

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

# *Ripperologist*

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*A Merry Christmas to all our Readers*

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of Charles Lechmere and Robert Paul**

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## EDITORIAL

# CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE WORKHOUSE

ADAM WOOD, Executive Editor

There are few works of fiction which conjure up thoughts of a Victorian Christmas more than readily than George Sims' *Christmas Day in the Workhouse*, the obvious candidate being Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* - whether your Scrooge of choice be Alistair Sim, Seymour Hicks or Michael Caine.

Actually titled *In the Workhouse: Christmas Day*, Sims' monologue first appeared in the Christmas 1877 edition of *The Referee*, as part of the 'Mustard and Cress' column attributed to his pseudonym 'Dagonet'. When it appeared with a collection of other stories titled *The Dagonet Ballads* in 1881, the book sold 100,000 copies in a year.

But what was Christmas *really* like for those in the workhouse, specifically in the 1888, the year of our interest?

Being naturally drawn to the mysterious 'Stepney Workhouse' written by Chief Inspector Donald Swanson in his marginalia, which I believe to be more formally the St. Leonard's Street Workhouse, and later Bromley House, I took a look at the state of affairs there in December 1888.

A report published in the *Standard* of Boxing Day 1888 counted 194 people in the Stepney Workhouse, down from 231 the previous year. Recently removed from that number was 81-year-old Jane Merry, an inmate employed as a bath attendant. An inquest had been held at the Workhouse on 9th December 1888, with Coroner Wynne Baxter hearing that she had died in extraordinary circumstances on the 6th. Earlier that week Mrs. Merry had enjoyed a day off, seemingly taking advantage of her absence from the Workhouse to seek out some festive cheer. On the morning of her death another inmate named Bridget Davitt went to the bathing room and at first thought it was empty, but then heard a thumping noise. Ms. Davitt went to investigate and was astonished to see a pair of legs sticking up from a hole in the floorboards. A local engineer employed by the workhouse named Edward Sheen came to free the stricken Mrs. Merry and, after no little effort, took her to the infirmary, where she died almost immediately. Mr. Sheen returned to the spot and entered the hole, where under some wood he found a bottle of whisky - "Just where a person, by leaning through the aperture, could reach it," he told the inquest, as reported in *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper* of 9th December 1888.

Those more fortunate than Mrs. Merry who got to spend their Christmas Day at the Stepney Union Workhouse a fortnight later were treated to roast pork and potatoes followed by plum pudding and ale, reported the *Standard* of 26th December 1888, with each adult receiving tobacco and snuff, and the poor children spending their Christmas in the workhouse being given apples, oranges and nuts.

In contrast to their neighbours at Stepney Union, inmates of the City of London Union Workhouse and Infirmary a mile away on Bow Road enjoyed roast beef for their Christmas dinner of 1888, along with plum pudding, oranges, apples and beer, with tobacco and snuff again generously handed out.

It seems that Christmas Day in the workhouse was not quite as bad as made out by George Sims. However you choose to spend your day, and the rest of the season, keep well, and have our best wishes for a peaceful end to what has been a difficult year.

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We welcome well-researched articles on any aspect of the Whitechapel murders, the East End or the Victorian era in general.

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ILLUSTRATED

Christmas  
1888



LONDON  
NEWS



# IN THE WORKHOUSE CHRISTMAS DAY

By GEORGE R SIMS



It is Christmas Day in the workhouse,  
and the cold, bare walls are bright  
With garlands of green and holly,  
and the place is a pleasant sight;  
For with clean-washed hands and faces  
in a long and hungry line  
The paupers sit at the table,  
for this is the hour they dine.

And the guardians and their ladies,  
although the wind is east,  
Have come in their furs and wrappers  
to watch their charges feast;  
To smile and be condescending,  
putting on pauper plates.  
To be hosts at the workhouse banquet,  
they've paid for with the rates.

Oh, the paupers are meek and lowly  
with their 'Thank'ee kindly, mums!  
So long as they fill their stomachs  
what matter it whence it comes?  
But one of the old men mutters  
and pushes his plate aside,  
"Great God!" he cries, "but it chokes me;  
for this is the day she died!"

The guardians gazed in horror,  
the master's face went white;  
Did a pauper refuse their pudding?  
Could that their ears believe right?  
Then the ladies clutched their husbands,  
thinking the man would die,  
Struck by a bolt, or something,  
by the outraged One on high.

But the pauper sat for a moment,  
then rose 'mid silence grim,  
For the others had ceased to chatter  
and trembled in every limb:  
He looked at the guardians' ladies,  
then, eyeing their lords, he said;  
"I eat not the food of villains,  
whose hands are foul and red;"

"Whose victims cry for vengeance  
from their dark, unhallowed graves."  
"He's drunk," said the workhouse master,  
"or else he's mad and raves."  
"Not drunk or mad," cried the pauper,  
"but only a haunted beast,  
Who, torn by the hounds and mangled,  
declines the vulture's feast."

"I care not a curse for the guardians,  
and I won't be dragged away;  
Just let me have the fit out,  
it's only on Christmas Day..  
That the black past comes to goad me  
and prey on my burning brain;  
I'll tell you the rest in a whisper,  
I swear I won't shout again.

"Keep your hands off me, curse you!  
Hear me right out to the end.  
You come here to see how paupers,  
the season of Christmas spend;  
You come here to watch us feeding,  
as they watched the captured beast;  
Here's why a penniless pauper,  
spits on your paltry feast."



"Do you think I will take your bounty  
and let you smile and think  
You're doing a noble action  
with the parish's meat and drink?  
Where is my wife, you traitors,  
the poor old wife you slew?  
Yes, by the God above me,  
my Nance was killed by you."

"Last Winter my wife lay dying,  
starved in a filthy den.  
I had never been to the parish,  
I came to the parish then;  
I swallowed my pride in coming!  
for ere the ruin came  
I held up my head as a trader,  
and I bore a spotless name.  
"I came to the parish craving,  
bread for a starving wife  
Bread for the woman who'd loved me  
thro' fifty years of life;  
And what do you think they told me,  
mocking my awful grief,  
That the house was open to us,  
but they wouldn't give out relief."

"I slunk to the filthy alley,  
'twas a cold, raw Christmas Eve  
And the bakers' shops were open,  
tempting a man to thieve;  
But I clenched my fists together,  
holding my head awry,  
So I came to her empty-handed  
and mournfully told her why."

"Then I told her the house was open;  
she had heard of the ways of that  
For her bloodless cheeks went crimson,  
and up in her rags she sat,  
Crying, 'Bide the Christmas here, John,  
we've never had one apart;  
I think I can bear the hunger,  
the other would break my heart."

"All through that eve I watched her,  
holding her hand in mine,  
Praying the Lord and weeping  
till my lips were salt as brine;  
I asked her once if she hungered,  
and she answered 'No.'  
The moon shone in at the window,  
set in a wreath of snow."

"Then the room was bathed in glory,  
and I saw in my darling's eyes  
The faraway look of wonder,  
that comes when the spirit flies;  
And her lips were parched and parted,  
and her reason came and went.  
For she raved of our home in Devon,  
where our happiest years were spent."

"And the accents, long forgotten,  
came back to the tongue once more.  
For she talked like the country lassie  
I wooed by the Devon shore;  
Then she rose to her feet and trembled,  
and fell on the rags and moaned,  
And, 'Give me a crust, I'm famished...  
for the love of God,' she groaned."

"I rushed from the room like a madman  
and flew to the workhouse gate,  
Crying, 'Food for a dying woman!'  
and the answer came, 'Too late!'  
They drove me away with curses;  
then I fought with a dog in the street  
And tore from the mongrel's clutches  
a crust he was trying to eat."

"Back through the filthy by-ways...  
back through the trampled slush!  
Up to the crazy garret,  
wrapped in an awful hush;  
My heart sank down at the threshold,  
and I paused with a sudden thrill.  
For there, in the silv'ry moonlight,  
my Nance lay cold and still."

"Up to the blackened ceiling,  
the sunken eyes were cast  
I knew on those lips, all bloodless,  
my name had been the last;  
She called for her absent husband...  
Oh God! Had I known--  
Had called in vain, and, in anguish,  
had died in that den alone."

"Yes, there in a land of plenty,  
lay a loving woman dead.  
Cruelly starved and murdered  
for a loaf of the parish bread;  
At yonder gate, last Christmas,  
I craved for a human life,  
You, who would feed us paupers,  
what of my murdered wife?"

"There, get ye gone to your dinners,  
don't mind me in the least,  
Think of the happy paupers  
eating your Christmas feast  
And when you recount their blessings  
in your parochial way,  
Say what you did for me too...  
only last Christmas Day."

# CHRISTMAS, 1888

By RICHARD JONES

Over the Christmas period, 1888, the people of the East End were coming to terms with the fact that another murder had recently taken place in their midst, with the finding of the body of Rose Mylett in the early hours of 20th December 1888, in Poplar, East London.

There was much debate as to whether her murder was the work of the fiend who, by this time, was universally known as "Jack the Ripper," with the general consensus being that it wasn't..



Indeed, several newspapers were stating emphatically that the murder was not by the same hand, whilst, at the same time, commenting on the fact that this most recent murder had not, so it seemed, resulted in the same degree of terror and panic that had followed the murders that had taken place between August and November, 1888.

## NEWS FROM WHITECHAPEL – CHRISTMAS, 1888

However, and perhaps inevitably, the Whitechapel murders were still fresh in peoples' minds and, over the Christmas period of 1888, several newspapers carried mentions of the way that the people of the East End were celebrating the Yuletide that followed their autumn of terror.

They were also mentioning the fact that many people were of the belief that the Whitechapel murderer would

mark Christmas by striking again in the East End of London.

The *Aberdeen Journal*, in its edition of Tuesday, 25th December 1888 reported on the weather in London, and on the mood in Whitechapel, with regards the murders that had occurred in the district over the course of the previous few months:

Christmas Eve, so far as London is concerned, presented the worst features of an inclement winter's night.

The holidays began on Saturday, scarcely a single shop of a representative class being open.

The morning of Christmas Eve began in dull, warm weather, and as twilight came down upon the dreary and depressed multitudes heavy rain added its influence to the prevalent gloom.

"A green Yule maketh a fat kirkyard." So runs the legend, and certainly there is not much health in the elements amid which we live this Christmas.

In Whitechapel an eerie feeling took hold of the inhabitants, owing to an impression or suspicion or fear that Christmas Day might dawn upon a new horror.

The police have naturally relaxed their vigilance, and, in an official sense, the crimes of the autumn have been well-nigh forgotten.

The poor inhabitants of this benighted region, however, hold "Jack the Ripper" in a species of superstitious dread, believing that he chooses high holidays and fast-days for his murderous forays.

## A CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Meanwhile, the *Nottingham Evening Post*, on Wednesday, 26th December 1888, published the following letter from Laura E. Ridding, who used the Whitechapel murders to solicit funds for a refuge for poor women in Nottingham:

Sir,

The Evil one has thrown down a challenge to Christendom in the blood-stained streets of Whitechapel.



Shall it lie there undisturbed? Dare no one take it up? Those whose hearts God has moved to care for His lost ones believe that He is giving an answer through their humble work. They believe that in seeking and saving the fallen and friendless girls of our great cities, they are fighting the evil side by side with those who are trying all around to raise the standard of purity.

This quiet rescue work has now been carried on for three years in Nottingham.

In these three years over 300 different cases have slept in the Rescue Home, and have been helped in various ways.

Besides many who are safely restored to their own friends and helpers in other towns, more than 30 are gaining their livelihood in respectable situations, about 90 are now in homes where they are staying voluntarily, and are learning honest means of self-support.

Daily, fresh cases come appealing for help; and all that hinders the further development of the work is want of funds.

Will those whose feelings of pity and horror have been stirred by the terrible deaths that have lately overtaken so many of these poor women in London help their sisters in Nottingham who need rescue and assistance no less, by contributing towards their maintenance at the Rescue Home, Southwell House, 19B, North-street, Nottingham?

The message of Christmas is Salvation and peace.

For the sake of the Saviour who brought it, you are earnestly begged to help in this work of restoring the fallen to repentance, peace, and safety by your prayers and your alms.

I am, sir, &c.,

Laura E. Ridding

Thurgarton Priory, Southwell,

December 22nd, 1888.

### HOW THE MURDERER SPENT CHRISTMAS

In its edition of Thursday, 27th December 1888, the *Western Morning News* pondered on how it perceived that Jack the Ripper had spent his Christmas:

Jack the Ripper did not spend his Christmas in following the pleasures of using the knife.

There was, however, a dire dread that he would gratify his thirst for blood by dispatching another person in Whitechapel; but it was with a sense of relief that one found that he had spent his Christmas in a civilised manner.

His barbarism has been traced by some in the Poplar case, but I do not attach any importance to the theories advanced.

The Poplar tragedy in no respect resembles those of Whitechapel.

### A STABBING IN DORSET STREET

Over on the streets of the East End of London, it appears that the Christmas spirit was somewhat lacking, if a case reported by the *Falkirk Herald and Linlithgow Journal* in its edition of Saturday, 29th December 1888, was anything to go by:

A serious stabbing affray took place early on Wednesday morning in Dorset Street, Whitechapel, and a labourer named Henry Buckley, of 28 Dorset Street, is now in the custody of the Commercial Street police on a charge of feloniously wounding.

The circumstances of the case are somewhat singular.

It would appear that a man named Patrick Manning accompanied a woman in a cab from Euston Road to 37 Dorset Street, and Buckley, who was an acquaintance of the woman, interfered, ultimately, it is alleged, drawing a knife and stabbing Manning in the left thigh.

The injured man bled profusely and was taken to the London Hospital.

The wound was found to be of a serious nature but is not likely to cause the man's detention for any length of time.

Buckley will be brought up at Worship Street.



Dorset Street

### CHRISTMAS IN WHITECHAPEL

On Saturday, 29th December 1888, the *Warwickshire Advertiser and Leamington Gazette* opted to adopt a censorious tone with regards the people of Whitechapel in a brief article that took a critical look at how they had celebrated the Christmas just gone:

The district from which the Whitechapel fiend has drawn his victims was on Wednesday the scene of terrible debauchery, which, unfortunately, characterises that portion of London during this

season of the year.

The gin palaces were thronged with women reeling under the influence of drink, and the police officers who have been stationed for many years at the East End of the Metropolis declare that the terrible series of crimes which have been perpetrated during the present year has had no effect in deterring or softening the women of the unfortunate class who infest certain thoroughfares in Whitechapel.

On the contrary, they appear to pursue their calling with as great callousness and brutality than ever.



*A Merry Christmas  
to all our Readers,  
and Best Wishes for Year ahead*



# ALL ROADS LEAD TO LECHMERE

By BOB MILLS

*"From a Police point of view, the person who finds a body in circumstances like this is always going to be significant to an enquiry. Certainly, in the modern age you couldn't prosecute anyone with eliminating him [Lechmere] first... because obviously you've got somebody who's been with the body very close to the point of death, and is possibly the person who causes the death, so is definitely a very significant person in terms of the investigation."*

*Dr Andy Griffiths,  
former head of Sussex Murder Squad<sup>1</sup>*

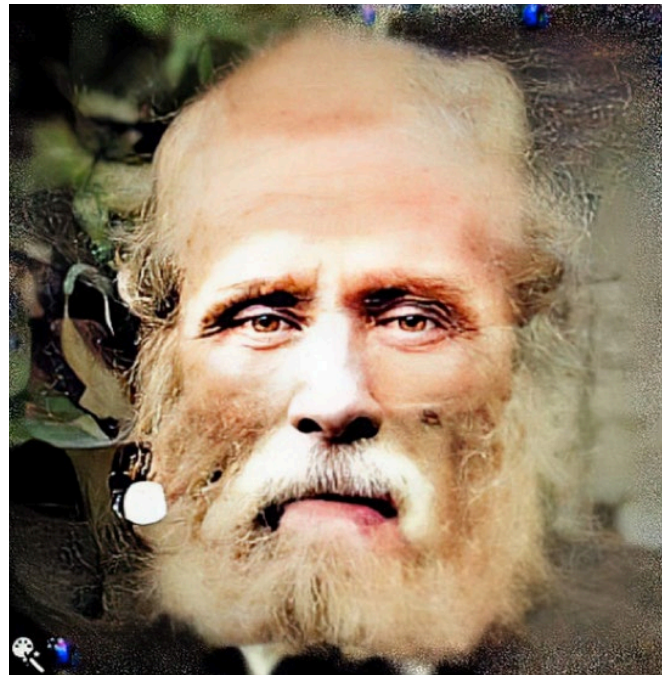


On the morning of 31st August, 1888, Robert Paul left his home in 30 Foster Street. He was running late for his job as a carman in Corbett's Court in Hanbury Street. He was quickly on Brady Street then turned into Buck's Row. It was 03.45, and he was rushing to get to work for his 04.00 start. Some distance along Buck's Row, a long narrow street that ran parallel to Whitechapel Road, he saw a man standing in the middle of the road.<sup>2</sup> The man he saw was Charles Lechmere, and Lechmere was standing next to the freshly-killed body of 43-year-old prostitute Polly Nichols. In a statement to a reporter for *Lloyd's Weekly* the next day, Paul described as seeing Lechmere "standing where the woman was".<sup>3</sup>

Lechmere's account, made at the inquest into her death, was that he left his home in 22 Doveton Street, Bethnal Green about 03.30. He was a carman for Pickford's in Broad Street, and like Paul he started at 04.00. Passing through Buck's Row he saw something on the opposite side of the road, lying against a gateway. It was dark, and at first he thought it was some tarpaulin. He walked to the middle of the road, and saw that it was the body of a woman.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, he heard a man about 40 yards away. He stepped back and waited for the newcomer.

This is where the Lechmere drama starts. We are presented with two scenarios. The first scenario is that Lechmere was an innocent carman on his way to work

who had the misfortune to come across a dead body. The second scenario is that had he just murdered Nichols and been caught in the act. One of these scenarios must be true, and they are mutually exclusive.



*Charles Allen Lechmere in 1912, when he was 62*

I am going to look in depth at the events of the morning of 31st August 1888, focusing exclusively on Buck's Row. I will demonstrate that there is more than enough evidence to have justified the Whitechapel police arresting and detaining Lechmere. I believe they were grossly negligent in not doing so.

The first point I'm going to look at is an obvious one. Lechmere was found standing near a dead body in the early hours of the morning down a deserted back street.

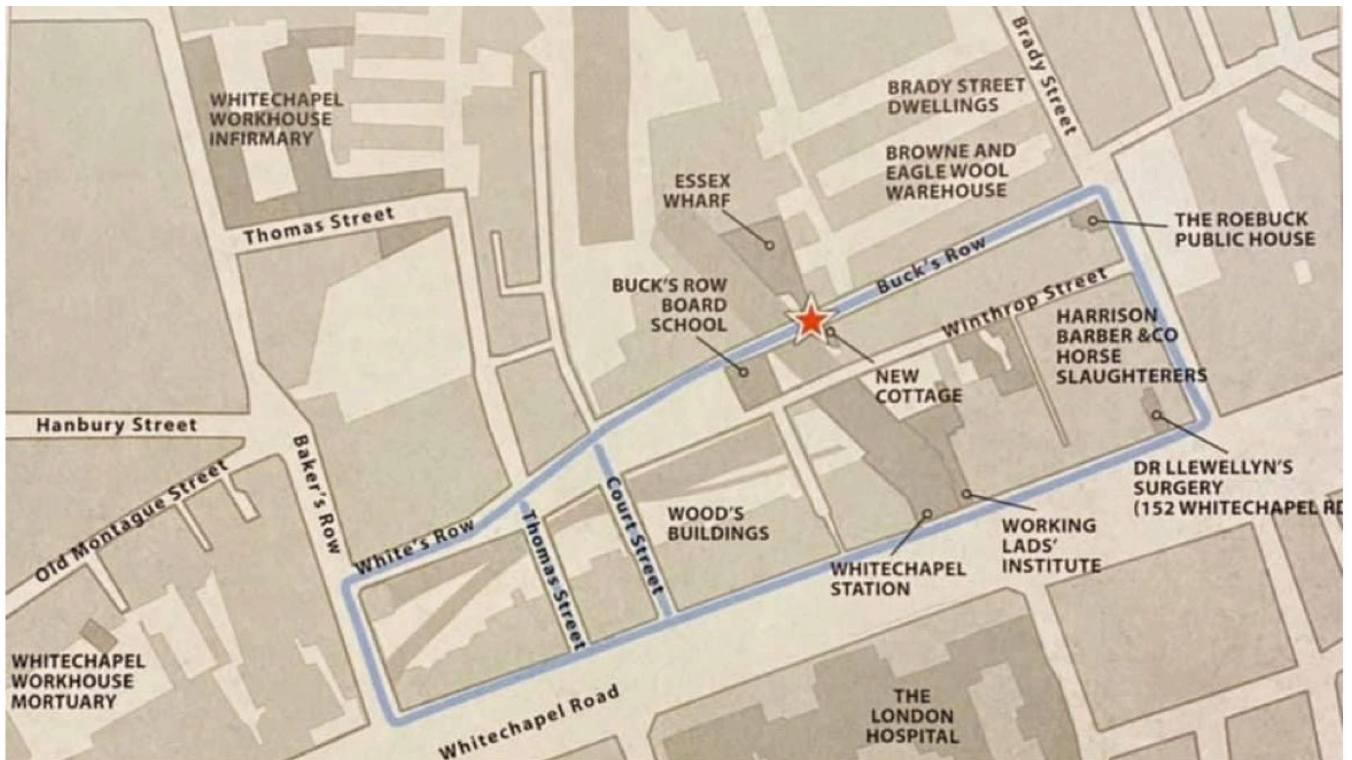
1 *Jack the Ripper: The Missing Evidence*. Ep. 3. Channel 5 documentary, 2014.

2 *The Lakes Herald*, 21st September 1888.

3 *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 2nd September 1888.

4 *The Daily News*, 4th September 1888.





A map of the murder scene. The location of the body is marked by the red star

Polly Nichols has clearly just been killed, minutes at most.<sup>5</sup> Anyone found in such circumstances must be very significant to the enquiry. This isn't a subjective opinion; it's a statement of fact.<sup>6</sup> If the Polly Nichols enquiry was being handled today, Charles Lechmere would come under intense scrutiny. So, we can say that the mere fact of being found "standing where the woman was"<sup>7</sup> so close to the time of death would make Lechmere the focus of any credible investigation. It's astonishing that in 1888 it didn't.

To quote David McNab, the producer of the Channel Five television documentary that looked at Lechmere and Buck's Row,<sup>8</sup> "Lechmere was discovered standing over the body, but bizarrely no-one seems to think was an important fact."<sup>9</sup> Dr Andy Griffiths, former head of Sussex Murder Squad, said: "There is no doubt that to an investigator, Lechmere is of tremendous interest".<sup>10</sup>

Moving on, we have the issue of the timings of our two protagonists, Lechmere and Paul. Lechmere tells the inquest he left his home at about 03.30.<sup>11</sup> Paul is very sure that he arrived in Buck's Row at 03.45 exactly.<sup>12</sup> There is a gap of around fifteen minutes between Lechmere leaving his home and being met by Paul in Buck's Row.

The issue is this: Lechmere's home was a short walk from Buck's Row. Back in 1888 there were several side streets you could take from Brady Street onto Buck's Row, none of which particularly alter the distance. However, taking the most obvious route (see map below) or one like it, it's

a walk of six or seven minutes. Simply put, if Lechmere left his home about 03.30 then why is he in Buck's Row at 03.45? He should enter Buck's Row about 03.36 or 03.37. The time is not exact: different routes, different walking speeds,<sup>13</sup> but the timing is off. In the Channel 5 documentary *Jack the Ripper: The Missing Evidence* Dr Andy Griffiths and journalist Christer Holmgren walked a slightly longer route (there's a Sainsbury's in the way now), and their time was seven minutes. And, of course, they weren't late for work and rushing to make up time.

There is time missing. We can see that there is around eight or nine minutes unaccounted for. Of course, "about 03.30" as a starting point could mean both before and after the half hour. There could be less than eight or nine minutes; there could be more. Lechmere could leave home as late as 03.35, and there would still be several minutes unaccounted for.

5 *Daily Express*, 16th November 2014.

6 *Evening Standard*, 4th September 1888.

7 *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 2nd September 1888.

8 *Jack the Ripper: The Missing Evidence*. Ep. 3. Channel 5 documentary, 2014.

9 *Evening Standard*, 4th September 1888.

10 *Ibid*.

11 *The Morning Advertiser*, 4th September 1888.

12 *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 2nd September 1888.

13 Blomer, Steven: *Inside Buck's Row*. Appendix 1: Timing Issues, and Appendix 2: The Sources. Witness Statements, Police Reports and Press Reports (2019).

It's important to note that we only have Lechmere's word when he left, and given the circumstances he may well have been aware of the time issue. Lechmere's usual time for leaving was 03.20,<sup>14</sup> and this departure time would be a red flag he couldn't explain away. Having been found in Buck's Row at 03.45, it would mean there is around 15-20 minutes of time to account for.

On a normal day he arrived in Buck's Row around 03.27. If Lechmere wanted to avoid scrutiny, then leaving at 03.20 would be bad optics, especially as the coroner, Mr. Wynne E. Baxter, himself fixed the time the body was found at around 03.45: "The time at which the body was found cannot have been far from 03.45, as it is fixed by so many independent data."<sup>15</sup>



*Lechmere's possible route from Doveton Street, a six minute walk*

Researchers often take Lechmere at his word that he left at 03.30. I don't think we can; it's uncorroborated. We are dealing with somebody who is a suspect in a murder case, who has been found near a dead body; we need to cover all the bases. We can't assume he left home at 03.30.

If he's guilty then the time he left home is the first thing he would conceal. Any look at the timings of Buck's Row must consider that if Lechmere is Jack the Ripper, it would be to his advantage to lie about when he left home.

It's noteworthy that two newspapers, including the usually reliable *Times*, have Lechmere leaving at 03.20, while several other have him leaving at 03.30.<sup>16</sup> Having read the articles through, I think the discrepancy lies in that Lechmere would have told the inquest he usually left home at 03.20. He would have said that on the morning in question he was late, and left at 03.30. It seems the explanation is that press got their wires crossed about the time he left. Leaving at 03.20 would be so incriminating for Lechmere he could never admit it at an inquest.

The overall point is this. Leaving around 03.30 leaves missing time we can't account for; leaving at 03.20 would make his being in Buck's Row at 03.45 inexplicable. It's

worth mentioning that when Lechmere was found in Buck's Row at 03.45 on that fateful morning, it was about 18 minutes later than he would be there on his usual commute. This fact alone should raise eyebrows.

To take a step back and look at the bigger picture, it's an unfortunate coincidence to be both so late for work and be found next to a dead body on the same night.

Now to set the scene. Buck's Row is deserted. There's nobody else there. Interestingly, Lechmere sees or hears nobody. PC Neil had walked down Buck's Row at 03.15 and saw nothing. When Paul first arrived in Buck's Row he saw nobody. Local night shift workers in Winthrop Street, a night watchman at Browne & Eagle, and another in Schneider's Cap Factory the same. Local resident Mrs. Green, a light sleeper who lived in the first house next to the stable gate, heard nothing. Mr. Purkiss, who lived opposite, heard nothing either. The only witness who heard anything was a neighbour named Mrs. Lilley, who heard some faint moans before a train went rumbling past, then some whispers. Mrs. Lilley heard nobody running away, and heard nothing else of note. I think she heard the murder being committed, then shortly afterward heard Paul and Lechmere at Nichol's body.

We also have the geography of Buck's Row. A long narrow street. If somebody else had killed Polly Nichols and had to run off they couldn't have headed east; they would have run right into Lechmere. The killer would have to initially head west, and there are no realistic escape routes until after you get past the Board School building. You would likely have to be level with Court Street before there was a decent escape route. Even getting past the Board School and turning north into Queen Ann Street still turns west at the top towards Thomas Street and leads to Baker's Row. Going further north up Queen Ann Street would be nearly impossible, and would involve jumping onto a rail track.

Heading south takes you to Whitechapel High Street. There is also an exit via Woods Buildings, an exit off Winthrop Street, but this also lead directly onto Whitechapel High Street. And you would still need to get past the Board School to get there. In short, Buck's Row was not a great place to commit a murder; there are few obvious escape routes.

Furthermore, given the length of the street it seems inconceivable that if Lechmere had disturbed the killer he

14 Blomer, Steven: *Inside Buck's Row*. Appendix 1: Timing Issues, and Appendix 2: The Sources. Witness Statements, Police Reports and Press Reports (2019).

15 *Daily Telegraph*, 24th September 1888.

16 Blomer, Steven: *Inside Buck's Row*. Appendix 1: Timing Issues, and Appendix 2: The Sources. Witness Statements, Police Reports and Press Reports (2019).



wouldn't have seen or heard anything. As mentioned in press reports, Lechmere confirmed himself that he "saw no-one running away, nor did he notice anything whatever of a suspicious nature".<sup>17</sup>

To add to the difficulty of escape, roughly every half hour a police patrol went along Baker's Row, another down Brady Street. PC Thain was in Winthrop Street, and PC Neil's beat walked down Buck's Row.<sup>18</sup> It would have been hard for a culprit to skulk away; it would have been nigh on impossible for him to sprint to safety and avoid detection. The likelihood of the murderer being an unknown third party running away seems slim to none. Coroner Baxter thought so too: "It seems astonishing at first thought that the culprit should have escaped detection".<sup>19</sup>



Buck's Row looking east (courtesy casebook.org)

From psychology we have the Law of Parsimony, the simplest explanation of an event or observation is the preferred explanation. This applies to Buck's Row. The only alternative to Lechmere being the killer is a third party. The more and more unlikely this becomes, the more we are left with the simple and most obvious solution.

This brings me on to my next point – the killer being disturbed. Baxter thought he had, "and in the case of Nichols the wretch was disturbed before he had accomplished his object".<sup>20</sup>

Killers have their *modus operandi* – the method the use to commit the crime – and their signature, the distinctive behaviour unique to the killer. It's the signature that you look to link the crimes.<sup>21</sup> When he had the opportunity, Jack the Ripper posed his victims, leaving them out for all to see. Tabram, Chapman, Eddowes and Kelly were all left posed for the shock value. After murdering them he added insult to injury with this final humiliation. This is the killer's unique signature; it's what he does. The signature can tell us a great deal about a crime scene.

Polly Nichols' body wasn't posed. This is a crucial fact when we look at Buck's Row. In fact, on this occasion Jack the Ripper had done the exact opposite. He had tried

to conceal that Nichols had been murdered. Inspector Henson (Head of J Division), who oversaw the Nichols case said "...and there were no cuts in the clothing. It would have been impossible to inflict the wounds while the clothing was on."<sup>22</sup> So, the killer would have lifted the clothes for access to the abdomen, like he usually did, then on this occasion instead of leaving the body posed he covered up the mutilations.

Lechmere himself describes how he found Nichols: "When I found her clothes were up above her knees",<sup>23</sup> and "the woman's legs were uncovered. Her bonnet was off, but close to her head".<sup>24</sup> It appears that Nichols' legs were exposed, and everything else was covered up.

In fact, Nichols' injuries had been so well concealed that when Paul examined her, he was not sure that she was dead. He saw no injuries whatsoever. When PC Neil found the body he was unaware of any injuries to her abdomen, seeing only the neck injury. Dr Llewellyn, called to the scene sometime around 04.00, didn't notice either. Even after loading her body on the ambulance her abdominal injuries were not noticed. Its only when Nichols arrived to the mortuary and was undressed that the extent of her wounds became apparent. The wounds to her abdomen were so severe her intestines were protruding.

Jack the Ripper had taken time and effort to hide his handiwork. Polly Nichols' crime scene is the exact opposite of the Ripper signature. This is hugely important. Let's look at what it means.

If Jack the Ripper had had time to complete his work, he would have left the body posed. This is a given. This is what he does, this is his thing, this is his signature. The fact the body wasn't posed shows us that he was disturbed. And if he was disturbed and had to run away, he wouldn't have wasted any time at the crime scene hiding his handiwork. It would waste valuable getaway time at the crime scene, increasing his risk of capture and it would ruin his signature. The fact that the killer had spent time tidying up the murder scene shows us that he didn't run off. He never left Buck's Row.

17 *The Lakes Herald*, 21st September 1888.

18 Blomer, Steven: *Inside Buck's Row*. Appendix 1: Timing Issues, and Appendix 2: The Sources. Witness Statements, Police Reports and Press Reports (2019).

19 *Daily Telegraph*, 24th September 1888.

20 *Ibid*.

21 Douglas, John: *The Killer Across the Table: Unlocking the Secrets of Serial Killers and Predators with the FBI's Original Manhunter* (2019).

22 *Irish Times*, 18th September 1888.

23 *Evening Standard*, 4th September 1888.

24 *The Daily News*, 4th September 1888.



The conclusion that we can take from a modern analysis of the crime scene is this. Firstly, Jack the Ripper was disturbed, and secondly, he didn't run away either. There is only one person in this drama this can apply to. This is the proof that Charles Allen Lechmere must be Jack the Ripper.

I think Nichols' injuries being concealed is the smoking gun evidence in the case. There is no reason to conceal that a murder has taken place, unless the killer is still *in situ* and trying to hide the crime scene from an approaching witness. The only person there is Lechmere, and the approaching witness is Robert Paul.

This brings us nicely on to Paul meeting Lechmere. In Lechmere's statement to the inquest, he saw Nichols and just at that moment Paul arrived on the scene, about 40 yards or so down Buck's Row. "At this time, he heard a man about 40 yards off approaching from the direction that witness himself had come from".<sup>25</sup> In Lechmere's statement these two events happened simultaneously, or at most a few seconds apart. With this statement Lechmere was attempting to establish an alibi that he had never been alone with the body.

The problem for Lechmere is that its 140m<sup>26</sup> from the Brady Street entrance to the body. Walking at an average speed of 5km per hour, this is about 1 minute 45 seconds. So, we are expected to believe he walked up Buck's Row for 140m being oblivious to somebody 40 yards (36m) behind him.

Paul, in his *Lloyd's* statement, clearly described Lechmere as "standing where the woman was"<sup>27</sup> when he first saw him. If Lechmere's statement is true, then it seems inconceivable that Paul would not have sight of him sooner than that. Lechmere and Paul's statements directly contradict each other. In Paul's version he appears to be a good bit behind Lechmere.

For Lechmere's statement to be true it would require two men, walking about 40-50 yards apart, to be unaware of each other while they walked down a silent and deserted back street. Sensing the movements of the world and the objects within it appears to be a fundamental job for our visual system.<sup>28</sup> It's just not credible that Paul could be walking up Buck's Row and not have sight of Lechmere. Even if there was poor the light, the visual system would pick up movement ahead. Our brain is hardwired to detect movement, like somebody walking ahead. And the weather that morning was "bright and fine",<sup>29</sup> with around 30% cloud cover.

My interpretation of the *Lloyd's* statement is this. Paul doesn't have sight of Lechmere until he is some distance up Buck's Row. It's worth noting that if Paul first spotted Lechmere just as Paul entered Bucks Row, then Lechmere

would need to have been a good distance ahead of him, at least 140m, and would thus have been alone with the body for a period of time. However, I do think this is the least likely scenario.

Similarly, if Paul didn't see Lechmere until he spotted him "standing where the woman was", then this again would mean that Lechmere had been alone with the body before Paul arrived.

The most likely scenario is that there must be a period of time when Paul was walking up Buck's Row that he has no awareness of Lechmere being there. Either way we can see that Lechmere has been alone with the body. His statement to the inquest is demonstrably false.



Buck's Row looking west (courtesy casebook.org)

Let's take a step back again and look at what this means. We have a man found standing near a freshly-killed dead body, and his explanation of finding it is a fabrication.

Now we get to one of the most curious aspects of Buck's Row. As Paul approached, Lechmere walked towards him and blocked his path.<sup>30</sup> Paul was understandably intimidated by this and stepped off the pavement to try get past: "As witness approached him, he walked towards the pavement, and the witness stepped on to the roadway in order to pass him".<sup>31</sup> As Paul tried to pass, Lechmere tapped him on the shoulder and stopped him. To my mind touching somebody else in this manner is threatening. Imagine if somebody blocked your path tonight, and you had to go onto the road to get past, then they walk towards

25 *Illustrated Police News*, 8th September 1888.

26 [www.calcmaps.com](http://www.calcmaps.com).

27 *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 2nd September 1888.

28 Snowden, Robert J. & Freeman, Tom C.A. 'The Visual Perception of Motion' in *Current Biology*, Vol. 14 No. 19 (2004).

29 Weather conditions for the night of the Whitechapel murders, given at casebook.org.

30 *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 2nd September 1888.

31 *The Times*, 18th September 1888.



*PC John Neil discovers the body of Mary Ann 'Polly' Nichols~  
from Famous Crimes Past and Present (1903)*

you and physically touch you on the shoulder and get you to stop.

Lechmere is making very sure Paul doesn't get past. It's very controlling behaviour. Lechmere isn't shocked, frightened, or alarmed; he's taking ownership of the situation. Given the circumstances, it's suspicious. This is a guy who has just found a body.

So, what does this tell us?

Lechmere had been caught unawares, he was engrossed in his work and too late realised Paul was approaching. We know that the male brain can zone in on a task and be less aware of their surroundings; males are less able at multi-tasking or task-switching, as a psychologist would call it.<sup>32</sup> Lechmere was so focused on Nichols that he had narrowly avoided being caught in the act.

It's worth remembering at this point that Paul shouldn't have been there. He was running late. This was the curveball that Lechmere didn't anticipate. Criminals spot opportunities while going about their day-to-day activities. Lechmere moved to Doveton Street in June. He would have walked Buck's Row six days a week for nearly three months. He would have known it well, it would have been in his comfort zone, and it would always have been deserted when he walked along in the early hours. It's an unusual and high-risk place for a murder. Only somebody

who knew it intimately would attempt a murder there. Robert Paul running late, and perhaps even taking a shortcut down a street he usually avoided, was completely unexpected.

Suddenly it's a fight or flight situation, and Lechmere has seconds to decide. He's with the woman he has just killed, and there is a man approaching. A normal person might run away; a psychopath would stand. Boldness is one of the main traits of a psychopath.<sup>33</sup> Lechmere must quickly conceal that a crime has taken place, covering the wounds he had just inflicted, and stepping back from the body into the middle of the road.

This fits in well with Paul's *Lloyd's* statement of not catching sight of Lechmere until he was a good way up Buck's Row.<sup>34</sup> Paul had no sight of Lechmere, then there he was in the middle of the street. Lechmere was next to the body, then stepped back into the road. Paul didn't catch

32 Stoet, G., O'Connor, D.B., Conner, M. et al: 'Are Women Better than Men at Multi-Tasking?' *BMC Psychol* 1, 18 (2013).

33 Patrick, C.J., Fowles, D.C., & Kruger, R.F. 'Triarchic 13 Conceptualisation of Psychopathy: Developmental Origins of Disinhibition, Boldness and Meanness. Development and Psychopathology', 21 (Special Issue 03) (2009).

sight of Lechmere until he was a distance up Buck's Row. Paul could hardly have missed somebody standing in the middle of the road or walking on the pavement. He could have missed somebody crouched in the darkness beside the body.



*Buck's Row as photographed by William Stewart in 1939, albeit with the outline of Polly Nichols' body incorrectly positioned*

Having taken a step back from the body, Lechmere must ascertain exactly what Paul has seen. Paul could have seen him at the body. Paul could get past the murder scene and quickly sprint and get a policeman. Lechmere can't take the chance. He must stop Paul and he must know what he saw. Lechmere tries to block his path; he won't let him pass. Paul "tried to give him a wide berth",<sup>35</sup> but "the man came towards me and said, come and look at this woman".<sup>36</sup>

Lechmere blocking Paul's path is often seen as unimportant, a minor detail. One that gets missed and rarely properly examined, especially from the psychology point of view. To me, it's crucial. It was one of the facts that immediately made me sit up and take notice. Lechmere's actions were to see if Paul had seen anything incriminating. Lechmere couldn't let Paul walk past without knowing what he saw.

Luckily for Lechmere, Paul had seen nothing. Lechmere can now start his pantomime of finding the body.

Paul stops and examines the body. He sees no injuries. The murder has been well concealed. No doubt Lechmere is continually sizing him up, still considering what to do. Paul gets close enough to feel her hands. He even thinks he detects faint signs of life. Paul wants to prop Nichols up to

"shift her".<sup>37</sup> Lechmere then makes a point of not wanting to touch her: "I'm not going to touch her".<sup>38</sup>

Another interesting point from the psychology viewpoint is that Lechmere started the process of drawing attention to Nichols, of getting help – then he won't follow the process through.

Nichols' neck has been cut right through to the vertebrae, through the arteries, the jugular, the veins, the windpipe and all the soft tissues. She is close to being decapitated. Lechmere knows if the body was moved her wounds would be unmissable. Lechmere's refusal to assist Paul in helping Nichols is just one more anomaly that can't easily be explained away.

We can now conclude our look at Buck's Row. The drama moves on from here to Baker's Row and to PC Mizen, but we don't have to leave Buck's Row to point the finger at Lechmere.

We have established that Lechmere must have been alone with Polly Nichols' body. We have the timing evidence, and we know that it doesn't take fifteen minutes to get from Doveton Street to Buck's Row.

We have also shown that Lechmere's inquest statement of finding the body at the same time he becomes aware of Paul is a lie. We can add that an unknown third party being the killer and escaping undetected would have been astonishing, a point made by the coroner himself.

Moving on to the crime scene and the unique Ripper 'signature', we can see that the killer was disturbed. We can also say that the murderer didn't run off either. It becomes clear that Polly Nichols' killer never left Buck's Row.

We have looked at the behaviour of Lechmere in relation to both the body and to Robert Paul. We have seen that Lechmere's behaviour is threatening, suspicious and incriminating. For somebody who has been found next to a dead body by a witness, it's all huge red flag. It's more than enough to have arrested Lechmere. It's criminal itself that this never happened.

When you look at Buck's Row, whichever way you turn, all roads lead to Lechmere.

34 *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 2nd September 1888.

35 *Ibid.*

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Illustrated Police News*, 8th September 1888.

38 *Echo*, 3rd September 1888.



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# THE THAMES TORSO MURDERS

## THE PONDEROUS WORLD OF IMPERFECT SHIBBOLETHS

By SUZANNE HUNTINGTON

Right everyone, pay attention, pens down, eyes to the front. Yes, that means you as well Keith, you never know, you might actually LEARN something, rather than constantly cribbing off your neighbour. So, today class, we're going to discuss 'The Thames Torso Murders', a series of female dismemberments which occurred in London between 1887 to 1889. Well, when I say the *Thames Torso Murders*, I am obviously including the cases that didn't actually occur in the river, and the ones that had nothing to do with disposal of a body in a public waterway. And of course, we will be including the ones where there isn't really any *torso* available, and the ones where it was only a part torso, and the ones where the body still had legs or arms attaching so wasn't technically a torso at all.

Oh, and although we say *murders*, we are clearly including both the ones that are murders and the ones that may have been as a result of an inadvertent or illegal death. And just on the point about the dates, I know I've said 1887 to 1889 but *obviously* we'll be looking at the cases from the 1870's and 1884. We may even touch on those obscure ones from 1898 and 1902 that nobody is really sure about. And then there's that obscure one from Paris which everyone thinks is a bit tenuous and basically bog all to do with any of the cases.

Let us also not forget that Jack the Ripper may or may not have been involved in one of them, or a couple, or none at all. Oh yes and lastly, please remember that we have an overlap case which also falls into the category of The Whitechapel Murders, except that this case occurred in St George's in the East.

Everyone with me so far?

As I've somewhat wryly attempted to demonstrate, the Thames Torso Murders is a rather deceiving name for a series of deaths that maybe, or may not, be connected. These cases occurred in London between 1873 and 1902. The only really provable link between any of them

is the victims were all adult females and all had been dismembered. We should really be calling them 'The LVP Dismemberments', or 'The Female Dismemberment Mysteries of Late Victorian London', or 'The London Dismemberment Mysteries' but these are not media-friendly monikers and are cumbersome in a soundbite world. So we're stuck with The Thames Torso Murders for now until such time as someone comes up with a snazzier title.

If this soubriquet *is* to become permanently instilled within people's psyche, we're going to have a problem folks, and we needn't look any further than our spiritual sister case; 'Jack the Ripper' to see the damage it could potentially do.

In using 'Jack the Ripper' instead of 'The Whitechapel Murders' we have an immediate narrative built around a fictional character. The Whitechapel Murders (its more accurate title) is an open-minded investigation into a dozen plus cases of women losing their lives or being attacked roughly within the same area of London. Jack the Ripper however, is a rabid eyed, comic characterisation of a cloak wearing, top-hatted monster who preyed on tarts with a heart, tarts who are gratuitous, sexualised, buxom, Windsor-esque parodies with a jaunt in their step and a wink in their eye.

Date	Time	Person Murdered	Where
4. 88	12.15-5.00pm	Emma E. Smith	Osborn Street

Chief Inspector Donald Swanson's list of 'Whitechapel murders' victims

So when we talk about ‘The Thames Torso Murders’ we run the risk of creating another malfeasant, a lone wolf serial killer with a proclivity for limbless corpses and a paraphilic river obsession. And it goes further than that: I’ve already seen, on more than one occasion, the 1887 to 1889 cases referred to as ‘canonical’. And that really does concern me, because it would take a brave (or foolhardy) individual to claim that those four cases are conclusively linked. To me, the use of ‘canonical’ in this context has more to do with the proximity to 1888 rather than it being based on any proven evidence. These subject commentators who make these assertions, where is there proof? Who says they’re canonical? Who has corroborated their account?

It really does just smack of what I like to term ‘SSS’; ‘Secondary Source Syndrome’, that malignant and hazardous affliction where authors read something without checking and hey presto, we get phony-baloney turned into de facto truth.

So, let us go back to basics, let’s wipe the slate clean, go back to the drawing board, make a new start. Let’s look at the evidence and create a narrative (if there is any). Let’s not get into revisionist or negationist labelling, let’s just allow the evidence to speak for itself. Let’s attempt, before it’s too late, to ‘SOS: Save Our Subject’.

When I first started to research the dismemberment cases I knew from the off I was not going to include child dismemberments. This was because the killing and/or dismemberment of children (and babies) is a completely different subject matter and one that warrants its own investigation. I did, however, decide to include male as well as female cases, and cases which had been solved and those where a perpetrator had not been brought to justice. I gave myself a generous scope of 63 years (1850-1913) from which to gather information and provide insight into any potential patterns that may inadvertently appear.

The first thing I discovered, almost immediately, was that dismemberments are incredibly rare. Rare now and rare then. In the ‘Essentials in Autopsy Practice’ by Guy N Rutty et al (2017) we are told that between 1985 and 2016 there were 85 incidences of dismemberment in the United Kingdom. That equates roughly to 2.75 cases a year out of a population of between 56-65 million. That, by anyone’s standards, is a miniscule amount. Between 1850 to 1913 however, it is even smaller, and I have only been able to locate 38 cases from a population that increased from around 27 to 40 million.

Now I don’t know about you, but I had a much higher perception where these figures are concerned. Indeed, whilst discussing this article with friends as I wrote it, they also thought the actual figure to be very low, but maybe this is because our climate of rolling 24-hour ‘Breaking

News’ and true crime documentaries has distorted our powers of awareness. And I think that is true, in a way, of Victorian society. Obviously, we’re not talking about the corseted classes being addicted to the clickbait headlines from the *Daily Mail Online*, but we are looking at the emergence of the popular press and the realisation from newspaper proprietors that gore sells. And to that end we see an awful lot of dismemberment cases that are, well, not *our kind* of dismemberment cases. This, in turn, is combined with a truly jaw-dropping amount of deaths that occurred in the waterways of the capital. In a sort of mathematical equation of perception we have:

$$= \text{SUM}((A:1' \text{populistpress}' / B:1' \text{sensationalistheadline s}') * C:1' \text{deathsinwaterways}') + D:1' \text{found bodyparts}' = E:1' \text{peoplesperception}' *$$

When we talk about deaths in the pools, rivers and canals of London we are looking at staggering figures, I mean, forget The Smiley Faced Killer in the States and The Pusher in Manchester, in 1882 just between Vauxhall Bridge and Blackfriars Bridge, an average of 8 bodies a WEEK were being pulled out of the water (*Derry Journal*, 8th July 1882). Between 1877 and 1881, 236 bodies were retrieved from the River Lea and 226 from the Regent’s Canal (same source). To Londoners, their waterways must have seemed a very petulant lifeblood indeed.

And as for the sensationalist headlines, we see four distinct subcategories to feed our misconceptions:

1. Disused graveyards
2. London’s violent past
3. Plague pits and mass burials
4. Medical schools

For anyone familiar with Catharine Arnold’s truly excellent *Necropolis: London and Its Dead* [Simon & Schuster; 2008] will know about our first subcategory. By the mid nineteenth century, London had run out of places to bury her dead. The resultant Burial Acts of the 1850s meant the dead would now be buried in her burgeoning suburbs at municipal cemeteries, so vast they used their own railway lines and stations. But these civic behemoth’s are not my concern, instead, it was the now disused graveyards within the city itself that drew my attention. Given the incredibly rapid growth of the city, these plots became much sought after by covetous building entrepreneurs and they were shaved constantly for the construction of new roads and buildings. The reinterment of the dead became an economic necessity. Unfortunately, some contractors were not particularly scrupulous in their handling of human remains, and as result we get the

\* Yes Excel geeks, I know that’s impossible but I’m trying to be ironic.

likes of the following occurring (as detailed in the London *Daily News* on Tuesday 13 April 1880):

Mr. Poland said he had to charge Mr. Jacobson with improperly and indecently disinterring certain human remains from property in his possession and under his control. – Mr. Poland then called Mr. G. Underwood, florist, of No. 52, High-street, Camden-town, who stated that he purchased some mould [topsoil] of [sic] a carman... about a fortnight ago. Two loads were shot at this door and it was raining at the time. He paid 1s. a load for it. It was sifted before being placed in the cellar, but he did not see any bones. Mr Rosch, the inspector of nuisances, called the following morning, and he (witness) saw him find some bones and jawbones with teeth in them, and Rosch took possession [of them]. The man who brought the stuff to him said it had come from a large cellar in Baker-street, and when he heard it came from a graveyard he stopped it... Mr Spence, inspector of nuisance for St Pancras, said he was all day at the place. He saw Mr. Jacobson, and the ground being dug up and carts filled with mould. He saw eighteen or twenty skulls taken out of the ground, the teeth in some being in a good state of preservation.

So you can see the re-emergence of human remains was a regular occurrence across the capital. In fact, if we look at this in combination with our second and third issues we get a rich picture of a city, constantly confronted with the remnants of historic uprisings, battles, prisoner containment and epidemics. Even today it is far from uncommon for contractors to dig up the dead – the building of Cross-rail and HS2 being prime examples.

Our final subcategory, medical schools, is an interesting one. There are repeated, regular accounts of limbs being found in London that bear all the hallmarks of a medical specimen. These limbs were found covered in preserving fluid, which is a general give away (as opposed to lime, which indicates a need for disposal). Whether students were removing them as part of a macabre hoax, or because they were ‘taking their work home with them’ and then discarding them once they’d finished remains to be seen.

Ultimately, whatever the reason for the dismemberment, the distortion of reality has not waned with the passage of time. And fascinating though these cases might be, they have no place in our investigation.

And so we return to the 38 cases I had initially identified. After analysing them further (details of which will appear in my forthcoming book) I was able to whittle this figure down to twelve unsolved cases of female dismemberment in London itself. These twelve cases are the basis for the investigative part of my book, and it is from there that any supposed serial killer narrative evolves. Detailed below is

a brief resume of the circumstances surrounding each of them:

### 1873: The ‘Battersea Mystery’

Sixteen body parts found in or on the foreshore of the River Thames, some of which proved to have come from an animal. The victim was never identified despite extensive police and press coverage of the case.

### 1874: The Second ‘Battersea Mystery’

A headless body of a female minus one leg found in the River Thames near Putney. The victim was never identified and she received little attention from either the police or the press.



### 1874: The ‘Blackfriars Mystery’

A body of a female minus an arm and a leg was discovered in the River Thames near Blackfriars Bridge. It is possible she could have been there for a considerable length of time. She was never identified but did receive some press coverage due to some advanced adipocere on her corpse.

### 1884: The ‘Tottenham Court Road Mystery’

At least seven pieces of a female body were found in various locations around Tottenham Court Road. Upon looking into this and the following case in more detail it would appear there were additional bodies within the



vicinity that had also possibly been dismembered. The case did receive some press coverage but the victim was never identified. None of the body parts were found in water.

#### 1884: The 'Mornington Crescent Mystery'

Portions of arms and feet were found in the ornamental gardens of Mornington Crescent. This occurred during the investigation into the Tottenham Court Road Mystery and as such they are often linked. It was not clear as to the gender of the remains and no identification was possible. None of the body parts were found in water.

#### 1887: The 'Rainham Mystery'

Seven body parts were found in the River Thames and the Regent's Canal. No identification was made and no prosecutions were undertaken.

#### 1888: The 'Whitehall Mystery',

Four, or more likely three, body parts were found in a wharf on the Thames, a school in the Elephant & Castle and most notoriously in the basement of New Scotland Yard whilst it was being built. Much was made of the case at the time, and since, with many people speculating on the location of the finds and the timing.



#### 1889: The Case of Elizabeth Jackson, aka 'The Horsleydown Mystery' and 'The Thames Mystery'.

Twelve body parts were found in the Thames, on the foreshore, in the Regent's Canal and on land. She was

identified as Elizabeth Jackson. Despite extensive interest nobody was arrested in conjunction with the crime.

#### 1889: The 'Pinchin Street Torso'

Probably our most well-known case, was actually a headless, legless corpse that had been left in an arch of a railway viaduct in Pinchin Street, just south of Whitechapel in St George's in the East. Due to the proximity of 'Ripperland' she received a great deal of attention at the time and now. The perpetrator of the crime has been much speculated on. She was never identified and no prosecutions were brought. The corpse was found away from water.

#### 1892: The 'Blackheath Mystery'

A fully dismembered, skeletonised female was found buried beneath a soon to be demolished laundry in Blackheath. She was identified as Eliza Smith Flavell who had disappeared 21 years previously. Although there was much circumstantial evidence, nobody was ever brought to trial for her murder.

#### 1898: The Case of Jessie Durien

A complete corpse composing of a body and two separated legs, were found a short distance from one another in the Regent's Canal. The victim was identified as Jessie Durien, who had been missing for several weeks. How she ended up in the water is still unclear.

#### 1902: The 'Salamanca Place Mystery'

A fully dismembered body of a female was discovered in Salamanca Place in Lambeth outside the gates of Doulton's pottery works. She had been in part scalded, boiled, cooked and burnt seemingly in an attempt to dispose of her. She was never identified and the public very quickly lost interest in the investigation.



So there we have it, the twelve cases up for investigation. Yes, some do immediately jump out at you as similar, and some are clearly stand-alone in their intent. But are any of them linked? That's the question you're all wanting an answer to isn't it? Well... hmmm... pffft... errrr... possibly. But until my research is *fully complete* I'm reluctant to comment one way or another. We don't, after all, want another incomplete addition to complicate matters further. I guess you're all going to have to buy the book. *#unashamedplug*



SUZANNE HUNTINGTON is the author of the forthcoming *The Thames Torso Murders: Fact or Fiction?* (2022). She has a degree in Modern British History, Human Geography, and qualified as a teacher before spending 25 years in Financial Services.

# FROM THE ARCHIVES

## A CUT-THROAT BUSINESS

By ANDY ALIFFE

*This article originally appeared in Ripperologist 20, December 1998*

**The legend of Sweeney Todd conjures up images of a throat-cutting ghoulish fiend, much the same as the perception of Jack the Ripper. They also shared the same *modus operandi*; a deep slash across the neck followed by mutilation of the body. It is possible that Sweeney Todd was no fictional character as imagined; in his book, *Sweeney Todd*, Peter Haining tells the supposed “real story of the demon barber of Fleet Street”.**

Haining tells us that Todd was born on 16 October 1756 in Brick Lane, Stepney.

The actual house in which the child first breathed the fetid air of a London slum is not known, though it has been suggested that it may have been one of a trio of three-storey buildings, numbers 85, 87 or 89, on the west side of the street, near the junction with Hanbury Street and just a stone's-throw from Spitalfields Market.

According to Haining's account, Todd's mother was a silk-winder, and her husband a silk weaver. At an early age Sweeney Todd became apprentice to John Crook of Holborn; cutler and specialist razor-maker, but by 1770, aged 14 years, Todd was sentenced to five years in Newgate Prison. There he met

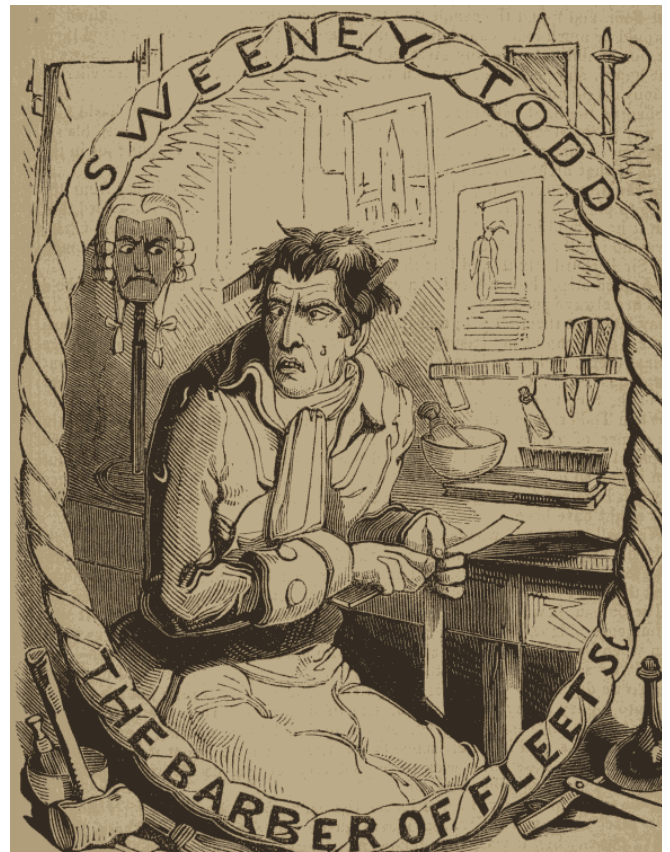
“a grizzled old barber called Plummer, who was serving ten years for embezzlement... he had not wasted his years though, for there were plenty of better-off prisoners who would like a shave, and anyone who fell ill had no one but the barber to turn to for treatment.”

Todd became Plummer's 'soap-boy', lathering-up the customers. He was released from Newgate in 1775 aged 19 years, and with his newly-acquired trade joined

the ranks of the eighteenth century 'Flying Barbers' or journeyman hairdressers, “setting up on street corners, in markets or at fairs, offering their services to passers-by.”

In 1785 Todd opened his barber shop at 186 Fleet Street, next to St Dunstan's Church, and the rest became history.

The story of 'Sweeney Todd' became deeply rooted in early Victorian 'Penny Bloods' or 'Penny Dreadfuls'. The theme was borrowed for serialisation in the *People's Periodical* of 1846/47 under the title 'The String of Pearls, or The Demon Barber of Fleet Street'.





It was written by Thomas Prest, who claimed to have based the historical fact of Sweeney Todd on the reports of his trial as written in the Newgate Calendar. It was later adapted for the stage, changing the name to Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street and was performed regularly during the 1800s at the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton. It is interesting to note that Roslyn D'Onston (aka Robert D'Onston Stephenson) stayed with a member of the same Prest family in Islington when he arrived from his native Hull to volunteer his services to fight with Garibaldi in Italy.

The theme was further developed in popular fiction; Sweeney becoming the model of B.L. Farjeon's novel *Devlin the Barber*. Published in 1888, it tells the story of a London hairdresser at the centre of a murder mystery and is highlighted by Devlin's seemingly supernatural powers, which he used to beguile his female victims, and who, at the end of the book, inexplicably disappears! (Now where have I heard that before?!)

In reality, in 1888 barbers and hairdressers were already under suspicion of being the perpetrator of the Whitechapel murders.

The joint title of barber-surgeon went back several centuries. They practised in Royal Households and military establishments, and often acted as medical orderlies under battle conditions. Apart from cutting hair and shaving, their more familiar civilian role was to perform minor surgery such as blood letting, treating wounds and lancing abscesses and some were also trained in the operation of removing gangrenous arms or legs. By definition they had "some rough anatomical knowledge".

The barber's pole is a reminder of this original work, as it represents the staff the barber-surgeon gave his patient to hold while he was being bled and to encourage the blood to flow. In the late 18th century a barber displayed a blue and white striped pole and the surgeons the same, but with a red flag and blood pot attached. The red striped pole is said to represent the blood from the blood letting and the white the bandages used to dress the cut.

The barber-surgeon has been immortalised in this famous verse:

A Barber's Shop adorned we see,  
With Monster, News and Poverty,  
While some are shaving others bleed,  
And those that wait the papers read.

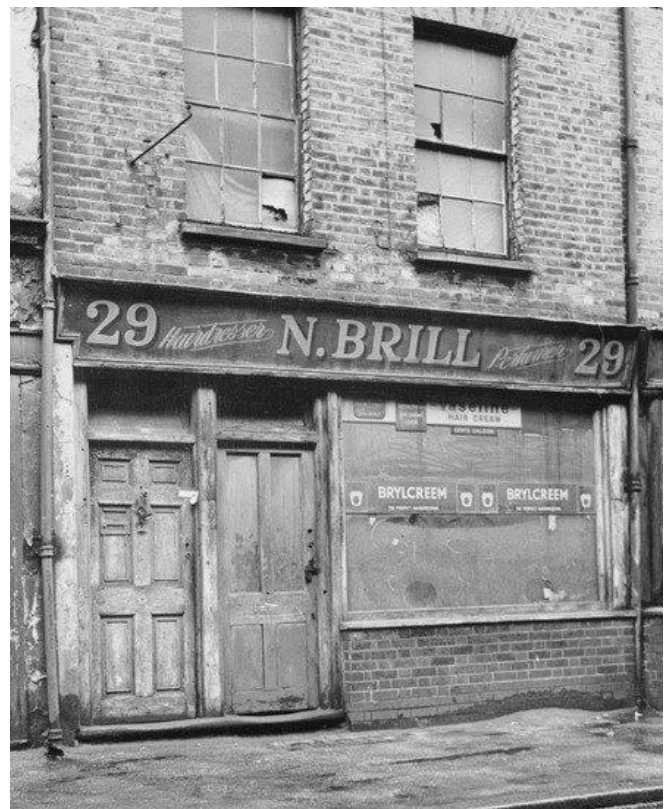
The Master full of Whig or Tory  
Combs out your wig, and tells a story.  
Then palms your Cole, and scraping, smiles,  
And gives a pill to cure the piles.

At least four or five police suspects and several others connected with the Whitechapel murders were

hairdressers, or in some way connected with the trade. The cut-throat razor has always been considered a formidable weapon!

During the investigation into Annie Chapman's murder, the CID wanted to question a male hairdresser called 'Mary', a known sex offender. They were, however, informed by the Bremen police that he was at the time serving a twelve month prison sentence in Oslebshausen.

The now very familiar picture of Annie Chapman's murder site at 29 Hanbury Street shows the front view of a hairdresser's shop owned by a certain N. Brill. In fact, 29 Hanbury Street had been continuously used as a barber's shop since 1895. When Mrs Amelia Richardson vacated the building the lease was taken over by Morris Modlin, who traded as a hairdresser until 1905. The trade and premises was then let to Nathan Brill, who conducted his business there from 1906 up to 1951, when Maurice Stanton is listed at the address from 1952 until 1957, although he traded with the same shop-front displayed by Brill, which remained until eventual demolition began in April 1970.



*The frontage of 29 Hanbury Street*

PC John Johnson was on duty in the Minories during the early hours of Tuesday, 18th September 1888 when he heard a cry of "Murder!" coming from the direction of a yard called Three Kings Court. Here he found a man with a prostitute named Elizabeth Burns. The man said he had done nothing and was sent on his way, and the woman pleaded to be escorted away from the scene by the policeman. As they walked Elizabeth told PC Johnson that



the man had threatened her with a big knife. She had been too frightened to say anything earlier, but it was now too late for Johnson to apprehend the man, who by this time had disappeared.

The culprit was in fact a German hairdresser by the name of Charles Ludwig, who was later arrested that same evening by PC Gallagher following an incident at a coffee stall in Whitechapel High Street. This is possibly the same incident often referred to by journalist and author George R. Sims, who, having spoken to the stall holder, was told that Sims' picture, advertising his latest book, was a perfect likeness of the man arrested as being the Whitechapel murderer.

Charles Ludwig, hairdresser, was described as "well dressed in a frock coat and top hat. Dark, slight build, about 5ft 8ins tall, supporting a grizzled moustache and beard".

Ludwig was taken to Leman Street Police Station, and when searched was found to be carrying a long-bladed knife, scissors and a collection of razors. He had been employed by Mr C.A. Partidge of the Minories as a barber's assistant.

Earlier in the evening of his arrest Ludwig had been drinking at an hotel in Finsbury, an establishment he used regularly, but this particular night he was the worse for wear from drink and became annoyed when asked to leave, producing a number of razors and frightening many of the hotel guests.

The landlord described Ludwig as follows:

He is a most extraordinary man, is always in a bad temper, grinds his teeth with rage at any little thing that puts him out. I believe he has some knowledge of anatomy, as he was for some time an assistant to some doctors in the German Army, and helped to dissect bodies. He always carries razors and a pair of scissors with him... from what he has said to me, I know he was in the habit of associating with low women.

The *Hairdresser's Weekly Journal*, the trade paper, was quick off the mark to report the incident. Dated 22nd September 1888, and captioned under the heading of its weekly column 'Captain Cuttle's Note Book', it says the following:

It had to come! I thought it would! None of the great events of the world have taken place without the help of THE profession [hairdressing]. Heroes have stopped to be carefully shaved before embarking on heroic deeds. Statesmen going down to the Senate with the faith of the nation in their hands have called on the way to have their hair carefully curled. The particular trimming of a legal whisker has gained a judgeship. The beard of a cleric has cost him the bishopric. In all

these things the hand of THE profession is visible.

Coming then to the antithesis of these things, it is fitting perhaps that the latest and most gory page in the bloodstained annals of crime – that recording the Whitechapel horrors – should not be without a barber's name. Herr – I'm glad he's a Herr, because he is evidently not English – you-know-who, has achieved the dubious distinction of being suspected of the perpetration of these horrible atrocities, is, it appears, a product of the German Club, Houndsditch, and has been engaged in the shop of Mr Partridge, hairdresser, of the Minories.

Partridge was of the opinion, however, that

Herr Ludwig was too much of a coward to commit a murder, and he has arrived at this conclusion by the fact that he [Partridge] – in we suppose, the exercise of his proper function as employer – had thought it expedient to punch Ludwig on the nose, to which piece of pleasantry Herr Ludwig had not thought fit to retaliate... Again, who knows but that Ludwig had been reading his countryman Professor Baron's Manchester lecture, in which he laid it down that it was "the duty of a hairdresser to remedy the mistakes of nature", and that by punching him on the nose Mr Partridge was, perhaps, only carrying out this injunction? Anyway we trust Mr Ludwig – should he succeed in getting out of the hands of the police with his neck intact – will see the propriety of making tracks for the happy Fatherland again, and that he will take with him as many of his own country and kidney as the ship will hold.

This rather jingoistic approach to reporting was the subject of an apology the following week. Dated 29th September it reads:

We have been requested by Mr H LUDWIG, of Beaufort Toilet Club (obviously a hairdresser), 27 Glasshouse Street, Regent Street W., to state that he is in no way connected with the man Ludwig who has been arrested on suspicion of being concerned in the latest Whitechapel assaults, and to who our 'Captain Cuttle' referred in his last week's notes.

However, the name of Ludwig would appear again in later enquiries.

On the same publication date as the apology – 29th September – Elizabeth Stride had been cleaning rooms at a lodging house at 32 Flower and Dean Street. At 6.30pm she went to the Queen's Head for a drink, returning to that address at about 7.00pm where she went to the kitchen and asked to borrow a clothes brush from Charles Preston; she left looking cheerful.

Charles Preston was a local barber who was living at

the lodging house, and who was later called as a witness at Stride's inquest where he gave evidence, including reports of charges brought against her on several occasions for being drunk and disorderly,

By November it was the turn of the hairdresser to become detective. Again from the *Hairdresser's Weekly Journal*, dated 10th November 1888, and under the headline 'A 'JACK THE RIPPER' CAPTURED IN SHEFFIELD BY A HAIRDRESSER, the following is reported:

Mr Hallott, hairdresser, Hillsbro, has just had a strange experience. On Friday afternoon a stranger came to his shop and purchased a walking stick. A conversation ensued, and as the stranger had to stay in Sheffield all night, Mr Hallott offered him a bed. This was accepted, and the stranger went out for a short time. During his absence Mr Hallott regretted that he has been so hasty in offering the stranger hospitality, and on his return he questioned him again as to his business. To Mr Hallott's questions the stranger gave satisfactory answers, and eventually he was allowed to retire to bed. Mr Hallott still felt uneasy, and lifted the stranger's hat off the hook and looked inside. Turning up the lining he discovered a letter signed 'Jack the Ripper'. He became concerned, Mrs Hallott was alarmed, and the police were fetched. The representative of the law at once entered the unsuspecting stranger's bedroom, and charged him to answer their questions in a truthful manner. This the visitor did, and he was again set at liberty.

Mentioned as number two in the Macnaghten memoranda of three names more likely to be a suspect than Thomas Cutbush is 'Kosminski'.

Aaron Kosminski is described as a Polish Jewish hairdresser who came to England in 1882. (It is also of interest that one of Cutbush's relatives was also a hairdresser.)

In 1890 Kosminski was admitted to the Mile End Workhouse for treatment, the admissions register noting that he had been insane for two years. After three days in the infirmary he was released into the custody of his brother, Woolf.

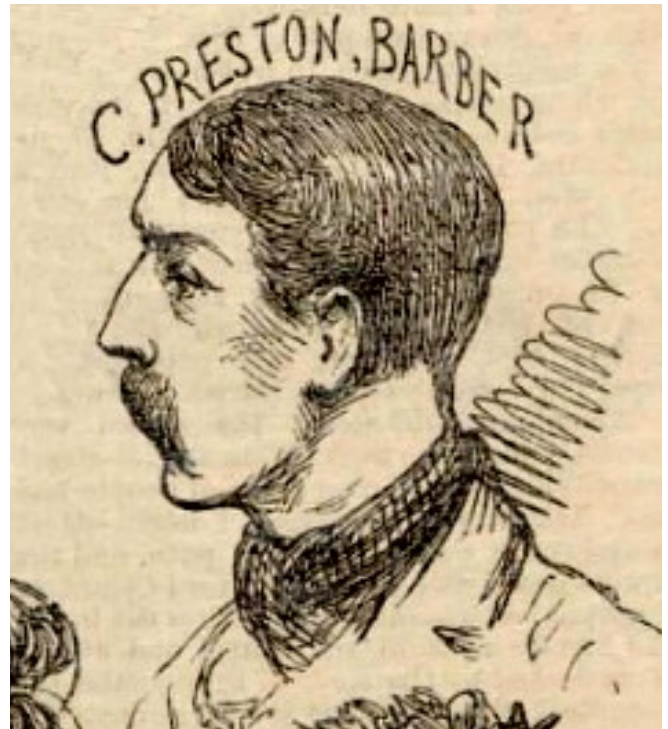
A hairdresser by the name of Kosminski was trading by that name in Baker Street at the time, but it is not yet established if they were of the same family.

It was also noted on Kosminski's admission to Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum in February 1891 that he had

taken up a knife and threatened the life of his sister. He is very dirty and has not attempted any kind of work in years.

Although not naming Kosminski, George R. Sims adds a little more information, gleaned from Macnaghten,

that Kosminski had once been employed in a hospital in Poland. During the 19th century, and especially in Eastern European countries, the barber-surgeon or 'feldscher', a junior or assistant surgeon, were the poor man's doctor.



*Charles Preston, sketched at the inquest into Elizabeth Stride's death*

One such feldscher was Ripper suspect and convicted wife poisoner, Seweryn Kłosowski, alias George Chapman. He arrived in England in 1887 having qualified as a junior barber-surgeon, studying in Poland. Between 1880-85 he was a student at the Hospital of Praga, in Warsaw, and between 1885-86 acted as an assistant feldscher at the same establishment.

In England, Kłosowski first worked as an assistant hairdresser in the West India Dock Road for Abraham Radin, and between 1888-91 was living and working at 126 Cable Street.

During the early part of 1890 he also worked in a barber's shop beneath the White Hart public house which still stands at the corner of Whitechapel High Street and Gunthorpe Street (then George Yard).

According to the dubious Dr Dutton, as reported by Donald McCormick, Inspector Abberline had questioned a hairdressing salesman by the name of Wolf Levisohn who said he had known Kłosowski by that name and also by the name Ludwig, but assured Abberline that Kłosowski wasn't the Ripper and that the detective should be investigating another hairdresser working as a barber-surgeon for William Delhaye in the Westmoreland Road, Walworth. McCormick said that this was a certain Dr Alexander Pedachenko, who was a double for Kłosowski/Chapman.

Kłosowski emigrated to America with his then wife, Lucy Baderski, at Whitsun 1890 and opened another hairdressing business in New Jersey. Lucy returned alone early in 1891 after Kłosowski's various affairs and threatening behaviour had frightened her. He himself returned to England in the middle of the same year and lived with a woman called Annie Chapman (no relation), subsequently taking her surname and calling himself 'George Chapman'.

Between 1893 and 1895 he worked for, or owned, hairdressing premises in West Green Road, Tottenham and Tottenham High Road, also being employed as a barber at addresses in Rushton Street, Shoreditch and Church Lane, Leytonstone where he met, and bigamously married, a Mrs Spink in October 1895. Chapman would not only become a serial-killer, but he was rapidly becoming a serial bridegroom!

With an inheritance left by Mrs Spink's grandfather, she and Chapman opened a hairdressing salon behind the Albion in Old Hastings, and as a business novelty Mrs Spink tried her hand at lathering and shaving some of the customers, but when this proved a disappointment Chapman persuaded his wife to use her musical talents and offered 'Musical Shaves' with Mrs Spink at the piano, which became popular and improved business.

George Chapman was committed for trial in February 1903 charged with poisoning Mrs Spnk, Maud Marsh and Bessie Taylor. The arresting officer was Detective Sergeant George Godlev, who had previously been involved with the Ripper crimes in 1888. On searching Chapman's room, Godley found, amongst other tings, a diary with an entry about a hairdressing job in Clifton Baths Market and several newspaper cuttings advertising hairdressing products.

One of the prosecution witnesses was the same Wolf Levisohn questioned by Abberline in 1888 about his acquaintanceship with Chapman. In giving evidence at the trial Levisohn stated the following, as reported in H.L. Adams' book *Trial of George Chapman*:

I live at 135 Rosslyn Road in South Tottenham and I am a traveller in hairdressing appliances. I have known the accused since 1888 when I met him in a hairdresser's shop in Whitechapel. I spoke to him in Yiddish- He said he came from Warsaw. I knew him as Ludwig Zagowski. We met from time to time in 1890. He told me he had been practising in the medical line as a 'feldscher' at the Praga Hospital. I have been a 'feldscher' myself. I have seven years training in the Russian Army. A 'feldscher' is an assistant to a doctor... When a man becomes a 'feldscher' in the Russian Army he gets a book given to him which contains his progress right through the service, and in civil hospitals he gets a certificate... The accused never

showed me any of his certificates as a 'feldscher'. The accused could not have been a soldier, because he was too young when he came over here... I lost sight of him for a time. I did not see him from 1895 till 1903.

Chapman was found guilty of murder by poison of three women and was hanged on 7th April 1903.



*Seweryn Kłosowski, alias George Chapman*

If the Whitechapel killer was indeed a 'tonsorial terror', then we should leave the final words to the character of hairdresser Alfred Wicken, alias Jack the Ripper, as played by Sir John Mills in the film *Deadly Advice*:

Nobody suspects a hairdresser... I ever cut Inspector Abberline's hair, that's how close he got!... I was the one they never caught... You've got to be someone nobody suspects.

Noting that most of the suspected victims were killed between Friday and Saturday nights brings to mind to the old barber's saying, "Something for the weekend, Sir?" Sadly, in these cases it was no form of protection!

## SOURCES

Peter Haining, *Sweeney Todd: The Real Story of the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*; Peter Haining, *The Mystery and Horrible Murders of Sweeney Todd*; Philip Sugden, *The Complete History of Jack the Ripper*; Gail Durbin, *Wig, Hairdressing and Shaving Bygones*; Begg, Fido and Skinner, *The Jack the Ripper A-Z*; H.L. Adam, *Trial of George Chapman*.



ANDY ALIFFE has had an interest in Jack the Ripper for nearly forty years, and was a founding member of the Cloack and Daggar Club (now Whitechapel Society). He has written, researched and broadcast on many aspects of the Whitechapel murders, and spoken at conferences in the UK and USA. He was also a cast member in Frogg Moody's musical *Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper*. Now retired, he was a Comedy and Entertainment Producer for BBC Radio for twenty years.



## Spotlight on Rippercast

# ANIMALS (ELEVEN DIFFERENT ONES)

By MARK RIPPER

Welcome to the latest instalment in our series SPOTLIGHT ON RIPPERCAST, in which Rippercast host Jonathan Menges transcribes excerpts from his extensive vault of Ripper-related podcast discussions. The following article is a transcription of Mark Ripper's insightful talk broadcast in November as part of the digital Casebook conference.

Hello. Let's start with some quotations. See if you can see what's going on here.

"Thrawl Street was the centre for hundreds of these dregs of humanity – sluts who knew no other way to live, cast-off wives and impoverished widows, dipsomaniacs and the 'slaves' of out-of-work labourers. Here existed so-called lodging houses, where these women herded together, paying fourpence a night for the privilege of sleeping on a bug-infested bed consisting of little more than a blanketed board in a room that might accommodate as many as sixty at a time."

"Polly Nicholls [*sic*] was a Whitechapel whore, which tells us much, for they were a species apart. ... In this respect, Polly Nicholls [*sic*] was typical. Only five feet two in height, she gave an overall impression of drabness, with mouse-coloured hair, a sallow complexion, and five front teeth missing from her lower jaw, souvenir of a brawl."

"Mary Ann Nicholls (or Nichols) was a pathetic creature, down on her luck if anyone was."

"Polly Nichols was a drab little woman. Forty-two years old, her brown hair turning mousily grey, with two bottom teeth and a top tooth lost in fights, she stood five foot two inches tall, and maintained an alcoholic brightness and pugnacity."

"Annie Chapman was a short, beefy woman aged forty-five."

"On the morning of 9 November 1888 the Lord

Mayor's coach stood ready for the Procession down to St Paul's. Only a handful of people knew that a short distance away, Mary Kelly lay carved to pieces by the Ripper."

We're going to come back to those, but keep them in mind. Today, let's talk about where Ripperology stands in today's anti-Ripperological world. What challenges does it face – and how many of them are existential, if any? What does it need to do to survive, supposing, of course, that we think it should?

One of the strangest phenomena of the last decade or so in Ripperology is the amount of money that has been spent on it, and in many cases this money has been spent by people who actually have very little time for it as a discipline. Bruce Robinson's book, *They All Love Jack*, was published in 2015, and it was widely reported that he had spent half a million pounds on it. We know what he thought, and presumably still thinks, of Ripperologists, because he tells us, by way of a somewhat fervid fantasy scene, in the very first paragraphs of his book:

"Middle-aged men with disturbing expressions... These are the Ripperologists... An inflamed, bespectacled authority fights his way to the front. 'Shut this farce down!' he demands. 'You are all duped!' He struggles to get a pedometer past a pack of egg sandwiches. 'I've measured his routes,' he charges, thrusting his instrument as proof. 'I challenge you all with the routes!'"

Robinson's outlay was overshadowed by that attributed to Patricia Cornwell, who published the second edition of her book, now called *Ripper: The Secret Life of Walter Sickert*, in 2017. Her work had cost her \$7 million. To be fair to Cornwell, she doesn't think that Ripperologists are her only detractors – she also thinks that her conclusions are indigestible to the art trade, whose practitioners have a vested financial interest in maintaining the market's interest in their valuable artworks. But she also saw the Ripperologists coming:

"When my book was released in the winter of 2002 and I headed to the UK for the publicity tour, I was baffled to hear reports from FBI friends that 'the Ripperologists are lying in wait for you'. Apparently this was based on postings on the Internet, and I thought it all ridiculous, not quite sure who these Ripperologists were. I joked that their threat brought to mind Klingons in formation ready to fire upon the USS *Enterprise*."

And then there is Hallie Rubenhold, whose book, *The Five: The Untold Lives of the Women Killed by Jack the Ripper* was published in 2019. I don't think that that book could have cost anything like what Robinson or Cornwell spent on theirs, but Rubenhold had access to an editorial team, research assistants: and these are all good things – no criticism is implied. All I'm saying is that there was another injection of capital there. And yet Ripperologists are no more in favour – I don't think that's a spoiler – with Hallie Rubenhold than they were with Robinson and Cornwell. What is it about Ripperologists? Can't they see a good thing when it's in front of them? Why are they so possessive about certain things, so insular, so fearful of outsiders and their strange new ideas?

Of course, this characterisation of Ripperologists is open to review. Hallie Rubenhold's own assessment of her work was that it had 'disrupted the Ripper narrative. This narrative,' she went on, 'means a great deal to many people. Some have invested decades of their lives in trying to identify the killer, others have built an identity of themselves around being a Ripperologist.' But this seems to imply that there is one Ripper narrative around

which every Ripperologist had instinctively and invariably huddled. On the contrary, my experience of Ripperologists is that they are as ideologically atomised and dissimilar in their view of what the narrative might really be as you'd expect any group of humans to be. They're all touching a different part of the elephant.

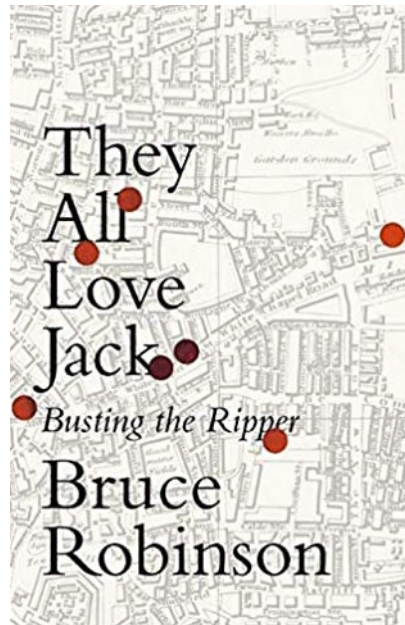
Robinson and Cornwell, in the quotations that I have given, also seem to think that Ripperologists are somehow bound by some sort of commonality – either, in Cornwell's case, a pathologically defensive way of thinking, or, in Robinson's case, their dietary and sartorial choices, and their visual acuity. But my eyesight is fine, thank you very much, and, however much Ripperologist X, whoever he or she may be, thinks we ought to pull up the drawbridge against the 'barbarians' outside the castle walls, I'd

expect Ripperologist Y to disagree, sometimes forcefully. Cornwell's *Star Trek* metaphor is an interesting one. In the brouhaha following the publication of Hallie Rubenhold's book, the cultural commentator Matthew Sweet tweeted that, 'in unkind moments', he was disposed to think of Ripperology as a sort of 'wankers' holodeck'. But imagine trying to disparage the social graces of Ripperologists by using *Star Trek* as a metaphor! For what it's worth, I get the distinct feeling that it wasn't the Klingons that

Patricia Cornwell was thinking of in 2002 – it was probably the Borg, a group of cybernetic organisms linked in a hive mind called 'the Collective' (thanks, *Wikipedia*). But that's as much as I know about *Star Trek* – no, really, it is. Also, in 2002, did the FBI really have nothing better to do than to put a bat up the leg of Patricia Cornwell's trouser suit by telling her that the Ripperologists were waiting for their chance to test her conclusions? Really? I think we should be told.

So it is that we reach this point, where being described – or self-describing – as a Ripperologist can feel like the sort of savage personal insult one might expect to receive as a member of the

cast on Succession, without the comfort blankets of the helicopters and the yachts. But it's my intention in this lecture to present a refutation to the status quo. I think Ripperology has more to offer than its recent critics have

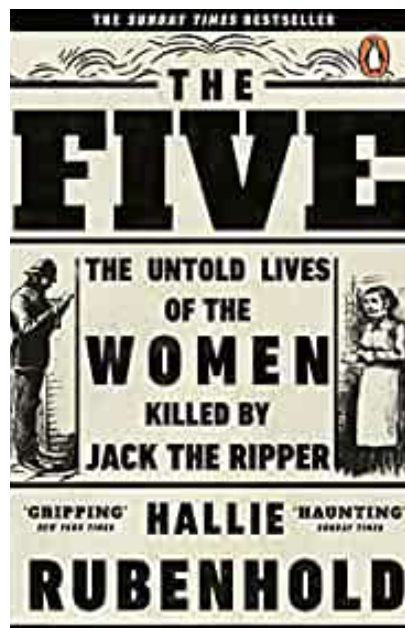


perceived, and I think that it can make a coherent claim to be a responsible discipline.

To get there, we have to spend a bit more time with Hallie Rubenhold first, and one of the things that we are going to have to do is to listen to her.

I am going to suggest that Hallie Rubenhold's disruption of the Ripper narrative, as she puts it, is in fact a necessary and important challenge to the orthodoxy of Ripperology – a timely shaking-up of a field of study which has too often been blind to its own faults and unnecessarily tolerant of bad eggs (and not just in its official sandwiches). *'The Five'*, Rubenhold writes, 'challenges the very validity of the pursuit of Ripperology'. To some extent – we can, perhaps, determine to what extent – she's probably right. Whatever we think about it, the public's embrace of Rubenhold's conclusions, not simply about the victims but about the role performed by Ripperologists in the transmission of their stories, tells us something about how we ought to be going about our business, and it's not as if we can look back at our track record in Ripperology with unadulterated confidence. Remember those quotations from the start of the lecture?

They are all from books on my bookshelf, and, if you're hearing this, you've probably got the same books on your bookshelf too. Here they are again. Did you spot the common theme? If not, the highlighting might help.



"Thrawl Street was the centre for hundreds of these dregs of humanity – sluts who knew no other way to live, cast-off wives and impoverished widows, dipsomaniacs and the 'slaves' of out-of-work labourers. Here existed so-called lodging houses, where these women **herded** together, paying fourpence a night for the privilege of sleeping on a bug-infested bed consisting of little more than a blanketed board in a room that might accommodate as many as sixty at a time."

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"On the morning of 9 November 1888 the Lord Mayor's coach stood ready for the Procession down to St Paul's. Only a handful of people knew that a short distance away, Mary Kelly lay **carved** to pieces by the Ripper."

Language matters. Hallie Rubenhold wants to see the victims' 'humanity' – that's a word that she uses. Nobody, I think, can have a problem with that. But it's alarming and telling to find that there are books on my shelves – again, not the scarce ones, but the ones that might be on anybody's shelves, the ones that you can pick up second-hand in charity shops and cheaply on eBay, the ones which are published by reputable companies – in which Ripperologists explicitly or implicitly compare the victims of the Whitechapel Murders to animals. Quotation number one and quotation number two come from the same source. Notice how groups of disenfranchised women

'herded together' in quotation number one; notice how, in quotation number two, Mary Ann Nichols is not simply the victim of socially-imposed class asymmetries, but actually, now, biologically different from other people – a species apart. Some of the quotations tell us what kind of animals are being thought of. In quotations two and four, vermin. In quotation five, and perhaps quotation one, cattle. In quotation six, some sort of animal slaughtered for its meat. One senses that, in real life, if any of these authors had been asked whether they regarded the victims of Jack the Ripper as animals or humans, they would have answered, 'Humans'. But if Ripperologists must have recourse to the animal kingdom as a source of metaphorical language and imagery, why must they fix on animals who are destined either to be exterminated as pests, or butchered for food?

I can't pretend that this is a comprehensive survey of the literature, but, from my reading so far, there appears to be an interesting epiphenomenon occurring here. Mary Ann Nichols is frequently a target of animal-related figurative language – see here quotations two through four, and add



quotation one, which occurs immediately before she is introduced in the book from which it is extracted. I think the reason is that, as history teaches us that she was, by convention, the first victim of Jack the Ripper, she is often the first to be written about in chronological studies of the murders. By undermining her humanity, the authors subtextually imply that the whole sorority of victims can be similarly dehumanised. If one of the victims is an animal, then they all are. Quotations five and six show that the other victims are not immune from this treatment, but Mary Ann Nichols tends – as far as I read it – to be the victim through whose description authors establish readers' expectations about the character of all the victims. I can anticipate challenges to this from listeners.

What about all the books in which the victims are not compared to animals? Certainly, they exist, but here are outward-facing books that can be picked up by anybody and read. If the world beyond Ripperology thinks as Robinson, Cornwell and Rubenhold appear to – that is, if people think that Ripperologists are perverted misogynists acting with one mind – then textual phenomena like animal comparisons are not the way to prove them wrong. Instead, the antidote is to ensure that Ripper literature, at least moving forward, post-Rubenhold, has a better meta-awareness of the conscious and unconscious prejudice of the language it chooses. You don't have to be 'woke' to know that these sorts of animal comparisons are reductive and inappropriate. We need to know that this is a problem, and we need to reject the stereotypes and caricatures of the past.

The funny thing is that Rubenhold isn't completely off the hook here. In her discussion of the courtship of Mary Ann Walker – as she was then – and William Nichols, she says this:

"As Nichols was a contemporary of Polly's brother, who worked as an 'engineer', it is possible that Edward introduced him into the family. With two male shepherds to guard over the small, dark-haired, brown-eyed young woman, William would have been certain to have ingratiated himself into their close circle."

To characterise the two male members of Mary Ann's household (her father and her brother) as shepherds has the unwanted effect of reducing Mary Ann to the status of a sheep – and William Nichols to the status of a potential predator with the good sense and interaction skills to get on the right side of the shepherds.

And, listen, these two sentences are a little bit of a mess, aren't they? Why the quotation marks around the word 'engineer'? Was he, or wasn't he? Are we meant to doubt it? And these sentences, like so many in Rubenhold's book,

are vitiated by 'it is possible' and 'would have been certain to'. These extra clauses and convoluted case structures can be a bit wearing after a while.

Really, I'm only partly criticising this: Ripper writers don't always do nuance and subtlety, and I like a bit of nuance and subtlety. I think that doubt is one of the most useful tools in the historian's toolkit. I was talking recently to someone who is reading History at Oxford, and she told me that one of the things that her professors were looking for in their end of year essays was a strong viewpoint, firmly expressed.

That seems to me to be the opposite of what historians ought to be doing. There's always a job to do to balance competing and conflicting evidence and to draw qualified conclusions from it, as far as it is possible to do so. You might never be certain about one thing or another. The evidence might not permit it. Or you might be sure on the balance of probabilities, or you might be a bit more sure than that. Everything depends on the evidence. It's not verdict first, evidence later.

Doubt is always a good thing, and I'm all for historians who describe their reasoning. When Rubenhold uses 'it is possible', 'perhaps', and other similar phrasings – 'would have' is another example, and one which does a lot of heavy lifting, from 'I'm certain she would have' to 'Nobody knows whether she did or she didn't, but I think she might have' – she does so to express her own varying degrees of confidence in the conclusions she reaches. I'm ok with that – it just gets tricky, and, if I'm honest, a little bit tiresome when one conditional follows another, and another.

Of course, one of the problems with Rubenhold's book is that its underlying reasoning isn't always as clear as some Ripperologists would like it to be. Sometimes, as has been widely discussed, she appears to slip below the threshold of the historical method, and we don't know why. We do know that, as she says in her introduction, she has reservations about newspaper reports because of the inaccuracies and misunderstandings which sometimes appeared in them, and she describes approaching them 'with care', and on the basis that 'nothing contained within them' can be 'taken as gospel'. (As an aside, there is something going on with Christianity in Rubenhold's book – I can't quite put my finger on it.)

Anyway, that's fine, but you've got to pass everything through the same historical filter at the standard established by historians as they have developed their craft over thousands of years. There's nothing wrong with explaining why something isn't reliable, why something isn't trustworthy. I wish there was more of that. It's not enough just to say, 'Source X tells us this' if you don't tell us why Source Y, which contradicts it, isn't allowed to be part of the equation.

In Rubenhold's case, the most egregious example of poor practice occurs in her handling of a report which was syndicated in the *Times*, the *St James' Gazette* and elsewhere on 1 September 1888, and in other newspapers subsequently. The relevant passage reads:

"As the news of the murder spread, however, first one woman and then another came forward to view the body, and at length it was found that a woman answering the description of the murdered woman had lodged in a common lodging-house, 18, Thrawl-street, Spitalfields. Women from that place were fetched and they identified the deceased as 'Polly,' who had shared a room with three other women in the place on the usual terms of such houses – nightly payment of 4d. each, each woman having a separate bed. It was gathered that the deceased had led the life of an 'unfortunate' while lodging in the house, which was only for about three weeks past. Nothing more was known of her by them but that when she presented herself for her lodging on Thursday night she was turned away by the deputy because she had not the money. She was then the worse for drink, but not drunk, and turned away laughing, saying, 'I'll soon get my "doss" money; see what a jolly bonnet I've got now.' She was wearing a bonnet which she had not been seen with before, and left the lodging house door."

Rubenhold's synopsis of this information leaves a lot to be desired.

"When the story first broke, before anything substantial was known about Polly's life, almost every major newspaper in the country carried a piece stating, 'it was gathered that the deceased had led the life of an "unfortunate";' in spite of also reporting that 'nothing... was known of her'."

So it wasn't that nothing was known of her – the women from Thrawl Street knew various things about her, such as that she was called Polly, that she had shared a room at 18 Thrawl Street with three other women at fourpence a night, with separate beds for each of them, and that she had been there about three weeks, during which she had led the life of an unfortunate. They didn't know anything more except that, on the last night of her life, she had been ejected from the lodging house because she didn't have the money for her bed, and that she was, at the time, drunk, but nevertheless optimistic about finding the money for the bed before very long, and that her optimism was supposedly based in part on the jolliness of her bonnet.

Rubenhold blames the late-Victorian police and the press for jumping to the conclusion that Mary Ann Nichols was a prostitute 'without so much as a single

shred of evidence' – but she never quite tells us why the information provided by the women of Thrawl Street is to be discounted by the modern historian, and, in fact, she embraces much of it. The identity of the lodging house, the sleeping arrangements, the duration of Nichols's stay at the lodging house, the fact that she was ejected by the deputy on the Thursday night, Nichols's inebriation at the time, and her cheerful optimism about getting the money for the bed and the existence and presence of a bonnet are all accepted into Rubenhold's narrative.



*Thrawl Street*

It is, of course, apparently true to say that, as far as the sources permit us to know these things, Ellen Holland, Nichols's acquaintance, did not describe Mary Ann Nichols as a prostitute at the inquest, although whether Rubenhold is right to say that she denied it 'adamantly' is uncertain – and, even if she did deny it, it is not clear how Rubenhold knows whether she was telling the truth or not. It is also true to say that Mary Ann Nichols's father, when he spoke to the newspapers, denied that she was a prostitute, but one wonders whether a bereaved father, now responsible to some extent for his deceased daughter's public profile, would unhesitatingly answer in the affirmative to that sort of journalistic enquiry. Rubenhold is no doubt right to say that conclusions about the character of women, in particular, could be jumped to all too easily in the culture of the time. This may itself have been a reason for Edward Walker, Mary Ann Nichols's father, to be mindful of his words.

Anyway, all of this is known, and it would be good to know, in addition to all of that, on what methodological

grounds Rubenhold omits to mention that the Thrawl Street women reported that Mary Ann Nichols had been leading the life of an unfortunate. She could have done so and still have rejected that evidence if she had wanted. She could have explained why it was rejected – what it was about that morsel of information that did not stand up to the historical test in the way that practically everything else said by the Thrawl Street women did.

Unfortunately, we don't see the carpentry here – we can't see the work that went into the decision. Speaking to the *Guardian*, Rubenhold said that,

"The more I looked for evidence of sex work, the more I found that it just simply wasn't there. What I found instead was a lot of convoluted, confused definition of what prostitution was among the working classes and the poor."

I'm not quite sure whether she means that the working classes and the poor of the nineteenth century were confused about what prostitution was, or whether she means that modern analysts are confused about what prostitution looked like among the working classes and the poor of the nineteenth century. However, if the Thrawl Street women were confused about what prostitution was, or whether what Mary Ann Nichols was doing to sustain herself against a backdrop of poverty, inequality, disenfranchisement, addiction, isolation and social contempt was indeed compatible with the definition of 'the life of an unfortunate', then we, as readers, ought to know what their confusion was, and how it can be identified now, especially since so many other aspects of their story were readily accepted.

There are, of course, plenty of other complaints that one can make. Rubenhold identifies no evidence of Annie Chapman's survival by means of subsistence prostitution, but she doesn't tell us why Annie Chapman's children's pitiable fates conform to Kassowitz's Law, suggesting that she had contracted syphilis in the early- to mid-1870s.

Again, this evidence merely needs to be accounted for. Chapman could have caught syphilis in any number of ways (for example, by an extra-marital affair, or by her husband's extra-marital affair), and not merely by engaging in prostitution.

On Rubenhold's end, engaging with the evidence doesn't commit her to anything – doesn't bust her thesis – but its absence from the narrative is as spooky as the absence of the Thrawl Street women's conclusion about Mary Ann Nichols's endeavours to survive. Similarly, Mrs Long's evidence is conspicuous by its absence. She saw Annie Chapman speaking to a male in the vicinity of 29 Hanbury Street shortly before the discovery of her body in the back yard of the building.

That doesn't mean that Annie Chapman was engaging in prostitution – but to omit to mention this important piece of evidence seems unreasonable. It is easy to find that the evidence of sex work 'simply wasn't there' if nothing can really be conceived of as evidence of sex work, and if all evidence is unreliable, unless you decide that it's not.

So, these are serious problems with Hallie Rubenhold's work, and, unless we discover the reasoning behind some of her decisions about how she selects and manages her evidence, we are entitled to treat her work with care.

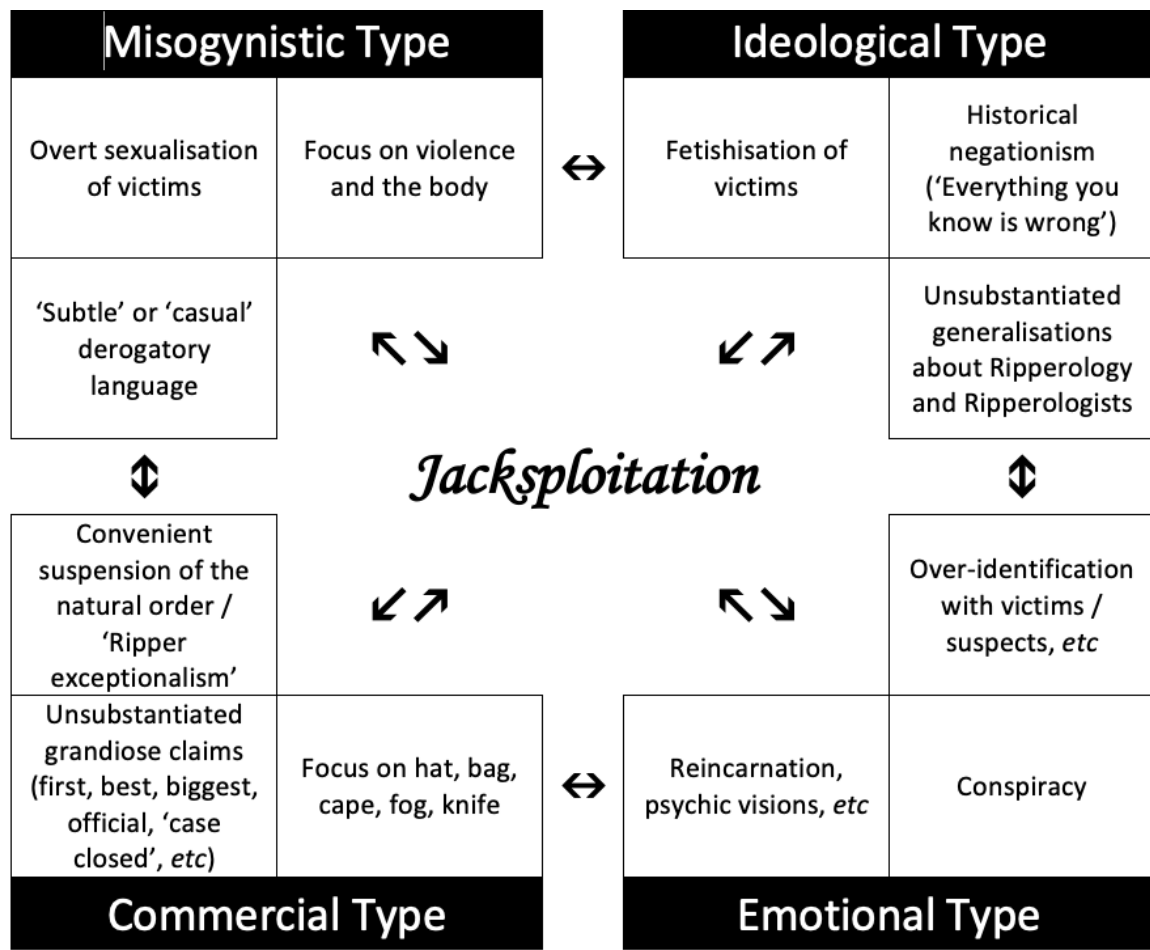
But her anti-Ripperological stance, whether you think it was justified or not at the outset, isn't negated by the existence of a discipline which can resort to the use of 'casually' derogatory language, such as the comparison of the victims of the Whitechapel Murders to animals. She might not be right for the right reasons, and she might not be wrong for the right reasons, but she might not be wrong for the wrong reasons, which means that she might be right for the wrong reasons. That's not necessarily a great place to be, epistemologically, but it has a chance of sustaining itself in public because Ripperology's most unpleasant parts are often the bits that face the outside.

When the Jack the Ripper Museum reduced one of the victims to a smear of blood on the ground at the feet of her murderer, and then plastered the image onto drinking glasses and souvenir pencil erasers, people, quite properly objected. That image is still available on merchandise purchased from the Museum's gift shop (so is a tote bag with the words 'there is nothing sexier than a male feminist' printed on it – going into that gift shop is a very strange experience).



Anyway, if that sort of representation of the victims, in particular, is allowed to be conflated in the popular imagination with Ripperology, then of course Ripperologists are going to be subjected to criticism.





What I am going to propose is that Ripperology is not the same thing as Jacksplotation. From the outside, looking in, a lot of Jacksplotation might appear to be orthodox Ripperology; from the inside, looking out, there are behaviours, forms of representation and ideologies that are characteristic of Jacksplotation which are flatly inconsistent not only with Ripperology but often with decent and humane values and the principles of historical methodology. To emphasise the positive work that goes on in Ripperology year after year is going to require us to identify and expose the impostor behaviours with which serious and legitimate Ripperology has nothing in common.

We may not have time to look at all of the examples that I have identified on the model above at the moment, but, in brief, let me summarise my thoughts, starting in the top left.

I don't think that Ripperology is inherently or inescapably misogynistic. However, the use of (inverted commas) 'subtle' or 'casual' derogatory language, the overt sexualisation of the victims and a focus on the representations of violence and the body are all Jacksplotationist manoeuvres which can be identified and rejected by responsible Ripperologists.

None of what Ripperology does, or seeks to do, is typified

by the decision of Andrew Cook, for example, to splash the photograph of the remains of Mary Jane Kelly across the cover of his book, *Jack the Ripper*, which was published in 2009. I remember, at the time, that people were displeased about this decision and could not understand how it got through the brainstorming meeting at Cook's publishers. Cook himself was interviewed on *Rippercast* and firmly rejected any suggestion that the use of the provocative image had been animated by 'commercialism', describing himself as 'personally exceptionally offended' by the attempts of others to 'commercialise this very disturbing subject'. He said that he was 'more offended' by stereotyped hat-and-cloak-and-doctor's-bag illustration. His own cover art, he said, was 'a serious statement' and 'effectively about how the subject has been exploited'.

But anyone walking into their local bookshop might have been excused for finding it difficult to know that Cook's unadorned, uncontextualised and brutal cover image was in fact a critique of commercialisation. The text offered little further guidance: it doesn't discuss the representation of the victims in general, and it doesn't explain how exhibiting Kelly's mutilated body in this way serves to comment on, let alone rehabilitate her from, any misrepresentations of the past. On the back cover, a mocked-up billboard of the contemporary

*Star* newspaper announced the existence of a ‘Cannibal Ripper’; on the podcast, Cook told his readers that the newspaper’s advertising billboards had indeed said so – perhaps on 19 October 1888 – although it is not clear that any evidence exists to support this claim, and the idea may, in fact, have originated in the made-for-television drama first broadcast in 1988. None of that is helpful, either, in helping us to learn more about the manner in which the victims of the Whitechapel Murders have been commercially exploited.

Either way, this was not the last of the problems with Cook’s book, but that will have to wait for another time. It would be interesting to know whether Cook or his publisher would make the same decision about the cover art again, or whether different forces would shape their thinking, but, in the absence of any further context to support Cook’s exegesis of the visual semiotics of his book’s cover, it is difficult not to regard it as an example of the careless use of the imagery of violence in the literature of the Whitechapel murders.

My point is that Ripperology can be done, has been done, and will be done, without recourse to violent imagery, at least on the front covers of books. Nothing is lost from Ripperology if the photograph of Mary Jane Kelly’s body is not part of its marketing or its public-facing imagery. Outsiders, who might, quite properly, wince at the apparent lack of compassion and consideration involved in creating a cover image like Cook’s, need to know that decisions like that are not characteristic of Ripperology as a whole, but rather of its parasitic, Jacksploitationist inversion.

Moving to the bottom left. The commercial logo, I suppose, of Ripperology as viewed from the outside is the hat, the bag, the cape, the fog and the knife – all the things to which Cook thought that the photograph of Kelly was a proper antidote. Heaven knows, we are probably stuck with this sort of imagery now. The apparel of Jack the Ripper, his possessions, and the weather conditions in which he supposedly operated are all part of a sort of visual metonymy by which he can be identified everywhere. But it seems to me that this image is better left to the Jack the Ripper Museum, and other transparently commercial ventures, whose use of it apparently sits perfectly comfortably alongside their educational objectives. You have to wonder how – this is just another of the dizzying contrasts to which one is exposed in their gift shop – I’ve never gone any further into the building than that.

What is that Ripperologists do that demands – nay, depends upon – the imagery of the cape and the hat and what have you? It can be the subject of cultural criticism – where did it come from? What does it mean? Why is it still here? – but it communicates nothing about the core

functions of Ripperology, and I think it belongs elsewhere.



Here are two aspects of visual representation – on the one hand, that of the victims; and on the other hand that of the popular figure of the murderer – which might interact in the central space of the Jacksploitationist model. Think of it as a sort of Venn diagram in which every component has the potential to interact with and cross-fertilise every other component.

I am suggesting, again, that Ripperology can abandon the stereotypes, tactics and unpleasant values of Jacksploitation, and that it can do so, firstly, because they play no part in its core functions, and, secondly, because common decency ought to get us that far; I am also suggesting that Jacksploitation does not always confine itself to the exploitation of just one of the twelve components shown on the model, and that they may be co-morbid, or otherwise emerge in hybrid forms.

I’m not completely convinced that the model is perfect – ask me tomorrow and I might be thinking to put this here, and that there, and I haven’t even mentioned the fabrication of evidence or plagiarism yet, because, well, how long have we really got?

What I am convinced about is that the best parts of Ripperology are often those which are least available for public inspection, and that the bits that the outsider usually sees are neither typical nor representative.

Looking towards the bottom right, I want to think about over-identification with the victims (or the suspects) in the narrative of the Whitechapel Murders – and perhaps this crosses over with the fetishisation of the victims, in the top right.

Nobody operating in Ripperology ought to make the mistake of thinking that they know anything intrinsic

about anybody who appears in the historical narrative. Personally-acquired knowledge – the sort of emotional, instinctive, experiential knowledge that you might have of your family members, for example – is a different platform of understanding. All we have to direct our understanding of the victims of the Whitechapel murders, the perpetrator of the Whitechapel murders, and everybody else who has been personally inaccessible for dozens of years are (chiefly) written and (occasionally) visual sources.

There is, of course, a balance here. The sources can tell us, sometimes, about aspects of character and personality that inform our perception of the person who prepared them, or the person they describe. What the sources do not justify, however, are overwrought assessments of the character of individuals who remain known to us only in fragmentary and secondary fashion.

Mary Jane Kelly – whose background remains more difficult to pin down than most of the other victims of the Whitechapel murders – has often been an involuntary screen upon which Jacksploitationist fantasies have been readily projected. The price she pays for this is the arrival of excitable tourists to the site of her burial; sometimes they come armed with alcoholic tributes, thereby celebrating the very vulnerabilities which contributed to her poverty and exploitation in life. In my view, performative gestures of this sort tell us more about the performer than the voiceless individual upon whose memory they are feasting.



*Mary Jane Kelly's grave*

The absence of a comprehensively identifiable personal history has increased Kelly's utility for the emotionally over-involved, but there is apparently a tipping point here, and the so-called 'Pinchin Street' victim, about whose background literally nothing is known, is never, as far as I can see, given the same treatment. With the Pinchin Street victim, there is just too little history to project one's fantasies onto. With Mary Jane Kelly, there is just enough: perhaps the optimum amount.

The most dignified and dignifying manner in which to represent the victims of the Whitechapel murders is not to make them into icons of imposed characteristics, but to recognise the limits of our knowledge about them. Even here, there is a danger, and this is where fetishisation comes in.

In July 2016, with the narratives of the lives of the victims of the Whitechapel murders increasingly up for grabs after the rotten trick of the opening of the Jack the Ripper Museum (which, you will remember, was originally expected to be a museum of women's history), I attended a presentation about Catherine Eddowes (entitled 'UnRipped') in the churchyard at St George in the East. Maybe 'presentation' isn't the right word: I notice that, in my booking email to the individual who was giving the presentation, I (apparently advisedly) used the word 'performance'. The individual in question, according to their email signature, was practising as a 'storyteller'. I confess that I heard no klaxon at this stage. The storyteller had received 'thoughtful' and 'generous' help from a responsible Ripperologist and acknowledged that the 'process of researching this story' had been 'a real journey for me'. So far, so good.

Eventually, when the churchyard assembly learned from the storyteller the 'truth' of Catherine Eddowes's life, one particular anecdote stood out. I paraphrase, but, in essence, the story was this: during her time as a domestic servant to a well-to-do family in the West Midlands, Catherine Eddowes was tempted by the presence of a tasty-looking ham in the kitchen. She looked about. She was alone with the ham. Initially, she resolved to take only a slice – so little that nobody would notice; but, the slice having lived up to the promise that her first glimpse of the ham had made, she gradually took more and more, until, at last, the ham was gone. Catherine had eaten the whole thing.

The problem with this was that, as far as anyone knows, this story was not true. It has never appeared in the literature – not even in Hallie Rubenhold's book which, when it was published three years after the 'performance' in the churchyard, set out to depict the life of Catherine Eddowes in greater detail than any preceding it. The storyteller, I presume, made it up, and then presented it to their audience as if it were factual.

July 2016 was a weird time – the Brexit vote had just happened, and Trump was in the White House, and the moderate right seemed to have given up on moderation as a bad plan unlikely to win and secure power, and had instead begun to embrace the sorts of dog-whistle tactics of those lying even further to the right. It became part of day-to-day political discourse for the right to exaggerate the threats posed to society by such phenomena as equality,



human rights, and trans-national migration, and then to recommend illiberal policies to avert the impending catastrophe. The caravan of rapists and murderers that never arrived in the southernmost states of the US was just one example of these fantasies, but, vote for vote, a lot of people found them persuasive, and found that their belief in them could be absolute, irrespective of the truth of the matter, and that they were thereby relieved of the responsibility to think about these issues for themselves.

The problem was that, on the left, there was so little confidence in the ability of reason, patience and decency to orientate society in a fair and equitable direction that the temptation arose to fight fire with fire. It was no longer enough simply to expose the fabrications of the right and to appeal to popular common sense, and what was sauce for the goose eventually became sauce for the gander.

The life of Catherine Eddowes is not without aspects of interest, but our knowledge of it is limited by the sources and, just like you and me, her achievements were not necessarily epochal. Much of her existence must have been quotidian and largely unremarkable, and, just like you and me, the vast majority of the things she did, the thoughts she had and the emotions she felt are not engraved in the historical record. It was not responsible to insert fictions into these vacancies, irrespective of the political value that they appeared to carry. In what sense was the narrative of Catherine Eddowes's life restored or emphasised if any of its components were the products of the modern imagination? This was not the way to counter the propaganda of the right: instead, this co-opted the manners of the right, piling misrepresentation upon misrepresentation, and, from the perspective of the guidelines of historical methodology, it was invalid regardless of the intentions with which it was done. It is terribly frustrating to find the left doing the right's work for it.

To fetishise the victims of the Whitechapel murders – to knowingly deviate from the historical record in order to increase their value as the tools of ideology – does

justice to no one. Sensible Ripperologists can be truthful about Catherine Eddowes without being disrespectful or derogatory, and to be less than truthful is simply to diminish her identity further. The same historical standards can, and should, be applied to all the other victims of the Whitechapel murders: to reclaim

them from misrepresentation, we must insist on their historicity, and not on aspects of their character that we have, for our own reasons, projected upon them.

We are approaching the end of this lecture now, and I need to sum up. I think that there is something in Ripperology which is worth preserving. I think that, at its best, it is a lens by which we can see a microcosm of Victorian society, and people who, frankly, without their connections to the murders, would have been forgotten altogether. I think that it diversifies into areas of genuine historical interest, even if you're doubtful about the suspectology

aspect. The built environment, critical theory, policing, journalism, historiography and victim biography are all legitimate areas of research and discovery into which, for several practitioners, Ripperology has acted as a springboard and a catalyst.

Unfortunately this work is too often concealed by the more visible excrescences of Jacksploitation, and by a sort of TARDIS effect as a result of which outside observers tend to get the impression that everyone on the inside is homogeneous, conservative, thoughtless and addicted to egg sandwiches.

I think that our task is to ensure that the public perception of Ripperology begins to align more closely with the quality of the work being done, and we do that by continuing to insist on public standards of historical practice, ethics and decency.

A *Star Trek* reference and a *Dr Who* reference. That must be the end of this lecture. And it is.



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# CENTRAL NEWS

# THE LONDON HOLOCAUST

By BRUCE COLLIE

**“The London Holocaust” – such was one of the headlines that welcomed in the New Year on the first day of 1898. So tragic were the events described below it, that none of the illustrated newspapers produced their customary illustration to augment their columns within.**

For the children of the East End survival was an everyday battle; the conditions, diseases and starvation claimed many of them. There was another lethal foe: fire, and this event is one of the most horrific in the area’s history.

For the family involved in this story, Christmas Day must have been a disappointment. Although enjoying a dinner that had been provided for them, their father was ill in the infirmary. Going to bed that night, they must have wished for better days to come and his safe return, fit and well.

## **Terrible Fire in Bethnal Green**

On Sunday morning [Boxing Day 1897] a fire broke out at No. 9 Dixie Street. The scene of the disaster was a four-roomed tenement shared by two families. The front and back rooms on the ground floor, were occupied by a widow and her five daughters, one of whom was married and lived in the front room. The first-floor rooms were tenanted by a family named Jarvis, there were ten members of this family, sleeping in the house, when the fire broke out.

At around half past six o’clock in the morning the married man, David Barber, living in the ground floor front room, thought he could smell fire. Running out into the passage he could see flames. They were coming from a cupboard under the stairs. [It was here Mrs Jarvis kept the combustible materials she used for making matchboxes.] He raised the alarm, and the occupants of the ground floor made their escape into the street and sheltered in the neighbouring houses. He made several attempts, as did others, to get up the stairs, and his cries of “Fire” were unheard.

A neighbour ran to Bethnal Green fire station and pulled the call signal on the fire alarm. Arriving

quickly, they were hindered by two bollards at the entrance to Dixie Street, and had to go to the rear of the house to fight the fire. It had spread quickly, the roof was burning on their arrival. The firemen did make an entrance into the house, but were unable to rescue any of the remaining occupants.

When the fire was finally put out and the building had cooled down, what met the firemen was a horrific scene. The mother, Sarah Jarvis, was found with her youngest, Elizabeth [8 months old], clasped close to her in an attempt to protect her from the flames, the mother’s body being badly charred, while her daughter’s body being unaffected by the flames. They would eventually come across the bodies of all nine children.<sup>1</sup>

## **Inquest and Verdict**

At the Bethnal Green Coroner’s Court Dr. Wynn Westcott held an inquiry into the deaths of the victims of the fire at No. 9 Dixie Street, Bethnal Green, on Sunday last. The deceased were Sarah Jarvis (39), Hannah Jarvis (16), Mary Ann Jarvis (14), Thomas Jarvis (12), William Jarvis (10), Louisa Jarvis (8), Alice Jarvis (5), George Jarvis (3), Caroline Jarvis (2) and Elizabeth Jarvis (8 months).

The first witness called was Thomas Must, a workhouse inmate. He confirmed he was the father of Sarah Jarvis. He stated his daughter was the mother of the nine children and that she was a matchbox maker, and that her husband was a matchbox stamper. David Barber, a labourer who had initially raised the alarm, was next. He had gone to bed at ten o’clock on Christmas Day, having checked the fire in the grate and all the paraffin lamps, and all were fine. The smell of smoke had awakened him. He heard no screams or cries from above on the first floor, everything was quiet. John Vorley, a carman living at No. 11 had been wakened by his wife, saying there was a fire. He rushed

1 *Banbury Beacon*, 1st January 1898.





*Dixie Street, Bethnal Green*

out and saw No. 9 was in flames, and all the windows where broken. It was he who ran and put off the fire alarm. In the same house lived Thomas Crouch, who deposed that hearing the alarm given he ran out of his bedroom and saw that the staircase and the first floor of No. 9 were a mass of flame. He did not believe that anyone could still be alive. Police Constable Laird said he heard a police whistle coming from the direction of Dixie Street. On his arrival the engines were at work. Sub-Fire Officer Jos. Westhorpe confirmed that the fire was situated a quarter of a mile from the Station. Four men and an engine were sent within two minutes of the alarm being raised. He confirmed that no-one would have been alive in the building when they arrived. Coroner Westcott asked him to state where the bodies were found. Witness: six were found in the front room, one was lying on a chair-bedstead and the others were side by side on the floor. In the backroom the body of a child was found fearfully charred on a chair-bedstead, underneath we found another body, two others were on the floor side by side. I could not recognise the mother, there was no trace of a lamp, or any furniture.

Dr John Bates, examining the bodies, stated that in his opinion all ten he died from suffocation.

Summing up, the coroner said that the assistance and warnings had come too late for the Jarvis family. There was no evidence of intentional burning. He could not believe, however, that so many could die in such a small place. The jury returned a verdict of Accidental Death, exonerating everyone from blame with regard to the outbreak of the fire.<sup>2</sup>

### Fate of the Father

The children's father was visited in hospital by his sister. She was going to tell him of the tragedy. The medical staff confirmed that his situation was hopeless, and suggested that his final moments should be free from the news of the disaster. He passed away that afternoon not knowing the fate of his family.<sup>3</sup>

The funeral was to be paid for by local businesses, but the poor of the area spared every farthing or penny they could and met the costs. It was recorded that the funeral was the largest that had ever been seen in the East End, surpassing that of Alfred Linnell, who had been killed during the Trafalgar Square 'Bloody Sunday' riots of 1887.

Thousands lined the route, passing the shell of No.9 Dixie Street on the way to the East End Cemetery. The police had to make several arrests, as pickpockets saw the large crowds as an ideal opportunity.

The memorial gravestone lists all eleven members of the Jarvis family who died on Boxing Day 1897. It is well looked after, and serves as a reminder of the hardship and of how cheap life was in the East End.



<sup>2</sup> *Illustrated Police News*, 8th January 1898.

<sup>3</sup> *Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser*, 1st January 1898.

With thanks to Christine James for bringing this story to my attention.



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 19th 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 articles.



## PRESS TRAWL

# A WEEK IN DECEMBER, 1888

**The following hand-picked reports appeared in various newspapers during the first seven days of December 1888. It will be seen from the broad range of topics – from suspects watched and arrested to fake detectives on the make – that the subject of the Whitechapel murders was still very much selling newspapers, a month after the murder of Mary Kelly.**

*Gravesend Reporter, North Kent and  
South Essex Advertiser, 1 December 1888*

On Wednesday last, at the Gravesend Police Court, Joseph Henry Havelock Blake, alias Robert Heath, a respectably dressed young man, was charged with obtaining food and lodgings, to the amount of 10s, by falsely representing himself to be a detective officer from Scotland Yard, with intent to cheat and defraud Elizabeth Ward.

Supt. Berry said that, about half-past seven o'clock, on Tuesday evening, in consequence of information rewire, he went to Mme Ward's house, 144, Windmill Street. He was shown into the front parlour, where he saw the prisoner. Witness said to him, "My name is Berry, and I am superintendent of the police here; do you know me?" Prisoner replied, "Oh, yes, I have seen you about Gravesend." Witness said, "I am informed that you are a detective from Scotland Yard," to which he replied, "Yes, I am." Witness said, "May I ask you your business here?" Prisoner answered, "I am at Gravesend in reference to making inquiries about the Whitechapel murders. I am under Inspector Abberline, and you will be advised in the course of a day or two with respect to my duties here." He (Supt. Berry) said, "Have you your warrant?" and prisoner answered, "No, I have left it at home."

Witness inquired how long he had been in the Detective Department of Scotland Yard?" He replied, "About four years; I was in the police first at Ramsgate." Witness asked for how long, and also inquired who was superintendent there. Prisoner said, "Supt. Bennett." Witness said, "No, it is Supt. Buss, who has been there for a great number of years. Are you quite sure you are an officer from Scotland Yard? If you are

in the detective force, you must know them all." He said there was Inspector Beck, Inspector Abberline, and others. Witness said he knew the majority, and was quite satisfied his statement was false. While this conversation was going on, a tradesman came in with some boots in a box to be fitted by Hoath. Witness asked him to write his name, which he did.

Supt. Berry then remarked, "Your whole statement is false," prisoner replying "Yes, it is; it is false. I belong to Loose, near Maidstone; my mother is living there, and I was at Tovill Mills as an accountant." On searching prisoner, the following letter was found in his pocket: "Police Station, Gravesend. Mr. Hoath, Sir - In answer to your application for a reference, will do so with pleasure... Please call and see me, etc., J.R. Berry."

Prisoner said he was a great fool for what he had done. He had to tell 50 lies for one. Prisoner had no money. Witness did not write the letter (produced).— Prisoner said it was quite true what Supt. Berry had said; he pleaded guilty to everything.

Elizabeth Ward also gave evidence. Prisoner told her he was a detective from Scotland Yard, to watch the river and the ships in reference to the Whitechapel case. She consented to let him have a sitting-room and bedroom for 21s per week. She estimated her loss at 10s.

Supt. Berry said he understood prisoner was wanted at Maidstone, and telegraphed there, but received the answer "Not wanted at present" (laughter). — The Mayor: Shall we serve the ends of justice if we settle the case here? — The Clerk said they could not settle the case there. They had no jurisdiction in the case at all. — Remanded for a week.

*Somerset Standard,*  
1 December 1888

### HOUSE OF COMMONS - FRIDAY

Mr. Matthews said he was quite prepared to recommend the Queen's pardon to any person, not being the actual perpetrator of the earlier Whitechapel murders, who could give information likely to lead

to the conviction of the criminal. He expressed an opinion that the murder of the woman Kelly in Dorset Street was not the work of one man.

*Wellington Journal,*  
1 December 1888

#### THE WHITECHAPEL MURDERS

So general is the feeling in the East End that the murderer will be heard of again before long that the members of the Whitechapel and Spitalfields Vigilance Committee have had an interview with Superintendent Arnold, and submitted to him a proposition to appoint 10 men each night to assist the police in watching secluded courts and otherwise render assistance. It is stated that Mr. Arnold favours the idea, subject to each man being provided with a card signed by the secretary of the committee. The men will carry a lamp, whistle, and stout stick. An appeal is being made for funds, so that men may be paid for their services, and a member of Parliament has promised £10 10s towards the same.

*Leeds Mercury,*  
1 December 1888

#### THE EAST END MURDERS

A man was arrested last night at the Crystal Tavern, Mile End Road, on suspicion of being the Whitechapel murderer. He met a woman there, whom he urged to accompany him, but she refused. He also met a photographer who was soliciting orders, and asked where he could take some photographs, using expressions which induced suspicion. He gave the address of Mr. Stewart, 1305 Mile End Road. He was given into custody, but at the police station he gave the name of Ever. He appeared to be a Polish Jew.

*Glasgow Evening Citizen,*  
1 December 1888

A Polish Jew was arrested in London last night on suspicion of being connected with the Whitechapel murders. Satisfactory explanations appear to have been given, however and the man has been liberated.

*Croydon Advertiser and East Surrey Reporter,*  
1 December 1888

For the honour of our nationality let us hope that the opinion entertained by a Russian journal as to the Whitechapel murderer, may prove to be well founded. This print, the *St. Petersburg Norosti*, in an article on the Whitechapel murders, on Tuesday, expresses the belief that the perpetrator of these dreadful crimes is a Russian named Nicolai Vassilyeff, of whose past



*Henry Matthews, Home Secretary*

career it gives the following details. Vassilyeff, who born at Tiraspol in 1847, was a student at the Odessa University, and having become a fanatical Anarchist, he migrated to Paris in the seventies, where he shortly afterwards became insane and was placed under restraint. Before being lodged in an asylum, however, Vassilyeff, whose mania appears to have been that fallen women could only atone for their sins and obtain redemption by being killed, murdered several unfortunates in Paris under conditions somewhat similar to those of the Whitechapel crimes, and on his arrest, his insanity having been proved, he was placed in criminal lunatic asylum.

This happened 16 years ago, and Vassilyeff, or the mad Russian, as he was called, remained in the Paris asylum until shortly before the first Whitechapel outrage, when he was dismissed as cured. He is then said to have travelled to London, where for some time he lived with the lower class of his fellow-countrymen. After the first Whitechapel murder, however, Vassilyeff was lost sight of, and the Russian residents in London believe that their insane countryman is no other than the murderer.

*Aberdeen Weekly News,*  
1 December 1888

The story told by the Russian newspaper, the *Norosti*, respecting a maniac who might be the perpetrator of the Whitechapel murders is an interesting one. It so well fits the circumstances needed to make up a probable theory for elucidating the mystery that the question may arise in some whether the story has but been concocted for sensational purposes, and from the known facts regarding the atrocities. The

likely perpetrator has to be a fanatic or monomaniac. There must also be an attempt to explain why this maniac's madness should lead him to extirpate or to try to extirpate the class of women whom the London murderer has been destroying...

Several objections could be made to the theory that Vassilyeff is the perpetrator of the London murders. It seems strange that if he was comparatively soon arrested in Paris he should escape so long in London. Of course, the answer to that might be that the French detective system was more effective than our own. But why, if it is known that he was a companion of Russian refugees in London, should not some details be sought from these people concerning their countrymen? Were the story a correct one, they should be able to give such information respecting the monomaniac as should lead to his identity and his apprehension. At the same time, the story is so circumstantial that it is sure to receive considerable attention by all who have become interested in the discovery of the London murderer.

*Exmouth Journal*,  
1 December 1888

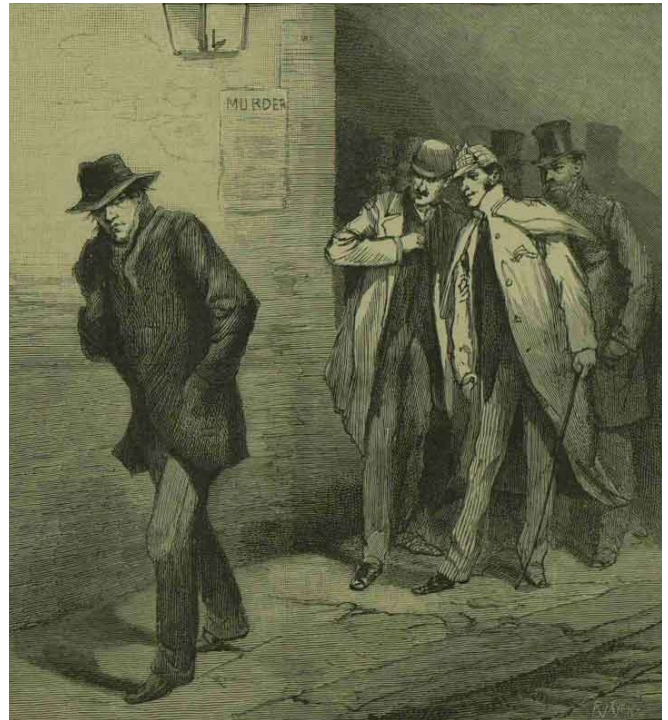
#### LONDON CORRESPONDENCE

It will probably never be known to be public how many persons have been arrested as the perpetrator of the Whitechapel murders. Never a day passes without someone having to march to a police station to explain that he is not, and never has been, "Jack the Ripper." The decision as to what shall be done with a person so apprehended rests with the inspector in charge at the station, and it is fortunate that the gentlemen filling that post in the principal East End stations are experienced and prudent.

One of the arrested since the outcry of last week was Sir George Arthur, a Devonshire baronet, and I believe a lieutenant in the Life Guards. He certainly does not look like a criminal, but the astrakhan collars and cuffs of his fashionably-cut overcoat were not satisfactory to the Whitechapel people, and the policeman on the beat, though the baronet protested, deemed it the safest way out of a difficulty to escort him to the station.

A friend of my own, an eminent chemical analyst, had to make some experiments in a Mile End brewery, and to conduct these it was necessary to carry down a black bag of instruments. As it is a fixed idea with many men and women that Jack the Ripper always carries a black bag, my friend was soon followed by a menacing crowd, and had in self defence to demand the protection of a constable to the nearest cab-stand. After witnessing the extraordinary panic in Whitechapel Road and Commercial Street last Monday, I am surprised that some innocent person

has not been in one of the panics hanged to a lamp-post, or lynched in some fatal fashion. With regard to the last attempted murder - so-called - numbers of persons decline to believe that there was a man in the case at all.



*'A Suspect Is Watched.'*  
*Illustrated London News*, 13th October 1888

*Drogheda Argus and Leinster Journal*,  
1 December 1888

We have an imitator of the Whitechapel murderer here: he, however, was promptly arrested. Mrs Cooper, the victim, was found chopped to pieces this morning by her servant. Her husband had been drinking and quarrelled with his wife, and as he had been reading an account of the Whitechapel murders and was excited, he said "he would fix her before Monday." He claims that his wife had been unfaithful to him, and that the killing was no more than any man would do under the circumstances.

*Weekly Dispatch*,  
2 December 1888

#### THE BIRTLEY MURDER

At the Durham Assizes, on Thursday, William Waddle, twenty-two, labourer, was charged with the wilful murder of Jane Beadmore at Birtley, Durham. The prisoner and deceased were sweethearts. They were last seen together on September 22, and the next morning the mutilated body of the woman was found in a lonely place, not far from where they were last noticed, and Waddle was missing. He was apprehended at Yetholm, on the border of Scotland.



The excited great interest at the time, as in some respects it resembled the Whitechapel murders — so much so that Dr. Phillips was sent down from London to compare the injuries. Waddle was found guilty, and sentenced to death. The judge warned him to have no hope of mercy.

*Pall Mall Gazette*,  
3 December 1888

Arthur Diosy is aggrieved. The ingenious contributor who discovered the nationality of the Whitechapel murderer said that no-one had hit upon the suggested necromantic motive. Mr. Diosy says he told the police all about it on October 14, which of course is news to everybody else. He also darkly hints that the dates of the crimes have some occult relation to magical astrology. It would be more to the point if Mr. Diosy would tell us where the next murder ought to occur according to the dates of magical astrology.

*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*,  
3 December 1888

#### THE EAST END MURDERS

No arrest of importance was made either on Saturday or yesterday in connection with the Whitechapel murders. Being the beginning of a new month, and about the customary period selected by the assassin for his foul deeds, the police were exercising the strictest precautions to provide against a renewal of the crimes. Measures were taken to secure the safety of the persons of the class to which the murdered women belonged. An extra number of policemen in plain clothes were told off to watch every woman who was seen to be loitering about the streets, and it was believed that should a repetition of the murders take place the assassin must be captured.

*Newcastle Daily Chronicle*,  
3 December 1888

How many, it may be asked, have been destined to undergo the inconvenience and ignominy of being taken into custody in connexion with the Whitechapel murders. The list, if drawn up, would, we feel positive, prove to be a surprisingly long one. The police have been apparently “collaring” anybody and everybody on the most ridiculous grounds. It is true that the suspects have been promptly released on furnishing satisfactory proof of their innocence; but even a police inspector’s apologies are not very much in the way of compensation for a forcible removal to a lock-up. The latest capture has been that of a man “who appeared to be a Polish Jew,” and who, it is stated, was denounced by a photographer. There was, of course, nothing in the charge, and the unhappy Hebrew was

liberated. This sort of thing, however, cannot go on ad infinitum. Anxious as the police may be to get hold of the Whitechapel fiend, respect for the liberties of people in this country ought not to be flung to the winds.

*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*,  
3 December 1888

It is formally announced that the successor to Sir Charles Warren is to be Mr. Monro, formerly Indian civilian and head of police in Bengal, and later, chief in London the detective police. Mr. Monro is said to have every qualification for the office except physical strength, he having been lamed by an accident in India. He has, however, Colonel Pearson as his chief of the staff and in modern strategy the business of the commander-in-chief does not lie in the field. It should be noticed that Mr. Monro is already attacked by some journals, and, indeed, threatened with dismissal if he does not behave himself. has two disqualifications which secure him injustice from the Press — he knows everything about Irish secret societies, and he has the confidence of Mr. Matthews, who hanged Lipski, and was once believed by Irishmen to be a Home Ruler. If Mr. Monro will catch the Whitechapel murderer, Englishmen will forgive him those serious offences, and powerless as they are in their own land, their favour may comfort the new Commissioner.

*Eddowes’s Journal, and General Advertiser for Shropshire, and the Principality of Wales*,  
5 December 1888

Mr. Monro’s appointment has given great satisfaction in the police force of London, and appears to be generally favourably endorsed. This opinion is largely held that he will make an admirable Chief of Police. He has a shrewd head, a fact which reminds one that physically he is in one respect very sadly afflicted. When in the Bengal Civil Service some years ago he made somewhat reckless attempt to catch a thief. The latter escaped over a wall, and in following him on horseback, Mr. Monro and the horse came sorely to grief. The present Chief Commissioner lay unconscious for a time, and when he came round he found that one of his legs had met with terrible injuries. He is now so lame that he cannot sit on the saddle or even stand for any length of time without support. The Chief Commissioner received any number of congratulations on entering on his period of office on Monday. Except among a few, who are trembling at the recollection of certain preferences shown some time ago, the new chief is undoubtedly a great favourite in the force. He will, I hear, at once introduce one or two very drastic reforms, both at Scotland Yard and at the offices of the Criminal Investigation Department

in Whitehall Place. It is rumoured that Mr. Monro intends to adopt several new methods with the object of capturing the dreaded Whitechapel murderer.



*James Monro, the new Commissioner*

*Eddowes's Journal, and General Advertiser for Shropshire,  
and the Principality of Wales,*  
5 December 1888

#### THE EAST END HORRORS

It would have been strange if the latest scare had not been turned to account to furnish silver lining to the pockets of the rascals who prowl about the London streets with nothing to exist upon save what small wits they might happen to possess. The latest thing in roguery is, consequently, the personation of detective officers, and an arrest, which has to be squared before the police station comes within the range of sight. Half a dozen cases of this nature have been reported to the police since Sunday last. Naturally, a respectable individual is fixed upon for the victim. Two men walk up to him and tap him mysteriously upon the shoulder. They ask him his name, and intimate that they would like three minutes' private conversation with him. If the individual thus accosted at once acquiesces, the three adjourn to a quiet spot, and the men of mystery then unfold the startling information. They are connected with Scotland Yard, and have reason to believe that the person they are addressing is connected with the recent tragedies perpetrated in the East End. The probability is that the inoffensive person so accused almost collapses with fright; or, at all events, expresses nervous anxiety to learn what reason there is for believing him associated with the

murders. Then the artful rogues play their part with much ingenuity. There is, they are quite convinced, not the slightest justification for making so horrible an accusation; at the same time, they have their superior officers, who have given their orders, and though they are extremely sorry, and, in fact, seemed almost inclined not to proceed farther in the matter, to do so might be more than their place is worth. The bait so artistically dangled is swallowed voraciously in nine cases out of ten. Is there any way of getting out of so disagreeable and inconvenient an affair without going the police station, and appearing before the magistrates? Well, the artful ones reply that it might be done, though the game is risky one that it would have to be well paid for. What follows is not difficult to imagine. The dupe hands over a good round sum, and flatters himself that is lucky fellow to escape easily. The persons accused have now seen through the ruse, tackled the pseudo detectives with commendable vigour, and made an effort to give them in charge. In one case a city clerk set about his tormentors with an umbrella, and belaboured them to such an extent that they were glad to beat a hurried retreat down a convenient alley.

*London Evening Standard,*  
5 December 1888

At an early hour yesterday a man was given into custody on suspicion of being the Whitechapel murderer. He was found in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane, and asked his way to the Strand - a startling fact which at once seems to have suggested the desirability of arresting him to some of Mr. Monro's subordinates, their suspicion being quickened by the circumstance that the man carried a "small black bag." The man is in no danger of being hanged. He made due apologies for not knowing his way to the Strand, exhibited the innocent contents of the bag, and was discharged.

But the question is, why the man was arrested? There is no evidence of a trustworthy character that the murderer ever carried a black bag. Men carrying black bags have been seen in Whitechapel, but it has never been ascertained that they are murderers; and to charge men of foreign appearance with being assassins because they do not know their way to the Strand scarcely seems reasonable. The Whitechapel murderer has method in his madness, if he be mad, and, after reading so much in the papers, as he probably has done, about carrying a black bag, the chance of his doing so at present is very small. It is, of course, desirable that no reasonable effort should be spared to capture the diabolical monster whose crimes have horrified the civilised world; but it is always necessary for the police to exercise discretion in arresting people.

*South Wales Daily News,*  
7 December 1888

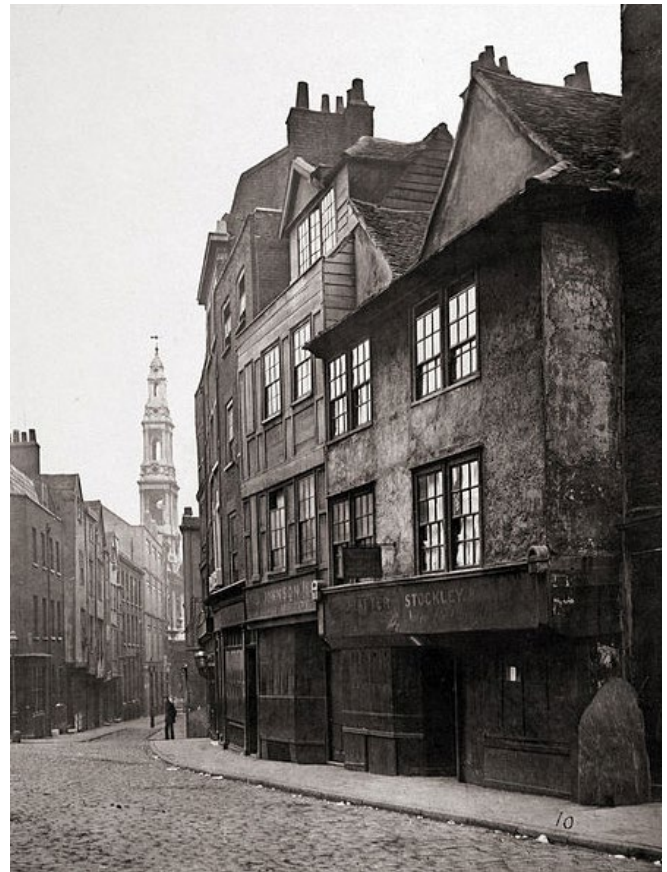
#### THE EAST-END MURDERS. IMPORTANT ARREST

The Press Association says that on Thursday the Metropolitan Police made a singular arrest which was reported to be in connection with the Whitechapel murders. It appears that during the afternoon a man described as a Polish Jew was arrested near Drury Lane, but for what offence is not quite clear. This individual, who of short stature, with a black moustache, was taken to Bow Street police station, where he was detained for a time. A telegraphic communication was forwarded thence to Leaman Street police station, the headquarters of the Whitechapel Division, requesting the attendance of one of the inspectors. Detective Inspector Abberline immediately proceeded to Bow Street, and subsequently brought away the prisoner in a cab, which was strongly escorted. While on the one hand the prisoner is reported to have stolen a watch, there is reason to believe that for circumstances other than that he corresponds with the description of the supposed Whitechapel murderer, and therefore he is detained by the police. The detectives at the East End are making every inquiry in the neighbourhood concerning the suspect, who is well known in the locality, although he is stated to have been absent lately. Great reticence is observed regarding the affair, and at Commercial Street station the officials deny any knowledge of the arrest, although the man is understood to be detained there.

*Globe,*  
7 December 1888

At Worship Street Police Court today Joseph Isaacs, 30, who said he had no fixed abode, and described himself as a cigar maker, was charged with having stolen a watch, value 30s, the goods of Julius Levenson. The prisoner is the man who was arrested in Drury Lane yesterday on suspicion of being connected with the Whitechapel murders. It transpired during the hearing of this charge that the theft was committed the very time the prisoner was being watched as a person "wanted".

The prosecutor, Levenson, said that the prisoner entered his shop on the 5th inst. with a violin bow and asked him to repair it. While discussing the matter the prisoner bolted out of the shop, and the witness missed a gold watch belonging a customer. The watch had been found at a pawn shop. To prove the prisoner



*Drury Lane, where the arrest was made*

was the man who entered the shop, a woman named Mary Cusins was called. She is deputy of a lodging house in Paternoster Row, Spitalfields, and said that the prisoner had lodged in the house as single lodger for three or four nights before the Dorset Street murder — the murder of Mary Janet Kelly, in Miller's Court. He disappeared after that murder, leaving the violin bow behind.

The witness on the house-to-house inspection gave information to the police, and said she remembered that on the night of the murder she heard the prisoner walking about his room. After her statement a look-out was kept for the prisoner, whose appearance certainly answered the published description of a man with an astrakhan trimming to his coat. He visited the lodging-house on the 5th, and asked for the violin bow. It was given to him, and the witness Cusins followed him to give him into custody as requested. She saw him enter Levenson's shop, and almost immediately run out, no constable being at hand. Detective Record said that there were some matters alleged against prisoner which it was desired to inquire into. —Mr Bush remanded the prisoner.

#### WRITE FOR RIPPEROLOGIST!

We welcome well-research articles on any subject related to the Whitechapel murders, London's East End or Victorian social history. Get in touch at [contact@ripperologist.co.uk](mailto:contact@ripperologist.co.uk)

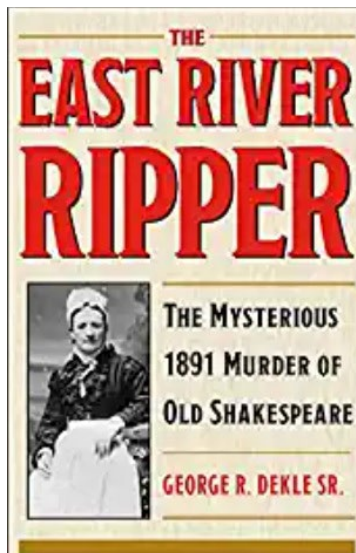


# THE EAST RIVER RIPPER

## THE MYSTERIOUS 1891 MURDER OF OLD SHAKESPEARE

By HOWARD BROWN

Recently released by the Kent State University Press was *The East River Ripper: The Mysterious 1891 Murder of Old Shakespeare* by author George R. Dekle, the first full-length book on the murder of Carrie Brown. Her death has seen much discussion over the years as to whether it was the work of the Whitechapel murderer.



"This book will, for the first time, give an accurate history of the East River Ripper case. It will not give an infallible account of what really happened. No history can do that. All history can do is reconstruct an account of what probably happened. The more numerous and reliable the sources, the more meticulous the historian, the more accurate the history can be, and no effort has been spared in making this history as true to what really happened as humanly possible."- George R. Dekle, from his Introduction.

Professor Dekle, not only the first crime scholar to have written a full-length book about the 1891 murder of Carrie Brown, the trial of Amir Ben Ali, and the aftermath to this Gilded Age mystery, is perhaps the best person who might have written a book about the case. His legal background separates him from the pack by the very fact that he covers Ali's trial, and does considerable damage to the long-held belief that Ali was framed by the NYPD, a belief which came about almost immediately after the

June/July 1891 trial.

Professor Dekle provides alternative theories as to who committed the murder, and leaves the casual reader and Brownian researcher the option of choosing which of his alternatives is closest to the truth as to whodunit.

The book doesn't shut doors, but rather opens them in terms of encouraging further research into the East River Hotel murder.

*The East River Ripper* is a must-have book for aficionados of Gilded Age American crime and true-crime devotees of every stripe.



### FIVE QUESTIONS WITH GEORGE R. DEKLE

**1: When did you begin your research into the Carrie Brown murder and Ali trial? How much time, from the beginning of the research until the completion, did it take for you to complete the work?**

Toward the end of 2018 as I was finishing up my last book, *Six Capsules: The Gilded Age Murder of Helen Potts*, I decided to write a professional biography of the lead prosecutor in that case, Francis L. Wellman. The format would be to give a chronological account of his murder trials, devoting a chapter to each one. I had followed this path once before, when I wrote *Abraham Lincoln's Most Famous Case: The Almanac Trial*. Upon finishing *The Almanac Trial*, I then wrote *Prairie Defender: The Murder Trials of Abraham Lincoln*.

I started on my project exactly as I did on *Prairie Defender*. I amassed all the information I could on every murder case that Wellman tried, and then began writing the book. When I hit the second chapter, I said to myself, "This case deserves a book unto itself," but I forged ahead. When I got to the fifth chapter, I said, "It's impossible. This

case has to be a book unto itself.” Then I really dug into the research on the Carrie Brown case and uncovered a wealth of information that confirmed my opinion. I set aside the professional biography of Wellman and wrote *The East River Ripper* instead.

I worked on the book from October of 2018 until January of 2020, at which time I had a completed manuscript. KSU Press accepted it for publication, and for the next six months I worked on responding to the critiques of the peer reviewers, rewriting to address the critiques, correcting mistakes found by the copyeditor, reviewing proof pages, and indexing.

**2: What was the most interesting part during your research? Scouring the trial transcripts? Reviewing first hand accounts, or something else?**

The most interesting moments during my research were the times that I found things which had certainly been overlooked by the lawyers trying the case and apparently overlooked by later writers on the case. As I tried to point out in the book, the prosecution didn't put on nearly as strong a case as they could have, and the defense missed gaping holes in the prosecution case that they might very well have exploited to achieve an acquittal.

**3: When you give the reader three alternatives to a solution in this case, was it entirely for the reader or are you not entirely convinced an answer or solution is etched in stone yourself.... or both?**

I talk about some of the principles of evidentiary analysis when I give the three case theories. One really important principle that I had to learn the hard way is: “Don't get tunnel vision.” Don't latch onto a theory and defend it at all costs no matter what new evidence turns up. Byrnes didn't do himself any favors by latching onto the “Frenchy No. 2” theory and not giving up on it until he had established that “Frenchy No. 2” had an ironclad alibi. Then he continued to let the public think that he was looking for Frenchy No. 2 and wound up with egg on the face when he arrested Ben Ali.

You look at the evidence and devise theories which explain as much of the known evidence as possible. Then you test those theories to see if they hold up under scrutiny. The three theories I advance in the book were what I believed to be the three most plausible theories. Any one of them has a claim to being true, but which is most likely true? In devising the three theories, I looked at all the evidence without analyzing its weight. In choosing

among the three theories, I weighed the evidence, accepting what I felt was more believable and rejecting what I felt was less believable. The weighing of evidence is a more subjective process than simply looking to find the existence of evidence.

As a prosecutor, I would have been perfectly comfortable with prosecuting Ben Ali for murder in the first degree. I wouldn't have been comfortable about my chances of getting a conviction, but I would have come to the conclusion that he was guilty and would have proceeded with the prosecution. I would have added a count of burglary to the indictment on the theory that he was at least guilty of that crime under the second scenario, and a conviction of burglary is better than a complete not guilty verdict.

Could I be wrong about whether Ben Ali committed the murder? Certainly I could. As Oliver Cromwell wrote to the Church of Scotland, “I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, consider that you might be mistaken.” This dictum gave rise to the scientific principle known as Cromwell's Rule: “Never assign a probability of 1 or 0 to any proposition.” Statistician David Lindley coined the term, and he illustrated it by saying that you should “leave a little probability for the moon being made of green cheese; it can be as small as 1 in a million, but have it there since otherwise an army of astronauts returning with samples of the said cheese will leave you unmoved.”

Somewhere out there someone may find a piece of evidence that proves beyond peradventure that Ben Ali was innocent. I think it's unlikely, but it could happen. What I haven't seen is any evidence whatsoever that the police, the expert witnesses, and/or the prosecutors colluded together to frame an innocent man. The only “evidence” of a frame job that I found was the unsubstantiated allegations in the press that Ben Ali was “railroaded” and Charles Russell's statement in his highly inaccurate magazine article that there was “something strange” about the blood evidence. These allegations got repeated over time until the acorns of allegation grew into the oak forest of certainty.

Sometimes people can get trapped in a web of circumstances indicating guilt that they cannot extricate themselves from, and that may well have occurred in Ben Ali's case. I handled a murder case once where an idiot kept doing stupid things that made him look guilty. I felt sure I could have convicted him at trial, but I was just as sure that he was innocent. We didn't arrest him, and a year later we were able to arrest the man who actually did commit the



murder. When I was a defense attorney I had a client who accidentally killed his girlfriend and then staged the scene to make it look like a rape-murder and throw suspicion on someone else. He took a manslaughter and turned it into a first degree murder and wound up getting sentenced to life instead of 15 years for manslaughter.

You get more false convictions from bad luck and bad judgment than from bad police officers.

**4: If you were a defense lawyer for Ali, what would have been (at least) one strategy you would have undertaken that the trio didn't, or one that you would have handled better?**

The prosecution went to trial unprepared. Francis Wellman delivered what seemed like a good opening statement, but it had gaping holes in it where he said things that he could not prove. The defense did not take advantage of these failures of proof. They actually papered over one of them. The prosecution wound up putting on a better case than what they said in opening (but not nearly as good a case as they could have), and the defense responded to that case with experts who could easily have been turned to support the testimony of the prosecution experts. The prosecution fumbled badly in their handling of the defense experts. Instead of using the defense experts to bolster their own experts, they attacked the defense experts.

The way to defend Ben Ali was to defend against Wellman's opening statement, not against the evidence presented at trial. In taking that approach, the defense could ignore most of the damning new evidence that hadn't been mentioned in opening statement and cross-examine the prosecution experts to have them underline all the things that Wellman had said but failed to prove. I would have worked hard to keep Ben Ali off the witness stand. He never looked more guilty than when he was denying his guilt. Wellman butchered him on cross-examination, and that may well have been the turning point of the trial. More times than I can remember I have seen a defendant who was sailing toward a not guilty verdict take the witness stand and snatch defeat from the jaws of victory by lying like a cheap clock. Usually it was a client I couldn't talk out of testifying.

It might be hubris on my part, but I think I could have gotten Ben Ali acquitted by following the strategy outlined above. I don't mean by my remarks to disparage the efforts of either side. They both worked hard, and both sides did enough to win the case before the right jury. The

problem was that the only truly experienced criminal trial lawyer among the six lawyers was De Lancey Nicoll, and he was only a mediocre trial advocate. The other lawyers were talented, and they occasionally showed flashes of brilliance, but they all needed some seasoning in the trial of murder cases. Wellman was a quick study, and he showed vast improvement in his next case, the Carlyle Harris case chronicled in *Six Capsules*.

**5: Our opinion of George Damon, the Cranford, N.J. man who came forward with the key to room 31 approximately a decade after Ali had been in various institutions, is probably the same. What might differ is what reason he had for coming forward. Do you believe this reason was self-serving or altruistic ?**

If George Damon was telling the truth, what else must be true? (1) It must be true that the police had no hope of ever finding out the true identity of "C. Knicklo." Damon, the only man who knew it, was concealing it. (2) It must be true that the police had no hope of ever finding the key to the death room. Damon was concealing it. (3) It must be true that George Damon valued his personal convenience over the life of an innocent man. Ben Ali stood in danger of death in the electric chair and only Damon could save him. (4) It must be true that George Damon didn't give a damn about the proper administration of justice. Conclusion: George Damon was the real villain of the tragedy of Ben Ali's false conviction.

The unspoken theme of George Damon's testimony, whether true or false, is "I'm a dirtbag." When someone says, "I'm the kind of guy who will let an innocent man die in the electric chair," he's not the kind of guy I'm going to rely on to tell the truth. And he's not the kind of guy I'm going to expect to act from pure motives. I've had quite a bit of experience with post-conviction "exculpatory" witnesses, most of them as a defense attorney. The usual scenario was that the witness came to me and said, "What do I have to say to get the defendant's conviction overturned?" None of these witnesses were motivated by altruism. I suggested one selfish motive for Damon to fabricate the story of Frank the Disappearing Dane in the book. There may have been others for which we have no evidence.



HOWARD BROWN is the owner of [CarrieBrown.Net](http://CarrieBrown.Net), the foremost online archive and discussion site on the Carrie Brown murder.



VICTORIAN FICTION

# THE OLD NURSE'S STORY

By Elizabeth Gaskell

Edited with an introduction by Eduardo Zinna

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays the night creatures of choice are the vampires, the zombies and the werewolves. They all have illustrious origins, and often remarkable physicality, but ghosts were there first. They were family, after all. Ghosts accosted the cave-dwellers on their way back home from hunting and gathering, featured conspicuously in the tales told round the proverbial campfires and secured prominent positions for themselves in religion, magic, folksong, oral tradition and popular superstition. Most often ghosts were spirits that could not rest until they had been properly buried, or until a wrong done to them had been avenged, or until they themselves had expiated their own crimes. They might have appeared to the living out of boredom, malevolence or spite, or been sent in dreams to deliver a warning to the sleepers or in nightmares to disturb the conscience of the guilty. While it is not established anywhere that ghosts should inspire unease, discomfort or fear, sociable, cheerful ghosts remain a rarity.

Ghost footprints can be found in both sacred and profane texts. The ghost of Samuel responded, albeit reluctantly, to the summons of the Witch of Endor; the spirit of Patroclus intruded upon the dreams of fleet-footed Achilles and an array of ghosts conversed with Odysseus of many wiles

in the House of Hades. Ghosts lived again in the works of Apuleius and Petronius, the tragedies of Seneca, the *Tales* of Chaucer, the plays of Shakespeare, Kyd and Webster and the novels of Horace Walpole, 'Monk' Lewis and Ann Radcliffe.



The ghost story, where the presence of a ghost was the main incident, came of age during the reign of Queen Victoria, flourished during the *fin-de-siècle* and declined gently, in volume and intensity, until the end of the 1950s. The Victorians loved ghost stories; authors loved to write them and the public loved to read them. The popular magazines, always in need of copy, reserved a special place in their pages for the ghost story, alongside the detective story and the tale of adventure in faraway lands.

Much has already been said about the substantial role played by Charles Dickens in the revitalisation of the ghost story and its identification with Christmas. He inserted a ghost tale in *The Pickwick Papers*, gave pride of place to ghosts in *A Christmas Carol* and wrote another two dozen ghost stories during his long and productive career. In his capacity as editor of *All the Year Round* and *Household Words*, he published ghost stories by such established authors as Sheridan Le Fanu, Wilkie Collins and Edward Bulwer-Lytton. He also invited a successful authoress, Elizabeth Gaskell, to contribute to his magazines.

Mrs Gaskell, as she was known in line with Victorian conventions, was born Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson on 29 September 1810 in London, the daughter of William Stevenson – a treasury official, journalist and one-time minister – and Elizabeth Holland. Elizabeth's parents were Unitarians; rational, liberal Christians who favoured the single personality of the Godhead above the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. They believed neither in original sin nor in eternal punishment for the sins committed in life.

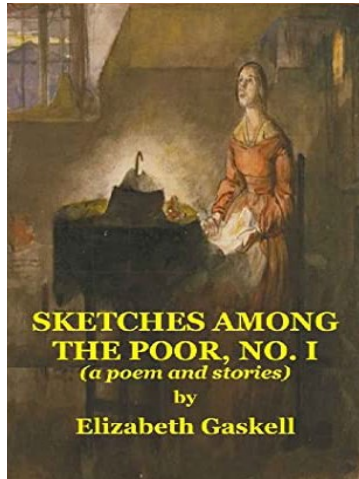
When his wife died in October 1811, barely a year after Elizabeth's birth, her father saw no alternative but to send the child to her aunt in Cheshire. In subsequent years Elizabeth lived in Stratford-upon-Avon and Northern England. In 1832 she married the Reverend William Gaskell, a Unitarian clergyman as well as a writer and poet. The newlyweds settled in Manchester, where William was minister at Cross Street Unitarian Chapel for more than fifty years. Elizabeth kept house, raised the couple's three daughters and helped her husband with his work. She also collaborated with William in a cycle of poems, *Sketches among the Poor*, which appeared in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in 1837. Other articles and essays followed. In October 1848, she published – anonymously – a novel, *Mary Barton. A Tale of Manchester Life*, dealing with the appalling condition of workers in the slums of Manchester during the industrialisation of Northern England. The novel was enthusiastically acclaimed and its unnamed author became much sought after by the reading public and her fellow writers. In the wake of her success Elizabeth met Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Thomas Carlyle, William Wordsworth, John Ruskin and the American writers Harriet Beecher Stowe and Charles Eliot Norton,

After *Mary Barton*, Elizabeth wrote several novels, including *Cranford* (1853) *Ruth* (1853), *North and South* (1855), *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863) and *Cousin Phillis* (1863) and a number of short stories. Many of these works appeared in the magazines Dickens edited, from 'Lizzie Leigh' (*Household Words*, 1849) to 'How the First Floor

Went to Crowley Castle' (*All the Year Round*, Christmas 1863). In 1857 she published *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), a biography of her friend which had been requested from her by Charlotte's father, Patrick Brontë. It was the first publication which bore her name on the first page.

Elizabeth Gaskell died unexpectedly on 12 November 1865 at The Lawn, a house in Hampshire which she was buying as a retirement surprise for her husband. 'It is an unlucky house', she had written about it, 'and I believe I was a fool to set my heart on the place at all'. Her final novel, *Wives and Daughters* (1866), which was being serialized in the *Cornhill Magazine*, a prestigious literary journal, was left unfinished at her death. It was published posthumously in 1866.

Our present Victorian Fiction offering, *The Old Nurse's Story*, was first published in *A Round of Stories by the Christmas Fire*, in *Household Words*, Extra Christmas Number (October 1852). It appeared with ten other stories, including two by Dickens, who also wrote a framework tale linking them. Its author, Elizabeth Gaskell, may have been much concerned with social issues, but she was also able to produce one of the greatest ghost stories, classic and innovative at the same time. For those who have not read it before, there is a treat in store.



# THE OLD NURSE'S STORY

By Elizabeth Gaskell (1852)

You know, my dears, that your mother was an orphan, and an only child; and I dare say you have heard that your grandfather was a clergyman up in Westmoreland, where I come from. I was just a girl in the village school, when, one day, your grandmother came in to ask the mistress if there was any scholar there who would do for a nurse-maid; and mighty proud I was, I can tell ye, when the mistress called me up, and spoke to my being a good girl at my needle, and a steady, honest girl, and one whose parents were very respectable, though they might be poor. I thought I should like nothing better than to serve the pretty young lady, who was blushing as deep as I was, as she spoke of the coming baby, and what I should have to do with it. However, I see you don't care so much for this part of my story, as for what you think is to come, so I'll tell you at once.

I was engaged and settled at the parsonage before Miss Rosamond (that was the baby, who is now your mother) was born. To be sure, I had little enough to do with her when she came, for she was never out of her mother's arms, and slept by her all night long; and proud enough was I sometimes when missis trusted her to me.

There never was such a baby before or since, though you've all of you been fine enough in your turns; but for sweet, winning ways, you've none of you come up to your mother. She took after her mother, who was a real lady born; a Miss Furnivall, a grand-daughter of Lord Furnivall's, in Northumberland. I believe she had neither brother nor sister, and had been brought up in my lord's family till she had married your grandfather, who was just a curate, son to a shopkeeper in Carlisle – but a clever, fine gentleman as ever was – and one who was a right-down hard worker in his parish, which was very wide, and scattered all abroad over the Westmoreland Fells.

When your mother, little Miss Rosamond, was about four or five years old, both her parents died in a fortnight – one after the other. Ah! that was a sad time. My pretty young mistress and me was looking for another baby, when my master came home from one of his long rides, wet and tired, and took the fever he died of; and then she never held up her head again, but just lived to see her dead baby, and have it laid on her breast, before she

sighed away her life. My mistress had asked me, on her death-bed, never to leave Miss Rosamond; but if she had never spoken a word, I would have gone with the little child to the end of the world.

The next thing, and before we had well stilled our sobs, the executors and guardians came to settle the affairs. They were my poor young mistress's own cousin, Lord Furnivall, and Mr Esthwaite, my master's brother, a shopkeeper in Manchester; not so well-to-do then as he was afterwards, and with a large family rising about him. Well! I don't know if it were their settling, or because of a letter my mistress wrote on her death-bed to her cousin, my lord; but somehow it was settled that Miss Rosamond and me were to go to Furnivall Manor House, in Northumberland; and my lord spoke as if it had been her mother's wish that she should live with his family, and as if he had no objections, for that one or two more or less could make no difference in so grand a household. So, though that was not the way in which I should have wished the coming of my bright and pretty pet to have been looked at – who was like a sunbeam in any family, be it never so grand – I was well pleased that all the folks in the Dale should stare and admire, when they heard I was going to be young lady's maid at my Lord Furnivall's at Furnivall Manor.

But I made a mistake in thinking we were to go and live where my lord did. It turned out that the family had left Furnivall Manor House fifty years or more. I could not hear that my poor young mistress had ever been there, though she had been brought up in the family; and I was sorry for that, for I should have liked Miss Rosamond's youth to have passed where her mother's had been.

My lord's gentleman, from whom I asked as many questions as I durst, said that the Manor House was at the foot of the Cumberland Fells, and a very grand place; that an old Miss Furnivall, a great-aunt of my lord's, lived there, with only a few servants; but that it was a very healthy place, and my lord had thought that it would suit Miss Rosamond very well for a few years, and that her being there might perhaps amuse his old aunt.

I was bidden by my lord to have Miss Rosamond's things ready by a certain day. He was a stern, proud man,





as they say all the Lords Furnivall were; and he never spoke a word more than was necessary. Folk did say he had loved my young mistress; but that, because she knew that his father would object, she would never listen to him, and married Mr Esthwaite; but I don't know. He never married, at any rate. But he never took much notice of Miss Rosamond; which I thought he might have done if he had cared for her dead mother. He sent his gentleman with us to the Manor House, telling him to join him at Newcastle that same evening; so there was no great length of time for him to make us known to all the strangers before he, too, shook us off; and we were left, two lonely young things (I was not eighteen) in the great old Manor House.

It seems like yesterday that we drove there. We had left our own dear parsonage very early, and we had both cried as if our hearts would break, though we were travelling in my lord's carriage, which I thought so much of once. And now it was long past noon on a September day, and we stopped to change horses for the last time at a little smoky town, all full of colliers and miners. Miss Rosamond had fallen asleep, but Mr Henry told me to waken her, that she might see the park and the Manor House as we drove up. I thought it rather a pity; but I did what he bade me, for fear he should complain of me to my lord. We had left all signs of a town, or even a village, and were then inside the

gates of a large wild park – not like the parks here in the south, but with rocks, and the noise of running water, and gnarled thorn-trees, and old oaks, all white and peeled with age.

The road went up about two miles, and then we saw a great and stately house, with many trees close around it, so close that in some places their branches dragged against the walls when the wind blew, and some hung broken down; for no one seemed to take much charge of the place; to lop the wood, or to keep the moss-covered carriage-way in order. Only in front of the house all was clear. The great oval drive was without a weed; and neither tree nor creeper was allowed to grow over the long, many-windowed front; at both sides of which a wing projected, which were each the ends of other side fronts; for the house, although it was so desolate, was even grander than I expected. Behind it rose the Fells, which seemed unenclosed and bare enough; and on the left hand of the house, as you stood facing it, was a little, old fashioned flower garden, as I found out afterwards. A door opened out upon it from the west front; it had been scooped out of the thick, dark wood for some old Lady Furnivall; but the branches of the great forest trees had grown and overshadowed it again, and there were very few flowers that would live there at that time.

When we drove up to the great front entrance, and went into the hall, I thought we should be lost – it was so large, and vast, and grand. There was a chandelier all of bronze, hung down from the middle of the ceiling; and I had never seen one before, and looked at it all in amaze. Then, at one end of the hall, was a great fireplace, as large as the sides of the houses in my country, with massy andirons and dogs to hold the wood; and by it were heavy, old-fashioned sofas. At the opposite end of the hall, to the left as you went in – on the western side – was an organ built into the wall, and so large that it filled up the best part of that end. Beyond it, on the same side, was a door; and opposite, on each side of the fireplace, were also doors leading to the east front; but those I never went through as long as I stayed in the house, so I can't tell you what lay beyond.

The afternoon was closing in, and the hall, which had no fire lighted in it, looked dark and gloomy; but we did not stay there a moment. The old servant, who had opened the door for us, bowed to Mr Henry, and took us in through the door at the further side of the great organ, and led us through several smaller halls and passages into the west drawing-room, where he said that Miss Furnivall was sitting. Poor little Miss Rosamond held very tight to me, as if she were scared and lost in that great place; and as for myself, I was not much better.

The west drawing-room was very cheerful-looking, with a warm fire in it, and plenty of good, comfortable furniture about. Miss Furnivall was an old lady not far from eighty, I should think, but I do not know. She was thin and tall, and had a face as full of fine wrinkles as if they had been drawn all over it with a needle's point. Her eyes were very watchful, to make up, I suppose, for her being so deaf as to be obliged to use a trumpet.

Sitting with her, working at the same great piece of tapestry, was Mrs Stark, her maid and companion, and almost as old as she was. She had lived with Miss Furnivall ever since they both were young, and now she seemed more like a friend than a servant; she looked so cold, and grey, and stony, as if she had never loved or cared for anyone; and I don't suppose she did care for anyone, except her mistress; and, owing to the great deafness of the latter, Mrs Stark treated her very much as if she were a child.

Mr Henry gave some message from my lord, and then he bowed goodbye to us all – taking no notice of my sweet little Miss Rosamond's outstretched hand – and left us standing there, being looked at by the two old ladies through their spectacles.

I was right glad when they rung for the old footman who had shown us in at first, and told him to take us to our rooms. So we went out of that great drawing-room, and into another sitting-room, and out of that, and then up a

great flight of stairs, and along a broad gallery – which was something like a library, having books all down one side, and windows and writing-tables all down the other – till we came to our rooms, which I was not sorry to hear were just over the kitchens; for I began to think I should be lost in that wilderness of a house. There was an old nursery, that had been used for all the little lords and ladies long ago, with a pleasant fire burning in the grate, and the kettle boiling on the hob, and tea-things spread out on the table; and out of that room was the night nursery, with a little crib for Miss Rosamond close to my bed.

And old James called up Dorothy, his wife, to bid us welcome; and both he and she were so hospitable and kind, that by and by Miss Rosamond and me felt quite at home; and by the time tea was over, she was sitting on Dorothy's knee, and chattering away as fast as her little tongue could go. I soon found out that Dorothy was from Westmoreland, and that bound her and me together, as it were; and I would never wish to meet with kinder people than were old James and his wife.

James had lived pretty nearly all his life in my lord's family, and thought there was no one so grand as they. He even looked down a little on his wife; because, till he had married her, she had never lived in any but a farmer's household. But he was very fond of her, as well he might be. They had one servant under them, to do all the rough work. Agnes they called her; and she and me, and James and Dorothy, with Miss Furnivall and Mrs Stark, made up the family; always remembering my sweet little Miss Rosamond! I used to wonder what they had done before she came, they thought so much of her now. Kitchen and drawing-room, it was all the same. The hard, sad Miss Furnivall, and the cold Mrs Stark, looked pleased when she came fluttering in like a bird, playing and pranking hither and thither, with a continual murmur, and pretty prattle of gladness. I am sure, they were sorry many a time when she flitted away into the kitchen, though they were too proud to ask her to stay with them, and were a little surprised at her taste; though to be sure, as Mrs Stark said, it was not to be wondered at, remembering what stock her father had come of.

The great, old rambling house was a famous place for little Miss Rosamond. She made expeditions all over it, with me at her heels: all, except the east wing, which was never opened, and whither we never thought of going. But in the western and northern part was many a pleasant room; full of things that were curiosities to us, though they might not have been to people who had seen more. The windows were darkened by the sweeping boughs of the trees, and the ivy which had overgrown them; but, in the green gloom, we could manage to see old china jars and carved ivory boxes, and great heavy books, and, above all,



the old pictures!

Once, I remember, my darling would have Dorothy go with us to tell us who they all were; for they were all portraits of some of my lord's family, though Dorothy could not tell us the names of every one. We had gone through most of the rooms, when we came to the old state drawing-room over the hall, and there was a picture of Miss Furnivall; or, as she was called in those days, Miss Grace, for she was the younger sister. Such a beauty she must have been! but with such a set, proud look, and such scorn looking out of her handsome eyes, with her eyebrows just a little raised, as if she wondered how anyone could have the impertinence to look at her, and her lip curled at us, as we stood there gazing. She had a dress on, the like of which I had never seen before, but it was all the fashion when she was young: a hat of some soft white stuff like beaver, pulled a little over her brows, and a beautiful plume of feathers sweeping round it on one side; and her gown of blue satin was open in front to a quilted white stomacher.

'Well, to be sure!' said I, when I had gazed my fill. 'Flesh is grass, they do say; but who would have thought that Miss Furnivall had been such an out-and-out beauty, to see her now?'

'Yes,' said Dorothy. 'Folks change sadly. But if what my master's father used to say was true, Miss Furnivall, the elder sister, was handsomer than Miss Grace. Her picture is here somewhere; but, if I show it you, you must never let on, even to James, that you have seen it. Can the little lady hold her tongue, think you?' asked she.

I was not so sure, for she was such a little sweet, bold, open-spoken child, so I set her to hide herself; and then I helped Dorothy to turn a great picture, that leaned with its face towards the wall, and was not hung up as the others were. To be sure, it beat Miss Grace for beauty; and I think, for scornful pride, too, though in that matter it might be hard to choose. I could have looked at it an hour but Dorothy seemed half frightened at having shown it to me, and hurried it back again, and bade me run and find Miss Rosamond, for that there were some ugly places about the house, where she should like ill for the child to go. I was a brave, high-spirited girl, and thought little of what the old woman said, for I liked hide-and-seek as well as any child in the parish; so off I ran to find my little one.

As winter drew on, and the days grew shorter, I was sometimes almost certain that I heard a noise as if someone was playing on the great organ in the hall. I did not hear it every evening; but, certainly, I did very often, usually when I was sitting with Miss Rosamond, after I had put her to bed, and keeping quite still and silent in the bedroom. Then I used to hear it booming and swelling

away in the distance. The first night, when I went down to my supper, I asked Dorothy who had been playing music, and James said very shortly that I was a gowk to take the wind sougning among the trees for music; but I saw Dorothy look at him very fearfully, and Agnes, the kitchen maid, said something beneath her breath, and went quite white. I saw they did not like my question, so I held my peace till I was with Dorothy alone, when I knew I could get a good deal out of her. So, the next day, I watched my time, and I coaxed and asked her who it was that played the organ; for I knew that it was the organ and not the wind well enough, for all I had kept silence before James. But Dorothy had had her lesson, I'll warrant, and never a word could I get from her. So then I tried Agnes, though I had always held my head rather above her, as I was evened to James and Dorothy, and she was little better than their servant. So she said I must never, never tell; and if ever told, I was never to say she had told me; but it was a very strange noise, and she had heard it many a time, but most of all on winter nights, and before storms; and folks did say it was the old lord playing on the great organ in the hall, just as he used to do when he was alive; but who the old lord was, or why he played, and why he played on stormy winter evenings in particular, she either could not or would not tell me.



Well! I told you I had a brave heart; and I thought it was rather pleasant to have that grand music rolling about the house, let who would be the player; for now it rose above the great gusts of wind, and wailed and triumphed just like a living creature, and then it fell to a softness most complete, only it was always music, and tunes, so it was nonsense to call it the wind. I thought at first, that it might be Miss Furnivall who played, unknown to Agnes; but one day, when I was in the hall by myself, I opened the organ and peeped all about it and around it, as I had done to the organ in Crosthwaite Church once before, and I saw it was all broken and destroyed inside, though it looked



so brave and fine; and then, though it was noon-day, my flesh began to creep a little, and I shut it up, and run away pretty quickly to my own bright nursery; and I did not like hearing the music for some time after that, any more than James and Dorothy did.

All this time Miss Rosamond was making herself more and more beloved. The old ladies liked her to dine with them at their early dinner. James stood behind Miss Furnivall's chair, and I behind Miss Rosamond's all in state; and, after dinner, she would play about in a corner of the great drawing-room as still as any mouse, while Miss Furnivall slept, and I had my dinner in the kitchen. But she was glad enough to come to me in the nursery afterwards; for, as she said Miss Furnivall was so sad, and Mrs Stark so dull; but she and I were merry enough; and, by and by, I got not to care for that weird rolling music, which did one no harm, if we did not know where it came from.

That winter was very cold. In the middle of October the frosts began, and lasted many, many weeks. I remember one day, at dinner, Miss Furnivall lifted up her sad, heavy eyes, and said to Mrs Stark, 'I am afraid we shall have a terrible winter,' in a strange kind of meaning way. But Mrs Stark pretended not to hear, and talked very loud of something else.

My little lady and I did not care for the frost; not we! As long as it was dry, we climbed up the steep brows behind the house, and went up on the Fells which were bleak and bare enough, and there we ran races in the fresh, sharp air; and once we came down by a new path, that took us past the two old gnarled holly-trees, which grew about half-way down by the east side of the house.

But the days grew shorter and shorter, and the old lord, if it was he, played away, more and more stormily and sadly, on the great organ. One Sunday afternoon – it must have been towards the end of November – I asked Dorothy to take charge of little missy when she came out of the drawing-room, after Miss Furnivall had had her nap; for it was too cold to take her with me to church, and yet I wanted to go, and Dorothy was glad enough to promise and was so fond of the child, that all seemed well; and Agnes and I set off very briskly, though the sky hung heavy and black over the white earth, as if the night had never fully gone away, and the air, though still, was very biting.

'We shall have a fall of snow,' said Agnes to me. And sure enough, even while we were in church, it came down thick, in great large flakes – so thick, it almost darkened the windows. It had stopped snowing before we came out, but it lay soft, thick, and deep beneath our feet, as we tramped home. Before we got to the hall, the moon rose, and I think it was lighter then – what with the moon, and what with the white dazzling snow – than it had been when we went

to church, between two and three o'clock.

I have not told you that Miss Furnivall and Mrs Stark never went to church; they used to read the prayers together, in their quiet, gloomy way; they seemed to feel the Sunday very long without their tapestry-work to be busy at. So when I went to Dorothy in the kitchen, to fetch Miss Rosamond and take her upstairs with me, I did not much wonder when the old woman told me that the ladies had kept the child with them, and that she had never come to the kitchen, as I had bidden her, when she was tired of behaving pretty in the drawing-room.

So I took off my things and went to find her, and bring her to her supper in the nursery. But when I went into the best drawing-room, there sat the two old ladies, very still and quiet, dropping out a word now and then, but looking as if nothing so bright and merry as Miss Rosamond had ever been near them. Still I thought she might be hiding from me; it was one of her pretty ways, and that she had persuaded them to look as if they knew nothing about her; so I went softly peeping under this sofa and behind that chair, making believe I was sadly frightened at not finding her.

'What's the matter, Hester?' said Mrs Stark sharply. I don't know if Miss Furnivall had seen me for, as I told you, she was very deaf, and she sat quite still, idly staring into the fire, with her hopeless face. 'I'm only looking for my little Rosy Posy,' replied I, still thinking that the child was there, and near me, though I could not see her.

'Miss Rosamond is not here,' said Mrs Stark. 'She went away, more than an hour ago, to find Dorothy.' And she, too, turned and went on looking into the fire.

My heart sank at this, and I began to wish I had never left my darling. I went back to Dorothy and told her. James was gone out for the day, but she, and me, and Agnes took lights, and went up into the nursery first; and then we roamed over the great, large house, calling and entreating Miss Rosamond to come out of her hiding place, and not frighten us to death in that way. But there was no answer; no sound.

'Oh!' said I, at last, 'can she have got into the east wing and hidden there?'

But Dorothy said it was not possible, for that she herself had never been in there; that the doors were always locked, and my lord's steward had the keys, she believed; at any rate, neither she nor James had ever seen them: so I said I would go back, and see if, after all, she was not hidden in the drawing-room, unknown to the old ladies; and if I found her there, I said, I would whip her well for the fright she had given me; but I never meant to do it.

Well, I went back to the west drawing-room, and I told Mrs Stark we could not find her anywhere, and asked for

leave to look all about the furniture there, for I thought now that she might have fallen asleep in some warm, hidden corner; but no! we looked – Miss Furnivall got up and looked, trembling all over – and she was nowhere there; then we set off again, everyone in the house, and looked in all the places we had searched before, but we could not find her. Miss Furnivall shivered and shook so much that Mrs Stark took her back into the warm drawing-room; but not before they had made me promise to bring her to them when she was found.

Well-a-day! I began to think she never would be found, when I bethought me to look into the great front court, all covered with snow. I was upstairs when I looked out; but, it was such clear moonlight, I could see, quite plain, two little footprints, which might be traced from the hall-door and round the corner of the east wing.

I don't know how I got down, but I tugged open the great stiff hall-door, and, throwing the skirt of my gown over my head for a cloak, I ran out. I turned the east corner, and there a black shadow fell on the snow but when I came again into the moonlight, there were the little footmarks going up – up to the Fells. It was bitter cold; so cold, that the air almost took the skin off my face as I ran; but I ran on, crying to think how my poor little darling must be perished and frightened.



I was within sight of the holly-trees, when I saw a shepherd coming down the hill, bearing something in his arms wrapped in his maul. He shouted to me, and asked me if I had lost a bairn; and, when I could not speak for crying, he bore towards me, and I saw my wee bairnie, lying still, and white, and stiff in his arms, as if she had been dead. He told me he had been up the Fells to gather in his sheep, before the deep cold of night came on, and that under the holly-trees (black marks on the hillside, where no other bush was for miles around) he had found my little lady – my lamb – my queen – my darling – stiff and cold in the terrible sleep which is frost-begotten.

Oh! the joy and the tears of having her in my arms once again – for I would not let him carry her; but took her, maul and all, into my own arms, and held her near my own warm neck and heart, and felt the life stealing slowly back again into her little gentle limbs. But she was still insensible when we reached the hall, and I had no breath for speech. We went in by the kitchen-door.

'Bring the warming-pan,' said I; and I carried her upstairs, and began undressing her by the nursery fire, which Agnes had kept up. I called my little lammie all the sweet and playful names I could think of, even while my eyes were blinded by my tears; and at last, oh! at length, she opened her large blue eyes. Then I put her into her warm bed, and sent Dorothy down to tell Miss Furnivall that all was well; and I made up my mind to sit by my darling's bedside the live-long night. She fell away into a soft sleep as soon as her pretty head had touched the pillow, and I watched by her till morning light; when she wakened up bright and clear – or so I thought at first – and, my dears, so I think now.

She said that she had fancied that she should like to go to Dorothy, for that both the old ladies were asleep, and it was very dull in the drawing-room; and that, as she was going through the west lobby, she saw the snow through the high window falling – falling – soft and steady; but she wanted to see it lying pretty and white on the ground; so she made her way into the great hall: and then, going to the window, she saw it bright and soft upon the drive; but while she stood there, she saw a little girl, not so old as she was, 'but so pretty,' said my darling; 'and this little girl beckoned to me to come out; and oh, she was so pretty and so sweet, I could not choose but go.' And then this other little girl had taken her by the hand, and side by side the two had gone round the east corner.

'Now you are a naughty little girl, and telling stories,' said I. 'What would your good mamma, that is in heaven, and never told a story in her life, say to her little Rosamond, if she heard her – and I dare say she does – telling stories!'

'Indeed, Hester,' sobbed out my child, 'I'm telling you

true. Indeed I am.'

'Don't tell me!' said I, very stern. 'I tracked you by your foot-marks through the snow; there were only yours to be seen: and if you had had a little girl to go hand-in-hand with you up the hill, don't you think the footprints would have gone along with yours?'



'I can't help it, dear, dear Hester,' said she, crying, 'if they did not; I never looked at her feet, but she held my hand fast and tight in her little one, and it was very, very cold. She took me up the Fell-path, up to the holly-trees; and there I saw a lady weeping and crying; but when she saw me, she hushed her weeping, and smiled very proud and grand, and took me on her knee, and began to lull me to sleep, and that's all, Hester – but that is true; and my dear mamma knows it is,' said she, crying. So I thought the child was in a fever, and pretended to believe her, as she went over her story – over and over again, and always the same.

At last Dorothy knocked at the door with Miss Rosamond's breakfast; and she told me the old ladies were down in the eating parlour, and that they wanted to speak to me. They had both been into the night-nursery the evening before, but it was after Miss Rosamond was asleep; so they had only looked at her – not asked me any questions.

'I shall catch it,' thought I to myself, as I went along the north gallery. 'And yet,' I thought, taking courage, 'it was in their charge I left her; and it's they that's to blame for letting her steal away unknown and unwatched.' So I went in boldly, and told my story. I told it all to Miss Furnivall, shouting it close to her ear; but when I came to the mention of the other little girl out in the snow, coaxing and tempting her out, and wiling her up to the grand and beautiful lady by the holly-tree, she threw her arms up – her old and withered arms – and cried aloud, 'Oh! Heaven forgive! Have mercy!'

Mrs Stark took hold of her; roughly enough, I thought; but she was past Mrs Stark's management, and spoke to me, in a kind of wild warning and authority.

'Hester! keep her from that child! It will lure her to

her death! That evil child! Tell her it is a wicked, naughty child.' Then, Mrs Stark hurried me out of the room; where, indeed, I was glad enough to go; but Miss Furnivall kept shrieking out, 'Oh, have mercy! Wilt Thou never forgive! It is many a long year ago.'

I was very uneasy in my mind after that. I durst never leave Miss Rosamond, night or day, for fear lest she might slip off again, after some fancy or other; and all the more, because I thought I could make out that Miss Furnivall was crazy, from their odd ways about her; and I was afraid lest something of the same kind (which might be in the family, you know) hung over my darling.

And the great frost never ceased all this time; and, whenever it was a more stormy night than usual, between the gusts, and through the wind we heard the old lord playing on the great organ. But, old lord, or not, wherever Miss Rosamond went, there I followed; for my love for her, pretty, helpless orphan, was stronger than my fear for the grand and terrible sound. Besides, it rested with me to keep her cheerful and merry, as beseemed her age. So we played together, and wandered together, here and there, and everywhere; for I never dared to lose sight of her again in that large and rambling house.

And so it happened, that one afternoon, not long before Christmas Day, we were playing together on the billiard-table in the great hall (not that we knew the right way of playing, but she liked to roll the smooth ivory balls with her pretty hands, and I liked to do whatever she did); and, by-and-by, without our noticing it, it grew dusk indoors, though it was still light in the open air, and I was thinking of taking her back into the nursery, when, all of a sudden, she cried out-

'Look, Hester! look! there is my poor little girl out in the snow!'

I turned towards the long narrow windows, and there, sure enough, I saw a little girl, less than my Miss Rosamond – dressed all unfit to be out-of-doors such a bitter night – crying, and beating against the window panes, as if she wanted to be let in. She seemed to sob and wail, till Miss Rosamond could bear it no longer, and was flying to the door to open it, when, all of a sudden, and close upon us, the great organ pealed out so loud and thundering, it fairly made me tremble; and all the more, when I remembered me that, even in the stillness of that dead-cold weather, I had heard no sound of little battering hands upon the window-glass, although the phantom child had seemed to put forth all its force; and, although I had seen it wail and cry, no faintest touch of sound had fallen upon my ears. Whether I remembered all this at the very moment, I do not know; the great organ sound had so stunned me into terror; but this I know, I caught up Miss Rosamond before she got the hall-door opened, and clutched her, and



carried her away, kicking and screaming, into the large, bright kitchen, where Dorothy and Agnes were busy with their mince-pies.

‘What is the matter with my sweet one?’ cried Dorothy, as I bore in Miss Rosamond, who was sobbing as if her heart would break.

‘She won’t let me open the door for my little girl to come in; and she’ll die if she is out on the Fells all night. Cruel, naughty Hester,’ she said, slapping me; but she might have struck harder, for I had seen a look of ghastly terror on Dorothy’s face, which made my very blood run cold.

‘Shut the back-kitchen door fast, and bolt it well,’ said she to Agnes. She said no more; she gave me raisins and almonds to quiet Miss Rosamond; but she sobbed about the little girl in the snow, and would not touch any of the good things.

I was thankful when she cried herself to sleep in bed. Then I stole down to the kitchen, and told Dorothy I had made up my mind. I would carry my darling back to my father’s house in Applethwaite; where, if we lived humbly, we lived at peace. I said I had been frightened enough with the old lord’s organ-playing; but now that I had seen for myself this little moaning child, all decked out as no child in the neighbourhood could be, beating and battering to get in, yet always without any sound or noise – with the dark wound on its right shoulder; and that Miss Rosamond had known it again for the phantom that had nearly lured her to death (which Dorothy knew was true); I would stand it no longer.

I saw Dorothy change colour once or twice. When I had done, she told me she did not think I could take Miss Rosamond with me, for that she was my lord’s ward, and I had no right over her; and she asked me would I leave the child that I was so fond of just for sounds and sights that could do me no harm; and that they had all had to get used to in their turns? I was all in a hot, trembling passion; and I said it was very well for her to talk, that knew what these sights and noises betokened, and that had, perhaps, had something to do with the spectre child while it was alive. And I taunted her so, that she told me all she knew at last; and then I wished I had never been told, for it only made me more afraid than ever.

She said she had heard the tale from old neighbours that were alive when she was first married; when folks used to come to the hall sometimes, before it had got such a bad name on the country side: it might not be true, or it might, what she had been told.

The old lord was Miss Furnivall’s father – Miss Grace, as Dorothy called her, for Miss Maude was the elder, and Miss Furnivall by lights. The old lord was eaten up with pride. Such a proud man was never seen or heard of; and

his daughters were like him. No one was good enough to wed them, although they had choice enough; for they were the great beauties of their day, as I had seen by their portraits, where they hung in the state drawing-room. But, as the old saying is, ‘Pride will have a fall’; and these two haughty beauties fell in love with the same man, and he no better than a foreign musician, whom their father had down from London to play music with him at the Manor House.

For, above all things, next to his pride, the old lord loved music. He could play on nearly every instrument that ever was heard of; and it was a strange thing it did not soften him; but he was a fierce, dour old man, and had broken his poor wife’s heart with his cruelty, they said. He was mad after music, and would pay any money for it. So he got this foreigner to come; who made such beautiful music, that they said the very birds on the trees stopped their singing to listen. And, by degrees, this foreign gentleman got such a hold over the old lord, that nothing would serve him but that he must come every year; and it was he that had the great organ brought from Holland, and built up in the hall, where it stood now. He taught the old lord to play on it; but many and many a time, when Lord Furnivall was thinking of nothing but his fine organ, and his finer music, the dark foreigner was walking abroad in the woods, with one of the young ladies: now Miss Maude, and then Miss Grace.

Miss Maude won the day and carried off the prize, such as it was; and he and she were married, all unknown to any one; and, before he made his next yearly visit, she had been confined of a little girl at a farm-house on the Moors, while her father and Miss Grace thought she was away at Doncaster Races. But though she was a wife and a mother, she was not a bit softened, but as haughty and as passionate as ever; and perhaps more so, for she was jealous of Miss Grace, to whom her foreign husband paid a deal of court – by way of blinding her – as he told his wife. But Miss Grace triumphed over Miss Maude, and Miss Maude grew fiercer and fiercer, both with her husband and with her sister; and the former – who could easily shake off what was disagreeable, and hide himself in foreign countries – went away a month before his usual time that summer, and half-threatened that he would never come back again.

Meanwhile, the little girl was left at the farm-house, and her mother used to have her horse saddled and gallop wildly over the hills to see her once every week, at the very least; for where she loved she loved, and where she hated she hated. And the old lord went on playing – playing on his organ; and the servants thought the sweet music he made had soothed down his awful temper, of which (Dorothy said) some terrible tales could be told. He grew infirm too, and had to walk with a crutch; and his son – that was the present Lord Furnivall’s father – was with the

army in America, and the other son at sea; so Miss Maude had it pretty much her own way, and she and Miss Grace grew colder and bitterer to each other every day; till at last they hardly ever spoke, except when the old lord was by.

The foreign musician came again the next summer, but it was for the last time; for they led him such a life with their jealousy and their passions, that he grew weary, and went away, and never was heard of again. And Miss Maude, who had always meant to have her marriage acknowledged when her father should be dead, was left now a deserted wife, whom nobody knew to have been married, with a child that she dared not own, although she loved it to distraction; living with a father whom she feared, and a sister whom she hated.

When the next summer passed over, and the dark foreigner never came, both Miss Maude and Miss Grace grew gloomy and sad; they had a haggard look about them, though they looked handsome as ever. But, by-and-by, Miss Maude brightened; for her father grew more and more infirm, and more than ever carried away by his music, and she and Miss Grace lived almost entirely apart, having separate rooms, the one on the west side, Miss Maude on the east – those very rooms which were now shut up. So she thought she might have her little girl with her, and no one need ever know except those who dared not speak about it, and were bound to believe that it was, as she said, a cottager's child she had taken a fancy to.



All this, Dorothy said, was pretty well known; but what came afterwards no one knew, except Miss Grace and Mrs Stark, who was even then her maid, and much more of a friend to her than ever her sister had been. But the servants supposed, from words that were dropped, that Miss Maude had triumphed over Miss Grace, and told her that all the time the dark foreigner had been mocking her with pretended love – he was her own husband. The colour left Miss Grace's cheek and lips that very day for ever, and she was heard to say many a time that sooner or later she would have her revenge; and Mrs Stark was for

ever spying about the east rooms.

One fearful night, just after the New Year had come in, when the snow was lying thick and deep; and the flakes were still falling – fast enough to blind anyone who might be out and abroad – there was a great and violent noise heard, and the old lord's voice above all, cursing and swearing awfully, and the cries of a little child, and the proud defiance of a fierce woman, and the sound of a blow, and a dead stillness, and moans and wailings, dying away on the hillside! Then the old lord summoned all his servants, and told them, with terrible oaths, and words more terrible, that his daughter had disgraced herself, and that he had turned her out of doors – her, and her child – and that if ever they gave her help, or food, or shelter, he prayed that they might never enter heaven. And, all the while, Miss Grace stood by him, white and still as any stone; and, when he had ended, she heaved a great sigh, as much as to say her work was done, and her end was accomplished.

But the old lord never touched his organ again, and died within the year; and no wonder, for, on the morrow of that wild and fearful night, the shepherds, coming down the Fell side, found Miss Maude sitting, all crazy and smiling, under the holly-trees, nursing a dead child, with a terrible mark on its right shoulder.

'But that was not what killed it,' said Dorothy: 'it was the frost and the cold. Every wild creature was in its hole, and every beast in its fold, while the child and its mother were turned out to wander on the Fells! And now you know all! And I wonder if you are less frightened now?'

I was more frightened than ever; but I said I was not. I wished Miss Rosamond and myself well out of that dreadful house for ever; but I would not leave her, and I dared not take her away. But oh, how I watched her, and guarded her! We bolted the doors, and shut the window-shutters fast, an hour or more before dark, rather than leave them open five minutes too late. But my little lady still heard the weird child crying and mourning; and not all we could do or say could keep her from wanting to go to her, and let her in from the cruel wind and snow.

All this time I kept away from Miss Furnivall and Mrs Stark, as much as ever I could; for I feared them – I knew no good could be about them, with their grey, hard faces, and their dreamy eyes, looking back into the ghastly years that were gone. But, even in my fear, I had a kind of pity for Miss Furnivall, at least. Those gone down to the pit can hardly have a more hopeless look than that which was ever on her face. At last I even got so sorry for her – who never said a word but what was quite forced from her – that I prayed for her; and I taught Miss Rosamond to pray for one who had done a deadly sin; but often, when she came to those words, she would listen, and start up from

her knees, and say, 'I hear my little girl plaining and crying, very sad, oh, let her in, or she will die!'

One night – just after New Year's Day had come at last, and the long winter had taken a turn, as I hoped – I heard the west drawing-room bell ring three times, which was the signal for me. I would not leave Miss Rosamond alone, for all she was asleep – for the old lord had been playing wilder than ever – and I feared lest my darling should waken to hear the spectre child; see her I knew she could not. I had fastened the windows too well for that.

So I took her out of her bed, and wrapped her up in such outer clothes as were most handy, and carried her down to the drawing-room, where the old ladies sat at their tapestry-work as usual. They looked up when I came in, and Mrs Stark asked, quite astounded, 'Why did I bring Miss Rosamond there, out of her warm bed?' I had begun to whisper, 'Because I was afraid of her being tempted out while I was away, by the wild child in the snow,' when she stopped me short (with a glance at Miss Furnivall), and said Miss Furnivall wanted me to undo some work she had done wrong, and which neither of them could see to unpick. So I laid my pretty dear on the sofa, and sat down on a stool by them, and hardened my heart against them, as I heard the wind rising and howling.

Miss Rosamond slept on sound, for all the wind blew so; and Miss Furnivall said never a word, nor looked round when the gusts shook the windows. All at once she started up to her full height, and put up one hand, as if to bid us listen.

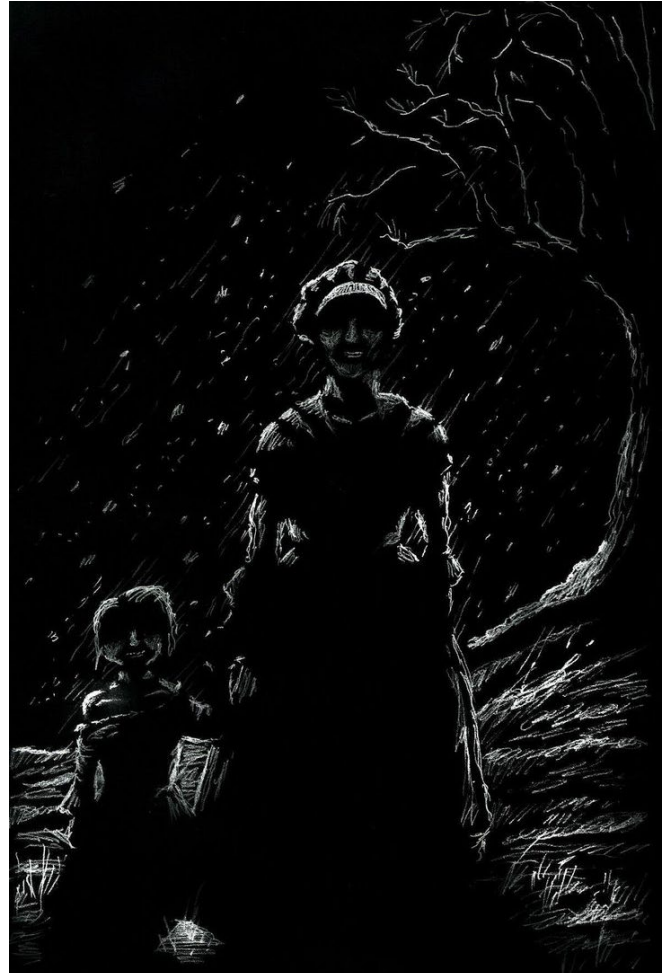
'I hear voices!' said she. 'I hear terrible screams – I hear my father's voice!'

Just at that moment my darling wakened with a sudden start: 'My little girl is crying, oh, how she is crying!' and she tried to get up and go to her, but she got her feet entangled in the blanket, and I caught her up; for my flesh had begun to creep at these noises, which they heard while we could catch no sound.

In a minute or two the noises came, and gathered fast, and filled our ears; we, too, heard voices and screams, and no longer heard the winter's wind that raged abroad. Mrs Stark looked at me, and I at her, but we dared not speak. Suddenly Miss Furnivall went towards the door, out into the ante-room, through the west lobby, and opened the door into the great hall. Mrs Stark followed, and I durst not be left, though my heart almost stopped beating for fear. I wrapped my darling tight in my arms, and went out with them.

In the hall the screams were louder than ever; they seemed to come from the east wing – nearer and nearer – close on the other side of the locked-up doors – close behind them. Then I noticed that the great bronze

chandelier seemed all alight, though the hall was dim, and that a fire was blazing in the vast hearth-place, though it gave no heat; and I shuddered up with terror, and folded my darling closer to me. But as I did so the east door shook, and she, suddenly struggling to get free from me, cried, 'Hester! I must go. My little girl is there, I hear her; she is coming! Hester, I must go!'



I held her tight with all my strength; with a set will, I held her. If I had died, my hands would have grasped her still, I was so resolved in my mind. Miss Furnivall stood listening, and paid no regard to my darling, who had got down to the ground, and whom I, upon my knees now, was holding with both my arms clasped round her neck; she still striving and crying to get free.

All at once, the east door gave way with a thundering crash, as if torn open in a violent passion, and there came into that broad and mysterious light, the figure of a tall old man, with grey hair and gleaming eyes. He drove before him, with many a relentless gesture of abhorrence, a stern and beautiful woman, with a little child clinging to her dress.

'O Hester! Hester!' cried Miss Rosamond; 'it's the lady! the lady below the holly-trees; and my little girl is with her. Hester! Hester! let me go to her; they are drawing me to



them. I feel them – I feel them. I must go!’

Again she was almost convulsed by her efforts to get away; but I held her tighter and tighter, till I feared I should do her a hurt; but rather than let her go towards those terrible phantoms. They passed along towards the great hall-door, where the winds howled and ravened for their prey; but before they reached that, the lady turned; and I could see that she defied the old man with a fierce and proud defiance; but then she quailed – and then she threw up her arms wildly and piteously to save her child – her little child – from a blow from his uplifted crutch.

And Miss Rosamond was torn as by a power stronger than mine, and writhed in my arms, and sobbed (for by this time the poor darling was growing faint).

‘They want me to go with them on to the Fells – they are drawing me to them. Oh, my little girl! I would come, but cruel, wicked Hester holds me very tight.’

But when she saw the uplifted crutch, she swooned away, and I thanked God for it. Just at this moment – when the tall old man, his hair streaming as in the blast of a furnace, was going to strike the little shrinking child – Miss Furnivall, the old woman by my side, cried out, ‘O father! father! spare the

little innocent child!’

But just then I saw – we all saw – another phantom shape itself, and grow clear out of the blue and misty light that filled the hall; we had not seen her till now, for it was another lady who stood by the old man, with a look of relentless hate and triumphant scorn. That figure was very beautiful to look upon, with a soft, white hat drawn down over the proud brows, and a red and curling lip. It was dressed in an open robe of blue satin. I had seen that figure before. It was the likeness of Miss Furnivall in her youth; and the terrible phantoms moved on, regardless of old Miss Furnivall’s wild entreaty – and the uplifted crutch fell on the right shoulder of the little child, and the younger sister looked on, stony, and deadly serene. But at that moment, the dim lights, and the fire that gave no heat, went out of themselves, and Miss Furnivall lay at our feet stricken down by the palsy – death-stricken.

Yes! She was carried to her bed that night never to rise again. She lay with her face to the wall, muttering low, but muttering always: ‘Alas! Alas! what is done in youth can never be undone in age! What is done in youth can never be undone in age!’



*"IN SILVERY ACCENTS, WHISPERING LOW – A HAPPY, HAPPY CHRISTMASTIDE!"*

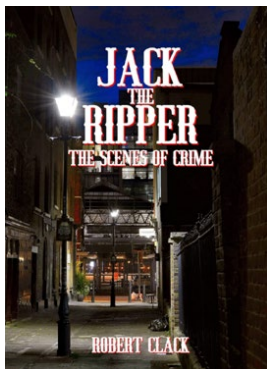
# NON-FICTION REVIEWS

Included in this issue:

*Jack the Ripper: The Scenes of Crime* and more!

## JACK THE RIPPER: THE SCENES OF CRIME

Robert Clack  
Wee Hoose Books, 2021  
200pp; illus (many in colour); biblio.  
ISBN: 979-8479906909  
£25 hardcover, £20 softcover



Rob Clack probably knows Whitechapel better than his own living room, so it's not easy to think of a better guide to the streets and buildings associated with the Jack the Ripper murders.

The subtitle is quite clever because this book isn't about the *scene* of the crimes, but the *scenes* of crime; that is, the places associated with the victims.

Clack looks at each crime victim-by-victim, beginning with Annie Millwood and ending with the murder of Mary Ann Austin in 1901. Austin was killed in the same lodging house as the one from which Annie Chapman had been ejected to her death in 1888, and the behaviour of some of staff and lodgers in 1901 was decidedly iffy, to say the least, and it makes one wonder just how helpful they were in 1888.

Embracing all the victims is good, because the extreme terror these tragedies created is the cause of the historic interest in the crimes, whereas I feel focussing on the so-called Canonical Five and whether all were killed by the same person is a suspect thing.

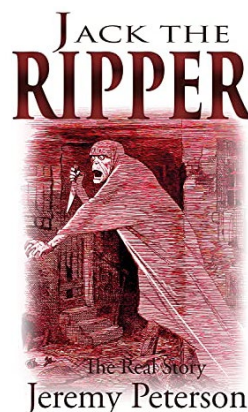
Clack describes each case in straightforward, factual detail, without the extraneous colour added to the known facts by Hallie Rubenhold in *The Five*, and it lacks the polemic, which makes *Scenes of Crime* more of a Ripperologist's book – just the facts.

What makes the book outstanding are the illustrations – the sheer number and the quality of them – plus the fact that they're properly sourced. Many illustrations are in colour, and some you won't have seen before, or you'll see things you hadn't seen before. There was a photograph of Poplar High Street which I must have seen dozens of times, but without knowing it showed the entrance to Clarke's Yard (where Rose Mylett was found).

The book isn't perfect; no book is. It would have benefited from an editor; the afterword, which was about a handful of suspects, suggested that it was rather hurried, and it might have been a wiser decision to omit it. And I could justifiably complain bitterly about the absence of an index. But all bar the most knowledgeable Ripperologist will find something they didn't know here, and the illustrations are excellent, which combine to make this quite possibly the best Ripper book published in 2021.

## JACK THE RIPPER: THE REAL STORY

Jeremy Peterson  
aSys Publishing, 2021  
www.aSys-publishing.co.uk  
222pp; illus.  
ISBN: 9781913438500  
£7.99 softcover



It may come as no surprise to learn that, contrary to the subtitle of this book, it isn't 'the real story'.

Back in the 1920s a story was circulating about some blood-soaked ties found in a box belonging to a black magician who had allegedly worn them when he performed a ritual that involved committing the murders attributed to 'Jack the Ripper'. Someone who knew the facts was a woman named



Vittoria Cremers, but she was living quietly somewhere and couldn't be traced.

Bernard O'Donnell was a reporter who had told the story of the ties in 1925 when he ghosted a series of articles by Betty May for the *World Pictorial News*. She was a one-time model, dancer, nightclub singer, and briefly a follower of Aleister Crowley, visiting his notorious Abbey of Thelema. Betty May, who was known as the 'Tiger Woman', had seen or at least been told about the ties. O'Donnell's interest in the story of the Jack the Ripper's ties stayed with him, until, in or about 1930, he set out to trace Vittoria Cremers – and he succeeded. After some initial distrust, and over several subsequent meetings, Vittoria Cremers told him the whole story, writing it all down for O'Donnell. The story was in her own words, and Jeremy Peterson quotes from her manuscript liberally.

Except they aren't her own words. There is no evidence that Vittoria Cremers ever wrote down anything about the ties, or her relationship with the novelist Mabel Collins, or their business partnership with the owner of the ties, who we now know was a man named Roslyn Donston Stephenson. The words are in fact Bernard O'Donnell's.

In the late '40s or early '50s, O'Donnell wrote a book about Vittoria Cremers and her story, and he proposed two possible titles: 'Black Magic and Jack the Ripper' and 'This Man Was Jack the Ripper'. But neither would grace the spine of a book, because O'Donnell never secured a publisher. Nobody knows why, it's not even certain to which publisher he submitted the manuscript. A few people had an opportunity to read it, and in due course it was found by Andy Aliffe and Melvin Harris among the possessions of O'Donnell's son, the respected romance novelist and creator of Modesty Blaise, Peter O'Donnell, before his death in 2010. O'Donnell later gave Howard Brown, the owner of JTR Forums, permission to publish on his site, and Chris Scott made a transcription.

The manuscript is a Jack the Ripper treasure. If it had been published it would have been the first post-war book on the subject of the Whitechapel murders, penned even before Donald McCormick's *The Identity of Jack the Ripper* in 1959, and would also have been the first Ripper book to offer an identifiable suspect (or not, because O'Donnell was never able to trace Roslyn Stephenson).

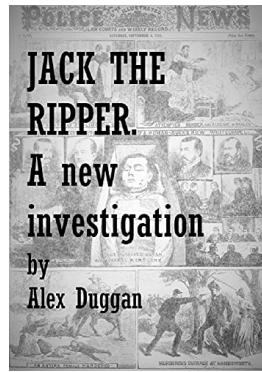
The trouble is that O'Donnell isn't reliable, and Vittoria Cremers left nothing written of her own, so we have absolutely no way of telling what she told O'Donnell and what he exaggerated, or even made up. One of the problems we have assessing some of O'Donnell's writing is that he often contributed stories and articles on the fringe subjects, like black magic, where exaggeration, elaboration and downright lies were almost acceptable.

The whole point was that they were sensational. And nobody really believed the stories anyway. O'Donnell could say what he liked; Cremers had died in the 1930s and neither she or anyone else could contradict him.

O'Donnell's unreliability means that Peterson's book is anything but the true story.

## JACK THE RIPPER: A NEW INVESTIGATION

Alex Duggan  
Privately Published, 2021  
247pp;  
ISBN: 9798540886956  
£7.99 softcover, £4.99 ebook



As far as I can see, Mr Duggan's investigation of the Whitechapel murders is new only in the sense that it isn't an investigation you have come across before. It isn't new in the sense of being fresh.

I don't want to be unkind – and as ever it may be that I missed something – but this book is just a rehash of what's already known and doesn't lead anywhere that we haven't been before.

It covers the usual ground – why the Ripper case remains so fascinating after so many years, what life was like in London in the 1880s, and the murders 'before the five'. There's a short chapter about Victorian prostitution, but there's no depth or real understanding. Mr Duggan has a superficial knowledge, and elaborates on that. One redeeming feature is that he didn't adopt Hallie Rubenhold's argument that the victims *weren't* prostitutes, but he should have addressed her case if he knew of it. There's no suggestion that I can recall that he did so.

I might as well mention some errors at this point, as they begin quite early. One example is the description of Buck's Row as having a row of terraced houses on one side and a warehouse, stable yard and school on the other. As you know, the terraced houses, yard and school were on one side, the warehouse on the other. Duggan also suggests that if Nichols' murderer was disturbed by the arrival of Charles Cross, he might have escaped by climbing over the school wall (it didn't have one) or going over the stable gates if they were low enough for him to do so. This also serves to illustrate a significant problem with Duggan's book, which is his tendency to speculate from the position of a little knowledge and less understanding. I have no idea how old the author is, but there is a naivety about the writing and thinking behind it that makes me



think he's young.

With that thought in mind, I don't want to be too cruel about Alex Duggan's book. I think one of the great things about Ripperology is that for most people it's about reading books, and no matter how you look at it that's a good thing, and it involves thinking about what one has read, which is terrific too. And everyone can and should be encouraged to share their thoughts. And that's what Alex Duggan has done. Unfortunately, he wants nearly £8 of your hard-earned to read them, and that's £8 too much.

### THE WORLD OF JACK THE RIPPER: ONE HOUR ESSENTIALS FOR PEOPLE WITH BUSY LIVES

Richard Walker

Privately published, 2021



72p ebook

This book is what it says it is, namely a brief recap of the known facts – the emphasis being on 'brief'. It's not bad, it's not good, it's just an unexciting bandwagon-jumper by somebody who doesn't seem to have any depth of knowledge about or real interest in the subject. But with an asking price

of just over 70p, you get your money's worth. It basically follows the usual pattern of doing a little bit about the conditions at the time, then a little bit about the lives of the victims, then a little about the murders, and finally a little bit about the subjects.

The book concludes with some moralising, including a partial quote from a letter Edward Fairfield wrote to *The Times*, published in October 1888. Fairfield was the uncle of the novelist Rebecca West and his star was rising in the Colonial Office at the time he wrote, but unfortunately Hallie Rubenhold misrepresented his letter in her book *The Five* and he has been portrayed as typical of the uncaring and misogynistic monied-class, unmoved by the horror of the murders and concerned only that the unlovely dregs of Annie Chapman's class of humanity might move into his disinfectant-clean neighbourhood if they were displaced from their own hovels. He was, in fact, concerned that suggested ways of cleaning up the disreputable lodging houses of Dorset Street and Flower and Dean Street would result in price hikes that the likes of Annie Chapman couldn't afford, thus depriving them of shelter.

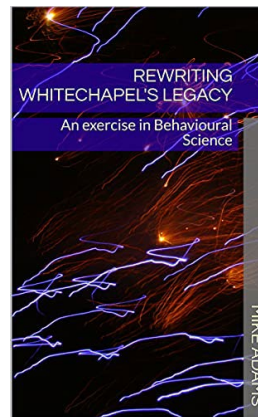
### REWRITING WHITECHAPEL'S LEGACY: AN EXERCISE IN BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE

Mike Adams

privately published, 2021

119pp; appendices; notes

£4.00 ebook



The title is probably enough to put you off Mike Adams' book, and if that doesn't do it then a glance through the first couple of chapters almost certainly will. That would be a pity because this is an interesting and informative read, but one that can also be tough going. This is because before he gets to the interesting stuff he provides a layman's explanation of what

he's doing, how he's doing it, and what it is supposed to achieve, so if you are one of those people whose eyes glaze over when people mention offender profiling and behavioural investigative analysis, some other book might be a better choice to accompany your night-time Ovaltine.

To be more positive, Mike Adams seems to know what he's talking about, and is talking from a position of experience: for most of his working life he has been a policeman, including a five-year stint with the Metropolitan Police, and he was involved in local, organised, and complex criminal investigations. In 2007 he graduated from the University of Leicester with an MSc in Forensic and Legal Psychology, and he's also completed several courses on the analysis of behavioural evidence. He says of himself that he has 'mainly focused on the linking of crimes committed by the same offender', and a substantial part of this book reflects that interest. Adams' work in this area suggests that the same person murdered more people than the Canonical Five, and he rightly points out that whilst 'academics, historians and Ripper enthusiasts' [a horrible term!] have considered other female victims, they have done so without 'concise, forensic examination of victimology, offender behaviour or associated behavioural evidence.'

In all, Adams looked at fifteen potential victims, and concluded that nine were killed by the same person. There were no real surprises, except, perhaps, the exclusion of Rose Mylett and the inclusion of Elizabeth Stride.

I belong to the aforementioned whose eyes glaze over when profiling is mentioned, so I cannot comment with any authority on the accuracy of Mike Adams' conclusions. He did his best to everything in terms a simpleton could understand, but I didn't have a simpleton handy to explain it to me and so I can do no better than say that I did find quite a lot that I'm sure the lay reader will find interesting.

The trouble is that it's almost impossible to resist the temptation to skip to the conclusion to learn the identity of the new suspect on offer. Be warned, in the paragraph after the next, I'll reveal the name of that suspect, so move to the next review now if you don't want the surprise spoiled.

Adams seems to have a fair grasp of the facts, but he comes out with a few things that may cause the informed reader a momentary stumble. For example, he often refers to Jack the Ripper as the world's first serial killer, which he wasn't.

The 'new' suspect isn't. Adams revealed the name – and there was quite a bit of discussion about him – some twelve years ago on the Casebook website, in September 2008, so I only feel a little uncomfortable at revealing he's Septimus Swyer (1835-1906). He was a doctor who had his practice at 32 Brick Lane and afterwards at 23 Whitechapel Road, and the murders stopped with Frances Coles when Swyer emigrated to the United States.

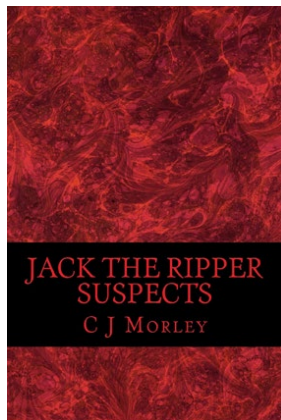
## JACK THE RIPPER SUSPECTS

C.J. Morley

Independently Published, 2021

702pp;

ISBN: 979-8452680635



£16.99 softcover

This book is probably the most complete collection of Jack the Ripper suspects ever compiled, and it should be on the shelf of anyone seriously interested in the mystery of the murderer's identity. However, Morley had earlier published the book in two volumes, something apparently forced upon him by Amazon when

his manuscript exceeded their page limits. Whatever the reason, he has managed to overcome the problem and he's here able to not only publish the book in a single volume, but also include the results of some new research. So, if you didn't buy the two-volume edition, this is a must-have. If you bought the two-volume edition, you probably don't need the single volume edition.

The book has its faults. Morley interprets the term 'suspects' rather too loosely, and includes a lot of the men who confessed to the crimes when drunk, and not a few of whom were insane. Such people aren't and never were suspects in any real sense, but it's nevertheless handy to have a ready reference to their names. My biggest criticism of the book is the dearth of sources, and this is something Mr Morley needs to fix for future editions.

## THE ESCAPE OF JACK THE RIPPER: THE FULL TRUTH ABOUT THE COVER-UP AND HIS FLIGHT FROM JUSTICE

Jonathan Hainsworth and Christine Ward-Agius

Stroud, Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing, 2020

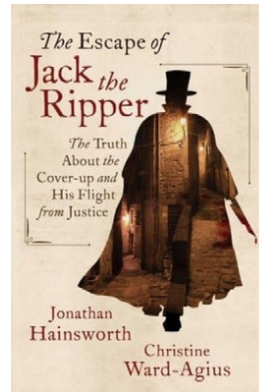
www.amberley\_books.com

288pp; illus; appendices; notes; biblio; index

Softcover and ebook

ISBN: 978-1398109629

£9.99 softcover, £8.19 ebook



The argument set out in this readable volume is that Sir Melville Macnaghten masterminded a way to publicly acknowledge that the authorities knew the identity of Jack the Ripper and that he was dead, yet at the same time make sure his family name was not revealed and disgraced. But when some others who were

in on the secret began to talk too much, Macnaghten ran a successful damage limitation campaign, spreading disinformation like confetti, and being responsible for everything from Anderson's belief that the Ripper was a Polish Jew, through Mrs Belloc Lowndes writing her famous story *The Lodger*.

This is a much-awaited revised softcover edition of Hainsworth and Ward-Agius's book published back in 2020, but unfortunately it arrived too late for review and remained on my to-read stack, along with far too many other books which real world concerns had prevented me from reading. I can't tell you what the revisions are, although I did notice that my only mention in the text has been removed, which probably tells us how much my review of the hardcover edition was appreciated. Nevertheless, although I am not a fan of conspiracy theories, this book lays out a case against Montague Druitt that's undeniably interesting, albeit you might not find it as convincing as the authors clearly do. Anyway, apart from alerting you to this softcover edition, I wanted to mention it here because of the following book:

## THE ESCAPE OF JACK THE RIPPER: THE FULL TRUTH ABOUT THE COVER-UP AND HIS FLIGHT FROM JUSTICE

Krystel Cornog

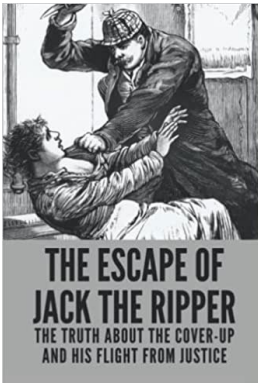
Independently Published, 2021

66pp

ISBN: 979-8772183854

£7.46

As far as I am aware, this depressingly slender volume, which costs only slightly less than the Hainsworth/Ward-Agius book, is not about the escape of Jack the Ripper, his flight from justice, or a cover-up. Those things are



very specific to Hainsworth/Ward-Agius, and the obviously pseudonymous “KrystelCornog” has nicked the title – titles not being subjected to copyright, presumably – with the hope of gaining some sales off the back of the Hainsworth/Ward-Agius title. Interestingly, the same context also appears between covers of a 66-page book called

*The Ultimate Jack the Ripper Sourcebook*, available in hardcover and as an ebook, one written by Paris Bulosan and the other by Calvin Bailado, neither of which is the superb book of that title by Stewart Evans and Keith Skinner.

### THE BRIGHTON POLICE SCANDAL: A STORY OF CORRUPTION, INTIMIDATION AND VIOLENCE

Dick Kirby  
Pen and Sword True Crime, 2021  
ISBN: 978-1399017282  
£20 hardcover, £6.99 ebook



The basement drinking club was known locally as “The Bucket of Blood” because it’s unsavoury clientele often had fights and staggered blood bespattered into the pre-dawn darkness, long after the licensing laws meant the club’s doors should have been locked and bolted and the staff and customers been tucked up and

gently snoring in bed. The taste and refinement of the establishment was obviously of the sort that meant it was kept under close observation by the police, but strangely it wasn’t.

The real name of the “Bucket of Blood” was the Astor Club, and it was rumoured that the owner, a local villain of some notoriety, was paying backhanders to the police, so few people clasped a hand to their mouth and looked with wild-eyed disbelief when Scotland Yard’s Flying Squad began to poke around and discovered that the laundry of the Brighton police was not as clean and white as it should have been.

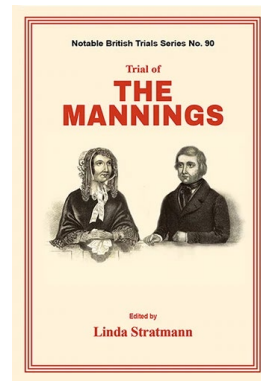
As so often happens, what first appeared to be a few back-handers was in fact the tip of a very nasty iceberg, and as the investigation proceeded the horrific scale of the corruption began to be revealed. For years bribes had been paid to coppers, who in turn didn’t investigate when crimes were reported, who discovered that evidence

had mysteriously vanished, and who somehow managed to overlook previous convictions. But there was worse; witnesses were threatened and otherwise intimidated, honest coppers were “fitted up” and threatened with serious violence, and the corruption went through the ranks to the Chief Constable.

*The Brighton Police Scandal* is a detailed and characteristically no-nonsense account from Dick Kirby of the prosecution of the Brighton police officers, including the Chief Constable, involved in an infamous corruption scandal, one of several at the time, that led to the reforms introduced by the Police Act of 1964.

### TRIAL OF THE MANNINGS

Notable British Trials 90  
Linda Stratmann  
London: Mango Books, 2021  
www.lindastratmann.com  
www.mangobooks.co.uk  
ISBN: 9781914277030  
272pp; illus; appendix; index  
£20 hardcover



Charles Dickens went to see the public execution of Maria Manning on 13 November 1849 and was horrified by ‘the wickedness and levity of the immense crowd’ who had gone to watch the spectacle. It says much, perhaps, that the behaviour of the crowd, as gut-wrenchingly horrible as it must have been, mattered more than

what many today would regard as the judicial murder of a human being. On the other hand, Maria (or Marie) Manning and her husband Frederick had committed a brutal murder and it is difficult to have sympathy for either of them, so perhaps the levity of the crowd is understandable.

Maria was a Swiss, born in Lausanne in or about 1821. It isn’t known for certain when or why she came to England, but she was able to speak the language fluently and with barely a hint of an accent, so it is supposed by some that she may have been offered a job as a domestic servant by a wealthy person visiting nearby Lake Geneva.

She became ‘friendly’ with a man named Patrick O’Connor, an interesting character who was a sort of tax collector in the London docks and a moneylender who had become rich by charging exorbitant interest. He doesn’t inspire much sympathy, although he didn’t deserve to end up decomposing under a slab in, of all places, a kitchen. Anyway, his friendship with Maria continued after her marriage in 1847 to Frederick Manning, a publican who



gave a new meaning to unprepossessing; Linda Stratmann describes this greedy, hard-drinking slob of a man as 'stout, with a jowly, bloated face, a florid complexion, and a peculiar fleshy bulge at the corner of his eyelids...'

Maria and Frederick murdered O'Connor on 9 August 1846. He went to dine with them at their home in Bermondsey and they shot him in the back of the head. They buried his corpse beneath the flagstones in their kitchen, then Maria went to his home in the East End and stole money and railway shares. She then double-crossed Frederick by fleeing to Edinburgh with most of the loot. Frederick went to Jersey. But O'Connor's body was found and both Mannings were eventually traced and arrested.

Thus it was that Maria and Frederick Manning came to stand in the dock of the Old Bailey, their trial turning out to be one of the most fascinating in terms of its legal problems, not the least of which was determining which of the accused had committed the actual act of murder.

Linda Stratmann provides an-all-too brief introduction to what is a classic *cause célèbre*, but doesn't examine in any detail the mechanics of the trial itself. A trial transcript isn't the ideal accompaniment to a Horlicks before lights out, but it is always the real strength of the book, an enormously valuable research tool and one of the best ways to feel the full drama of the trial.

## TRIAL OF CHRISTINA EDMUNDS

Notable British Trials 91

Kate Clarke

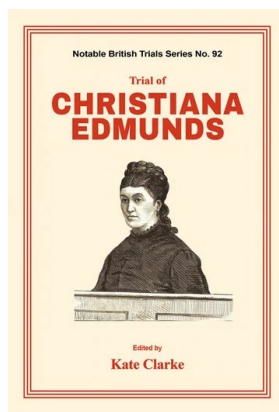
London: Mango Books, 2021

www.MangoBooks.co.uk

178pp; illus; appendices; biblio; index.

ISBN: 9781914277252

£20 hardcover



Brighton. 1870.

Emily Beard accepted a chocolate cream from a friend, Christina Edmunds, but it had a disagreeable metallic taste and she did not eat it. Her husband was away from home at the time, but on his return, Emily told him about the incident and he concluded that Christina had tried to poison his wife.

Stanley Barker had gone on holiday to Brighton with his family. He was just four years old. His elder brother had bought some chocolate creams from the local confectioner and Stanley happily ate one of them, but soon after began crying and complaining about the taste of the chocolate cream. Convulsions quickly followed and within twenty minutes the lad was dead. In due course analysis of the

contents of his stomach found strychnine was present in a quantity sufficient to have killed him, and strychnine was found when one of the chocolate creams was examined.

Christina Edmunds was an emotionally fragile 43-year-old spinster who had developed an infatuation with her doctor, Charles Izard Beard, and had sought to eliminate one of the obstacles to furthering her desired relationship with him, by sending his wife some chocolate creams laced with poison. When Dr Beard accused her of attempting to poison his wife, which Christina naturally denied with all the vehemence she could muster, she set about diverting attention from herself by sending poisoned chocolates to other residents in Brighton and by poisoning chocolates sold by Mr Maynard, one of which had been eaten by Stanley Barker.

Christina Edmunds was tried for murder at the Old Bailey in January 1872, where she was found guilty and sentenced to hang, but it was determined that she was insane. She was committed to Broadmoor, where she died in 1907.

Kate Clarke's introduction to *Trial of Christina Edmunds* is a model of how succinct writing and a command of the facts can produce an informative and at the same time entertaining read.

Like so many of these stories, it is a tragic one. It is hard to have sympathy for Christina, who was a great source of annoyance and irritation even when living out her final days in Broadmoor, but I don't want to imagine the agonies through which the Barker family must have suffered, the holiday having turned into such a never-to-be-forgotten nightmare. And there is the question of Dr Beard and how much he reciprocated Christina's passion, if at all.

Kate Clarke provides a detailed and insightful assessment of the trial and the questions facing both defence and prosecution, and, of course, the jury. She also had access to some first-hand accounts of meetings with Christina Edmunds in Broadmoor which have been neglected.

An excellent book.

## TRIAL OF FREDERICK BAKER

Notable British Trials 92

David Green

London: Mango Books, 2021

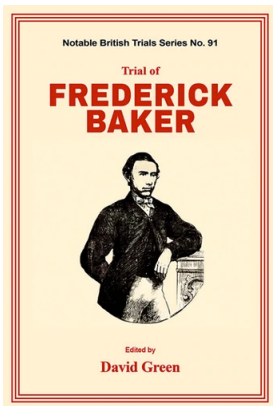
www.MangoBooks.co.uk

189pp; illus; appendices; biblio; index

ISBN: 9781914277047

£20 hardcover

While the expression 'Sweet F.A.', meaning 'nothing' (and for some people 'F.A' being a coarse way of expressing it), is in common use today, the initials in fact mean Fanny Adams, the name of the little girl Frederick Baker murdered and mutilated, tearing the little body apart so thoroughly



that virtually nothing was left of it. Investigators later found Baker's diary in the office where he worked as a solicitor's clerk, and for the day of the murder, Saturday, 24 August 1867, they read, 'Killed a young girl. It was fine and hot.'

The story of Fanny Adams is a horrible one, utterly unpleasant, but a fascinating case in the history of criminal insanity. Psychiatry was still very much in its infancy in 1867, although the first book about mental illness was *A Treatise on Madness*, written by a one-time President of the Royal College of Physicians, William Battie (c.1703-1776), whose name is probably the origin of the expression 'battie' for someone who is extremely eccentric or mad (nothing to do with the most common explanations involving bat guano, expressions like batshit mad and the less colourful bats in the belfry!).

Killing without apparent motive was known about, but it wasn't in any sense understood, and there was much debate.

Baker's defence argued that he was Not Guilty and also that he was Guilty but Insane, and the judge at the trial may even have tried to direct the jury towards a verdict of

insanity, but they took only quarter of an hour to declare Baker Guilty of murder and he was hanged outside Winchester Gaol on Christmas Eve, 24 December, before a crowd estimated to have numbered 5,000, most of them women.

David Green provides a very detailed and fully footnoted account of the crime, the investigation, and the issues arising at the trial, as well as the aftermath.

## LEWISHAM PRESS

[www.lewishampress.com](http://www.lewishampress.com)

Lewisham Press have issued a selection of ebooks, most of which are essential reading for anyone interested in the people and the times of the Whitechapel murders. The volumes seem to be quality conversions of the original to etexts, but at £6.99 they're maybe a little on the pricey side.

Titles of interest are: Robert Anderson, *Sidelights on the Home Rule Movement, Criminals and Crime*, and *The Lighter Side of My Official Life*. Henry Smith, *From Constable to Commissioner*. Frederick Porter Wensley, *Detective Days*. Other police memoirs are Charles Arrow, *Rogues and Others*; Tom Divall, *Scoundrels and Scallywags*; Herbert T. Fitch, *Traitors Within*; John Mallon, *Irish Conspiracies, Recollections of John Mallon*; John Sweeney, *At Scotland Yard*. There are several other titles.

*All reviews by Paul Begg*





*Loretta Lay  
Books*



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(Further speakers to be announced)

EMCEE: KARL COPPACK

SATURDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> & SUNDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2022  
AT THE ASTRONOMER, MIDDLESEX STREET, LONDON

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