

Ripperologist

No. 69

July 2006

What happened to the Coroners' papers?

ROBERT LINFORD,
JOHN SAVAGE and
DAVID O'FLAHERTY
tell us in the last
installment of
The Green of the Peak

JOE CHETCUTI on the
Belle of Philadelphia

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Quote for July

The three-letter "job," with its can-do implications, also makes the term especially American. Perhaps forgotten as the London of Jack the Ripper receded into the past, the idea of an oral swiftie was re-exported to Europe and far beyond by a massive arrival of American soldiers. For these hearty guys, as many a French and English and German and Italian madam has testified, the blowjob was the beau ideal.

Christopher Hitchens on America's supposed obsession with fellatio, *As American as Apple Pie, Vanity Fair*.

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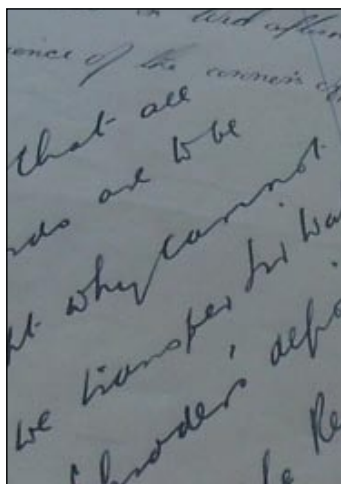
The Belle of Philadelphia

Joe Chetcuti delves further into the world of Col Francis Hughes-Hallett and W T Stead and discovers a beauty who captivated Prince Albert Edward.



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The Sunshine and the Shadow

What happened to the coroners' papers? In the final part of their monumental *Green of the Peak* series, Robert Linford, John Savage and David O'Flaherty reveal all...

Contributors to this issue

JOE CHETCUTI

Joe Chetcuti is a San Franciscan who has put over 20 years of hospital work in an Emergency Room and Urgent Care Clinic. He has studied the Littlechild Suspect for many years and has gathered a large amount of paperwork on him.

ROBERT LINFORD

Robert Linford is a writer from east London and is a regular contributor to *Casebook: Jack the Ripper*.

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.

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In Future Issues

You won't believe what we have in store for you!

We would like to acknowledge the valuable assistance given by the following people in the production of this issue of *Ripperologist*: Ally Reinecke, Stephen P Ryder and Eduardo Zinna. Thank you!

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ADAM WOOD

Goodnight, Old Cock

In December 1996, when the *Casebook* was little more than a few months old and held together by paper clips and chewing gum, I posted on the fledgling message boards offering to arrange a meeting of interested readers in London; the first Casebookers' day out.

The plan was to meet in Chancery Lane on a Saturday morning, conduct some brief research, then head over to Whitechapel to tour the sites before ending up in a Brick Lane curry house, with the evening ending with a visit to the first anniversary meeting of the Cloak and Dagger Club.

One of the first to arrive was a middle-aged gentleman in a Barbour coat and tweed cap. Looking a little furtive, he wandered around the station until I approached with a cheery "Excuse me, are you waiting for someone?". To which he replied, in a way which suggested he might have been asked the question a thousand times, "Yes, I'm afraid I am."

So began my friendship with Eduardo Zinna.

My main memory of that first visit to the C&D? Not meeting for the first time Stewart Evans, Paul Begg, nor Andy Aliffe, but when Eduardo leant back against a huge metal Whitechapel underground station sign that hung on the wall of the Alma pub in those days... a deafening clang rang out in the reverential silence for speaker Nick Connell, and we just looked at each other, desperately trying not to laugh.

The ten years since then have been marked by a mixture of seriousness and hilarity; Eduardo offering invaluable insight into non-English speaking Ripper reports, while at the same time donning a turban for his portrayal of 'Indian' Harry Bowyer in the silent mockumentary *Crapper*.

I'm aware that this is sounding a little like an obituary... and possibly it is, in a way. For the sad news is that Eduardo is unable to continue with his work on the *Rip*. Since joining Paul Begg and myself in time for *Rip* 45, March 2003, Eduardo has proved to be an excellent editor, extremely dedicated and great fun to work with. As Paul said in his Editorial for our first electronic issue, Eduardo had pretty much run the ship for a year, and his incredible knowledge of all manner of subjects helped to shape the magazine. He more than anyone has worked to ensure the monthly electronic *Rip* has been a success.

He's a man with an admirable sense of duty; a few months ago, the night before publication day, Eduardo called me from his home in Spain at 4am to say he'd been involved in a minor car accident and would be unable to complete the final revisions for the next morning as per my request. An email would have sufficed.

Of course, time changes everything, and magazine personnel is no different. The day Eduardo, Paul and I met for the first time, the Editor of the *Rip* was Mark Galloway. A couple of months later Paul Daniel took the magazine on to a new level. In 2000 Paul and myself steered the *Rip* in a new direction, boosted by the arrival of Eduardo and Chris George in March 2003... and now we are about to embark on a new journey, while Eduardo takes a well-earned break from the rigorous daily routine of working on the magazine, relaxing in his house in Kenya.

Eduardo, we thank you sincerely for the efforts you've undertaken in the name of the *Rip*. You've left the magazine in a far better place than you found it.

Adios amigo... you'll be sorely missed.

* * * * *

There's but one thing that could lessen the blow of Eduardo departing; to find a new editor to join the team. And we're very pleased to be able to tell you that we've done just that. Step forward, Don Souden. Don, a frequent poster on the *Casebook*, is an author and freelance writer living in Connecticut, USA. More from Don himself next month, but we'd like to take this opportunity to publicly welcome him on board.

Enjoy issue 69!



JOE CHETCUTI



Assisted by
MARIBEL REYES

The Belle of Philadelphia

A Lady Caught Between
the Whitechapel Murders and Parliament

The Philadelphia Academy of Music is the oldest Grand Opera House in the United States. The most extravagant evening in its long history occurred during the autumn of 1860 when the visiting Prince of Wales, Prince Albert Edward, was in attendance. This was the first British Royal visit to North America, and it attracted global attention as well as huge crowds. Around 30,000 boisterous Americans turned out to see the Prince in Detroit, then another 50,000 greeted him in Chicago. But in October 1860, all eyes were focused on Philadelphia's gala setting in the Academy of Music. The elite members of this Pennsylvania city were co-patrons of the opera with Prince Albert Edward on that special night.

The youthful Prince declared it was on this evening that he had seen the most beautiful woman in America. Author Virginia Tatnall Peacock vividly described the scene in her 1901 book, *Famous American Belles of the Nineteenth Century*:



Inside the Philadelphia Academy of Music



Prince Albert Edward

It was on that famous night when the visit of His Royal Highness brought thither one of the most distinguished audiences ever assembled in Philadelphia. She was dressed with girlish simplicity in white, her only ornament being a small chain of golden sequins, which bound the rich masses of her hair and defined her shapely head, yet such was the subtle power of her presence, that the moment she entered that crowded assembly, with its tier upon tier of brilliantly arrayed women, she became the focus of all eyes, dividing the attention of the Prince of Wales and the audience.¹

That riveting woman was the Belle of Philadelphia, Emilie von Schaumburg.² Peacock elaborated:

The beauty of some women admits a diversity of opinion. Emilie von Schaumburg's did not. It was absolute and the effect was instantaneous... a figure tall and svelt, all undulating lines and willowy grace; a regal carriage, and, above all, an air of high-bred elegance and distinction.³

Another source described this alluring lady in a similar fashion:

Miss Von Schaumburg for many years was the belle of Philadelphia, and there was none powerful enough to take the social scepter from her. A remarkable linguist, a talented singer and actress, and a charming and magnetic woman who knew the artistic properties of dress, she was for years the social arbiter. She was always surrounded by brilliant people in her salon, and as a conversationalist, she has never been surpassed by any of her successors, if indeed, she may be said to have had a successor.⁴

¹ Virginia Tatnall Peacock, *Famous American Belles of the Nineteenth Century*. Philadelphia: JP Lippincott Company, 1901, 200.

² Virginia Peacock spelled the name 'von Schaumburg' while all other sources spell it 'von Schaumburg.'

³ Peacock, 199.

⁴ Joseph Jackson, *America's Most Historic Highway: Market Street, Philadelphia*. New York: John Wanamaker, 1926, 316.

The 'remarkable linguist' quote was well deserved. On one occasion, Emilie was in the midst of eight non-English speaking diplomats who were each talking in a different tongue, yet she was still able to converse with all of them. This prompted the Empress of Brazil to pronounce Miss von Schaumburg to be one of the most remarkable women she has ever met.

The crown of the 'Belle of Philadelphia' wasn't achieved in those days without defeating some stiff competition, for, Peacock pointed out:

Philadelphia has developed a critical instinct which is not easily satisfied... The ladies of Philadelphia have more cleverness in the turn of an eye than those in New York have in their whole composition... Every Philadelphia girl who had hoped to be a belle during the last quarter of the [nineteenth] century, and even many who have been without social aspirations, have been brought up on traditions of Emilie Schaumburg. Yet so eminent was the place she held in the old city whose standard of belleship had been fixed back in colonial America, that no one ever succeeded her.⁵

One would think that a lady of Emilie's qualities would mean that her name should not be mentioned when the Whitechapel murders are discussed. But now it's unavoidable. Miss von Schaumburg married a high society Englishman, and this prominent couple lived on London's Cromwell Road during the late 1880s.

London in 1888



Mrs Emilie Hughes-Hallett

When Emilie's husband returned home in the early morning hours of 8 August 1888, he had just completed a fruitless night of hunting in the East End. Colonel Sir Francis Charles Hughes-Hallett soon realized that his chances were very remote at making a red-handed apprehension of Martha Tabram's murderer. The Colonel would eventually admit to a news reporter: 'I satisfied myself that it was no use to look for him there [in Whitechapel]. He must be found at his home, in his club, in the fashionable thoroughfares of the West End.'⁶

Hughes-Hallett believed that the George Yard murder would not be an isolated incident. Although his attempt to quickly put an end to this brutal development didn't succeed, his inclination that more murders were to follow unfortunately proved to be accurate. Within five weeks, the Nichols and Chapman killings were committed. After the Hanbury Street mutilation, Emilie must have realized that her husband had been seriously on to something in early August. The Colonel's assessment of the crimes was quite definite: A fellow West End clubman had familiarized himself with the slums of Whitechapel and had become a killer.

The autumn of 1888 was a trying time for the Colonel and Emilie. For over a year, Hughes-Hallett had been hounded by Radical newspaper editor William Stead of the *Pall Mall*

Gazette. The editor was determined to oust the Tory colonel from his Parliament seat. Financially, Hughes-Hallett was skating on thin ice during this time period. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* of 16 October 1887 reported that a pre-nuptial contract was in force to prevent the Colonel from dipping into Emilie's funds during their marriage. Signs existed that he was truly short on cash. In late September 1888, he needed to take a recess from Parliament and the Ripper case. The Colonel boarded a ship bound for America 'in the interest of shareholders of a London company.' Whatever this monetary matter involved, it was important enough for Hughes-Hallett to make a transatlantic business voyage. The trip seemed to further punctuate his need of raising capital. As he was crossing the Atlantic Ocean, the 'double event' murders of Stride and Eddowes occurred on 30 September.

On that same day, Sir Richard Francis Burton walked into the military United Service Club in Westminster to write a transcript of the past happenings in Pall Mall. Burton described how Stead unjustly chastised Home Secretary Henry Matthews just because the cabinet minister had pursued a conviction against the confessed Jewish murderer Israel Lipski. Burton claimed that Stead did not even have 'the manliness to apologise' to the Home Secretary even though the PMG was undoubtedly in the wrong. In the same paragraph, Burton wrote of how Stead failed in a previous attempt to remove Hughes-Hallett from Parliament.⁷ Like Matthews, the Colonel was a Conservative MP who had sought justice

⁵ Peacock, 190.

⁶ Atlanta Constitution, 7 October 1888

⁷ Sir Richard Francis Burton, Appendix 16, 'Biography of this Book or the Reviewers Reviewed,' in *Supplemental Nights to the Book of a Thousand and One Nights...* Vol. 6. London: The Burton Club, n.d. (reprint of 1888 edition). Available at wollamsham.ca/1002/Sn_6/16appendixF.htm

against a Whitechapel murderer, and both of these politicians had to perform this function while combating Stead's antagonism. Readers can surmise how shrewd a writer Burton was by how he composed his paragraph which smartly linked the two cases.

Stead wasn't the type who would back down from a fight so he printed up a spirited *PMG* article on 8 October 1888. Just one week prior he was lambasted by Burton's writing inside a military club, and now the editor was ready to retaliate against the police leadership of London. His poignant words were sharply delivered: 'Sir Charles Warren, with Colonel Pearson and his imposing staff of military commanders, is now acting as Chief of the Detective Department... In [Sir Robert Anderson's] absence, the CID is delivered over to anarchy...' ⁸

There was plenty of venom in Stead's article and it was understandable. The writing in the United Service Club had just portrayed this editor as being nothing more than a self-righteous troublemaker. Burton's document also re-told of Stead's ill-fated Eliza Armstrong abduction plot and of his subsequent jail sentence. The insulted editor attained a good measure of personal revenge against the military with his 8 October response.

On his arrival in New York, Hughes-Hallett soon learned of all the 30 September Whitechapel news, and he wouldn't hold his peace about the situation any longer. The Colonel promptly set up a 6 October interview with a New York newsman. It was here where Hughes-Hallett revealed the details of his midnight 8 August George Yard investigation and of his suspicion that the Ripper was a West End clubman with an illegitimate medical background. This was a very bold proclamation to make considering how revered was the Pall Mall name in England. I could see why Hughes-Hallett would make sure he was an ocean away from Westminster before speaking out in such a fashion.

Stead not only returned fire against the military brass and the CID with his writing, but he would also take aim at the talkative English Colonel in America. I've uncovered a harmful and deceptive maneuver that was unleashed against Hughes-Hallett shortly after his 6 October interview. The scheme camouflaged itself in the form of distressing letters which were sent from London to New York. These letters involved Emilie, and they bit at her husband's Achilles heel, his financial status. The stage has now been set to speak of one of the more eventful sequences a Whitechapel researcher can come across.

The Conniving John Arthur Chandos



Mrs Clara Bloomfield-Moore

Mrs Clara Bloomfield-Moore, a very wealthy and respected Philadelphian author, was Emilie's friend. Like Emilie, she was part of London's upper society in the late 1880s. Emilie, on behalf of her husband, made an appeal to Clara for a £4,000 loan. Emilie sent her financial agent to Clara, and he convinced the elderly widow to grant the loan request. A repayment date of October 1888 was agreed upon.

Unbeknown to Emilie, this intermediary who she had sent was one of the biggest con men in England. After he initially weaseled his way into becoming the financial agent for the Hughes-Halletts, he gained Emilie's trust to the point where she authorized him with full Power of Attorney to transact her financial affairs. Using his sly talent, this man would amazingly land himself in another enviable position. Not only did he obtain the £4,000 loan for the Hughes-Halletts, but he would soon milk another \$10,000 out of Clara for himself. Clara also made the big mistake of hiring his services. The scoundrel would eventually make things rotten for Clara and her daughters. I've read he was a Dutchman, but at the time of his dealings with Emilie and Clara, he claimed to have been an American from Philadelphia. The conniver's name was John Arthur Chandos.

The first time I ever heard about this trickster was in January 2005 when Stewart P Evans kindly provided me with information that in early 1890, John Arthur Chandos (alias Chandor, alias Captain Carlton) had been accused of previously conspiring with William Stead to undermine

Colonel Hughes-Hallett. The purpose of this underhanded activity was to have Hughes-Hallett replaced from his Parliament seat. A *Chicago Tribune* article from 1889 provided a recap:

⁸ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 8 October 1888.

Some time in October of last year, Col Hughes-Hallett came [to America.] When he left [London], a security debt of £4,000 was about to become due. He left John Chandor in charge of his business as agent. While [in New York] he received letters from Chandor to the effect that [Chandor] and Mrs. Hughes-Hallett were doing what they could and that ultimately everything would be arranged. Finally, however, the letters became less promising in their character and the correspondent began to declare that it would be unwise (for HH) to return to England at once, as bankruptcy proceedings would be entered against him and he would be plunged into costly and tedious litigation. [emphasis mine] Col Hallett's suspicion of Chandor was aroused, and he began to think that Chandor had in some way or other played him false. Immediately on Col Hallett's return to England, he put himself in communication with Mrs Bloomfield-Moore and began prosecuting inquiries concerning John Chandor. He is reported to have unearthed a story of the man's career which is simply appalling. He communicated portions of it to Mrs Bloomfield-Moore, and that lady, who had already broken with [Chandor] without knowing the full extent of his wickedness, wrote letters to her old friend and fellow-Philadelphian, Mrs Hughes-Hallett, warning her of the kind of man Chandor was. These were the letters which Mrs Hughes-Hallett showed Chandor despite the fact that they were marked 'personal and confidential.'⁹

The accusation that Chandor and Stead had worked in cahoots sure had the earmarks of having been accurate. The editor had done jail time for working hand in hand with a woman who rented out her own thirteen-year-old daughter. The alleged association with Chandor would have been compatible with Stead's antics. The scheme to keep Hughes-Hallett in America and away from Parliament was sneaky, but the perceptive Colonel saw through their ploy. Hughes-Hallett not only returned to England, but he instantly launched an inquiry against Chandor. This was in complete accord with the Colonel's mannerisms and personality. Hughes-Hallett displayed similar exuberance and urgency during the George Yard investigation. Plenty can be said about his fellow clubman with the phony medical credentials as having been an experienced shyster who penetrated Hughes-Hallett's circle in the United Service Club. Chandor was another fraud who successfully penetrated the Colonel's personal life in 1888, but this con man knew he had taken it as far as he could. All that was left for Chandor was to try to make an issue out of Clara's "personal and confidential" writing that Emilie had shown him. The following London news item was wired to the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*:

*Mrs Bloomfield-Moore was committed for trial today on charges of having criminally libeled Mr Chandor in letters addressed to Mrs Hughes-Hallett. The presiding magistrate refused to entertain the plea that the letters were privileged communications.*¹⁰

Clara pleaded innocent inside London's Central Criminal Court. When her trial came up, Chandor and the counsel for the prosecution strangely announced that they would consent to a 'not guilty' verdict. Thanks to Chris Scott, a London *Times* article has been discovered which explained why the case was never prosecuted. Oddly enough, it was because Chandor refused to submit the evidence that would have supported the indictment against Clara. Chandor was against having certain people testify in the witness-box so the conviction attempt was withdrawn. This visible display of vulnerability caused the tables to be dramatically turned. Sensing that she now had the upper hand, Clara brought civil libel charges of her own against Chandor. One of her charges stemmed from the £4,000 loan to the Hughes-Halletts. Here is what the *Chicago Tribune* of 9 December 1889 had to say about it:

*Col Hughes-Hallett, it would seem has never been able to learn anything about the £4,000 which Mrs. Bloomfield-Moore loaned to his wife on his behalf. When [Emilie] was called to testify concerning this money in the police court during the progress of the libel case, she said that she gave £2,000 of it to Chandor to hold in trust for her. When the claim was put in, however, Chandor's solicitor replied that he did not have the £2,000 and knew nothing about it.*¹¹

Chandor had been exposed as an embezzler in the police court, and he didn't even bother to fight against the civil charges that were brought against him. Everything was decided in Clara's favor due to Chandor's non-appearance to present his defense. I certainly hope she was re-united with all of her money as a result of the police court's verdict. According to the accounts I've read, both Clara and Emilie became increasingly agitated inside the courtroom during the trial.

Although the alleged Stead-Chandor plot to strand Colonel Hughes-Hallett in America was deplorable, the ugliest part of the war between the PMG and the Hughes-Halletts came about in a previous drama in September 1887. The gist of it isn't pleasant to read. A debutante had entrusted some funds with Hughes-Hallett for investment purposes. Her name was Miss Beatrice Selwyn, a girl in her early 20s. Hughes-Hallett was caught monkeying around with her, and the word got out. Stead again viewed this as an opportunity to knock the Colonel out of Parliament. The PMG boldly claimed that Miss Selwyn was Hughes-Hallett's stepdaughter from his first marriage and that he had cheated her out of her investment. Not surprisingly, Stead stressed the encouragement of political repercussions:



Colonel Francis Charles Hughes-Hallett
from *Vanity Fair*, 18 December 1886

⁹ *Chicago Tribune*, 9 December 1889.

¹⁰ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 13 October 1889.

¹¹ *Chicago Tribune*, 9 December 1889.

Serious Charges Made by the 'Pall Mall Gazette' Against Col Hughes-Hallett. London, Sept 20. [1887]

*The Pall Mall Gazette publishes full details of the scandal in which Col Hughes-Hallett (Conservative) Member of Parliament for Rochester, is involved by reason of the exposure of his relations with his stepdaughter. The Gazette states that the Colonel will not resign his seat in the House of Commons, and accuses the Government of attempting to whitewash him.*¹²

The article would go on to erroneously state that in six months 'the unfortunate girl is expected to become a mother by her stepfather.' Then three demands were made by the PMG which emphasized their true objectives. It was printed: 'The Gazette demands that the Colonel be dismissed from the army, and declares that no English gentleman could sit on the same bench with him; last the Ministers must force him to vacate his seat in the Commons.' The next day Stead topped it off with, 'We trust enough has been said to convince the electors of Rochester that the honorable and gallant gentleman is not a proper person to represent them.'¹³

Burton revealed in his United Service Club writing that the PMG's story resulted in the opposite effect that it was intended for. '[Stead] raged with all the fury of outraged virtue against Colonel Hughes-Hallett with the consequence of seating that MP more firmly than he was before.'¹⁴

Hughes-Hallett repudiated the slurs that he misappropriated Miss Selwyn's funds, and his statement was promptly investigated into by the British Government. The press reported that 'in an interview with W H Smith [The First Lord of the Treasury] and Mr Akers Douglas, the Tory whip, it is said Col Hughes-Hallett convinced them that he was guiltless of any malversation of money. Here at least, for the time, Government interference in the matter has ceased.'¹⁵

The Colonel was a tactful politician who knew the best way to respond to all of this was to play it down. He made sure not to fall into any trap which would have lured him into a courtroom-circus scene. Hughes-Hallett explained in the *New York World* that the PMG's goal is 'evidently to force my hand and to compel me to prosecute that journal for having promulgated libellous statements in regards to me. I shall not gratify the editor's longing for notoriety.'¹⁶

Hughes-Hallett Survives in Parliament

Hughes-Hallett had defeated a Liberal candidate in 1885 to win his Rochester Parliamentary seat, and he defeated another Liberal candidate in 1886 to retain that seat. Stead had thrown his support to both Liberal losers. Now in 1887, it looked like the editor finally had the Colonel cold turkey over the affair with Miss Selwyn, but Hughes-Hallett had strong allies in the right places, thus his political survival techniques won out over the cries of the PMG. Smith, the First Lord of the Treasury who exonerated Hughes-Hallett was also the Conservative Leader of the House of Commons. Since Hughes-Hallett was an outspoken supporter of Lord Salisbury's government, the ruling Conservative Party didn't actively pursue any disciplinary action against Hughes-Hallett for his misbehavior in the Selwyn scandal. Stead's blood must have boiled because he was now getting politically out-dueled by this promiscuous Colonel on an annual basis. What made it really hurt was that Hughes-Hallett represented the counterpoint on issues which were very close to Stead's heart. The Tory colonel was pro-British Army, coercively anti-Home Rule, and he had commanded troops in India to curb Russian expansion. The Radical editor strongly supported Irish self-Government, openly criticized the British military, and printed literature in praise of Russia. You could just see how this was getting personal, and it all rose to a head in 1888. During that year, there were indications that Chandor was subversively installed as a financial agent who won the Hughes-Halletts' confidence. I also sense that another experienced charlatan, this a deadly vengeful one with strong Irish sentiments, was briefly planted inside Hughes-Hallett's Pall Mall club. Research has led me to the suspicion that the Colonel was politically targeted by both of those hired con men in 1888. Hughes-Hallett's midnight 8 August 1888 George Yard hunt and his determined investigation of Chandor's history were two very personal responses. There was no talk of a mass murderer being on the loose right after the Tabram killing, yet within 24 hours of her death a knighted Member of Parliament had cased out the murder site and completed a late night Whitechapel search. A warning flag should go up when we find such a well-regarded and connected politician suddenly to be involved with the murder of an East End prostitute.

The paperwork for the United Service Club's 1828-1976 history is housed at a private organization in London's St James Square. I was informed by those people in writing that the only year in which the United Service Club's membership registration material is missing is 1888. If these records should ever re-surface in their entirety, let's hope that they will be made accessible to Ripper researchers. Although I am not sure which alias Hughes-Hallett's suspect may have used, the man in question can still be identified through a review of the club's 1888 guest status membership application forms. I can offer an opinion of what the writing on his forged military-medical paperwork would have indicated, but I'd be more interested in reading the names of his 'proposer' and 'seconder' and confirming their political affiliation. The names of those two military clubmen were required to appear on the application form.

¹² *Chicago Tribune*, 21 September 1887.

¹³ *Chicago Tribune*, 22 September 1887. The PMG's retraction of their claim that Miss Selwyn was HH's stepdaughter is found in this issue of the *Chicago Tribune*.

¹⁴ Burton, op cit.

¹⁵ *New York World*, 21 September 1887.

¹⁶ *New York World*, 23 September 1887.

Stewart Evans recently provided some additional information concerning other charges that Clara Bloomfield-Moore made against Chandor. Her accusations of 'theft by fraud and seduction of a young girl' particularly hit home because they pertained to Chandor's involvement with Clara's two daughters. Her other charges against Chandor included skipping out on hotel bills; theft of jewelry from girls he seduced; blackmail; and Chandor's false claim about being an officer in the army. That last charge about him impersonating a military man came as no surprise. I've suspected that the services of these types of military frauds were in demand for Radical hire in 1888 London. Chandor wasn't the first character I've come across during this study who had that feature in his resumé.

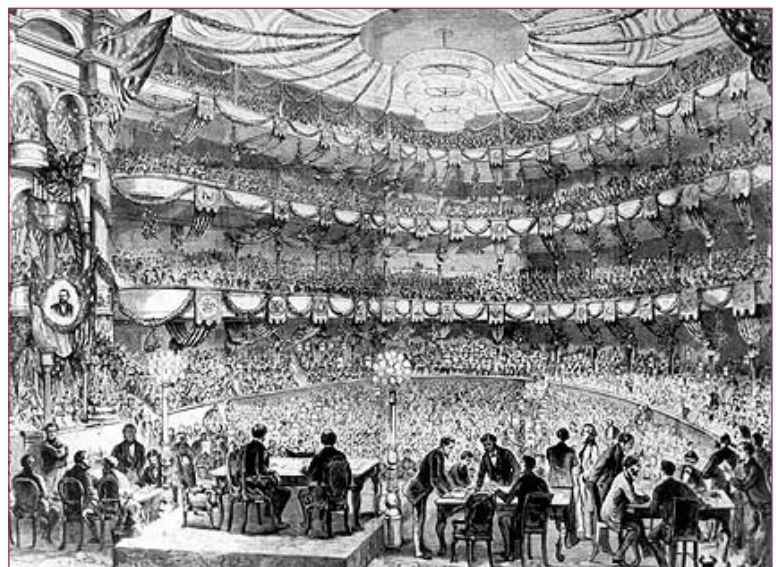
Break-up of the Hughes-Hallett Marriage

Despite Hughes-Hallett's political survival of the Selwyn scandal, the Colonel was still guilty of marital infidelity. Emilie couldn't take any more of this life with her Colonel. The combination of Miss Selwyn, Chandor, her husband's poor finances, and the *PMG* attacks on him were all taking their toll on the 'Belle of Philadelphia.' Her husband's involvement in the George Yard investigation and the continued Ripper murders may have been the last straw for her. The Hughes-Halletts had a lengthy divorce court battle. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* mentioned in 1892 that the Colonel even filed a lawsuit against Emilie.¹⁷ His 'financial agent', Chandor, must have really done a number on Hughes-Hallett's bank account because the Colonel was really scraping for cash during these days. Member of Parliament T P O'Connor's bitter remark that '[Stead] ruined a poor devil named Hughes-Hallett' can be better understood now.

Emilie would eventually move to Dinard, France. She put her frustrating London experiences behind her and resumed the social life she loved. It wasn't long before the former Belle of Philadelphia was dubbed the Queen of Dinard. After obtaining an inheritance from her mother, Emilie built a fabulous home called Monplaisir (My Pleasure), and her parties there were said to have come one after the other. Monplaisir was considered 'a true palace of 1001 nights' and Emilie was the gracious host for a constant flow of guests. In France, she returned to the life that best suited her.

In the late 1890s, Emilie visited her home town of Philadelphia. She noticed that a performance of Madame Bernhar' was playing at the Academy of Music. It had been nearly forty years since she stole the show from the admiring Prince of Wales in that same building. Although she was now in her mid-60s, Emilie decided to have another go at it inside Philadelphia's classiest venue. Virginia Peacock provided the details of the result:

*A woman occupying one of the boxes, and carrying herself with that fine spirit that had been the glory of a previous generation, was recognized as Emilie Schaumburg, for she still is, and forever will be known among the people of her own city and country. The discovery flew from mouth to mouth, and many who had never before seen her, as well as those who looked upon her for the first time after many years and recalled that memorable night at the Academy of Music, bent upon her a gaze of unmistakable admiration.*¹⁸



The Philadelphia Academy of Music

Throughout each ordeal in England, Emilie and the Colonel had to endure the tabloid quips. Some of the accusations were justified and some were Radically-biased lies. But unlike her ex-husband, the Belle of Philadelphia thrived in her elder years. She proudly maintained her elegance, and thus her popularity did not fade.

¹⁷ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 21 September 1892.

¹⁸ Peacock, 200.

Acknowledgments

The author thanks Stewart P Evans, Chris Scott, Stephen Ryder of *Casebook: Jack the Ripper*, and Liz Carless of the House of Commons Information Office.

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The Curse Upon Mitre Square

Book II: Two Centuries After

JOHN FRANCIS BREWER, 1888

Chapter I: Rumours of the Apparition

"HOW comes it, man, that thy friend Jack Walton is never with thee now? The tavern misses him; his cheery face was always welcome; and when I think of it, thou art thyself flat sorry company, nowadays."

The jolly, red-faced host of the 'Mitre' liked not a dull and quiet guest; good food and drink, he used to say, were wasted when they loosened not the tongue in anecdote or song.

"Jack has gone, and I'll soon follow him," was the dismal answer.

"Ye mean to tell me that Jack the fearless, the mighty toper, the jolly drunken rogue, has turned craven and thrown up his employ?"

"Landlord, ye have hit it; the others are going too, and if ye take my advice ye'll shift the 'Mitre' to another place."

"Fool, take thy womanish fears to others; the 'Mitre' and Will Railton will not shift for Papist ghost or other foolery; but hark thee, Grale, a week to-morrow I shall prepare a feast, to which ten or twelve young bloods from town will come. You, Grale, and your fellow-workers at the stable, have been my friends; help me now prepare this feast, and lend me your daughters as waiting-maids; my own lass, Rose, who will be here of course, will look after the others, and see that no harm comes to them."

Grale promised to send his daughter to help prepare the feast, and asked his host in what manner he meant to amuse his wild young guests.

"Ay, that is what I wished to tell you. Ye know yon spot, beneath the arch, where the Papist monk killed his sister and himself. I shall take them

there, and you, Grale, or some such 'other fool who believes the story, must recount it to them; by which time I shall have primed them well with wine. When it is quite dark, they shall all move out, terrible noises shall be made, and as all are waiting for the ghost, my daughter Rose shall spring into their midst, which, if I mistake not, will make them merry and contented with their visit.

Grale looked serious, and thought no good would come from tampering with the ghost, but knew of old that Railton of the 'Mitre' regarded the story of the monk as a myth, and laughed at those who differed from him. Grale paid for his little meal, and went out into the courtyard in front of the tavern and rejoined his companions.

These men worked in the stables which were built up with the few rounded arches and Norman columns, relics of the once glorious church of Holy Trinity.

The spot reported to be haunted was just outside the stable, furthest from the court, exactly where the altar steps of the church had formerly existed. The ghost was said to appear on this spot between twelve and one at night on certain



Ripper's Corner, Mitre Square taken by William Stewart, 1930s

days, and mutter strange warnings, and in other ways disport himself as is the wont of ghosts.

All the people in the district firmly believed the story, except the jolly host of the 'Mitre'; but there were diverse opinions as to the day or days of the appearance, some contending that they had seen it on Sunday nights, others—the majority—on Mondays.

Now though Railton was the only sceptic, and thus formed a party by himself, the other people of Aldgate Ward formed themselves into two factions—those who believed in the Monday appearance—the men engaged in the stables and a few others—and those who swore that Sunday was the ghost's night.



Radio Times cover from 1973 featuring Barlow and Watt

A wag from town, when told of the affair, had declared that the majority were Sunday believers, because, being virulent anti-Papists, they wished to think the monk had broken the Sabbath law, the wag adding that this fact exercised the people's minds more than the murder, which they held to be an ordinary occurrence with the priests of old.

However this may be, party feeling ran high, and Railton was wont to declare the Monday folk would sooner believe in no ghost at all than that it should appear on Sunday, and vice versa. But he was wrong; there were solid foundations for a belief, though many might mistake the day, and in after years the host himself believed the story, and held that the fatal spot was indeed accursed by God and man.

"Jack gone! Then I suppose he has seen the monk," a brother worker said to Grale.

The latter nodded, and added, "Jack lost his wife a week arter he saw the cursed Papist."

"But I've seen 'im, and nothing's come to me," remarked several of the stablemen, and Grale, who was the oldest and most learned in the ghost's ways, turned and said—

"You may 'a seed 'im, so 'ave I; but that is not the point. The man who, with a wicked purpose or to jeer at the monk, stands upon that spot between the hours of twelve and one and sees the ghost, will surely come to harm."

The old fellow was impressive; the terms of the curse were not stated in his own words, but were a formula well known to many of the inhabitants of the Ward of Aldgate. Certainly it was no joking matter, given the conditions which Grale mentioned. A curse did alight on the unlucky person who approached the spot with a criminal or jeering intention. The curse did not necessarily end in death, another misfortune might happen to the offender; but many and foul were the crimes which this very spot had witnessed from the year 1530 to the date in which this second narrative is cast.

Chapter II: Merry-Making at the "Mitre" Tavern

Great preparations were made at the old Mitre Tavern for the advent of Railton's young gallants. Food and wine, the best that could be procured, were in readiness. The buxom daughters of the stable-men donned their prettiest gowns, and looked their brightest for the occasion. Will Railton, Grale, and others were in attendance, all primed to their duties, and anxious that the meeting should pass off merrily.

The guests were slow in arriving—not one came in time. Railton remembered with a pang that the choicest dishes would be spoilt; a punctual man himself, he had timed the cooking to be ready to the minute, and here it was full half an hour behind the hour arranged.

What with the scowlings of the cook, the kitchen-maids, and the fair waitresses, he did not know, so he said, which was in the worse state—the burnt-up capons or his own head.

But at last they came, and all together; a dissipated crew, richly dressed; men born in a good position, nobles, soldiers, and the like, polished in manners (when sober), irregular in their habits, they honoured the 'Mitre' with their presence just once a year, in return for services Railton rendered them in their own part of the town. It may seem strange that they should travel to what was, even in those days, an unfashionable district; but Railton was a man of weight, a famous cook, a maker of good punch; a man the gallants liked to please, and secure for their own costly entertainments. Besides which, Railton was a man of wit, and always prepared some amusement for his guests. Their jaded palates liked his rich cheer, their worn-out sense of fun was tickled with his sparkling wit; they enjoyed their day, and came again when asked.

These were days of hard drinking; not in the sense in which this degenerate nineteenth century understands the term. Drinking was then an art, confined principally to the rich. Drink did not claim its thousand gutter-victims, as at present.

The poor got drunk, of course, but not to the same extent as now. The gentlemen of those days were careful as to the quality of the wine they drank, but not the quantity; they vowed a man ill-bred who did not take his share. But just as they would not cross swords with a man of blood inferior to their own, and regarded duelling as a pastime only of the "gentle," so also did they consider drunkenness a privilege peculiar to themselves.

They sent their servants to the lock-up for a tipsy peccadillo, they drew long pious faces at the luxury of monks, and fell beneath their tables every day, which became them as true gentlemen. A merry, worthless set that was which Railton brought together: Lord Wareham, member of the Mohawk gang; Sir Jocelyn Cholmondeley; Jack Mounteagle, Percy Pains, and others, all in the fastest, loudest set. They ate their fill, drank deep, and joked the pretty waiting lasses.

Hilarity was the order of the day. The jokes went round with every dish, and the serving-maids, though teased to death, declared it bright and merry fun! When to eat more was impossible, Railton rose and bade them fill their glasses, while he proposed a toast with a song:

*Here's a health unto His Majesty;
With a fal lal la!
Damnation to his enemies;
With a fal lal la!
And he who would not pledge this health,
I wish him neither wit nor wealth,
Nor yet a rope to hang himself;
With a fal lal la!*

Jacobites they were, one and all. And how lustily all joined in the rowdy *fal lal la*, and how the elements of seriousness and fun intermingled in the then popular ditty When quiet was resumed, the host again rose, and with a merry twinkle in his eye, drew himself up, and in a mocking-serious tone exclaimed—"Gentlemen, have ye heard of our ghost in yonder part of town? I see ye have. Let's drink to him. Monk Martin, Papist priest, here's to your health; mind come and visit us to-night."

Grale and the other stablemen stood aghast at such temerity, and Railton, seeing their fears, proclaimed them with derision to the company. A shout of laughter greeted this. The gallants had drunk deeply, and were getting quite uproarious.

Lord Wareham now got upon his legs—

"Will Railton, you have proposed a toast; let me propose another: ' Drink, gallants all, to buxom Mistress Rose, and death to him who says she's not the prettiest maid in Aldgate.'"

This was followed by great applause, and Railton, who studied well the pleasures of his guests, proposed a dance, and removed the tables and chairs for that purpose.

The young men who, a few minutes ago, appeared half tipsy, threw off their rowdy gaiety, and went through the various evolutions of the dance with the utmost ease and grace. The untaught damsels looked at their elegant partners with evident admiration, and tried to imitate their courtly manners.

Mistress Rose being the prettiest maiden present, and the daughter of the host, of course came in for the greater attention, and these jaded men, who had ceased to care for dancing with the well-taught damsels of their own class, eagerly sought Railton's daughter for a partner, and rivalled one another in their gallant speeches to her.

"Host Railton, dost thou think the Papist Martin will obey thy summons?"

"Thou'dst better ask the stablemen, my friend. Here, Grale, will the ghost appear to-day on yonder spot?"

"Many ha' seen Monk Martin, but we canna tell for certain when he comes. But the man who, with a wicked purpose, or to jeer at the monk, stands upon the spot, between the hours of twelve and one and sees the ghost, will surely come to harm."

"Tut, tut, man, stop that silly jargon. Tell us, if thou canst, whether Martin will appear or not?"

Grale feared the vengeance of the ghost, and knew what ill had come to those who jeered and disbelieved its appearance.

"Noble gallants, listen not to Master Railton's gibes! Do not, I pray thee, visit Merry-Making at the "Mitre" Tavern yonder spot."

The guests laughed loud and long at the old man's fears, and began to pester him with ridicule.

"Look, Grale, there is the monk behind thee. Methinks that Master Grale had better don the cowl. Turn Papist, man, and please the ghost, and save thyself from danger."

"Art thou a Sunday or Monday believer, Grale? Prophesy; tell on which of us will come the curse?"

The old man was grave and silent; he did not mind the ridicule, and feared a reckoning would come to such misplaced and sacrilegious mirth.



*Ripper's Corner, Mitre Square
taken by William Stewart, 1930s*

"Thou dost not answer, man. Did Martin break the Sabbath law?"

"I must tell the parson of thee, Grale. Thou won't accuse a ghost of crime. Fie, thou call'st thyself a Protestant."

On another occasion pretty Mistress Rose would have thought such conversation dangerous, but surrounded with such gay and noble gallants, she felt secure and happy.

By-and-by they adjourned to another room, where Railton had prepared a bowl of steaming punch. The waiting-maids now sat down to table with the others, and more toasts and pretty speeches followed.

Rose sat between Lord Wareham and Poins, and looked from one to the other with divided admiration, "They ought to send thee, Mistress Rose, to seek the ghost. Mine host, Will Railton, what say you? Shall thy daughter go

and find the monk?"

Poins followed his lordship in his little jest. "If Martin sees thy buxom face and cherry lips and answers not thy call, then, odsbodikins, if he's Papist priest or no, a ghost he is, and I'll believe the story."

Railton answered: "Methinks if the myth which goes the round be true, the monk will have no more to do with womankind; but still, as it seems to please your wit, the damsel shall betake her to the spot, and try to exorcise the spirit."

The hour was now getting late, and Rose, much to her regret, left with the stableman to find the accursed spot. Once away from the scene of revelry, her heart misgave her. What was she doing? Going to stand on that awful site to jeer at the avenging spirit? No, she could not do it; look at the fate which had befallen so many fearless sceptics!

She spoke with Grale, and the two determined to hide in an outhouse, and see what happened. They had left the tavern very late, and the night, though dark, was then quite fine.

It was late in autumn, but not cold, and as the hour of midnight came a close feeling was noticeable in the air; the sky became dark; a storm had been presaged for this very night. A disturbing, fierce wind now suddenly sprang up; it shook the very stables; the moaning, sighing noise increased; a mighty gust of wind swept past the ancient Norman arches, and seemed to make them totter.

"Oh, leave me, Grale, and go and warn yon gallants of the night!"

"No, Mistress Rose; I stir not from this place. The monk is coming. Look not on the fatal spot! Oh, save us from the sight! I did not jeer thee, priest. Send not the curse upon my aged head."

"Then I will go to father, and tell him not to come."

"Thou shalt not do so, damsel. Hark! Listen to the storm! A deed of vengeance is at hand. Look, maiden, at the fierce and sudden flames! The heavens are on fire!"

The old man held the girl in a tight grip, and would not let her move. She tried to force herself away, but was not able, and Grale at last persuaded her that Railton and his guests were not likely to leave the tavern in such a fearful storm.

Chapter III: The Ghost Avenged

After the departure of the maids, the men drained the bowl of punch, and Railton brewed them another. They soon began to show evidence that the second howl was too much for them; one dropped beneath the table, another fell asleep, but Lord Wareham and Poins emptied the bowl, and were still comparatively sober. Railton went to the window and looked out.

"It's raining, my lord, and I see a storm's approaching. Had we not better wait a little, until the weather clears?"

"No, no, unless the ghost does not appear in storms. What weather does he generally bring?"

"Well, my lord, they say the monk appears in a flash of lightning, and if that be true he might be appearing in a dozen places now."

Poins woke up the others, not in a very gentle manner, and said— "A little cold water will do us all no harm, and if you are ready, Railton, lead the way while I help these gallants to move."

The men were all put upon their legs. Lord Wareham, Poins, and Railton helped them along; and when they got outside the pouring rain soon sobered them.

Two centuries had indeed altered this part of Aldgate ward. The monastic buildings and church of Holy Trinity had all gone, except for a few rounded arches and huge Norman pillars which, as before mentioned, had been partly roofed over as stables. Near these was the old "Mitre" tavern, which looked on to a court; and close by was an ugly red brick church, St. James', surrounded with a small churchyard. The scene of Monk Martin's crimes was just outside the stables—a large slab of stone, and near to a remnant of a decorated arch and wall of the old chancel.

The men shivered from the wet, and Poins exclaimed, "The monk must have gone to the brimstone pit to seek the earth on such a rainy night."

But both gallants and host soon ceased their prattling; it was evident that the worst of the storm had yet to come. The thunder grew louder and louder, the rain came down in torrents, and forked flames were shooting from the heavens, and lit up the ruins of the once stately church.

Nearer and nearer came the storm, when a terrific peal of thunder made the bravest of them quail. Now was the storm right above them, and raging with ungovernable fury. The wind howled like a fierce beast in pain, the heavens seemed to open and cast down streams of liquid fire. Listen to that fearful crash! A mighty battle was being waged above; or was an angry God hurling His anathemas at the sins and crimes of men? Could the elements increase their fury? The liquid flames seemed to unite and concentrate their force; they struck that fatal slab of stone, once, twice; it seemed to disappear, and then a hellish cry—the pitch-black cloud seemed resting on that awful spot!

The men were almost dead with fear. What was yon cloud? Why did it not move? The tempest seemed to gather round it, the lightning struck at it a dozen times. It slowly lifts and utters a hollow, dreadful laugh. Is it ghost or fiend? It seems diminishing in size. Horror! It assumes the shape of a man! What is it that it holds aloft? Again the lightning struck at it, and its ghastly head was seen.

Another crash of thunder, and a naked arm appears, holding a blood-stained dagger. Oh, what is it that it strikes with such a demon fury? Why that final, dreadful cry?

The spectre seemed approaching them; they shriek with terror, but cannot escape. Railton seizes two of them, and drags them from the spot. Why could he not take the others? A dark and mighty mass is moving; it splits into a thousand bits, it flies at them with fierce spite, it strikes and kills, and buries its disfigured slain!

Chapter IV: In Moorfields

"I told ye all about Monk Martin's ghost."

"Yes, Grale. We know about the wicked monk."

"Well, master, what think ye happened on the cursed spot not twenty hours ago?"

"Tell us, Grale; ye know we all believe the ghost."

The old man, with a look of triumph in his weather-beaten face, now got up and said—"Ye know about the curse. The man who, with a wicked purpose, or to jeer at the monk, stands upon that spot—"

"Tut, Grale we know about the curse."

"Well masters, ye know Will Railton of the 'Mitre' tavern, Aldgate. He asked a dozen gallants from yonder part of town. They came and made merry, and jeered at Martin's ghost. I warned them not to do it, but ye know the sort of men. Well, in the middle of the storm Will Railton took them to the cursed spot. Ye also know that the man who, with a wicked—"

"Hurry on, friend Grale, we know all that."

"Well, when the storm was at its worst they saw the ghost. They say he struck that ancient arch. It fell upon the gallants, and killed and buried ten of them."

This conversation took place in Moorfields, some distance from the tavern. Grale had left Aldgate and sought employ elsewhere. Will Railton, Lord Wareham, and Poins, the men who had escaped from the falling ruin, probably because they were the most sober, now believed in Monk Martin's ghost.

No more gallants were seen in the 'Mitre' tavern. Railton left, and took another inn, and vowed the spot indeed accursed!

END OF BOOK II

The Sunshine and the Shadow

ROBERT LINFORD, JOHN SAVAGE AND DAVID O'FLAHERTY

*Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.*

*But he grew old -
This knight so bold -
And o'er his heart a shadow
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.*

*And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow -
'Shadow,' said he,
'Where can it be -
This land of Eldorado?'*

*'Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,'
The shade replied, -
'If you seek for Eldorado!'*

Edgar Allan Poe

In the Service of Sugden

What happened to the coroners' lost records? Where are they? We ask ourselves all the time, and undoubtedly, it's the subject of many another Ripperologist's daydream too, but except for the rare and lucky accident (such as the 1966 rediscovery of sketches from the Eddowes inquest in London Hospital's basement), the enquiries of our fantasies will remain unanswerable without contextual support. We should not assume the existence of such records, but neither should we assume their destruction. We suggest that a more purposeful approach, albeit a gradual and less direct route, would be to reframe our question slightly - before we ask *where*, let's address *why* and *how*. Why have some records passed into the archives and not others? How did they get there? *Were* some destroyed, and if so, how, when, and why? Let's document the documentation and see where it takes us - a sort of quasi-Sugden approach: a return to primary sources in order to attempt a rescue.

If we want to search for paperwork in respect to coroners' records, it's reasonable to turn to their system of administration. In this case, bureaucracy might be our friend because as it happens, 1888 Metropolitan London was an administrative Frankenstein on the cusp of significant change. Unlike the City of London's little square mile, which had its own charter and its elected Common Council to keep its affairs humming along efficiently, the Metropolis had no central administrative apparatus of its own, no real seat of thought that coordinated the body. Oh, it had a central authority of sorts for urban problems, the often-criticized Metropolitan Board of Works, but when it came to the justice system - of which inquest was a part - it's most important to note that the Metropolis had no system of its own. Rather, because it sprawled over portions of Middlesex, Surrey, Kent, and Essex, it relied upon the system those counties used.

For example, one could stay in the confines of Greater London while tripping across county jurisdictions, committing crimes in Spitalfields and appearing before a Middlesex magistrate before adjourning across the Thames, offending in Bermondsey, and making a forced rendezvous with a Surrey magistrate.

This also meant that the county magistrates had financial oversight of the coroners working in London, paying their salaries and expenses of inquests. Because several entities were involved, administration of coroners' inquests varied - for example in Surrey, jurors received a shilling a day for their service; in Middlesex, they got nothing. Coroners' officers in Middlesex made a little less than their Surrey counterparts did for performing the same work. The magistrates were also responsible for the maintenance of county courts, and the one thing they all had in common was their failure to provide coroners with proper courts, leaving them little more than judicial nomads holding their proceedings wherever they could find space - town halls, hospitals, the Working Lads' Institute, and taverns. Coupled with the lack of mortuaries, the county coroners' formal investigations of sudden death were often held under the most informal of conditions and consolidation of administrative procedure was fragmented and lacking.

That's the backdrop for the inquests of 1888 and very early 1889. Shortly after that date, in January through March 1889, the administration of the Metropolis' judicial jurisdictions changed dramatically. The Local Government Act 1888 established the creation of popularly elected county councils throughout England; they became the new administrative authorities for their respective counties. In London, a place where an efficient central authority was needed the most, the creation of a council was somewhat problematic since the Metropolis was actually an entity composed of parts of other counties, which is why we call it the administrative Frankenstein of England. This problem was solved when a new county was carved from parts of Middlesex, Surrey, Kent, and Essex: the County of London with its own administrative body, the London County Council. The provisional council held its first meeting on 31 January 1889; elections followed two months later, and the Council, composed mainly of merchants and businessmen, formally came into existence on 21 March.¹ Soon the LCC got down to business, creating committees that attended to urban problems and most notably for our purposes, the consolidation of administrative procedure. The LCC's procedural reconstruction also applied to the justice system and the coroners. The LCC consolidated inquest fees, and during the 1890s and into the twentieth century, it established and maintained permanent coroners' courts for the purposes of holding inquests.

Through its Public Control Department, the Council turned its attention towards retaining coroners' records - depositions, certified inquisitions, postmortem reports, expense vouchers, and material evidence that coroners had retained according to their discretion (weapons, suicide notes, sketches, the clothing of deceased persons, valuables, etc). This last initiative was a problematic venture for the Council; coroners had always held the attitude that depositions were, in most cases, their private property, a view that the Coroners' Act 1887 had reinforced. Indeed, although the County of London reimbursed coroners for the inquest's expenses, that was no guarantee that coroners would allow them access to records.

Coroners were only ever required to produce depositions relating to cases of murder and manslaughter, and those under very specific circumstances; Section 5 (3) of the Act directed coroners to deliver the depositions, inquisitions, and recognizances to the proper officer of the Court where the criminal trial was to be,² and Section 18 (4) allowed accused persons the right to purchase copies of inquest depositions at the rate of three halfpence for every folio of ninety words.³ Otherwise, access to depositions was completely dependent upon the individual coroner's discretion.

We also must consider how the wording of Section 5 (3) and its statutory predecessors might have affected the very existence of the records we're looking for. Because there was no legal requirement to produce the depositions related to suicides, accidental deaths, etc., some coroners might have taken the view that there was no legal reason for their existence. Financially inhibited coroners may not have always endured the costs associated with taking down depositions or they may have utilized police statements, which were then read back to witnesses and signed by them. Therefore, without supporting documentation, it has always been an assumption to suppose that the witness testimony for the Montague John Drutt inquest was ever formally taken down and preserved.⁴ Practice was likely individualistic - some coroners might have been sloppy and cut corners in the interests of saving expenses; probably the majority acted more responsibly as a matter of course and dedication. After all, the office of coroner began its existence as an office of preservation.

Likewise at the end of the nineteenth century, procedure relating to the custody and ownership of physical evidence, which we have assumed to have fallen under the control of the police, actually seems to have been a largely undefined procedure related to inquest, with coroners exercising their discretion upon the custody of legal artifacts on a case-by-case basis - sometimes releasing them to other parties, but sometimes holding evidence themselves to ensure that the complete record was maintained for later legal purposes (like a criminal trial). Years after the origin of their related cases, what was their status? How long should coroners retain them, especially money or other valuable items found on bodies or the premises where death had occurred? To whom did they belong? Scotland Yard and the City Police

1 W. Eric Jackson, *Achievement - A Short History of the LCC*. London: Longmans Green, 1965, 7.

2 Rudolph E. Melsheimer, *The Coroners Act, 1887, With Forms and Precedents. Being the Fifth Edition of the Treatise by Sir John Jervis on the Office and Duties of Coroners*. London: H. Sweet and Sons, W. Maxwell & Son, Stevens and Sons, 1888, 50.

3 Melsheimer, 89.

4 See 'The Green of the Peak: The Coronial System', *Ripperologist* 63, January 2006, 37-38 (Subsection 'Are There Not Wives and Children?').

conducting investigations? Or coroners and their heirs? Or the relatives of the deceased? Or were they County records since the County had paid for the inquest? There was no set procedure and as the reform-minded nineteenth century ended, coroners sought clarification and advice.

The very existence of records. Their possible destruction. The custody of physical evidence. It is a mistake to assume anything about them. Though we don't hunt the Ripper here, remember Philip Sugden's warning to the unwary researcher. The world we investigate looks like old London, but it's really steaming jungle: dense tangled forest, ancient and complicated. It is a mistake to leap any chasm without first looking around. We must document, document, document. Every step in the pursuit of documentation, no matter how tentative and small, is a positive step forward.

Fortunately, another accomplishment of the new bureaucracy was the creation of paperwork; because the LCC made an attempt to secure records, a paper trail survives that allows us to begin the task of documenting the history of some of Ripperology's lost evidence - a logical step towards either their eventual rediscovery or towards determining their destruction (an equally necessary step), or even, in the case of the Druitt depositions, establishing whether they ever existed in the first place - a humble place to have to start from indeed.

The letters, memos, and reports in the file LCC/PC/COR/1/55, labeled The Custody of Coroners' Records and held by the London Metropolitan Archives, are incomplete. Documents refer to correspondence that is not present, but what the file does offer is a comprehensive slideshow firmly dealing with some subjects of interest to us, while remaining suggestive on others. Some 200 pieces of correspondence, typed or handwritten, dating from 1890-1954 relate two overlapping tales. The first is largely that of Alfred Spencer, the Chief Officer of the Public Control Department, and his efforts to track down the records of deceased coroners and encourage their donation to the Council. Spencer's quest was not so different from our modern search. The second account tells of the evolution of the LCC's policy and procedure towards the records it managed to acquire, and of the Council's (and coroners') attitude towards them.

In this, the final article in our series, our intention is to present a reference source for the researcher in pursuit of lost records - material that provides some answers, provokes relevant new questions, and hopefully encourages further research - particularly in the archives, which we believe are far from exhausted. It is also our desire to bring the archive to the interested reader living far from London who is unable to make a personal visit but is there in spirit, and who may offer valuable insight. Therefore, we have effused our service to Sugden with a little spirit borrowed from Evans and Skinner.

So that readers may form their own opinions, as if they were examining the documents first hand in the archives, we have chosen to act as editors rather than writers, and have adopted style of presentation similar to Evans and Skinner's *The Ultimate Jack the Ripper Sourcebook*. That is, transcriptions as faithful as we could make them, introduced by a minimum of commentary, distinguished by italics. Helpfully, *Ripperologist's* electronic format allows for the presentation of lengthy articles at little cost, and a search engine for quick reference, and thus we offer the bulk of the file - some 170 items, including documentation of other coroners' records in the interests of context since all information is of use. Excluded are a minority of items that we found to be illegible or redundant (those wishing to view the entire file may do so through appointment with the LMA). Because it was not permissible to take the file apart, or remove documents from the file, often the upper corners of documents were obscured; we have noted such areas in brackets, as we have done with illegible or suspect interpretations of handwriting. In addition to the items contained in LCC/PC/COR/1/55, we have also included the rare additional piece that we feel provides further context. We are not professional historians, but we have tried to imitate them to the best of our ability.

The documentation of lost records is a work in progress. The London County Council was only one of three financial authorities affecting coroners' records in London. Because some parishes - like Chiswick - fell under the province of the Middlesex County Council, and portions of Whitechapel seem to have been divided between the LCC and the MCC, examination of its records may also reward the curious researcher (the LMA also holds these records). Likewise, the Corporation's records may yet prove of interest. Perhaps other leads will occur to readers that we have not considered.

Some advice: differentiate between the definitions of inquisitions and depositions, terms that the LCC seems to have used interchangeably. They are quite different things. Inquisitions were the coroner and jury's certification of the proceedings; they recorded the victim's name, the verdict, and the names of the coroner and the jury, and coroners seem to have turned them over to their financial authorities on a monthly basis, along with the coroner's accounts of his expenses. Depositions obviously preserved witness testimony. Look to the context of each document to determine which is under discussion.

This article, which we hope demonstrates the continuing importance of archival work even as the crucial digitalization of documents becomes more prevalent and easily accessible, is for all the researchers who haunted libraries and archives prior to the mid-1990s, labouring in isolation without benefit of the wonderful electronic global community we enjoy today. Some dwell there still. A special salute goes to Alexander Chisholm, who thoughtfully trod a portion of this path ten years ago.

What follows is historical inquest. You are the jury.

No. 23 Chiswick

Inquisition taken on view of the Body of

Charles Cordery Baglin

January 26th 1892

Syncope from congestion
of the lungs. Natural.

The Mountains of the Moon

You shall diligently inquire and a true presentment make of all such matters and things as are here given you...
-Oath administered to inquest jury, 1888.

The Council's interest in coronial records began early in 1890: ⁵

[Stamped illegible]

London County Council
Comptroller
Spring Gardens, S.W.
7th February 1890

To the Secretary of Special Purposes Committee

Custody of Coroners' Inquisitions

Dr. Diplock, one of the Coroners, in presenting his monthly account of disbursements with vouchers of this office, has requested to be informed whether he should send to the Council's office the inquisitions relating to each inquest held by him.

At present in cases other than murder or manslaughter, in which special provision is made under section 5 (3) of the Coroners' Act of 1887 for the delivery of the inquisitions to the proper Officer of the Court where the trial is to be, the inquisition remains in the custody of the Coroner, and at his death is liable to be destroyed with other papers. If the inquisitions come under the designation of County documents, they would as such be under the charge of the Clerk of the Council [section 88 (11.a) of the Local Government Act]. I believe that in new Middlesex the inquisitions are given up by the Coroner to the Clerk of [the] Council. In Surrey I believe not.

Perhaps the Committee would take up the question to the Solicitor.

[Signature illegible]
Comptroller.

The Council conferred with the Coroners' Society: ⁶

11th February 1890

Dear Sir,

I make reference to your letter of the [27th] inst. It occurs to me that it may be desirable for the meeting which is to take place on the 12th inst. to consider the [obscured 'question'] of the custody of the inquisitions in the County of London.

The Local Government Act, Section [88 (11)] provides that all County documents other than the Records of Quarter and Petty Sessions, shall be in the Custody of the Clerk of the Council, but before coming to any decisions as to the custody [obscured 'of the'] documents, it may be desirable [obscured 'that the'] Coroners Society should give [obscured 'the Committee'] the benefit of their opinion. [It] is clearly desirable that these [obscured 'documents'] should be carefully preserved [obscured 'in'] some suitable place and in proper custody.

I am, Dear Sir,
Yours faithfully,
Deputy Clerk of the Council.

The President (Saml. F. Langham Esq).
The Coroners' Society,
10 [Bartlett's Buildings, Holborn Circus]

However, the Coroners' Society held the position that coroners should retain the custody of their records. ⁷

[Custody] of Coroners' Inquisitions

Abstracts from Minutes

[7] February. - Report of controller as to Coroners' Inquisitions. It was moved by [Mr. Leon], seconded by Mr. Young, and Resolved. That the coroners' Inquisitions be preserved as County Records, and that the Clerk do report as to the necessary provision for the storage of such documents.

⁵ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, LCC Comptroller to the Secretary of the Special Purposes Committee, 7 February 1890.

⁶ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, the Deputy Clerk of the Council to Samuel F Langham, 11 February 1890.

⁷ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, 'Custody of Coroners' Inquisitions, Abstracts from Minutes', undated.

21 February. - Letter from the President of the Coroners' Society, expressing the opinion of the Society that Coroners' Inquisitions are not county records, and that the coroners are the proper persons to have the custody of such documents.

It was moved by Mr. Sly, seconded by Mr. [Beresford Hope] and Resolved. That no further steps be taken as to the custody of Coroners' Inquisitions.

The next year, the Public Control Committee adopted a slightly different course, and determined to search for and collect the records of deceased coroners in the interests of their preservation, but first the Chief Officer of the Public Control Department - Alfred Spencer - had to find them.⁸

[19th January] 1891

Dear Sir

Coroners Inquisitions

The Public Control Committee has met under consideration the question of the custody of coroners inquisitions with a view to their preservation as county records, and I shall be glad if you can let me know for the information of the Committee whether the inquisitions of inquests held by the late Mr. Carttar⁹ are in your custody, or if not, what has become of them.

If you would like to make any observations on the general question of the custody of coroners' inquisitions I should be glad to have them.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature almost completely faded away]

[Chief] Officer.

G. Wyatt Esq.
33 Wiltshire Road
[Brixton] [illegible]

Spencer reported to the Public Control Committee.¹⁰

18 March, 1891.

To the Public Control
Committee

[Handwritten note] For (your) approval [illegible date]

Custody of Coroners' Inquisitions

The question of the custody of coroners' Inquisitions was before the committee [illegible], but, in consequence of a [representation] made by the coroners that their courts were courts of record and that therefore they were responsible for the custody of the inquisitions, no further steps were taken in the matter.

During the recent investigation into Coroners' disbursements¹¹ I ascertained that in Middlesex the Coroners' Inquisitions were always sent with the monthly vouchers of disbursements to the County magistrates, and also to the Council [illegible] the first [four] months of their office, and that it was only after this question was raised that the practice was stopped.

The present system gives no guarantee that the inquisitions will be [preserved] [obstructed] for [County] purposes, and as [illegible] of fact I have found that [location] of [the] inquisitions of the North [Eastern] District [was] at the house of the Coroners' Officer, while others were at the Coroner's own house.

As it appears most desirable that a better system should be [adopted] I recommend:-

That the question be referred to the Solicitor, to advise the Committee as to what the powers of the Council are in the matter.

Chief Officer

⁸ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Letter from the Chief Officer to coroner G Wyatt, 19 January 1891. The ink has considerably faded.

⁹ Coroner Charles Joseph Carttar, who served Kent for 50 years, died in 1880 ('Obituary', *The Times*, 5 November 1902).

¹⁰ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, memorandum from the Chief Officer to the Public Control Committee, 18 March 1921.

Inserted into LCC/PC/COR/1/55 is the following newspaper clipping from the Echo, mounted on London County Council notepaper: ¹²

[Printed matter obscured]

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.

21 April 1892

Coroners Act.

Extract from 'Echo'

21 April 1892.

A CORONER AND HIS DEPOSITIONS

The rights of a coroner over the depositions taken by him at his inquests has just been raised by the Home Secretary, who has written to Dr. [Charton], of [Chester], the coroner for West [Cheshire] and the Borough of [Birkenhead], directing [his] attention to [the evidence] from a Liverpool [solicitor], having *[illegible]* to the depositions taken by Dr. [Charton] in the course of an inquest held at Birkenhead on the body of a man named [Anderson], employed at Messrs. *[illegible]* shipyard. The Liverpool solicitor, writing to the Home Secretary on behalf of the widow and children of the deceased, explained that he had been refused a copy of the depositions by Dr. Charton, and the Home Secretary asked the coroner for his observations on the matter. Dr. Charton has replied to the Home Secretary as follows - 'It has been my practice for twenty years never to supply copies of my depositions, except in cases where a prisoner has been committed for trial, as I hold a very strong opinion that proceedings in a coroner's court ought not to be used to [enforce] civil [remedies].'

[Second cutting in a disintegrated state]

[Signature of] James Gibbons Insp

Searching for Thomas Diplock's papers in 1893, the year after Diplock's death, Spencer wrote one of his two successors, Dr Clifford Luxmoore Drew, whose district was in the County of London: ¹³

Dear Sir,

Coroners' Inquisitions *[ink badly smudged]*

The Public Control Committee has had under consideration the question of the custody of coroners' inquisitions with a view to their preservation as county records and I shall be glad if you can let me know for the information of the Committee whether the inquisitions of inquests held by the late Dr. Diplock are in your custody, or if not, what has become of them.

If you would like to make any observations on the general question of the custody of coroners' inquisitions I should be glad to have them.

Luxmore Drew Esq.

[Address illegible except for 'Square'; date and signature also illegible]

Luxmoore Drew replied to Spencer saying he had not inherited his predecessor's records - but he provided Spencer with a valuable lead:¹⁴

[Letterhead obscured; stamped] London County Council, Public Control Committee 31 JUL *[sic]* 93 *[In pencil]* 5274

July 29th 1893

Dear Sir,

Re Custody of Inquisitions

I believe the late Dr Diplocks' Inquisitions are in the possession of his son, Mr Leonard Diplock of 'Ashwood', Bolton Gardens, Chiswick. He kindly supplied me with those, that were required to complete the Annual Returns. *[Obscured]* of the suggestion to file the Inquisitions at a Central Office be *[an option' or 'adopted']* I presume, *[the]* arrangement

11 In January 1892, the Central Criminal Court found Thomas Hammond, the North East coroner's officer, guilty of fraud and forging false expense vouchers. He was sentenced to three years' penal servitude.

12 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, newspaper clipping from the *Echo*, 'A Coroner and His Depositions', 21 April 1892, mounted on London County Council letterhead, hand-dated 21 April 1892. Regarding the Coroners Act referenced, that summer an amendment to the Coroners' Act 1887 was passed, 55 & 56 Vict. c. 56, Coroners Act, 1892, which was dedicated to the appointment and powers of deputy coroners.

13 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer of the Public Control Committee to Dr. Clifford Luxmoore Drew, date illegible.

will [commence from] January 1894. Wouldn't it [*illegible*] convenient, that [all] documents connected with an Inquest, should remain for a certain time [in the] possession of the [*obscured, probably 'coroner'*] for reference [purposes].

Faithfully yours,

C. Luxmoore Drew

Alfred Spencer Esq.
Public Control Depart.
London County Council

Spencer approached Leonard Diplock as suggested. His letter is quite blurred and seems to have been used as a template for later correspondence related to the records belonging to one of the Carttars (either father or son) since inserts relating to them appear over Diplock-specific text. We have excluded the inserts in this case for the sake of clarity:¹⁵

1st August [189]3

[Dear Sir,]

[Coroners' Inquisitions]

I have been informed that the coroner [papers relating] to inquests held in the western district of London [by] the late Dr Diplock are in your [*illegible*] possession. As [it is] [*illegible possibly 'important'*] that Coroners' inquisitions should be [*illegible*] preserved [as county records], I shall be [glad] to know whether you will [be prepared] to hand over to the Council the inquisitions taken [by] your father or his deputy Mr Hicks [relating to] London districts.

Leonard Diplock Esq.
Ashwood
Bolton Gardens
Chiswick

I am, Sir,
Yours faithfully

Alfred Spencer

Spencer then received a reply from Wyatt:¹⁶

[Stamp obscured]

33 Wiltshire Road
Dr.

2nd August 1893

[Salutation obscured]

In reply to your letter of [*obscured*] inst. I beg to inform you that the Inquisitions of Inquests held by the late Mr Carter [*sic*] are not in my [possession]. No doubt they are in the hands of his family or executors.

Yours faithfully,
Geo. Perceval Wyatt

A. Spencer Esq.
L.C. Council
21 Whitehall Place

Even as Wyatt composed his letter, Leonard Diplock replied to Spencer:¹⁷

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, 3 AUG 93. [*In pencil*] 5313

Ashwood
Bolton Gardens
Chiswick
August 2nd 1893

Sir,

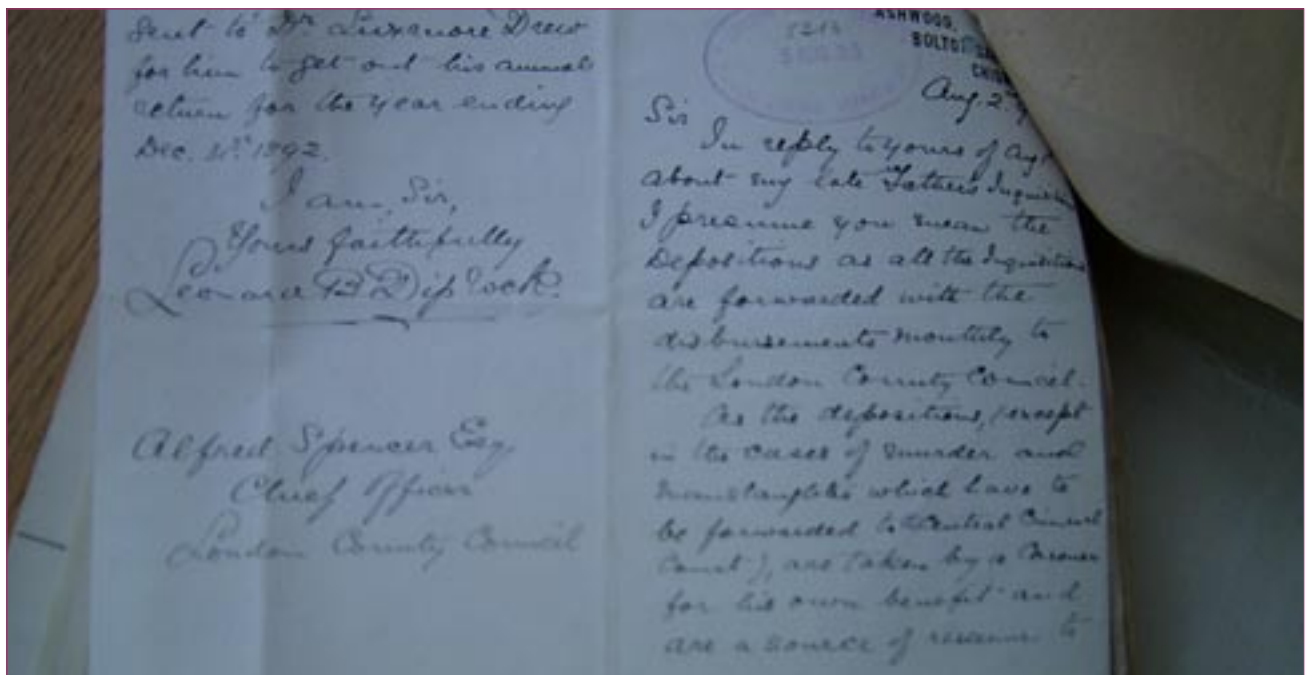
In reply to yours of Aug 1st about my late Father's Inquisitions, I presume you mean the Depositions as all the Inquisitions are forwarded with the disbursements monthly to the London County Council.

¹⁴ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Dr Clifford Luxmoore Drew to Alfred Spencer, Chief Officer of the Public Control Committee, 29 July 1893.

¹⁵ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer of the Public Control Committee to Dr Leonard Bramah Diplock, 1 August 1893.

¹⁶ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, George Perceval Wyatt to Alfred Spencer, 2 August 1893.

¹⁷ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Dr Leonard Bramah Diplock to Alfred Spencer, 2 August 1893.



LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Dr. Leonard Bramah Diplock to Alfred Spencer, 2 August 1893 (a).
Photo by John Savage, reprinted courtesy of the City of London, London Metropolitan Archives.

As the depositions, (except in the cases of murder and manslaughter which have to be forwarded to the Central Criminal Court), are taken by a Coroner for his own benefit and are a source of revenue to the coroner, or as in our case to his widow, by supplying copies to various persons, I suppose the London County Council if I hand them over will be prepared to pay say the sum of £25.0.0. for them, for which sum I will hand them over.

Before the establishments of the London and Middlesex county councils, all the depositions were placed together and numbered in rotation, since then the depositions taken in the London portion have been kept separate from the Middlesex portion of the Western Division of the County of Middlesex and for the before mentioned sum I should be prepared to hand over, (if you would send a van for them), all the depositions from the time of my late father's appointment until the foundation of the London County Council,¹⁸ and all the depositions taken in the London portion from the formation until the end of 1891, those taken from Jan 1st 1892 until my father's death¹⁹ I sent to Dr. Luxmore Drew for him to get out his annual return for the year ending December 31st 1892.

I Am Sir,
Yours faithfully
Leonard B. Diplock²⁰

Alfred Spencer Esq.,
Chief Officer,
London County Council.

In addition to material in the file, we include the range of Thomas Diplock's cases for 1887. Note the low number of murder verdicts for that year:²¹

A CORONER'S ANNUAL REPORT. - Yesterday Dr. Diplock, Coroner for West Middlesex, issued his annual statistical report, a copy of which has been forwarded to the Home Office. It appears that during the year 1887 the number of cases reported in the western division of Middlesex was 1,106. In 199 of these the coroner did not think inquests necessary. The number of inquests actually held during the 12 months was 807, which are thus classified: - On persons under one year, 299; above one year and under 16 years of age, 135; above that age, 443. The verdicts were: - Murder, four, manslaughter, two; suicide (36 males and eight females), 44; violent deaths (accidental), 280; and from other causes, 477...

18 Diplock was elected the end of February 1868; the first meeting of the provisional LCC was on 31 January 1889. The Council formally came into existence on 21 March 1889.

19 29 April 1892.

20 Eleanor Diplock, Thomas Diplock's widow, died 10 May 1911, probate was 17 November to Arthur Hay Diplock, journalist, and Montague Standly Master, insurance surveyor. Dr Leonard Diplock died intestate in 1918 and administration of his estate was handled by his two daughters, Elsie Maud Diplock and Dorothy May Diplock; both were described as 'spinsters.'

21 'A Coroner's Annual Report', *The Times*, 1 February 1888.

C.D. & G.P.17.11.41.

19th. November, 1941.

Sir,

Coroners' records - Salvage of paper.

In connection with the salvage of waste paper for war purposes the Council has considered the question of the disposal of coroners' records of which it is the custodian.

At the suggestion of the Home Office in 1931 the Council decided that such records should be destroyed after the expiration of 15 years from the date of the documents. In view, however, of the suggestions of a Departmental Committee on Coroners in 1936 for the setting up of a Rules Committee to consider, inter alia, measures to ensure the proper care and preservation of documents relating to inquests, it was arranged that no coroners' records should be destroyed pending further consideration of the Rules. As you are aware the proposed Rules Committee has not yet been set up.

In the circumstances, the Council proposes, subject to the approval of the Home Secretary, to revert to the practice of destroying coroners' records after a period of 15 years, and as a special war measure, to destroy such records after 10 years.

A reversion to the 15 years limit will release approximately five tons of paper for salvage and another two tons if the proposed 10 year limit is put into operation.

In view of the urgent need for paper salvage, the Council will be glad to know the decision of the Home Secretary as soon as possible.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,

Clerk of the Council

The Under Secretary of State,
Home Office,
Whitehall,
S.W.1.

Original motion as amended carried.

Resolved accordingly.

(c. to d.) Resolved—That the several recommendations of the Committee, (c) to (d) inclusive, be adopted.

(e.) On the motion to adopt the recommendation of the Committee, (c.).

10th August, [189]3

[Sir]

I am obliged to you for your letter of the 2nd instant. I [am] unable at present to make the arrangements you propose. I will however *[illegible]* your letter before the Public Control Committee at [its] first meeting with the *[illegible]* and should the Committee be persuaded to accept your offer I will *[illegible]* [let you know].

I am Sir,

Your faithful servant,
Alfred Spencer
Chief Officer

L. B. Diplock [Esq.]
Ashwood
Bolton Gardens.
Chiswick

*Rather than pay for records, the Council instead sought donations. Meanwhile, Alfred Spencer closed in on the records of Charles Joseph Carttar:*²³

[Letterhead obscured] [Public Control Department]
21 Whitehall Place

28th Sept 1893

[Sir]

[Re] Coroners Inquisitions

I have been informed that the county papers relating to inquests held in the Kensington District of London by the late Mr. Carter *[sic]* are probably in your possession. As it is important that Coroners inquisitions should be preserved as county records, I shall be glad to know whether you will be prepared to hand over to any person who may be appointed by the Council to receive them the inquisitions taken by Mr. Carter or his deputy.

I am Sir,

Your obedient Servant
Alfred Spencer
Chief Officer

A. V. Haines Esq.
c/o Myers Morrison & Nightingale
Solicitors
Reigate.

*Haines referred Spencer's letter to Surrey coroner Percy Morrison:*²⁴

[Letterhead obscured] [Red Hill, Surrey].

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, 7 OCT. 93 [*In pencil*] 6056

6th October, 1893

Re Coroners Inquisitions

Dear Sir/

Your letter of the 28th ult: directed to Mr. Haines with reference to the above has been forwarded to me as I have the custody of the Inquisitions which were taken by the later W. Carter *[sic]* & therefore I presume you will be satisfied now that you know they are taken care of by one of the Coroners for the District.

Yours faithfully

Percy Morrison

Coroner

22 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer, Public Control Committee, to Dr. Leonard Bramah Diplock, 10 August 1893.

23 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Alfred Spencer, Chief Officer of the Public Control Committee, to Arthur Vernon Haines, 28 September 1893.

24 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Surrey coroner Percy Morrison to Alfred Spencer, Chief Officer, Public Control Department.

[Illegible] October [189]3

Dear Sir

I have [put] before the Public Control Committee your letter of the 6th instant stating that the inquisitions taken by the later Mr. Carter [sic] are in your custody, and I am directed to say that the Committee is satisfied with the arrangements you have made for their temporary custody.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature of] Alfred Spencer
Chief Officer.

[Mr.] Percy Morrison, Esq,
Red Hill
Surrey

*By this time, the Public Control Committee had considered Leonard Diplock's offer to sell his father's records to the Council:*²⁶

[23 October 1893]

[Salutation faded]

I [illegible] before the Public Control Committee your letter of the 2nd August offering to transfer to the Council the Inquisitions taken by your father in the county of London for the sum of £25, and I have been directed to inform you that the Council has no funds out of which it can make such a payment.

Yours faithfully

[Signature of] Alfred Spencer
Chief Officer.

[L.] B. Diplock, Esq.
Ashwood

[Remainder of address obscured]

*Spencer also attempted to collect the records of Roderick Macdonald, and tracked them to his former deputy and co-executor of his will, Alfred Hodgkinson:*²⁷

[Letterhead obscured]

[Stamp of receipt obscured]

27th Dec. 1894.

[Salutation partially obscured] Spencer,

[Obscured] for you[r] letter [obscured] I duly received the small [obscured] due to use.

With reference to the custody [of] the papers you have I think [rather] misunderstood my [either 'offer' or 'other' followed by obscured word] 5th ult. How are you authorised to take charge of them? - I constantly have applications for [information] & for ['production', followed by obscured words] I fear it would be no good for me to state that you have the records, where a coroners court is supposed to be a Court of Record [is] the coroner to be responsible [in] the matter -

You do not state in your letter what is Dr. Thomas' custom²⁸ - Before handing over the records they would have to be looked over so as to extract those for the County of Middlesex which would take some time -

I must also ask you not to place me in the position of creating a precedent for other[s] but if the London Coroners have no objection to depositing their records, then you can have the late Dr. Macdonalds -

With compliments of the season,

Yours faithfully

A Spencer Esq

[Signature of] Alfred Hodgkinson

25 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Alfred Spencer to Surrey coroner Percy Morrison, October 1893. The ink has faded making it difficult to make out the date.

26 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Alfred Spencer to Leonard Bramah Diplock. The ink has faded making it difficult to make out the date. Possibly 23 October 1893.

27 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Alfred Hodgkinson to Alfred Spencer, 27 December 1894.



Coroner Roderick MacDonald.
(PHO/4/1/10. Courtesy of the House of Lords Records Office,
the Parliamentary Archives)

Finding the collection of private records - personal property - to be problematic and time-consuming, the Council determined to head off future quests by requiring new coroners coming into office as of 1895 to agree that their records belonged to the county:²⁹

[Handwritten header on blank sheet] Council Minutes, 12-2-1895.

p. 130-131.

Adhered to this sheet is page 7 of the 'Adjourned Report of the Public Control Committee. The Council considered the following recommendations in the report brought up on 29th January - Coroners' Inquests'.

[Excerpt] 1(t) That proper records of all cases dealt with by the court, whether inquests be held or not be kept as records of the county. [Handwritten note:] ? See [copy] 29.1.95 and note 5.452 under [section] 29.1 95.

28 In 1894, Dr George Danford Thomas would have been the senior county coroner in London at this time, having been elected in 1881.

29 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Council Minutes, 2 December 1895. The recommendation was resolved and adopted. As of 1895, the records of incoming London County coroners automatically became county property as opposed to the private property of coroners. However, the resolution did not affect sitting coroners.

In June 1901, Samuel Langham retired as coroner for several jurisdictions: the City of London, Southwark, and the Clapham portion of the Duchy of Lancaster. Where Langham, acting as President of the Coroners' Society in 1890, had apparently advocated that sitting coroners retain their records, as he retired, he directed his officer to defer to the relevant financial authority - in the case of Clapham, the London County Council:³⁰

[Handwritten] City Mortuary

Golden Lane E.C.

['10 Bartletts Buildings, Holborn Circus' struck out]

[Printed] London, E.C.

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, 18 JUN 1901. [In pencil] 1533.

17th June 1901.

[In blue pencil] 15a

[Obscured Alfred] Spencer Esq.

Comptroller

London County Council

Spring Gardens S.W.

Dear Sir,

I am directed by Mr. S.F. Langham Coroner for Duchy of Lancaster in Surrey to inform you that he is retiring from that position about the end of this month and wishes to know what you would like done with the Inquisitions and papers relating to Inquests held by him in that District. If you would like to have them in your custody would you kindly arrange for them to be fetched away or if not kindly say what you would like done in the matter.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature of] Geo. G. Lee

Clerk to the Coroner

The Chief Officer replied:³¹

18th June, [190]1.

Dear Sir.

In reply to your letter of the 17th instant the Council considers that all inquisitions are County papers, and should be deposited with the County records. I will therefore send to your office to remove the inquisitions for both Clapham and Southwark at any date you may appoint.

Permit me to express my regret at the severance of our official connection, and I trust that you may long enjoy your well-earned retirement.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

Chief Officer.

Having offered to collect Langham's Clapham records, the Chief Officer now wondered where he was going to put them:³²

21st June, [190]1.

PUBLIC CONTROL COMMITTEE.

CUSTODY OF CORONERS' INQUISITIONS.

A letter from Mr. S.F. Langham asking what shall be done [obscured] inquisitions relating to inquests held in the Franchise [obscured] of Clapham. I have informed him that the Council [desires] that the inquisitions should be placed with the records of the [County] and that I will remove them from his custody at any date which he may fix for their delivery.

30 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, George Lee, clerk to coroner Samuel Langham, to Alfred Spencer, Comptroller, 17 June 1901.

31 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer to Samuel F Langham, 18 June 1901.

32 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer to the Public Control Committee, 21 June 1901.

Will the Committee instruct me how to dispose of these papers. The Committee have authorised the fitting-up of presses for the reception of similar papers at the Coroner's Courts in Shoreditch [and] South Islington, but there is at present no court in the Clapham District where these papers could be kept. I therefore suggest that for the moment they should be removed to the Weights and Measures Office, Newington. [Obscured] the new Court at Clapham is completed, and that the Architect be requested to fit up a press at the new Clapham court in which these papers can be placed.

Chief Officer.



Coroner Samuel Langham. (From George Sylvester (Ed.),
The Corporation of The City of London and The First Twelve
of The Great City Guilds (London 1897) [CLRO REF; JACB/223].
Courtesy of the Joint Archive Record Service -
Corporation of London Records Office.)

There was apparently some last minute business to wrap up around the time that Langham retired:³³

[Handwritten] City Mortuary
Golden Lane E.C.

[Printed letterhead struck out] 10 Bartletts Buildings, Holborn Circus
[Printed] London, E.C.

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department

[date of receipt obscured. In blue pencil '754' and in lead pencil: '/47 (i.e., 754/47)'].

24th June 1901.

[Addressee partially obscured]

[Comptroller]

London County Council

Spring Gardens S.W.

Dear Sir/

I am obliged for your letter of 22nd inst. and regret that I shall be unable to attend at your office tomorrow (Tuesday) as stated in your letter to inspect the Vouchers but shall like an opportunity of doing so on Wednesday next if you will kindly have them ready on that day.

33 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, George Lee to Comptroller, 24 June 1901.

Trusting this will not inconvenience you

Yours faithfully

[Signature of]

Geo: C: Lee

Clerk to the late Coroner
For City & Southwark

Arthur Langham, the coroner's son and former deputy, became the Council's contact:³⁴

10 Bartletts Buildings
Holborn Circus
London, E.C.

[Stamped but obscured] [In blue pencil] 739 [In lead pencil] /47 [followed by illegible word]

27th June 1901

[Addressee partially obscured]

Comptroller
London County Council
Spring Gardens SW

Dear Sir

Herewith I enclose you [vouchers] which you sent to me [with] some queries marked thereon [and which] I have now settled. I also enclose your Jury Requisition fee for ['24 s' followed by illegible word] evidence in case of Caroline Knight as requested. *[Over this first paragraph are notes in red pencil, written diagonally and consisting of a left-leaning arrow, and an illegible note followed by two sets of initials, both illegible.]*

The Inquisitions and papers relating to Clapham Cases will be ready for you whenever it is convenient for you to send for them. As regards the Southwark Inquisitions and papers ['I am' struck out and 'My Father is' inserted above] wanting to hear from the Town Clerk to the City Corporation and will write you further when he hears from them. *[On the reverse side is a note in red pencil: 'Referred to Chief Officer P.C. dept. 29/6/1.']*

With reference to your letter of 17th inst: and my letter to you of 18th inst: I shall be glad if you will kindly let me have the vouchers which I left with you and which had been omitted from the [accounts] since the 1st of January 1901 so that I may prepare the account and [statutory] declaration verifying [same] as requested. *[Over this paragraph are more illegible notes in red pencil, written diagonally across the text of the letter.]*

Yours faithfully

[Signature of]

Arthur G. Langham

Deputy Coroner *[struck out]*

Langham arranged a date for the removal of records:³⁵

10 Bartletts Buildings,
Holborn Circus
London, E.C.

2nd July 1901

[Addressee partially obscured]

Alfred Spencer Esq.
Chief Officer
Public Control Department
6 Waterloo Place SW.

Dear Sir

In reply to your letter of yesterday's date the Clapham records will be ready for you if your Representative will call at the City Mortuary Golden Lane E.C. tomorrow (Wednesday) at 10.30 a.m.

³⁴ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Arthur Langham to Comptroller, 27 June 1901.

³⁵ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Arthur Langham to Alfred Spencer, 2 July 1901. Samuel Langham had retired the week before. Besides serving as City and Southwark coroner, Langham also served the Duchy of Lancaster, a franchise district under the financial authority of the LCC (Clapham was part of the Duchy). The City and Southwark districts were under the financial control of the Corporation.

Referring to your Representative's call this afternoon there are not a great many Clapham [Cases] so that if he came with a cab he would be able to take them all away easily.

Yours faithfully,
[Signature] Arthur G. Langham

*The Council sent their representative to Golden Lane. Besides the Clapham records, it appears that the Council also sought to obtain Langham's Southwark papers:*³⁶

[Date partially obscured] 1901.

On attending at the City Coroner's Court I received the Coroners Inquisitions for Clapham, from 1884 - date (except 2 months). The previous coroner's papers were mixed up so with the City & Fire Inquest papers that it would have taken a long time to sort, so I did not wait.

It appears the City claims all Southwark papers & until it is settled whether the Council or the Corporation are to have them Mr. Langham will not allow them to be removed.

As 1902 began with coroner George Arundel Carttar apparently incapacitated, the hitherto-murky discretion coroners exercised over inquest exhibits became a concern. Walter Schröder acted as an intermediary between Carttar's sister, her solicitor, Edward Negus Wood,³⁷ and Alfred Spencer:³⁸

[Printed letterhead partially obscured and crossed out]

[The Coroners' Society]
[20] Brunswick Square
London W.C.

Jan 3. 1902

[Dear] Mr. Spencer/

I have now been asked by [Miss Carttar]³⁹ as to the disposal of the weapons produced in evidence at inquests. I have advised her as I did Mr. Wood that the only proper course is to [hand] them with all documents relating to the cases to the newly appointed Coroners, to be received & taken charge of by them on behalf of the Authority dealing with Coroners viz. the County Councils.

I have further informed Miss Carttar that the weapons in no way become the property of the Coroner.

Yours faithfully

Walter Schröder

Telegraph Hill
Hampstead NW

36 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Handwritten report dated 1901, related to attempt to collect the Clapham records, 1884-1901.

37 In 1894, Roderick Macdonald remembered Wood's daughter Louise, leaving her £250 'for her kindness to my late dear wife' (Will of Roderick Macdonald, QE/D/3/4, Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children, Royal London Hospital Archives and Museum).

38 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Walter Schröder to Alfred Spencer, 3 January 1902. Sir Walter Schröder (1855-1942) was long active in coronial matters. He began his career when he left school at the age of 15 to serve as coroner Edwin Lankester's clerk in Central Middlesex. He continued to fill that position under two subsequent successors, William Hardwicke and George Danford Thomas. In 1894, Danford Thomas elevated him to the position of deputy and in 1910 Schröder succeeded him as coroner for the Central district. During World War I, he also served as Deputy City Coroner for Frederick J Waldo. He was active in professional organizations, serving as President and Honourable Secretary for the Coroners' Society of England and Wales, Treasurer of the Medico-Legal Society, Vice-President of the Hampstead Scientific Society, sat on the Council of the National 'Safety First' Association, and was a life governor of the Royal Free Hospital. He became a K.B.E. in 1923, retired in 1930 a veteran of 50,000 inquests, and died on 28 July 1942 ('Sir Walter Schröder, Formerly Coroner for Central London', *The Times*, 29 July 1942).

39 Edward Arundel Carttar was coroner for West Kent and Southeast London and the son of Charles Joseph Carttar. E A Carttar had, according to *The Times*, 'a legal education, became a marine engineer, and was for many years employed by Messrs. Harland and Wolff, of Belfast', also working as an engineer at the Crew Works of the Southwestern Railway Company, and was known for his expertise at inquests of shipping, factory, and railway deaths. *The Times* credits Carttar's 'painstaking and conscientious' nature as a cause for the poor health that led to his death on 4 November 1902, aged 55 ('Obituary', *The Times*, 5 November 1902).

Believing Carttar dead (although George Arundel Carttar would not actually die until that November), Alfred Spencer approached his sister for his records:⁴⁰

[8th] January [1902].

Dear Madam,

At the request of Dr. R.R. Oswald, the present Coroner for the South Eastern District, I have arranged for the removal from your residence of the records of inquests held by the late Mr. E.A. Carttar. The bearer of this letter is provided with a vehicle, and if you will be good enough to hand the records to him, he will remove them to one of the Council's Offices.

I am, Dear Madam,
Yours faithfully,
Chief Officer.

Miss Carttar,
Catherine House,
Blackheath Road, SE.

Meanwhile, as Spencer's efforts to gather records upon the death of each coroner became an accepted policy over time, and following a renewed correspondence, Alfred Hodgkinson softened his previous stance towards the Council's custody of Roderick Macdonald's records:⁴¹

[Letterhead obscured]

[11th] July 1902

[Stamped] London County Council, 12 JULY 1902 [in red pencil] 18127

[Salutation obscured]

[Thank] you for [the] letter of 9th inst. [Obscured followed by 'course'] adopted in [illegible] Mr. Troutbeck [obscured] I think prove [illegible and obscured] -----

Several years ago, I was in communication with you as to the custody of the inquisitions taken by Dr. Macdonald. I still [retain] them but I think you would be the proper custodian, for [in] course of time they will no doubt be cleared out as waste paper if they remain where they are. I shall have no hesitation in handing them over [illegible] now that some years have elapsed since Dr. Macdonald's death -----

Yours faithfully,
Alfred Hodgkinson

The Clerk
The London County Council
County Hall
Spring Gardens
SW

Hodgkinson appears to have divided Macdonald's papers according to who the financial authority had been. Thus, the records of inquests held under the financial authority of the Middlesex magistrates, such as the Kelly inquest, became the property of the Middlesex County Council and those held after the birth of the London County Council went to Spencer:⁴²

[Letterhead obscured]

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, 17 JUL 1902. [In black ink] 1949.

16th July 1902

[Dear] Sir/

[Obscured] have all the papers [obscured] with the [obscured] held by Dr. Macdonald [from] 1st April 1889 till [his] death, and those I [obscured] until Dr. Westcott was appointed - The papers would all go inside a cab - They are here-

You can send for them at any time after 10 o'clock & before 5, or before 2 on Saturday.

40 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer to Miss Carttar, [8] January [1902].

41 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Alfred Hodgkinson to the Clerk of the Council, [11] July 1902.

42 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Alfred Hodgkinson to Alfred Spencer, 16 July 1902.

All earlier papers than April 1889 I shall ask the Middlesex Council to take charge of -

I am, Dear Sir,
faithfully,
Alfred Hodgkinson

Alfred Spencer Esq
Public Control
31 Spring Gardens
SW

Spencer continued the practice of storing records at the relevant coroner's court:⁴³

19th July, [190]2.

Dear Sir,

With reference to our correspondence as to the deposition papers of inquests taken by the late Dr. Macdonald, I have instructed one of my assistants to attend at your office on Tuesday next the 22nd instant at 12. noon in order to remove the papers to the Shoreditch Coroners Court.

Yours faithfully,
[Unsigned]

Alfred Hodgkinson Esq.

Wynn Westcott, the current coroner, was informed of the impending arrival of most of his predecessor's records:⁴⁴

21st ['June' struck out] July, [190]2.

Dear Sir,

Mr. A. Hodgkinson, 5 Idol Lane, Eastcheap has offered to hand over to the Council the deposition papers of inquests held by the late Dr. Macdonald. The Council has accepted the offer, and the papers will be removed to the Shoreditch Coroners Court on Tuesday next the 22nd instant, at 12, noon.

I am, Dear Sir,
Yours faithfully,
[Unsigned]

W. Wynn Westcott Esq.
396, Camden Road,
E

However, the new coroner's court in Shoreditch was not yet equipped to store the records. Therefore the Council found a temporary alternative:⁴⁵

[Obscured] at the Office of Mr. A. Hodgkinson, 5, Idol Lane, East-[cheap] this day, accompanied by Bartlett, Resident Officer, and the [papers] referred to in the enclosed correspondence were removed to the Weights and Measures Office, Calvert Avenue, Shoreditch, where they will be kept until some fitting can be provided at the Coroners Court.

[Illegible initials, possibly 'ARS']

22nd July. 1902.

43 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, unsigned letter to Alfred Hodgkinson, 19 July 1902.

44 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, unsigned letter to Dr. Wynn Westcott, North East Middlesex coroner, 21 July 1902.

45 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, carbon copy dated 22nd July 1902. Initialed, possibly 'A.R.S.'

*Westcott also wrote Alfred Spencer, informing him of the need for more cupboards:*⁴⁶

[Printed letterhead partially obscured] Westcott

[Handwritten] 396, Camden Road, N

July 25 1902.

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, 28 JUL 1902. [In pencil] 2114

Alfred Spencer Esq

Dear Sir,

The papers of the late Dr. Macdonald have been received at Shoreditch, but my room being turned out by the painters, - Mr. [Illegible] has taken charge of them in his building. We need several more cupboards for them which could be fixed on the top of the present case of cupboards.

As to the matter of your letter of July 14th, the contents have no formal applications because at the Councils' [obscured] I arranged with the Commissioner of Police to give me always a choice of a succession of Police Officers to do the duties of the Coroner's Officer, and this arrangement gives complete satisfaction to me, and the people in my District.

Believe me

Yours faithfully

Dr. Wynn Westcott.

*Spencer responded:*⁴⁷

28th July, [190]2.

Dear Sir,

With reference to the first part of your letter of the ['26th' smeared out and '25' penciled above] instant, the Council's Architect has already been requested to provide the fittings to take the papers of the late Dr. Macdonald.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

Chief Officer.

Wm. Wynn Westcott, Esq.,
396, Camden Road,
N.

*E. A. Carttar died on 4 November with the disposal of his records - written and physical - still unresolved. Schröder continued to act as intermediary:*⁴⁸

Telegraph Hill

Hampstead, N.W.

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, 11 NOV 1902. [In pencil] 4209.

[Dear] Mr. Spencer

When attending the [cremation] of the body of the late Mr. Carttar I was informed that he has made no Will, and in course of conversation with Mr. E. N. Wood, - (who will probably be acting for the next-of-kin) - and speaking on Coroners affairs I expressed the opinion [beside this section of the letter is a note in red ink 'Papers sent to Mr. Troutbeck 30/6/02'] that in my view the papers relating to [the] Inquests held by [the] Coroner or his Deputy should pass to the Authority dealing with Coroners matters [illegible] in their care they would be preserved [the rest of the sentence is illegible]. I also mentioned my opinion to Miss Carttar - and I would suggest - if [you think] well - that you should [obscured] to her with the [obscured] of the papers [passing] into the custody of the Council. No objection was raised to my suggestion as to the disposal of the papers.

Yrs faithfully

Walter Schröder

Nov. 10. 1902

⁴⁶ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Dr Wynn Westcott to Alfred Spencer, 25 July 1902.

⁴⁷ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer to Dr. Wynn Westcott, 28 July 1902.

⁴⁸ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Walter Schröder to Alfred Spencer, 10 November 1902.

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL. *[In red pencil]* Mr. Swainston

PUBLIC CONTROL DEPARTMENT
31, Spring Gardens, SW
[struck out] 6 Waterloo Place, SW
11th November. 1902

Dear Mr. Schröder,

Thanks very much for your letter as to the depositions of the South Eastern District.

I have written to Mr. Wood asking him to be good enough to arrange for the papers to be handed over to me.

Yours sincerely,

[Unsigned]

Walter Schröder Esq.
Telegraph Hill.
Hampstead. NW

11th November, [190]2

My Dear Sir,

At the death of a Coroner it is my duty to endeavour to obtain possession of the records of inquests held in the County.

I hardly like to trouble Miss Carttar on this matter, but you will probably be able to tell us where the records are, and what steps I should take to obtain their custody by the Council.

If you can help me in this matter I shall be greatly obliged.

Yours faithfully,

Chief Officer.

E. N. Wood Esq.
12, Burney Street.
[Greenwich S.E.]

[Printed] 12 BURNEY STREET, GREENWICH S.E.

12th Novr 1902

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, 12 NOV 1902. *[In pencil]* 4257.

Dear Sir

Re E. A. Carttar - Coroner, deceased.

In reply to your letter of the [11th] the records you refer to are at Catherine House Greenwich & as soon as administration has been taken to the late Coroner's estate I will write to you further on the matter.

Yours faithfully

Edw. N. Wood

Alfred Spencer Esq
Chief Officer
Public Control Department
31 Spring Gardens
SW

⁴⁹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Public Control Department to Walter Schröder, 11 November 1902.

⁵⁰ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer to E.N. Wood, 11 November 1902.

⁵¹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Edward N Wood to Alfred Spencer, 12 November 1902.

At the same time, Wood approached Schröder for guidance, which Schröder reported to Spencer:⁵²

Private [*In red ink*] Mr. Swainston

Telegraph Hill
Hampstead Heath
N.W.

Dear Mr. Spencer/

I have today received a letter from Mr. Wood in which he further asks my opinion as to handing over the records of inquests. I have replied that I have but one opinion on the matter, & that I feel sure that [*'I' struck out*] in giving effect to my views he will also be carrying out the wishes of the late Mr. Carttar, as I well remember when 3 [*followed by obscured words*] short with him [*obscured*] matters, he [*obscured*] to my view [*obscured*] records should be [*obscured*] with the C. Council. [I] don't know if you were acquainted with Mr. Carttar or his opinions on [various] matters, but if you were, you will really understand his desire to assist forward anything tending to improve the Coroner's Court. He and I were in accord on many points, & I have often regretted during the last 6 or 7 years his inability to take an active part or follow up his views on matters [*'which' struck out*] not only directly concerning his own district but on the other matters which have been frequently discussed and which - in my opinion - have been suggested with but one object, that the well-being & improvement of the Coroner's Court, its procedure, etc. etc.

I know the S.E. District requires much 'attention' & 'overhauling', and no one knew it better than he did; he realized what was required but he was [unequal] of late [years] to [move] in the [matter], but I feel sure had he been a man of sound health much that now requires active attentions would never [existed], - and proposed reforms would have been keenly [*'welcomed &' inserted above*] supported by him.

Do not [*illegible*]. [*In small cramped writing*] I have also [not] written to Miss Carttar [expressing] my opinion [*illegible*] her last [*illegible*] re the inquest papers.

Yours faithfully

Walter Schröder

13 Nov. 1902

Advice about the retention of physical evidence was also sought. Since the subject presented certain complications, Schröder asked the Council's view:⁵³

Telegraph Hill
Hampstead Heath
N.W.

Dear Mr. Spencer,

In a letter received this morning my advice has been asked as to the disposal of certain knives, revolvers and deadly weapons produced as evidence at inquests and retained by the late Coroner. Personally I have always held and advocated that they should be kept with the depositions, etc. in the case, and in [*illegible*] of that opinion I [*obscured*] that they should [be] handed over to the [*obscured*] custody of the Council with the papers.

Does my view coincide with that of yourself and the Council[?]
If you agree with me I will suggest accordingly. I have not yet replied to [her] letter

Yours faithfully

Walter Schröder

Dec 8th 1902.

Spencer replied:⁵⁴

10th December, [190]2

Dear Mr. Schröder,

I feel your hesitation in expressing an opinion on the point raised in your letter of the 8th instant, as it involves a question of legal practice and common law right.

⁵² LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Walter Schröder to Alfred Spencer, 13 November 1902.

⁵³ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Walter Schröder to Alfred Spencer, 8 December 1902.

⁵⁴ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, unsigned letter to Walter Schröder, 10 December 1902.

I assume that until a case in which a weapon was involved has been finally dealt with, the weapon is ear-marked as evidence. Afterwards there may be a question of private ownership but should none such exist I agree that the weapon belongs to the County, and forms part of the records of the case. If that be the current view, and I gather it is the one you hold and therefore is in agreement with practice, the exhibits in inquest cases might in time form an interesting addition to a County [museum], if one be taken to attach to each exhibit a short account of the case.

When you are passing here I should be glad of an opportunity of a chat on this and other subjects [*'at any time' inserted by hand*]

Yours faithfully,

[*Unsigned*]

W. Schröder Esq.
Telegraph Hill.
Hampstead Heath. NW

Schröder's opinion was that any physical evidence Carttar had retained should remain part of the permanent record.⁵⁵

Personal

Telegraph Hill
Hampstead Heath [N.W.]

Dear Mr. Spencer/

I wrote yesterday to [*obscured*] representative of the late Mr. Carttar's next-of-kin and expressed my opinion that the weapons, etc. should not be destroyed, sold or disposed of, but handed to the Council with the [*'depositions' and illegible word abbreviated*] in the cases to which they refer. I had intended writing you fully on this matter tonight, but an inquest [*obscured*] prolonged for [*obscured*] delayed me & [*obscured*] [then send] of official [appointed] I find [*obscured*] to put in writing [*obscured*] opinions, and details [*obscured*] practices, etc. What [the] strict legal position of the Coroner is in reference to weapons, etc. there has always been some doubt, but there can be no question at least to my mind - that they do not become the property of the Coroner, or Police, that if retained they should be kept by the Authority having the custody of documents relating to inquests. I was very keen on the subject some 4 or 5 years ago and in conjunction with Mr. Braxton Hicks, drafted a letter [*illegible*] dealing with it fully, and [*illegible*] raised an Opinion from the Law Officers of the Crown. I was under the impression that some time ago I mentioned the [result] to you [perhaps] [*illegible*] not, I could look up the [papers] & give you the details when I call upon [him, which] I hope [to do] next week.

Yours faithfully,

Walter Schröder.

Dec. [12] [*date partially obscured by hole punch*] 1902

The Council's clerk apparently had his own copy of the document in question that Spencer was able to obtain, for inserted into the file are pages 11-16 of printed matter, forming a question and answer session between The Association of London Coroners and the Law Officers of the Crown on the subject of physical evidence, dated 1896.⁵⁶

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[*Typed header partially obscured*] matters have engaged the attention of the Council [*obscured*] Secretary during the year.

[*The following is printed matter*]

CORONERS' AND DECEASED PERSONS' PROPERTY

Case and Opinions of the Law Officers of the Crown.

87, Euston Road, N.W.

30th January, 1896.

Sir,

The Association of London Coroners has had under its consideration the question as to what rights and duties devolve upon the Coroner in securing and taking temporary possession of the property of deceased persons,

⁵⁵ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Walter Schröder to Alfred Spencer, [12] December 1902.

⁵⁶ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, 'Coroners' and Deceased Persons' Property: Case and Opinion of the Law Officers of the Crown', Questions from the London Coroners' Association, 30 January 1896, and Answers from the Law Officers of the Crown, 9 December 1896.

Firstly. - For the direct purposes of the Inquest, and

Secondly. - For the safe custody of the same before and after the Verdict of the Jury.

The Association has thought it advisable to respectfully ask the assistance of the Law Officers of the Crown in giving an opinion as to the rights and duties of Her Majesty's Coroners in dealing with the property of persons upon whom Inquests have been held, and begs to lay the case before you:-

No. 1. - Cases in which property is found upon the body of a deceased person, or in a house or rooms in his occupation, and when at the Inquest no relative or legal representative is present.

These cases frequently occur. The Officer acting for the Coroner is informed that a body is lying dead within his jurisdiction. Such body may be found in the river or canal, or in some public place or in an hotel, or in some private dwelling-house. On searching the body, valuable property is found upon it, consisting of specie, jewelry, bank-notes, etc., etc., and often in rooms or houses, other valuable property, deeds, bonds, etc., etc.

If the death has occurred in such a manner, the deceased's relatives may be unknown, or the circumstances attending the death such as to necessitate a careful search for poisons, etc., or to obtain addresses; and the Coroner's Officer in his endeavour to ascertain the required evidence finds property as aforesaid on the person or dispersed among the general effects. It has been customary from time immemorial for the Coroner's Officer to institute, in cases of suspicion, and also where there are no known relatives, a thorough search of the premises as well as of the body.

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Having made the search it follows that [said] property [should be retained] by the Coroner until the conclusion of the Inquest, on behalf of the relatives, [or failing any], the Crown. If the contrary practice pervaded, the Coroner would often fail to obtain documents, poisons, writings, [illegible], etc., most essential to the enquiry, and by which [illegible] [the ends of] justice might be defeated; and where property of value exists, it might be purchased [to] the detriment of the relatives or the Crown.

Questions:-

Has the Officer acting for the Coroner, a right to make search, if so, should such search and custody of the property be confined to the discovery of such property only as might be necessary for the purposes of the Inquest?

If the Officer is to search for and retain property till the conclusion of an Inquest, but not after, to whom should it be handed at the Inquest?

If the Coroner has no right to take possession of property other than that required for evidence, when money, etc. is found by his officer, what is to become of it?

Note: - It has been generally the custom for the Coroner to retain such property in his office until properly claimed, and if unclaimed and no relatives are known, after a lapse of three months, it has been handed over in due form to the Treasury, which not infrequently occurs.

No. 2. - Cases in which there are no known relatives, before, or at, or after the Inquest.

Such cases arise where the deceased person has property just sufficient to meet the expenses of the funeral, pay rent, etc., owing. Others where large sums of cash, sometimes hidden away, bonds, and securities are found. It is essential that some official should take charge of and administer such estates; otherwise property belonging to the next-of-kin, or the Crown would be lost.

Question:-

Should the Officer, acting under instructions from the Coroner, arrange for the funeral, pay the debts and expenses as far as the estate will allow where the deceased is poor, and in cases where the property is over and above that required for necessary expenses, communicate with and hand the estate to the Treasury?

No. 3. - Cases in which there are relatives present at the Inquest, who are presumably next-of-kin.

Question:-

In these cases, if property of considerable value has come into the possession of the Coroner, should he retain the same until the Probate of the deceased's Will, or Letters of Administration have been produced; and in cases where the property is of no great value, hand it over to the

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[obscured] next-of-kin upon such persons giving a receipt for same, or [obscured] undertaking to bury the deceased?

No. 4. - Cases in which the relatives present are not next-of-kin.

Question:-

Should the Coroner in his discretion hand over the property when of [such] value upon receiving a written promise to deliver same to next-of-kin?

Nos. 5 and 6. - These deal with property absolutely necessary to the inquiry, and which are real evidence.

No. 5. - Documents found on the body or in the possession of deceased, or in the possession of any witness which may tend to elucidate the cause of death, or have any bearing upon same, and at the inquest received as evidence.

These may consist of letters written by a suicide, murderer, or persons charged with other criminal offence. When these are produced and identified and read to the Jury, they must be considered as influencing the Jurors in their verdict, and therefore ought to be carefully retained and placed with the records of the Inquest.

Even in cases where the deceased may have died naturally, property may be involved, such as bank notes, cheques, etc., and may be produced at the Inquest, and which, though not absolutely material to the Coroner's inquiry, may tend to [throw] light upon embezzlement, theft, or some other crime. Such cases are on record.

It is presumed that a Coroner being a judicial representative of the Crown, is bound as such to take cognizance of all matters affecting public justice coming under his notice. If the Coroner did not retain such evidence, the ends of justice, both in his own and other Courts might be frustrated.

Question:-

Should all documents, etc., at the conclusion of the Inquest be returned to the persons producing them, or be retained by the Coroner with the depositions, etc., in the case, as part of the evidence, and so retained unless required in some other Court?

No. 6. - Articles which are produced in evidence as causing the death and are material to the enquiry.

In these articles there is a great difference in their nature, value, and size.

- (a) Small articles, such as revolvers, pistols, guns, knives, razors, daggers, swordsticks, scissors, bottles of poisons, powders, string, rope, cord, handkerchiefs, wrappings, lamps, etc., etc., by which human life may be destroyed.

[page no.] 14

- (b) Articles which are impossible to be brought into Court, [of] [illegible] nature could not be retained, such as locomotives, [stationary] machinery, houses which have collapsed, wrecked vessels, [illegible], etc., etc.

The distinction between (a) and (b) is shown by the [convenience] of the various articles.

In (a) the articles are more particularly those which may be [described] as personal effects, and which can be easily produced in Court for identification, and without serious inconvenience retained, and are more frequently connected with cases of murder and suicide. These, if parted with, could be easily destroyed and all traces lost. The Coroner's Court being a Court of first instance, and its proceedings not necessarily final, such articles may be afterwards required as evidence in the same Court, or in some subsequent distinct inquiry.

For instance: Man is found shot - revolver near him - weapon not identified - evidence not conclusive whether wound was self-inflicted - open verdict returned - revolver retained by Coroner - suspicion afterwards falls upon a person of having murdered the deceased - revolver identified as belonging to such suspected person and produced at subsequent proceedings. If it had been handed to the friends of the deceased person (a request often made), it might have been sold or lost, and the most important link in the evidence at the trial would be wanting. Such a case as detailed would apply to any other of the articles mentioned.

With regard to (b), these are articles which from their nature would not tend to show the identity of an accused person by production in Court, and could, when necessary be viewed by the Jury, or plans produced, and are generally connected with deaths from Accidental Causes.

Questions:-

With regard to (a), should the Coroner retain all such weapons and articles. If not, to whom should they be handed?

In reference to (b), should the Coroner at the conclusion of his inquiry, authorise them to be dealt with as the special requirements of the case demand?

[I] am, Sir, your obedient servant,
(Signed) WALTER SCHRÖDER,
Hon. Sec.: London Coroners' Association.

To the Right Honourable SIR MATTHEW WHITE RIDLEY, M.P., Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Whitehall,
31st January, 1896.

Sir,

I am directed by the Secretary of State for the Home Department to

[page no.] 15

[acknowledge receipt] of your letter of the 30th instant, and to say that it shall [obscured].

I am, Sir, Your obedient servant,
(Signed) [KESELM E. DROST].

WALTER SCHRODER, Esq.
[The] London Coroners' Association.

Whitehall.
9th December, 1896.

With reference to previous correspondence, I am directed by the [Secretary] of State to acquaint you, for the information of the Association of [obscured] [Coroners] that he has submitted to the Law Officers of the Crown a case [obscured] based on the questions asked in your letter of the 30th January [obscured] advised by the Law Officers that there is practically no direct [obscured] on the particular points raised by the various questions under the first [point] of Law. If the Coroner, or his Officer has ground for thinking that a [search of] the premises or among the deceased's effects is likely to lead to evidence [obscured] the inquiry, he should certainly search. As a rule the search should [obscured] reference to questions likely to arise at the Inquest, and not a roving [investigation]. Possession of property other than that which is likely to be [used] for the purpose of the investigation should not be taken unless there is no [worthy] person in whose charge it can be left; but if no such person is [available] it is a convenient course for the Coroner's Officer to take possession of [obscured] property, though this is not strictly any part of his duty.

The Secretary of State is further advised that the Coroner is empowered to [authorise] the burial of the body (See sub-sec. 6. of sec. 18 of the Act of 1887; Registration Act, 1874, sec. 17; Burial Act, 1880, sec. 11; but the burial and administration of the estate should, in strictness, be carried out by the representative of the deceased. It is, however, no doubt, convenient that when there is no such person, this should be carried out by the Coroner's Officer, but he has no legal authority as to administration of the estate. The Law Officers are of opinion that the Coroner, as such, has no right to the money or property of the deceased. If he has reason to believe that the deceased has no relatives, or that they cannot be found, he should communicate with the Treasury Solicitor who, under 39 & 40 Vict. cap. 19, can take action.

In all cases the Coroner must act reasonably, and should not take possession unless he thinks there is risk of the property being lost.

With regard to the questions under the second and third headings, the Secretary of State is advised that where property has come into the possession of the Coroner or his Officer, the Coroner should not part with it until satisfied by reasonable evidence that the persons claiming it have a right to its possession. He parts with it at his own risk, and if he feels any doubt should not do so unless ordered by a competent Court.

[page no.] 16

As regards questions 4, the Law Officers are of opinion that the Coroner should not part with documents which have been put in evidence at the Inquest [unless it is] clear that they are not likely to be required elsewhere. If the documents are of value or importance the [safe] course would be for him to decline to part with them unless ordered by some Court; and in cases of doubt, he should be careful to retain accurate and examined copies. A great deal must depend upon the nature of the documents.

Finally, the Secretary of State is advised, with reference to questions 5 and 6, that as regards articles, no general rule can be laid down, but that such cases must depend upon its particular circumstances.

I am, Sir, Your obedient servant,
(Signed) HENRY CUNYGRAM.

W. SCHRODER, Esq.

87, EUSTON ROAD, N.W.
15th December, 1896.

Sir,

I beg to acknowledge, with thanks, the receipt of your letter of the 9th instant [*reference number illegible*], which shall be read at the next meeting of the London Coroners' Association.

I am, Sir, Your obedient servant,
(Signed) WALTER SCHRODER.
Hon. Sec.: London Coroners' Association.

HENRY CUNYGRAM, Esq.

In addition to the above document, the coroner's discretion over evidence came up as a side issue in one of A Braxton Hicks' inquests at the end of 1896:

Yesterday, at the Battersea coroner's Court, Mr. A. Braxton Hicks held an inquiry into the circumstances attending the death of GEORGE ALBERT MOYSTON, aged 61 years, a pensioner from the Grenadier Guards, lately residing in Balfarn-street, Battersea. It appeared that the deceased had been employed since his discharge from the Army in 1875 at the Army Clothing Depot, but he was obliged to leave there seven weeks ago in consequence of his age. He left with a bonus. Since he had been out of employment he had been somewhat depressed, but he never threatened to destroy himself. On the morning of the 22nd inst. his daughter heard a noise in his bedroom, and, the sound being repeated, after the lapse of a minute or two, the room was entered, and the man was found to have shot himself. In her evidence Edith Moyston, the daughter, said that her father kept the revolver in memory of his son, who committed suicide. A jury asked whether it was usual to return the weapons used by suicides to the relatives, as seemed to have been done in the case referred to. The coroner said that that was a curious point which had lately been brought before the law officers of the Crown by the Coroners' Society. Coroners had been advised that it was their duty to use their discretion, but they had a perfect right to retain weapons as part of the evidence. He always made it a practice to do so, although he might in certain cases after a time return some things, particularly if they were valuable and were likely to assist the relative pecuniarily. In this case, unhappily, the deceased out of a sentimental feeling retained the revolver as a keepsake...⁵⁷

As 1903 began, Alfred Spencer sent James Court to remove the records of E.A. Carttar from Catherine House in Greenwich. After undertaking what seems to have been considerable snooping, Court made his report:⁵⁸

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.

PUBLIC CONTROL DEPARTMENT

6TH January 1903

[Obscured print]

Removing articles [*illegible*] from the Late Coroners residence.

A. Spencer Esq.
Chief Officer.

Sir

I have [*illegible*] going to 31 [Blackheath] Road, and 'Miss Carttar', is away on business, which fact I discovered after a good deal of enquiring, there being no person in the home, I ascertained that 'Miss Carttar,' will return late today & leave again at 8.0 am tomorrow, I have therefore arranged to call on her at 7.30 tomorrow morning.

I am, Sir,
Your Obedient Servant
James Court
Coal Officer.

⁵⁷ 'Inquests', *The Times*, 29 December 1896.

⁵⁸ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, James Court to Alfred Spencer, 7 January 1903.

[Note in different handwriting] Court says there are about 2 loads of papers & sundries, & that he will require labourer to give him assistance & help with [minding corners]. [Signature illegible]

*The resolute coal officer made a second attempt the next day:*⁵⁹

Mr. Court states on calling at Blackheath Road to obtain the records of the S.E. District that Miss Carttar was away from the house from 8 am to 8 pm. Mr. Court called again this morning at 7.30 and saw Miss Carttar, who explained that there had been a demand from Kent for the Kent records and the [illegible] have to sort them, which would take a week.

Miss Carttar states her Solicitor has written last night to the Chief Officer.

7 Jan. 1903

[Illegible] 14th (Mr. Court at PC)

*Carttar's solicitor, Edward Wood, complained to Spencer about Court's visits:*⁶⁰

12 Burney Street Greenwich S.E.

6th Jan. 7. 1903

9 [illegible]

[Stamp faded] London County Council, [Public Control Department], [illegible] JAN 1903. [In pencil] 5192

Dear Sir,

Re E.A. Carttar deceased

[Miss] E Carttar has just brought me your letter [illegible] of this date & informed me that an officer sent by you - without notice to me or to her - has been at Catherine House with a cart & has also called on her eldest sister who is blind & [infirm] demanding delivery of the late Coroners' papers

These papers are very numerous and the London depositions have to be sorted out [and put] in order - a very [obscured] job & [Miss] E Carttar [obscured] a single lady living [alone] & engaged ['away from home' inserted] during the day in getting her living & cannot get through this work for some days

I only heard from Mr. Oswald this morning & these papers cannot be got ready for delivery until next week when I will notify you to make an appointment for [illegible] purpose

The papers are quite safe & there is [no] reason for undue haste

Yours faithfully
Edw. N. Wood

PS you ought to have written to me & not worried [Miss] Carttar personally.

EMW.

Alfred Spencer Esq.
Public Control Dept
31 Spring Gardens
SW

*Spencer replied:*⁶¹

7th January, [190]3

Dear Mr. Wood,

I was very much surprised to get your letter of yesterday's date as to the inquisition of the late Mr. Carttar. We were quite content to wait the convenience of both Miss Carttar and yourself as to the removal of these papers, but the day before yesterday Dr. Oswald called upon us and stated that Miss Carttar desired us to receive the papers at once as she was giving up the house. At some inconvenience I sent an officer with a vehicle together with the accompanying letter to Miss Carttar.

We will now wait until we hear from you that it is quite convenient to Miss Carttar and yourself for the papers to be removed.

⁵⁹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, unsigned account regarding James Court's attempts to retrieve records of Edward Arundel Carttar, dated 7 January 1903.

⁶⁰ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Edward N Wood to Alfred Spencer, [6] January 1903.

⁶¹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, unsigned letter to Edward Wood, 7 January 1903.

Yours faithfully,
[Unsigned]

E. N. Wood Esq.
12, Burney Street.
Greenwich. SE

Wood arranged a time for Court's return:⁶²

[Illegible note in purple ink]

12 Burney Street, Greenwich, S.E.

10th January 1903

[Stamped, faded] London County Council, Public Control Department 11 JAN 1903. [In pencil] (5)296

Sir

re E A Carttar decd.

I am much obliged by your letter of the 7th with enclosure [obscured] now inform [‘you that if’ inserted] you will send your officer with a vehicle to Catherine House at 2.30 on Wednesday the 16th my client will hand over to him, upon his giving receipt, the Coroners’ papers &c. as arranged.

Yours faithfully
Edw. N. Wood
[Handwritten note] I will try.

An unsigned draft or copy of a letter, presumably from Alfred Spencer to Walter Schröder:⁶³

[11th] January, [190]3

Dear Mr. Schröder,

Thanks very much for the trouble you have taken relative to the inquisitions &c. of inquests held by the late Mr. E. A. Carttar.

I am in communication with Mr. E. N. Wood, and he will advise me when the papers &c. can be removed, which will probably be in about a week.

Yours faithfully,
[Unsigned]

W. Schroder Esq.
Telegraph Hill.
Hampstead. NW

Spencer confirmed the date of removal with Wood:⁶⁴

13th January, [190]3.

Dear Sir,

I have to acknowledge the receipt of and to thank you for your letter of the 10th instant relative to the inquisition papers of the late Mr. Carttar, and to inform you that I have arranged for an officer to be in attendance at Catherine House on Wednesday next the 14th instant at 2.30 o’clock, in order to receive the papers on behalf of the Council.

I am, Dear Sir,
Yours faithfully,
[Unsigned]

E. N. Wood Esq.
12, Burney Street.
Greenwich. SE

⁶² LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Edward Wood to Alfred Spencer, 10 January 1903.

⁶³ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, unsigned letter to Walter Schröder, [11] January 1903.

⁶⁴ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, unsigned letter to Edward Wood, 13 January 1903.

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.

PUBLIC CONTROL DEPARTMENT

14TH January 1903

[Obscured print]

Papers, Weapons, etc, of the late
Mr. Carttar, Catherine House.

A. Spencer Esq.
Chief Officer.

Sir,

I have [illegible] removing the whole of these things this morning to Newington Office, & giving 'Miss Carttar,' a receipt for the same. There was enough in all to fill my conveyance full twice, 'Miss Carttar was present while I removed the things & said, when I handed her the receipt that she thought an official receipt would be sent her from Spring Gardens.

I am Sir,
Your Obedient Servant
James Court,
Coal Officer.

Spencer thanked Miss Carttar for her donation:⁶⁶

16th January, [190]3

Madam,

Mr. James Court, the officer instructed by me to remove from you the official documents etc. connected with inquests in the South Eastern District held during the Coronership of your late brother Mr. E. A. Carttar, has reported that he has received the same on behalf of the Council, and I now beg to tender the thanks of the Council for the trouble you have [smudged word] enough to take in the matter.

I am, Madam,
Your obedient servant,
Chief Officer.

Miss Carttar,
Catherine House,
31, Blackheath Road.
SE

Spencer reported his plans for Carttar's records, both written and physical, to the Public Control Committee. As we've seen, the evolving procedure was for the Council to obtain the records of deceased coroners and store them in the respective coroner's court. Where there was no court yet constructed, records were deposited with the local weights and measures office. However, sometimes even temporary accommodations were not quite prepared to receive the records. This was the case now that the Council had obtained E A Carttar's records:⁶⁷

TO THE PUBLIC CONTROL COMMITTEE.

----- CUSTODY OF INQUISITIONS. -----

I present correspondence which I have had with Mr. E. N. Wood the Solicitor for the administration of the estate of the late Mr. E. A. Carttar Coroner, offering to hand over to the Council the inquisition papers etc. in connection with inquests held in the South Eastern District. On behalf of the Council I have accepted the offer, and the papers etc.

⁶⁵ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, report of James Court to Alfred Spencer, 14 January 1903.

⁶⁶ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer to Miss Carttar, 16 January 1903.

⁶⁷ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, report of the Chief Officer to the Public Control Committee, 23 January 1903.

which are very numerous were removed from the residence of the late Coroner on the 14th instant and are now stored at the Weights and Measures Office, Union Road, [Newington]. When the new Coroners Court at Greenwich is completed the records should be removed to that Court, and perhaps the Committee will authorize the Architect to provide the necessary fittings to take the papers etc. The fittings should afford accommodation for existing papers, and also for future records of inquests.

Chief Officer.

A carbon copy of a memorandum from Dr George Danford Thomas illustrates the financial relationship between coroner and the LCC, and how coroners' courts were utilized:⁶⁸

COPY.

Coroners Office,
20, Brunswick Square, [WC]
8th March, 1904.

re Coroners Court, Paddington.

I write to ask if there would be any objection to the Coroner using the coroners Court, or rather one or two of the ante-rooms, for official purposes other than the immediate holding of the statutory inquests, and utilizing the room as offices [daily], for receiving the Constables' reports for investigating cases and interviewing persons previous to an inquest, as well as in those cases in which no formal inquest will be held. I have contemplated making this request for some little time past, and I am encouraged to do so from an idea I entertain that it would be agreeable to the wishes of your Council that the Court should be utilized as much as possible for such purposes rather than the residence of the Coroner, or private offices. If such permission were granted to me I should establish my office at the Court and keep it open to the public from 10 am to 4 pm daily, and I should be prepared to supply such extra furniture etc as I might require. You will remember that already I have supplied a range of bookshelves for holding the bound volumes of evidences and inquisitions (the records of the Court). I should be willing also to make arrangements with the Court keeper for any additional services I may require, as well as for extra cleansing of the room in use, so that no extra expense should be incurred by the Council. My chief object in making these suggestions is that I think that if the preliminary investigations and considerations could take place at the Coroners Court greater formality would be observed and decisions arrived at, tending to lessen somewhat the number of formal inquests required to be held, and might be productive of initiation by other Coroners. Probably you will be so good as to submit my proposition to your Committee and favour me with a reply.

Yours faithfully,
(sd) Geo. Danford Thomas,
Coroner.

The Greenwich Inspector of Weights and Measures informed Spencer that his office was now prepared to receive Carttar's documents:⁶⁹

[Handwritten note obscured]

THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES OFFICE,
LAMB LANE, BRIDGE STREET,
GREENWICH, S.E.

9.3.1904

[From]

[E.E.] [followed by illegible word]

INSPECTOR OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.

To The Chief Officer

[Obscured]

The muniment room in loft here is completed.

The Inquest Reports [rc re] now stored at the Newington weights & measures office could be returned.

Yours obediently,

[E.E.] [followed by illegible word]

68 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, memorandum from Dr. George Danford Thomas, 8 March 1904.

69 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Inspector of Weights and Measures to the Chief Officer, 9 March 1904.

Section 13(4).
Violations, Impudence and
insubordination.

Secretary of State,
10/49.

HOME OFFICE
Cromwell House,
Stamford Street,
S.E.1.

24th. February, 1942.

Restriction of Coroners' records.

In view of the present acute shortage of paper, the question has been raised whether some reduction might be made in the prescribed periods for which certain Coroners' records should be preserved; these periods are set out in a Schedule dated the 18th June, 1931, approved by the Master of the Rolls and are as follows:-

<u>Class of Documents.</u>	<u>Periods after which documents may be destroyed.</u>
1. Warrants for Summoning Jurors and panels of Jurors.	1 year
2. Reports of Coroners' Officers.	15 years
3. "Depositions" or notes of Evidence; and accounts of Exhibits, e.g. Reports of Post Mortem Examinations, Medical Certificates, etc.	15 "
4. Inquisitions and Riders.	15 "
5. Miscellaneous Papers.	15 "

The Secretary of State has considered the matter and is of the opinion that as regards documents falling within the classes numbered 2, 3, 4 and 5 above, the period of preservation may be reduced to 10 years, provided that in cases in which an open verdict or a verdict of murder or manslaughter by an unknown person has been recorded the documents are retained for at least the full period of 15 years. In his view however there could be no objection in any case to the destruction of the documents after 10 years, if the matter had been cleared up by subsequent criminal proceedings.

The Inspecting Officers of the Public Record Office have been consulted in pursuance of Regulation 50M of the Defence (General) Regulations and have expressed their formal agreement.

There is no obligation to destroy documents of the classes mentioned and they may be preserved if in any case their destruction appears to be inadvisable on the ground, for example, that they are of permanent public interest.

Scheduled documents will be destroyed under the direction of the Controller of the H.M. Stationery Office and application for the removal of documents should be made to the Director of Supplies (SP) H.M. Stationery Office, 481, ~~Charing Cross Road~~ Oxford Street, W.1. as in the case of offices within 10 miles of Charing Cross, or to the Super-

Original motion as amended carried.

Resolved accordingly.

(c) is (d.) Resolved--That the several recommendations of the Committee, (c) to (d) inclusive, be adopted.

(e.) On the motion to adopt the recommendation of the Committee, (c).

A few days later, the Greenwich Inspector reported that the transfer was completed:⁷⁰

THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES OFFICE,
LAMB LANE, BRIDGE STREET,
GREENWICH, S.E.

16.3.1904

[From]

[E.E.] [followed by illegible word]

INSPECTOR OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.

To The Chief Officer

[Obscured]

The Coroner's papers [rc] from the Newington office have been deposited in the muniment room of this office.

Yours obediently,

[E.E.] [followed by illegible word]

The Chief Officer and a representative of the Duchy of Lancaster conferred upon the storage of the more current records of sitting coroners:⁷¹

[30th] March [190]4

[Obscured]

TO THE PUBLIC CONTROL COMMITTEE.

Custody of Coroners' Inquisitions.

I have to report that I have been consulted by Mr. [Hardy], a representative of the Duchy of Lancaster Office, relative to the custody of the inquisitions of inquests held by Coroners of the Duchy of Lancaster. The patents of all Duchy of Lancaster Coronerships contain a provision requiring the inquisitions to be annually deposited at the office of the Duchy, but hitherto this has hardly ever been observed and the right has not been insisted upon. Difficulty has now however been experienced owing to the fact that Coroners have regarded the inquisitions as their private property, and their executors have on the death of the Coroner refused to give up possession of the inquisitions. The committee will remember that similar difficulty at the time occurred in London, and that in recent appointments of County Coroners the Committee have, before appointing the Coroner, arranged that he is to regard his official papers as County documents and keep them in one of the [Courts] provided by the council.

The only Coroners of the Duchy of Lancaster in London are Mr. Troutbeck, who is Coroner for the Savoy, and Mr. Wyatt Coroner for Clapham, and in both these districts there is accommodation for keeping inquisitions at one of the Council Courts. The Duchy of Lancaster consider this arrangement a desirable one as regards inquest records of the Duchy, and they suggest that the Council should write asking the Duchy to require those of their coroners whose districts are within the County to deposit their inquisitions as County records at one of the Coroner's Courts belonging to the Council in lieu of at the Duchy of Lancaster Office as provided for in the Patent of Appointment.

I recommend

That a communication be addressed to the Clerk of the Council of the Duchy of Lancaster in accordance with this report.

Chief Officer.

⁷⁰ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Inspector of Weights and Measures to the Chief Officer, 16 March 1904.

⁷¹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, report of the Chief Officer to the Public Control Committee, [30] March 1904.

Meanwhile the Council considered George Danford Thomas' request:⁷²

[Encircled '27' handwritten]

Memo. as to letter from Dr. Thomas.

This Court contains a fitting belonging to the Council in which the records of inquests for the district are kept, and Dr. Thomas at his own expense provided another fitting to keep past records. There does not seem to be much objection to the Coroner doing as is suggested, providing that the use is confined to one or two of the ante-rooms, and that the Council is not put to any extra expense in the matter.

Alfred Spencer replied to Danford Thomas:⁷³

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.

COPY

PUBLIC CONTROL DEPARTMENT.

31 Spring Gardens, S.W.

31st March. 1904

Dear Sir,

Paddington Coroners Court.

I submitted to the Public Control Committee at their last meeting your letter of the 5th instant requesting permission for the use by the Coroner of some of the rooms of the above Court for official purposes other than the immediate holding of inquests, and the Committee have decided to accede to the request, provided that it be understood that such permission may be terminated at the pleasure of the Council and that the Council is not put to any extra expense by reason of such use of the Court.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

(sd) Alfred Spencer.

Chief Officer

G. Danford Thomas Esq. MD
20, Brunswick Square.
WC

Danford Thomas acknowledged the Council's conditions:⁷⁴

COPY.

CORONERS OFFICE.

20, Brunswick Sq.

5 April, 1904.

Dear Sir,

re Coroner's Court, Paddington.

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter granting permission on behalf of the Control Committee for the use of the Court for official purposes other than the immediate holding of inquests. I have duly noted the conditions imposed, viz; that the said use is at the pleasure of the Council and that no extra expenses shall be chargeable to the Council.

Trusting you are keeping well.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yrs. Faithfully,

(sd) Geo. Danford Thomas.

Alfred Spencer Esq.

⁷² LCC/PC/COR/1/55, 'Memo. as to letter from Dr Thomas', unsigned and undated.

⁷³ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Alfred Spencer to Dr George Danford Thomas, 31 March 1904.

⁷⁴ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Dr George Danford Thomas, 5 April 1904.

*Typed correspondence, the Clerk of the London County Council to the Clerk of the Council, Duchy of Lancaster:*⁷⁵

[Encircled '22' handwritten]

(copy).

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, 18 APR 1904

12th April, 1904.

Sir,

With reference to the interview with your representative, Mr Hardy, had with the Chief Officer of the Public Control Department of the Council on the subject of the custody of the inquisitions of inquests held by Coroners of the Duchy of Lancaster, I am directed to inform you that the Council will be glad if you will be so good as to arrange, as suggested by Mr Hardy, for the Coroners of the Duchy whose districts are within the County of London to deposit annually, as provided for in the patents of their appointments, their inquisitions of inquests as county records at one of the coroner's courts belonging to the Council, instead of at the office of the Duchy of Lancaster.

If this course is adopted, it appears to me that the most convenient court for the Coroner for the Savoy would be the Westminster Coroner's Court, Horseferry Road, while that for the Coroner for Clapham would be the Clapham Coroner's Court, Hetherford Road.

I am, Sir,
Your Obedient Servant,
Clerk of the Council.

The Clerk of the Council,
Duchy of Lancaster.

*The Council sent a representative to inspect George Danford Thomas' proposed alterations at the Paddington court:*⁷⁶

[Obscured]

PADDINGTON CORONERS COURT.

[Encircled '20' handwritten]

I attended the above Court on Saturday last at the request of the [obscured] of the Court, in order to [illegible word struck out] examine the proposed [alterations] to be made in order to make the Court of service to the [obscured] as an office for the district.

[I] found that the fitting supplied by the Council for the records, and which has been kept hitherto in the witness-room, has been removed to a local builders' premises for the purpose of being cut in two. The object of this alteration is to enable the two halves to be placed in the Coroner's room, one half is to go between the windows and the other half on the right side of the doorway. The fitting after being cut will be painted to match, so that it will in future look like two fittings.

The only other alteration is that the shelves, provided at the Coroner's expense, in his own room are to be continued round the room, instead of finishing at the fire-place.

I ascertained that no cutting away of the premises will be necessitated.

[Signature of MR Swainston]

25th Apl. 1904

*The Duchy of Lancaster formally agreed that the records of the Lancaster coroners could be deposited at the coroners' courts in Westminster and Clapham:*⁷⁷

Duchy of Lancaster Office, W. [S.]
[28th] April, 1904.

[Obscured]

Duchy of Lancaster Liberty Coronership within
The Administrative County of London.
(Coroners' Inquisitions)

I am directed by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to state for the information of your Council that after considering the representations made by your Council and communicated in your letter of the 12th instant respecting the safe custody and preservation as public documents of Inquisitions taken by the Coroners of Liberties of the Duchy of Lancaster within the administrative County of London, he concurs in the views of your Council.

⁷⁵ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Clerk of the London County Council to the Clerk of the Council, 12 April 1904.

⁷⁶ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, report by Swainston, 25 April 1904.

⁷⁷ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, William R Smith to the Clerk of the Council, [28] April 1904.

The Chancellor has accordingly caused it to be intimated to Mr. John Troutbeck, the Duchy Coroner for the Liberty of the Savoy, and to Mr. George Percival Wyatt, the Duchy Coroner for the Liberty of Clapham that he will consider the deposit of Inquisitions taken before them within the Duchy Liberties at the Westminster Coroner's Court in Horseferry Road and the Coroner's court, Hetherford Road, Clapham, respectively, as a sufficient compliance with the requirements of their respective patents in relation to the return of Inquisitions.

I am,

Your obedient Servant,
(Sgd.) WM. R. SMITH.

The Clerk of the
London County Council.

The following document, unsigned, addresses the types of evidence George Danford Thomas stored at Paddington coroner's court as well as the costs associated with their storage:⁷⁸

11th Nov. 1904

[Obscured] have had an interview this afternoon with the Chief Officer on the [obscured] of Paddington Coroners Court, and its use by the Coroner, Dr. Thomas, [obscured followed by 'purposes'] other than connected with the immediate holding of inquests. [Obscured] stated with reference to the letter from the Mortuary Keeper [obscured] room in question desired by the Coroner for the storage of old [obscured] revolvers, ropes, etc was one now in the possession of the caretaker, [obscured] it is said is not used by him, and that the Coroner proposed paying [the] caretaker a small sum for keeping the room clean.

[The] Chief Officer said that he personally had no objection to the use of the room, and that it must be a matter of [arrangement] between the Coroner and the caretaker.

The Chief Officer then raised the question of the extra charge to the Council in respect of extra coal and light, due to the [uses] of the Court by the Coroner. Mr. Schroder [sic] admitted that it was equitable that some payment should be made by the Coroner, and the Chief Officer then said that he did not desire that money should pass, but suggested that the coroner should purchase such extra coal as would be equal to the extra cost to the Council of increased use of coal and light, and to this Mr. Schroder on behalf of the Coroner assented.

Mr. Schroder was then asked a question as to the manner in which juries were summoned in the Central Districts, and he stated that local directories were purchased annually, and the jury summoned therefrom.

A communication between the Clerk of the Council to the Under Secretary of State regarding the fees coroners charged for copies of depositions:⁷⁹

[18th March, 1909.]

Sir,

Your letter of the [date illegible], asking whether the Council has issued regulations proscribing the fees to be charged by Coroners for supplying copies of depositions of inquests and for certified copies of the verdicts returned by the juries, has been laid before the Council's Public Control Committee.

In reply I [typo struck out] have to inform you that no such regulations have been made, the Council having been advised that it had no power [s' struck out] to make them. I am however instructed to forward, for the information of the Secretary of State, the enclosed copy of reports by the Public Control Committee and resolutions passed by the Council with regard to the amendment of the law relating to Coroners' inquests and the [regulation] of the payment of Coroners' jurors.

By reference to the resolutions in favour of the amendment of the law passed by the Council on 13th February, 1896, it will be seen that it is suggested (Resolution 7)

'That proper records of all cases dealt with by the Court, whether inquests be held or not, should be kept as records of the County'.

If this [amendment] be adopted it may to some extent enable difficulties [obscured] which may have arisen with regard to the [supply] [followed by obscured word] depositions and verdicts to be [illegible].

⁷⁸ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, unsigned carbon copy dated 11 November 1904.

⁷⁹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Clerk of the Council to the Under Secretary of State, tentative date of 18 March 1909.

It is hoped indeed that the whole [*illegible*] in support of which deputations from the Council have waited on the present Lord Chancellor and his predecessor, may commend itself to the Secretary of State. The Lord Chancellor has promised to give the proposals his careful and sympathetic [*'consideration' struck out and 'attention' handwritten above it*] and the Council ventures to submit them for the consideration of the Secretary of State in order that, if he concur in the desirability for an amendment of the law, his powerful influence may be exerted in favour of early legislation to give effect to the [*illegible*] of amendments or much portion of it as may be thought desirable.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,
Clerk of the Council.

The Under Secretary of State
[Obscured]

Inserted into the file is the following newspaper clipping that likely confirmed the Council's resolution to acquire records in the interests of preservation:⁸⁰

['59' handwritten top left corner of blank page]

[Handwritten notation above cutting]

Daily Chronicle
3 June 1909

STATE DOCUMENTS LOST.

Supposed Curious Theft from the
King's Household Coroner.

For a week past Scotland Yard officials, in conjunction with detectives of the City Police, have been investigating the mystery surrounding the strange disappearance of a number of valuable legal documents from the office of Mr. A. W. Mills, the well-known solicitor, of Chancery-lane.

Considerable anxiety is felt in connection with this matter, as Mr. Mills holds the position of coroner to the King's Household, and amongst the missing documents are a number of official depositions and the original certified inquisitions of inquests held upon members of the staff of the King's Household who had died within the Royal domain.

It is believed that the papers in question were stolen from the office. The police have been furnished with the description of two men who had been noticed in the vicinity of Mr. Mills's office shortly before the loss was discovered.

Following the interest in copies of depositions, the file picks in the middle of communications between James Ellis and Walter Schröder. Ellis seems to have been interested in acquiring a copy of the depositions from the inquest into the death of a woman named Agnes Ruiz:⁸¹

[Printed letterhead]

CORONER'S OFFICE.
Manor Place,
Paddington Green,
18 June 1909

Dear Mr. Ellis/

The inquest referred to was held by Dr. Danford Thomas. I will see him & ascertain whether he has any objection to your seeing the notes of the evidence taken. I may, however, say that copies have been asked for by various persons - principally [*illegible*] representatives & [*illegible*].

Yours truly,
Walter Schröder

⁸⁰ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, newspaper clipping, 'State Documents Lost', *Daily Chronicle*, 3 June 1909.

⁸¹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Walter Schröder to James Ellis, 18 June 1909.

George Danford Thomas replied the same day, restricting accessing and suggesting those interested in acquiring depositions should simply trouble themselves to attend the relevant inquest:⁸²

[Printed letterhead]

CORONER'S OFFICE.
Manor Place,
Paddington Green,
18 June 1909

Dear Mr. Ellis/

[W.] Schröder has informed me of the visit of your clerk re the Ruiz case.

Copies of depositions are supplied - or inspection of the [illegible] given - only when required for legal purposes or to some relative unable to be present at the inquest. In the case in question it was conducted in the usual way. A report of the death from the Constable with a letter from Dr. [Blaud] [obscured word] of inquests are posted [inside] this Court every [day] & members of the Press [obscured] to copy the notice.

If I can supply you with any further information, I shall be glad to do so. [Illegible] should you like to come yourself I shall be pleased to see you here on Monday next at 10 o'clock am.

Yours faithfully

Geo. Danford Thomas

James Ellis Esq

Ellis's assistant replied:⁸³

19th June, [190]9

Dear Sir,

Your letter to Mr. Ellis relative to the Ruiz case has been received here this morning. Mr. Ellis is however out of town until Monday, and I fear that ['even' inserted] if the letter he be sent to him he will be unable to be at Paddington at 10 am on Monday.

I will however take care that he has the letter on his return, and he will probably communicate with you on the matter.

Yours faithfully,

Chief Assistant.

G. Danford Thomas, Esq. M.D.
Coroners Office,
Manor Place,
Paddington Green. W.

*Inserted into the file is the following clipping from **The Daily Mail**. Apparently, as Schröder told Ellis, there was great interest in the Ruiz depositions that was frustrated by Danford Thomas's policy of closure:⁸⁴*

[Handwritten] The Daily Mail, 21st June, 1909.

REPORTING OF INQUESTS.

Mr. Bowerman, M.P. will today ask the Prime Minister whether, in view of the present state of the law regarding the publication of depositions taken at inquests, he will consider the advisability of proposing legislation which will transfer from the coroners to the Home Office the power to decide whether depositions shall be made public or not.

In answer to an inquiry by Mr. [illegible], M.P., followed by a supplementary question concerning the recent inquest on the death of Mrs. Agnes Ruiz, the Home Secretary stated that the facts, if submitted to him, would be placed before the Departmental Committee now considering the law and practice affecting coroners' inquests.

82 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Dr George Danford Thomas to James Ellis, 18 June 1909.

83 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Assistant to Dr George Danford Thomas, 19 June 1909.

84 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, newspaper cutting, 'Reporting of Inquests', *Daily Mail*, 21 June 1909.

A second cutting follows:⁸⁵

[Handwritten] The Daily Mail, 22nd June, 1909.

REPORTING OF INQUESTS.

Mr. Gladstone informed Mr. Bowerman, M.P., yesterday, that he saw no necessity of proposing legislation dealing with the power of coroners to decide whether depositions should be made public.

It was the usual practice of coroners to admit the Press and the public to inquests, but depositions formed part of the records of the court, and it was for the court to decide what persons should have access to its records.

Mr. Bowerman: Is he not aware that in the past few days a metropolitan coroner has refused to allow depositions to be made public?

Mr. Gladstone: No, sir; I think the hon. gentleman is under a misapprehension.

Coinciding with the interest in the Ruiz depositions was a Committee on Coroners, which warrants further study:⁸⁶

[Handwritten over cutting]

RCC

? June 1909

27.a. Depositions at Coroners' inquests - The Chief Officer to make inquiry into the question raised by the Chairman as to the unsatisfactory method [*illegible insert*] at inquests held by Dr. Wynne Baxter in the taking of depositions.

*During this same period, government began to examine the preservation of public records of all types. We include an April 1910 excerpt from **The Times**' coverage of debate in the House of Commons;⁸⁷ although the discussion was more concerned with records of antiquity and poor preservation techniques, it nevertheless provides a cup of courage to the optimistic researcher who quests for Victorian documents:*

PUBLIC RECORDS.

Mr. LLEWELYN WILLIAMS (Carmarthen Boroughs, Min.) called attention to the state of the public records. By the Act passed in 1838 public documents and records were entrusted to the keeping of the Master of the Rolls and deposited in Rolls Chapel, Chancery-lane. In 1862 by Order in Council the provisions of the Act were extended, but no inquiry was made by any responsible official into the working of the Act or the condition of the muniments. In this matter we were far behind all other countries. Two recent occurrences marked the importance of this subject in relation to scholarship and historical research. Professor Wallace, an American scholar, came over to London and among the records discovered papers long hidden in the office which threw a flood of light on the private life of Shakespeare while living in London. Up to the time of the discovery it had been supposed that everything that could be known of Shakespeare was known, and yet an American made this discovery among the unknown, uncatalogued contents of the Record Office. Still more recently another discovery was made by Mr. Jenkinson, from which it was made clear that historians were mistaken in presuming that what had been called the model Parliament was that of 1295, and that, in fact, it dated from 20 years earlier - 1275. Facts like these were of immense importance to scholars and every student of history, and it was clearly the duty of a Government to promote historical research. In 1877 another Act gave for the first time power to public officials to determine for themselves, without the advice of scholars and experts, whether it was necessary to preserve any document. No doubt they had exercised their power with great discrimination, but there was a great fear among students that in the working of the Act valuable documents had been or might be destroyed. Ever since 1877, now and again, public documents had been on sale, documents that must have come from State Departments. It was very well known that a document increased in value as time went on, and that which had little value now might be most valuable to historical students a century hence.

Personally, he was interested in Welsh history, and from that point of view was impressed with the importance of the records of the Courts of Great Session established in 1543 - two in North and two in South Wales. The records were kept until 1830, when the old courts were swept away, and the ancient records valuable to every student of social history were sent to the Record Office, he thought in 1841. There they had remained uncatalogued, uncalendared, and any one who wanted to find anything about an old law suit to throw light upon any occurrence in history could not get hold of the document without the expenditure of an immense amount of time, of years, perhaps. Then, again, while the Historical MSS. Commission had published 100 volumes relating to England, 70 to Scotland, and 40 to Ireland, there had been no attempt to publish matter specially interesting to students of Welsh history.

85 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, newspaper cutting, 'Reporting of Inquests', *Daily Mail*, 22 June 1909.

86 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, cutting from report regarding unsatisfactory depositions of Wynne Baxter, hand-labeled 'R.C.C. June 1909'.

87 'Public Records', *The Times*, 29 April 1910.

He urged the Government to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the whole working of the 1838 Act.

The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER (Mr. Lloyd George) said he agreed with his hon. friend that the time had come when something more ought to be done to calendar and catalogue these very valuable documents, which contained material that would be an important contribution to the history, not merely of Wales, but of other parts of the country. (Hear, hear.) A good many of these documents were in a state of hopeless confusion, and any historian who was working up the period might have to spend years of precious time in tracking a small and almost insignificant document. He thought, therefore, his hon. and learned friend had made out a good case for an inquiry. He would bring the matter to the notice of his colleagues in the Government, and especially the Prime Minister, who in his capacity of First Lord of the Treasury would be more particularly responsible. His hon. friend might rest assured that he had got the sympathy of the Government in this matter. His hon. friend had discharged a public duty in calling attention to this matter, and historians would have good reason to be grateful to him if in future greater facilities should be given to them...

Following the death of George Danford Thomas in 1910, his son (and Deputy City Coroner) Francis Danford Thomas approached the Council regarding the disposal of his father's papers. We see that Victorian records continued to be legally relevant well into the twentieth century.⁸⁸

[Printed letterhead]

City Coroner's Office.
Golden Lane.

London, E.C. [Month and day handwritten] Sept 26th 1910

Dear Mr. Ellis

Can you kindly tell me if any deceased Coroner's Depositions of Inquests in London, have come into the possession of the Council by purchase or gift?

My late Father purchased his predecessor's, but I believe the late Mr. Braxton Hicks' are in his widow's possession -

I am of opinion that the County should pay for the stationery [illegible] & binding as is done here, & that they should be County Records, and under certain circumstances I should be glad, as my Father's executor, to [start] such a collection, for in [my] case, if, as I read in the papers, my Father's district is to be divided, they cannot be divided, if each new Coroner desired to purchase them -

I cannot easily estimate their value either, for Probate though a few months ago a question of some hundreds of pounds turned, I believe, on the evidence of a witness in the eighties! -

You kindly sent a message through somebody, W. Schröder told me regretting my Father's death - I have had some hundreds of letters, which show me what a unique man he was, and those members of the Council who have written me appear to regret the action [obscured] in February, [illegible].

[However it is all over] [obscured word] and after [many] years of anxiety & [illegible], I shall be very glad at last to have a holiday.

I held my last case at your asylum on Saturday, [illegible] Clifford Smith was in great form!

The work at Southwark Court a few days ago was done with great [expedition]. I only had to sit in the lavatory! on one occasion - There was a govt. foreman on the job - Dr. Waldo talks about returning this week, as I [hole punch renders word illegible] I finish up there & here on Tuesday -

Yours sincerely,

F. Danford Thomas

88 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Deputy City Coroner Francis Danford Thomas to James Ellis, 26 September 1910. FDT wrote this document against a painful backdrop. In ill health, his father, George Danford Thomas, the Central Middlesex coroner, unsuccessfully petitioned the LCC in February 1910 to grant him a pension and lessen his workload by dividing his district. The LCC refused this request and attempted to discard the ailing coroner completely by appealing to the Lord Chancellor to remove him from office. Their somewhat ungracious attempt failed; the ailing Danford Thomas remained in office until he died in August 1910 during the Crippen inquest. Walter Schröder became coroner for Central Middlesex and appointed his predecessor's son, Francis Danford Thomas, as his deputy. Francis Danford Thomas also served simultaneously for many years as Deputy Coroner for the City of London and the Borough of Southwark under Samuel Langham's successor, Dr Frederick Waldo. In 1920, he became Coroner for the Tower of London. He served as President of the Coroners' Society in 1929 and a later term as its Honourable Secretary, also editing a standard work on coronial practice. He succeeded Waldo as City Coroner in 1932, serving until his death in 1939 (*The Times*, 11 May 1939).

The following document provides a brief history of the Council's acquisition of records:⁸⁹

[Handwritten] ? reply to
Mr. Thomas'
Letter

CUSTODY OF INQUISITIONS.

[There] appears to be little doubt that the inquisitions are by [prescriptive] right the property of the Coroner, but the records of the late Dr. Macdonald were in 1902 handed over to the Council by his deputy, Mr. Hodgkinson and are kept at the Shoreditch Coroners' Court. Mr. Langham, the Clapham Coroner, adopted a similar course on his retirement in 1901, and these are at the Clapham Court. On the death of Mr. E.A. Carttar, Coroner for Greenwich, his executrix also followed this precedent, and the records are kept at the Greenwich Court. Mrs Hicks, on the death of her husband Mr. A. Braxton Hicks in 1902 handed over the papers, and they are at the Battersea Court.

It will thus be seen that in recent years it has been the custom on the death of the Coroner to deposit the papers with the County as records, and it may also be noted that the Duchy of Lancaster in 1904 informed the Franchise Coroners for the Savoy and Clapham that they would consider the deposit of inquisitions at the Westminster Coroners Court⁹⁰ and the Clapham Coroners Court respectively as a compliance with the requirements of their respective [patents] in relation to the return of inquisitions.

The Coroners for the South Western and South Eastern Districts who were appointed in 1902 agreed to keep their records as County records.

A special fitting was provided at the Paddington Coroners Court, and I always understood that it was the intention of the Coroner, Dr. Thomas that the papers should be County records, but Mr. Schroeder will probably be able to throw some light on this.

With regard to the question of purchase, Mr. Diplock, the son of the late Coroner for the Western District offered to sell his father's records for £25, but he was informed that the Council had no money with which to pay for them.

27.9.10

[Signature] W. R. [Swainston]

Having assessed past practice, reply was made to Francis Danford Thomas:⁹¹

27th September, [19]10.

Dear Mr. Danford Thomas,

In answer to yours of the 26th instant I think I can say that no depositions of Coroners have come into the possession of the Council by purchase, as the Council has no funds out of which such a purchase could be made [but may] have by gift. The records of the late Dr. Macdonald were handed over to the Council in 1902, the Clapham records of the late Mr. Langham in 1901, while those of the late Mr. Carttar and Mr. Braxton Hicks have also come into the possession of the Council. On appointment the Coroners for two of the present London districts agree to keep their records as County records.

I was under the impression that your father had intended to leave the depositions as County records, but I gather from your letter that this was not the case.

I am sure that everyone regrets the circumstances preceding your father's death, and I hope that the rest you are about to take will enable you to recover from the trouble and anxiety through which you have passed.

Yours sincerely,

[Unsigned]

F. Danford Thomas, Esq.
City Coroner's Office,
Golden Lane, E.C.

⁸⁹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Custody of Inquisitions, 27 September 1910. This appears to be an internal memorandum.

⁹⁰ The LCC was also the financial authority for the Westminster coroner.

*Sitting coroner John Troutbeck requested that his records be removed from his office to the coroner's court:*⁹²

[*Illegible note*]

Westminster and South Western District.

[*Obscured*]

[6th] October 1910

Coroner's Office.

[Phillimore] Chambers
21 Great Smith Street
Westminster [S.W.]

[*Stamped*] London County Council, (*observed*) 7 OCT 1910. [*Red stamp*] 2643

[*Stamped*] London County Council, Public Control Department, 10 OCT 1910. [*In pencil*] 939

The Comptroller
London County Council

Dear Sir/

The Inquisitions relating to Inquests in the South Western District have now greatly accumulated. Will you be good enough to make arrangements to have them removed to the Battersea Court as heretofore.

I shall be obliged if you will give me a clear days notice.

Yours faithfully

J. Troutbeck

*Howard notified the Chief Officer:*⁹³

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.

[*Obscured*]

COUNTY HALL.
SPRING GARDENS, S.W.
7th October, 1910.

MEMORANDUM FROM THE COMPTROLLER,
To The Chief Officer, public Control Department

I enclose a letter, dated 6th instant, from Mr. Coroner Troutbeck, relative to the disposal of the inquisitions in his possession.

The letter has been acknowledged, with an [intimation] that it will doubtless receive early attention at your hands.

N. E. Howard
[*Illegible*]

[*Stamped*] London County Council, Public Control Department, 10 OCT 1910. [*In pencil*] 938

[*Handwritten in red ink*] Arranged by [L Lane] with [*illegible boxes*] Friday 11.10.10

*Carbon copy of report concerning removal of John Troutbeck's records:*⁹⁴

[12th] October, 1910.

I this day attended at Mr. Troutbeck's office No. 21, Great Smith Street, S.W., and superintended the removal of Inquisitions to the Westminster and Battersea Coroners Courts.

Mr. [*illegible*] (Mr. Troutbeck's representative) said he understood the Council had promised to provide a cupboard for the storage of Inquisitions at the Westminster Court, and he suggested the dimensions should be [*'equal to' inserted*] [7' 12'], and a clear depth of [20'].

[*Illegible signature*]

91 Reply to Francis Danford Thomas, 27 September 1910.

92 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, John Troutbeck to Comptroller, [6th] October 1910.

93 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, memorandum from N E [Howard] to the Chief Officer, 7 October 1910.

94 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, report regarding removal of John Troutbeck's records, [12] October 1910.

With the death of George Danford Thomas, the Council acquired a significant cache of records related to Central London, spanning the careers of Edwin Lankester, William Hardwicke, and George Danford Thomas:⁹⁵

[Stamped: Obscured]

[Handwritten '57' encircled]

[Printed letterhead]

CORONERS OFFICE.

Manor Place

Paddington Green

14th November 1910.

Dear Sir,

I have in my possession the depositions of inquests held by the late Dr. Lankester (and his Deputy) from July 1862 to 1874, which 'under certain conditions' were given to me by his widow.

In accordance with my oft expressed opinion that inquest documents should be County Records, I advised handing over to the London County Council the papers relating to inquests taken by Mr. Braxton Hicks and Mr. E. A. Carttar, and on similar grounds, I desire to formally present to the Council the volumes of depositions belonging to Dr. Lankester, and all documents connected with inquests and preliminary inquiries during my holding Office as Acting Coroner.

By so doing, - combined with the gift of the papers referred to in the letter (herewith enclosed) from the Executor of Dr. Danford Thomas [in] so far as Central London is concerned, the Council will become possessed of the inquisitions taken since April 1889, and (save for [three] short periods) of deposition papers from 1862 to November 2nd last year which latter date the inquest documents are [reserved] as County Records by the undertaking relative to my appointment as Coroner.⁹⁶

In view of such appointment, the only condition I make in reference to the papers within my gift is that during my lifetime I have free access to them for all purposes.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature of] Walter Schröder

James Ellis Esq.

Chief Officer

L.C.C. Public Control Department

A joint letter from Walter Schröder and Francis Danford Thomas (executor to coroner Danford Thomas) offered the Council custody of records, with a stipulation:⁹⁷

Coroner's Office,

Manor Place

Paddington Green, W.

14th November 1910

Dear Sir

As Executor of the late Dr. Danford Thomas, who was Coroner for the Central District of London and Middlesex for nearly thirty years, the question of the future custody of the Inquest Records, has naturally engaged our attention.

Dr. Thomas on his election in 1881, purchased from the widow of the late Dr. Hardwicke, his predecessor, the bound Records of Inquiries from 1874-1881, and the present ones become, with these, the personal property of his widow.

We have consulted with Mrs. Danford Thomas on this matter, and she agrees with us that such Inquisitions and Depositions should undoubtedly be held in official custody as County Records, and so far as London is concerned she desires us to hand them over to the London County Council subject to the right of herself or her authorized nominee to have access to them for any proper purpose.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature] Francis Danford Thomas

[Signature] Walter Schröder

To

J. Ellis Esq.

Chief Officer

Public Control Department

London County Council

⁹⁵ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Walter Schröder to James Ellis, 14 November 1910.

⁹⁶ Schröder presumably refers to the 1895 resolution by the LCC that incoming coroners should agree that their records were county records as opposed to private papers.

⁹⁷ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Walter Schröder to James Ellis, 14 November 1910.

*The Chief Officer replied:*⁹⁸

14th, November, [19]10.

Dear Mr. Schröder,

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of the 14th. Instant, with reference to the Inquisitions belonging to the late Dr. Danford Thomas and yourself, and shall have much pleasure in laying them before the Public Control Committee. I have no doubt the Committee will be pleased to accept the offer of the Inquisitions, and to respect the conditions attached thereto,

Yours very truly,

[Unsigned]

Walter Schröder, Esq.,
Coroner's Office,
Manor Place,
Paddington Green, W.

*Following is a typed internal memorandum, the Chief Officer to the Public Control Committee, with a cutting, also typed, adhered to the top of the document and obscuring the date:*⁹⁹

[Cutting] iv. Coroners - Inquisitions for Central District. Offer of Mr. Schroder [sic] and executors of the late Dr. Danford Thomas to hand over to the Council the inquisitions relating to inquests held in the Central District to be accepted and Mr. Schroder and the executors to be thanked for their action in the matter. (Clerk of the Council will write). Arrangements to be made for the removal of the documents and the provision of fixtures for their storage and the necessary expenditure sanctioned for this purpose. [End cutting].

To the
[No. 57]

PUBLIC CONTROL COMMITTEE

CORONERS

I beg to report that a letter dated the 14th. ultimo has been received from Mr. Walter Schroder, Coroner for the Central District, forwarding a letter from himself and ['from a' struck out] one from the executors of the late Mr. Danford Thomas, offering to hand over to the Council the inquisitions relating to inquests held by Dr. Lankester, Dr. Danford Thomas, and by himself (Mr. Schroder) subject to any authorized [nominees] having access to them for a proper purpose. I recommend

That this offer be accepted, subject to the provision specified; and that authority be given for any expenditure in connection with their removal and the provision of fixtures for their storage.

Chief Officer.

*A handwritten letter, on Coroner's Office stationery, informed Ellis of the death of coroner John Troutbeck and requested the removal of his records:*¹⁰⁰

Westminster and South Western District.

[Obscured]

[Handwritten note] to [Swainston]

Coroner's Office.

[Phillimore] Chambers
21 Great Smith Street
Westminster [S.W.]

March 13th 1912

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, [illegible] MAR 1912. [In pencil] 2232

98 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, letter to Walter Schröder, 14 November 1910.

99 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, internal memorandum, Chief Officer to the Public Control Committee. Because a cutting has been adhered over the document, the date is difficult to make out but is probably 2 or 3 December 1910.

100 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Secretary to the Personal Representatives of the Late John Troutbeck to James Ellis, 13 March 1912.

[James] Ellis Esq.

Dear Sir,

I do not know whether it is necessary, but it may be that I should give you notice that Mr. John Troutbeck the Coroner for Westminster and the South West District of London died on the 29th February last.

The Inquisitions and Evidence taken at Inquests held by the late Coroner should be removed to the Courts at Westminster and Battersea respectively. They will be packed and ready for removal at the end of this week and I should be obliged if [*'you' inserted*] would make a convenient to have them removed as [*heretofore*] early next week.

Mrs. [*illegible*] Troutbeck the Widow, is applying for Grant of Letters of Administration to the Estate and as soon as obtained the Grant shall be produced for Registration at your Office.

Yours faithfully

[*Illegible signature*]

Secretary to the Personal
Representatives of the late John
Troutbeck

[*Notation in red ink*] 16/3/[12] Arrangements made by [L Lane] for conveyance of the papers.

19/3/[12] Papers conveyed to Battersea and Westminster by [Meaney] this day.

After the First World War, available storage space started to become an issue. Wynn Westcott suggested a limited period of retention:¹⁰¹

MEMORANDUM.

[*Illegible note*]

[*Printed letterhead*] WM. WYNN WESTCOTT, Esq., J.P.,
H.M.'s Coroner for North-East London,
396, CAMDEN ROAD,
LONDON, N. 7.

[*Handwritten notation obscured*]

February 8 1919

[*Faded stamp*] London County Council, Public Control Department, 10 FEB. 19. [*In pencil or ink*] 3231

J. Ellis Esq.

Dear Sir.

Please to represent to the Public Control Committee that as Coroner for North East London, I have been without storage cupboards for papers since the end of 1916. The L.C.C. provided cupboards from 1890 to 1916 - 26 years - I find there is very little use in storing these old Inquests papers for more than ten years. I want 3 cupboards now for 1917-1918 and the current year. I suggest that the 3 oldest lots be destroyed & then one year's papers, each subsequent year - unless indeed the L.C.C. prefers to [*obscured*] more cupboards for my [*use*] but the walls of the Room are already pretty well filled.

Yours faithfully

Wynn Westcott
Coroner

J. Ellis Esq

101 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Wynn Westcott to James Ellis, 8 February 1919.

*Whereas the initial motive to acquire records had been to preserve them, now the Public Control Committee considered its options, including Westcott's suggestion that older records should be destroyed:*¹⁰²

14th February, 1919.

[Obscured]

To the

Public Control Committee.

Coroners.

I have to report the receipt of an application from Mr. W. Wynn Westcott, coroner for North East London, for more storage accommodation for inquest records. He states that he has not been able to properly store these records since 1916, the cupboards provided by the Council at the Shoreditch Coroner's Court and which contains the papers from 1890 being full. Accommodation for the storage of inquisitions has been provided at several courts.

There appears to be little doubt that the inquisitions taken at inquests belong to the Coroner, but in recent years it has been the practice on the death of a coroner for his inquisitions to be deposited with the Council as records. One of the recommendations passed by the Council for the amendment of the Coroner's Law is:-

'The proper records of all cases dealt with by the court, whether inquests be held or not, should be kept as records of the County.

Every newly appointed Coroner in the County of London agrees to regard his records of inquest as County records and not as the property of the Coroner.

There are about 7,000 inquests held annually in the County of London and if the records of these enquiries are to be kept indefinitely considerable storage accommodation will be required.

If the records when they pass out of the custody of a Coroner are to be regarded as County records they would then strictly speaking come under the custody of the Clerk of [the Council]. Provision for their storage was contemplated in [obscured] new County Hall.

It would now seem desirable to consider if [any] [obscured word] what can be destroyed so as to make room for current [records. If] the Committee concur I will ascertain the views of the [coroners].

Chief Officer.

[Adhered to the second sheet of the report is the following cutting, typed.]

20. Coroners - Chief Officer to ascertain the views of the various coroners as to the destruction of old depositions in order to make room for current inquest records.

*Ellis asked Schröder for his opinion:*¹⁰³

25th, February, 1919.

[Obscured]

Dear Mr. Schroder [sic],

At [some] of the Coroners' Courts the accommodation for the storage of coroners' inquisitions is insufficient and it is necessary to consider whether additional storage should be provided or the older inquisitions removed. As you are aware the inquisitions taken in the County of London are now regarded as County records and it was intended to assign a room in the new County Hall for the storage of the older inquisitions, leaving those of present years at the several Courts in the care of the Coroners. It seems now desirable to consider whether this is necessary. Certainly the collection of such records and their storage in such a manner as would make them available for reference will entail some expense. The alternative is the provision of accommodation at each Coroner's court for their storage over a reasonable period of years and the destruction of the older papers as this accommodation becomes congested.

Will you be good enough to give me your views on this matter?

Yours faithfully,

[Unsigned]

Walter Schroder, Esq.,
Coroner's Office,
2, Branch Hill Side,
N.W.3.

¹⁰² LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Report of the Chief Officer to the Public Control Committee, 14 February 1919.

¹⁰³ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, unsigned letter to Walter Schröder, 25 February 1919.

Schröder replied:¹⁰⁴

[Obscured stamp]

[Handwritten notation] Mr. Parker

Coroner's Office
2 Branch Hill Side
N.W.3.

Feb. 26th 1919

Dear Mr. Ellis/

I am definitely of opinion that the Coroners' records should not be destroyed. If you will let us know the most convenient days & hours to find you disengaged for a short time, I will come & see you on an early date.

Yours faithfully

Walter Schröder

J. Ellis Esq.

[Handwritten notation] Say Monday [any] morning or afternoon next week if he will [illegible].

An assessment was made of expressed interest in the records, drawn from correspondence spanning 1906-1919:¹⁰⁵

[Day and month obscured] 19.

[C.O. rept.] that the general opinion [illegible] mgmt. Coroners is that coroners Inq. [illegible insert] shd. not be destroyed but be deposited with the council as records.

[8] 2.19

Mr. Wynn Westcott stated 'I find there is very little use in storing these old Inquest papers for more than ten years'

14.11.10

Letter from Mr. Walter Schroeder offering to hand over to the council the inquisitions held by Dr. Lankester, Dr. Danford Thomas, and himself.

26.9.10

Dr. F. Danford Thomas:- 'I cannot easily estimate their value [either, for] Probate, though a few months ago a question of some hundreds of pounds [turned] I believe on the evidence of a witness in the eighties'

1.4.15

Letter from a firm of solicitors asking ['for information' crossed out] whether the council had any information as to a man who left home in 1839 + had not since been heard of.

26.9.06

Letter to firm of solicitors with reference to inquisitions of inquests held by late Dr. Diplock in 1889.

104 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Walter Schröder to James Ellis, 26 February 1919.

105 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, handwritten notes detailing correspondence dating 26 September 1906-1919.

Heeding the collective advice of Schröder and other coroners, Ellis suggested additional storage. The newly constructed County Hall was designated as an additional storage facility to relieve over-burdened coroners' courts:¹⁰⁶

31st October, 1919.

[Obscured]

To the

PUBLIC CONTROL COMMITTEE.

CORONERS.

The Committee, on the 14th February last, directed us to ascertain the views of the various Coroners as to the destruction of old depositions in order to make room for current inquest records. It may be recalled that this matter was raised on an application from the Coroner for North East London for more storage for such records.

In accordance with this instruction, I have ascertained that the general opinion amongst coroners is that Coroners' Inquisitions should not be destroyed but be deposited with the Council, as records.

As the Committee are aware, one of the recommendations passed by the Council for the amendment of Coroners' law is that proper records of all cases dealt with by the Court, whether inquests be held or not, should be kept as records of the County.

Having regard to the opinion expressed by Coroners, I have made arrangements for Coroners' Records to be removed from certain Courts where there is no more room to store additional papers to outlying offices under the control of the Council until they are transferred to the new County Hall in due course.

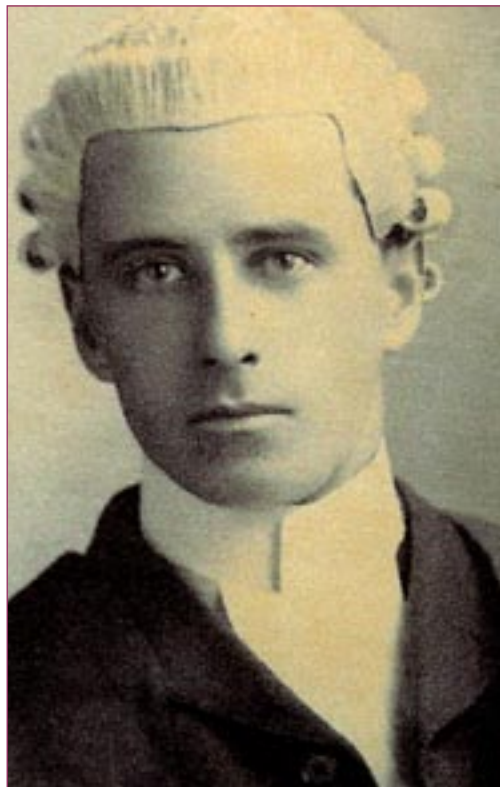
Perhaps the Committee will approve of this action?

[Cutting] 31. Coroners - Action taken by Chief Officer in arranging for coroners' old records to be removed from certain coroners' courts to some of the Council's outlying officers pending ultimate transfer to the New county Hall, approved. [End cutting]

[Partially obscured by cutting] Chief Officer



Wynne Baxter c1920 ©Adam Wood



Son Francis William Baxter ©Adam Wood

¹⁰⁶ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, internal memorandum, Chief Officer to the Public Control Committee, 31 October 1919.

In the aftermath of Wynne Baxter's death in October 1920; his son and executor, Francis Baxter, approached the Council:¹⁰⁷

Gloucester House
19, Charing Cross Road, W.[C.D.]

[30th] January, [19]21.

the Clerk of the Council.

[Illegible reference.]

In reply to your memorandum of the [19th] instant, with reference to the offer of Mr. F.W. Baxter to hand over to the Council, as Public Records, 840 foolscap volumes of evidence kept by his father, the late Mr. Wynne E. Baxter, as Coroner for East London. I have to inform you that it is the practice to regard inquisitions, taken in the County of London, as County Records, and it is a condition imposed by the Council on a Coroner on his appointment that he should agree to keep records of all cases enquired into by him, whether or not inquests are held by him therein, and that he should regard such records as County Records. In these circumstances I am of the opinion that the offer of Mr. Baxter should be accepted and that he should be thanked for presenting the records to the Council. In connection with this matter I may add that the accommodation for the storage of such inquisitions is insufficient and I have therefore to ask if it is possible that storage room could be found for them at the new County Hall with a view to their immediate transference thereto.¹⁰⁸

Once again, storage of records presented a logistical problem:¹⁰⁹

2nd February, 1921

Dear Mr. Oswald,

The question of the accommodation for the storage of Coroners' inquisitions as County records is now under consideration by the Clerk of the Council. Before coming to any decision in the matter the Clerk would like to have some idea of the size and nature of the records and has suggested that a bound volume thereof might be submitted for his inspection. I believe that the only bound volume of inquisitions, other than those of the late Mr. Wynne Baxter which have not yet been handed over to the Council, are stored at the Paddington Coroner's Court and I should therefore be glad if you could kindly allow the bearer to have a volume containing the records for a year for inspection by the Clerk of the Council.

Yours faithfully,
Chief Officer.

H. R. Oswald, Esq., M.D.

Apparently, though, storing the overflow records at the County Hall was to be a temporary solution. Now that the Council was confronted with Baxter's massive reserve of documents, the Clerk of the Council issued a report that revived Westcott's suggestion that older documents should be destroyed:¹¹⁰

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

[Examination] of members only - H.O. 370.
London County Council.

16.2.21

CORONERS' RECORDS.

Local Government (Records and Museums) Sub-Committee.
Report by Clerk of the Council.

16th February, 1921.

A letter has been received from Mr. F. W. Baxter, son and executor of the late Mr. Wynne E. Baxter, coroner for East London, offering to present to the Council 840 volumes of inquisitions belonging to the late coroner.

This is in accordance with a custom which has obtained many years for coroners' records to be handed over to the Council on the death or retirement of a coroner, and the Committee will probably therefore decide to accept Mr. Baxter's offer. Several such accumulations of records are now in the Council's custody and are stored in various buildings under the control of the Chief Officer of the Public Control Department who is unable to find accommodation for more. The 840 volumes now offered must, if accepted, be stored at the New County Hall where I can make temporary arrangements for their accommodation.

¹⁰⁷ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, memo to the Clerk of the Council, January 1921.

¹⁰⁸ We tentatively estimate that Wynne Baxter's 840 volumes weighed about two tons. See H Neville Stafford to the Chief Officer, 14 November 1938.

¹⁰⁹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer to H R Oswald, Esq, MD, 2 February 1921.

¹¹⁰ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Report of the Clerk of the Council, 16 February 1921.

It will be seen that if the policy of accepting these inquisitions is continued a very large demand is likely to be made [on] storage accommodation. I have, therefore, thought it desirable to put the Committee in possession of the facts connected with coroners' inquisition.

Coroners' inquisitions are commonly regarded as, by prescriptive right, the property of the coroner, who has been accustomed to charge fees when searches and extracts have been made in probate and other cases. In these circumstances their preservation may be grievously imperiled after the coroner's death, and the necessity for some alteration in the law has been pointed out on many occasions.

The Royal Commission on Public Records recommended that provision should be made for the better custody and inspection of *inter alia* coroners' records. In their report they called attention to the grave danger to which the records were exposed under the present system of custody, and expressed the opinion that the records 'of this ancient Court' should be placed in some known and permanent custody. In the course of the Commission's investigation the fact was elicited that the coroners' returns sent to the Home Office for statistical purposes are destroyed after five years; therefore, should the original records be destroyed, no record other than certain statistical information would be available for after years.

The Council's notion in the matter has, up to the present, been consistently in the direction of the preservation of coroners' records. On 12th February, 1895, and again on 30th October, 1908, the Council passed resolutions on the subject of the amendment of the law relating to coroners, and on both occasions recommended that 'proper records of all cases dealt with by the court, whether inquests be held or not, should be kept as records of the County'. In 1908, it began the practice, since continued, of making it one of the conditions of appointment of a coroner that he should keep records of every inquest and regard such records as county records. The same [practice], it may be observed, obtains in certain other areas, (e.g. see Report of Royal Commission on Public Records, 3rd Report A p.4.X2., in which it is suggested that the transfer should be made compulsory by Act of Parliament).

It is now customary for the executors of deceased coroners to hand over to the Council the records of inquests held by the coroner, and sometimes also of those accumulated by his predecessors. These collections were often very large and the pressure on the existing accommodation became acute. As a result, in 1919 the Public Control Committee considered the question of the necessity for retaining the records beyond a certain number of years. The coroners were consulted and the Chief Officer, Public Control, reported that their general opinion was that coroners' inquisitions should not be destroyed, but be deposited with the Council as the evidence given before the Royal Commission on Public Records. A large amount of evidence was given, for example, as to who should preserve the records, but their permanent preservation appears to have been treated as a matter of course.

I question whether the value of these records is commensurate with the very large amount of accommodation required for them, and in my opinion, it would be desirable to fix a period beyond which they need not be preserved. Such period should not, I suggest, exceed 25 years. In this connection, I may point out that coroners' records are classified in the Royal Commission's report as 'local records of a public nature' and are placed in the same category as those of various judicial and quasi-judicial bodies. Should, therefore, the Sub-Committee favour the suggestion which I have put forward, the advice of the Master of the Rolls should first be sought as to the propriety of adopting such a course.

(Sgd.) JAMES BIRD,

Clerk of the Council.

The County Hall, S.W.

Bird also wrote to the Public Control Committee on the subject of Baxter's records:¹¹¹

PUBLIC CONTROL
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
18TH February, [1921].

The Executor of the late Mr. Wynne E. Baxter, for East London, has offered to present to the Council 840 volumes of inquisitions belonging to the late coroner. The Local Government Committee are advised that this is in accordance with the custom which has obtained for many years for coroners' records to be handed over to the Council on the death or retirement of a coroner and the Committee have therefore decided to accept the offer.

In connection with this offer the Committee have considered the general question of the preservation and destruction of coroners' records, and they are informed that several series of coroners' records are in various buildings under the control of the Chief Officer of the Public Control Department and that he is unable to find accommodation for further records.

¹¹¹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Clerk of the Council to the Public Control Committee, 18 February 1921.

The Local Government Committee understand that in 1919 the Public Control Committee considered the question of the necessity for retaining the records beyond a certain number of years, and that it was then ascertained that the general opinion of the [*handwritten insert: 'coroners was that'*] coroners' inquisitions should not be destroyed, but be deposited with the Council as records.

In view, however, of the growing demand which is likely to be made on storage accommodation if the present practice of accepting the inquisitions be continued, the Local Government Committee have decided to consult the Master of the Rolls on a proposal that coroners' records should be preserved for a period of 25 years only. Before communicating with the Master of the Rolls, however, the Local Government Committee will be glad to consider any observations which the Public Control Committee may wish to make on the subject.

Clerk of the Council.

Now attitudes and policy shifted:¹¹²

[*Handwritten notation*] Mr Parker

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

[*Faded stamp*] London County Council, Public Control Department, [10 MAR 1921].

PUBLIC CONTROL

4TH March, [192]1.

With reference to the memorandum dated 18th February, 1921, from the Local Government Committee, the Public Control Committee desire to state that they have no observations to offer on the question of the preservation and destruction of coroners' records.

Clerk of the Council.

The Public Control Committee stated their position as follows:¹¹³

4th March, 1921.

To the

Public Control Committee.

Coroners.

No. 44.

With reference to the memorandum from the local Government Committee as to the custody and storage of coroners' records, I concur with the suggestion of the Clerk of the Council that such records should not be preserved beyond a period of 25 years.

Chief Officer.

Local government began to discuss which documents should be destroyed:¹¹⁴

Chancery Lane, W.C.2.

17th March, 1921.

[Dear] Sir,

Your letter of 11th March with reference to Coroners' inquisitions (0.9500) came up for consideration at a meeting of the Committee of Inspecting Officers yesterday. The General opinion was that it would be possible to frame a schedule under which a large number of these documents could properly be destroyed. It was, however, considered that it was inadvisable to come to a final decision without seeing specimens of the records in question.

¹¹² LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Report of the Clerk of the Council, 4 March 1921.

¹¹³ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer to the Public Control Committee, 4 March 1921.

¹¹⁴ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, C T Flower to the Clerk of the Council, 17 March 1921.

It was therefore decided to meet again soon after Easter and I am instructed to ask whether one of your officers, who is conversant with these documents and their use, could attend and bring with him a convenient number of the various classes of records named in your letter.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
(Sgd.) C.T. FLOWER.
one of the Inspecting Officers.

The Clerk of the Council,
London County Council,
County Hall,
Spring Gardens,
S.W.1.

A typed memorandum from the Deputy Clerk of the Council to the Chief Officer, Public Control Department:¹¹⁵

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.

[Handwritten notation in pencil] Mr Parker

MEMORANDUM FROM

THE ['Deputy' inserted] CLERK OF THE COUNCIL.,
[In ink] Please attend say Wednesday at 11 a.m.

TO

The Chief Officer, Public Control Department.

7th April, 1921.

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, *[date stamp illegible]*

[Illegible print] please quote G. 1320 *[rest illegible]*

Coroners' Records.

I have received a telephone message from the Public Record Office stating that the Committee of Inspecting Officers are ready for the conference on the question of the preservation of coroner's records suggested in their letter of 17th March. The letter has, I understand, been shown to you, but I am sending you a copy of it. From the wording of the last paragraph, it would appear necessary that an officer should be sent to the conference who is competent to answer any questions as to the use of these documents and their relation to coroners' duties. I shall be glad therefore if you will make arrangements accordingly and let me know what day and hour next week will be convenient to suggest, so that I can make the appointment. My representative will of course accompany your assistant.

I am informed that you are taking steps to collect some representative specimens of these records.

[Illegible signature]

['Illegible initials]

Another reference to a conference at the Public Records Office:¹¹⁶

11th. April, [192]1.

The Deputy Clerk of the Council.

[Obscured]

Coroners' Records.

In reply to your memorandum of the 7th, instant, I have arranged for an officer of this department to attend the suggested conference at the Records Office, relative to the preservation of these records, on Wednesday, the [12th], instant, at 11 a.m., if that will be convenient to the Officers concerned.

¹¹⁵ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, memorandum from the Deputy Clerk of the Council to the Chief Officer, Public Control Department, 7 April 1921.

¹¹⁶ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, unsigned memorandum to the Deputy Clerk of the Council, 11 April 1921.

The Home Office issued a non-obligatory, discretionary, schedule for destruction of records:¹¹⁷

[Stamped but illegible] [handwritten] 23

[Illegible] [Pursuant to] the Public Record Office Act, 1877, Section One, this Schedule [illegible] submitted to both Houses of Parliament for a period of not less [illegible] beginning the 28th of June, 1921.

[Illegible]

[Sterndale], M.R.

[Stamped] London County Council, 11 August 21 1. [Handwritten] 12244.

PUBLIC RECORDS.

CORONERS' RECORDS.

SCHEDULE

CONTAINING

A LIST AND PARTICULARS

Of CERTAIN CLASSES of DOCUMENTS existing and accruing in the offices of Clerks of County Councils and Town Clerks or elsewhere, which are not considered of sufficient public value to justify their preservation in the Public Record Office.

Prepared as required by the Public Record Office Act, 1877, Section One, and in accordance with Rules made pursuant thereto, approved by Orders in Council dated respectively the thirtieth day of June, 1890, and the nineteenth day of May, 1899.

LIST AND PARTICULARS

Of Classes of Documents of a later date than 1874 which it is proposed to destroy.

Class of documents.	Periods after which documents may be destroyed.
1. WARRANTS FOR SUMMONING JURIES AND PANELS OF JURIES	1 year.
2. REPORTS OF CORONERS' OFFICERS	15 years.
3. 'DEPOSITIONS' OR NOTES OF EVIDENCE; AND ACCOMPANYING EXHIBITS, e.g., REPORTS OF POST MORTEM EXAMINATIONS, MEDICAL CERTIFICATES, &c.	15 years.
4. INQUISITIONS AND RIDERS	15 years.
5. MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS	15 years.

{From the 1st of January, 1875, certificates of all inquisitions have been sent to the local Registrars and the details have been entered in the Registers of Deaths, which are permanently preserved.

Statistical information is extracted, and printed by the Home Office.

¹¹⁷ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Recommended Schedule of Destruction of Coroners' Records, received by the LCC, 11 August 1921.

The files of proceeding sin cases where the inquisition charges a person or persons by name with murder, with being accessory before the fact to murder, with manslaughter or (in the City of London) with arson, are sent to the Clerks of Assize and their disposal is regulated by a Schedule of 17th July, 1919, dealing with records existing and accruing in the offices of Clerks and Assize.}

Settled as above,

H. C. MAXWELL LYTE, HUBERT HALL, R. C. FOWLER, CHARLES JOHNSON, C. T. FLOWER,	Inspecting Officers of the Public Record Office.
---	--

18TH June, 1921.

[Illegible reference number] Wt. 0923-195. 759. 7/21. Sir J.C. & S. Op. 32.

*The Home Office offered the Clerk of the Council further particulars:*¹¹⁸

[Stamped] LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL 13 Aug 21 1 32244

[Stamped] [Illegible] MUSEUMS [Illegible] COMMITTEE OF -7 OCT 1921 LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

[Handwritten initials, illegible] (July) 23 (1[illegible])

12th August, 1921.

(Dear Sir,)

I am directed by the Secretary of State to send you the enclosed copy of a (schedule), approved by the Master of the Rolls, containing a list and particulars of certain classes of coroner's Records of a later date than 1874 which, not being considered of sufficient public value to justify their preservation in the Public Record Office, may be destroyed by their custodians after the expiration of the [periods] stated in the last.

The schedule does not impose any obligation to destroy, and documents of any [illegible] mentioned in the schedule should be preserved if destruction appears to be [inadvisable].

As regards documents accruing hereafter, the Secretary of State is asking [coroners] to keep separately any records they may think specially worthy of preservation for longer periods than those named in the schedule: in particular [any] relating to:

- (i) inquests on persons unknown;
- (ii) open verdicts;
- (iii) verdicts of murder, manslaughter, etc., against persons unknown.

Arrangements for disposing of documents for destruction may be made with the following: -

[Illegible] the London Postal Districts	the Inspector of Waste, H.M. Stationery Office, C/o The London Waste Paper Co. Ltd. King's Arms Wharf, Belvedere Road, S.E.1.
---	---

[Illegible] a radius of 20 miles of Manchester	the Superintendent, H.M. Stationery Office, Gorse Street, Hollinwood, Oldham.
--	---

[Illegible] the two areas named.	the <u>Head</u> Postmaster of the district.
----------------------------------	---

I am,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,
[Signature] H. B. Simpson

[To] Clerk of the County Council.

118 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, H B Simpson to the Clerk of the London County Council, 12 August 1921.

Local Government No. 84.

Examination of members only - S.O. 370.

Agenda Paper No. [blank].

London County Council.

CORONERS' RECORDS.

Local Government (Records and Museums) Sub-Committee.

Report by the Deputy Clerk of the Council.

1st September, 1921.

On 18th February, 1921, the Local Government Committee agreed that 25 years should be the limiting period for the preservation of coroners' records, subject to the concurrence of the Public Control Committee, and to reference being made to the Master of the Rolls, the documents in question being of a quasi-judicial character.

The Public Control Committee expressed their concurrence and a communication was sent to the Master of the Rolls, by whom the matter was referred to the Committee of Inspecting Officers of the Public Records. By appointment an officer of my department, with an officer of the Public Control Department, attended, at the Public Record Office, a conference with the Committee, presided over by the Deputy-keeper (Sir H. Maxwell-Lyte). A representative of the Home Office was also present. Specimens of the documents were laid before the Committee, and as a result of the conference, an interim schedule was issued, subject to the agreement of the coroners, suggesting periods varying from 1 year to 15 years as the limits of time after which the respective classes of documents might be destroyed.

A letter has now been received from the Home Office enclosing a final schedule (submitted to Parliament as required by the Public Record Act, 1877) fixing 15 years as the limiting period. It will be noticed that the authority is permissive only and not obligatory. The Sub-Committee will therefore doubtless wish to recommend that all coroners' records in the custody of the Council, existing or accruing, be destroyed after the lapse of 15 years from the date of the documents. The exception of 1 year in the case of Warrants might be regarded as negligible, on account of the amount of time which sorting would involve. I suggest, however, that an exception be made in respect of the documents mentioned in the third paragraph of the Home Office letter, should any such documents be hereafter separately deposited with the Council.

The paragraph in question reads:-

'As regards documents accruing hereafter, the Secretary of State is asking Coroners to keep separately any records they may think specially worthy of preservation for longer periods than those named in the schedule, in particular any relating to:-

- (i) inquests on persons unknown:-
- (ii) open verdicts;
- (iii) verdicts of murder, manslaughter, etc., against persons unknown'.

There are not likely to be many documents of this description.

(Sgd.) MONTAGU H. COX,
Deputy Clerk of the Council.

The County Hall,
S.W. 1.

¹¹⁹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Report by the Deputy Clerk of the Council to the Local Government (Records and Museums) Sub-Committee, 1 September 1921.

LONDON BELOW GROUND

A HONEYCOMB OF TUNNELS.

THE BURIED RIVERS.

(By Our Special Correspondent.)

Explosions in subterranean passages and the bursting of water mains in various parts of London, apart from the loss and inconvenience they have caused, have drawn attention to the underground honeycomb of conduits, galleries, tunnels, and borings beneath the city of various sorts and serving various purposes. Some of these tunnels carry hidden rivers, which, rising in the suburbs, make their way through buried courses to the Thames. Others accommodate gas and water mains and cables of various kinds. The London county Council owns altogether some seven miles of these service subways, and the question arises whether it is desirable to extend the system considerably. Various explanations have been given for the large number of fractures recently in buried rosins and pipes - change of temperature, shifting soil, and vibration caused by traffic being among them. Obviously pipes carried in a tunnel are less likely to suffer damage than those buried in the ground, while they are also more easily repaired. The construction of a complete system of subways for all the buried pipes and cables under London, however, would be very costly, not to speak of the difficulty of co-ordinating all the interests concerned.

The underground rivers and springs contribute their share to the subterranean troubles of London. It was once a city of wells and spas, and abundant water naturally lies or flows or bubbles below the surface, breaking out every now and again, as it has done recently at several points, through the discipline of pipes and conduits. Wells and rivers do not dry up conveniently at the best of the builder; and if they cannot be disposed of they must be accommodated, and so used or diverted that they will contribute to his plans or, at the worst, not interfere with their execution. A stream develops its force from its persistence; and though in itself it may be of meagre dimensions it can become, by reason of its continual flow, formidable to the builder. Thus, as was recently recorded in *The Times*, the entire area round about the Mansion House, which was built almost on the bank of the old Wallbrook, had to be piled, and even after that underpinning was necessary. Pumping is almost continuously carried on in the Poultry, opposite, where a well 49ft. deep collects the water. When a certain level is reached a pump automatically comes into operation and discharges at the rate of some 2,500 gallons a day into the sewer. Sixty years ago the building of the National Safe Deposit at the corner of Queen Victoria-street was only made possible when the same brook had been harnessed. The London County Hall stands in a neighbourhood which was once a tract of marshland, with wells of medicinal water in the neighbourhood. It was built on a concrete raft 5ft. thick, but continual pumping is necessary to keep the foundations dry...

The Council continued to acquire documents. In 1930, Walter Schröder prepared to resign while the Council contemplated a reorganization of districts. The following letter was sent to Schröder and other coroners with districts in the County of London:¹²¹

[29th] April, 1930.

Dear Sir,

Coroners' Records.

As you are aware, a reorganization of the districts of N.E. Coroners in London is in contemplation and in the circumstances you may wish to consider as to the disposal of some of your records. If you agree to transfer any of these documents to the Council will you kindly have them placed in order, tied up and labeled clearly and inform us when they are ready. I will then arrange for them to be collected and handed over to the Council's Record Keeper. Depositions which are more than 15 years old can be destroyed.

Yours faithfully,

[Unsigned]

Sir Walter Schröder, K.B.E.,
34, Heath Street,
N.W.3.

[Handwritten notation] also sent to:- [Guthrie] Whitehouse Waldo, Couburn, Oddie, Smith & Oswald.

¹²⁰ 'London Below Ground', *The Times*, 22 January 1929.

¹²¹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, unsigned letter to Walter Schröder, [29] April 1930.

Coroner A. Douglas Couburn's clerk replied to the Chief Officer as follows:¹²²

[Obscured]

[Printed letterhead] Camberwell Coroner's Court.
St. George's Road.
Peckham, S.E.15.

1st May 1930.

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department [date stamp illegible, stamped reference number illegible]

Dear Sir,

Coroners' Records.

I am directed by H.M. Coroner to acknowledge with thanks your letter of 29th April & to state that Depositions for the years 1923-26 have been tied up & labeled & ready for dispatch.

I should be glad if you could conveniently send for them any morning before 1.0 o'clock.

Yours faithfully,
[Signature of] N. Hollands
Secretary.

The Chief Officer,
Public Control Department,
The County Hall.
Westminster Bridge.

[Handwritten notation, faded and illegible]

The following correspondence from City Coroner (and Clapham coroner) Frederick Waldo provides a glimpse of the Corporation's attitude towards the City records and their historical importance:¹²³

[Addressee obscured]

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, 3 MAY 1930. [Additional stamp] (906)

HER MAJESTY'S CORONER
FOR THE
CITY OF LONDON
& THE
BOROUGH OF SOUTHWARK

Coroner's Office
Golden Lane,
City E.C.1

2 May, 1930.

Dear Sir,

Coroners' Records.

In reply to your letter of the 29th April, 1930, I was unaware that any reorganization of the Districts of [the] Coroners in London was in contemplation. Would you kindly inform me what is in contemplation, and whether such changes will effect my two jurisdictions [illegible] Coroner in the City of London and Borough [of] Southwark, [obscured] one of [illegible and obscured]. During the period [I have] acted as Coroner for [the City] & Southwark (29 years [this] June next) I have [obscured] all my Records bound [obscured] in separate volumes [kept] by wish of the Corporation of London in the City Archives, [&] which I have right of entry for examination of any of my Records. My suggestion to the Corporation was that the right & proper place for the [keeping] of my Records was in either the precincts of the Coroner's Court - a Court of Record - and that a vacant room - or portion of such room - next to my City office might [be] rendered [fire-resisting] for my bound volumes and where they would be readily accessible at any time [they] might be required - especially when sitting [obscured] Court with a jury [who] have, on occasion, been obliged to adjourn an inquest in order to obtain & examine Documents [from] the Guildhall.

[At] present with a small office only, I have insufficient room or safe accommodation for my Records - so that, under such circumstances, the City Archives serve as a substitute. Mr. [Vale] of the City Corporation is to keep their records, & not destroy any of them - even if [illegible] 15 or hundreds of years of age, such records are most useful to the Historian, & in writing on the subject of the Ancient Office of Coroner I personally obtained much useful information from the City & [illegible] Archives dating back [from] the 12th century.

Yours faithfully
F. J. Waldo
[Hon.] Senior Coroner for London.

122 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, N Hollands to the Chief Officer, 1 May 1930.

123 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, letter from City Coroner Dr Frederick J. Waldo, 2 May 1930.

Forgetting that the records of George Danford Thomas were already in the custody of the LCC, the Chief Officer approached Francis Danford Thomas:¹²⁴

[Obscured]

3rd May, 1930.

Dear Sir,

CORONERS' RECORDS.

As you are aware a reorganization of the districts of H.M. Coroners in London is in contemplation and in the circumstances you may wish to consider as to the disposal of your records.

I understand that a quantity of the records of the late Dr. Geo. Danford Thomas are now stored at the Paddington Coroners' Court and if you agree to transfer any of these documents to the Council will you kindly have them placed in order, tied up and labeled clearly and inform me when they are handed over to the Council's Record Keeper. Depositions which are more than 15 years old can be destroyed. [Initialed 'P.N.S.']

Yours faithfully,

[Unsigned]

Major F. Danford Thomas,
King's House,
Tower of London,
[E.C.3.]

An unsigned, typed letter to coroner A. Douglas Couburn spoke of the arrangements to collect his records:¹²⁵

[Obscured]

5th May, 1930.

Dear Sir,

CORONERS RECORDS.

With reference to your letter of 1st May, I have arranged for a vehicle to call at Camberwell Coroners Court at 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday next, the 7th inst., for the collection of your records.

Yours faithfully,

[Unsigned]

A. Douglas Couburn, Esq.,
Camberwell Coroners Court,
St. Georges Road,
PECKHAM, S.E.15.

[Handwritten note] 15 packages of depositions handed to [Mr.] [illegible] 7.5.30 [initialed 'PNS']

Francis Danford Thomas replied, warning that older records were still relevant:¹²⁶

4 Poplar Buildings
Temple [Inn].

[Printed] Mr. Parker
May 5th, 1930

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Committee, 7 May 1930. [In black ink] 1035

Dear Sir

When my Father died in 1910, Sir Walter Schröder and myself who were the joint executors of his will handed over all records of Inquests and reports to the London County Council, and I believe an acknowledgement of this letter was received by us from the late Chief Officer - I should be glad if you would collect them at your convenience but as they are all more than 15 years old it is apparently not necessary to retain them at all in your view - Sir Walter Schröder would tell you however that these old records of the past have often been asked for in inquiries concerning dead persons -

F. Danford Thomas

124 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, letter to Major Francis Danford Thomas, 3 May 1930.

125 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, letter to A Douglas Couburn, 5 May 1930.

126 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, letter from Francis Danford Thomas, 5 May 1930.

*The Chief Officer informed Waldo of the Council's redistricting plans and reminded him that the storage of his records was ultimately a matter for his discretion, as it was for all coroners, their relatives, and their executors:*¹²⁷

[Handwritten notation] This copy letter is also filed in C1 Coroners salaries & inquests [obscured]

6th May, 1930.

Dear Sir,

With reference to your letter of 2nd May, I set out below for your information certain recommendations agreed to by the Council on 30th July, 1929, concerning coroners' districts in the County of London:-

(a) That, in the opinion of the Council, the coroners' districts in the County of London should ultimately be reconstituted as follows :-

<u>No. District</u>	<u>Constituent metropolitan boroughs.</u>
1 Western ...	Hammersmith, Fulham, Battersea, Wandsworth, Chelsea.
2 Central ...	Westminster, St. Marylebone, Paddington, Holborn, Finsbury, Kensington.
3 Eastern ...	Shoreditch, Bethnal Green, Stepney, Poplar.
4 Northern ...	St. Pancras, Islington, Stoke Newington, Hackney, Hampstead.
5 Southern ...	Lambeth, Camberwell, Southwark.
6 South-eastern ...	Bermondsey, Deptford, Lewisham, Greenwich, Woolwich.

that the reconstitution should be brought into effect on the occasion of the occurrence of a vacancy in the office of coroner, subject as regards the franchise districts to such districts being incorporated from time to time in the several franchise districts; and that the Secretary of State for Home affairs be so informed and asked to favour the Council with his observations on the proposal.

(b) That, subject to the approval of the proposal specified each of the proposed six districts in the county of London, when constituted, be fixed at £1,700 a year inclusive, but that the salaries of the coroners of the Southern and Western districts be subject to deductions of £126 19s. 4d. and £59 8s. respectively, until the franchise districts of Southwark and Clapham are respectively incorporated in the Southern and Western districts.

The general approval of the Secretary of State was given to the scheme on 12th August, 1929.

The above-mentioned proposals do not in any way effect the coroner for the City of London.

As regards the storage of your records it is within the absolute discretion of the coroner as to where and how to [move] his records and the suggestion in my letter of 19th April, was only put forward because certain county coroners desired to be relieved of the custody of their depositions, etc.

Yours faithfully,

[Blue stamp] Signed by Chief Officer.

F. J. Waldo, Esq., M.D., J.F.,
Coroner's Office,
Golden Lane, E.C.1.

*The Chief Officer replied to Francis Danford Thomas:*¹²⁸

[Obscured]

8th May 1930.

Dear Sir.

Coroners Records.

I have to thank you for your letter of 5th May as to the records of the late Dr. George Danford Thomas. I shall be seeing Sir Walter Schroder [sic] very shortly and will discuss the matter with him.

Yours faithfully,

Chief Officer.

Major F. Danford Thomas,
4 Paper Buildings,
Temple, E.C.

127 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, letter to Dr Frederick J Waldo, 6 May 1930.

128 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer to Major Francis Danford Thomas, 8 May 1930.

Danford Thomas having invoked Schröder, the Chief Officer thought fit to add a clarification to his letter of 29 April 1930, which was copied and sent to other coroners in the county:¹²⁹

[Handwritten] 9th May 1930.

Dear Sir,

Coroners' Records.

With reference to my letter of 29th April I should have added that the destruction of depositions more than 15 years old is permissive and not compulsory and that coroners' records dated prior to 1875 must not be destroyed.

If you have any documents which you wish to get rid of and will kindly let me know, I will arrange for them to be collected by the Council's waste paper contractors.

Yours faithfully,

[Unsigned]

Sir Walter Schröder, K.B.E.,
34, Heath Street,
N.W.3.

[Handwritten notation] Also sent to Whitehouse, [Guthrie], Oddie, Smith, Oswald.

Now reminded that the policy of storage and destruction was discretionary, A Douglas Couburn reversed his previous request:¹³⁰

[In pencil] Coroner records 16C

[Printed letterhead] Camberwell Coroner's Court,
St. George's Road,
Peckham S.E.15.

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, 16 MAY 1930. [Black stamp] 1332

14th May 1930.

Dear Sir,

Coroners' Records.

[Printed] H.M. Coroner desires to acknowledge with thanks your letter of the [typed] 9th inst: I am directed to state that there are no documents which the Coroner wishes to be collected.

I am,

Your obedient Servant,

[Signature of] N. Hollands.
Secretary.

Coroner Edwin Smith wrote the following handwritten letter to the Chief Officer:¹³¹

[Obscured]

[In pencil] Coroners Records 16C

[Printed] Coroner's Court.
Calvert Avenue.
E.2.

[Stamped] 1761

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, 26 MAY 1930. [Part of stamp struck out]

24th May 1930.

Dear Sir,

I find I have not many disbursement forms left, and should be much obliged if a supply of these (No. 2's No 2A) may be sent to me at the Police Station, ['Old Street, E.C.1.' inserted followed by check mark in red ink, notation 'Sent 26/5/30' and illegible initials].

Coroners' Records.

In conformity with your letters of 29th April and 9th May, I am getting the old records placed in order, tied up and labeled and hope within a week to write and request their removal as suggested. In view of the possible need for reference to any of the more recent records, I think it would be well to retain the N.E. London records for (say) the years subsequent to 1925 at the Coroners' Office at Shoreditch, and I will do this if I do not hear the contrary.

¹²⁹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, letter to Sir Walter Schröder, 9 May 1930.

¹³⁰ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, N Hollands to the Public Control Department, 14 May 1930.

¹³¹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Coroner Edwin Smith to the Chief Officer, 24 May 1930.

Inquest on Ernest Davies, March 17th

I regret that no acknowledgement appears to have been sent in respect of your letter of May 13th informing me that authority had been obtained for the balance of 3/- in excess of the 2/6 usually provided in payment for cab fare for conveyance of viscera to analyst. I am obliged for your letter, and regret my omission to endorse the voucher in explanation. It happens that a cab fare from Hackney is [currently] disproportionately high from the [*'fare' obscured*] nearest cab [rank] from which a vehicle can be [*illegible*] is at Dalston [*illegible*], and in this particular case [it] was from Dalston that the cab was obtained.

National Safety Week:

I have to acknowledge the receipt of the [posters] sent, [and] to say that these were daily exhibited as desired.

I am,

dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

Edwin Smith,

Coroner for N.E. London.

The Chief Officer,
Public Control Department,
London County Council
County Hall, S.E.1

The Chief Officer replied to Smith; note the transfer of an exhibit:¹³²

[Obscured]

[In pencil] Coroners records 16C.

27th, June 1930.

Dear Sir,

Coroners Records.

In accordance with your request the depositions and other papers at Shoreditch Coroners' Court from 1904 to 191[5] have been collected and are now in the hands of the Record Keeper at County Hall. As all these documents are upwards of 15 years old I assume they have been sent to be destroyed. Perhaps, however, you will kindly confirm this.

Included amongst the depositions relating to an inquest held on 26th. October 1896, as to the death of a woman named Sarah Weston, there is an account book of a Mr. Charles Douglas, showing that he had a balance of £40 at the Birkbeck Bank, and in accordance with the request of your officer I am returning these papers herewith.

Yours faithfully,

[Unsigned]

Edwin Smith Esq.,
Coroners' Court,
Calvert Avenue,
Shoreditch, E.2.

Edwin Smith assented to the destruction of records:¹³³

[Obscured]

[In pencil] Coroners' Records 16C.

[Stamped] Coroner's Court
Calvert Avenue
E.2.

2nd July 1930.

Destruction of Coroners' Old Records.

Dear Sir,

I regret delay in acknowledging receipt of your letter of June 27th re. storing Depositions & Bank book found with papers relating to this old case, for which I am much obliged.

¹³² LCC/PC/COR/1/55, letter to Edwin Smith, 27 June 1930.

¹³³ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Edwin Smith to Chief Officer, 2 July 1930.

Confirming telephone message received through my officer from you, the records recently removed from Shoreditch will, I understand, be destroyed, their [sic] being no apparent reason for preserving them. I shall therefore be glad, if you approve, for them to be destroyed.

I am, dear Sir,
Yours faithfully,
Edwin Smith

The Chief Officer,
London County Council

[*Notation in red ink*] Mr. [illegible] informed a copy of letter
Sent to him. [illegible initials]

A similar letter to coroner S Ingleby Oddie demonstrates cooperation between the Chief Officer and coroners:¹³⁴

[Obscured]

1st August 1930.

Dear Sir,

Coroners Records.

I understand that there is a quantity of records at Battersea Coroners Court which you wish to have destroyed and if you will kindly confirm this in writing I will make the necessary arrangements.

Yours faithfully,
[Unsigned]

S. I. Oddie Esq.,
Coroners Court,
High Street,
Lambeth, S.E.1.

[Handwritten notation] Mr. [illegible] coroner's officer called 31-8-30 and said that records for destruction were ready at Battersea c.c. and he would be prepared to hand them over on receipt of a telephone message before 1 p.m. on any day. [initialled 'p.n.s.']

as however no authority has been received from Mr. Oddie as to records of Mr. Troutbeck & Mr. Braxton Hicks, it has been decided to wait until this is sent in [10.9.30] [obscured initials]

As evidenced by the next letter, Sir Walter Schröder's earlier resistance towards destruction of records was softening:¹³⁵

[Illegible]

8th August 1930.

Dear Sir Walter,

Coroners Records.

I understand that you agree that the records now stored at Paddington Coroner's Court which are appropriate for destruction should be so disposed of and I shall be glad if you will kindly give your consent in writing to this course being pursued.

Any records which you desire preserved can be removed to County Hall.

Yours faithfully,
[Unsigned]

Sir Walter Schröder, K.B.E.
34, Heath Street,
Hampstead,
N.W.3.

¹³⁴ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, letter to Ingleby Oddie, 1 August 1930.

¹³⁵ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, letter to Walter Schröder 8 August 1930.

The records of coroner Clifford Luxmore Drew received attention as well.¹³⁶

[Illegible]

8th August 1930.

Dear Sir,

Coroners Records.

I understand that there is a quantity of records at Paddington Coroner's Court which date from the time when the late Mr. C. Luxmore Drew met at this Court.

I shall be glad if you will kindly inform me whether you agree that those records which are appropriate for destruction should be so disposed [*'of' inserted*] and the remainder, if any, removed to the County Hall for storage.

I am in communication with Sir Walter Schröder as to the other records.

Yours faithfully,

[Unsigned]

H. R. Oswald Esq. M.D.
Coroner's Court,
Fulham Palace Road,
Hammersmith, W.6.

Schröder replied:¹³⁷

[Illegible printed matter] Coroner's Office. [*Handwritten insert*] 34, Heath Street,
[*Printed address struck out*]
London, N.W.3.

[*Stamped*] London County Council, Public Control Committee, 16 AUG 1930 [*In black ink*] 1368

15th August 1930.

Dear Sir,

Coroners Records.

With further reference to your letter of the 8th inst. and my interview with Mr. Parker on the 13th inst., I have given careful consideration to the question of destruction of the records stored at the Paddington Coroner's Court.

Those from 1862 to 1874 [in custody] must be kept.

Those covering the years 1875 to 1898 I am under no obligation to retain but from 1899 promises - verbally and in writing - have been given by me that the documents would be preserved and I therefore am unable to consent to their destruction. If room cannot be found for their storage by the County Council, I must find means for keeping them myself.

The only papers that may be destroyed are those relative to inquests held between 1875 and 1898, but in respect to those I am definitely of opinion it would be better if they were retained till after my death. Recently application was made to me for papers concerning an inquest [for] 1884 and certain information was given. Obviously as it is known the papers do exist, the destruction of the volumes containing them could not now take place. They may be required to be produced.

[Signature] Yours faithfully,
Walter Schröder

The Chief Officer
Public Control Department,
County Hall.

PS.

If it is desired that I must find a place of storage and the existing shelves at the Paddington Court are not required, I would be glad to utilize them.

W.S.

¹³⁶ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, letter to Dr H R Oswald, 8 August 1930.

¹³⁷ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Walter Schröder to the Chief Officer, 15 August 1930.

An internal communication pertaining to Schröder's letter of 15 August 1930 reads as follows:¹³⁸

[Obscured]

[Will] you please arrange for records mentioned in 2nd paragraph [to] be handed over to the Record Keeper and for the remainder to be stored in one of our semi basement rooms until the decease of Sir Walter.

The C.O. has agreed to this course and perhaps you will notify Sir Walter accordingly.

[K.P.] 29/8

Luxmoore Drew had been appointed in 1892, before the Council's 1895 policy that required new coroners to agree that their papers were county records, and his successor, H R Oswald, wrote to say that the late coroner's records were in the possession of his widow:¹³⁹

Coroner's Court,
Fulham Palace Road
- Sw. W.

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, 19 AUG 1930. [Black stamp] 69

Aug. 18th 1930.

Dear Sir.

Coroners' Records

In reply to your letter of the 8th inst., which I have found awaiting me on my return to town regarding the Records left by my predecessor the late Mr. Luxmoore Drew, I fear that I am unable to give any directions about them as they are the personal property of his widow. She is at present [obscured] will be back at [the end] of the month.

I would suggest if ['you' obscured] it necessary, to write to [Mrs.] Drew on her return to [London]. Her address is 15. Pembridge Villas, Kensington: W.[11]

Yours faithfully
H. R. Oswald.

A. G. [Channings], Esq.
Public Control Department,
Lond. County Council.

A tactful letter to Walter Schröder failed to mention the future destruction of papers dating to post-1875:¹⁴⁰

[Illegible]

3rd September 1930.

Dear Sir Walter,

Coroners Records.

With reference to your letter of 15th August, as to the records now kept at the Paddington Coroners' Court arrangements can be made for their collection and storage at the County Hall. The documents dated from 1862 to 1874 inclusive will be handed over to the Council's Record Keeper and the remainder accumulated within ['the' inserted] Department.

I am taking steps to have the matter put to hand at once.

Yours faithfully,
[Unsigned]

Sir Walter Schröder, K.B.E.,
34, Heath Street,
N.W.3.

[Handwritten notation] Lawson instructed to have all of Dr. Danford Thomas' records [illegible] dates 1862-1874 ready for removal. [p.n.s. 5.9.30]

[A second handwritten notation, illegible, dated '5.9.30']

138 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, note dated 29 August [1930].

139 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, H R Oswald to the Public Control Department, 18 August 1930.

140 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, letter to Sir Walter Schröder, 3 September 1930.

Schröder's replied, equally tactfully:¹⁴¹

Coroner's Office,
34, Heath Street,
London, N.W.3.
5th September 1930.

[*Stamped*] London County Council, Public Control Department, 6 SEP 1930. [*Black stamp*] 689

Dear Mr [Channings]

Coroners Records.

I thank you for your letter of the 3rd September and note that the collection and storage at the County Hall of the records now at the Paddington Coroner's Court has been arranged.

Yours faithfully,
Walter Schröder

The Chief Officer wrote to Mrs. Clifford Luxmoore Drew about destruction of her late husband's records and removal of any remaining records to the County Hall for storage:¹⁴²

[*Illegible*]

5th September 1930.

Dear Madam,

Coroners Records.

I understand that there is a quantity of Coroners' records at Paddington Coroner's Court which date from the time when the late Mr. Luxmore Drew held office.

A reorganization of the districts of H.M. Coroners in London has been approved by the Council and it is desired to transfer to the County Hall all records which are less than 15 years old, or which are dated prior to 1875, and to have the remainder destroyed.

I shall be glad if you will kindly inform me whether you agree that those of your late husband's records which are appropriate for destruction should be so disposed of, and the remainder, if any, removed to the County Hall for storage.

Yours faithfully,
Chief Officer.

Mrs. C. Luxmore Drew,
15, Pembridge Villas,
Kensington,
W.11.

[*Blue stamp*] Signed by Chief Officer

Coroner Oddie left the fate of the records of Troutbeck and Braxton Hicks to the Public Control Department:¹⁴³

[*Handwritten notation, partially obscured*] collected 10.10.30. see [requisition &] C.O. supplier [*in another hand*] 17093 4.10.30.

[*Stamped*] London County Council, Public Control Department, 1 OCT 1930. [*Black stamp*] 1611

Coroner's Court.
High Street
Lambeth S.E.1.

1 Oct., 1930.

Dear Sir

I shall be glad if you will remove some old depositions & inquisitions belonging to the late Mr. Troutbeck & Mr. Braxton Hicks, Coroners for Westmr. & S.W. London, which are stored at the Coroners Court, [*illegible*] Lane, Battersea, for destruction or storage as you wish.

¹⁴¹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Sir Walter Schröder to the Public Control Department, 5 September 1930.

¹⁴² LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer of the LCC to Mrs Clifford Luxmoore Drew, 5 September 1930.

¹⁴³ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, S Ingleby Oddie to the Public Control Department, 1 October 1930.

I may say that I [told the solicitors] of the personal representatives [for] both the late Coroners for destruction [these] in both cases & [obscured] do not desire [their retention].

Yours faithfully

S. I. Oddie

After a month of waiting for a reply from her, the Chief Officer grew impatient with Luxmoore Drew's widow:¹⁴⁴

[Illegible]

7th October 1930.

Dear Madam,

Coroner's Records.

May I venture to remind you that I wrote to you on 5th September last asking for your consent to the destruction or disposal of certain coroner's records at Paddington Coroner's Court which dated from the time when the late Mr. Luxmore Drew held office.

I shall be much obliged if you will kindly let us know whether you are yet in a position to give your decision on this point, as the matter is somewhat urgent.

Yours faithfully,
Chief Officer.

Mrs. C. Luxmore Drew,
15 Pembridge Villas,
Kensington, W. 11.

[Blue stamp] Signed by Chief Officer

Mrs. Luxmoore Drew wrote a vague assent to remove her late husband's records:¹⁴⁵

[Stamped] Mr. PARKER.

[Stamped] [illegible] Council Public Control Committee 10 OCT 1930. [In black ink] 1899

Oct. 9th

Dear Sir

I have received your letter this morning about the coroner's records. I fear you did not receive my reply to your former letter. I am quite willing for them to be moved & you can have them when you like to send for them.

Truly yours,
[M.] Luxmoore Drew

The Chief Officer offered his thanks to the coroner's widow:¹⁴⁶

[Illegible]

10th October 1930.

Dear Madam,

Coroners' Records.

I have to thank you for your letter of 9th October, giving permission for the records belonging to you at Paddington Coroners' Court to be disposed of and I will make arrangements accordingly.

Your previous letter appears to have gone astray in the post as there is no trace of its having been received in this department.

Yours faithfully,
Chief Officer.

Mrs. [M.] Luxmore Drew,
15 Pembridge Villas,
W.11.

¹⁴⁴ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer of the LCC to Mrs Clifford Luxmoore Drew, 7 October 1930.

¹⁴⁵ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Mrs Clifford Luxmoore Drew to the Chief Officer, 9 October 1930.

¹⁴⁶ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer to Mrs Clifford Luxmoore Drew, 10 October 1930.

An internal communication exists concerning Luxmoore Drew's records:¹⁴⁷

[Obscured]

21st October [193]0.

The Clerk of the Council.

The following is the information you desire with regard to the Coroner's records delivered to the record keeper in Room B.21, on the 20th October; they consist of the records of [*handwritten insert 'the late'*] Mr. C. Luxmore Drew for the years 1915-1920 inclusive.

Following Schröder's retirement, his records were removed from the county court at Clerkenwell for storage at the County Hall:¹⁴⁸

30th October 1931.

Dear Sir,

Sir Walter Schröder has asked that the records of inquests held by him, now stored at the Coroner's Court, Northampton Road, Clerkenwell, may be removed to County Hall. Arrangements have therefore been made for them to be collected on Tuesday next, the 3rd November, and I shall be glad if instructions can be given to facilitate their removal accordingly.

Yours faithfully,
Chief Officer.

The Medical Officer of Health,
Metropolitan Borough of Finsbury,
Town Hall,
Roseberry Avenue, E.C.

An excerpt from an Order of the Local Government Committee in regard to destruction of some records and preservation of others reads as follows:¹⁴⁹

(d) All coroners' records in the custody of the Council shall be destroyed after the lapse of 1 1/2 years from the date of the documents, except that, as regards documents deposited with the Council after 14th October, 1921, such as are, in the opinion of the coroners, especially worthy of preservation for longer periods shall be kept indefinitely, in particular any relating to (i) inquests on persons unknown, (ii) open verdicts and (iii) verdicts of murder, manslaughter, etc., against persons unknown.

Another letter relates specifically to Clapham records:¹⁵⁰

[Obscured]

12th September, [193]2.

the Clerk of the Council

Coroners Records

I forward herewith documents relating to the records of [*'certain' inserted*] inquests held in the Clapham district and shall be glad if you will kindly arrange for their examination and disposal.

147 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, memorandum to the Clerk of the Council, 21st October 1930.

148 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer to the Medical Officer of Health, Finsbury, 10 October 1931.

149 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, 'Local Government Committee - [4 March 1932] Order for all needs of departments.'

150 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, letter suggesting the destruction of Clapham records, 12 September 1932.

A request from A Douglas Couburn asks for removal of records from Camberwell Coroner's Court:¹⁵¹

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, 5 SEP 1933. [Black stamp] 4735

Camberwell Coroner's Court,
St. George's Road
Peckham, S.E.15
4th September 1933.

Records - Coroner's Inquests etc.

I am directed by H.M. Coroner to ask if you would arrange for the collection of depositions etc for the years 1927 and 1928 for removal to your Record Department.

Thanking you,
Yours faithfully,

N. Hollands
Secretary

The Chief Officer,
Public Control Dept,
London County Council,
New County Hall, S.E.1.

The Chief Officer replied:¹⁵²

[6.70]

5th September, 1933.

Dear Sir,

Records - Coroners inquests, etc.

With reference to your letter of 4th September, arrangements are being made for the collection of depositions, etc, as desired by you.

Yours faithfully,
[Initials stamped] [A.] G. M.

A. D. Couburn, Esq.,
Camberwell Coroner's Court,
St. George's Road,
S.E.15.

We include excerpts from Chapter XII of the Report of the Departmental Committee of Coroners, 1936, paragraphs 179-80 and 201-3:¹⁵³

PROCEDURE AT INQUESTS.

179. We propose to deal in this chapter with various questions affecting the procedure which should be followed at inquests.

Rules Committee.

180. We have already indicated that coroners labour under the disadvantage of not having any general rules of procedure. Under section 26 of the Act of 1926, power is vested in the Lord Chancellor to make rules, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, regulating practice and procedure; but so far these powers have been very little exercised. There are already general provisions about procedure in the Coroners Acts, but these do not deal adequately with the difficulties which have arisen. Some of the recommendations we have already made do in fact deal with procedure; and for the most part these should be the subject of legislation. But we think that in addition there ought to be a general body of rules for Coroners' Courts. Judges of the High Court and County Court judges are governed in their proceedings by a detailed code of rules of court which have been drawn up and are altered from time to time by a statutory Rules Committee in each case. We think that the time has come for a similar code of rules to be drawn up to apply to coroners' courts, and we recommend that a statutory body should be set up with the duty of drawing up

¹⁵¹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, N Hollands to the Chief Officer, 4 September 1933.

¹⁵² LCC/PC/COR/1/55, letter to A Douglas Couburn, 5 September 1933.

¹⁵³ Report of the Departmental Committee on Coroners (First Printed in 1936, Reprinted 1964). The Shipman Inquiry, pp. 51 and 56, available at www.the-shipman-inquiry.org.uk/gencat.asp?p=2&ID=45. Accessed 14 October 2005.

and, when necessary in the future, of altering the Rules of Procedure and the forms for coroners' courts. We consider that the statutory body should consist of persons chosen by the Lord Chancellor and Home Secretary to represent the Lord Chancellor, Home Secretary, Coroners Society, General Council of the Bar, Law Society, British Medical Association and the general public. The Rules drawn up by the Committee would be subject to the approval of the Lord Chancellor and Home Secretary.

Depositions.

201. 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 latter practice appears to us to be indefensible.

202. We have already indicated that we consider that the principal function of the coroner's court is to arrive at an early decision on the main facts of a case of violent or unnatural death and, as a statement of facts is of great value to many parties, including Government Departments, we think that it is essential that some record should be kept of the evidence taken at an inquest. We recommend that, in those cases in which the coroner is required to have a jury, he should be under an obligation to take full notes of the evidence tendered by the witnesses and that, in all other cases, he should keep a record of the main points made in evidence, somewhat on the lines of the Judges' notes in High Court cases. Copies of these notes should be available to any person who shows proper cause, on payment of a fee.

203. We had very little evidence about coroners' records. Our attention was, however, drawn to a Home Office circular letter suggesting that when a coroner vacates office his records should be handed over to the Clerk of the Peace, and a proposal was made to us that a coroner should be under an obligation to preserve his official records during his term of office. If the Rules Committee suggested in paragraph 180 is set up, we think that it should consider measures to ensure that proper care is taken of documents relating to inquests.

A typed inventory exists of coroners' records held at the County Hall as of 1933. Note the volume numbers and dates related to the East London district:¹⁵⁴

Coroner's Records in the custody of the Record Keeper, County Hall on 1st March 1933

There are [98] Vols. Relating to various districts and covering the period 5th July 1862 to 31 December 1874 (Vol. 97 missing). These are being retained permanently.

x East London District	Vols. 746 - 847.	24:12:1914	-	31:12:1920 .
x South London "	Monthly parcels.	Jan. 1915	-	Dec. 1922.
x West London "	" "	Jan. 1916	-	Dec. 1920.

[Handwritten notation] x These may be destroyed after 15 years but the depositions covering the period of the war will probably be kept permanently. [Signature illegible]

Arrangements were made to collect Luxmoore Drew's records. Note the stipulation, 'for storage purposes':¹⁵⁵

[In red ink, encircled] 62

[602.]

1st June, [193]7.

the Clerk of the Council.

[Handwritten] [x] Depositions made at inquests.

I shall be glad if you will kindly arrange to receive, for storage purposes, a quantity of depositions made at inquests held by the late Mr. Luxmoore Drew, county coroner. The documents in question will be collected from Mrs. Luxmoore Drew's private address by the Supplies Department.

[Stamped] (Sgd) H. J. C. DAVIES _____ R. McD.

154 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Inventory of Coroners' Records, 1 March 193[6].

155 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, H J C Davies to the Clerk of the Council, 1 June 1937.

156 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, handwritten memorandum regarding records of Clifford Luxmoore Drew, 1 June 1937.

The 'Fifteen Year Rule' (we should say 'Discretion') was suspended:¹⁵⁶

[Obscured]

Depositions of the late Mr. Luxmoore Drew.

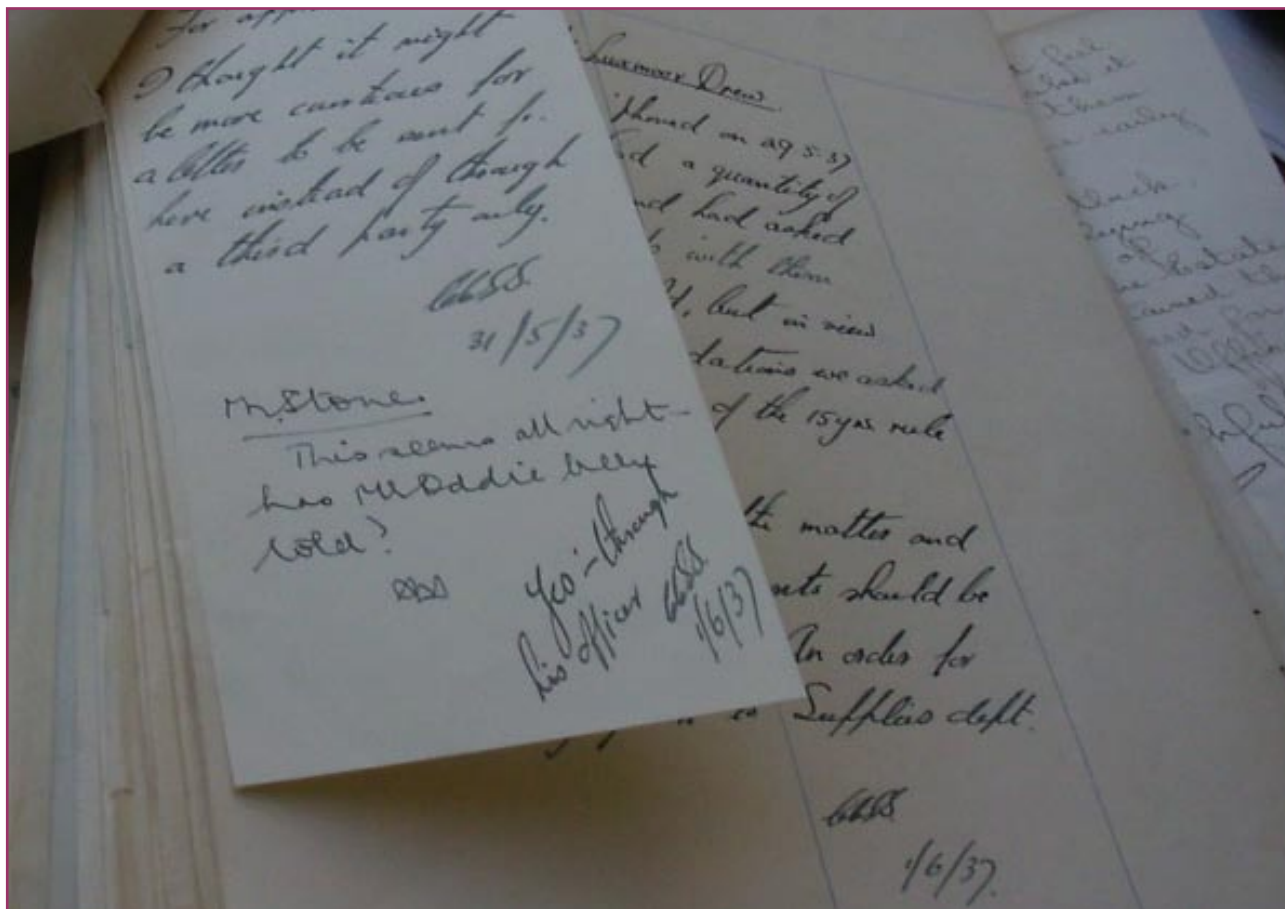
Mr. Oddie's officer phoned me 29.5.37 to say Mrs. Luxmoore Drew had a quantity of depositions at his address and had asked Mr. Oddie what she should do with them.

They are over 15 years old, but in view of the Deptl. Comtie's [sic] recommendations we asked the Clerk to suspend operation of the 15 yrs. Rule (name flagged in file).

I consulted Mr. [Bow] on the matter and he has agreed that the documents should be handed over to the Clerk. An order for collection is being given to Supplies dept.

[Initials illegible]

1/6/37.



Handwritten exchange from 1937 on how to approach the widow of coroner Luxmoore Drew

A handwritten exchange concerned how to approach Mrs. Luxmoore Drew:¹⁵⁷

[Obscured] Mr. Bow

For approval [illegible]

I thought it might be more courteous for a [letter] to be sent [to her] instead of through a third party only. [Illegible initials] 31/5/37.

Mr. Stone.

This seems all right - has Mr Oddie been told?

[Illegible initials]

Yes - through his office. [Illegible initials] 1/6/37

¹⁵⁷ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, handwritten exchange between Mr Stone and [Mr. Bow], 31 May - 1 June 1937.

Records continued to be accepted, as shown by the following letter from the Chief Officer to Mrs. Luxmoore Drew:¹⁵⁸

[Obscured]

[In red ink, encircled] 63

1st June, 1937.

Dear Madam,

Coroners' depositions.

With reference to your inquiry of Mr. Oddie, as to the disposal of a quantity of depositions made at inquests conducted by the late Mr. Luxmoore Drew, arrangements have been made for the documents concerned to be collected from your address and to be received by the Clerk of the Council for custody.

I shall be glad if you will kindly arrange for the bundles of depositions to be addressed to the Clerk of the Council, London County Council, County Hall, S.E.1. A supply of labels for this purpose is enclosed.

Yours faithfully,

[Faded stamp] (Sgd.) H. J.C. Davies_____R. McD.

Chief Officer.

Mrs. Luxmoore Drew,
13, Pembridge Villas,
W.11.

The 'Fifteen Year Rule' remained suspended, and records continued to come in:¹⁵⁹

[Obscured]

10th January, [193]8.

the Clerk of the Council

Coroners' records.

I shall be glad if you will kindly arrange to receive, for storage purposes, a quantity of depositions from H.M. Coroner for the western district of London.

P.H.G.

[Handwritten notation] x Depositions relating ['made during' written above] to Dr. Smith's tenure of office - Mr Stafford asked verbally that they be removed - mortuary keeper at Battersea to phone when ready. He did so to-day. Order issued in Supplies

[Initials illegible Stone?]

20-1-38.

More records came in from East London:¹⁶⁰

[8170]

Sir.

[12 APR 1938.]

the Clerk ['to' struck out] of the Council

Coroner's Records.

I shall be glad if you will arrange to receive, for storage purposes, a quantity of depositions from H.M. Coroner for East London. The documents will be delivered to the record room on either Wednesday or Thursday of this week.

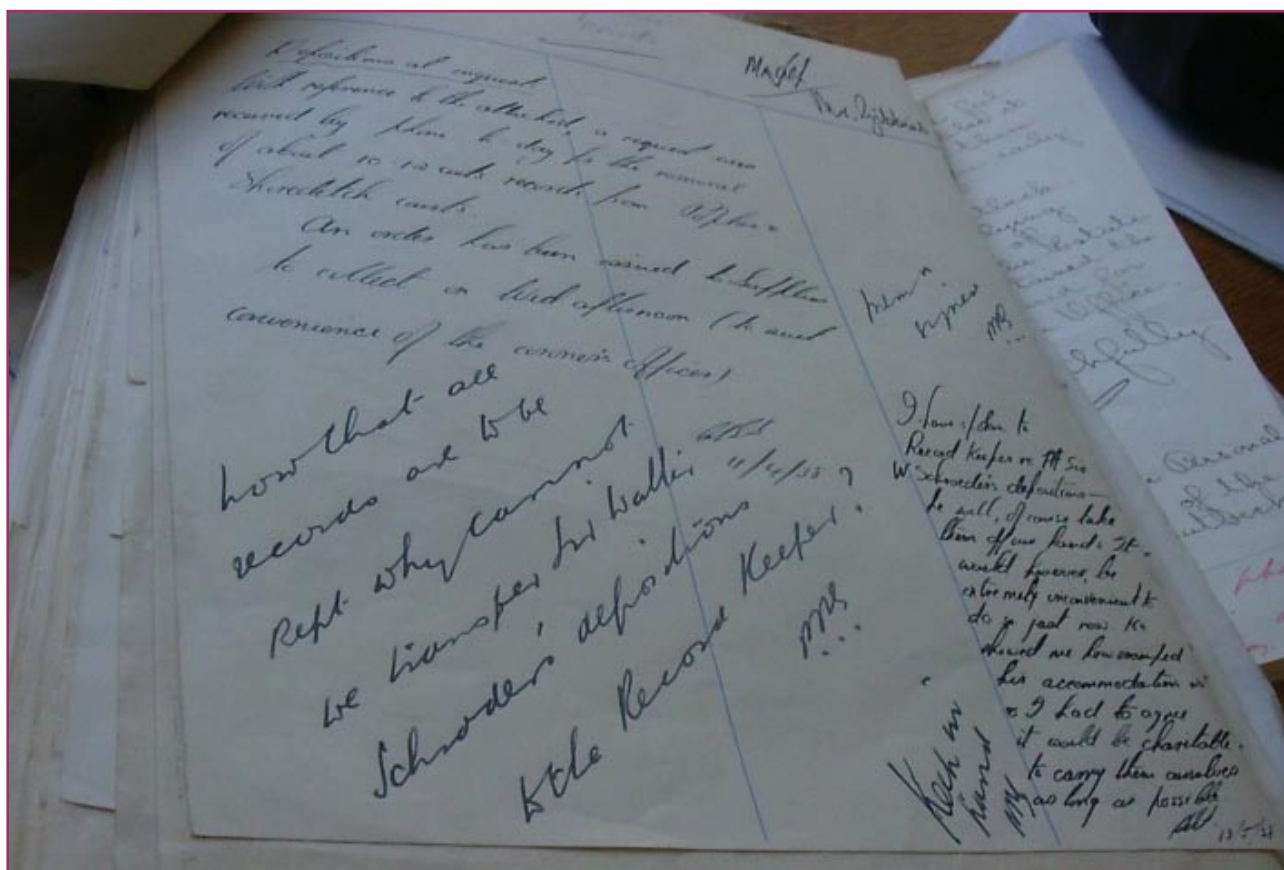
[Stamped] P. H. G.

158 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer to Mrs Clifford Luxmoore Drew, 1 June 1937.

159 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, P H G to the Clerk of the Council, 10 January 1938.

160 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, P H G to the Clerk of the Council, [12 April 1938.]

A page consisting of several handwritten notes reads as follows:¹⁶¹



Handwritten notes from 1938 on the problem of how to dispose of and store coroners' records

[Obscured]

Possession of coroners
records

['Magil/Mr.' illegible]

Depositions of inquests

With reference to the attached, a request was received by phone to-day for the removal of about 10-12 [illegible] records from Poplar Shoreditch courts.

An order has been issued to Supplies to collect Wed afternoon (to such convenience of the coroner's officer)

[illegible initials, Stone?] 11/4/38

now that all records are to be [illegible]. why cannot we transfer Sir Walter Schroeder's depositions to the Record Keeper?

[p.n.s.]

Keep in
Hand
[p.n.s.]

[illegible
note]
[p.n.s.]

I have spoken to Record Keeper re ['M' struck out] Sir W. Schroeder's depositions - he will, of course take [their office] Records It would however, be be entirely inconvenient to do so just now. He showed me how [overfed] his accommodations are & I had to agree it would be charitable to carry [them] ourselves as long as possible.

[Illegible initials Stone?]

13/5/38

The following letter from Coroner H Neville Stafford to the Chief Officer illustrates the scope of the growing storage problem. Note that although some of the records listed here were older than fifteen years, the 'Fifteen Year Rule' continued to remain suspended:¹⁶²

[Blue stamp] Mr. Gissing

**CORONERS COURT
HAMMERSMITH.**

CORONER'S COURT,
77 FULHAM PALACE ROAD,
HAMMERSMITH,
LONDON.
W.6.

14th. November 1938.

The Chief Officer,
The Public Control [error struck out] Department.
County Hall,
Westminster.

[Stamp] London County Council, Public Control Department, 16 NOV 1938. [Black stamp] 172

Sir,

re: - OLD DEPOSITIONS.

I have to request that depositions relating to the periods noted below, may be collected from this Court and stored at the County Hall.

1921. January to December.	1922. January to December.
1923. January to December.	1924. January to December.
1925. January to December.	1926. January to December.
1927. January to December.	1928. January to December.
1929. January to December.	1930. January to October.

These are in all 199 packages, each of which bears a label relating to the period.

The approximate weight of the packages is 12 cwt.¹⁶³

Will you please inform me of the date on which it is proposed to carry out the removal and I would be obliged if you would furnish the carrier with the necessary authority to receive the consignment.

[Signature] H. Neville Stafford.

H.M. Coroner.

County of London. (Western District.)

[In pencil] Removal ordered
on [DIM] - 196161.
17/11/38.

Chief Assistant H. J. C. Davies made arrangements to collect Stafford's records:¹⁶⁴

8170.

COR.

[Faded date stamp, possibly 'NOV 1938']

Dear Mr. Stafford,

Depositions taken at inquests, etc.,

With reference to your letter of the 14th instant, arrangements have been made for 119 packages of old depositions now lying at the Hammersmith coroner's court to be moved to County Hall on Thursday afternoon next, the [24th] instant. I have asked the Chief Officer of Supplies to supply the driver with an authorization to receive the consignment.

[Blue stamp] Yours faithfully,
Signed by Chief Assistant,

{In pencil for} H. J. C. DAVIES

H. Neville Stafford Esq., W.C.,
Coroner's Court,
Fulham Palace Road,
[N.]W.6.

¹⁶² LCC/PC/COR/1/55, H Neville Stafford to the Chief Officer, 14 November 1938.

¹⁶³ Approximately half a ton, 0.6 tons.

¹⁶⁴ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Assistant to H J C Davies to H Neville Stafford, [day illegible] November 1938.

*Davies communicated with the Clerk of the Council:*¹⁶⁵

[Obscured]

[In pencil] ? of
depositions

[Dear] Sir.

the Clerk of the Council.

[Date stamp] 17 NOV 1938

Coroners' Acts - depositions taken at inquests.

I shall be glad if you will kindly arrange to receive for storage purposes, a quantity of depositions (119 packages) from H.M. Coroner for the Western district. The depositions will be delivered to the Record Room on Thursday next, the 24th instant.

[Blue stamp] (Sgd) H. J. C. DAVIES
R.McD.

*Accessing documents was an inconvenient affair:*¹⁶⁶

[Obscured salutation]

Mr. Temple Grey phoned. He is getting [obscured] some figures relating to [forms] he has made [to] [obscured] [the] coroners & would like to refer to the depositions taken by Mr. Guthrie. (Mr. Grey's secretary would do the actual work).

Certain of the depositions are in a store room under the Clerk's record room. The record keeper says he has absolutely no assistant and that it is impossible for him to arrange for the records either to be brought up or [returned] to their proper place. There is no objection so far as he is concerned to their being used but we (this dept.) would have to provide the labour. [In another hand: 'we have not got it.' Illegible initials]

Can I explain the position to Mr. Grey, adding that no labour is available.

[Illegible initials Stone?]
24/5/40

[Line pointing to underlined section in sentence above]

Yes try tactfully
to choke him off until
the time is more
opportune.
[pns]
27/5/40

Done.-----will phone
28/5/40. if he decides to
visit But I don't
think he will.

*As the Second World War dragged on, the Clerk of the Council suggested that 'Fifteen Year Rule' be resurrected and shortened, subject to approval:*¹⁶⁷

17. Nov. 194[1].

Salvage - Collection of waste, paper etc.

Report by Clerk of the Council as to steps which have [obscured] and [struck out] are being taken for the collection of waste paper [obscured] for salvage purposes (Document 405)

RESOLVED - (a) That, as a temporary measure for the duration of war, the operation of rule 98 (c) of the Establishment Committee, so far as it provides that all tenders (except those used for Contracts) shall be destroyed after six years, be suspended, and that the prescribed period be reduced to one year.

(b) That the operation of the provisions of rule 98 (d) of the Establishment Committee prescribing the period of 15 years as the normal period for the destruction of Coroners' records be reverted to and that, as a special war measure, subject to the approval of the Home Secretary, and to the concurrence of the Public Control Committee, such records be disposed of for salvage purposes after a period of 10 years.

(c) That, subject to his consent and to the concurrence of the Public Control Committee, the official records of Sir Walter Schröder [sic], who ceased to be a coroner in 1930, be disposed of for purposes of salvage.

¹⁶⁵ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, H J C Davies to the Clerk of the Council, 17 November 1938.

¹⁶⁶ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, handwritten letter with notes, 24 May - 28 May 1940.

¹⁶⁷ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, 'Salvage - Collection of Waste, Paper, etc.' 17 November 1941.

*An excerpt from an Order for the Clerk of the Council further spoke about the coroners' records in terms of salvage of paper:*¹⁶⁸

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.
[Obscured] DEFENCE AND GENERAL PURPOSE COMMITTEE

17th, November, 1941.

[Obscured] Order for the Clerk of the Council.

[Obscured] Item No.	Order
6.	<p><u>Coroners' records - Salvage of paper.</u> Subject to approval of the Home Secretary and to approval of the Home Secretary to the observations of the Public control Committee, the operation of the provisions of rule 98(c) of the Establishment Committee prescribing the periods of fifteen years as to the normal period for the destruction of coroners' records, which has been in abeyance since 1936, to be reverted to.</p> <p><u>Letter (9.12.41.) from the Home Office offering no objection to the proposal.</u></p> <p><u>Notification (21.11.41.) from the Public Control Committee (chairman) offering no [struck out] observations.</u></p>

Notes.- (1) The [struck out] Home Secretary has under consideration the further proposal that, as a special war measure, coroners' records might be disposed of for salvage purposes after a period of 10 years.

(2) Pending a decision on ([item] 1), the question of the disposal of the records of Sir Walter Schröder, who ceased to be a coroner in 1930, is in abeyance.

*The Clerk wrote to the Under Secretary of State for approval, citing a massive accumulation of records:*¹⁶⁹

C.D. & G.P. 17.11.41.

19th. November, 1941.

[Dear Sir,]

Coroners' records - Salvage of paper.

In connection with the salvage of waste paper for war purposes the Council has considered the question of the disposal of coroners' records of which it is the custodian.

At [struck out] the suggestion of the Home Office in 1921 the Council decided that such records should be destroyed after the expiration of 15 years from the date of the documents. In view, however, of the suggestions of a Departmental Committee on Coroners in 1936 for the setting up of a Rules Committee to consider, inter alia, measures to ensure the proper care and preservation of documents relating to inquests, it was arranged that no coroners' records should be destroyed pending further consideration of the Rules. As you are aware the proposed Rules Committee has not yet been set up.

In the circumstances, the Council proposes, subject to the approval of the Home Secretary, to revert to the practice of destroying coroners' records after a period of 15 years, and as a special war measure, to destroy such records after 10 years.

A reversion to the 15 years limit will release approximately five tons of paper for salvage and another two tons if the proposed 10 year limit is put into operation.

In view of the urgent need for paper salvage, the Council will be glad to know the decision of the Home Secretary as soon as possible.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
Clerk of the Council

The Under Secretary of State,
Home Office,
Whitehall,
S.W.1.

¹⁶⁸ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Order for the Clerk of the Council, 17 November 1941.

¹⁶⁹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Clerk of the Council to Under Secretary of State, 19 November 1941.

A tentative reply was received from the Home Office:¹⁷⁰

HOME OFFICE,
Council House,
Stamford St.,
S.E.1.
9th. December, 1941.

[Obscured]

Sir,

Coroners' records - Salvage of paper.

In reply to your letter (K. 4113 9) of 19th, November, I am directed by the Secretary of State to inform you that he sees no objection to the Council reverting to the practice whereby Coroners' records have been destroyed after 15 years. He could not however agree to destruction after 10 years, since the Schedule made with the approval of the Master of the Rolls in 1921 lays down a period of 15 years. He is however in communication with the Public Record Office and with the Honorary Secretary of the Coroners Society, with a view to consideration being given to the question whether the period of 15 years may be reduced.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
(Signed) E. Cordes.

The Clerk of the London County Council,
The County Hall,
Westminster Bridge, S.E.1.

Several months later, the Home Office offered a more firm policy:¹⁷¹

Secretary of State,
[Illegible]

HOME OFFICE
Cornwell House,
Stanford Street,
S.E.1.
24th. February, 1942.

Destruction of Coroners' records.

In view of the present acute shortage of paper, the question has been raised whether some reduction might be made in the prescribed periods for which certain Coroners' records should be preserved; these periods are set out in a Schedule dated the 18th June, 1921, approved by the Master of the Rolls and are as follows: -

<u>Class of Documents.</u>	<u>Periods after which Documents may be destroyed.</u>
1. Warrants for Summoning Juries and panels of Jurors.	1 year
2. Reports of Coroners' Officers.	15 years
3. 'Depositions' or notes of Evidences and accompanying Exhibits, e.g. Reports of Post Mortem Examinations, Medical Certificates, etc.	15 "
4. Inquisitions and Riders.	15 "
5. Miscellaneous Papers.	15 "

The Secretary of State has considered the matter and is of the opinion that as regards documents falling within the classes numbered 2, 3, 4 and 5 above, the period of preservation may be reduced to 10 years, provided that in cases in which an open verdict or a verdict of murder or manslaughter by an unknown person has been recorded the documents are retained for at least the full period of 15 years. In his view however there could be no objection in any case to the destruction of the documents after 10 years, if the matter had been cleared up by subsequent criminal proceedings.

The Inspecting Officers of the Public Record Office have been consulted in pursuance of Regulation 60M of the Defense (General) Regulations and have expressed their formal agreement.

¹⁷⁰ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, E Cordes to the Clerk of the Council, 9 December 1941.

¹⁷¹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55 Home Office memorandum, 24 February 1942.

There is no obligation to destroy documents of the classes mentioned and they may be preserved if in any case their destruction appears to be inadvisable on the ground, for example, that they are of permanent public interest.

Scheduled documents will be destroyed under the direction of the Controller of the H.M. Stationery Office and application for the removal of documents should be made to the Director of Supplies (SP) H.M. Stationery Office, 421, [error struck out] Oxford Street, W.1. as ['regards' written above illegible word] offices within 10 miles of Charing Cross, or to the Super- [Second page missing]

In Spring 1948, three years after the end of the Second World War, some interesting gossip reached coroner W Bentley Purchase, that there was a plan to transfer the coroners' records in the custody of the Council to the Regional Hospital Boards that had been set up under the National Health Service Act of 1946 by the Labour government of Prime Minister Clement Atlee:¹⁷²

[Stamp partially obscured] The Coroner's Society of England and Wales, Founded 1846, W. B. Purchase, M.D. Hon. Sec.

[Stamped] DIV. 114

Telephone: EUSTON [illegible]

[Illegible printed matter]

ST. PANCRAS CORONER'S COURT
CAMLEY STREET,
N.W.1.

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, 25 MAY 1948 CD. [Black stamp] 7970

22nd. May, 1948.

Dear Chief Officer,

Custody of Coroners' Records.

As you know, the Council have the custody of certain coroner's records. I was surprised to be privately informed in the course of conversation a few days ago that the Council 'had offered such records to the Regional Board' that is being set up under the new Medical Act.

I did not accept the likelihood of this being true, since the documents are of a legal and not of a medical character and I expect that you can swiftly confirm that there is no idea of attempting to dispose of them in this way. My informant had no special knowledge of the council's position in the matter and mentioned it only from his point of view, ['as' struck out] being connected with the Board.

Yours sincerely,

W. B. Purchase.

[Signature of W. B. Purchase]

However, the Chief Officer replied a few days later that he knew of nothing to substantiate to the rumour:¹⁷³

6312

Cor.

Chief Officer of the Public Control Department

27 May, 1948.

Custody of Coroners' records.

With reference to your letter of the 22nd instant, I know of no proposal to transfer the coroners' records at present in the custody of the Council to the Regional Hospital Boards. Other records relating specifically to the Council's hospitals would presumably be handed over if asked for - possibly something has been said on that point and been misunderstood.

¹⁷² LCC/PC/COR/1/55, W B Purchase to the Chief Officer, 22 May 1948. The outspoken Sir William Bentley Purchase (1890-1961) was a veteran of the First World War who served as coroner for Ipswich as well as the Queen's Household from 1955 to 1959. He edited the ninth edition of Jervis, served as the Honourable Secretary for the Coroners' Society, and received a knighthood in 1958 ('Sir W. Bentley Purchase: A Well-Known Coroner,' *The Times*, 28 September 1961). Purchase is perhaps best known for his involvement in the wartime case of 'The Man Who Never Was'. During the Second World War, the naval security services hatched a scheme to mislead the Germans about the Allies' plans to invade Europe by planting false invasion plans on a corpse dressed as a British officer, then depositing the body in the waters off the coast of Spain. Enter coroner W Bentley Purchase, whose role was to provide a suitable corpse, which he agreed to do after an initial conflict between professional ethics and patriotism. Operation Mincemeat was on, and in April 1943, the body (uniformed and equipped with the fake plans) was shot out of a submarine into Spanish waters where the Germans recovered it.

Yours faithfully,

[Stamp, very faded] R. J. B. MCDOWELL

W. Bentley Purchase, Esq., [N.]C.
H.M. Coroner,
Coroner's Court,
Camley Street,
N.W.1.

However, coroner Purchase was not content to let the matter rest - he had received more information that led him to believe there was indeed a plan to transfer the coroners' records to the Regional Hospital Boards:¹⁷⁴

[Stamp partially obscured] The Coroner's Society of England and Wales, Founded 1846, W. B.
Purchase, M.D. Hon. Sec.

[Stamped] DIV. 114

Telephone: EUSTON [illegible]

[Illegible printed matter]

ST. PANCRA'S CORONER'S COURT
CAMLEY STREET,
N.W.1.

1st. June, 1948.

[In red ink] Recd 3/6

Dear Chief Officer,

Thank you for your letter of 27th. May as to coroners' records. You will be amused to hear that I was right; it turns out that Sir Allen Daly spoke to the Chairman of the S.W. Regional Board (on which I have temporarily a subsidiary honorary position) and today the Chairman told me personally. I do not know whether you would like to make sure that whatever Sir Allen may think, these documents are legal ones and should not be parted with by the Council to any body such as the Board.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature of W. B. Purchase]

W. B. Purchase.

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, ['14' struck out and '3' inserted in blue ink] JUN 1948
CD. [In blue ink] 9199A

A few days later, the Chief Officer sought to check out the rumour by writing a letter to the apparent source for the story - Sir Allen Daley:¹⁷⁵

[Obscured]

6337.

[Handwritten] Sec.

11 June, 1948.

the Chief Officer of the Public Control Department.

Dear Daley,

Coroners' records.

Purchase has mentioned that in the course of conversation he gathered there was some proposal afoot to transfer coroners' records now in the Council's custody to the Regional Boards set up under the National Health Service Act. He points out that these records are legal documents and are not of a medical character and that the Council should not part with them. During a further conversation it appeared that what had been said to Purchase was based on something which you had said to the Chairman of the South-west Regional Board - something which has obviously been misunderstood. [continued on reverse side]

[P.T.O.] [i.e., 'Please Turn Over']

173 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer to W B Purchase, 27 May 1948.

174 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, W B Purchase to the Chief Officer, 1 June 1948.

175 LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Chief Officer to Sir Allen Daley, 11 June 1948.

Sir Allen Daley, K.H.P.,
County Hall.

[reverse side] Perhaps when next you see the Chairman of the Board you would like to take the opportunity to clear up any misunderstanding on the point.

Yours sincerely,

[Stamped] R. J. B. MCDOWELL.

McDowell also wrote to the Chief Officer of the Public Control Department and the Clerk of the Council:¹⁷⁶

THE CHIEF OFFICER OF THE PUBLIC CONTROL DEPARTMENT.

[Obscured] CLERK OF THE COUNCIL.

6337.

11 June, 1948.

Coroners' records.

I am told that there is an impression in certain quarters that coroners' records now in the council's custody are to be transferred to the Regional Boards set up under the National Health Service Act, 1946. These records, as you know, are in no way related to the hospital service and there is obviously a misapprehension. In case the point should be raised with him you may like the Record Keeper to note that none of these records are to be sent to the Regional Boards.

[Stamped] R. J. B. MCDOWELL.

Sir Allen Daley responded:¹⁷⁷

THE COUNTY COUNCIL

[Obscured] COUNTY HALL, WESTMINSTER BRIDGE, S.E.

[Stamped] London County Council, Public Control Department, 15 JUN 1948 CD

[Illegible] 6579

[Illegible] reply please [illegible] Sec.

[illegible] The Medical Officer of Health

14th June, 1948.

Dear McDowell,

Coroners' records

In reply to your letter of June 11th, I am afraid Mr. Elliott, the Chairman of the south West Metropolitan R.H.B., has misunderstood what I said. At the last meeting we had with the Chairman of the R.H.B.s I pointed out that we had a very large number of records relating to our hospitals, particularly staff dossiers, papers concerning establishments, equipment, and improvements and alterations to the structure which would have to be handed over to the officers of the R.H.B.s. As the service is being broken up into four quarters and many of these records contain in the same file information about hospitals in different Regions it is a matter of some difficulty to know exactly what should be their destination as the Boards have no common secretariat. I did not mention coroners' records which I did not regard as part of the records of the hospital service. [continued on reverse side]

[P.T.O.]

R. J. B. McDowell, Esq.,
Chief Officer of the
Public Control Department.

[reverse side] The next time I see Mr. Elliott I will [tell] him the purport of this letter, which in the meantime you might pass to Mr. Bentley Purchase.

I am,

Sincerely yours,

[Signature of] Allen Daley

¹⁷⁶ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, [R J B] McDowell to the Chief Officer and the Clerk of the Council, 11 June 1948.

¹⁷⁷ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Sir Allen Daley to [R J B] McDowell, 14 June 1948.

The Chief Officer reported back to coroner Bentley Purchase:¹⁷⁸

6337

Sec.

Chief Officer of the Public Control Department.

17 June, 1948.

Dear Mr. Purchase,

Coroners' Records.

Following the receipt of your letter of 1st June, about coroners' records, I got into touch with Sir Allen Daley. He tells me that at the last meeting with the Chairman of the R.H.B.s he pointed out that we have a very large number of records relating to our hospitals, particularly staff dossiers, papers concerning establishments, equipment, and improvements and alterations to the structure which would have to be handed over to the officers of the R.H.B.s Sir Allen says that he did not mention coroners' records which, of course, he did not and does not regard as part of the records of the hospital service. Mr. Elliott, the Chairman of the South West Metropolitan R.H.B. must have misunderstood what was said. Sir Allen will take the opportunity, when next *[continued on reverse side]*

W. Bentley Purchase, Esq., W.C.
H.M. Coroner,
Coroner's Court,
Camley Street,
N.W.1.

[P.T.O.]

[reverse side] he sees Mr. Elliott, *[obscured]* the misunderstanding.

Yours sincerely,

[Stamped] R. J. B. MCDOWELL.

And so, as far as one financial authority was concerned - the London County Council - McDowell had cleared up an interesting misunderstanding. Before closing the door on the subject, we take notice that sketches from the Eddowes case - inquest exhibits - resurfaced in the basement of the London Hospital in 1966, discovered by Sam Hardy, assistant to Professor Francis E Camps.

Following is a handwritten draft of a report by the Deputy Chief Officer with notations:¹⁷⁹

[Obscured]

The Deputy Ch. Officer.

Coroners - fees for copy depositions

1. A condition of affairs *[illegible]* of coroners is that he 'shall keep records of all cases inquired into whether or not inquests *[are]* held, and that such records shall be county records and not the property of the coroners.'

2. Candidates for appointment are required to sign an undertaking that if appointed they will accept the appointment on certain conditions one of which is the foregoing. On appointment the successful candidate is furnished with a copy of the undertaking.

3. Coroners surrender the records of inquests etc. when their storage space becomes over-full. As it happens none of the present coroners has surrendered any records. The last batch to be received was from *[illegible]* Couburn in 1937! Records, when surrendered, are in the custody of the Record Keeper. Requests for copy depositions of records in the Council's custody are received from time to time; they are dealt with in this dept. and the applicable fees are collected and paid *[in to the]* Cashier.

4. The fees payable are proscribed by Statutory *[Rolls and Orders]*, 1927. No. 348. (The Coroners' Records (Fees for Copies) Rules, 1927).

That instrument fixes the price for copies supplied to 'ordinary' applicants at *[6d.]* For folio of 72 words (not a profitable price at present cost of paper & labour); special 'prices' are fixed for copies supplied in connection with trials for murder, manslaughter or infanticide.

5. I cannot recall that a coroner has ever 'paid in' *[fees]* received by him for copies of depositions in his custody. No information is available as to whether coroners are in fact asked to supply copies but the *[perception]* is that they are - and do supply them.

¹⁷⁸ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, The Chief Officer to W B Purchase, 17 June 1948.

¹⁷⁹ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, 'The Deputy Chief Officer. Coroners - Fees for copy depositions.' *[February 1952]*

6. I have consulted Mr. Adams (Solicitor's dept.) on the question - is a coroner legally entitled to retain fees paid for supplying copies of records in his possession, having regard to the undertaking given that such records are county records and are not the property of the coroner.

Mr. Adams is of the opinion that the coroner is entitled to retain the fees.

[Initials illegible] 28/2/52.

Mr. [illegible] tells me that Mr. Adams in discussion expressed the view that if a coroner came here & made a copy of a deposition which he had handed over to the Cty., he would be entitled to retain any fee charged. This reminds me that on several occasions Sir Walter Schröder in fact did this.

[Initials illegible]

Chief officer.

On 3, these County records are remaining in the coroners' custody for very long periods, but the [illegible] is silent on questions when they are to be handed over. The coroners may wish to retain them until they retire and if so, the [County] could not, I think, insist on the records being handed over at any earlier time. If you think it desirable, a letter could be sent reminding coroners that these records are County records [requiring] that storing them must now require a lot of space and that some or all can be sent here at any time in arrangement for keeping.

On 6 (fees) - having regard to view taken there appears to be no point to raise.

[Initials illegible]
23/3

A 1954 inventory of records in custody allows us to contrast depositions from the East London district with the 1933 inventory:¹⁸⁰

Coroners Inquests, Depositions, etc. In Custody of Record Keeper.

Depositions -	Various parishes.	1862 - 1874	37 Volumes
"	Central London.	1927 - 1930	parcels
"	East London.	1921 - 1935	"
"	South East District.	1932 - 1934	"
"	South London District	1932 - 1937	"
"	Western District.	1930 - 1936	"

Registers -	West London District.	1892 - 1907	1 Volume
	Central London District.	1856 - 1930	13 Volumes

Record Books -	Eastern District.	1921 - 1934	3 Volumes
" "	North East London District.	1902 - 1932	[3] Volumes
	Volume [6] contains Western District.	1930/32.	

Plans presented at Inquests -	North East London District.	1926 - 1930	parcels
"	Western District	1932 - 1936	"

Battersea Railway Accident.	1937	1 File.
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Annual Returns to Home Office. (Copies) -	Eastern District.	1921 - 1935	parcel
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J. Denyer
22.10.54.

¹⁸⁰ LCC/PC/COR/1/55, Inventory of records by J Denyer, 22 October 1954. The file also preserves a handwritten version.

The Green of the Peak

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 the victim in 'The Italian Boy Murder', 1831.

We proceed to sum up for the jury, remarking that although the evidence presented here is of an exhaustive character, it is still incomplete; perhaps is better to leave the matter in the hands of future research. The evidence shows that records were the private property of the coroner and that:

- 1 The London County Council considered that records should become County records in the interests of preservation. They conferred with the Coroners' Society on the issue; however, the Society disagreed with the Council, holding that coroners should retain their records. Therefore, the Council instead pursued the records of deceased coroners, seeking their whereabouts from the successors of individual coroners. Collected records were stored at the respective coroner's courts that the Council had constructed or where there was no court, they were deposited in various governmental buildings, such as local Weights and Measures offices.
- 2 It found that records of deceased coroners, including physical evidence in the cases of coroners Edward Arundel Carttar and George Danford Thomas, were often transferred to the custody of relatives or executors of estates. This was the case with Thomas Diplock's records, which were the property of his widow Eleanor and in 1893 were in the possession of his son, Dr. Leonard Bramah Diplock. Diplock was prepared to hand over his father's records but wanted a payment of £25 for them, an offer that was declined. Instead, the Council adopted a policy of pursuing donations only. In order to avoid having to conduct similar searches for records in the future, in 1895 the Council resolved that incoming coroners must agree that their records belonged to the County. This however, did not apply to the coroner working before that date.
- 3 Coroners exercised discretion over the custody of physical evidence, although it's unknown how Diplock, Baxter, Langham, and Macdonald exercised their discretion over Ripper artifacts. Coroners George Arundel Carttar and George Danford Thomas kept some items in their custody, which appear to have been transferred to the London County Council. It's possible that Ripper artifacts eventually found their way to the various financial authorities of coroners: the London County Council (LCC), the Middlesex County Council (MCC), and the City of London.
- 4 On the question of whether the Druitt depositions ever existed, given the vagaries of the 1887 Act, we may compare Leonard Diplock's request for a van for removal of his father's records with Thomas Diplock's account of inquests held over 1887. If we assume that West Middlesex saw no significant rise in murder over the period of Diplock's tenure, 1868-1892, we may multiply the 4 murders from that year by 24, the length of his career, and arrive at the tentative conclusion that Diplock held approximately 96 murder inquests during his career. Even allowing for fluctuations of statistics, it would seem reasonable to suppose that Diplock was in the practice of taking down depositions in all of his cases - including the Druitt inquest, if a van was required to haul them away. Because the Council rejected Diplock's offer, they largely pass from our knowledge in 1893; we can be reasonably sure that the LCC still had not acquired them as of 1906 since they approached a firm of solicitors about them, although it is possible that the Council received them after that date. We might assume that the MCC may have made its own overtures as well.
- 5 In the period following the Great War, a tremendous amount of material had accumulated; coroners' courts overflowed with the records of deceased and sitting coroners. Coroner Wynn Westcott proposed the destruction of older records, which the Council considered, seeking the advice of Sir Walter Schröder, who opposed the suggestion. The historical significance of coroners' records and their continuing legal value (as noted by Francis Danford Thomas) was recognized.
- 6 Wynne Baxter died in October 1920 and his records, 840 volumes that we estimate to have weighed about two tons, passed to the custody of his son Francis Baxter, who offered them to the Council. Their storage was problematic for a system already overburdened and it was decided to utilize the new County Hall as a central depository for their storage. The County Hall was built on former marshland, and the new building required continual pumping to keep the foundations dry, making for an unsuitable archive. There is, however, no direct documentation of the transfer of Baxter's Ripper records to the Council's custody.
- 7 The London County Council approached the Home Office for advice about how long records should be retained. The result was the 15 Year Rule for the keeping of depositions, postmortem reports, and exhibits, a policy that was discretionary and allowed for records of historical significance to be retained permanently. Presumably, it was in 1921 that the Council began destroying documents in its custody, with the permission of coroners' relatives.

- 8 In 1936, the Home Office proposed that a Rules Committee be formed to further consolidated coronial procedure; it advocated the proper care of inquest records. Therefore, the Council ceased exercising the 15 Year Rule pending the creation of the committee - a process that was delayed with the result of halting the destruction of records for some years. The Council continued to collect the papers of sitting coroners.
- 9 The Council at this time reviewed an inventory of records from 1933, which indicates that Wynne Baxter's records were indeed transferred to the County Hall in 1921, as records from East London, 1914-1920, are recorded (representing the last six years of Baxter's career). This would seem to be evidence that the Council no longer had custody of records from 1888 and that they possibly destroyed them during the period 1921-1933. However, we should seek further documentation.
- 10 In 1941, the Council commenced a wartime effort to salvage paper, and with the consent of the Home Office, the practice of destruction was resumed. For the duration of the war, the period of retention was shortened to 10 years, with the 15-year period still applying to cases of murder and manslaughter by persons unknown. Of course, the records of 1888 had long ago passed the 15-year mark.
- 11 Following the Second World War, there was an interesting correspondence indicating that coroners' records should be transferred from the Council to new Regional Hospital Boards that were being set up under a new Medical Act. This, however, was quickly determined to be a mere miscommunication. Coroners' records, including postmortem reports, were considered to be of a legal and not medical nature. It is interesting to note Professor Francis Camps' discovery of sketches from the Eddowes inquest in the basement of London Hospital.
- 12 A 1954 inventory of records reveals that Baxter's records from 1914-1920 that had appeared in the 1933 inventory were apparently no longer in the Council's custody.

There you have it. It looks bad for Wynne Baxter's records but we shouldn't assume their destruction yet. We should document it; it's possible that between 1921 and 1933, notice was taken of the historical significance of Baxter's Ripper inquests. Meanwhile, we have reason to hope that Thomas Diplock's records may have escaped the 15-Year Rule. We must also expand the search for artifacts to include coronial records. What happened to the lost records? It's for you, the jury, to determine whether you will return your verdict or adjourn for further evidence. We suggest that an adjournment is in order.

The Victorian Inquest was the community's reclamation of the victim through the gathering of written, physical, and oral evidence. In the twenty-first century, we can make a purposeful and informed second reclamation; we can all be coroners. Happy questing, everyone. Ride boldly.

Robert Charles Linford

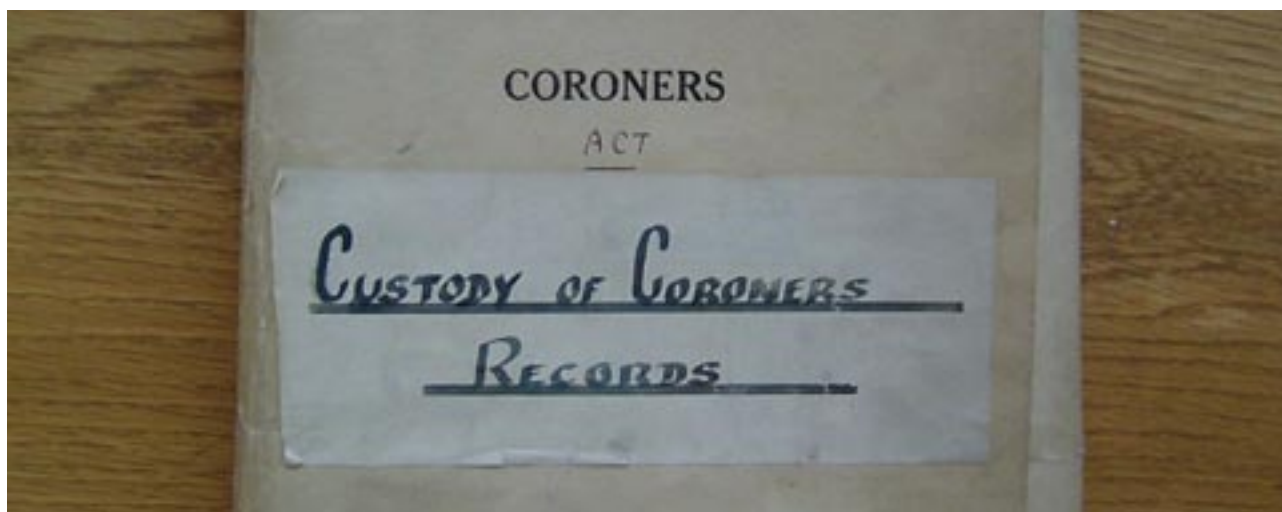
John Savage

David O'Flaherty

'The Green of the Peak', 30 September 2004 - 4 June 2006.

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Staff of the City of London, London Metropolitan Archives, particularly Bridget Howlett, Senior Archivist and Elizabeth Scudder, Principal Archivist (Access & Enquiries). Our appreciation also goes to the following for their direct and indirect support: Alexander Chisholm, Stewart P Evans, Stephen Ryder, and Keith Skinner. Finally, we extend our thanks to the editors of *Ripperologist* for their support of the series: Paul Begg, Adam Wood, Christopher T George, and former European Editor, Eduardo Zinna.





CHRIS SCOTT

Press Trawl

Ogden Standard
1 February 1889

JACK THE RIPPER

The person calling himself "Captain J R Middlemiss" claimed yesterday that he had received a communication through the mail, signed "Jack the Ripper." From a gentleman to whom the person Middlemiss exhibited the alleged threatening document, we learn that it was headed "No. 7" and contained a representation of a skull and crossbones.

Galveston Daily News
2 December 1888

PROBABLY A HOAX

*A Very Blood Curdling Letter Received by the Minneapolis Chief of Police.
Minneapolis, Minn., November 30.*

The following is a verbatim copy of a letter received by the chief of police. It was written on a a foolscap sheet, which clearly furnishes at least reasonable indications that it was not written in the West Hotel as claimed. The hand is bold and round:

Chief of Police, Minneapolis.

Gentlemen: You had better close up select houses on First street before December 8, or you will have a reign of terror and blood equal to the Whitechapel of London, England. I am a pal of Jack McCurdy, alias Jack the Ripper, of London, and have been in Minneapolis just three days and at present time am in the West Hotel writing this. The time is just 3.20 p.m., Wednesday. As soon as I finish this I go to St. Paul and make some arrangements and then on December 8 I return to Minneapolis. Then beware, for blood shall tinge the father of waters, as it has the Thames in England. Until then bye bye, and be sure you do as I direct, for the dawning of the morrow is not more sure than the death of fifteen unfortunates by my hand. So farewell, until December 8.

Yours truly, William Hollen (Alias "Knife Stab"). Late of London, England.

Underneath is a cut of a nude woman with a knife in her heart and her bowels cut open, followed by the words "This is a fair sample of what my work will be."

The Echo
25 September 1888

SHARPENING HIS KNIFE ON THE PAVEMENT

Dr. Forbes Winslow vouches for the following, which he communicates this morning to The Times:-

My sister in law and her daughter were walking up Norton road, Brighton, when a strange looking man, dressed in a brown pea jacket and cap, about the medium height, suddenly fell down to his knees right in front of them and produced from his pocket a large bowie knife, which he commenced sharpening on the flagstone before them. Naturally alarmed, they hurried home and informed me of what had happened. It was too late, however, to capture the man, who hurried down the Western road. I immediately gave information to the police. The circumstance, to my mind, is of sufficient significance at the present time to draw public attention to it.

Advertise in Ripperologist

Advertisements in Ripperologist cost £25 for a half page, £50 for a full page, with a nominal charge for a premium position such as the back cover.

Email at adam@ripperologist.info

The Echo
29 September 1888

Here is the latest result of the investigations of our admirable guardians of the peace into the Whitechapel murders:-

The police state that they noted, as an extraordinary circumstance, that when they went on duty on Thursday night they saw a very long chalk mark on the pavement in Kingsland road, one directing point coming to the word "Look!" and, further on, "I am Leather Apron. Five more, and I will give myself up." Beneath this was a rude drawing of a man with a knife uplifted towards a woman.

Oh, simplicity sacred and ineffable! We should judge that Leather Apron was still in his petticoats. Clearly here is a clue at last.

The Echo
29 September 1888

THE WHITECHAPEL MURDERS
A BIRMINGHAM "CONFESSION"
SINGULAR STATEMENT

The following letter reached the *Birmingham Post* last night. We cannot (says that paper) say that we entertain very high hopes that it will lead to the apprehension of the murderer.

Sept. 28th 1888

Gentlemen

I wish to give myself up as the White Chaple (sic) murderer. I am now in a desperate State of Mind and can console my feelings no longer. I was in a Hospital Corps in India, for ten years. The Climate affected My brain, so that, at times I was Completely Mad and unconscious (sic) of My Doings. I was paid for My Crimes and Eagerly to Grasp the Gold I Slaughtered the Innocent defenceless creatures. I am now looking forward for nothing but death & hope God will forgive me for my desperate Crimes.

I Come to Birmingham with the intention of throwing the Police off my Scent. I can rest neither Day or Night without some Gastley (sic) figure appears before my eyes. I startle in my dreams and fancy I am in the prison cell fettered down with iron chains. I can restrain my conscious no longer, So I shall leave myself to the penelety (sic) of my Crime.

It shall be at the Police Station in Moorstreet On Saturday at Mid Day where I can make a full confession of my Crime.

Unfortunely (sic)

R. Smith

Oakland Tribune
13 May 1934

From an article entitled
"HOW MANY RUMORS HAVE YOU STARTED?"
by D.A. Laird Ph.D., Director Psychological Laboratory, Colgate University

No single crime story, perhaps, has been used more by rumor makers, one way or another, than that of the infamous Jack the Ripper, who is alleged to have terrorised London in the year 1888. All sorts of fearful and bizarre angles to the story itself have developed through the years and few rumor makers who lean to things criminal have failed to tell of having known a modern Jack the Ripper. Knowing a Jack the Ripper, incidentally, will capture attention for a rumor monger almost any time.

One version of the original story has it that the Ripper was in reality a famous physician - a "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." Still another denies this and claims that the identity of the strange killer was established and the mystery solved by a crystal gazer who led the police to his house.

Yet the truth is, as it has been well established by the German scientist, E. Engelhardt, there probably never was any Jack the Ripper and he concludes that "enough nonsense has been written about these Jack the Ripper stories to sink a dreadnought."

SCOTLAND YARD MAY ESTABLISH JACK THE RIPPER'S IDENTITY

London (UPI)

Scotland Yard is checking out a report which may result in closing out the docket on Jack the Ripper after 70 years, according to the London newspaper *Reynold News*.

Jack the Ripper was one of the most infamous murderers of all time. He brutally murdered six women in London's gaslit streets in the 1880s. He was never caught and never identified.

The *Sunday Reynolds News* said Sunday that retired blacksmith, George Henry Edwards, 82, told Scotland Yard that Jack the Ripper was his cousin Frank, now dead.

Explains Silence

It quoted Edwards as saying he kept silent until now because "otherwise I might have been done in too."

According to the newspaper, Edwards told Scotland Yard of a night in 1888 when a woman was murdered in London's East End, one of the series killings which terrorized London.

A few hours later, according to Edwards, his cousin Frank arrived at the Edwards home. Frank, an accountant, carried an attache case in which were a razor and a bloodstained collar.

The newspaper quoted Edwards as saying Frank wore a bowler hat, goldrim spectacles and had a black moustache. A newspaper report of that murder said a policeman spotted a man wearing a bowler hat, goldrim glasses and with a moustache waling away from the murder scene.

Hated Women

Reynolds News said Edwards told Scotland Yard Frank was always saying he hated women. He said Frank picked quarrels easily, mainly over women.

Mrs. Bertha Parkhurst, 75, another of Frank's cousins, was quoted as saying of him: "Women in his opinion were just no good. I have a vague memory he was supposed to have murdered a woman in London, but I can't remember the details."



Loretta Lay Books

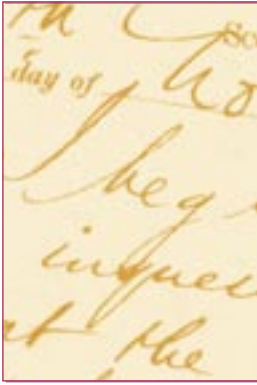
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Turnbull (Peter) THE KILLER WHO NEVER WAS h/b (only 300 copies printed) rare £190
Wolff (Camille) WHO WAS JACK THE RIPPER? hb/dw new, but with small mark to fep, with 9 signatures, some labels £90



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

I Beg to Report

SWANSON'S NOTES DONATED TO YARD CRIME MUSEUM. Chief Inspector Donald S Swanson's personal copy of Sir Robert Anderson's 1910 memoirs *The Lighter Side of My Official Life* containing his handwritten marginalia notes made on the Whitechapel murders, which had been on loan to Scotland Yard's Crime Museum, has been officially donated to the museum. The notes are significant in naming a man named 'Kosminski' - generally thought to mean Polish-born Jewish barber Aaron Kosminski - as the unnamed suspect whom, Anderson claims, the Yard had under scrutiny as the man responsible for the Whitechapel murders.

The ceremony at the Metropolitan Police's famed 'Black Museum' took place on 13 July. Nevill Swanson, the great-grandson of Chief Inspector Swanson, had loaned the marginalia to the Black Museum and he formally handed it over to the museum in part to help publicise the Met's newly refurbished museum.

Although Anderson was cautious in his memoirs, the handwritten notes are more explicit. Anderson wrote in his book: 'The only person who ever had a good view of the murderer unhesitatingly identified the suspect the instant he was confronted with him, but he refused to give evidence against him.'

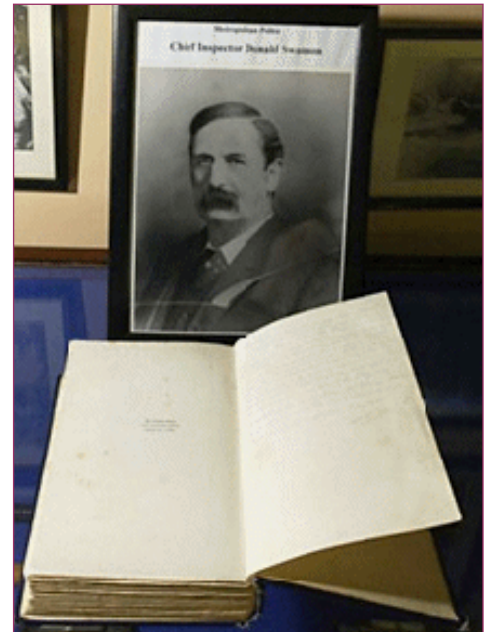
Swanson's granddaughter, Mary Berkin, stated that the case was commonly discussed by the family. 'It was general knowledge that my grandfather knew the name of the killer, and that there was no evidence except from a Jewish man who would not give evidence for ethical reasons,' she said. It is thought by some students of the case that witness Joseph Lawende, who saw a man with fourth canonical victim Kate Eddowes on the night of her murder early on 30 September 1888, might have refused to testify that the man was a Jew known to him.

Swanson's notes apparently clarify the situation: 'Because the suspect was also a Jew, and also because his evidence would convict the suspect, and witness would be the means of murderer being hanged, which he did not wish to be left on his mind. And after this identification, which suspect knew, no other murder of this kind took place in London.' In clear handwriting, and initialled 'DSS' as in his annotations on Yard correspondence, Swanson added: 'Kosminski was the suspect.'

'My great-grandfather thought he got his man,' Nevill Swanson said. 'He would have thought he conducted his detecting job very well and reached a proper conclusion.'

Partly backing up the story, the name 'Kosminski' also appears with those of other suspects in the memorandum written in 1894 by Assistant Chief Constable Melville Macnaghten. On hand for the Scotland Yard ceremony was Ripperologist and documents expert Keith Skinner, who said there was no proof implicating any of the suspects that have been suggested. 'We don't know why these names come into the frame. Swanson's [notes] produce as many questions as they do answers,' he said. Adding to the mystery, Skinner said was that although the Jewish suspect is said to have died, Aaron Kosminski died in a mental hospital in 1919.

www.foxnews.com



The new display in the Crime Museum

RIPPEROLOGIST PIRATE. Alex Norton, who plays Captain Bellamy in the new Disney *Pirates of the Caribbean* sequel *Dead Man's Chest* is a Ripperologist, reported Scotland's [Sunday Times](http://www.sundaytimes.co.uk) on 9 July. It is an interest Norton shares with *Pirates* star Johnny Depp (Captain Jack Sparrow), known for the role of Inspector Abberline in the Hughes Brothers movie *From Hell*. The newspaper reported that Norton, perhaps better known to British TV audiences as DCI Matt Burke in *Taggart*, 'seems an unlikely Jack the Ripper buff, but the fiend of Whitechapel is an abiding passion.' Said Norton, 'I just don't buy the sensational explanations... I don't think it was the queen's grandson, [artist] Walter Sickert, or any

of the rubbish you see in films. I think on the day of judgment Jack the Ripper will make himself known, and we investigators will turn to each other and say: "Who's that?" Seems Mr Norton agrees with Don Rumbelow on that score. Although the *Pirates* opened to lukewarm reviews, it has nonetheless, as might be expected, shot to the top of the movie-goers lists as a must-see. No doubt producer Jerry Bruckheimer plus Jack Sparrow and the crew will be yo-ho-ho-ing all the way to the bank.



Alex Norton



Young Winston

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL AS JACK THE RIPPER? We were taken aback at the notion that anyone could think that the late Prime Minister

[Sir Winston Churchill](#) (1874-1965), the great British Second World War leader, could have been the Ripper. At first we thought Winnie's father Lord Randolph Churchill, sometimes mooted as a Ripper suspect, might be meant. And Winnie after all was only age 13 during the bloody Autumn of Terror of 1888, having been born on 30 November 1874. Nonetheless the producers of a new comedy to premiere at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival do mean the one and the same Winston Churchill. *Winston Churchill was Jack The Ripper* a one-man show starring [Andrew O'Neill](#) and produced by the Good Sense Of Humour company will open at Edinburgh's Underbelly Theatre on 3 August. Here's their press blurb: 'In 2006, a rumour started to spread around the internet. Britain's Greatest Prime Minister, Winston Churchill the man who single-handedly won the Second World War by fighting the Germans on the beaches, or something had a dark secret. He was also Britain's Most Notorious Serial Killer Jack The Ripper. Web sceptics (skwebtics) were unsure. Rolling news channels brought in "experts". But no-one called on Andrew O'Neill. Possibly because they didn't have his number. So, in response to being shunned by the media circus, Andrew instead swore to wreak revenge on the

mulletted fools, and undertook a mission to tell the world about the Churchill-Ripper phenomenon in his own words, at a time and venue to coincide with the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Using archive footage, crackly tape recordings and a variety of hats, history will be re-written live on stage ... 23 times in one month.' And early feedback appears favorable. One person who saw a pre-Fringe preview of the Churchill show enthused: 'Saw a preview and enjoyed it immensely. It's an ingenious idea, well crafted and beautifully written. Not forgetting very very funny.' We wonder whether the Churchill family are laughing. The Underbelly at Edinburgh Central Library, George IV Bridge, 3 August through 27 August (no show 14 August) each night at 11:00 PM, running 55 minutes. Full price £8.50.

TOP LONDON COPPER'S JOB IN JEOPARDY? 'A fixation with speaking to reporters is at the heart of Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Ian Blair's fall from favour' reported [Press Gazette](#) on 6 July on a Channel 4 documentary that aired the following day. 'In this "audit" on the record of Blair, *Daily Mirror* political correspondent Kevin Maguire asks whether Blair will become the first commissioner to be forced out of his job since the man who failed to capture Jack the Ripper. Maguire told *Press Gazette*: "The future is very bleak for Sir Ian Blair, who may not survive. A surprising number of his colleagues and other people close to him, both within the police service and in politics, used a phrase that kept coming up in conversations — 'dead man walking'. People can't see where he can go and how he can recover his authority." Maguire gives the impression that a climate of fear has arisen among the media since Blair took over. He mentioned that numerous people backed out of taking part in the documentary after possible pressure from the Metropolitan Police. The tension between the media and the Met rose to its highest point, according to Maguire, after an ITV journalist was arrested over leaked documents relating to the De Menezes shooting [the mistaken shooting of a Brazilian after the 7 July 2005 terrorist bombings]... Maguire said he frequently came across a sense of disappointment in Blair, that the man who was supposed to be the "great reforming copper" has ended up seeming "incapable of opening his mouth without putting his foot in it....The crux of it is that he made such a mess when he was the mouth of the Met, he's now trying to say next to nothing, and that's not right either."

THE EAST END AS THE CAPITAL OF CURRY OR AS 'JIHADISTAN'? On 25 June, the same moment that the travel section of the *Baltimore Sun*, Baltimore, Maryland, USA, declared Brick Lane in London's East End, 'The Capital of Curry', a less favorable and much more serious cover story by Christopher Caldwell in the [New York Times Sunday Magazine](#) of 25 June discussed 'Counterterrorism in the UK; After Londonistan' finding the East End, with its depressed immigrant communities, to be a breeding ground for Islamic jihad: '...Juliet Luswa, a police constable who grew up in Uganda, and Ahmed Asania, a Bangladeshi-English special police constable, see a lot of London when they walk the beat on a Friday afternoon in Shoreditch, Spitalfields and Whitechapel. The areas are both rich and poor, teeming with



Sign of the times:
bilingual street signs in Brick Lane

immigrants and encroached on by the booming banks and brokerages of the City of London nearby. They are both yuppie dining destinations and caldrons of deprivation... Among the worshipers leaving Friday prayers at the Jamia Masjid mosque - which was built as a Huguenot church in the 18th century and served as a synagogue for most of the 20th - they greet an elderly Liberal Democrat politician from somewhere in South Asia who has just won a seat on the local council, despite his unsteady English. Asania and Luswa point out the flats on Heneage Street where the most dangerous Caribbean gangs loiter and the podlike public toilets on Bethnal Green Road, which are going to be removed because heroin addicts barricade themselves inside with their works.'

Better perhaps to show a blind eye (but how will that ever help solve the problems?) and celebrate the East End as the capital of curry as did the *Sun*: 'On Brick Lane, in an East London enclave known to locals as Banglatown, the scent of biryani and vindaloo wafts from practically every other shop. That's because this 1-mile stretch is the unofficial curry capital of England, a country where Indian food is as much a part of the gastronomic scene as shepherd's pie and mushy peas...'

DON RUMBELOW'S 'RIPPER' TOUR REVIEWED BY CANADIAN WRITER. After admitting to becoming 'hooked' on the case Patricia Cornwell's *Portrait of a Killer: Jack the Ripper Case Closed*, Ellen Raine-Scott signed up for Donald Rumbelow's famed tour of London's East End to visit sites associated with the Ripper and she wrote a lively commentary on the tour for Straight.com in Vancouver, Canada, published on 6 July.

Raine-Scott writes, 'I don't like mysteries: I can't stand not knowing the end of a story. But I've become obsessed with finding the true identity of Jack the Ripper... I'm awaiting the arrival of Donald Rumbelow, London's infamous Ripper expert [and author of *The Complete Jack the Ripper*], to walk me back to the shadowy East End of London in the fall of 1888. The Autumn of Terror. A world of gaslight and torches and murder. I wish he'd hurry up. When Rumbelow finally arrives, he emerges from an inky side street wearing a black fedora and dragging a large, heavy suitcase, looking surprisingly similar to the police-witness drawings of various Ripper suspects. For a moment I wonder whether it could contain a body. I can't help it. It's just that kind of night...

'Rumbelow looks disapprovingly at my camera and notepad, asking that I refrain from filming any video images of him. He is, apparently, worried about amateur Ripperologists stealing his show. Ripper walks are big business in this town... How easy it is to be transported back in history. You walk the same cobblestoned streets that the victims walked, and many of the original buildings are still standing, like the gothic-looking St Botolph's Church. This church was known as the Church of Prostitutes because women walked in slow circles around it to attract clients. It is probable that this site is where the Ripper picked up at least one of his victims.

'As we pass through dank, sinister alleys between warehouses en route to the crime scenes, I can see why the Ripper signed his postcards to police "From Hell". At the turn of the century in industrial England, these former slums would have been polluted, disease-ridden, and desperate places. Poverty forced many "unfortunates", as they were called during the Victorian era, to turn to alcohol and prostitution. Even today, the tenement houses are missing glass panes.

'When we stop at Middlesex Street, once the boundary between the City proper and the East End, it still feels like crossing an invisible line into the city's heart of darkness. This is still the stomping ground of the unfortunate. A quarrelsome fellow points at Rumbelow and slurs, "Don't listen to him! It's all bollocks! Bollocks!"

'Finally, we step onto Goulston Street. Rumbelow points to a row of brick Victorian buildings, formerly the location of the doorway where the Ripper left a bloody scrap of clothing and scrawled the controversial message: "The Juwes are not the men that will be blamed for nothing." The structure now houses a Chinese Restaurant, ironically named Happy Days. In her book, Cornwell asserts that the misspelling of Juwes was deliberate, and one (allegedly) used by the Freemasons. The fact that Walter Sickert had Masonic connections further points to his guilt, in Cornwell's opinion.

'The tour is about to end, and it's my last chance to ask Rumbelow what he thinks about Cornwell's charge that Walter Sickert was Jack the Ripper. He gives a one-word response: "Nonsense." I immediately assail him with Cornwell's arguments. "But the DNA evidence... Jack wrote his notes to police on artist paper... Sickert's drawings match the drawings in the Ripper's letters..."

'"Utter nonsense," Rumbelow insists. I plead with him. "Then, who was Jack the Ripper?" "Read my book," he says, popping open his suitcase and pulling out a copy. As frenzied Ripper groupies move in for autographed copies, I wander away, disgruntled, to the Ten Bells pub. This is the pub that Mary Kelly and the other victims frequented. Inside I'm warmer, but I'm still not happy with my ending.

'The next day, I can't resist dropping by the Tate Modern, where one of Sickert's paintings is exhibited. The painting, *Brighton Pierrots*, depicts a vaudevillian act on-stage before a scattered audience, with many empty seats. Who are the missing audience members? I feel the painter mocking me. Was Sickert perhaps comparing tragedy and comedy,

and speaking to a performance that remains unseen? Suddenly, a cold shiver runs through me. I have the ending I've been looking for.'

ACCESS: Donald Rumbelow's Ripper tours begin at 7:30pm. at the Tower Hill tube station. He guides approximately three times per week in high season, and the tour costs £6.00. The Ten Bells, commonly known as the Jack the Ripper Pub, is in Spitalfields on the corner of Commercial and Fournier streets. [Further information.](#)

PLANS TO RENAME LIVERPOOL'S SLAVERY STREETS DROPPED. Plans in the Liverpool City Council to rename streets with associations to the city's involvement in the slave trade have been dropped after public protest, reported the [Liverpool Daily Post](#) of 12 July. Councillor Barbara Mace began the debate when she proposed renaming Exchange Flags (associated with Ripper suspect James Maybrick, a cotton Merchant) as 'Independence Square' and also streets as Rodney Street, birthplace of Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone (another Ripper suspect) and Penny Lane, made famous in the Beatles song of 1967 of the same name. More 'politically correct' names were to be substituted, to honor men such as abolitionist William Wilberforce, who led the movement that finally abolished slavery in the British Empire in 1807 and Liverpool MP William Roscoe, who likewise campaigned against the trade. The streets would have been redesignated under Cllr Mace's proposal because it is thought that slaves were sold on Exchange Flags (although it is acknowledged that few if any slaves ever reached the port of Liverpool, since most were transported directly to the West Indies and the American mainland), Rodney Street gets its name from Admiral Rodney who defended slavery, and Penny Lane is named for James Penny, a Liverpool sea captain who also campaigned to keep slavery. In an e-mail to Christopher George, the *Rip*'s North American editor, Cllr Mace said a revised proposal might be to put explanatory plaques under the present names to explain the slavery link. Mr George said in an e-mail back to her, 'It is important that the city acknowledges its link to slavery, which the city has done with a major exhibit at the Liverpool Maritime Museum, so nothing is being hidden. The street names should be left as they are. You should not alter history.'

JACK LONDON COTTAGE'S RESTORATION NEARING COMPLETION. The decades-long restoration of one of the cottages on the Sonoma, California, estate of writer Jack London (1876-1916), where the famed writer died, is nearing completion, reported Associated Press writer [Michelle Locke](#) in a syndicated story on 8 June, 'Jack London's Other Role: Farmer.' In his classic book, *People of the Abyss*, first published by Macmillan in 1903, London did much to publicize the poverty and depressed conditions in London's East End. Locke writes: '...chances are you don't know Jack London the sustainable farmer who pioneered environmentally friendly practices on his sprawling ranch in the Northern California wine country. London, it turns out, was about more than dogs, danger and derring-do, a story state parks officials hope to tell as they meticulously restore the Sonoma County cottage where he spent the last years of an action-packed life. "This is where he lived, where he wrote, where he died," regional parks superintendent John Crossman says of the cottage, which is expected to be completed by late summer. "That house," says London scholar Jeanne Campbell Reesman, "has so much history to it. Most people just think he wrote the dog books and he wrote books for boys. Actually, he's one of California's most distinctive writers," says Reesman, a professor of English at the University of Texas at San Antonio and executive coordinator of the Jack London Society.'

Locke continued: 'London's pastoral period started around 1905 when, already a successful writer and celebrity, he moved to Glen Ellen, about 65 miles north of San Francisco, eventually buying up 1,400 acres that became his Beauty Ranch. The land was exhausted by poor farming techniques and soon London was throwing his formidable energies into reviving the property, says Greg Hayes, a former park ranger who helped plan the cottage restoration. London introduced terracing techniques he'd seen as a war correspondent during the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905. He also promoted using animal waste as fertilizer instead of the new chemical fertilizers that were emerging on the market. "He was pre-organic, but I think he'd probably sign on if he were around now," says Hayes.



Jack London in 1902, and the marker stone to his State Park

'The plan was for London and his second wife, Charmian (an earlier marriage ended in divorce), to stay in the cottage just until their dream home, Wolf House, was built. But it wasn't to be. Wolf House burned to the ground in August 1913, leaving nothing but an intriguing shell. At the time, the fire was a mystery, prompting whispers of arson, but it's now believed oily rags spontaneously combusted. Step into London's restored study, a book-lined retreat, and you see the desk - facing away from the windows to avoid the distraction of sweeping green vistas - the safe where he kept his manuscripts, his broad-brimmed hat tossed on a convenient table. All that's missing is the scratch of pen on paper. A stroll through the living room is equally evocative, stocked with items - real and replica - that Jack and Charmian brought back from the South Pacific during a 1907-1909 cruise on their ketch, the Snark. Many of the artifacts used in the restoration were donated by London's descendants, who have made a point of preserving his legacy.

"I was raised to protect the stuff," says Milo Shepard, grandson of London's stepsister and ranch manager, Eliza Shepard. Most of the original Beauty Ranch now belongs to the state, some of it donated by the family, and forms what is now Jack London State Historic Park. Shepard, 80, still lives on 180 acres abutting the park and has worked with parks officials on the \$1.4 million restoration project. Once finished, visitors will have a chance to see the rooms as they would have looked in London's time, including the restored kitchen that gives an idea of the meals the Londons' two cooks would turn out for the ranch's frequent guests.'

[Jack London State Historic Park](#) is located at 2400 London Ranch Road, Glen Ellen, CA 95442. *People of the Abyss*, incidentally, is now available as a free e-book from the [Scottish Sunday Herald online](#).

JANA OLIVER 'RIPPER' NOVEL TO BE SERIALIZED ON INTERNET. Virtual Tales, an e-publisher of serialized novels and novellas, will publish in cooperation with Dragon Moon Press, a leading Canadian publishing house for Science Fiction and Fantasy, its first serialized novel: *Sojourn* by Jana G Oliver. [According to Dave A Law](#), Chairman of Virtual Tales, 'This exciting time-travel thriller will take readers back to Victorian England for a fresh look at one of the most talked-about unsolved crimes in history - the serial killings of Jack the Ripper. When you think about it, what could be better than to serialize a novel involving one of the most infamous serial killers in history, during the height of serial story popularity? Time travel puts a modern spin on this story, and Virtual Tales provides the modern spin on the serial format.'

SKA BAND TAKES ON THE RIPPER. It never ceases to amaze in the number of ways the Ripper pops up in modern culture. Now UK-based ska band The Dualers have come out with a Ripper track on their new album *Don't Go Video*. According to a review on [Musicrooms.net](#), 'The album is an upbeat affair, taking you on a journey through the ages of ska and reggae. Influences are drawn from the likes of Bob Marley and The Wailers, Curtis Mayfield, Toots and The Maytals, The Police and even Madness! The Melting Pot kicks off with three self-penned feel good tracks. *Jack The Ripper* clearly displaying the band's show side, giving you the feeling that you were on the front row at an original ska club!...' Funny, we didn't know there were any ska clubs around in 1888.

GOING TO THE US SPECIAL OLYMPICS. Pat Kossan in the [Arizona Republic](#) of 2 July reported that among the Arizona athletes going to the Special Olympics USA National Games in Ames, Iowa, was bocce ball player Jack 'The Ripper' Wadleigh of Camp Verde, part of the state's four-man team competing in the bocce-ball part of the US games - bocce ball being roughly the Italian equivalent of English lawn bowling. 'At 66, he is the oldest Arizona athlete headed to nationals... It's not the competition that keeps Wadleigh on top of his game, he said, it's his love of strategy. "I'm tough," said Wadleigh, adding that he'll play as long as his back holds out.'

'JACK THE RIPPER' BASEBALL CARD. Arnold Bailey in *Rhode Island News Collectors Corner* on 25 June informs us 'There are some new baseball cards that present Jack the Ripper as a home-run hitter rather than a weird guy with a knife hitting on unsuspecting women in London, and show the Secretary of Defense as a smooth-fielding outfielder instead of the country's out-front guy in the war in Iraq. The card set is called [Greats of the Game](#), a cardboard concept originated by Fleer and now re-energized by Upper Deck. And much of the set's renewed energy comes from a subset of autographed cards in which players don't simply sign their names - they even add their nicknames. The previously mentioned "Jack the Ripper" turns out to be Jack Clark, a slugging outfielder-first baseman known for taking a powerful "rip," or swing, at pitches during 15 big-league seasons, including two with the Red Sox. And the "Secretary of Defense" is Garry Maddox, who was a fleet, sure-handed and often spectacular defensive outfielder for 16 years with five major-league teams.'

NEW PASTICHE HOLMES-RIPPER NOVEL. 'Michael A Stackpole comes closer to something memorable with *The Silver Knife*,' which utilizes an intriguing plot twist with Jack the Ripper. And even if the inclusion of Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson has been seen many a time, the joining of these three personalities creates an intriguing tale.' Kristin L Gray/Enterprise book critic, Review of *Slipstreams*, a short-story anthology edited by Martin H Greenberg and John Helfers which features tales combining science fiction and fantasy with every genre imaginable.

[The Davis Enterprise, 16 June 2006.](#)

WHITECHAPEL PROWLER. 'When I researched *London Under Midnight* I wandered into the back streets of Whitechapel where Jack the Ripper once lurked. There, it's as if plot ideas ooze from the very brickwork.' Simon Clark, author of *London Under Midnight*, cited by Sandy Auden, Simon Clark - new short film about Vampyrhic book, *From Whitby to London*.

[The Alien Online, UK, 26 June 2006.](#)

JACK DRIVES DOWN CAPE SALES. 'Avoid an air of torture for torture's sake. Dracula and Jack the Ripper haven't done much for capes, either – unless you sell Halloween costumes.'

[Sharon Fink, Enraptured, \(A great cape can turn any Clark Kent \(or Lois Lane\) into a fashion superhero\), St Petersburg Times, St Petersburg, FL, USA, 27 June 2006.](#)

ALL THE NEWS FROM HORNCastle. 'From Jack the Ripper to Queen Victoria, taking in Mr Trotter's artificial teeth and Sunlight Soap! 1888: - Gruesome murder in Whitechapel. The body of a woman has been discovered. Her face was cut from ear to ear. There is great excitement in the district.' *Woodhall Spa and The World*, a new book by Marjorie Sargeant, published by Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum and printed by Cupit Print of Horncastle will be on sale for £9 from local shops. The book looks at the period from 1885-1890, as printed in the pages of the *Horncastle News*. Incidentally, Mr Trotter, of Lincoln Road, Horncastle, sold sets of artificial teeth for just £2. His advert in the *News* read: 'Teeth extracted by latest, improved forceps.'

[Horncastle News, Horncastle, Lincolnshire, UK, 28 June 2006.](#)

INFAMOUS GANG ROUNDED UP. 'One would think that Osama Bin Ladin, Al Zarqawi and Jack the Ripper had all been caught together.' Larry Hales on the arrest of seven black men in Miami, Florida, on 22 June, Miami arrests seen as racist entrapment, [Workers World](#), New York, NY, USA, 29 June 2006.

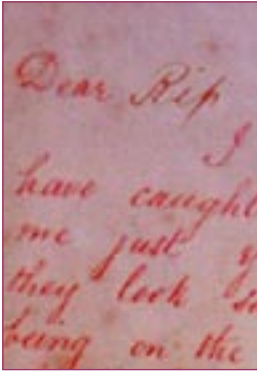


Carmen Colon, Wanda Walkowicz and Michelle Maenza: victims of the Alphabet Killer

ALPHABET KILLER MOVIE TO BE MADE. Reports Dayna Papaleo from Dr Tumblety's home city of Rochester, New York: 'From Jack the Ripper to the Son of Sam, Hollywood has lifted details from true-life events to make movies that fall into the lucrative serial-killer genre. The feelings of fear and loss brought about by those tragedies are usually abstract to those of us in Western New York, but they might not be come September, when production is scheduled to begin on [The Alphabet Killer](#). Directed by Rob Schmidt (2003's *Wrong Turn*), *The Alphabet Killer* is based on Rochester's double-initial murders of the 1970s, in which three girls with the same first and last initials were killed, each of their bodies found in a suburb whose name began with the same letter as the girl's. The story has been relatively fictionalized for the film... Whether the film reopens one of this region's wounds or it brings needed attention to an unsolved crime, there could be one clear benefit: for the local economy.'

[Dayna Papaleo, Metro ink, City Newspaper, Rochester, NY, USA, 28 June 2006.](#)

Got email? Got the Rip!



Dear Rip

Your Letters and Comments

[CLICK TO EMAIL US](#)

Thomas Diplock's signature

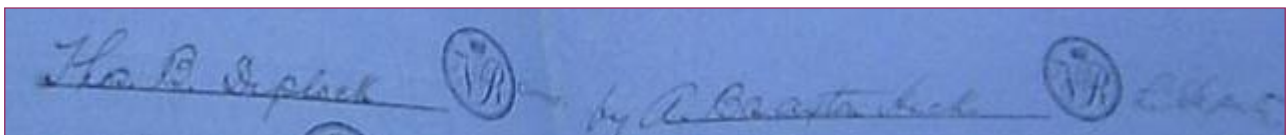
Email to Ripperologist

Dear Rip

On page 18 of *Ripperologist* 64 (February 2006), we provided an image of Thomas Diplock's signature to complement Part II of our 'Green of the Peak' series, a detail taken from the inquisition into the death of Charles Codery Baglin, held on 26 January 1892. This inquisition and others like it are held at the City of London, London Metropolitan Archives, COR/MW/1890-1891/01 in Box COR/MW/01 (although the inquisition is dated 1892, it is nevertheless held in a bundle of inquisitions dated 1891). The Baglin inquisition is of no particular interest to the career of Thomas Diplock's career; rather we selected it randomly thinking it would be nice to include an example of Diplock's signature in an article devoted to him – a simple enough thing to do, we thought.

How complicated our random choice turned out to be! In fact, we have made an error that we must correct. The image we provided for your February issue is not actually Thomas Diplock's signature.

An explanation: it was the *Rip*'s North American Editor, Christopher T George, who caught the first whiff of an inconsistency as he edited our piece, one that had escaped our notice. Chris questioned whether the dating of the 26 January 1892 inquest was accurate given its location in a bundle dated 1891, but even more relevantly, Thomas Diplock, fatally ill with oral cancer, had stopped holding inquests himself after September – a fact that his West London Observer obituary records and that was confirmed by our own research. We were unable to find any examples of Diplock holding an inquest after that September. Rather, his deputy A. Braxton Hicks held inquests in his place from September 1891 until Diplock's death in April 1892 (and Braxton Hicks's signature is also present on the Baglin inquisition, shown below).



*COR/MW/1890-1891,
City of London, London Metropolitan Archives*

As we informed Chris, the inquisition clearly gives a date of 26 January 1892. It was misfiled in an 1891 bundle, as an archivist found when she had to dig it back out again in order to confirm that it was in the LMA's possession once we requested permission to reproduce it.

A minor mystery was born. Diplock held no inquests after September 1891. Yet there was Diplock's signature, plain as day, on an inquisition from January 1892, a time when we knew he was not holding inquests, and there was Braxton Hicks's signature, showing that he had held the inquest in Diplock's place. We were somewhat at a loss to resolve the inconsistency. We knew the coroner's inquisition was the certification of the inquest by the coroner and jury and that without it, the inquest was invalid. In Diplock's case, these inquisitions seem to have been forwarded to the London County Council along with the expenses of the inquest – proof, perhaps, to the financial authority that the inquest had been held. So the inquisition, the certification of the proceedings, was a very important document. Perhaps, we reasoned, Diplock signed off on inquests from his sickbed to ensure that Braxton Hicks's inquests were procedurally sound as far as paperwork went. Since the inquisition was a formal document, and the signature was represented to be that of Thomas Diplock, West Middlesex coroner, we felt comfortable running it in Part II, despite the inconsistency.

Then a couple of months later, as we were sourcing material for Parts IV and V of the series, we came across the following bit of procedure from pages 76-77 of Rudolph Melsheimer's, *Fifth Edition of the Treatise by Sir John Jervis on the Office and Duties of Coroners* (1888). It involves the role of the deputy coroner acting during the sitting coroner's absence; the emphasis is ours:

It has been held to be a sufficient cause for the appointment of a deputy, that the coroner himself was engaged in holding another inquest. If the jury are sworn and the proceedings begin before the deputy of a county coroner, the deputy has power to finish them, though the coroner be present in the course of holding the inquest; but it is otherwise in the case of a borough coroner, for the words of that statute, 45 & 46 Vict. c. 50, s. 172, which deals with deputies of borough coroners, are narrower, and only empower the deputy to act during the illness or unavoidable absence of his principal. The inquisition is properly signed in the name of the principal coroner, "by A.B., his deputy;" and is properly described as having been taken before the principal coroner.

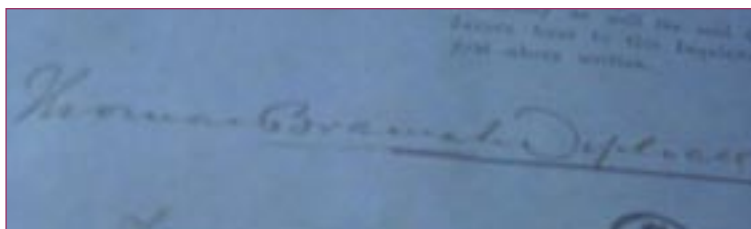
Oh no, we thought — Braxton Hicks must have signed Diplock's name himself according to the procedure Rudolph Melsheimer wrote about. Of course, we now saw, the deputy must have had this power — otherwise what would he do if the coroner happened to be in a coma? Hold the pen in his hand?

It was a head-slapping moment for us. We now realized that very likely we had provided our editors and readers a legally forged signature and represented it as authentic. With a sinking feeling, we referred back to the Baglin inquisition and saw that the Diplock and Braxton Hicks signatures have suspiciously similar characteristics. The correct thing for us to do now would be to pull an inquisition from before September 1891, a time when Diplock was well enough to hold inquests himself, and photograph the relevant signature and compare it to the January 1892 version. So it was that Robert Linford found himself wading through the boxes of inquisitions when he made his final trip to the LMA to gather further source material for Part VI of our series. Robert pulled examples from several inquisitions dated 1890.

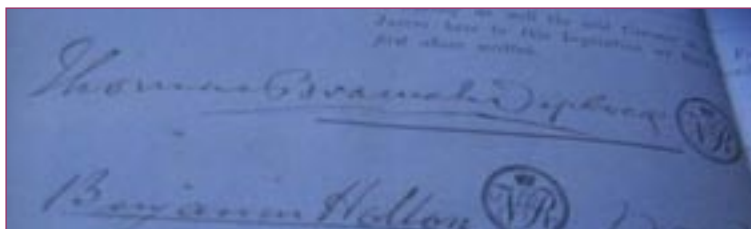
Wouldn't you know it, the earlier examples Robert pulled are all very similar to one another but quite different from the example the Baglin inquisition provides. Therefore, we are quite confident that the example we provided in Part II is actually a case of A. Braxton Hicks signing for Diplock and that the three specimens given above are truly signatures of Dr Thomas Bramah Diplock, coroner for West Middlesex.

It's important to get things right, and we are happy to be allowed to correct an error, hopeful that what is of minor importance today has the potential to be significant tomorrow. We apologize for the mistake.

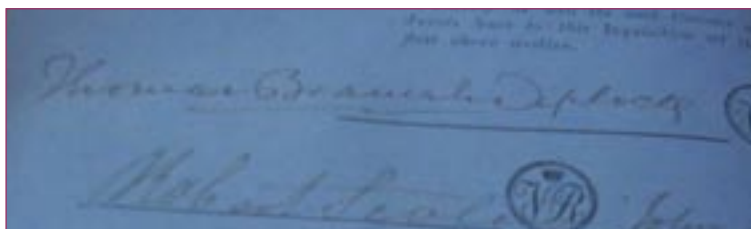
Sincerely,
Robert Charles Linford
John Savage
David O'Flaherty, authors,
'The Green of the Peak'



COR/MW/1890/01/02, City of London, London Metropolitan Archives.



COR/MW/1890/01/02, City of London, London Metropolitan Archives



COR/MW/1890/01/02, City of London, London Metropolitan Archives

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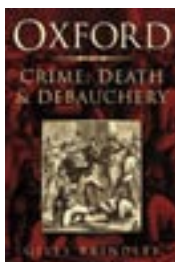
Advertisements in Ripperologist cost £25 for a half page, £50 for a full page, with a nominal charge for a premium position such as the back cover.

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WILF GREGG

On the Crimebeat



Oxford Crime, Death and Debauchery

Giles Brindley

S/B, 216 pp., Illus., Sutton Publishing, £14.99

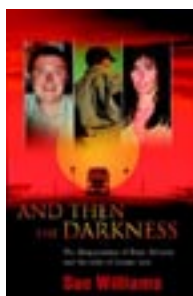
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The darker side of the dreaming spires ranging from the twelfth century onwards. Murder, suicide, duelling, tragic accidental deaths, thefts and bizarre happenings all feature in this book. Rather like the publisher's *Grim Almanac* series but without the date line heading, it is a book which the reader can open at random and find something strange or bizarre. I have to say that I prefer the *Grim Almanac* format as the chapter headings in this book are somewhat overdone.

Notwithstanding this quibble, it is a fascinating and brilliantly researched collection of the down side of Oxford. I particularly liked the item detailed under *Smoking Kills...* In 1735 John Chambers was tried for the murder of Thomas Middleton by stabbing him in the cheek with a tobacco pipe. Chambers was found guilty of manslaughter, burnt in the hand and freed. Another item which caught my eye was the two young lads who went begging in a shop and when rebuffed, grabbed a 1lb sponge cake each and ate them on the spot. They were arrested and sentenced to 21 days hard labour. Mr Brindley comments that at least they would know where the next meal was coming from.

Very readable and as usual from Sutton; very well produced, with many extremely unusual illustrations..

Recommended.



And Then The Darkness

Sue Williams

H/B, 296 pp., Illus., John Blake Publishing, £17.99

[BUY NOW](#)

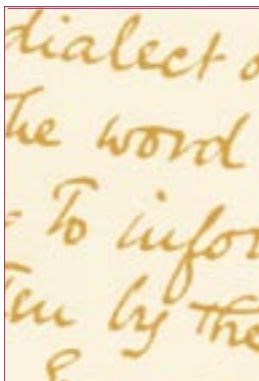
The disappearance of Peter Falconio in the Australian outback not far from Alice Springs, together with the traumas of his girl friend Joanne Lees and the eventual trial and conviction for murder of Bradley Murdoch, made worldwide headlines. A murder case without a body is still comparatively rare. The main physical evidence was a pool of blood found at the side of the road.

Ms Williams, a journalist, is to be congratulated on producing a balanced, well researched and very readable account of the case. It includes interviews with both Joanne Lees and Bradley Murdoch, discussions with families and friends of them both, together with detailed accounts of the police investigation. The conspiracy theories which surfaced in the case and the media furore are very well dealt with.

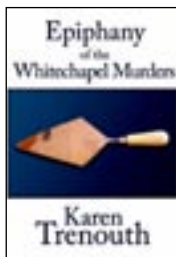
An interesting chapter deals with Bradley Murdoch's earlier trial for abduction.

Ms Williams provides answers to many of the questions surrounding the case but it would appear, one question may never be answered. Where is the body of Peter Falconio?

Recommended.



Reviews



Epiphany of the Whitechapel Murders

Karen Trenouth

Bloomington, Indiana

1663 Liberty Drive, Suite 200, Bloomington, IN 47403: AuthorHouse, 2006

www.authorhouse.com

softcover, 183pp, illus. ISBN: 1425934161

\$18.70 Softcover, \$28.20 Hardcover

Epiphany of the Whitechapel Murders is a reworking of the Royal Conspiracy theory. In this incarnation, the murders are committed by some of the young aristocratic patrons of the homosexual brothel at 19 Cleveland Street. It is Ms Trenouth's contention that fifth canonical victim Mary Kelly had worked for the owner of the brothel when she arrived in London and after an incident in early 1888 had told Abberline about it. The young aristocrats learned about this and set out to silence Kelly before it became known that Prince Albert Victor was also a patron of the brothel, although Ms Trenouth isn't clear about what the aristocrats hoped to achieve by killing Kelly as she had already told Abberline everything she knew. But there is no point in close analysis of the details of Ms Trenouth's hypothesis as it is essentially a fiction, it being well-established that the authorities first learned about what was going on at 19 Cleveland Street almost a full year after the commencement of the Whitechapel murders. This was on 4 July 1889 when a theft from the Receiver-General's Department in the Central Telegraph Office led the police to question a post office messenger named Charles Swinscow about a large amount of money in his possession and he admitted that it was payment for having sex with men. Since Ms Trenouth supplies absolutely no evidence or even reasoned argument that the police had any earlier intimation of what was going on at 19 Cleveland Street or that Kelly worked for Hammond or that she ever visited Abberline, the whole hypothesis must be treated as a fantasy.

The epiphany of the title appears to be a report in the *Birmingham Evening Mail* of 8 October 1888 about Alfred Pearson, a moulder, frightening a courting couple by brandishing a large trowel and crying 'Jack the Ripper'. The author maintains this was really Albert Henry Pearson, son of a prosperous mine-owner, who behaved that way to divert attention away from his brilliant surgeon cousin, whose name was Alfred Pearson and who Ms Trenouth claims was the murderer. It isn't clear why this behaviour would have diverted attention away from the surgeon or, given that neither 'Alfred' nor 'Pearson' are rare names, why and how Ms Trenouth knows there wasn't a moulder named Alfred Pearson.

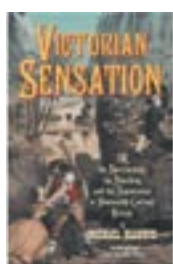
Ms Trenouth thinks that Prince Albert Victor murdered Mary Kelly and dismisses the long-standing claim that he was at Sandringham at the time of the murder, explaining that she found it stated somewhere on the internet that since 1862 the Royal Family have traditionally spent from Christmas to February at Sandringham, from which she infers that Prince Albert Victor 'could NOT have been in Sandringham on November 9 1888 or at any other time in November'. In fact Prince Albert Victor joined the Prince and Princess of Wales at Sandringham on Saturday, 3 November 1888, was present with other members of the royal family on 8 and 9 of November entertaining the Duc d'Aumale and the Marquis and Marchioness of Landsdowne, and on Saturday, 10 November, accompanied the Prince and Princess from Sandringham to Hillington to join the meet of the West Norfolk Hunt, where he was seen by a very large number of people.

Ms Trenouth believes that Mary Kelly's 'injuries mirror the field dressing of a deer' and points out that Prince Albert Victor was proficient at dressing a deer. Ms Trenouth also sees an image of Baphomet on Kelly's bedside table and believes that the missing internal organs from the victims were used in some sort of ritual associated with Baphomet worship. Whether Kelly's injuries 'mirror' a dressed deer or not, and in truth they don't, they have nothing whatsoever to do with Prince Albert Victor because he was at Sandringham, and whilst it is possible to see shapes and images in almost anything from a wallpaper pattern to clouds, seeing them doesn't make them real.

Overall, the book reads like a sequential collection of research notes interwoven with the wholly illusory activities of the aristocrats. Ms Trenouth's knowledge of the Ripper case seems marginal - there are several howlers such as having Annie Chapman walking upstairs to the back yard of 29 Hanbury Street and her portrayal of Abberline putting together

an Untouchables-like team of his best men, namely Swanson, Dew, Andrews and Arnold! - and her research doesn't seem to have extended beyond reading a few internet sites like *Casebook: Jack the Ripper*, which appears to be the source of most of her information about the murders from Tabram to Kelly, which comprises the bulk of the book, and *Wikipedia*, from which she reprints verbatim parts of her information about Baphomet.

It is not easy to write a book and see it into print and nobody can take that achievement away from Ms Trenouth, who is probably a genuine person who honestly believes that she has stumbled on something important and significant, but the fact is that her central thesis that the murders were committed by *habitués* of 19 Cleveland Street doesn't hold together even as a piece of fiction, there is no evidence that Kelly worked for the owner of 19 Cleveland Street, no evidence that the police knew anything about 19 Cleveland Street prior to 1889, no evidence that any of the named aristocrats were in the East End at the time of the murders, no evidence whatsoever that Dr Alfred Pearson committed the mutilations, and no evidence that Prince Albert Victor wasn't at Sandringham. All these claims by Ms Trenouth are products of the imagination, not of fact. 'Jack the Ripper' is history and like all history it is subject to the rigorous demands of facts, evidence, understanding and accuracy. It isn't about wholly hypothetical scenarios based on imagination, fantasy, factless theorising and shapes one might be able to see in the light and shade of old photographs.



Victorian Sensation or the Spectacular, the Shocking and the Scandalous in Nineteenth-Century Britain

Michael Diamond

Anthem Press, 2003

www.anthempress.com

hardcover, 328pp, illus, notes, chronology, index

ISBN: 1 8433 1076 7. \$35.00 Hardcover

Michael Diamond's *Victorian Sensation* provides a very helpful survey of British Victorian society's reactions to different types of sensations, thus placing the Whitechapel Murders in the context of the era. Covered are society attitudes not only to murder and other crime but Royalty, political movements, religion and morality, sex scandals, sensational novels and drama, and the stars of entertainment. The author, a former BBC producer and broadcaster with the BBC World Service, brings substantial scholarship and detail to the discussion which is told in a lively and entertaining fashion fitting to his background.

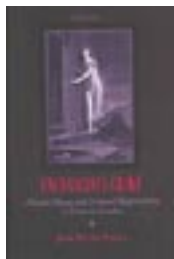
The 1889 trial for murder of Mrs Florence Maybrick, thankfully seen in isolation from any candidacy of her husband as the Whitechapel murderer, is covered as one of the sensations of the era. The author traces how, prior to her conviction, the luckless widow of Aigburth was pilloried as an adulteress. The confusing medical evidence and existence of poisons in the household (though none that were hidden) led to her conviction for murdering James Maybrick. The verdict of the jury was not a little helped by the direction of unstable judge Sir James Fitzjames Stephen - father of Ripper suspect J K Stephen - who was so out of it that he expressed befuddlement over what the Grand National was - surely one of the most famous steeplechase races in the world. However - as Diamond notes, public opinion changed with her conviction. As *The Times* put it, 'The public are not thoroughly convinced of the prisoner's guilt' (p181) and since Florie was American-born, the movement to gain her release, became an international cause. The uproar led to her sentence being transmuted to life in prison, of which she actually only served fifteen years.

Diamond's discussion of the Whitechapel murders is exceptional for a survey-type book that covers far more than as Diamond puts it, 'the greatest sensation of the Victorian era'. The author writes: 'Although violent crime was routine [in the age], this case involved exceptional brutality. However, many other factors were involved, notably the number of linked crimes and the failure of the police to solve them, which made the personality of the murderer a particularly potent factor. As he was never caught, there was no limit to the possibilities, and the public imagination ran riot.' (p184)

The hue and cry after Annie Chapman's murder on 9 September 1888 is covered by the author who cites the case of a blind lace-seller who was at first thought to have been the murderer and to have 'ripped' a woman who was in fact leading him around. Diamond states 'There could scarcely have been a better picture of the fear and excitement endemic in the East End.'

The only part of the author's discussion of the case that is unsatisfactory is that he fails to make clear in his text - though it is clear enough in his footnotes - that Sir Robert Anderson's *Blackwood's magazine* article referring to the murderer as a poor Polish Jew did not appear at the time of the murders but in 1910, twenty-two years later, and that the *Jewish Chronicle's* editorial questioning of Anderson's theory was also those many years later. (p187) Touching on the other theories of the case, that 'Jack' might have been an abattoir worker or a 'a famous man or of noble birth.' Diamond validly makes the point that the rumour, circulating in the East End, that Jack could have been a member of the House of Lords, and that the Home Secretary stopped enquiries into the East End murders for that reason, seems derived from confusion with the Cleveland Street case of 1889. Diamond also states that '...Prince Eddy [Prince Albert

Victor] has been mentioned in the long list of unlikely suspects. Rumour, speculation and uncertainty, fanned by the popular press, are essential ingredients in the Ripper story, and help explain why, for both his contemporaries and ours, it was perhaps the greatest Victorian sensation of all.' (p188)



Unconscious Crime: Mental Absence and Criminal Responsibility in Victorian London

Joel Peter Eigen

Baltimore

Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003

Hardcover, 223pp, notes, tables, index

ISBN: 0-8018-7428-9

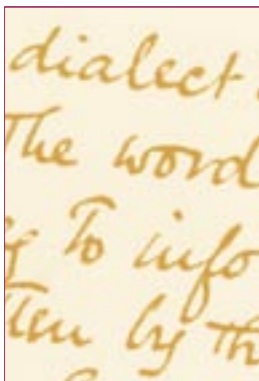
\$39.95 Hardcover

Today's public unease with the insanity defense of suspects in criminal trials has its historical antecedent in the so-called 'McNaughtan Rules' of 1843, which were formulated following the case of political assassin Daniel McNaughtan, who was found not responsible due to insanity. Joel Peter Eigen, Professor of Sociology at Franklin and Marshall College, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, USA, provides a lively discussion of how English courts sought to restrict medical testimony on the diminished responsibility of defendants. As Eigen points out, prior to 1843, 'Suspicion that the prison surgeon or other court-appointed medical men might testify in court prompted defense attorneys to secure medical experts of their own. The practice spiraled to the point that, by 1843, medical witnesses were present in three of four trials in which the prisoner's mental state was at issue... The long-familiar tension between the judiciary and the emerging specialty of mental medicine hardly abated after the imposition of the McNaughtan Rules, but it comes as a surprise to learn that, far from circumscribing the medical expert, the newly articulated criteria actually created an opportunity for medical men to comment on material they heard in the trial itself. The obvious threat such medical interference posed to the "job description" of the juror became the focus of rancorous debate in successive trials... [The] issue of impairment had to be fought anew on a case-by-case basis.' (pp11-13)

Eigen's interesting discussion of Victorian cases and how they had an effect on legal thinking then and now is fascinating. It is also revealing as well to see how cases might or might not proceed to a full trial, depending on the verdict of the grand jury or the coroner's jury, and this slots in with the recent able discussion of the English coronial system by Linford, Savage, and O'Flaherty in these pages. A case of murder by a supposed sleep walker, Esther Griggs, was heard in Marylebone Police Court in January 1859. According to Sergeant Simmons, on duty in East street, Manchester Square, he heard a female voice cry out, "Oh, my children! Save my children!" Simmons and his fellow officer went to 71 East street, where he found that the prisoner was in a room in darkness with two children, one aged five and another aged three. She had thrown her other child, a boy, through the window, thinking the house was on fire. Simmons said the police surgeon told him 'it was a species of nightmare, which the prisoner was laboring under when the act was committed.' The grand jury empanelled to review the case refused to enter an indictment for murder. The case might not be known today except that it ended up on broadsheets and the sharp eye of medical authors Bucknill and Tuke recognized the case for what it was, in Eigen's words, a 'remarkable tale of sleepwalking'. (pp135-136). In a nicely turned sentence at the end of this useful book, the writer concludes, 'It might take a Freud later in the century to connect the person with his hidden wishes, but it took only the Old Bailey sleepwalker to light the way.' (p180)

In Future Issues...

Future issues of *Ripperologist* will feature... Gavin Bromley on PC Smith's beat, Antonio Sironi and Jane Coram's *Mary Jane Kelly*, Andy Aliffe's *Sadie Orchard*, Tim Mosley's Boris Karloff's 1960s TV Series *Thriller*, William Michael's Ripper victims' photographs, John Ruffels on *The East End Murderer - I Knew Him*, Colin Roberts's geo-political divisions of Jack the Ripper's territory: Civil and Ecclesiastical Parishes, Parliamentary Boroughs and Metropolitan Police Force Divisions, Karyo Magellan on the Victorian Medico-legal Autopsy, Claudia Aliffe on the Wicked Women of Britain, Jeffrey Bloomfield on the Charles Bravo murder case, Zoraida Dunne on William Palmer, Christopher T George on Neil Cream, Eduardo Zinna on Buck Ruxton, Howard Brown on Privies and Outhouses in Victorian Times, Nicholas Smith on St Patrick and the Crown Jewels, Leslie A Klinger on Jack the Ripper and Sherlock Holmes, Stanley Dean Reid on the Most Wanted Criminals in World History, John Crawford on Algernon Haskett-Smith, Robert McLaughlin on *Vacher l'Eventreur*, Stepan Poberowski on Russian perceptions of Jack the Ripper, *The Last Word* by Christopher-Michael DiGrazia, *Crimebeat* by Wilf Gregg, *Cyberjack* by Monty, *Press Trawl* by Chris Scott, *East End Life* by Adam Wood, Ripper Fiction, In Brief, I Beg to Report, Dear Rip, Ripping Yarns and more, much more... can you afford to miss out on any of it?



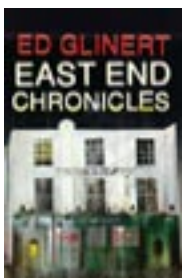
Ripping Yarns

Books, Films, Theatre, Television,
Radio, DVDs, Compact Discs and Other Media

BOOKS: OLDIES BUT GOODIES

NON-FICTION

BY EAR AND EYES: THE WHITECHAPEL MURDERS, JACK THE RIPPER AND THE MURDER OF MARY JANE KELLY (Paperback, 320 pages, Longshot Publishing, ISBN: 0955024005, £12.99), by Karyo Magellan. '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.' *Ripperologist*.

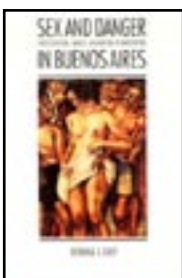


EAST END CHRONICLES (Hardcover, 320 pages, Allen Lane/Penguin, ISBN: 0713997745, £20) by [Ed Glinert](#), covers the Silk Weavers of Spitalfields, Docks, Dockers and River Pirates, Murder and Mayhem on the Ratcliffe Highway, Mystics and Myth-Makers, The Blitz and Bombs, The Jewish Ghetto and others. '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 ... highly recommended for those who would like a grounding in East End lore.' *Ripperologist*.

EYE ON LONDON, (Paperback, 160 pages, Capita Publications, ISBN: 0954868102, £9.99) by Colin Kendell, who chose Jack the Ripper as his specialist subject when he appeared on the BBC programme *Mastermind* ten years ago, deals with famous London landmarks and characters, such as the Tower of London, the Albert Hall, Kensington Palace and - of course - Jack the Ripper.

JACK THE RIPPER. MIT CD. PRE-INTERMEDIATE. STEP 4. 9. /10. KLASSE (LERNMATERIALIEN), by Peter Foreman. Perfect (2006/01) Langensch. Schulb., Mchn. This book, which comes with a CD and internet exercises, is used as a Pre-Intermediate, Step 4.9. /10 teaching English, history and research skills. At the end of each chapter there are several sections of questions and before each chapter the reader is asked to listen to the relevant section on the CD and answer questions. 'Overall, this was an impressive little book, good for students as well as teachers.' *Ripperologist*.

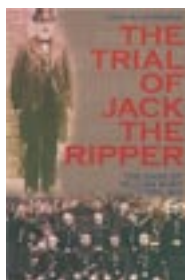
MARY JANE KELLY: LA DERNIÈRE VICTIME (Paperback, 90 pages, L'Harmattan, Collection: *Graveurs de mémoire*, ISBN: 2747525244, €9,50) by [Didier Chauvet](#), is a French-language book described as the first biography of Mary Jane Kelly, the last victim of Jack the Ripper.



SEX AND DANGER IN BUENOS AIRES: PROSTITUTION, FAMILY, AND NATION IN ARGENTINA (Cloth, ix, 261 pp. Illus., maps, University of Nebraska Press, ISBN:0-8032-2139-8, \$55; Paperback, 260 pages, University of Nebraska Press, ISBN: 0803270488, \$24.95) by Donna J. Guy, 'is... a very readable analysis of mid-nineteenth- to mid-twentieth-century Argentina from the perspective of the underworld of prostitutes, bordellos, and international white slavery rings.' *Hispanic American Historical Review*. 'Guy's study is a salutary reminder of how deeply prostitution influences the politics of nationalism, of social control and of cultural identity, not just in Argentina but in Europe as well.' *Manchester Guardian*. The period examined in the book, roughly 1850 to 1950, covers the year 1876 and its aftermath, when Hungarian petty criminal Alois Szemeredy killed Caroline Metz in a Buenos Aires hotel, escaped, was captured, stood trial for murder, was acquitted for lack of evidence and went on to a career of crime which some have maintained included the crimes ascribed to Jack the Ripper

THE AMERICAN MURDERS OF JACK THE RIPPER: TANTALIZING EVIDENCE OF THE GRUESOME AMERICAN INTERLUDE OF THE PRIME RIPPER SUSPECT (Paperback, 240 pages, The Lyons Press, ISBN: 1592286755, illus., \$ 14.95) by R Michael Gordon, posits Severin Klossowski, aka George Chapman, as the Ripper and explores his responsibility for a number of murders committed in the United States.

THE BLACK DAHLIA FILES: THE MOB, THE MOGUL AND THE MURDER THAT TRANSFIXED LOS ANGELES (Hardcover, 416 pages, Regan Books, ISBN: 0060582499, \$26.99), by Donald H. Wolfe. The mob is Benjamin 'Bugsy' Siegel, the mogul is Norman Chandler, the publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, and the murder that transfixed Los Angeles is the killing of Elizabeth Short, the 'Black Dahlia'.



THE TRIAL OF JACK THE RIPPER: THE CASE OF WILLIAM BURY (1859-89) (Paperback, 192 pages, 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, Macpherson's book is a damn good read and a penetrating analysis of a nasty murder by an equally nasty little man.' *Ripperologist*.

WILL THE REAL MARY KELLY...? (Paperback, 154 pages, Christopher Scott, ISBN: 1905277059, £10.99) by Ripperologist's contributing editor Chris Scott, is a definitive take on the Miller's Court victim. '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. 'Best Book of 2005.' Karyo Magellan, *Ripperologist*.

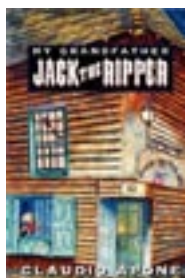
FICTION

DEATH AT WHITECHAPEL (Paperback, 288 pages, Berkley, ISBN: 0425173410, \$6.99), by Robin Paige, the pseudonym of a husband-and-wife writing team, deals with a husband-and-wife detective team on the trail of Jack the Ripper. We are not be giving too much away by revealing that the authors have embraced the Masonic conspiracy theory that supposedly reached to the highest levels of the British government.

ERASTE FANDORINE, TOME 5: MISSIONS SPÉCIALES (Softback, 475 pages, 10/18, *Collection : Grands détectives*, ISBN : 2264036796, €7.80) by Boris Akounine (Boris Akunin) is a French translation of the fifth volume in the best-selling adventures of late nineteenth-century Russian detective Erast Fandorin. It consists of two adventures: in the first one, Fandorin confronts a daring confidence man; in the second one, Jack the Ripper - not a copycat, not a red herring, not a Tsarist conspiracy, but the real Ripper, who is pursuing his life avocation in Moscow. 'As of now, only four of [Akunin's] novels have been translated into English, though quite a few more are available in French or German. If you can read either language, rush to get the Fandorin-meets-the-Ripper book. Otherwise, publication of its English translation has been announced for February 2007 under the title *Jack of Spades and The Decorator*. It's worth the wait.' *Ripperologist*.



LE RETOUR DE JACK L'ÉVENTREUR (Paperback, 253 pages, Malko - Gérard de Villiers, *Collection: Les Dossiers de Scotland Yard*, ISBN : 2738601952, €5,20), by J B Livingstone, is a French-language thriller where Jack the Ripper returns 50 years after the Whitechapel murders.



MY GRANDFATHER JACK THE RIPPER (Hardcover, 208 pages, Herodias, ISBN: 1928746160) by Claudio Apone, was widely acclaimed in its original Italian as an atmospheric thriller aimed at a young adult readership. Young EastEnders Andy Dobson uses his psychic powers to travel to the past - were he witnesses Jack the Ripper's grisly murders - and to detect a modern-day killer. Be warned that a stilted, uncredited translation is often unintentionally hilarious and militates against the author's attempts to build up suspense.

STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT (Paperback, Ballantine Books, ISBN: 0345285417) by Stanley Ellin, was translated into German as *Jack the Ripper und Van Gogh*. The Ripper connection is apparently limited to six pages where Ellin's protagonist, private investigator John Milano, establishes a link between Van Gogh and the Whitechapel Murders.

THE WHITECHAPEL CONSPIRACY, (Paperback, 352 pages, Ballantine Books, \$6.99, ISBN: 0449006565), by Anne Perry, is an intricate, fast-paced, atmospheric Victorian mystery cum political thriller featuring Inspector Thomas Pitt undercover in the East End slums chasing anarchists, finding out about the Whitechapel conspiracy and uncovering Jack the Ripper's true identity.

BOOKS: RECENTLY PUBLISHED

NON-FICTION

EPIPHANY OF THE WHITECHAPEL MURDERS (Hardcover, ISBN:1425934153, Paperback, ISBN: 1425934161) by Karen Trenouth, is a self-published book which purportedly 'details the reasons behind the Whitechapel Murders of 1888, how the murders occurred, who was responsible, and how this series of murders was linked to another infamous scandal that rocked all of England a year later. The identity of "Jack the Ripper" will be revealed as this previously untold story unfolds.' The blurb adds: 'What is the true story of the Whitechapel Murders? You have seen the films; you have read the various books on the subject. Now, 118 years later, is the time for the truth.' According to the book's preface, the truth seems to be somehow related to Alfred Pearson, a 27 year old moulder from Brierley Hill, Kingswinford, who on the evening of 8 October 1888 jumped at a young couple brandishing a trowel and yelling 'Jack the Ripper!!! Jack the Ripper!!!' at the top of his lungs. Reviewed in this issue.

JACK THE RIPPER (Paperback, 160 pages, 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*.

DID THEY REALLY DO IT? FROM LIZZIE BORDEN TO THE 20TH HIJACKER (Paperback, 256 pages, Thunder's Mouth Press, ISBN: 1560257741, \$14.95), Fred Rosen.

EAST END MEMORIES (Hardcover, 352 pages, Sutton Publishing, ISBN: 0750939966, £14.99) by Jennie Hawthorne, is an account of the author's early life in the heart of the East End told with passion and humour - even though her drunken father struggles from crisis to crisis and illness and crime are part of everyday life. Her captivating anecdotes, poignant and entertaining, are suffused by the sights, sounds and smells of the East End in the 1920s and 30s.



JACK OF JUMPS (Hardcover, 400 pages, Granta Books, ISBN: 1862077703, £18.99), by David Seabrook, is an account of the murders of eight prostitutes in West London between 1959 and 1965 by a serial killer known as Jack the Stripper. Seabrook relates the crimes to various sex and corruption scandals in the 'Swinging Sixties' and conjures up the disturbing possibility that the killer may still be at large. 'Overall, once you've got into the style, *Jack of Jumps* is unputdownable. It doesn't answer a lot of questions - Freddy Mills's death remains a mystery, the alleged cover-up is largely unexplained and the case against the unnamed copper isn't really any stronger than it was when Baldock advanced it back in the 60s. But the book just grabs you and holds you and gives you a lot to think about.' *Ripperologist*.

JACK THE RIPPER - ANATOMIE EINER LEGENDE (Hardcover, 256 Pages, Illus., Militzke Verlag, €18, ISBN: 3861897539) by Hendrik Püstow and Thomas Schachner, is the first original German-language book on the Ripper. 'To whom can Jack the Ripper: Anatomie einer Legende be recommended? To every German-speaking reader who wants to venture deeper into the case and needs a comprehensive source for his further studies, or to any connoisseur interested in Jack the Ripper books and resources from non-English-speaking countries.' Michaela Kořistová, *Ripperologist*.

JACK THE RIPPER COMPREHENSIVE A-Z (Hardcover, 499 pages, 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.

JACK THE RIPPER: THE FACTS (Paperback, 560 pages, 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.

NEWGATE: LONDON'S PROTOTYPE OF HELL (Hardcover, Sutton Publishing, ISBN: 0750938951, £20), by Stephen Halliday, relates the story of the largest and most notorious prison in London. Built during the twelfth century, Newgate held at various times Dick Turpin, Titus Oates, Jack Sheppard, Casanova, Daniel Defoe - and Defoe's fictional heroine Moll Flanders. 'Packed with information and very readable, this is a splendid retelling of our black history and is strongly recommended.' Wilf Gregg, *Ripperologist*.



PORTRAIT OF A KILLER: JACK THE RIPPER - CASE CLOSED (Paperback, 400 pp., Penguin Group (USA), ISBN: 0425205479, \$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.

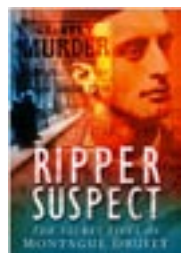
PRINCE EDDY: THE KING BRITAIN NEVER HAD (Hardcover, 272 pages, Tempus Publishing Ltd, ISBN: 0752434101, £20) by [Andrew Cook](#), is a revisionist account of Eddy's life. 'Overall Cook makes a valiant attempt to rehabilitate Prince Albert Edward Victor and deservedly so, and his book is highly readable, even when not discussing the Ripper and Cleveland Street.' *Ripperologist*.



PUBLIC REACTIONS TO JACK THE RIPPER: LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: AUGUST - DECEMBER 1888, Softcover, ca. 250pp. Illustrated with extensive annotations. Index, \$ 23.99), edited by [Casebook: Jack the Ripper](#) Founder and Administrator Stephen P Ryder, is a collection of more than 200 Letters to the Editor published in the Victorian press, presented chronologically, extensively annotated and indexed both by author and subject. Anyone interested can [email Stephen](#) at to be placed on the list for a signed copy. All proceeds from the sale of the book will directly benefit the *Casebook Press Project*. 'Letters to the editor in the London press during the murder series of 1888 probably will not help us catch the elusive murderer who has fascinated us for so many decades - but they do provide a fascinating sidelight on the society of the day. As with a number of other specialty books on the Whitechapel murders that have been appearing in recent years... Public Reactions gives us a better rounded view of the effect of the crimes on people in London and beyond and provides interesting glimpses into human psychology.' *Ripperologist*.

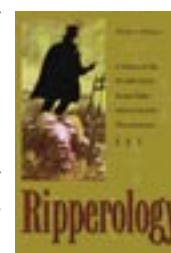
REVELATIONS OF THE TRUE RIPPER (Paperback, 293 pages, Lulu.com, ISBN: 1411697413), by Vanessa A Hayes, presents a suspect who, according to Ivory Moon literary agents is 'a fully plausible suspect, non-related to the Author or Royalty'. The author adds: 'Although Jack the Ripper has been remembered for over a century I think we should spare a thought for his victims. These women were living day to day trying to escape starvation and death. They did not have a choice how they lived. "Jack" gave them no choice in death. *Revelations of the True Ripper* introduces you to my "Jack the Ripper". I did not choose him, I found him in the detail, hidden behind the history of the times.' 'Overall, Vanessa Hayes's book carries you along, her enthusiasm is infectious and her writing style, a little gushing at times, is personal and has a charm that overcomes the book's deficiencies.' *Ripperologist*.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES: BEING THE STORY OF JACK THE RIPPER AS REPORTED IN THE LONDON AND NEW YORK TIMES (Paperback, 139 pages, cover illustration by Gavin L O'Keefe, Ramble House, \$12) is a collection of news items published in *The Times* and the *New York Times* in chronological order (1885-1895). 'Although marred by a rather garish and unpleasant cover and the absence of an index, and whilst it would have benefited from an introduction and notes by someone who knows the subject, overall this is a nicely produced little volume.' *Ripperologist*.



RIPPER SUSPECT: THE SECRET LIVES OF MONTAGUE DRUITT (Hardcover, 224 pages, Sutton Publishing, £18.99, ISBN: 0750943297) by D.J. Leighton, was originally self-published in 2005 and reviewed in issue 57 of *Ripperologist*. 'Apart from some tidying up of the spelling and grammar ...the book remains the same as the volume published in 2005 and is subject to the same criticisms.' *Ripperologist*.

RIPPEROLOGY: A STUDY OF THE WORLD'S FIRST SERIAL KILLER AND A LITERARY PHENOMENON (Hardcover, 288 pages, Kent State University Press, US\$24.95/£20.50, ISBN: 0-87338-861-5/978-0-87338-861-0), by veteran Ripper author Robin Odell, with an introduction by Donald Rumbelow. 'Odell covers most of the recent theories at some length, lingers a little over the Macnaghten suspects, and provides what will be seen as sober assessment from an old hand who has been kicking around this field long enough to easily see the gems. And the joy of the book is that it is easy reading, as ideal for the newcomer to Ripper studies who wants the history of the subject in broad brush strokes, as it is for the old hand who'll find Odell's style and approach a joy.' *Ripperologist*.





THE YELLOW HOUSE: VAN GOGH, GAUGUIN, AND NINE TURBULENT WEEKS IN ARLES (Hardcover, 368 pages, Fig Tree, ISBN: 0670914975, £18.99) by Martin Gayford. As is widely known, the cohabitation of Van Gogh and Gauguin ended when the former sliced off his left ear and presented it to a prostitute. Was he inspired by the Ripper's slicing off Catherine Eddowes's ear? 'It's a beguiling theory, the severance of the ear and the involvement of a prostitute in both cases suggesting a intentional coincidence, but there is no empirical evidence that Van Gogh ever read the accounts of the Ripper crimes in the newspapers - only two of fifteen reports published actually mentioning the ear-cutting - or that he particularly noted the ear-cutting or was in any way influenced by it. However, since we don't know what influenced Van Gogh, every suggestion is largely hypothetical.' *Ripperologist*.

TO KILL RASPUTIN: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF GREGORI RASPUTIN (Hardcover, 288 pages, 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' who journalist William Le Queux claimed knew the true identity of Jack the Ripper.

UNCLE JACK, (Paperback, Orion) by Humphrey Price and Tony Williams, is the paperback edition of the controversial book proposing the candidacy of Royal obstetrician Sir John Williams as Jack the Ripper. '...when the primary supporting pillars of the theory tumble like a house of cards there is no real point in examining the equally unreliable minutiae...' *Ripperologist*.

FICTION

AN ACRE OF BARREN GROUND (Paperback, 352 pages, Scribner, ISBN: 0743259726 , £7.99) by [Jeremy Gavron](#), is a novel of Brick Lane, Spitalfields, from prehistory to the present. It is divided into some 40 chapters named after the buildings that line Brick Lane and told in different styles. The chapter about Inspector Abberline's hunt for Jack the Ripper reads like a police procedural, Gunther von Hagens's 2002 exhibition of plastinated cadavers at the Old Truman Brewery is evoked through newspaper coverage and a story about hard-edged, hyped-up dotcom entrepreneurs setting up business in the area their grandparents once struggled to leave is told as a graphic novel. The 'short stories are filled with memories of homelands and dreams for the future, and they pulse with the busy rhythm of everyday London living.' *The Independent*, 12 March 2006.



BLACK BY GASLIGHT (Paperback, 342 pages, Cavalier Press, ISBN: 0974621064, \$ 17.95), by Nene Adams, opens in August 1888 as consulting detective Lady Evangeline St Claire rescues prostitute Rhiannon Moore from the clutches of Jack the Ripper. The two women embark upon an investigation that soon becomes a race against a killer whose only motive is madness and, while trying to save themselves, fall desperately in love.



BROKEN (Paperback, 480 pages, Spectra (Random House Inc), ISBN: 0553588184, \$6.99), by Kelley Armstrong, combines fantasy and suspense as werewolf Elena Michaels discovers she's pregnant. Elena has never heard of another living female werewolf, let alone one who's given birth. At this point, a playful demon prevails upon her to retrieve a stolen letter allegedly written by Jack the Ripper. As a distraction, the job seems simple enough, but the letter contains a portal to Victorian London's underworld which Elena inadvertently triggers unleashing a vicious killer and a pair of zombie thugs. Now Elena must find a way to seal the portal before the unwelcome visitors get what they're looking for: Elena herself.

DEVIL GODDESS: A SUPERNATURAL MYSTERY (Paperback, 484 pages, iUniverse, Inc, ISBN: 0595380670, \$25.95 - also available as a printable e-book in Adobe Reader format from Amazon for \$6), by Robert Amsel, is a thriller concerning a modern-day young schoolteacher living in Manhattan who fears she's being haunted by the ghost of Jack the Ripper. 'Whoever the real Jack the Ripper was, Ripperologists will whistle at the author's cleverness in making connections between the Ripper's signature crimes and earlier, until now unrelated horrors. This intricately structured horror novel unfolds like a well-layered mystery in which the hapless heroine must fight for both her sanity and her life.' Perry Brass.

JACK THE RIPPER: A CONFESSION (Paperback, 257 pages, ripperArt, ISBN: 0954660331, £9.99) by Geoff Cooper and Gordon Punter, is (according to the publishers) 'the chilling account on why the murders occurred and why they ceased so abruptly. It also reveals the identity of the man, known as Jack the Ripper, who, towards the end of the nineteenth century, held the entire district of Whitechapel, London, England, in a grip of unparalleled terror.'

JACK THE RIPPER: END OF A LEGEND (Paperback, 316 pages, Athena Press Pub, ISBN: 1844014843, \$15.95) by Calum Reuben Knight, argues that Jack the Ripper wasn't one person but three, including a French woman who successfully masqueraded as the final victim - Mary Jane Kelly. 'The book...does not acknowledge being fiction, which makes it a little difficult to review... it isn't brilliant fiction, but ... it's a clever, well-written and recommendable spoof. If by some bizarre chance it is meant to be fact, the book is a pretty dismal affair that doesn't exactly make *Portrait of a Killer* and *Uncle Jack* look good by comparison but comes pretty close.' *Ripperologist*.

SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE BIOGRAPHY (Hardback, 240 pp., Atlantic, ISBN: 1843542749, £ 14.99) by Nick Rennison, ventures beyond Holmes's published cases to recount how the great detective prevented Fenian attacks, advised Oscar Wilde to scarper, helped Conan Doyle to solve the Edalji case and almost caught Jack the Ripper. But why wasn't the Ripper case recorded by Watson? As the Ripper skulked about Whitechapel, Mary Morstan, Watson's future wife, made her appearance in the good doctor's life. According to Rennison, Watson, busy setting forth Mary's story as *The Sign of Four*, did not think the Ripper case worth chronicling.

SOJOURN (Paperback, 369 pages, Dragon Moon Press, ISBN: 1896944302, \$19.95), by Jana G Oliver, combines science fiction, fantasy and history as Jacynda Lassiter struggles arrives in Victorian London to find an overdue 'tourist' and return him to 2057 before he alters history. As the Whitechapel murders have the city in an uproar, the shape shifters are fretting the hard-to-catch killer might be one of their own. To prevail, Jacynda and Dr Alastair Montrose, a shape shifter who is denying his heritage, must outwit a madman whose legacy will endure for centuries. 'Sojourn's a rare, well-researched and entertaining tale set against the backdrop of Victorian England and the Whitechapel Murders.' *Casebook: Jack the Ripper*. 'Ms. Oliver has done her research. I had no trouble imagining the vivid settings, from the overly heavy gowns to the rat-infested rotting tenements. And all references to Jack the Ripper are in keeping with historical notations.' [Nanette Littlestone](#), Amazon.com.



THE SEDUCTION OF MARY KELLY: FINAL VICTIM OF JACK THE RIPPER (Hardback, 591 pp, Coudsdon, Surry: D'Arcy Collection, 2005, 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... You should like this book and it'll keep you occupied and out of trouble for a while.' *Ripperologist*.

BOOKS: FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

SUMMER 2006: NON-FICTION

ASSASSINS IN THE PARK: MURDER, BETRAYAL AND RETRIBUTION (Paperback, 192 pages, Mercier Press, ISBN: 185635511X), by Senan Molony, deals with the assassination of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Thomas Burke in Phoenix Park in May 1882 by men wielding surgical knives, the police investigation and the attempts to infiltrate the Fenians.

LONDON: THE EXECUTIONER'S CITY (Hardcover 256 pages Sutton Publishing, ISBN: 0750940239 £18.99), by David Brandon and Alan Brooke, is described by its publishers as 'a vivid picture of capital punishment in a capital that seems to have thrived on executions.' The book 'reveals the capital as a place where the bodies of criminals defined the boundaries of the city and heads on poles greeted patrons on London Bridge.'

SUPPER WITH THE CRIPPENS (Paperback, 352 pages, Orion (an Imprint of The Orion Publishing Group Ltd) ISBN: 0752877720, £7.99), by David James Smith, concerns American Dr Hawley Harvey Crippen, his wife, a music-hall artiste who called herself Belle Elmore, and his mistress, Ethel le Neve, against the background of Edwardian England. Crippen murdered his wife, buried her remains in the cellar and escaped to Canada in an ocean liner with Ethel disguised as a boy. They were arrested on arrival by Inspector Walter Dew, of Whitechapel fame, thanks to the wireless telegraph newly installed on the ship. The lovers went on trial for murder. Ethel was acquitted but Crippen was convicted and hanged.

THE A-Z ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SERIAL KILLERS (Paperback, 341 pages, Pocket Books, ISBN: 0671537911), by Harold Schechter, consists of brief articles examining serial killers, their crimes and victims, and the methods they used to kill people and dispose of their bodies.

THE CAMDEN TOWN MURDER: WALTER RICHARD SICKERT, ROBERT WOOD, EMILY DIMMOCK: ARTISTS, MURDERER AND VICTIM IN ANOTHER NOTORIOUS 'RIPPER' CRIME (Paperback, 250 pages, Mandrake of Oxford, ISBN: 1869928148), John Barber. 'I know the book will be of interest.' Karyo Magellan, *Ripperologist*.

THE FATHER OF FORENSICS: THE GROUNDBREAKING CASES OF SIR BERNARD SPILSBURY AND THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERN CSI (Paperback 336 pages Berkley Publishing Group, ISBN: 0425210073, \$14), Colin Evans.

SUMMER 2006: FICTION

FRANKENSTEIN: THE SHADOW OF FRANKENSTEIN VOLUME 1 (THE SHADOW OF FRANKENSTEIN) (Paperback, 275 pages, DH Press, ISBN: 1-59582-037-X, \$6.99), by Stefan Petrucha. [Frankenstein meets Jack the Ripper](#). 'Following his lab's explosion, Henry and Elizabeth Frankenstein head to London for a rest (and to avoid possible criminal charges). The monster, still alive, follows, but winds up in the Whitechapel district. There, he's mistaken for a disfigured, mentally disabled man and befriended by local prostitutes. When one of the streetwalkers is horribly murdered, the creature roams the area, hoping to protect the survivors. This brings him in contact with the real killer—Jack the Ripper. After 47 years, he's back in action. The Ripper's string of brutal killings in 1887 [sic] were actually sacrifices, dark rituals that extended his life. Now he's aging again and desperate to remain alive, and sees in the reanimated corpse of the Frankenstein monster a possible new way to live forever. Henry, the monster and Jack the Ripper's fates become entwined as Jack the Ripper hatches a plan to frame the monster for the killings, to force Henry to reveal his secrets of life and death.' DH Press. Frankenstein, the Ripper, London. What could be missing? Old-timers and day-time TV addicts might wish for Abbott and Costello.

AUTUMN 2006: NON-FICTION

JACK THE RIPPER: REVEALED AND REVISITED (Hardcover, 224 pages, Express Newspapers Plc, ISBN: 0850793238, £14.99) by John Wilding, is an extensively revised and updated version of the author's 1993 *Jack the Ripper: Revealed*.

PORTRAIT OF A KILLER: JACK THE RIPPER - CASE CLOSED (Paperback, 416 pages, Time Warner Paperbacks, ISBN: 0751537225, £8.99), by Patricia Cornwell, will be the British edition of her revised book.

JACK THE RIPPER: THE COMPLETE INVESTIGATION (Hardback, 320 pp., Sutton Publishing. ISBN: 0750942282. £20), by Stewart P. Evans and Donald Rumbelow. Need we say more? Unquestionably, this is one to buy and treasure.

THE CRIMES OF JACK THE RIPPER: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE WORLD'S MOST INTRIGUING UNSOLVED CASE (Hardcover, 208 pages, Arcturus foulsham, ISBN: 0572032854, £9.99) by Paul Roland. According to the publishers, 'This impartial investigation focuses on the forensic evidence. For the first time, Paul has had access to official police reports. Myth, misconception and speculation are stripped away here. Uniquely, he judges the investigation by our contemporary standards. How would the profilers describe the Ripper today? Which of the usual suspects would they have prosecuted? For the first time in the history of books written about Jack the Ripper, the author is able to make a proper assessment of the forensic evidence that was available at that time. Paul Roland builds up a profile of the most infamous serial killer. By looking at the injuries and mutilations to the various victims, he is able to build up a profile of the killer and make deductions about the weapon and his state of mind at the time. All the evidence is carefully weighed and the case is brought before the reader to act as judge and jury - is the Ripper really an evil psychopath or is he the first modern monster of our times?' Indeed. We'll see what we see when we see it.

LATE 2006

THE QUEST FOR JACK THE RIPPER: A LITERARY HISTORY 1888-2000 by acclaimed Ripper author Richard Whittington-Egan, has been eagerly expected for quite some time now. Let it happen soon, say all.

UNCOVERING JACK THE RIPPER'S LONDON, by [Richard Jones](#). Mr Jones's documentary, *On the Trail of Jack the Ripper*, was described by *Ripperologist* as 'Perhaps the best documentary to have been produced in recent years.'

FEATURE FILMS

ROHTENBURG (Germany, 2006). Also Known As *Butterfly: A Grimm Love Story*. Directed by Martin Weisz, written by T.S. Faull, starring Thomas Kretschmann, Angelika Bartsch and Thomas Huber, is inspired by the real-life story of cannibal killer Armin Meiwes. The release of this film was prevented by a German court decision resulting from Meiwes's successful lawsuit. Following Meiwes's recent conviction for murder, this decision might be reversed.

THE BLACK DAHLIA (USA, Universal Pictures, 2006). Directed by Brian De Palma, based on the novel by James Ellroy and the real-life murder of Elizabeth Short, the 'Black Dahlia', screenplay by Josh Friedman, starring Josh Hartnett as Officer Dwight 'Bucky' Bleichert, Scarlett Johansson as Kay Lake, Hilary Swank as Madeleine Sprague, Aaron Eckhart as Sgt. Leland 'Lee' Blanchard and Mia Kirshner as Elizabeth Short. In an article in the June issue of *Premiere* magazine, director Brian De Palma has been quoted as saying: 'I love dark noir, these femmes fatales, the twisted noir hero. The hero is basically put through hell.' De Palma viewed the gruesome shots of the crime scene, where victim Elizabeth Short's body was discarded. 'The photos of her displayed out in the field, they are all over the Internet,' he said. 'Once you see them, you will never forget them.' Universal has announced that *The Black Dahlia* will open in cinemas in the United States on 13 October 2006 - a Friday.

TORSO (USA, Paramount, 2007). Following *Zodiac*, David Fincher will direct *Torso*, a thriller based on a graphic novel written by Brian Michael Bendis and Marc Andreyko, for Paramount. Ehren Kruger is writing the adaptation, which will be produced by Pandemonium's Bill Mechanic, Angry Films' Don Murphy and comic artist Todd McFarlane. Fincher is expected to start work on *Torso* once he wraps production on Paramount's *Benjamin Button* adaptation. *Torso* will tell the true but relatively unknown story of Treasury Department agent Eliot Ness after his Al Capone days, when he became Cleveland's director of public safety in 1934. He launched a successful campaign against crime and corruption, but his record was marred by a series of gruesome, motiveless murders. The 'Torso Murderer' was responsible for at least 13 victims, all decapitated and dismembered. Ten of them were never identified. Ness, who had no experience in police work, put together a team of ex-officers to apprehend the serial murderer. Despite their efforts, the killer was never found. *Dark Horizons*, 12 January 2006, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 17 January 2006.

ZODIAC (USA, Paramount, Warner, 2006). Directed by David Fincher, based on the Robert Graysmith books, with a screenplay by James Vanderbilt, stars Robert Downey Jr. as Paul Avery, Jake Gyllenhaal as Robert Graysmith, Mark Ruffalo as Dave Toschi, Anthony Edwards as Armstrong and Gary Oldman as attorney Melvin Belli. The film deals with the real-life serial killer *Zodiac*, who terrorized San Francisco with a string of seemingly random murders during the 1960s and 1970s. Its release has been announced for autumn 2006.

DOCUMENTARIES

SUMMER 2006

JACK THE RIPPER'S SWEDISH VICTIM is a documentary by Daniel Olsson and Wulvarich shot on location in Store Tumlehed, Gothenburg and other places frequented by young Elisabeth Gustafsdotter, better known as Long Liz Stride. It will consist of the following sections: 1. THE LONDON MURDERS, 1888; 2. LIZ: CHILDHOOD AND TEENAGE YEARS; 3. LIZ'S MOVE TO GOTHENBURG; 4. PROSTITUTION AND THE 'REGISTERS OF SHAME'; 5. LIZ'S MOVE TO LONDON; 6. LIZ'S MURDER; and 7 THEORIES ABOUT JACK THE RIPPER. The original schedule for the release of the Swedish and English-language versions of VICTIM has been slightly affected by the health problems currently experienced by its co-director, *Ripperologist*'s friend and contributor, Daniel Olsson. Readers will be happy to learn that Daniel is responding favourably to treatment and keeping his morale high.

TELEVISION

SUMMER 2006

LONGFORD, Channel 4 - One-off drama starring Jim Broadbent as the title character battling to win parole for Moors murderess Myra Hindley (played by Samantha Morton). With Andy Serkis as Ian Brady and Lindsay Duncan as Elizabeth Longford. An HBO Films presentation in association with Channel 4 produced by Granada. Directed by Tom Hooper (*Prime Suspect 6*, HBO's upcoming miniseries *Elizabeth I*), written by Peter Morgan (whose credits include *The Deal*, *The Queen*, *Henry VIII*). Andy Harries (*The Queen*, *Prime Suspect 6*) and Peter Morgan produce. The film's original soundtrack will be composed by Rolfe Kent (*About Schmidt*, *Sideways*).

STILL UNSCHEDULED

JACK THE RIPPER, BBC1. *EastEnders* star Shane Richie stars as 'opium-addicted Victorian detective Inspector George Frederick Abberline' in an eight-part drama about the hunt for the Victorian murderer. When? Not known yet. At least the BBC got Abberline's name almost right.

JEKYLL, BBC1. James Nesbitt stars in a modern take on the story of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde described as more Spooks than Robert Louis Stevenson. It is 2006 and there's a new Dr Jekyll with an old problem: Mr Hyde. What Hyde doesn't know is that Jekyll is married. The series begins filming in September and is written by Steven Moffat (whose credits include *Coupling*).

DVD

THE MONSTER OF LONDON CITY/SECRET OF THE RED ORCHID (Image Entertainment, Germany, 1964, Black and White, Full Screen, Unrated, \$ 19.95). The first in this double-feature disk is an English-dubbed version of *Das Ungeheuer von London City*, a German film produced by Artur Branek, directed by Edwin Zbonek, starring Hansjörg Felmy, Marianne Koch, [Dietmar Schönherr](#), [Hans Nielsen](#) and [Chariklia Baxevanos](#) as the wonderfully named Betty Ball. Monster was scripted by Robert A. Stemmle and Bryan Edgar Wallace, the son of crime-thriller novelist Edgar Wallace. 'The Monster of London City is perhaps more interesting for its "ahead-of-the-curve" use of drug addiction and syphilis as plot elements than for its rather derivative Ripper plot.' Cindy Collins Smith, *Hollywood Ripper*. The second feature in the DVD, *Secret of the Red Orchid*, stars Christopher Lee as an FBI Captain and Klaus Kinski as an American gangster.

COMPACT DISCS

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.

JACK THE RIPPER'S REIGN OF TERROR is a [London Audio Walk](#) tour of the murder sites recorded on MP3 or Audio CD which sells for £5.99. The 3-mile (4 km) walk covers from Whitechapel Underground Station to Aldgate, visiting the five murder sites with a stop at the Ten Bells in Commercial Street. Sights include Spitalfields Market and Brick Lane. The full audio lasts 50 minutes and the walk usually takes round 1.5 - 2 hours.

MILLER'S COURT, a two-person drama by James Jeffrey Paul about the Ripper's encounter with his last victim, is available on CD from Actors Scene Unseen, a Live Internet Radio Theatre company broadcasting live from Charlotte, NC, USA. 'The play's dialogue is convincingly written, Mary coming across as a hardened woman of the streets who has a gentle centre - yes, I know that sounds that the cliché-ridden "tart with a golden heart" but author James Jeffrey Paul manages to get round it. The only complaint one really has is Mary's strong Irish accent, which sounds fake to me, and which it's doubtful she would have had if, as she claimed, she'd moved from Ireland to Wales when a child.' *Ripperologist*.

SAUCY JACK, an original radio drama by James Vita focusing on the Ripper murders originally broadcast on 19 June 2004 is also available from [Actors Scene Unseen](#).

CD-ROM

CASEBOOK: JACK THE RIPPER CD-ROM - NEW 2006 EDITION RELEASED. 'Brand new, fully revised and uncensored 2006 Edition of the *Casebook* CD-Rom! Ever want to take the *Casebook* with you, on the plane, in the car, or to the library? Have a slow internet connection, or hate having to pay per-minute download charges? Know someone who wants to see the *Casebook*, but doesn't have an internet connection? Now you can purchase a complete copy of *Casebook: Jack the Ripper*, including all message board content, for just \$19.99, plus shipping. You will be able to browse the site in your favorite web browser at your leisure, anywhere you like, without ever having to connect to the internet.' *Casebook*. For more information or to buy it using your Visa, Mastercard, Discover or AMEX credit card via Paypal, go to the [Casebook](#).



Sleeping in Itchy Park.
From Jack London's *People of the Abyss*.
See *I Beg to Report*