

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

Ripperologist

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Persons Unknown

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on the British Colonial System**

**CARMAN CUMMING on Sandford Conover,
Charles A Dunham and Dr Francis Tumblety**

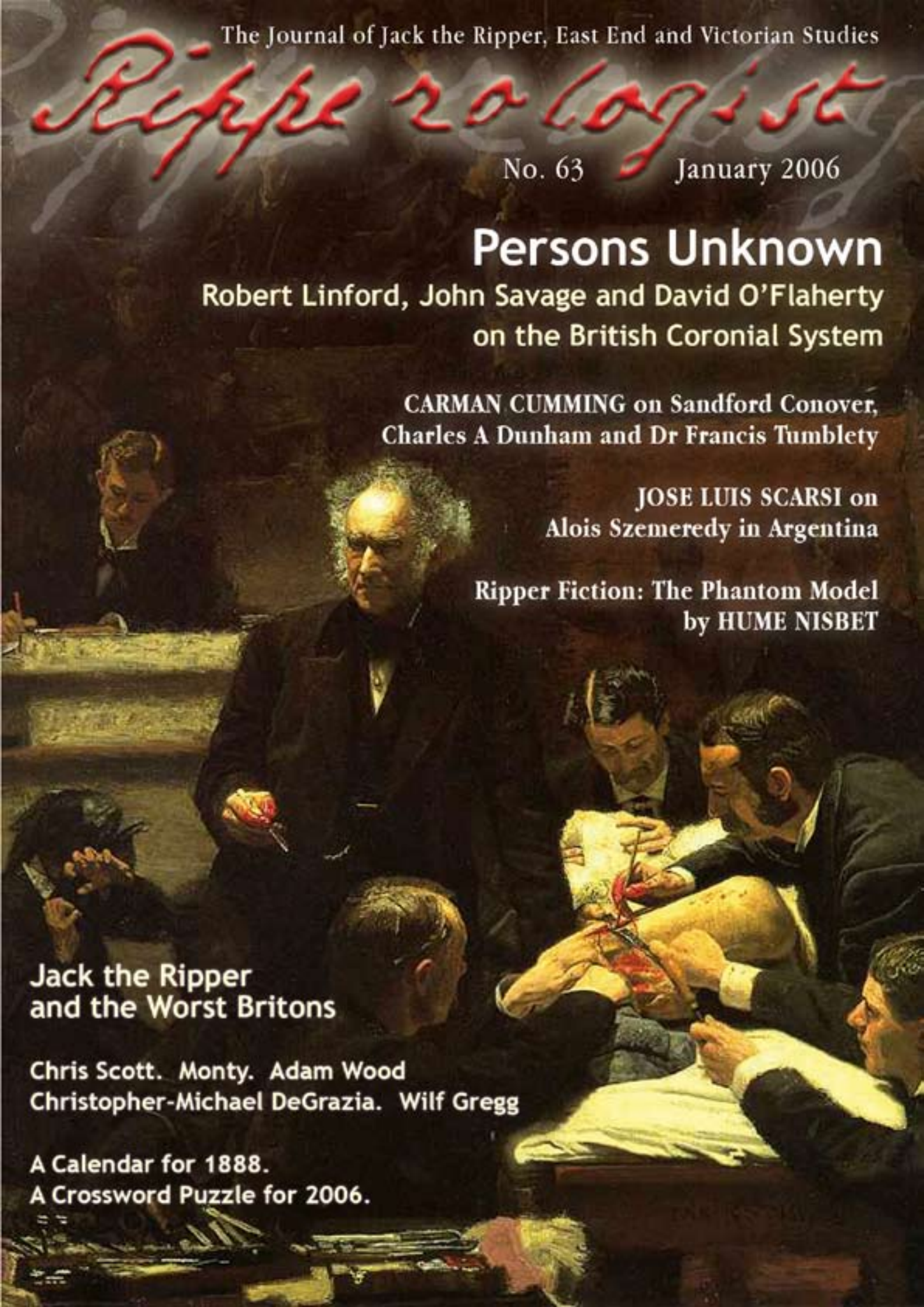
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**Chris Scott. Monty. Adam Wood
Christopher-Michael DeGrazia. Wilf Gregg**

**A Calendar for 1888.
A Crossword Puzzle for 2006.**



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COVER ILLUSTRATION:

The Gross Clinic
by Thomas Eakins, 1875

QUOTE FOR JANUARY:

"English history, it's always fascinated me: Cromwell, Robin Hood, Jack the Ripper." *Tracy Lord (Katharine Hepburn) to Macaulay Connor (James Stewart) in The Philadelphia Story (1940). Screenplay by Donald Ogden Stewart.*

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We occasionally use material we believe has been placed in the public domain. It is not always possible to identify and contact the copyright holder; if you claim ownership of something we have published we will be pleased to make a proper acknowledgement.

We would like to acknowledge the valuable assistance given by the following people in the production of this issue of *Ripperologist*: Andrew Balfour for the photo of Carman Cumming, Joe Chetcuti, Stewart Evans, David Inglis, Michaela Koristova, Hugh Lamb, Greg Laxton, Alan McCormick (Curator of the Crime Museum), Stephen P Ryder. Thank you!

Contributors to this issue

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Carman Cumming is a retired professor of journalism at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, and the author of *Devil's Game: The Civil War Intrigues of Charles A Dunham*, Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2004.

ROBERT LINFORD

Robert Linford is a writer from east London and is a regular contributor to *Casebook*.

HUME NISBET

Hume Nisbet was born in 1849 in Stirling, Scotland. At the age of 16 he left home and spent the next seven years wandering in Australia. Back in Scotland, he became an art master at Watt College, Edinburgh, but resigned in 1885. For a while he worked for the publisher Cassells in Australia and later he became a professional writer. He produced over 40 'tales of adventure', many of which he illustrated himself, and, in 1894, a collection of ghost tales: *The Haunted Station*. Nisbet died in 1920.

DAVID O'FLAHERTY

David O'Flaherty has contributed articles on Albert Bachert and Alfred Blanchard to *Casebook: Jack the Ripper*, and transcribed articles for *Casebook's* Press Project. His short stories have appeared in *Twilight Times* and *Stirring*, and in 2004 he wrote an audio drama, *The Cleveland Street Scandal*, for Actors Scene Unseen in North Carolina. He is 39 and lives in the southern United States.

JOHN SAVAGE

John Savage is a shipping consultant living in Hull, East Yorkshire. He has been taking an interest in Jack the Ripper for over 30 years and first became "hooked" through watching the BBC *Barlow and Watt* series.

JOSE LUIS SCARSI

José Luis Scarsi is 44 years old. He is a researcher particularly interested in the history of his native city, Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina. He has published numerous articles in specialised magazines and participated in several research competitions.

ISRAEL ZANGWILL

Israel Zangwill was born in 1864 in Whitechapel, the son of Jewish emigrants from Russia. He graduated from London University and became a school-teacher, but in 1888 he abandoned that profession to become a full-time writer. His most successful work was *The Children of the Ghetto* (1892), a realistic novel commissioned by the Jewish Publication Society of Philadelphia. He died in 1926.



EDUARDO ZINNA
EUROPEAN EDITOR

Brave New World

ON A WARM, SUNNY DAY IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN Adam woke up from his afternoon siesta and realised that he was not alone. Next to him on the fragrant green grass lay a creature who, but for some significant features, closely resembled him. Adam scrutinized the newcomer, noting advantages and disadvantages carefully and systematically. He soon made up his mind. 'It will never work,' he said.

Many centuries later, on a warm, sunny day in the barren, windy expanses of Oklahoma - or Patagonia or Scotland - some simple folk stood by the side of the road waiting for the stagecoach. In the distance, beyond the hill, they saw a puff of black smoke rise and then another. They heard a harsh metallic noise and saw what looked like a horseless carriage coming down the road at full speed towards them, belching huge clouds of malodorous smoke as it advanced. The most timid among them cowered; the most adventurous stood their ground. As the carriage juddered to a halt, shaking and trembling, an arm materialized out of a window motioning them towards a door that had opened on its side. Some climbed aboard and some did not. They stayed where they were and looked at the door closing and at the horseless carriage speeding on down the road until it vanished beyond the horizon, leaving behind nothing but a sharp, acrid smell. They looked at one another knowingly. 'It will never work,' they said.

Many believe the simple folk from Oklahoma - or Patagonia or Scotland - were right. Even more, it seems, believe Adam may have had a point. It's still possible to live as the simple folk did before the internal combustion engine and as Adam did before Eve. It's possible, but it's not the course most follow and the path most tread.

A few weeks ago the *Ripperologist* team came to a conclusion and made a decision. The conclusion was that if *Ripperologist* was to grow and evolve it must change radically and completely. The decision was to adopt an electronic format allowing *Ripperologist* to introduce existing and future technological innovations, to increase twofold the number of issues published and to reach a much larger readership. We knew, of course, that our decision would entail some sacrifices, that some might not share our optimism and that some might not be prepared to follow us in our new venture. Yet we moved ahead, convinced that we were heading in the right direction.

Most of our subscribers quietly rallied behind us and many among them actively encouraged us to move forward. Some subscribers who were unable to benefit from our new format for lack of computer facilities still wished us well. All those who for any reason have chosen to part company from *Ripperologist* at this juncture will receive a full refund for their outstanding subscriptions. In the wake of *Ripperologist's* transition to an electronic format, new subscribers have joined up, and we are sure that many more will follow.

We are deeply and sincerely grateful to those subscribers who have stayed with us for their trust, loyalty and support. We are equally grateful to those who have left us with their good wishes for the future and hope that they will soon come back. We are grateful to our new subscribers and we are grateful to those who have behaved towards us with fairness, decency and an open mind and have urged others to do the same. To you all, thank you.

The crisis was brief and is now over. *Ripperologist* 62, the first issue of its brave, new era, has been with you for over a month now. The second issue is in your screens or in your hands as you read this. The third is in preparation. The monthly, electronic *Ripperologist* is a reality. We have seen the future - and it works.



CARMAN
CUMMING

The American Connection

Sandford Conover *aka* Charles A Dunham and Dr Francis Tumblety

For some years now, the bizarre personality of Dr Francis Tumblety, a prime suspect in the Whitechapel murders, has been defined partly by the colorful description from Charles A Dunham, a 'well-known' and, therefore, presumably respectable New Jersey lawyer, who knew and had met Tumblety in Brooklyn and Washington. In a 2 December 1888 interview with the *New York World*, at a time when it seemed evident that the Irish-American quack doctor was suspected of being involved in the Whitechapel murders of that autumn, Dunham helpfully painted the 'Indian herb doctor' in lurid terms: as a psychotic, an exhibitionist, a misogynist, and a charlatan healer who kept in his office an evil collection of female body parts. Several writers have quoted this account as being true, but it is now clear that Dunham himself was also a most remarkable liar and scoundrel, possibly the least reliable witness who ever faked a newspaper column. Therefore, his account of Dr Tumblety must be treated with great caution.

A man of many identities and many frauds, Dunham was a Civil War spy, 'reptile journalist' and agent provocateur whose career as a con artist in both North and South began well before the war and extended beyond it, peaking when he testified (as Sandford Conover) that the Confederate government had ordered Abraham Lincoln's assassination. Dozens of his stories, written for various papers under various names, have now been exposed as ingenious frauds. Presumably many more have still to be spotted.

So, is his description of Dr. Tumblety a total fabrication?

Not necessarily. Dunham often used a base of reality for his best inventions, and in the Tumblety case there are indeed elements of truth. For instance, Dunham claimed he was a very young army colonel when Tumblety entertained him at his 'tasteful' quarters in Washington and showed off his cases of female body parts. The fact is that Dunham was indeed in Washington at the time he mentioned, shortly after the 1861 First Battle of Bull Run, as self-proclaimed 'colonel' of a New York regiment. Dunham's 'Cameron Legion' eventually collapsed and was probably a fraud from the start. His claims of recruiting success did not stand up, and his officers were a shady lot of Brooklyn cronies. The most impressive officer listed was a Major Sandford Dockstader, a regular army officer trained at West Point - but that name fails to show up in West Point or US Army records.

Tumblety in Civil War Washington, DC

Dunham's description of Dr Tumblety in the 2 December 1888 *New York World* colorfully paints the doctor as one of the most prominent characters in wartime Washington, DC. As such, the account is typically detailed, vivid, and unprovable. Much of it could have been taken from newspaper accounts, but the basic facts are consistent with other descriptions of the herb doctor, and they also give a striking view of the wartime capital. When he arrived in July 1861, Dunham recalled, the first-class hotels were like beehives, packed with strangers, mainly in uniform:

Among them were many fine-looking and many peculiar-looking men, but of the thousands there was not one that attracted half as much attention as Tumblety. A Titan in stature, with a very red face and long flowing mustache, he would have

been a noticeable personage in any place and in any garb. But, decked in a richly embroidered coat or jacket, with a medal held by a gay ribbon on each breast, a semi-military cap with a high peak, cavalry-trousers with the brightest of yellow stripes, riding boots and spurs fit for a show window, a dignified and rather stagy gait and manner, he was as unique a figure as could be found anywhere in real life. When followed, as he generally was, by a valet and two great dogs, he was no doubt the envy of many hearts.

Dunham's description of Tumblety's role in Washington is also based on accounts that say Tumblety was a ubiquitous presence:

Go where you would, to any of the hotels, to the War Department or the Navy Yard, you were sure to find the 'doctor'. He had no business in either place, but he went there to impress the officers whom he would meet. He professed to have had an extensive experience in European hospitals and armies, and claimed to have diplomas from the foremost medical colleges of the Old World and the New. He had, he declared, after much persuasion accepted the commission of brigade surgeon at a great sacrifice pecuniarily; but, with great complacency, he always added that, fortunately for his private patients, his official duties would not, for a considerable time, take him away from the city.



Dr Francis Tumblety with one of his dogs

The crucial (and apparently uncorroborated) part of Dunham's account, however, comes with claims of an intimate association with the doctor and especially with revelations made by him at a dinner attended by 'my lieutenant-colonel and myself'. We should note here that Dunham's 'lieutenant-colonel' was in fact a Brooklyn colleague in crime named Charley Bishop who had helped Dunham in pre-war 'missing heirs' swindles. As Dunham told it:

One day my Lieutenant-Colonel and myself accepted the 'doctor's' invitation to a late dinner-symposium, he called it - at his rooms. He had very cosy and tastefully arranged quarters in, I believe, H street... His menu, with colored waiters and the et ceteras, was furnished by one of the best caterers in the city. After dinner there were brought out two tables for play - for poker or whist. In the course of the evening some of the party, warmed by the wine, proposed to play for heavy stakes, but Tumblety frowned down the proposition at once and in such a way as to show he was no gambler. Someone asked why he had not invited some women to his dinner. His face instantly became as black as a thunder cloud. He had a pack of cards in his hand, but he laid them down and said, almost savagely: 'No, Colonel, I don't know any such cattle, and if I did I would, as your friend, sooner give you a dose of quick poison than take you into such danger.' He then broke into a homily on the sin and folly of dissipation, fiercely denounced all woman and especially fallen women.

Then he invited us into his office where he illustrated his lecture, so to speak. One side of this room was entirely occupied with cases, outwardly resembling wardrobes. When the doors were opened quite a museum was revealed - tiers of shelves with glass jars and cases, some round and others square, filled with all sorts of anatomical specimens. The 'doctor' placed on a table a dozen or more jars containing, as he said, the matrices of every class of women. Nearly a half of one of these cases was occupied exclusively with these specimens.

Not long after this the 'doctor' was in my room when my Lieutenant-Colonel came in and commenced expatiating on the charms of a certain woman. In a moment, almost, the doctor was lecturing him and denouncing women. When he was asked why he hated women, he said

that when quite a young man he fell desperately in love with a pretty girl, rather his senior, who promised to reciprocate his affection. After a brief courtship he married her. The honeymoon was not over when he noticed a disposition on the part of his wife to flirt with other men. He remonstrated, she kissed him, called him a dear, jealous fool - and he believed her. Happening one day to pass in a cab through the worst part of the town he saw his wife and a man enter a gloomy-looking house. Then he learned that before her marriage his wife had been an inmate of that and many similar houses. Then he gave up all womankind.

1861 lists 'Tumblety Undone' as one of its attractions.

In this as in other cases, Dunham may have drawn the dramatic detail from other accounts - or simply from his rich imagination. His testimony was, for instance, a highlight of the 1865 military commission trial of Lincoln assassins. He told of being present in the Montreal office of rebel officer Jacob Thompson when fateful orders arrived from Richmond approving Lincoln's killing. Thompson, he said, tapped the paper with his finger, and said: 'This makes the thing all right.' As with much of Dunham's work, this story is discredited mainly on the grounds that almost any



Uncle Sam and the Civil War, a cartoon from Harper's Weekly, 23 August 1862

Shortly after telling this story the 'doctor's' real character became known and he slipped away to St Louis where he was arrested for wearing the uniform of an army surgeon...

This account is so richly detailed that it begs belief, especially since it adds much to the profile of an enigmatic figure. This kind of authenticity, however, was a hallmark of Dunham's technique. He was a master of the art of choosing convincing detail - the small touches that gave 'presence' to his stories. In Tumblety's case it is not even certain the subject was in Washington at the time of Dunham's July visit. However, Dunham apparently visited the capital several times in 1861 and may well have been present for a contretemps he described in which Tumblety, as a publicity stunt, burlesqued himself at the Canterbury Music Hall and then pretended fury at the hall for lampooning him. An ad for the hall in the *Washington Star* of 4 December

statement of Dunham's that can be checked, from the pre-war estate swindles to post-war political scams, is a lie.

A Multitude of Faked Identities

Dunham's faked characters included, for instance, the formidable Southern spy Col. George W Margrave (or Rhett, or Haynes), an aristocratic villain who had developed an elaborate plan for capturing or killing Lincoln. As Sandford Conover of the *New York Tribune*, Dunham told of defecting from the Confederate war department and bringing with him documents that included a Margrave report on plots in the North to promote fake peace plans:

He is one of the most cool and reckless villains in the Confederacy - one who can smile, and murder while he smiles. For a villainous and desperate enterprise, no better leader could be found. He is now in the Canadas, and I verily believe

for the purpose of heading a gang of desperadoes to commit some depredation on our frontier.

In fact, no historical trace of Rhett/Margrave has ever been found, and Dunham himself is now known to have passed as Margrave. For instance, Margrave's 'report' told how in spring 1863 he had obtained a pass in Baltimore in the name of Isaac E Haynes. When Dunham was captured in the South around that time he was carrying Union passes from Baltimore and Harper's Ferry in the name of Haynes. Again, when he was freed and sent north a few months later, Dunham posed as Margrave at least once to sell a fake document (later exposed, of course) to the disloyal *New York News*. Again, in 1864, when Dunham went to Canada as James Watson Wallace, he carried a Confederate commission authorizing 'Col. Margrave' to recruit men for border raids.

Ironically and significantly, Dunham himself had in 1863 proposed to Lincoln a plan to capture Jefferson Davis that was similar to 'Margrave's' plan for the capture of Lincoln.

The 'She-Wolf' of Castle Thunder

Another Southern spy who cropped up in Dunham's Northern journalism poses even more interesting problems of credibility. This was the woman known to history as Alice Williams or Loreta Janeta Velazquez (among other names), who was supposed to have fought in the Confederate army as Lt. Harry Buford. Velazquez produced controversial post-war memoirs telling how as a Confederate agent she had duped the formidable (but by now



General George B McClellan

conveniently dead) Col. Lafayette Baker, chief detective in the Union war department. Since an 'Alice Williams' did indeed appear on Baker's payroll in fall 1863, this account has been given some credence.

Recent research, however, shows a curious twist: Williams showed up on Baker's list shortly after Dunham, as Harvey Birch of the *New York Herald* 'exposed' her as a Southern 'she-wolf' working as a spy in Washington. Because Dunham was known to have been in touch with Baker at least once in this period, and since Baker's bureau would hardly have missed the prominent *Herald* warning, it is likely the 'Williams' Baker hired was a fake of some kind, possibly one of the women he used to spy on

suspected traitors. Dunham (as Birch) claimed he had met the 'she-wolf' in Richmond's Castle Thunder prison, and this is almost certainly true, since both are known to have been held there in spring 1863. But the spy story may be a fiction since Dunham later exploited the she-wolf's story at least one more time. This was in the fall of 1865 after Secretary of War Edwin Stanton personally hired him to seek evidence of rebel complicity in Lincoln's death. Working in the South as W E Harrison, Dunham reported discovery of another plot for Lincoln's murder, approved by Confederate President Jefferson Davis, which was 'quite as diabolical as the one which resulted in his death' and was to be carried out by Alice Williams/



Loreta Janeta Velazquez as Confederate soldier Lt. Harry Buford



Castle Thunder Prison, Richmond



HARRY WELAZQUEZ IN FEMALE DRESS

Loretta Janeta Velazquez in female dress

Harry Buford. Dunham said Williams wanted to emulate Charlotte Corday, the aristocratic French woman who was guillotined for slaying Jean-Paul Marat in his bath, 'except that she proposed to employ poison instead of a dagger'. This incident, too, has been cited by some writers as support for the Velazquez memoirs.

Further tangling the 'she-wolf' story is the fact that 'Velazquez' gave considerable credit for her post-war memoirs to an editor/collaborator identified only as C J Worthington, 'late of the US Navy' - another name that does not show up in military records. Since Velazquez's adventures often paralleled Dunham's, especially on Southern spying and raid threats from Canada, it seems possible he could have been this elusive collaborator, exploiting her story for a third time. While that invention seems fantastic, it is topped by Dunham's most remarkable confirmed wartime play, in which, after becoming 'Conover', he transformed his original 'Dunham' identity into yet another vicious Confederate agent. He used this villainous Col. Dunham in several ways, including a cunning ploy to discredit Democratic candidate General George McClellan during the runup to the 1864 election.

Conover/Dunham's Post-Civil War Activities

After the war, too, Dunham created a full stable of fake witnesses (including his wife and sister-in-law) who swore to the guilt of Confederate officers in Lincoln's assassination. When this scam was eventually uncovered (to the horror of the War Department), Dunham was sentenced

to 10 years' hard labor. He then continued a series of plots in prison, first devising evidence that President Andrew Johnson had associated with John Wilkes Booth, then disclosing the fake evidence to the president in an eventually successful bid for a pardon.

After his release, Dunham's life becomes almost as shadowy as Tumblety's. He did indeed do legal work in New Jersey before his death there in 1900, but again, his status is uncertain and his work seemed focused on efforts to tap into large estates. His account of Tumblety in the *New York World* - which reads more like a written article than an interview - must, therefore, remain in the highly doubtful category.

One odd little sidelight on the article is that Dunham recalled an incident in which Tumblety, at the time of the assassination, was briefly confused with Luke Blackburn, the Kentucky doctor (later governor of the state) who had mounted a wartime effort from Canada to spread yellow fever infection in the Union. Dunham remarked as an aside that Blackburn had been 'falsely accused' of the

yellow fever plot. The irony is that Dunham knew the Blackburn plot, admitted even by Thompson's own secretary, was real. He knew as well the falsity of an additional charge: that Blackburn and others had plotted to cut off New York City's water supply by blowing the great dam at Croton, New York (Dunham's hometown) and then poisoning remaining water in conduits and reservoirs. He would have known all about this because he himself had devised the Croton plan, pressed it on reluctant Confederate officers, and then exposed it in his Washington testimony.

So while the truth of his Tumblety story remains clouded, there can be no doubt whatever of the complexity of Dunham's lies. Each part of his Tumblety story will therefore have to be tested, piece by piece, against other available evidence.

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Francis Tumblety: from The Atchison Daily Globe, 15 December 1888



JOSÉ LUIS
SCARSI

On the Trail of Jack the Ripper: Szemeredy in Argentina

The Spanish version of this article was published under the title Jack el Destripador: una pista en la Argentina in the magazine Historias de la Ciudad, Año 4, N° 31, Buenos Aires, Argentina, June 2005. Translated from the Spanish by Eduardo Zinna

He came from Europe to fight in the War of the Triple Alliance.¹ He was a soldier, a tanner and a butcher by trade, a barber by vocation. He was a doctor, a landowner and a political refugee. This is the story of a clever confidence trickster, small-time thief and slippery character who for many years held the attention of the press and the authorities. A murder suspect, he committed the same type of crimes in Buenos Aires and in London and, as he died bearing a tarnished title of Count, became another Ripper suspect.

It was more than a year since Alois Szemeredy had last walked in the streets of Buenos Aires. Since that winter night when he was seen fleeing his hotel, in little clothing and a great hurry, his luggage left behind, he had been impossible to find. The police sent detectives throughout the city and, since they couldn't spot him in gin palaces, eateries, underground hangouts, train stations or the docks, they went looking for him in dozens of towns and villages in the Argentine Provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, Entre Ríos and Cuyo and over twenty locations in the neighbouring Eastern Republic of Uruguay. Every move of the authorities seemed like an iron circle closing down on the fugitive, but he, shrewd and elusive, always found a gap to slip through.

The circumstances of the brutal crime of which he was suspected were still vivid in the memory when a telegram from the Bahian police

confirmed that he had been arrested in Brazil. It was mid-morning on 8 August 1877 when the ship that was bringing him back approached the Catalinas dock. Like a metaphor for a remote remembrance or an uncertain future, the mist and the distance from the coast blurred the outline of the city that once more awaited him. On the docks, an impatient crowd had gathered to catch a glimpse of the vicious killer.

During the journey Szemeredy had tried to commit suicide on two occasions. Sgt. Antonio Augusto Almeida Navarro, who was bringing him from Río de Janeiro, thought that the prisoner was completely insane and was eager to hand him over to the local authorities. Perhaps by chance, perhaps because of a macabre pleasantry of the driver, the carriage taking him to prison went by the house in Corrientes Street where he had allegedly committed murder. The newspapers reported that when they pointed out the house to him and reminded him of the woman who had lived there, he said that 'she was his mistress but he was absent when the murder was committed.'²

The Beginning of the Story

The Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nación* reported on 27 July 1876:

Last night at 10, a young woman who shared lodgings with another woman at 35 Corrientes Street, between Reconquista and 25 de mayo Streets, was horribly murdered. Her name was Carolina Metz and she was not yet 20 years old... Carolina lived with a man who was not her husband. Last night, at the above-mentioned time, Carolina's woman friend ran into the street crying for help... several police officers answered her calls, closely followed by higher-rank policemen. They found Carolina lying in her bed, half-naked, her throat cut from ear to ear.

There, next to the bed, stood the young woman's lover. He was immediately arrested. His statement

was as follows: That a few moments earlier, while he was in another room of the house, a man whom both he and Carolina knew had asked for his permission to enter the room where she was. That, after a few moments, he heard cries for help and ran into the young woman's room, where he found her with her throat cut. There were no traces of the man who had gone in a few minutes before. On Carolina's bed was found, covered with blood, the weapon with which her throat had been cut... a sheath-knife nearly 10 inches long... which looked brand-new.

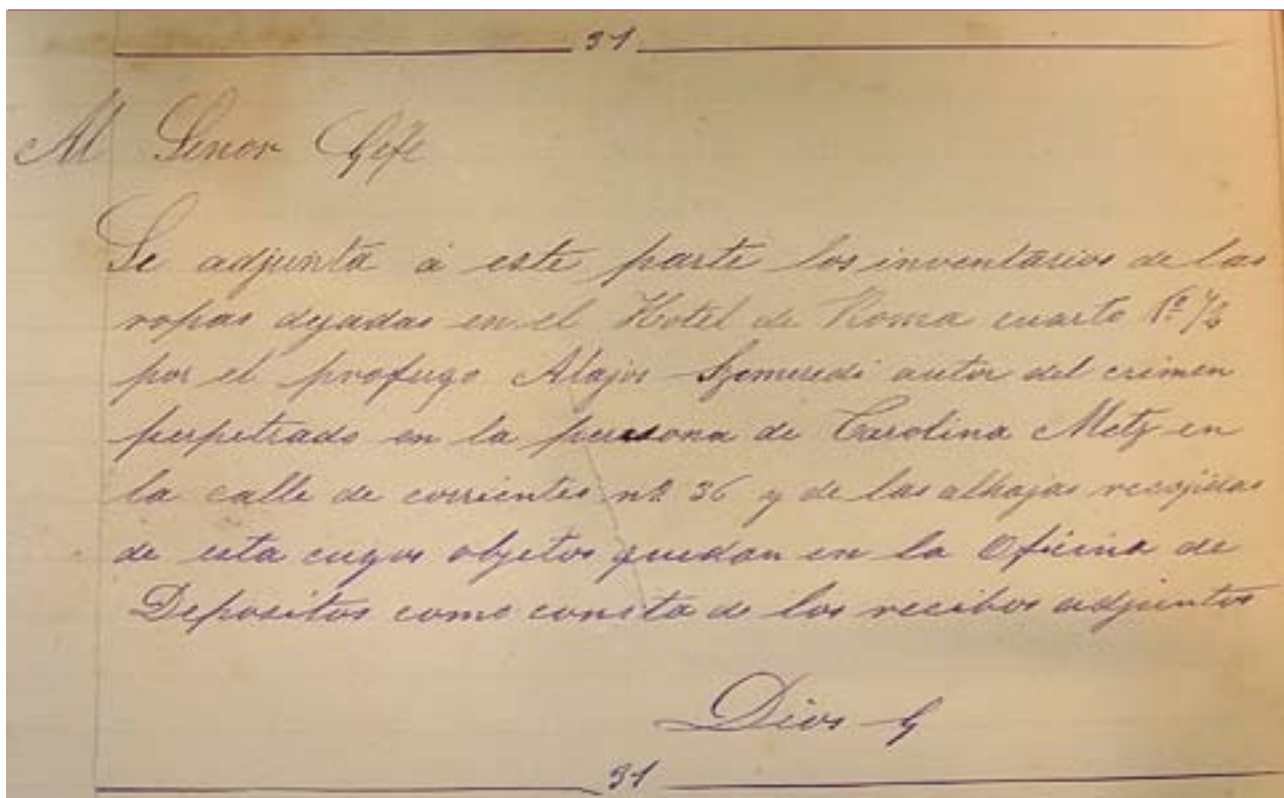
On a chair was an overcoat in one of whose pockets they found two portraits. One was of Carolina and the other... precisely of the man who had come in a few minutes earlier... The suspect has not yet been captured by our police, as it usually happens nowadays.

The newspaper does not say it in so many words and only hints at it, but for a whole decade a well known brothel had operated at 35 Corrientes Street. This, and the fact that Carolina had worked there, must have led it to publish the wrong address, since the rest of the newspapers and the police themselves gave the address of the murder house correctly as 36 Corrientes Street.³

The man euphemistically described as Carolina's lover was in fact her procurer, Baptiste Castagnet, who had met her in the ship that brought her from Marseilles in 1874. He had met Szemeredy at a card game during one of his frequent trips to Montevideo. When Szemeredy arrived in Buenos Aires Castagnet offered him his mercenary friendship and the services of his ward.

We find more information in police reports. The officer in charge of the investigation stated:

At about 10:30 in the evening of the 25th inst. I was informed that a woman had been murdered at 36 Corrientes Street. I went there at once and found in the front room of the above-mentioned house the body of the woman Carolina Metz, as Bautista Castañet [sic] told me she was called... I inspected said room, noticing a large amount of blood on the bed, the bedclothes in disarray and a black-handled sheath-knife covered with blood lying on them. On an armchair were Carolina's clothes and on top of them lay a grey overcoat, a waistcoat of the same colour and a watch and chain



Argentine Police Report on Szemeredy, 1876

apparently of gold and, attached to this chain, two rings, one with a white stone and the other with a green stone, an umbrella with a steel handle and a black beaver hat... in the inside pocket of the overcoat I found the sheath of the knife that lay on the bed, two portraits, a bloodstained white handkerchief embroidered with the initials AS and a key.

The perpetrator of this murder is Alejo Szemeredy, a Hungarian or Austrian, 35 years of age, tall, corpulent, olive-skinned, straight black hair, wears a thick moustache and goatee joined together, speaks good Spanish and claims to be a medical doctor... This man is known in this police station because on the 16th Inst. he came to complain that he had been robbed at the "Hotel de Provence" of valuables worth approximately ten thousand pesos - among which were the two rings now found attached to the watch-chain he left behind when fleeing Carolina's room.

...It became known yesterday that Szemeredy was staying at the Hotel de Roma, room 72, and the manager Luis Soler stated that on the evening of Carolina's murder he arrived some time after 10:30 and said to him: They just stole my hat and the clothes I was wearing I'm moving out another one to report to the police but I need to force the door because the key was

left in my overcoat. Believing this statement to be true, he made him enter through a door communicating with his room, where he picked up a poncho and a soft black hat, put them on and left again in a hurry.

It is now known that the watch and chain that Szemeredy left behind in his escape belong to Lt. Col. Domingo Jerez, who resides at the Hotel de Roma, and from whom these items were stolen a few days ago together with some cash.

Until now it is not known what was Szemeredy's motive for this murder... Carolina was buried by her beloved Castañet. Carolina Metz was Alsatian, 20-years old, single. She arrived in Buenos Aires on 13 October 1874 and worked first at the brothel at 35 Corrientes Street, from where she moved to No. 509 in the same street, which she left to live with Bautista Castañet with whom she had had relations since her journey from Marseilles. This woman's family lives in Strasbourg and she had a brother in Digon. ⁴

In the aftermath of this brutal murder, particularly when the suspect returned in 1877, the newspapers published numerous items about him and continued to do so until a few years after the end of his trial in 1881.

But let's see who was Alois Szemeredy - for that was his real

name - what were the reasons for his journey and what were his adventures since his arrival in Argentina.

Szemeredy was born in Pest - one of the two cities on either side of the Danube which were later merged into Budapest, capital of Hungary - on 7 July 1840. At an early age he enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian Army. He served with the Auxiliary Hungarian Legion in Ancona, a city situated north-east of Rome on the Adriatic coast. His conduct was irreproachable and he earned a promotion to corporal and given a good behaviour certificate which showed his trade as tanner. He later obtained another good behaviour certificate where he was said to be a butcher and a third one in Turin. On 29 June 1863, however, he deserted. Not for the last time, he vanished from sight.

Two years later, in October 1865, Szemeredy presented himself at the Argentine Consulate in Genoa where he signed up for a four-year term to fight in the War of the Triple Alliance. On 17 March 1866 he was inducted into the Argentine Army and assigned to the Artillery Regiment. In May of the same year he was declared insane and interned in the Hospicio de las Mercedes - an asylum. On 17 September he escaped.

The following year we find him in Buenos Aires, working in a barber shop in Victoria Street, near the Congress

building - the Argentine Parliament. Some time later, having gained the trust of his employer, he stole tools, money and a horse and escaped to Mercedes. From there he wrote a letter expressing his regret for his conduct to his employer, who forgave him. Back in Buenos Aires, he told his employer that he wanted to return to Europe and, through the good offices of an acquaintance, obtained a free passage. Two days before his ship was scheduled to weigh anchor, however, he stole the jewels of the captain's wife and disappeared. Shortly afterwards he was recognised by the owner of the horse he had ridden to Mercedes and wound up spending six months in jail. Free again, he worked at a barber shop in May Street and then at another one in the town of Saladillo. He did not last long on this job. He soon managed to trick and rob the owner of a jewellery shop.



*General Ricardo López Jordán.
Szemeredy served under him in 1873.*

At the beginning of the 70s Szemeredy arrived in Villa Mercedes, San Luis Province. The military chief of the Cuyo border zone was at that time General Arredondo. There was neither hairdresser nor barber in the whole region and the general went though the torments of hell every time he was shaven by a heavy-handed private. The newcomer suggested to the general that he authorise him to open a barbershop. The general advanced the necessary capital and used his influence with one of his relatives to obtain for Szemeredy the required licence.

Szemeredy cut hair with considerable skill and shaved with recognised ability. Soon the whole population entrusted themselves to his art. In this way he met a compatriot of his who owned a photographer's

shop. The photographer was planning to get married and made the mistake of confiding to his new friend that he had saved 1,000 pesos fuertes to pay for the wedding. On an evening when they had gone out together for a few beers, Szemeredy took advantage of the first occasion to absent himself for a while in order to steal the small fortune that his friend had hidden in a trunk. Immediately afterwards he returned to the bar to continue drinking. But when the photographer went home he realised he had been robbed and raised the alarm.

The police formed a search party including two trackers who soon found the trail of the person who had carried away the trunk - not very far away, in fact. Szemeredy, who with great impudence had joined the search party, was immediately arrested. They sent him to the Provincial capital, San Luis, but on 19 April 1871 he was released for lack of evidence. The missing money was never found. Szemeredy worked in San Luis for a while. Later, he was seen in the guise of a gentleman at official balls in neighbouring Mendoza Province.

At the beginning of 1873 Szemeredy arrived destitute in Victoria, Entre Rios Province, where he entered into a partnership with a barber, Jayme Bojorje. When, a few months later, Bojorje left for Uruguay, Szemeredy became sole owner of the shop. In August of the same year, he was arrested for attempted murder on the person of an Italian named Guido Benonati. As soon as he recovered his freedom, he joined the army of General Ricardo López Jordán, then leading an uprising against the National Government of Argentina.⁵ Although he described himself as a medical doctor, Szemeredy was little more than a sawbones.

On 8 December Szemeredy was captured during the battle of Talita. At the beginning of 1874, as he was being taken to the military prison at Martín García Island on board the warship Pampa, he made his escape by throwing himself into the River Plate near the Uruguayan coast. Travelling through Uruguay he arrived in Mercedes, where he met Bojorje again. They discussed the opening of another barber shop but, when their plans did not prosper, Szemeredy continued his journey to Salto, where he stole some jewels and money.

On 28 May 1874 Szemeredy obtained a passage for Europe from the Austro-Hungarian Consulate in Buenos Aires, but jumped ship in

Rio de Janeiro. He presented himself at the Austro-Hungarian Consulate in that city and claimed he had been robbed - but was not believed. He left for Bahia, north of Rio, where in October he went to his Consulate passing himself off as the owner of great tracts of land in Entre Ríos. Once again he claimed to have been robbed, this time by a woman and two men who spoke Polish. Although he was wounded in the left arm, the examining physician, Dr Wissman, suspected that Szemeredy himself had inflicted this wound to inspire sympathy and obtain compensation for the valuables and money allegedly stolen from him.



*General Francisco Solano López.
Szemeredy joined the Argentine Army
to fight against him.*

While the police and the Austro-Hungarian authorities questioned the 800 Polish settlers in the area without finding the alleged thieves, efforts were being made to succour Szemeredy. But then it became known that in August one Alejo Szemeredy had kidnapped a young woman at Colonia de San Francisco, Santa Catalina Province, to sell her into prostitution in Río. Despite this news and in order to be rid of the scoundrel, the Consulate gave him passage to Buenos Aires, where he claimed to own property. He left Bahia in October on board the German steamer Montevideo, but was taken ashore during the journey on suspicion of having stolen watches and jewels.⁶ It seems that upon his return he had the gall to write a letter under the name of Carlos Pinto to the Brazilian Consulate complaining for the treatment given to Szemeredy - that is to say, to himself.

In January of 1875 we find him

in Junín practising medicine. His visiting card gave his name as Dr Elois Szemeredy. He would also be known as Luis, Enrique and Alejo Szemeredy, Julio Somegyi, Carlos Pinto and Carlos Temperley. As usual, he remained only a few days in the same place and escaped with a surgery kit belonging to one Dr Caballero and money stolen from a tradesman from Bragado. He continued his criminal journey through Rojas, Pergamino, San Nicolás and Rosario. According to police reports, he left for Milan in May 1875. In July he reported to the Austro-Hungarian Army, from which he had deserted 12 years earlier. Soon afterwards he deserted again and fled to South America.

What have we got here?

This narrative, which has taken us through some of the places where Szemeredy was up to his usual tricks, reveals some of his characteristics. Though some events are difficult to prove and others were magnified by the press, we still can get an idea of his personality. A contemporary newspaper reported that when he was arrested in Brazil they found in his luggage a sharp sheath-knife, a bottle containing 18 grams of chloroform, a small box containing 14 grams of opium in powder form, false beards and moustaches and several artificial jewels.⁸ The records of the First Police Station at Buenos Aires show that on 15 July Szemeredy [sic], a

imprisonment for an undetermined period, the most severe penalty after death. In the meantime, and to render the case even odder, the Austro-Hungarian Minister handed a note to the Argentine Foreign Ministry stating that the Hungarian Courts had advised him that Alejo Szemeredy had inherited a substantial sum from a close relative.¹⁰

In 1881 Szemeredy's case was still rousing. Let's see what the press had to say on the day he appeared before the Appeals Court, which in those years functioned at the Cabildo, the old town-hall building.

*By two in the afternoon over 500 people had gathered attracted by the celebrity of the individual and the notoriety of the case. Thus yesterday Szemeredy, the hero of the day, was the subject of all the talk of the people gathered at the Cabildo...*¹¹

Long before the time set for the beginning of the hearing, a large crowd filled the galleries adjoining the courtroom... another equally thick crowd waited along the stairs and galleries of the ground floor waiting for the defendant to go by so they could examine him closely.

*Szemeredy, who looked about 40 years of age, was dressed all in black, his clothes threadbare but clean, and behaved like a man in full and assured possession of all his senses. With his left hand he smoothed down from time to time his long black goatee flecked with a few grey hairs, while with his right hand he performed the same operation on his hair, letting his hand descend immediately afterwards along his face to his mouth, as if he wanted to erase from it any expression that was either forced or contrary to his idea of the attitude he must assume in such solemn circumstances.*¹²

Dámaso Centeno, appearing for the defence, took only two days to demonstrate to the Court that the prosecution's case was seriously flawed. He laid the blame for the murder on Castagnet, who by then was back in Europe, and pointed up the contradictions of the policemen who had investigated the affair. Since he could not describe the defendant as an honest man, Centeno concentrated on showing that there was insufficient evidence to convict him of murder. He made his point so well that, to everybody's surprise, Szemeredy was acquitted on 12 September 1881. Oddly enough, he was sentenced to two and a half years' imprisonment



Argentine Military Camp, 1866.

Back in Argentina, he travelled round the south of Buenos Aires Province, Chascomús and the Tuyú - where he embezzled a Justice of the Peace. He next crossed into Uruguay where he continued his escapades until mid-year. In Montevideo he met Baptiste Castagnet, whom he would see again in Buenos Aires a few weeks later. Upon arrival in Buenos Aires he lodged at the Hotel de Provence. He soon left in a trip to return a few days later. On 18 July 1876 he left the hotel claiming that some valuables left in his room had been stolen; a stratagem to which he resorted often to avoid paying his hotel bills. On 22 July, he moved into the Hotel Rome, where he resided until his precipitate escape following the murder of Carolina Metz.⁷

resident at the Hotel Provence, room No. 22, came to denounce the theft of: A belt containing 21 ounces of gold, two rings of the same metal and a silver watch with a silk chain.⁹ These were the rings that, ten days later, he would claim to have found in Carolina's room and on account of which he allegedly had a heated argument with Castagnet, whom he accused of being her real murderer.

The prosecutor, Dr Pondal, spent several years preparing the case against Szemeredy, mainly because he needed to show a motive for the murder. According to a report published in the newspaper *La Pampa* on 27 May 1879, he asked for the death penalty. *La Pampa* further reported on 3 November 1880 that Judge Insiarte had sentenced Szemeredy to

for the theft of the watch belonging to Commandant Domingo Jerez. Bearing in mind the years the defendant had already spent in prison, his sentence was considered as served and he was set free.¹³

Jack the Ripper

A psychopath, extreme violence, sex, intrigue and the chance to outwit all institutions: these, the basic ingredients of top grossing thrillers, explain clearly why Jack the Ripper's story continues to stimulate the imagination and lives on in popular fantasy, as easy to recreate as the fog that in our imagination enshrouded London in the nights of 1888.

In the early hours of 8 August of that year, the body of Martha Tabram, an ageing prostitute, was found dead in George Yard, off Whitechapel High Street. She had been stabbed 39 times. Because of the high incidence of crime in the area, whose inhabitants were working class and, in many instances, immigrants, and because the body was found near a pub, the crime was only cursorily investigated.

Three weeks later, in the early morning of 31 August, Mary Ann Nichols died almost instantly when a mysterious killer sliced with great accuracy her trachea, oesophagus and spine and laid open her abdomen, exposing her internal organs and viscera. A week later, the body of Annie Chapman was found with the same type of mutilations sustained by the previous victim.

All three victims were poor, alcoholic prostitutes from the slums of London.

Numerous arrests were made. The few, unreliable witnesses who came forward mentioned a well dressed man of about 40 years of age who spoke with a foreign accent. Towards the end of September, the murderer manifested himself through a letter and a post-card addressed to a news agency. In these letters, written in red ink and signed Jack the Ripper, he spoke of his hatred for streetwalkers and announced future crimes. In the hope that someone would recognise the handwriting and identify the criminal, the police made thousands of copies of the letters and posted them throughout the city. What they achieved instead, besides publicising the murderer, was to spread panic and, in a way, help to popularise the pseudonym of the best known serial killer in history.

On 29 September, perhaps encouraged by this tacit recognition,

the killer chose with just a few minutes' interval two new emissaries of his cruelty: Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddowes. He only slit the throat of the first one, but had more time to mutilate the second one in his usual way. A few days later George Lusk, president of the Mile End Vigilance Committee, received a package containing half the kidney of one of the victims and a note in which the Ripper claimed to have fried and eaten the other half.

cobbler to the policemen on the beat; from lawyers and businessmen to Queen Victoria's own grandson. Yet no one was ever condemned for the murders or even formally accused of them. The mystery of Jack the Ripper followed him into his accursed grave and today, when not even the dust of his bones remains, still endures.

In the Suspects' List

After his release from prison in 1881, Szemeredy remained for a short time in Argentina before returning



The National Congress, Buenos Aires. Szemeredy worked at a barber shop near this building in 1867.

To close his atrocious list, the mysterious Ripper introduced some new elements in the person of Mary Jane Kelly. This time the victim was young and lovely and, unlike the others, was not attacked in the street but in the room at 13 Miller's Court where she received her clients. With the same impunity as before, and enjoying the shelter of the grimy, clammy walls, the morbid criminal took his time to tear apart with surgical precision the inert body of the young woman. He dismembered her anatomy, separated viscera from organs, scattered about the room unrecognisable fragments of her breasts and mutilated her face by cutting off her nose and ears. The police surgeons took over a day to search for missing parts and put together again all the pieces of that macabre jigsaw puzzle.

And then the killer vanished, as furtively as he had come. All clues and suspects were investigated or followed up: from an East End Jewish

definitively to Europe. On 30 March 1882 he was arrested for desertion and confined in a military prison. In 1885 was declared insane and interned first in a military asylum and then in a state asylum near Pest. He was subsequently released into the custody of his family and disappeared again for several years, although it is known that he made his living as a sausage salesman for a while. In 1886, Dr Gotthelf-Meyer, a specialist on South American law, interviewed him in Budapest. Szemeredy showed up at their meeting carrying a huge stack of newspaper cuttings on his trial. He had tried to sell his memoirs to the Hungarian newspaper Egystertes, which had eventually rejected them, among other reasons, because they were written in the 'Magyar Dialect'.¹⁴ Szemeredy told Dr Gotthelf-Meyer on that occasion that he was considering going to America or joining the Carlistas in Spain.¹⁵ Nothing is known of his whereabouts during the next few years. He reportedly spent sometime in Vienna during August

1889 where he registered his address when he arrived.¹⁶ In March, 1890, he made the acquaintance of a widow, Julianne Karlovicz. They afterwards lived together in Budapest, where he worked as an assistant in her pork butcher shop.¹⁷

Researchers Adam Wood and Eduardo Zinna have tried to ascertain the whereabouts of the slippery Hungarian during the period of the Whitechapel crimes.¹⁸ Zinna has a pet theory, based on the similarity of their names and origins, that Szemeredy may have been in London in 1888 posing as Alonzo Maduro, a businessman from Argentina who spoke English with only a slight Spanish accent, allegedly because he had lived in the United States for a long time.¹⁹

As he tried to place shares of a railway company through Gresham House, a City Brokerage firm, Szemeredy/Maduro met and befriended a young clerk, Griffith S Salway. During his sojourn in London, Szemeredy lived at a hotel east of Finsbury Pavement, ten minutes from Whitechapel. One evening, Salway was strolling along Old Broad Street when he unexpectedly came across Szemeredy, dressed in an old hat and suit, slouching slowly along with bowed head and drooping shoulders. The two walked together through Spitalfields and Whitechapel, arriving back at Szemeredy's hotel at 10:30pm. The following morning the papers carried details of the first Whitechapel crime: the murder of Martha Tabram. When

Szemeredy, arriving at the office two hours later than usual, was shown a copy of the Star, he flew into a rage. Salway later heard him say that all prostitutes should be killed and on one occasion found surgical knives in the false bottom of a trunk belonging to Szemeredy. Soon afterwards the alleged Argentine left London and the murders ended.²⁰

During February 1892, Szemeredy was responsible for several robberies or attempted robberies in jewellery shops in Vienna, normally involving violence and, in one case, resulting in the death of a shop owner, Andreas Schütz. He also robbed a watchmaker's shop in Vienna on 4 June, leaving its owner, Marie Sotolar, with a badly fractured skull. On 16 September he robbed yet another jewellery shop in Vienna, hitting an employee on the head with a blunt instrument and leaving him lying in a pool of blood. But then his luck ran out.

On 26 September, Szemeredy was arrested in Pressburg, today Bratislava, capital of Slovakia, at a jewellery shop whose owner recognised him as the man who had sold him a stolen watch and chain. He was taken to the police station. Showing the same nervous disturbance as in previous confinements, he decided not to wait for his trial this time. He took a sharp razor out of his pocket, cut his throat from ear to ear and expired within a matter of minutes. His death would have gone unnoticed and been little more than another statistic, had police reports not leaked that Szemeredy and the Ripper were one and the same. Newspapers throughout the world spread the news, but Scotland Yard never accepted the evidence as conclusive.²¹

For many years, every time a notorious murder was committed in Argentina, the newspapers recalled the sojourn of the Ripper in this country and recounted the story for the benefit of new readers. In 1898, *La Nación* mentioned him under his full name and title of Count Luis Alejo Torsianj Szemeredy in an article comparing his crimes to a gory murder committed in Rosario:

Szemeredy, who was suspected of being Jack and the murderer and thief of Vienna, in Buenos Aires murdered Carolina Metz... spent almost five years in prison only to be absolved without a stain in his character, though this did not quash the belief that he was Jack the Ripper, then far from London he reappeared in Vienna, committed the same type of



*The Cabildo, Buenos Aires.
The Appeals Court met here in 1881 to consider Szemeredy's case.*

crimes and, mixed up in a robbery in a jewellery shop was arrested... since then nothing has been heard from Jack the Ripper.²²

The mystery surrounding all these events is still unsolved. From time to time, newly discovered information fuels discussions on old and new suspects. This is a true story that time has turned into a popular legend and an open-ended narrative.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

- 1 The War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870) was fought between Paraguay on the one side and an alliance of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay on the other. Paraguay's dictator and military leader, General Francisco Solano López, was killed on 1 March 1870 in the last action of the war together with his eldest son, a Colonel in the Paraguayan Army. By this time Paraguay was devastated and a considerable part of its male population had died. (Translator's Note).
- 2 *La Pampa*, 9 August 1877, Page 2.
- 3 *La Libertad*, 26 July 1876 and *La Pampa*, 27 July 1876.
- 4 Comisaría 1º Libro Copiador de Notas N° 25, (First Police Station, Records Book No. 25), Page 404. Text underlined in the original.
- 5 Ricardo Lopez Jordán (1822-1889) was an Argentine soldier and political leader who was active in his country's civil wars from 1841 until 1879. On 11 April 1870, his followers assassinated the Governor of the Province of Entre Ríos, General Justo José de Urquiza, and López Jordán took his place. The National Government sent a 16,000-strong army against his 12,000 troops. After

several months of armed struggle, López Jordán was defeated and sought exile first in Uruguay and then in Brazil. On 1st May 1873 he invaded Entre Ríos with an 18,000-strong army. He fought the National Army in numerous encounters, including the battle of the Talita Stream where Szemeredy was captured. In January 1874, Lopez Jordán crossed into Uruguay in defeat. His third and last rebellion lasted from November 1876 until his capture on 10 December. On 11 August 1879 he broke out from jail and sought refuge again in Uruguay. In December 1888 he took advantage of an amnesty to return to Argentina. On 22 June 1889, shortly before noon, an assassin came up to him in Esmeralda Street, Buenos Aires, and shot him twice in the head (Translator's Note).

- 6 *La Pampa*, 27 July 1877, Page 2.
- 7 *La Libertad*, 10 August 1877 From the Inquiry addressed by the Chief of Police to the Judge.
- 8 *La Pampa*, 28 August 1877, Page 2
- 9 Comisaría 1º Libro Copiador de Notas N° 25, (First Police Station, Records Book No. 25) Page 376
- 10 *La Nación*, 25 August 1880, Page 1
- 11 *La Pampa*, 28 August 1881, Page 1.
- 12 *La Nación*, 28 August 1881, Page 1.
- 13 *La Tribuna Nacional*, 14 September 1881 Page 2.
- 14 See Muusmann, Carl, *Hvem Var Jack the Ripper?* (Who Was Jack the Ripper?). The newspaper was identified in the *Port Philip Herald*, (Australia), 9 November 1892.
- 15 The Carlists emerged at the time of the death of King Fernando VII of Spain. They argued that the King's daughter, Isabel, could not succeed to the throne because the Salic Law, abolished by the King shortly before his death, was still valid in Spain. They crowned the King's younger brother as Carlos V (reigned 1833-1855) while his niece became Queen Isabel II. The two factions fought the First Carlist War (1833-1840), which was followed by two more (1846-1849 and 1872-1876). Carlos's heirs (Carlos VI, 1855-1861, Juan III, 1861-1868, Carlos VII, 1868-1909, and others) have continued to claim the Spanish throne. (Translator's Note)
- 16 See Morley, Christopher J: *Jack the Ripper: A Suspect Guide*.
- 17 See the *Port Philip Herald*, 9

November 1892, and the *Wiener Zeitung Abendblatt*, 28 September 1892.

- 18 See Wood, Adam *From Buenos Aires to Brick Lane: Were Alois Szemeredy and Alonzo Maduro the Same Man?*, *Ripperologist* No. 25, October 1999; and Zinna, Eduardo, *The Search for Jack el Destripador*, *Ripperologist* No. 33, February 2001.
- 19 'Believe it or not, [the two names] sound alike: A-LON-soh-mah-DOO-ro, A-LOI-seh-meh-REH-dee. The "z" of Alonzo would actually be pronounced as an "s" in South American Spanish; the same applies to the Hungarian combination "sz". Moreover, Alois is a common Austrian/Hungarian name and Szemeredy a very common Hungarian surname. Alonzo is a surname in Spanish and not a first name; it is a given name in America, though. Maduro could be a surname. It means "mature" or "ripe". An English person with little knowledge of either language who heard the name Alois Szemeredy, and knew the person came from South America, might well interpret the name as Spanish. Alonzo Maduro would then be a possibility.' Zinna, Eduardo, Private correspondence to Adam Wood, (26 April 1999), cited in Wood, Adam, *loc. cit.* Maxim Jakubowski and Nathan Braund reached a similar conclusion in the *Mammoth Book of Jack the Ripper*, though they spelled Szemeredy's first name as 'Alios'. Adam Wood, however, concluded that Szemeredy and Maduro could not have been the same man.
- 20 Salway kept his knowledge of the Ripper's identity to himself for many years. In 1949, he told his story to *True Detective's* Editor, John Shuttleworth, who published it in the May issue of the magazine. See Wood, Adam, *loc. cit.*
- 21 Among these newspapers were the *Olean Democrat*, New York, USA, 27 September 1892, *La Nación*, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 30 September 1892, the *New Oxford Item*, Pennsylvania, USA, 7 October 1892, and the *Port Philip Herald*, Australia, 9 November 1892.
- 22 *La Nación*, 21 October 1898, Page 5.

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Got an email address? Got the Rip!

Ripper Fiction

The Phantom Model

A Wapping Romance

HUME NISBET

I - The Studio

'Rhoda is a very nice girl in her way, Algy, my boy, and poses wonderfully, considering the hundreds of times she has had to do it; but she isn't the model for that Beatrice of yours, and if you want to make a hit of it, you must go further afield, and hook a face not quite so familiar to the British Public.'

It was a large apartment, one of a set of studios in the artistic barrack off the Fulham Road, which the landlord, himself a theatrical Bohemian of the first class, has rushed up for the accommodation of youthful luminaries who are yet in the nebulous stage of their Art-course. Each of these hazy specks hopes to shine out a full-lustred star in good time; they have all a proper contempt also for those servile daubsters who consent to the indignity of having R.A. added to their own proper, or assumed, names. Most of them belong to the advanced school of impressionists, and allow, with reservations, that Jimmy Whitetuft has genius, as they know that he is the most generous, as well as the most epigrammatical, of painters, while Rhoda, the model, also knows that he is the kindest and most chivalrous of patrons, who stands more of her caprices than most of her other masters do, allows her more frequent as well as longer rests in the two hours' sitting, and can always be depended upon for a half crown in an emergency; good-natured, sardonic Jimmy Whitetuft, who can well appreciate the caprices of any woman, or butterfly of the hour, seeing that he has so many of them himself.

Rhoda Prettyman is occupied at the present moment in what she likes best, warming her young, lithe, Greek-like figure at the stove, while she puffs out vigorous wreaths of smoke from the cigarette she has picked up at the table, in the passing from the dais to the stove. She is perfect in face, hair, figure and colour, not yet

sixteen, and greatly in demand by artists and sculptors; a good girl and a merry one, who prefers bitter beer to champagne, a night in the pit to the ceremony of a private box, with a dozen or so of oysters afterwards at a little shop, rather than run the entertainer into the awful expense of a supper at the Criterion or Gatti's. Her father and mother having served as models before her, she has been accustomed to the disporting of her

charms *à la vue* on raised daises from her tenderest years, and to the patois of the studios since she could lisp, so that she is as unconscious as a Solomon Island young lady in the bosom of her own family and can patter 'Art' as fluently as any picture dealer in the land.

They are all smoking hard, while they criticize the unfinished Exhibition picture of their host, Algar Gray, during this rest time of the model; Rhoda has not been posing for that picture now for at the present time the studio is devoted to a life-club, and Rhoda has been hired for this purpose by those hard-working students, who form the young school. Jimmy Whitetuft is the visitor who drops in to cut them up; a marvellous eye for colour and effect Jimmy has, and they are happy in his friendly censorship.

All round the room the easels are set up, with their canvases in a half-moon range, and on these canvases



Early 20th Century Wapping

Rhoda can see herself as in half-a-dozen mirrors, reflected in the same number of different styles as well as postures, for these students aim at originality. But the picture which now occupies their attention is a bishop, half-length, in the second working upon which the well-known features and figure of Rhoda are depicted in thirteenth-century costume as the Beatrice of Dante, and while young painter looks at his stale design with discontented eyes, his friends act the part of Job's comforters.

'There isn't a professional model in London who can stand for Beatrice, if you want to make her live. They have all been in too many characters already. You must have something fresh.'

'Yes, I know,' muttered Algar Gray. 'But where the deuce shall I find her?'

'Go to the country. You may see something there,' suggested Jack Brunton, the landscapist. 'I always manage to pick up something fresh in the country.'

'The country be blown for character,' growled Will Murray. 'Go to the East End of London, if you want a proper Beatrice; to the half-starved crew, with their big eyes and thin cheeks. That's the sort of thing to produce the spiritual longing, wistful look you want. I saw one the other day, near the Thames Tunnel, while I was on the prowl, who would have done exactly.'

'What was she?' asked Algar eagerly.

'A Ratcliff Highway stroller, I should say. At any rate, I met her in one of the lowest pubs, pouring down Irish whiskey by the tumbler, with never a wink, and using the homespun in a most delectable fashion. Her mate might have served for Semiramis, and she took four ale from the quart pot, but the other, the Beatrice, swallowed her dose neat, and as if it had been cold water from one of the springs of Paradise where, in olden times, she was wont to gather flowers.'

'Good Heavens! Will, you are atrocious. The sentiment of Dante would be killed by such a woman.'

'Realistic, dear boy, that's all. You will find very exquisite flowers sometimes even on a dust-heap, as well as where humanity grows thickest and rankest. We have all to go through the different stages of earthly experience, according to Blavatsky. This Beatrice may have been the original of Dante in the

thirteenth century, now going through her Wapping experience. It seems nasty, yet it may be necessary.'

'What like was she?'

'What sort of an ideal had you when you first dreamt of that picture, Algy?'

'A tall, slender woman, of about twenty or twenty-two, graceful and refined, with pale face blue-veined and clear, with dark hair and eyes indifferent as to shade, yet out-looking - a soulful gaze from a classical, passive and passionless face.'

'That is exactly the Beatrice of the East End shanty and the Irish whiskey, the sort of holy after-death calm pervading her, the alabaster-lamp-like complexion lit up by pure spirits undiluted, the general dreamy, indifferent pose - it was all there when I first saw her, only a battle royal afterwards occurred between her and the Amazon over a sailor, during which the alabaster lamp flamed up and Semiramis came off second best; for commend me to your spiritual demons when claws and teeth are wanted. No matter, I have found your model for you; take a turn with me this evening and I'll perhaps be able to point her out to you. The after negotiations I leave in your own romantic hands.'

II - Dante in the Inferno

It is a considerable distance from the Fulham Road to Wapping even going by bus, but as the two artist friends went, it was still farther and decidedly more picturesque.

They were both young men under thirty. Art is not as precocious as literature, and does not send quite so many early potatoes into the market, so that the age of thirty is considered young enough for a painter to have learnt his business sufficiently to be marketable from the picture-dealing point of view.

Will Murray was the younger of the two by a couple of years, but as he had been sent early to fish in the troubled waters of illustration, and forced to provide for himself while studying, he looked much the elder; of a more realistic and energetic, he did not indulge in dreams of painting any single magnum opus, with which he would burst upon an astonished and enthusiastic world, he could not afford to dream, for he had to work hard or go fasting, and so the height of his aspirations was to paint well enough to win a note of approval from his own particular school, and keep the pot boiling with black and white work.

Algar Gray was a dreamer on five hundred per year, the income beneficent Fortune had endowed him with by reason of his lucky birth; he did not require to work for his daily bread, and as he had about as much prospect of selling his paint-creations, or imitations, as the other members of this new school, he spent the time he was not painting in dreaming about a possible future.

It wasn't a higher ideal, this brooding over fame, than the circumscribed ideal of Will Murray; each member of that young school was too staunch to his principles, and idealized his art as represented by canvas and paints too highly to care one jot about the pecuniary side of it; they painted their pictures as the true poet writes his poems, because it was right in their eyes; they held exhibitions, and preached their canons to a blinded public; the blinded public did not purchase, or even admire; but all that did not matter to the exhibitors so long as they had enough left to pay for more canvases and frames.

Will Murray was keen sighted and blue-eyed, robust in body and for ever on the alert for fresh material to fill his sketch book. Algar Gray was dark to swarthinness, with long, thin face, rich-toned, melancholy eyes, and slender figure; he did not jot down trifles as did his friend, he absorbed the general effect and seldom produced his sketching-block.

Having time on their hands and a glorious October evening before them, they walked to Fulham Wharf and, hiring a wherry there, resolved to go by the old water way to the Tower, and after that begin their search for the Spiritual, through the Inferno of the East.

There is no river in the world to be compared for majesty and the witchery of association, to the Thames; it impresses even the unreading and unimaginative watcher with a solemnity which he cannot account for, as it rolls under his feet and swirls past the buttresses of its many bridges; he may think, as he experiences the unusual effect, that it is the multiplicity of buildings which line its banks, or the crowd of sea-craft which floats upon its surface, or its own extensive spread. In reality he feels, although he cannot explain it, the countless memories which hang for ever like a spiritual fog over its rushing current.

This unseen fog closes in upon the two friends as they take up their oars and pull out into mid-stream;

it is a human fog which depresses and prepares them for the scenes into which they must shortly add their humanity; there is no breaking away from it, for it reaches up to Oxford and down to Sheppey, the voiceless thrilling of past voices, the haunting chill of dead tragedies, the momentous hush of acted history.

in front appear like a dense forest of withered pines, and then mooring their boat at the steps beyond, with a shuddering farewell look at the eel-like shadows and the glittering lights of that writhing river, with its burthen seen and invisible, they plunge into the purlieu of Wapping.

Trough silent alleys where dark



Wapping (1861-64) by James McNeill Whistler

It wafts towards them on the brown sails of the gliding barges where the solitary figures stand upright at the stern like so many Charons steering their hopeless freights; it shapes the fantastic clouds of dying day overhead, from the fumes of countless fires, and the breaths from countless lips, it is the overpowering absorption of a single soul composed of many parts; the soul of a great city, past and present, of a mighty nation with its crowded events, crushing down upon the heart of a responsive stream and this is the mystic power of the pulsating, eternal Thames.

They bear down upon Westminster, the ghost-consecrated Abbey, and the history-crammed Hall, through the arches of the bridge with a rush as the tide swelters round them; the city is buried in a dusky gloom save where the lights begin to gleam and trail with lurid reflections past black velvety-looking hulls; a dusky city of golden gleams. St Paul's looms up like an immense bowl reversed, squat, un-English, and undignified in spite of its great size; they dart within the sombre shadows of the Bridge of Sighs, and pass the Tower of London, with the rising moon making the sky behind it luminous, and the crowd of shipping

shadows fled past them like forest beasts on the prow; through bustling market-places where bloaters predominated, into crammed gin-palaces where the gas flashed over faces whereon was stamped the indelible impression of a protest against creation; brushing tatters which were in gruesome harmony with the haggard or bloated features.

Will Murray was used to this medley and pushed on with definite purpose, treating as burlesque what made the dreamer groan with impotent fury that so dire a poverty, so unspeakable a degradation, could laugh and seem hilarious even under the fugitive influence of Old Tom. They were not human beings these breathing and roaring masses, they were an appalling arm of spectres grinning at an abashed Maker.

'Here we are at last, Algy,' observed Will, cheerily, as the pair pushed through the swinging doors of a crammed bar and approached the counter, 'and there is your Beatrice.'

III The Picture

The impressionists of Fulham Road knew Algy Gray no more, after that first glimpse which he had of Beatrice. His studio was once again to let, for he had removed his baggage and tent

eastward, so as to be near the woman who would not and could not come West.

His first impressions of her might have cured many a man less refined or sensitive; - a tall young woman with pallid face leaning against the bar and standing treat to some others of her kind; drinking furiously, while from her lips flowed a husky torrent of foulness, unrepeatable; she was in luck when he met her, and enjoying a holiday with some of her own sex, and therefore wanted no male interference for that night, so she repulsed his advances with frank brutality, and forced him to retire from her side baffled.

Yet, if she offended his refined ears, there was nothing about her to offend his artistic eyes; she had no ostrich feathers in her hat, and no discordancy about the colours of her shabby costume; it was plain and easy-fitting, showing the grace of her willowy shape; her features were statuesque, and as Will had said, alabaster-like in their pure pallor.

That night Algy Gray followed her about, from place to place, watching her beauty hungrily even while he wondered at the unholy thirst that possessed her, and which seemed to be sateless, a quenchless desire which gave her no rest, but drove her from bar to bar, while her money lasted; she appeared to him like a soulless being, on whom neither fatigue nor debauchery could take effect.

At length, as midnight neared, she turned to him with a half smile and beckoned him towards her; she had ignored him hitherto, although she knew he was hunting her down.

'I say, matey, I'm stumped up, so you, can stand me some drink if you like.'

She laughed scornfully when she saw him take soda water for his share, it was a weakness which she could neither understand nor appreciate.

'You ain't Jacky the Terror, are you?' she enquired careless as she asked him for another drink.

'Certainly not, why do you ask?'

'Cos you stick so close to me. I thought perhaps you had spotted me out for the next one, not that I care much whether you are or not, now that my money is done.'

His heart thrilled at the passivity of her loneliness as he looked at her; she had accepted his companionship with indifference, unconscious of her own perfection, utterly apathetic to everything; she a woman that nothing

could warm up.

She led him to the home which she rented, a single attic devoid of furniture, with the exception of a broken chair and dilapidated table, and a mattress which was spread out in the corner, a wretched nest for such a matchless Beatrice.

And as she reclined on the mattress and drank herself to sleep from the bottle- which she had made him buy for her, he sat at the table, and while the tallow candle lasted, he watched her, and sketched her in his pocket-book, after which, when the candle had dropped to the bottom of the bottle which served as a candle stick, and the white moonlight fell through the broken window upon that pure white slumbering face, so still and death-like, he crept softly down the stairs, thrall'd with but one idea.

Next day when he came again she greeted him almost affectionately, for she remembered his lavishness the night before and was grateful for the refreshment which he sent out for her. Yes.' she had no objections to let him paint her if he paid well for it, and came to her, but she wasn't going out of her beat for any man; so finding that there was another attic in the same house to let, he hired it, got the window altered to suit him and set to work on his picture.

The model, although untrained, was a patient enough sitter to Algarr Gray when the mood took her, but she was very variable in her moods, and uncertain in her temper, as spirit-drunkards mostly are. Sometimes she was reticent and sullen, and would not be coaxed or bribed into obedience to his wishes, at other times she was lazy and would not stir from her own mattress where she lay like a lovely savage, letting him admire her transparent skin, with the blue veins intersecting it, and a luminous glow pervading it, until his spirit melted within him and he grew almost as purposeless as she was.

Under these conditions the picture did not advance very fast, for now November was upon them with its fogs. Very often on the days when she felt amiable enough to sit, he had no light to take advantage of her mood, while at other times she was either away drinking with her own kind or else sulking in her bleak den.

If he wondered at first how she could keep the purity of her complexion with the life she led or how she never appeared overcome with the quantity of spirits she consumed, he no longer did so since she had given him her

confidence.

She was a child of the slums in spite of her refinement of face, figure and neatness of attire; who, six years before had been given up by the doctors for consumption, and informed that she had not four months of life

ideal, had linked himself to a soul already damned, which still held on to its fragile casement, a soul which was dragging him down to her own hell; her very cold indifference to him drew him after her, and enslaved him, her unholy transparent loveliness



Lizzie Siddall by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

She posed for Beatrice, like the girl in the *Phantom Model*, and died young of an overdose of laudanum. Was she the real-life inspiration for the character in the story?

left. Previous to this medical verdict she had worked at a match factory, and been fairly well conducted, but with the recklessness of her kind, who resemble sailors closely, she had pitched aside caution, resolved to make the most of her four months left, and so abandoned herself to the life she was still leading.

She had existed almost entirely upon raw spirits for the past six years, surprised herself that she had lived so long past her time, yet expecting death constantly; she was as one set apart by Death, and no power could reclaim her from that doom, a reckless, condemned prisoner, living under a very uncertain reprieve, and without an emotion or a desire left except the vain craving to deaden thought, and be able to die game, a craving which would not be satisfied.

Algarr Gray, for the sake of an

bewitched him, and the foulness of her lips and language no longer caused him a shudder, since it could not alter her exquisite lines or those pearly tints which defied his palette; and yet he did not love the woman; his whole desire was to transfer her perfection to his canvas before grim Death came to snatch her clay from the vileness of its surroundings.

IV A Lost Soul

December and January had passed with clear, frosty skies and the picture of Beatrice was at length ready for the Exhibition.

When a man devotes himself body and spirit to a single object, if he has training and aptitude, no matter how mediocre he may be in ordinary affairs, he will produce something so nearly akin to a work of genius as to deceive half the judges who think themselves competent to decide

between genius and talent.

Algar Gray had studied drawing at a good training-school, and was acknowledged by competent critics to be a true colourist, and for the last three months he had lived for the picture which he had just completed, therefore the result was satisfactory even to him. Beatrice, the ideal love of Dante, looked out from his canvas in the one attic of this Wapping slum, while Beatrice, the model, lay dead on her old mattress in the other.

He had attempted to make her home more home-like and comfortable for her, but without success; what he ordered from the upholsterer she disposed of promptly to the brokers, laughing scornfully at his efforts to redeem her, and mocking coarsely at his remonstrances, as she always had done at his temperate habits. He was not of her kind, and she had no sympathy with him, or in any of his ways; she had tolerated him only for the money he was able to give her and so had burnt herself out of life without a kindly word or thought about him.

She had died as she wished to do, that is, she had passed away silently and in the darkness leaving him to discover what was left of her, in the chill of a winter morning, a corpse not whiter or less luminous than she had been in life, with the transparent neck and delicate arms, blue-veined and beautiful, and the face composed with the immortal air of quiet which it had always possessed.

She had lasted just long enough to enable him to put the finishing touches upon her replica, and now that the undertakers had taken away the matchless original, he thought that he might return to his own people, and take with him the object which he had coveted and won. The woman herself seemed nothing to him while she lay waiting upon her last removal in the room next to his, but now that it was empty, and only her image remained before him, he was strangely dissatisfied and restless.

He had caught the false appearance of purity which was about her, but all unaware to himself, this constant communication of the more natural part had been absorbed into his being, until now the picture looked like a body waiting for the return of its own mocking spirit, and for the first time, regretful wishes began to tug at his heart-strings; it was no longer the Beatrice of Dante that he wanted, but the Beatrice who had mockingly enslaved him with her vileness, and

whom he had permitted to escape from him for an ideal, she who had never tempted him in life, was now tormenting him past endurance with hopeless longings.

At length, as midnight neared, she turned to him with a half smile and beckoned him towards her; she had ignored him hitherto, although she knew he was hunting her down... 'You ain't Jacky the Terror, are you?' she enquired careless as she asked him for another drink.

He had gone out that afternoon with the intention of returning to his studio in the West End, and making arrangements for bringing his picture there, but after wandering aimlessly about the evil haunts where he had so often followed his late model, he found that he could not tear himself from that dismal round. A shadowy form seemed to glide before him from one gin-palace to another as she had done in life; the places where she had leaned against the bars seemed still to be occupied by her cold and mocking presence, no longer passive, but repulsing him as she had done in the early part of the first night, while he grew hungry and eager for her friendship. She was before him on the pavement as he turned towards his attic; her husky, oath-clogged voice sounded in his ears as he passed an alley, and when he rushed forward to seize her, two other women fled from him out of the gloom with shrieks of fear. All the voices of these unfortunates are alike, and he had made a mistake.

The ice had given way on the morning of her death, and the streets were now slushy and wet, with a drizzling fog obscuring objects, so that only an instinct led him back to his temporary studio; he would draw down his blind and light his lamp, and spend the last evening of the slums in looking at his work.

It appeared almost a perfect piece of painting, and likely to attract much notice when it was exhibited. The dress which Beatrice had worn still lay over the back of the chair near the door, where she had carelessly flung it when last she took it off. He turned his back to the dress-covered

chair and looked at the picture. Yes, it was the Beatrice whom Dante yearned over all his life - as she appeared to him at the bridge, with the same pure face and pathetic eyes, but not the Beatrice whom he, Algar Gray, passed over while she lived, and now longed for with such unutterable longing when it was too late.

He flung himself down before his magnum opus, and buried face in his hands with passionate and hopeless regret.

Was that a husky laugh down in the court below, on the stairs, or in the room beside him? - her devil's laugh when she would go her own way in spite of his remonstrances.

He raised his head and looked behind him to where the dress had been lying crumpled and away from his picture. God of Heaven! his dead model had returned and now stood at the open door beckoning upon him to come to her, with her lovely transparent arm bare to the elbow, and once more dressed in the costume which she had cast aside.

He looked no more at his replica, but followed the mocking spirit down the stairs, into the fog-wrapped alley, and onwards where she led him.

Down towards Wapping Old Stairs, where the shapeless hulks of the ships and barges loomed out from the swirling, rushing black river like ghosts, as she was, who floated towards them, luring him downwards, amongst the slime, to the abyss from which her lost soul had been recalled by his evil longings.

The Phantom Model: An Afterword

Eduardo Zinna

*The Phantom Model is many things. It is, first of all, a superb Victorian ghost story. Hume Nisbet, its author, was not only a writer but also an artist and a world traveller. Most of his work consisted of tales of adventure, the best known being *Bail Up!* (1890), a romance of bush-ranging in Queensland, the title being the command given by thieves to their victims. He wrote, however, a number of supernatural tales: *The Haunted Station and Other Stories* (1894), from where *The Phantom Model* comes, and *Stories Weird and Wonderful* (1900). Nisbet drew upon his own life for his adventure stories. Where did he find the subjects for his gothic tales? He lingered long after hours awaiting inspiration for these fantasies. In his introduction to *The Haunted Station*,*

Nisbet recalled that the stories it contained were 'thought out during hours of solitude when the bustling world was hushed in slumber, and solemn midnight granted to the mind the true conditions for the reception of the occult mysteries'.

But *The Phantom Model* is also a realistic story, is also drawn from life. Nisbet, who had been an art student and teacher, knew well the world he describes, the world of artists and their models, of whom some pursue excellence in their craft and some succumb to commercialism in order to survive. He also conjures up vividly another world, which even years later was seldom visited and little known: the East End, the Ratcliff Highway, Wapping Old Steps washed by the mighty Thames, the grimy alleys, the gin-palaces, the market-places and the attics inhabited by their sombre denizens. Indeed, Nisbet suggested that his ghosts were all too real. In his introduction he said that his phantoms 'were gleaned from reliable sources or personal experience... malignant influences I have tried to define in such sketches as "The Phantom Model".'

Nisbet's *Wapping Romance* is also - in my view at least - a roman à clef. A character who makes a brief appearance in the story is Jimmy Whitetuft, whom Impressionists allow has genius, who is described as the most generous and most epigrammatical of painters, the kindest and most chivalrous of patrons, good-natured, sardonic Jimmy Whitetuft, who has a marvellous eye for colour and effect. Who can he be but James Abbott McNeill Whistler, the witty, acid-tongued, flamboyant American Impressionist painter who lived in London for many years and was a friend to Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Oscar Wilde?

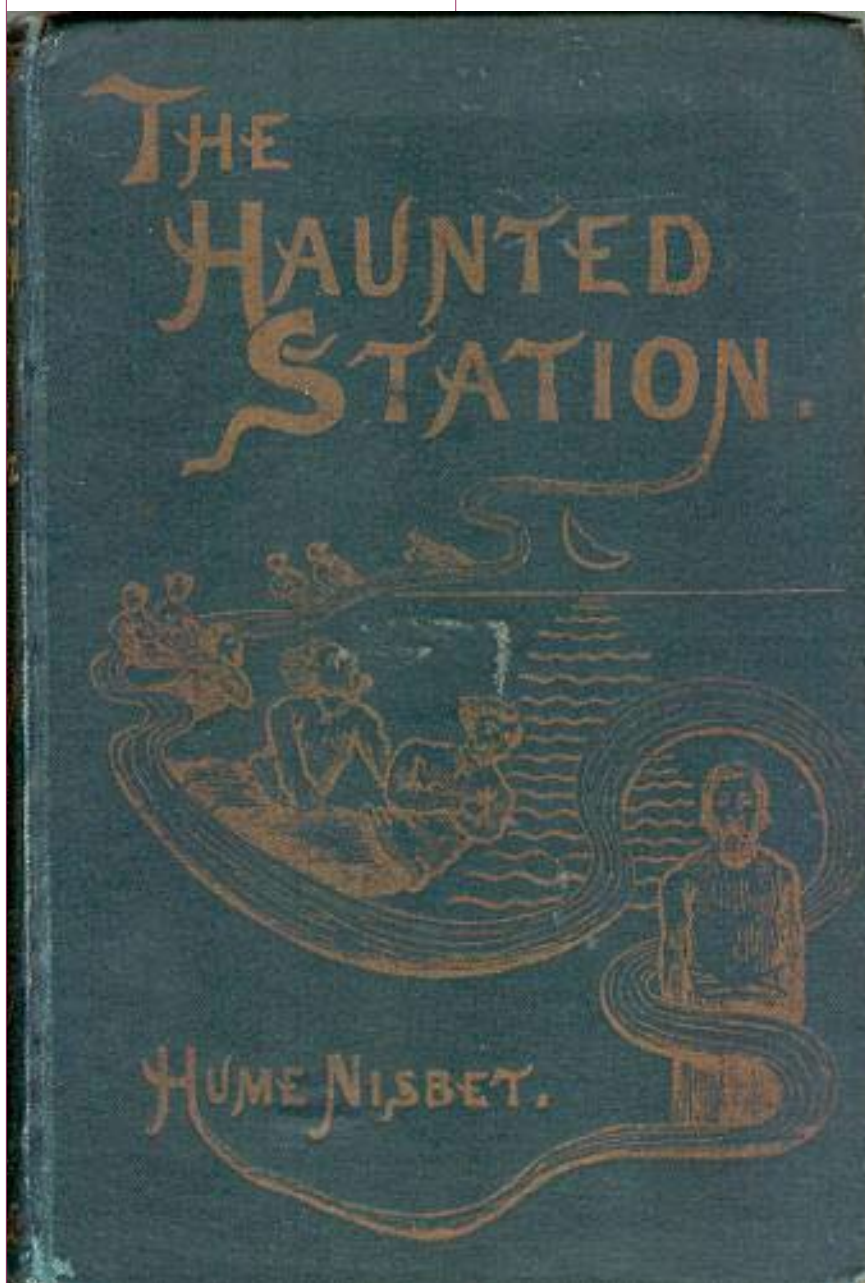
And the *Phantom Model* herself, the beautiful, foul-mouthed, doomed daughter of the slums? Who could she be? In 1850 Whistler's friend, the painter and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was looking for a model when he was introduced to Lizzie Siddall, a tall, stately working-class girl with limpid hazel eyes, pallid, ethereal colouring and a mass of red-gold hair who had recently started modelling. Unlike the young woman in Nisbet's story, Lizzie was gentle and demure. Rossetti had found his model; Dante had found his Beatrice. They fell in love. They embarked on a long, chaste and vexed liaison, often hindered by her poor health - like the

Phantom Model, she was consumptive. Years went by. Lizzie became a talented artist on her own right. As her health deteriorated further, she developed a strong laudanum habit. On 23 May 1860, after ten years, she and her Dante were married. Their happiness was short-lived. In May 1861, she was delivered of a still-born child. On 10 February 1862 she died from the effects of a very large dose of laudanum. The jury at the inquest concluded that her death had been accidental. Rumours have always abounded that she killed herself. Rossetti placed a notebook containing the only copies of his poems amidst her masses of hair in her coffin. He painted her portrait once more, as Beatrice. In October 1869 he had her grave opened to retrieve his notebook. He was told that her hair filled the coffin, shining

red and gold.

Nisbet's tale is, finally, a tale of Jack the Ripper, and that is the main, though not the only reason for its inclusion here. If you have already read *The Phantom Model*, you know that his appearance is only fleeting. Yet it is one of the very first mentions of the Ripper, not as a fictional or ostensibly non-fictional representation of the real-life Whitechapel murderer, but as his mythical persona, the cold, malevolent harlot killer lurking in the shadows just beyond the reach of the gas-lights.

I hope you liked *The Phantom Model*, with its fog-bound alleys and its cold, black waters. If you did, you are in for a treat, for this is not the only tale where its author evoked the Ripper and his wretched prey. Hume Nisbet will be back in these pages.





ROBERT
LINFORD

JOHN
SAVAGE

DAVID
O'FLAHERTY

The Green of the Peak

The Coronial System in Britain

[Those of us] who hunt the Ripper are vaguely reminiscent of the Spanish conquistadores, those foolhardy adventurers of four centuries ago who, driven by shimmering visions of El Dorado, Cibola or Quivira, cut their way through steaming jungles or toiled across burning deserts to find at their journey's end, not the riches for which their souls longed, but clusters of dirt villages or desolate plains.

*Philip Sugden,
The Complete History of
Jack the Ripper, 1994, pp374-5*

In the Service of Sugden: The Coronial System and the Whitechapel Murders

Besides providing details of terrible crimes such as the Ripper murders, coroners' inquiries into sudden deaths allow something of the victims to survive, something close to the spark of life. A sampling of Catherine Eddowes's inventory of possessions perhaps tells us more about the way East End unfortunates lived than does reading Jack London's *People of the Abyss*: Layers of clothing, a portion of a pair of spectacles, a single red mitten, tin boxes of tea and sugar, a table knife, a spoon. Six pieces of soap. Unredeemed pawn tickets. The list is eloquent. It is nothing less than the voice of Eddowes herself, telling us how she lived. In its complete form, this list of possessions, an account of the remainders of Kate Eddowes's life, survives only within City of London coroner Samuel Langham's inquest depositions. Famous figures live on in grand public addresses, diaries, and private papers, but victims of sudden death - often lost and lonely souls - survive only within the inquest depositions of the people who knew and encountered them. By examining the death, we learn about

the life. The inquest records provide a valuable historical contribution to our understanding of murder most foul.

Yet, for the Whitechapel murders, our record is far from complete. Three out of five inquest depositions for the canonical victims of Jack the Ripper are missing. That is, we have the inquest papers of coroners Samuel Langham and Roderick Macdonald that relate to the murders of Kate Eddowes and Mary Jane Kelly, respectively. However, frustratingly missing are the papers on Wynne Baxter's inquiries into the first three canonical murders - those of Polly Nichols, Annie Chapman, and Elizabeth Stride.

Additionally lost are the depositions from Dr Thomas Diplock's inquest into the death by suicide of an often-discussed Ripper suspect: Montague John Drutt.



*Montague John Drutt
(1857-1888)*

Luckily, contemporary newspapers covered the Ripper victim inquests, and thus, to some extent, the absence of the official records is assuaged. However, in the case of the Drutt inquiry, the press only carried brief accounts, and therefore we know little about the circumstances of Drutt's suicide, leading to decades of speculation about the suspect and the reasons for his early demise.

What valuable materials not covered by the press - like the Eddowes inventory - might yet nestle in the lost records?

And why are these documents missing?

Some claim that the Blitz of the Second World War was responsible. If so, then the Blitz was oddly thorough. Could these materials yet survive, forgotten in some dank, weeping basement in London?

Our obsession for detail and documentation will not allow us to say, 'We don't know.' We *must* know. Until someone invents a time machine, contemporary records are our only path to 1888. Without the inquest, our view is further diminished, obscured as the view through a lost window. And it is the same view we have of the coroners themselves. 'Ripperology' knows little about them.

It is proper that we take up an in-depth study of the coronial system that investigated the Whitechapel murders. The coroners are the writers of our canon, and if we really want to locate missing depositions, a better understanding of both the coroners and the system under which they operated can only help us. Cortez is supposed to have said that the Spanish had a disease of the heart for which gold served as the only cure. We suffer the same disease. Documentation is our cure, and we must have it. But look at us. We're amateurs. Many of us don't even know how to use a compass properly. How will we ever traverse the jungle to El Dorado, where the lost depositions rest, where the dead spring back to life?

Mr Sugden warning of 'clusters of dirt villages' and 'desolate plains' suits us very well. Let's heed him by doing some planning. If we really hope to succeed, we must study the lay of the land. We have little understanding of the Victorian coroner or the English system of coronial law. Indeed, since coroners are most associated with

post-mortem examinations, the public often confuses them with pathologists who cut open bodies. English coroners do not perform autopsies - only a minority of their profession have been trained in medicine, and the majority are drawn from the ranks of solicitors and barristers. Thus they most probably are not pathologists or medical examiners. Indeed, although the history of the office extends to past centuries, the internal post-mortem as a common feature of the inquest was, as we shall see, a notion of nineteenth century reform.

Coroners are independent judicial officers; in the counties of 1888 England, they were elected magistrates whose jurisdiction was sudden death and treasure trove. Their appointment, then and now, is for life. Despite their status as magistrates, historically the office has not been a respected one, and after Thomas Becket, arguably no English official has been more abused than the coroner.

A long march is in order. The land is unfamiliar. This country might look like old Victorian London, but it's really Sugden's steaming jungle - dense, tangled forest, ancient and complicated. It owes its immense size not to acreage, but to time. This jungle stretches over a thousand years that we know of; like world maps before Columbus, the extremities of our coronial map end in blank spaces, except for sketches of terrible monsters we hope are imaginary. Nevertheless, our machetes are sharp and we've been practicing with our compass. We armour ourselves not with good Castilian steel, but with copies of *Ultimate Sourcebook* padded with contemporary press clippings. Jungle does not deter us. We are conquistadores in the service of Sugden.

*As I came down the Highgate Hill,
The Highgate Hill, the Highgate Hill,
As I came down the Highgate Hill
I met the sun's bravado,
And saw below me, fold on fold,
Grey to pearl and pearl to gold,
This London like a land of old,
The land of Eldorado.¹*

North is this way.

Roots of the English Coronial System

The public, sometimes encouraged by the Press, have an idea that the Coroner is an autocratic, interfering, and self-opinionated minor official, whose duty is merely to discover

the cause of death, and that he ought to confine himself strictly to that function. This is absolutely and entirely erroneous.

S Ingleby Oddie, Inquest, 1941

If the coroner's jury can come to a decision as to the cause of death, then that is all that they have to do.

*Coroner Roderick Macdonald,
Mary Jane Kelly inquest, 1888*

Tell the overseers, with my compliments, to mind their own business... You tell the overseers that they are not to interfere with my work... You are between the devil and the deep sea. You had better look after the devil - that is, the coroner...

*Coroner A. Braxton Hicks,
The Richmond and Twickenham Times, 30 December 1899*

I am ten years old, and live in Crabtree-row, Bethnal-green, facing the Bird Cage, near Nova Scotia-gardens; I live with my mother, who is now confined. I remember one day when my mother was washing, seeing a foreign boy near Nova Scotia-gardens... I was looking down upon him from the lost window... he was standing still... he had a brown hairy cap on his head - the peak of it was lined with green; the cap produced looks exactly like it - I do not know how long he remained there; I was looking at him a few minutes... I was looking out at the lost door, and could see the green of the peak.

Witness John King, describing an unidentified murder victim, 'The Italian Boy Murder', 1831

Straight away, we meet a fellow explorer coming from the opposite direction of the route we must travel. A native to the year 1936, this denizen of the coronial jungle displays Home Office markings. He stumbles toward us, dishevelled and clutching at our sleeves, gasping into our ears before reeling away again into the foliage. A refugee of the Home Office's Departmental Committee on Coroners, he offers us a stiff warning:

Any comprehensive study of the history of the office of coroner will always be rendered difficult by the fact that, although the coroner's court is a court of record and enjoys the privileges, thereof, coroners have not in the past been in the habit of

taking adequate steps to preserve their records.²

The history of the office is incomplete. Nobody knows when it originated. We do know that coroners existed as early as the ninth century. The earliest known reference to them is that 'King Alfred hanged a Judge for treating a Coroner's inquest as conclusive.'³ That's all there is - a coroner, an inquest. It doesn't tell us much about what coroners were actually doing in the ninth century. From the sound of it - coroners holding inconclusive inquests - their function was similar to that of their professional descendants, in that their proceedings were inconclusive in the sense that they were not legally binding; if a coroner accused a person of murder, a trial would determine guilt, not the coroner's inquest. Apparently, one of Alfred's judges learned that lesson at the cost of his life. Perhaps the office goes back even farther than the time of Alfred. No one knows.

The official date of origin is 1194, when one of Richard the Lionheart's statesmen, Hubert Walter, either resurrected a defunct office or reformed an existing one. King Richard had a big problem as the twelfth century ended - he needed money. The Third Crusades had drained his coffers, and to make matters worse, as Richard returned home in 1192, Duke Leopold of Austria took him hostage and demanded a large ransom for his return. The King's loyal henchman, Hubert Walter, thus needed revenue fast. He turned to Richard's royal piggy bank, which for the Norman King was England itself.



*King Richard the Lionheart
(reigned 1189-1199)*

Walter faced some complications. Because much of the royal revenue came in the form of fines that were levied for any infraction of the law,

the great interval between the Eyres, England's travelling court system, was a real problem because it took justices years to complete their circuits, during which time valuable evidence was lost. Income was lost. Another kink was that the administrative system, headed by the sheriffs, was corrupt (the sheriffs were notorious for embezzling).⁴ Walter's solution was a new official who would document the pleas of the Crown, ie, preserve the record, to which the justices would refer the next time they rode into town. Therefore was born the office of 'crownor' - so named because he acted on behalf of the Crown - which was later transmuted into the term we know today, 'coroner.'

Article 20 of the 1194 Eyre established the coroner's appointment and function:

*Furthermore three knights and one cleric shall be elected by each county keepers of the pleadings of the Crown.*⁵

Three coroners and a scribe would thus record all the pleas in their respective counties. It was a vague function, but we can pick up a little information from Article 20. Look at the knighthood qualification - coroners were elected officials and men of substance. The Statutes of Westminster, 1275, described them as 'most wise and discreet Knights', and it was illegal for them to 'demand or take any thing of any man to do his Office, upon great forfeiture to the King.'⁶

Crownors were unpaid. Their tenure was, as it is now, for life. Professor Bernard Knight, an authority on the medieval coroner, believes the reasoning behind the knighthood qualification was that men with their own property and income would not be tempted to embezzle.⁷

After Article 20 of the 1194 Eyre, the main statute is 4 Edward I, *De Officio Coronatoris*. Until 1887, it was the only directive for coroners. It is extensive and detailed, and addresses those things about which the King's coroner should make inquiries and how he should go about it. The statute directs, 'He shall go to the places where any be slain, or suddenly dead.'⁸ That sounds so simple, but we will see how such a simple directive caused the nineteenth century coroners tremendous problems. Furthermore, *De Officio Coronatoris* says:

All the wounds ought to be viewed, the length, breadth, and deepness, and with what weapons, and in what part of the body the wound or hurt is,

*and how many be culpable, and how many wounds there be, who gave the wound.*⁹

That is not a post-mortem as we think of it today. In the medieval process, the coroner had no power to compel medical witnesses to examine corpses and testify. There is no pathology there - one of the coroner's concerns was to identify the weapon so he could put a value to it. By identifying the wound-giver, the coroner could then seize his property for the Crown, if he had any. The inquest is about generating income.

The coroner was involved with almost every facet of the English judicial system, whenever and wherever there was a prospect of claiming money for the Crown. He was not confined to only investigation of death. For example, he investigated rape, and, in cases of sanctuary, he arranged for criminals' abjuration from the realm (again, seizing their property for the Crown). He recorded the infamous trials by ordeal (seizing the property of felons).

The coroner acted, noted Professor Knight, as a kind of police surgeon, in that he examined injuries not only of the dead, but of the wounded, including women believed to be victims of rape. Furthermore, the coroner recorded declarations of outlawry. He held inquests on treasure trove to ensure the King's claim on discovered treasure. Likewise, he investigated wrecks of the sea. Whenever whales and sturgeons washed up on shore, that was the place to find the 'crownor' as he calculated the value of the carcasses for the King - whales and sturgeons being royal fish, Crown property.



A whale as illustrated in a Medieval Bestiary

The coroner also investigated non-fatal fires, incidents that destroyed property but that neither killed nor injured anyone.¹⁰

And, of course, the coroner was concerned with sudden death, yet another terrific source of income for the Crown, particularly when the business was murder. The coroner's jury determined the value of property belonging to murderers and suicides, which was sold, with townships responsible for paying amercements to the justices.

There was also the *murdrum* fine, a neat trick that enticed Saxons not to assassinate their Norman overlords. How it worked was that whenever a corpse turned up in a village, the legal assumption was that the dead person was a Norman who had been assassinated, in which case, villagers faced a costly *murdrum* fine. In order to avoid it, villages bore the burden of proof to show a presentment of Englishry - witnesses appeared before the coroner to testify to the dead person's identity, and if they were unable to prove identity, they had to cough up the stiff *murdrum* fine.

It is therefore simple for us to imagine how uneasy country folk were whenever a stranger wandered into their community. *What if the fellow dies here? Who is he?*

Professor Knight writes that the temptation for the peasants simply to remove the corpse to another locale must have been great, but that such schemes were risky - the villager would face another large fine if the coroner caught them moving the corpse.

If people failed to report the body, that was worth another fine. Never mind that it must have taken the coroner some days to travel from town to town, during which time decay and corruption were not idle - it was illegal to remove or bury a dead body before the coroner inspected it. Until the coroner arrived, the body stayed where it was, stinking and rotting. Indeed, it is believed that decomposing bodies were on display during the whole of the inquest, as opposed to the discreet, private view that nineteenth century coroners and juries enjoyed.¹¹

Another neat trick for the Crown was the law of *deodand*. Imagine a boat capsizes and a villager drowns. Without a culprit, who was there to fine in such cases? The *deodand* handily solved the dilemma: this assigned guilt to an object, in this case the boat. Its sin could be removed by

assigning it - or its value - to the Church or the King.¹²

The Medieval Coroner's Inquest



King Edward III
(reigned 1327-1377)

To help get an idea of what a medieval coroner's inquest was like, consider an example from 1362, during the reign of King Edward III. Here the coroner looked for property to seize and placed a value on the murder weapon. Strictly speaking, the *deodand* was applicable only in cases of misadventure, but note that did not stop the coroner in this case:

The townships of Terrington, Walpole, Walsoken, and Walton with Emneth present that (Walter Caley) was found slain at Walsoken about the hour of none on Sunday [Note: this was 3:00pm on 6 March 1362, 'none' being the ninth hour after sunrise at the Equinoxes].

Inquest was taken on the following Monday at Walsoken by (twelve sworn men) and by the said four townships (sworn). They say on their oath that on Saturday next before the feast of St Gregory the Pope in the thirty-sixth year of King Edward the Third at Walsoken, John Odey of Emneth, with a knife called a broad, assaulted Walter, Bartholomew Caley's son, who was forty years of age, and feloniously killed him by striking him on the left side of the belly near the navel; and he suffered from this wound until the hour of none on the following Sunday, when he died, after having the rites of the Church. And they say that John Odey fled forthwith, and he had chattels worth half a mark, for which the township of West Walton with Emneth will account. The knife was worth four pence, for which the said

*township with the hamlet (Emneth) will account. It was ordered that he be arrested, etc.*¹³

After the coroner accounted for and recorded the value of Odey's property and the murder weapon, the township was then responsible for selling the items and presenting their determined value to the justice when he arrived to hold the trial.

It is easy to imagine how the average villager must have feared the sight of the coroner plodding towards them. All business came to a halt when the coroner came to town because everybody attended the inquest, and not just in the town where the body was located, for, as noted in the example above, townspeople from adjoining communities had to attend. *De Officio Coronatoris* specified that the coroner 'command four of the next Towns, or five or six to appear before him...' ¹⁴

Inquests must have been tedious and unpleasant, and so must have the coroner have seemed, as far as the common folk were concerned.

'At no time did Coroners seem to have been treated with respect,' Lord Francis Hervey declared in the Commons in 1876. Hervey was right. Besides the fact that villagers lost income from having to attend the inquest, the coroner was likely to inflict some further type of financial hardship on villagers in the form of fines. Maybe he would deprive their suffering community of some valuable salvage like a beached whale or a shipwreck.

Some people would not stand for it. Look what happened when a thirteenth century coroner named William le Poer tried to secure a wreck:

...whereas John of Berwick and his colleagues, the king's justices in eyre, during their last eyre in Cornwall, had William le Poer chosen coroner to receive and guard wreck in the island of Scilly, the men of that island prevent, appropriate and lay waste this wreck, and do not permit the same coroner to perform his office with regard to it, threatening to drown and butcher him etc; and recently a whale was beached there, a fish which belongs to the crown, but the men and mariners of that island caught, sold and carried off that fish, so that the king had nothing from it and the said coroner did not dare to interfere in the matter in any way, for which he requests a remedy etc... ¹⁵

The relationship between coroner and citizen was complicated. As

noted, the coroner's prime concern was not the people's welfare. Rather, he sought funds for the Crown. That is not to say there was no concept of justice in England, but when someone died, the loss was the King's - someone had deprived him of a subject and thus of a source of revenue. Inquests were held in the interests of the Crown. On the other hand, the inquest, inconvenient and expensive as it was for towns, also presented a weird dichotomy. The coroner was a popularly elected figure who was required to hold open proceedings before several towns at once. He was the King's man, but his authority originated from the people, and at the bottom of every inquest was a verdict that issued from the jury, not from the coroner. The voice of the inquest was the voice of the commons. Mixed up with the fine collecting was a spirit of civic independence.

That element of independence strongly came into play in the nineteenth century, when activists and radicals seized on it as a means for reform.

The Coronial System and the Reformers

In the nineteenth century, the Radicals or Reformers wanted to publicize systematic abuses by establishment figures: the government, overseers of prisons and workhouses, and incompetent doctors. When the establishment killed members of the public - through negligence, incompetence, or outright murder - who protected them? The Reformers' answer was that the person who should protect them should be the coroner. Therefore, the Reformers saw the coroner, a popularly elected, independent magistrate who held open inquiries, to be the perfect person to publicize abuse. At least that was the conceptual ideal.

Remember, however, that the coroner was the King's man, so before the radicals could harness the coroner's court to their reform wagon, the coroner's court would have to undergo some dramatic changes. Somehow, the welfare of the public would have to become the chief concern of the inquest.

Accordingly, during the 1830s and 1840s, the focus of the coronial system underwent a fundamental transformation: the inquest became the people's court, and the coroner, the poor man's magistrate. Besides publicity, another of his chief tools was a hitherto under-utilized procedure, one which he insisted on

using with ever-increasing frequency - the pathological post-mortem. The prevalence of the internal post-mortem in the 1888 Ripper inquests - yielding information that we today find to be incredibly valuable - owes its existence to a political campaign waged only fifty years earlier.

To gain a footing, let's look at a case that illustrates what was wrong with the system prior to reform, the Oldham inquest held on John Lees, a victim of the 'Peterloo Massacre' of 16 August 1819.

'We Don't Want Your Evidence'

John Lees was a cotton spinner, a veteran of the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815, just four years earlier. He was one of the thousands of people who attended a massive Reformist demonstration at St Peter's Field, Manchester, so they could hear speeches by Radicals such as Henry 'Orator' Hunt, advocating suffrage and reform of child labour laws. The event was peaceful, but there was a bit of a militaristic attitude on the field, with some people waving flags and marching about in formation. Watching the gathering from nearby were the Manchester magistrates, who, even before the speeches began, grew alarmed by the size of the crowd. Fearing a riot, the magistrates ordered the military to disperse the demonstrators.

Unfortunately, the military responded with swords, killing a number of people - including Lees, who died of his wounds a couple of weeks later. There was tremendous public outrage against the government and sympathy for the slain; tensions ran high. As coronial historian Ian Burney notes, the protracted death of John Lees not only gave the tense atmosphere time to stew, but it also gave a Radical lawyer named James Harmer time to travel north to Oldham from London in order to participate in the coroner's inquiry and to gather numerous witnesses to the massacre.

Yet, even before the witnesses had a chance to give their side of events, the inquest opened on a jarring note. Because coroner Thomas Ferrand was away on another inquiry, his clerk, a man named Batty, opened the inquest in his place. Batty seems to have expected a brief, open-and-shut inquest, because the Manchester authorities had put out the story that Lees had been crushed to death in the mass of humanity at Peterloo. However, as Batty and the jury gathered to view the corpse, they observed obvious sword wounds on Lees' body.

When Batty and the jury returned to begin the inquest after their disquieting view of the body, the presence of Harmer and his witnesses - all ready to talk about the governmental massacre - confronted

them.¹⁶ It must have been apparent that the Lees inquest was about to become complicated. Batty's tactic was to question Harmer's right to attend the inquest, and he told him bluntly, 'We don't want your evidence.'

When Harmer insisted he had every right to produce evidence at a public inquest, the coroner's clerk immediately adjourned the session until the arrival of coroner Ferrand. Naturally, the coroner was no happier than his clerk with the presence of the Radical lawyer at the inquest. It was obvious to the coroner that Harmer, appearing on behalf of the victim's parents, meant to demonstrate that elements of the cavalry and Manchester yeomanry had committed murder.¹⁷

Although technically during inquests there are no parties, since the inquiry is only a fact-finding mission, in the Lees inquests two camps emerged. On one side, there was Harmer attempting to introduce witnesses to demonstrate the military's indiscriminate use of violence in St Peter's Field. On the other side were lawyers for the Manchester magistrates and coroner Ferrand, who sought to exclude such evidence and confine testimony to the matter of who specifically had attacked John Lees.¹⁸ Of course, in a crowd of thousands such as the Peterloo demonstration, pinpointing of identities presented a difficult task for witnesses. When one witness, Peter Drummond, testified about soldiers galloping into the crowd and wielding swords, Ferrand disallowed his testimony because 'it identified none who cut John Lees'. There was an objection.

A Juryman rose and said, 'Mr Coroner, do you mean to tell us that we, the Jury, are not competent to say what ought or ought not to be received as evidence? Are we to understand that we are not to form an opinion as to what is evidence?'

CORONER. - Yes, I do.¹⁹

Ferrand had committed a legal sin - he had just trampled on the jury's ability to assess testimony.

The open nature of the inquest became an issue when Ferrand also attempted to restrict the press from covering the inquest. At the beginning of the inquest, Ferrand allowed note taking with the injunction that nothing be printed until the inquest had closed. Of course, editors in London ignored Ferrand's request. When *The Times* printed accounts of the proceedings in defiance of an order by



The Peterloo Massacre at St Peter's Field, Manchester, 16 August 1819

Ferrand not to do so until the inquest had closed, the coroner, feeling that he had been taken advantage of and possibly fearing a riot, prevented reporters from taking notes in court.²⁰ Ferrand turned his wrath on a reporter from the offending *Times*, J Ross. After accusing Ross of betraying him, Ferrand insisted he no longer record the proceedings.

CORONER. - Mr Ross, are you taking notes?

MR ROSS. - You told me that my word was not to be believed; therefore, I answer no more.

CORONER. - I restrain you from writing.

(Mr Ross continued to write.)

*CORONER. - (Having been repeatedly pressed by the persons around his table.) Are you still writing, Mr Ross? (No answer.) I desire you to desist; you will be removed out of court if you continue to write. (After a considerable interval,) Constables, take him out.*²¹

By excluding the press, Ferrand excluded all of England from the traditionally open inquest. Reporters continued to file dispatches taken from memory, and debate about the openness of the Oldham inquest expanded to include not just James Harmer, but anyone capable of reading a newspaper.

Ultimately, Harmer inadvertently sank the inquest (and the publicity for reform it presented) when he questioned Ferrand on whether he had viewed the body of Lees (remember Ferrand was absent during the opening of the inquest). Ferrand refused to answer. He realized that he had failed to observe that most basic of the coroner's duties, the view of the body.

HARMER. - Sir, I beg to ask you, whether you have seen the body of the deceased? I beg leave respectfully to remind you, that that is a very important part of your duty.

CORONER, after a considerable pause - I don't answer that question.

Mr HARMER. - Do I understand you, Sir? Do you mean to say, that you refuse to answer that question?

*CORONER. - My answer is, that I do not answer that question.*²²

Ferrand attempted a secret nocturnal exhumation, but his lantern attracted the attention of Oldham residents, who also decided to get out of bed and attend. Although Ferrand did ultimately take his view, the

damage to the inquest was complete.

When Harmer proposed to Ferrand that he planned to introduce five hundred witnesses to testify they saw soldiers hacking down demonstrators,²³ Ferrand adjourned the inquest - by then it had stretched on for a month - on the grounds that the jury was fatigued.

The Court of King's Bench then terminated the proceedings because of Ferrand's failure to view the body in the presence of the jury (as noted, the jury had instead taken their view of the corpse in the presence of Ferrand's clerk). When Harmer and the jurors returned to court on the day Ferrand had specified for the recommencement of proceedings, Ferrand simply did not show up.



Henry 'The Orator' Hunt
(1773-1835)

that 'The right of excluding the public from Coroner's Inquests was first assumed, twelve years ago, at Manchester.'²⁵

Even in defeat, the Radicals still took a step forward by stimulating debate about the open nature of coroners' courts.

Open My Body

Next, the Government compounded the Peterloo - Oldham fiasco by sending Henry 'Orator' Hunt to Ilchester gaol for speaking at Peterloo. They should have known better than to send to prison a fellow whose nickname was 'Orator.' Soon Hunt began making big noises from confinement, criticizing gaoler William Bridle's management of the prison.

Despite written pleas from the jurors, who wanted to deliver a verdict of murder,²⁴ Ferrand never re-opened the inquest into the death of John Lees, and the High Court never ordered him to.

After the aborted Oldham inquest, some coroners took the King's Bench ruling as permission for holding closed inquests. Indeed, on the floor of the House of Commons in 1832, Henry Hunt, the Radical speaker who had been present at Peterloo, asserted

One of Hunt's targets was the prison inquest, which he exposed as a lethargic and unjust affair that assisted in concealment of institutional murder (denial of nourishment, beatings, etc). Inquiries were slanted in the prison's favour. Regular features of prison inquests were gaolers who were able to give unsworn testimony, inmates who feared recrimination when they had to give evidence in the presence of gaolers, and cursory medical evidence establishing cause of death. Hunt began publicizing the usefulness

of the post-mortem to combat all that.

During a hearing into conduct at Ilchester gaol, Hunt's criticism focused on a prison inquest into the death of a prisoner named James Ford. An external medical examination of Ford's corpse was supposed to have taken place in a darkened cell, where the body lay shackled. Although Ford had been deprived of nourishment, the medical cause of death was listed as 'Died from the visitation of God.'²⁶

The inquest ignored the contributory factor to Ford's death - the conditions in which he was imprisoned. Although he had only 'examined' the body in darkness, the examining surgeon, James Bryar, excused the management of Ilchester gaol by supposing that Ford had worked himself into a violent frenzy and died. Hunt revealed the worthlessness of Bryar's medical testimony.

HUNT. - *You said Ford might have died from his violent effects?*

BRYAR. - *He might.*

HUNT. - *And was it not possible for a medical man to have examined and discovered if that had been the case?*

BRYAR. - *He might have discovered it if he had opened the head and the body.*

HUNT. - *Was his body and head opened?*

BRYAR. - *No, Sir.*

HUNT. - *What is your reason for supposing he died of violent means, when you took no pains to ascertain it?*

BRYAR. - *It was only from what I heard from other people.*

HUNT. - *If a person has died of a fit or an apoplexy, is that ascertained by any appearances?*

BRYAR. - *In that case, the same means must be resorted to.*

HUNT. - *If the man had been killed by falling out of bed, there must have been some bruises?*

BRYAR. - *Yes.*

HUNT. - *Then the only reason why you stated to the coroner that he died of violence, was from what others had said?*

BRYAR. - *Yes.*²⁷

Examining the Coroner

Hunt then examined coroner Richard Pople Cames, who had presided over Ford's inquest:

HUNT. - *Had Dr Bryar ever seen Ford in his life-time?*

CAMES. - *I apprehend not.*

HUNT. - *Was the opinion of Dr*

Bryar, the only mode by which you endeavoured to ascertain how Ford came by his death?

CAMES. - *Yes, Dr Bryar stated that he had known and heard of men who had worked themselves into a passion drop down.*

HUNT. - *Did it occur to you that Dr Bryar could only be speaking by guess, unless that he had opened his head or his heart?*

CAMES. - *It appeared that Dr Bryar could form an opinion by the statements of the witnesses, and it did not occur to me that it was necessary, Dr Bryar having stated that such things did occur.*

HUNT. - *What evil do you apprehend could have occurred to a dead man by having his head and heart opened?*

CAMES. - *None whatever: but people in the country places are very averse to these operations, and that makes me sometimes not to insist upon it, from motives of humanity.*

In Ford's case, the medical evidence was born of hearsay, not direct observation. There was no pathological evidence of death - one could be murdered in gaol with no one the wiser. At the hearing, Hunt dramatically served Cames with a public notice:

*If you should be called upon to take an inquest upon my body, while I am in this prison, I hereby request you will summon Mr Shorland, of Ilchester, and Mr Davis, of Andover, surgeons, to open my body.*²⁸

As Ian Burney writes, Hunt had linked political and medical corruption together.²⁹ Hunt's message was that the inquest and pathology, the study of not only the cause of death, but also the evolution of death in the body, were the tools that could defeat corruption and oppression.

Under-Utilization of the Post-mortem

The problem was that coroners under-utilized the procedure - note Cames reference to the public's aversion, and the 'humanity' he showed by not opening the body. Even today, we consider autopsies cold and intrusive. Somehow, the physical cause and effect of death robs the body of its dignity. The feeling was even worse in the early nineteenth century, when dissection was associated with crime. The main source for the anatomist, indeed, was the scaffold.³⁰

The 1832 Anatomy Act, while expanding the dissection pool by making unclaimed bodies of paupers

available to anatomists, also expanded the shame associated with the procedure. From the point of view of families, the coroner wanted to violate the deceased's dignity; he wanted to treat it like a hanged felon or an unwanted, unclaimed workhouse corpse. Imagine their horror.

Data are incomplete, but a study of Westminster inquests during 1835-8 showed that post-mortems were only performed in 17 per cent of inquests.³¹ Another study, covering South London and the City of London for 1820-9, found that post-mortems were only performed in 23 per cent of inquests.³²

In about eight out of ten cases, no post-mortem was performed. Besides stigma, another reason for this was that, prior to 1836, coroners had no ability to order surgeons to perform them nor to testify at inquests. Surgeons operated on a voluntary basis, and they received no pay for their work. That made for a catch-as-can-catch system where coroners seeking surgeons were beggars not choosers. Radical activists could only publicize the need for post-mortems at inquests; it would take a Radical coroner to implement them.

Advent of Thomas Wakley, The Man Who Was Nearly Always Right

Nine years after Hunt and the inquiry at Ilchester gaol, the Radicals found an opportunity to run a candidate when East Middlesex coroner John Wright Unwin died. Their man was Thomas Wakley, surgeon and founding editor of the reformist medical journal, *The Lancet*.

The name Wakley chose for his journal perfectly sums up his philosophy: 'A lancet,' Wakley wrote in 1823, 'can be an arched window to let in the light or it can be a sharp surgical instrument to cut out the dross and I intend to use it in both senses.'³³ Besides his journal, Wakley's other lancet to 'cut out the dross' would be the coroner's court.

At the time, Thomas Wakley was thirty-five. Born in 1795, the son of a Devonshire farmer, he had lived a colourful life. Athletic and handsome, he was a former South Seas cabin boy, boxer, surgeon, and editor. In August 1820, members of Arthur Thistlewood's gang had attacked him and burned down his house. The gang had mistakenly believed Wakley was the masked decapitator who had beheaded the Cato Street conspirators after their hanging. He was not.³⁴



Reformist coroner Thomas Wakley
(1795-1862)

Wakley was strongly anti-establishment, motivated by 'life's brutalities and corruptions,' which he had witnessed during his teenage sailing days and his early hospital work in London, where he had 'found the diseases of the poor were made materials for enriching the corrupt.'³⁵

He became a staunch, biting opponent of England's medical institutions. He loathed teaching hospitals that turned out ill-equipped surgeons who, in his opinion, went on to murder people through their incompetence. He called the Warden and Court of the Society of Apothecaries 'the old hags of Rhubarb Hall.'³⁶

In his perpetual struggle with the establishment, Wakley displayed a Churchillian wit. But, in his anxious righteousness, he often failed to observe the niceties society demanded. At a blue plaque ceremony outside Wakley's former residence at 35 Bedford Square, London in 1962, his successor at *The Lancet*, Dr T F Fox, remarked that Wakley was 'nearly always right in what he said, but not always wise in the way he said it.'³⁷ Wisdom aside, Wakley's combination of wit and penchant for bluntness made him a colourful and entertaining figure and a formidable opponent to the entrenched establishment and outworn and unjust social policies.

Marrying the Coroner's Inquest to Radicalism

Following 'Orator' Hunt's example,

Wakley wed the coroner's inquest to radical politics in order to educate and safeguard the public.

In fighting the new Poor Law and workhouse conditions, he carried on the activism exhibited by Harmer and Hunt into the next generation. He believed that the coroner's court should be open to the public and that post-mortems should be a routine feature of the inquest.

But, in attacking England's hospitals and medical system, Wakley added another area for reform besides the coroner's court: the coroner's qualification. He argued that the coroner should be a medical constable:

*Some time ago a man met with a very slight accident on the head, and upon being taken to an hospital at the west end of the town, the surgeon, while, what was called 'half seas over,' attended him, and by a bad operation, killed the man; that man's skull was now preserved in a museum in London. An inquest was held on the body before a lawyer coroner, and a verdict of manslaughter was returned against the carter who had caused the first accident, whereas, if a medical coroner had presided, the verdict would have been manslaughter against the surgeon.'*³⁸

Such medical - legal questions became a major element of the 1830 East Middlesex election. Wakley's opponent was Limehouse solicitor William Baker. The election became a huge affair lasting some ten days, with thousands of people gathered to hear the candidates speak. Attendance was large; on the second day of the election, the crowd was estimated at 7,000 people, hooting, yelling, and cheering.³⁹

Coronial elections were notorious for their rowdiness. On the first day of the East Middlesex contest, a four-horse open carriage full of Baker supporters dangerously forced its way into the dense crowd as Wakley spoke and interrupted him for ten minutes, 'during which the tumult was very great.'⁴⁰

Wakley supporters showered the occupants of the carriage with mud.

'Medical Coroners' versus 'Legal Coroners'

When Wakley addressed the freeholders from the hustings, he played to an appreciative crowd, standing alternatively on casks, beer barrels, and ladders. The following account gives the flavour of his lively, populist spiel, as recorded in *The*

Times of 10 September 1830:⁴¹

It had been said, 'Who would think of electing a doctor to the office of Lord Chief Justice?' Why none but an ass, an ass with two short ears. (Laughter.) Was the office of coroner a lawyer's office? (Cries of 'No.')

What were the duties? Were they not invariably the duties of a medical man? (Cries of 'Yes.')

⁴²

He insisted that the coroner should be a medical man not a lawyer:

*It was also said that a coroner had to deal with the dead; why a lawyer did not know a dead subject from a living one. (Laughter and cheers.) It was known that lawyer-coroners had held inquests upon living persons; a Mr Keats, a coppersmith, at the east end of the town, informed him (Mr Wakley) of a coroner, who had held no less than three inquests on one woman who was alive. (Loud laughter.) Was it not monstrous to elect a person as coroner who knew nothing whatever of dead bodies? The freeholders had not to elect a Chief Justice of the King's Bench, but a coroner of the county, who would attend to their interests. (Cheers.) It was for them to remedy abuses when the power was placed in their own hands, otherwise they would be taunted with their own abuses when they complained of abuses in a higher quarter.'*⁴³

Wakley urged freeholders to 'oust lawyers from every situation they could... a lawyer should never be in the office of coroner...'⁴⁴

Wakley urged that the coroner had a role to play in medical reform. The British, 'by the humanity of the public, and by their feeling for the sufferings of their afflicted fellow-creatures,' had established some of the greatest medical institutions in the world - the public hospitals - he stated.

However, he railed, the authorities entrusted with the administration of the public hospitals were corrupt. Instead of using the institutions for the welfare of the people, he asserted, the authorities used them for profit. Through the coroner's inquest, such abuses could be corrected.

Wakley also cited poor training programmes that unleashed graduates who were 'destitute of information from those employed to instruct them, [and who] went to all parts of the kingdom to mutilate rather than to cure. Now,' he reasoned, 'if an ignorant, brutal, mercenary quack doctor destroyed a person, was not the medical coroner to bring him to

justice?'⁴⁵

By contrast, Baker argued that the coroner should be a lawyer not a doctor - a legal coroner not a medical coroner. He countered that it was the coroner's obligation to aid the jury in their deliberation. And who was better suited to that task than a lawyer versed in England's legal system? For medical advice, the legal coroner could properly rely on the testimony of medical witnesses. (Baker, however, assumed the cooperation of medical witnesses. In 1830, medical witnesses were unpaid and coroners had no power to compel their attendance.)⁴⁶

Baker maintained that the true purpose of the coroner, or any judicial figure, was to instruct the jury on the facts of evidence presented.

Baker supporter George Frederick Young asserted in *The Times* that medical coroners threatened the survival of the foundation for England's legal system - the jury. Medical coroners, Young argued, would bring their 'own dogmas, and prejudices, and prepossessions.' Moreover, he stated, the medical coroner would 'draw the attention of the jury from the plain and straightforward investigation of facts, into the labyrinths of his own scientific inquiries.'⁴⁷

Young asked, if the medical coroner differed with the testimony of medical witnesses, to whom should the jury defer - to judge or to testimony? Rather, he claimed, if they gave way to the medical coroner, verdicts would be nothing more than judicial opinion, not decisions based on evidence presented in the court.

According to Young, medical coroners would effectively combine the role of judge, witness, and jury. In such a scenario, he argued, 'the intervention of a jury on an inquest should be wholly dispensed with, and the inquiry delegated to the coroner alone.'⁴⁸

Refuting Young's concern about juries, Wakley promised to 'give publicity to his conduct' by holding open courts - an invocation of the John Lees inquest that established for voters an association of legal coroners with closed inquests.

Protecting the Common People

During the campaign, the Radical activist Henry Hunt spoke on Wakley's behalf. He reminded the freeholders of the outrages at Peterloo and Ilchester and he urged 'Englishmen loving liberty' to vote for the surgeon.⁴⁹

Finally, Wakley appealed to the

public's self-interest.

'It was to correct the present system,' he told them, 'that he solicited to be elected - to cause the hospitals to be properly governed, the poor to be properly treated, and the pupils to be properly instructed.' He warned the freeholders that if they didn't elect him, 'the blood of some of their fellow creatures would be upon them.'⁵⁰

An open letter from a Wakley supporter appealed to Middlesex women to urge their men to vote for a medical coroner, so 'no longer would the wretched sufferers be neglected; no longer would they be the victims of ruthless and incompetent practitioners.'⁵¹

The parallelism with motherhood was a redefinition of the coroner's role, one that heralded a forthcoming age of public guardianship. In that open appeal to the women of Middlesex in 1830, the Victorian coroner - whose ranks would include the Ripper case coroners, Langham, Diplock, Baxter and Macdonald - was born.

But the new age would have to wait a little longer - for Wakley was defeated. In a close contest, the freeholders elected Baker by a majority of 136 votes.⁵²

The Middlesex contest, however, proved only a warm-up for Thomas Wakley. In 1835, he won a seat in Parliament as the Radical MP representing Finsbury, and carried on the fight for reform in the House of Commons.

'The Big Four'

During the period 1829-36, four major developments occurred that changed the nature of the coroner's inquest:

1 *Formation of the Metropolitan Police in 1829*

Simply stated, because an organized police force would undertake a greater number of investigations of death, this meant there would be more inquests.

2 *The Births, Deaths, and Marriages Act, 1836*

This act called for registration of all deaths. Cases of suspicious death were referred to the coroner, who decided whether an inquest was warranted. After the inquest, the coroner provided the registrar with a certificate for the cause of death. He could also release bodies for burial while inquests were underway. Legally,

no corpse could be buried without proper certification from either registrar or coroner.

In particular, the Act called for a reckoning for deaths of the poor: in requiring the occupiers of houses to report deaths, it described 'the Master or Keeper of every Gaol, Prison, or House of Correction, or Workhouse, Hospital, or Lunatic Asylum, or public or charitable Institution' as occupiers.⁵³

Thus, the Act required an accounting for all deaths, and led to greater coronial scrutiny of gaol and workhouse deaths.

3 *The Medical Witness Act of 1836*

This act, Wakley's brainchild, gave coroners the power to compel legally qualified medical practitioners to testify at inquests, and if desired, conduct post-mortems. For the first time, such a medical witness would receive a fee of one guinea (ie, one pound and one shilling, ie, 21s or £1 1 0) for his testimony, and two guineas (42s or £2 2 0) for performing an examination, authorized and payable by the coroner. The penalty for non-attendance was five pounds.

Because we are going to hear a lot of complaints about money, for non-British readers particularly, the following explanation of the British pre-decimalized monetary system might help:

12d (12 pence) = 1s (shilling)

20s = 1 pound (£ or l)

6s 8d (six shillings and eight pence) = 1/3rd of £1

13s 4d (thirteen shillings and four pence) = 2/3rd of £1

The Act also provided jurors with the ability to compel the coroner to summon further medical witnesses if they were unsatisfied with the first witnesses.⁵⁴

Opponents of the Bill objected to payments to medical witnesses because of fears that they would lead to jobbing between coroners and surgeons. Wakley defended the fees and suggested that an even greater amount of money was appropriate.

He cited the danger that surgeons faced in possibly contracting communicable diseases from corpses (and which resulted in higher insurance premiums), and their lack of travelling expenses (by contrast, barristers on Commissions of Inquiry travelled in style and

received five guineas a day besides expenses).

Wakley also rejected jobbing fears. He noted 'that the Coroner generally called in his cousin, who was a surgeon. The Coroner had not the power to do so; for the medical man who was known to possess most skill in the district in which the occurrence which gave rise to the inquest took place, was generally called in.'⁵⁵

- 4 *The years 1832-1835 saw general agreement in Parliament that in the interests of justice, coroners' courts should be open to the public.*

Traditionally, with the medieval coroner summoning entire towns to attend inquests, openness had always been a chief characteristic, but recent cases like the Oldham inquest had disputed the public's right of attendance. In 1832, members of the House of Commons sought to require that all proceedings of inquests be carried out in open court (except the view and jury deliberations).⁵⁶

The House of Lords rejected the measure because, while it agreed in principle that coroners' courts should be open, it wanted to provide coroners with some measure of control in extraordinary cases (for example, their ability to exert control over an excited court room). There was an attempt at compromise by allowing the exclusion of unruly people, but that coroners should have the sanction of the jury and later justify their actions to the King's Bench and Home Secretary.⁵⁷

Ultimately, that Bill was also defeated and no law concerning the openness of the court was passed. Although the idea wasn't expressed in legislation, there was general agreement that inquests should be open, and that publicity was the soul of justice.

Because of the advent of the 'Big Four', inquests of the 1830s and 1840s saw an increase in their quantity, quality, and publicity. The stage was set for the Radicals when, at the end of the decade, West Middlesex coroner Thomas Stirling died. Thomas Wakley made another run for the office. After a more muted election than in 1830 which revisited the medical - legal question that had been fought over in the earlier election, Wakley this time succeeded, and was admitted to the office of coroner of West Middlesex in

February 1839.

But although he had the power to order post-mortems and compel medical testimony in the cause of reform, the new coroner faced a dilemma. If he wanted, he could order post-mortems at will, but he still faced public aversion and resentment. What good would he then achieve, if he imposed autopsies upon juries against their will? Therefore, Wakley knew that he had to change the public's perception of the post-mortem.

Pressing for more Post-mortems

The way to gain gradual public acceptance for the post-mortem, Wakley reasoned, was to make it a routine feature of the inquest. Given the stigma attached to the 'opening up' of bodies, he had to tread carefully.

Wakley did not want to throw juries into the deep end and watch them frantically thrash about. He knew that the thing to do would be to start them in the shallow end, and ease them into deeper water. So, at the end of his first inquest, when the jury returned a verdict of 'Natural death by the visitation of God', he chose not to insist on a post-mortem. Instead, he gently suggested its usefulness for the future. The jury, he reminded them, 'ought to know the order of a disease to return a proper verdict.'

The Times of 27 February 1839 reported on Wakley's first inquest:

*The object of law generally was not, in his opinion, formed so much for the detection of crime as to prevent its occurrence. With that conviction, he was led to believe that coroners' inquests, from their first institution, were of the first importance in a moral point of view, as regarded the administration of criminal law. In his opinion, even with respect to the case they had just decided upon, a post mortem examination was truly desirable, although there was no discrepancy in the evidence.*⁵⁸

To emphasize his point, he drew an example:

It might transpire that an individual, heir to property, might wish to get rid of a second person, who stood between the former's speedy possession of it, and for that purpose might administer to him morphiate, the principle of opium, and cause death. To detect if such had been done, it was necessary in all cases of sudden death that a post mortem examination should take place, but

*not so much so in cases resulting from known accidents, or palpable instances of suicide. He intended to put the county to as little expense as possible; but he should feel it his duty, where no judgment could be fairly formed from an external appearance of a body, always to order a post mortem examination.*⁵⁹

Although Wakley wanted to hold autopsies in all cases, he offered a compromise - to hold post-mortems when the cause of death was not evident. Also, we might note how Wakley mentions the usefulness of the post-mortem in crime prevention. Clearly, his intention was to use the post-mortem to reveal not only hidden murders, as in poisonings, but also to unmask such wrongs as inhumane incarceration in prisons and asylums, neglect in the workhouses, and medical quackery.

To Wakley, the post-mortem was a tool to aid a charitable and moral mission to alleviate the sufferings of the poor. The notion of inquests preventing crime was a major shift from the attitude of previous coroners like Ferrand and Cames. Spectators (no doubt many of whom were Radicals and reformist sympathizers) cheered the short speech, and Wakley, like any consummate politician, concluded the inquest by standing the jury to drinks.⁶⁰ Nothing greases the wheels better than the buying of rounds.

But, by October, Wakley was spinning his wheels.

Miss Charlotte Goring, a wealthy woman about to leave her relatives to marry, was suspiciously found dead next to an empty vial of turpentine. To Wakley's annoyance, the jury at the inquest ignored his advice to open her body for a cause of death. Instead, they returned a verdict of death by natural causes. Frustrated, Wakley shook his head and signed off on the verdict, but not without a promise:

*I sign this, gentleman, because it is my duty to do so. It is your verdict, and not mine. You will hereafter see the great benefits to society at large to be derived from post mortem examinations in such cases as this.*⁶¹

'How Many Paupers Have You Boiled?'

Wakley had already decided further boldness was necessary. He had begun to impose his authority. In September 1839, he drew on the thirteenth century *De Officio Coronatoris* - to 'go to the place where any be slain or suddenly dead.'

Wakley issued a directive called 'Instructions from the Coroner of Middlesex.' In it, he demanded notification of not only suspicious deaths, but all cases of sudden death:

*That notice should be given to the coroner, by headboroughs, the police, parish constables, and beadles, in all cases when persons die suddenly - when persons are found dead - when persons die from any act of violence, or any accident - when women die during labour, or a few hours after delivery - when persons are suspected to have died from the effects of poisons or quack medicines - when persons die who appear to have been neglected during sickness or extreme poverty - when persons die in confinement, as in prisons, police-offices, or station-houses - and when lunatics or paupers die in confinement, whether in public or private asylums.*⁶²

It was a warning to the Establishment: the coroner's eye was on them.

He also became more aggressive in his inquests. He insisted that authorities cooperate with him. When he issued a warrant to exhume Thomas Austin, a pauper who had died after he reportedly fell into a copper of boiling water at Hendon Union workhouse, and then was buried without proper registration, the parish vicar refused to comply with the coroner's order.

Despite Wakley's citation of statute, law, and custom - principally the requirement that the coroner and jury had to view the body before holding the inquest - Rev Theodore Williams held his ground and tried to debate law with the coroner while he continued to refuse to assist with the exhumation. In doing so, he inhibited Wakley's right to hold the inquest.

Wakley turned next to Williams's churchwardens, but when he sent a constable to serve his warrant on them, they also refused. One of them told the constable, 'Give my compliments to the coroner, and tell him I shan't take any notice of his warrant.'

Exasperated, Wakley declared, 'I have been told by several persons since I came into the village that I should not see the body. Now, we will see whether I shall or not.' With that, he directed the Hendon constable to exhume Austin and marched off to the churchyard to see it done.

Stung by the vicar's lack of cooperation, Wakley oversaw the exhumation in a most public manner. He ordered Austin dug up while two

services were being conducted in the churchyard. The tempestuous coroner did not wait for the first service to end before beginning the exhumation; cooler heads prevailed upon him to at least pause during the second.⁶³

Once the jury had had their view of the corpse, Wakley was able to proceed with the inquest. When one workhouse official questioned whether the constable had exhumed the correct body, Wakley's response was withering: 'If this is not the body of the man who was killed in your vat, pray, Sir, how many paupers have you boiled?'⁶⁴

Ultimately, the verdict of 'accidental death' was less important than the issue of the coroner's ability to compel officials to assist him in an inquiry that not only investigated causes of death, but also investigated their circumstances.

The Hounslow Flogging Case

Wakley achieved his greatest victory in 1846 when he held an inquiry into the death of Private Frederick John White of the 7th Queen's Own Hussars. While drunk, White had struck a sergeant and had received 150 lashes as punishment for his offence.⁶⁵



Grave of flogging victim Private Frederick John White of the 7th Queen's Own Hussars (courtesy David Inglis, web master, www.thequeensownhussars.co.uk)

In the infirmary, White appeared at first to recuperate from the punishment, and outwardly his wounds healed. However, the private died suddenly on 11 July, aged 27. Regimental surgeons performed a post-mortem. Conflicting statements

were made about the cause of death by a regimental officer and by two of the surgeons. The officer initially claimed that White had died of a liver complaint. Meanwhile, regimental surgeon Dr James Warren certified the cause of death as inflammation of the heart while another attending surgeon Dr Hale blamed inclement weather for the heart inflammation).⁶⁶

The regimental surgeons refused to admit that the cause of death could have been the flogging that White had received. Wakley, calling on his surgical background, questioned the results of the post-mortem. He ordered another examination, and the jury concurred with him.

By this means, Wakley demonstrated the usefulness of the post-mortem. He summoned to testify Erasmus Wilson, a distinguished surgeon and dermatologist and author of the medical textbook, *Healthy Skin*, who by this date had performed between 500 and 1,000 dissections.⁶⁷

Dr Wilson's post-mortem on White affirmed the cause of death as an inflammation of the chest and lungs, but he cited a contributory factor that the regimental surgeons failed to recognize. He found a disorganization of the muscles lining the inflamed area, a 'pulpy softening of the muscles' that occurred when they ruptured by spontaneously contracting as White was flogged.

The flogging had literally caused White's muscles to explode, and the ruptured muscles lay all along the inflammation noted in both autopsies. Although Wilson concluded that White had died of the inflammation, he said the destruction of muscle caused the inflammation, and flogging had caused the muscle disorganization. Wilson told the inquest that he had 'made a scientific observation connected with pathology, and one which has never been made before.'⁶⁸

Dr Wilson explained the importance of his discovery near the end of the inquest:

*Extensive injuries to the skin will produce serious internal irritation. Thus a burn will give rise to fatal disease of the internal organs, viz, stomach and bowels, heart and lungs, liver and kidneys, so that prolonged irritation of the skin in this case was calculated to produce disease. Then there might have been secondary disease, inflammation of the heart, and lungs, weeks after the application of the cause of the original disease.*⁶⁹

Wilson indicated that, from his experience, flogging could often lead

to death:

*Such cases are frequently to be met with in our hospitals; so that whether I look at the primary or secondary effects of flogging, I see in both a cause of fatal disease. Heretofore it has been considered that the injuries resulting from flogging are confined to the skin, but I have given evidence that in this case, the flogging was followed by a pulpy, softening and deranged state of the muscles.*⁷⁰

Essentially, Drs Warren and Hale had superficially determined the cause of death without determining its origin. They had assumed that the flogging had only affected the epidermis. White's exterior wounds had healed and yet he had died.

Dr Wilson employed pathology - the scientific assessment of the process, development, and consequence of the victim's injuries - to demonstrate cause and effect. The jury accepted Wilson's evidence over that of Drs Warren and Hale, finding that Private White had indeed died from injuries he sustained during the flogging. They attached a rider to the verdict 'expressing their horror and disgust at any law... which permits the revolting punishment of flogging to be inflicted on British soldiers...'⁷¹

The verdict was warmly received by the public and the press, and the inquest was celebrated in a ballad:

*The Middlesex famed gallant jury,
In history recorded shall be,
They struggled together like fury,
For the good of the army we see,
Three times a strict investigation,
To Heston they went from afar,
To come to a determination,
Respecting poor White, the Hussar.*⁷²

In the short term, Wakley had used pathology to publicize a barbaric practice. In the long term, by identifying not only the cause of death, but also its circumstances and development, the modern inquest was born. The pathological analysis performed by Dr Wilson was the precursor of the analyses done in 1888 for the Whitechapel murder victims by Drs Phillips, Brown, and Bond - divisional surgeons who utilized Wilson's comprehensive approach and who are responsible for what we know, from a medical standpoint, about Jack the Ripper's methodology as well as our knowledge of the general state of health of his victims at the time of their deaths.

For the post-mortem, 1846 is the line

of demarcation. Wakley's campaign of reform resulted in the gradual increase in use of the post-mortem in coroner's inquests throughout the rest of the century, and right on into the next. By 1865, post-mortems were held in 49.7 per cent of Westminster inquests. By 1894, in London districts overall, they were held 48 per cent of inquests; 1907, 56.5 per cent; 1918, 62 per cent; and 79 per cent in 1930.⁷³

Backlash: Conflict with the Magistrates

Regardless of the popularity of the ruling made in the Hounslow flogging inquest, there remained considerable public outrage over exhumations and post-mortems. To understand why, remember that for hundreds of years, the coroner went unpaid.

The concept of the unpaid coroner changed in 1487, when they were allowed to accept a fee of 13s 4d for every inquest taken upon their view of slain bodies (the amount was subtracted from the goods of the murderer or from the township's amercements).⁷⁴

Coroners received a raise in 1751, 20s for every inquisition taken and 9d for every mile travelled.⁷⁵ In 1837, coroners received an additional 6s 8d for every inquest,⁷⁶ increasing their fee to £1 6s 8d per inquest, to be paid out of the county rate. Coroners still paid for the costs of inquests (attendance of witnesses, leasing premises in which to hold inquests, etc) out of pocket immediately after the close of the inquest, but local magistrates oversaw the coroner's accounts on a quarterly basis, reimbursing them for expenses, and paying their fees on a case-by-case basis.

Therefore, the county coroner was answerable to three authorities: the Lord Chancellor, who could remove him from office; the Lord Chief Justice, who, since the coroner was a judicial officer, could order him to hold inquests; and the local magistrates, who paid him. *Thus, since magistrates paid coroners on a case-by-case basis, they had inadvertent oversight of individual inquests.*

Now, because magistrates paid coroners on a case-by-case basis, when everybody saw coroners suddenly holding more inquests in the 1830s and 1840s, they forgot all about the 'Big Four' reasons for why that should be. Rather, they perceived that coroners were unnecessarily holding more inquests solely to increase their

personal wealth, and by performing exhumations and post-mortems, they were doing so ghoulishly. An editorial in the *Morning Advertiser* of 9 October 1839, complained, 'As the bones of horses and cattle are now converted into manure, so, IN FUTURE, are the last dear remnants of the dead to be converted into a mode of INCREASING THE FEES OF CORONERS!'⁷⁷

Actually, coroners appear to have been underpaid. In 1843, Thomas Wakley complained to the House of Commons that in order to perform his duties in travelling across West Middlesex, he was compelled to keep four horses and two carriages, but received less than £100 in mileage allowance.⁷⁸

Although statutory law provided for a travelling expense of 9d per mile, magistrates frequently only paid the coroner to travel one-way, that is, they paid them to travel to an inquest but not back home. That halved their mileage to 4.5d per mile.⁷⁹ Coroners travelled thousands of miles every year as they went back and forth across their districts.

Something else to realize is that the rate had been set back in the eighteenth century, hardly equitable for the coroner working in 1840. The policy's lack of standardization affected rural coroners even more adversely. Wakley told Parliament in 1844:

*The mileage was fixed at 9d in the reign of George II, and was paid out and home, making 1s 6d per mile up to the year 1828 when some magistrates of Oxford resisted it, and the litigation ended in a decision that only 9d should be paid. But Sir J Sheppard, then Attorney General, gave his opinion in favour of the 9d being paid both out and home. After all, it was not so great an addition as might be supposed.*⁸⁰

The hardship, he said, was greatest on coroners in large counties who had to travel long distances:

*If a Coroner were to travel 4,000 miles a year it would amount to but 50l. The addition in Middlesex would not be more, perhaps, than 8l. But it was not in that county that the increased allowance was wanted; but in large counties, where the population was widely scattered, and where often the expenses exceeded the receipts for mileage. In his own case, the cost for turnpikes had frequently exceeded his mileage.*⁸¹

Consider the table of payments shown below to Middlesex coroners, 1837-42.⁸²

Note the sizeable increase in the number of inquests held in the County of Middlesex in this five-year window, from 615 in 1837 to 868 in 1842, a 43 per cent increase. Also observe the increase in fees - this would have been a concern to magistrates who were trying to lessen the burden to county rates. Despite the large increase of inquests, magistrates managed to keep mileage allowances virtually frozen.

Wakley's total earnings of £1,070 for 1841 look all right at first glance, but consider the expenses he had to pay out that year - £772. True, he was reimbursed for expenses quarterly, but until that happened, he was out of pocket; meanwhile, he still had to function. Look at Baker in 1841 - he made £997 but paid out £1,128. He got it back, but again, while he waited for the magistrates to reimburse him, he operated in the red.

Much of the time - although not all of the time - there was a cash crunch. A financial conflict was brewing.

Many of the men on the Middlesex magistrates' bench, the body responsible for paying London coroners, shared the view that coroners were holding inquests unnecessarily. Intent on protecting ratepayers from coroners' avarice, they began disallowing fees for what they believed were unnecessary inquests.

On the face of it, we might consider the magisterial effort to save taxes a

noble one, but the magistrates do not seem to have really understood the role of coroner or the new place the inquest held in English society; they failed (or refused) to understand the reason for the increase in numbers of inquests. They blamed it not on the 'Big Four', but rather on the 1837 raising of fees by 6s 8d, from £1 (20 shillings) to £1 6s 8d. During one of the quarter sessions in 1839,

*Mr LAURIE then said, it would be in the recollection of the Court, that in the year 1837 an act of Parliament had been passed, one object of which had been to increase the allowance to coroners; the fees payable to that officer had been increased to £1 6s 8d on each inquisition, and the remuneration to witnesses and constables had at the same time received an addition. It was a well-known fact that after the passing of that act there had been a larger number of inquests held than before.*⁸³

Effectively, the lay magistrate, by exercising this financial control over the coroner, became the authority that decided which deaths warranted inquests, not the coroner. That was going to become a big problem because the magistrates defined necessary inquests as only those cases that dealt with criminal deaths. They deemed inquests which returned verdicts of natural death as being unnecessary, and in 1851 they even passed a resolution on the subject:

[It] is the opinion of this Court that no inquest ought to be held upon a dead body except where the coroner

*has received information affording reasonable ground for suspecting that the death has been occasioned - or at least for doubting whether it may not have been occasioned - by some criminal act or omission.*⁸⁴

In cases of natural death, the magistrates reasoned, why should coroners hold an inquest that not only wasted taxpayer resources, but also intruded upon the grief of families? Their precedent for withholding fees and expenses dated from 1809, *Rex v Kent*. Kent magistrates had attempted to disallow the fees of an inquest on the death of a man who had died naturally. Chief Justice Ellenborough had supported the magistrates and he observed:

*...that there were many instances of coroners having exercised their office in the most vexatious and oppressive manner, by obtruding themselves into private families, to their great annoyance and discomfort, without any pretence of the deceased having died otherwise than a natural death, which was highly illegal.*⁸⁵

On behalf of coroners, commentators observed that coroners had the much older precedent of Edward I, *De Officio Coronatoris*, to investigate not only the slain, but all the suddenly dead as well, a precedent that was reaffirmed in Wakley's 1839 'Instructions.' Furthermore, coroners were also obligated, under pain of fine, to investigate all deaths reported to them, not all of which resulted in inquests.

Magistrates insisted that coroners should scrutinize their cases, and

| Mr Stirling & Mr Wakley | Years | No. of Inquests | Fees on Inquests | | | No. of Miles | | | Mileage | | | Disbursements | | |
|----------------------------|-------|--------------------|------------------|----|---|--------------|-----|----|---------|---|---|---------------|-----------|----------|
| | | | £ | s | d | | | | £ | s | d | £ | s | d |
| | 1837 | 615 | 700 | 0 | 0 | 3,180 | 119 | 5 | 0 | | | 168 | 14 | 9 |
| | 1838 | 720 | 960 | 0 | 0 | 3,149 | 118 | 1 | 9 | | | 705 | 0 | 5 |
| | 1839 | 623 | 839 | 13 | 4 | 2,855 | 107 | 1 | 3 | | | 624 | 10 | 5 |
| | 1840 | 787 | 1,049 | 6 | 8 | 2,964 | 111 | 3 | 0 | | | 617 | 17 | 0 |
| | 1841 | 803 | 1,070 | 13 | 4 | 3,211 | 101 | 3 | 3 | | | 772 | 5 | 6 |
| | 1842 | 839 | 1,118 | 13 | 4 | 3,429 | 128 | 11 | 9 | | | 195 | 5 | 0 |
| | | 4387 | | | | | | | | | | 3883 | 13 | 1 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mr Baker | 1837 | 627 | 738 | 0 | 0 | 1,917 | 71 | 17 | 9 | | | 460 | 9 | 11 |
| | 1838 | 762 | 1,002 | 13 | 4 | 2,337 | 87 | 12 | 9 | | | 1147 | 3 | 8 |
| | 1839 | 784 | 1,045 | 6 | 8 | 2,684 | 100 | 13 | 0 | | | 1206 | 9 | 6 |
| | 1840 | 709 | 945 | 6 | 8 | 1,611 | 60 | 8 | 3 | | | 1045 | 11 | 6 |
| | 1841 | 748 | 997 | 6 | 8 | 2,083 | 78 | 3 | 0 | | | 1128 | 12 | 6 |
| | 1842 | 868 | 1,157 | 6 | 8 | 2,467 | 92 | 10 | 3 | | | 1395 | 14 | 6 |
| | | 4488 | | | | | | | | | | 6382 | 1 | 7 |

Payments made to Middlesex coroners, 1837-42.

inquests that returned verdicts of 'natural death' or 'visitation by God' ran the risk of being disallowed. Magistrates reviewed their associated fees and expenses in an arbitrary manner, sometimes allowing them, sometimes not.

The county coroner had no idea where he stood.

What the magistrates failed to take into account was that sometimes what might appear to be a natural death was actually a criminal death, which was the case often with poisonings or infant murders masked as crib deaths. Only the post-mortem and inquest could reveal their true nature. If the coroner neglected to hold an inquest, he ran the risk of allowing criminal deaths to remain undetected, even if in the case of a finding of natural death he did not get paid, which seemed an unjust situation and to the advantage of the magistrates, as *The Times* of 27 March 1846 noted (emphasis ours):

The preliminary step, in order to punish crime, is the inquiry and committal by a magistrate of the supposed offender, and yet no fault is found with that magistrate, although the party is subsequently acquitted. He had information that a crime had been committed, and he was called upon to institute an inquiry. The coroner has information brought to him; he is bound to institute an inquiry. If it should appear that the death should have been caused by violence he is paid his fees, but if it should turn out that the party, although dying suddenly, died from natural causes, his expenses are to be withheld; thus giving a power to the justices over the coroner which they ought not to possess. The magistrate cannot deprive a prosecutor of his expenses because a prisoner has been acquitted. The justices of Devon came to this resolution, 'That the committee of accounts be instructed not to pass the expense of any inquest where the verdict is 'Natural death,' or 'Visitation of God', unless reasons are shown them that suspicion fairly arose that such death was not natural.

The Times then pointedly demanded to know how the coroner could determine whether a death was unnatural, unless he held an inquest (emphasis ours):

How can this be ascertained without inquiry, and how is that inquiry to be carried on but by means pointed out by the law? At the mid-summer sessions of 1845 the expenses

of several inquests were disallowed. One of them was an inquest held upon the body of an old man of 74 years of age, who was last seen alive on the evening of the 10th of June, and was found dead the next afternoon in an outhouse; and yet it was held by the justices that this was not a fit subject for an inquest. Another instance was that of information being conveyed to a coroner that a child had been found dead in its mother's bed; the informant could not say whether it had been overlaid, or smothered, or had died from natural causes. The coroner thought it his duty to hold an inquest, the matter was inquired into, and the jury returned a verdict of 'Natural death.' The justices refused to allow any of the expenses of that inquest. If such a proceeding is to be sanctioned, how can a coroner act? A mother of an illegitimate child has only in future to smother the child instead of cutting its throat, and she can ride off with impunity.

Coroners made good counter-arguments, yet the magistrates persisted with their attempts to limit their activities by financially strangling them. They ignored coroners' pleas for better pay, and the suspicion between magistrate and coroner was perpetuated.

One reason for this suspicion was coroners' method of appointment - the massive, lengthy, and expensive coronial election, as we saw in Wakley's first electoral contest in 1830 against Baker, who was the ultimate victor.

Sir Robert Peel offered a most cynical view of the contests. 'It was clear,' he said in 1827, 'that there must be some advantage attached to the office of coroner, or the parties would never undergo the expense attending on another election.'⁸⁶ Underlying Peel's remark is an unspoken charge of bribery and corruption. Hotly contested elections fuelled the perception that the office of coroner was a lucrative one. We have discussed Wakley's 1830 East Middlesex election that stretched over nine days. Another 1827 contest in Stafford lasted for eight days, with over 8,000 voters polled.⁸⁷

In 1876, H T Cole told the House of Commons that coronial elections frequently cost £10,000 to £12,000,⁸⁸ a tremendous sum at the time. When coroners entered office, destitute from their elections, that left them partial to corruption, or at least to accusations of it. Peel raises a valid point - why should coroners undergo

such expense to undertake a thankless job?

One explanation is that they didn't. A reason for such extravagance was that political parties had seized on the coronial election as a sort of test primary. According to Sir George Strickland, addressing the Commons in 1832, it appears that in some cases, political parties, not candidates, underwrote the cost of elections. He cited the 1827 Stafford coronial election as one that was underwritten by the political parties:

He knew that there was a mistaken notion abroad as to the profits of the office, because there had been a contest for it once or twice; but he believed that those contests proceeded from very different causes, and he knew with respect to one of them - the most expensive that had occurred - he meant in the county of Stafford - that it was a contest between two political parties, who wanted to try their strength, and who gladly adopted the opportunity offered them by the election of a Coroner. The expenses of that contest were defrayed by them.⁸⁹

On the other hand, Thomas Wakley made no bones about his motivation during the 1830 East Middlesex election - civic duty.

'As for pecuniary advantage,' *The Times* quoted him as saying, 'he would be obliged to make a large sacrifice, but it would enable him to do good to the cause of medical reform, and to protect the poor against their oppressors.'⁹⁰

To Wakley, the root of the magistrates' objections was not really to the coroner's newly awakened sense of civic duty and authority nor about the coroner's supposed avarice. It was rather that the coroner and his inquest - now the people's court - threatened the entrenched position the legal community enjoyed in English society, by questioning its administration of public institutions such as workhouses, asylums, and gaols. Wakley said in 1844:

The Coroner was elected by the people, and not by the Crown; and therefore he was not so well paid as officers of the Crown; and it was invariably found that, because he was a popular officer, a prejudice prevailed against him, among the magistracy, in Courts of Law, and in that House; and every opportunity seemed to be taken of throwing scandal upon the office, and to make the officer a dependent person.⁹¹

That dependency threatened to roll

back the social and medical reforms of the Radicals. When magistrates pressured coroners not to inquire into natural deaths, they prohibited the coroners' ability to investigate the poorly managed workhouse, asylum, and gaol, which was in the public's interest. If magistrates were suspicious of the coroner's financial motives, Wakley remained equally suspicious of the magistrates and warned that their fiscal control, besides being a conflict of interest, would have a chilling effect:

[Magistrates] are the controlling authorities in the gaols and in lunatic asylums; they are sometimes concerned in cases where life is lost in conflicts between the people and the civil powers; the magistrates are the persons to whom the poor apply in cases of urgent necessity, when the requisite aid is refused to them by parochial officers... If coroners be subject to the control of persons who are thus engaged, seeing the tyranny which might be exercised over them with reference to their accounts, they might shrink from the performance of their duty at a time when their most powerful energies should be called into action in the public service.⁹²

Wakley alleged an attempt by magistrates and politicians to assassinate the office of coroner - professionally speaking, to 'Beckett' the coroner. In 1851, a special committee of the Middlesex magistrates recommended that coroners' powers transfer to the police and magistrates. The recommendation met with a protest by ratepayers who sent in a petition accompanied by a long list of signatures.⁹³

If government could not bring the coroners to heel, if it could not appoint them, and if it could not remove them from office (a power reserved only for the Lord Chancellor), it tried to garrotte them with strings of pound notes. The allegation was a harsh one, but of course, Wakley was a firebrand.

Whatever the truth was, the problem remained that elections and the mode of remuneration created a public image problem for coroners that inhibited their ability to function, and so affected the public health and safety in an adverse and direct way.

Electoral Reform

While there were occasional calls in Parliament to abolish the office, and one does get a feeling that politicians sometimes cast an

envious eye on Scotland's system of death inquiry, which depended on no coroner but rather on the Procurator Fiscal's private investigations of sudden deaths, most Members of Parliament recognized that English coroners provided a valuable public service. They were reluctant to do away with them; after all, coroners were elected officials who had deep roots in English history. Ultimately, Members decided to reform two of the major sources of conflict - the system of elections and payment.

Parliament found the reformation of coronial elections problematic. There was little disagreement that they were lengthy, rowdy, expensive and generally undignified affairs, unsuitable for a respectable judicial office with such an important responsibility. A simple answer was to dispense with elections altogether, and there were suggestions to allow magistrates or the Crown the power to appoint coroners. Another possibility was to apply a municipal corporation style-act to county coroners (councils of the City of London and boroughs appointed their coroners).⁹⁴

The problem facing the appointment of county coroners was that city and borough councils were elected bodies, so there was still a measure of democracy in their appointments. Of course, nobody voted for magistrates or the Queen, so lawmakers were reluctant to invest them with the power to appoint coroners, the poor man's magistrate. Instead of dispensing with elections entirely, Parliament sought to narrow their scope.

For some, the problem originated with those who participated in elections, the freeholders. The thinking was that, per the precedent of the 1832 Reform Act, too many people were voting, as illustrated by the collection of some 7,000 people, hooting and hollering, during the Wakley - Baker East Middlesex election of 1830.

One solution was to limit participation; a cause for such large voter turnouts was that freeholders attended district elections from across the entire County of Middlesex. The qualification of freeholders was also an issue.

Qualification was tied to the amount of property owned - substance of property being directly related to substance of decision-making. Some members opposed that sort of opinion because it excluded the poor. One member complained of

disenfranchisement: 'Coroners in counties were the persons to whom the poor looked for protection, and it was most unjust to deprive them of the franchise, and transfer it to another class.'⁹⁵

So, instead, Parliament limited the scope of the contests. The Coroners' Act of 1844 provided for the division of counties into smaller districts on the death of the sitting coroner (subject to Crown approval). The vote of freeholders was restricted to their respective districts. In the event of a view of hands not being sufficient to determine the election, polls were limited to two days.⁹⁶

The 1844 Coroners' Act also confined the activities of coroners, except under exceptional circumstances, to their respective districts. A previous statute of 1843 specified that only coroners within whose jurisdiction the body lay should hold the inquest.⁹⁷ By ignoring the scene of death, the statute - 45 years before the Mary Jane Kelly inquest - avoided potential and complicated jurisdictional conflicts between coroners.

Salary Reform

In August 1860, Parliament addressed how coroners were to be paid. We have seen how the fee per inquest system had threatened the independence of coroners. The 1860 Coroners' Act did away with the old system in favour of quarterly salaries. Payments were now based on a five-year average of fees previously paid, to be agreed on mutually by coroners and magistrates. Every five years, coroners and magistrates could negotiate raises (seen also as a protection against the salaried coroner slacking off). Where coroners previously had no resort of appeal in cases of financial dispute, the 1860 Act allowed them an appeal to the Home Secretary, who would then fix their salaries himself.⁹⁸

In providing for the financial security of coroners, Parliament designed the Act to uphold their independence. They had recognized that the subordination of the coroner to the magistrate presented a real danger to the public.

A result of the magistrates' strict interpretation that coroners investigate suspicious death only was that poisonings had gone undetected. Magistrates had instructed constables on what cases they could report to coroners. Infant mortality was rising, but magistrates had deemed that cases of crib death were not appropriate

subjects for inquests. Workplace safety was an issue; inquests brought into question the management of coalmines and factories, yet magistrates threatened to disallow such inquests.⁹⁹

The 1860 Act ended such open interference. With salaries now in place, magistrates lost the opportunity to evaluate inquests on a case-by-case basis. No longer could they disallow inquests they thought unnecessary.

But Wait...

The Acts of 1844 and 1860 were, in a larger sense, band-aids. True, gone were the days of large and lengthy elections, but despite the fact that Parliament now limited the sphere of elections, the rowdiness and great expense with which they were associated remained. Likewise, the 1860 Act, while acting in the interests of coroners and the public, still left a loophole for future magisterial interference. In its language, there were no mandatory schedules for salary increases. Rather, the Act only allowed that it was lawful for salaries to be reviewed after each five-year period.¹⁰⁰

Technically, there was no requirement for magistrates to adjust salaries at all; they merely had the option to do so every five years. While population and area of districts were now main factors in determining salaries, magistrates could still theoretically confine sitting coroners to 1860 figures (or for new coroners, entering their offices for life, figures as they stood when first elected).

As London continued to swell while the century progressed, the vague language would become a problem for coroners who found their salaries did not keep pace with their rapidly expanding districts and expenses. Magistrates who wanted to curb the activities of coroners could still choke them financially, as Dr Thomas Diplock found in 1879 when the Middlesex magistrates refused to give him a raise. They expressed their reasoning in a maddening resolution:

The justices have now no means of discovering in what cases inquests have been fairly held, but have still every reason to believe that the larger number are unnecessary and improper.¹⁰¹

Magistrates still often exerted unreasonable fiscal control over coroners. After 1860, it became subtle, but the old potential to inhibit coroners was there. After all, if you are a coroner who is strapped for

cash, what do you do? Well, perhaps you start cutting down on costs, hedging on parts of the inquest that cost you money. Leasing space to hold the inquest. Medical witnesses. The taking down of depositions - clerks and parchment - cost money.

The Watchful Guardian

After the reform of the first half of the century, the fiery, caustic social activism of Wakley cooled into vigilance. The office of coroner settled into a stewardship of health and safety. The President of the Coroners' Society, Samuel Frederick Langham, stated in 1865: 'The coroner is now called upon to be the watchful guardian of the public, to prevent a relapse into the oppression of the past.'¹⁰²

Thomas Wakley's notion that coroners should not only investigate death, but that their inquiries should also *prevent* future deaths, had come into widespread fruition. The pro-public coroner of post-1860 was now a very different animal from the pro-government coroner of pre-1830. Radical reforms had made the 700-year-old coronial system new again.

One thing that remained the same was the coroner's ability to provoke great outrage. If the pre-1830 inquest was slanted in favour of the government, and the post-1830 inquest was about reform and exposing bad practices, then the inquest of the 1870s and 1880s was to a large degree about discretion. How extensive should inquests be? Can an open court be contrary to the interest of justice? Is a view of the body *really* necessary to hold an inquest?

Everyone searched for middle ground and sought to exercise discretion. Gone was the black and white, right and wrong, reformist world of Thomas Wakley. In the last third of the nineteenth century, England's newly reformed coronial system passed into the grey world of its adolescence.

The Age of Discretion: Hardwicke

As we cruise into the 1870s, coroner Dr William Hardwicke might give proof to the magistrates' suspicions that coroners ran wild in the fields. The acrimonious aftermath of the 1868 contest for West Middlesex coroner between Dr Thomas Diplock and Hardwicke could only have contributed to the introduction of yet another attempt in Parliament to reform coronial elections.

We will cover the Diplock -

Hardwicke campaign and its fallout in detail later. Suffice to say here that Hardwicke's post-electoral challenges to Diplock's authority in both the High Court and the Middlesex Sessions threatened to leave West Middlesex without a functioning coroner. For example, in a crafty and vindictive move, Hardwicke succeeded in stopping payment of Diplock's salary for several months.

Over the next several years, 1869-1871, several attempts to push another election bill through Parliament appear to have met with stiff resistance. Specific objections are not clear, but certainly the contentious 1868 West Middlesex election must have been a factor. Evidently, enough members were so frustrated with the problems presented by coronial elections that they were ready to give up on the office entirely.

In 1875, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach referred to the aborted bill during separate debate on Irish coroners:

For many years the Hon Member for Chippenham (Mr Goldney) had brought forward a Bill dealing with the duties, salary, and position of coroners; but that Bill had never got beyond the stage of second reading, because great doubt was entertained whether it was necessary to continue the office of coroner at all.¹⁰³

As coroner for Central Middlesex in 1875, Hardwicke provoked another bout of resentment when he insisted on holding an inquest upon the eminent geologist Sir Charles Lyell. The geologist died at the age of 77 of meningitis, exacerbated by a fall down some stairs a month prior to his death. Lyell's physician had certified death by natural causes, but Hardwicke insisted on holding an inquest and opened Lyell's soldered coffin for the jury's view. The jury upheld the physician's opinion of natural death.

Hardwicke, perhaps, followed Wakley's example in the exhumation of the pauper Thomas Austin, except now there was great resentment in the press and Parliament toward Hardwicke's treatment of such an eminent personage as Lyell, resulting in three questions on the subject in one day. The new Conservative Party Home Secretary, Sir Richard Assheton Cross, was outraged by the Lyell inquest but powerless to act. He growled in complaint that 'it was a great outrage on decency and common sense but that he had no power over coroners but that the power to dismiss a coroner rested with the Lord

Chancellor. Nonetheless, he said:

*I have nevertheless thought it my duty, as being responsible for the due administration of the law, to write to the Coroner for an explanation of his reasons for holding this inquest. I have, in reply, received from the Coroner a letter in which practically he states no reason, so far as I can see, which in any way justifies the course he took... I can only say for myself that if such acts of discretion or indiscretion were at all common among Coroners, it would be quite necessary to clip their wings.*¹⁰⁴



Sir Richard Assheton Cross
(Home Secretary, 1874-1880)

The Quarter Sessions could not have helped. Assheton Cross forgot the 1860 Act, which had helped to diffuse magisterial interference with inquests. Francis Morley, chairman of the Committee for Accounts and General Purposes for Middlesex, was very glad to wag a finger and remind Parliament that, in giving coroners their salaries, it had removed the magistrates' power of direct oversight - but remember they still had indirect oversight via pay raises and expense reimbursement:

*This as the law now stands, I am sorry could not be done, and a Court of Quarter Sessions has no power, unfortunately, to disallow the expenses of an inquest, however improper or indecent it may have been to hold it, though formerly such control did exist, and prevented much abuse of the office of coroner and unnecessary expense to the rate expense to the ratepayers of counties. An alteration of the law is greatly needed.*¹⁰⁵

Even City of London coroner William John Payne, while defending Hardwicke's right to hold the inquest, could only shake his head at his colleague's judgment. Citing the legislative history of payments that culminated in the abolition of the magistrates' authority to disallow inquests, Payne regretfully concluded, 'Although the inquiry might be perfectly legal, it might, under the circumstances, well have been dispensed with.'¹⁰⁶

The Lyell inquest - seen by even other coroners as intrusive and unnecessary - set the stage for its philosophical opposite, the hurried first inquest into the poisoning death of Charles Bravo in 1876.

The First and Second Bravo Inquests

Charles Bravo, the frugal barrister, was young and newly wed to Florence, a bride with a chequered past. Her faithful but expensive companion of several years, Jane Cox, was soon to be released from service. Then there were other ingredients to the mystery: Dr James Manby Gully, the Bravos' neighbour and Florence's former lover. The stately alabaster mansion called The Priory. Marital tensions. Jealousy. A whopping fat dose of tartar emetic - the industrial poison, antimony - resulting in Charles Bravo's prolonged and painful death. Jane Cox told physicians that Bravo had confessed to committing suicide. Bravo, taking three days to die, repeatedly denied it. Furthermore, the use of antimony was unknown to surgeons in cases of suicide, but they knew of plenty of murder cases involving it. The Balham Mystery was born: was it suicide or murder?

Sounds like an Agatha Christie novel come to life, doesn't it? Actually, the riddle of the death of Charles Bravo and the Balham Mystery constitute one of the great unsolved murders of the nineteenth century. The affair spanned the spring and summer of 1876, and was the subject of not one, but two controversial inquests that provoked another furious public debate about coroners and their inquests. Like the fabled porridge of 'The Three Bears,' each inquiry occupied opposite poles of dissatisfaction: the first was too rushed, the second inquest, meant to serve as a corrective to the first, was too extensive and intrusive.

Surrey coroner William Carter's first inquiry was held at the Priory on April 25, 1876. It provided dissatisfaction on several levels. Carter, a 40-year inquest veteran,¹⁰⁷ appears to have

made up his mind prior to the inquest to push a suicide verdict - possibly, he was motivated by criticism of the intrusive Lyell inquest. He neglected to call the widow, Florence Bravo, to testify. He failed to notify the press so there were no reporters present to give an account of the proceedings. Carter refused to allow the testimony of several of Bravo's attending physicians, despite their desire to speak, and the jury's desire to hear them.

Possibly the exclusion of medical witnesses was an effort by Carter to save expenses - remember that medical witnesses received payment for their appearances, and over the course of Bravo's lingering and painful three days, Bravo had been attended by four or five attending physicians, including the Royal physician, Sir William Withey Gull.

In the first inquest, the depositions taken by Carter were sloppy and misleading. For example, he twisted the testimony of Bravo's cousin, Dr Hutchinson Royes Bell, into an admission by Bravo to having committed suicide. Bravo had not made such a confession, and Royes Bell never said he had. Carter strongly pushed for a suicide verdict in his summing up, and then ejected the public while he conferred with the jury.

In the end, the jury, who as a juryman said, 'were rather in a fog',¹⁰⁸ returned the verdict, 'That the deceased died from the effects of the poisoning of antimony, but we have no sufficient evidence to show under what circumstances it came into his body.'¹⁰⁹ Feeling that they had not heard all the relevant testimony, they found neither suicide nor murder.

Dissatisfied with their own verdict, the jury held a meeting and expressed their dismay over the shortness of the inquest.¹¹⁰

So too were the friends of Charles Bravo convinced that someone was 'getting away with murder.' With no press in attendance, the first inquest had received little notice. The only way the first inquest ever received any publicity was because one of Bravo's barrister friends named Reid attended and took copious notes of the inquest while he and other friends and family watched with what could only have been growing horror as Carter conducted the laziest and most slanted of inquiries.

Reid's notes then found their way into the press. Bravo's circle of clever

friends - professional men, barristers and physicians - then petitioned Home Secretary Assheton Cross for a special investigation into the case. Assheton Cross granted the petition and directed the Treasury Department to begin inquiries.

Word of the unsatisfactory inquest began to spread among the newspapers. An article in the *British Medical Journal* condemned the inquest, calling the verdict 'very unsatisfactory' and venturing, 'We think it will appear that no pains were taken by the Coroner to elicit the evidence which would really have thrown a light upon this part of the case.'¹¹

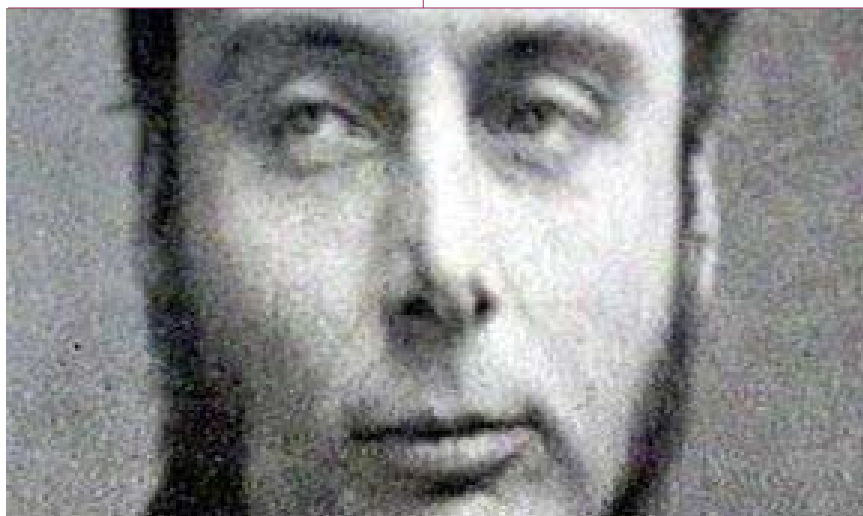
jury. But then, Carter could not hold a second inquest until the first had been quashed. A second inquest with a new jury also meant an exhumation because, without the view, the inquest was void.

Suddenly, things started to get complicated in the High Court. On what grounds could they order a new inquest? If they were going to have to quash every inquest returning an incomplete verdict - well, they were going to be kept very busy. Did there have to be a view of the body? Were witnesses going to have to be recalled? Couldn't they get around some of this?

Out came the precedents -

corpse. While it continued to be a legal requirement, the High Court considered it outdated, at least as far as the Bravo case went. For some coroners, the question became: what information did the jury gather from the view that they could not gather from medical testimony? Could the jury's view - a layman's view - ever conflict with a surgeon's post-mortem? The view thus became, at least in this instance, an inconvenient and potentially troublesome thing.

The second inquest opened 11 July 1876 with the exhumation of Bravo (a portion of the coffin lid was replaced with a glass window so the jury could peek at the corpse's face).¹²



Charles Bravo



Florence Bravo

Suddenly, Florence Bravo, who had heretofore remained silent, offered a £500 reward through her solicitors, Brooks, Jenkins, and Co, for any information that shed light on who had bought the antimony found during the post-mortem.

The Attorney General, also convinced that Bravo had been murdered, applied to the Queen's Bench to quash the inquest. Remember that the Lord Chief Justice, by virtue of his office, was also Chief Coroner and had the power to instruct Carter to hold another inquest. But grounds for doing so were unclear to the High Court; they ran into a legal mish-mash of ancient coronial law.

The Attorney General thought that since the verdict was inconclusive - neither suicide nor murder had been found - the Court could just order Carter to resume the inquest. However, Carter had closed the inquest and discharged the jury. Therefore, the first inquest could not be resumed; a second inquest would have to be ordered with a new

incredibly old ones: cases from the reign of Richard III (1483-5), a case from the time of the Commonwealth (1658), and one from Charles II's reign (1669). In the end, the Court quashed the first inquest because Carter had omitted relevant testimony - an error of judgment, not misconduct.

Therefore, the Court upheld the jury's right to find incomplete verdicts. In the absence of evidence, they knew it was better to be unsure than to impute murder or suicide to an innocent person. The Court couldn't get around the view - there was no choice but to dig up poor Bravo and take another gander at him.

That decision chafed the Court, because they knew the jury could not benefit from looking at Bravo's corpse. The man had been poisoned, so the view would yield no useful information. The jury and family would undergo a painful, distasteful experience for nothing. Yet without the view, there could be no inquest.

The bell started to toll for *super visum corporis*, the view of the

Although the High Court technically had found no misconduct on Carter's part, he was limited to a figurehead role and was assisted by a legal assessor, Mr Burleigh Muir. Essentially, the second inquest was a public grand jury of Jane Cox, Florence Bravo and Dr James Gully. The inquiry lasted for twenty-three sessions and received massive press and public attention. The proceedings were standing room only: at times, attendees overflowed into the jury's space; on one day, spectators even devoured the jury's lunch.

The inquest was so stuffed with people that the attendance of women was eventually banned, presumably because their large skirts took up too much space. Out came all the sordid details of Florence and Gully's secret affair (which had occurred before her marriage with Charles Bravo). And revealed to the world was an abortion she had undergone - naturally, scandalous knowledge in that era.

In the end, the jury returned a

verdict of murder, but they found there was insufficient evidence to determine anyone's guilt. Everyone suspected Florence, Jane Cox and James Gully, but there was no proof.

After so many sittings, the inability to reveal the poisoner's identity was unsatisfactory, and for many the second inquest was an even bigger failure than the first. Tremendous newspaper attention and a parade of witnesses had led to an atmosphere of sensationalism and the public persecution and humiliation of three people who, ultimately, were never charged with a crime. Their reputations were ruined all the same.

The critics and theorists loved to bathe in the newspaper ink of the sensational case. The entire process left the *Saturday Review* disgusted:

*The daily mess of loathsome scandal put before the public in the newspapers; the gloating zest with which the audience in court, including even so-called ladies, gave themselves up to the enjoyment of the spectacle of a woman, to whom reputation was dear, having wrung from her, by questions as cruel as the rack, an open confession of dishonour, not only as a general admission, but in precise detail; the unsavoury relations of social life and manners brought out in the evidence.*¹¹³

To the *Saturday Review*, the issue was clear:

*The question to be determined by the jury was simply how Mr Bravo came by his death; but this was almost lost sight of in the mass of gossip and conjecture as to matters only indirectly and remotely connected with the case. It was not the business of the Court to pass judgment on the moral character of Mrs. Bravo or Dr Gully, but only to form an opinion, as far as the evidence enabled it to do so, as to the manner in which the deceased was poisoned, and the hand which administered the fatal drug.*¹¹⁴

Similarly, a correspondent wrote to *The Times*, 'What connexion is there between the death of Mr Bravo and the private character of Mrs Bravo?'¹¹⁵

The writer's query addressed a larger question: how extensive should inquests be?

Another concern was the duplication of process. Imagine that the second inquest had found enough evidence to lead to an accusation of murder. The entire process of twenty-three sessions would then have begun again in another court. In the Bravo case,

that would have been two trials for the same death. Should murder inquests then only be preliminary affairs to avoid a duplication of processes and sensationalism?

There was no answer, only degrees of discretion.

'Are There Not Wives and Children?'

Let's talk about depositions for a moment and backtrack just a little bit. The reader will remember Carter's practice of not having his depositions signed - as a result, they didn't accurately reflect the testimony of Dr Hutchinson Royes Bell.

During the commotion over the first Bravo inquest, Home Secretary Assheton Cross informed the Commons that he intended to pass on Carter's papers on to the Attorney General to see whether there were grounds to quash the inquest and hold another. *The Times* reported Assheton Cross as saying, 'It is a fact that coroners are required by law to read over to each witness a written report of the evidence they have given, and to procure the signature of the witness to the same. I am sorry to say that the requirement of the law does not seem to have been complied with in the present case.'¹¹⁶

However, a letter to the editor of *The Times* signed 'County Coroner' demonstrates that when it came to depositions, some of the legal requirements became fuzzy:

*The fact is, that except in cases of murder and manslaughter and being accessory before the fact, the Coroner is not bound to take any depositions at all, and, as a matter of fact, often does not take any. In the Balham case there was no such verdict. The instructions on this point which were given to me by my predecessor, a venerable lawyer, who had long exercised the duties of Coroner in this district, were that there was no legal or customary requirement for me to take formal depositions except in cases of murder and manslaughter.*¹¹⁷

The anonymous 'County Coroner' admitted that his own practices varied greatly as to whether or not to take depositions, depending on how 'simple' the case appeared to him (a statement that bears on our question of whether depositions were taken at Diplock's inquest into the suicide of Ripper suspect Montague John Druitt):

I have been in the habit in many simple cases of accident or death

*from disease where the result of a very clear post-mortem has reached me of jotting down a few memoranda in characters unintelligible to others for my own guidance in addressing the jury; in other cases which have at first a doubtful aspect, I commence carefully and fully with my depositions, but as the case goes on and clears up the written evidence becomes small by degrees. In a few cases I take the depositions from first to last thoroughly, and read them over to the witnesses, and have them signed. I believe this to be the usual practice with Coroners. How far this method admits of improvement the Legislature must decide, but it is well that they should know what the mode of procedure is.*¹¹⁸

What 'County Coroner' was referring to is a legal requirement that coroners had to turn over depositions related to murder or manslaughter cases to trial courts, where they would then be entered into the record as secondary evidence. Herein lies an important distinction, because in the case of accidental deaths or suicides, there was no legal requirement to provide the depositions to anyone whatsoever, since there would be no trial. In those instances, the record keeping was completely at the coroner's discretion - he had no obligation to make copies available to anyone.

Now a finer distinction should be made: where there was no legal purpose for depositions, there was no reason they should exist - depositions cost money to produce. As 'County Coroner' explained:

*If it should be required of a Coroner in any case to take formal depositions, it would be necessary for him to have the assistance of a clerk. As the Court is at present constituted the whole weight of conducting the inquiry, examining the witnesses, writing down their evidence, formally drawing up the inquisition, &c., falls upon the Coroner. When I hold a serious inquiry I have to beg or hire a lawyer's clerk to write down the evidence, so that my attention may be the less disturbed and worried; and this absorbs the profit of the inquest. I blush at the argument; but, as the Attorney General says, are there not wives and children?*¹¹⁹

The practice of not taking depositions was not limited to just one coroner writing a letter in 1876. In 1936, the Home Office found that some coroners were still cutting corners:

It is clear that the practice of

*coroners in the matter of taking depositions or notes of evidence varies considerably. In cases, other than the most straightforward cases of suicide or simple accident, some coroners take down in writing the witness's evidence. Other coroners are said to be in the habit of reading through the statements made by witnesses to the police or coroner's officer; and, if they assent, treating these statements as depositions. This later practice appears to us to be indefensible.*¹²⁰

We now see that we cannot make the assumption that coroners took depositions in cases. This is significant in regard to our search for any depositions taken in the inquest held by Thomas Diplock on Montague John Druitt, apparently a clear case of suicide. What if the depositions have not survived because *they never existed*? Suddenly the jungle we traverse becomes a lot thicker. Since procedure varied depending on the coroner, we need to determine what Diplock's practice was - if we can.

Hervey's Address to the Commons

As mentioned, Bravo's circle of professional friends stepped in to help get a second inquest. There was one other very influential and clever friend in the House of Commons. On 11 July 1876 (the very day jurors peered at dead Charles Bravo through an improvised glass window), his friend and the Member of Parliament for Bury St Edmunds, thirty-year-old Lord Francis Hervey, rose to address the House of Commons on the state of coronial law.¹²¹

A former president of the Eton Society, scholar of Balliol College, Oxford (where the theologian Benjamin Jowett had been his tutor), and future historian of East Anglia,¹²² Hervey researched the coronial system, and charged that it was prone to incompetence and in desperate need of standardization, updating, and oversight. He criticized the system on numerous points.

Hervey counted 233 county coroners and 99 borough coroners throughout England and Wales. Their distribution, however, was lopsided: the heavily populated county of Middlesex (covering much of London) had five coroners; the county of Norfolk had seven; the city of Manchester had one; the county of Dorset had eleven. Did Dorset experience more sudden deaths than London? Obviously not. What then, did eleven Dorset coroners do?

The coronial system had no professional standards. The county coroner's property qualification was meaningless, and besides, though county coroners had to have a certain amount of estate, there was no agreement over how much land made for a good coroner - Hervey's point being that it was a 'ridiculous qualification for a Coroner of the present day.'

In the case of borough coroners, their only qualification was vague - they must be fit persons.

'To any reasonable mind,' Hervey said, 'it was perfectly ridiculous that functions of so important and delicate a character as those of Coroners should be left to auctioneers, retired tradesmen, and other persons of a similar kind.' For Hervey, the issue was competency. He also thought that coroners should be barristers or solicitors - an opinion that he acknowledged would upset *The Lancet*.

As had others before him, Hervey proposed the elimination of elections for county coroners, due to the problems we have noted. England had long ago ceased to elect sheriffs and magistrates - why should the coroner not follow? Hervey's colleague, Serjeant Simon, agreed that judicial officers should not be elected: 'The contest for the office often turned upon the question of who could spend most money.'

The purpose of coroners - to investigate all sudden deaths - was vague. Which deaths should be investigated and which should not?

There had been, as we have seen, inquests that had been held that should not have been held (eg, Lyell) and inquests that were not held that needed to have been held and inquests that were simply botched (eg, Lees and Bravo).

Furthermore, there was no real mechanism to oversee whether coroners upheld their office correctly - coroners who in many cases were unqualified to hold a competent legal proceeding.

Certainly, the Attorney General could apply to the Queen's Bench, as occurred in the Bravo case, but that had been a difficult, complicated procedure owing to the scattered and ancient state of coronial law. Moreover, the requirement that coroners and jury view the body before holding an inquest also complicated matters. The view demanded that inquests be held in a timely manner and therefore any time-consuming review - such as

an application to the Queen's Bench - was impractical.

Hervey described Statute and Common Law as incomprehensible. He called for eliminating obscurities and for consolidating all of the Statute Law into a single comprehensive Act. Inquests should be open to guarantee competency. He questioned the usefulness of juries and criticized the taking of inaccurate depositions, as occurred in Carter's abuse of Dr Hutchinson Royes Bell's testimony. The open inquest was a protection against bad verdicts and bad record keeping.

In Hervey's address are the seeds of the Coroners Act 1887. The Act was a century in the making, and it was partly born out of the deaths of an eminent geologist and a poisoned barrister. The Act is the operating mechanism for our coroners of 1888.

The Coroners Act of 1887

Passed on 16 September 1887, the Coroners Act of 1887 (50 & 51 Victoria, c. 71) consolidated, repealed, and revised six hundred years of coronial law, addressing thirty-three statutes dating from 1275 to 1882.¹²³

In itself, the 1887 Act was not so much a vehicle for sweeping coronial reform (not in the sense Hervey had proposed) as it was an easy-accessible reference point for future reform. Parliament could not hope to carry out true reform without a solid comprehension of coronial law. As the Member for North East Bethnal Green, Mr Howell, said in the Commons on 10 September 1887:

When they consolidated the Statutes - and they had done something towards it - they would be able to understand the law. At present the most learned Member of the Bar - even the hon. and learned Member for Camberne - could not understand the Statutes.

The 1887 Act acted as a legislative Noah's Ark, collecting and updating coronial law. For example, the power to remove coroners for neglect of duty was lifted from a 1751 statute. The instruction that coroners should not act as solicitors in the prosecution or defence of a person charged with murder or manslaughter comes from the Coroners Act 1844. The section specifying that only coroners within whose jurisdiction the body lay should hold the inquest comes from an 1843 statute. Section 21 of the Act giving coroners the power to summon medical witnesses and order post-mortems comes from Wakley's 1836

Medical Witness Act.

Notice the prevalence of nineteenth century statute in the above examples. The 1887 Act largely dispensed with medieval statutes such as *De Officio Coronatoris* of 1275-6. For example, the inhabitants of the Scilly Isles off the southwest coast of Cornwall could be grateful that the 1887 Act forbade coroners from holding inquests on royal fish or shipwrecks - although coroners continued to inquire into treasure trove, as they continue to do so today.¹²⁴ Neither could coroners inquire into the goods of murderers. Of course, as far as daily practice went, the old medieval statutes had long since ceased to be applicable, but the new Act enabled legislation to catch up with practice. Likewise, Section 4 of the Act, 'proceedings at inquest - evidence and inquisition' was now composed mostly of nineteenth century legal precedent, not thirteenth century statute.

Here are the five subsections governing how our inquests of 1888 operated:

- 1 The coroner and jury shall, at the first sitting of the inquest, view the body, and the coroner shall examine on oath touching the death all persons who tender their evidence respecting the facts and all persons having knowledge of the facts whom he thinks it expedient to examine.
- 2 It shall be the duty of the coroner in a case of murder or manslaughter to put into writing the statement on oath of those who know the facts and circumstances of the case, or so much of such statement as is material, and any such deposition shall be signed by the witness and also by the coroner.
- 3 After viewing the body and hearing the evidence the jury shall give their verdict, and certify it by an inquisition in writing, setting forth, so far as such particulars have been proved to them, who the deceased was, and how, when, and where the deceased came by his death, and if he came by his death by murder or manslaughter, the persons, if any, whom the jury find to have been guilty of such murder or manslaughter, or of being accessories before the fact to such murder.
- 4 They shall also inquire of and find the particulars for the time being required by the Registration Acts to be registered concerning

the death.

- 5 In case twelve at least of the jury do not agree on a verdict, the coroner may adjourn the inquest to the next sessions of oyer and terminer or gaol delivery held for the county or place in which the inquest is held, and if after the jury have heard the charge of the judge or commissioner holding such sessions, twelve of them fail to agree on a verdict, the jury may be discharged by such judge or commissioner without giving a verdict.¹²⁵

It is not necessary to go into case law for the entire section, but it might be helpful to focus on one area to see the influence of nineteenth century case law over medieval statute: the view of the body. In the 1887 Act, the view was still a requirement for holding the inquest, but it is not the same view of the corpse that *De Officio Coronatoris* had directed back in 1275-6. Back then, the directions required of the medieval jury were more stringent:

*All the wounds ought to be viewed, the length, breadth, and deepness, and with what weapons, and in what part of the body the wound or hurt is, and how many be culpable, and how many wounds there be, who gave the wound.*¹²⁶

Under the 1887 Act, Section 4(1) only directs, 'The coroner and jury shall, at the first sitting of the inquest, view the body.'

The legal precedent for the 1887 Act's view of the corpse is our crafty friend from the 1819 Oldham inquest, coroner Ferrand.¹²⁷ You will recall that the King's Bench quashed the Oldham inquest because Ferrand had not taken a view of the body of Lees at the beginning of the inquest - remember how Ferrand had prevaricated when James Harmer had asked him if he had viewed the body.

The sticking point for the King's Bench in 1819 had been that Ferrand had not taken his view in the jury's company, but, according to commentator Rudolph Melsheimer in 1888, it was no 'longer necessary for the coroner and jury to view the body at the same time'¹²⁸ - so long as both had a view. Melsheimer's notation of practice explains why Roderick Macdonald did not view Mary Kelly in the jury's company; rather, he stayed behind at Shoreditch Town Hall to discuss jurisdiction with the press while the jury travelled to Shoreditch mortuary.

Also, notice that there is nothing stated about the nature of the view. It could be a gander, a peek, a good long look, or anything in between. Theoretically, in some cases, the view was no longer even necessary. These were instances where the High Court was involved - the reader will remember the frustration the Queen's Bench had with the Bravo exhumation. Section 6(3) of the 1887 Act excused those problematic second views with their painful and distasteful - 'it shall not be necessary, unless the court otherwise order, to view the body...' That's a legacy of the Balham Mystery. In that case, the Court had been unable to order a second inquest without exhuming Charles Bravo, but future Courts would not have that problem. They could still order a second view if they wanted, but they did not have to. The 1887 Act gave them the tool of discretion.

Section 6(3) created a bit of an anomaly because it allowed an inquest without any view whatsoever. Imagine that someone has died suddenly, but the coroner finds nothing suspicious going on and refuses to hold an inquest. The death is registered, and the body buried. Someone else - say a family member - does entertain suspicions of murder, so he applies to the High Court to require the coroner hold an inquest. The High Court agrees, but under Section 6(3) of the 1887 Act, the Court has discretion over the view. Technically, the Court could order a first inquest while not ordering an exhumation of the body.¹²⁹

The antiquated view was now merely a matter of form. It had long been so in practice, and now, in 1887, legislation caught up. As the nineteenth century melted into the twentieth, and as the number of post-mortems grew, the view was seen as an inconvenient barbarity. It afforded juries no useful information against expert medical testimony. It was nothing more than a non-professional opinion about the cause of death and ultimately, in 1926,¹³⁰ the view fell victim to the push towards medical professionalism that Henry Hunt and Thomas Wakley had advocated a century earlier.¹³¹

While we are here, deposition-hunters should take note of Section 4(2) listed above. The taking of statements of oath was only a duty in cases of murder and manslaughter. It's an 1887 reinforcement of the example cited by 'County Coroner' in 1876 - some coroners, looking to

save on expenses, might have taken Section 4(2) to mean that the taking of depositions in cases of suicide and accidental death was *not* a duty. The wording in the 1887 Act is vague; it offers no standardization of practice that helps us determine whether Thomas Diplock took down any depositions during the Druitt inquest. We'll have to dig deeper.

Besides the technical requirement of the view, two other ancient characteristics of the coroner - elections and the land qualification - also survived in the 1887 Act. However, they were almost immediately repealed by the Local Government Act of 1888.

The Local Government Act of 1888

This Act created some 60 administrative counties across England. The new administrative counties were largely based on counties that had been around for centuries. In the case of London, where the many small parish councils were brought under one umbrella to form the metropolis (a metropolis that sprawled across several counties and had no judicial system of its own), an entirely new administrative county was created. Carved out of portions of Middlesex, Kent, Essex, and Surrey, the new County of London was born.¹³²

Every county now had its own elected body - the county councils - which provided public services for their respective counties. For our Middlesex coroners - for example, Wynne Baxter, elected in 1886, or Roderick Macdonald, elected in 1888 - that meant that the Middlesex Magistrates bench was no longer their financial authority. The London County Council was now responsible for paying their salaries and reimbursing their expenses. For Thomas Diplock in West Middlesex, the change meant that he now had two new local authorities paying him - the London County Council (LCC) and the Middlesex County Council, because portions of his jurisdiction lay in each county.

The London County Council would prove to be more progressive than the miserly Middlesex Magistrates; one of the big improvements the LCC offered was building proper courts and mortuaries for coroners. In *Bodies of Evidence*, Ian Burney reproduces a marvellous 1893 plan for a swank facility housing two mortuaries (for infectious and non-infectious cases), a proper coroner's court, a private jury and coroner's room with its own toilet or water closet (WC), a public

waiting room with its own WC, and a post-mortem room.¹³³ The new courts would be a big improvement over the shed in Montague Street and noisy tavern inquests.

As part of the Local Government Act, Parliament invested the county councils with the power to appoint coroners. The problem that had faced electoral reformers in the 1830s and 1840s - how to dispense with rowdy and expensive coronial elections without depriving the electors of a right - was resolved in 1888. Since the county councils were elected bodies, the inherent authority that coroners derived from the public stayed intact. As of 1 April 1889 (the cut-off date), those troublesome elections passed into history.

For those of us who are familiar with the Ripper case, we have entered recognizable territory in the coronial jungle - 1888 country. Names and places appear like familiar landmarks: Wynne Baxter at the Working Lads Institute, Samuel Langham in Golden Lane, Thomas Diplock at the Lamb Tap and Roderick Macdonald in Shoreditch Town Hall. We know this place, but after our travels, somehow it looks different.

Let's camp here.

Around the Campfire

*This is where I dip my buckets,
where I fill my pen.*

Peter Straub, The Throat

We said at the outset that it would



Wynne Baxter (1844-1920) ©Adam Wood

be a long march. We are nowhere near done, but now we have a backdrop for the inquests and coroners of 1888. We don't know everything - there are still blank spaces on our coronial map, though thankfully no monsters yet - but at least we have a sense of what the territory is like.

We have seen how very different the medieval coroner was from his Victorian counterpart, and how the nineteenth century inquest had its foundation in an idealistic struggle to secure the civil liberties of England's poorer citizens: their right to work and live in safe conditions. We have learned that, by 1888, the study of pathology had only been in use for about fifty years - and still had a way to go before becoming a standard procedure.

We have also seen how coroners were underpaid, misunderstood and less than respected officials. In their conflict with the magistrates they were not as independent as we thought. They also sought a balance in the openness of their courts. Although from the earliest days, when the earliest coroners were directed to document the pleas of the Crown in 1194, it appears that down through the centuries some coroners were not the record keepers we might wish.

Armed now with a basic understanding of the issues with which the coronial system grappled, we can see the coroners who were involved in the Ripper case - Baxter, Langham, Diplock and Macdonald - in a different light. Compare Thomas Wakley's struggle to introduce the routine post-mortem with the complex issues with which Wynne Baxter struggled at the Rose Mylett inquest a half century later. True, pathology had come a considerable distance. However, respect for the coroner had not - as we can tell from the rather hurt feelings Baxter expressed to the jury:

*At all events, they heard that doctor after doctor went down to view the body without his knowledge or sanction as coroner. He did not wish to make that a personal matter, but he had never received such treatment before.*¹³⁴

It was the coroner's prerogative to order post-mortems, and it was his responsibility to pay for them. The body was his jurisdiction, and only the coroner could release it for burial. Rose Mylett was the central piece of evidence in the inquest into her death. Now, if we imagine for a moment that Rose Mylett died in custody, the nature of Baxter's complaint becomes

easier to understand. In the context of a custody or prison death, Robert Anderson's examination of Rose Mylett takes on a sinister connotation.

We might ask - as Thomas Wakley surely would have asked - what Robert Anderson's medical qualifications were. In reality, Rose Mylett was not a victim of police brutality. There was no sinister business going on, only what appears to be a communication breakdown between police and coroner.

In Chief Inspector Donald Swanson's report of 18 January 1889, he cited practice during the Kelly inquest as precedent for sidestepping Baxter.¹³⁵ We should remind ourselves, however, that the whole idea behind the pathological post-mortem was to guard against any attempt by the establishment to prettify death. In that sense, Mary Kelly is not the precedent for Mylett, but rather the precedent is the Hounslow Flogging case.

If we think about the roles of the post-mortem, the inquest, and the coroner as Thomas Wakley did, this episode at the end of the Mylett inquest comes into sharp focus:

*In answer to the jury, the CORONER said he did not think any disrespect to him was intended when several doctors were sent to view the body.*¹³⁶

The Mylett jury's concern for the dignity of Baxter's office was very much in their self-interest. Wynne Baxter was *their* coroner, their guardian against abuse. He was their elected protector.

It is no surprise, however, that few understood the coroner's office or that Lord Francis Hervey's words of 1876 continued to hold: 'At no time did Coroners seem to have been treated with respect.'

From all we have discussed, we can see the complicated background to the coroners who worked on the inquests into the Whitechapel murders: the lost origins of the coronial system; the medieval coroner's concern in garnering revenue for the Crown from whales and fish, treasure, and fines; the coroner's business of poking around wounds and allowing juries a view; opening up dead bodies; the issue of civil liberties; huge and noisy elections; Radicals; exhumations; doctors and lawyers; old medieval statutes; the uneasy relationship between magistrates and coroner; and baffled High Courts. For all these reasons, the office was mysterious. Coroners were mysterious people.

We hope they are a little less mysterious to you now that, like little John King, you have had a glimpse of the green of the peak.

In subsequent articles, we will examine the careers of Thomas Diplock, Samuel Langham, and Roderick Macdonald. We will watch Diplock's contested 1868 election, and see him struggle with the Middlesex magistrates. We will look at tavern inquests, a subset of the English inquest that includes the Druiitt inquiry.

While examining Samuel Langham's fifty-year career, we will look at the City of London coronership and see how Langham could hold inquests where no one had died or even been injured.

We'll take a stab at answering the two questions that Macdonald famously asked during the Mary Kelly inquest: 'Do you think that we do not know what we are doing here, and that we do not know our own district?'

And along the way, we will cast an eye for the missing depositions from the inquest of Montague John Druiitt.

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Write for Ripperologist!

Victoriana or the East End. Please send your submissions to contact@ripperologist.info



ADAM WOOD

The Last Supper

Mary Kelly's evening meal
and the fast food of the East End

We may be forgiven for thinking that 'fast food' is a modern day convenience, an opportunity to eat for those too busy - or reluctant - to prepare a 'proper' meal; an integral part of our disposal lifestyle.

Fast food was readily available at all hours in Victorian London, however, and especially in the East End. We have numerous accounts of victims, witnesses and suspects in the Ripper case partaking of a late supper.

Elizabeth Mahoney, a witness at Martha Tabram's inquest, reported that the landing on which the body was found was clear when she returned to her rooms at 37 George Yard Buildings with husband Joseph at 1.40am. Pausing only to remove her hat and cloak, Mrs Mahoney went out again to a Chandler's shop in Thrawl Street for some supper, returning just five minutes later.¹

Later that month, August 1888, it was reported that at around 1.45am on the last morning of her life, Annie Chapman was seen eating potato by Timothy Donovan in the kitchen of Crossingham's lodging house, 35 Dorset Street. Having finished the meal, Annie asked Donovan to keep her bed, saying she'd soon return with her doss money.²

On the night of 20 September Dock labourer James Brown believed he saw Elizabeth Stride with a man near the Board school at about 12.45am. He testified at her inquest:

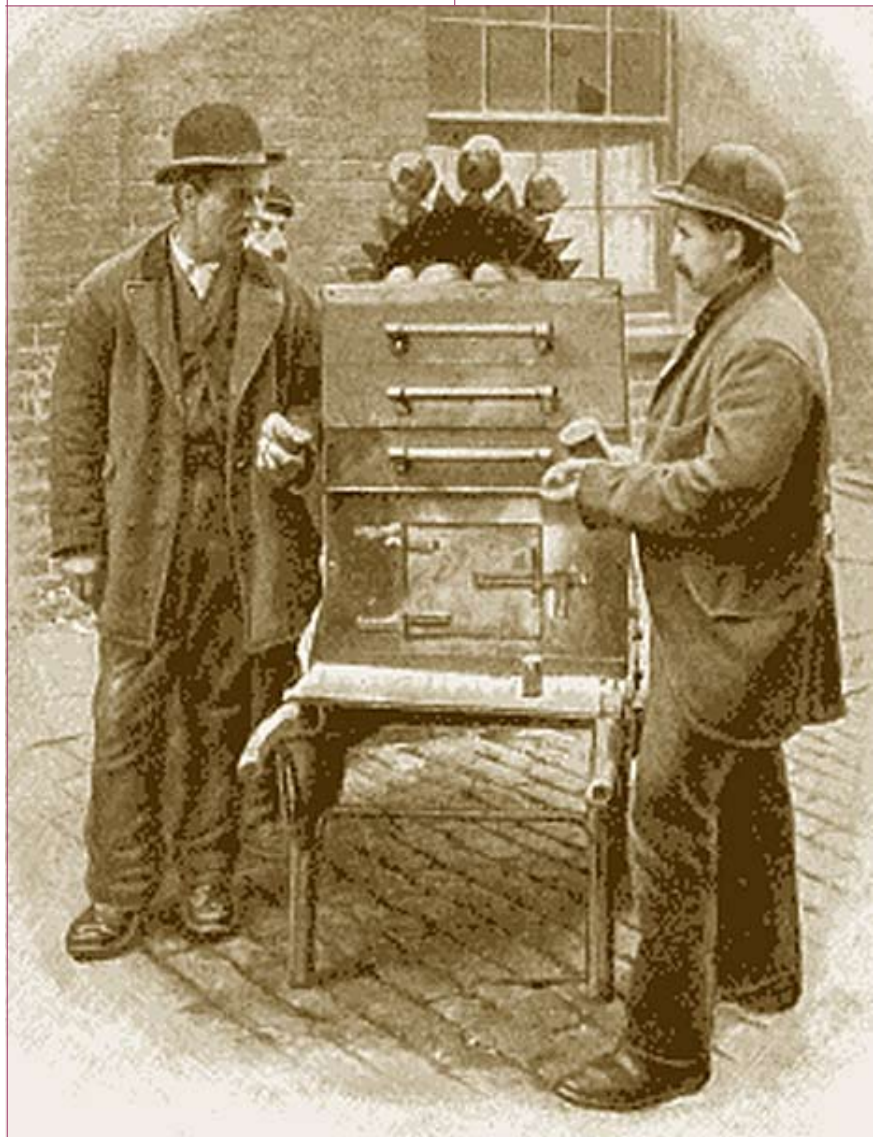
I live at 35, Fairclough-street. I saw the deceased about a quarter to 1 on Sunday morning. At that time I was going from my house to get some supper from a Chandler's shop at the corner of Berner-street and Fairclough-street. As I was going across the road I saw a man and woman standing by the Board School in Fairclough-street. They were standing against the wall. As I passed them I heard the woman say, "No, not to-night, some other night." That

made me turn round, and I looked at them. I am certain the woman was the deceased. I did not notice any flowers in her dress. The man had his arm up against the wall, and the woman had her back to the wall facing him. I noticed the man had a long coat on, which came very nearly down to his heels. I believe it was an overcoat. I could not say what kind of cap he had on. The place where they were standing was rather dark.

*I saw nothing light in colour about either of them. I then went on and went indoors. I had nearly finished my supper when I heard screams of "Police" and "Murder." That was about a quarter of an hour after I got in.*³

The *Star*, seeking to interview witnesses to the Stride murder, sought out a friend named 'One-armed Liz'. The reporter found her in the kitchen of one of the many lodging houses:

To be sure, "One-armed Liz" had good reason to be kind to the police. She occasionally fell into their hands, and needed all the mercy she could get laid up in her favour, but she had done her duty to-night, and was the heroine of the hour. "Did you want to see her? Here she is, in here." The speaker led the way to one of the barrack-like lodging-houses half way down the street. "Can't you get her to step out?" asked the reporter. "Oh, you walk right in;



Baked potato seller



Fried Fish

From *The Children of the Ghetto, Chapter IV, The Redemption of the Son and the Daughter* by Israel Zangwill, 1892

Fried fish, and such fried fish! Only a great poet could sing the praises of the national dish, and the golden age of Hebrew poetry is over. Strange that Gebirol should have lived and died without the opportunity of the theme, and that the great Jehuda Halevi himself should have had to devote his genius merely to singing the glories of Jerusalem. 'Israel is among the other nations,' he sang, 'as the heart among the limbs.' Even so is the fried fish of Judæa to the fried fish of Christendom and Heathendom. With the audacity of true culinary genius, Jewish fried fish is always served cold. The skin is a beautiful brown, the substance firm and succulent. The very bones thereof are full of marrow, yea and charged with memories of the happy past. Fried fish binds Anglo-Judæa more than all the lip-professions of unity. Its savour is early known of youth, and the divine flavour, endeared by a thousand childish recollections, entwined with the most sacred associations, draws back the hoary sinner into the paths of piety.

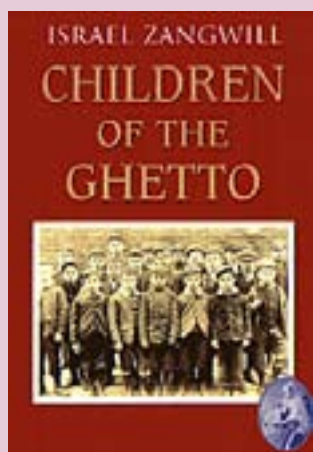
It is on fried fish, mayhap, that the Jewish matron grows fat. In the days of the Messiah, when the saints shall feed off the Leviathan; and the Sea Serpent shall be dished up for the last time, and the world and the silly season shall come to an end, in those days it is probable that the saints will prefer their Leviathan fried. Not that any physical frying will be necessary, for in those happy times (for whose coming every faithful Israelite prays three times a day), the Leviathan will have what taste the eater will. Possibly a few highly respectable saints, who were fashionable in their day and contrived to live in Kensington without infection of paganism, will take their Leviathan in conventional courses, and beginning with hors d'oeuvres may will him everything by turns and nothing long; making him soup and sweets, joint and entrée, and even ices and coffee, for in the millennium the harassing prohibition which bars cream after meat will fall through. But, however this be, it is beyond question that the bulk of the faithful will mentally fry him, and though the Christian saints, who shall be privileged to wait at table, hand them plate after plate, fried fish shall be all the fare.

One suspects that Hebrews gained the taste in the Desert of Sinai, for the manna that fell there was not monotonous to the palate as the sciolist supposes, but likewise mutable under volition. It were incredible that Moses, who gave so many imperishable things to his people, did not also give them the knowledge of fried fish, so that they might obey his behest, and rejoice, before the Lord. Nay, was it not because, while the manna fell, there could be no lack of fish to fry, that they lingered forty years in a dreary wilderness?

Other delicious things there are in Jewish cookery - Lockschen, which are the apotheosis of vermicelli, Ferfel, which are Lockschen in an atomic state, and Creplich, which are triangular meat-pasties, and Kuggol, to which pudding has a far-away resemblance; and there is even gefüllte Fisch, which is stuffed fish without bones - but fried fish reigns above all in cold, unquestioned sovereignty. No other people possesses the recipe. As a poet of the commencement of the century sings:

The Christians are ninnies, they can't fry Dutch plaice,

Believe me, they can't tell a carp from a dace.



Further information on Children of the Ghetto

*you needn't be afraid. They are all ladies and gentlemen in there." Thus encouraged the Star man entered. The door opened into a large room, of which the ceiling was so low that a Guardsman who rose from a seat between two girls to see what was to do couldn't stand upright, and the walls were black as grime and filth could make them. The floor was inches deep with dirt, and the atmosphere could have been served up with a spoon. On the benches and tables sat or squatted some half a hundred of men and women of all ages and degrees of poverty. A huge fireplace at the end of the room held a cooking apparatus, on which were displayed a score of suppers in course of preparation. And there, in a halo of vile vapor and amid an incense of fried fish stood "One-armed Liz."*⁴

This first mention of fried fish touches upon the enormous popularity of the dish that was becoming the country's favourite - fish and chips, which is probably most well known in relation to the Whitechapel murders with the release of Dr Bond's post mortem on Mary Kelly:

In the abdominal cavity was some partially digested food of fish and potatoes and similar food was found in the remains of the stomach attached to the intestines.

Was this last supper 'fish and chips' as we know them today? It's impossible to say whether the potatoes were chipped, although this method of cutting and frying potatoes was certainly in use. In all likelihood the potato was baked.

Where did Mary buy her meal? There would have been dozens of options, but it would seem probable that she would have visited her landlord, John McCarthy, at his shop next to the entrance to Millers Court. But did McCarthy sell cooked 'fast food'?

A clue is given by Isaac Lewis Jacobs in his testimony at the inquest into the murder of Alice McKenzie:

*I live at 12 Newcastle place, and am a bootmaker. About ten minutes to 1 this morning I left home to buy some supper in M'Carthy's, in Dorset street. I had occasion to pass Newcastle place into Old Castle street. When I got to Cocoanut place a constable ran up to me; I stopped. He said, "Where have you been?" I replied, "I have been nowhere, I am just going on an errand and have just left my home."*⁵

Police-constable Walter Andrews, who discovered the body, stated that Jacobs was carrying a plate. This indicates that McCarthy probably

served hot food, presumably buying in and re-heating fried fish rather than frying it on the premises. The time of Jacobs's proposed visit to McCarthy's shows he would have indeed been open at the time Mary Kelly purchased her last supper.

History of fish and chips

The Portuguese *Marranos* - Jews who had been forced to hide their ethnicity due to persecution - introduced fried fish to Britain when they arrived as refugees in the 16th century. The soon-to-be US president Thomas Jefferson wrote about eating 'fried fish in the Jewish fashion' after a visit to Britain towards the end of the eighteenth century (interestingly Jefferson also introduced the French style 'chip' to America after serving as Ambassador to France in the 1700s).

The first published mention of fried fish was in 1837, when Charles Dickens wrote of a 'fried fish warehouse' in *Oliver Twist*. In 1846 the first Jewish cookbook, *Jewish Housewives Cookbook*, included a recipe for fried fish.

By the 1850s street traders sold pieces of fried fish and cooked 'shaved' potatoes in newspapers on the streets of London.

Henry Mayhew, in *The Morning Chronicle: Labour and the Poor, 1849-50*, gives an insight into the life of a fried fish seller:

Among the street vendors of fish there is one class who get a living by the sale of fried fish. They purchase their fish at Billingsgate - a species termed dabs. Some are called plaice dabs, and others are called sole dabs. They buy by the pot, which contains from 70 to 80 fish, for which they pay from 1s to 1s 6d per pot. This is the average price the year through. Some have harrows, others pots, and some get porters. They pay for barrows 3d a day; the pot is given in with the fish, and for porters they pay from 4d to 6d, according to the load. Some trade upon their own capital, and others borrow enough to purchase stock, for which they pay 1s in the pound. Those who generally lend stock-money are persons who keep coal-sheds, or shopkeepers. In commencing this business it would require about twenty shillings to start fairly. Sometimes they use linseed oil, sometimes fish oil; but the Jews use salad oil; and in order to give the fish a rich colour they use turmeric, which gives it a yellow cast. The class generally live in a low neighbourhood,

From London Labour and the London Poor; 1851

Henry Mayhew

Among the cooked food which has for many years formed a portion of the street trade is fried fish. The fish fried by street dealers is known as "plaice dabs" and "sole dabs," which are merely plaice and soles, "dab" being a common word for any flat fish. The fish which supplies upwards of one half the quantity fried for the streets is plaice; the other fishes used are soles, haddocks, whittings, flounders, and herrings, but very sparingly indeed as regards herrings. Soles are used in as large a quantity as the other kinds mentioned altogether.

On my inquiry as to the precise quantity of each description fried, the answer from the traders was uniform: "I can't say, sir. I buy whatever's cheapest." The fish is bought at Billingsgate, but some of the street dealers obtain another and even a cheaper commodity than at that great mart. This supply is known in the trade as "friers," and consists of the overplus of a fishmonger's stock, of what he has not sold overnight, and does not care to offer for sale on the following morning, and therefore vends it to the costermongers, whose customers are chiefly among the poor. The friers are sometimes half, and sometimes more than half, of the wholesale price in Billingsgate. Many of the friers are good, but some, I was told, "in any thing like muggy or close weather were very queer fish, very queer indeed," and they are consequently fried with a most liberal allowance of oil, "which will conceal anything."

The fish to be fried is first washed and gutted; the fins, head, and tail are then cut off, and the trunk is dipped in flour and water, so that in frying, oil being always used, the skin will not be scorched by the, perhaps, too violent action of the fire, but merely browned. Pale rape oil is generally used. The sellers, however, are often twitted with using lamp oil, even when it is dearer than that devoted to the purpose.

The fish is cooked in ordinary frying-pans. One tradesman in Cripple-gate, formerly a costermonger, has on his premises a commodious oven which he had built for the frying, or rather baking, of fish. He supplies the small shopkeepers who deal in the article (although some prepare it themselves), and sells his fish retail also, but the street-sellers buy little of him, as they are nearly all "their own cooks." Some of the "illegitimates," however, lay in their stock by purchase of the tradesman in question. The fish is cut into portions before it is fried, and the frying occupies about ten minutes. The quantity prepared together is from six to twenty portions, according to the size of the pans; four dozen portions, or "pieces," as the street people call them, require a quart of oil.

The sale is both on rounds and at stalls, the itinerants being twice as numerous as the stationary. The round is usually from public-house to public-house, in populous neighbourhoods. The itinerants generally confine themselves to the trade in fried fish, but the stall-keepers always sell other articles, generally fish of some kind, along with it. The sale in the public-houses is the greatest.

In the public-houses, a slice of bread, 16 or 32 being cut from a quartern loaf - as they are whole or half slices - is sold or offered with the fish for a penny. The cry of the seller is, "fish and bread, a penny." Sometimes for an extrasized piece, with bread, 2d is obtained, but very seldom, and sometimes two pieces are given for 1.5d. At the stalls bread is rarely sold with the edible in question.

For the itinerant trade, a neatly painted wooden tray, slung by a leathern strap from the neck, is used: the tray is papered over generally with clean newspapers, and on the paper is spread the shapeless brown lumps of fish. Parsley is often strewn over them, and a saltbox is placed at the discretion of the customer. The trays contain from two to five dozen pieces.

The capital required to start properly in the business is: - frying-pan 2s (second-hand 9d); tray 2s 6d (second-hand 8d); salt-box 6d (second-hand 1d); and stock-money 5s - in all 10s. A man has gone into the trade, however, with 1s, which he expended in fish and oil, borrowed a frying-pan, borrowed an old teaboard, and so started on his venture.

From *The Wild Tribes of London*; 1855

Watts Phillips

A fish-shop throws its cheerful glare into the chilly night. We will halt for a moment, and inspect its interior, - one of many of a similar character which abound in the neighbourhood.

The first thing which arrests our attention, after having feasted our eyes upon the rows of crisp brown fish that decorate the window, is the large fire within, which has a fiercely jolly look, like the face of a giant who has taken to drinking; but which comforts us nevertheless, till we forget this raw December night, which encompasses us about. The shop is tenanted by a family of five - a mother, her three daughters, and an only son, the heir to the house of Manasseh. The mother, though obese, is comely to look upon, with eyes of melting lustre, and nose, whose size, and lips, whose pulpy fullness, indicate her race. She stands by the fire, the presiding genius of the frying-pan, whose handle she holds firmly, as hardy mariner the good ship's helm. She grasps her fork like a harpoon, and, with steady eye, watches the sea of hissing, bubbling oil. Each moment the fork descends, and transfixes a fish, till one by one the rich brown spoil lies heaped up within the confines of the dish, while the frying-pan bubbles and hisses with impatience, calling loudly, like the horse-leech's daughters, for more.

The elder daughter of the house stands near her mother, with the face and presence of her namesake, Judith. She is cutting the fish in slices, preparing them for their hot bath in the hissing pan; and we shiver as we hear the keen knife crash through the bone, and strike the table beneath.

Hiss-bubble-bubble-goes the pan, as a fresh shoal of fish plunge into it; and - "Come along," says our friend, placing his hand, by force of habit, on our collar. We go along accordingly, though not without another look upon the shop and its contents. O, daughters of Judah, even Mr Spooner will not deny that there is yet one triumph left you-ye fry fish well!

because people object to the bad smell in frying the fish. Boys and girls, as well as men and women, are engaged in selling the fish. They give upon the average 1s 3d a pot, which generally contains seventy-five fish, for which they generally get, in selling out at 0.5d and 1d a slice, about 3s 5d gross profit. Then out of that they have to pay for oil, flour, and fuel to fry them with, which leaves a clear profit of 11d, the pot. A pot will take, when they have a good sale, two days in selling. In the summer time their fish will not keep more than a day, but in the winter two or three days. If there are a few left, they generally eat them; but if a great many, they take them out again the next evening about six o'clock. The reason is, because they won't sell in the daytime. Mondays and Saturdays are their best days. Their chief custom lies among mechanics and labourers in the public-houses. and in the streets various persons buy them. They are out in all kinds of weather.

The *Daily Telegraph* in October 1888 carried an article about fried fish titled "Are fried fish refreshments?" A dealer in fish had been prosecuted for selling it fried without having taken out a licence for the sale of refreshments:

London, to the South and East, swarms with little shops haunted late at night by the poor, who buy cooked food in several forms, also ginger-beer, lemonade, and other non-intoxicant

drinks. A humbler class of dealers in refreshments [are] the men who sell coffee and tea and hot potatoes at street-corners, in portable stalls... [with people buying] coffee, cocoa, tea, lemonade, fried fish, ham and beef, sausages, hot potatoes - all such foods and drinks are rivals to the brandy and gin of the public-houses...

The *Boston Globe*, in December 1888, described Commercial Street:

We are now in Commercial street, and it seems to me a very paradise after the slums we have left. The mist has cleared away, and if it were not for the all-pervading and abominable smell of fried fish, the air would be delightfully fresh in comparison with Hanbury Street.

The first recorded fish and chip shop came in 1860, when a Jewish immigrant called Joseph Malin opened a business in London's Cleveland Street selling fried fish alongside chipped potatoes, which, until then, had been found only in the Irish potato shops. It was a great success and more shops sprung up immediately. These were originally small family businesses, often run from the 'front room' of the house.

The popularity of the pairing was enormous, and by 1902 London was full of fish and chip shops, as George R Sims reported in *Living London*:

The fried fish shop of the east is very like the fried fish shop of the west, but in the matter of 'chips' there is a slight difference. It is in the



Fried fish stall

vinegar bottle. It may be the desire of the East-End-er to get more for his money, but this I know, that where the West-End 'chipper' is contented just to sprinkle his or her pennyworth, the East-End 'chipper' shakes the bottle for a good two minutes in order to get a grand result. Salt for fish and chips or batter pudding you take with your finger and thumb from a big salt box on the counter, and you bring the salt out with you and do your seasoning in the street.

In the latter part of the 19th Century, the development of the steam trawler brought fish from all over the North Atlantic, Iceland and Greenland and the steam railways allowed easy and fast distribution of the fish around the country. At the same time the poor saw a general rise in their incomes which left a little spare cash for luxuries like the fish supper.

By 1910 there were around 25,000 fish and chips shops in Britain. Although recently overtaken as Britain's favourite takeaway by Chicken Tikka Masala, there are still 8,600 fish and chips shops in this country, eight for every one McDonalds outlet.⁷

It makes you wonder what Dr Bond may have been noting as the contents of Mary Kelly's stomach had the murder taken place today...



Late 19th Century fish and chip shop, Nottingham

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Further information

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Cyber Jack: The Ripper on the Internet

MONTY

In the beginning God created *Ripperologist*. And *Ripperologist* was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the cover. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the cover. And God said, let there be font: and there was font. And God saw the font, that it was good: and God divided the font from the graphics. Then God created Monty. And God spoke unto Monty. He sayeth: 'Monty, go forth and search ye World Wide Web. Gather relevant material from the Internet and share it within my mightiest creation'.

And that's how this article began - well, something like that. Actually God came to me in the form of Adam Wood. Yep, I know, mysterious ways. Adam asked me if I would contribute something about Jack in cyberspace. So if this goes wrong please mail adam@....

If I am going to start anywhere then I guess I should start with the Daddy of all Jack the Ripper websites, [Casebook Jack the Ripper](#).

Now, as we are all well aware, *Ripperologist* has hit cyberspace and if you are reading this now the likelihood is you are acquainted with Internet land and most probably *Casebook*. However, if you are missing 'C', 'J' and 'R' on your keyboard, or know nothing of search engines, then I will inform you that *Casebook* has a vast amount of information regarding the subject. In fact, if you are a newcomer, *Casebook* is THE place to start searching for information regarding the Whitechapel murders of 1888. A basic and factual introduction to the case, the low downs on victims (including possible victims), suspects (including the obscure) and witnesses are included. As well as information gathered on official documents related to the case, Police officials (including the playing of Police Beats) and inquest notes. There are other topics such as

Victorian London, Timelines, Media related items, Author interviews and even a Games section. However, the most valuable topics, in my opinion, are the Dissertations, Press reports and the shiny, spanking new Message Board Forum.

Dissertations

The **Dissertations**, written by a variety of known and not so well known people, are interesting, informative and thought-provoking. All are worth a read no matter what one's own opinions are. Essays on a number of issues, by the likes of established authors such as Stewart Evans and Martin Fido along with excellent essays by Adrian Phypers (*aka Viper*), Dave Yost, Brian W Schoeneman, Christopher-Michael DiGrazia and many, many others, makes this section a must read, so visit it! I defy your thoughts to remain unprovoked. My only gripe is the lack of contributions in recent times. This may be down to many varying factors, such as fear of repeating subjects or even worse, apathy. Also The Great White Magazine Sharks such as *Ripperologist* and *Ripper Notes* swallow up new talent as soon as it surfaces. This problem is apparent in the fact that many later dissertations have been taken from

either or both the aforementioned magazines. However, as stated, the works that do appear are well worth discovering.

Press Reports

Press reports is a valuable source of research information. The work put into the *Casebook* Press project initially by the late great Adrian Phypers and then by current contributors including Chris Scott, Alex Chisholm, Alan Sharp and David O'Flaherty have ensured that when it comes to contemporary press reports, the *Casebook* is the only place to look. Here you will find the informative, interesting and bizarre. News reports from around the globe are included and updated. If you are searching for that elusive press report or just simply in the mood for a contemporary feel then visit the Press Reports section of the *Casebook*.

Message Boards

The final, and by far most popular, topic on the *Casebook* is the **Message Board Forums**. New Year, new Forums. The popularity of the Forums created overloaded scripts and resulted in continual server crashing. Software update was needed. A necessary act conducted by Stephen Ryder (The Boss) due to the old software heaving



Casebook: Jack the Ripper. Its importance to researchers was recognised at the recent UK Ripper conference when founder Stephen Ryder was awarded the Outstanding Achievement award

and creaking with 80,000 odd posts. In fact, if it was not for Stephen's prompt work the risk of losing all that information was a real possibility. Congratulations and thanks must go to Stephen for this work. Not only has he rescued the forums, he has treated members to brand spanking new features (such as a calendar listing up coming events which members can access, thread subscription and a easier to use private messaging system... amongst other things), made it more user friendly and, as Stephen puts it, has ensured growth without 'any more growing pains'. It must be remembered that Stephen has inputted a lot of his own time, effort and money into this restructuring act. So donations will be gratefully received.

If you want the latest information on Jack the Ripper then the forums is the place to visit. If you want to debate then the forums is the place to visit. If you want to ask questions or state opinions then the forums is the place to visit. If you want to know about Mary Kelly's inside leg measurement then the forums is the place to visit. If you want to know the height of the fence at the yard at 29 Hanbury Street then the forums is the place to visit. If you want to know about the sinister Diddles then the forums is the place to visit. A Jack the Ripper Community Centre where you can meet other people, debate, question and chat. A varied plethora of subject matter can be found here. It is this detail that annoys some and endears it to others. The annoyance arises from the fact the message board forums has been up and running since 1998 (I think, Mr Ryder please correct me if I am wrong) and therefore topics tend to get repeated *ad nauseam* - this mainly down to new visitors creating threads without searching for the appropriate topic beforehand, thus creating a tendency to make the boards 'stale' to regular visitors and leading to a reluctance by the more knowledgeable to partake and debate. Some feel another 'pain' is the creation of non-Ripper related discussions; the argument being that the *Casebook* should be a factual research tool as opposed to a diluting, glorified Chat Room. Whilst I agree that the *Casebook* should be a valued research tool I see no reason why other topics cannot be included - within reason. After all the message board side of *Casebook* is, like it or not and as mentioned, a community. Differing contributors

who bring differing views and angles to a case that has evolved little (though evolved it has) since 1888. And, over time, these contributors have bonded. Friendships have been forged to such a degree that off-topic messages are unavoidable. And this I welcome. The diversity of opinions and ideas, the bouncing off of ideas and theories coupled with the endless pursuit for an answer. Will we get one? Most likely not, but there is much interest in trying. So, *viva la Casebook!*

An archived post thread, allowing you to view all posted messages on the Forums from 2003 to 2006, is accessible [here](#), though new posts cannot be added. I will mention one archived thread I feel is worth viewing, created by our own Chris Scott, titled *Earliest Profile of the Ripper? 1893*. This concerns the Belgian author and poet Camille Lemonnier's psychological work titled *L'Homme qui tue les femmes (The Man Who Kills Women)*. Inspired by the Whitechapel Murders, this short story first appeared in *Gil Blas* on 2 November 1888 and an illustrated version appeared in *Gil Blas illustré* on 19 February 1893, resulting in a charge against the author of outraging public decency by publication, heard on 16 October 1893. He was later acquitted. Incidentally, the first English translated version appeared in *Ripperologist* 46. Bet the editors didn't know that. (*Course we did! Who did the translation but Ripperologist's own Eduardo Zinna? Rip.*)

The A?R Methodology and Research thread

This thread, (click [here](#) for archived, view only; click for [new Forums thread](#)) is based on the case study by David M Radka entitled A?R, *Alternative Ripperology: Questioning the Whitechapel Murders*. The thread has been created by David himself, explaining the reasoning behind his thinking as well as answering questions and points raised by other posters. David does have a 'unique' way of handling fellow posters, but I am not here to comment about the personalities on the thread - you can judge that for yourself. I will just state that David's study is unique and interesting, even if it does take some reading and re-reading. As with any theory, it has its supporters and detractors. I confess that he has made me look at the case from a completely new angle, an angle I had not considered before. I am not sure I agree with it but, admittedly,

this is maybe down to my lack of understanding. Credit must go to David for the obvious hard study he has put in and even more for sharing his ideas with us all, as credit must go to any person who lays their own views open for all to criticise. He may not be everyone's cup of tea, not that he is out to win friends and influence people, but his original thinking is a refreshing change. I plead for those who have not read *Alternative Ripperology: Questioning the Whitechapel Murders* to do so. And do so with open minds. Anyone who wishes to view David's work *Alternative Ripperology: Questioning the Whitechapel Murders* please click on this link. <http://casebook.org/dissertations/dst-ar.html>

The James Maybrick thread

Finally, my last link to the message boards is regarding the alleged diary of Jack the Ripper. *The James Maybrick thread*. OK, I admit it, the diary world leaves me cold. To others it is a place of intrigue. To me it is just a carousel of repeated argument and allegation. Progression in the verification of the diary is laboured, though that is not due to a lack of effort. It was not so long ago that inconclusive yet informative tests were conducted, and it would seem that moves for further tests are being mentioned again. Still, it is oh so easy for me to sit here typing gloom. Credit must go to those who are willing and trying to produce a conclusion rather than those who talk about it and do nothing more.

I really could go on and include more stuff from the *Casebook*, but if I did that then I'd have nothing for next month's *Ripperologist*. Needless to say, and I have said it already, the *Casebook* is a pre-eminent, distinguished and fantastically wonderful site concerning Jack the Ripper. Basically, if the *Casebook* was a blonde, could make me a pie and get me a beer, then I'd marry it. It's that good. Hell, I'd marry it anyway.

Other Ripper sites

THE METROPOLITAN POLICES CRIME MUSEUM introduces us to *The Enduring mystery of Jack the Ripper*. Seeing as they list 11 victims, including the Pinchin Street Torso, one begs to wonder if the Met's thinking of today has altered much from 1888. Mystery indeed. A clear and concise description of the events of 1888 makes this site basic to the more interested but just handy for anyone new to the case. Just want to view the bare



DANIELLE MAY'S OWN VIEWS ON JACK can be found at *The Curiosity of the Whitechapel Murders of 1888*. OK, so this site mentions the very lamentable Knight Mason/Royal conspiracy as a favourite book. So what? Knight's book drew me to the subject so I guess it wasn't all bad. Anyway, I like this site because of the very honest and personal views given by its creator.



And finally, Monty's site of the month. Richard Jones provides directions in his own **DIY Ripper walk**. For those who do not know, Richard was the

Don't worry Monty, we're confident our readers will appreciate your firm hand guiding them through the choppy waters of the web. As for us, we look forward to another analysis of sites old and new next month. Rip.

Comment





CHRIS SCOTT

Press Trawl

Decatur Morning Review
19 November 1890

PUT BEHIND BARS
Arrest of Dr Tumblety
at Washington City
He is A Suspicious Character

Washington City, Nov. 18.

Dr Francis Tumblety, who is known to the police of all the large cities of America and Europe, and who was under the surveillance of the Scotland Yard force when the Jack the Ripper excitement was at its height, was arrested in this city Monday night on the charge of being a suspicious character. At the station the doctor was searched and a large number of valuables were secured from him, amounting in worth to several thousand dollars. In his pocket was a pamphlet containing the names of a number of prominent men both in this city and elsewhere, and he also carried a letter from a well known congressman. The testimonials were chiefly devoted to elaborate praise of the doctor's character. In the pamphlet the doctor had an article of printing to the charge advanced against him by the London authorities and spoke of his escape from the vilifying statements of the newspapers.

Frederick News
4 December 1888

Tumblety Turns Up

Dr Francis Tumblety, the eccentric American who was arrested in London some weeks ago on suspicion of being Jack the Ripper, the Whitechapel murder fiend, jumped his bail and escaped the vigilance of the London police, and landed at New York yesterday. According to the detectives he arrived on the French steamship La Bretagne, from Havre, and although there were a dozen or more reporters on the pier when he landed, all failed to recognize him. Two of Inspector Byrnes' most trusted aides were on

the pier, however, and as they had been sent there specially to keep an eye on the doctor, whom they suspected that he was a passenger on the steamer, they had no difficulty in dogging him to a boarding house on West Tenth street where he is now under surveillance.

Frederick News
20 November 1888

The Whitechapel Murderer
Was in Frederick

The Baltimore Sun of today refers to the arrest of Dr Francis Tumblety in London as the supposed Whitechapel murderer. That paper also refers to the fact that Tumblety at one time resided in Baltimore, San Francisco, Cal., and Washington. As usual The News man is always on the alert, and after a turn around the city gleaned the following facts: Dr Francis Tumblety opened up an office in this city where Mr Charles Kuesmaul now has his tobacco and cigar store, on Court street, about the close of the war for the purpose of curing blood diseases, pimples &c., arising from disorders of the blood. The doctor was a very eccentric man, having for a sign a skeleton head and whilst out riding always had a greyhound following him. He dressed in a very eccentric manner also, and answers the description of the man referred to in Baltimore and other places. The doctor whilst here also represented himself as an Indian Doctor from London.

Manitoba Daily Free Press
29 November 1888

Dr Tumblety, who has gained some considerable notoriety in connection with the Whitechapel murder, is well known in Ottawa. He at one time was spoken of as a candidate in opposition to late T. D'Arcy McGee. He took great pride in showing what purported to be letters from Emperor Napoleon III, the

Duke of Wellington and all the eminent people of Europe on his ability and the reason of friendship which existed between the writers and himself, but he was very reticent on his escapades in the Maritime Provinces and as to how he was drummed out of a Quebec village near Montreal. His life in Canada would fill a large volume of adventures, thrilling in interesting but too demoralizing for publication.

Fitchburg Daily Sentinel
1 October 1892

WAKEMAN'S WANDERINGS
LONDON'S BILLINGSGATE

The Greatest Wholesale
Fish Market in the World

Older then Authentic British History

Its Ancient Fishwives Are No More

Interesting Surroundings
and Odd Characters

Copyright 1891 by Edgar L Wakeman

London, Sept. 19.

You can fairly smell Billingsgate market, the greatest wholesale fish market of London, and the most important fish market in all the world, long before you can see it. It has a hint of the sea air in it. Tar and oakum are suggested. Floating to your senses, along with the coming of the first rays of the morning sun broken by the grim and lofty Monument, it tells more than of the stuffy market and its steaming throngs. It carries the fancy pleasantly along past London's grim waterside structures and the webs of spars and rigging, down the widening Thames and on past pretty Margate to the wide free reaches of the blue North sea. There is that wondrous sea harvest field, from Dover to upper Norway, are rocking the fisher fleets.

In olden days. indeed not more than a quarter of a century ago, these sent their catches to the London market. And a pretty sight it must then have been, when the fleet came up here to the old Billingsgate wharf, just under the shadows of historic London Bridge; the Dutch built eelboats, with their bulging polished oaken sides, half hidden in the river mist; punts packed with flounders and small closely crowded baskets ranged along the seats, scores of oyster punts filled with gray masses of sand and shell; weather neaten luggers packed with herrings, cod and ling, and all about the wharf and swarming like flies

aboard all manner of closely anchored fishing craft, sailors, fishermen, costers, Billingsgate fishwives, and fine ladies too, engaged in the chaffering and bantering of eager selling and buying.

But that day is past. The olden color and brightness are gone. Hard mercantile thrift and modern methods have banished the fine ladies who in gentle "slumming" mood made their own purchases at Billingsgate and took back into choice London society the wondrous sayings of the Billingsgate women, whose tongues were the readiest and wickedest in all the world. The fishwives are gone, and their only existing prototypes are at the Claddagh, Galway, Ireland.

Steam vessels scurry about the North Sea grounds, secure the fish where they are taken and bring them to the mouth of the Thames. Here other larger fast sailing steam craft are laden, and these, varying in number according to the season, daily bring the vast fish supply of London, landing it at the very doors of Billingsgate, much as the fish supply of New York city is set down in the East River at the back doors of ramshackle old Fulton Market.

Billingsgate Market still stands just where it has stood for centuries. How many centuries, no man knows. Iconoclasts without reverence for even the antiquities of a fish say a fellow by the name of Billing owned a wharf upon the same spot in Queen Elizabeth's reign, and hence its name. But I have seen a preamble to an Act of Parliament (in 10 and 12 of William III) to make Billingsgate a free market for the sale of fish, in which, among other "whereases," is one reciting that "Billingsgate has time out of mind been a free market for all manner of floating and salt fish, as also for all manner of lobsters and shellfish." Tradition, which is good history when authorities differ, lends the place its more fitting antiquity and insists that it owes its origin to Belin, an ancient king of the Britons, who flourished 400 years B.C., and who, observing an opportunity for gain like a true Briton, erected a gate here through which the fishermen of his day were made to pass and pay toll before they could sell their fish, and hence the name Belin's Gate, finally corrupted to Billingsgate.

However all this may be, Billingsgate is the oldest wharf on the Thames, and that is saying much for it on the line of age. The market building and the ground it stands upon is owned

by the London municipal authorities. Its river frontage is 200 feet and its superficial area is 40,000 square feet, affording sites for seventeen shops and two large public houses. It is located in the densest part of what may be termed waterside London, on the north bank of the Thames. Just above it, to the west, is old London Bridge - a bridge probably better known in the literature of fiction and travel than any other similar structure in the world.

Just below it to the east is the new Tower Bridge, in process of construction for the past six years. Immediately adjoining, to the west, are the great Levant and Spanish fruit markets, and on the other side, seaward, stands the huge Doric fronted London custom house. Immediately opposite, across the Thames on the Surrey side, is the tremendous reach of the Surrey Commercial docks, vast, grim, black, and half in mist, and the Thames at this point between London and Tower Bridges is called the "Upper Pool." It is said to carry here more floating traffic than any other reach of water approaching it in size upon the face of the globe.

Owing to the dense massing of river traffic at this point and the inconceivably congested nature of the population, narrowness of streets and seeming inextricability of street traffic banking up against and hemming in Billingsgate from all directions, it would almost seem that London would have long since found some more accessible and convenient depot for the disposal of her enormous fish supply. Yet all attempts to abandon Billingsgate or divert its trade have proven futile. "Conservatism," tradition, and even superstition balk all efforts of this character. Dealers tell me they would go out of business if they had to leave Billingsgate. Fishermen would not feel easy about their consignments to any new market. Costers have repeatedly told me that their best customers among the poor of the East End would not buy or eat fish that had not the time honored seal of Billingsgate inspection upon it.

The varieties of fish which are in their respective seasons delivered at Billingsgate market certainly number nearly 100. During this month I have noticed perch, periwinkles, pike, anchovies, roach, salmon, gurnard, haddocks, herrings, flounders, turbot, sprats, jack, ling, plaice, dories, prawns, catfish, mullets, whelks, coalfish, trout, soles, pilchards, eels

and conger fish, dogfish, bream, hake, shad, weavers, skate, smelts, whitebait, tench, sturgeon and perhaps a dozen other varieties, and the total weight is from 12,000 to 13,000 tons per month of 150,000 per year.

Of this vast quantity fully two thirds reaches London by railway. All the fish from Ireland is sent across St. George's channel in fast steamers and thence by rail. Salmon and trout all come by rail, and much of the northern North Sea yield, taken off east Scottish shores, and even some of the catches from about Yarmouth and Scarborough, are for the sake of time saving thus transferred. Small wheeled, lead lined vans are provided by the railways. These are dragged by horses from fishing stations or quays to railway stations, wheeled into the railway vans, and this brought to London without breaking bulk. On arrival here they are wheeled to the streets and dragged by horses through the streets from various stations to Billingsgate. Fully 100,000 tons of fish annually reach the market in this manner.

Over three fourths of all the fish consumed by London passes inspection at Billingsgate. As the market is city property the officials for this purpose, four in number, are appointed by the Court of the Fishmongers' Company, one of the ancient but still thoroughly active Guilds or Trades Companies of London. It has a fine Fishmongers' Hall near London Bridge, and expends many thousands yearly in preventing the sale of decayed fish. All fish condemned by its inspectors are immediately conveyed to a waiting barge, treated with carbolic acid and sent to fertilizing works at Rainham, where after being baked dry they are ground to powder and sold at about five pounds per ton to the strawberry and hop farmers of Kent for fertilizing purposes.

The fish steamers arrive alongside the market at all hours of the night and early morning. At precisely 5 o'clock in the morning the market opens. Long lines of plank are laid from the market quay over barges and pontoons to the steamers' decks, and every ounce of fish is brought over these in baskets and bags on porters' heads and backs. At the same time the railway vans are unloading on the landward side, But six can be cared for at the same time. The confusion and entanglement are indescribable.

One who witnesses the scene for the first time is filled with amazement

that the largest and most civilized capital in the world will tolerate such antiquated methods. But the porters are wonderfully deft, alert, and carry incredible loads. I have seen many laden with from 200 to 300m pounds weight. They will positively frisk under a barrel of herrings which weighs 200 pounds, and there is no question many of these fellows can easily get about the market with upward of 400 pounds properly distributed upon head and back.

These Billingsgate porters are regarded as the strongest, quickest, and most athletic men in London. They live in every respect like the water rats of the Thames and the aristocracy of the Whitechapel district. Their only earthly ambitions are to eat, drink, visit "penny gaffs," rat and dog fights and excel in pugilism. They are licensed, and the strictest regulations exist regarding their conduct, even to the character of language. To lose their license is worse than imprisonment as a criminal. Their "reputations" among their fellows, the costers, and the East End slums are gained by their prowess and strength here. It is their world, their highest, broadest outlook, and they are really curiosities in social or literary studies.

They delight especially in odd sounding nicknames. In my few visits to Billingsgate I have already come to know and be favorably known by "Fishy Jim," "Cocky Jim," "Black Prince," "Jack the Float," "Happy Jack," "Johnny Shoeblack," "Jimmy Fingers" - the latter because of his thieving propensities; "Blue Nose Mike," "Cross Eyed Joe," and "Four Ale Jim." The latter is never quite at his best unless he has drunk six or seven quarts of ale before breakfast. The oath of all these Billingsgate porters, like that of the costers, to which class they have marked affinities, of "Gor blimey" and its wickedness too abhorrent for translation. They comprise two classes in their daily market work - those who bring the fish from the steamers into the market, who are called "shorers," and those who remove the fish to the stallmen's wagons on the costers' carts, who are called "mobbers."

The pugilists of London chiefly have their origin among the Billingsgate porters. They have their regular champions at "seven stone six," "eight stone six," and "eleven stone," and Officer 790, Policeman F. Wade, informed me that there is not a man among them who has not at some time or another appeared in a

Whitechapel ring. Bill Goode, who fought Slavin, is still a licensed porter here. Among many curious characters is one Cornelius Callahan, known as "Mike the Tipster." He is a ne'er do well and a privileged person. He makes great ostentation of his knowledge of the state of the market. Getting up at 2 o'clock in the morning, he prowls about the fishing steamers, and then just before the market opens he slips about among buyers and sellers and whispers "the tip o' the day" in their ears. The ha'penny is always forthcoming. On Saturday afternoon, just before the market is closed for the week, they have a game with Mike. He regularly appears for his buffeting, and often in the rough play that ensues Mike is nearly killed. Then the hat is passed, and from six to ten shillings are always paid the willing victim.

At Billingsgate fish are sold by auction and a veritable Babel the place is from 5 to 8 or 9 o'clock. There are two classes of sellers. One comprises the regular commission men to whom the fishermen consign their catches, and the other is a thoroughly hated but most prosperous class, known to Billingsgate from time immemorial as "bummarees." These are really middle men, who practice all possible arts to combine and force the regular commission men, who have but a short limit of time in which to sell, to dispose of lots at ruinous prices, and through similar combination often compel retailers to purchase at exorbitant rates. But however interesting may be the interior of Billingsgate to the casual visitor, the adjacent thoroughfares from midnight, when the first retail buyers begin coming, until the close of the market at 9 o'clock, provide far more strange and curious pictures and groupings. Upper and Lower Thames Street, Eastcheap and Great Tower Streets, Tower Hill, Fish Street Hill, St Mary at Hill, St. Dunstan's Hill, King William Street, Arthur Streets, east and west, Grace Court and Love Lane, are apparently inextricably jammed with hundreds of railway fish vans, greengrocers' wagons, and costers' donkey carts and handbarrows.

There is no other place in London where such a vast and so odd a jumble of vehicles and folk may at any time be seen. Over 4,000 vehicles for the bringing or taking away of fish are here. With them are 10,000 coster men and women, and an unnameable, indescribable host of petty street vendors and hangers on. If you can

arrive here on a foggy morning, when the first rays of the sun are filtering through the fleece fold of mist flapping up with the tide along the Thames, you will then know old Billingsgate as Dickens and Thackeray knew it, and will long for power and space in which to paint with pen or pencil one the strangest, oddest scenes to be found in this mighty London town.

Fitchburg Sentinel

28 March 1889

William Ralston, a well known English writer, has become insane from too close a study of the mysterious Whitechapel murders.

Decatur Daily Republican

13 November 1888

A Terrible Deed

A Connecticut Man, After Reading of Jack the Ripper, Kills His Wife, While Asleep, With an Axe

Mrs Ellen Cooper, aged thirty two years, was found by a servant girl in bed yesterday morning, with her head badly cut with an axe. The weapon was found lying on a pillow, covered with blood. The woman's husband is a harness maker, and had been working in a shop in Meriden. He came home two weeks ago and said he was out on a strike. His wife mistrusted his statement, and wrote to the firm. They replied that he had been discharged for neglecting his work, and that if he would return he would be given work. Mrs Cooper urged him to go back, saying that she could not support the family. Cooper was drunk Friday and Saturday, but sober Sunday. He prepared to go back to work. Her had quarrelled with his wife, and had been reading an account of the Whitechapel murder, and was greatly excited. She told a neighbor that he would fix her before Monday morning so she would not trouble him any more. On Saturday night Mrs Cooper went to the post office and showed an open letter, claiming that the letter had been opened at the post office. The postmaster said that the letter was in perfect order when he passed it out to her little boy a few moments before. She was greatly excited, and made some insulting remarks, drawing quite a crowd.

The murderer was arrested in Middletown yesterday morning. He gave the letter to the chief of police, acknowledged the killing of his wife and said that the letter justified the act, as it was from a prominent

businessman in East Hampton and showed that his wife was unfaithful. Cooper is in jail. He says he was sober when he committed the deed. He went to bed with the axe handy and waited until his wife was asleep. He then got up and struck her a blow which stunned her, and then finished the work with the edge of the axe. When he was satisfied that she was dead, he fled and was arrested as previously stated.

Anaconda Standard

5 May 1901

Jack the Ripper

While he may be "something just as bad," the Jack the Ripper arrested by the Bavarian police the other day, as told in last week's dispatches, cannot possibly be the original Jack the Ripper, the terror of London's Whitechapel district ten or a dozen years ago. The original and Simon pure Jack was safely locked up in an English insane asylum some time ago, and, if he is not dead, he is undoubtedly there yet, for even if he showed signs of returning sanity, the managers of the asylum would not be so insane themselves as to turn him loose again. The celebrated alienist, Dr Edward C Spitzka, tells how a lunatic called upon him while the Whitechapel excitement was on, and asked for treatment for his malady. Dr Spitzka listened to the man's story, questioned him closely, investigated all the facts bearing upon the case, and became convinced beyond any reasonable doubt that his patient was an insane physician and none other than the famous criminal for whom all the English detectives were scouring the country. Other alienists, as well as the police authorities, gave the matter minute examination and agreed with Dr Spitzka. The Bavarian police have caught only a gross impostor or a rank imitator.

Davenport Morning Tribune

27 January 1889

Curious Russian Superstition

A curiously unpleasant peasant superstition has just been revealed at a trial in Southern Russia, which ended in the conviction of four peasants for the murder of a girl 11 years old. The superstition recalls that about thieves' candles narrated in connection with the Whitechapel murders. These peasants, it seems, were believers in the superstition that candles made

of human fat rendered the bearers invisible. To obtain these articles they first attempted to murder a boy in a forest. They next tried to kill an old peasant, thirdly a Russian clergyman, and being disturbed on all three occasions they at last succeeded in murdering Sukuena Cherkaschina. With the fat from the child's body they made candles, and with their help attempted to commit a robbery. The light of the candles betrayed their doings, and on being arrested they confessed everything. The evidence in court showed the belief in the thieves' candle superstition to be widespread in Russia.

The Times

9 April 1891

COUNTY OF LONDON SESSIONS

Before Sir P H Edlin, QC, Chairman,
sitting at Clerkenwell

John Hill, 31, a ship's fireman, was indicted for an assault with intent to ravish. Mr Besley prosecuted for the Treasury. The prosecutrix, Elizabeth Tilley, a woman of respectable appearance, said she was a widow, and gained her living as a laundress. About 9pm in March 10 she was returning from a house near the East India Docks, where she had been at work, to her home at Bromley. In Old Brunswick road, or, as she called it, the Dock walk, the prisoner ran out from a dark passage. Witness was carrying a parcel and an umbrella. The prisoner seized her and threw her to the ground, which was covered with snow. Twice she rose to her feet, and each time he threw her down again. The third time he fell with her. He held her by a handkerchief which she had round her throat, and thrust his fingers into her mouth to prevent her from screaming. He told her that "Jack," meaning, it was suggested, Jack the Ripper, had got her, and threatened to use his knife against her if she was not quiet. Witness then described the further acts of the prisoner. A boy who was passing witnessed this part of the assault, but, although she called on him for help, he did not interfere. She said she continued to struggle, and at last escaped from him, and ran down the street until she met some men, into whose arms she fell exhausted. Police constable 61KR then came up, and at once searched the neighbouring streets and public houses. He found the prisoner in a court near the scene of the assault. He was carrying

the parcel which the prosecutrix had left on the ground, and appeared to have been drinking. The constable, in spite of violent resistance from the prisoner, succeeded in taking him to the police station. The jury found the prisoner Guilty, and commended the constable for the promptness with which he had acted. The learned Chairman said he had been struck by the prisoner's manner during the trial, and should postpone sentence until the medical officers had had an opportunity of seeing him.

Edwardsville Intelligencer

24 July 1889

A man supposed to be Jack the Ripper was arrested in the Whitechapel district on the morning of the 20th. He had just killed a woman and had a knife on his person with which he had committed this deed.

Frederick News

6 December 1888

It is said that Whistler, the celebrated artist, is at work on a picture representing one of the victims of the Whitechapel murder as she was found mutilated and bleeding. "Realism in art" is what such indecencies are called, but the term is frequently synonymous with the apotheosis of disgusting naked filth.

Morning Oregonian

26 November 1888

Jack the Ripper

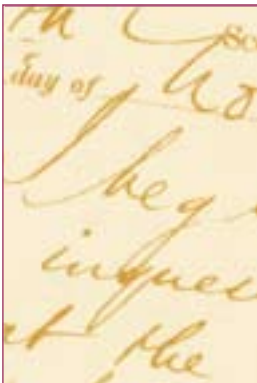
A private person living near Nottingham has received a letter signed "Jack the Ripper and Pal" stating that both the writer of the letter and Jack committed the recent murders in the Whitechapel district. Jack is a Bavarian whom he first met aboard a ship returning from America and who exercised a mesmeric influence.

Morning Oregonian

22 January 1889

Another Jack the Ripper Crank

A man recently wrote to the postmaster, saying he was about to begin slaughtering women, and signed the letter Jack the Ripper. The police arrested F R Harris on a charge of forgery. Letters in the same handwriting as that received by the postmaster were found on him.



This month's news...

I Beg to Report

BEADLE THE MASTERMIND. Ripperologist, true crime aficionado and friend of the *Rip* Jeremy Beadle took part on a celebrity edition of the BBC TV quiz *Mastermind* on 28 December, taking questions on his specialist subject: Capital London Murders 1900-40. Battling against



Celebrity Mastermind: Jeremy Beadle

lyricist Tim Rice (The Solar System), Eastenders actress Natalie Cassidy (Friends) and former Holby actor Jeremy Edwards (Johnny Depp), our Jeremy stormed into the lead giving the correct answers to 14 out of 15 questions on cases such as Crippen and George Smith, the Brides in the Bath murderer. A good general knowledge round saw Jeremy finish top with 23 points, 3 ahead of second-placed Tim Rice.

A WHITECHAPEL TALE. Simon Pergande and Mike Lewis have written a brand-new musical based on - no way you'll guess this one - Jack the Ripper! Spotlight Productions describe it thus: 'Set in Victorian London, [the play] tells a story of love, blackmail and probably the most infamous murders of our time. Using one of the most fascinating theories about "Jack the Ripper", the writers have based many of their colourful characters on real people who tell us the story almost entirely through memorable songs and lively dance routines.' The show was performed 18-21 January 2006 at the

PerformingArtsCentre, Hinchingsbrooke Park Road, Huntingdon, with a cast of 50 talented and enthusiastic young people. [Click here](#) to listen to the following excerpts from the show: *Ballad of Annie Crook*; *Dangerous Game*; *King of Mitre Square*; *Berner Street*; *I'm a Seasoned Politician*; and *I've Paid the Price of Love*. You may also buy the Full Original Cast Double CD for £5.00 + p&p. Tell them the *Rip* sent you.

RIP UP YOUR SHAKESPEARE. 'Film directors continually talk about "opening up" Shakespeare for the big screen. To me, this always brings to mind Jack the Ripper "opening up" the innards of his East End victims in order to slice out their entrails.' Writer, director and playwright Charles Marowitz in Cinematizing Shakespeare, a lecture at a session of the Association of Literary Scholars & Critics on 21 November 2005.

[Further information](#)

THE WORTH OF ENEMIES. 'One lesson of war is that if we can objectify our enemies as worth less than us, then we can kill them. It could be prostitutes, as it was for the young man interested in Jack the Ripper; it could be gays... it could be Arabs or Jews or homeless or... You fill in the blank. The sad truth is that as long as we classify groups of people under labels that strip them of their individual worth - whether it's the Crips labeling their victims as "enemies", or the state labeling its victims as "gang bangers", etc. - we can dispose of them.' Michael Kroll, New America Media, 14 December 2005. Kroll originally made this statement during a meeting at a juvenile hall in California following the execution of Stanley 'Tookie' Williams where a young man had said that since the Ripper's victims were prostitutes they didn't really matter.

[Click for full story](#)

RIPPER, YOUR LIPS ARE MOVING. Jack the Ripper has been unmasked as a ventriloquist's dummy. Dr Archie Mysteron, a forensic psychologist and part-time historian, has turned up evidence that shows beyond doubt that the killer had 'ventriloquian tendencies'. 'The murderer needed a disguise in order to escape capture; what better camouflage than an actual dummy?' asked Dr Mysteron rhetorically at the Fiftieth Annual Convention of Criminologists and Voice-Throwers in London on 15 December 2005. 'No one would suspect a harmless piece of wood', But who controlled the dummy? None other than politician and former Primer Minister William Ewart Gladstone. Says Dr Mysteron: 'Gladstone, as every schoolboy knows, was famous for his bag, and the assassin would need a good, strong bag in which to keep his dreadful instruments. This would also explain why not a single cheap, useless bag was ever found at any of the crime scenes.' To read Dr Mysteron's complete story, which was written up by Captain Dopey in *The Spoof*, 16 December 2005, [click here](#).

THE PATTERN OF LITTLE FEET. 'Some of us can remember times when we needed a break from children so badly we would have allowed them to go outside and play with Jack the Ripper if it would only afford us a few minutes of quiet.' Joy Stephenson, *The Navasota Examiner & Grimes County Review*, 15 December 2005.

IF YOU ASK ME. The Internet Bookshop Amazon UK's website often displays readers' reviews, comments or lists ostensibly designed to help customers choose a product. Next to the books on Jack the Ripper appears a list purporting to include the best Ripper titles compiled by Deborah MacGillivray, who defines herself as a Scottish lady writer, web designer, reviewer specialising in Romance novels, Historical Fiction, Historical non-fiction of Britain and US Civil War and a Member of the Romance Writers of America, the Historical Novel Society (UK) and others. Ms MacGillivray's recommendations and comments are here reproduced unedited and unabridged: '1. *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution*, by Stephen Knight: Stephen Knight's excellent work into the true ripper solution; 2. *Jack the Ripper: Compl Casebk* by RUMBELOW: Scotland Yard Detective's second work on the

ripper; 3. *Complete Jack the Ripper* by Donald Morrison: Rumbelow's first work on the Ripper where he returned the death bed photo of Mary Kelly to the sealed records; 4. *The Complete History of Jack the Ripper* by Philip Sugden: one of the most complete works; 5. *Sickert and the Ripper Crimes: The 1888 Ripper Murders and the Artist Walter Richard Sickert* by J.O. Fuller: Interesting but flawed book about Sickert's involvement in the Ripper; 6. *Walter Sickert* (British Artists S.) By David Peters Corbett: about Sickert's influence on British Art; 7. *Jack the Ripper* (Pocket Essentials: History) by Mark Whitehead, *et al*: quickie reference on the Ripper case; 8. *Portrait of a Killer: Jack the Ripper - Case Closed* by Patricia Cornwell: Case NOT CLOSED... she spent millions for this??? Nice fiction, but only that; 9. *From Hell* (Two Disc Set) [2002]: Johnny Depp proves his talent in this flawed story.' Yeah, we know what you're thinking. Shall we tell Amazon?

A RAG AND A BONE AND A HANK OF HAIR. Scottish-born Professor Ian Findlay, chief scientist at the Gribbles molecular science forensic laboratory in Brisbane, Australia, is attempting to build up a genetic 'fingerprint' of Jack the Ripper by taking samples of saliva on the back of envelopes sent to police at the time of the killings. 'As a youngster growing up in Blantyre,' said Professor Findlay, 'I always wanted to be a police scientist and now I am working on one of the world's biggest murder mysteries. The Ripper case is absolutely huge and one mention of it in Australia landed me on the front pages of the newspapers here. If we found DNA on the stamps, we can compare that with DNA from the descendants of the suspects.' Professor Findlay began working on the case after developing a DNA identification technology called Cell-Track ID which he claims can extract and compile a DNA fingerprint from a single cell or strand of hair up to 160 years old. He will also be testing hair said to have come from Catherine Eddowes, the Ripper's fourth victim. *The Herald*, 16 December 2005.

[Click for full story](#)

INFAMOUSPRODUCTIONS. Vince Wilson, of Dunstable, Bedford, has been for the past few months preparing a new musical CD out based on - you'll never guess! - the story of Jack the Ripper. He has been producing the album



Vince Wilson
©Infamous Productions

under his own record label, Infamous Productions, along with Tim Burrell, who has worked with David Bowie and others. Wilson has drafted in some top class singers to bring the album alight. He has said: 'The feedback we've had is amazing, I'm really encouraged. And when people find out who I've worked with they're very impressed.' For more information or to buy a CD call Wilson on 07801 107191. Tell him *Ripperologist* sent you.

Bedford Today, 6 December 2005.

TROPICAL RIPPER. Patrick Manning, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and leader of the People's National Movement (PNM), has described Austin Jack Warner, the deputy leader of the rival United National Congress (UNC) as 'Jack the Ripper - with two faces and two knives'. As the country moves towards general elections in 2006, Manning said of the UNC: 'I give them warning. They can't say I did not tell them. So they better move fast and put their patchwork party together, that is, they can take care of Jack the Ripper.' When he heard about Manning's remarks, Warner quipped: 'After the election they will call me Jack the executioner, mark my words.'

[Visit the Jamaica Gleaner website for full story](#)

COME HUNT THE HAGGIS. The temperature is plummeting, the frosts of winter nestle on the moors and the steam is rising from massed ranks of haggis hunters. Balblair Single Malt Scotch Whisky invites you to join in a fine old Scottish tradition: the

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Intergalactic, glitzy pop musical, a combination of disco, cabaret and murder! Mondays to Saturdays 8pm, Saturday matinee 3.30pm, Fridays 11.30pm.

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'It's 1899 and all of Europe is agape at the arrival of the new century! The world crackles with possibilities - and its people dance to the irresistible rhythms of money, sex, love and freedom. Swinging above them all is a showbiz sensation; a fierce, vulgar, pant-droppingly sexy trapeze artist called Fevers. The story charts her unlikely love affair with Walser, a world-weary journalist on a mission to expose her as a fake...'

Lyric Hammersmith 20 Jan-18 Feb
West Yorks Playhouse 21 Feb-4 Mar
Warwick Arts Centre 7-11 March
Bristol Old Vic 19 March-1 April
Theatre Royal Plymouth 4-8 April
Sheffield Lyceum 11-15 April

[Book tickets](#)

hunting of the haggis. To encourage the resurgence of this great pastime, great prizes are offered, including bottles of Balblair Single Highland Malt Scotch Whisky and others. If you snare a Golden haggis you'll have a chance to win the grand prize: two nights of luxury at the world-famous Gleneagles Hotel, Perthshire. But fear not, to win you do not need to go out onto the hills, nor will you have to harm one of these rare creatures, since haggis hunting is environmentally friendly. You can hunt the haggis through the hunt's website (link given below). Simply browse through the ten haggis-cams located in various parts of beautiful Scotland: Princes Street, Edinburgh, Renfield Street, Glasgow, Oban Bay, Buchanan Street, Glasgow, King's Course, Gleneagles, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, Central Edinburgh, Aviemore Highland Resort and, for the benefit of the haggis diaspora, in London and at New York's Times Square. If you see a haggis, click on the 'I saw a haggis' link displayed under the cam. You will then need to login or register (free) if you are a first time hunter and be entered into a draw for one of the great prizes. Enjoy browsing the haggis-cams and while enjoying Scotland's natural beauty, plan your strategy for the hunt. Why not also

swot up on your haggis lore with the extensive *Haggislopedia*? One of the first things you'll learn there is that, contrary to popular belief, a haggis is not a sheep's stomach stuffed with meat and oatmeal.

[Click for Haggishunt](#)

WATCH OUT FOR MOTHER GOOSE. The Jack the Ripper musical which played until 22 December at the Jermyn Street Theatre in central London had been described as a 'musical romp through Victorian London'. But its director, Tim McArthur, says he has held true to the show's darker social comment. 'It's a fascinating story that should appeal to people who don't want to see a panto at Christmas. I hope it will make people think,' he added. 'So much myth and speculation have sprung up because the crime was unsolved.' McArthur also said that the musical uses music hall-style numbers to put over social points about the bungled police investigation and the vulnerability of poverty-stricken prostitutes. 'Those murders were terrifying and the women were desperate to afford the doss houses to get somewhere to sleep for the night. Charles Warren, the chief of police, made a mess of the investigation - some of the murders were committed in the city of London and others in the next police division and they didn't communicate with each other. I have worked hard to make all the victims strong characters and to make it more chilling with some eerie moments - so the comedy is all the funnier.'

Ham High Broadway,
5 December 2005.

THE RIPPER MAN WILL GET YOU. 'I must confess that serial murderers have held a certain fascination for me since my student days in Chicago when I stumbled upon a slightly used study of London's Whitechapel murders. "Saucy Jack" has always personified the accipitrine killer lurking in the foggy street, hidden away in a Cimmerian alcove, waiting, ever waiting, for an innocent to slaughter. My landlady at the time, who hailed from the Isle of Man and was over eighty years old, told me a delightful story of how her mother would instruct her that if she "wasn't a good girl," Jack the Ripper would "get her!" One supposes that the woman's child-rearing methodology produced a plethora of demure and obedient offspring.'

*Bob Cheeks, review of
Tom Sandy's mystery The Monopoly
Murders, Intellectual Conservative,*
9 December 2005.

HIT YOUR MOTHER WHILE SHE'S YOUNG. On 1 December 2005 Melba Benevento, 55, of Lansdale, was convicted of repeatedly striking her 88-year-old mother in her wheelchair at a department store cosmetics counter and sentenced to from 30 days to 23 months in jail. In September, she had been convicted in Montgomery County of simple assault and harassment. Ms Benevento repeatedly maintained she had not abused her mother and tearfully told the judge she was not 'Jack the Ripper, as the district attorney portrays me.'

The Philadelphia Inquirer,
3 December 2005.

PROJECT KARE. For years, prostitutes have been disappearing from the streets of Edmonton, Alberta, and some have turned up dead. But the deaths were often written off as part of the intrinsic violence of the street sex trade. The realization that a serial killer was responsible for the disappearances changed all that by providing the political momentum to establish Project KARE: the Royal Canadian Mounted Police-led multi-agency task force investigating the cases of 83 women gone missing or found murdered in Alberta over the last few years. KARE has deep pockets and access to the best information management technology. What used to be a desktop groaning under the weight of case files is now a gleaming stack of computer processors humming away at KARE's headquarters. 'We didn't really have a problem with stovepiping in Alberta,' says Constable Tamara Bellamy, KARE spokesman - 'stovepiping' being cop talk for one police service working alone on a case that might have links to other open cases elsewhere; a data-sharing problem that's sidetracked serial-killer investigations since Jack the Ripper. 'Police services would share information. But they didn't all work together in one room the way we do, and they didn't have access to our database.' Investigators took three years to create the KARE database out of the contents of 83 paper files weighing over 20 pounds apiece. All new data are entered into the system, allowing investigators to search for links between files. KARE has access to a battery of

serial-murder experts collaborating on a 'profile' of the killer. But, apart from a few details about his probable choice of vehicle and his fondness for the outdoors, KARE hasn't made that profile public. In fact, KARE has said little about the killer's activities to date lest it encourages him to increase his body count. Besides, the profile, which is of necessity based on a measure of guesswork, could be wrong. 'We're trying to circumvent the sensationalism,' said Bellamy. 'We're more interested in the case than we are in what kind of movie it's going to make. When the tip comes - and it could happen tomorrow - it may not be obvious. It might not even be someone with a criminal record.' But the technology, the profiling and the work of in-house investigators is only half what KARE has become. Through the work of their 'street team,' KARE members have established strong links with the women in the street sex trade which have allowed them to amass a second database of vital statistics on the women, including next-of-kin and identifying marks like tattoos, which is hoped will save time and legwork the next time someone goes missing. KARE has also become a kind of go-between with the courts, social services, housing agencies and detox which has helped at least a dozen Edmonton women leave the sex trade. 'The Ontario Provincial Police and Calgary are already looking at copying our street-team model,' said Bellamy. 'Our hope is to make this a long-term project, to deal with all high-risk missing persons, serial offenders and cold cases in Alberta. We think we've found a humane approach to the problem, and it works.'

Edmonton Sun, 28 December 2005.

A DIP FOR THE RIP. Police and sheriff's deputies rescued 16-year-old car-theft suspect Steven Eugene Graham after he jumped into the gelid waters of the Des Moines River on 1 December to elude capture. They were relieved when they heard reports the next day that Graham had recovered from severe hypothermia. 'The kid was in the river,' said Police Capt Kelly Willis, one of five officers to rescue Graham. 'As you looked at him, you could see braces on his teeth. It was obvious we were not dealing with Jack the Ripper. Many of us are fathers. We were all kids, too. We've all done stupid things.' Graham, of Plattsmouth, Nebraska, is wanted on an undisclosed juvenile charge in his

home state and charged in Des Moines with felony eluding, second-degree theft and interference with official acts.

The Des Moines Register,
3 December 2005.

THE MURDERS OF THE BEIGE MUSEUM. Police Constable Zahid Malik of the Nottinghamshire Police has described as racist the use by the police magazine *The Sharp End* of the name 'Black Museum' for the Metropolitan Police's famous archive of crime artefacts. In a letter, PC Malik said: 'In a piece on the Met's Crime Museum you use the term "Black Museum" for this "notorious police museum" and "the man in black" to accompany a picture of the curator. I question the negative use of the word "black" in these contexts.' He added: 'I feel we all have an important responsibility to ensure that the language and terminology we use is in a sensitive and appropriate manner. We live in times where language/images and motives can easily be misinterpreted and misunderstood.' The editor of the publication responded to PC Malik's letter saying: 'There was no intention to offend.' The Crime Museum, stored at Scotland Yard, features gory exhibits from famous cases dating back to 1875 such as death masks, casts of necks disfigured by rope burns and a collection of nooses hanging from a gallows. It also has exhibits featuring some of London's most notorious crimes, such as the Jack the Ripper murders. It is not open to the public, with admission restricted by invitation only to police officers, lawyers and other crime experts. The phrase 'Black Museum' has traditionally referred to its funereal and evil nature, and has nothing to do with the ethnic origin of its exhibits.

[Click for full story](#)

AND DON'T FORGET TO EAT YOUR SPINACH. 'As a toddler I hated spinach, bedtime and loose ends. I'm still no fan of any of them today. Real-life crime, meanwhile, makes me feel slightly queasy in its messiness. I couldn't bear to settle down with a book on Jack the Ripper, or a conspiracy theory on John Lennon's shooting, knowing in advance that the whole thing was bound to end with a question mark. Why would one read such a book? It would be like deliberately pouring a bag of flour onto the floor, knowing that molecules of it would lie in the carpet

fibres forever.' Victoria Coren, *The Guardian*, 11 December 2005.



John Pope-de-Locksley
©Adam Wood

JACK: MEET JASON. Last Friday the Thirteenth, as shadows fell over Whitechapel, one of the most colourful and eccentric delvers in Ripperology and other arcane matters was attacked in Gunthorpe Street as he held forth on the murder of Martha Tabram just a few yards away. Dr John Macmillan-Pope-de-Locksley, Doctor of Metaphysics, tour guide, proprietor of London Horror Tours, self-styled 'Rippologist,' occasional contributor to our sister publication *Ripperana* and alleged descendant of Dracula, Robin Hood, English nobility and Jack the Ripper through his great maternal grandfather, Severin Klosowsky aka George Chapman, was beaten up and robbed by 10 thugs in front of his tour group. The ruffians kicked and punched Pope-de-Locksley to the ground, stole his possessions, including old newspaper cuttings and pictures of the Ripper's victims, and ran off. Pope-de-Locksley's customers, who had paid £6 each for the tour, fled, but he managed to limp to a nearby pub - undoubtedly the White Hart - and raise the alarm. He then went to hospital, but his injuries were not serious. Pope-de-Locksley told the *East End Advertiser* that the assailants may have mistaken his Victorian top hat and black overcoat for the clothes of an Orthodox Jew. *Ripperologist* wishes Mr Pope-de-Locksley a prompt and complete recovery.

The East End Advertiser,
18 January 2006.

[Mr Pope-de-Locksley's website](#)

THE JEWISH MUSEUM OF LONDON. A grant of over £4 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund will enable the Jewish Museum of London to consolidate into a single location and expand substantially its activities. At present, the Museum's collections are divided between two sites - one in Albert Street, Camden, and another at the Sternberg Centre in Finchley. The Museum plans to use the grant to expand the Albert Street site to combine both collections at that location. Rickie Burman, Director of the Museum, said: 'This is the largest single such award ever received by a Jewish communal organisation. We are incredibly grateful for this major boost to our development plans which will create a world-class museum in London. The real work begins now as we fund-raise to match this funding and to achieve our £8.4 million target.' The Jewish Museum of London boasts of one of the world's best collections of traditional Jewish art, one of the largest collections of Jewish prints, drawings and photographs and an extensive historical archive regarding the Holocaust. The collection on the Jewish East End now housed at the Sternberg Centre, however, is especially useful to students of the Ripper case. Visitors can explore the history of Jewish immigration and settlement in London and step back in time to view reconstructions of East End tailoring and cabinet-making workshops.

The Jewish Museum
The Sternberg Centre
80 East End Road
London, N3 2SY
Sun 10.30-16.30, Mon-Thurs
10.30-17.00. Admission: £2 Adults,
£1 Concessions, Free for children 12
and under.

Tel: 020 8349 1143
Fax: 020 8343 2162
enquiries@jewishmuseum.org.uk
www.jewishmuseum.org.uk

[See also the 24hourmuseum website](#)

VLAD THE RIPPER, JACK THE IMPALER. 'So we now learn that our entire case for claiming Saddam Hussein was matey with Al-Qaeda came from a chap who was being tortured so viciously he would have confessed to being Jack the Ripper and Vlad the Impaler if you had only asked him.' Jasper Gerard, on the alleged confession of Ibn al-Libi. Comment, *The Sunday Times*, 18 December 2005.

VLAD AND JACK, TOGETHER AGAIN. 'Serial murder is not a modern phenomenon. While serial murder hit its peak of notoriety in the 1990s, serial murder has been documented as far back as ancient Rome. Killers such as Vlad the Impaler, Elizabeth Bathory, and Jack the Ripper seem so far removed from our contemporary society that they are considered mythical creatures of our imagination.'

*Kimberley Glover, ABD,
Serial Murder: Cause and Effect,
New Criminologist
20 December 2005.*

THE VITAL QUESTIONS. 'Who was Jack the Ripper? Who killed Bruce Lee? Who shot JFK? Who finished Saurav Ganguly? For each one of these there are some mind blowing conspiracy theories - imagine, Jack the Ripper is alleged to have been the Prince of Wales. But then, who will believe that Saurav was once the Prince of Calcutta?'

*Watch Tower: The crucifixion of
Saurav, Central Chronicle, Bhopal,
Madhya Pradesh, 21 December 2005,
on the sacking of popular Indian
cricketer Saurav Ganguly from
the Indian team for the third Test
against Sri Lanka.*

BOYS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN. '[Terrorists] don't terrorize for fun, otherwise they would be the equivalent of Jack the Ripper. Political Terror is an act of rebellion, a spark to ignite insurgency against an established seemingly formidable system of economic exploitation, which has concentrated all means of terror in the hand of a few elites.'

*Farhat Quasem Maqumi,
9 December 2005*

OFF THE RECORD AND ON THE QT. 'And in closing... Oh boy... remember when Hugh told Marcie that he was adopted? Well, someone who I consider "in the know" just told me that Hugh is going to turn out to be the son of... hang on... Paige and Spencer. It seems that Paige gave up a child years ago that Spencer didn't know about. Oh jeez... what a legacy for poor Hugh! He'd be better off if his daddy were Jack the Ripper!!!'

*Jill Berry, Reflections by Jill -
A Weekly Commentary on One Life
to Live, 20 December 2005.*

JUST WANNA PLAY DOCTOR. 'It is

possible that Jack the Ripper can be understood in terms of doctor-identification borne of one or more terrifying experiences he may have had with doctors during his childhood. The fantasies acted out by this primitive murderer are similar to the fantasies experienced by people who have been surgically traumatized as children. The evidence suggests that the activities of Jack the Ripper resemble the acting-out of a horror story in which he, as the main character, played to the population of London as an actor plays to his audience, through the need to discharge anxiety and regain some kind of emotional balance. When his depredation failed to achieve the desired results for him, the Ripper probably committed suicide.' S Shuster. *Jack the Ripper and Doctor-identification*. Int J Psychiatry Med 1975; 6(3):385-402.

WHITECHAPEL BIBLE. St John's College, a small Anglican college located on the University of Manitoba's campus in Winnipeg, has discovered it owns a half-million-US-dollar book: a first edition of the King James Bible, printed in London in 1611. It was recently determined that the leather-and-oak-bound Bible with engraved title pages and ornamental wood-cut borders belonged to the first edition by comparing its text with a list of printing errors in early editions. This Bible is a large book indeed: it measures 43cmx28cm, is 13cm thick, has 1.25cm-thick oak covers, leather binding, metal embossing and clasps, and weighs about 16 kilograms. While it is missing its frontispiece - the illustration on the page that faces or immediately precedes the title page of a book - it is bound along with a valuable genealogy for Jesus that lists Mary and Joseph as his legal parents and God as a direct ancestor through Adam and Eve. A note attached to the Bible says it is believed to have once been the property of King James himself. The book was in a collection of Bibles donated in 1897 to St John's College by Anglican clergyman Rev Daniel Gatorex of Whitechapel, London. Gatorex was known for criticizing the police for not doing enough to protect women from Jack the Ripper. *Ripperologist* readers will remember that Sir Charles Warren once defended the police force against a statement by Gatorex that 'one great cause of police inefficiency was a new system of police, whereby constables were constantly changed from one district to another, keeping

them ignorant of their beats.' Warren said that the statement was entirely without foundation.

*Winnipeg Free Press,
22 December 2005*

*Edmonton Sun,
22 December 2005*

*Anglican Journal,
23 December 2005*

YOU MUST REMEMBER THIS. 'The *femme fatale's* punishment for sex without apparent love of the wifely variety is death at the hands of Jack the Ripper.' *Laura Appignanessi on Angela Carter's translation of Frank Wedekind's play Lulu. Flight entertainment, The Guardian, 21 December 2005.*



A play based on Angela Carter's novel *Nights at the Circus*, set in 1899 London, opened at the Lyric Hammersmith, London W6, on January 20. Box office: 08700 500511.

[Click for website](#)

BEAUTY IS A CURSE ON THE WORLD. *Nip/Tuck* is a highly rated American drama television series (well, soap) which follows two plastic surgeons as they nip and tuck their way through the population of Miami against a background of greed, envy, lust and crime. One character that has won over the hearts of the mostly adult audience is the Carver, a masked psychopath who rapes his/her victims



The Carver unmasked

mutilitating the stars of the show. He turned out to be Dr Quentin Costa, a plastic surgeon described, rather unkindly, as a 'freakin' eunuch who has to rape people with a strap-on to feel like a man.' A woman police detective saved the Carver's potential victims by shooting him in the back. But his death was a ruse concocted with the help of the policewoman, who was in fact his sister. The siblings escaped and are now at large at a luxury resort near Malaga, Spain, drinking sangrias and considering their next victim.

Further information on the Carver

MORE MYRA HINDLEY. As reported in *Ripperologist* 62, filming has already begun on *See No Evil: The Story of the Moors Murders*. The ITV drama starring Maxine Peake and Sean Harris

and/or kills them and/or disfigures them by cutting a deep slash resembling a smile on either side of their mouths. The Carver is one of your talkative psychos. Before raping his/her victims and/or carving their cheeks down to the lip he tells them: 'Beauty is a curse on the world. It keeps us from seeing who the real monsters are,' often followed by other bon mots. His - perhaps her - modus operandi involves (1) injecting the victim with a paralyzing agent ('a rarefied form of metachurine chloride', if you must know); (2) making a speech; (3) slicing a smile in the mouth/face of the victim with a knife; and (4) raping the victim. Other characteristics of the Carver is that he/she has raped most of his/her victims, whether men or women (don't ask); uses a condom; his/her MO suggests he/she possesses some medical knowledge and is right-handed; has access to medical supplies; knows the exact dosage that will incapacitate—but not overdose—a victim (something a layperson is unlikely to know); has used only 'precise' cuts; his known victims are all Caucasian; refers to his/her victims as 'masterpieces'; and is proud, deliberate, vindictive, and occasionally prone to rash action when prompted to anger. Series creator Ryan Murphy has said the Carver is as 'an interesting character because what he's doing is really no different than what plastic surgeons are doing. They are both carving and butchering people.' ATTENTION SPOILER: In the last show of the season, on 20 December 2005, the Carver removed his mask prior to



Maxine Peake is Myra Hindley in See No Evil

will be screened in April 2006 to mark the 40th anniversary of the trial where Myra Hindley and Ian Brady were sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of several children whose bodies they buried in the moors above Oldham. So far, filming has portrayed Hindley at a picnic with Brady, her sister Maureen and her brother-in-law David Smith. The shoot took place in exactly the same spot at Saddleworth Moor where they had their real picnic, which was identified through a rock into which the murderous couple had carved their initials. An onlooker said: 'Maxine looks so similar to Myra Hindley that it brought memories flooding back. It's going to make for uneasy viewing.'

This is Bolton, 22 December 2005

EVEN MORE MYRA HINDLEY. Another film featuring Myra Hindley will focus on her friendship with Lord Longford.

The film, tentatively called *Longford*, will star Samantha Morton as Hindley and Jim Broadbent as Longford. It attempts to explain the high-profile friendship they developed over nearly



Samantha Morton will portray Hindley in Longford

three decades. Longford died four years ago - one year before Hindley. Ms Morton has said it took much deliberation before she decided to take on the role as she knew it would be highly controversial: 'I initially didn't even want to look at the script. I didn't want anything to do with it. They shouldn't be doing it, they shouldn't be touching it,' she said. 'It's about Lord Longford. It's about his life, and in particular about his relationship with prisoners, not just Myra Hindley. Yes Myra Hindley did what she did, for just one second forget that. As a woman she served a life-long sentence. If she had been called Martin she would have been out in about 12 years.' Ms Morton concluded: 'I believe it is my duty as a performer is to raise issues in the world of things we're afraid to look at.'

ITN, 25 December 2005

A LITTLE MORE MYRA HINDLEY. On 5 January 2006, 202 new lives of persons who died in 2002 were added to the online edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Among the new entries is: Hindley, Myra (1942-2002), murderer.

www.oxforddnb.com

THE DEVIL YOU KNOW. As the ever-defeated Washington Senators baseball team goes once more from weakness to weakness, lumpy middle-aged fan Joe Boyd swears he'd sell his soul for a long-ball hitter who could lead the team to victory over those

damn Yankees who win the pennant every year. Dapper Mr Applegate - well, the Devil - promptly pops up to take him up on his pledge, turning him into Joe Hardy, a handsome young athlete with amazing powers. But Joe is smart enough to insist on an escape clause in the contract allowing him to pull out of the deal and return to his former self (and his wife Meg). Mr Applegate enlists his most seductive femme fatale, leggy Lola, to keep Joe from exercising his option just as the team gets to the final game. One of the best loved American musicals from the 50s, *Damn Yankees* is playing at the Arena Stage, Washington DC, from 9 December 2005 to 5 February 2006. Now, why would a *bonafide* Ripperologist want to go all the way to Washington DC to watch a musical about baseball? (Unless he lived in Washington DC and loved musicals about baseball). Well, first of all, there's the showstopper *Those Were the Good Old Days*, whose nostalgic lyrics include the verses: 'I see Indians draggin' / An empty covered wagon / When scalping the settlers was the latest craze / And that glorious morn, Jack the Ripper was born / Ha ha ha ha / Those were the good old days!' Not enough? There's Brad Oscar, fresh from success in *The Producers*, playing the Devil amidst a bevy of Devilettes. Not enough? There's strapping Matt Bogart down to his boxer shorts as Joe Hardy. Not enough? There's Meg Gillentine singing *Whatever Lola Wants* in a lacy señorita ensemble that will melt your Latin soul. 'Nuff said! You can take the whole family to *Damn Yankees*! Arena Stage is offering the TARGET Family Fun Pack: 4 box seats, 4 non-alcoholic drinks and 4 snacks for US \$100. It won't cost your soul.

[Damn Yankees! website](#)

WIKIPEDIA WISDOM. In late November the Internet encyclopaedia *Wikipedia* became a source of controversy when John Seigenthaler Sr, a retired civil servant and journalist, found an entry that read in part: 'John Seigenthaler Sr was the assistant to Attorney General Robert Kennedy in the early 1960s. For a brief time, he was thought to have been directly involved in the Kennedy assassinations of both John, and his brother, Bobby. Nothing was ever proven.' In a 29 November opinion piece in *USA Today*, Seigenthaler strongly castigated *Wikipedia*. He said the statement that he was an aide to Kennedy was true. 'I also was his pallbearer,' he added.

Seigenthaler continued: '[Wikipedia owner Jimmy] Wales... insisted that his Web site is accountable and that his community of thousands of volunteer editors... corrects mistakes within minutes. My experience refutes that... For four months, *Wikipedia* depicted me as a suspected assassin.' In early December, stung by the criticism over the Seigenthaler incident, Wales stated that he will bar anonymous users from creating new encyclopedia entries, leaving that job instead to the site's many 'registered' contributors. However, *Wikipedia* will still permit anonymous posters to edit existing articles. As it does about many thousands of topics of interest (750,000 by a recent count), *Wikipedia* has a section on the Whitechapel murders and Jack the Ripper. A review of the entry has revealed no errors.

[Wikipedia's Jack the Ripper entry](#)

LOVE DAT RIPPER, MON. 'Some of us may be old enough to remember reading about the mysterious, horrible and infamous "Jack the Ripper Murders" on the streets of London in the year 1888. It would appear, from all the supporting evidence, that the police officers were always "coincidentally" deployed elsewhere by the instructions of their superiors... so that they were never able to catch the murderer(s) in action. Are there any similarities between 19th century London and 21st century Jamaica? What do you think?'

[Donald K Stewart, pastor of the Portmore Lane Covenant Community Church, The Police, Hypocrisy and Social Anarchy, Jamaica Gleaner, 25 December 2005](#)

TALKING TURKEY. 'It's nice to know that while the President is busy carving away our civil liberties like Jack the Ripper tearing into a holiday turkey, one local judge is making a stand for freedom of expression.' Brian J Kareem, *Editor's Notebook, Time to play Shoot the Moon, The Montgomery County Sentinel*, Montgomery County, Maryland, USA, 7 January 2006. Mr Kareem was commenting on a recent finding by John W Debelius II, a Montgomery County Circuit Court judge. In the matter before his court, the judge ruled that a Germantown man who had exposed his backside to his female neighbour and her daughter - the practice known as mooning - may have been 'a jerk' and that what he did was 'disgusting' and 'demeaning'



Cara Fea: Paraguayan Troops Mooning Enemy Spies During the War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870).

- but it wasn't illegal.

[Click for full story in the Sentinel](#)

BELIEVE IT OR NOT. Documents released under Freedom of Information laws in Britain have revealed that in the 1980s government officials tried to establish whether the Loch Ness Monster, *aka* Nessie, would be safe from poachers or hunters if found. The Whitehall exchanges were prompted by an inquiry from Sweden about the Storsjö monster, said to inhabit the lake of that name in the north of the country. In August 1985, the British Embassy in Stockholm wrote to the permanent under-secretary at the then Scottish Office explaining that Swedish civil servants were looking for details about the legal safeguards which existed for Nessie, as they wanted to protect the Storsjö monster, reputed to look like a snake with a dog's head and fins on its back. 'What, they wonder, do we do?' said the letter. 'Is "Nessie" protected in any way?' A J B Barty, of the Scottish Office, wrote: 'The protection of this putative denizen of the deep deserves serious consideration.' One JF Buckle, an official at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, wrote: 'Unfortunately Nessie is not a salmon and would not appear to qualify as a freshwater fish under the Salmon and Fisheries Protection (Scotland) Act 1951.' Stephen Dowell, another official, wrote: 'There is, of course, another part to the question and that is measures to protect man from Nessie, however, past history indicates that Nessie's tastes do not extend to



Nessie as the Ripper
in Amazon Women in the Moon

homo sapiens.' In the end, after taking advice from the Nature Conservancy Council, officials from the Scottish Development Department wrote back to embassy staff, telling them that if Nessie was discovered she, or he, would be protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act which made it an offence for anyone to snare, shoot or blow up any protected species. The advice was that 'the legislative framework to protect the monster is available, provided she (or he) is identified by scientists whose reputation will carry weight with the British Museum.' An official reply was sent to the embassy in Stockholm, signed by one F H Orr. It stated: 'The Secretary of State for Scotland has powers, on representation made to him by the Nature Conservancy Council, to make an order adding any wild creature to the schedule if in his opinion that creature is in danger of extinction...' The letter went on: 'We should certainly welcome teams of Swedish scientists, amateur and professional, bent on establishing Nessie's identity, and I can assure them that there is ample accommodation in the Highlands and plentiful supplies of the national beverage which will help them to see her in the dark.' In January 1986, an embassy official identified only as M Bradfield wrote back to the Scottish Office reporting that legislation had been passed in Sweden to 'prohibit the destruction, injury or capture of live animals of the Storsjö monster species, extending to the taking or damage to any eggs, roe or nest of the monster.' The civil service involvement with Nessie in the 1980s was not the first time she had been brought to the attention of legislators. In 1933, the then local MP, Sir Murdoch MacDonald, who later claimed to have seen Nessie, had written to the Secretary of State for Scotland, saying he was considering introducing legislation to protect the monster. He did not do so in the end.

The Scotsman, 9 January 2006

DNA ANYONE? The number of samples held on the United Kingdom DNA database will rise to 4.25 million within two years. There are three million samples held at the moment, with some of the expansion due to law changes in 2001 and 2004. Suspects arrested over any imprisonable offence can have their DNA held even if they are acquitted. Matches using newly-lawful DNA samples have been made to 88 murders, 45 attempted murders, 116 rapes and 62 sexual offences. More than 198,000 samples are held that would have had to be destroyed under the old law. In all, 7,500 of these have been matched to 10,000 offences. The Home Office report showed that 5.24% of the UK population now has a DNA profile held on the database. This compares with an EU average of 1.13% and 0.5% in the US. The number of crimes solved through DNA technology has quadrupled over the past five years. There has been a 74% rise in the number of crimes where potential DNA material is collected, and a 75% increase in the number of matches of suspects to crime scenes. Police can now track down offenders by matching samples with other family members who may be on the database. The number of samples on the database has trebled in the last five years - beyond the target set by the Home Office. In a case last November, a 50-year-old builder was found guilty of a murder and rape he committed in Essex 27 years ago. He was stopped for drink driving in 2004 and his DNA matched a sample on the database taken from the original crime scene. Several English forces have also been testing a mobile laboratory which cuts the time taken to produce DNA matches. However, police identifying the bodies of victims of the Asian tsunami found samples can degrade, noting that it may not always be possible to identify people from their DNA.

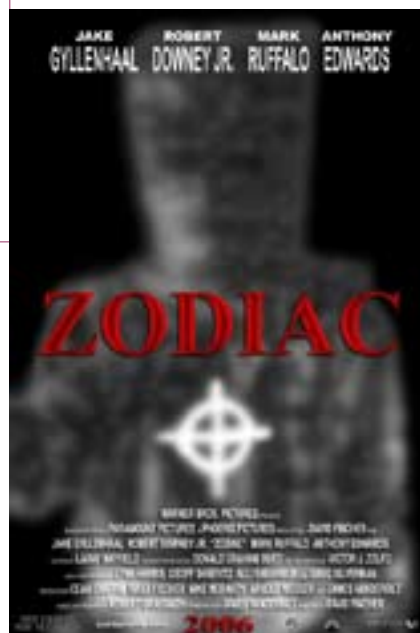
BBC News

THE BLACK DAHLIA. Brian De Palma's film adaptation of James Ellroy's classic noir novel, *The Black Dahlia*, will be on screens in 2006. Ellroy found his inspiration in the notorious, unsolved Los Angeles murder of Elizabeth Short, an aspiring actress known as the Black Dahlia. The mystery of her death began in 1947 when her body was discovered severed at the waist in a vacant lot with evidence that she had been tortured for several days before

dying. The film stars Josh Hartnett and Aaron Eckhart as LAPD cops obsessed with the case and Scarlett Johansson, Hilary Swank and Rose McGowan as their women. Mia Kirshner plays the Black Dahlia - mostly in flashback, we suppose. 'It's violent, sexy and mysterious,' says director de Palma of his film. 'Studios tend to be scared of material like this.'



ZODIAC. David Fincher of *Seven*, *Fight Club* and *Panic Room* fame directs *Zodiac*, a thriller based upon journalist Robert Graysmith's books on the real-life serial killer who terrified the San Francisco Bay Area for 25 years and then disappeared. Jake Gyllenhaal portrays Graysmith, Robert Downey Jr fellow reporter Paul Avery and Mark Ruffalo and Anthony Andrews inspector Dave Toschi and detective Bill Armstrong, the San Francisco policemen in charge of the case. Graysmith and Avery used to



work at the *San Francisco Chronicle*, where 'The Zodiac Killer' sent letters and bits of evidence taunting the police and the media. Also in the cast are Gary Oldman and Chloë Sevigny. The film-makers marshalled considerable investigative resources of their own and rumour has it that their sleuthing has enriched the case file's evidence. *Zodiac* is coming to your neighbourhood screens in the autumn of 2006.

SUSPECT DENIES BEING 'YORKSHIRE RIPPER' HOAXER. In an appearance at Leeds Crown Court on 9 January, John Humble, the man accused of being the notorious Yorkshire Ripper hoaxer known as 'Wearside Jack,' has entered a plea of not guilty. John Humble, of Flodden Road, Ford Estate, Sunderland, has been charged perverting with the course of justice. As noted in *Ripperologist* 62, Humble, aged 49, was arrested and charged on 20 October in connection with sending a series of hoax letters and an audio tape during the hunt for the 'Yorkshire Ripper' more than 25 years ago. The Wearside, Northeast



John Humble

England, voice on the 1979 audio tape and the Sunderland postmark on the envelopes of three 1978 letters signed 'Jack the Ripper' led astray the police enquiry. Assistant Chief Constable George Oldfield of the West Yorkshire Police became convinced that the correspondent, and thus the murderer, was from the Castletown area of Sunderland. It is believed that the diversion in the case allowed Yorkshireman Peter Sutcliffe, the man ultimately arrested and found guilty in 1981 of murdering 13 victims, to continue to murder at least three additional women. Humble denied four counts of perverting the course of justice. The former labourer and window cleaner was remanded in custody and a trial date set for 20 March.

See *BBC News*, 9 January 2006

'KNOCK, KNOCK.' 'WHO'S THERE?' 'This place is bad, I always hear screaming around here. That's why I never open the door completely when someone knocks. You could have been Jack the Ripper.' Donna Kushneryk, who has lived at the seedy Trailway Motel in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada for about two years. The Trailway became the site of a murder investigation following clues gathered in a stolen property raid on 15 December 2005.

Edmonton Sun, 11 January 2006

FRIDAY THE THIRTEENTH. 'It's no secret that the number 13 is considered unlucky, even in modern day United States. Some buildings don't have 13th floors, apartments and some streets miss the number 13 in addresses, and the bookings for events such as weddings are significantly down on the 13th. Several events are given as evidence of its bad luck — the 13 disciples at the Last Supper, 13 letters in the names of such infamous murderers as Jack the Ripper and Charles Manson...' Sharon Swanepoel, *Friday the 13th is alive and well, The Loganville Tribune/The Walton Tribune*, Monroe, Georgia, USA, 13 January 2006.

LINK WRAY TRIBUTE CONCERT. The Washington DC suburb of Rockville, Maryland, rocked on the night of Sunday, 15 January in a tribute to late guitarist and former local area resident Link Wray, who had the 1963 hit song *Jack the Ripper*, and who passed away in Denmark on 5 November. As you



may recall, we published an obituary on Wray in *Ripperologist* 62. Over 750 fans attended the sold out show at El Boqueron II. Storming up the joint in a powerhouse set were Wray's former backup band, the Raymen, Richie Mitchell, Pat Greenwood, and Ed Cynar, reunited after two decades, along with Wray's grandson and other musicians who played for six hours. Rare 1950s footage of Wray was also shown. Wray has been cited as an influence by rock superstars Pete Townshend, David Bowie, and Bruce Springsteen.

Greg Laxton's Link Wray web site provides pictures and more information about the rocking evening.



Playing in tribute to late pioneer rock guitarist Link Wray on 15 January was a new lineup of Wray's former band, the Raymen, left to right - Wray's grandson, Chris Webb, plus veteran Raymen Richie Mitchell, Pat Greenwood, and Ed Cynar

LINK WRAY TWO: THE RIPPER DANCES. Incidentally, Greg Laxton has informed *Ripperologist* that Link Wray's song *Jack the Ripper* was not named directly for our favourite serial killer. Rather, it appears that Wray derived the name from a 'dirty dance' called 'Jack the Ripper' performed at the time by the local black kids. Wray and the Raymen played six nights a week at a notoriously rough local roadhouse called 'The 1023 Club' at 1023 Wahler Place, Washington, DC, Southeast, close to the apartment where Wray was then living. As noted in a *Washington City Paper* article from 1998 quoted on Laxton's site, 'Wray attracted crowds that included such notorious biker gangs as the Pagans, fans of the over-amped, proto-punk rock and roll [played by Wray]. Wicked rave-ups like his most recent hit "Jack the Ripper" - which was named in honor of a dirty-dance style invented by the DC black kids - made a suitably menacing soundtrack for brawling.'

NEW MAYBRICK DIARY TESTS. As *Ripperologist* goes to press - or rather, gets ready to travel to our subscribers' computer screens via the Internet - John Omlor, an *habitué* of the *Casebook: Jack the Ripper* Message Boards and professor at the University of South Florida, announced that a still unidentified scientist on his campus is willing to test the ink in the Maybrick diary. Robert Smith, the present owner of the diary and publisher of Shirley Harrison's *The Diary of Jack the Ripper* (Hyperion), has said that he will make the diary available for testing. Jennifer Pegg has volunteered to act as liaison between Mr Smith and Mr Omlor to facilitate the testing. A letter posted by Ms Pegg on the *Casebook* Message Boards on 25 November 2005 cited the following statement by Mr Smith: 'I was pleased to see that John Omlor and Caroline Morris [co-author with Seth Linden and Keith Skinner of *Ripper Diary*] are in 100 per cent agreement that the diary ink should be tested against the formula which Alec Voller used to make Diamine black manuscript ink up to 1992. I agree with them and will release the diary if such tests are scientifically feasible. I feel they should be conducted by an organisation of the highest repute in the field of ink chemistry.' As regular visitors to the Boards cannot have failed to notice, Mr Omlor and Ms Morris have often crossed swords, as it were, over the ink used in the diary and its testing. GC-MS testing, a method that combines the features of gas-liquid chromatography (GC) and mass spectrometry (MS) to identify different substances within a test sample, will be used in the testing. On 18 January, Mr Omlor stated on the *Casebook* Boards that he had met with the professor who is responsible for GC-MS testing on his campus and added: 'I have three main points to report. He assures me that he would be able to determine whether or not there is any significant amount of chloroacetamide in the ink (that is, at least above the barest minimum the instrument can measure, which is minute). It is also quite possible that he would be able to tell us a good deal more about what else, specifically, is in the ink. And, if provided with the appropriate samples, he would also be able to tell us if the ink matches the old Diamine ink named by Mike [Barrett, the original diary owner] in his confession [to forging the diary]... The cost is nominal and I would be

willing to cover it entirely using my own university funds, so it would cost nothing to anyone else. Ideally, he would like to see the text and take and extract the samples in the lab. But I suppose he could also work from provided samples of the paper with ink on it and the paper with no ink on it. Some time ago I counted the number of straight lines in the diary (it was in the forties, I think) so we know there is plenty of ink to be analysed without touching a single word of the diary's text. And he would of course be very sensitive to preserving the integrity of the original material in any case.'

LAST MINUTE NEWS: FINDLAY SAYS DNA RESULTS ARE INCONCLUSIVE. On 24 January, Professor Ian Findlay of Queensland's Griffith University stated on the *Casebook: Jack the Ripper* Message Boards that his analysis of DNA samples obtained from 'Ripper letters' and from a braid of hair alleged to be from victim Catherine Eddowes have been inconclusive. Findlay stated, 'We performed two types of forensic DNA analysis: nuclear and mitochondrial. As previously stated, nuclear is more powerful with specificity around the billion-to-1 mark. Whereas mitochondrial can be approximately be 20- to 100-to-1... 'We tested the hair braid and hairs from known descendants of Eddowes using mitochondrial sequencing. The descendants' hairs were consistent with both descendants having a common maternal ancestor, in this case likely to be Eddowes. However, the hair braid consistently failed to provide a profile. This could be due to: 1. technique failing. Possible but unlikely as the technique worked well with other hair. 2. As the test looks for human DNA sequences, this could indicate that hair is not human. Nuclear testing on the hair provided several partial DNA profiles, including male, which may simply be from cellular contamination on the hair rather than from the hair. Conclusion: We cannot determine that the hair braid is from Eddowes or not. In fact, it is possible that the hair braid is not human and therefore not from Eddowes.' Regarding the 'Ripper letters,' Findlay said, 'The good news is that we obtained nuclear DNA forensic profiles from the Openshaw [letter] envelope seal samples (and hence possibly from the sender) and blood stains from two [other 'Ripper'] letters. This demonstrates that nuclear DNA exists

and that our techniques can detect it. I understand (though I may be wrong) that [Patricia] Cornwell's team failed to obtain nuclear DNA profiles but did obtain a mitochondrial profile from the envelope seal.' He continued: '[The] bad news is that unfortunately all the profiles are partial and inconclusive and may originate from multiple persons. This isn't very surprising considering that the letters etc would have been handled dozens to hundreds of times over the last 120 years - often without gloves etc. In conclusion - although DNA profiles from letters were obtained, they are inconclusive.' Prof Findlay ended by saying: 'Although our DNA techniques have worked, it appears that the notoriety of the Ripper case may have worked against us as the letters and hair braid have been handled multiple times thus contaminating the samples.'

Full story

And finally...



THE RIPPER AND THE RAPPER. Jacki-O, who scored a hit with the sexually charged rap *Nookie* and has recently filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy, is currently at work on her follow-up album, whose title you will never guess. Not in a million years. Ready? *Jack the Ripper*. Yes, Jacki-O does Jack. Fans can expect more provocative lyrics, with the rapper to release the song *Monkey*, as the first single off the album.

Daily Hip Hop News, SOHH.com, 23 January 2006



EDUARDO ZINNA

The Baddest Brit of All

In November 2002, the British public voted Sir Winston Churchill the Greatest Briton of all time following a nationwide poll that attracted over a million votes. Three years later, the *BBC History Today* magazine has invited the public to choose the worst Briton of the last thousand years. Ten leading historians have nominated one top villain from every century. The list includes something for everybody, with a few surprises and a few politically correct choices thrown in for good measure: what would you say to one King, one Duke, two Archbishops of Canterbury, one lawyer, one defrocked priest, assorted politicians and only one bona fide serial killer? And not a single woman? Is the female of the species not as deadly as the male?



History Today editor Dave Musgrove said that 'the different "definitions of wickedness" of the ten historians questioned had led to a diverse list.'

Deciding on the worst Britons, he added, was 'not an easy choice'. 'Is it the person who murdered the most citizens or the one who led the country into the most desperate straits of poverty or war, or perhaps just he who trod most unscrupulously on those around him?' he wondered. 'We left the criteria up to the ten historians we spoke to, and it's their definitions of wickedness that give us such a diverse selection of figures on our list of evilness.'

The dirty decade includes Eadric Streona for the 11th century, St Thomas Becket, for the 12th, King John for the 13th, Hugh Despenser (The Younger) for the 14th, Thomas Arundel for the 15th, Sir Richard Rich for the 16th, Titus Oates for the 17th, the Duke of Cumberland for the 18th and Oswald Mosley for the 20th. Yes, you're right, we skipped the 19th century. Who was nominated? Need you ask?

Let's take a look at the nominees - and their sponsors. We'll do it in countdown style, beginning with

Oswald Mosley,

who started strongly in the poll but peaked early and as of 24 January 2006 was relegated to the last position, with only 142 votes. Professor Joanna Bourke, Birkbeck College, London, thought Mosley was the baddest Brit of the 20th century. She felt Mosley continued to have 'a pernicious impact on our society' as an inspiration for far-right groups in the UK. 'On his death in 1980, his son Nicholas concluded that his father was a man whose "right hand dealt with grandiose ideas and glory" while his left hand "let the rat out of the sewer".'

Fresh from service on the Western Front and the Royal Flying Corps during the First World War, Mosley entered the House of Commons first as a Conservative and then as an Independent. In 1924 he joined the Labour Party and in 1927 was elected to its National Executive Committee.

He was part of the Labour Government formed by Ramsay MacDonald after the 1929 General Election, but when MacDonald rejected his social and economic proposals he resigned from office. In 1932, impressed by Benito Mussolini's achievements, he founded the British Union of Fascists (BUF). On 4 October 1936, Mosley's Blackshirts organised a march through Stepney, whose population was mostly Jewish. 100,000 people signed a petition to ban the march, but the Government allowed it to go on and assigned 6,000 police to maintain order. Many thousands gathered in the streets. As the Blackshirts tried to march down Cable Street, the crowd overturned a lorry to form a barricade and pelted the police with fruit and bottles, injuring many of them. Eventually the Police Commissioner called off the march and the Blackshirts had to turn round and withdraw through the deserted City of London.



Oswald Mosley

The passing of the 1936 Public Order Act that made the wearing of political uniforms and private armies illegal and using threatening and abusive words a criminal offence, and gave the Home Secretary the powers to ban marches, undermined the activities of the BUF. In October 1936, Mosley married his second wife, Diana Mitford, in a ceremony at Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels's home in Berlin which was attended by Adolf Hitler. On 22 May 1940, following the outbreak of the Second World War, the British government passed Defence Regulation 18B, which gave the Home Secretary the right to imprison without trial anybody he believed likely to 'endanger the safety of the realm'. The following day, Mosley was arrested. On 30 May 1940 the BUF was dissolved and its publications

were banned. In November 1943, the Mosleys were released from prison. They left England in 1949 and eventually settled in France. Mosley was unsuccessful in two attempts to enter the House of Commons in 1959 and 1966. He died in 1980.

Miri Rubin, of Queen Mary University of London, chose

Thomas Arundel,

who was twice Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1397 and from 1399 until his death, and four times chancellor, as the worst Brit of the 15th century. His wickedness did not attract that many votes, however, as he placed only ninth with 321 votes. The Arundel family was an old and influential one. Now, that had advantages and disadvantages for Thomas. On the one hand, when he entered the church his preferment was rapid: in 1374 he was Bishop of Ely and in 1388, archbishop of York, and in September 1396 he was transferred to Canterbury. On the other hand, the Arundels had joined forces with King Richard's rival, Henry Bolingbroke. In 1397, Richard II had Thomas's brother executed and Thomas deprived of the see of Canterbury and banished from England. Thomas left for Rome and joined Bolingbroke in Paris when the latter was also banished the following year. According to Froissart's Chronicles, Arundel returned secretly to England to confer with Bolingbroke's supporters and carried back the offer of the crown to him in Paris. Landing with Bolingbroke at Ravenspur in Yorkshire, Arundel took his place as archbishop of Canterbury, witnessed the abdication of Richard in the Tower of London, led the new King, Henry IV, to his throne and placed the crown of St Edward on his head on 13 October 1399.



Thomas Arundel

The main work of Arundel's later years was the defence of the church

and the suppression of heresy - as he saw them. To put down the Lollards, followers of John Wycliffe who believed in the necessity for the Church to aid men to live a life of evangelical poverty and imitate Christ, Arundel pressed on the statute *De haeretico comburendo*, allowing heretics to be burnt at the stake, and passed sentence upon William Sawtre, an English priest. Sawtre was the first Lollard to be burned at the stake, in 1401. In 1408, as chancellor, Arundel summoned a council at Oxford which drew up constitutions against the Lollards forbidding the translation of the Bible into English. In 1413 he took a leading part in the proceedings against Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, a Lollard leader who was also burned alive at the stake. The following year Arundel died on 19 February and was buried at Canterbury. A legend of a later age tells how, just before his death, he was struck dumb for preventing the preaching of the word of God.

Nigel Saul, Professor of Medieval History at Royal Holloway, London University, nominated as the biggest rotter of the 1300s

Hugh Despenser the Younger.

He received 333 votes. 'Despenser was pure evil,' said Saul. 'He browbeat the weak into signing over their estates.' Sir Hugh - also called le Despenser - was, along with his father, Edward II's favourite. Froissart calls him 'the King's evil counsellor'. He is particularly disliked by the Welsh because he used his position in court to amass a largely stolen empire of land in Wales. But he obtained the greatest part of his wealth through his marriage in 1306 to Eleanor, one of the heiresses of Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, when he dubiously seized most of Glamorgan through her inheritance.

The hatred of the English barons for the Despensers was such that in 1321 Edward II was obliged to consent to their banishment. But he soon persuaded the clergy to annul the sentence against them and father and son were again at court, where they became practically responsible for the government of the country. They had scores of their opponents executed or murdered and some, including Thomas of Lancaster, King Edward's main rival, seized and beheaded. The Despensers also intrigued against Queen Isabella, Edward's wife, until she fled from England to the court of her brother, the King of France.



Hugh Despenser

The tide then turned against the Despensers. Isabella was not called the She-Wolf of France for nothing. In 1326, she returned to England with a large fighting force to wage war on the King and place their son in the throne. The elder Despenser was seized at Bristol, where he was drawn and beheaded and his body hanged on 27 October. The younger Despenser was taken with the King at Llantrisant. The King was deposed and confined in Berkeley Castle, on the Severn, where he died soon afterwards, reportedly murdered in the most ignominious manner. Hugh Despenser tried to starve himself to death before his trial, but failed. He was judged a traitor and a thief and condemned to the most severe punishment. On 24 November, he was dragged in a hurdle through the streets of Hereford until the main square. There he was tied to a long ladder, so everybody could see him, and first his private parts and then his heart were cut off and thrown into the fire. His head was struck off and sent to London and his body was divided into four quarters which were dispatched to the four principal cities of England after London.

The next nominee got 372 votes - not the best of performances for a lawyer. David Loades of the University of Wales thought no one in the 16th Century was as bad as

Sir Richard Rich,

Lord Rich of Leighs, the character played by John Hurt in the film of *A Man for All Seasons*, who often shifted his political and religious allegiances to further his career. Rich became solicitor general in 1533. Two years later, he was prosecutor at the treason trials of Sir Thomas More and Bishop John Fisher, and it was specifically his testimony against More that led to his conviction. By contrast, his scarcely

less decisive part in the condemnation of Thomas Cromwell five years later is seldom held against him.



Sir Richard Rich

In 1536 Rich was elected speaker of the House of Commons, and by 1540 had become a privy councillor. On the accession of Edward VI he was created Baron Rich, and in October 1547 became Lord Chancellor. He avoided taking sides in the final conflict between John Dudley, later Duke of Northumberland, and the Duke of Somerset, regent to young Edward VI. In 1551 he resigned the chancellorship because of ill health. Like the other councillors, he acquiesced when Edward designated Northumberland's daughter-in-law, Lady Jane Grey, successor to the crown. After Edward's death in 1553, however, he changed sides and supported the cause of Mary Tudor. Lady Jane Grey reigned for nine days before being deposed and, on 12 February 1554, executed. Although Rich no longer took a prominent part in public affairs, he was active in the restoration of the old religion in Essex under Queen Mary and was one of the most notable persecutors, supervising the burning of heretics and serving on the commission inquiring into the property of those who fled the realm on religious grounds. He died in 1567.

The next nominee up, with 393 votes, was a Royal,

King John.

Mark Morris, writer and presenter of Channel 4's *Castle* described John as 'one of the worst Kings in English history'. 'John committed some wicked deeds and was a deeply unpleasant person,' said Morris. 'He was untrusting, he would snigger at people while they talked and couldn't resist kicking a man when he was down.'

John was the youngest son of King Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. He

was given at an early age the nickname of Lackland because, unlike his elder brothers, he received no land rights in the continental provinces. Henry II, however, always favoured John, provoking a civil war by attempting to transfer the duchy of Aquitaine from the hands of his brother Richard the Lionheart to those of John in 1183 and appointing him to all sorts of posts in which he proved quite unable to perform.

On his accession to the throne, Richard confirmed John's existing possessions but excluded him from the regency which was to govern England while he was away at the third crusade. Soon before his departure for the Holy Land, Richard designated his nephew, Arthur of Brittany, as his successor. John at once began to intrigue with the aim of securing England for himself. When Richard was captured by Leopold, duke of Austria, in December 1192, John endeavoured to prevent his release. His schemes collapsed when Richard returned in



King John

March 1194. Older moviegoers and television addicts might remember the expression in the face of Claude Rains as John when Richard showed up in the Erroll Flynn vehicle *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Not the beginning of a beautiful friendship, that's for sure.

Richard pardoned his brother and they lived on friendly terms for the next five years. On his deathbed in 1199, Richard, reversing his former arrangements, caused his barons to swear fealty to John, although the hereditary claim of Arthur was by the law of primogeniture undoubtedly superior. A brief civil war ended with Arthur's capture in 1202 and his murder the following year.

But John soon came to be detested by the people as a tyrant and despised by the nobles for his brutality, cowardice

and sloth. While he inherited great difficulties, he was largely responsible for his misfortunes. Each of his great humiliations followed as the natural result of crimes or blunders which resulted in the loss of vast possessions in France in 1205 and his own excommunication in 1208 for refusing to accept the papal nominee to the see of Canterbury. When submission to Rome had somewhat improved his position, he squandered his last resources in a new and unsuccessful war with France in 1214. Enraged by his high-handed methods of raising money, the English barons forced him to sign the *Magna Carta* in June 1215. Civil war soon ensued. John's struggle against the barons and Prince Louis, afterwards King Louis VIII of France, was the most creditable episode of his career. But when he died on campaign, on 19 October 1216, his country was in a calamitous situation.

More dastardly than King John by just a whisker was an old Anglo-Saxon two-timer who got 396 votes. Professor Sarah Foot, Sheffield University, nominated

Eadric Streona

as the vilest Brit of his century. Much of what is known about Eadric or Edric Streona (thought to mean the Acquisitive) comes from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and other works whose authors did not regard him highly. In the *Chronicon ex Chronicis*, Florence of Worcester writes of him: 'he was a man of humble birth, but his tongue procured him both riches and high station; he was of a ready wit, of persuasive eloquence, and surpassed all his contemporaries in malice, perfidy, pride, and cruelty.' In the *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, William of Malmesbury refers to Eadric as 'one of the refuse of mankind, and the reproach of the English'. Indeed, Eadric comes across as the ultimate traitor, always waiting in the wings



to see which way the battle went and never hesitating to betray his trust and go over to the winning side.

Be it as it may, in 1007 Eadric became ealdorman of Mercia, reportedly through craft, perfidy and murder. He was married to King Æthelred's daughter Eadgyth and a counsellor to Æthelred. In that capacity, he was probably responsible for that monarch's being known as the Unready - one who lacks counsel. When Æthelred proposed to attack the pillaging Danes, Eadric advised against it, and Æthelred was reduced to paying the Danegeld - and never got rid of the Dane.

In 1015, when Cnut invaded England, Eadric and Æthelred's son, Edmund, known as Ironside, raised armies to oppose him. But Eadric deserted his King and went over to Cnut with 40 ships full of soldiers. Cnut turned south with his host, and, in the words of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 'plundered, and burned, and slew all they met.' Æthelred died before Cnut arrived and Edmund succeeded him. Cnut besieged London, but Edmund broke out, forced Cnut to lift the siege and defeated him at Otford in Kent. At this point Eadric changed sides again and joined Edmund who, oddly enough, accepted his oath of loyalty. As the armies clashed again at Ashingdon, Eadric fled from the battlefield with his men, thus ensuring Edmund's defeat. Through a subsequent peace agreement Edmund was left in control of Wessex and Cnut of Mercia and Northumbria. Whoever survived the other would take control of the whole realm. One month later, on 30 November 1016, Edmund died. William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon, author of the *Historia Anglorum*, say that he was murdered through Eadric's agency while he attended to some very private needs.

Left as sole King, Cnut granted Eadric the earldom of Mercia. But it was not for nothing that he has left a reputation for wisdom. Florence of Worcester says that Cnut wondered whether Eadric would remain loyal to him this time. Just to be on the safe side, he had Eadric slain at Christmas 1017 and commanded his body to be thrown down from the walls of his palace and left unburied. There are other versions. Roger of Wendover, the author of *Flores Historiarum*, put it best: 'But whether the traitor ended his life one way or the other, it does not much matter; since this is sufficiently clear, that he, who had deceived so many, by the just

judgement of God met with condign punishment.'

Next one on the way up is another Royal, albeit a minor one, who garnered 403 votes and became the third runner up. Rab Houston, Chair of Modern History at St Andrews University, nominated

Prince William Augustus,

Duke of Cumberland,

a younger son of King George II, as the nastiest piece of work of his century. In December 1742, 23-year-old Cumberland joined the army - as a major-general, no less - and in the following year he first saw active service in Germany. He was wounded at Dettingen, and his energy and valour were the basis of his great



Duke of Cumberland

popularity in England.

In 1745, Cumberland was commander-in chief of the allied troops in Flanders. He was recalled to England and given command of the forces in Scotland with the mission to put a decisive stop to the successful career of Prince Charles Edward, the young Pretender, in the rebellion of 1745-1746. On 15 April 1746 Cumberland engaged the small and poorly supplied Jacobite army at the battle of Culloden and completely smashed it. Cumberland had told his troops that the enemy's orders were to give them no quarter and directed them to behave in the same manner. No trace of such orders, however, remains. Cumberland also ordered the systematic extirpation of all rebels who should be found concealed in the Highlands - which was interpreted to mean the killing of all Highlanders found wounded or with arms in their hands. On account of his ruthless pursuit of the defeated enemy following the battle, the merciless severity with

which he treated the fugitives and the atrocities subsequently performed by his army, Cumberland was nicknamed the Butcher, and by that sobriquet was known for the rest of his life.

Back in Flanders in 1747, Cumberland was badly defeated at the battle of Lauffeld. His unpopularity, which had steadily increased since Culloden, prevented any success in politics, and when the death of the Prince of Wales brought a minor next in succession to the throne, he could not secure the regency for himself. In 1757, the Seven Years War having broken out, Cumberland was placed at the head of a motley army of allies to defend Hanover. On 26 July, he was defeated by superior forces. Driven from point to point, and at last hemmed in by the French, he capitulated on 8 September, agreeing to disband his army and evacuate Hanover. His disgrace was completed on his return to England by the King's refusal to be bound by the terms of his agreement.

In chagrin and disappointment, Cumberland retired into private life. For a few years he lived quietly at Windsor, and subsequently in London. Public opinion had now set in his favour, and he was almost as popular as he had been in his youth. On 31 October 1765, he died.

With 409 votes,

Titus Oates,

a Protestant clergyman, became the second runner up. He was nominated by John Adamson of Peterhouse College, Cambridge. The son of a Baptist preacher, Oates was ordained into the Church of England, but he was imprisoned for perjury while serving as a curate in Hastings in 1674. He escaped and joined the navy as a chaplain but was soon dismissed for misconduct.

Early in 1677, Oates became chaplain to the Protestants in the household of the Roman Catholic Duke of Norfolk. Encouraged by his friend Israel Tonge to profit by betraying Catholics to the government, he set out to gather information about them and their activities. In 1678 Oates and Tonge invented the 'Popish Plot', a vast Jesuit conspiracy to assassinate King Charles II and place his Roman Catholic brother, James, Duke of York, on the throne. They publicized the tale through a prominent justice of the peace, Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, and their revelations seemed even more plausible after Godfrey was found murdered on 17 October. Three Roman

Catholics, Robert Green, Henry Berry and Lawrence Hill, were arrested for Godfrey's murder, sentenced to death and hanged. They are now believed to have been innocent.

In the wave of terror that swept London, Oates was hailed as the saviour of his country. His testimony was responsible for the execution of some 35 persons, but, as the frenzy subsided, inconsistencies were discovered in his story. On 10 May 1684 he was himself committed to prison for calling the Duke of York a traitor and on 18 June he was fined £100,000 for scandalum magnatum. After the Duke of York came to the throne as King James II in 1685, Oates was tried for perjury and condemned to be whipped, degraded, pilloried and imprisoned for life. Judge Jeffreys said of him: 'He has deserved more punishment than the laws of the



Titus Oates

land can inflict.'

But when James was deposed in 1688, Oates was released from prison and later obtained a royal pardon and a pension. In 1690 he was taken up by the Baptists, only to be again expelled from the ministry, this time for 'a discreditable intrigue for wringing a legacy from a devotee'. He died in obscurity on 12 July 1705.

Professor John Hudson, of St Andrews University, made one of the oddest yet most popular nominations:

St Thomas Becket,

Archbishop of Canterbury, who obtained 958 votes and became the first runner up. 'He divided England in a way that even many churchmen who shared some of his views thought unnecessary and self-indulgent,' said Professor Hudson of his nominee. 'He was a founder of gesture politics. Those who share my prejudice against Becket may consider his assassination

in Canterbury Cathedral on 29 December 1170 a fittingly grisly end.'

Becket was born about 1118 in London. His ascent to power and fame accelerated when young monarch Henry II took 'Thomas of London', as Becket was then most commonly called, for his chancellor and his constant companion. Though he preserved friendly relations with his old patron, Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, Becket subordinated the interests of the Church to those of his new master. Under his administration the Church was severely taxed to finance Henry's foreign wars. In 1159 Thomas was the chief organizer of Henry's expedition to Toulouse and took part in its military operations, personally leading the most daring attacks and unhorsing many French knights.

When Theobald died, Henry had his chancellor appointed to the position. Thomas, who was only a deacon, was ordained priest on Saturday and consecrated bishop the next day, Sunday 3 June 1162. A great change took then place in him. Contrary to the King's wishes, he resigned the chancellorship. By nature a violent partisan, the new archbishop now showed himself the uncompromising champion of the Church and was on the worst of terms with the King before a year had elapsed. They came into open conflict when Thomas successfully opposed the King's proposal concerning a land-tax. Other misunderstandings soon followed. Most serious was Thomas's resistance to the King's desire to assert the jurisdiction of the secular courts over clerics guilty of crimes. While the other bishops showed a willingness to submit, Thomas was inflexible.

The King punished him for his resistance through systematic legal persecution. Thomas fled England in 1164 and sought refuge in France with Pope Alexander III. At last, on 22 July 1170, the threats of the Pope forced Henry to a reconciliation with Thomas. It was a hollow truce, since Thomas returned to England with papal bulls condemning the bishops who had supported the King. Henry is said to have uttered angry words. One month after Thomas's return, four armed knights came to Canterbury. To their question, 'Where is the traitor?' Thomas replied, 'Here I am, no traitor, but archbishop and priest of God.' They slew him where he stood, scattering his brains on the pavement.

Thomas was canonized in 1172.

Within a short time his shrine at Canterbury became the resort of innumerable pilgrims. Plenary indulgences were given for a visit to the shrine, an official register was kept to record the miracles wrought by his relics and for the rest of the Middle Ages the shrine of St Thomas of Canterbury was one of the wealthiest and most famous in Europe. Becket's remains are believed to have been destroyed in September 1538, when nearly all the other shrines in England were dismantled. In January 1888, however, a skeleton was found in the crypt. There are those who hold that it is Becket's.



St Thomas Becket

After a slow start, when he was outvoted by Oswald Mosley and Thomas Becket,

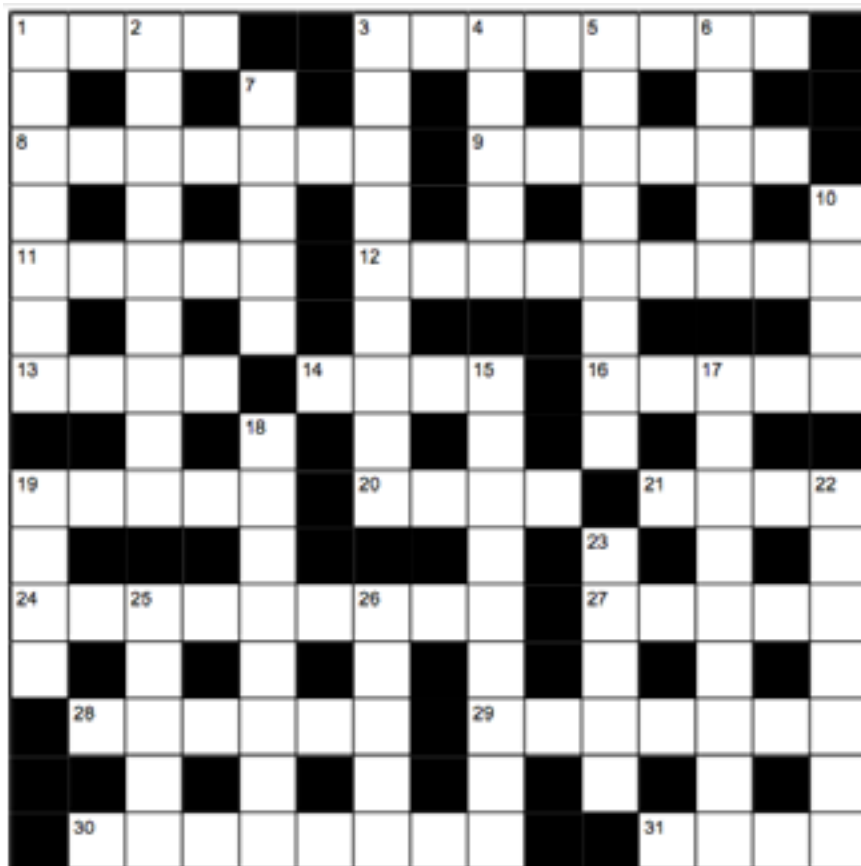
Jack the Ripper

rose to the top of the poll and, as of last count, on 24 January 2006, was still safely ensconced there, with 1207 votes as opposed to 958 for Becket and 409 for Titus Oates. Upon nominating Jack the Ripper as the worst Briton of the nineteenth century, Professor Clive Emsley, of the Open University, said: 'No one can touch the Ripper for sheer wickedness. Firstly, because he preyed on the most vulnerable women, and secondly, for the sheer horror of his crimes.'

In future issues, we will report on the results of the poll, analyze further the personalities of the beastly Britons involved and their relevance in modern times and ask prominent historians and Ripperologists for their views on the Whitechapel murderer as one of the most infamous - if not the most infamous - of Britons. In the meantime, to see the latest results of the vote or to cast your vote for your favourite villain, [visit the website](#).

Ripperologist's Prize Crossword

SET BY SLAUGHTERMAN



Clues are a mix of cryptic, general knowledge and coffee time.

A prize of six months' subscription to *Ripperologist* (ie six issues) will be awarded to the sender of the first all-correct solution pulled out of the Gladstone bag on 20 February 2006.

Please send your solution to contact@ripperologist.info with 'Crossword' as the subject line; or print out the grid and post it to Ripperologist, PO Box 735, Maidstone, Kent ME17 1JF.

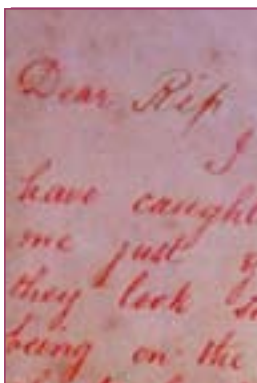
The solution and winner's name will be published in the February issue.

ACROSS

- 1 Tony Williams's uncle, apparently... (4)
- 3 ... or a very likely suspect (8)
- 8 City coroner at Eddowes inquest (7)
- 9 See 1dn (6)
- 11 Gladstone receptacle holds cosmetic (5)
- 12 Not married (9)
- 13 Cut, as into Maybrick watch (4)
- 14 Drinks in the Ten Bells (4)
- 16 Jack's third letter to cause injury for a spell (5)
- 19 She put the kettle on (5)
- 20 Carrotty — (4)
- 21 Talented Jack left East End (4)
- 24 See 23
- 27 Ghastly pale, or horrible in savagery (5)
- 28 A vicar carved-up hors d'oeuvre (6)
- 29 Prospect for Kosminski at Convalescent Home (3,4)
- 30 Anonymous like the body of Mary Kelly (8)
- 31 Endless disturbed sleep. He had visions of the Ripper (4)

DOWN

- 1 & 9. William Stewart's midwife murder theory (4,3,6)
- 2 Victims such as 19ac and 22 but not 4 or 20 (9)
- 3 Author of *Autumn of Terror* (3,6)
- 4 Chapman victim (5)
- 5 Cosmetic surgery on Lipski cut out middle (8)
- 6 19ac was missing five of these (5)
- 7 "My knife's so nice and — I want to get to work right away..." (5)
- 10 Author of *The Trial of George Chapman* (4)
- 15 Pathological hardening of tissue (9)
- 17 Supposed diarist (9)
- 18 Potentially dangerous person may end it horribly...(8)
- 19 ... incompetent person heard Kelly's 'Murder!' no doubt (4)
- 22 Does Dew worry about victim? (7)
- 23 & 24. Dockland garage converted into Ripper club (5,3,6)
- 25 A butcher, a Dr, a mad Polish Jew holds the answer to tragic sequence of events (5)
- 26 Rises in disgust when 'e's taken from the yard where Martha Tabram died (5)



Dear Rip

Your Letters and Comments

[CLICK TO EMAIL US](#)

Ripperologist No. 62 (I)

[Email to Ripperologist](#)

Dear Rip

The latest issue of your magazine is truly excellent. It is, however, a shame that hardcopy is no longer also available. Only computer geeks want the reading (as opposed to the reference) online experience.

Gerry Carruthers
16 December 2005

Ripperologist No. 62 (II)

[Email to Ripperologist](#)

Dear Rip

GREAT JOB! The magazine looks fabulous. Well done, everyone.

Simon D Wood
18 December 2005

Ripperologist No. 62 (III)

[Email to Ripperologist](#)

Dear Rip

Good luck with the new form.

Anne Perry
19 December 2005

Ripperologist No. 62 (IV)

[Email to Ripperologist](#)

Dear Rip

Issue 62 - absolutely excellent quality and greatly enhanced by the use of colour and links etc. I quite agree that electronic publication is the way to go; in fact, it will eventually be the norm certainly for periodicals, but it will be interesting to see what kind of an overall response you get. There will no doubt be negative feedback to start with but most will accept it with time and I suppose you might lose a few subscribers.

I guess the major reason for resisting the change from a printed version will be the loss of flexibility that a printed copy affords - flexibility to read it anywhere I mean - and although one can of course print off a version it usually ends up being one page per

sheet, hence twice the bulk, or at A5 with two pages per A4 sheet as I have done which is a bit demanding on the eyesight! Anyway it really is a quality production and congratulations yet again!

Karyo Magellan
21 December 2004

Ripperologist No. 62 (V)

[Email to Ripperologist](#)

Dear Rip

My first impression of the new look was, yes I would like to get to know this person better. The effective use of colour and presentation of photographs that was not quite feasible in the print version really does enhance the reading experience greatly I feel. What struck me was Paul's comment on the new *Rip* being more researcher-friendly which as I viewed the remaining pages found to be the case. The ease of navigation, the highly useful links function and of course the ability to search the document has validated for me the flexibility of the *Rip*'s editorial team's move into the future. I agree and support the notion that the *Rip*'s existence is primarily as a research tool catering to students of the case and the Victorian East End and secondarily to those with a passing interest or mass appeal. Good move and I wish you well in your new editorial concerns. As much as I still enjoy reading a print periodical, the use of Hyper-Text articles in modern research and academic journals appears to be gaining ground. But this really isn't an academic field as such and I hope that your subscribers, if not new ones, come along and also can see the benefits for research in time. I certainly know, as I'm sure you are aware, that the search feature on the *Casebook* was very well received and a useful aid in sifting through the great mass of material for most.

Spiro Dimolianis
20 December 2005

Ripperologist No. 62 (VI)

[Email to Ripperologist](#)

Dear Rip

Congratulations on a beautiful publication. Electronic formatting is an exciting opportunity, which you have used to its fullest. The links are very helpful.

Les Klinger
Editor, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Short Stories*
18 December 2005

Ripperologist 62 (VII)

[Email to Ripperologist](#)

Dear Rip

Kudos on an issue worthy of high praise for its content and appearance!

First of all, a tip of the hat to ROB HILLS for his continuing research into James Hardiman. Hardiman's family story is filled with tragedy after tragedy. Hardiman was surrounded and possibly overwhelmed by madness in his own family... epileptics, syphilis, meningitis, premature death on a yearly basis, etc.

While Mr Hills does not mention if Hardiman had syphilis, the wife of Hardiman undoubtedly passed on syphilis to their child who died after living for approximately one year. It's quite possible that the sort of syphilis that Mrs Hardiman had was not contagious to James, although it would be to any offspring. Like Mr Hills, I have an interest in the concept that a syphilitic [even in the tertiary stage years after contracting it] may be behind the murder skein regardless of which suspect [with syphilis] had it.

I look forward to someone discovering what Hardiman was incarcerated for in 1881 [at this time, research having failed to do so]. He was 22 when put into Wandsworth Common.

I really enjoyed the chronological work Rob set up and elaborated upon. Like the work Ivor Edwards did with Stephenson, Rob makes it easier for us to examine a suspect in this way and allows for additions/subtractions to the chronologies in the future based on subsequent investigations.

Equally impressive were the sidebars of information. For instance, these three facts...

In London on an annual basis... 5,200 TONS of cat's meat were sold!!! 200,000 lbs per week! And yet people were living on threadbare diets and

often starving. It was good to be a cat... One woman alone, an eccentric no doubt, purchased 14lbs of the meat DAILY.

William Hardiman, the younger brother of James, was also known as Walter in his youth.

I enjoyed Rob's article very much and look forward to more on this tragic family who had not one, but two people who are examined in the first on-line *Ripperologist*.

The second story on a Hardiman connection, by Mr Stan Reid, was short and sweet and succinct. Mr Reid posits the theory that a younger than previously suspected candidate for the crimes might have been at work. William Hardiman, 16 [and also referred to as Walter... see Mr Hills' story] is Mr Reid's choice as the perpetrator of the crimes.

Recently on *Casebook: Jack the Ripper*, threads which the writer and envelope-pushing theorist A P Wolf has been spearheading opted for a less than mature Ripper and although not specifying a target/suspect, has opened up new areas for consideration. The Youth Angle is one that can't be dismissed too easily. Young master Hardiman was surrounded by all the gore most of us in ten lifetimes haven't been and never will, and at an early age as well. Mr Reid steps up to the plate and presents the example of Jesse Pomeroy [one murder short of SK status, but no doubt heading for such a tag] who fortunately was apprehended after his second murder.

Without presenting a criticism of Mr Reid's story, which I liked, young serial killers seldom kill older victims, usually dispatching those of their own age group or younger. That's not etched in stone, but worth remembering as the first four victims of the WM were old enough to be William's mother. Yet, they were available and they wouldn't turn down doss money from willing patrons either. Hopefully, we will be reading more from Mr Reid in the future.

On to the triumvirate of Went, Sironi, and Howard. Antonio Sironi has an eye for details for sure and applies that observant eye to the piece started by Adam Went [also

the same age as William Hardiman, but thankfully heading into another direction!]. Antonio's work on Hanbury Street in previous writings [at the Rip and elsewhere] has been good food for thought... and now with the Lawende/Levy and Goulston Street graffiti segment of the article. Adam provides the reader with the Tasmanian press reports which further illustrate the worldwide interest in this case involving prostitute murder [as an example of how this does not characterize modern interest, perhaps due to the larger number of these types of killers; here in my city someone murdered 5 women within a year and the story has completely disappeared from newspapers or the public's interest] tens of thousands of miles away.

One particular comment made in the *Mercury*, a Tasmanian paper from the day, just 4 days after the Kelly murder was the disclosure that blacks [Africans] were being considered in assisting in the hunt for the Ripper [according to the *Times* from where the *Mercury* in surprisingly rapid speed lifted this information]. One can imagine the sight of Africans wandering through the East End attempting to 'track down' the elusive killer.

The addition of Tasmanian press accounts to the number already accounted for is welcome. Hopefully, we will hear more from Adam, Amanda and Antonio in the future.

In closing, the article by Mr Simon Wood, the originator of the 'FM' found on MJK's wall [Mr Wood acknowledges that he made a 'mistake' with his previous effort... something some people don't take into consideration]. In addition, he posits that a knife can be seen on the table inside Kelly's room. This I can see. However, the statement that entrails, not light, are hanging from the ceiling is beyond my ocular capabilities.

Another element to the story, which was illuminating to me, was the reference made in the *Irish Times* that two members of the Royal Irish Constabulary visited Millers Court three days after the murder.... [Having read Alan Sharp's excellent, *Jack the Ripper and The Irish Press*, I didn't recall this being mentioned,

although I do remember how one Irish paper gloated on how the Irish police, unlike the British, were not engaged in hunting savages on the streets...]. This may have been an excursion conducted by British authorities to allow the visiting Irish to see what the English were facing. A noteworthy mention nonetheless by Mr Wood.

All in all, an excellent issue. Mr Zinna's historical discourse on St Saviour's and Mr Bondeson's article on the Portuguese prostitute were also new and entertaining.

Hopefully Chris Scott will be back for the next month's issue.

Howard Brown
Proprietor, JTRforums.com
31 December 2005

We thank our readers for their kind and thoughtful words and their good wishes for the future. We'll continue to do our best to deserve your praise and your confidence. As you can see, Chris Scott is back with us after a much lamented absence due to a bout of illness. We are glad that he is well again and warmly welcome him and his much esteemed Press Trawl back to Ripperologist. Rip.

The Enigmas of Millers Court

Email to Ripperologist

Dear Rip

If there is way to pass my compliments to Simon Wood, please do so. I enjoyed reading his current article in *Ripperologist* very much. The middle column of page 17 is so intriguing to me. The Special Irish Branch's insignia being imprinted on the MJK photo is compelling. Simon did a great job.

Joe Chetcuti
20 December 2005

We have passed your compliments on to Simon Wood. Rip.

The Goulston Street Graffito

Email to Ripperologist

Dear Rip

Pauline Reeves (*Dear Rip, Ripperologist* No. 62) has neatly rearranged the letters of the Goulston Street graffito to form the sentence 'Mr Abberline, judge the one man with the tens that follow.'

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Adverts cost £50 for a full page and £25 for a half page. All adverts are full colour and can include links to your website or email, or movie and sound files. contact@ripperologist.info

She suggests this anagram may have been a boastful message left by the Ripper to taunt the police. Perhaps: but I'm wondering why on earth the Ripper (if indeed it was the Ripper who wrote the Goulston Street message) would choose such an obscure, roundabout method to issue his chilling taunt. Why not simply write what he meant?

Furthermore, this graffito (like any block of text containing a reasonably balanced mix of vowels and consonants) can be anagrammed various ways to suit whatever purpose is required. For example, after a few minutes work I was able to produce two variant anagrams implicating two different suspects: (1) 'John Druitt at a brothel - we bet he's the man felling women.' (2) 'NB: Bet he (John Williams) left another woman gutted there.'

Recreational anagramming is great fun, but I don't feel it can tell us anything useful about the Ripper case.

David A Green
22 December 2005

Was a Quack Doctor Jack the Ripper? (I)

Email to Ripperologist

Dear Rip

Ripperologist #62 carries a brief mention of a 'forthcoming' article entitled 'Was a Quack Doctor Jack the Ripper?' This article was actually published eight months ago in the March/April issue of the *Skeptical Inquirer* (Vol. 29, No. 2, pp.15-17). The author is Massimo Polidoro, a science writer from Italy. The article is a brief re-telling of Tumblety's life and criminal career culled almost entirely from the *Casebook*, and from *Jack the Ripper: First American Serial Killer*. I've been subscribing to the *Skeptical Inquirer* for many years, and I can heartily recommend the magazine - but this particular article can be viewed online at <http://www.csicop.org/si/2005-03/strange-world.html>.

David A Green
22 December 2005

Was a Quack Doctor Jack the Ripper? (II)

Email to Ripperologist

Dear Rip

I have some information on the item 'Was a Quack Doctor Jack the Ripper?' mentioned in the Forthcoming Publications section of *Ripperologist*

62. This is an e-book of 1,964 words available as a download from amazon.com, priced at \$5.95, and is a summary of the Tumblety theory.

The Amazon entry includes a review by Dan Norder pointing out that he read the article for free on the *Skeptical Enquirer* website, and that it is 'severely outdated, extremely expensive... you can get full fledged books and scholarly journals... for not too much more money.' There is also a glowing review by Daniel Jolley, but having read the article for free, courtesy of Google, my vote goes with Dan Norder.

Ted Ball
28 December 2005

David and Ted, thank you both for setting the record straight about this article by Massimo Polidoro. We had listed it under the sub-heading Recently Published. In the light of your comments, we have moved it to Oldies but Goodies. But even that particular location might be somewhat controversial... Rip.

Children of the Ripper

Email to Ripperologist

Dear Rip

Congratulations to Jan Bondeson on his excellent 'Children of the Ripper' (*Ripperologist* 62). For many years I have hoped for someone to produce an objective study of this highly convoluted case and at last this is it.

No doubt due largely to the media hysteria which developed in Sweden over the two doctors, most English reports were totally inaccurate and trashy in the extreme. I had no idea the police investigation was so inept.

What a terrible let down it must have been when the one book Jan Bondeson found credible suddenly went off with what sounds like some of the Ripper theorising at its very worst and came up with a JTR victims name association.

Jan Bondeson lists Swedish language books. Perhaps he could be prevailed upon to do a full book on the case for the benefit of us non Swedish readers. The anonymity provisions are presumably no longer binding if Swedish newspapers have revealed the names of the doctors. In any event the names are available on the Internet.

I'm sure his book on the case would be a great follow-up to his excellent *London Monster* and *Blood on the Snow*.

Wilfred Gregg
28 December 2005

Correction: Jan Bondeson, the author of Children of the Ripper: The Killing of Catrine de Costa, published in issue 62 of Ripperologist, has written to advise us that Catrine was not Portuguese - as the published version of his article said. She was in fact Swedish but had the bad judgment to marry a Portuguese crook who left her alone with two small children (whom the state took into foster care). Our apologies to Mr Bondeson for an excess of editorial zeal. Rip.

We love to hear from you! Please write to us at PO Box 735, Maidstone, Kent ME17 1JF or email us at contact@ripperologist.info. Rip.

Jeremy Beadle's

DID YOU KNOW?



DON'T CALL US, WE'LL CALL YOU

The Commercial Tavern public house on Commercial Street, opposite the site of the police station, has the telephone number 020 7247 1888.





WILF GREGG

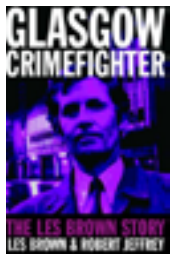
On the Crimebeat

GLASGOW CRIMEFIGHTER

Les Brown & Robert Jeffrey

245 pp., Illus.,

Black & White Publishing, £9.99



A gritty account of the career of Glasgow detective, Les Brown. Cases featured include Bible John, Paddy Meehan, wrongly convicted of murder, the sad case of Alex Miller, who killed two young children in order to steal a TV set and Thomas Docherty, who in 1980 had a murder charge against him thrown out and when freed was immediately committed to an asylum by his defence counsel. Major Glasgow crime figures such as Arthur Thompson and the infamous Tam McGraw also feature in the book.

A good police memoir. Recommended.

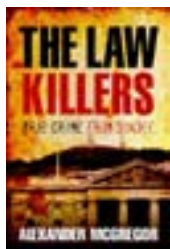
[Buy now](#)

THE LAW KILLERS

Alexander McGregor

189 pp., Illus.,

Black & White Publishing, £9.99



As an ignorant Sassenach, I was rather puzzled by the title of this excellent collection of True Crime from Dundee. However, the author soon solved my problem by explaining in his introduction that The Law is a hill which dominates the Dundee skyline.

Nineteen cases are chronicled plus a chapter of shorter reports including

wife killer and Ripper suspect William Henry Bury, the "confessional killer", Henry Gallagher and father and son Robert Mone. Mone, senior, has to be one of the most bizarre murderers of all time - he seemingly murdered three people in order to eclipse the score of his psychopathic, double murderer son, Robert Mone Junior.

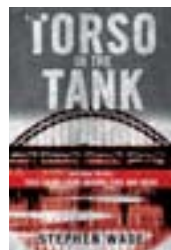
One of the best books of its kind that I have read for some time. Strongly recommended.

[Buy now](#)

THE TORSO IN THE TANK AND OTHER STORIES. TRUE CRIME FROM AROUND TYNE AND WEAR

Stephen Wade

188pp., Black & White Publishing, £9.99



As a native of Sunderland, I approached this book with particular interest. A good selection of 30 cases from the 20th century.

Featured are the widow of Windy Nook, Mary Wilson, child killer Mary Bell, two cases frequently labelled wrong convictions, both with some evidence to bolster this claim, John Dickman hanged for a robbery murder on a train and Robert Hoolhouse, hanged for the rape and murder of a 67-year-old farmer's wife. Also, what I think may be the first account in a book, the homosexual, "Sunderland Strangler", Steven Grieveson, a much neglected serial killer The book also includes "Wearside Jack", whose letters and tape threw the Yorkshire Ripper investigation completely off the track.

Following the publication of this book, a man was arrested and is awaiting trial on a charge of perverting the course of justice.

Recommended.

[Buy now](#)

VENDETTA

Paul Ferris & Reg McKay

375 pp., Illus.,

Black & White Publishing, £9.99



Not an easy book to read, divided as it is over 8 parts, containing 85 short chapters but none the less interesting. Paul Ferris was a major figure in Glasgow crime, who

really hit the headlines when he stood trial for the murder of Arthur "Fat Boy" Thompson, son of the notorious Arthur Thompson, whose career was chronicled in *The Last Godfather* by Reg McKay. Ferris was acquitted.

His next appearance before the courts was at the Old Bailey, where he was jailed for ten years for gun running - reduced to seven years on appeal. On release he declared that he was finished with crime and would devote his time to writing.

This book sets out to illustrate the pressures and problems which he has encountered since leaving prison. It also includes references to not only Glasgow crime figures but notorious English and national gangsters. That Paul Ferris is a marked man cannot be doubted and this book seems unlikely to increase his popularity with the underworld.

Bizarre characters abound but none are as interesting as Paul Ferris. Had he not gone into crime, one wonders what would have been his metier. Recommended.

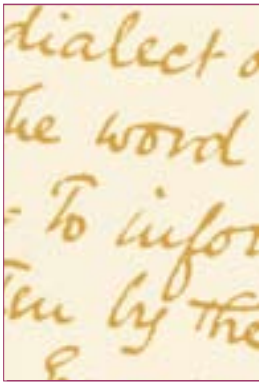
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Got an email address?
Got the Rip!



Reviews

East End Chronicles: Three Hundred Years of Mystery and Mayhem

Ed Glinert

London:

Allen Lane, 2005

Hardback, 325 pp., biblio., index

ISBN 0-713-99774-5

UK £20.00; Canada \$34.00

In this lively and informative book, walking tour leader Ed Glinert provides a fascinating rundown of the colourful history of London's East End, the infamous location of the Whitechapel murders of 1888. While only a small portion of the book, some 15 pages or so, are directly devoted to the Ripper case, scattered references to the crimes occur throughout, and the book overall provides enthralling and sometimes lurid reading. It is highly recommended for those who would like a grounding in East End lore.

Valuably, in the foreword, Glinert is keen to inform the reader what the 'East End' is and what it is not: 'The East End is the four-mile-wide territory east of the City of London leading up to the river Lea, a natural and obvious eastern boundary. The other traditional boundaries are equally formidable: another powerful and obvious river boundary - the Thames - to the south, and the thick woodland long prettified into Victoria Park to the north.' Glinert is adamant that other areas sometimes said to be part of the East End are not. These locales include Dalston, Hackney, Canning Town, East Ham, Ilford, Leyton, Romford, Silvertown, Wanstead, and West Ham, many of them areas that are historically in Essex and not London.

Glinert traces the history of the area to medieval times, when the then rural area was dominated by religious institutions such as the 'White Chapel' that gave its eponymous district its name, as well as to the Great Fire of London of 1666, which led to development of the now-East End outside of the old walls of the City to prevent the overcrowding that had led to the disastrous fire that decimated the ancient city. This is covered in a chapter on 'Building the New Jerusalem', a name derived from the ideals of puritan Protestants of the

day. The author describes how architect Sir Christopher Wren and his team designed new churches and squares in a Kabbalah-inspired London based on distances of '2,000 cubits (about two-thirds of a mile), the distance from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives and the furthest a Jew is allowed to travel on the Sabbath.'

In his treatment of the Ripper murders, the author is avowedly biased toward the Royal - Masonic conspiracy theory, and the aforementioned distances in cubits and the idea of 'building' and the Masons are inherent in his ideas about the reasons behind the murders. The reader might wish to remain sceptical about some of his notions about the Ripper crimes.

Possibly the fact that Mr Glinert is a tour guide and not a Ripperologist is a disadvantage in regard to his discussion of the murders. Several selected quotes quickly peg where he stands. Glinert says that Jack disappeared 'silently... into the gas-lit, fog-enveloped streets' - certainly a stereotype if ever there was one, and not accurate as to the weather on the streets of the East End during the nights of the crimes. He also says that the killer or killers were 'perhaps a team of murderers [emphasis mine] [that] killed at least five East End prostitutes... in late 1888.' (p 87)

Glinert examines the idea that the Ripper murders could have been part of a Royal or Masonic plot to protect the British monarchy. Here he cites the theories expounded in the 1970s by Dr Thomas Stowell and Stephen Knight, and, of course, the fantastic claims of Joseph Gorman Sickert. The recently deceased Sickert claimed that the Ripper crimes were done to cover up Prince Albert Victor's supposed secret marriage to a Catholic woman, Annie Crook, a circumstance that was said to endanger the British monarchy. Following Knight's theory, Glinert says the Royal physician, Sir William Withey Gull, administered memory loss drugs to Crook, forced her into a lunatic asylum, and killed her prostitute friends to keep them quiet about the secret marriage. (pp 90-92)

Glinert does bow to Don Rumbelow (p 92) 'regarded by many as the world's leading Ripper expert' and cites his

opposition to Knight's claims, since Gull had suffered a stroke in 1887 and no records show a marriage between Prince Eddy and Annie Crook. Yet this even-handed caveat is soon swept aside as Glinert appears to wholeheartedly accept the Masonic theory in latching onto 'The Three Juwes' of Solomon's temple supposedly referred to in the graffito discovered in Goulston Street on the night of the 'Double Event': the murders of Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddowes.

The author writes (p 94), 'The Ripper murders spin a web of myth that cannot be explained only by empirical and forensic evidence, as the Jack the Ripper experts claim. Each of the murders bears too many signs of Masonic ritual for it to be mere coincidence.' He calls on his expertise in East End history, or at least his understanding and, some might say, his gullibility in believing too easily its lore and myth, in that he points out, 'Similar violence and similar Masonic patterns had governed the style of the Ripper murders' sinister antecedents - the Ratcliff Highway murders of 1811' which he discusses in the previous chapter and that he says featured 'slitting rather than disembowelling, ...using instruments - maul, chisel - that feature in Masonic ritual.' While this vague similarity of supposed Masonic coincidences might be so, Glinert leaves unexplained why there should be any real link between murders committed in 1811 in the East End and ones over 75 years later. Guilt by association?

Glinert then goes on (p 97) to assert, 'Perhaps the BBC researchers and Knight [and by extension other Ripper researchers], unaware of the Biblical/ Masonic pattern behind the rebirth of London after the Fire, did not know how to look, let alone where to look. For they never thought of the chapel in the school in Wellclose Square, built on the site of the mission hall of St Saviour and the Cross. At the time of the alleged secret marriage [of Annie Crook and Prince Eddy at a place supposedly called St Saviours church] chapels in schools were being used for marriage services, and locals were still calling the Wellclose Building St Saviour, in the way that people are initially loathe to rename familiar landmarks even after they are demolished and rebuilt.'

Glinert then mentions that until 1869 Wellclose Square 'was home to Caius Cibber's Danish church, as Prince Eddy, given his Danish background, would have known.' Really? He states, 'The choice of a chapel on Wellclose Square, the place created according to biblical instruction and Masonic lore, would have also won approval from the high-ranking Masons associated with the prince. Indeed an inspection of the key murder sites and

associated locations show that 'Jack the Ripper' must have been acquainted with the esoteric code that lay behind the creation of post-Fire east London.' (p 97-8)

Glinert claims that the murder of Mary Anne Nichols in Bucks Row, early on 31 August 1888, took place '2,000 cubits, the distance of biblical instruction enshrined in Masonic legend, from Wellclose Square.' Claiming a similar distance between Wellclose Square and the site of Mary Jane Kelly's murder in Miller's Court on 9 November, Glinert claims the three locations form a triangle, and that the other three canonical murders, those of Chapman, Stride, and Eddowes, form a second, 'smaller equilateral triangle.' He says, 'Placed together the two shapes overlap to burn on to the map a twisted image of the key Masonic shape - the Seal of Solomon or Star of David. *It is probably a coincidence* [emphasis supplied].' (p 98) Do we get the impression that Glinert does not think this a coincidence?

Separately, in a chapter on the East End as 'The Jewish Ghetto' (pp 117-47), the author spends some pages discussing the notion that the Ripper could have been Jewish, in a section headed, 'Jacob the Ripper' (pp 136-41). In some ways, this discussion proves more valuable than the heard-before (*ad nauseum* some would say) Royal conspiracy - Masonic angle. Certainly, as Glinert shows, the East End was by the 1880s largely though not wholly a Jewish community, due to an influx of thousands of Eastern European Jews. The mystery remains about whether the murders were committed by a Jew or were somehow meant to implicate or 'blame' the Jews, as one interpretation of the infamous graffito would have it if we read the word to be 'Jewes' - a misspelling of 'Jews' - rather than that it signifies Hiram Abiff's 'Juwes' of Solomon's Temple. Glinert in this section does admit that while the message had 'strong Masonic connotations... [it] could also be taken anti-Semiticly.' And he moreover states that Sir Charles Warren ordered the graffito wiped from the wall because he was afraid of an anti-Jewish riot.

Glinert describes the arrest of John Pizer, on 10 September, two days after the murder of Annie Chapman in a Hanbury Street backyard. Pizer, a Jewish cobbler, was suspected of being 'Leather Apron' - an early name for the murderer before the name 'Jack the Ripper' was given currency for the killer. Pizer was released when he produced an alibi for his whereabouts during the time of the Nichols murder.

Also discussed is the supposed epithet of 'Lipski' hurled at witness Israel Schwartz near the Berner Street murder scene just before Stride's murder. As

the author notes, this was a seeming reference to Israel Lipski, who was executed for the murder of Miriam Angel in nearby Batty Street in 1887.

Glinert also touches on Sir Robert Anderson's later contention that the murderer was ascertained to be a low-class Polish Jew and that his 'people' would not give him up to 'Gentile justice.' Usefully, Glinert quotes Jewish commentator Chaim Bermant as writing, 'If Jack the Ripper was a Jew then one can be fairly certain that his fellows would have kept quiet about it, for the simple reason that the whole community could have been held culpable for his deeds.' This makes sense, and when we think about it, this reason is akin to and is the other side of the coin to that of Warren erasing the graffito because he was trying to head off an anti-Semitic riot: the community itself could have been afraid of such a riot, or worse, a pogrom, such as Eastern European Jews had so recently experienced under Tsarist rule.

Glinert explores the idea that a Jewish slaughterer was involved - a theory rejected by Jewish leaders, who pointed out that the khalef, or ritual knife used to slaughter an animal according to kosher custom, is single-edged, not pointed as the doctors believed the killer's weapon to be. Lastly, the author explores the unproven but intriguing idea that the murders may have been tied in some way to the Jewish calendar.

Annoyingly, Glinert provides no references beyond naming authors and some titles of books in the text, and no page references. Perhaps even more surprisingly, for such a colourful topic as the East End, the book, which totals 300 plus pages, totally lacks illustrations, although there is an attractive dust cover of a painting *The New Globe* by Jock McFadyen.

The reader will also be entertained by the lively discussion of the Huguenot silk weavers of Spitalfields; the dock workers and dockland vice and prostitution; brutal gangs such as the Nichols gang; the saucy entertainments; the Anarchists, the Houndsditch murders, and the Sydney Street Siege of 1911; the General Strike of 1929; the Battle of Cable Street, involving British Fascists, in 1936; the two world wars; East End gangsters; the John Childs serial murders; and the future of the East End, faced with a new influx of immigrants, this time from Asia.

Ripperana. The True Crime Mystery Magazine

Editor: Nick Warren

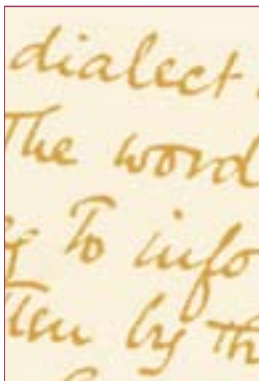
16 Copperfield Way, Pinner, HA5 5RY

nwarren@ripperana.fsnet.co.uk

No.55, January 2006, 28pp

UK £8, Overseas £15, €25 or USA \$25, for four issues

In reviewing *Ripperana* one should bear in mind that this was the first and, for quite some time, the best Ripper magazine. It was then, as it is now, largely the work of one person, its Editor, Nick Warren. What at one time may have been an asset now appears to be a liability, as *Ripperana* has failed to evolve at the same rate as other publications in the field and has been first overtaken and then left behind by *Ripperologist* and *Ripper Notes*, which benefit from higher production values and a broader range of contributors. That said, *Ripperana* soldiers bravely on, having extended its remit to cover true crime and mystery as well as the Ripper murders. The current issue, No. 55, kicks off with an editorial on a minor mystery connected to the death of Edith Cavell, an English nurse executed as a spy by the Germans in 1915, with a mention of Mata Hari, the other woman spy executed during the Great War - this time by the French. The coda is another chapter in another minor mystery raised by *Ripperana* eight years ago - though we thought this mystery had been solved in a Letter to the Editor eight years minus an issue ago. Several pages of news notes follow which are dominated by the possible identification of 'Wearside Jack', the hitherto anonymous hoaxer who impeded the police investigation of the Yorkshire Ripper crimes. The Reviews Section covers four books, a couple of them extensively, and the two major periodicals. Other Sections include Letters and, finally, a Picture Desk whose meaning we failed fully to grasp. Besides the regulars, *Ripperana* offers three articles of which two deal with matters Ripperological. The exception is a piece by Sam Goodlass commenting on some new adherents of the death penalty in Britain and giving an account of the process that led to its abolition in 1965. In the first Ripper piece, Dr Martin Roberts refers to the astrakhan coat worn by the man allegedly seen by George Hutchinson, its parallels in a Sherlock Holmes story and the reputation of Victorian seamstresses. To round up the issue, Barry Gritt asks, somewhat rhetorically, whether the Ripper existed. Although he offers some interesting speculation on a number of issues, he fails to come up with an answer. Perhaps he did not intend to.



Ripping Yarns

Jack the Ripper and his ilk
in books, film, DVDs, radio
and all other media

OLDIES BUT GOODIES



DEVIL'S GAME: THE CIVIL WAR INTRIGUES OF CHARLES A DUNHAM (Hardcover, 296pp, University of Illinois Press, ISBN: 0252028902, \$34.95) by Carman

Cumming, is the first book-length study of one of the American Civil War's most outlandish and mysterious characters, Charles A Dunham, double agent, spy, forger, journalist and master of dirty tricks. Writing for a variety of papers, including New York's Tribune, Herald and World, under different names, he routinely faked stories, even writing contradictory accounts for different papers. He passed himself off as both Union and Confederate officers, had still more aliases for his Canadian travels and plotted relentlessly against many major figures in the conflict. He is of course known to *Ripperologist* readers because of his acquaintance with another shady character: Dr Francis Tumblety, herb doctor and Ripper suspect. (See Carman Cumming's article, *The American Connection: Sandford Conover aka Charles A Dunham and Dr Francis Tumblety*, in this issue.)



DAS PHANTOM VON LONDON. EINE GESCHICHTE UM JACK THE RIPPER - SCHAUSPIEL (Paperback, 97pp, Monsenstein und Vannerdat, ISBN: 3 8 6 5 8 2 1 5 0 2, €15) by Mathias

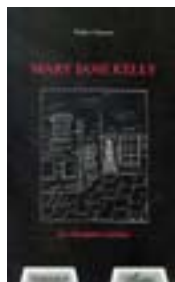
Schwappach, is a German-language play based on the Whitechapel Murders.

[Buy now](#)



LONDON VON SCOTLAND YARD BIS JACK THE RIPPER (Hardback, 240 pp, Eulen Verlag, ISBN: 3891024495) by Gerald Hagemann, is a German-language guide to 350 London crime sites frequented by the likes of Mrs Pearcey, the Ripper and Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street.

[Buy now](#)



MARY JANE KELLY: LA DERNIÈRE VICTIME (Softback, 90pp, L'Harmattan, Collection: Graveurs de mémoire, ISBN: 2747525244, €9,50) by Didier Chauvet, is described as the first biography of Mary Jane Kelly, the last victim of Jack the Ripper.

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WAS A QUACK DOCTOR JACK THE RIPPER? (NOTES ON A STRANGE WORLD): AN ARTICLE FROM: SKEPTICAL INQUIRER (Publisher: Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, ISBN: B000AJPJSE) Our readers to the rescue! No sooner had we admitted that we knew nothing about this article that Ted Ball and David A Green told us everything we ever wanted to know about it. For more information, go to our [Dear Rip](#) section.

RECENTLY PUBLISHED

EAST END CHRONICLES (Hardcover, 320pp, Allen Lane/Penguin, ISBN: 0713997745, £20) by Ed Glinert,

includes chapters on the Silk Weavers of Spitalfields, Docks, Dockers and River Pirates, Murder and Mayhem on the Ratcliffe Highway, Mystics and Myth-Makers, The Blitz and Bombs, The Jewish Ghetto and others. Glinert discerns the influence of 'esoteric measurements' in the location of the Ripper's killings and the murder in 1974 of Alfie Cohen, the owner of a tobacco kiosk in Commercial Road, which were linked by traces of Masonic ritual. (Reviewed in this issue).

[Buy now](#)



BLOOD ON THE SNOW: THE KILLING OF OLOF PALME (Hardcover, 272pp, illus., Cornell University Press, ISBN: 0801442117, \$29.95 - UK Equivalent: £17.20), by

Jan Bondeson, chronicles the still unresolved assassination of Swedish Prime Minister Palme in February 1986, the conspiracy theories that sprang throughout the country and the utter incompetence shown by the police during the investigation. In issue 60, *Ripperologist* said: 'This is a murder mystery that has it all, a Swedish Kennedy, and Bondeson, as usual, is superb. The book is excellent.'

[Buy now](#)

ANTI-SEMITISM AND BRITISH GOTHIC LITERATURE (Hardcover, 256 pages, Palgrave Macmillan, ISBN: 0333929519, £47.50), by Carol Margaret Davison, examines Gothic Literature's engagement with the Jewish Question and British national identity over the course of a century, from Romanticism to Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). A chapter devoted to *Dracula* considers the vampiric Count as a crypto-Jew, while immigration, syphilis, Jack the Ripper, corporate capitalism and the New Woman are all *fin-de-siècle* concerns connected with the assimilation of the Jews.

[Buy now](#)

BLACK BY GASLIGHT (Paperback, 342pp, Cavalier Press, ISBN: 0974621064, \$ 17.95), by Nene Adams, is a novel which starts in August 1888, as consulting detective Lady Evangeline St Claire rescues prostitute Rhiannon Moore from the clutches of a bloodthirsty murderer who would

come to be known as Jack the Ripper. The two women embark upon an investigation into an unrelated case that soon becomes a race against a killer whose only motive is madness. While trying to save themselves and each other, Evangeline and Rhiannon fall desperately in love. A secondary character is a detective called Sherringford Pike.



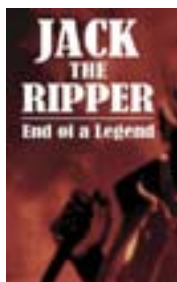
BY EAR AND EYES: THE WHITECHAPEL MURDERS, JACK THE RIPPER AND THE MURDER OF MARY JANE KELLY (Paperback, 320pp, Longshot Publishing, ISBN: 0 9 5 5 0 2 4 0 0 5 ,

£12.99), by Karyo Magellan, presents a new theory on the most enigmatic of the Ripper's victims. In *Ripperologist's* view, 'If there's any justice at all in our little square-mile corner of historical study, Magellan's book will emerge as the most controversial, if not the most important, book of 2005.' Very strongly recommended.

[Buy now](#)

JACK THE RIPPER COMPREHENSIVE A-Z (Hardcover, 499pp, Castle Books, ISBN: 078581616X, £19.98) edited by Maxim Jakubowski and Nathan Braund, is a re-issue of the *Mammoth Book of Jack the Ripper* first published in paperback in 1999.

[Buy now](#)



JACK THE RIPPER: END OF A LEGEND (Paperback, 316pp, Athena Press Pub, ISBN: 1844014843, \$15.95) by Calum Reuben Knight, offers a new interpretation and solution to the

mystery of the Whitechapel murders. The author argues that Jack the Ripper wasn't one person but three, and that one of the three was a French woman who successfully masqueraded as the final victim - known to posterity as Mary Jane Kelly. Knight reveals the true identity of the three individuals, recounts their lives and explores their motives.

[Buy now](#)

SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE BIOGRAPHY (Hardback, 240pp, Atlantic, ISBN: 1843542749, £14.99) by Nick Rennison, is of particular interest to *Ripperologist* readers since it ventures beyond Holmes's published cases and recounts how the great detective prevented Fenian attacks, advised Oscar Wilde to hotfoot it, helped Conan Doyle to solve the Edalji case and almost caught Jack the Ripper. Rennison even explains why the Ripper case was not among the stories recorded by Watson. At about the same time as the Ripper was roaming through the streets of Whitechapel, Mary Morstan, Watson's future wife, made her appearance into the lives of Holmes and Watson. The good doctor set forth her story as *The Sign of Four*, but did not think the Ripper case worth chronicling.

[Buy now](#)



THE HUMAN PREDATOR: A HISTORICAL CHRONICLE OF SERIAL MURDER AND FORENSIC INVESTIGATION (Hardcover, 320pp, Berkley, ISBN: 042520765X,

\$24.95) by Dr Katherine Ramsland PhD, is a detailed and comprehensive anthology of multiple murder events and serial killers from the 'Alphabet Murders' through the infamous 'Zodiac Killings'. The phenomenon of serial murder in analysed in the context of specific historical periods tracing the history of serial murder and providing the reader with thumbnail biographical sketches of a myriad multiple murderers. Starting with the Dark Ages and culminating with events of the new millennium, Dr Ramsland takes the reader through history up to the present time with her presentation and documentation of famous cases of multiple and serial murders, the journalistic coverage of these crimes and the social reaction to the 'evil' of serial murder, which to this day continues to shock us. This book shows that the darkness that exists in human nature is not the product of modern society.

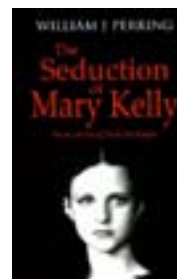
THE NEW ANNOTATED SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE NOVELS (A STUDY IN SCARLET, THE SIGN OF FOUR, THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES, THE VALLEY OF FEAR) (Hardcover, 992pp, illust., W W Norton, Slipcase edition,



ISBN: 039305800X, \$49.95) by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Leslie S Klinger (Editor), is the third book in a series begun in 2004 with two volumes examining the original 56

short stories to feature the great detective. It contains clear definitions of obscure terms, pithy discussions of puzzling issues, lucid essays and many illustrations, some from the novels' original appearances. 'A must-have for any serious mystery fan, this edition will stand as the benchmark for generations to come.' *Publishers' Weekly*.

[Buy now](#)



THE SEDUCTION OF MARY KELLY: FINAL VICTIM OF JACK THE RIPPER (Hardback, 591pp, Coulsdon, Surrey: D'Arcy Collection, 2005, www.darcycollection.co.uk, ISBN:

0954977009, £17.95) by William J Perring, is a novel recounting 'the "known" career of Mary Kelly with all the familiar faces emerging as flesh and blood characters instead of the often one-dimensional figures they appear in the non-fiction books.' (*Ripperologist*) The *Rip* also told its readers: 'You should like this book and it'll keep you occupied and out of trouble for a while.'

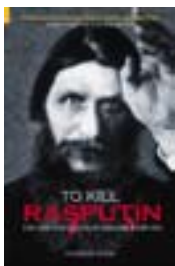
[Buy now](#)



THE TRIAL OF JACK THE RIPPER: THE CASE OF WILLIAM BURY (1859-89) (Paperback, 192pp, Mainstream Publishing, ISBN: 1845960114, £9.99) by Euan Macpherson, discusses Ripper

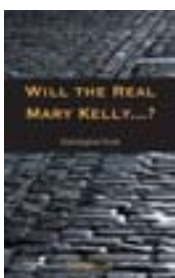
suspect William Henry Bury, who was hanged in 1889 in Scotland for the murder of his wife. 'Whether Bury was Jack the Ripper or not,' said *Ripperologist*, 'Macpherson's book is a damn good read and a penetrating analysis of a nasty murder by an equally nasty little man.'

[Buy now](#)



TO KILL RASPUTIN: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF GREGORI RASPUTIN (Hardcover, 288pp, Tempus Publishing Ltd, ISBN: 0752434098, £20) by Andrew Cook is a re-investigation of Rasputin's death which reveals for the first time the real masterminds behind the murder of the 'mad monk'. Ripperologists are of course aware that journalist William Le Queux claimed that Rasputin knew the true identity of Jack the Ripper.

Buy now

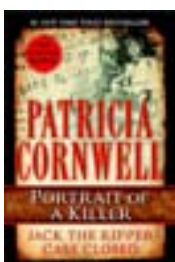


WILL THE REAL MARY KELLY...? (Paperback, 154pp, Christopher Scott, ISBN: 1905277059, £10.99) by noted researcher Chris Scott, is a definitive take on the Millers Court victim by one of *Ripperologist's* most celebrated contributors. 'Without question *Will the Real Mary Kelly* will become a "must-have" resource for any serious Ripperologist.' Stephen P Ryder, Exec. Editor, *Casebook: Jack the Ripper*. 'Highly recommended.' Antonio Sironi.

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FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

JANUARY 2006



PORTRAIT OF A KILLER: JACK THE RIPPER - CASE CLOSED (Paperback, 400pp, Penguin Group (USA) ISBN: 0 4 2 5 2 0 5 4 7 9, \$15), by Patricia Cornwell, is a revised edition of her controversial book reportedly including more evidence for her conclusion that the killer was the artist, Walter Sickert. A British edition will follow in September.

PRINCE EDDY: THE KING BRITAIN NEVER HAD (Hardcover, 272pp, Tempus Publishing Ltd £20, ISBN: 0752434101) by prolific author Andrew Cook, is a revisionist account of Eddy's life.

MARCH 2006



AN ACRE OF BARREN GROUND (Paperback, 352pp, Scribner, ISBN: 0743259726, £7.99) by Jeremy Gavron, is a novel covering events in Brick Lane, Spitalfields, over many centuries, from the life and death of a mammoth in prehistoric times to Gunther von Hagens's exhibition of corpses at the Old Truman Brewery a few years back, and everything in between: Bangladeshis, Jews, Huguenots, brewers, soldiers, farmers and medieval monks. During the Victorian period, the victim of a savage serial killer is found at Number 30 Brick Lane, and Inspector Abberline wonders whether he'll ever find the murderer they call Jack.

SPRING 2006



JACK THE RIPPER (Paperback, 160pp, Pocket Essentials, ISBN: 1904048692, £4.99), by Mark Whitehead and Miriam Rivett, is described as the Essential Guide to 'Jack the Ripper', contains an introductory essay and considers many of the Ripper's proposed identities, a summary of his crimes, victims and the ill-fated investigation, plus a guide to the Ripper's many fictional outings, from Hitchcock's *The Lodger* to Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's *From Hell*.

JACK THE RIPPER: THE FACTS (Paperback, 560pp, Robson Books Ltd, ISBN: 1861058705, £8.99) by *Ripperologist's* Executive Editor Paul Begg, is simply one of the most complete and authoritative books on the subject. A must-have.

RIPPEROLOGY by highly respected Ripper author Robin Odell will be launched by Kent State Press at the American Jack the Ripper Conference in Baltimore, Maryland, in April 2006. Mr Odell has described *Ripperology* as 'the story of what we have all come to know as "Ripperology" with some personal reminiscences and a modicum of analysis.' The book's

introduction will be written by Donald Rumbelow.

SEPTEMBER 2006



PORTRAIT OF A KILLER: JACK THE RIPPER - CASE CLOSED (Paperback, 416pp, Time Warner Paperbacks, ISBN: 0751537225, £8.99), by Patricia Cornwell, will be the British edition

of her revised book.

LATE 2006

THE QUEST FOR JACK THE RIPPER: A LITERARY HISTORY 1888-2000 by Richard Whittington-Egan has been several years on the making. Mr Whittington-Egan has told *Ripperologist* that the delay has been due, among other reasons, to the scrupulous checking of all the facts by his editor, Tom Kelly, and the minute attention and meticulous research which he has displayed in the construction of a really comprehensive bibliography, taking in for the first time all manner of obscure American book, magazine and newspaper reference sources. Mr Whittington-Egan says that the delay has been worth it, because what has resulted from it will stand for all time. Hear, hear, say we.

UNCOVERING JACK THE RIPPER'S LONDON is a book by Richard Jones, whose recent documentary, *On the Trail of Jack the Ripper*, was described by *Ripperologist* as 'Perhaps the best documentary to have been produced in recent years.' Jones's web site is at www.london-walks.co.uk

STILL UNSCHEDULED

CUATRO MIRADAS SOBRE JACK EL DESTRIPIADOR is a Spanish-language collection of original essays on the Ripper to be published in Buenos Aires. The authors are the late Juan-Jacobo Bajarla, Juan José Delaney, Christopher-Michael DiGrazia and Eduardo Zinna.

SHADOW PASTS, by Professor William D Rubinstein, looks at Ripperologists and other 'amateur' historians.

AND DON'T FORGET...

THE ROYAL LEGACY OF HATE, a further volume of revelations concerning the regal ancestry of Joseph Sickert, who died on 9 January 2003, the Second Edition of *Jack the Myth*, by A P Wolf, journalist Tom Slemen's book on Charles Regnier Conder, *Revelations of the True Ripper* (Ivory Moon), by Vanessa A Hayes - which was announced for publication in October 2005 - and a still untitled German-language book by Thomas Schachner and Hendrik Püstow. The publication of all these books has been announced, in some cases several years ago, but no information is available as to their present status.

RADIO DRAMA ON COMPACT DISC

SAUCY JACK, an original radio drama by James Vita focusing on the Ripper murders, is available on CD from Actors Scene Unseen, a Live Internet Radio Theatre company broadcasting live from Charlotte, NC, USA. This is a totally new recording and remastered edition of the live program originally broadcast on 19 June 2004 on Actors Scene Unseen and features a new, larger cast and original music. Another offering by Actors Scene Unseen, *Miller's Court*, is a two-

person drama by James Jeffrey Paul about the Ripper's encounter with his last victim. For information on programmes and schedules, to listen to live broadcasts or to find out how to buy the CDs, go to their website at www.actorssceneunseen.com.



JACK THE RIPPER, DIE GESCHICHTE EINES MÖRDERS, (Audio-CD, Luebbe Verlagsgruppe, ISBN: 3785711999), by Frank Gustavus, Dietmar Mues, Dagmar Puchalla and Heinz Lieven, is a German-language account of the murders.

DVD

ALREADY ISSUED



JACK THE RIPPER'S LONDON (DVD, Castle Home Video, Run Time: 60 minutes, Region 0, PAL, ASIN: B000AXWCY0, Catalogue Number: CHVBB0095, £2.99). No further details available at present.

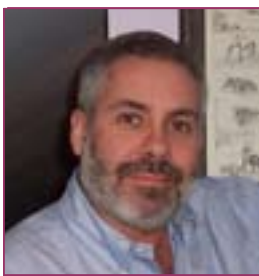
SUMMER 2006

JACK THE RIPPER'S SWEDISH VICTIM is a documentary by Daniel Olsson and Vulvarich shot on location in Store Tumlehed, Gothenburg and other places frequented by the young Elizabeth Stride. Major shooting was completed in December 2005. On 22 December, co-director Daniel Olsson gave a filmed interview to be featured in the documentary where he explained the historical background of prostitution in Gothenburg in the nineteenth century. The schedule will then be as follows: January: Pre production of the Swedish narration; February: Cutting and Editing; March or April: Swedish Narration; May: Post Production; June or July: DVD Release (Swedish Version); October: English Narration; December 2006: DVD release (English Version). You'll find more details about progress on the completion of *Victim*, its availability and price, right here in this column.

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CHRISTOPHER-
MICHAEL DIGRAZIA

The Last Word

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and welcome to 2006! A welcome, also, to this electronic version of the *Rip*, and kudos to everyone who's worked so hard to keep this best of Ripper magazines going.

Your Indolent Columnist has a bad habit (well, several, actually, but never mind that now) of waiting until the last minute to file these dispatches from the wilds of Massachusetts. So a trawl through the daily e-mail reveals such light-hearted messages as 'where's our column, fatty?' to charming *billet-doux* such as 'very large men are coming to your house with very heavy bats.'

It's a fair cop, as they say. So imagine how happy I was when the *Rip's* charming European Editor, Eduardo Zinna, suggested the story



William Randolph Hearst

Ince, newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst, the legendary comic Charles Chaplin and, finally, Hearst's mistress, Marion Davies. Davies was an actress of rare gifts - a clever mimic, a delicious comedienne, and a peppy, lovely, successful silent movie actress. Her eternal curse, however, is that no-one believes it, and for that we must thank *Citizen Kane*. The great film of wunderkind Orson Welles, *Kane* tells the story of newspaper tycoon Charles Foster Kane and his mistress, the supremely untalented Susan Alexander. Since *Kane* is supposedly modeled on William Randolph Hearst, and Marion Davies was his mistress, it follows - falsely - that Marion Davies was a talentless nonentity.

Chaplin, of course, needs neither introduction nor explanation. Hearst, meanwhile, had been entranced with Davies since first meeting her in 1917. He was fifty-four and married; she was a luscious twenty and single. A besotted Hearst promised to make her a huge star, and to that end set the entire machinery of his newspaper empire to trumpet her every film

appearance. Davies was appropriately grateful, and soon began living openly with her patron at his California estate, San Simeon. Their relationship was an open, if close-mouthed, secret to their friends, but it was also clear they would never be more than sugar daddy and mistress. Hearst knew his wife would never grant him a divorce, and Davies never pressed him to get one. But she did have needs, and though Hearst fumed, she had discreet affairs with men of her own age - one of whom, it was said, was Chaplin.

The last man in our quartet is Ince. Like many of the cinema's pioneer actors, he considered the movies little more than 'galloping tintypes,' and appeared in them only when absolutely strapped for cash. But in 1910 he joined D W Griffith's Biograph studio, and soon found he had a talent for directing. With his eye for detail, Ince's Western movies (of which he was a past master) broke all box office records, and by 1918, Ince had his own company and a huge 20,000 acre lot - 'Inceville' - to film on. As his forty-first birthday approached, Thomas Harper Ince was on top of the world.

Ince was invited to take a birthday cruise aboard Hearst's yacht *Oneida*. The director agreed, but when he boarded the yacht, complained of



Thomas Ince

of Thomas Ince as the subject of this month's column. Who he? A movie producer, director and all-round bigwig in the early days of the silver screen. A man, in short, at the center of a Hollywood murder.

There are four people in the tale:



Charlie Chaplin

feeling unwell with stomach ulcers. He spent most of his time on board discussing plans to shoot Marion Davies' movies at his studio. All seemed well. Then, on November 16, Ince was dead. But how?

The official story is that an overtired Ince perished from a heart attack. But Hollywood gossip was much more lurid. Ince, they said, had died of a case of old-fashioned lead poisoning, delivered courtesy of a pistol wielded by William Randolph Hearst! In one version, a jealous Hearst, catching Marion and Charlie writhing in unholy congress, tried to blow the Little Tramp's brains out, but missed and felled Ince instead. In another, the besotted Hearst saw Marion talking to a grey-haired man; insanely jealous, he shot the man he believed was Chaplin only to find it was Ince.

How ever it happened, Hearst gathered his guests together. Through a series of threats and bribes, he succeeded in buying their silence - and, more importantly, their tacit agreement to whatever story the Hearst newspapers would create to explain Ince's death.

Ince was quickly cremated and a secret trust fund set up for his wife. Although the San Francisco district attorney held a hearing in conjunction with the death, the hearing was quickly closed after a Dr Daniel Goodman testified Ince had died of 'acute indigestion.' Dr Goodman, we might note, was Hearst's production manager. In one way or another, everyone on board the Oneida that November day was taken care of. But from that time forward, the name of Thomas Ince was absolutely forbidden in Hearst's presence. As D W Griffith said, 'All you have to do to make Hearst turn white as a ghost is mention Ince's name. There's plenty wrong there, but Hearst is too big to touch.'

And does this have anything to do with Jack the Ripper? Maybe. In his book *The Killer Who Never Was*, Peter Turnbull argued that the popular press of 1888 was complicit in the Whitechapel Murders; that, by their lurid reporting, they actually encouraged copycat murders in the 'Ripper style.'

The temptation for a publisher or editor to spice up the news is never far from the surface. In England, practically the whole careers of Lord Beaverbrook and the Harmsworth brothers were based on outdoing their rivals, and in America, the quarrels between Hearst and Pulitzer originated the disparaging term 'yellow journalism.' Usually this sort of one-upsmanship is entertaining, if not particularly edifying, but it can



Marion Davies

also degenerate into sleazy scandal-mongering. Hearst is notorious for almost single-handedly dragging the United States into the Spanish-American War, and his famous 'you provide the pictures, I'll provide the war' directive to Frederick Remington stands as a low point in the history of journalism. Closer to home, one only need look at the frenzy surrounding the documents supposedly proving George W Bush skipped out on his military service - the desire to 'get' Bush and the pressure for a truly 'hot' story cost two leading journalists their jobs, and introduced the invidious phrase 'fake but accurate' into modern political discourse.

Hearst very likely got away with murder. The editors of the *Star* and *East London Advertiser* arguably prolonged the Ripper murders with

sensational coverage of Saucy Jack's sanguinary deeds. And if you think that too harsh - or too facile - a comment, allow me to leave you, again, at the feet of William Hearst. When the comic Roscoe 'Fatty' Arbuckle, whose career he had helped to destroy with phony allegations of rape and murder, asked him 'Why are you giving me a job when you did everything you could to hurt me?' Hearst admitted, 'I don't care what you did, son. All I ever wanted to do was sell papers.'

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Calendar for 1888

| JANUARY | | | | | | | FEBRUARY | | | | | | | MARCH | | | | | | |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
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| JULY | | | | | | | AUGUST | | | | | | | SEPTEMBER | | | | | | |
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| OCTOBER | | | | | | | NOVEMBER | | | | | | | DECEMBER | | | | | | |
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30 March: Good Friday
1 April: Easter Sunday
2 April: Easter Monday

20 May: Whit Sunday
27 August: Summer Bank Holiday