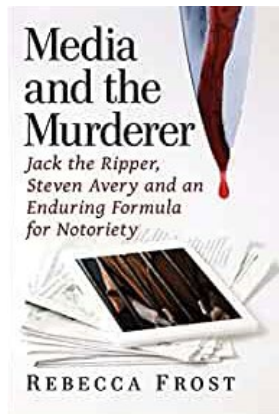
www.expositbooks.com

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193pp; notes; biblio; index.

ISBN: 9781476681528

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According to Rebecca Frost, one of the key questions asked by those who study crime narratives is, 'Why do some crime stories become popular while others hardly make a showing in the media?'

It seems a simple enough question, but what does Frost mean by 'popular'? Or 'media' for that matter? In her conclusion, Frost refers to

'enduring popularity', and even to whether a criminal could do anything to ensure that his crimes are newsworthy and will endure! I found that a strange and even disturbing question, but let's let it pass. What's clear from this is that by 'popular' Frost didn't mean a crime that grabbed the headlines and then was forgotten, but a crime that achieved the sort of notoriety that it became the subject of books and even TV documentaries or movies, like Jack the Ripper.

The difficulty for me is that the Ripper's murders grabbed public and press attention with the first in the series, that of Mary Ann Nichols (Frost only considers the canonical victims), but the reasons for continuing interest have changed and it's probably futile to seek a single reason why Jack the Ripper still 'makes a showing in the media', unless it is the enduring mystery of the murderer's identity. However, the other case Frost examines in this book, that of Steven Avery, is not a mystery of identity like the Ripper, but is a question of whether he committed the crime or not.

In case you are unfamiliar with the case of Steven Avery, he lived in rural Wisconsin, and in 1985 he was sent to prison following a conviction for sexual assault and attempted murder. He consistently maintained his innocence of the crimes, but it was 18 years before DNA evidence finally proved that he was not guilty. He was released, but two years later he was convicted of another murder and sent back to prison. Avery appears to have been the victim of a gross miscarriage of justice in the first case, and some commentators have argued that in the

second he was framed by a corrupt local police. Unlike the Ripper, Steven Avery's story was of mostly local interest until it caught the attention of two filmmakers, Moira Demos and Laura Ricciardi, who made a docuseries about the case for Netflix, *Making a Murderer*.

Currently it has run for two series, one in 2015 and the other in 2018. Whether interest in the Avery case will endure beyond the popularity of the docuseries remains to be seen.

Frost says that researchers have previously tried to explain why some crimes are 'popular' and others not by comparing and contrasting 'popular' cases with unpopular ones. In this new book, Frost, who has previously written *Words of a Monster: Analyzing the Writings of H.H. Holmes, America's First Serial Killer* (2019), and *The Ripper's Victims in Print: The Rhetoric of Portrayals Since 1929* (2018), neither of which seem to have attracted much attention, has taken the different approach of using 'the two examples of Jack the Ripper and Steven Avery to compare what two successfully marketed narratives of murder have in common.'

I must say that it was not obvious to me how comparing Avery with Jack the Ripper could come close to answering Frost's question and Frost's unconventional approach seemed contrived. I thought that more interesting or 'popular' crimes were made more interesting or popular because of their singular or unique features. Jack the Ripper grabbed media attention in 1888 because it was different! I also wondered whether the Ripper case was a 'marketed narrative' (whatever that actually meant). The Avery case would have remained of comparatively local interest if Demos and Ricciardi hadn't become involved, so it was undoubtedly 'marketed', whereas 'Jack the Ripper' was an immediate sensation because, as Judith Flanders said in *The Invention of Murder*, he 'brought with him a new kind of crime, and a new kind of fear'. This is important, and I mention it because Frost refers to Flanders and *The Invention of Murder* as a previous attempt to answer why some crimes become 'popular' and others not. I'm not so sure that that was Flanders' goal, but Frost should have picked up the observation that the Ripper was a new kind of crime.

I should state that what we call 'serial killing' wasn't new in 1888, but it wasn't something a lot of people knew about. The idea of a 'motiveless' murderer was therefore terrifying.

Frost argues Jack the Ripper was rocketed to notoriety by the 'Dear Boss' letter, writing, 'Had Demos and Ricciardi not approached Netflix, and had the "Ripper" letters not been sent to the Central News Agency, neither story would have reached such widespread fame.' But this



attaches far too much importance to the 'Dear Boss' letter, which doesn't remotely compare to an internationally-shown docuseries. 'Dear Boss' gave us the memorably chilling nickname 'Jack the Ripper', but without it the murderer would probably have been known by another catchy nickname, and plenty of criminals are 'popular' without one – Crippen and Christie spring to mind. The name certainly did not harm the lasting notoriety of the murders, but it's doubtful that the 'popularity' of the Whitechapel murders would have suffered without it. Otherwise, 'Dear Boss' started an avalanche of letters, but these did little to foster lasting interest in the murders. And on top of all that, the murders were notorious before 'Dear Boss' was written.

Likening the impact of the 'Dear Boss' letter to the Netflix docuseries struck me as contrived. The docuseries turned a crime of largely local-interest into one of international notoriety and spawned a lot of books and discussion on both sides of the Atlantic and elsewhere. International interest in the Jack the Ripper murders was caused by the newness of the 'motiveless' murders and a fear of the unknown, among other things. But Central News also features large in Rebecca Frost's reasoning. She believes 'media coverage of the murders, can be traced to the Central News Agency, a recently founded news distribution service...', but apart from receiving (and some would argue, creating) the 'Dear Boss' letter, it's questionable whether Central News' part in the Ripper story was any more significant than its rival, the Press Association, or newspapers such as the Star. And Central News wasn't new either, but had been founded back in 1863, a quarter of a century before the Ripper murders,

Frost's understanding of the time and place of the Whitechapel murders seems limited, which in turn impacts on her reasoning. Frost writes of 1888, '...the idea of plainclothes policemen was a terrifying one to citizens who thought that a policeman out of uniform would in effect be a spy, so even those men who were off duty were compelled to wear their uniforms.' This was the case when the New Police was created in 1829, but by 1888 most people had never known a time when policemen were not patrolling the streets, and every division had its plain-clothes detectives.

Without a good knowledge of the time and place of the Jack the Ripper murders, it is almost impossible to understand why they caused such a sensation at the time. Change was in the air, stability was threatened, and some people believed that revolution was a serious possibility. Unemployment, unionisation, workers flexing their united muscle, the unemployed marching to Trafalgar Square, riots like Bloody Sunday, strikes like that at Bryant

and May and another brewing in London Docks... a lot of things focused attention on the East End, preparing the stage for Jack the Ripper and his 'new kind of crime, and a new kind of fear'. 'Jack the Ripper' soon took on a separate life too, developing into the devil incarnate, an arch-bogeyman, the stuff of adult nightmares, who would inspire stage melodramas, novels, and silent movies. There is nothing like this in the Steven Avery case, which despite some superficial parallels, bears little comparison with the Ripper.

Rebecca Frost says she set out to discover why some true crime stories were 'popular' and others weren't. Instead of comparing and contrasting a 'popular' case like Ted Bundy with an 'unpopular' one like Gary Ridgway, she elected to do it by comparing two 'popular' cases, but she notes that, unlike Ridgway, Bundy was perceived as intelligent and charming, and she asks, 'Must a criminal be perceived as intelligent and charming in order to maintain extensive media coverage?' This question struck me as either naïve or a thickly-veiled attempt at jocularity, and I wondered why Frost bothered to ask it. Obviously, the answer to her question is no, but it is almost unquestionably Bundy's perceived good looks, intelligence and charm that set him apart from the likes of Ridgway. Bundy was not what people expect a serial killer to be. If every serial killer was good-looking and charming, Bundy may not have raised an eyebrow.

Jack the Ripper grabbed the public imagination in 1888 because few people at the time were aware of motiveless murderers, and the idea scared the hell out of them. Many couldn't believe it, and came up with theories giving the murderer a motive, such as mad Portuguese cattlemen, a deranged doctor, or a religious fanatic. In later years, people would recall the scare and a semi-mythical horror creation began to take on a life of its own. As time passed, 'Jack the Ripper' became the world's most famous cold case and true crime whodunit, and at the same time the semi-mythical Jack appeared in short stories and novels and movies, and eventually TV programmes and computer games. 'Jack' was both real and fictional. There is no point of comparison with Steven Avery, and I think the Avery case will be forgotten as soon as another case of false imprisonment and postulated corruption comes along.

Despite my reservations that anything of value could come from comparing Avery with Jack the Ripper, the blurb's promise that the book examined how and why the Ripper case became notorious sounded interesting and possibly a worthy contribution to our understanding of the case. But the time and the place are crucial to understanding why 'Jack the Ripper' achieved such notoriety and has continued to fascinate ever since. Frost

barely allowed these factors into any analysis she made and, indeed, her understanding of the history seemed poor. Sadly, this book contributes very little to our understanding of 'Jack the Ripper'.

### THE WHITECHAPEL MURDERS OF 1888: ANOTHER DEAD END?

John Malcolm

self-published: 2020

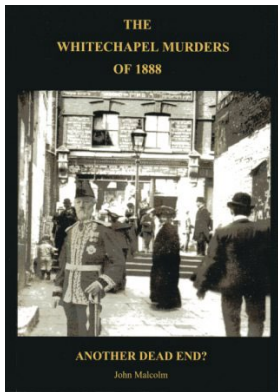
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214; illus in colour; appendices (further reading)

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John Malcolm does not believe that 'Kosminski' was Jack the Ripper, but he unashamedly admits that he's pretty sure 'Kosminski' currently occupies the number one spot on the list of suspects. That wasn't always the case.

As you most likely know, 'Kosminski' was almost certainly the Polish Jew suspect said to have been Jack the

Ripper by no less an authority than Sir Robert Anderson, the Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police at the time of the murders. As someone who was in a position to know, and who would have known the evidence against every major suspect, weight has to be attached to what he believed. But that hasn't been the case.

If a reason for disbelieving Anderson can be found, someone has used it. Anderson had been dismissed as seeking kudos, either for himself or the CID. He has been discounted as boastful, a wishful thinker, and a geriatric fantasist. And because he suggested a Jew, he's been disregarded as anti-Semitic. In fact, the idea that he was anti-Semitic has become some ingrained in Ripper lore that in a recent book it was confidently asserted that his thinking should be discounted because of 'his well-known dislike of 'aliens' and his lack of direct knowledge of the case'.

John Malcolm didn't believe that 'Kosminski' was Jack the Ripper, then he did, then he fell under the sway of Philip Sugden and didn't believe it. Then maybe... Then Stewart Evans and maybe not... Then Rob House and maybe... Then back to the drawing board and a thorough reassessment of all the evidence, which included a reading of Sir Robert Anderson's religious writings, which Malcolm says he didn't find much fun. Neither did I when I began reading them. I gave up. John Malcolm didn't.

The upshot of all this is that John Malcolm has written a wonderfully idiosyncratic book in which he not only examines a lot of questions you may not even have considered before, but addresses lots of the problems raised about Sir Robert Anderson. Whether you think 'Kosminski' is a likely suspect or you dismiss him altogether, I guarantee you'll find something of value in John's carefully-considered arguments.

This new edition isn't very different from the previous one. There are some corrections, some new footnotes scattered throughout, and a little bit of new text, but the main difference is about twenty new, full-colour photographs. Most of the sources are mentioned in the text, and a fully-searchable ebook of the old edition is available for £6.00 and should fulfil the need for an index if you really need one.

I might add that this is not only a must-have book for every serious Ripperologist, it's a not-to-be-missed collectable book too. There are 100 copies only, all signed.

### THE RADIANT ABYSS: VICTORIAN LONDON IN THE FILMS OF JACK THE RIPPER

Amanda J Field

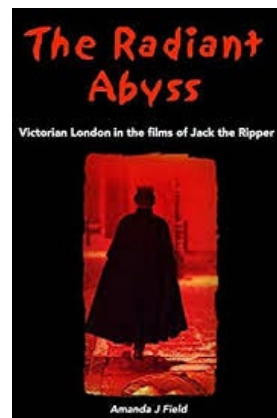
Gosport, Hampshire: Chaplin Books, 2020

[www.chaplinbooks.co.uk](http://www.chaplinbooks.co.uk)

ebook

90pp; illus; notes, biblio

£3.95



It won't come as a surprise if I say that this short but readable book looks at how London has been portrayed in Jack the Ripper movies – the book's sub-title made that clear – but it helps to keep that firmly in mind because a lot of what the author says can also apply to the real London, and it is easy to forget that the author's focus isn't Jack the

Ripper.

The book also feels like Amanda Field wrote it in the 1990s and superficially updated it about a decade ago, the lengthy bibliography having ten sources from 2000 or after and none from the last fifteen years. The date of authorship isn't a problem, because the author concentrates mainly on comparing the portrayal of London in Alfred Hitchcock's *The Lodger* (1926) with that of the Hughes Brothers' *From Hell* (2001). It would have nevertheless been interesting to have read her take on the London of *Ripper Street*.

You'll recall that in 1902 Jack London visited Thomas



Cook's travel agency in Ludgate Circus, and found that they couldn't help him visit the East End, barely a stone's throw from their office, but could have 'unhesitatingly and instantly, with ease and celerity' sent him to Africa or Tibet. I don't know how true the story is, but it illustrates the other-worldliness of the East End. Fourteen years earlier, in 1888, it was probably even more of an other-world. Contemporaries applied a variety of metaphors: 'terra incognita', 'nether world', 'the abyss', 'the vortex' or 'the maelstrom'. It's perhaps worth observing that having just read Rebecca Frost's *Media and the Murderer*, Amanda Field's book reminded me that a big part in the notoriety of the Jack the Ripper murders was played by the other-worldliness of the East End.

As Field points out, *The Lodger* makes little use of the familiar London landmarks, but London is marked 'as an alien and predatory place, principally through the use of fog' – fog plays a big part in the story, as indicated by the movie's subtitle, 'A Story of the London Fog'. Field argues, using supportive quotes, that London was a place of disappearance, be it faceless in the anonymity of a big city, or literally like fading into the fog, disappearing into a warren of alleys, or, as does the lodger in the movie, vanishing behind the locked door of a rented room.

Film-makers have also used the duality of London to great effect. The West End is light, good, ordered, stable and safe, whereas the East End is dark, bad, insecure and dangerous. This duality reflects the reality of 1888. The West End was mainly secure and stable, but in the East End, the forces for change were gathering and threatening the very fabric of society. The unemployed were flexing their muscles, unions were threatening the business owners, and women were agitating for the vote... everything seemed centred on the East End. Jack the Ripper seemed to embody all the fears and anxieties associated with change. Field quotes Peter Ackroyd's observation that 'the East End was the true Ripper.' It's not an original thought, but in a way it's true.

Field notes how the West End and East End are contrasted in *From Hell*. In the West End it's daylight and the sun is nearly always shining, but in the East End it's almost always night and raining. In the West End it is quiet, and the indoors have lustrous mahogany and polished leather, shiny glassware and gleaming silver. In the East End, it's noisy in the street or a pub and everything is grey, including the people. I hadn't noticed that in the film, although I haven't watched it for a long time. Likewise *The Lodger*, but Field pointed out the religious symbolism throughout the movie, something new to me and for which I have promised myself to keep an open eye.

Amanda Field has one section which she called

'The Cult of Ripperology', which was a title I found on the offensive side. I sometimes think that the greatest disservice Colin Wilson did to Ripperology was coining the term 'Ripperology'! It invests the mystery of Jack the Ripper and the study of the time and place and the crimes with the quality of pseudohistory, much as UFOlogy did in the 1950s for the study of aerial phenomena, but it is merely an interest, no different to having an interest in the history of Tudor England or the American Civil War. It isn't a 'cult.'

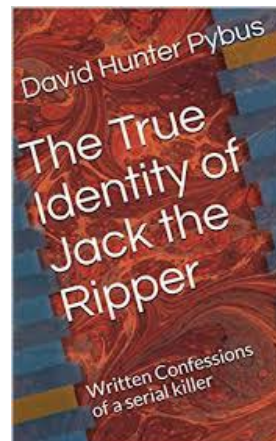
I also nearly spilt my tea when I read 'a number of present-day authors make their living from writing about the Ripper'. I'd like to know who. If I relied on writing about Jack the Ripper for my living, right now I'd be huddled in rags inside a cardboard box down some dank and smelly alley, scratching away on a piece of paper with a pencil stub.

However, the author has recognised the worth of an awful lot of pertinent quotes by other people and provides some excellent insights into the representation of London.

#### THE TRUE IDENTITY OF JACK THE RIPPER: WRITTEN CONFESSIONS OF A SERIAL KILLER

David Hunter Pybus  
self-published, 2020  
softcover & ebook  
568pp; appendices; biblio  
£11.78 softcover, £6.10 ebook

(This book appears to have been withdrawn from sale)



The heart of every reasonably knowledgeable follower of the Great Victorian Mystery must sink every time there is a new book published in which the author claims to have solved the mystery. A claim like that is almost raising a flag proclaiming "Don't waste your money". But we dig into our pockets just in case the author has at least uncovered something interesting.

Predictably, this book doesn't provide the solution to the mystery, but neither is it interesting – unless your fancy is grabbed by Freemasonic conspiracies, clues left in codes and ciphers, an old and improbable suspect, and a lot of wrong information.

David Pybus's theory is that Jack the Ripper was the poet James Kenneth Stephen, the second son of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, the judge who presided over the trial of Florence Maybrick. J.K. Stephen, who died in 1892, was also tutor to Prince Albert Victor and it has been suggested

that the two men were homosexual lovers. Whether or not Prince Albert Victor was in fact homosexual is disputed (and Andrew Cook does much to dispel it), but Pybus accepts it without reserve, and argues that Stephen's frustration when the couple separated was a catalyst for the murders.

About half of this book's 550+ pages is basically a biography of J.K. Stephen, primarily aimed at showing that he was not 'Mr. Nice Guy'. That fact, if it is a fact, does not alone make him Jack the Ripper, and I have very little doubt that the East End was teeming with nasty people who would fit the criteria to be Jack. The trouble is, they weren't rich or famous, and nobody bothered to record anything of their lives.

After thirty-three chapters the author comes to the first murder, which Mr Pybus believes to have been that of Martha Tabram, but the chapter is the author's own imagining of J.K. Stephen committing the crime, complete with Tabram's stereotypically accosting Stephen with the words "Fancy a good time, dearie". All the murders are described in this way, though he focuses on Mary Kelly's murder a little more factually, but only a little.

The latter part of the book is devoted to a longish discussion of something I'd never come across before that connects the Ripper and the unsolved Zodiac murders of 1968/69 in the San Francisco area of California. Notoriously, Zodiac communicated with the authorities, writing taunting letters and sending four cryptograms, three of which have not been solved. Back in 2011, a man named Daniel Gillotti placed a series of messages on a Zodiac website – [www.zodiackillersite.com](http://www.zodiackillersite.com) – on a thread called Z340 and "The Sacred Nine". Z340 is one of the Zodiac cyphers and it was published in August 1969, claiming to have worked out one or more of Zodiac's ciphers. He found therein references to J.K. Steven and Jack the Ripper, which is remarkable because the Zodiac communication would pre-date the first known link anyone made between J.K. and Jack.

How J.K. Steven came to be linked with Jack the Ripper is important and apparently unknown to David Pybus. The link was first made by the author Michael Harrison, who was writing a book about Prince Albert Victor and had dismissed the suggestion by Dr Stowell in the *Criminologist* that he was the Ripper. He explained, "I couldn't leave the reader high and dry, so what I did was find somebody who I thought was a likely candidate." (*The Listener*, 17 August 1972)

Harrison was either remarkably prescient or he was indeed the first to make the connection.

Except for a lady named Marnie Hallam; in 1975 she wrote to the *Sunday Times* and said that her grandmother

had been told by her father, a barrister, that the authorities knew Steven was the murderer. If this story is true then Marnie Hallam is the only source independent of Michael Harrison to connect J.K. Steven with Jack the Ripper, and as such it would be so important to Pybus's story that you'd imagine he'd really pull out all the stops to find out as much about her as he could. Instead, Pybus says little more about Marnie Hallam than that his genealogy researcher had identified Marnie's grandmother as Gertrude Baillie Weaver and the barrister as her husband Harold. But Marnie's letter made it clear that the barrister was her grandmother's father, not her husband, so obviously Pybus's genealogist is wrong; it's all academic anyway because Gertrude Baillie Weaver wasn't Marnie Hallam's grandmother.

I don't want to make too much out of this because tracking through Marnie's forebears was a nut on the tough side to crack, but Marnie Hallam's story is really important and not pursuing the lead provided by the genealogist to learn more about Marnie Hallam (and in the process learn that Marnie Hallam's grandmother wasn't Gertrude Weaver), suggests a lack of interest and care. Unfortunately, the book reflects this throughout.

Pybus calls Kevin O'Donnell, who authored *The Jack the Ripper Murders*, Kevin, Colin, and Jack. He says Stephen Evans and Keith Skinner were the authors of *Letters from Hell*. He calls Macnaghten's autobiography "Days of My Life" instead of *Days of My Years*. One of his chapters is called "John Montague Druitt". And he heads a chapter "Sir William Gull", but starts the text by calling him "Sir James Gull". He says Swanson wrote his marginalia in 'Macnaghten's book' and that when Chapman was arraigned, Abberline shouted to Godley that he'd caught the Ripper. He says Druitt "was a failed lawyer", that Mary Kelly was pregnant, that the "Dear Boss" letter was sent to George Lusk, that the Macnaghten memorandum was written in 1889, that a farthing at a murder scene was found Queen's-face upward.

Pybus says Macnaghten wrote the memorandum because he was angry when a newspaper had "named" Thomas Cutbush as the murderer, but the newspaper hadn't "named" Cutbush and Macnaghten had nothing to be angry about. He says that in return for his role in the cover-up, Abberline was given "a nice sinecure with the Pinkerton's" and afterwards received a substantial police pension. Neither is true. Pybus also claims that "Abberline was documented as having interviewed James" Steven, who accused Sir William Gull and Lord Randolph Churchill of being Jack the Ripper. If this was true it would be a great support to Pybus's theory, but Pybus's source appears to be the discredited 'Abberline diaries'. Pybus doesn't really



address the problems with the so-called diaries, and seems unaware that they are discredited because they repeat errors made in an article in a true crime magazine in 1987.

Pybus could also have done with exercising a little more discretion with his sources. He accepts what Abberline allegedly told Nigel Morland, but seems unaware that Morland's reliability has been seriously questioned. And he repeats the tiresome canard that Warren erased the writing on the wall because he feared it would provoke a violent anti-Jew reaction, whereas it was Thomas Arnold, the Superintendent of H Division, who feared riots and had arranged for a policeman with a wet sponge to be standing by when Warren took the responsibility for wiping off the writing himself. A good boss! Warren has taken the flack ever since.

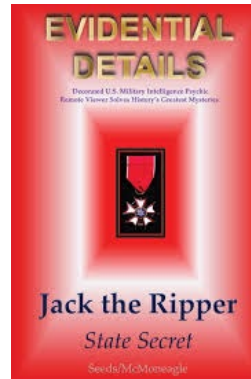
The book's errors and dubious statements go on and on, and whilst they're not significant individually, their sheer number suggests that the author has a deficient knowledge of his subject or hasn't proof-read his manuscript (or maybe both). The author charges the cover price of a professionally-published book for a poor amateur production. That's just not on.

In my opinion, the strongest argument that J.K. Stephen could have been Jack the Ripper is Michael Harrison's contention that Dr Stowell may have misidentified the person whose name was in Dr Gull's papers. But this depends on Dr Stowell accurately reporting what was seen and what was actually written, and on why Dr Stowell believed that person was responsible for the Whitechapel murders. Apart from that, David Pybus does a good job of showing that J.K. Stephen was a disquietingly odd individual, maybe even a potential murderer, but that doesn't mean that he was anymore likely to have been Jack the Ripper than many other disturbed and possibly homicidal, but nameless people who populated the East End. Pybus argues that Stephen knew the East End because he regularly visited Toynbee Hall. I'm not sure whether he did or not, but Stephen knew several Cambridge men who were members of the Toynbee Hall Association, so it is possible that he did. That would at least put Stephen in the area, which often isn't the case with suspects, but it doesn't mean he knew the geography beyond the Toynbee's walls.

When Michael Harrison, on TV's *Late Night Line-Up*, presented his argument for Stephen being Jack the Ripper, Daniel Farson responded, "Well, you can make out a better case for Queen Victoria." I don't think much has changed.

## JACK THE RIPPER: STATE SECRET (EVIDENTIAL DETAILS SERIES)

Scott Seeds & Joseph McMoneagle  
Lulu/ Logistics News Network LLC, 2020  
ISBN: 978-0982692851  
152 pages; illus; notes; biblio.  
£15



'We determined Jack was Aaron Kosminski in 1997 and sat on the material until 2019 – 22 years. Out of respect we declined to be the first to reveal Jack's ethnicity.'

The authors wrote these words just three lines into the preface and I began to have niggling doubts about this book. Actually, they weren't 'niggling'.

I'm being polite about that.

Ten years before the authors of this book allegedly 'determined' that Aaron Kosminski was Jack the Ripper, he had been found in the asylum records by the author Martin Fido when researching his book, *The Crimes, Detection and Death of Jack the Ripper*, published in 1987. A little later that year it was learned that 'Kosminski' was named in what is now known as the Swanson marginalia. Aaron Kosminski – and his ethnicity – had been the subject of considerable discussion in books, articles, and TV documentaries throughout the 1990s and afterwards. By the time the authors of this book decided to reveal it, Aaron Kosminski had been widely discussed for thirty-two years.

The authors of this book obviously weren't up-to-speed with Jack the Ripper, but one of them, Joseph McMoneagle, is supposed to be a psychic (or Remote Viewer), and I'm frankly surprised that at some point during those thirty-plus years his gift or talent didn't alert him to the fact that Aaron Kosminski was well-known. Surely, at some point when researching this book the authors would have discovered that they needn't have 'sat on' the ethnicity of Aaron Kosminski because it was very well-known?

But back to Joseph McMoneagle. Back in the late 1970s the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) established a secret US Army unit at Fort Meade, Maryland, to evaluate the intelligence uses of psychic phenomena. By the 1990s, the projects were collectively codenamed 'Stargate'. A lot of work was done at the non-profit Stanford Research Institute (now known as SRI International), notably by two parapsychologists named Harold E Puthoff and Russell Targ. In August 1973, they tested spoon-bender

Uri Geller in a series of controversial examinations that have since been criticised and dismissed as 'sloppy and inadequate'.

Among the others tested was Joseph McMoneagle, one of the co-authors of this book, whose gift is 'remote viewing', the ability to psychically obtain impressions about a person or object located at a distance. It has and is taken seriously in some quarters – and the authors provide a lengthy list of further reading on the subject – but elsewhere it is dismissed as a pseudoscience, lacking any scientific evidence that it is real. Apparently the \$20 million Stargate Project was terminated in the 1990s because it had failed to produce anything useable.

McMoneagle, who's authored several books, including *The Stargate Chronicles: Memoirs of a Psychic Spy* (2018), *Remote Viewing Secrets* (2000) and *The Ultimate Time Machine* (1998), believes that he can and has 'remote-viewed' events in the past, and the 'Evidential Details' series of books uses those skills to enhance what is known about past events.

What McMoneagle claims to be able to do would be fantastic. Imagine how terrific it would be to be able to view the past! Just think how many historical mysteries one could solve and how many historical problems one could resolve! It's hugely exciting, but, alas, I'm a sceptic and I need to be convinced that an ability or gift like remote viewing is actually real. That stuff about Aaron Kosminski in the opening paragraph didn't help to convince me that it does, and nothing else in this book did either.

The book is a bit of a mess. A lot of time is spent explaining McMoneagle's credentials, including his military medals – his U.S. Legion of Merit Medal even features on the cover of this book – and then there's a section about the death of Princess Diana and another about the Maybrick 'diary'. Finally, one gets to the Ripper section, which interweaves the life of Elizabeth Stride with Victorian history and Aaron Kosminski. There's also what appears to be a fair bit of fiction: we're told that Elizabeth 'developed into a skinny farm girl. She was a plain Jane with big ears, kinky hair and a long neck.' Also that her parents wanted a boy, that her elder sister was more attractive, and that as an adolescent she was stuck with the most menial farm jobs. As for Aaron, we're told that his mother, Golda Lubnowska, was a prostitute and Aaron was the child of one of her clients. His father, Abram, allegedly deserted his family and Aaron was treated so badly that he developed a burning hatred of prostitutes.

Good stuff. If it was true.

However, there was an interesting little bit of information. On pages 60-61 the authors claim that Elizabeth left John Stride and moved in with William A.

Fisher, who owned a coffee shop in Chrisp Street, Poplar, and they acted as man and wife, having two children together. Fisher's coffee shop was 'probably shut down by the authorities' in 1877, say the authors, although they give no reasons for the authorities to have taken this action, and William and Elizabeth found employment aboard the pleasure steamers that plied the Thames, specifically aboard the *Princess Alice*. On 3 September 1878, the *Bywell Castle* collided with and sank the *Princess Alice*, costing the lives of about 650 passengers and crew, among them William A. Fisher and the two children. Elizabeth survived, and the following day went to Woolwich Dockyard, where she identified the body of her husband and two children, but because she and William were not married in the eyes of the law, she was not allowed to claim the bodies. The authors write that 'Liz drew a press report stating she had witnessed her "husband" attempting to save one of the children', and say that 'some Ripper historians have callously discounted this story as an illicit attempt to get financial assistance.'

As far as I can tell, none of this information was obtained psychically by Mr McMoneagle, which means it was researched by Mr Seeds, who gives no source. No William A. Fisher, who owned a coffee-shop in Chrisp Street, Poplar, is mentioned in any book or newspaper that I have been able to check, but, as Seeds and McMoneagle know, Michael Kidney, with whom Elizabeth had lived for three years, and Charles Preston, who lived in the same lodging house she used, both stated that Elizabeth had told them that she once had a coffee shop in Chrisp Street. Even more coincidentally, a William A. Fisher *did* run a business in Chrisp Street and did drown when *Princess Alice* sank!

William Alfred Fisher ran a corn chandler business with his wife Mary Ann at 134 Chrisp Street, Poplar. He had a friend in Chrisp Street, William Driscoll, who ran a silversmith and pawnbroking business with his wife at No. 147. On 3 September 1878, William Fisher left the business in his wife's care to take a trip down the Thames aboard *Princess Alice* with Driscoll and Driscoll's five-year-old daughter Rose. When *Princess Alice* was struck by the *Bywell Castle*, Driscoll and Rose stayed afloat and became separated from Fisher. They would eventually jump into the water, Driscoll clutching Rose in his arms, and after a short but terrifying few minutes they were hauled to safety, but Fisher drowned, and his body was among those later pulled from the water or washed ashore. His body was identified at Woolwich Dockyard on 6 September 1887 and his wife, Mary Ann Fisher, later proved his will. She would continue to run the business for some years. There is no evidence, or at least there isn't any I have been able to find, that William Alfred Fisher had any children; his wife was a widow when he married her and had a son,



William James Willy, who was 23-years-old in 1878.

The authors claim that on 8 October 1888, the *Manchester Guardian Evening News* – a paper that has never existed as far as I know, and is presumably a conflation of the *Manchester Guardian* and *Evening News* – carried a story which claimed that a search of a Woolwich newspapers showed that Elizabeth Stride had attended the *Princess Alice* inquest and identified three bodies as those of her husband and two children. The authors observe, 'She never stated that her husband was John Stride. But a W.A. Fisher, and their two children, had drowned in the disaster,' and they conclude that, 'Ripperologists need to admit that for years Elizabeth was the common-law wife of W.A. Fisher.' However, the cited article was a widely-published agency story, and it was refuted in many newspapers the following day. The only record of a father and his two young children being drowned was that of a Mr Bell and his two sons aged 10 and 7.

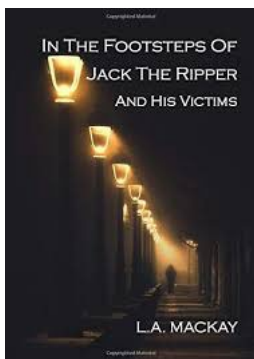
The only connection Elizabeth had with Chrisp Street was the coffee shop she allegedly had there and mentioned to at least Michael Kidney and Charles Preston. William Alfred Fisher did live and have a business in Chrisp Street, but it was a corn chandler, not a coffee shop, and he was married and did not have two young children. I have no idea where Seeds and McMoneagle found their information, but it seems to be incorrect. It doesn't inspire confidence in the book.

## IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JACK THE RIPPER AND HIS VICTIMS

L.A. Mackay

ISBN 979-8651780655

Softcover £9.99, ebook £5.99



'I see dead people', said Cole Sear. I'm pleased to say that I don't see dead people, and as I live next to a graveyard, I'm grateful for that. I also don't believe it is possible to communicate with the dead and that it is only right to be sceptical about the claims of those who say otherwise. L.A. Mackay is a psychic medium, so I had a few problems with her book right from the kick-off.

In 2013 Mackay launched a paranormal investigation company called From the Other Side, and she's written several books based on her psychic abilities, including *The Ghost of Robin Hood* (2018), *Celebrity Ghost Conversations* (2019), and *Tragic Stories of the Titanic* (2020). Her latest book, *In The Footsteps of Jack the Ripper and His*

*Victims*, is the result of five years' research, much of it done on the spot in London where she has picked up psychic impressions from Ripper-connected sites. She has supplemented this research by interviewing or having a general chat with Jack's victims.

Mackay discusses the canonical and other victims, but all of her information seems to have come from published sources. She provides a breakdown of the victim's final hours, describes their murder and gives a brief history of the murder location, and then the aftermath and the inquest. She also singles out specific topics for special discussion, such as the Goulston Street graffito. The material is well ordered and concise, but there's little or nothing original, so anyone familiar with the case will find nothing they didn't already know.

The trouble with information obtained psychically is that there is no way of verifying it, so it has no practical use. Another problem is that the dead don't have anything interesting to say, as Mackay demonstrates. She had what she calls Mediumship Conversations with the victims, and these were almost always conducted using a 'Dousing Pendulum' – a crystal on a chain; you ask 'yes' or 'no' questions and it responds by swinging in one direction or another. This method doesn't allow anyone dead or alive to develop a jolly stream of banter. And it didn't. Catherine Eddowes said there were two murderers, both of them policemen. Their surnames began with the letters 'A' and 'S' – if Eddowes knew their surnames began with 'A' and 'S', why didn't she know the full name? Catherine also said her favourite tippie was gin, which shows the level of banality to which conversations with the dead can descend. Some corroboration was received from Mary Kelly, who told Mackay that her real name was Mary Davies and that she came from Shropshire, and added that her murderers were policeman, one with the initials R.A. and the other D.S. – I'm sure you can see where Mackay is heading with this!

Mackay may be sincere, and she may have been writing for believers like herself, but it is probably unnecessary to point out here that nothing she has learned from chats with the dead can be accepted as truth. Even if one could liven-up a quiet evening by having a tête-à-tête with a dead person ('liven-up' may not be quite the right word), there's no evidence that Mackay was conversing with the deceased. And I have serious doubts that she was. She came to London on one of her research trips and on her list of sights to see was St Botolph's Church, which she duly visited and with her 'psychic eye' saw groups of prostitutes parading around the building. Now, the only connection St Botolph's has with Jack the Ripper is the story of the prostitutes circling the building, so it is likely

that Mackay read that story before listing St Botolph's as one of the places she wanted to visit. So, were the prostitutes circling the church seen with her psychic eye, or did Mackay imagine a scene taken from what she'd read?

Moving on, unsurprisingly she concludes that Jack the Ripper was Robert Anderson and Donald Swanson.

She says Anderson had worked for the secret service and would have been trained not to attract attention, so he 'could get around without being spotted'. But there was no secret service in 1888; consequently there was nobody to train agents, and Anderson was never an agent, just a desk-bound pen-pusher.

Mackay concludes with photographs and descriptions of some of the Ripper-associated locations in Whitechapel, including the Ten Bells, of which she says, '...if you look inside, you will see a tiled picture of the unfortunates.' You won't. You'll see a tiled picture of the area in 'Ye Olden Times'. Aside from such inaccuracies, the book would have benefited from careful editing – in the introduction we meet 'Walter Snicket' and 'Francis Tumberty', for example – but overall Mackay's account of the victims and the murders is tolerably accurate. The psychic revelations were minimal and mostly banal, and Mackay's theory was utterly unconvincing.

### JACK THE RIPPER UNCOVENANTED

Kristina Nordquist

PDF

£6.99

[paypal.me/JTRUnCovenanted?locale.x=sv\\_SE](https://paypal.me/JTRUnCovenanted?locale.x=sv_SE)



In this nicely-produced, well-written, fully-sourced, and closely-researched book, Kristina Nordquist presents a convoluted theory that Jack the Ripper was Henry Maxwell Reilly (1834-1914). He was born in India in 1834 and after a few years as a deputy magistrate he began in 1863 a long career

with the Bengal Police, becoming a Superintendent under James Monro, who was Inspector General of Police. On 24 January 1857 he had married Caroline Kemp, who in England had enjoyed the privileges of elevated society. However, she filed for divorce in the early 1880s and although nothing came of it that time, the marriage deteriorated and by the autumn of 1888 she sought a judicial separation. According to Nordquist, this spelt complete ruin for Henry Reilly and prompted him to embark on a campaign of murder.

The theory is that Henry masqueraded as the deputy

of a common lodging house at 14 Dorset Street, and the rather grand Caroline, whose family associated with lords and ladies, passed as his dutiful wife. Caroline, you'll recall, even said she'd spoken with Mary Kelly at the entrance to Millers Court a few hours after the medical evidence suggested Kelly was dead (murdered by her husband, if Nordquist is to be believed).

This review isn't the place to describe Nordquist's theory in detail. As said, the book is well-researched and fully sourced – in many respects it is a model of sourcing – but the theory is... Well, let's say it's hard to accept. In my opinion, if you need to manipulate the sources to make a theory work, it's probably time to seriously consider discarding a theory. I find it very difficult to believe that an upper-middle-class woman from a prominent Sussex family would have lived in Dorset Street, one of the most notorious streets in London. Her life in India may have prepared her for squalor and filth, but not to live with it as part of her everyday existence. Maybe she was made of tough stuff, but I suspect that she wouldn't have enthusiastically embraced the dirty and uncouth people, or the rats, bed bugs and other vermin. But more than that, I wonder how well she could have passed herself off as someone born into or long-accustomed to living in such conditions. Could she have blended in so well as to be accepted by the likes of Mary Kelly?

A big problem are the records which show that Henry Maxwell Reilly was thousands of miles from London when he was supposed to have killed Mary Kelly. He left London for India aboard the *Peshawar* on 25 October 1888. On 9 November, the day Kelly was murdered, the *Peshwar* was in Port Said, and there is no evidence to show that Reilly wasn't on board. Reilly arrived in Bombay (Mumbai) ten days later, and from there he travelled to West Bengal where, on 2 December he took up a new appointment in Maldah as District Superintendent of Police. Nordquist doesn't ignore or try to hide this awkward detail, but confronts it head on, arguing that ships' passenger lists were notoriously unreliable. They may well have been, but there is no evidence that they were in this case. It's never a good thing to try to resolve a problem of this magnitude – having your supposed murderer thousands of miles from his victim – by proposing without hard evidence that the source is or is very likely to have been wrong.

Finally, there is the difficult problem presented by the existence of Henry Maxwell. On 22 May 1889, a man of that name was admitted to the Whitechapel Infirmary in Baker Street from 14 Dorset Street, which was where in November 1888 Caroline Maxwell said her husband laboured over his duties as deputy. Two days later he died from pneumonia. There is little reason to doubt that this



man was Caroline Maxwell's husband, a man who was not and had nothing to do with Henry Maxwell Reily.

Nordquist doesn't avoid this problem either, but makes quite a big thing out of it. Eagle-eyed, Norquist noticed that on the Infirmary document recording Henry Maxwell's death there was a small number written in the margin beside Maxwell's name: 73. It is easy to miss, but it is definitely there and Nordquist says it is a medical code for a suicide by 'cut or stab'.

She believes this because in the 1889 Report of the Medical Officer for Health for Whitechapel, there is a table on page 30 listing the number of deaths in Whitechapel and their cause. The 73rd cause is part of a section headed 'Suicide' and denotes the manner of the suicide, 'cut, stab'. There are five columns, one for each quarter of the year into which the number of deaths from the given cause are inserted, and a fifth column is the total for the year.

Nordquist makes much of what she believes to be the suicide of Henry Maxwell, rightly pointing out that the law required that an inquest be held on a suicide, and

that a suicide should not have been buried on consecrated ground. In the case of Henry Maxwell, the lodging house deputy, there was no inquest and his was one of sixteen bodies buried on Monday, 27 May in a common unconsecrated grave in the London City Cemetery, Little Ilford. Something, says Nordquist, was very odd about the death and burial of Henry Maxwell.

Or maybe there wasn't. This is a book review, not a full-on examination of Nordquist's theory, so my quick and cursory look at this source data could be wrong, but I took a look at the Medical Officer for Health's Report for 1889 and it looks to me like only one person committed suicide by 'cut or a stab' in 1889 and he did so in the 1st quarter of 1889. Henry Maxwell died on 24 May 1889, the 2nd quarter. If that's correct, 73 wasn't Henry Maxwell.

Kristina Nordquist has obviously put a lot of hard work into this book, it contains a lot of information, and probably merits several readings and a thorough double-checking of the plentiful sources provided. On the face of it, though, the theory seems inherently implausible; it

	1917	1918	1919	1920
70 Otherwise .....	...	...	1	4
<i>Homicide.</i>				
71 Murder & manslaughter	I	...	...	...
<i>Suicide.</i>				
72 Gun-shot wounds .....	...	...	...	...
73 Cut, stab .....	I	...	...	...
74 Poison .....	I	I	I	I
75 Drowning .....	...	...	...	...
76 Hanging .....	I	...	...	...
77 Otherwise .....	...	...	...	I
<i>Execution.</i>				
78 Hanging .....	...	...	...	...

looks like Henry Maxwell Reily was in India when Kelly was murdered, and that there really was a man named Henry Maxwell living at 14 Dorset Street who had a wife named Caroline.

### JACK THE RIPPER: A COLD CASE TOOLKIT

Alexander Parker

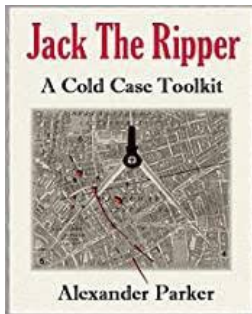
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419pp; Biblio, Pro-Forma Documents etc

Ebook

ISBN 9781716545597

£4.79



I reviewed the author's previous foray into the world of Ripper studies, *Jack the Ripper: Design for Death* (2018) in *Ripperologist* 163, January 2019, and didn't know what to make of it. I found it tough going, interesting, different, and probably worth the fiver it cost.

I can't say the same about this second bite of the cherry.

In his introduction the author says that he doesn't agree with those who say we'll never know who Jack the Ripper was, and he confidently writes 'I think we will find out – and by using the methods I will be introducing below.' The methods include tables and ways of organising the evidence, victim profiles, maps, geographic locations, and so on, but I doubt they'll bring us any nearer to a solution than we've ever been. The trouble is that Alexander Parker's grasp of many details is either wrong or biased or both. Here are a few examples.

He says that what we call the Swanson marginalia was found by 'a high-ranking police official'. It wasn't. It was found by his grandson, Jim Swanson. Parker also comments, 'Donald Swanson writes a misleading marginalia for all to read that implies that JTR was a local Jew. The account is not true but it became the basis for Sir Robert Anderson's confidence that the case was definitely solved.' I let pass the statement that Swanson's marginalia is 'misleading' and 'not true', although neither statement is supported by any real evidence, but the marginalia was not written 'for all to see'. It was written for private consumption in the margins of Swanson's own copy of a book. There is no suggestion anywhere that he ever showed or tried to show or so much as whispered anything about the marginalia to anyone, not even his family, and nobody saw it for a generation or two. Furthermore, it was in that book that Anderson wrote that the case was closed, so the marginalia was not and could not have been the basis for what Anderson thought.

Parker writes, '...there is little valid evidence to link Druitt to the murders...' Actually, we know of no valid evidence, but our ignorance doesn't mean that no valid evidence existed. There appears to have been 'evidence' that was convincing to Sir Melville Macnaghten, and he expressed his opinion in an official report. Furthermore, Macnaghten was stating a fact which he was in an excellent position to know, not presenting a theory and trying to persuade anyone to accept it. Parker is not alone in arguing that Macnaghten wrote 'a dodgy memorandum', but he's a bit short on a good, solid argument that most readers would find persuasive.

Dr Thomas Bond, says Parker, circulated a story that three American medical students were after wombs. This seems to be a conflation of the three medical students who came under suspicion early in the investigation and the story that an American doctor had visit several medical institutions in London apparently attempting to purchase uteri. Neither story had any connection with Dr Thomas Bond.

Parker is very keen on the Freemasons theory, and the writing on the wall is central to his thinking – Warren saw something in the message he did not want anyone else to see (the word 'Juwes', of course), and so took the enormous step of erasing what was potentially a hugely important clue. Unfortunately, it was Superintendent Thomas Arnold, the head of H Division, who wanted the writing erased, believing it could inflame the already tense situation with the Jews, and he had a policeman with water and sponge waiting for his order. Warren recognised the seriousness of what Arnold was about to do and – like a good boss – took the responsibility himself.

Parker also writes, '...Also important here is the story of Jubela, Jubelo, and Jubelum – the "Three Ruffians" or "Three Juwes" of Freemasonry legend. I found an old archive document that proves London lodges and their members would know both the story and the ruffians' names from 1760 onwards as the murderers of the architect Hiram Abiff, one of Freemasonry's most venerated characters.' The trouble is that as far as I know it has never been doubted that London Freemasons knew the story of the murder of Hiram Abiff, or that they knew their names to be Jubela, Jubelow and Jubelum. In fact, we know they were known, so I can only assume that Parker has completely misunderstood the absence of evidence that Jubela, Jubelow and Jubelum were ever known as the 'Juwes'. And if they weren't, the decision to have the writing erased was not because Warren didn't want the word seen by anyone else. I may add that Parker did not find 'an old archive document', but an advertisement in a 1760 issue of the *London Magazine* for a book called *Three*

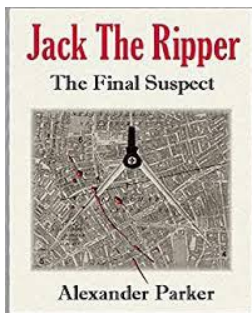


*distinct Knocks; or, The Door of Free-Masonry Opened*, the title of which alludes to Abiff's three murderers.

I can't say this book inspired me, except in a negative way, but if Freemason theories are your bag, a fiver probably won't break the bank.

### JACK THE RIPPER THE FINAL SUSPECT

Alexander Parker  
Lulu Press, Inc, 2020  
ebook  
263; illus; charts; biblio  
ISBN: 9781716547089  
£5.99



This is the third and final volume in Alexander Parker's trilogy of books. In it he expands on his reasons for believing that Jack the Ripper was Frederick Treves, but his book is such a mish-mash of his own ideas about how to identify the Ripper and Freemason that the theory has little substance to

recommend it.

There are processes of reasoning that baffled me. For example, he says that there isn't 'even a whiff' of Masonry in the surviving police reports and newspaper articles. 'What does this tell you?', he asks, and answers, 'an organised Patsy Plant operation...'

Let me see, there is no evidence in the surviving documentation of Masonic involvement, and this is evidence of Masonic involvement...

He then says that 'a trail was left pointing to Aaron Kosminski, Sir Charles Warren's 'right hand man', Donald Swanson, deliberately leaving an account that named Kosminski.

Except that writing two decades later in the margins of a book, something that nobody else was supposed to see and which nobody else did see for nearly a century; something which would almost certainly have been meaningless to anyone who saw it, and putting it in a book which could have been destroyed time and time over, was a poor way of setting up a patsy.

'What more evidence do you need...?' Parker asks. Anything halfway good would be a start.

There is an eagle-eyed observation that's quite interesting though. Parker has noticed that the writer of the 'Saucy Jacky' postcard put a dash between 'ev' and 'ent' when writing of the 'double ev-ent'. This is curious. There is no obvious reason for hyphenating the word, but it does make one wonder whether someone wrote out the letter, for some reason, such as reaching the end

of the line, hyphenating 'event'. Someone then copied it retaining the hyphen.

Parker, however, suggests that the dash was intended to represent a missing letter, then speculates that the missing letter was an 'R', so the word reads 'TREVEN', and he further theorises it was an anagram that can be read as TR EVEN or 'Treves will get even'.

This reasoning may suggest to you why my patience ran very thin, and why I thought the evidence against Frederick Treves ran even thinner. Mind you, as said before, if Masonic conspiracy theorising gets your juices flowing, Parker's trilogy is for you.

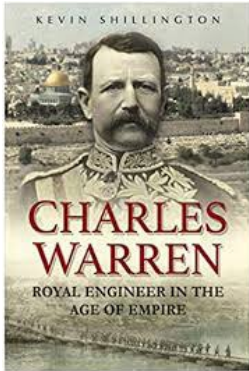
Parker says Treves is mentioned as a Ripper suspect by William J Fishman, Mike Holgate (in *Jack the Ripper: The Celebrity Suspects*), and Richard Whittington Egan. It is unstated, but I assume one is supposed to infer that all three attached weight to the Treves candidature. Holgate in fact stated that Treves had been 'implausibly denounced' as the Ripper. Whittington-Egan, who naturally had considerable respect for Bill Fishman, as do we all, noted that he'd said Treves was 'under surveillance', but added that the statement was 'in equal measure intriguing and puzzling', which could be Whittington-Egan's typically polite cypher for something more cutting. I don't know Fishman's source, but I wonder if he confused Treves with Dr Denis Halstead, a doctor at the London Hospital in 1888, who observed in his book *Doctor in the Nineties* that doctors came under suspicion.

I don't want to be too harsh, but this is the 'threequel' that broke the critics back. I'm afraid that I was unpersuaded by this umpteenth attempt at a Masonic conspiracy, and I don't think there's any evidence against Treves – although in fairness he had medical skill and was in the East End at the time, which can't be said for every suspect.

### CHARLES WARREN. ROYAL ENGINEER IN THE AGE OF EMPIRE

Kevin Shillington  
Bath: Brown Dog Books, 2020  
www.selfpublishingpartnership.co.uk  
softcover  
486; illus; maps; biblio; index.  
ISBN: 978-1-83952-187-4  
£20.00

It is probable that Sir Charles Warren should be remembered as a hero. That's certainly how he was remembered during the early part of his career, but today he is remembered – when he's remembered at all – as a failure: he was the Metropolitan Police Commissioner who so badly mishandled a peaceful march by the unemployed that it turned into a riot; he was the Commissioner who failed to catch Jack the Ripper; and as a military leader he was responsible for the monumental failure at the battle



of Spion Kop in the Second Boer War. His *Boys' Own* adventures – tracking down the murderers of Professor Palmer and tunnelling under the Temple Mount in search of the Temple of Solomon – have been covered by the harsh and unforgiving sands of time and are rarely recalled.

Warren's failures were not all of his own making. The police were demoralised and needed reorganisation and discipline. As the *Times* said, Warren was 'precisely the man whom sensible Londoners would have chosen to preside over the Police Force of the Metropolis', and even the *Pall Mall Gazette*, usually critical of the Metropolitan Police, thought that Warren was 'a man after our own heart,' but it prophetically warned that Warren should be left to do things his own way. The Home Secretary at the time of his appointment, Hugh Childers, did so, but when Gladstone's government fell in June 1886, Childers was succeeded by Henry Matthews, probably the worst Home Secretary Britain has ever had. Matthews and his mandarins were as much responsible for the Bloody Sunday riots, and Warren was no more responsible for the failure to catch Jack the Ripper than anyone else, possibly less so. As for Spion Kop, although Shillington doesn't go into it, it is a mystery why Warren, who lacked the experience for the command, was ever appointed to it, and one argument is that General Sir Redvers Henry Buller, who appointed him, was suffering from dementia and thought he was someone else.

I think Kevin Shillington is a little harsh on Warren from time to time, but he has written a magnificent biography. He was in contact with Sir Charles' descendant and was given access to some family photographs which add tremendously to his book – I was particularly won over by the photograph on page 339 of the Warren family in fancy dress, which gave humanity to Warren, who often comes across as the austere Victorian gentleman.

There is one criticism of the book to which I sadly feel obliged to draw attention. On Page 329 he refers to Hallie Rubenhold's study of Jack the Ripper's victims having revealed 'that most of these women were not prostitutes at all, but merely down-and-out victims of poverty who, in drowning their personal and economic misery in alcohol did not have the sixpence to pay for a night in a seedy boarding house.' As serious students of the story are aware, the evidence that the women *were* prostitutes was ignored by Rubenhold, and her argument is untenable once her suggestion that the victims had gone to the places where their bodies were found to sleep.

Kevin Shillingford is a historian, and a distinguished one at that, and it is a pity that he appears to have uncritically accepted what Rubenhold has written, but what saddens me most is to see Rubenhold's theory, like those bogus victim photos found on the internet, making their way into mainstream books. There are enough fictions about the Ripper floating around without more being added to the pile.

Shillingford also takes Bruce Robinson to task, referring to 'his careless and often flippant use of sources' and 'his tendency to convert circumstantial evidence into proven fact'. I have no argument with this judgement, but it's a shame that Shillingford is blissfully unaware that Ripperologists generally share his opinion of both Robinson's book and his arguments. Had he been, he might not have sniffily commented that 'all Robinson's book proves is that the art of Ripperology is alive and well in the second decade of the 21st century'.

That said, Shillingford has written a very good biography of Sir Charles Warren, showing him to be much, much more than the Commissioner who failed to catch the Ripper and the commander to lead British troops to a crushing defeat by a bunch of South African farmers. This is a well-written and well-researched book, and a nicely produced one too. Recommended.

*NOTE: Recently published as an ebook is 'Sir Charles Warren and Spion Kop: A Vindication' by 'Defender', published by Smith, Elder, & Co. in 1902. It was long supposed that 'Defender' was Warren himself, but in 'The Anglo-Boer War' (London: Arms and Armour, 1996) Owen Coetzer identified the author as a friend of Warren named Hedworth Lambton RN (he would change his surname to Meux so that he could inherit a substantial fortune), the son of the 2nd Earl of Durham. The ebook is £3.00.*

## **SPRING-HEELLED JACK THE TERROR OF LONDON (1863) BOOK ONE**

Spring-heeled Jack Library Book 1  
979-8636486220  
Paperback £16.99, ebook £6.99

## **SPRING-HEELLED JACK THE TERROR OF LONDON (1886) BOOK TWO**

Spring-heeled Jack Library Book 2 Pt.1  
535pp  
979-8618373623  
Paperback £16.99, ebook £6.99

## **SPRING-HEELLED JACK: ARTICLES AND SHORT FICTION (1838-1879)**

Spring-heeled Jack Library Book 2 Pt.2  
ISBN: 979-8646518133  
511pp  
Paperback £15.99, ebook £5.99



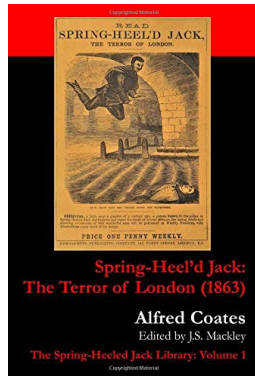
## SPRING-HEEL'D JACK: ARTICLES AND SHORT FICTION (1838-1897)

Spring-heeled Jack Library Book 3

369pp

979-8652045579

Paperback £15.99, ebook £5.99



20 February, 1838. A Tuesday. Bearbind Lane, a lonely spot between Bow and Old Ford in East London. It was about quarter to nine and a violent ringing of the bell brought 18-year-old Jane Alsop to the door of her home. Peering into the darkness she saw a figure, a man wrapped in a large cloak who identified himself as a

policeman and said urgently, "For God's sake bring me a light, for we have caught Spring-heeled Jack in the lane." Jane Alsop disappeared indoors and returned with a candle, handing it to the 'policeman', who clutched it to his chest and threw off his cloak. He 'presented a most hideous, frightful appearance', eyes burning like coals, his skin unnaturally white (evidently a tight-fitting costume) and he spurted blue flame from his mouth. He darted at Jane, caught her by the neck and clawed at her dress. He tore at her clothing and skin, ripped a quantity of hair from her head. Jane screamed loudly and struggled in her assailant's grasp. Her young sister, Mary, looked on, frozen by fear, but an elder, married sister, Sarah, was made of sterner stuff and went to Jane's assistance, but the weird individual was dragging Jane from the house. Sarah grabbed Jane and, by means she was unable to later describe, dragged her indoors. The strange being continued to hammer at the door a few times but when the girls started screaming for the police from an upstairs window the creature 'capered across the fields' and was lost in the darkness. An accomplice must have collected the cloak that had been thrown off, because the creature had not taken it and it was not where it had been dropped when looked for later.

Jane was the daughter of John and Elizabeth Alsop, who had been in bed with some unspecified rheumatic affliction when she was attacked. John was apparently a wealthy man. Jane recovered and two years later married a bookseller named Charles Butcher at St Leonards in Shoreditch. But her encounter with Spring-heeled Jack is probably the most often told of Jack's many appearances, and a bizarre and terrifying encounter it must have been.

In many ways Spring-heeled Jack was a precursor to Jack the Ripper. He was real, and whilst his attacks weren't murders, they were nasty attacks and frightening.

Stories of his activities persisted into the next century, and unsurprisingly Spring-heeled Jack took on a life of his own in fiction. The 'Spring-Heeled Jack Library' is intended to make available all the stories about Jack from the earliest penny dreadful of 1863. It is a mammoth project, a real labour of love, and must feature on the bookshelf of anyone interested in that terrifying creature of the early 19th century.

The first book in the series is of a single penny dreadful, *Spring-Heeled Jack The Terror of London*, published in 1863 by the Newsagent's Publishing Company in 48 weekly issues, each eight pages long! Few copies of the original publication have survived, and even the set preserved in the collection of the British Library is missing issue 14. Fortunately, J.S. Mackley, who has written an introduction to these volumes and annotated them (a mammoth undertaking), managed to track down a copy of the issue in the library of the University of California in Los Angeles, so this edition is fully restored, as complete as it was when first published. If you are interested in Spring-heeled Jack, especially if you are interested in the development of Jack as a fictional creation, to have a copy of the complete publication is very exciting.

In the story Spring-heeled-Jack has elements of the Lone Ranger or Zorro, a mysterious masked man helping those who are prey to evil men, the difference being than Jack is atoning for past sins.

The 1863 story sparked an interest in the story among dramatists; *Spring-Heeled Jack or The Mysteries of the Old Grange* was performed in 1864, and a play simply called *Spring Heeled Jack* appeared the following year. Nothing is known about either. Another play of 1868 was described as employing 'extraordinary mechanical and special effects'. It is interesting to see how the melodramatic Spring-heeled Jack of fiction and theatre developed alongside continuing sightings of the real creature (at Aldershot in 1877, for example) and eventually eclipsed the real individual, much as the real Jack the Ripper has been subsumed by the semi-Gothic horror creation he has become today.

Volume two runs to over one thousand pages and has been split into two volumes. It was published in 48 weekly parts in 1886 and is completely independent of the 1863 story. Each issue filled eight pages, about 10,000 words per issue. We don't know for certain who wrote it, although it was possibly penned by Alfred Sherrington Burrage, although Karl Bell, who gave a talk at a Ripper conference a couple of years ago, has suggested George Augustus Sala. Again the story has been annotated by Jon Mackley, who also provides an introduction.

The third volume in the series contains several pieces

of short fiction about Spring-heeled Jack dating from between 1838 to 1879, including a story from 1888. It seems quite probable that the popularity of the huge 1886 serial, which was reprinted in 1887, followed by the 1888 story, may have inspired who ever bestowed the chilling moniker on the Whitechapel murderer to have called him 'Jack'.

Four further volumes are slated for publication and I must confess to being absolutely bowled over by this project. Spring-heeled Jack, whoever he was (it's highly unlikely to have been a whatever), seen in various guises from the early 1800s and maybe even earlier, is a fascinating story, and it's interesting that he became a figure of melodrama, even becoming a hero or anti-hero. J.S. Mackley is to be congratulated on making the stories available, in complete and affordable editions, and for what can't have been the easy job of reading and annotating them.

As far as I am concerned, a must-have for me, both the softcover and the essential and easily and quickly-searchable ebook.

### SCOTLAND YARD'S MURDER SQUAD

Dick Kirby

Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword True Crime, 2020

[www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk)

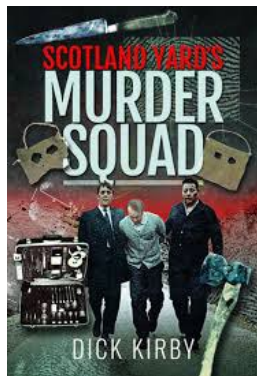
[www.dickkirby.com](http://www.dickkirby.com)

hardcover

209pp; Illus; biblio; index.

ISBN: 9781526765338

£25.00



Dick Kirby seems to rattle out books faster than some people can read them. *Scotland Yard's Murder Squad* was published in June, and in October came *The Racetrack Gangs*. Kirby seems embittered, a world-weary cop who has seen it all and wonders why he bothered. It's easy to understand some of the frustration he must have felt

when he finally got some villain into court and the bad guy walks free or with a paltry community service order. Kirby's frustration is perhaps a little more apparent in this book.

Of all the Yard's special squads the Murder Squad is perhaps the best known as it gave popularity to the once headline-making 'Scotland Yard has been called in'.

Of course, Scotland Yard had often been called in to provide specialist knowledge and experience – perhaps the best-known early example being Inspector Jonathan

Whicher, one of the original members of the Detective Branch when it was created in 1842, who in 1860 was called in to assist the local police in the investigation into the murder of Savile Kent at Road Hill House in Wiltshire – but the Murder Squad proper was formed in 1906 following a Home Office request that the Metropolitan Police put together a special team of skilled investigators to undertake murder investigations anywhere in the country.

Originally known as the Reserve Squad, it wasn't always welcomed, many Chief Constables resenting what they considered outside interference that carried an implied criticism of the abilities of their own officers.

This book is a catalogue of some of the Murder Squad's best-known cases, such as multiple murderer Dr Bodkin Adams, who was investigated by Bert Hannam and Charlie Hewitt, who arrived at Eastbourne police station to be greeted by the Chief Constable seated on his horse. He was being photographed for the force's Christmas card. It would now be a collectors' piece because the horse chose that moment to relieve itself on the floor. Looking at the pile of faeces on the floor, the Chief said, "There you are, Hannam – that's what my horse thinks of Scotland Yard officers!" Hannam promptly responded, "Oh, I'm so glad you spoke, sir – for a moment, I thought you'd fallen off your horse." Neither remark was intended to promote a harmonious working relationship, but Hannam's quick response was an absolute gem and it would be a pleasure to have one of that year's Christmas cards framed on my office wall as a constant reminder of pomposity being pricked.

It's anecdotes like that which stick in my mind, and always make Kirby's books a joy to read.

### THE RACETRACK GANGS

Dick Kirby

Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword True Crime, 2020

[www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk)

[www.dickkirby.com](http://www.dickkirby.com)

softcover

224p; illus; biblio; index.

ISBN: 9781526778727

£15.99

The man took a last breath and passed away in the Mount Stuart Nursing Home in the genteel Devon seaside town of Torquay. It was 1942, and the man's name was William Kimber, better known as Billy. A fair case can be made that he was Britain's first organised crime boss. Of course, there had been other gangs, but Kimber had virtually controlled the Midlands and North of England, and after forming an alliance with the Elephant and Castle Mob he'd begun to move in on the racecourses in the





south of England.

Racecourses were the only places in England where legal gambling could take place. Bookies had loads of money and were a target for violent robbers; they were also open to blackmail and protection rackets. Gangsters even controlled the bookies' pitches, and rented them the stools on

which they stood to give their odds. It was a very lucrative business and Kimber didn't find it easy to move in, so fights between rival gangs were frequent and often very violent. They were called the 'racetrack wars', and 'wars' wasn't too far off the mark either.

Billy Kimber's main opposition were the Sabini family, led by the infamous Darby Santini. Other well-known names crop up in the story too, among them Arthur Harding - a nasty piece of work, says Kirby, but remembered today for his fascinating, if not altogether reliable, memories of the East End. Among others are Billy Hill, Jack Spot, and, inevitably, Ron and Reg Kray.

The racecourse wars have interested me in a sort of casual fashion long before the *Peaky Blinders* tv series came along, primarily because they formed the background to one of my favourite British films, *Brighton Rock* (the 1948 version with Richard Attenborough as the psychopathic Pinkie Brown, and a fabulous performance by Hermione Baddeley as Ida Arnold; there is a 2010 remake which I haven't seen but is on my 'watch' list). In *The Racetrack Gangs*, Dick Kirby tells the story of forty years of violent crime, and finishes with an epilogue in which he says that these days violent crime has spiralled out of control and refers to the thug on the streets today as an 'anti-social piece of garbage', with which it is difficult to disagree, but is terminology which won't endear Kirby to some readers.

This is an interesting look at Britain up to the 1970s, but primarily between the wars. It was a different time, and a different place, but it's open to question whether much has really changed.

## MURDER MAPS. CRIME SCENES REVISITED

Drew Gray

London: Thames and Hudson, 2020

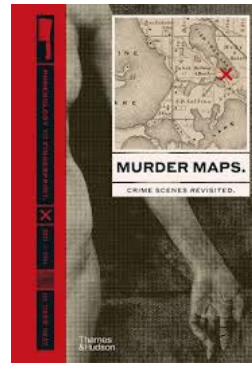
hardcover

224; illus; maps; further reading; index.

ISBN: 9780500252451

£25.00

*Murder Maps: Crime Scenes Revisited; Phrenology to Fingerprint 1811-1911* is the latest book from Dr Drew Gray, a social historian of the 18th and 19th centuries who specializes in the history of crime and punishment.



This would make him an ideal choice to write this overview of crimes from around the world, which as the title suggest are from 1811 to 1911, and many of the cases mentioned are new to me and something I was looking forward to reading.

Thames & Hudson have produced a quality hardback book printed on thick, quality

vellum paper, well-illustrated with many illustrations, photographs (it should be noted that there are crime scene photographs which some readers may find disturbing) and, of course, maps of the locations, some of which are in colour.

The maps are the main selling point of the book and for the most part they are reproduced quite well, although in places some of the street names are a bit difficult to read, which did not spoil my reading of the book. Not all the cases mentioned have an accompanying map; for instance, the Crippen case has no map showing the location of 39 Hilldrop Crescent, only a transatlantic map of Crippen's flight from justice.

The book is set out in three parts: Europe, North America and Australia, and each part is divided into individual chapters covering different countries and cities. There are many cases in the book I knew nothing about, but I found some problems with the ones with which I'm familiar and I found these rather worrying. If these contained errors, and rather sloppy ones at that, could I rely on what Drew Gray says about the ones I am ignorant about?

Obviously, it was the Ripper case that primarily concerned me. There are a few textual errors – on page 34 Police Constable Neil sees the body of Mary Ann Nichols and blows his whistle to summon assistance, whereas he used his lantern to summon the assistance of Police Constable Thain – but it's the errors on the maps that matter most. I don't know how precise the maps were intended to be when identifying the murder site, but it can be important if the reader plans to visit the site and, say, photograph where the crime took place. A map showing ten of the eleven murders which are in the Metropolitan Police files (Catherine 'Rose' Mylett is not covered), is on pages 36 and 37. Some relevant sites are also included, and they are nearly all wrong. The murder site of Annie Chapman at 29 Hanbury Street is about 200 yards from where it actually was; the site of Dutfield's Yard in Berner Street is also wrong, and Miller's Court, where Mary Kelly was murdered is marked where Little Paternoster Row was located. A small point, and this is something

which is carried on into other chapters, is that Drew does not mention that many of these locations have either disappeared or the streets have been renamed.

Considering that Drew Gray has written a book about Jack the Ripper, these are not the sort of errors I expected to find.

The murders by Mary Pearcey of Phoebe Hogg and her baby Tiggy in 1890 has some rather more serious errors: two maps show the location of 2 Priory Street, where the murders happened, but they show different locations! Drew also states that Priory Street is in Swiss Cottage, when it is in fact in Camden. In the case of Israel Lipski, who murdered Miriam Angel in Batty Street in 1887, Drew tells us that Charles Moore sold Israel Lipski nitric acid at 96 Backchurch Lane, but the map locates the shop between Fairclough Street and Batty Gardens, when it was actually on the corner of Fairclough Street and Backchurch Lane. Drew also states that a cab was hailed in Commercial Street, but the map shows Commercial Road.

I do not want to be harsh. A lot of hard work has clearly gone into this book. It is beautifully illustrated, and it is a readable book you can simply dip into when you have a quiet five minutes. As said, there are lots of well-known cases, but also quite a few with which you might not be familiar. The problem I have are the mistakes I've found in the cases I know about. There was nothing terribly serious, but the errors seemed sloppy and I don't expect to find sloppy errors in a book from an academic like Dr Drew Gray, and it worries me that I may not be reading accurate information in the cases new to me. This said, I noticed on the final page that the maps and floorplan illustrations were by Adrian Cartwright of a company called Planet Illustration, so Drew may not have been alone responsible.

The book has a cover price of £25, which is good value for a quality production like this, but is nonetheless a significant investment.

*Reviewed by Rob Clack*

**ELIOT NESS AND THE MAD BUTCHER: HUNTING AMERICA'S DEADLIEST UNIDENTIFIED SERIAL KILLER AT THE DAWN OF MODERN CRIMINOLOGY**

Max Allan Collins, and A. Brad Schwartz

New York: William Morrow, 2020

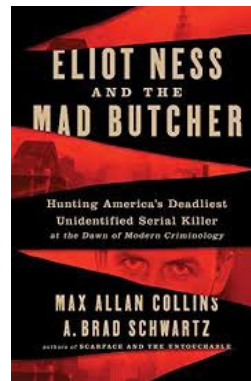
hardcover and ebook

558; illus; sources and notes; biblio; index

ISBN: 9780062881977

hardcover £22.00, ebook £12.99

At a Jack the Ripper conference in New Jersey a few years ago – actually, it was more years than I care to remember – I was presented with a book about the Mad Butcher of Kingsbury Run. It may be a case with which



you are familiar, but in case you're not...

Otherwise known as the Cleveland Torso Murders, they were, as you'll have guessed, a series of murders and dismemberments of both men and women committed by an unidentified serial killer, largely all of them in an impoverished neighbourhood known as Kingsbury Run. Apart from their interest as a series of unsolved murders, they were investigated by Elliot Ness of *Untouchables* fame, who was then Cleveland's Public Safety Director and, ironically, well on his way to becoming an alcoholic, if he wasn't one already. What particularly intrigued me about the case was that Ness, like Sir Robert Anderson in 1888, believed he knew who the killer was.

Collins and Schwartz set out to write the life of Elliot Ness, best remembered for having headed a team of uncorruptible lawmen charged with bringing down Chicago bootlegger and gangster Al Capone. Ness's life and deeds took on semi-mythic proportions thanks to a journalist named Oscar Fraley, who wrote a wildly-exaggerated account of Ness called *The Untouchables*. The book inspired a memorable television series of the same name that ran for four seasons from 1959-63. Robert Stack played Ness and veteran broadcaster Walter Winchell narrated, giving the series a distinctive documentary feel. A good, but even more exaggerated movie was made in 1987, and there have been other dramas and documentaries and even a video game.

Collins and Schwartz set out to get at the truth – as others have done before them – and they wrote a terrific book *Scarface and The Untouchable: Al Capone, Eliot Ness, and the Battle for Chicago* (2018). On the basis of that book, I snapped up *Eliot Ness and the Mad Butcher*. It's a very detailed book – as you can tell from the 128-pages of notes, sources and bibliography – but clearly and engagingly written. It probably doesn't have as much about the Mad Butcher as I would have liked and as one might reasonably expect there to be in a book with this title, but the book is the companion volume to the earlier book and is supposed to be a biography of Ness, not an account of the Kingsbury Run murders.

I thought both books were terrific. My only complaint is that the theme to the Robert Stack tv series ran through my head all the way through reading the book, and is running through it now.

*All reviews by Paul Begg except 'Murder Maps'*



# FICTION REVIEWS

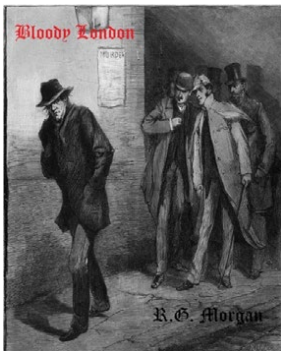
By DAVID GREEN

Reviewed in this issue:

***Bloody London, East End Girls, Reid And The Ripper and more!***

## BLOODY LONDON

R.G. Morgan  
Independently published, 2019  
Paperback, 240pp.  
£5.27



R.G. Morgan has tried his hand at an old theme: Jack the Ripper versus Sherlock Holmes. Events begin in traditional style when the two inhabitants of 221b Baker Street receive a visit from Inspector Lestrade. It seems a woman has been murdered in George Yard Buildings. 'There

is something I do not like about this business,' declares Holmes. 'I believe this killer will strike again.' And events develop in traditional style, too, as Holmes and Watson are swiftly drawn into the mystery of the Whitechapel murders. Their pursuit takes them through a good cross-section of Victorian society from 'poor creatures' huddled in doorways to members of the House of Lords.

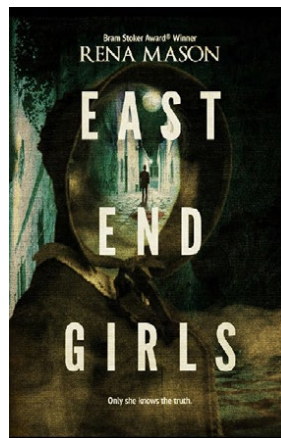
Writing historical crime fiction is not easy; mystery and suspense are often the first casualties when the reader is presented with a cast of familiar faces and a well-known sequence of events. *Bloody London* faces challenges of this sort; by sticking so conscientiously to recorded historical fact, the author curtails his scope for invention and playfulness. Yet as the story unfolds and the body count rises, new characters are introduced into the mix, such as Benjamin Bates, an unprincipled reporter on the *Star* newspaper, and Squibby, who takes on a kind of Baker Street Irregular role. Gradually, an elegant and very clever solution to the Ripper crimes emerges from the age-old story you thought you knew so well.

*Bloody London* was first published nearly a decade ago. It has now been re-issued for the enjoyment of a new generation of readers. It's a very accomplished work that

catches much of the flavour of the original Arthur Conan Doyle stories, and navigates the rough districts of late Victorian London with aplomb.

## EAST END GIRLS

Rena Mason  
Cemetery Dance Publications, 2020  
ISBN-13 979-8630342546  
Paperback, 98pp.  
£8.90



Another re-issue (this time from 2013) is the novelette *East End Girls* by American horror fiction writer Rena Mason. It's a sumptuously-produced publication with pages that have been artfully stained to suggest mould and unnameable splashes from the mortuary table. Inside there are maps and vintage anatomy illustrations of the dissected human heart.

We first meet Eliza Covington when she is up to her elbows in filth during a backstreet abortion in Whitechapel. She is training to be a physician at the London School of Medicine for Women, and these forays into the East End are a way of broadening her practical experience of female reproductive anatomy. Inevitably, a procedure goes horribly wrong, there is some frenzied mutilation, and Eliza scurries home with a uterus wrapped in cloth...

Her father is Lord Thomas Covington, surgeon extraordinary to Queen Victoria, while visitors to the family home include Dr Rees Llewellyn, the very queasy Inspector Godley, and Frederick Abberline. Eliza is expected to marry Henry Osborne, the dreary son of a banking magnate, but how can she concentrate on such matters when the conversation at the dinner table and

in the drawing room is all about the murders in the East End...

*East End Girls* is an interesting variation on the Jill the Ripper abortionist midwife theme. Rena Mason is a skilful writer with enough talent not to have to rely so much on the *grand guignol* of the slaughterhouse. But this is a stylish flesh and blood thriller ornamented with the right amount of period atmosphere and enlivened with many genuinely surprising twists and curious and fascinating social details. Eliza's love of tennis is put to spectacularly macabre use. Even if the denouement is not entirely unforeseeable, this is a gripping, dread-filled crime story.

## REID AND THE RIPPER

Paul Kenny

Independently published, 2020

Kindle Edition, 313pp.

£4.99



Frederick Abberline is possibly the nation's favourite Jack the Ripper crime-fighter, followed a long way behind by Donald Swanson and Walter Dew. Is there any room in the pantheon for Inspector Edmund Reid, the strolling player and Victorian adventurer? Other than Jess Reece's *Whitechapel* (2018) and Jacqueline Beard's *The Ripper Deception* (2019),

there haven't been many novels in recent years where Reid has featured prominently. You have to wonder why such a colourful and extrovert character hasn't appeared more often as the Man from the Met.

Like a constable's lamp illuminating the darkest corners of Mitre Square, Paul Kenny now throws light on the methods of the overlooked Kent policeman, and in doing so presents an intelligent and thought-provoking solution to the Ripper mystery.

*Reid and the Ripper* is an ambitious work that can be best described as fictional history or a 'nonfiction novel'. The author has plainly conducted extensive research into the period, place and people of Whitechapel in 1888, and he knows his way around the murder scenes and the autopsy sheds and the inquest hearings, but all this background detail tends to be hurled at the reader in a way that distracts from the story. It's a truth worth repeating that nothing kills Jack the Ripper fiction faster than info dump.

Throughout the book, Reid is credited with detective skills far superior to those of his colleagues at Scotland Yard

and H Division. His powers of analysis and ratiocination mark him out as the equal of C. Auguste Dupin, possibly even Sherlock Holmes. Reid often discusses the Whitechapel murders with his drinking partner Frederick Abberline and with his wife Emily at the end of the day, and it is during these conversations that we get to know Reid's thinking and his reasoning and how his ideas on offender profiling, hunting typology, crime reconstruction and data assimilation developed over the course of the Ripper enquiry. 'I think I am going to have to look at these recent crimes differently,' says Reid. 'Rather than trying to find who may have done it, we may have to look at why the crimes are being done... We must understand the type of person who is doing this, to have a chance of catching him.' By contrasting Reid's new approach based on linkage analysis and offender profiling with the traditional style of policing exemplified by Abberline, the reader gets an insight into the early beginnings of forensic psychology and how police science and detective techniques evolved in the late 1880s. (It is a nice touch to include Reid's noticeboards as an appendix.)

Of course, watching Reid grope towards something resembling modern policing is another way of gradually revealing the identity of Jack the Ripper. Reid had his own theory on the type of offender responsible for the Whitechapel murders – a local working-class man, a drunk, who met his victims in a public house, and murdered them without surgical skill while under the influence of 'maniacal blood-lust' – and Paul Kenny elaborates on this sketch to paint an unremittingly bleak portrait of Saucy Jack. It is not a spoiler to reveal that Jack the Ripper is portrayed in this novel as a horse slaughterer experiencing seizures and mental blackouts. He is the nephew of the landlady of the Princess Alice, who uses the pub as a base for stalking prostitutes. At the same time, we are told that the Ripper has been wronged by society; he is a victim of childhood sexual abuse. The author does his best to crank up the monstrosity of the Ripper – he has him urinating on the corpse of Mary Kelly – but there is an unconvincing monochrome hideousness about him that verges on pantomime. One quality we can assume Jack the Ripper possessed was the ability to live unnoticed among fellow human beings, yet in *Reid and the Ripper* nearly everyone, including Reid, suspects the horse slaughterer from Kent of being the Ripper.

Throughout the book, Edmund Reid expostulates on the way serial killers often exhibit learned behaviour, evolving their craft as they gain experience and confidence. Of course, the same applies to novelists, who equally need to hone and develop their skills. This is Paul Kenny's first book, I believe, written in retirement: it evinces wide reading and many interesting ideas, but in my view

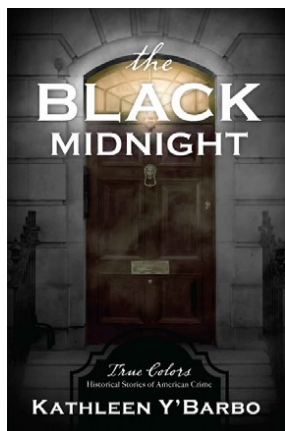


Paul has erred in presenting his thoughts on the Jack the Ripper murders as a quasi-novel. In truth, *Reid and the Ripper* can't really be anything other than an apprentice work because as a fiction writer he hasn't yet attained the ability to create tension or suspense, or fashion believable people. The semi-literate vacuity of his working-class characters distracts him into wading around in swearsy colloquial language with silly bits of Cockney rhyming slang thrown in. But there's no doubt he has produced an interesting book that will appeal to readers of *Ripperologist*, and the design and presentation are of a high standard.

There is scene early on in the novel when Jack the Ripper – he is never named in the book – meets Joseph Merrick at the London Hospital. It is a touching scene, and probably one of the few occasions where the author has put down the *Sourcebook* and *The Facts* and the *A to Z* and told us something from the heart about human pain and suffering.

### THE BLACK MIDNIGHT

Kathleen Y'Barbo  
Barbour Publishing, 2020  
ISBN 978-1643525952  
Hardback, 256pp.  
£9.93



It is 1889. Queen Victoria's great-granddaughter, Alice Anne von Wettin, a former Pinkerton detective, is summoned to Buckingham Palace for an audience with Her Majesty. While sipping tea from crockery made of gold, she is tasked with sorting out a 'situation in London that has not been remedied', i.e. the Jack the Ripper murders.

Annie recruits a crack duo to assist her – Simon Kent, a high-ranking officer at Scotland Yard, and Isaiah Joplin, a lawyer from Texas who worked with Annie while they were investigating the Servant Girl axe murders in Austin three years earlier. Could the Austin Axe Murderer, the so-called Midnight Assassin, also be responsible for the Jack the Ripper murders?

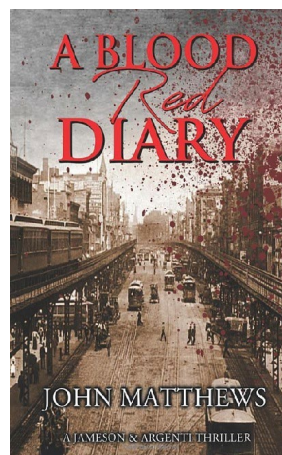
Much of the novel takes place in flashback, recounting Annie's pursuit of the American serial killer. Nearly all the violence and death takes place off the page, with the result that the murder plot sits rather forlornly on the edge of this novel. Nonetheless, there is plenty of excitement involving rumours of voodoo magic and a secret society of vigilantes operating on extra-judicial lines like Alex

Grecian's *Karstphanomen*. The growing romance between Annie and Isaiah adds a syrupy flavour.

Back in London, the hunt is on for Jack the Ripper. There is an abundance of suspects – Prince Albert Victor, Charlie Einhorn (the knife thrower from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show), and a Malay cook called Maurice. At one point, Annie is taken on a tour of the Ripper murder spots, but you get the sense the author is far more comfortable among the opulent surroundings of Buckingham Palace than the rookeries and courtyards of the East End. Still, Annie proves to be an adaptable sleuth and the reader is kept guessing right to the end.

### A BLOOD RED DIARY

John Matthews  
The Write Direction Publishing, 2020  
ISBN 978-1788750226  
Paperback, 326pp.  
£10.99



Back in 2013, John Matthews published *Letters From A Murderer* (later retitled *Murder in Manhattan*), the first volume in his Jameson and Argenti Victorian murder mystery series. It introduced the crime-fighting duo of the aristocratic English forensic examiner and criminal profiler Finley Jameson and his no-nonsense street-worn Italian partner, Manhattan cop Joseph Argenti. Set in New York in 1891, it explored city corruption, east side gangsterdom, and the immigrant experience. When the city is rocked by a series of gruesome prostitute murders, fears grow that Jack the Ripper may have crossed the Atlantic to continue his bloody work in the New World.

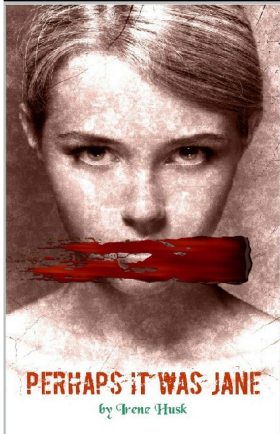
Readers have had a long wait for the 'sequel', but here it is – *A Blood Red Diary*. We're four years on, and little seems to have changed. Gangsters are still largely running the city. But the relationship between Jameson and Argenti has warmed and matured, and there is a new Chief Commissioner pledging to stamp out police corruption. History seems to be repeating itself, though, when a young woman is viciously murdered. Is it a Jack the Ripper murder? Or is it a copycat of the previous 'Ripper' crimes in New York in 1891? Or a copycat of the 1888 murders in London? Or something else entirely? Jameson and Argenti are sent in to sort it out.

There is a slight worry that Matthews is hankering after old glories by rehashing the winning formula of his earlier

novel. But he is too good a writer simply to repeat himself: in this fast-paced, action-packed crime thriller he merges the Jack the Ripper mystery with New York's Gilded Age to stirring and enjoyable effect.

### PERHAPS IT WAS JANE

Irene Husk  
Independently published, 2020  
ISBN 979-8670037297  
Paperback, 229pp.  
£8.63



At night, a woman creeps unnoticed through the foggy streets of Whitechapel. In a leather wrap she keeps her surgeon's blades and other cutting implements. Her first victims are 'Elizabeth' Smith and Martha Tabram – clumsy apprentice murders, inexpertly executed. But she is learning her trade, and soon the whole world will know of her mission to 'rid society of the wanton

epidemic of disease-spreading whores'.

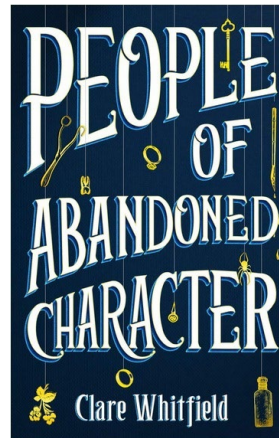
The woman is a widow and the mother of stillborn twins: her physician husband, Arthur, died of venereal disease while working among the destitute of the East End: a big red ledger in his office reveals 'nauseating' truths about his relations with some of his patients. 'The deaths of these vile whores would be the price to pay for my lost babies and my darling Arthur.'

*Perhaps It Was Jane* tells the story of the Jack the Ripper killings from the unique perspective of a female murderer. It is an intensely human tale about love and vengeance, written with a lyricism that belies the grisly horrors it so unflinchingly recounts. The charred remains of Annie Chapman's womb are prodded with a toasting fork, and the homely smells of lavender and freshly baked bread and pies mingle with the rancid stink of evisceration. A powerful novel, thoughtful and relevant.

### PEOPLE OF ABANDONED CHARACTER

Clare Whitfield  
Head of Zeus, 2020  
ISBN 978-1838932732  
Hardback, 432pp.  
£10.99

It is 1885. Susannah Chapman leaves her home in Reading to begin a new job as a nurse at the London Hospital. There she meets the dashing young surgeon Thomas Lancaster. He's a real charmer, and wealthy to boot, and



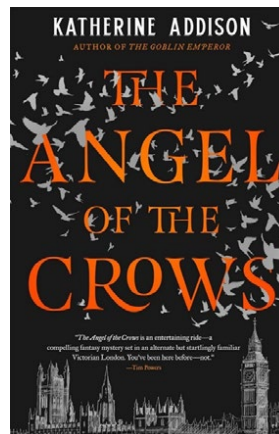
after a whirlwind courtship the couple are married and set up home together in Chelsea. But does Susannah really know her husband? Has she tied herself to a monster?

What begins as a fairytale doctor/nurse romance quickly degenerates into a shocking tale of domestic abuse. Her husband is becoming increasingly erratic and unpredictable, arriving home in the early hours with his clothes saturated in blood, and locking himself away for long periods in the attic. At the same time, the newspapers are filled with lurid accounts of the East End maniac. Stuck at home all day with an intimidating housekeeper, Susannah gradually convinces herself that Thomas is the Whitechapel fiend...

*People of Abandoned Character* claims to offer a new angle on the Jack the Ripper murders. But Brandy Purdy covered this theme in 2014 in her Maybrick-inspired novel *The Ripper's Wife*, and over the years there have been many variations seeking to re-imagine Saucy Jack through the eyes of his wife. Even so, Clare Whitfield has produced an intelligent and enthralling piece of work that delves into the grim social and economic hardships of life in Victorian London. She resists the temptation to turn Susannah into an amateur lady detective; rather, the story centres on the lives (and deaths) of the murdered women, on the creepy relationship between the housekeeper and Thomas, and on terrorism behind closed doors.

### THE ANGEL OF THE CROWS

Katherine Addison  
Tor, 2020  
ISBN 978-0-76538-739-4  
Hardback, 448pp.  
\$27.99



Katherine Addison comes with impressive fantasy and science fiction credentials. Her new novel is a Sherlock Holmes versus Jack the Ripper yarn set in an alternate London populated with vampires, hellhounds, ghosts, carrion-eaters, demons, and giant airships flying over the East End.

Sherlock Holmes (or Crow as he's called in the book) has sprouted wings and become



an outcast asexual Angel, while Dr Watson (or Dr J.H. Doyle) is a kind of cross-dressing lesbian who turns into a werewolf at night. Someone or something is terrorizing the capital's prostitutes and leaving mutilated bodies besides the Thames.

*The Angel of the Crows* is unashamedly fan fiction, and Addison has a lot of fun playing with gender identity and subverting the Conan Doyle universe in a steampunky sort of way. The narrative consists of a series of adventures based loosely around several tales from the Sherlock canon – *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*, etc – with the hunt for Jack the Ripper providing a sort of unifying timeline and common purpose.

Undoubtedly there's some clever world building here, and the relationship between Crow and Doyle is deftly handled. The author describes *Angel* as a 'kitchen sink novel', which is a reference not so much to the book's social realist engagement as an admission that she's thrown everything into it: the result is a novel that teems with exuberant weirdness and bizarrerie but sags a little under the hodgepodge of its derivative elements.

## SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE RIPPER OF WHITECHAPEL

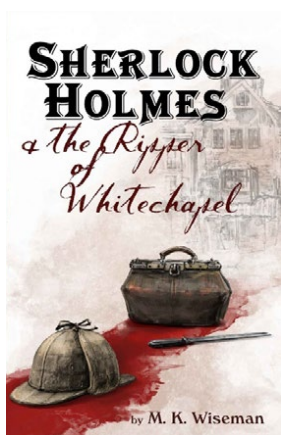
M.K. Wiseman

Independently published, 2020

ISBN 978-1-7344641-2-2

Kindle edition, 219pp.

£3.99



Jack the Ripper and Sherlock Holmes are old adversaries. They've battled it out countless times before in novels, short stories, television series, and video games. The subgenre has almost been done to death. Yet there is nothing dull or played out about Megan Wiseman's contribution to the canon: *Sherlock Holmes and the Ripper of Whitechapel* is a vividly imagined study of friendship

and loyalty which deals in a very English way with the emotional consequences of suspicion and deception.

Sherlock Holmes is called in by Scotland Yard to help solve the 'Red Fiend' murders. He must investigate these crimes

alone because Watson, in the wake of his engagement and marriage to Mary Morstan, has moved out of Baker Street. A 'great divide' has consequently come between the two former flatmates. Moreover, Watson has begun to behave in a very furtive manner, and Sherlock's suspicions are further roused when butts from Watson's favourite brand of cigarette are found at the Hanbury Street crime scene and splashes of blood are spotted on the doctor's shirt sleeve after the Mitre Square murder. It seems that Watson has been unaccountably absent from home on the nights of the murders, and as Sherlock Holmes delves deeper into the Ripper murders, he must also confront the dreadful possibility that his friend is complicit in the crimes.

M.K. Wiseman builds her tale slowly, creating an atmosphere of mounting tension and anxiety. Doubts and mistrust grow ever more corrosive as the story unfolds. Suspicion spreads like mould. Of course, this is not the first novel to feature Watson as a Ripper suspect: when Holmes declares that 'In my mind's eye I pictured a furtive black-clad figure creeping through the shadows. A man with a black medical bag and moustache, and wearing a long black coat and low-pulled hat', he is simply renovating one of the hoariest old chestnuts in Ripper mythology. But it says much for the author's skill that the reader is induced to go along with it. She does a good job of exploring the possibilities of her premise, and her relaxed, flexible prose style copes equally well with the daily lives and routines of her characters as it does with atrocities of Miller's Court.

*Sherlock Holmes and the Ripper of Whitechapel* is an assured piece of crime fiction enlivened with sensitive characterisation and impressive background research. It is a good example of a writer taking a classic Ripper trope and twisting it into something fresh, startling, and scary. Recommended.



Next issue we review *Whitechapel Rising* by Anthony M Strong, plus all the latest Ripper fiction.



DAVID GREEN lives in Hampshire, England, where he works as a freelance book indexer. He is the author of *The Havant Boy Ripper* (Mango Books, 2018), an account of the Percy Searle murder case of 1888. He is currently editing *Trial of Frederick Baker* for the revived *Notable British Trials* series.

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