

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

Ripperologist

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City of Dreadful Night?

JOHN BENNETT takes us
to the darker side of London

EDUARDO ZINNA
revisits Christ Church

JANE CORAM looks at the
traditional Victorian Christmas

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poses a Christmas condundrum
for Sherlock Holmes



RIPPEROLOGIST MAGAZINE

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QUOTE FOR DECEMBER:

"Recently I heard a young woman talk about her belief in reincarnation - she knows she had a former life. Some folks believe we return to right past wrongs. In that vein I imagine Mother Teresa may have been Jack the Ripper. "

Sue Mason, *The Party Catoosa County News*, Ringgold, GA, USA, 11 December 2007

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RIPPEROLOGIST MAGAZINE

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Another Dozen Down

Editorial by DON SOUDEN

Another twelve months gone by, another twelve issues of *Ripperologist* to delight our readers, the mystery of the Whitechapel murders will soon enter its twelfth decade and we about to celebrate the twelve days of Christmas. As a dedicated craps shooter might put it, “a bonanza of boxcars.” Then again, a devotee of the dice probably wouldn’t take time from rolling the bones to ponder anything that sublime so I suppose it is up to someone like me to provide an even dozen thoughts about the JtR scene in this rapidly passing year.

1 Topping my list, I suppose, must be the Wolverhampton JtR Conference in October. A wonderful experience and above all because I finally got to meet a wonderful bunch of people previously only encountered on the Internet. There were also some excellent presentations and I even learned to make change in pounds and pence. Or would have if the rate of exchange weren’t so confiscatory that I never got any change.

2 There was also a JtR conference this year in Liverpool devoted to trying James Maybrick for the crimes. I didn’t go and can’t even remember the result of the trial, nor can I be bothered looking that up. Clearly made a big impression on me.

3 Suspect-based Ripperology, long a staple of the field, seemed to suffer a hit in the past year. As Ripperology as a whole grows more scholarly, an increasing number of those in the field seem to feel that suspect-based books tend to play fast and loose with the facts: making more than they deserve of those that support their suspect and suppressing those that don’t. But, with several million more potential suspects still out there, opportunities aplenty remain for the genre.

4 In contrast, books about the social history of the East End and those devoted to the victims garnered more interest and attention this year. But, with suspects easier to find than victims, the potential for growth in that area would seem much less.

5 As it is, however, Patricia Cornwell announced she will be rewriting her original Ripper book, *Portrait of a Killer: Jack the Ripper Case Closed*. The prospect has delighted her supporters and detractors alike, but no truth to the rumor it will be titled *Oh Gee, My Bad—Case Reopened*.

6 Among the suspects, that self-proclaimed quack Francis Tumblety enjoyed something of a “career year” as more and more attention was focused on him. Personally, I have never given him much credence as a suspect, figuring that if he actually had been Jack the Ripper that consummate publicity hound would have printed up flyers advertising the fact.

7 Meanwhile, Joe Barnett and M.J. Druitt stock seemed to plunge a bit and “trading” in Aaron Kosminski shares remained largely inactive. Not that there aren’t those actively touting those suspects or flurries of interest, but overall they caused no excitement. A re-branding for 2008 would seem in order.



The idea of a Fenian connection to the crimes was also an eagerly debated possibility on message boards everywhere in 2007. Intriguing, but also so very predictable—when all else fails, blame the Irish!



Another hot topic that emerged late in the year has been the possibility that the September 17, 1888 JtR letter, uncovered a few years back in the National Archives at Kew, might be authentic. Then again, it might not be authentic. “Maybe yes” and “maybe no” do seem to be the answers to almost any Ripper conundrum.



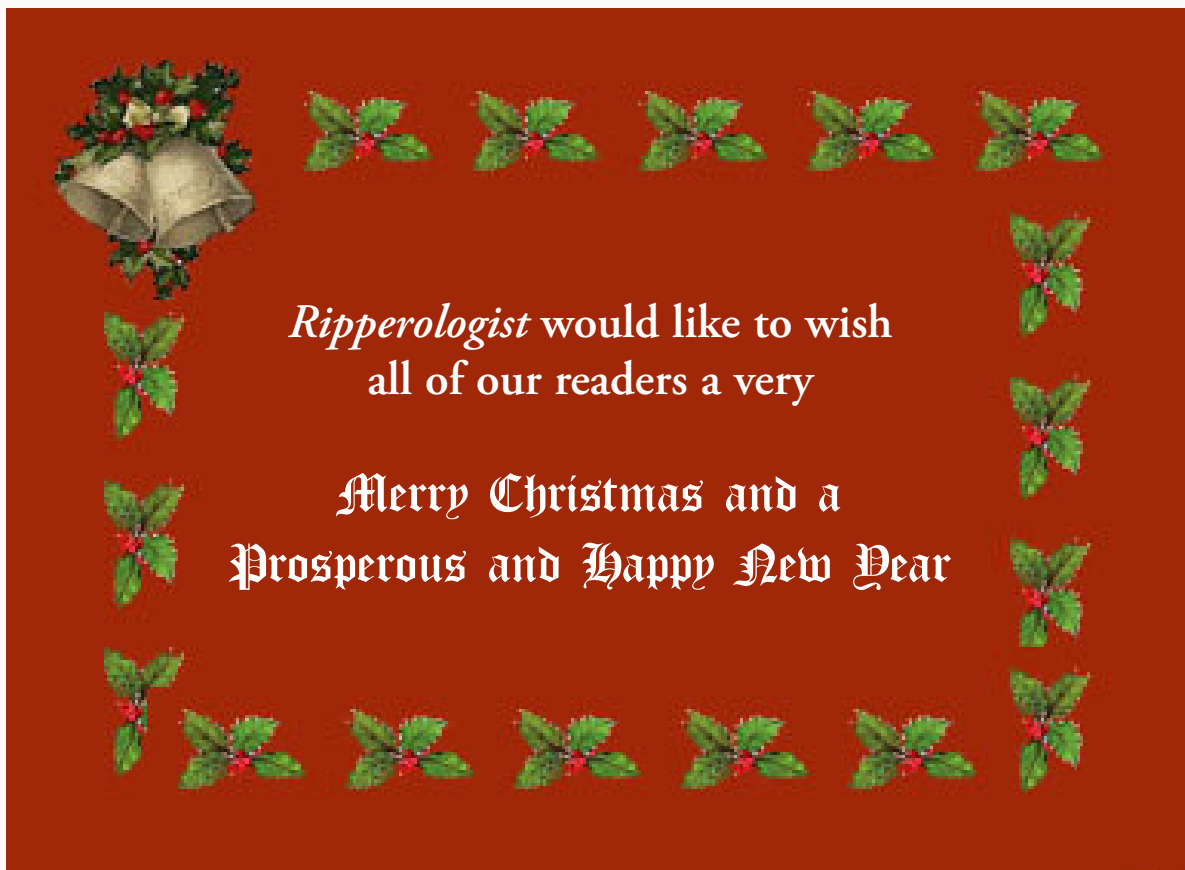
A debate that continued apace throughout 2007 concerned the canonicity of all the various victims, with many Ripper “agnostics” challenging the very term Canonic Five. On any given day, it seemed, Liz Stride was a 50-50 proposition, Mary Jane Kelly clung to her place in the group by her “ear and eyes” while others kept plumping for Martha Tabram’s inclusion. And through all the wrangling too few seemed to care that the poor women were all horribly murdered.



It had nothing to do with JtR, but a topic engaging the attention of a good many Ripperologists late in the year was England’s national team failing to make the Euro 2008 football championship round. In fact, all the home nations failed in that quest (which might be a good reason to exit the EU), but only the England squad’s backers thought their team, as with kings of old, had a divine right to that role.



And finally, in all seriousness, as we stagger into this coming year I hope it will prove to one of great personal and professional success for all of us. And if so it will, for me, be a welcome change. Have a great 2008!





The Eloquence of Stone - A Long Look at Christ Church

By EDUARDO ZINNA

At this time of year Hawksmoor's magnificent Christ Church Spitalfields plays host to a number of concerts as part of the Spitalfields Winter Festival, having been restored to its original glory in 2004 after a 30-year campaign.

Here, in an article originally published in *Ripperologist* 31, October 2000, Eduardo Zinna traces the history of the masterpiece.

You can't miss it. Come from any direction you wish, North or South, East or West. As soon as you get within two miles of it, you'll see it. Step out of Aldgate East tube station, turn left into Commercial Street and there it is, still taller than any other building near it, as splendid as it was when it was first completed, well over two hundred years ago. If you are coming from the City, take Brushfield Street and, as you walk alongside the old Market, look up and you will see it, standing out against the sky. Come from Shoreditch or Southwark, Mile End or Liverpool Street Station. Whichever road you take, you can't miss it, Hawksmoor's masterpiece, Christ Church at Spitalfields.

Early in the morning of Sunday, 2 September 1666 - the Year of the Beast - a fire began accidentally in the house of Thomas Farriner, baker, in Pudding Lane, near London Bridge. A strong wind blew it west. For three days the Great Fire raged. When it was over, London lay in ruins, plumes of smoke rising lazily from a blackened mass of burned-out husks. Most of the City proper, old St. Paul's, many civic buildings, eighty-seven of the 106 City parish churches and 13,000 houses were destroyed. Within a few days, King Charles II received three different plans for rebuilding the city. The most ambitious was by Christopher Wren, an astronomer turned architect. A journey to Paris had dazzled Wren with vistas of straight boulevards, squares, round-points and broad quays, and he was eager to incorporate these into his own projects. But no plan to redraw the streets was adopted and the old lines were in almost every case retained. An act passed in 1667 levied a tax on coal coming into London and provided for the reconstruction of a few essential buildings. In 1670 a second act raised the coal tax, creating a source of funds to rebuild St. Paul's Cathedral and a few other churches and to set up a column - the Monument - to commemorate the Great Fire. Fifty-two Wren churches were eventually built, of which twenty-one survive. Wren designed six of them himself. He entrusted the remainder to architects working under his direction. Among them was Nicholas Hawksmoor.

Some men are remembered for their life, some for their work. Much is known about Hawksmoor's work, since he left a wealth of buildings, models, drawings, blueprints and sketches. But only the scantiest information has survived about Hawksmoor the man.

Sir Christopher Wren





Nicholas Hawksmoor

We know that he was born in 1661 or thereabouts at East Drayton, a small village by the River Trent, in Nottinghamshire. At the age of eighteen, the country boy entered Wren's service. In time he became a brilliant draughtsman, producing innumerable architectural drawings and immersing himself in the classical works of Vitruvius and Andrea Palladio. He assisted Wren in rebuilding St. Paul's Cathedral and another celebrated architect, Sir John Vanbrugh, in building Castle Howard in Yorkshire and Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire. On Wren's death in 1723, Hawksmoor became chief architect of Westminster Abbey, the west towers of which were built to his design. We know that he was married, fathered children and, in the last years of his life, was afflicted with the gout that would kill him on 25 March 1736. The only known likeness of him is a plaster bust, painted black to simulate bronze, at the Buttery of All Souls' College, Oxford.

In the year 1012 Alfege, the Archbishop of Canterbury refused to pay the Danegeld. The enraged Danes bludgeoned him to death with the bones remaining from a banquet. A church was built in Greenwich to his memory where Henry VIII was baptised and Samuel Pepys worshipped. On 28 November 1710, the church's roof collapsed. Its parishioners petitioned Parliament to grant them some money, if some was left from the reconstruction of the churches destroyed during the Great Fire, to rebuild

their church. The ruling Tories saw this as an opportunity to enhance the image of their traditional ally, the Anglican Church. They would erect imposing places of worship, built of stone, so they would last for centuries, and with towers or steeples to stand proudly against London's skyline. The following year Parliament adopted an Act designed to build fifty new churches in the cities of London and Westminster and their immediate environs. Priority was given to Stepney, Wapping and Bethnal Green, areas densely populated and short of parish churches. In return the Anglican Church was given the job of taming the anarchic East End, widely known as a centre of dissension where temples of other faiths proliferated.

But the Whigs were returned to power within a few years, the proceeds of the coal tax were lower than expected and enthusiasm for church building abated considerably. Of the fifty new churches originally envisaged, only twelve were eventually completed. And there is little evidence that Anglicanism ever trickled down to dissenting East Enders.

At the beginning, however, everything went according to plan. The Commissioners appointed to consider the design and construction of the new churches - whose number included both Wren and Vanbrugh - laid great emphasis on open sites, porticoes and steeples. The churches were to be monuments as well as places of worship, presenting, in Vanbrugh's words, 'the most Solemn & Awfull Appearance both within and without.'

On the first possible opportunity, in October 1711, the Commissioners named Hawksmoor as architect to the Commission. Over the years, Hawksmoor designed St George, Bloomsbury, St Mary Woolnoth, in the City - next to where Bank Underground Station is now - and in the East End, St Anne, Limehouse, St George-in-the-East, Wapping Stepney, and his masterpiece, Christ Church, Spitalfields. Hawksmoor believed that churches demanded open or detached sites to derive as much advantage as possible from their design. He was forced to build some of his churches in cramped, existing locations, confined by other buildings. In Spitalfields, he found an open site.

The East End has been associated with death since the earliest times and remains to this day dotted with secret and forgotten burying-places. The inhabitants of Roman London brought their dead outside the city walls to bury them by torch-light. In 1574, a Roman cemetery was found in Spitalfields, in the exact place where Hawksmoor would build Christ Church. As recently as 1999, Museum of London archaeologists excavating a 12 acre site adjoining the Spitalfields Market, across from the Church, found plague pits, the remains of a mediaeval priory and yet another Roman cemetery. They retrieved 8,500 skeletons from the mediaeval period and 80 from Roman times, mostly low born Britons, buried in shrouds and wooden coffins. Among them was the skeleton of a fourth century Roman noblewoman in an elaborate sarcophagus. Using forensic techniques, they put flesh on her bones and a face on her skull. Look at her now. She will look back at you across time.



Early 19th century engraving of Christ Church Spitalfields

There was no parish in or about London where the plague raged with such violence as in the two parishes of Aldgate and Whitechapel. Or so Daniel Defoe tells us. His journal entries describe the huge pits into which the victims of the pestilence were thrown and recount how some were continued as cemeteries and how others were converted into other uses or built upon.¹ Starting in the 1990s, excavations carried out in the vaults of Christ Church uncovered one thousand of the dead who had lain there for so long in their lead-lined coffins. 'As if the measuring and photographing of mummified remnants,' observed Iain Sinclair, 'could bring back those lives, powder the air with lost time'.² Rachel Lichtenstein recalled, 'When one of the coffins was opened the perfectly preserved body of a fourteen-year-old girl was discovered. She was dressed in her funeral clothes: a white linen dress, bonnet and gloves. As the body was exposed to the air it rapidly began to deteriorate and within twenty-four hours she had turned to black dust'.³

Hawksmoor must have picked up his surveyor's tools of a sunny morning and walked across the site where his Church would stand. His view would have been unobstructed, the landscape extending in all directions in decreasing lines beyond the brick-fields. His thoughts must have flown to the Portland stone from which walls would be built, to the timber for the roof beams, to iron, to lead, to the workers who would spend themselves in long days of labour. In November 1713, the Fifty Churches Commissioners paid £1,260 for the bare land. Work started in earnest the following July. By

November 1714, the bricklayers had laid down the foundations, a job for which they charged £800. One of the Commissioners, who resided in Spitalfields, laid the foundation stone in 1715. His name was Edward Peck and his Memorial can still be seen in the church. Soon afterwards, the masons started work on the walls, which were 14 feet high by the end of the year. But in 1719 funds ran out and all building stopped. For the next ten years the building of the church would progress unevenly, as funds were exhausted, became available again and were once more exhausted.

As the church rose slowly towards the sky, letters went back and forth between the community, the Commissioners, the architect and the contractors. On 28 April 1720, Hawksmoor wrote to the Commissioners asking for money to protect the carcass of the church from weather damage. He told them that the walls were to full height and the side aisles roofed, but the timbers of the nave roof were incomplete and the carpenter would not finish them unless he was paid the £2,000 he was owed. Once the commissioners found money and paid the contractors, work was resumed, though not at full speed. Three years later, in January 1723, it was the turn of the local residents to petition for the church to be completed.

During the years it took to build the church, Hawksmoor, the compulsive draughtsman, had many opportunities to change his mind about its original design. For the east face of the church he had used a Venetian window motif - consisting of an arched opening between two rectangular ones. Then, in 1724, after most of the walls had been finished, he envisioned the magnificent portico surmounted by the steeple that comprises the greater part of the western face

1 Defoe, Daniel, *A Journal of the Plague Year*

2 Sinclair, Iain, (with Rachel Lichtenstein) *Rodinsky's Room*

3 Lichtenstein, Rachel: *Rodinsky's Whitechapel*



The interior of Christ Church

today, and repeated the Venetian window motif at the belfry stage. Christ Church 'is full of surprises,' wrote Professor Downes, 'no less when one passes the west front and finds the great cavities hollowed out of the massive front of the belfry stage'.⁴

The majestic church was completed in 1729 at a total cost of over £40,000, four times the original estimates. In May an Act created a new parish and on 5th July the Bishop of London consecrated the new church.

'Mighty' is the word that Ian Nairn had for Christ Church, although he only saw it centuries later when it had been remodelled and rebuilt. In his telegraphic, impressionistic style, Nairn added: 'But not "composed"; transmuted somewhere right down in the blood so that the whole building becomes a living idea...Centre and wings in the huge porch, in the relation of belfry to steeple; and overwhelmingly, inside: aisles to central space, division of the chancel screen, divisions of the huge flat ceiling, the actual Venetian window at the east end: everything offered up: to God be the praise'.⁵

Yet Christ Church's Baroque grandeur was not without critics. Writing in 1734, James Ralph derided Hawksmoor's just completed churches as 'mere Gothique heaps of stone without form or order', described Christ Church as 'one of the most absurd piles in Europe' and called for its 'severest condemnation.' But then Ralph also advocated pulling down St Margaret's, Westminster, and London Bridge.⁶ Hawksmoor did not take kindly to Ralph's outburst. He scorned 'Mr Rafe the Critick', as he called him, for using 'the word Gothick to signifye every thing that displeases him, as the Greeks and Romans call'd every Nation Barbarous that were not in their way of Police and Education'.

⁴ Downes, Kerry, *Hawksmoor*.

⁵ Nairn, Ian, *Nairn's London*.

⁶ Downes, Kerry, *op. cit.*

The organ built for the Church in 1735 by Richard Bridge was the largest in Georgian England, with over one thousand pipes. Some say that Handel played in it. But its best known executant was Peter Prelleur. An East-End of Huguenot descent, Prelleur led a bit of a double life. Not only did he play the organ in church and write religious music, but he also played a lively harpsichord at the local theatres and composed incidental music and light operas for them.

Bells were hung at various times under the Church's tower until a peal of eight was completed. The local residents regulated their lives by the sound of the bells. In the eighteenth century James Rogers, the Church's 'Steeple-Keeper and Bell-Ringer of the 6 & 8 O'Clock Bell', printed a broadsheet in the hope of getting Christmas boxes from his parishioners:

*A Quarter before six I ring my Bell,
As every honest labouring Hand can tell:
The Porters, Joiners, Bricklayers, Market Folks,
Are all in Arms, and crack their harmless Jokes:
The jolly Dyers, now, whose gaudy Trade,
Decks both the Duchess and the Chambermaid;
Waked by my Bell they straitway quit their Room,
And then prepare their colours for the Loom.
The Weavers, Draw-Boys, Throwsters now arise,
Jump up in bed and rub their sleepy Eyes,
Slip on their cloaths and then to work they hie,
Nor think it time to lay their Labour by,
Till Eight at Night, I give them their Dismission
And then they homeward go by my permission.⁷*

Accidents and good intentions alike contributed to change the appearance of Christ Church, often for the worse. Plaques on its walls tell the story of these efforts. In 1822, restorers radically altered the spire. They removed the flame-like crockets running up the corner, the spire lights, the three dormer windows on each face and the large stone finial Hawksmoor had placed at the top and smoothed down the faces. At the same time they refurnished the interior at great expense, much to the consternation of the money-conscious parishioners.

On Ash Wednesday, 1836 fire ravaged Christ Church, destroying the tower, a peal of twelve bells, a clock with chimes and parts of the roof. In 1851 restorers sold the original altarpiece and the communion table. In 1866 they eliminated the side galleries, altered the side-windows, removed the old box-pews and the windows and replaced the pulpit by the old reading desk. And they were still at it in 1880. 'The worst thing,' wrote Gordon Barnes, 'was to chamfer the corners of the high bases to the nave arcade which gave them an insubstantial appearance. After all this the interior looked much higher and Hawksmoor's original proportion had been destroyed'.⁸ Professor Downes says that 'the loss of the galleries, the side entrances and the steeple ornaments and the lowering of the side windows have damaged Christ Church irreparably; nevertheless, it remains as compelling a masterpiece as any of the churches'.⁹

As immigrants from many nations, few of whom answered to the Church of England, came to the East End, the temples of the Huguenots, the Roman Catholic churches of the Irish, the synagogues of the Jews and the Protestant churches of the Danes, the Germans and the Swedes flourished next to Hawksmoor's church. As time went by others also came who sought not spiritual refuge but entertainment, instruction or nourishment. All this could be found in the church. For they walked in the shadow of Christ Church who walked the narrow streets of Spitalfields.

In neighbouring Hanbury Street, Christ Church Hall provided a platform for all those who needed one, radicals and freethinkers included. During her long and active life Annie Besant was an Anglican clergyman's wife, an atheist's com-

⁷ Cited in Rose, Millicent, *The East End of London*

⁸ Barnes, Gordon, *Stepney Churches: An Historical Account*

⁹ Downes, Kerry, op. cit.



The grounds of Christ Church looking across to the Ten Bells public house

panion, a journalist, a birth-control advocate, a Fabian socialist, a theosophist and an Indian independence leader. In the summer of 1888, she often took the floor at the Hall in support of the match-girls. Workers at Bryant and May's match factory in Bow were exposed to yellow phosphorous, a substance widely known to cause the deterioration of the jawbone. Besant wrote in her newspaper about their health hazards, their long hours and their scanty pay. The company threatened a libel action. Besant distributed pamphlets to the factory workers. The company countered by firing three workers. On 5 July one thousand match-girls downed their tools. Within two weeks they had won their strike and Besant became head of the executive committee of the Match-Makers' Union.

No sooner was the match-girls' strike over than the attention of the world was drawn again to the dark alleys criss-crossing Spitalfields. During the autumn of terror, the unfortunate ladies of the evening, the terrified inhabitants of the parish, the policemen in pursuit and the Ripper himself, had but to raise their eyes to see Christ Church's steeple above. That is perhaps the last thing Martha Tabram saw, as she walked to her death in George's Yard.

Since 1867, the Church had offered to would-be timekeepers its illuminated clock besides the peal of its bells. When witnesses came forward to talk to the police or the press or to testify at the inquests of the Ripper's victims, they often established the time of events in their narratives by the Church clock. Thus, Albert Cadosch. Early in the morning of 8 September, he overheard Annie Chapman talking to the Ripper in the backyard of the house next door, 29 Hanbury Street. As he passed the Church on his way to work, he looked up at the clock. It was 5:32. At 5:45, the clock woke up John Davis, the carman who would find Annie's body a few minutes later.

Sarah Lewis knew that she had turned into Dorset Street at exactly 2:30 in the morning of 9 November because she had looked at the Church clock as she walked past. At that time, George Hutchinson was waiting at the corner of Miller's Court for Mary Kelly's visitor to come out.

As he finally gave up and left, the clock struck three. Within half an hour, the clock woke up Sarah Lewis, who remained awake in the dark long enough to hear a faint cry of 'Murder!' coming from somewhere outside.

Before we leave behind the season of the Ripper, let us evoke yet another image of those troubled times. On 8th October they put poor Kate Eddowes, arguable the Ripper's penultimate victim, in her handsome elm coffin and took her on her final journey. Four black horses pulled her open glass hearse. Behind came the chief mourners, all in black, in a mourning coach, and the representatives of the press in a brougham. The funeral cortège left the Golden Lane mortuary at 1:30 in the afternoon. It wound its way slowly along Old, Great Eastern and Commercial Streets before turning into Whitechapel High Street to continue towards its destination, the City of London Cemetery at Ilford. Spectators thronged along the route, uncovering their heads as the hearse went by.

As the cortège reached Christ Church, was Mary Kelly in the crowd? Was she standing, pint in hand, by the door of the Ten Bells or the Britannia, watching Kate proceed unhurriedly towards her resting place. Mary laughed often, but not, I think, that day. No doubt she felt compassion for the dead woman. Perhaps a premonition clouded her brow. Yet she could not know, could she, that a role awaited her as the last act of the tragedy.

In 1902, when the twentieth century was young, American writer Jack London disguised himself as a pauper and went, as if into another world, among the 'people of the abyss'. In the shadow of Christ Church, at three o'clock in the afternoon, he saw a sight he never wished to see again. An improvised guide led him into one of London's lungs: Spitalfields Garden. But this was a garden surrounded by sharp, spiked iron fencing, where there were no flowers, but grass only grew. Jack London and his guide went up the garden's narrow gravelled walk, surrounded, on the benches on either side, by a mass of miserable and distorted humanity.

'It was a welter of rags and filth,' Jack London tells us, 'of all manner of loathsome skin diseases, open sores, bruises, grossness, indecency, leering monstrosities, and bestial faces'. He went on his way among men, women and children of all ages, huddled in their rags against a chill, raw wind, sleeping for the most part, or trying to sleep. 'It was this sleeping that puzzled me,' he recalls. 'Why were nine out of ten of them asleep or trying to sleep?' Only afterwards he learned why: 'It is a law of the powers that be that the homeless shall not sleep by night'.

On the pavement, by the portico of Christ Church, where the stone pillars rise toward the sky in a stately row,' noted Jack London as he continued his slow progress along this barren garden, 'were whole rows of men lying asleep or drowsing, and all too deep sunk in torpor to rouse or be made curious by our intrusion'. No, he did not love that garden, that glimpse of hell. 'A lung of London,' he exclaimed, 'nay, an abscess, a great putrescent sore!' Yet the measure of his revulsion was still not full. 'Those women there,' sneered his guide cheerfully, 'will sell themselves for thrupence, or tu'pence, or a loaf of stale bread'.¹⁰

Unlike her sister churches, Christ Church was not damaged by the machines of destruction of the two world wars. But with peace would come a subtler enemy. It has been said that in the fifties London was at its lowest ebb. There seemed to be almost no street life, the river was dying, London had ceased to be a night city. The weight of indifference and neglect almost brought down Hawksmoor's great churches. St George-in-the-East and St Luke, Old Street, Finsbury, gutted during the war, were never fully restored. St George, Bloomsbury, was almost pulled down, together with several streets of Georgian housing, to make room for a new national research library. As for Christ Church, it was adjudged as unsafe and closed in 1957 as the frantic clicking of death-watch beetles echoed hollowly throughout the deserted nave. 'Suddenly one week we were in the church,' recalled Fay Cattini, who has lived in Spitalfields since 1950, 'and the next we were out and the church locked'.¹¹ The congregation moved to the parish hall. They launched an appeal to allow an extensive restoration to be undertaken. 'Locked up whilst money is being collected for a restoration,' commented Ian Nairn. 'If the Church lets it fall down it might as well present a banker's order for thirty pieces of silver. For here is the faith, manifest'.¹²

What Jack London had done at the beginning of the century, writer and artist Geoffrey Fletcher did as the century turned the bend of middle age. In the mid-sixties, Fletcher went among the meths men, the drinkers of methylated spirits who milled about the East End. For weeks he followed those bleary-eyed, ragged ghosts, as they ambled aimlessly round the heart of Skid Row, breath stinking, limbs twitching nervously, bodies shaking with a tubercular cough. Fletcher met Liverpool Jack and Belfast Johnnie, Glasgow Jock and Geordie the Pill, Sidney the Sod and Billy the Puff, Hat, Pee, Itchy Bill, Syphilis Joe, Peeky Blinder and Harry the Ram. He sat among them as they smoked cigarette ends, popped pills and drank blue meths, metal polish, cleaning fluid or gas milk - a beverage made through passing coal gas through a carton of milk. It rots your brain and drives you mad. Fletcher stood by as the meths men prepared stews out of chicken bones, orange rinds and cabbage stalks, and as they sunned themselves in the barren park that was no longer known as Spitalfields Garden. The locals now called it, more accurately and perhaps less ironically, Itchy Park.¹³



Sleeping rough in 'Itchy Park'

¹⁰ London, Jack, *The People of the Abyss*

¹¹ Cattini, Fay, *Spitalfields: a recollection*, in *Columns*, Number 12, Summer 1999.

¹² Nairn, Ian, op. cit.

¹³ Fletcher, Geoffrey, *Down among the Meths Men*

Amidst all this misery, all this horror, Chaim Bermant found a glimpse, not of hell, but of hope. He noticed that most meths men were not Londoners, that their accents gave them away as strangers. 'They are not the products of East End life,' he wrote, 'but are drawn to the East End because there alone can they be sure of sympathy and help'.¹⁴

Some saw beyond aesthetics in the unconventional dimensions of Hawksmoor's haunting churches. Professor Downes had already observed that 'the strangeness - even when analysed - of Hawksmoor's formal devices found recognition only in the present century's exploration of the unconscious'. In 1975, Iain Sinclair considered the occult pattern formed by the siting of the churches, whose oddities he had first noticed while working as a gardener in their grounds. 'A triangle is formed,' he wrote, 'between Christ Church, St George-in-the-East and St Anne, Limehouse'. The churches, he underlined, were centres of power for those territories; sentinel, sphinx form, dynamos abandoned as the culture they supported went into retreat. The power remained latent, the frustration mounted on a current of animal magnetism. Sinclair went still further. He added St George, Bloomsbury and St Alfege to make the major pentacle-star and then drew lines through Hawksmoor churches and obelisks, plague pits and Ripper and Ratcliffe Highway murder sites to form distorted geometrical figures. He did not neglect the curious detail of Christ Church's windows; 'the pull that is set up by the sequence of small portholes above tall narrow lower windows', a symbol relating to 'a whole chain of meaning and resonances: the grail cup above the lance...the cauldron and the sword...female and male...the setting sun and the molten light over the waters...the pill about to be dropped into the test tube...stylisation of the phallus and generative spurt.'¹⁵

'From what is known of Hawksmoor,' wrote Sinclair, 'it is possible to imagine that he did work a code into the buildings, knowingly or unknowingly, templates of meaning, bands of continuing ritual'. Following into his steps came a biographer and novelist who is on record as considering his work as a lifelong investigation of the Cockney experience. Peter Ackroyd has remarked how certain parts of London still breathe with past lives and says that what he likes to do is to go to a particular part of the city and parley with its ghosts. His 1985 novel *Hawksmoor* combines fiction and history, the present and the past. The real Nicholas Hawksmoor is replaced by the imaginary Nicholas Dyer, an architect and disciple of Christopher Wren. A child of London whose parents, lost to the plague, lie buried in an unmarked pit in Spitalfields, Dyer is also a Satanist who incorporates human sacrifices into the design of his churches. When, centuries later, a series of crimes is committed in the churches, present-day Detective Hawksmoor is charged with the investigation. The Spitalfields Church is the scene of the death of a child who, pursued by a menacing stranger, seeks shelter in its grounds.¹⁶

Christchurch Spitalfields c1957
Source: Survey of London, Spitalfields



14 Bermant, Chaim, *East End: Point of Arrival*

15 Sinclair, Iain, *Lud Heat: A Book of Dead Hamlets*

16 In their recent book on Inspector Reid, *The Man Who Hunted Jack the Ripper*, Nicholas Connell and Stewart P. Evans mention a series of crime novels featuring Inspector Dier, whose name resulted from inverting the letters in Reid's name. One wonders whether Detective Dyer's name in Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* is purely a coincidence.



Dionysis

Alan Moore dipped into every well in his search for information on the Ripper for his epic comic strip *From Hell*. He took Iain Sinclair's work as the main inspiration for some speeches he wrote for his semi-fictional Sir William Gull. According to Gull - or Moore's Gull - Hawksmoor was a follower of the 'ancient Dionysiac architects'.

Dionysus, called Bacchus by the Romans, was a bit of a gatecrasher, only admitted into Olympus when his cult became too important to be ignored. He was the god of vegetation and wine, worshipped in festivals devoted to dancing, drinking and sex. Choruses and incantations performed in his honour are said to lie at the origins of Greek tragedy. A tolerant god, Dionysus was, nevertheless, not to be denied. And there was a darker side to him. He was a flesh-eater - one who did not kill the animals on which he fed but tore their living limbs from them. Some believe that Satanism derived from the Dionysian rites and that the horned, masked Devil at the centre of the Black Mass was none other than Dionysus himself.

Moore traces Dionysus's cult far beyond the Greeks and describes the Dionysiac architects as a 'secret fraternity of Dionysus cultists originating in 1,000 BC who worked in Solomon's Temple, eventually becoming the Middle Ages' Travelling Masonic Guilds. Their ingenious constructions merely symbolised their greater work: the Temple of Civilisation, chiselling human history into an edifice worthy of God, its Great Architect.' According to Moore, Vitruvius, a classic architect of antiquity much revered by Hawksmoor, was a Dionysian. And Hawksmoor's churches were designed 'following the Pagan traditions of the ancient Dionysiac architects'.¹⁷

In the nineties the exterior of Christ Church looked its usual splendid self, but the building remained condemned and the crypt was used as a rehabilitation centre for alcoholics. To the dismay of many admirers of the elegant church, Lord Templeman's City Churches Commission: *Report to the Bishop*, commissioned by the Bishop of London in 1992, and published in 1994, recommended that many churches 'be declared redundant or otherwise deconsecrated,' and even 'locked up and maintained wind and water tight'.¹⁸

Yet, on the brink of disaster, Christ Church was given a new lease of life. In 1996 English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund launched a scheme to finance the renovation of churches. Christ Church, the first to benefit, was granted £2.9 million. The scheme covers repairs to the fabric, churchyards, tombstones, walls and gates, archaeology as well as organs, fonts, stained glass, bells and furnishings and restoration.

Within the following few years the tower and spire were repaired. In 1999 the south facade was restored and cleaned to uncover the blinding whiteness of its stone and the double flight of steps on the south side was reinstalled. By early 2000, the floor structure of the aisle galleries had been reinstated according to original designs. For the first time in 140 years Hawksmoor's vision for Christ Church's interior has been revealed. Its full restoration was scheduled to start in July using, whenever possible, surviving eighteenth-century timber from the church itself.

On 2 April 2000, Mother's Day, I entered Christ Church for the first time. The walls were covered with scaffolding and the floor with rubbish. But renovation was visibly in progress and the parishioners looked confidently to the future. The ghost of the wrecker's ball has been exorcised, one hopes, permanently; and Hawksmoor's great church shall soon rise again in all its glory.

¹⁷ Apart from Iain Sinclair, Moore cites as his sources *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*, by Manly P. Hall, and *The Dionysian Artificers*, by Hall and Hippolyto Joseph Da Costa,.

¹⁸ Cited in Watkin, David, *Paris in the City*, (Review of *The City Churches of Sir Christopher Wren*, by Paul Jeffery), *The Times Literary Supplement*, 17 January 1997.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND SOURCES

The main source of information on Nicholas Hawksmoor's life and works *Hawksmoor*, by Kerry Downes. I have drawn extensively upon Professor Downes's book and used its last line as the title for this article. For all Ripper-related matters, I have relied, as usual, on the works of Begg, Fido, Rumbelow, Skinner, Sugden et al. and my collections of *Ripperana* and *Ripperologist*.

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Christ Church by Tho. H. Shepherd



CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT?

By JOHN BENNETT

Most of us would agree that the East End still has some pretty atmospheric places; a few of them retain that atmosphere even in broad daylight, but for my money, photographing these streets at night makes wonderful subject matter. In the past, I have only done this when accompanied by others (usually Dan, my loyal and tolerant friend from school days), but on a horribly wet evening in November 2007, I made my way down to the East End alone, armed with camera, all-important tripod and rarely for me, a *car*, which made getting around the places I had chosen a whole lot easier. Two hours later, I ended up with 23 shots; what follows is the best of the bunch, some of which did not escape being affected by the irritating drizzle. Some were taken earlier in the year while compiling material for the Whitechapel Society photo competition. Where possible, I chose to take the pictures when there were no cars or people passing. However, I believe that the occasional blurred figure *does* add to the atmosphere.

I love the advent of digital photography, purely for the fact that it is so *instant*. Even in the old days of film, my patience was non-existent and I would always use a 1-hour photo lab for developing, sometimes before I'd even got home (Happy Snaps on Bishopsgate has had quite a lot of business from me over the years). Digital cameras allow us to see an image seconds after taking the shot, but night photography, for me, is often a hit-and-miss affair and I don't always see the results *properly* until they appear full-size on my computer screen back home. Colour representation in dark conditions is often a problem and sometimes the whole scene can be overwhelmed by a sickly yellow hue thanks to the street lighting. Thankfully, I can tweak these images for colour and tonal values so that they show the scene how it appeared to me at the time.

What I wasn't prepared for was the strangely haunting nature of some of these photographs; when the context of being alone in these sometimes threatening environments is taken away and we can see the images for what they are, it doesn't seem like 'dreadful night' at all. That is a personal opinion, but whatever your perception, I hope you enjoy looking at them.





Durward Street, E1

We'll begin with an old favourite. The former Buck's Row still manages to exude an air of unease, despite the considerable - and long overdue - redevelopment that took place in the mid-1990's. Important in this respect is the Board School, which although now renovated as an apartment block, still looms over the street, but admittedly not quite with the same menace as it did when it was derelict. As a rule, Durward Street is relatively busy nowadays, owing to the addition of the bus terminus and the sports centre, but at night it is still dark and quiet enough to make one want to look over one's shoulder - just in case! Back in the 1980's, I used to enjoy taking friends down here at night (strangely enough, some might say) for the full 'Jack was here' treatment before whisking them into the comparatively comfortable environment of the *Roebuck* pub on the corner with Brady Street. In those days, the only buildings on the street were derelict and I can recall only two streetlights, so there was always a sense of relief to get indoors for a pint of fizzy keg beer amongst the somewhat quirky environment of the *Roebuck*. The pub has gone now, along with the other buildings (Essex Wharf and Brady House), but that uneasy feeling is still there, just about.



Voss Street, E2

Voss Street? 'Where's that then?' you might ask. Well, it runs south of (and parallel to) Bethnal Green Road, crossing Vallance Road and it was obviously once a mews. I discovered this interesting little thoroughfare after I saw an old family marriage certificate from 1882 - Henry Wheeler, my great-great grandfather, lived here when it was called Thomas Passage and Henry's bride, Sarah Frost, lived in nearby Derbyshire Street. I have seen one version of Booth's poverty map in which one side of this street is shown coloured black, denoting a 'vicious, semi-criminal' populace, though I believe the other side was inhabited by a mixture of poor and comfortable folk. I wonder which side the Wheeler's lived on? Henry was a 'whitesmith' or tin-plate worker. Several 'smithies' were based near here - Sarah and Henry's son George became a blacksmith and worked around the corner in Sale Street. But that's enough family history for the moment.

I did take some photos from the other end of the street, but the driver of that taxi cab in the distance kept giving me funny looks, so I moved on.



Brady Street, E1

This is the northern end of Brady Street at the junction with Dunbridge Street and Three Colts Lane. Despite being used as a traffic cut-through, it is one of the more gloomy places I have photographed at night. It's in pretty poor shape. The building on the far corner (No.180) was until recently a rather handsome pub called the *Yorkshire Grey* and the building on the left was once the *Old Cavalier* pub. Until 1991, the latter was known as the *Lord Hood* and in the 1950's was frequented by a Mr F R Rogers whose horse would also drink with him, apparently knocking back a pint in ten seconds. It's true, I tell you! Go to londonpublichouse.com/LondonPubs/BethnalGreen/LordHood.shtml and you'll see a picture of the horse (and Mr Rogers) in action.

When my partner saw this photo, she said it reminded her of an Edward Hopper painting and I can see her point - empty street corner, no people, lit by a solitary street lamp. Having said that, the quietness suggested by this shot is not the reality; it took about 7 attempts to get this result because of interference from cars.



Wapping High Street, E1W

The 'W' was added to the postcode for Wapping High Street when this part of Wapping saw an increase in residents following warehouse conversions in the 1980's. The pub is the *Captain Kidd*, but it is not at all old like its near-neighbours (the *Town of Ramsgate* and the *Prospect of Whitby*) - it was opened only twenty years ago.

What has always struck me about this area is its quietness. I first came here in 1987 and was taken aback by the sheer oppressive gloom of the place, all shabby warehouses and metal bridges that had been disused for nearly twenty years by that time. But despite now having quite a high density of residents, the eerie quiet remains, save for the infrequent car, bus, or jogger. It is as if the walls of the old London Docks have managed to hold in an atmosphere that cannot escape, regardless of change.



Gunthorpe Street, E1

Ladies and gentlemen, the daddy of them all! One of those places that is atmospheric whatever time you visit, and the one that gets the tourists' whipping out their cameras on guided walks. It has it all - narrowness, cobbles, old buildings, and that all-important association with Jack the Ripper which attracts people in the first place. It is also known for being not particularly safe, whether it be from the attentions of youths from the nearby Flower and Dean estate, or by drunks who occasionally gather in its various nooks and crannies. This image was taken earlier this year for the WS1888 photo competition, although not ultimately submitted for the contest. I have probably taken more photographs of Gunthorpe Street than any other location in the East End and to be frank, it was becoming a tedious subject, but the thought of capturing the street at night gave it a much needed shot in the arm and rekindled my enthusiasm. On this particular night I was happy that Dan (good old boy) was keeping a watchful eye as I fiddled clumsily with camera settings and tripod parts.



Assembly Passage, E1

I first became aware of Assembly Passage many years ago via a photograph in Bill Fishman's *Streets of East London*. However, I didn't actually walk down the passage until earlier this year when this picture was taken. It formed one of twelve shots I took that evening - of which two black and white ones ended up in the WS1888 competition. I reckon this much ignored alleyway has almost as much ambience as Gunthorpe Street, although for different aesthetic reasons, due to it being much more run down. Out of shot to the right of this image are buildings which once housed Baron's pickle factory - I understand an unexploded bomb from the Second World War is still buried in the grounds of the former factory. Once again, Dan was on hand to keep a lookout for gangstas, the ever-present winos, or mad drivers. As narrow as it seems, cars do pass through here and they don't half go for it.



Walton House, E2

I came across these buildings by chance when attempting to photograph Old Nichol Street, which failed to yield much visual interest because of its blandness and amount of parked cars. This shot shows Walton House (part of the Boundary Estate) from the direction of Old Nichol Street. I liked the fact that the doorways to the dwellings have yet to be secured by intercom systems that are becoming desirable and commonplace, allowing for a sense of mystery as the staircases disappear into the body of the dwellings.

The tenements were built around 1900 to replace the infamous slums of the 'Old Nichol' and the whole district is overshadowed by these tall red-brick facades which I can well imagine are not particularly comfortable to live in these days. Here we can detect faint echoes of Rothschild Buildings or Brady Street Dwellings - long lost examples of this once popular building style.



Calvin Street, E1

Once known as Great Pearl Street and considered a dangerous slum in the Victorian period, Calvin Street sits in a small enclave of narrow, unremarkable thoroughfares off Commercial Street. This is one of the streets whose desperate social conditions were exacerbated by the construction of Commercial Street which literally sliced through it and caused overcrowding on the surrounding neighbourhoods. To be honest, the street has little going for it aesthetically, but I have included this photo because of the air of seclusion and the fact that I managed to capture a couple on their way home (I assume) with their shopping. They appeared typical of the young professionals who have been settling into the area in the last ten or so years, but if they *were* going home, I couldn't work out where that might be, because they were heading towards the distinctly non-residential Grey Eagle Street. It is sometimes difficult to tell what are residential properties around here, largely due to the fact that many of the buildings look run down or are in somewhat insalubrious areas, but a tell-tale light in an old warehouse window or a glimpse of some modern art inside soon reveals that some people's desire to live in the right places overshadows any notion of a pleasant aspect. Perhaps this were taking a short cut, but on this picture they could just as well have been walking into oblivion.



Grey Eagle Street, E1

If you want to see a dead street, then this is a great example. Once lined with small terraced houses, the 1960's saw them replaced by the current buildings which were part of the then still-expanding brewery. These buildings are now mostly empty and vandalised, which makes Grey Eagle Street a not particularly pleasant place to be by day or night. The sense of alienation is enhanced by the high walls of the brewery complex on the east side. A small door in the wall leads directly to the trendy brewery complex of Dray Walk, itself once called Black Eagle Street.

This is another street with personal family connections - the Laskey family, ancestors on my mother's side, were registered as living at No. 37 in the 1861 census, having moved from Pelham Street (today's Woodseer Street). I was quite taken with Grey Eagle Street's bleakness before I knew those little titbits of family history. While taking the photos here, I was disturbed by a loud crash which turned out to be a fox jumping against an iron gate - I was quite alarmed by this, mainly because hanging around here at night makes one feel jittery already.



Mitre Square, EC3

To finish, a view across Mitre Square from Ripper's Corner. The square lost all its oppressiveness when the warehouses that dominated it for years were demolished in 1979. By day it is a quiet haven for office workers to have lunch, but by night it is eerily deserted, save for the sudden invasion of Ripper tours at around 7pm. This takes place every evening and it is quite a sight to see up to 4 or 5 groups squeezed into separate corners of the square, although only one can claim the bench that sits near Catherine Eddowes' final resting place.

This view into St James' Passage reminds me that it was once known as 'Dark Entry' and was exceptionally narrow - the darkness itself must have been overwhelming.

There ends my little tour of the East End by night. I did not make a conscious decision to avoid Ripper murder sites, but I left out Dorset, Hanbury and Berner Streets as they do not fit the bill any more, atmosphere-wise. This 'photo essay' however, was never going to be just about those places, but from the outset attempted to capture some of the more obscure locations in the area. As I wander these streets after dark, whether it be during a social night out, or as part of my job, I am always finding new places to photograph. The area of forgotten streets north of Shoreditch Church is an increasingly interesting subject for me, as are the less well-known and as yet undeveloped parts of Wapping and Limehouse. Three Colt Street near St Anne's Church is crying out to be photographed, although with the density of gloomy railway bridges and gangs of youths with pit bulls roaming about, this would have to be thought out very carefully!

Another 'tour' beckons....



It was Christmas Day in the Workhouse

By JANE CORAM

It was Christmas Day in the workhouse, that season of good cheer, the paupers hearts were merry, their bellies full of beer . . . That's really as far as I can go with that music hall ditty as my asterisk key couldn't take the strain. Suffice it to say that it doesn't paint a very rosy picture of life in a 19th century workhouse, and ends with the Beadle being told to do something physically impossible with the Christmas pudding.

George Sims, who penned the more sober version of this monologue, would undoubtedly be less than amused by the various renditions of his famous work, but it seems likely that the more vulgar versions reflected popular opinion much more accurately.

It's hard to imagine that the poorest stratum of society had much to celebrate at Christmas, especially if they were forced to live in the work or doss house, but surprisingly enough, it was probably the one day of the year when at least the vast majority did have a good time.

Christmas was always considered the best of the London Holidays. It wasn't until Queen Victoria came to the throne, though, that Christmas as we know it was created. Prior to that there were no days off, no Christmas cards, and a jolly time was *not* had by all. Charles Dickens certainly had as much to do with the inception of our modern Christmas as good old Queen Vic did, thanks to his *Christmas Carol*, written in 1844, which instructed everyone on how they should really celebrate Christmas in the proper manner. Dickens described the holidays as 'a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of in the long calendar of the year when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of other people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys.' Just seems a bit of a pity that, with the odd exception, most of them kept their hearts and their wallets well and truly hidden for the rest of the year.

At the beginning of the Victorian period no one had really thought much of Christmas, although a few still celebrated the medieval traditions, which were generally not that much fun. Christmas at that time was a fusion of Saturnalia, (the Roman god of agriculture) and the German festival of Yule, neither of which rocked many people's boats. The Industrial Revolution, though, gave workers the chance of two days off work, which obviously went down very well with everyone except the employers who were forced to pay out two days wages with no returns.

Prince Albert was really single-handedly responsible for the introduction of the Christmas tree into England, and also the singing of carols, which had been out of favour by the turn of the 19th century, although that might have been considered a blessing by some. Musicians called 'waits' would play seasonal tunes on street corners in return for a few coins, and carol-singers would stand frozen stiff on doorsteps hoping to be asked in for a glass of mulled spiced wine or the odd left-over mince pie.

The first Christmas card appeared in the 1840s, with the Penny Black stamp presenting a cheap way to deliver the cards to Auntie Flo in Bournemouth, even if Auntie Flo didn't want to get one. Images of the robin redbreast or the dove, and simple colour prints of flowers, were among the most familiar, while Old Father Christmas, surrounded by the rosiest-cheeked children, all beaming happily, was a close runner-up. The very cheap Christmas cards came from

It was Christmas Day



A typical Victorian Christmas card

Germany, which seems to have cornered the market in economy toys, cards and festive paraphernalia – which did at least mean that even those on a modest income could afford some sort of Christmas. In 1882, nearly 14 million letters and packets, together with three tons of registered letters, passed through the post office, which amounted to £58,000 extra revenue. The fact that cards could be bought for as little as a halfpenny certainly must have helped.¹

By the 1850s, Christmas had come into its own and the festival as we know it today was well established. Truthfully, it was a way to break the dull routine of winter and for a short time the grey-ness of Industrial London was broken by colour and festivity.

Some joys of Christmas could be enjoyed by rich and poor alike. The streets on Christmas Eve were one continuous blaze of show and ornament, which could be shared even if you didn't have a copper in your pocket. About a week before Christmas, all the markets began to increase in the quantity and quality of their goods, although in some cases the opposite was true; any old tat that had been stored through the year could be dragged out for those with less cash in their pocket to purchase. Sound familiar? Green branches of holly were hung, mistletoe and ivy draped over everything; shops opened later than usual, with their oil lamps casting warmth over the streets, a definite improvement on the usual grey, drab winter streets of the capital. Toys, books and Christmas presents would appear in shop windows, and posters would be displayed with such legends as "Do, Papa, Buy Me", on their equivalent of Barbie or Action Man – not unlike the ads for 'ToysRUs' nowadays.

At the start of Victoria's reign, children's toys tended to be hand-made and of course expensive, meaning that only the rich kids got a visit from Father Christmas; but with the increase of factory

goods and mass production, toys became much more affordable and the vast majority could manage something to put in the Christmas stocking, albeit a very modest offering. Unfortunately most of the very poor didn't even have a stocking, let alone something to put in it.

The Christmas stocking first became popular around 1870, and would usually have an apple, orange and a few nuts lurking in the toe, even if there was nothing else. Greengrocers displayed their wares on stalls outside their shops, where there are apples of all hues and sizes, pears, grapes and pineapples, pomegranates, Kent cob-nuts, filberts and foreign nuts all luring the customer in. It must have been less than encouraging for those who couldn't rake together the price of a bed for the night to see all these delights wafted under their noses, with no hope of them ever getting a taste of them.

Fir trees were everywhere, cropped and clipped into regular shapes for Christmas-trees; most of these were sold bare, but some were loaded with fruit – oranges, lemons, and clustered grapes – and liberally adorned with imitation flowers and wreaths.

The butchers' counters would be groaning with meat and poultry, brought in alive from the country and slaughtered in London, and in no way humanely, to cater for the vast demand over the Christmas period; swans, pheasants, bit-terns, herons, hawks, peacocks and even cranes and ravens, ducks, and of course geese would be seen parading through the streets, in very poor condition after their long trek to the capital. Hares and rabbits by the warren lined the walls or hung from the ceiling; pork, venison, beef and lamb slaughtered by the hundreds, all for two days' festivities.

1 The Times, 25 December, 1883



Christmas 1838 - illustration by George Cruikshanks

On Christmas Eve, the whole of London would be out spending — assuming, of course, they had a copper to spend — which brings us nicely onto the Christmas Club, otherwise known as the ‘Goose and Pudding Club’.

Practically every back-street shop and public house had a Goose and Pudding club. Desperate mothers, with no chance of being able to afford a decent Christmas for her family otherwise, would put a small weekly sum aside for thirteen weeks in one of these clubs and that would entitle her to a goose, and possibly a couple of bottles of spirits, if she could find enough pennies every week to cover it. The member would be given a card and their contributions noted down, but the money could be redeemed at any time through the year and topped up again at a later stage. Whatever there was in it at Christmas was what the member had to spend. The distribution of the geese and gin took place on Christmas Eve at the shop or local pub. Generally the choice of the birds was decided by the throw of the dice, the thrower of the highest cast having the first choice.

One advertisement for such a club ran as follows:

*“Bragster’s Christmas Club commences August 5th. Pay what you please and when you like. Fair value for your money, and no restriction as to the selection of goods. P.S — Be cautious which club you join, as it must be a sad disappointment to go with a fully paid-up card on Christmas Eve, and find the grocer’s shop shut up.”*²

A timely caution, as it seemed that often the members of these clubs could go along on Christmas Eve and find that their hard-earned cash could only be spent on certain items in the shop, like washing powder or shoe polish! Competing club organizers would try to outbid one another with incentive to join their particular club by offering a bribe of some description, like a bottle of wine on top.

There was a deal of secrecy about the whole business, as it seemed that poor mothers often kept their membership in a Christmas club a secret. There was actually a good reason for this, because in many instances had Dad known that there was money hidden in a kitty that could be redeemed at any time, the card would disappear along with the club money into the pocket of the local pub landlord.

One desperate women commented:

‘Last week.....we had not one penny coming into our house; and the week before — which was Christmas week — my husband got two jobs, which would come, he told me, to 8s. or 9s., if he had brought it all home; but he only brought me 1s. This was all the money I had to keep me and my five children for the whole week; and I’m sure I don’t know how we got through.’

² Odd People in Odd Places, by James Greenwood, [1883] - The Queen of “Clubs”

It is interesting to note that membership in a Christmas goose club played an important plot role in Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes story “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle” that first appeared in the January 1892 issue of Strand Magazine.

She went on to explain that only one shilling of the money came to her and the rest was spent by her husband at the pub, where he got blind drunk. Many a Christmas club fund ended up the same way.

Mothers resorted to hiding the cards in more and more ingenious places. One took to hiding it in the lining of her husband's hat, only to have the thing blow away in a strong wind and into the river, where she was so desperate to retrieve it, she jumped it after it. Needless to say an explanation had to be given, and we will probably never know if she actually got her goose or not.

It was also a fact that in the precarious times in which they lived, anything could happen between the beginning of August and Christmas. Sixpence or a shilling a week soon mounted up, and if the family fell on hard times – if Dad was out of work due to sickness or some other extra expense cropped up – then the money in the Christmas club would be the first thing to be sacrificed, in the hope that they could make it up later. Better a loaf on the table now than a goose on it at Christmas. Better times would be sure to come presently and then it would be easy enough to make the money up.

Christmas Eve was a time of celebration for the East Enders, who would invariably spend the evening in the pub. As most of the Goose and Pudding clubs were run from the local pub, it was a great excuse to go there and have a knees up, on the pretext that they were going to collect their geese. Most would eat while they were there. The food that was on offer was varied and plentiful and very cheap, although most were suffering from malnutrition due to lack

of real goodness in the fare in combination with the large quantity of alcohol that most consumed, which lowered the nutritional value of the food they took in, but on Christmas Eve, who cared?

Children were allowed in with their parents, and pub games such as dominoes, shove halfpenny, and skittles could be played as well as card games, mainly for money, although that too was illegal. Often they would play for matches, which represented a sum of money, and settle up at the end. There would be music most of the time, in one form or another, for people to have a sing along. Many of the old music-hall songs would do the rounds of the pubs and be known by everyone.

There is no question that the atmosphere in the pubs at the time was not the best environment for youngsters to be exposed to. Sexual foreplay, if not full blown sex, would take place in the pubs, albeit usually surreptitiously, but overt enough for the sharper of the youngsters to know what was going on. The language that freely flowed would have been really fairly grim for the most part, and arguments and fights were nightly occurrences; domestic violence wasn't confined to the home but would spill over into the pub and was accepted.

Many people would have spent Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and even Boxing Day in police cells. A typical case was reported by Charles Maurice Davies, 1875 - *Boxing-Day on the Streets*:

'A bruised and bleeding woman, not young or good-looking, enters the [witness] box with her head bound up. Her lord and master confronts her in the dock. It is the "old, old story". A drop of drink yesterday – the day of the Great Nativity, never forget – a series of "drops of drink" all day long; and, at five o'clock, just when gentility was beginning to think of dinner, the kitchen poker was used with frightful effect. A triangular cut over the right eye, and another in the dangerous neighbourhood of the left ear, administered with that symbol of domestic bliss, the kitchen poker, sends the wife doubled up into a corner, with an infant of two years old in her arms. The head of the family goes out for a walk after his exertions. The woman lies there bleeding until the neighbours hear her "mourning," as she terms it – the result being that the lord and master's "constitutional" is cut short by a policeman, and the happy pair are this morning separated for six months, at the expiration of which period Paterfamilias is to find surety for another six months' good behaviour. Such, starred round with endless episodes of "drunk and disorderly", "foul language", and so on, is our first tableau this Boxing Day. It is not a pleasant one.'



Charity being dispensed to the poor at Christmas



Christmas Day in the Workhouse

Still, by noon on Christmas Day most would have slept it off and be ready for something to eat.

There were, of course, many in the poorer areas of London that could not even afford the luxury of the Pudding Club, but would rely totally on the charity of the better-off for a meal on Christmas Day. There were social commentators at the time who were aware of the plight of those in the lowest stratum of society, mainly prompted by Charles Dickens' influence.

Provisions were made for those that couldn't afford any kind of Christmas dinner in their own homes. Halls, Churches and workhouses were opened up to the masses; tents would be set up where the destitute could come and have a Christmas dinner free of charge. They were invariably oversubscribed, and crowds of the poorest would stream through their doors to get a free meal. Signs would be put above the door painted in gigantic letters on a large white sheet:

"Welcome to the Christmas Feast" and underneath; "God loveth a cheerful giver."

Policemen would be marshalled to keep order and direct the grateful recipients into the tents or halls, where they could enjoy roast beef and plum pudding and a cup of tea, on their own plate or basin that they had taken along. This would continue from one in the afternoon until late in the evening, long streams of people snaking through continuously.

Whilst the lucky souls were eating, they were treated to a merry-faced orator on the platform at the end, praising the charity and virtue of those who had laid on the bounteous feast, and their exemplary display of Christian good will.

In 1888, the *East End News* wrote that there were an astonishing 108,000 paupers in London. Workhouses were set up all over Tower Hamlets – Poplar, Whitechapel, Mile End, Bethnal Green, Spitalfields and Ratcliff (Limehouse/Highway).

All had their institutions and the poor were set to work - and hard work it was. Families were torn apart, men housed separately from wives, children taken from their parents. It was a barbaric system, designed to keep the poor off the streets and keep them alive at subsistence level, although often the standard of living fell well below that.

The workhouses came into existence after the introduction of The Poor Law, which was designed so that the destitute would have the profound satisfaction of working for their daily crust in the marvellous institution known as The Workhouse. They were run by the charity of the wealthy, which not only had the welfare of the poor at heart, but were considerate of others who would no longer have to put up with the nuisance of stepping over the homeless on the street or the inconvenience of having them starve to death on their doorstep.



CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE WORKHOUSE.



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 tables,
For this is the hour they dine,
And the Guardians and their ladies,
Altho' the wind is east,
Have come in their furs and wrappers,
To watch their charges feast;

To smile and be condescending,
Put pudding on pauper plates,
To be hosts at the workhouse banquet
They've paid for with the rates.

By arrangement with G. R. Sims and Routledge & Son.

Popular postcard depicting the famous version of Christmas Day in the Workhouse by G R Sims

The general diet in the workhouse through the year varied from institution to institution; for example dinner, on alternate days, at Peckham, was officially “meat, potatoes and bread” and “soup and bread.” The soup was made from the liquid in which the meat for the whole establishment was boiled the previous day, together with all the bones, with the addition of barley, pease (green or yellow lentils), and green vegetables. The seventh day was “Irish stew and bread”. The quantity of meat used was not stated, although it is not hard to imagine that it hardly amounted to a generous portion of the parts that the animals didn’t even know they had.

Christmas Day, however, was different. For the most part, some effort was made to give the inmates some kind of festive cheer in the form of roast beef, Christmas pudding, and porter to wash it down with.

Journalist George R Sims wrote: ‘From one to half-past there is a little stream of visitors to the workhouses and certain charitable institutions, where Christmas is being celebrated by a dinner to the inmates. Fashionable philanthropy which has contributed to the good cheer passes a pleasant half-hour on Christmas Day in assisting the poor, the lonely, and the afflicted to share in the common joy.’ Of course on Boxing Day it was back to dishwater soup and bread again.

Christmas Day was treated much as a Sunday. London did not rise as early on Christmas morning and it would be close to ten o’ clock before there would be much sign of movement. Then, from Piccadilly to Whitechapel, the bells rang, and the people flocked to the churches for the Christmas service. Every shop was shut, as it would have been on a Sunday, but the streets were full of people, flocking to and fro and just wandering in the streets.

A full service took place in all the churches, which were gaily decorated with boughs of evergreen. Christmas carols were sung, and Christmas sermons preached, and Christian charity urged on behalf of the poor. People who are going to spend the day with friends in the suburbs or at some little distance began to make their way to the railway stations. Almost without exception each one carried a brown-paper parcel containing a Christmas gift for an Auntie Mabel or Uncle George. Buses and trams and cabs all ran in the mornings. Surprisingly enough, a great many young couples chose to have their wedding on Christmas Day throughout the whole of England, for the simple reason that they could be sure that the day would be a success and everyone would be in the mood to enjoy themselves. Also probably saved them a few bob.



The Christmas Tree

By the afternoon the streets would thin out and become quite deserted as people went to have their Christmas dinners.

Even those in poor homes, where there were cooking facilities, would make some sort of meal from the proceeds of their Goose and Pudding club.

Throughout the afternoon and evening a quiet would fall over the city – until midnight when suddenly the streets would fill again and the noise and merry-making would start up again with renewed vigour.

Boxing Day, the day consecrated to *baksheesh*, or money, was the day that most of the lower classes enjoyed the most, because it was the day they got their tips for the year. It is a day for “Christmas boxes”, hence the name ‘Boxing Day’. On that day every person who had served a household in any way would turn up on the doorstep, hat or box in hand, and say “Christmas box, please, sir !” and expect a gratuity for their hard work through the year.

The householder dare not refuse, unless he wanted a whole year of dust-men dropping litter down their path, papers being thrown in the mud, chimney sweeps littering their living rooms with soot, and the sausages being full of gristle. By the end of Boxing Day, the poor were a little richer and the rich not much poorer, and another Christmas was over.

One commentator of the period wrote:³

‘The quiet that reigns all the afternoon and evening throughout the city is effectually broken before midnight, by which time the streets are populous again with groups of well-dressed visitors returning to their homes, noisy with mirth or heavy with wine;

these reclining in cab or hackney, and those loudly chattering on the pavement, and beguiling the walk with jest or song. The rumble of wheels and the merry march of foot passengers continue for the best part of the night, and as they fade away into silence, Old Father Christmas vanishes in the morning mist.’

Really, looking back at those times, it’s hard not to draw parallels with today. It seems, in essence, that the traditional Victorian Christmas has not changed that much from Dickens’ time – the main difference being that people generally have more to spend and a longer time to spend and enjoy it in. There are still Christmas clubs offering the same terms as the old Goose and Pudding clubs, although of course it’s unlikely they have to roll a dice to see which turkey they get these days.

Signs still encourage children to blackmail their parents into buying them the latest toys, Christmas still brings in extra revenue for a great many people. Really, though, despite the grumbles and groans that most of us have about Christmas, would we really want it to be any different? For it to have remained so much a part of our lives and cultures for so many years, almost unchanged, then there really must be something to be said for a good old fashioned Christmas!

3 Curiosities of London Life, or Phases, Physiological and Social of the Great Metropolis, by Charles Manby Smith, 1853

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The Albermarle Manor Mystery

A Christmas Conundrum for Sherlock Holmes

By Don Souden

I have no need to consult my notebooks to recall it was in 1888 that my friend Sherlock Holmes and I spent Christmas as the guests of Lord Albermarle. Normally the most unsociable of men, Holmes had surprised me by unaccountably agreeing to spend the holiday with Albermarle, for whom Holmes had recovered a prize brood mare the previous summer. And so it was that we found ourselves on a train headed toward the Sussex countryside on the day before Christmas.

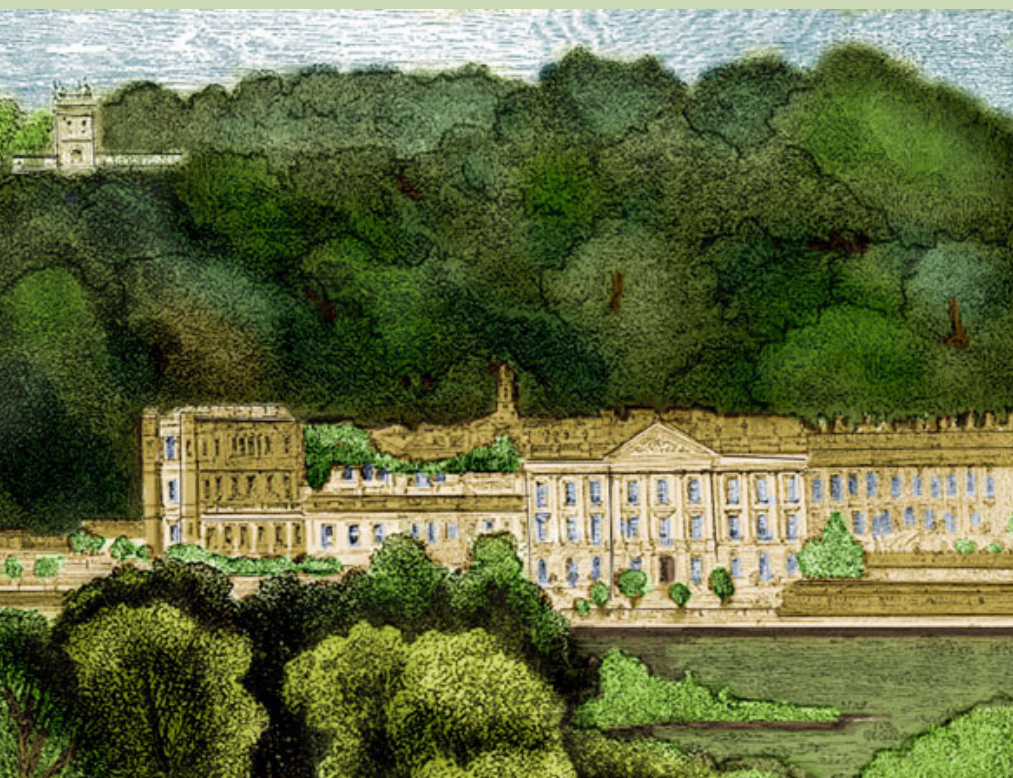
Holmes was certainly in a very festive mood during our rail journey and, again, this was a surprising departure from the norm. He entertained me with a thorough discussion of the holiday's history in England. He then launched into a long and, I suspect, not entirely serious lecture on the origins of our popular Christmas carols. It was only as the train approached the station that he grew more somber, staring intently at the countryside lanes. Still, he made a good show of seasonal joviality as we climbed into the waiting carriage for the trip to the manor house.

Those of us gathered for the occasion fully filled even the capacious Albermarle Manor and the occasion seemed to me more like a regimental reunion than a family affair. Of course, Albermarle's three sons and their families were in attendance as well as what seemed innumerable aunts, uncles, cousins and an otherwise rather distinguished collection of acquaintances. Indeed, there were so many under the one roof as to make proper introductions almost impossible.

Somehow, we all managed to sit down to a dinner so lavish as to make the most ostentatious of Oriental potentates positively emerald green with envy. Once dinner was finally finished there was an attempt at desultory conversation, but

we soon all went our own ways.

Albermarle Manor



Most of the guests, I suspect, had gone to find some quiet corner in which to rest and give their digestive systems a chance to work in comparative ease.

An abstemious eater (a habit learned only with difficulty in the army) I had also learned the value of moderate exercise after any large meal. Thus, I took it upon myself to explore as many of the winding passages of the house as propriety would allow when I suddenly heard laughter coming from a room whose door was only half-shut.

Opening the door carefully, I came upon the arresting scene of Holmes playing some game with several children. Often bored by the company of adults, Holmes has a natural affinity for young people and their ever-

changing enthusiasms. In this instance, he had a half-dozen or so children enraptured, most notably the 'Triplets.' Not actually siblings, they were three cousins, all about eight-years-old, and so inseparable as to have earned their collective nickname.

"Ah, Watson" said Holmes as he noticed me. "Do come in. We are just finishing a little game that tests the powers of observation and as soon as I have lost — which I assuredly shall — you and I may have a quiet little talk."

As if recognizing the cue, the children quickly brought the game to a conclusion. With a series of 'whoops' like a pack of Red Indians, they exited the chamber in a clamorous rush to leave Holmes and I alone.

"Watson," he said with a smile, "never play a game of mental agility with the young. The attics of their minds are still uncluttered with the square roots, grammatical rules, political theories and other impedimenta that fill ours. Thus, they see all and remember all."

"Still, I had a sense they were somewhat distracted and I suspect we are in for some mummery, as I am sure I heard those Triplets whispering about costuming. But, what else is Christmas for? And now, let us share a pipe or two."

We did sit for a while in silent serenity, but at length I ventured the thought that my friend must be finding himself chaffing to be back in the smoky warrens of London and all its crime and criminals.

"Not at all, Watson, not at all. What would you say if I told you that right here in the manor house with us is a forger, someone suspected of simony, another who most assuredly committed a murder that cannot be proved and at least two others whose business affairs are currently so perilous as to tempt a saint to sin?"

"My word Holmes, you must be joking. Why all those people with whom we just enjoyed Christmas dinner all seemed genuinely good and upright."

Holmes gave a dismissive laugh. "Gather together a fair sampling of our fellow folk, even — perhaps especially — of the good sort and you will find felons aplenty. Enough, I would wager, to fill an entire floor at Newgate prison.

"And that, my dear Watson, is the reason why, after learning of the guest list, that I accepted Albermarle's otherwise rather tedious invitation. Still, we may pray that we shall spend this holiday in quiet repose."

That was not to be, however. No sooner had Holmes given voice to his fervent hope that our holiday would be one of unrelieved quiet than we heard a distant but strident scream, followed by a clamor that grew rapidly in volume. Springing to action, Holmes and I sought the cause of all the excitement and soon found ourselves among an agitated group in the bedroom of Devereaux, one of Albermarle's sons.

Devereaux was off to one side of the chamber, comforting his near-hysterical wife, while commanding everyone's attention was the diminutive figure of Albermarle himself. He was issuing a series of orders to everyone indiscriminately until he finally became aware of Holmes's presence in the room.

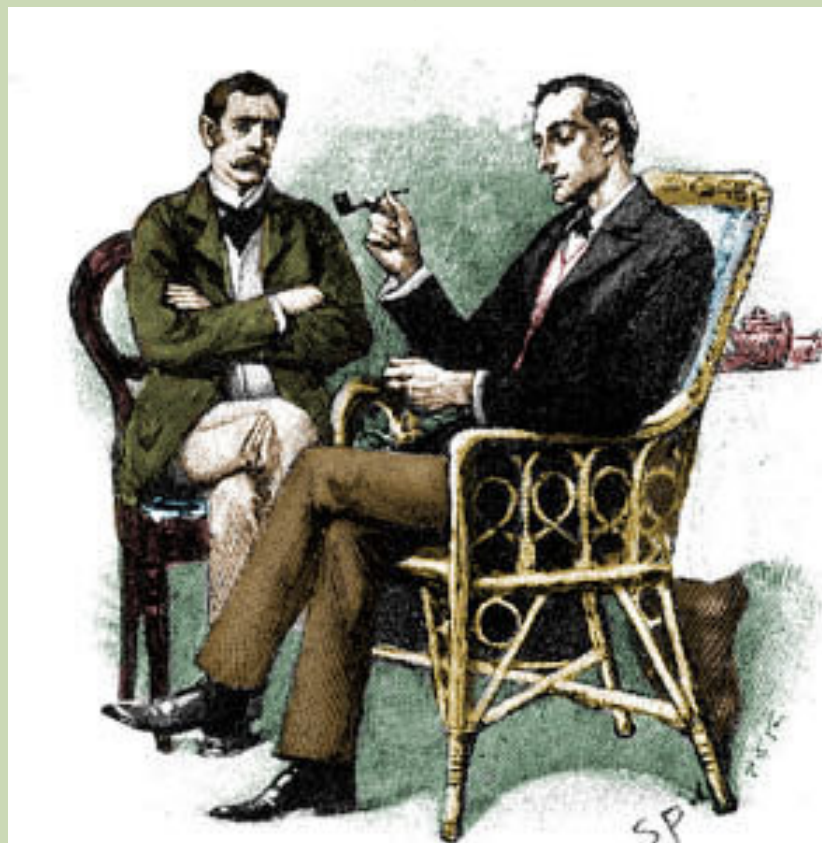
"Holmes," he began with a booming voice that belied his size, "fortunate indeed that you are here. I've already sent word to the Chief Constable, a good chap (fine stock to be sure) and all that, but not I would say your match, eh?"

"I certainly wouldn't want to interfere," was the languid reply from Holmes, "but as you say, I am here. Just what seems to be the trouble?"

"Trouble! Trouble?" stormed Devereaux, who by now had left his wife's side to stand with his father. "I'll tell you what the trouble is. My wife has had her ruby diadem stolen! Taken right from its case this very hour. It's worth a king's ransom and I'll gladly pay a quarter of that sum if you can get it back without harm."

Holmes gave a little bow and said simply "I am at your service. The diadem was removed, I surmise, from the case on the dressing table. If you should truly desire my assistance, I would ask that everyone please leave this room. Indeed, it would be most helpful if the other guests," and he gestured toward the throng clustered outside the door to the bedchamber, "would please check their own rooms and ascertain if they, too, are missing anything."

Holmes and I sat for a while in silent serenity . . .



The possibility that they might have been burglary victims as well caused the other guests to scatter quickly and Holmes and I were finally left quite alone. As I have seen him do so often, Holmes hastily but methodically made a series of observations. He checked the windows and doors, minutely examined the dressing table and its contents and then, crawling on all fours, he scrutinized the floor.

At length he stood, a look of some satisfaction on his face.

"Singular Watson, most singular. Yet also most instructive and not without parallel. I think there was something of this sort in Aberdeen not that long ago and even an instance in Leipzig earlier in the century."

Any further explication of the puzzling theft, however, was precluded by the sudden return of his lordship and Devereaux. Albermarle was most overcome with emotion and fairly staggered into the room, his visage both florid and congested.

"It is a conspiracy Holmes," Albermarle shouted. "A conspiracy aimed solely at my family! It seems that besides Devereaux, only the wives of my other sons, Clarence and Valentine, have been burgled."

"And what, pray tell, has been stolen?" asked Holmes, his quiet vocal tone providing a stark contrast to that of Albermarle.

"An ermine wrap, considerable quantities of gold jewelry, a brocaded something or other and several disparate decorative items — some of real value. My word, Holmes, this despicable crime must be solved and the thief run to ground before sunset."

"I quite agree," replied Holmes, his words still measured. "And, unpleasant as it may seem, I must begin by questioning everyone in your home."

"The help, of course," interjected Devereaux, "but surely not our guests."

"No, I mean to talk to everyone; staff, guests and family alike," was the terse reply from Holmes.

Both Albermarle and his son seemed quite prepared to protest this aspersion cast upon their family and friends. Any comments, however, went unvoiced because of the sudden appearance of Sanderson the butler.

"Excuse me, milord," he said with enough trace of a burr to suggest he had been born in the Scottish lowlands, "but cook says she must see you and Mr. Holmes at once."

"Good heavens, Sanderson," the near choleric Albermarle sputtered, "are you not aware of what has occurred? Half the family jewels are gone: We can't be bothered by some petty dispute in the scullery."

"Begging your pardon, milord," continued the visibly uncomfortable Sanderson, "but I do believe that what cook has to impart may be of great importance regarding the theft."

With a gesture of resignation, Albermarle said: "All right, if we must. Come along Holmes, Devereaux, Dr. Watson. If it will help to bring this outrage to a conclusion then we shall go and find what is so important in the kitchen."

I must begin by questioning everyone in your home," said Holmes



The cook, a woman of more than ample size and personality, was clearly not to be intimidated by her master — or anyone else — when things were awry in her realm. With the smallest acknowledgment of our presence, she launched into a litany of grievances.

"Aiiiiiie! The puddin's gone, the sweetmeats and half the cold collations for the tea. Just snatched away like milady's jewels and like as not by the same 'uns. It's them Gypsies in the stable that done it. Strike me, it was!"

"Gypsies!!!" cried Albermarle and Devereaux in unison.

"Aye, him and his sick wife, so he was claimin; at least," explained the cook with a sniff of disdain. "They comes by yesterday and that witless stable lad, Beveridge, he took pity on 'em. Said they could stay, it bein' so cold and Christmas and all. Now they's stole us out, upstairs and down."

"Gypsies!!" Albermarle cried anew. "By thunder, I'll have Beveridge turned out for his impertinence. Hurry Devereaux, we must sound the alarm and have the countryside scoured for those Gypsy devils, though they're probably miles away in another county by now. Dash!"

"No, milord, they're not," came a thin, almost whispering voice, and a little kitchen maid who'd been cowering in a corner inched herself forward. "Them has a baby and them's still here in stable."

Holmes, who had been silent until this moment, quickly turned his attention to the wee wisp of a girl.

"How, my dear, are you so sure?"

"Ah, them Triplets told me and . . . and I went and see'd meself."

"Tell me," Holmes asked with keen interest, "was the Gypsy man uncommonly tall, but no moustache and one eye-brow torn and mostly missing?"

"Aye, sir, you see'd 'em too, I reckon."

Holmes clapped his hands with satisfaction. "Capital, indeed capital. I think the odds have suddenly but surely shortened in our favor. Your lordship, if you would come with me to this stable I am confident we can recover most of the missing items, save perhaps the food."

"Wait, and I shall get a gun," was the cry from Devereaux, but Holmes cut him short.

"That will not be necessary. The four of us will be men enough for the thieves. But, I implore you, do only as I bid."

Wrapped in heavy coats and mufflers — Holmes in the lead — the four of us were soon striding purposefully from the manor house proper to the stabling yard. We moved in silence, our breath making hoary balloons in the chill air, but as we approached the barn where the Gypsy cart stood Holmes bade us to stop.

He then went quietly to a window and looked inside. Nodding first to himself, he motioned for us to come forward, a finger at his lips urging silence upon us. One by one, we crept to the window and took a look at the scene within.

When it was my turn, I looked inside and beheld the Gypsy couple, eating heartily of the pudding and other missing food, while their infant child slept in a small basket. Gathered round them were the Triplets, garbed in a motley that included the ruby diadem, ermine stole, glittering jewelry and all the other items missing from the house — all serving to better encostume these latter-day Three Magi bringing gifts to a newly born child in a stable on Christmas Day.

"Blasphemy!" hissed Albermarle, but Devereaux laid a warning hand on his father's shoulder.

"No, just a rather touching tableau; they shall, of course, have to answer — the three of them — for taking what they did without asking but there is time enough for that."

Holmes tugged at my arm and pulled me away from the stable. As he did, he whispered "Come, Watson, let us take an invigorating winter's walk while fathers and sons sort out their affairs."

Once we were far enough away not to be heard, I eagerly asked Holmes how he had so easily solved the little puzzle.

"Observation and deduction Watson, nothing more. It seemed readily apparent that there had been no forced entry of the bedroom I examined: whoever had taken the diadem had come from inside the house. Moreover, from certain footmarks, it was clear this person was quite small."

"Then, when I learned that only the three mothers of those seeming Siamese triplets had lost anything — and you will remember I suspected they were planning some costumed charade — a hypothesis quickly presented itself. And all the more because the boys were nowhere to be found amidst a hue and cry most young lads crave with fervor."

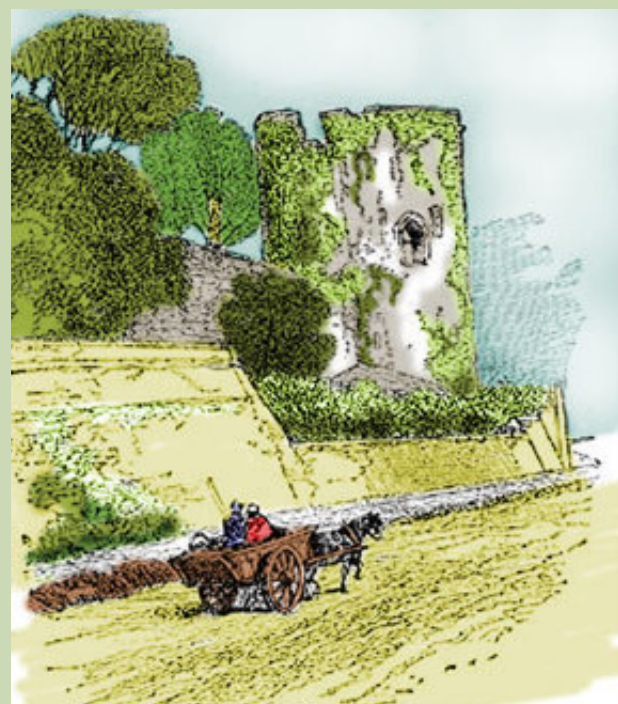
"Then," I asked, "that interview with the cook and asking the little maid what the Gypsy looked like, that was only play-acting on your part?"

"To the contrary Watson! The missing food made my theory ever more tenable and when the kitchen maid satisfied me that the Gypsy couple I had seen on the road as we came into the rail station — the female of the pair giving sign that an addition to the family was nearly at hand — were the same as the two in the stable. Well, then it was certain this child had just been born and with the story of the first Christmas well in their heads it was overwhelmingly likely that the Triplets were staging as realistic a holiday pageant as possible."

"Yes, Holmes, it all seems quite clear now — and all rather petty and insignificant after all."

"Insignificant?" cried Holmes as he clapped me on the back. "My dear Watson, if there is to be crime on Christmas Day, then I would heartily endorse a notion that this was the very model of the perfect Christmas crime."

The Gypsy couple



CHRIS SCOTT'S

Press Trawl

LIFE IN WHITECHAPEL

Washington Post

25 December 1904

PAY PENNY TO SIT UP

Wretched Life of Aged Women in Poorest London

PENILESS MEN FARE BETTER

Poverty stricken humanity is at home in the English metropolis.

American cities have their slums, but in London the poor are in greater number, and somehow or other they seem to be more resigned to their wretched condition.

The poor have been very much pauperized in England. Mistaken philanthropy has done so much for the thriftless and the dissipated that meritorious, hard working poverty has difficulty in keeping out of the ranks of the unemployable.

During the summer months a favorite resort of these houseless and homeless wretches is on what is called the "Embankment." It is a stretch of land immediately facing the River Thames, on the north side of London, and runs for a distance of about a mile and a half.

All along this section of the city benches are placed, supposedly for the accommodation of decent citizens, but these benches have been pre-empted by members of the tramp persuasion. Now no one will sit on them who values cleanliness of person.

Every day water carts employed by the city come along and drench these benches with prophylactic fluid in order that public health may be preserved.

As you walk along the Embankment at night you see men, women, and sometimes little children huddled together in the cold. It is the province of the London police to keep these people "moving on" like poor Joe. The tired wayfarer

Sleeping rough



does not have a chance to sleep more than half an hour at a time on the benches at night, and the poor wretches are kept moving up and down the Embankment from one bench to another between the Houses of Parliament and Blackfriar's Bridge.

"It's good for their circulation," the policeman will tell you if you ask him why he moves them on.

"They would sit there all night and most of the next day if we let 'em. But our instructions are to keep 'em goin', and we do it rather well."

Afraid to Go to the Workhouse

If London had no refuge such as the workhouse

and other charitable institutions, where these people could obtain food and clean shelter, including nice beds and bathing facilities, there would perhaps be no excuse for the apparent brutality of the police. All these people would have to do in exchange for shelter and food would be a little work such as cleaning windows or picking oakum, and for the women washing in the laundries connected with these institutions. However, most of these people seem to be like the tramp who preferred to wear his hair matted, and they do not go into the workhouse, not because they would have to put up with hardships, but for the reason that they would have to do a little work.

At the same time, no one can witness the condition of some of these people without feeling that there is a great deal of suffering among them. When you see a woman with two or three little children who has been deserted by her husband and put out of a squalid room for lack of a few pennies' rent, suffering in the cold under one of the arches of London Bridge, you cannot help but feel that there is something terrible in her condition.

If you ask her why it is she does not go to the workhouse, she gathers her children close about her and says:

"They would take these little ones away from me."

It is true that children are taken away from their mothers when they go into the workhouse, because the parents are required to do a certain amount of work, while the children are given new clothes and have to go to kindergarten or other schools connected with the institution.

Ignorant mothers whose only pleasure is the company of their children, however miserable the latter may be, cannot bear the thought of being separated. It is their only pleasure, and life seems void indeed without the little ones. The crass ignorance of these poor women makes them stand in the light of their own children for the sake of a little interested affection.

And so these women expose their children to the fogs and damp and chilling winds along the riverside, until they are finally prosecuted by the S.P.C.C. for exposing children to illness.



A typical slum dwelling in Whitechapel and Spitalfields

Refuges for the Very Poor

There are a few places in London, however, where women with children can receive shelter on payment of the extremely small sum of four cents. These shelters are at various places about London, and even the poorest are enabled to take advantage of them.

Selling shoe laces, collar buttons, and matches on the street will bring in usually 25 cents or more a day, and a woman with her baby in her arms can often make 50 cents - a truly regal sum. By an outlay of four cents for a "shake down" she has the rest of the money for food, and the purchase of a new stock of matches, &c., for the next day.

Inside these shelters for the poor the conditions are unique. In the women's dormitories you do not see beds, but coffinlike places on the floor. Indeed, they are called "coffin bunks." They are about six feet long by two feet and a half wide. Economy of space is absolutely necessary, as the places are terribly overcrowded. The covering of these miserable floor beds consists of a mattress one inch thick, filled with seaweed.

In lieu of blankets and eiderdown quilts, the poor woman has for covering a length of what is known as "American cloth," a species of oilcloth which has a wonderful affinity for the skin and sticks to it like the proverbial sheepskin and beeswax plaster. In order to prevent American cloth from sticking to their skins, the poor usually provide themselves with pieces of newspaper which they put over their arms and faces.

The method of retiring is extremely simple. With the women it consists in merely taking off their hats and shoes. Their clothes, as a rule, are of the one garment variety, and would not permit of much undressing. The oilcloth covering is said



Picking oakum in the workhouse

to be quite warm, as it does not permit of any radiation of heat, and is almost the same as covering oneself with rubber.

Curious Beds for Families

Sometimes very pathetic sights are witnessed in these shelters; women with little babies in their arms and four or five children tagging after them, will apply for shelter, and not infrequently have to be turned away for lack of room. There are some bunks, however, built in tiers for the special accommodation of families, where there are more than four people.

A woman with four children can get two beds for herself, one placed above the other. The larger children are placed in the top bed, while the woman manages to accommodate herself with the other two

in the lower compartment. These beds in tiers are somewhat more comfortable than those placed directly in the floor; they have springs, another advantage being that they are not directly on the floor, where drafts and, occasionally, rats can reach them.

Strange to relate, it is not always the desperately poor who frequent these places - especially the women shelters. There are often women who work in the markets who find the public shelters more handy than they would a room. They have to pay only 4 cents a night, and if they come regularly enough their bunk is reserved for them. There are ten or twelve old women who have been living at a shelter in Dorset street for upwards of eight years, occupying the same bunks all the time.

The bunks in these shelters are cleaned out every day and thoroughly scrubbed with permanganate of potash, which is very effective for disposing of what is termed "live stock."

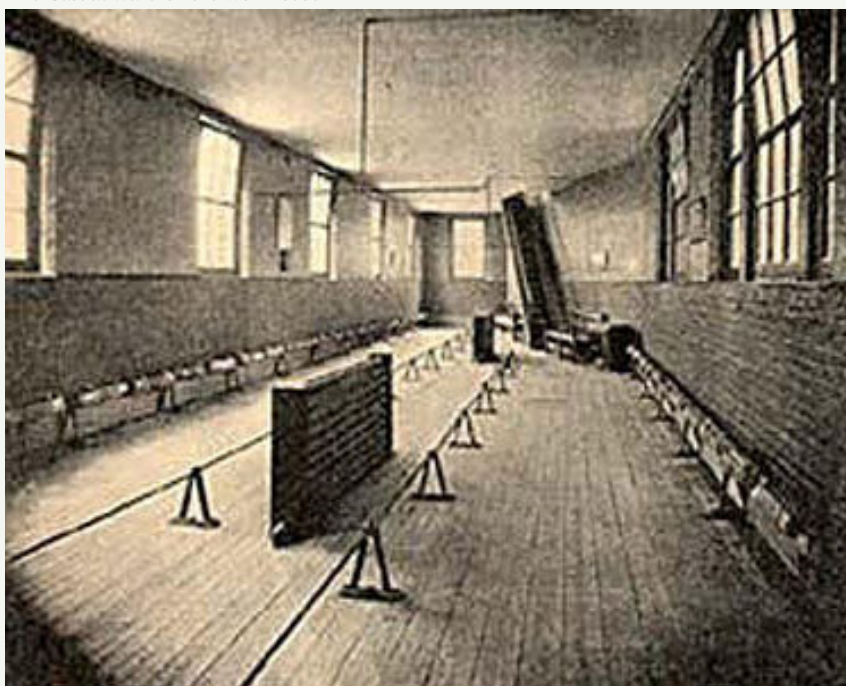
It is difficult to imagine a condition of life more desperately hard up than the one here mentioned, but nevertheless a worse state exists in London. There are many women who cannot afford even the four cents for the floor "shake down." The extent of their financial wealth every night does not amount to more than two cents.

Of course, they cannot put in an application for a four cent bed on a two cent financial status. At the same time, however, they can regale themselves with the privilege of what is called the "penny sit up." The supreme advantage of the penny sit up is the fact that it provides you with a roof over your head for the night. Other comforts there are none.

The Penny Sit Up

The penny sit up is a large room in which are placed a number of pewlike benches, similar to those seen

The Casual Ward of the workhouse



in country churches. There are no cushions on these benches, and the occupants cannot lie down during the whole night for the reason that they sit up as usually so well patronized that there is not room for a reclining posture. It is a rather sad sight to see 150 or 200 women sitting up all night.

They do not exactly sit up, either. They fall up against each other in various attitudes. Many of these women are quite old, and not a few of them have passed the Biblical three score and ten years. Poverty has been their companion from infancy. The penny sit up seems a poor resting place for old bones.

There are no absolutely free women shelters in London except the workhouse. Women will not go to the workhouse if they can possibly avoid it. It is the last resort, although the workhouse is really a charming place. This is not an exaggerated statement. In the workhouse the cleanest kind of beds are provided, nice warm baths, plenty of good food, clean clothes, and every comfort.

People who have made a study of this curious phase of existence say that the reason people will not go to the workhouse is because they cannot get beer with the little surplus change that they might happen to scrape together now and then, whereas "outside" they can often indulge in the cup that cheers and also inebriates.

Men Tramps in Clover

Men tramps in London are really better looked after than women. There are several places where a man can get free food and shelter without paying a cent. One of these is called Medland Hall, and it is in the Whitechapel district near the docks. Every afternoon at 5 o'clock, if you are passing Medland Hall, you will see a long line of men leaning up against the fences waiting until the doors are opened. On the outside of Medland Hall is a sign announcing that 842 men will be accommodated each night and fed for nothing. Medland Hall is always crowded to overflowing, and sometimes workless men and worthless ones will stand outside from 8 o'clock in the morning, waiting all day for the doors to be opened.

As you go into Medland Hall you pass a little window, from which a hand extends giving you nearly half a loaf of bread covered with marmalade or butter. It is good butter, good bread, and good marmalade. Passing into a room, you are provided with a tin cup. Taking your cup, you go to another window and pass the cup in. It is returned to you filled with a pint and a half of alleged tea; or, as some men call it, "water bewitched." It is hot, and, combined with the bread, forms a very filling meal. The men are allowed to sit around and talk or smoke until about 9 o'clock, when the lights are lowered and every one is supposed to retire.

Medland Hall has about 300 bunks placed on the floors. There are three floors in the building, connected together by double stairways, and every floor is occupied to its fullest capacity each night.

The usual custom with reference to retiring for the night at Medland Hall consists of the men taking off nearly all their clothes and depositing them under the wad of oilcloth which stands for the pillow.

The same system of covering with oilcloth and sleeping on seaweed mattresses is followed out here, as in the other shelters.

Free Food and Shelter

One of the peculiar features of Medland Hall is the fact that a man can go there for a week or two weeks at a time. Some of them put in three or four months at Medland Hall and do not pay one cent.

Of course, there are a good many deserving men among these people who cannot find work, although they make every effort to do so. The regular fixtures at Medland Hall have an anchor stamped on their tickets, which is a rather mild way of suggesting that they are anchored to the place. Very often the persons in charge of Medland Hall find work for the men, and it has become in recent years a species of employment agency.

There is one little difficulty about Medland Hall, and that is the fact that you only get a meal each night. There is no breakfast for the men, and if they are absolutely penniless, as is often the case, they are turned out in the street the next morning without food, and some of them go all day until they get their next allowance of bread at 6 o'clock in the evening. It was stated some time ago that a great many men went to Medland Hall just because it was free and not because they were penniless, but an investigation was conducted one night after the men had all retired by a num-

ber of detectives and policemen to see if these men actually had any money. Out of 342 men sleeping in the place, the total amount of money netted by the police officers searching the men's clothes was \$2.28, which, divided by 342, does not leave very much of a fortune per head.

There are a lot of places in London, however, where people can get free breakfasts. One of these is the Black Friar shelter, where breakfasts are given out to people who hold tickets. These tickets are distributed every night by regularly appointed inspectors, who go about the streets and give them to every person who seems really destitute, or is found sleeping on the embankment without a penny to but a cup of coffee or a piece of bread.

Purchasing Power of a Penny



A farthing breakfast queue in Hanbury Street - 1880

It is truly wonderful the amount of food that a penny will buy in London in the poor districts. At a lot of places you can get for 2 cents a pint and a half of tea or coffee and a slice of bread weighing six ounces. This bread is covered with butter, or marmalade, as the case may be, and is really quite a substantial meal. A man can keep his soul (if he has one) and body together in London on 6 cents a day for meals and 4 cents a day for his lodging - a condition which competes very favorably with the American free lunch system, which necessitates the preliminary expenditure of 5 cents for a glass of beer, which only adds to the gnawing hunger when it comes on again, and requires a further investment for more beer.

Altogether, the state of the London tramp is a very happy one. Strange to say, many American tramps have emigrated to London within the last five years, and out of 2,000 visitors recorded at Medland Hall in 1904, 1,100 of them were American citizens.

Sunday Call (San Francisco)

30 September 1900

Glimpse at the Slums of London

I have seen a small part of the slums of London and now all other poverty, all other misery that my eyes have ever beheld become joyous and radiant in comparison. I think of the poor in Ireland, huddled indiscriminately into black, dreary shanties with the cow and the pig and the chickens, and something akin to comfort possesses me. After all, there are companionship and love and sympathy in this miscellaneous jumble; there is a suggestion of comfort in the grunt of the pig; there is warmth in the breath of the cow. And besides, there is a possible pride, a sense of ownership conveyed by the possession of the cow and the pig that is not by any means to be despised. But better than all, peer into the blackest of Irish shanties and you will find a crucifix, a few holy pictures and a statue of the Virgin Mary. Faith and hope and love abide in the dreariest of Irish hovels and who shall say that the man has missed his share of human joy to whom these things have been given? I think of the poor in Italy, limping, whining, pursuing every stranger, snatching at pocketbooks and revealing every sort of self-inflicted deformity, yet today their life seems to me not without its ray of sunshine. Under Italian skies there is always beauty to behold and like the Irish the poor of Italy find an infinite solace in their religion. Nay, more, they find therein an ecstasy. At the feet of bespangled virgins their sorrows are forgotten; in the burning of a candle untold realms are theirs. They will pick your pocket just the same, in spite of their lively faith in the Divine Bambino, in spite of their ardor for the toe of Saint Peter, but no matter. It is at least the emotional, the poetic side of life that is predominant among them; the spiritual thing is uppermost, the brute is subordinate.



A contemporary illustration portraying the terrible conditions in the common doss house

But the poor of London - God pity them - have none of that effervescence to modify their dull, cold brutality. The Anglo Saxon lack of emotion may be a sterling character in certain respectable classes, but in the slums it renders life a stupor, devoid of sensation, except the purely animal cravings. In America, we do not quite understand the Salvation Army, perhaps we do not quite need it. We have enough of Latin and Irish blood in our veins to render an awakening possible without a drum or a tambourine. It is only in London that the Salvation Army may really be appreciated. Here it loses its eccentric aspect and climbs at once in one's estimation to a work of astounding genius. For the men and women that one sees in the slums of London are not the picturesque poor to whom it is so easy to be awakened to pity. They do not tell you tales of numerous children and sick husbands, nor do they take the pains to reveal the stumps of arms and legs and expatiate upon their misfortunes.

They are simply blouzy, bleary eyed, swollen, drunken in many cases, almost inanimate brutes. The numerous chil-

dren and the sick husbands and wives do not worry them. To lie on the sidewalk of the ground, anywhere, drunken, filthy, covered with flies and vermin, is the paradise of the Whitechapel inhabitant, man or woman.

How to reach this class of humanity, as low in the order of intelligence as the jellyfish or the crab, yet supposed to have a soul, had long been the despair of reformers, when the Salvation Army appeared with its drums and tambourines, its gimcracks and fireworks. It thumped a refrain into the ear of a sot and made him look up. This in itself was a great triumph, it was really the key to the situation. The sot's attention had been obtained, for one brief moment, the brass drum had accomplished what science and eloquence had attempted in vain, and the Salvation Army flourished. That it has need yet awhile to sigh for new worlds to conquer is very palpable in this part of London. The work that it does is inch by inch; it is almost discouragingly slow. The slums are really much better than they used to be before the days of the Salvation Army, every one will tell you. But here my imagination stops. It refuses to depict what they used to be. A worse condition than exists at present does not seem within the range of possibilities.

We planned our trip to Whitechapel for Sunday morning, for, consistent in its lawlessness, Whitechapel refuses to observe the Sabbath, and Sunday is the busy day. It is the market day and the most interesting to the sightseer. A respectable London shop could not keep open in Sunday were it so disposed. It would soon be closed by the police, for London is rigid in its Sunday law. But at Whitechapel the police are powerless. Long ago it was discovered that this side of London must simply be winked at by the law. It would hardly be practicable to put a million people in jail, and even were there no question of the feasibility of this plan it would be doubtful as a discipline, for jail to many of these Whitechapel people is a luxury. It means something to eat and a place to sleep; in winter it means protection from the cold. In visiting Whitechapel you must take your own chance; every one will tell you that the police can offer you little or no protection.

My escort in this expedition was a university professor who happens to be six feet two and rather illustrative in appearance of the athletic side of university life. He agreed to take me to Whitechapel on two conditions - that I render myself as threadbare as possible for the occasion, and that I leave the kodak at home. The first condition was accepted without demurrer; for the second I begged the privilege of submitting a brief or two and of arguing the case in full. Nay, more; I even demanded a jury, for I did not want to leave the kodak at home.

The jury, consisting of several acquaintances versed in London ways, agreed with the professor. It would never do to take a kodak to Whitechapel, The thieves and crooks that abound in this region might suspect us of being detectives and make things every disagreeable. Thus overcome, there was nothing to do but to submit, although I still had hopes



Inmates in the Whitechapel infirmary

of having things my way. With shabby gloves and my very oldest outfit I presented myself before the professor on that Sunday morning.

"How do I look?" I asked him as he scrutinized me critically.

"Much too respectable," he answered discouragingly. "You're not a bit Whitechapely."

"Well, neither are you," I retorted, for the professor was absolutely picturesque in the garb that he had affected. With a slouch hat, a low collar and a floating necktie he looked like the hero of a Saturday afternoon melodrama.

"Pull your hat ever you eyes," I suggested, "and you may at least pass for the polished villain. Perhaps they will forgive the polish in Whitechapel for the sake of the villainy."

As we started out I made a last appeal for the kodak. "Please let me take it. I am sure that your six feet of manhood will be able to protect me."

"Probably," said the professor dryly, "but you seem to forget that I shall have future use for this six feet of manhood." Then he began one of his characteristically tirades against womankind in general. For the professor is an avowed woman hater and to accuse us of our sex is the most available way known to him of venting his spite. He never had seen a woman who could keep an agreement - they always broke their word at the last minute; they were absolutely unreliable and so on through the list of woman hating invectives.

For my own part I find "woman haters" the most delightful people on earth. They relieve us of all personal responsibility. We may dump the blame for all of our caprices on to our poor old sex and do what we please. Having been assured that he had never expected me to keep my part of the contract I went in search of the kodak.

We took the train at Bloomsbury marked Whitechapel and were thus plunged at once into the slums. The tramway itself was a bit of the slums on wheels. As all the places on top were taken, we were forced to go inside, an experience that should have gratified for evermore the most ambitious "slummer." I had my choice of two places, one next to an old woman peacefully sleeping away a "jag" with a basket of fish on her lap; the other by the side of a bleary eyed individual who was devouring a most unsavory mess of strong cheese. To make a selfish selection between these two possibilities would have been difficult. I didn't try it, but sank at random next to the fish woman, leaving the cheesy corner to the professor. In a few moments the aged woman began to nod my way and to adjust her basket at an angle favorable to dumping its contents in my lap. I tried to look unconscious and not to reveal the seasickness that soon began to possess me, for the lesson had been well taught me that the slightest display of disgust might lead to very disastrous consequences. I realized the danger full well, yet now I felt that I should shriek should one of those clammy dead fish tumble out upon me. The fish were smelling to heaven most persistently, for many days had flown since they sported free of care neath crystal waves. My neighbor on the other side looked like a pickpocket. In fact, the

Second hand clothes sellers





Petticoat Lane market

more I looked at him the more convinced I became that such was his profession; but no matter. I

huddled as close to him as possible, for anything was preferable to the fish basket. In the midst of this dilemma what should I discover sauntering slowly up the seam of the pickpocket's trousers but a most healthy looking bug. The proverbial situation of being between the devil and the deep sea was nowhere compared to my position. I simply couldn't stand it. I nodded to the professor, who was looking rather pale himself around the mouth, and suggested that we get out. He understood out we went, although miles away from our

destination.

"You are a great one to go slumming," he laughed, when we were once again in the street.

"I think I should have stood it for half an hour after starting out so bravely. I suppose you want to go back?"

"No, I don't want to go back, but I must confess that prefer the slums at a respectful distance. I don't want them in my lap nor crawling all over me. Let's take a cab till we arrive within walking distance of the markets."

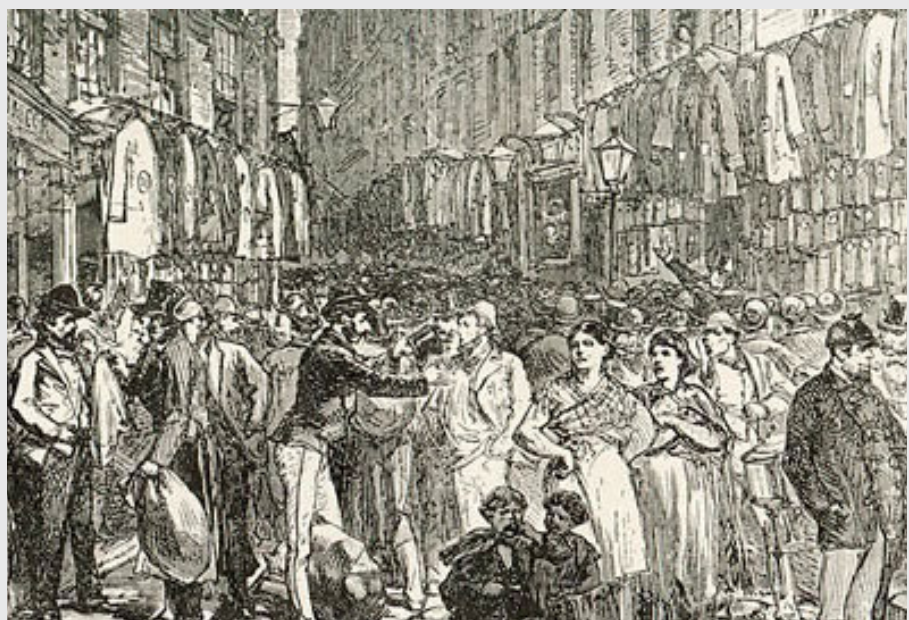
"A cab," said the professor in his most cynical fashion. "Well, you are a woman if ever one existed. You start out prepared for any kind of horror and in twenty minutes you are looking for a cab. Now, there aren't any cabs in Whitechapel and even if there were it wouldn't be at all safe to ride in one. It would probably be smashed to pieces in very short order. It is one of two things - take a tramway such as we have just left or walk."

"Excuse me from any more trams on this said," I protested. "Let's walk."

We were really not so far from the great slum center as we had imagined. In twenty minutes we arrived at Middlesex street, formerly known as Petticoat lane, a corner that is unique and famous throughout the world. It is the region of old clothes in the most inconceivable abundance. Old boots and shoes were piled in pyramids or banked against improvised walls all the length of the street. Old coats, old hats and bonnets, men's and women's; faded old cotton frocks, probably the cast off of servants, were displayed in proud array. The sellers of these wares were mostly Jews, oily, slimy, obnoxious looking individuals with huge noses, elaborate watch chains and dirty hands. The cheapness of their wares can hardly be imagined, it being possible to buy a complete outfit, shoes included, for less than a shilling. And the buyers, poor things, I think I shall see them forever. Women with pallid faces, half defiant and half death-like in their expression, lingered enviously over paste diamonds and make believe turquoise. Loud mouthed old termagants shook their fists in the faces of the Jews and haggled over the difference of a ha'penny in the price of cotton frocks.

Old men with moist eyes and red noses and hands with crinkled skin and black nails blinked their way along from one shop to the other, probably with a penny to spend and looking ardously for the best bargain. Children, pale

A Whitechapel market on a Sunday morning



faced and starved, poor little pickpockets, 10 or 12 years of age, stood about in numbers awaiting their chances to steal. To grab something at one end of the street and run to the other and sell it is the popular trick. Every one knows that the thing is stolen, but the sympathy of Whitechapel is always with the thief. He has a better chance to sell his wares than the merchant. Whether this sympathy be in the atmosphere of Whitechapel I know not, but at any rate I felt myself catching it. This white faced, big eyed urchin, with wrinkles around his eyes and lines about his mouth like a man of 50, was the thief; this greasy, nosey, lippy Jew was the merchant. Pernicious though it may have been, my heart welled over for the little thief and I wished him godspeed in his maneuvers. Most of these youngsters boast the proud distinction of being "known to the police," the only distinction, by the way, that is at all available to the ambitious resident of Whitechapel.

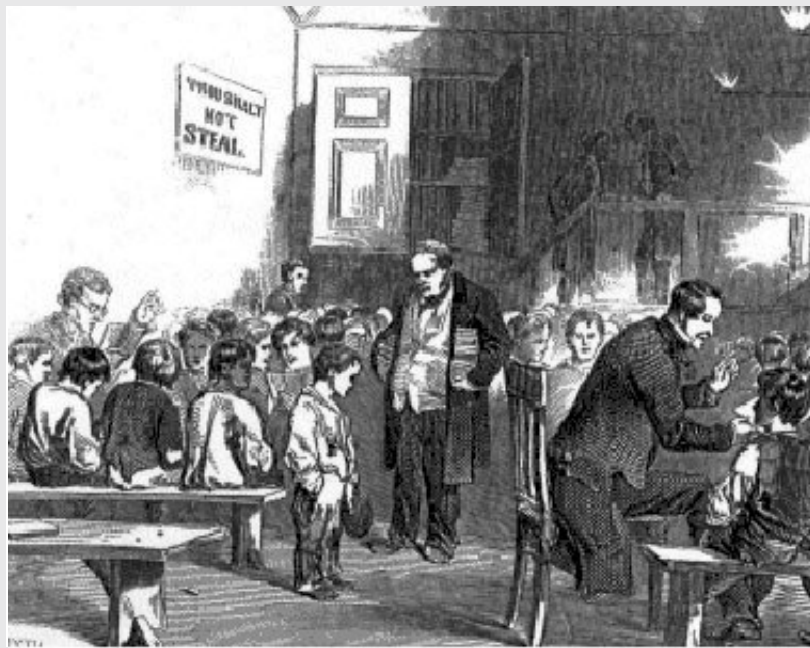
Almost as soon as they can walk or talk they are put on the list as the "companions of thieves," as if they could choose their companions, poor little wretches. In all of this jumble cursing and swearing and the foulest kind of language made the day hideous. Although in the morning hours drunkards were everywhere apparent, asleep on the sidewalks or staggering through the streets. Puny, scabby babies, loathsome little victims of filth and disease, clung to the breasts of insensible, drunken mothers.

In this same street is a public house that has been famous for centuries as the rendezvous of beggars. Here at night the lame man throws away his crutch and the blind man sees and high carnival is held after a day's successful imposition. Here, also, he who is sufficiently ambitious may enjoy the real privilege of meeting a real live burglar, not in the dark with a mask and a lantern, but socially. He may smoke a pipe with him and listen to tales of his daring deeds. For the burglar to the people of Whitechapel is a "jolly good fellow," although a little condescending in his way toward the petty thieves and pickpockets with which he is surrounded.

We wended our way through several streets of this sort, past the markets where old meat and vegetables cast off by the city establishments are sold to this starving population to whom anything is acceptable that holds their wretched bodies and souls together. I meant to take a number of pictures in spite of the professor, but I had not the heart, to say nothing of the courage, to turn the kodak on their misery. The few snaps that I was able to obtain were in the more decent corners.

We returned by a different route, past the Bank of England and Saint Paul's Cathedral. The service at Saint Paul's was just over and the people were pouring out - that wonderfully well dressed, top hatted, long coated English crowd, the most respectable and genteel in appearance, perhaps, that you will find on earth. We looked in silence, each of us impressed with the greatness and the suddenness of the contrast.

"On our side of the water we have a theory that we take quite seriously," I said at last to the professor, "that all men are born equal."



A ragged school where itinerant pickpockets and child thieves were encouraged to reform

All the news that's fit to print...

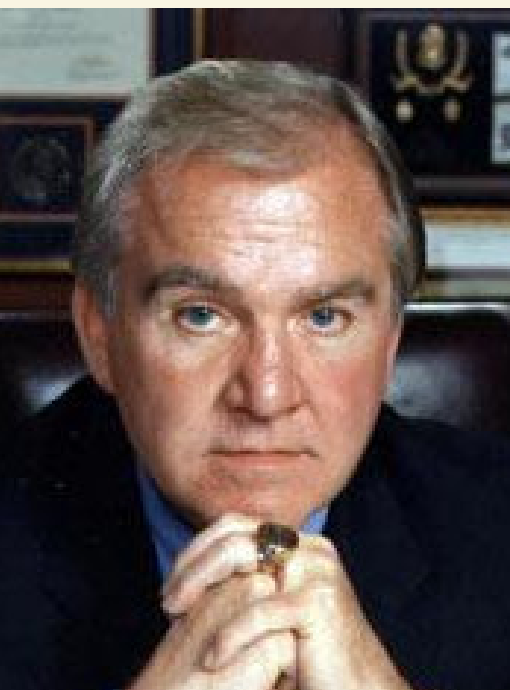
I Beg to Report

PROFILERS CRITICISED. Profiling continues to be a controversial topic among Ripperologists, with some students of the case believing it has no place in the study of a Victorian murderer, and others feeling that profilers do indeed have something relevant to say in the ongoing (although perhaps in vain!) hunt for the Whitechapel murderer. Former Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) profiler John Douglas is famous for his 1988 profile that fingered an East-End-residing individual such as Aaron Kosminski as the likely murderer. A pdf file of Douglas's profile of Jack the Ripper can be downloaded from the FBI's site foia.fbi.gov/jacktheripper/jacktheripper.pdf

As if in support of those who are dubious of what profilers 'do', the science of profiling came in for some harsh criticism from writer Malcolm Gladwell, author of *Blink*, in the article 'Dept. of Criminology: Dangerous Minds: Profiling Made Easy' in the *New Yorker* magazine of 12 November www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/11/12/071112fa_fact_gladwell Gladwell accused profilers of a 'smoke and mirrors' approach to criminology in which practitioners of profiling position themselves with analyses that attempt to cover all bases. Thus once a suspect is caught they can claim some aspect of their analysis was correct.

Gladwell noted, 'In the case of Derrick Todd Lee, the Baton Rouge serial killer, the FBI profile described the offender as a white male blue-collar worker, between twenty-five and thirty-five years old' - but the killer turned out to be black and in other important respects different from the man the profilers predicted would be the murderer. For example, the profile stated that the killer would have a low level of sophistication in interacting with women, 'especially women who are above him in

John Douglas



the social strata' and that his contacts with women would be 'awkward.' Gladwell wrote, 'The FBI was right about the killer being a blue-collar male between twenty-five and thirty-five. But Lee turned out to be charming and outgoing, the sort to put on a cowboy hat and snakeskin boots and head for the bars. He was an extrovert with a number of girlfriends and a reputation as a ladies' man.'

Gladwell added, 'A profile isn't a test, where you pass if you get most of the answers right. It's a portrait, and all the details have to cohere in some way if the image is to be helpful. . . . There is a deeper problem with FBI profiling. Douglas and [Robert] Ressler didn't interview a representative sample of serial killers to come up with their typology. They talked to whoever happened to be in the neighborhood. Nor did they interview their subjects according to a standardized protocol. They just sat down and chatted, which isn't a particularly firm foundation for a psychological system. So you might wonder whether serial killers can really be categorized by their level of organization.'

Malcolm Gladwell's 'Dangerous Minds: Profiling Made Easy' has been discussed on the Psychology and Crime News blog www.crimepsychblog.com/?p=1830 which provides links to comments elsewhere.



Malcolm Gladwell

NEW JACK THE RIPPER BLOG AND COURSE. Oklahoma, USA, university instructor Lavaughn Towell has launched a new blog at jtrslondon.wordpress.com/ in conjunction with a Spring 2008 First Seminar class entitled 'Jack the Ripper's London' that he will teach at the University of Tulsa. We understand that the course has proven so popular with students that it is already closed to new applicants.

Mr Towell told us, 'For the class, I plan to contextualize the murders, using Mayhew's writings, Jack London's *People of the Abyss* and Booth's Poor Maps so the students can see just why, besides the horrific nature of the crimes, Jack struck such a chord at the time. I plan to have the students write one piece on an aspect of Victorian culture, one on a victim, and one on a suspect. The final paper will draw on all of these to produce a reasoned argument for or against a particular theory/suspect or a more general look at the impact of Jack the Ripper on Victorian society. The students will upload to the blog their pieces under the specific categories (background, suspect, victim) as well as post on the blog any thoughts, files, stories, etc., about the Ripper murders that they deem interesting.'

Mr Towell further explained, 'I hope to use the blog as a discussion group for them as well to use time outside of class to talk about the case with each other. In class, we are going to watch "Murder by Decree" and "From Hell" on the Royal Conspiracy, "The Lodger," the "Maybrick Diary" documentary, and "Time after Time," as well as read numerous excerpts from the standard literature (A to Z, and Donald Rumbelow's *The Complete Jack the Ripper*) and discuss the continued presence of Jack in culture through board games, video games, action figures, and allusions in popular fiction and press.'

We told him that we had already noted that he will be discussing in class both the Maybrick Diary and Stephen Knight's Royal Conspiracy theory. Mr Towell replied, 'Yes, I've found Stephen Knight's book the most fun to read (if you dismiss it as 'fiction') and the Maybrick Diary as the ultimate in wish-fulfillment for Ripperphiles. I thought the students would have fun exploring these 'solutions.' He added, 'I've intermittently written about the case on my more personal blog "Jack the Ripper and Me" www.jtrandme.blogspot.com, including some mini-reviews of books (for which I got a scathing reply from one author!).'



Image of Jack the Ripper from SAW's blog



NEW YORK BLOGGER'S RIPPER TOUR IMPRESSIONS. On 25 November, New York blogger SAW wrote the following impressions of taking a Ripper tour: 'Most of the murder locations were built over, council flats here, apartments there, and entire sections of this area once filled with pubs and whores was now a thriving Indian and Pakistani neighborhood filled with curry and incense. And all that remained of the most brutal of all the crime scenes was a bit of curb that signaled the entrance to the original doorway through which the murderer led his last alleged victim to be butchered in her room.'

He continued, 'But still, he, she, or it *walked over this very place* over a hundred years ago. History takes imagination to make words, stories and things seem possible when McDonald's opens a franchise or when the young urbanites line up to smoke outside the very bar some of the victims themselves once drank at.'

internationalbeautysupply.blogspot.com/2007/11/jack-ripper-around-halloween-cara-and-i.html



XMAS CARD LOST FOR 93 YEARS FINALLY DELIVERED. A Christmas postcard mailed 23 December 1914 in Nebraska, USA, has finally arrived in northwest Kansas. The card, featuring a colour drawing of Santa Claus and a young girl was mailed to Ethel Martin of Oberlin, Kansas, by her cousins in Alma, Nebraska. Oberlin Postmaster Steve Schultz commented: 'It's surprising that it never got thrown away,' he said. 'How someone found it, I don't know.'

Although Miss Ethel Martin, the intended recipient of the Christmas greetings, is deceased, the US Postal Service wanted the card to reach a relative. The card was therefore delivered to Bernice Martin, Ethel Martin's sister-in-law.

In order to send it to Oberlin, the card was mailed inside another envelope with modern postage for the trip to Oberlin - the one-cent postage of the early 20th century would not have been sufficient - the base postage rate for a first class stamp in the United States these days being 41 cents.

Mrs Martin said she had been told that the card had been found somewhere in Illinois. 'That's all we know. But it is kind of curious. We'd like to know how it got down there.' She added, 'Wherever they kept it, it was in perfect shape.'

IMPROVED *RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES* PUBLISHED. When the first edition of *Ripped From the Headlines*, a compilation of contemporary (1888-1895) news stories from *The Times* and the *New York Times*, first appeared several years ago, we at the *Rip* expressed reservations. Although we deemed it 'a nicely produced little volume,' we lamented the lack of an index. We also commented that 'it would have benefited from an introduction and notes by someone who knows the subject.' Those two deficits to an extent have now been set right with the addition of an index and an introduction (although not page-by-page notes) written by the *Rip*'s own Don Souden. The new and improved edition of *Ripped From the Headlines, Being the Story of Jack the Ripper as Reported in The London and New York Times* is available from Ramble House www.ramblehouse.com (112 pp; hardback, \$26.00 US; paperback, \$16.00 US). The book features a cover illustration by Gavin L O'Keefe, which remains the same as in the earlier edition - as we said back then, 'a rather garish and unpleasant cover.'

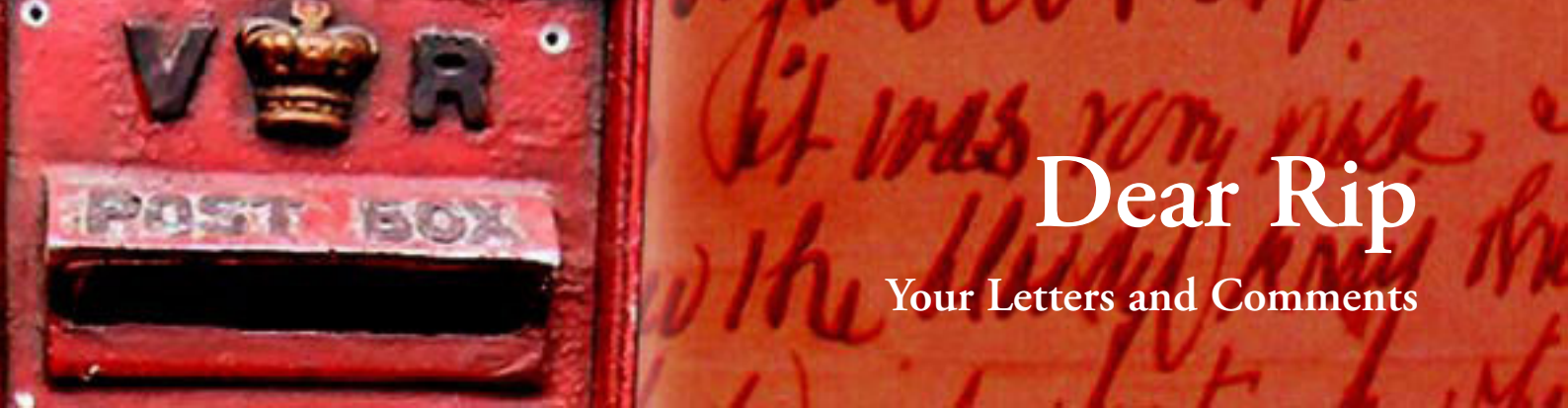


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Dear Rip

Your Letters and Comments

Dear Rip,

I'd like to offer a few observations regarding Amanda Howard's article 'Sex or No Sex' in *Ripperologist* 83 (September 2007), which gives a spirited defense of the now widely held belief that the Ripper murders were sexually motivated.

Ms Howard asks, 'How did doctors in Victorian England's prudish times know that the women were not raped?' (p. 4)

The short answer is through microscopic examination. Twenty-eight years before the Ripper murders, in their text, *A Treatise of Medical Jurisprudence* (1860), Francis Wharton and Moreton Stille included detailed instructions for conducting microscopic examinations for the presence of semen. On page 429, the authors listed no less than four scientific texts that outlined techniques for preserving suspected semen stains on clothing, including transfer of such evidence to a glass slide to study under a microscope. A two-page account of the analysis of semen stains in rape cases appeared in the 10 April 1875 issue of *The Medical Times and Gazette* - a widely read publication among British physicians. As far back as 1856, William Benjamin Carter wrote in *The Microscope: And Its Revelations*, 'that medico-legal science has been greatly enriched and rendered far more certain in its results by the aid of the microscope, few persons will deny. The ends of justice have sometimes depended solely upon its power of detecting spermatozoa in case of rape. . . .' (p. 650) Meanwhile, in *A Manual of Minor Surgery and Bandaging* (1875), Christopher Heath, FRCS, discussed the use of swabs: 'where the alleged assault is recent, the microscopic examination of the vaginal mucus should not be neglected. A small quantity should be removed with a pipette (care being taken to wash it thoroughly first)'

The standard medico-legal text of the 1880s was Charles Meymott Tidy's *Legal Medicine*. In the 1884 edition, Vol 3, Tidy devoted two chapters to the collection of evidence in cases of rape or sexual assault, irregardless of whether the

victim was alive or dead. In discussing rape victims, Tidy commented, '1. Examine the body generally for injuries (bruises, fractures, etc.) 2. Examine the mouth for foreign bodies. 3. Examine the genital organs. 4. Examine the vaginal secretions, the pubic hairs, the vulva, etc. for spermatozoa.'

Ms Howard seems to imply that, unlike modern investigators, the Victorians would have been unlikely to check for signs of coitus in locations other than the genitalia. I am not convinced of this. Tidy discussed evidence of sodomical assault and tribadism (sexual acts limited to friction), and the examination of Eddowes' thighs for trace fluids seems to verify that this advice was generally followed. Tidy recommended that victims' under-clothing, including the posterior of garments, should be subjected to examination. He also suggested a microscopic examination of the wounds, which may suggest that he was not oblivious to the fact that they sometimes contained fibres or sexual emissions. Finally, a look at the 51 'illustrative cases' that Tidy included on pages 146-151 of his text should quickly convince any reader that 19th century medicos were painfully aware of man's propensity for inflicting horrific injuries and abuses.

Thus, the Victorian medical writers knew about trace evidence. Is there any indication that the Victorian doctors actually used these techniques in



the field? I have found several dozen examples where they indeed did employ such procedures in the field during the years before the Whitechapel murders. I will limit myself to mentioning two cases. In early January 1884, Eliza Cartwright, age 21, was brutally assaulted just outside of Wolverhampton. She was in a coma when discovered and later died of her injuries. It is a case, incidentally, that may be of interest to those researching the suspect William Bury. *The Times* records that it was the second attack committed in the same locale, i.e., near the 'Blue Button Bridge' in Deepfields, and the local inhabitants seemed to associate the crime with an artisan 'flasher' who carried a black bag. While discussing the medical aspects of the case, Dr J W Batterham stated that he 'had not discovered anything to prove that she had been violated,' but the inquest was adjourned 'for a post mortem examination of the body and also a microscopic examination of the injuries. . . .' (*The Times*, 7 January 1884). The other case occurred in New York City. In summer 1879, Jane De Forrest Hull was found bound and suffocated in her room at West 42nd Street in Manhattan. Once again, it is clear the medical authorities closely looked for signs of semen. In the *New York Times* of 12 June 1879 reported, '[A] most searching and thorough anatomical examination failed to show the least indication that an outrage like that alleged had been committed. A portion of the remains, however, was reserved for a microscopic analysis. This has been begun and prosecuted carefully, but it's not yet finished.'

In her article, Ms Howard argues that any signs of 'sexual connection' may have been lost in the overwhelming amount of blood at the Whitechapel murder sites. Others who favor the sexual assault theory of the murders have theorised that the murderer was impotent. It seems to me, however, that this is rather dubious reasoning; negative or non-existent evidence is used to support a 'positive' presumption of sexual intent. More likely, the physicians in the Whitechapel murders - Drs Philips, Brown, etc. - found no evidence of sexual assault because no sexual assault had occurred.

On a broader issue, most students of the case appear to be blissfully unaware that in the past two decades any number of criminologists, social historians, and medical professionals have raised considerable doubt about the legitimacy of the old notion of 'lustmord,' and query whether or not it is merely a dubious and 'descriptive' classification that might hinder a more unified understanding of why multiple-murderers appear in our midst. While there is no doubt whatsoever that some victims of random homicide are sexually assaulted, a key question to ask is whether multiple-murderers who do not have sex with their victims (e.g., Berkowitz and Tappan) are really fundamentally 'different' from those who do (e.g., Chikatilo and Kemper).

There exist a number of cases that suggest that the motivation behind so-called 'sexual' serial murder is elusive and problematic. In their article, 'Paths to Destruction: The Lives and Crimes of Two Serial Killers' (*Journal of Forensic Sciences*, Jan 2007, Vol 52, Issue 1, pp. 199-203), Barbara C Wolf MD and Wendy A Lavezzi MD recounted the case of Kendall Francois of Poughkeepsie, New York. Francois was arrested in 1998 and subsequently convicted of the murders of eight women described as 'prostitutes.' Francois frequently had 'normal' sexual relations with sex workers, but on eight different occasions inexplicably resorted to murder. While it seems there is little doubt that Francois' murders would have been written off as a 'sex crimes' by profilers or psychologists, Wolf and Lavezzi proved hesitant to label Francois' crimes as such. They stated, 'His murders occurred during or after sexual encounters, and his method of killing was hands on, i.e., strangulation. However, the motive for his murders is not completely clear. In spite of the killings occurring in the context of a sexual encounter, he claimed that he did not intend to kill the women before he experienced the feeling that he was being cheated.'

In each case, Francois had been asked by the victim for more money or had been asked to increase or re-negotiate the payment. This seemingly infuriated him. It also seems significant that although Francois was an African-American who frequented both black and white prostitutes, his victims were petite white women, ages 25-51. After his arrest, he told investigators that he would 'not kill a sister.' Thus, obscure racial tension also seems to have been a subconscious factor in his crimes. In short, there is no evidence that he achieved any 'sexual' satisfaction from his murders, and instead he appears to have been defending a point of dignity or honor. Nonetheless, there was also a ritual element to his acts. In each case, he carefully cleaned his victims' bodies (although this act seemed to serve no rational criminal purpose) before hiding them in his parent's house, which was a block from prestigious Vassar College in Poughkeepsie.

Another case that even more blatantly confounds standard beliefs about 'lust murder' is that of Australian Paul Charles Denyer of Frankston, Victoria. During a five-week span in 1993, Denyer committed three appalling mutilation murders as well as engaged in a fourth attack where the victim survived. The crimes were very similar to the early Whitechapel murders. On 11 June, he repeatedly stabbed the throat of Elizabeth S, mutilating her abdomen with deep vertical and horizontal cuts in a manner reminiscent of the wounds inflicted on Polly Nichols. The woman's bra had been left around her neck, and the upper part of her body exposed. There was no sexual assault. On 8 July, he murdered Debbie F. She was strangled and stabbed repeatedly in the chest and abdomen in a way similar to the mutilations done to Martha Tabram. Again, the victim was not sexually violated. Nine days later, 17 July, Denyer strangled, stabbed, and sliced Natalie R, aged 17. Once more no evidence of sexual assault was observed, despite the fact that Denyer was biologically capable of sex.

Detectives who interviewed Denyer after his arrest found that his motivation was not the least bit 'sexual'; he merely had an irrational hatred of women. 'I hate them,' he told detectives, 'and I like to kill them.' Asked if he hated these specific victims, he answered, 'no,' and that he just hated women 'in general.' Not only did Denyer deny any sexual desire for his victims, he was disgusted by the thought of it. Teenage Natalie R, abducted while riding her bicycle, actually attempted to save her life by offering Denyer sex or money if he would not physically harm her. Instead, he killed her and stabbed her repeatedly. When he described the crime to the police, Denyer sneered in disgust at the young woman's offer of sex and spoke contemptuously about her 'loose morals.' Despite his outspoken misogyny, once convicted and imprisoned, Denyer began to behave in an increasingly effeminate manner. He requested women's clothing and cosmetics for his personal use. Victoria Corrections Commissioner Kelvin Anderson later confirmed that Denyer was a transsexual and that he had applied for a sex-change operation (*Melbourne Herald Sun*, 28 June 2004). Denyer's misogyny appears to have been coupled with sexual confusion and/or jealousy. The Denyer case is one of a number that renders dubious the contention of those who deny that homosexual or bisexual suspects could have committed the Whitechapel murders based on the dubious Freudian observation that they could not 'lust' for women. (See *The Frankston Murders* (1995) by Vikki Petraitis for more on this Australian case.)

The examples of Francois and Denyer demonstrate that the motivations behind serial homicide are clearly more complex and elusive than the advocates of 'lusmord' would have us believe. In particular, the fact that sexual organs were attacked in several of the Whitechapel murders does not necessarily indicate the perpetrator experienced 'lust.' He may in fact have experienced mere revulsion, contempt, or jealousy, or none of the above. Indeed, the lack of specific evidence of sexual assault may well indicate that the murderer was more akin to Denyer than Chikatilo, if, indeed, the distinction between the two is not in itself misleading and arbitrary.

R J Palmer, Oregon

A response from Amanda Howard:

Dear *Rip*,

I take great pride that my article has given some readers food for thought, even if they do not agree with my theories. The hypothesis that the Whitechapel murders were sexually motivated can only be a theory because, based on the existing evidence, there is no definitive answer.

Let me address a few points that Mr Palmer makes in his letter. He compares the Whitechapel murderer to Paul Denyer. This is a case I know very well - I knew the killer in childhood and I have since interviewed him. However, the comparison Mr Palmer makes is in fact incorrect and based on outdated data. Denyer's murderous impulses were based more on desire than anything else. It was not a hatred of women at all as Mr Palmer claims based on a single answer

given in one of the Denyer's police interviews. If Mr Palmer had viewed the footage, he would have seen that the answer was one made out of fear and confusion. Denyer now wants to be moved to a women's prison, and he has been living as a woman in prison. Thus, I think his expressed hatred was just part of his sexual confusion, and not the real motive - which I explore in my upcoming book, *Loss of Innocence*.

I believe if one were to make comparisons between Jack the Ripper and other killers, it needs to be done between Jack and his contemporaries. It is extremely problematic to compare a Victorian killer to a modern killer. Even to compare killers of today to those from just twenty years ago is naive. The serial killer characteristics have continued to change over the decades and centuries and they continue to spawn new breeds with new motives and desires, outdoing their predecessors, and that leaves little room for comparison of the old with the new.

As for the finding of sperm amid such blood loss, medical examiners I have spoken to have said that at the time of the Ripper murders, it would have been extremely difficult. As Mr Palmer said, a doctor would have done 'the microscopic examination of the vaginal mucus', however, as the vaginas had been mutilated or removed, this would have been extremely difficult if not impossible. Again, this is my opinion, based on evidence provided by modern medical examiners regarding the Ripper murders but I am happy for Mr Palmer to provide his own opinions based on his own evidence.

Mr Palmer also discusses searching the woman's clothing for evidence of sexual intercourse. There is no evidence in any of the material in the case files that shows that this was done. I believe only rudimentary observations were done of sexual interference of any kind and that leaves the entire matter open for conjecture.

Again, I thank Mr Palmer for his response to my article and I am glad that he found it so thought provoking. I tip my hat to him for his keen research skills. I enjoyed his letter.

Cheers

Amanda Howard

Got something to say?

**Got comments on a feature
in this issue?**

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Christmas in Brick Lane - Photograph by Adam Wood