

# Ripperologist

No. 148

February 2016

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Prater Thomas born at 71 New Church  
St. Street 1881.  
No children. about 47 years old in 19  
never cohabited with him on his death  
was at 103 New Church St. Street  
at Croydon at 103 Church  
Street. I took a photograph of the  
East End of Croydon  
1897. he was a carpenter  
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## Elizabeth Prater

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# QUOTE FOR THE MONTH

"JACK THE RIPPER WAS A SERIAL KILLER OF WOMEN. THE MOORS MURDERS ARE HISTORY AND DRAMATIC TOO. WOULD THEY BE CONSIDERED SUITABLE FOR HISTORY? OR THE YORKSHIRE RIPPER?"

*Unnamed member of MumsNet.com reacts to news that aspects of the Whitechapel murders are being taught to schoolchildren as young as eleven after lesson plans and worksheets were uploaded to the Times Educational Supplement forum*

[www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3458637/Schoolchildren-aged-11-given-history-lessons-Jack-Ripper-killed-prostitutes.html#ixzz41Yd0hDKq](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3458637/Schoolchildren-aged-11-given-history-lessons-Jack-Ripper-killed-prostitutes.html#ixzz41Yd0hDKq)

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# RipperCon in Baltimore, April 8-10, 2016

EDITORIAL by CHRISTOPHER T GEORGE

Twenty years ago, an intrepid band of American-based Ripperologists, including myself, Dave Yost, and Christopher-Michael DiGrazia, came together in the chat room at Stephen Ryder's Casebook: Jack the Ripper website (now at [www.casebook.org](http://www.casebook.org)).

We resolved to form an organization called Casebook Productions, Inc, an independent but (at least name-wise!) adjunct entity to Stephen's site that would publish a magazine called *Ripper Notes* and mount the first American Jack the Ripper convention, which took place at the Park Ridge, New Jersey, Marriott Hotel in April 2000. Our guest of honor was noted Ripperologist and historian Paul Begg and we also brought in serial killer expert Stephen Michaud. Mr Michaud played for the convention attendees some chilling recordings of Ted Bundy and told us what it was like dealing with that notorious killer. And perhaps most amazing of all, in addition to support from members of the Cloak and Dagger Club (now the Whitechapel Society 1888) such as Jo Edgington, Andy Aliffe, and the late Des McKenna and his wife who flew over from England, the entire cast of Frogg Moody and David Taylor's "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper" came over from the UK and performed for the assembled multitude!

Now, 16 years later, after lamentably no such U.S. conferences since 2008, Baltimore novelist and crime expert Janis Wilson and I are reviving the biennial American Ripper conferences. RipperCon will be held in Baltimore's historic Mt Vernon district at the Maryland Historical Society (MdHS) and the Mt Vernon Baltimore Hotel on April 8-10. We will have as our keynote speaker to open the conference in France Hall of MdHS at 1:00 pm on Friday, April 8, the redoubtable Martin Fido, who along with Paul Begg and Keith Skinner makes up triumvirate of Ripper experts who produce *The Complete Jack the Ripper A to Z*. Martin's keynote speech ties 1888 to the modern-day in that he will be speaking about "Ripperology and Anti-Semitism." He will also be part of a panel on Ripper suspects on Saturday at MdHS with Robert Anderson and Tumblety expert Michael Hawley to be moderated by Jonathan Menges of Casebook's Rippercast. Mr Menges will serve as co-moderator for the weekend along with Casebook administrator Ally Ryder. The complete schedule and pricing for RipperCon can be found at [RipperCon.com](http://RipperCon.com).

Just as Casebook Productions brought in Mr Michaud to speak to the 2000 conference about murders other than the Ripper crimes, Robert Anderson will address the topic of "The Long Island Serial Killer" - the unknown killer who has slaughtered as many as 12 to 17 sex trade workers on Long Island. We believe that to include discussion of other murder series is important. Ripperologists often act as if the Ripper case occurred in a hermetic chamber isolated from other serial murder series, and there are lessons to be learned!

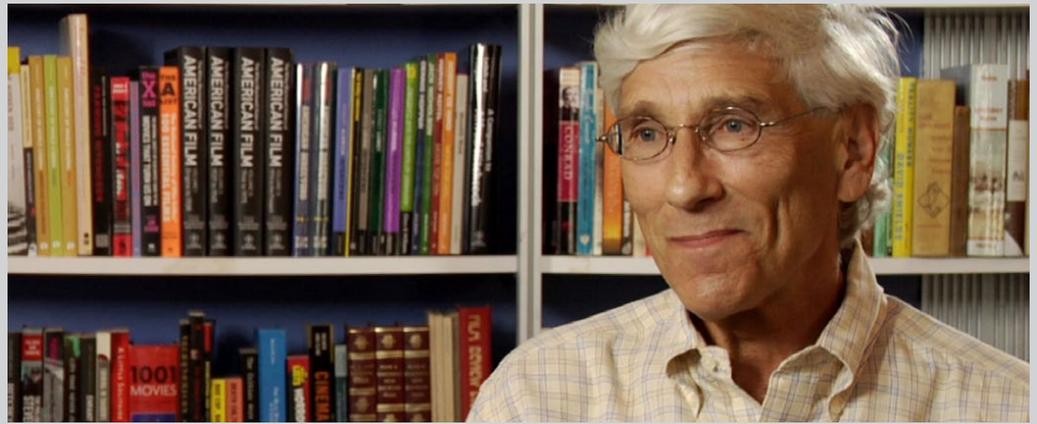
In the same sense, in this issue of the *Rip*, the article by John Frizzell, "The Ripper Moniker: Jack the Ripper and his Significance as a Precedent for Serial Murder," is noteworthy in pointing out the similarities and dissimilarities with other killers who have been likened to the Ripper, specifically Joseph Vacher, the French serial killer; Jack the Stripper, the never-apprehended London serial killer of the early Sixties; and the Yorkshire Ripper of the Seventies and early Eighties, Peter Sutcliffe, who is now serving a life sentence. Each of these murderers terrorized the populace much as the Ripper terrorized the East End of London.



Robert Anderson



Stephen Hunter



Dr David Sterritt

At RipperCon, Dr David Sterritt, professor of film at the Maryland Institute College of Art and an expert on the films of Alfred Hitchcock, will talk about “The Ripper, the Lodger, and Hitchcock’s Existential Outsider.” Indeed it might be argued that the spectre of the Ripper haunted the London-born director. His 1927 silent film of Marie Belloc Lowndes’ novel *The Lodger*, starring Ivor Novello as “The Avenger” is a classic, and some 45 years later he was back in London to film “Frenzy” (1972) about a serial strangler. Hitchcock’s 1927 “The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog,” incidentally, is available in its entirety on Youtube ([youtu.be/PzLVNRzU1FE](https://youtu.be/PzLVNRzU1FE)). Baltimore resident and best-selling novelist Stephen Hunter, author of the recent *I, Ripper*, will discuss “Finding a Voice for the Ripper (Writing Ripper Fiction)” and he and his researcher Lenne Miller and Dr Sterritt will be a panel to talk about Ripper Fiction moderated by Janis Wilson.

Mary Pearcey probably was not “Jill the Ripper” but her *bona fides* as the Hampstead murderer will be examined on Saturday at RipperCon by Dr Sarah Beth Hopton. Dr Hopton, author of the forthcoming *Woman at the Devil’s Door: The Extraordinary True Story of Mary Pearcey and the Hampstead Murders* - the first full-length examination of the case - will discuss “Mary Pearcey, the Hampstead Murders, and Debunking the Myth of Jill the Ripper.” The creator of Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, believed that the killer of Whitechapel could have been a woman, and Janis Wilson and I will lead a discussion on Doyle’s theories at MdHS on Saturday afternoon.



Dr Sarah Beth Hopton



Howard Brown

The Ripper’s crimes had effects far and wide in the imagination of the world, partly because they were widely reported at the time in the world’s press. Howard Brown of JtRForums.com has been making a study of how for years after 1888 individuals sought to emulate the London serial killer by committing murders or just writing “Jack the Ripper” letters to the press. Indeed, drunken husbands or boyfriends declared they were the Ripper or threatened to “Whitechapel” their partner. The *Rip* has carried a large number of articles by Howard and Nina Brown on these manifestations of the influence of the East End crimes in the years following the bloody autumn of 1888. At RipperCon, Howard will talk on “Diamonds in the Rough: A Positive View of the Contemporary Papers.”

Ripper suspect Dr Francis Tumblety lived in Baltimore and he is listed in the 1900 US Census as living in a lodging house on N. Liberty Street. The building that was the lodging house is still there, south of the Mt Vernon Hotel, as convention goers will see on a Sunday bus tour of Baltimore. Mike Hawley has promised new findings on Tumblety that he will reveal at RipperCon. The controversial doctor left \$10,000 to fellow Irish American James Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore in a will upheld in court in 1908, five years after the suspect’s death in St Louis. In a possibly fraudulent Baltimore will that was not upheld he left \$1,000 to Cardinal Gibbons and \$1,000 to the Home for Fallen Women on N Exeter Street, the site of which will be visited during the bus tour. It so happens that the family of Lincoln’s assassin John Wilkes Booth lived



# Goodnight Old Dear

By DEBRA ARIF

"I am the wife of William Prater a boot machinist he has deserted me for 5 years. I live at No.20 Room Millers Court up stairs. I live in the room over where deceased lived.."

*Inquest testimony of Elizabeth Prater*

It's ironic that our biography of Mary Kelly dwarfs that of the people who surrounded her in life, and yet it is Kelly's own historical identity that so far remains just outside our grasp. In a quest for more insight, I've turned my attention to the ancillary characters that made up her world to find out what their own lives might tell us about Kelly's. What follows is new information on the mother of Diddles the Cat, and Mary Jane's nearest neighbour.

In stark contrast to the very detailed information we have about murder victim Mary Jane Kelly's background, for obvious reasons; biographical information on Elizabeth Prater, friend and neighbour of Kelly and inquest and police witness, is limited to the couple of brief details she revealed about herself, given above.

Despite what seems to be a wealth of information on Mary Jane Kelly, a definite identification of her in the records has so far eluded researchers. I wondered if detailed background research on a contemporary like Prater may shed any light on the way Kelly ended up as a prostitute living in one room in Miller's Court, if perhaps the background story she gave was not entirely true. Was there anything the two women had in common?

So, what was Elizabeth Prater's own story? She was a woman in a similar situation to Mary Jane Kelly, highly likely a prostitute allowed to rent a single room at number 26 Dorset Street from landlord John McCarthy. What sort of background did Elizabeth Prater come from? How did this woman end up destitute and earning a living as a street prostitute in Spitalfields? The general assumption with Mary Jane Kelly is that her life spiralled downwards and she had seen much better days; was that was true of Elizabeth Prater, too I wondered?

In his 2004 book *A Cast of Thousands*, the late author and researcher Chris Scott first presented the identification of Elizabeth Prater we are most familiar with, that of a middle-aged woman who regularly separated from her husband. Chris wrote:



*Elizabeth Prater from Famous Crimes Past and Present, 1903*

*I have searched extensively both in census data from 1871 to 1901 and also in BMD (Birth, marriages and Deaths) and the result of this is that there is only one couple who can conceivably be identified as Prater and her husband. Theirs is a chequered and complex marital history in that both had previous spouses and children by their former partners.*

Chris goes on to explain that Elizabeth Prater was,

*Born Eliza Sophia Wickes in 1842, Holborn, London. Had two children by a man named Elder, Charles (b.1868) and Kate (b.1869). It is unclear whether Eliza and Mr Elder were married, or indeed what became of him.*

and

*Married William Prater (b.c.1830), a boot machinist, in Shoreditch in 1873 and it appears they already had one child, Elizabeth (b.1872). Recorded as living at 8 Blossom Street, Norton Folgate in 1881, Eliza later stated that her and William separated c.1883. However, a second son, Thomas (b.1884), is known, suggesting (along with other evidence) that the Praters separated and got back together more than once.<sup>1</sup>*

The idea that this couple regularly split up and got back together was speculation by Chris, no doubt to account for the fact that they were always listed together in census entries and even went on to have more children after the supposed 1883 ‘desertion’ by William. Where the *Casebook: Ripper Wiki* uses Chris’s book as a source to claim that “Eliza later stated that her and William separated c.1883” it is referring to the statement of Elizabeth Prater of Miller’s Court and not any statement ever made by Eliza Prater (nee Wickes) about her husband.

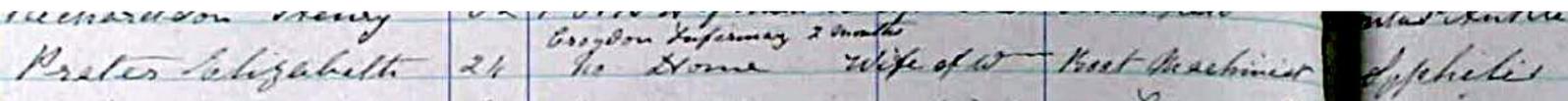
Many more avenues for detailed research online have opened up since Chris’s initial identification of Elizabeth Prater back in 2004, not least of which are the digitised Poor Law Union records made available on Ancestry by the London Metropolitan Archives. These records contain the details of people seeking refuge in workhouses and infirmaries at the expense of the parish they came from, and are a treasure trove of little nuggets of information that help build up the picture of a life lived between the census entries.

It was in one of these groups of records, the Whitechapel Infirmiry Records, that I first came across another woman named Elizabeth Prater who also claimed to be the wife of a boot machinist named William, satisfying one of the known facts known about the Elizabeth Prater. However, this woman was not the middle-aged Elizabeth Prater identified by Chris Scott. She was in fact a younger woman.

In the grand scheme of things, Prater’s age does not make much difference to the case, except perhaps if Prater was a much younger woman, closer in age to Mary Jane Kelly in fact; could it go some way to explaining why there seemed to be contradictory physical descriptions of Mary Jane Kelly from the residents of Miller’s Court and some definite confusion over her movements on the morning of her murder?

With the possibility that Prater was a young woman, her background becomes more interesting in terms of any parallels with Kelly and her perceived fall from a better life and descent into street prostitution.

On 29 May 1884, a 24-year-old woman named Elizabeth Prater was admitted to the Whitechapel Infirmiry suffering from syphilis. She was described as having no home and the wife of Wm., a boot machinist. Her religion was noted as Church of England. Elizabeth was discharged a few weeks later on 9 July. There was the additional note in the record that Elizabeth had just spent two months in the Croydon Infirmiry.<sup>2</sup>



1884 Whitechapel Infirmiry record for Elizabeth Prater

1 *A Cast of Thousands*, Chris Scott (Apropos Books, e-book 2004) available for free download at [casebook.org](http://casebook.org).

2 Whitechapel Infirmiry admission and discharge register 1883-84 (StBG/WL/123/16).

Researcher Robert Linford then tracked down the marriage entry for the couple mentioned in the Infirmary record. On 8 October 1881, William Prater, a bachelor aged 21, a boot machinist by trade living at 111 Old Bethnal Green Road, married Elizabeth Broomer. Elizabeth was also aged 21, a spinster with no occupation who gave her address as 86 Minerva Street, which is in Bethnal Green, just off the Old Bethnal Green Road. William Prater gave his father's name as William Prater, also a boot machinist, and Elizabeth gave her father's name as James Broomer, an undertaker. The marriage took place at St Thomas's Church, Bethnal Green.<sup>3</sup>

Robert noted that the groom's father mentioned in the marriage entry, William Prater, a boot machinist, was in fact the man that Chris Scott had originally picked out as being the husband who deserted Miller's Court's Elizabeth Prater, Chris concluding that William Prater senior's second wife, Eliza (nee Wickes), was Elizabeth Prater herself. Now it appeared William Jr and his wife Elizabeth (nee Broomer) were also contenders for the couple.

To minimise confusion (hopefully!) I have referred to William Prater, husband of Eliza Wickes as William Prater Sr and to his son, husband of Elizabeth Broomer, as William Prater Jr throughout the rest of this article.

So far, there was nothing to determine which woman may have been deserted by her husband as Prater claimed in her witness statement that she had been. Although the detail in the 1884 Whitechapel Infirmary records that the 24-year-old Elizabeth Prater had 'no home' at the time of her admission suggested she may have been apart from her husband, it wasn't proof.

Prater Elizabeth 25. wife of William Prater born in ... at St Thomas Church ...  
 No children. about 4 yrs come the 19<sup>th</sup> July.  
 never cohabited with him since. husband  
 been at sea since this time. left me  
 at Croydon at 103 Church Street. after he  
 left me took a situation at the Chapel  
 East India Co Croydon then went into Croydon  
 Infy. he was in Croydon Infy 4 months  
 last place living with him at 34 Reens  
 Rd Croydon. 4 months from at 10. Catherine  
 Street - Croydon 2 months. from with him at Havers  
 Horse Slaughter Farmhouse Street Hoxton.  
 2 months came home to me then after  
 being away 4 months. 6 Primrose Walk  
 Hoxton with Uncle Mr Davis 6 weeks.  
 Grey Street some distance from London

The younger Praters had links to Bethnal Green at the time of their marriage, and so my next find was in the settlement records of the parish of Bethnal Green. Paupers who sought relief in the various different union infirmaries or workhouse had to have earned that right through settlement in that parish. Place of birth, place of residence or place of undertaking of an apprenticeship determined place of settlement, and paupers were examined as to these details to see which union they were chargeable to when entering an institution run by a Board of Guardians.

On 24 January 1888, a few short months before the events in Miller's Court, an Elizabeth Prater aged twenty five was examined for settlement by Bethnal Green Board of Guardians after she had entered the Bethnal Green workhouse on 18 January 1888. The admissions register for Bethnal Green workhouse has not survived, but the Creed Register for that workhouse records that Elizabeth Prater was born in 1863 and had no home. Elizabeth was discharged from the workhouse on 25 January 1888.

The settlement examination established that Elizabeth was the wife of William Prater and was married at St Thomas's Church, Bethnal Green on 8 October 1881, that the couple had no children and crucially, that William Prater Jr had been absent for almost four years after leaving her to go to sea, and that she never cohabited with him since. The

210  
 Feb. 28 Clarkson Street. start times.  
 first place after man 111 Clabbs Rd  
 start times. 8 Blossom Place  
 White Lion Street from under Filgate  
 for 5 yrs -

Settlement record for Elizabeth Prater on entry into Bethnal Green workhouse dated January 1888 (pages one and two)

examination also gave several addresses that Elizabeth Prater had stayed at before her arrival at the workhouse.

3 London Metropolitan Archives, Saint Thomas, Bethnal Green, Register of marriages, P72/TMS, Item 021.

Here is a transcript of the settlement examination:

*Prater Elizabeth 25. Wife of William Prater to whom married at St Thos Church 8th Oct 1881 B.G. No children. absent 4 yrs come the[?] 19th Feby never cohabited with him since. husband been at sea since this time, left me at Croydon at 103 Church Street. after he left me I took a situation at the Chalet[?] East ??? Nr Croydon then went into Croydon Infy. he was in Croydon Infy. 4 mos prior last place living with him at 84 Reens Rd Croydon. 4 mos prior at 10 Catherine Street Croydon 2 mos prior with him at Hawes Horse slaughter Fanshaw Street Hoxton*

*2 mos came from home to see her after being away 4 mos. 6 Pimlico Walk Hoxton with Uncle Mr Davis 6 weeks Grays Essex 5 mos ??? Terrace London Fields 28 Clarkson Street short time, first place after marr[iage] 111 Old??? Rd short time. 8 Blossom Place White Lion Street Norton Folgate for 5 years.<sup>4</sup>*

This was definite evidence that this Elizabeth Prater had been deserted by her husband William sometime around 1884 when she sought refuge in the Bethnal Green workhouse and that she had never lived with him again between February 1884 and 1888. This tallies with the witness Prater’s own statement that she had been deserted by her husband some five years earlier. Robert Linford also pointed out that William Prater Sr could hardly have been described as deserting his wife Eliza, as he doesn’t appear to have moved from his address at 8 Blossom Place, Norton Folgate.

The mention of a stay at 8 Blossom Place, Norton Folgate, as well as the mention of the uncle named ‘Mr Davis’ of 6 Pimlico Walk, also confirmed the already mentioned familial link to the William Prater Sr and Eliza picked out by Chris Scott.

I discovered that ‘Mr Davis’ was living at the same address, 6 Pimlico Walk, St Leonard, Hackney at the time of the 1881 census. James Davis was described as a traveller in looking glasses, aged 56 and born in Islington. Listed with him was wife Dinah, aged 45, a washerwoman born in Aldgate, London.

Further research on the Davises showed that before her marriage to James Davis, Dinah’s maiden name was Abrahams, and she was the sister of William Prater Sr’s first wife, Sarah Abrahams, the mother of William Prater Jr. This established the ‘uncle’ relationship mentioned in the settlement record. Sarah Prater had died in 1873 when her son William Jr was just thirteen. William Prater Sr married Eliza Wickes that same year, less than six months after the death of his first wife.

We know from Elizabeth Broomer and William Prater’s 1881 marriage entry that her father was named James and described as an undertaker, and we know her approximate year of birth. Elizabeth seems to have shaved off a few years in some records. At her 1881 marriage she stated she was 21-years-old, making her birth year around 1860, but seven years later, when she sought refuge in Bethnal Green workhouse in 1888, she was had only aged by three years! Yet we know these two records definitely refer to the same woman.

1881. Marriage solemnized at *St Thomas Church in the Parish of Bethnal Green in the County of Middlesex*

No	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
249	October 8 <sup>th</sup> 1881	William Prater Elizabeth Broomer	21 21	Bachelor Spinster	Boot making —	11 Old Bethnal Green Road 86 Minerva Street	William Prater James Broomer	Boot making Undertaker

MARRIED in the *Parish Church* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by *William Prater* or after *Banns* by me,  
*G. H. Vincent*  
 Curate.

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *William Prater* and *Elizabeth Broomer*, in the Presence of us, *William Prater* and *Sarah Abrahams*.

Marriage certificate of William Prater and Elizabeth Broomer

The only woman in earlier census records that seemed to fit these facts was someone I had ruled out initially because of her place of birth and no apparent connection to East London.

Elizabeth Broomer’s birth was registered in the June quarter of 1857. Her parents, James Broomer and Elizabeth Andrew, had been married at St Michael, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire, on 20 May 1850. James was a carpenter or joiner. It was Elizabeth’s second marriage.

4 London Metropolitan Archives Examinations for settlement /267/039 6 September 1887 to 10 April 1888.

The couple had five children living with them at Dyson's Buildings, Mossley, Ashton-under-Lyne in the 1861 census: Edward, born c.1847 (possibly James Broomer's stepson and registered in 1849 as Edward Andrews); Mary Jane, born c.1852; Rachael, born c.1853; Charles Henry, born c.1855; Elizabeth, born c.1857; and Samuel, born c.1860. All the family were born in Ashton-under-Lyne. There appears to have been another son, Richard, born in 1853, who may have died by 1861. By 1871 the Broomers were no longer a family unit.

In 1856 James Broomer received press coverage of his case when he and his wife and three oldest children were refused poor relief at Ashton-under-Lyne when they fell on hard times. They were subjected to a Magistrate's removal order from Ashton-under-Lyne parish in Lancashire and transferred to the Medway Union workhouse in Chatham, Kent. James Broomer was judged as having no right of settlement in Ashton but in Chatham. This was the town of birth of his father, and the place where he served his apprenticeship. The Broomers' case was used in the press by commentators to highlight the need for a change in the rules regarding rights of settlement, because in this case a whole family had been denied relief and uprooted miles from the place they themselves were born and lived. The family eventually returned to Ashton.

James's wife died in Ashton a few months after the 1861 census, and it is here that things took an interesting turn. I discovered that almost immediately following the death of his wife, James took his children to live in Whitechapel.

Again, the poor law union records came up trumps and revealed something not apparent on any census or any other records; that Elizabeth Broomer had links to the East End of London after all.

Sunday	Feb 23	Broomer James	39	Wentworth St	Widower Joiner
	"	" Mary Jane	10		
	"	" Rachael	8		
	"	" Cha Henry	7		
	"	" Elizabeth	5		
	"	" Samuel	2		

1862 record of the Broomer family's entry into Whitechapel workhouse

On 23 February 1862, James Broomer (39) of Wentworth Street, Whitechapel, a widower employed as a joiner, and his children Mary Jane (10), Rachael (8), Charles Henry (7), Elizabeth (5) and Samuel (2) entered the Whitechapel

workhouse. There was no discharge date given for the family; they may have even been 'removed' from this place too. It was this Whitechapel record that gave me confidence that this was the Elizabeth Broomer that married William Prater in 1881.<sup>5</sup>

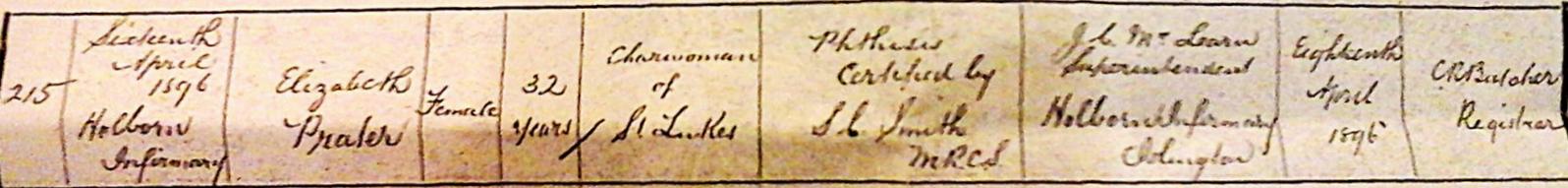
James Broomer returned to Chatham, his death registered in the September quarter of 1865 in Medway. Before his death, James seems to have experienced difficulties in coping without his wife. He spent more time in the Medway workhouse and was prosecuted for abandoning Elizabeth and the rest of his children there. James had accepted relief money to buy tools to carry on his trade, later pawning the tools and heading back to Ashton without his children. There were also bouts of drunken episodes reported in the local Kent newspapers.

Elizabeth and her older brother Charles Henry were again in the workhouse at Chatham at the time of the 1871 census. Older sister Mary Jane Broomer had apparently stayed on in London, and on 15 October 1871 she married John Clarke, a man carrying on the occupation of 'clicker' and of full age (meaning he was over twenty one), at St Saviour's Parish Church, Southwark. The couple both gave their address as Union Street, which was also in Southwark. A 'clicker' was the person who cut the leather in the process of shoe making. Perhaps Elizabeth headed back to London to be closer to her sister when she finally left Chatham some time before her 1881 marriage. She may even have met her future husband William Prater through the shared trade of their partners.

Elizabeth's brother Charles Henry died in 1887 and was buried on 28 May at Ashton-under-Lyne. He is probably the Charles Broomer born c.1856 who was indentured into the Merchant Navy on 4 May 1871 at Rochester, a short distance from Chatham. Orphans receiving parish relief, as both Elizabeth and Charles Henry were in 1871, were often bound as apprentices as soon as they reached the right age.

In workhouse records in the 1880s Elizabeth Prater made the forlorn-sounding claim that she had 'no friends', a term used in workhouse records to include family members. Relatives and friends were inquired about by authorities in case they may have been able to support a poor relief applicant financially.

5 STBG/WH/123/005 Tower Hamlets Parish or Poor Law Union London, 1861-1862.



Elizabeth Prater's 1896 death certificate

Elizabeth received treatment again at the Whitechapel Infirmary in 1894 for an ulcerated leg, this time giving her address as 8 Brick Lane. The ulcerated leg would be connected to the syphilis Elizabeth was suffering from in 1884. There were also spells in Bethnal Green, Hackney and City Road workhouses. Elizabeth had lived at 50 Old Nichol Street, Florida Street and also at a coffee shop in Church Street, Bethnal Green. According to Canadian journalist Kathleen Watkins, Prater had returned to Miller's Court by 1892, albeit at a different house. In fact, records show Elizabeth still on the move around the East End until her eventual death from phthisis, a term used for tuberculosis or a general wasting disease, in the Archway Road Infirmary, Holborn on 12 February 1896, aged just 35.

It isn't too difficult to imagine that two women of a similar age, seen daily entering and leaving their rooms at number 26 Dorset Street from doors located in the narrow passageway leading from Dorset Street into Miller's Court, might be mixed up with one another by people who only knew them by sight, or who shared the occasional greeting with them.

Prater being a younger woman also seems to make more sense of a comment reportedly made to her by Mary Jane Kelly on the evening of 8 November 1888, the last time the two women spoke.



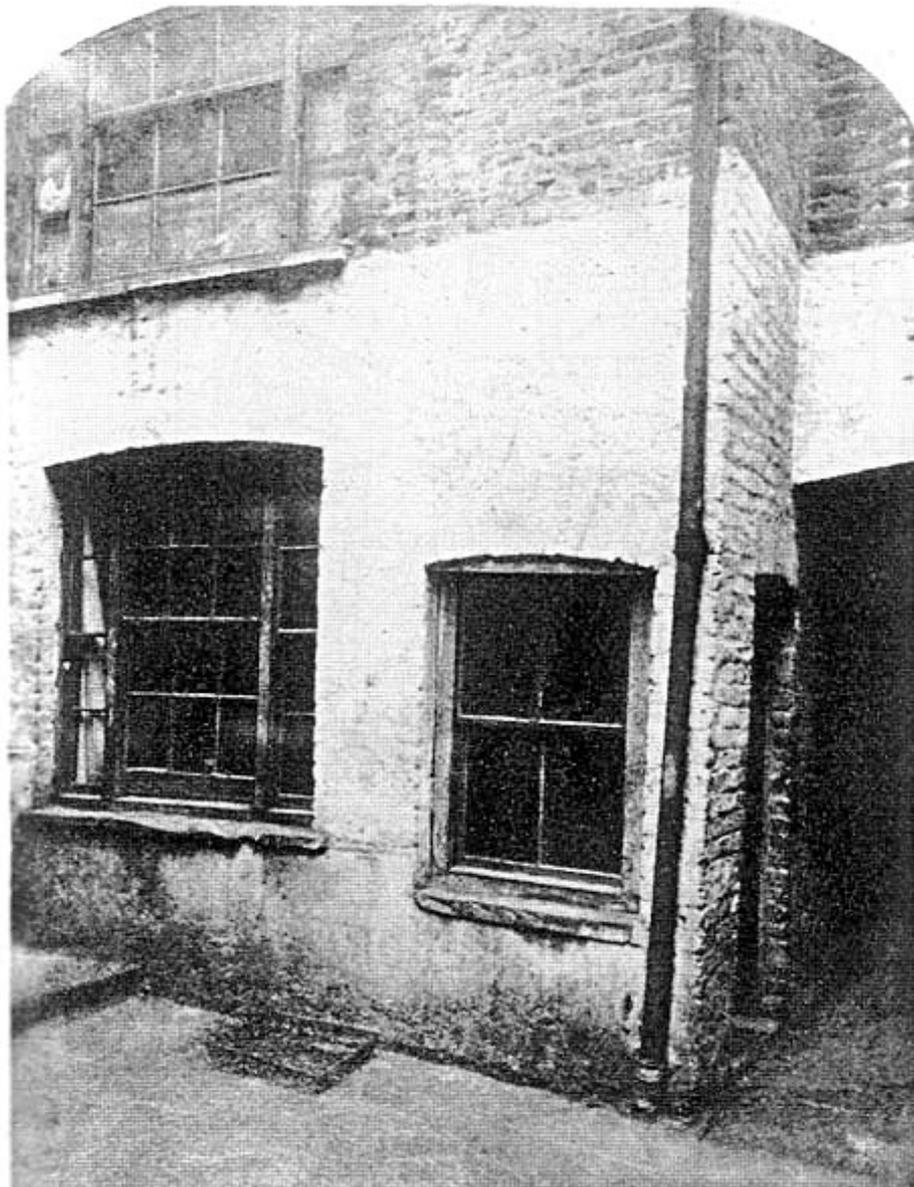
Contemporary sketches of Elizabeth Prater (above) and Mary Jane Kelly (right)

In an interview published in *The Star* on 10 November, Elizabeth mentioned that she and Kelly stood at the entrance to Miller's Court, talking a bit about what they were going to do that night, before Elizabeth said 'Good night, old dear,' and Mary Jane replied 'Good night, my pretty.' According to Prater, this was a phrase Mary Jane always used towards her. This seems a more natural exchange if the two women were of similar ages.

Another snippet of information given by Elizabeth Prater in that same interview was that Mary Jane had been wearing a hat and coat, which contradicts some information given by others who claimed to know her. Elizabeth adds the interesting information that she herself did not own a hat or coat. Could this be support for the idea of the two women being mixed up by others?

As far as their pasts go, it seems that Elizabeth's life in the East End was a natural continuation of the lifestyle she had always known, rather than a downward spiral into street prostitution from better times as Mary's was said to have been. Elizabeth's parents regularly sought poor relief, living hand to mouth, sheltering in workhouses, sometimes choosing alcohol over their children. Abandoned first by her father, then by her new husband shortly after their marriage, she learned to fend for herself as best she could, living a transient lifestyle in the company of women in a similar situation. By the time she came to rent a room from John McCarthy at Miller's Court she had no family around her. She relied on care from the parish infirmary during times of illness and the workhouse when she just had nowhere else to go.

The details of her life that Mary Jane Kelly told Barnett are not actually too dissimilar to Elizabeth Prater's. Both came from a large family and were moved to another place when young, Mary Jane supposedly from Ireland to Wales, Elizabeth from Lancashire to Kent. Both women spent a considerable time in an infirmary; Mary Jane had said she was in Cardiff Infirmary for nine months before 1884 for an unspecified illness, while Elizabeth had spent two months in Croydon Infirmary immediately before entering the Whitechapel Infirmary in 1884 suffering from syphilis.



*Mary Kelly's ground floor room at Miller's Court.  
Prater's room was on the floor above*

Then there were the short-lived marriages, Mary Jane's ended by tragedy, Elizabeth's by desertion. A brother in uniform may also figure in both their lives, even the name 'Henry'. Mary Jane was said to have a friend in Southwark she regularly visited, Elizabeth had once had a sister living there; maybe this sister was also viewed as 'respectable', as Mary Jane's sister was.

In January 1888, Elizabeth was able to pass herself off as a twenty-five year old despite probably being nearer thirty-one years old. John McCarthy reportedly once said that Mary Jane was twenty-five but looked thirty. Was Mary Jane Kelly really so different to Elizabeth Prater, or even the many other young women who inhabited Miller's Court and surrounding streets? Many talk of her as if she was, but based on what? A lack of records to confirm what she told of her past does not help, but as we see with Elizabeth Prater, the most revealing records are not always the easiest to find and perhaps one day Mary Jane will also turn up in some poor law records somewhere.

#### **Acknowledgements**

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DEBRA ARIF is a busy mum and carer and lives with her family in Yorkshire. One of her favourite areas of research is in the London Poor Law Union and criminal records where she has made some interesting discoveries that shed new light on the lives of some of the lives of the victims, witnesses and other characters mentioned during the time of the Whitechapel murders. Debra is hoping to write a series of research articles in future based on some of those finds.

# The Ripper Moniker

## Jack the Ripper and his Significance as a Precedent for Serial Murder

By JOHN L FRIZZELL

Mary Ann Nichols, a local prostitute, lay in the gutter of the street called Buck's Row in Whitechapel, London. It was still dark when a cabman discovered her on his way to work on the morning of 31 August 1888. Her hands were cold to the touch. Her limbs were limp and lifeless. She lay on her back with her arms resting at her sides and her hands open. Her legs were slightly apart and her skirts had been pushed up to her waist. Blood still oozed from the slit in her throat, which ran from ear to ear, an evil smile that leered wickedly up at all who looked upon her. Her gray eyes stared up emptily at the dark sky; she was dead.<sup>1</sup>

Mary Ann Nichols' murder was the first of several murders of prostitutes in London's East End, specifically Whitechapel and Spitalfields, that occurred from late August to early November of 1888.<sup>2</sup> Police never discovered the perpetrator of these crimes and he remains unknown to this day. The killer had not yet become an iconic figure, but instead existed as a nameless and unimportant spectre, the perpetrator of but a single murder in the slums of London. Yet, he lingered only briefly in obscurity. By the time the public discovered the body of his fifth and final victim on the morning of 9 November 1888, all of London, and indeed much of the world, knew his moniker: "Jack the Ripper."

In an 1888 study of the murders, Richard K Fox wrote the phantom, "had got to be a thing of flesh and blood in the households of England... Mothers hushed their children saying: "Be Quiet, or 'Jack the Ripper' will come."<sup>3</sup>

In the 127 years since Jack the Ripper's killing spree, a new classification of murderers has grown up in his shadow: "Rippers."<sup>4</sup> These "Rippers" "violently mutilate[d] or literally rip[ped] their victims open and often dismember[ed] them."<sup>5</sup> As the categorical name suggests, Ripper crime is so named due to its resemblance to the



Mortuary photograph of Mary Ann Nichols

1 "Another Murder in Whitechapel," *The Times*, 1 September 1888, 3c; Maxim Jakubowski and Nathan Braund, eds., *The Mammoth Book of Jack the Ripper*, (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd, 1999), 16-19; Philip Sugden, *The Complete History of Jack the Ripper*, (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2002), 36-38.

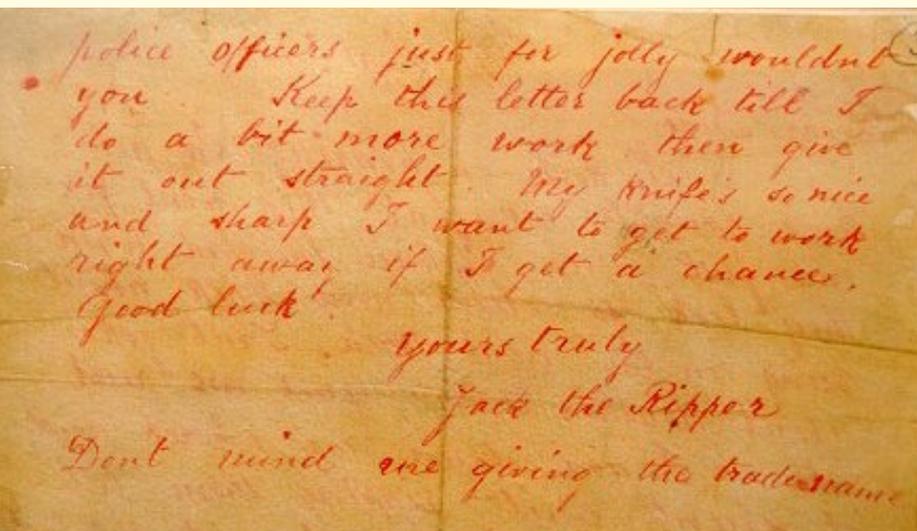
2 Robin Odell, *Ripperology: A Study of the World's First Serial Killer and a Literary Phenomenon*, (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006), xvii.

3 Richard K Fox, *The History of the Whitechapel Murders: A Full and Authentic Narrative of the Above Murders, with Sketches*, (New York: Richard K Fox, 1888), 20, in Casebook: Jack the Ripper, produced by Stephen P Ryder and Johnno, [www.casebook.org/](http://www.casebook.org/) (accessed 12 October 2015).

4 Eric Hickey, ed., *Encyclopedia of Murder and Violent Crime*, s.v. "Rippers," (London: Sage Publications, 2003), 392.

5 Ibid.

murders of Jack the Ripper. In the absence of historical precedent by which to understand the horror of Jack's killings, the Victorian press utilized literature to conceptualize and understand Jack. This created a murderer who was equal parts fact and fiction. In the same manner in which the Victorian press drew upon literature to comprehend Jack, the press often assigns pieces of Jack's moniker to "Rippers" and various other murderers such as the Ripper of the Southeast (Joseph Vacher), Jack the Stripper (identity still unknown), and the Yorkshire Ripper (Peter Sutcliffe) in an effort to view them through a Jack the Ripper lens, and aid the public in conceptualizing them. Deriving the signature of Jack the Ripper from a close investigation of his murders and then comparing it to the murder styles of each of these other three murderers, and the manner in which the press appropriated the Ripper moniker, reveals Jack the Ripper as both a valuable and dangerous precedent by which to understand his successors.



The 'Dear Boss' letter introduced the name 'Jack the Ripper'

The name "Jack the Ripper" first appeared in two taunting letters sent to the Central News Agency in late September 1888, which most London papers printed between 1 October and 4 October; both of these letters carried the signature of "Jack the Ripper" and were believed by most people at the time to be authentic.<sup>6</sup>

The canonical five murders (Mary Ann Nichols, Annie Chapman, Elizabeth Stride, Catherine Eddowes and Mary Jane Kelly) are all considered the work of Jack the Ripper due to the similarities present in each. These commonalities are combined to create Jack the Ripper's criminal signature and consists of six main

components: picquerism (deriving sexual pleasure from the stabbing or wounding of another person),<sup>7</sup> post-mortem mutilation, abandonment of the body, purposeful posing of the body, a centralized location for the crimes, and the common element of prostitution.<sup>8</sup>

In the case of Jack the Ripper, sexuality has been fused with violence. Based on the murders, which are of an overtly sexual nature, modern commentators suggest that Jack derived sexual satisfaction by picquerism, claiming his stabbing and mutilation of his victims' breasts and genitals as evidence.<sup>9</sup> Picquerism was not unknown in the Victorian world. In the spring of 1789, London was beset by what the populace referred to as "the Monster." "The Monster" was a middle-aged man who would approach fashionable women in conversation, walk with them a short distance, and suddenly stab them with a short knife before slipping away.<sup>10</sup> Jack's murders, however, represented a much more extreme version of picquerism. By first subduing his victims, Jack was able to have total domination over them, allowing him to mutilate without fear of resistance or interruption.<sup>11</sup>

6 L Perry Curtis, Jr. *Jack the Ripper and the London Press*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 140-141.

7 Though there is no overt evidence directly proving that Jack received sexual gratification from his attacks on these women, there is enough indirect evidence to warrant the presence of picquerism in this list of common elements. These indirect pieces include Jack's continual mutilation of his victims' sexual areas, his decision to pose their bodies in sexually explicit positions, and his exclusive choosing of sex-workers as his victims. These three pieces do point, although indirectly, to a sexual element in Jack's killings and, subsequently, his disfiguring of his victims. This decision to include picquerism as a criteria of his murders is supported by the study conducted by Keppel, Weis, Brown, and Welch, as well as the study conducted by the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1988, both of which I suggest for those curious in further study in this discussion.

8 Stephen T and Ronald M Holmes, *Sex Crimes: Patterns and Behaviors*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 1 65; Robert D. Keppel, Joseph G. Weis, Katherine M. Brown, and Kristen Welch, "The Jack the Ripper Murders: A Modus Operandi and Signature Analysis of the 1888-1891 Whitechapel Murders," *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling* 2 (2005): 16-17; Federal Bureau of Investigation, Freedom of Information / Privacy Acts Section, Subject: Jack the Ripper, John E. Douglas, (6 July 1988), 2-3.

9 Holmes and Holmes, 165; Keppel, Weis, Brown, and Welch, 16-17; Federal Bureau of Investigation, Freedom of Information / Privacy Acts Section, Subject: Jack the Ripper, 2-3.

10 DNB, s.v. "Williams, Renwick." See *The London Monster: Terror on the Streets in 1790* by Jan Bondeson (2005)

11 Matt DeLisi, "An Empirical Study of Rape in the Context of Multiple Murder," *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 59, no. 2 (March 2014): 420.

After killing each of his victims, Jack left the bodies in the open to be discovered; he never hid them. Even in the case of Mary Jane Kelly, who he killed inside, Jack left her in her room to be discovered once someone came looking for her.<sup>12</sup> Not only were the bodies left, but he arranged them in such a way as to further degrade the victims and shock those who found them. For example, each of the bodies (except for Elizabeth Stride because Jack was likely interrupted) was posed in such a way as to suggest the act of sex or to showcase the mutilations the victim had received, and often times both elements were present. In doing so, Jack showcased his complete power over his victims, conveying that each girl has been completely vanquished and annihilated.<sup>13</sup>

The final commonalities in Jack's murders are the location of the crimes and the common element of prostitution. Jack committed each of the murders within a single square mile in London's East End, his hunting ground.<sup>14</sup> By killing prostitutes only in this small region, Jack concentrated all the hysteria, fear, and sensationalism caused by his murders and the media coverage of them into a very small section of London. This compounded the sense of fear felt by those in the area and served to increase the degree of power Jack held over the East End community. To the modern commentator, the combination of these six elements reveals that Jack, like all sexual serial killers, enjoyed "the excitement, the sexual satisfaction, and the dominance and power that [he] achieved over the lives of [his] victims."<sup>15</sup>

As previously mentioned, the Victorian world had no effective historical precedent by which to comprehend Jack the Ripper; he was the first of his kind in this new era in which serial murder and sexual crime became commonplace.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the Victorian world conceptualized the Ripper through the lens of literature, turning him into a mythical creature who belonged in both story books and history books. Jack did not remain alone for long. Others quickly joined him and inherited pieces of his title, three examples being the Ripper of the Southeast (1894-1897), Jack the Stripper (1964-1965), and the Yorkshire Ripper (1975-1980).<sup>17</sup> When these other murderers appeared, Jack the Ripper functioned as the precedent by which the world could understand them. The press assigned pieces of Jack's moniker to these murderers in an attempt to aid the public in comprehending these new horrors, so that rather than draw from fiction as a means to understanding the killers, as had been done in the days of Jack the Ripper, the public might draw from fact. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's beloved character Sherlock Holmes stated, "There's [a] scarlet thread of murder running through the colourless skein of life, and our duty is to unravel it, and isolate it, and expose every inch of it."<sup>18</sup> The application of pieces of the Ripper moniker to these other murderers creates that thread linked with Jack the Ripper, by which to unravel these new murderers in ways the original Ripper never was. But do these murderers truly share a core element, a 'scarlet thread,' or did the press' labeling these criminals as the Ripper's inheritors confound the public's understanding of them rather than aid it? In order to judge this, the signatures of each of these other three killers must be compared with the signature of Jack the Ripper, thereby revealing if a comparison between the Ripper and each of the three was appropriate.

Joseph Vacher was the first of the three aforementioned case studies to appear on the scene after Jack. Vacher was a French vagabond and serial killer responsible for eleven murders, many rapes, and several other attempted murders, all in France ranging from 1894 to 1897. The French police apprehended Vacher in the fall of 1897. Following his capture, several experts in both law and criminology interviewed Vacher, and as a result, historians know a great deal about his life and motives. However, in order to maintain a pure comparison between Vacher and Jack the Ripper, about whom little is known, one must look only at the murders each was responsible for and exclude information about Vacher gleaned from interviews and public statements.<sup>19</sup>

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12 Keppel, Weis, Brown, and Welch, 16.

13 Jane Caputi, *The Age of Sex Crime*, (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1987), 7.

14 Keppel, Weis, Brown, and Welch, 15.

15 James Alan Fox and Jack Levin, *Extreme Killing: Understanding Serial and Mass Murder*, (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 44.

16 Caputi, 4.

17 Caputi, 1.

18 Doyle, 178.

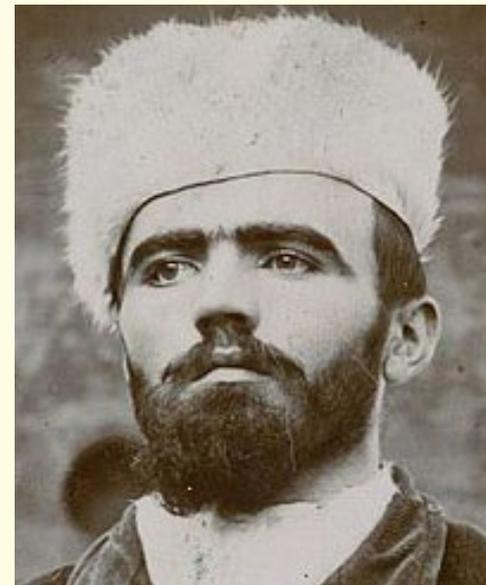
19 Timothy B. Smith, "Assistance and Repression: Rural Exodus, Vagabondage and Social Crisis in France, 1880-1914," *Journal of Social History* 32, no. 4 (Summer 1999): n.p.; Douglas Starr, *The Killer of Little Shepherds: A True Crime Story and the Birth of Forensic Science*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 151-166, 180-189.

Several similarities exist between the murders committed by Jack and those committed by Vacher. Like Jack, Vacher's crimes shocked the people of his country, France. As a result, Vacher's crimes received much attention from the press. The people of France, like those in London, clamored for gory details of each murder, espousing the French expression *Sand á la une*, or "the bloodiest stories should go on page one."<sup>20</sup> As was the case with Jack, there was little historical precedent in France on which to draw to understand the horror of Vacher's killings. To find a situation similar to that of Vacher's string of murders, the press would have needed to refer back to the fifteenth century when Gilles de Rais, a French nobleman, had been hanged for the rape and murder of hundreds of children.<sup>21</sup> Rather than go back several centuries to find precedent, the French press labeled Vacher "the Ripper of the Southeast" and "Vacher the Ripper," overtly connecting him to London's own Jack whose murders had occurred only a few years previously.<sup>22</sup>

The connection between these two is obvious: like Jack's, each of Vacher's victims was found strangled and mutilated.<sup>23</sup> On first glance, these mutilations represent an obvious similarity to the murders committed by Jack. However, on closer observation, these two are not so similar after all. Jack's crime was limited to picquerism and mutilation, whereas it was not unusual for the bodies of Vacher's victims to show signs of sodomy. So while these two murderers are indisputably both categorical rippers, there is some deviation in the nature of their "rippings." Thus ends the list of similarities between Jack and Vacher: sensationalism in the press and mutilation of the bodies. Of these two similarities, Vacher was only truly responsible for one: the mutilation of the bodies. The press, rather, was responsible for the sensationalism in the reporting of Vacher's murders. In likening him to the almost mythical Jack, the French press made it impossible to cover Vacher's murders in any but a sensational manner.

Unlike Jack the Ripper, there is no discernible pattern in the victims Vacher chose. He killed both males and females, and their ages ranged from young children to old women.<sup>24</sup> Though most of his victims were shepherds and farm hands, these do not represent a strong enough majority to claim that these were his primary targets.<sup>25</sup> Rather, evidence suggests Vacher chose his victims from the standpoint of convenience rather than fitting any specific criteria. Furthermore, Vacher never posed any of his victim's bodies or even left them out in the open to be discovered, but frequently chose instead to hide them in hedges, behind large rocks, or in one particularly nasty case, down a well.<sup>26</sup> Vacher, as a vagabond, did not choose his victims from a central locale. Instead, his murders occurred all over rural France.<sup>27</sup> In addition, the bodies of Vacher's victims frequently showed signs of struggling with their assailant prior to death, whereas the bodies of Jack's victims never showed signs of struggle.<sup>28</sup> Taking these differences into account, Vacher appears to be a much less calculating and far more erratic serial killer than Jack. Whereas Jack's murders consistently matched his signature, Vacher's murders varied wildly. The only constant theme in Vacher's murders was the mutilation of the bodies post-mortem. Based on the lack of finesse and polish in Vacher's murders, had he operated in a small confined hunting ground such as Whitechapel, he would likely have been apprehended far sooner than 1897.

The consistent presence of massive mutilation in Vacher's chain of murders was much more striking than his failure to leave the bodies of his victims in the open or his failure to follow any discernible criteria in his selection of victims. Therefore, the French press' appropriation of the Ripper moniker to Joseph Vacher was understandable. However, a likening of Joseph Vacher to Jack the Ripper crumbled under scrutiny. Yes, the two were alike in that they were both categorical rippers, but the resemblance ends there. The press labeled Vacher "the Ripper of the Southeast" not because he was the perfect embodiment of Jack the Ripper, but because Vacher's France, like



Joseph Vacher

20 Starr, 75.

21 Starr, 117-118.

22 Starr, 160.

23 Smith, n.p.

24 Starr, 155.

25 Smith, n.p.

26 Starr, 30, 73, 164.

27 Smith, n.p.

28 Starr, 32, 58.

Jack's London, craved sensationalized reconstructions of his crimes. The French press compared Vacher to Jack in order to borrow from the horror Jack's murders caused and supplant it into their own newspapers. Utilizing Jack the Ripper as a lens to view Vacher proved convenient due to the close proximity the two men shared geographically and in time. But despite the two men's common time period and geographical region, this likening Vacher to Jack the Ripper leads naturally to an incorrect belief that Vacher's murders were of the same vein as Jack's, which they were not. Vacher's murders lacked the forethought and planning evident in Jack's, painting him as a killer of convenience rather than calculation.

In 1964, almost seventy years after the French convicted Vacher of murder, another inheritor to the Ripper moniker appeared on the scene in London. In the span of one year, from January 1964 to January 1965, this killer claimed the lives of six prostitutes from London's West End.<sup>29</sup> Murdering London prostitutes immediately led to the press likening this twentieth century murderer to the late-Victorian era's own Jack the Ripper. Because this murderer removed his victims' clothes before abandoning their bodies, the press labeled him "Jack the Stripper" and his crimes became known as the "murders of the London nudes."<sup>30</sup> At the time, the hunt for the Stripper proved to be one of the biggest in London's history, and the police went to great pains to catch the killer, even asking prostitutes to assist the investigation by submitting names of their clients who seemed "eccentric."<sup>31</sup> London's Metropolitan Police had never used a general appeal to prostitutes to catch a killer before.<sup>32</sup> Female police officers also went undercover as prostitutes in an attempt to add names to the police's list of possible suspects.<sup>33</sup> But despite the best efforts of the police, they never discovered the identity of Jack the Stripper and he remains, like Jack the Ripper, known to the world only by his moniker.

The similarities between the Ripper and the Stripper are obvious: both posed their victims, both exclusively killed prostitutes, and both were London serial killers. However, among these similarities are subtle differences. For example, the Ripper posed his victims both to degrade them further and to shock the public once the bodies were found. The Stripper, however, did not "pose" his victims in the strict sense of the word. Each of the Stripper's victims was discovered nude, and while this can be considered a form of posing, it certainly is not the same style of posing as that of the Ripper. It is more likely that the Stripper removed his victims' clothes in order to hide evidence rather than to shock society.<sup>34</sup> Another subtle difference is that while both killers hunted prostitutes, the Stripper's victims had far more in common with each other than those of the Ripper. The Stripper's victims were all under 5' 2", between twenty and thirty years old, and all suffered from sexually transmitted diseases.<sup>35</sup> So, though both killers hunted prostitutes, for the Stripper, not just any prostitute would do. His criteria were far more restrictive than the original Ripper's. In addition, while the Ripper hunted in London's East End, the Stripper hunted in London's West End. In spite of these subtle nuances, the similarities between the two murders are incontrovertible.

Indeed, Jack the Stripper's moniker immediately suggests a remarkable likeness to Jack the Ripper. After all, the only difference between the two names is the addition of the letters 's' and 't.' However, these two letters are highly important, separating the Stripper from the Ripper in a far more significant manner than their subtlety suggests. The reason the perpetrator of the London nude murders is referred to as "Jack the Stripper" rather than "The Second Jack the Ripper," is more fundamental than the nudity of all his victims. Simply put, the Stripper does not fit the criteria of a ripper murderer. None of the Stripper's victims showed any trace of the frenzied mutilations for which Jack the Ripper was known. Whereas the Ripper killed all of his victims by slitting their throats, the Stripper claimed the lives of each of his victims by some form of asphyxiation. The Stripper drowned his first two victims in the Thames and strangled the last four, three by a ligature and one by hand.<sup>36</sup> Each victim's body showed that the Stripper had used only as much force as was necessary to subdue and dispatch each woman. This evidence suggests that in contrast to Jack the Ripper, the Stripper was not prone to lose himself in

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29 John Du Rose, *Murder Was My Business*, (London: Anchor Press, 1971), 92.

30 Du Rose, 92

31 "Jack the Stripper," *Time*, 8 May 1964, 32; "Scotland Yard Asks Prostitutes to Help Track Down Killer," *New York Times*, 29 April 1964, 20a.

32 "Scotland Yard Asks Prostitutes to Help Track Down Killer," 20.

33 "Jack the Stripper," 32.

34 Fergus Mason, *Exposing Jack the Stripper: A Biography of the Worst Serial Killer You've Probably Never Heard Of*, (Absolute Crime Books, 2013), 56.

35 Du Rose, 92, 102.

36 David Seabrook, *Jack of Jumps*, (London: Granta Publications, 2006), n.p.93, 137, 193, 205, 235, 330-331.

the savagery of his crimes, but rather, exhibited self-control in his murders.<sup>37</sup> The absence of mutilation on the bodies of the Stripper's victims precludes the possibility of categorizing the Stripper as a ripper murderer or as a necrophiliac.

John Du Rose, the officer in charge at the conclusion of the investigation, believed that during the year of the killings, Jack the Stripper received more sustained publicity than any other of London's many strings of crimes.<sup>38</sup> If this is so, then why has Jack the Stripper faded into obscurity? Why has his moniker not become a household name like that of Jack the Ripper? To understand this, one only need realize that Jack the Stripper did not kill in as sensational a manner as Jack the Ripper. The savage manner in which the Ripper mutilated his victims allowed the press to paint the Ripper as a monster who skulked in the shadows, awaiting the perfect moment to strike. *Newsweek*, an American periodical, published an article on 21 December 1964 which placed a description of the Stripper's murders between two quotes from the London *Times* in 1888, pretending as if nothing had changed since the Ripper's original murders. The article stated that "a new Mad Jack - this one known with ghoulish humor as Jack the Stripper - is on the prowl in the dark, narrow, twisting streets of London."<sup>39</sup> But despite this article's claim, much had changed since 1888. The simple fact of the matter was that there were far fewer shadows in London in 1964 than there had been in Jack the Ripper's Whitechapel. Furthermore, the Stripper's killing style was much less grotesque and shocking than that of the original Ripper. So while yes, the Stripper had a strong presence in the news, his stories were not handled in the same fantastical manner as those of the Ripper because the Stripper's murders did not offer as much sensational material to work with. The Victorian press, through literary allusions, had described Jack as a respectable man tortured by inner demons who compelled him to eviscerate women during the night. The style of reporting news changed between 1888 and the 1960s. Whereas the Victorian press valued dramatic narratives, and indeed often drew from fiction to help paint the scene more fantastically, the press of the 1960s largely preferred to report the facts. So, rather than using the Ripper precedent to further sensationalize the Stripper, the *New York Times* chose to use the Ripper precedent as a tool by which the public might understand the current murderer, reporting that "the police favored the theory that there is one killer, a man with a grudge against prostitutes in the tradition of Jack the Ripper."<sup>40</sup>

The question remains, did the application of the Ripper moniker to Jack the Stripper aid in understanding him as a murderer? The answer is yes. By changing "Ripper" to "Stripper," the press entirely negated the criteria of mutilation and picquerism. The trade name "Jack the Stripper" itself accepts that the perpetrator is not a ripper. Once the mutilation criterion is removed, the elements of Jack the Ripper's murders that remain are: abandonment of the body, purposeful posing of the body, the location of the crimes, and the common element of prostitution. The Stripper's murders demonstrated a marked resemblance to these remaining criteria. If the press had branded the Stripper as "The Second Jack the Ripper," or by some other name which would have suggested him as a categorical ripper murderer, then that application would have led to a great misunderstanding of the Stripper. However, because the press adapted the Ripper moniker to "Jack the Stripper," thus admitting the absence of ripper characteristics, the Stripper's moniker lent itself to a better understanding of the Stripper as a murderer of London prostitutes. Utilizing the Ripper as a precedent allowed the press to convey more effectively the type of man the Police suspected of these crimes.

In 1969, just a few years after the Stripper ceased his murdering, the song "Maxwell's Silver Hammer" appeared on the Beatles' album *Abbey Road*. The song proclaimed the exploits of a fictitious boy named Maxwell who murdered two women and one man with his silver hammer. The chorus sang, "Bang, bang, Maxwell's silver hammer/ Came down upon her head/ Bang, bang, Maxwell's silver hammer/ Made sure that she was dead." In 1975, six years following the release of *Abbey Road*, the story of Maxwell and his silver hammer became a harsh reality to the citizens of Yorkshire, Britain. Peter Sutcliffe, better known by his trade name "The Yorkshire Ripper," committed his first murder in 1975 and quickly became infamous both for ripping open his victims in a manner reminiscent of Jack the Ripper and for his signature method of incapacitating his victims: smashing them over the head with a ball-pein hammer.<sup>41</sup> The newspapermen who covered his murders created the title "The

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37 Seabrook, 333.

38 Du Rose, 94.

39 "Britain: The Killer," *Newsweek*, December 21, 1964, 38.

40 "Scotland Yard Asks Prostitutes to Help Track Down Killer," 20.

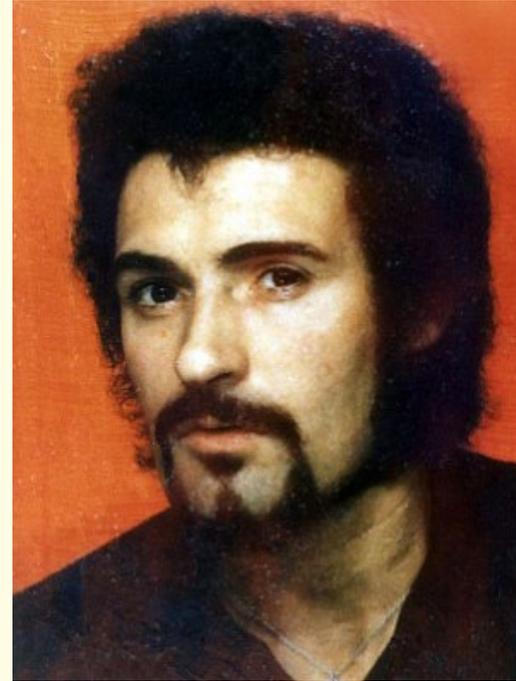
41 Cross, 147; Chris Clark and Tim Tate, *Yorkshire Ripper: The Secret Murders: The True Story of How Peter Sutcliffe's Terrible Reign of Terror Claimed at Least Twenty-two More Lives*, (London: John Blake Publishing, 2015), 14.

Yorkshire Ripper,” accurately conveying that Sutcliffe operated in Yorkshire in the north of England.<sup>42</sup> Sutcliffe’s spree of murders launched “the largest criminal investigation ever conducted in [Britain].”<sup>43</sup> Despite the police’s best efforts, he remained on the loose for five years. After being apprehended, the courts convicted him of murdering thirteen women between 1975 and 1980.<sup>44</sup>

Sutcliffe murdered in a manner remarkably similar to Jack. His largely Yorkshire hunting ground, which encompassed the communities of Leeds, Bradford, and Manchester, quickly became referred to as the “triangle of terror.”<sup>45</sup> Once Sutcliffe chose a woman as a victim, he quickly incapacitated her by forcibly striking her several times in the back of the head with a heavy blunt object, most often a ball-pein hammer.<sup>46</sup> Then, as his victim lay dead or dying, Sutcliffe would pull up her clothing and begin to mutilate her body, stabbing and slashing it up to as many as fifty-two different times.<sup>47</sup> This clearly evidences a commonality of mutilation in the two killers’ signatures, but does Sutcliffe’s method, like Jack’s, also show traces of picquerism? In other words, does the evidence point to Sutcliffe’s receiving some sexual satisfaction from the mutilation of his victims?

When Sutcliffe moved his victims’ clothing in order to mutilate their bodies, he would push up their bra (thus exposing the breasts) and would pull down their pants (thus exposing their pubic region).<sup>48</sup> The exposure of these areas certainly points to the presence of a sexual motive. In addition, Marcella Claxton, who was attacked by Sutcliffe but survived, distinctly remembers him masturbating over her body as she lay bleeding at his feet.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Police found the body of Wilma McCann, the first of the thirteen women Sutcliffe confessed to murdering, with semen on the back of her pants and underwear, suggesting that Sutcliffe had masturbated over her body as well.<sup>50</sup> Both of these episodes, when added with Sutcliffe’s consistent exposure of his victims’ sexual areas, strongly suggest that the mutilations of his victims did stem from a sexual motive and should, thereby, be considered picquerism. In addition to the similarities of mutilation, picquerism, and the existence of a personal hunting ground, both murderers further degraded and shamed their victims by posing their bodies in exposing ways. Though Sutcliffe did not leave his victims in a position pantomiming sexual intercourse as Jack often did, Sutcliffe, like Jack, left his victims’ sexual areas exposed.<sup>51</sup>

So, of the six aforementioned criteria evident in Jack’s murders, Sutcliffe’s murders clearly show four: mutilation, picquerism, posing of the bodies, and a central geographic area in which he operated. Sutcliffe’s murder signature, while possessing aspects of the two remaining criteria, abandonment of the bodies and commonality of victims, fails to align itself perfectly with them. In the early years of Sutcliffe’s killings, he perfectly represented these two criteria, but as he neared the end of his killings, he began to diverge from Jack’s precedent. For example, at the beginning of Sutcliffe’s murder spree, Sutcliffe left the bodies of his victims in public and in plain sight, but by his seventh murder in 1978, he had begun to hide the bodies of his victims in



Peter Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper

42 Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 229.

43 Hansard Parliamentary Debates, “The Yorkshire Ripper Case,” HL 19 January 1982, v. 426: cols 536-41. [hansard.millbanksystems.com](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com).

44 Roger Cross, *The Yorkshire Ripper: The In-Depth Study of a Mass Killer and his Methods*, (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), 249.

45 “The 13th Victim: Yorkshire Ripper Kills Again,” *Time*, 1 December 1980, 47.

46 Cross, 147; Chris Clark and Tim Tate, *Yorkshire Ripper: The Secret Murders: The True Story of How Peter Sutcliffe’s Terrible Reign of Terror Claimed at Least Twenty-two More Lives*, (London: John Blake Publishing, 2015), 14.

47 Clark and Tate, 17.

48 Cross, 147.

49 Cross, 72; Clark and Tate, 17.

50 Cross, 23; Clark and Tate, 16.

52 Cross, 143, 187, 112, 107.

53 *Ibid.*, 19, 27, 34, 75, 80, 92, 108, 110.

51 Cross, 147.

forests, woodpiles, trash heaps, and under dust bins.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, eight of the first nine victims of the Yorkshire Ripper were prostitutes, exhibiting a clear similarity to Jack's killings.<sup>53</sup> Sutcliffe's final four victims, however, were not prostitutes, as evidently Sutcliffe did not choose his victims as carefully as Jack. But despite these two differences, the murders committed by Jack and by Sutcliffe were remarkably similar.

Sutcliffe's murders were reminiscent of a horror that Britain had not experienced since the legendary days of Jack the Ripper. Indeed, in the media, Sutcliffe was compared time and time again to the infamous Victorian murderer, and these comparisons revealed a gut-wrenching truth: Sutcliffe's murders were a "late-twentieth century 'replay' of the [original] Ripper episode."<sup>54</sup> The press capitalized on the undeniable similarities between the Yorkshire Ripper and his infamous predecessor to "enhance the contemporary power and prestige of this contemporary killer," by using Victorian imagery to describe Sutcliffe's hunting ground, thus likening it to Jack's own Whitechapel.<sup>55</sup> *The Evening News Magazine* reported "Bradford on a Saturday night is pure Victorian Gothic... dank slate roofs gleaming, the blackened brick... even the quarter moon obliges, fitfully disappearing behind windswept clouds."<sup>56</sup> An article that appeared in the American magazine *Time* went so far as to refer to Sutcliffe as "Britain's modern-day reincarnation of Jack the Ripper."<sup>57</sup> The police and press received three letters and one "spine-chilling two-minute-long tape recording," all by the time this article appeared in 1980. Each of these three communiques bore the signature, "Jack the Ripper."<sup>58</sup> Sutcliffe, more so than any other of Jack the Ripper's successors, was understood better by the application of the Ripper moniker. Viewing Sutcliffe as a reincarnated Jack the Ripper allowed the public to process the grisly nature of Sutcliffe's murders. An article appeared in the 23 April 1979 edition of *Time* magazine, with two pictures; one was a 19th century cartoon of Jack the Ripper and the other was the tarp covered body of one of Sutcliffe's victims. The article, along with the world, recognized that Sutcliffe's murders were "in a style reminiscent of the original Jack the Ripper."<sup>59</sup> The tarp that covered the victim pictured could not mask the truth; beneath it lay a murder as horrifying as those of Jack the Ripper. The crimes of the Yorkshire Ripper truly were a 'replay' of Jack's in 1888.

As evidenced by the press coverage of Jack the Ripper as well as that of Jack the Stripper, the Ripper of the Southeast, and the Yorkshire Ripper, when society is faced with a great evil, there is an immediate clamoring to find some precedent or similar event by which the evil can be understood. Long ago, the Ancient Greeks sought to explain the world around them. They explained it in a manner which they could understand: mythology. To explain the tempestuous seas, the Greeks created the god Poseidon to rule jealously over the waters. If he were not properly appeased, Poseidon might choose to smite any ship passing over the sea. The danger of this kind of thinking was that their gods looked and acted similarly to mankind, behaving jealously and frequently acted out of anger. In reality, the Greeks explained nothing; they merely conceptualized these occurrences by what they already knew and so missed the true explanation entirely.

Over the years, Jack the Ripper has been used to aid in comprehension of other serial killers as well, such as: the Son of Sam, the Hillside Strangler, the Boston Strangler, the Coed Killer, Ted Murderer, and the Green River Killer.<sup>60</sup> When trying to conceptualize these other killers through the lens of Jack the Ripper, society risks suffering the same fate as the Greeks. Interpreting other killers through this lens does not always aid in understanding them. It can, as was the case with Joseph Vacher, actually limit comprehension. As the originator of Ripper crime, Jack is frequently used by the press as a tool to conceptualize each new categorical ripper. However, not all rippers are alike. Though they may be categorized similarly, each killer's signature is different and a comparison between two ripper murderers with drastically different methods of operating can have disastrous results. It can easily cause the public to understand a killer of convenience, like Joseph Vacher, as a killer of calculation, like Jack the Ripper. Comparing killers to Jack the Ripper risked conforming them to his model when they might have been understood better by some other means.

However, in other cases like those of Jack the Stripper and the Yorkshire Ripper, utilizing Jack as a precedent greatly aided in the public's comprehension of the kind of killer they were facing. When utilizing Jack the Ripper's

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54 Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 228.

55 *Ibid.*, 230.

56 *Evening News Magazine*, 7 December 1979 quoted in Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 230.

57 "The 13th Victim: Yorkshire Ripper Kills Again," 47.

58 *Ibid.*

59 "Ripper's Return: Killer in a Triangle of Terror," *Time*, April 23, 1979, 43.

60 Caputi, 6.

as a lens by which to conceptualize current murderers, it is best to use similarities to aid in comprehension while still admitting to the differences. In the case of Jack the Stripper, the press used the familiar reputation of Jack the Ripper to explain to the public that the Police believed the Stripper to be a man with a vendetta against prostitutes, much like Jack. Laying Jack the Ripper's murders side by side with those of the Yorkshire Ripper revealed the extreme similarities between the two, effectively showing how severe the danger to women in Yorkshire was, but also revealed the differences: Jack the Ripper managed to vanish after each crime, but the Police compiled pieces of evidence against the Yorkshire Ripper and slowly but surely closed in on him. The trial of the Peter Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper, harkened back to the press coverage of Jack the Ripper in 1888, questioning how Sutcliffe managed to lead two lives: one as a functioning member of society and one as a murdering reprobate. Sutcliffe personified the worst fears of Victorian London; he turned the characters of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde into a real life criminal plaguing modern Yorkshire.<sup>61</sup>

In the original handling of Jack the Ripper, the press turned to literature, and the result was the creation of a monster. But in the case of the three killers discussed in depth and the others previously mentioned, the press turned to Jack the Ripper. This allowed the press to remain grounded in reality rather than fiction, and reveals that Jack the Ripper's significance is not limited to the Victorian era. Instead, it transcends time, serving as a precedent by which many serial murderers will continue to be measured and understood.

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61 Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 231.



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# SIR HOWARD VINCENT'S POLICE CODE 1889

NEIL R A BELL and ADAM WOOD

FOREWORD BY

DEPUTY ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER NEIL BASU  
*Chairman of the Metropolitan and City Police Orphans Fund*

A republishing of the famous guide for Metropolitan Police of the Victorian era, with an extensive introduction by Neil Bell and Adam Wood. First published in 1881, the Police Code was written by Howard Vincent, Director of the CID and was an invaluable resource to Metropolitan Police officers. The version reprinted is for 1889, in use by officers at the time of the Whitechapel murders.

Originally, a share of proceeds from sales were donated to the Metropolitan and City Police Orphanage, and we are proud to continue this tradition by donating an equal share of profits from every book sold to the Metropolitan and City Police Orphans Fund.

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# The Jack the Ripper Museum: A Six Month Update

By **TREVOR BOND** and **JON REES**

As the majority of readers will no doubt be aware, 2015 saw the launch of a new business venture located at number 12, Cable Street, a short walk south from Whitechapel High Street. Founded and fronted by Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe, a former Diversity Officer for Google who had also previously held a number of corporate banking roles, the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' has certainly proved a controversial addition to the world of 'Ripper' commerce since its (delayed) opening back in August of last year.

As discussed in *Ripperologist* 145, a number of protest groups objected to the opening of such a museum for a variety of reasons, indeed often very personal and keenly felt ones. Of course, it should also be acknowledged that a number of voices have also felt compelled to defend the museum and its owner's right to exercise his entrepreneurial initiative in any way he sees fit. Neither the authors, nor *Ripperologist*, would deign to attempt to guide readers into taking up a position on either side of this debate.

Nevertheless, a number of impassioned protests, petitions, and the like continue to be actively promoted, even if national media interest in the controversy has reduced since the days of July to September 2015 when on some days you could barely walk along the western edge of Cable Street without sighting reporters and photographers from BBC London, Sky News, or even the *New York Times*. As writers with an obvious self-interest in the public perception of the field, this remains a debate worth observing.

Simply put, objections to the museum seem to fall into three broad categories - people who feel that the crimes of 'Jack the Ripper' represent a part of history which would be best ignored, those who feel that the case may have historical merit but that the presentation of the story as the museum currently exists could be considered unsatisfactory or even exploitative, and finally a significant proportion who remain angered that such a focus was chosen for a museum which was originally granted planning permission for what was stated to be planned as a 'museum of women's history'.<sup>1</sup>

This range of concerns has led to a broad church of protest groups and objecting individuals, from self-styled anarchist groups to faith leaders and local politicians, and from feminist historians and academics to local residents and even anti-fascist demonstrators (of which, more later). Arrayed on the other side of the debate are PR consultants, former museum staff, and more; and, at the centre of it all, Mr Palmer-Edgecumbe, a man with many years of corporate and charity work to his name. In the words of Anthony Burgess, all human life is here. The Holy Ghost is yet to give an opinion.

Much of this debate was covered in the aforementioned *Ripperologist* 145 article. In the six months since, however, events have continued to develop in a manner that warrants exploration, in our opinion. Therefore, we present to you a summary of the first six months in the life of the 'Jack the Ripper' Museum, as well as three new interviews taken from both sides of the invisible but nonetheless tangible battle lines.

If nothing else, the last six months have certainly demonstrated, perhaps in the strongest fashion since events surrounding the 'centenary' of the crimes in 1988, that interest in the crimes of 'Jack the Ripper' remains a controversial matter for a number of people. As an exercise in seeing the world of 'Ripper' studies from outside the proverbial bubble, it has been a fascinating period to cover. It will be no less so to see what, if any, impact, this very public reminder may have on the presentation of 'Ripperology' in the near future.

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<sup>1</sup> Original planning application; see *Ripperologist* 145.

Although we do not intend to report every six months on 'Jack the Ripper Museum', we will continue to observe the developing story, for all the reasons given above. In case of future significant developments, we shall endeavour to inform any interested readers in the best way possible; however, for now, it appears that for good or ill, the 'Jack the Ripper' Museum' is here to stay. Whether that is a cause for despair, celebration, or apathy, is up to the individual reader to decide.

Whatever your thoughts, we hope that you enjoy this update, which begins in September, after the publication of the preceding article.

### September: PR and Petitions

On the final day of August, journalist and public relations consultant Joshua Walker ([www.joshuawalkerpr.com](http://www.joshuawalkerpr.com)) had announced his employment by the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' to manage their PR and publicity campaigns. On September 2, 2015, Walker began contacting various parties - including the authors - in an apparent attempt to change hearts and minds following the negative publicity of the past two months or so. Towards the end of the month, he would meet with a number of writers and commentators, and also begin to effect introductions with Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe. Palmer-Edgecumbe himself appeared to be keeping a low profile following the initial blast of publicity, controversy and media interviews around the time of the museum's opening.

As an aside, readers may recall talk in our previous article of a space on the opposite side of Cable Street to the museum and a few yards to the west. To recap, this space is currently largely obscured by hoardings, and is accessed through a wire fence with an opening on to a short stub of road leading off Cable Street. Used occasionally as a car park, and also by a number of street vendors who trade from close by Tower Hill station for the storage and preparation of their equipment, the space also features a large and currently empty secure area located in an arch under the railway bridge carrying the Docklands Light Railway towards Shadwell. As discussed in *Ripperologist* 145, rumours circulating amongst protesters in August had suggested that this space was being rented for a potential extension of the 'Jack the Ripper Museum'.

As we will see, during September and October Walker would share supposed plans for this space with interested parties; details enthusiastically shared but, as we will also see, not necessarily accurate according to the alternative interpretations of Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe.

Some people remained unconvinced, despite the best efforts of Walker. On 9 September, a group featuring members of Class War, whose previous protests against the museum were covered in *Ripperologist* 145, and other protest groups convened inside the foyer of Tower Hamlets Council's offices in Poplar. Also present was Becky Warnock. Strongly opposed to the museum and a supporter of a number of early protests, Warnock had recently set up an online petition calling for the closure of the business, entitled 'Celebrate Suffragettes, not Serial Killers'. The petition was hosted and publicised by the website 38 Degrees<sup>2</sup> and by September 9 had already been signed over seven thousand times (the total currently stands at just over thirteen thousand). On the day, Ms. Warnock and her companions shared a short meeting with Tower Hamlets Mayor John Biggs, who as readers may recall publicly declined his invitation to the opening of the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' the previous month. Online comments left by those signing the petition included 'Blatant opportunism by the owner/organisation. Shameful.' (Brenda W.), 'Appalling, misogynistic and fraudulent' (Nick A.), 'I don't agree with how the company went about this and I do not want it on my doorstep' (Sophea B.; sic), and 'If it's not about the murderer, why name it after HIM?' (D. M.). Clearly this is a self-selecting sample, but it nevertheless demonstrates that in some quarters, anger against the museum was finding a wide audience.

### Interview: Becky Warnock 18/9/2015

**So, first off, can you give us some idea what happened when you met with the Mayor?**

On the day, we only had about fifteen minutes with the Mayor, and then we had about half an hour with the Mayor's Representative. [The Mayor] professed absolute commitment to our campaign, and said that he was horrified by the state of the Museum, that he was totally against it, and that his legal team had looked a lot into what their restrictions were and what they could do.

The legal position of Tower Hamlets Council is that because [the owner] has opened a museum that the content of the application, whilst it was completely deceptive, didn't influence the decision [to award planning permission]. The only thing legally there are issues with is the frontage - the frontage of the Museum goes against

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2 [www.you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/celebrate-suffragettes-not-serial-killers](http://www.you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/celebrate-suffragettes-not-serial-killers).

what was originally in the planning application, and they are looking into that. But, realistically, changing the frontage would completely negate that.

[Representatives] from Wilton's Music Hall also came along, and Wilton's is part of a conservation area [within which the Museum is also located]. There are guidelines that specifically mention victimisation and exploitation - that nothing within the conservation area should exploit or re-victimise. That, I think, is our strongest angle on trying to get [the Museum] to close. Although realistically, because they are guidelines... the likelihood is that [the Museum] would be able to throw money at it and make the issue go away; but the Mayor said he took that [angle] very seriously, and his department have taken that to the planning [department]. All we can do is wait.

The other thing outside of that is apparently there is a council owned property on the other side of Cable Street, and so the Council are looking into that; because there is speculation that the reason they are renting that is because they want to expand and make [the Museum] into a full-scale 'attraction'.

There are two things I think about that - firstly I would hope that the Council wouldn't allow it, but secondly if that does become an 'attraction'... [the whole project] is no longer a museum, which I hope would invoke their original planning permission. [Even at present] I don't feel that the content of the Museum as it stands has any historical relevance, so I think to call it a museum is debatable, and to call it a tourist attraction is probably more accurate.

Again, there is no legal differentiation between a tourist attraction and a museum...in terms of granting planning permission, but I think that now there are enough people [concerned by events] that might be the planning department's hold on it, and I hope that would be the case.

[Mayor Biggs] also said that he is trying to get a Council inspection of the inside of the building. I haven't been inside, I have no intention of going inside, but I know [members of] Class War have been inside...and were genuinely horrified. And their representatives [at the meeting] gave their impressions of that visit.

One thing [Class War] said which was particularly poignant for me was that...children are allowed into the museum, and there is no age restriction on entry. The reason I got so riled up by this whole thing was that...for a long time I was doing a lot of work to do with domestic violence, and working with young people around healthy relationships, and the prevention of violence against women and girls. Now, Tower Hamlets doesn't have the highest rates of domestic violence in London, but it's pretty high...and I think it is completely irresponsible of the Council to be on the one hand funding projects like that, while at the same time allowing permission for a museum [of this kind].

I said that to the Mayor, and he did take it on board, although again his argument is that he has no legal grounds on which to take [the permission] away...I do know that the Council have told [the Museum] to bring in their A-frame boards, because they are not legal.

In all honesty I came away thinking that "ok, you are angry, but in all honesty you're not going to do anything about it". I think the [chances] of us getting it shut down are relatively low, so...for me, my next ambition would be that we can get the Council to enforce restrictions on [the Museum] - including an age restriction, and including changing the board outside, and keeping to the original opening hours - which is one of the things that was legally wrong in the original planning permission.

### **Were you surprised by the response to the petition?**

I was absolutely [amazed]. I've never done anything like this before...my work is kind of related to this kind of area but it's more passive in its protest.

I started [the petition] because I felt like I need to do something, and I still look at those numbers [of signatures] and go 'wow'. To be honest, I've done very little - I've tweeted it and posted it on Facebook...and obviously 38 degrees supported it, but I still find it quite amazing how quickly [it grew].

I think that's the other thing that's quite heartening is that I wonder how realistically [Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe] he is going to be able to continue without public support, but I'm guessing that's really wishful thinking.

I think what has been good about the petition is that it demonstrates that the protests are not 'just a few mad feminists' and that there is actually a broad range of people who are concerned. Clearly 7,000 people is not just a few mad feminists.

This is something that I try quite hard to talk about - when the petition kicked off I was interviewed quite a lot by London Live and LBC, it was all very surreal. A lot of them asked me "what about the London Dungeons?", or "what about the Ripper tours?". My answer to that was that, personally, I don't think Jack the Ripper is something to be celebrated - but my problem with this museum is not down to the context of it being a Jack the Ripper Museum, it's the way it has been done which was deceptive.

If you look at [Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe's] quotes from when it first opened, when he was saying that he wanted to explore how the women got themselves in their situation in the first place - that's victim blaming. And that is what I spent a lot of work with teenagers in the area [trying to dispel]. I feel that's a very important point to stick to, if he had applied for permission to open a Jack the Ripper museum and had been given that permission then I wouldn't go to visit it, but I wouldn't be as outraged as I am. And I think a lot of people feel like that.

That's what a lot of people are saying on the comments for the petition, that it's the deception they are unhappy about. There was even one person who said he was really interested in Jack the Ripper and the history of the area at that time, but even he was angry [about the way things have been done].

#### **Does the location have any impact on how you feel about the museum?**

To be honest, I didn't really know about Cable Street's history until I started this, but I think there is a sense of rubbing salt into the wound when you consider that Cable St has a history of confronting racism and prejudice.

**If the museum was located close to Aldgate East station, for example, which is where a lot of the walking tours leave from, and the White Hart pub there has its board about Jack the Ripper outside, do you think there would perhaps be less concern?**

Again, I wouldn't go, but it might seem less inappropriate, yes.

You have to remember that on the planning permission it cited the closure of the local women's history library, and...you just think "you've done your research"...this isn't a case of someone making a stupid mistake, this is a deliberate move. Again, the Mayor alluded to this - and he said that because of the content of the application, it breezed through the planning process.

Especially in Tower Hamlets...there had been quite a lot of negative publicity, and they would have been keen to get some good publicity. [The Mayor] said that if the application had [been submitted] with the real content, there would have been a lot more scrutiny.

To me it just feels like a real smack in the teeth. Working in the area with young people, a lot of the work now is challenging institutions - challenging prejudice - and you find yourself getting angry with the institutions more so than with the young people, because...they are just regurgitating this stuff. You think 'ok, that's not something you've thought of', that's something that's coming from education, and from your experiences of the world around you. And for them to see an establishment that supports [the glorification of murder], it feels like that is all being undermined.

#### **When did you first find out about the museum, and can you remember your first thoughts?**

I can remember because it was just ridiculous. I was out of the country because I was away with work, and so I was sitting in this incredible hotel room looking out over Lake Geneva - the irony of this is not lost to me by the way, I was sitting there thinking what a wonderful privileged position I was in - and I had a morning off, so I was reading the news online. There were a few stories that morning that really annoyed me, but this story was one where it felt like there was something you could do [about it]. I thought 'I don't believe this museum should exist...I want to change that'. And for once I had a morning off, so I had time to do something, rather than just assume that someone else would do it for you which I think is what we all tend to do a lot of the time.

I knew a few people at 38 Degrees which I why I chose that platform...so I just did it. I genuinely didn't think it was going to get anywhere, then I started receiving messages from 38 Degrees saying...'we really want to push this, we really want to support it as much as we can'. For the first four days of the petition I was still away, and by the time I got home there were over four and a half thousand signatures, and Twitter requests for interviews.

I do question my validity for doing this, I'm not a Cable Street resident and I'm not even a Tower Hamlets resident, but I guess what I am is a woman working and living in London, and I do have a connection to the borough.

#### **Have you tried to get in touch with Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe?**

For me, speaking to him was always a last ditch resort, because I wanted the establishment to shut him down, rather than it seeming personal. I suppose I wanted to have faith in the system working, but now it has got to the point where I think I might have to try and get in touch with him.

If we can't shut it down, then there are things [I would want to see changed]. I want age restrictions...I think it's really irresponsible [as it stands]. Also, originally, in the press [Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe] said he was giving a load of the profits to a local women's refuge,<sup>3</sup> and I want him to do that too.

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3 Eaves, see *Ripperologist* 145.

Although as much as I am saying I want that to happen, I do question how many women's organisations would want to take that money. I think my wanting that to happen is more based on the fact that I want him to make good on at least one of his promises, but I might be surprised if any organisations in that area were prepared to take it.

**If you were to speak to him, what is one question you would want to ask?**

How do you not see a connection between historical violence against women and violence against women today, and do you not think that [the museum] is irresponsible towards young people in the area?

Do you feel there is any educational value in looking at cases like this?

I think absolutely there is, if it's done well. I had a big debate with my cousin who is a head teacher, and he said they use Jack the Ripper in their classes all the time. I'm not against Jack the Ripper as history, or learning from it. But I think you have to learn from it as a mistake, not [glorify] it. I don't want to pretend that it didn't happen...but I do think [there are ways of going about it].

For me, everything about that front board [outside the museum] - the skull and crossbones, the red and black paint is saying "isn't this cool and shouldn't we be celebrating it?"...it makes my skin crawl.

I used to work a lot in prisons, and with young men who were trying really hard to break out of [patterns of behaviour], and I have spoken to some of them about this and even they were shocked when I told them about this [museum]. So that kind of restored my faith!

\* \* \* \* \*

Also in September, rumours began to circulate regarding the involvement of the 'Whitechapel Society 1888' with the museum, in one form or another. On contacting the Society's chairman, Steve Forster it became apparent that this was not the first time the Society had been asked to comment on such claims. Forster revealed that he had been contacted in August by Joe Sullivan, a blogger for the website London Museum's Group ([www.londonmuseumsgroup.org/blog](http://www.londonmuseumsgroup.org/blog)) who was writing an article about the museum. According to Sullivan, he had been told by a staff member at the museum that the Society had offered advice on the preparation of the current exhibits. Forster was happy to deny this, stating that 'the Whitechapel Society was not officially invited to consult on the museum', although he did acknowledge that 'I cannot comment on whether one of our members privately was consulted'.

Many thanks to Steve for his permission to reproduce these sections of his response here. Sullivan's article, which was entitled 'Some thoughts on the Jack the Ripper Museum' and did not mention the 'Whitechapel Society 1888' in its final form, appears to have been taken down from the London Museums Group Website after a short while.

### **Interview: Joshua Walker 27/9/15**

**What's your background and how did you become involved with the Museum?**

I was running the CEO's offices for various CEOs so I always had that PR background, I was always running the PR for my CEOs. I worked on the Financial Ombudsman side of things, dealing with the PPI [*Payment Protection Insurance*] issue [for example]. And I always had one or two other little [PR] businesses of my own, and I've done some journalism.

I met Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe through a friend. I did some googling and read all the press stuff, and then I met with him and heard his story and sympathised with him that the backlash wasn't fair in some respects.

So I thought I would like to get involved and tell this [man's] story. Because that's...what I do, in PR, is telling stories.

**Did you have any prior knowledge of the Jack the Ripper case?**

Of course. As a Londoner, you know various things - through the London Dungeons, and school, and various TV shows and films like *From Hell*. I'm really interested in Tudor history, that's more my era...but I'm really fascinated by Jack the Ripper.

**What were your thoughts when you came on board, and started engaging with the various protesters on social media and so on?**

I set up a Facebook page [for the Museum] and within about twenty minutes I was getting messages to say that I

glorify the rape and murder of women, and all my clients were messaged - including a sixteen year old boy - saying they shouldn't work with me. Thankfully a lot of my clients have worked with me for a long time, and they know I'm not going around murdering people so they kind of shrugged it off.

So that was...my initial experience with the protesters. But then again, I do sympathise with them [in a way] - to look at the press, you would think that one minute something was promised and the next minute something different turned up. Because without the story and the journey [behind it] being told, it's quite a reasonable assumption to have.

So I think it's quite good to be able to get our story out there...to tell people what the process was, what we're doing, and what the plans are for the future. We are a museum that talks about East End women.

**You say in your recent [7 September 2015] press release that Mark 'divulged' his involvement in the 2008 Museum of London Docklands exhibition to the architects and also to Tower Hamlets Council. Does Mark accept that is not the same as saying 'this is what the museum is going to be about'?**

This is my honest answer - I wasn't there, you weren't there, the Mayor wasn't there. No one was there. And I think at this point that anyone can say whatever they want to say.

Mark believes that he made it quite apparent that it was going to be, if not a Jack the Ripper museum, that there was going to be a strong focus on Jack the Ripper. I don't really think it makes sense for Mark, having done that [Museum of London Docklands] exhibition that that wouldn't have come up in conversation. That's what Mark has said to me.

I'm sure it was mentioned, even if it was just casually. And actually Mark has said to me that it was part of the discussions with the Council that it would have a strong focus on Jack the Ripper.

**Also in that press release, you say that 'images from the Docklands exhibition were used in the planning application'. Is that not a bit disingenuous, because any images from that exhibition that were used were not images of Jack the Ripper were they? It was a 35 page application with no mention of Jack the Ripper.**

It's public knowledge...people know what the images were.

[Mark] has been quite transparent about the whole thing. Those images worked within the application, even if they weren't related to Jack the Ripper. And they are images that will be appearing in our new exhibitions. It certainly wasn't a fib.

**The blood smear design seems to be being phased out. Is that an admission that the Museum got that wrong?**

I wouldn't say so. We consulted with the protesters and that was something they were very passionate about. I like the fact that we are a museum that is kind of bringing awareness to feminism as an issue, so people are interested in it. But at the same time we are not being deliberately controversial, so if there is a group of people who are particularly offended by a certain thing, and we understand why they would be offended, I think it makes much more sense to just remove it. We don't need it there, I think it probably was a bit of a mistake.

It was a rethinking. Is it the end of the world if it's there? I don't think so. But at the end of the day we're not an attraction, we are a museum and we do want to tell the stories of women. I do feel it [didn't] necessarily go in line with our mission statement and for the sake of having an image deleted I think it makes sense to do that.

**You may not know the answer to this as you weren't involved at the time - as an aside, I'm very surprised that there was no one involved in PR in the beginning - but when the initial press response hit, the content on the website was changing quite a lot at that point. Initially, Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe was very clearly identified as the owner, but that quickly changed to being the 'founder' in a statement which replaced the previous page which had been taken down [See *Ripperologist* 145]. Was that a deliberate attempt to distance himself?**

I don't think there is a difference. It's public knowledge that he's involved. I don't think it was an attempt to distance himself. I think it is semantics.

**In one of Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe's early interviews he said that no one cares more about women's issues than he does. As you can imagine, that hasn't gone down very well with some groups.**

I think it was meant well. I think as someone who has championed gay rights and women's rights, I think he was leaning more to that. We all have a tendency to...exaggerate things when we feel passionately towards them and I think that's more what he was [saying]. I'm sure there are one or two people in the world, particularly women, who probably do feel more passionately about the women's cause.

But...[Mark] is a wealthy guy. He has an independent income, and the Jack the Ripper Museum even on its best days isn't going to make any [income] that is too exciting, and he did this because he is passionate about the cause of women.

**So you would say that he has set up the Museum because he is passionate about women's history?**

I really do. I think he is passionate about the story of women in the East End. I think he's passionate about both things. He's passionate about telling the Ripper story from the side of the victims - which I think has been neglected...on a mass appeal side.

**You may be aware that last Friday, the great-great-great-great granddaughter of one of the victims visited...**

I was not aware of that.

**She has left a comment in the guestbook. She feels quite passionately about the story being told correctly, and she was quite upset that there are some factual inaccuracies, as well as obviously being shaken by the mannequin of her ancestor in the Mitre Square room. Obviously that second point is a personal response, but I wonder if you have any thoughts on either of those issues?**

I understand. It is sad, and we regret that happened to her. I'd love to chat to her.

The idea of that room is to make people understand what it was like. We are a museum and we are exploring [the story]. I think it would be quite disingenuous of us, and a bit lazy to be honest, to not give people an experience where they leave thinking they really understand the story.

We are quite concerned with how people react, and if she had contacted us before visiting we probably would have warned her.

As for the inaccuracies, we don't want inaccuracies.

**She also made a point about the three information boards on the stairs down to the mortuary room, and she states that even on those boards the name Jack the Ripper still appears on every one. He is the constant presence in the museum isn't he, however much it's supposed to be about the women - the only person mentioned in every single part is the Ripper, isn't he?**

Sure.

**So it's a Jack the Ripper museum isn't it, it's not a museum about the women?**

It's a museum of Jack the Ripper and the women of the East End.

It is fundamentally a museum of Jack the Ripper, and so it makes sense that he is mentioned everywhere. But we are also looking at the social conditions. Even with the focus on Jack the Ripper, it is still looking at the history of the area at that time and the people living there.

**Those three bits are the only elements of social history and context in the whole museum aren't they?**

I'm not sure about that. But at the moment we only have so much space...and we also have to keep a lot of different groups of people happy. I think most people are happy - the majority of people who write comments are happy...But I do actually believe that [Mary Kelly's bedroom] speaks a lot about the women and the context, even the pictures on the walls.

We are a museum and we are evolving, and we are looking at improving and doing more exhibitions and acquiring more artefacts. That is why we are looking at the space over the road [prior to this interview, Joshua had taken us to see any empty space on the northern side of Cable Street, which he stated was intended for a new programme of temporary exhibitions; see our interview with Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe elsewhere within this article for his alternative perspective on this space and its intended use], and doing fundraising and debates.

We've been open since August...we are brand new by any standards. The only thing I can really say is bear with us and...see what we have to offer.

**If an extra board was put up outside the Museum now saying 'and the history of women in the East End', do you believe that would be justified by the current content within?**

Based on what it is now, I would say fifty-fifty. People go into the Museum, and I have read the comments in the guestbook and I have spoken to [visitors] on Twitter and Facebook, and I think most people understand where we are coming from. But we could do more and we intend to.

**That is where the space over the road comes in?**

Absolutely. So the honest answer to that is yes. It could be stronger, and it will be stronger. But I do believe [a museum of Jack the Ripper and the history of women in the East End] is what we are.

We're only talking about a few months that it will take to get that space renovated and open, and we are starting to get a board together to work on exhibitions and debates.

We'd love to work with the protesters. In 1888, there was a real sense of community in the East End and we don't have that now...I know what it's like to work in these communities, and that's why we're a bit disappointed with the response of the Council and the Mayor - we want to work with local groups and [protesters] and various organisations.

It seems like things are going in the right direction...and people are slowly starting to realise what we are trying to achieve. This is just a snapshot in time - give us six months, give us a year, give us five years and I think we will be a real asset to the community. And then maybe the Mayor rather than not returning our calls he will be shaking our hands! But only time will tell.

**You said in one interview [*The Wharf*, 17 September 2015] that the Museum has brought awareness to the feminist struggle. Is that not equivalent to me saying that I could go into a pub and say something really racist, that if people then object to that that I have raised the profile of race relations?**

I don't think we are anti-feminist at all, I don't see where that comes into it quite honestly. Just because you're learning French doesn't mean you're French. Just because we are [running] a museum about a man who murdered women doesn't mean we are endorsing it...or giving out leaflets suggesting that people do it themselves.

The thing we are shining a light on more than anything is the living conditions...in 1888, people were living poorly and they weren't being looked after and it was a crying shame quite frankly. Look to today and there is still domestic violence going on, women are still forced into prostitution, there is still trafficking going on. And if we shine a light on that, I'm proud of that.

That's why I took on this job. I like what we're doing and I'm really proud of what we're doing, and I think in the future people will start to appreciate that. I think they slowly are, and I think that is shown in the press that we are getting now and the social media [responses].

**In the same interview, you said of the Mayor of Tower Hamlets that 'no court action has been threatened'. That obviously carries with it the implied threat that it might be in the future, or it has at least been discussed. Do you think that is helpful to be talking about the local Council in that way?**

I'll tell you what the story is with that. The [current] Mayor wasn't the Mayor at the time [of the planning application], and he was going to come down [to the opening] at one point and then decided that he didn't want to...which is obviously his prerogative, but it's disappointing because we are a business in his area. We pay business rates and it would be quite nice...if we could meet with him.

We had vandalism, we had threats, so a presence would have been nice. So Mark sent a letter saying 'obviously you have an opinion on us, but you've never been, would you like to come and see what we're offering - and also I'd like to speak to you [because] we've had...a tough time'...also we are a local business and, I mean, a local business owner had his car smashed. It's not nice, and it's not appropriate. It doesn't matter how strongly you believe in something, violence isn't the answer and neither is breaking the law.

That letter was ignored. I personally worked with Mark on drafting a second letter, and that letter went out about three weeks ago...it was a response to not hearing anything [to the first letter] and it was very much along the same lines. However, I believe that the Mayor has sent out letters to various people claiming that Mark has done certain things or hasn't done certain things and Mark was very upset because that isn't the case.

#### **Claiming that what?**

That we had duped the Council.

So the letter reminded him that wasn't appropriate. There wasn't a threat of action but there was...a suggestion that we would explore options if it continued.

I think it's a pity, because Mark has wonderful plans to work in the community. We already have support from people in the community - not all, granted - but there are people within the community who support us...and it would be quite nice to be able to have a conversation. The protesters met with him a few weeks ago [with regard to Becky Warnock's 38 degrees hosted petition] and we weren't allowed that opportunity which I think is unfair.

So that's our stance. We are still very keen to meet with him...because I don't believe we've done anything wrong and obviously Mark doesn't believe we've done anything wrong.

I think politics is a very interesting thing.

**There have been some claims recently from people who have been to the Museum where they have been online in various places and have said that 'the Museum has the original 'From Hell' letter' and the window in the mortuary room is from the St George in the East mortuary, and they've suggested they have been told this by staff in the museum. Can you confirm or deny if people are being told those things?**

Definitely not.

**Do you feel hard done by in regards to the press coverage, or does Mark?**

I don't feel hard done by but...I wasn't around when it was all starting.

I think it is a misunderstanding more than anything else. I think hard done by is a bit strong. I think Mark is a bit disappointed that people didn't really understand what we were trying to achieve. And we are now trying to rectify that.

**Do you accept there is a good and bad way of approaching a subject, and that people have the right to discuss whether they feel things have been approached in the correct manner?**

Absolutely. Even as a museum...there is no museum in the world that gets it right. Everything is open to interpretation, everything is evolving. We have a museum and if everyone was saying how fabulous it was and we'd got it all absolutely spot on, then I'd be very worried about the people saying that.

It is up for discussion, we want to debate. If you don't believe in our approach then chat to us, let's look at the research. Maybe that could be an exhibition in itself.

**Do you think five rooms and a gift shop can really be said to constitute a museum?**

I believe that what we do is important. I think people are enjoying what we are doing. We do have the artefacts...I feel that we have approached the subject in a way that hasn't been done before.

The London Dungeons [for example] approach the subject in a completely different way to us, and that's for their audience and I think that a tourist perhaps or even a Londoner could go to [the London Dungeons] and it's quite fun...[but] I feel that we offer so much more when it comes to the facts, the history, the context. I don't think we've had that before.

We are small, we don't pretend that we aren't small; obviously we also have the site over the road that we are renovating. And if people come to us and they learn some stuff and become interested in [the subject] and go away and read about it, and maybe even get involved in the local community to stop some of these things happening then I think we've done a great job.

I think absolutely we are a museum.

**The call for a real women's museum - you've said you'd be quite happy to collaborate on that?**

This is my personal opinion, I don't know what the Museum's opinion on this is. But I think we've seen this in the past, for example with the Women's Library - I think it's a tough sell. I don't think it has mass appeal in so far as tourists and people flocking to it, and that makes it tough especially in this environment where there isn't really the budget for it.

So the only thing we can really do is create something that has commercial value and pays for itself. We feel that we have created that balance where we have...the Jack the Ripper name and we have people coming in because of that, [and] they then learn a bit about the context and [in future] they can go over the road and start learning about other East End stories. I think that is the way we can sell it to a mass audience, and I think that works far more [effectively].

As part of that, we would love to work with different volunteers and groups, and parts of the community, and make that really strong. There are a lot of people out there who could add value to that.

Come on board with us and make something great.

**What are your thoughts on Class War?**

I think [Dr] Lisa [McKenzie] is lovely. They have different views to me, at least some of their views, and I think you have to respect that people have those views...I don't believe that the museum...is trying to create offence.

We've spoken about the blood and how that offended them so we've taken that out. We can appease people to a certain level and we don't want to cause unnecessary offence. But at the same time we have our mission which is to tell the story of women with an initial focus on Jack the Ripper and extend from there.

Lisa is a really smart woman and I hope they would work with us on [that] even though we might not necessarily see eye to eye on all the issues.

**There are some inaccuracies within the Museum and obviously part of the purpose of a museum is to educate people. So if the information you are giving is misleading, that undermines that. Presumably your answer to that would be that you want to correct any errors and people should approach you about them?**

Absolutely. We are not infallible. I think it's important that we accept criticism, and that's the reason I met with Class War in the first place. If you don't think we've approached something in the right way, or...we've got it wrong, then do tell us and we will happily correct it.

**When I met with Becky Warnock who is behind the petition, she was quite upset that there is no age restriction on the museum and that you actually offer discounted tickets for children. She felt that was encouraging people to view it as a family day out, and she doesn't think this is the kind of museum that children should be exposed to. Any thoughts on that?**

My initial thoughts are [that] we don't market it as a family day out. I do the PR, I can tell you we don't do that. Do we tell parents to bring their children in? Absolutely not. Do we manage parents' expectations and tell them what the museum is about and what they will see? Absolutely.

The [mortuary room] is over 16s only so [children] can't go and see the mortuary photographs.

**So if a family group came in you would say to them that you can't take the children downstairs to the mortuary?**

Yes. There is a sign on the door.

**And someone would actually make sure they didn't go down there anyway?**

I'm sure they would.

It's 2015 - let people do what they want to do. If people are happy for their child to go and see the reconstruction of Mitre Square then who are we to say no? All we can do is talk to people and say 'this is what they will see', and if they are happy with that then...come on in.

They've probably seen worse on Youtube.

**Coming back to the press release, you wrote: 'we understand people might be angry at the sensationalist headlines'. But do you not accept that many people, rightly or wrongly, are angry at what they see as the behaviour of the Museum, not the headlines?**

I'm not so sure about that. I don't think it helps having those [headlines].

Fundamentally, I speak as a journalist, there are certain things I do which may make something more of a readable story...I think it does fuel the fire. But, quite frankly, that's another potential exhibition we could do - in Jack the Ripper's time it was all fuelled by the media. Isn't it interesting that it's happened again in this instance as well?

**You also say in the press release that 'one of the initial and vague ideas' for the Museum was to look into women's history. It's a large and well-produced document. That's not a vague idea, is it?**

There's only about four paragraphs talking about what the museum is going to be about. I think the rest of it is talking about where the loos are going to be. I could be wrong but I think that's pretty much what it is.

I'd be interested to know what the Council want from us. If they're going to get angry if people change their minds then perhaps there should be stronger guidelines in place.

**Has the Museum got a curator?**

Mark curated it himself.

**Prior to this interview when we visited the Museum, when we were in the mortuary room you mentioned the cards listing information about the victims. You could argue some of those are on the verge of victim blaming - I'm thinking in particular of Martha Tabram's card which essentially says 'her husband left her because she drank too much and so she became a prostitute'.**

I'm sure that's not the intention.

**What is the situation with giving money to charities?**

I only vaguely know what happened [with Eaves]. I think there was a discussion and a misunderstanding. I think the controversy might have not made things easier for everybody. We're very passionate about what Eaves does, and we would like to hope that at some point we might be able to do something with them.

**Is Linda Riley still involved?**

Is she involved on a day to day basis? No, she is not.

I understand that she was involved in the initial stuff, but I don't know much about her and I certainly haven't dealt with her on a day to day basis.

**Can you give us some details about the events you have planned for the new temporary exhibition space?**

We are...getting a group of people together. Historians, feminists, Ripperologists. Mainly feminists. We want to put together an amazing schedule that looks at the women of the East End - past, present and future...the

protesters [too]. There's almost a story in that - [Dr] Lisa [McKenzie] , for example, she's still as feisty as I'm sure some of the victims would have been in 1888.

We want to explore those people. The suffragettes are a really strong story. We want to look at doing fundraising - the Amy Winehouse Foundation have two women's refuges, and we want to raise money for them. We want to bring awareness to trafficking, forced prostitution and domestic violence - things that really are affecting women now, as much as they were affecting women now.

Is it under the guise of Jack the Ripper Museum? Yes, that's not a bad thing though. We're not endorsing what he did. But in the same way that the press around those murders...changed the local community and brought awareness, we want to do a similar thing and...carry that on.

Terrible things happen, but it doesn't mean that some good can't come of it.

**Do you think that, in hindsight, having those kinds of exhibits within the museum itself may have been a better way of approaching this, rather than starting with a Jack the Ripper museum and then saying 'while you're here, here is some temporary stuff on women in the area'?**

We don't have the space. We could probably give one room to the suffragettes - it wouldn't be fair and it wouldn't be appropriate. The whole idea of what we are doing is to create mass appeal, so in the first instance we can bring attention to the lives of the victims of Jack the Ripper, and equally we can then bring people in to see the temporary exhibitions and get [them] involved with events and with fundraising. That's the kind of thing we are looking to do.

When I say temporary exhibitions, we're talking about three months [to] six months. It's not going to be one or two weeks at a time. Even from a commercial perspective that wouldn't make any sense.

We don't have the space in our six room museum to justify the stories that we want to tell. It makes far more sense to have the focal point [of Jack the Ripper] that brings people in, and then they come over the road and we can tell more stories.

**You say the museum tells the story from the victim's perspective. But assuming they never saw the interior of the detective's office at one of the local police stations, and they never saw 'Jack the Ripper's sitting room', there are only really three rooms where they are represented aren't there - the Mitre Square room, the bedroom, and the mortuary room? Seeing as in all three of those the women are represented dead - the mannequin in Mitre Square, the bloodstains on the wall in the bedroom, and the mortuary representing what it does - how can you justify saying that?**

I think there are also quite a few stairwell [exhibits] that are dedicated to the lives they were living.

Fundamentally, we are a Jack the Ripper museum, with a focus on the victims. But we still have to offer something for people who are interested in the Jack the Ripper [case]. It wouldn't be fair if they came along and said 'where are the autopsy photos?', 'what would his sitting room have looked like?', 'what was the police station like - what was being done about [these crimes]?'.

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile, without doubt the most significant event in September occurred on the evening of Saturday, 26 September when a gathering of 'hundreds'<sup>4</sup> of protesters affiliated to Class War gathered close to the northern end of Brick Lane to march towards a nearby cafe. Shoreditch's 'Cereal Killer Café' specialises in offering a number of often obscure and international cereals at what have been criticised as inflated prices (up to £4.40 a bowl according to the aforementioned Guardian article). Given the levels of poverty in Tower Hamlets, groups such as Class War have expressed concerns that this is inappropriate, in addition to concerns regarding the 'gentrification' of the area, a process which admittedly would seem to have begun many years prior to the opening of the café itself.

Ever since the opening of the 'Jack the Ripper Museum', the actions of Class War and its affiliated groups, including the self-styled 'Women's Death Brigade' has dominated much of the related media attention, to the detriment of other groups such as the East London Suffragettes, E1 Enclave, and so on, as well as the 38 degrees petition - although as we have seen, this does not seem to have impacted on the ability of that particular avenue to attract support. On the night of 26 September, the group which featured many senior members of Class War including Dr Lisa McKenzie and Murray Healy, both of whom had been present at numerous protests aimed at the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' (it was Healy who first alerted us to the potential expansion into the space on the northern side of Cable Street), gathered under the identity of a 'Fuck Parade'. The café's windows were broken and the exterior of the business was smeared with paint. Some attendees also dressed up in outfits including

police insignia and pig heads - presumably a reference to recent allegations involving the behaviour of British Prime Minister David Cameron whilst studying at university.

Quickly, much public opinion galvanised in attacks on Class War and their actions on 26 September, although it should be acknowledged that much of this came from publications with a documented bias against left-wing ideals. McKenzie and Healy came in for particular criticism. Both the *Daily Mail*<sup>5</sup> and the *Sunday Telegraph* concentrated on the alleged hypocrisy of Dr McKenzie, a professor at the London School of Economics (LSE), and others in expressing solidarity with issues of poverty whilst enjoying comfortable lives themselves. Other media outlets concentrated on expressing disdain for the way in which the group had gone about their protest, condemning the vandalism and in particular the fact that this was performed while customers were still inside the building.

The *Daily Mail* of 4 October 2015 described Healy as ‘the leader of a hard-Left anarchist group that attacked a trendy café in East London’ and similarly claimed hypocrisy on his part due to the value of his home (the same article made similar claims against another prominent member of Class War, Jane Nichol, for living in a home worth £250,000, which hardly seems extravagant in the context of London prices).

On Sunday 27 September, on the day we interviewed Joshua Walker, Class War announced that their next target for a similar treatment would be the ‘Jack the Ripper Museum’, on the following weekend. The date was set for 4 October 2015.

### October - Controversy and Selfies

In the event, the protest of 4 October did not occur. Blaming the intense press reaction to the protest of the previous week, Class War posted a statement on their Facebook page declaring that the ‘Jack the Ripper Museum’ protest was cancelled, as ‘it would not be fair on comrades’ to expose them to an increased risk of arrest.

It was not only Class War who had attempted to link events around the Cereal Killer Café and the ‘Jack the Ripper Museum’ in the public’s mind. Following the protest of September 26, Joshua Walker sent out several Tweets and press releases on the attack and how the museum was in “solidarity with them”:

*We, like the brave owners of the Cereal Killer Café, will not give in to bullies. We will be open as usual on Sunday and would ask all Londoners who believe in free speech and freedom of expression to come down to the museum this weekend and show the world that we do not give in to bullying.<sup>7</sup>*

At around the same time, Fern Riddell (who had visited the museum earlier that month) was tweeting her thoughts about the attraction, which she felt was inaccurate. As a historian known for consulting on the television series *Ripper Street*, the media picked up on her comments and she was asked to speak to numerous publications (including *The Independent*) and also spoke to the BBC regarding what she considered inaccuracies within the museum portrayed. Walker’s response was to go on the attack, mocking her on Twitter for slipping up on BBC radio when saying PC Edward Watkins’ name.

Walker himself became part of the story that week when on September 30 he sent a Tweet to an *Express* journalist where he tried to claim the Ripper’s crimes may not have been sexually motivated. The Tweet has been since deleted by Walker. This move spectacularly backfired and several protesters and the media accused him of trying to defend the Ripper’s reputation. Walker later claimed that it was just as likely that the murders were racially driven.

Within days Walker had again faced the anger of Class War when a strange Twitter exchange took place with their @FuckParadeLDN account on October 4. It seems to refer to an incident where Walker had given personal information regarding activist Lisa McKenzie to a journalist. McKenzie at the time was facing a barrage of negative press coverage regarding what was seen as her double standards in regards to her lifestyle and wage as an academic and her involvement with the group.

We have not been able to ascertain the exact information nor newspaper the information about McKenzie appeared in, but we believe it might be in relation to an article in the *Daily Express* that was published on October 4. In the article Walker is interviewed about Class War and describes taking them around the museum. Despite Walker’s claim that he “personally like[s] Lisa”, in the article he is negative about McKenzie and mocks her views and suggestions and it is in line with the other coverage of her in right wing media at the time.

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5 ‘Class War hate mob that attacked East London hipster cereal café included LSE academic and others from prominent universities’, *Daily Mail*, 29 September 2015.

6 *Sunday Telegraph*, 29 September 2015.

7 Press release from Joshua Walker PR, 4 October 2015.

Not all press or social media coverage of the museum has been negative, however. Various positive reviews have appeared on TripAdvisor praising the museum and its highly knowledgeable staff. However, various commentators have raised concerns with the validity of some of these reviews.

The first notable event of October, therefore, occurred on 2 October 2015 when Scott Brown of the website Londonist ([www.londonist.com](http://www.londonist.com)) published an article entitled 'Went to the Jack the Ripper Museum, Didn't Get the T-shirt'. Highly critical of the museum, Wood recounted a visit accompanied by Joshua Walker, and shared further details of the apparent temporary exhibition space which Walker had spoken to us at length about at the end of the previous month. One intriguing line appeared towards the close of the article, and appeared to be a remnant from a previous draft - 'Who is Helena?', Wood mused, a name which had failed to appear elsewhere in the published article.

In private correspondence, Wood later confirmed that this was indeed the case. He also offered the following explanation of the occurrence, and also explained the origin of the name - 'We never found out [who Helena was) and the build up to that question got lost in the edit...Josh Walker told me there would be a suffragette and feminist discussion and temporary exhibitions...from November 2015 [which never materialised). Josh dropped the name Helena as a women's historian/ feminist who was helping them piece this programme together'. Given Mark Palmer-Edgcombe's subsequent denial that any such plans had ever been considered, it is unclear whether this additional detail serves to clear up or the further obscure the truth of the situation.

As mentioned during our interview with Joshua Walker, Catherine Eddowes' great-great-great-great granddaughter, Tracey Smith, had previously visited the museum in September, and left a negative comment in their guestbook. On 5 October 2015, Smith posted the text of her comment along with some additions on the 'Jack the Ripper Museum's Facebook page, although this was subsequently deleted, seemingly by an administrator for the page. She has given permission for the comment to be published here:

*This is by a DESCENDANT of a victim...I have been to the museum and was very disappointed. Firstly the photo of Catherine Eddowes is not of her. I should know she was my great great great great grandmother. Also Catherine was found in Mitre Square, the area patrolled but the City of London police. So why do you have PC Watkins' Metropolitan police whistle? Obviously you have not done your homework correctly. Another point I would like to add in your mortuary you have Catherine buried at Ilford cemetery in fact she is at manor park city of London. Again something I think I would know. I think your Mitre Square room is totally insensitive to the families of all the victims especially mine. Finally to charge people £12 to enter the museum and sell such that is disgusting I wonder where this money goes?*

On 21 October 2015, Joshua Walker sent out an email stating that the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' had been voted the 'world's creepiest attraction' by the website Culture Cheat Sheet, based in the USA. In fact, the article [hosted at [www.cheatsheet.com](http://www.cheatsheet.com), but seemingly no longer available] simply listed the ten 'creepiest' museums in the writer's opinion, and while the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' was listed first, there was no indication that this represented a ranking. There was certainly no award (or, seemingly, any voting system) involved in a listing on what, at a glance, appears to be little more than a 'click-bait' site. Nevertheless, Mark Palmer-Edgcombe proclaimed himself pleased with the listing - 'we are delighted to win this accolade so soon after opening and as the World's creepiest museum we are expecting to be very busy this Halloween'.<sup>8</sup>

On 27 October 2015, representatives of 'United East End' met with Tower Hamlets Mayor John Biggs to discuss their objections to the museum. Formed in 2013 in response to a planned march by the far-right English Defence League through the area, United East End is a large and multifarious organisation with close links to local trade unions including the British Medical Association, the 'No Place for Hate' forum. After a lengthy meeting, a protest was arranged on the early morning of 29 October whereby members of United East End gathered alongside Mayor John Biggs outside the Museum to be photographed by various local media outlets. This protest was dismissed by Joshua Walker via Twitter as 'more of a photo opportunity than a protest', with particular disdain reserved for the fact that the group had left before the Museum opened for the day.

One final, and rather disturbing, addition to the Museum's exhibits appeared to come to public attention around this time, with the French website *Le Petit Journal* ([www.canalplus.fr/emissions/le-petit-journal](http://www.canalplus.fr/emissions/le-petit-journal)) posting an image of what appeared to be the blood-stained legs of a mannequin emerging from one of the drawers in the mortuary room. No further images were available, and this was not picked up by any English language media outlets. Initially, therefore, the claim was difficult to verify - although, as we will see, the model's presence (albeit briefly) was later confirmed by staff working at the Museum.

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8 Press Release from Joshua Walker PR, 21 October 2015.

**Interview: Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe**  
**20/10/2015**

**Bit of a provocative question to start with - "world's worst diversity officer". How does that feel?**

That wasn't a lot of fun, it was very hurtful to be called that. I've spent twenty years working in diversity, and worked my way up from the bottom to the top of the profession, and I've won lots of awards working in diversity. But I think...the people who were saying that hadn't been to visit the museum, and had no idea what we were trying to do, [nor did they) have any idea about me or my work either. So you tend to just take that on the chin.

**Did you not foresee a backlash once the museum in its current form was revealed?**

To be honest, no. Because I genuinely don't think that what we've done is a million miles away from what was in the original planning application - in fact it is very much in line with that.

There's two things going on here. One is that we applied for planning permission for a museum, and we got [the permission) for a museum. That was concerned with technical issues around whether this building was suitable for a museum. Secondly, we put in a concept document about doing something around women's history in the East End of London. But as we curated the museum and built it, that evolved and changed.

After speaking to a lot of experts in the museum world, we were advised to go with a very strong 'theme' - i.e. Jack the Ripper - and use that as a vehicle to tell the stories of women as well.

So I don't feel like we've done anything wrong. I've been surprised by, frankly, the hysteria. I've had death threats and threats to my family, threats to burn my house down...We are a museum! I find it quite unbelievable that people have reacted so violently against us.

**Away from the extremes of death threats and the like, do you think any of the protesters have a valid point?**

I think they have a point in that if they don't like what I've done then they have a right to their opinion. What I find extremely annoying and frustrating is that many of the people who have criticised me over and over again have never taken the opportunity to speak to me, or to try to speak to me. They haven't visited the museum - I've invited them along, and I've tried to have a dialogue with them and the response has just been...'I don't want to know, I don't like what you've done'. How can they not agree with what I've done if they've never seen what I've done?

It just seems quite childish. I'd be quite willing to have an adult debate with them. Interestingly I did have such a debate on Sky News with one of the leaders of Class War and we were able to come to an agreement on some things, and not on others.<sup>9</sup>

There has been a lot of lazy journalism from people who will write article after article criticising me without ever having come to see me and give me my right to reply.

**Were you aware that at one of the recent Class War protests (as covered in *Ripperologist* 145) that one of the two security staff outside the museum was wearing a t-shirt with the slogans "You have the right to remain conscious", "Are you ready?" and "Fighting is right". And would you agree that is provocative?**

I'm horrified if that is the case actually. I wouldn't have known. There is a company who sent [the security staff) to us, and we kept them for a while. At the time I wasn't coming here because I was literally in fear [of my life).

**Things had progressed that far?**

Oh God, yes. I was terrified to come within half a mile of here - if you've got people screaming at you that they're going to kill you...it's quite unsettling. You saw what [Class War) did in the Cereal Killer café and that was women and little kids who were in there. There was one occasion when I had to lock myself across the road in the car park.

**So what were your intentions with the museum?**

My intentions were exactly what I think I have created here - to create a fully immersive experience where you walk through the door and you step back in time to the East End of the 1880s. You can actually feel and touch and smell...what it was like to live then. You can follow through the museum the story of Jack the Ripper, you can also see one of the murder scenes, you can come in here [this interview took place within the "Jack the Ripper's

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<sup>9</sup> Reference to a joint interview with Dr Lisa McKenzie, conducted in the street outside the museum. The video is still available at news.sky.com. We will leave it up to the reader to decide whether Dr McKenzie would agree that any agreement was reached during this.

Study” room of the museum] and see what it was like to be a richer person [at the time] - maybe an artist, maybe a doctor or a surgeon.

You can then follow the police investigation in the police station, and you can see what it would have been like to live as one of those poor women in Mary Jane Kelly’s bedroom. You can see the images laid out for you in the mortuary, and hopefully when you leave you will have a really deep understanding of what it was like to live then, and also an appreciation of the crimes and take away a feeling for the women that were [the Ripper’s] victims and that they weren’t just a list of names but that they had real lives...that were tragically taken away from them.

I actually think that’s a much more powerful way to tell the story of Jack the Ripper rather than the traditional approach of ‘who was it? Was it the Masons, was it a butcher, was it a surgeon?’.

**You’ve said previously that you feel the museum tells the story through the perspective of the women. Could you explain how you feel you achieve that?**

For me, what I hope we’ve done here is to make it very personal.

Today, for example, I was actually talking to the great-great-great-great granddaughter of Catherine Eddowes [the aforementioned Tracey Smith]. She was saying that she found the murder [scene] in Mitre Square really horrible...and I was trying to explain to her that the reason we have that [exhibit] is precisely for that reason. They were horrible murders, they were shocking and they were terrible. That’s the first room you see when you come to the museum - and you have the smells and the sounds...and we want you to forget from that moment that it’s 2015 and believe it is 127 years ago.

And she said she really liked [Mary Kelly’s bedroom] - that she felt it was very strong and very emotional [Tracey Smith disputes that she gave such a positive impression of any part of the museum, for the record]. And again, that’s exactly what that room is supposed to do. We want people to go in there and be shocked at the lives these women lived and the conditions they lived in.

And then she said about going into the mortuary, and that she really didn’t want to go in...she said that was the room she expected to hate the most but in fact it was the room she liked the best, because she felt it was very reverential to the women and it treated them in a very positive way.

I see that [mortuary room] as... not glorifying the way they were murdered. It’s saying ‘you’ve seen how these women lived, now see how they died - isn’t it a terrible thing?’.

I think when you have that personal empathy it makes everything more shocking and more horrible - and we’re not pretending this isn’t a terrible thing. It is scary and it is gruesome in places, and it is spooky and people do get really moved and scared and shocked in equal measure here. That’s’ what we want them to do...but we don’t have people dressed up as Jack the Ripper and jumping out and trying to stab you, which I think would make it less scary and more tacky...more of a pantomime than a museum, really.

**Going back in time a bit, the original two Jack the Ripper Museum companies - what were your intentions there?**

There are only two companies - the company that owns this museum now and one that I set up a very long time ago.

**There was ‘Jack the Ripper Museum Limited’ (Company number 08002897, active between March 2012 and March 2013) and ‘Museum of Jack the Ripper Limited’ (Company number 08002862, active between March 2012 and March 2014), both set up concurrently in 2012. You were listed as a director of both of them along with Linda Riley and Katie McCrum.**

Well if there were two I wasn’t aware of that. I was only aware of one. Anyway, I set that up with [Riley and McCrum], it was their idea and...actually it was more like 2009, I think. That was set up because I sat on the board of the Museum of London [Docklands] at the time that they ran their ‘Jack the Ripper and the East End of London’ exhibition. [Riley and McCrum] had found a property in another part of East London [apparently in Leman Street] which they were interested in turning into a Jack the Ripper museum.

It was a massive basement, about five times the size of this [museum]. Basically, [the idea was] to recreate the ‘Jack the Ripper and the East End’ exhibition [there], and so they asked me if I would be interested in helping with that. It would have been dramatically bigger than this and dramatically different to this [current museum].

I spoke to the Museum of London and they said that if we could do it, they would be happy to support that. Somebody else bought that space, and we closed down that company and that was the end of that.

This [museum] is something I am doing completely on my own. Linda Riley and Katie McCrum are nothing to do with this.



**Lee Jackson** @VictorianLondon  
But seriously @rippermuseum tell us more of these world leading experts? Who advised you?

3h

Mark p, Owner at Jack the Ripper Museum, responded to this review, 4 days ago  
I'm sorry that you did not enjoy your visit to the museum.

The Jack the Ripper Museum is a totally immersive experience in an historic Victorian Building in the middle of where the Ripper murders happened in 1888. Offering 6 exciting floors we pride ourselves on the authenticity of our displays and the accuracy of the sets we have created. The museum was curated and designed by world leading experts in both Jack the Ripper and the history of Victorian London.

Best regards

Mark Palmer-Edgcombe  
Founder

Report response as inappropriate

This response is the subjective opinion of the management representative and not of TripAdvisor LLC.



**Fern Riddell**  
@FernRiddell

So @RipperMuseum's latest claim is that 'it's curator was a woman' - are they no longer? Curator of a museum is kind of an ongoing thing...?

12/10/2015, 16:01

*Historian Fern Riddell (@fernridell) and Twitter user Lee Jackson (@VictorianLondon) take issue with Mark Palmer-Edgcombe's response to a negative TripAdvisor review, with its claims of 'world leading experts' and female curators. The latter was later identified as the Museum of London's Cathy Ross, who is no longer involved with the museum. October 12, 2015.*

Recently you talked about various women who had been involved throughout the planning process and that your curator was a woman (in response to a negative TripAdvisor review on October 12, 2015, as observed by Twitter user Lee Jackson and historian Fern Riddell; at the time, Mr. Palmer-Edgcombe refused to be drawn on the identity of the 'curator' - see image right. That confused me somewhat, as three weeks ago I spoke to Joshua Walker and he told me that you were and had only ever been the sole curator of the museum?

There is no mystery about who that woman is. That is Dr Cathy Ross, who is at the Museum of London. She advised me on curating this museum. So, technically, I am the curator - this is my sloppy language, I'm afraid. Cathy worked with me in the early stages on providing details and a facts base, so she was...a consultant in terms of the curating.

**She's not involved anymore?**

No. She also worked with me on the guidebook which is still a work in progress. That will be coming out.

**So she's happy for you to mention her name in association with the museum at this point, even though she's not been involved since the early stages?**

What I've been trying to do is keep that relationship low key...because of the absolutely unbelievable venom that has been poured on me, and friends and family of mine. She would not deny that [relationship] at all, but it's not something I have been labouring the point on because she had a relatively small part in the whole museum, and I don't particularly want her to have death threats herself. It's not that I'm trying to hide that in any way, or that she is, but it's not something [I am looking to talk up]. Some people have said to me that I should make a big deal out of it because she's a woman...but I don't think it's necessary and I don't think it's appropriate.

But I curated the museum, and she advised me. I'm not an expert on Jack the Ripper, or on social history, so I needed someone to advise me on the facts as I was going through [the process].

**In one of your early interviews you were quoted as saying that 'no one cares more about women's rights than I do'. That has not gone down particularly well with some people. If I was to sit here as a heterosexual man and say 'no one cares more about LGBT rights than I do', how would you feel about that?**

It would depend if you could justify that by demonstrating that you've done something to work with LGBT rights. I actually have done, I spent twenty years working in diversity whereby both within my work role and outside of work I had devoted my money and my company's money to furthering the rights of women both in the workplace and outside of the workplace.

I have been involved in...dozens of corporate initiatives as diverse as working to bring more women into working in computer science, to working with women at executive level to help get more women into senior positions. In my personal life, I have worked with charities against the trafficking of women and domestic violence, I have worked in lobbying governments about domestic violence and the trafficking of women.

I could spend probably three or four or five hours listing to you the various things that I've done, both in the corporate and non-corporate space, around furthering the rights of women...So I don't feel any qualms whatsoever about saying I feel passionately about the rights of women, and I have spent twenty years working on that and have put my money where my mouth is. If people have an issue with that, that's their issue. Because I don't!

**In a recent press release [7 September 2015], you stated that you 'divulged' your role in the 2008 Museum of London Docklands exhibition to both Tower Hamlets Council and the architects during discussions. Do you accept that's not quite the same thing as saying 'and that is what the museum is going to be about', though?**

The point is this - from when we started the process, [the proposed content of the museum] has gone through a large number of iterations. The initial idea that I had, prior to the planning application, was that I was going to create a museum about the history of east London generally. Then I thought [I would] focus that more on an idea of the history of women, because there is already a lot of stuff out there on the history of east London and it is a very wide area.

All [the planning application] was, was a document to illustrate my thinking at the time. My thinking at the time was that it was going to be quite a generic focus on women in the area. And...we were given [permission] for a museum, not a women's museum - as the Mayor of Tower Hamlets has said, I could open a museum about dinosaurs

or tiddlywinks if I wanted. Once we had that permission, I then started to think deeply about what am I going to put in this space, because initially you don't even know whether you're going to get that planning permission.

I started to engage with curators, and designers, and speak to friends of mine in the museum business, and talk to potential visitors and think about what I wanted to put in this space. I don't apologise for that, I haven't done anything wrong - I can put whatever I want in here.

What I chose to do was look at the story of Jack the Ripper because it's a very powerful story, if you ask anybody anywhere in the world 'tell me a famous figure from east London', they will say Jack the Ripper. So I thought [that] was a terrific vehicle to use to tell the story of the history of east London. Jack the Ripper is completely inseparable from the history of east London; and what I wanted to do, which no one has ever done before, was to tell the story from the perspective of the women of east London who became his victims.

[Of course] there were many, many women who didn't become his victims, but they lived similar lives. It is a vehicle to tell a story.

**I have to pick up on you saying that no one has looked at the lives of the women who became his victims, are you aware that there has actually been a great deal of compassionate work done in that direction over the years?**

Nobody has put a museum on the ground that does that. If you watch a movie about Jack the Ripper....or you pick up a book on Jack the Ripper, they tend to focus very much on 'who was he?', 'how did he live?', the crimes that he committed and how horrific those crimes were.

I've only been able to find one book - over the last one or two years or however long that I've been working on this - that has ever been written about the lives of the women, and that is out of print and almost impossible to obtain [Neal Sheldon's *The Victims of Jack the Ripper*].

**You mentioned the Council, and the current Mayor earlier. Why do you think the Mayor has come out so strongly against the museum?**

I am shocked and horrified by what he has said. I have written to him a number of times, I have rung his office... wishing to speak to him. Again, he has decided to damn and condemn our museum without ever have set foot in it or ever speaking to me, giving me the right to put my side of the story [across]. I guess it is just symptomatic of Tower Hamlets politics.

**The application was put in under the previous administration. Did you find they were more receptive?**

To be honest I didn't have much to do with them. We put in a planning application which was so straightforward that it was granted under what they call delegated authority. I had maybe two meetings with the team of planning people at the council and that was it. My engagement with Tower Hamlets Council has been practically zero, because [the Mayor] now refuses to speak to me. I do have a meeting now coming up with him. Interestingly, a couple of days after [the attack on] the Cereal Killer café happened he got in touch and said he'd like to meet me. Up until that point I'd heard nothing. So you can draw your own conclusions from that.

**Could you state for the record whether the Council were aware of the Jack the Ripper focus before the museum opened??**

The Council were aware of what was in the planning documents. When I put the application in, there wasn't a Jack the Ripper focus. As I explained before, the Jack the Ripper focus evolved while I was curating [the museum].

**So the Council found out at the same time as everyone else, when the signage was put in place?**

Yes.

**The architect Andrew Waugh has said he wasn't aware of the Ripper focus. I felt his most notable statement in his *Building Design* article was when he said that he was approached by people saying they had a very limited budget, and therefore he had done his work 'on the cheap', so to speak (*Building Design*, 4 August 2015, as discussed in *Ripperologist* 145). Do you have any thoughts on that?**

I would strongly dispute that. The situation with Andrew Waugh is that I employed [Waugh Thistleton] on the recommendation of someone who I didn't know very well, on the recommendation that they were a fantastic firm of local architects. They produced a design which on paper looked fantastic. They didn't charge us any special rates, we paid them...a lot of money, and their rates were probably treble those of the architects who we used subsequently because they have swanky offices over in Shoreditch.

I remember as clear as day [what happened], I was standing downstairs. I had appointed builders and they were here, a structural engineer was here, the fire officer from Tower Hamlets Council was here and the Building Control officer...they looked at the plans and they just laughed their heads off because the plans were so impossible to

build.

They had put a staircase up the middle of the building through all the floors with no provision for a fire escape or fire exits - basically if there had been a fire everyone inside would have been burned to death within five minutes. The fire officer...said 'these plans are useless, you need to start again'. I got another architect to look at it, and they said 'these plans are a joke, you could never build this building'.

Subsequently I fired Waugh Thistleton, and I can only assume that all his carping has been for a bit of free publicity, and sour grapes because he got fired.<sup>10</sup>

**The original merchandise descriptions on the website were taken down quite quickly around the time of opening. Many people felt they were in bad taste. Was that an admission that you got that wrong?**

No. We were taken aback by the reaction that we received to opening the museum...the way that we were attacked and vilified and had death threats, our windows smashed and we had paint thrown all over the building. I was completely flabbergasted to the reaction, and I was reacting to things on a daily basis. I think now with hindsight, actually...probably we shouldn't have taken those down, because we have done nothing wrong. The people who have done something wrong are the people who were smashing our windows, the people who were intimidating our staff...and threatening to kill me and burn my house down, and threatening to attack my father.

These are the people who have done something wrong. I have done nothing wrong in all of this, on any level. Perhaps maybe morally some people might feel that I was wrong in opening a museum about Jack the Ripper, but I don't see that either. I don't see that we are celebrating Jack the Ripper here, or condoning his crimes of glorifying murder. What we are doing is the opposite of that.

Our logo has a shadow of Jack the Ripper and blood and that was on those [original] glasses. Actually, Jack the Ripper murdered people - that is a fact. There was blood on the pavement when he murdered people. There's nothing particularly salacious about those souvenirs. If you watch the Six O' Clock News tonight...or open a newspaper tomorrow, you're going to see much more shocking things than a black silhouette with a bit of red underneath. If people find that offensive then they must be exceptionally easily offended.

**I think it was more the descriptions that many people objected to. One that spring to mind is 'we can't confirm or deny that Jack the Ripper drank shots, but if he did then he probably had a really cool shot glass'. Aren't descriptions like that starting to move towards Jack the Ripper as something to aspire to?**

I'm not abdicating responsibility for this but I didn't [write] the merchandising descriptions. That is a little bit cheesy and I can see why people might not like that, yes.

**Just to be clear then - when you submitted the original planning document the idea was to open a women's museum, and then subsequently the idea changed to a Jack the Ripper museum. At what point along the timeline was the merchandise saying 'Jack the Ripper Museum' ordered then?**

A couple of weeks before we opened.

There were two planning documents...the first was to change the building from a mixed use building which was semi-derelect. It couldn't be made into a residential building. It was a simple technical fact of whether it was going to be a shop and an office or...a shop and a museum, which is what we have got [now].

We put in a concept - a concept of what the space would look like, and a concept of what would be in that space.

Then we went back with another application to create the space we have now, which was when we had to re-do everything [after the issues with the original architect's plans]...we had to go back and put all the fire exits in the right place and so on, so we could actually build it.

**Then there was the application in July about the signage outside (See *Ripperologist* 145)?**

Yes, then there was a final one which is still pending where we were looking at the outside space.

**It does still say 'women's museum' on that document?**

That is a technical thing.

**Linda Riley's name is also still on that document. Is that a mistake?**

Yes.

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<sup>10</sup> We have contacted Andrew Waugh and Waugh Thistleton for comment on Mr Palmer-Edgecumbe's version of events, but have received no response.

You have previously claimed that the reason the board outside shows 'Jack the Ripper Museum' as the name of the museum is because a board showing a different name wasn't ready yet. Can you explain how that situation came about?

I never said that.<sup>11</sup>

So what is the situation with the board - are you waiting for permission to erect a new board which will say 'Jack the Ripper Museum and the Museum of Women's History'?

Precisely.

Do you have any indications when that might be ready?

Ask Tower Hamlets Council.

Couple of quickfire questions now to finish, just to address a few rumours. Are you a Freemason?

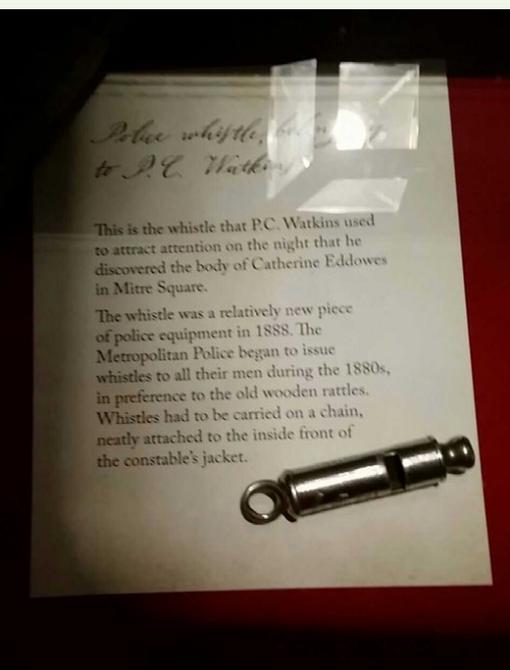
No. Absolutely not.

Are you a member of the Glassblower's Guild?

No. I am a member of the Worshipful Company of Glass Seller's in London, which is a city livery body.

To be fair, that is probably what the person who initially said 'Glassblowers Guild' meant. Does that have any involvement with the window in the mortuary room?

Absolutely not. The window in the mortuary would [relate to] a different livery company anyway... The livery companies are ancient companies, and I've spent a lot of my career working in the city of London. Nowadays they do charitable work...The Glass Sellers were set up to work with the British glass industry and protect it from imports. There is another glass company, the name of which I can't remember but they make flat glass, for example for windows. Whereas my livery company is interested in protecting non flat glass, such as glasses and bowls....what we do is we raise money and we give it to charity. We're nothing at all like the Masons.



Now there have been a few errors pointed out - I'm thinking most notably of the whistle upstairs which states 'this is the whistle PC Watkins used on the night he discovered the body of Catherine Eddowes' - are you going to be changing details such as that?

Yes that is going to be changed...the only reason we haven't been able to change that yet is that the graphic designer who I need to work on that is [busy] on a project which will take a couple of more weeks. There's a few things I need to change.

[As for the whistle], I have been back in touch with the people who sold me the [items] because that is what they told me at the auction. What they have confirmed is that it is PC Watkins' whistle but that he moved to the Metropolitan Police later. The notebook is definitely a hundred percent right... .I think it was a miscommunication and there was an assumption made which was actually incorrect.

We are a serious museum and I welcome anyone bringing to light inaccuracies because then we can correct them. It happens in all museums, big ones as well as little small ones like us.

The other notable error would be the photographs in the uppermost room. I would be interested in your opinion on that because some people see those as a mistake - as there is clearly no provenance to say they are who they claim to be, and in fact one is demonstrably of a different woman entirely, Lizzie Williams - whereas others have suggested that maybe you know that but you

are trying to humanise the women by having a picture of somebody.

No. This is a mistake and, again, we will be correcting it. The [photo] of Annie Chapman is genuine. But those four [images purporting to show Mary Ann Nichols, Elizabeth Stride, Catherine Eddowes and Mary Kelly] were presented to me as genuine. I am not an expert on Jack the Ripper. This is why I had curatorial advice.

*This is the whistle that P. C. Watkins used to attract attention on the night that he discovered the body of Catherine Eddowes in Mitre Square'. False claims remaining on 12 December, 2015.*

11 See ITV London report, 30 July 2015, available on youtube. Interviewer [Ria Chatterjee]: "Do you accept that the name on the front of the museum could be misleading?"; Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe: "Well actually our signage isn't finished yet, so we're still working on that and it's still with the planners. The full name of the museum is the 'Jack the Ripper Museum and the History of Women in East London'. So when we actually finish the signage it will actually reflect what the museum is truly about".]

The source told me that those were correct, and I took that at face value and on good faith. Subsequently, it has been brought to my attention that they are probably not those women. I'm waiting for an answer from the person who sent them to me as to why [they said that].

I don't think it was a deliberate attempt to mislead me, and it's certainly not an attempt to mislead the public. What we will do is we will change that because there are illustrations of those women from the time which we can use...so it is a more accurate representation of the women when they were alive.

**Do you have any more details on the plans for a temporary exhibition space across the road?**

This is rubbish. We don't have a temporary exhibition space.

**That is strange because Joshua Walker told me you did, and he even showed me around the space and told me about some of the proposed exhibitions ?**

This is Josh jumping to conclusions, because I think Josh had been working on this project for maybe a day or two at the time.<sup>12</sup>

There is a space across the road which we have been renting. We don't have planning permission to turn it into a temporary exhibition space, and my focus right now is to get this museum perfect. I have no interest at the moment in anything else other than a car park [in that space].

**We mentioned Linda Riley briefly earlier - what was the situation with Eaves (The women's charity who around opening time was claimed to be receiving a percentage of profits from the museum, a claim which the charity denied at the same time as revealing that Linda Riley, previously a co-director of two Jack the Ripper Museum companies with Mr Palmer-Edgcombe, was no longer involved with their organisation). Was there ever an agreement in place?**

Linda Riley was a trustee with Eaves, and we had a discussion about potentially giving some of the museum's profits to charity. Unfortunately, because of all the negative publicity no charity wants to deal with us.

I had a discussion with Linda when she was on the board of Eaves, and their CEO at the time who has very sadly died since, about the contents of this museum and...the fact we were trying to draw attention to those kinds of issues. Now subsequently I made that statement that we were going to work with Eaves, but their staff then were not aware of the agreement and Linda was no longer on the board. It was clumsy of me, but at the moment we are in discussions with another couple of organisations about potentially doing something.

**The Amy Winehouse Foundation has also been mentioned more recently (such as in a Press Release from Joshua Walker sent on 7 September 2015 which stated that 'proceeds from the Museum will also be donated to the Amy Winehouse Foundation specifically to fund two women's refuges)?**

I am in discussions with them but I am not sure whether that is going to happen. I completely understand that because of the negative publicity...you can't take money from an organisation that is potentially going to be seen as negative.

**Could you tell us about the 'International Ripperologists Society' (the name which is given on the mock blue plaques to Elizabeth Stride and George Chapman on the wall of the museum's shopfront; a very basic website can be found at [www.internationalripperologistsociety.weebly.com](http://www.internationalripperologistsociety.weebly.com), which offers 'gold membership' for £20 a year, and also links to the Jack the Ripper Museum website for ticket purchases)?**

This is an idea that I had around the time we were opening...We get a lot of international visitors as you can see if you look in our visitor's book about half the people who come here are non UK residents. [The plan was that] rather than having a mailing list we could create a virtual community.

I still plan to do that but it is not active at the moment. I've been busy with all the other stuff but we will get around to that.

**The blue plaques which bear the name of the International Ripperologists Society have been brought up by various groups and it has been queried whether they should have been shown in the planning application or whether they may contravene regulations of one sort or another. Have you heard anything about that?**

I haven't heard anything about that, and to be honest lots of people put up blue plaques. If you care to have a look around, there are many blue plaques put up by many different organisations...that's not an issue.

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<sup>12</sup> Actually, closer to a month.

**You're aware presumably that George Chapman who is commemorated on one of those plaques was not only a Ripper suspect but demonstrably did go on to murder women. Is he an appropriate person to be commemorating?**

It is a fact that he lived in this street and it is a fact that he is one of the known Ripper suspects. That is what we are stating, we are not commemorating him or saying 'isn't it wonderful'. We are just stating the facts.

**You recently mentioned putting a panel of women together to advise on the museum (*Evening Standard*, 7 October 2015), can you give us any updates on that and has it been a long term idea or is it a reaction to some of the publicity?**

No, it was always an idea. What is actually happening is some of the women who were going to be on that panel have been intimidated out of doing it by all the negativity. There is a small core of those women who I am still talking to - at the moment we are going to keep who those women are confidential because we don't want them to be having death threats.

Their role [would be] to work with us on making sure that we are telling this story from a perspective that is sympathetic to the women.

**Would that include people who have been involved with the museum in the past, such as Linda Riley and Katie McCrum?**

No.

**When it was discovered that Linda Riley and Katie McCrum were once involved with your Ripper museum businesses but are no longer, some people have inferred from that there had been a disagreement amongst you. Can you address that quickly? Are you still in contact with them?**

I can deny that. I know Linda through companies I have worked with in the past. She is not involved in this museum at all. Katie I knew at the time, I haven't actually seen her for a couple of years now.

**Katie McCrum didn't do the design work on the museum?**

She did not. I haven't seen her for some time. There's no massive schism between us.

**Another link that has been noticed is that people involved with Linda's company 'Square Peg Media' were responsible for registering the domain names for the Museum. You've worked with Square Peg Media quite a lot haven't you, are they directly involved?**

[I've worked with them] in the past, yes.

I asked Linda to do that for me as a favour because I don't know how to register a domain name. It is as simple as that...if somebody turned round to you tomorrow and put the whole of the world's media and Class War, and a load of other people, to look into every single detail of everything you've ever done in the last fifteen years you might think 'Oh God, I wish I'd done that differently', 'why did I ask that person to do that for me?'. There is nothing sinister going on.

I went into this with totally good intentions. I put my savings into this project because I wanted to have a museum. I wanted to turn my hobby into my day job, and I wanted to create something that I was proud of and was clearly fantastic and I think I've done that. The reaction to that was 'burn him at the stake', and I'm amazed at the level of political correctness gone mad. It's flabbergasted me.

Many of the people who have turned on me so violently... are people who I agree with almost everything they stand for, and I've been on the same campaigns as them. And yet they don't know what I'm trying to do here. Come and see it, and then you can criticise me as much as you like, tear me to pieces for whatever you want. But don't stand over there in your ivory tower saying that I'm a misogynist and I'm a glorifier of murder and rape and I'm a crook and all these other things without knowing the truth about what I'm trying to do here.

**Finally, I don't know whether you are aware of Russell Edwards, who owns the shawl and used to run the shop in Toynbee Street. Many people, when the museum first hit the headlines, were desperate to suggest he was involved somehow. Can you deny that for good?**

Absolutely not. He is nothing to do with [the museum], I have never met him and I have never spoken to him. I wouldn't recognise him if he walked in here now.

\* \* \* \* \*

On 20 October 2015, the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' announced a Halloween event where they would have the "Ripper in residence" at the museum during Halloween weekend:

Jack and his next victims? #halloweenlondon



'Jack and his next victims?'. A member of staff portraying Jack the Ripper poses with two visitors during the museum's Halloween event, as posted by the museum's Twitter account (@rippermuseum). 31 October, 2015

*Dare you have a selfie with him in his sitting room where he planned his horrific murders? Or how about a picture with Jack in Mitre Square together with the body of Catherine Eddowes? Are you brave enough to meet him in Mary Jane Kelly's bedroom - the scene of the most horrific of all Jack the Ripper's murders. Just be careful not to meet Jack in the basement morgue!*<sup>13</sup>

We feel that both of these things are very curious things for a legitimate museum wanting to tell the stories of the victims to promote and be proud of. It seems much of the media and the protest groups also agreed with this sentiment as there was widespread outrage. The museum seemed to revel in the publicity from this reaction. When asked by an opinion columnist by *The Independent* who would be playing the Ripper, Walker claimed it would be Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe himself,<sup>14</sup> though this was later denied and on the day the killer was played by one of the Museum's front desk staff.

Pictures from the Halloween weekend showed images of the Ripper standing and sitting in the recreation of Mary Kelly's room and also posing for pictures with female tourists with captions such as "Jack and his next victims?"

In the run up to the Halloween event, numerous protesters were posted criticisms on social media. Numerous heated exchanges took place between Joshua Walker and critics of the Museum. During one such exchange with Jemima Broadbridge, Walker uncovered a Facebook comment from 2011 wherein Broadbridge appeared to claim that "East-Enders" carry "pistols" (although from the wording and language of the comment it appears it was a satirical remark). Broadbridge responded saying "at least i'm not a bigoted gay man who pretends to speak on behalf of women in a patronising manner. And I'm a Londoner."

Walker immediately accused Broadbridge of being homophobic, and issued a press release to that effect.<sup>15</sup> The press release was sent out late in the evening and in it Walker gets Broadbridge's name wrong (calling her "Broadbroad"), and used the wrong date.

In the release Walker releases his own statement saying "It's disappointing that this comment was made. My sexuality has nothing to do with this debate and it's unfortunate that this was said in a public forum where young, impressionable people may see it and think it's ok. Ms. Broadbridge cites herself as a Press Officer - so she should know better".

Jemima Broadbridge categorically denies any accusations of homophobia, and as she has verbally confirmed to the authors since, her point was quite simply that as a gay man Joshua Walker should be more atuned to issues of bigotry and the feelings of marginalised sections of society. She also points out that a number of LGBT friends were heavily involved with her in setting up the initial protests against the museum.

The last press release to be sent from Walker was on 2 November, celebrating the success of the Halloween event and announcing a ghost hunt at the museum in January 2016. This event had sold out by the end of December, and a second one is planned for March.

### November - An Evening of Remembrance

After a busy October, and disregarding the continued reaction to the museum's Halloween event, November was a quitter month. However, on November 5 a significant decision was made by the planning department of Tower Hamlets Council - the retrospective application submitted by the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' with relation to the current frontage (including the name board and roller shutters) was denied. Inevitably, this judgement was greeted with great acclaim by many of those opposed to the museum, with both Fern Ridell and Jemima Broadbridge sharing the news on social media.

At present, however, the exterior of the museum remains unchanged since this decision. It remains to be seen whether, and how, any required changes will be enforced, or whether Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe himself feels compelled to obey the ruling.

13 Press Release from Joshua Walker PR, 20 October 2015.

14 *The Independent*, 20 October 2015.

15 Press release from Joshua Walker PR, 27 October 2015.

Finally, at the end of the month, on the evening of Thursday, November 26 2015, a different kind of event was staged.<sup>16</sup> Starting outside the museum, and arranged by members of the original protests as reported in *Ripperologist* 145 (including Jemima Broadbridge), the evening was billed as 'A Vigil for the victims of Jack the Ripper'.

Advertised on Facebook as well as through press releases, the event attracted around thirty of forty people in addition to media representatives and a small police presence, and consisted of two halves. The first element, starting at 6.30pm shortly after the museum ceased trading for the day, saw a diverse crowd lighting candles in memory of the five 'canonical' victims of Mary Ann Nichols to Mary Kelly inclusive, whilst organisers and others read out short summaries of the lives of each of the women in turn.

Amongst those also invited to speak was a community activist working with the local Bengali community who outlined some of the work being done in Tower Hamlets to combat the problem of violence against women and girls, and briefly explained some of the challenges faced by such projects and the ways in which some such could be seen as relating to similar issues facing the local community back in 1888.

Although the biographical sketches were short and in the main consisted of basic information which could be easily found in several places online, in truth there was little time for anything more, and the general sentiment of those in attendance was one of gratitude for an opportunity to mark the lives of these five women, as well as probably, for some, gaining some new insight into those lives.

Having discussed the arrangement of the event (which had originally been considered for being held on the anniversary of Mary Kelly's death, on 9 November) with some of its organisers and impressing on them the importance of ensuring every victim mentioned was given an equal amount of attention, we were pleased to see this was indeed the case.

One unfortunate interruption to the event occurred shortly after it had begun, when a member of staff from the museum left the premises and attempted to close the security shutters, a procedure complicated by the presence of the vigil group who had been forced to stand close to the shop in order to allow pedestrians to pass by.

What followed may, at time of writing, still transpire to become the subject of legal proceedings, and so we have to exercise caution with regard to reporting details. Suffice to say that the member of staff, while struggling to close the shutters, became aware that a journalist and photographer for a local newspaper had captured his image while photographing the ongoing event, to which the member of staff objected. A physical scuffle ensued, which police officers were required to address.

Although both of those directly involved, along with a few attendees who had witnessed the altercation, were taken aside to be questioned, in the main this initial portion of the vigil was able to continue without too much interruption.

The second half of the evening saw the group progress a short distance to St George in the East church, on the corner of Cannon Street Road and The Highway. The impressive building, the interior of which was extensively remodelled following bomb damage sustained during World War Two, will be well known to many readers as featuring within its churchyard the mortuary building to which the body of Elizabeth Stride was taken on 30th September 1888.

At the church, the Reverend Alexandra Lilley, curate at St George in the East, conducted a 'memorial service', dedicated once again to Nichols, Chapman, Stride, Eddowes, and Kelly, but also according to the distributed literature to 'all victims of gender - based violence'. Formerly employed both in Islington and at nearby St Paul's Shadwell, the Reverend Ms. Lilley is an engaging speaker and in 2013 undertook a charity challenge aimed at raising awareness of poverty in the UK.<sup>17</sup>

As well as introducing a selection of choral music and readings, the Reverend Ms Lilley also spoke not only on biblical teachings regarding violence but also commented directly on what she termed 'this so - called museum'. Those in attendance were left in no doubt as to her position that the Jack the Ripper Museum as it currently stands is morally reprehensible.

Members of the vigil group were encouraged to place their candles in sand at the base of the font, and an ornamental tree had also been placed in the central aisle, to which could be attached small white ribbons intended to commemorate victims of violence both in the local community and worldwide.

The evening ended around 9.30pm, with an informal drinks reception, at which members of the church, press, and attendees enjoyed lively conversation before the group disbanded in time for a 10pm prayer service. Although

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16 *East London Advertiser*, 27 November 2015.

17 [resistanceandrenewal.net/2013/04/25/five-lessons-from-living-below-the-line-by-alexandra-lilley](http://resistanceandrenewal.net/2013/04/25/five-lessons-from-living-below-the-line-by-alexandra-lilley).

the aforementioned incident earlier in the evening was inevitably a subject of much conversation, the evening was considered by all to have been both successful and moving.

Also of great interest was the announcement that in Spring 2016, St George in the East church will be hosting a temporary exhibition on local women's history, likely to be the first of many mooted attempts to compensate for recent developments by fulfilling the Cable Street museum's original stated remit. We are sure that *Ripperologist* will keep readers informed of more details as they are announced.

Amongst those in attendance for the evening was Tracey Smith, who seemed greatly affected by the event, and felt it had been a worthy attempt to give a voice to her ancestor and women like her - much more so, to her mind, than the claims by the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' to be doing so.

### December: Revenge?

Since their abandoned protest in October, Class War had held a few small scale demonstrations outside the premises in Cable Street, including a 'Women's Death Brigade' protest on 7 November and a further protest on 21 November during which one attendee was photographed wearing a mask of Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe, but on the whole events had been relatively quiet compared to the summer and early autumn. It should be acknowledged, however, that a number of Class War members had been involved with, for example, promoting the 'Celebrate Suffragettes...' petition, even if there had not been any large - scale developments under the Class War 'brand' for some time.

Discussion on Class War's Facebook page<sup>18</sup> showed that while the Jack the Ripper Museum remains a major target for the group's anger, their objection to 'Jack the Ripper' themed events would appear to have widened. On 3 December, the page shared a post proposing a protest against a 'Jack the Ripper Pantomime' at the Norwich Playhouse. The protest was set for 10 December, although no updates have been posted since through which we can confirm or deny whether any such protest took place.

The performance in question, run by 'Spooky Kid Productions' and which took place over three nights from 10 to 13 December, has previously been performed in 2009 and 2012, according to the production's own website ([www.jacktheripperthepanto.com](http://www.jacktheripperthepanto.com)), which promised that the 2015 revival would be 'bigger, better, funnier' than previous productions. *The Eastern Daily Press* of 3 December noted that the performance was aimed at adults, despite its cartoonish advertisements, as reproduced on the Class War Facebook page. The same *Eastern Daily Press* article also demonstrates that objections to the pantomime did not begin with Class War, but rather on a more local level with Sophie Elliott, the part-time editor of a feminist magazine.

As of 3 December, around 250 signatures were said to have been collected urging the Norwich Playhouse to reconsider staging the event. 'Do not desecrate the memories of the real-life victims of Jack the Ripper by turning him into the good-guy protagonist of a sexist and misogynistic stage show', the petition urged; in response, Caroline Richardson of the Norwich Playhouse stated that 'we think very carefully about the shows we programme here, and the comedy in Jack the Ripper the Panto may not be to everyone's taste, but we would like to reassure people that violence against women is not the butt of the joke'. She went on to add 'Obviously as it's a show about a murderer, murder will feature'.

A follow-up article, also in the *Eastern Daily Post* on the same date reported that an online survey of readers had resulted in 83% of respondents feeling the production should be allowed to go ahead, taken from an apparent response of 'over 500' people.



'Close Jack the Ripper Pantomime'. Protest announcement on Class War's Facebook page, including the original artwork for the production

18 [www.facebook.com/classwarofficial](http://www.facebook.com/classwarofficial).

19 [www.allthingsnorfolk.com/component/k2/item/81-Spooky-Kid-Productions.html](http://www.allthingsnorfolk.com/component/k2/item/81-Spooky-Kid-Productions.html).

Back in 2012, one of the founders of 'Spooky Kid Productions', Jim Blythe, defended the concept of 'Jack the Ripper the Pantomime' in an interview with the website All Things Norfolk,<sup>19</sup> in which he stated that 'Jack the Ripper the Panto came about through a gradual evolution of ideas that started with two one-act pantos (one was going to be Macbeth and the other 1984) and eventually became a desire to write a panto around a subject you wouldn't expect to see as a pantomime. What [we] wanted to do was to affectionately mock the genre; we weren't aiming to write a 'bad taste' panto...with a subject like Jack the Ripper you're always walking that line and you have to be careful where you go with it'.

On 4 December, the *Daily Telegraph* picked up on the story around the Norwich Playhouse production, and explicitly made the link with recent press attention around the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' - a reasonable supposition when considering why the 2009 and 2012 productions of the pantomime had not attracted such negative attention. Sophie Elliott herself, interviewed by *the Telegraph* in the same article, also made the connection - 'we seem to be going through a bit of a Jack the Ripper obsession at the moment. It's important to take a feminist stand against it'. Interestingly, both in Elliott's interview and elsewhere in the article (the full title of which was 'Feminists call for Jack the Ripper panto to be banned as it "promotes rape culture"') reference is made to one of the more curious misunderstandings in recent press discussion of the Whitechapel Murders, namely that the culprit/s raped as well as murdered and mutilated their victims. Readers may remember that this anomaly first surfaced during the early days of press attention regarding the 'Jack the Ripper Museum', and it appears to be becoming accepted as fact in the time since.

It may be that Class War's lack of original action represented nothing more than a natural lull, although equally it is possible that their Jack the Ripper Museum related activities were temporarily curtailed due to the fact that Dr Lisa McKenzie and Jane Nichol, who between them had been the public faces of much of the group's attention on this issue, were awaiting trial at Stratford Magistrates Court during September and October. Dr McKenzie was charged with causing criminal damage, causing alarm and distress, and intent to cause alarm and distress. The charges related to a Class War protest in February 2015, outside a controversial property development on Commercial Street, Whitechapel. The criminal damage in question was the placing of a sticker on a window of the building, an act of which Dr McKenzie herself was not directly accused, but rather as an organiser of the protest she was prosecuted under the legal principle of joint enterprise. On 21 October, Dr McKenzie was acquitted as reported in *The Guardian*. Nichol's case was thrown out, according to a post on Class War's Facebook page.

Whatever the case, at 2pm on 5 December, Class War staged their most spectacular demonstration against the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' yet. Although all related posts would appear to have been removed from their Facebook group, an archive of 'Jack the Ripper Museum' related publicity on the main Class War website<sup>20</sup> still advertises the 5 December protest with the slogan 'Ripper protest is going to be "Revenge of the Women - We Hack Him Back"', alongside a poster and a photograph taken during the day itself. In an unfortunate clash of scheduling, the authors were both otherwise occupied speaking at the Casebook Classic Crime Symposium on 5 December, but the *Docklands and East London Advertiser* of 6 December takes up the story:

*Jack the Ripper was back on the streets of London's East End yesterday hacking to death what appeared to be the latest victim - left slumped on the pavement covered in blood.*

In truth, the 'victim' was a lifesize effigy of Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe, which protesters including Jane Nichol - pictured in triumphant pose in the *Docklands and East London Advertiser* article, perhaps buoyed by the cessation of her recent legal troubles - cut into pieces with a machete. Fake blood was also used to accentuate the scene, with the effigy placed outside the doors of the museum. Once again a small police presence appears to have been in place, but no arrests or attempts to disrupt the protest were made.

'We want to show him what it would be like if a man was hacked to death instead', Nichol told the *Docklands and East London Advertiser*. Although the museum was due to be open during Saturday, again according to the same publication, 'the doors remained shut' throughout, while Nichol is alleged to have shouted at the staff inside.

In the opinion of the authors, this latest demonstration was in poor taste, especially in the context of the alleged previous death threats against Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe. Doubtless, the organisers would argue that the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' is itself in poor taste, but it is our belief that the old cliché about two wrongs not making a right remains true. Nevertheless, it succeeded in gaining press attention, and once again linking the protests against the museum with Class War in the public consciousness. It should also be remembered that the police at the time clearly did not consider any offence to be taking place, and therefore - whatever the opinions of the authors - Class War members deserve the right to protest in any lawful manner in which they see fit.

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<sup>20</sup> [www.classwarparty.org.uk/category/ripper](http://www.classwarparty.org.uk/category/ripper).

Throughout the final weeks of November and into December, no further press releases regarding the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' had been sent. Joshua Walker's Twitter account had also fallen quiet on the project, although for a time his website continued to list the Museum amongst a list of clients. Numerous emails went unanswered, until on December 15 2015, Walker confirmed in an email that he is no longer employed by the Museum. All reference to the business has now been removed from his website.

On 10 December, the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/jacktherippermuseum](http://www.facebook.com/jacktherippermuseum)) posted a photograph announcing new exhibits. The accompanying caption stated that 'The new book by Bruce Robinson<sup>21</sup> claims, as many Ripperologists have in the past, that Jack the Ripper was a Mason. This week at the Museum we display an exciting collection of Victorian Masonic Regalia including two ritual aprons, Ritual Cuffs, a spectacular Masonic Grand Masters Chain and Sash. These amazing and rare items can be seen in the Jack the Ripper Sitting Room'.

This, coupled with the assurances given during our interview with Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe back in October that the various erroneous captions on items would be corrected as soon as possible, seemed to warrant a further visit to the museum.

In truth, the captions in question (namely the claim that the whistle belonging to PC Edward Watkins was used by him on the night he discovered Catherine Eddowes' body, the names of Mary Ann Nichols, Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddowes attached to photographs which are at best of dubious veracity, the attachment of a photograph of Lizzie Williams to the name of Mary Kelly ; and the claim that a lock of hair displayed in 'Jack the Ripper's Sitting Room' originates from Mary Kelly) all remain, uncorrected, as do smaller errors such as the claim on an information board in the 'Mortuary' that Mary Kelly's right arm was severed, and that her remains are buried in Walthamstow Roman Catholic Cemetery (as opposed to, correctly, St Patrick's Roman Catholic Cemetery, in Leytonstone). It seems nonsensical to believe that the graphic designer mentioned by Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe on the 20 October was still 'on holiday' by the 12 December, and so it would appear there has been no attempt to correct any of these errors to date.



*'Lock of hair from Mary Jane Kelly',  
a display in 'Jack the Ripper's Sitting Room',  
12 December, 2015*

The claim with regards to the alleged lock of Mary Kelly's hair is an interesting one. The item consists of a lock of pale hair mounted on card and set within a small wooden frame, and it is within this which the claim 'Lock of hair from Mary Jane Kelly, the fifth and final victim of Jack the notorious Jack the Ripper, November 9th 1888' is written, in slanted text presumably intended to resemble Victorian penmanship. The museum's own tag, attached to but outside the frame, simply states more cautiously 'Lock of woman's hair'. However, it is an unavoidable fact that the museum are still displaying the fuller claim for visitors to read, and that their own caption, while less descriptive, does not actually give any information to suggest that the claim may be in doubt.

The matter is further clouded by the behaviour of 'Twilight Ghost Hunts', a who will be running paranormal events at the museum at the end of January, 2016, and apparently also on future dates ([www.twilightghosthunts.com](http://www.twilightghosthunts.com)). This collaboration was first announced via a somewhat bizarre post on the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' Facebook page on 2 December which stated that 'the museum [is] a dedication to the women who were his [Jack the Ripper's] victims, and the people of the west end'. Twilight Ghost Hunts have previously, on 29 October, posted on the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' Facebook page explicitly stating that the lock of hair from Mary Kelly is genuine, as well as promoting another falsehood which has proved pervasive in various forms on the internet over the last few months, namely that the stained glass window in the 'Mortuary' was obtained from 'the mortuary where Elizabeth Strides [sic] body lay' - presumably referring to the mortuary in the churchyard of St George in the East (elsewhere, it has previously been claimed that this window came from the 'St George in the fields' mortuary).

Clearly, seeing as Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe himself makes no such claims, this can be dismissed as untrue as well as extremely unlikely. In fact, on questioning staff working in the museum, they are all happy to confirm that

21 *They All Love Jack: Busting the Ripper*, Harper, published 13 October 2015.

such claims do not originate from the museum itself. It is up to individual readers, however, to decide whether they feel that allowing posts to remain on your social media profile making such claims, posts which originate from a company you are in partnership with, constitutes plausible deniability or not.

It is not simply an academic point. Although voluntary, both the Arts Council for England and the Museums Association offer guidance for institutions wishing to be affiliated to them. Namely, these are the Arts Council Accreditation Scheme<sup>22</sup> and the Museums Association's Code of Ethics for Museums.<sup>23</sup> Whilst the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' is not affiliated with either of these institutions, schemes such as this exist due to the public perception of a museum, and the standards of research which visitors will feel they can expect to have been undertaken into items on display in such an institution. In this way, they can at least be said to give some insight into the Museums Association's view of the public's expectations of a business calling itself a museum. All museums benefit from the positive association of the name and the good practice of others, as opposed for example to presenting themselves as a private collection.

With that in mind, three passages from the Museums Association's Code of Ethics may prove illustrative, and so are reproduced within this article. Section 3.17, which deals with providing as much information about an item displayed as possible, would arguably be breached by many of the museum's exhibits and their perfunctory explanations. Section 9.11 further states that member museums are required to keep presentations 'as accurate and up to date as possible', and to correct errors 'without delay'. Demonstrably, the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' would fail this test given the continued lack of corrections to, for example, the claim regarding Edward Watkins' whistle.

Finally, section 9.2 declares that members must 'apply the highest standards of objectivity to the research undertaken' and allow re-examination and independent verification when required. As we have seen, this does not appear to have been the case with, for example, the 'lock of woman's hair', with its claim to have belonged to Mary Kelly prominently displayed without any serious refutation; as we will see below, staff in the museum also do not appear willing or able to offer any information as to what research they themselves may have undertaken to ascertain the truth of such claims.

Nevertheless, it should be reiterated that no museum is under any obligation to sign up to such a code of practice, and that as Mayor Biggs revealed during the 26 October meeting, representatives from the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport have visited the 'Jack the Ripper Museum' and decreed that it does indeed meet their legal criteria for being considered a museum. It appears self-evident that they would not be considered to be meeting the required standard to join the Museums Association scheme should they desire to, however.

On 12 December, the masonic exhibits consisted of one item, the 'spectacular Masonic Grand Masters Chain and Sash' mentioned in the announcement above. This, a member of staff present on the day revealed, was believed to be 'probably nineteenth century, but we can't prove it'. To the museum's credit, at least no claim has yet been made one way or the other. On the provenance of the 'lock of woman's hair', the same member of staff stated that 'we bought it off ebay' (from research, it appears that the item is offered for sale on etsy, and may well have also been sold or resold through ebay) and 'we can't prove whether it is hers or not'. At best, this appears to suggest that the museum's staff feel it is possible that the provenance is genuine, or at least are happy for visitors to believe this may be the case. Again, we are reminded of the Museums Association guidance that identifications should be undertaken to the highest scholarly standard, and as many significant facts about an item as possible should be provided.

One positive note was that the feet in the 'Mortuary' drawer as revealed by *Le Petit Journal*, were no longer present, although the aforementioned member of staff did confirm that they had been in place during the Halloween weekend. 'You've got to have a sense of humour about these things', being his opinion.

### The Future?

So, what is the future for the 'Jack the Ripper Museum'? It will certainly be interesting to see the developments with the additional space, given the conflicting accounts of its intended use given by Joshua Walker and Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe. Whilst the benefit of the doubt should go to the owner, rather than a PR consultant who is no longer employed by the business, the specific details given by Walker as to the plans for such a space, even down to naming an individual who was apparently involved with their formation, appears curious. Watch this space, as they say.

Clearly, as far as protests and objections are concerned, feelings still run high on both sides. Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe is passionate about the project, and the impression which the authors gained from him was of a

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22 [www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-museums/accreditation-scheme](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-museums/accreditation-scheme).

23 [www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics](http://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics).

man who is not likely to be swayed by public opinion. However, new developments in these movements, such as the emerging involvement of 'United East End' and their political and local community connections, and a different type of events such as the November vigil, with the involvement of the church, may yet yield a new style of pressure. It will be interesting to see what occurs with the current signage, which as of 5 November is now technically illegal under planning law, including the roller shutters, but remains in situ at the time of writing.

It may, of course, simply be that it will be market forces which force the closure of the enterprise, rather than any amount of public, political, or community pressure. Certainly, the museum has not been busy on any of the occasions on which the authors have visited or observed it over the course of researching this and the previous article. It is the opinion of the authors that this is the most likely outcome, although it may well be that Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe feels that more events such as the Halloween weekend discussed above, and the planned 'ghost hunts' may be a solution to increase trade. If so, then an increase in such events is likely to only increase the ill feeling against the museum from various angles, as the business moves ever more towards the status of an entertainment based, novelty attraction, and perhaps further from some people's perception of an informative and scholarly museum, not to mention a sober and respectful treatment of a controversial subject.

It is not the job of *Ripperologist* or the authors to suggest which perspective readers should take on this argument. However, as Adam Wood eloquently stated in his editorial to *Ripperologist* 145, it is an argument with which our community should be concerned, whatever your conclusions. We hope you have found these two articles informative, in dealing with what is undoubtedly one of the most significant developments in the public perception of Ripperology for many a year, perhaps even since the renaming of the Ten Bells in the 1970s. We will return to update readers as and when there are further significant developments in this fascinating story.

## Ripper protest is going to be "Revenge Of The Women – We Hack Him Back"

2nd December 2015

Protest

Ripper Museum

Women's Death Brigade



'Ripper protest is going to be Revenge of the Women'.  
Class War website with image of 5 December protest



TREVOR BOND (left) is a writer and researcher, born in South London to an East End family. In the past he has written for *Casebook Examiner*, and contributed to the commemorative London Job 2010 and London Job 2011 books. He spoke at the 2010, 2012 and 2014 Jack the Ripper conferences, including on John McCarthy in Salisbury in November 2014. He is also engaged in co-authoring *The A-Z of Victorian Crime*, to be published in 2016 by Amberley. In real life, he works as an Intensive Care Nurse.

JON REES (right) is from Swansea, Wales and has been interested in the case for over ten years. He holds an MSc in Forensic Psychology and Criminology and at the 2013 Jack the Ripper Conference spoke on the psychology of eyewitness testimony. He is a moderator for *jtrforums.com*, a frequent contributor to *www.spookyisles.com*. Outside Ripperology he works in IT, is involved in Scouting, amateur dramatics and is a town crier.



From the Archives

# Some Notes of The History of The Colney Hatch Asylum

by Rev Henry Hawkins, Late Chaplain 1867-1900

Published by Potter, Batten & Davies, Clapham Common (1901)



*Rev Henry Hawkins,  
Chaplain of Colney Hatch Asylum 1867-1900*

On a tablet, opposite to the front entrance door, is the following inscription:- "This Foundation Stone was laid by Field-Marshal, His Royal Highness, Prince Albert, Her Majesty's Consort, on the 8th day of May, AD 1849, and in the twelfth year of the Reign of Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria."

On the above-named date (which was on a Tuesday), the Prince's carriage, passing under a triumphal arch, near to where stands the "Triumph" Inn, came to the Asylum Grounds. Hereabouts was "Halliwick" Wood, perhaps once part of the Duke of Buckingham's estate. Through Alderman Sir William Curtis (a well-known civic father of those days) the property passed to the Asylum authorities.

What a contrast between the rough woodland of 1849 - where might be seen hares, rabbits, snakes, &c. - and the cultivated grounds of 1901: that broad walk, between avenue and flower beds, from entrance gates!

On that 8th May, a large crowd, it is said, was gathered together. Among those present were the late Marquis of Salisbury, Lord Lieutenant of Herts and Middlesex; of neighbours - Rev. J. Thompson, Rector of Friern Barnet; Rev. James Baird, Vicar of Southgate; of the Asylum community - Mr. B. Rotch, first Chairman; Mr. J. Skaife, Clerk to the Committee of Visitors (into whose possession came the mallet which the Prince used); Mr. Goodchild, of the Staff, who died in 1901. One of the present residents in the Asylum was there, and a neighbour, Mr. Arthur

Eley, was one of those who saluted the Prince with flags.

His Royal Highness inspected the rising Building, and visited the party at luncheon. So that the 8th May, 1849, is memorial in the annals of the Asylum.

## Completion of Building

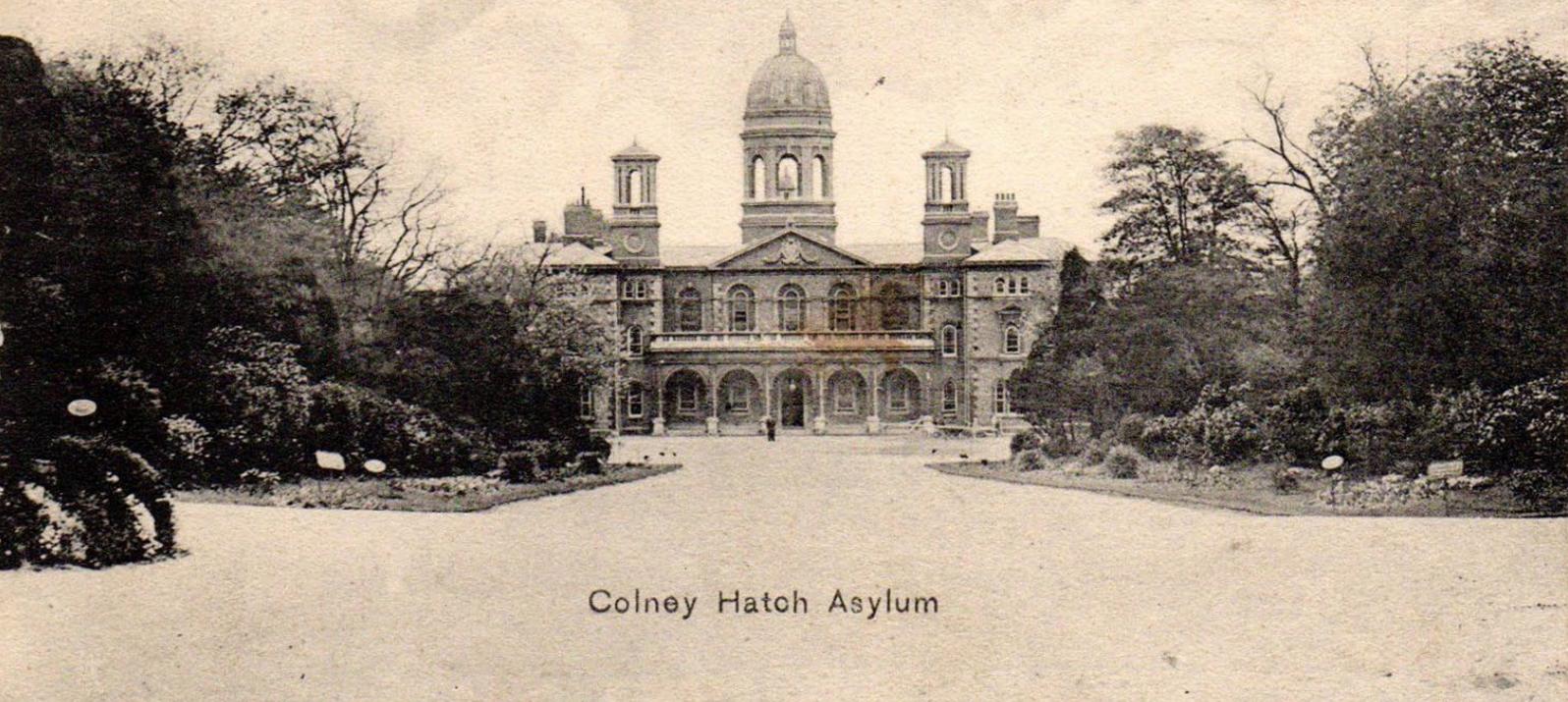
Rather more than two years passed, during which time the structure was in active progress.

On Tuesday, the 1st July, 1851, the Chapel was dedicated by the then Bishop of London, Dr. Blomfield. On the same day the Cemetery was consecrated. Some particulars are here recorded. It was officially notified:-

*The Bishop will arrive at the Chapel at half-past twelve o'clock, and should be met by the Chaplain and Trustees, as also by his officers.*

*They should proceed in the following order to the Reception Room : the Gate Porter, Trustees, Apparitor, Bishop, Chaplain, and Chaplain of the Asylum, Chancellor, Registrar, the Clergy (two and two), the Committee of Visitors (two and two), the Medical and other Officers of the Asylum.*

*The Bishop, being robed, the Procession is to pass along the Passage to the Chapel, when the Service should be commenced.*



Colney Hatch Asylum

The Psalms appointed for the occasion were the xxxix. and xc. The First Lesson was the xxiii. chapter of Genesis the Second, the xix. of St. John, beginning at the 13th verse.

The Service appears to have had reference to the subsequent Consecration of the Cemetery. After the Service in the Chapel it was directed:-

*The Bishop will proceed in the same order out of the " Chapel, and at the door the Procession should be headed by the persons appointed to sing, who shall proceed, two and two, through the hall to the Burial Ground, which the Bishop shall then perambulate, if the weather permits.*

*On arrival at the tent, the persons appointed to sing are to divide right and left, so as to leave a clear avenue for the Bishop and his officers, preceded by the Trustees.*

*The Bishop being seated, one of the Trustees will present the deeds of Conveyance, and the Bishop, having repeated the appointed prayer, the persons appointed are to sing the verses (named) in the form.*

*After the final Blessing, the Bishop will be attended as before to the Reception Room. The verses to be sung are the 5th and 6th of the xxix. Psalm.*

Such appears to be the Order of Service on that 1st July, fifty years ago.

N.B. - A memorandum by Mr. Skaife says: "The Chapel, as far as my recollection serves me, was first used for a portion of the Consecration Service of the Burial Ground, by the Bishop of London, in the early part of 1851. The Chapel itself was not consecrated."

The Cemetery was disused in 1873. A Memorial Cross was in after years erected in it, bearing this inscription:-

IN THIS CONSECRATED GROUND  
 HAVE BEEN INTERRED  
 THE REMAINS OF  
 2,696 INMATES OF THIS ASYLUM,  
 And this MONUMENT  
 HAS BEEN ERECTED  
 TO THEIR MEMORY  
 by the committee of visitors,  
 January, 1883.



*The Memorial Cross placed on the consecrated ground*

Soon after the Dedication of the Chapel, the active work of the staff commenced; for it was on the 17th July, 1851, that the first patients were received - eleven men, five women. The total number of those under care, now and formerly, is 28,141, inclusive of re-admissions. On the day when the Foundation Stone was laid, it was announced by the Lord Lieutenant, that he had it in command from Her Majesty, to found, in Her Majesty's name, a Fund for the relief of pauper lunatics, on their discharge cured from the Asylum, and that she had graciously condescended to allow the Fund to

be called the "Victoria Fund," and to subscribe £100 towards it; the name subsequently "Adelaide Fund," the name of the original Fund, in Hanwell Asylum.

A few notes may be interesting of footprints on the sands of time during the past half-century of the occupation of the Asylum.

### Members of Committees

Mr. B. Rotch, as already mentioned, appears to have been first Chairman of the Colney Hatch Asylum Committee of Middlesex Magistrates, after the opening of the Building. The names of the Committee at an earlier period are recorded on a slab. The first is that of Lord Robert Grosvenor, who, it is believed, was the last survivor. A successor of Mr. Rotch was Mr. Pownall. But the most outstanding name of that administration was unquestionably that of Mr., afterwards Sir William Wyatt, who was a member of Committee from 1859 to 1889, and Chairman during twenty-seven years of that time. He died in 1898.

In 1889, the management of County Lunatic Asylums was transferred from the jurisdiction of Magistrates to that of County Councils. The Colney Hatch Asylum, situated in Middlesex, was placed under the administration of the "L.C.C." The first Chairman under the new regime was Mr. Fletcher, a link with the former Committee, of which he was a member. Successive Chairmen were: Mr. Moss, 1890-92; Mr. Parkinson, 1892-93; Mr. Robinson, 1893-94; Mr. Orsman, 1894-95; Dr. Blake, 1896-97; Mr. White, 1899; Mr. Parkinson, 1900; Mr. Lampard, 1901.

### Medical Superintendents

The first over the Male Department was Dr., afterwards Sir W. C. Hood,\* who afterwards migrated to Bethlem Royal Hospital, and died in 1870. He was succeeded by Dr. Tyerman, in 1852: followed by Dr. Edgar Sheppard, who, in addition to professional work, promoted the decoration of his wards, gave occasional recitations and lectures, and "captained" in the cricket field. His charge extended from 1862 to 1881; he died in 1897. His son, Dr. Edgar Sheppard, Sub-Dean of the Chapels Royal, has preached in the Asylum Chapel.

Of the Female Department, Dr. Davey was first Superintendent. His successor was Mr. Marshall, whose charge lasted for the long period of thirty-eight years, from 1852 to 1890. His systematic, conscientious work is held in remembrance. He died in 1897, by a noticeable coincidence within a few days of the death of Dr. Sheppard, whose colleague he had been during some twenty years.

On Mr. Marshall's retirement, the Superintendentship of both Male and Female Departments (happily combined, to the great advantage of the community) was entrusted to the present respected chief, Dr. W. J. Seward, who has gained a stronghold on the respect and cordial regard of his colleagues and staff. *Vivat et Floreat!*

\* *Resident Physician, Bethlem Hospital, 1852-1862 - Chancery Visitor - 1868. Treasurer of Bridewell and Bethlem Hospitals.*

### Assistant Medical Officers

It might not be generally interesting to record the names of all who have held office since the opening of the Institution, but the names of a few are here noted: Dr. Adam, is at West Mailing Place, Kent; Dr. T. Claye, Superintendent of Banstead Asylum, and Lecturer at St. Bartholomew's Hospital; Dr. Strange, Bicton, Shrewsbury; Dr. Elliot (retired 1901), Caterham; Dr. Robert Jones, Claybury; Dr. Bryan, Horton Manor; &c.

Mr. W. H. George (still kindly remembered) is buried in Friern Barnet Churchyard; Dr. Grosvenor Shaw in Barnes Cemetery; one of former medical staff was drowned at the foundering of SS *London*, in 1867; Dr. Balfour died in 1884; Dr. Skelton in 1899.

In this memorial year, the Asylum retains the services of Drs. Beadles, Jones, Tizard, Fleming, Cole, and Wilkinson.

### Chaplains

1851 - Rev. H. Murray, afterwards a Government Chaplain in India; 1855 - Rev. R. R. Hutton, who became Rector of High Barnet, and died in 1887; 1860 - Rev. W. Bullock (died 1870); 1867 - Rev. H. Hawkins (retired 1900); 1900 - Rev. A. L. P. Parry, fifth on the Chaplain's roll, and gaining the kindly regard of his charge.

### Stewards

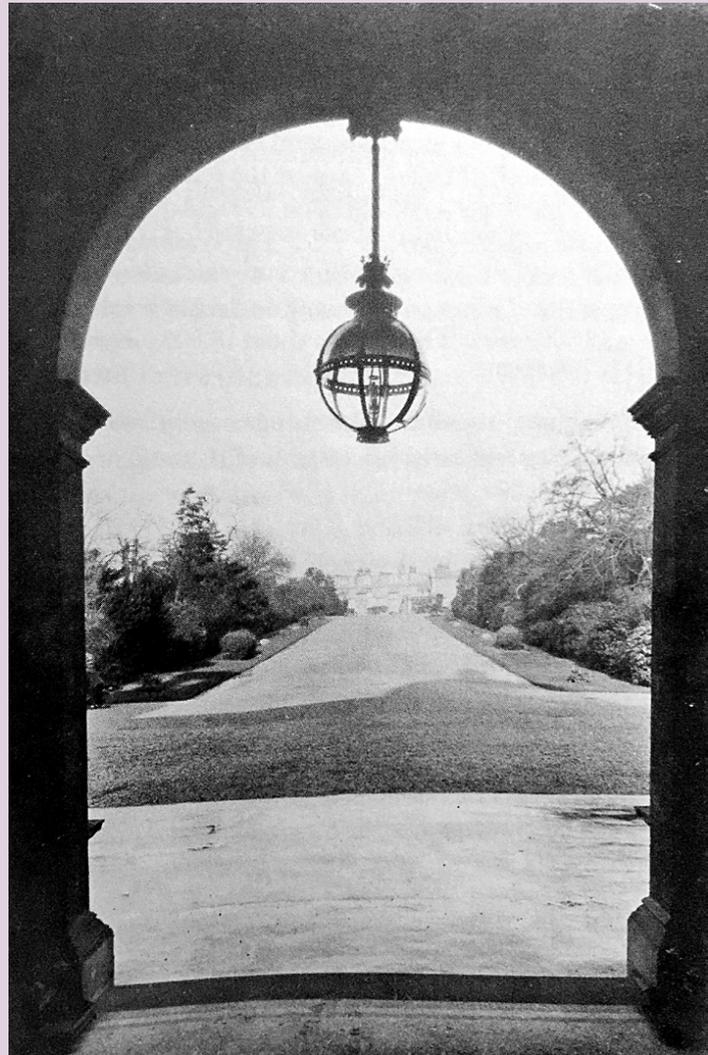
The first, Mr. George Henderson (died 1888); Mr. Blake (retired); Mr. Boyce (died 1901); Mr. Mallett succeeded. No light charge attaches to an office having the oversight and dispensation of vast stores of commissariat and material needful for the sustenance and furnishing of so vast a household of more than 2,800 persons.

### Engineers

Among those holding this responsible post have been Mr. Walker (died 1884); Mr. Hack (died 1901). Mr. Young, ably seconded by Mr. Phillips, has held chief office since 1886. The care of designing and overlooking important work within a vast building covering an area of 10½ and on grounds of 156 acres, is not light. In addition to works of construction, alteration, decoration, there belongs to the Engineer's department the care of water supply (more than 100,000 gallons needed daily), illumination, drainage, oversight of fabrics, &c. - matters on which the health and comfort of the inmates of an establishment greatly depend.

### Clerks of the Asylum

In former years Mr. Chaney was chief. He was succeeded, in 1867, by Mr. Burrows, who retired in 1889. In his place was appointed Mr. Eade, who was the Father of the House, its head by seniority of office, having been at the time of his lamented and almost sudden death in 1900, a member of the staff during more than 45 years. He was buried, on 30th August, in the Great Northern Cemetery. There was a large attendance at his funeral; among those present was Mr. Boyce, whose own funeral took place in the following December. Mr. Eade was succeeded by Mr. Bailey, seconded by his able and experienced colleague, Mr. Sterland, who has been on the Staff of the Asylum since 1871.

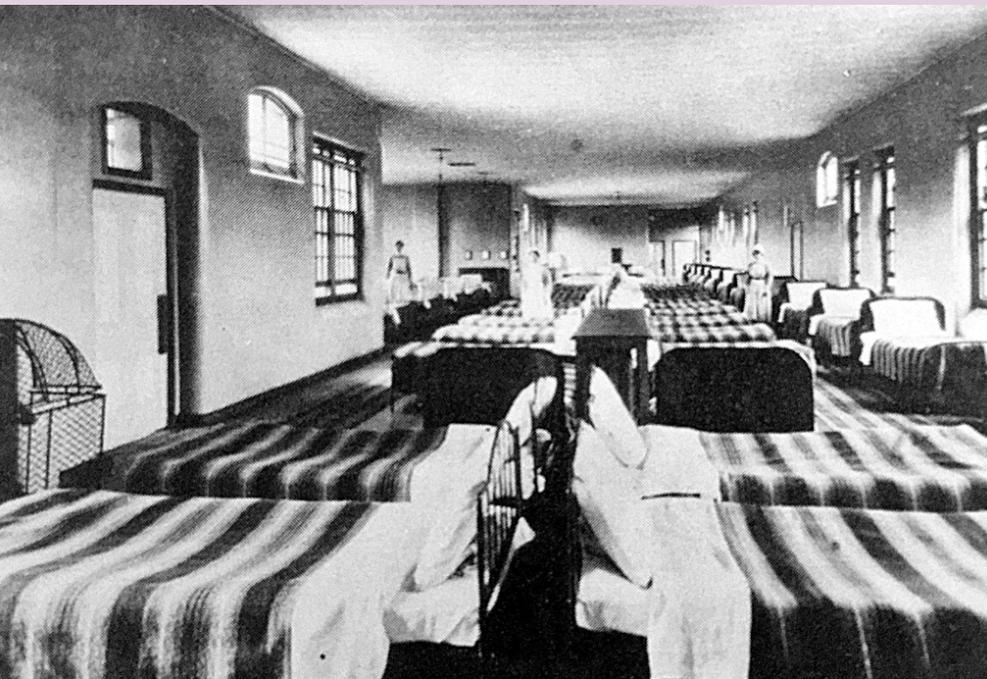


*View from the main entrance towards the hospital gate.  
The hanging gas lamp was installed in 1866.*

## Dispensary

With the Dispensary have been associated the names of Messrs. Rose, Greaves, Dendy, and others; last, not least in sequence, being Mr. Welford, 'curator' of portrait albums. It is noticeable the "Apothecaries' Hall" has been, in two instances at least, allied to the fine Arts - Music and Photography, represented by Mr. Dendy and Mr. Welford.\*

*\*Mr. Welford's Albums contain about 18,672 portraits.*



*Ward E1, a dormitory for 80-90 women. Photographed c1900.*

Laundry Attendant, Miss Wilson, died in 1874. What a record must be the laundry work of half-a-century! About 35,000 articles are received and returned weekly.

The smaller community of the Workroom, of which many years ago Mrs. Bates (who died in 1874) was Mistress, is not behindhand in the produce of needle-craft, as Miss Cooke would testify. Though those valuable members of the Staff, the Head Attendants, have been a somewhat stationary sisterhood, many, of course, have gone away. The names of some recur: of the Misses Hemming-Feake, Fenwick (died 1901), Owen, Morgan, Finnerty, Ferris, Crundwell. Nor should the respected and indispensable rank and file be unmentioned in this brief review, some of whom have died within these walls, or elsewhere: Attendants Atkins, Jarrett, Danes, Furzer; Nurses Kaiser, Sparrow, O'Conner, Locke, Maidman, Ding, Daniels, Karnes, and many others.

The title, "Inspectors," suggests a reminiscence of that fine old officer, Mr. Blowfield, whose name stands first on the list of Attendants engaged at the opening of the Building; of the sailor-like Mr. Cowley. Both the present Inspectors, Mr. Hope and Mr. Jarman, have been long on the Staff.

Miss Charlotte Field, many years Bible Reader, was succeeded, after an interval, by Miss V Williams, in 1896, both of whom have ministered kindly and usefully.

## The Chapel

Its original interior was very bare and cheerless. But, as years went on, successive Committees were kindly responsive to many suggestions and sanctioned various improvements. In 1874, important structural work was carried out under the superintendence of Mr. Walker. The roof was strengthened, the galleries were removed, the seats levelled, partial decoration was undertaken. Then, after closure during many weeks (in which interval services were held in No. 1 Hall), the Chapel was re-opened on the 15th December, and the Sermon preached by Bishop Piers-Claughton. In 1878, tinted windows were substituted, and emblems of the Evangelists inserted between. In 1880 the oaken eagle lectern was added, some decoration of the walls and roof were effected, and

## The Female Staff

Passing to the Female side of the House, the first Matron was Mrs. Meriton, 1851. There followed the duplex regime of Miss Cullen and Miss Builder, followed by Miss Moore, Miss Plaistowe, Miss Whatnall, and the present Matron, Miss Bissett.

Miss Dixon, Deputy-Matron, long time resident, resigned from ill-health in 1898; her successor, Miss Puckle, became Matron of Bexley Heath Asylum in 1899; in her place was appointed Miss Warham.

In that busy hive of industry, the Laundry, Mrs. Welham long reigned supreme. Her work was taken over by Miss Wilson; next came Miss Watson and Miss Briar. A Head

a series of mural texts painted, under the direction of Mr. Hack. The Chapel, after temporary disuse, was again opened on 9th October. Sir W. H. Wyatt, Chairman of Committee; the Revs. R. Morris (Friern Barnet), J. Baird (Southgate), and others, were present. The Sermon was preached by the Venble. Archdeacon Hessey, Master of the Charter House. 1888-1897: Mural cartoons of Scriptural subjects, from designs by Mr. Worrall, were affixed, under the superintendence of Mr. Young. 1899: Gas standards were introduced.

Many preachers have addressed the Chapel congregations. The Bishops of London (Temple); Bishops Billing (East London), Turner (Islington); the (future) Bishops of Ripon, Peterborough, Bristol, Wakefield, St. Alban's; the Archdeacons Cheetham, Blomfield, Emery, Sinclair, Thornton; the Revs. R. Maguire, A. H. Mackonochie, Gordon Calthrop, C. F. Lowder, Harry Jones, Dr. Scrivener, S. Buss, R. Suckling, Dr. Edghill (Chaplain General), L. Wainwright, N. Liberty (in eleven successive years), S. G. Harris, F. Hall, J. Bowman, G. Hennessy, E. C. and F. Hawkins, Canons Cooper, Elwyn, Duckworth, &c.

**Organists.** - Mr. Pigrome, Miss Owen, Miss Moore, Mr. Dendy, Miss A. Hawkins, Mr. Klitz, have successively played on the Organ, built by Walker, and, as a record notes, purchased in 1851 for £176 10s. It stood originally in a loft at the south end of the Chapel. The names of blowers, Mr. David Stewart and Mr. Wilson, should not be unrecorded.

**Choir.** - In former years, within remembrance, Mr. Pigrome directed some singers from the organ loft, they being on the basement. The commencement or revival of a Choir may be dated, perhaps, from 1874, when the organ was moved to its present position. Mrs. Hawkins was a member from the beginning; Miss A. Dear, Miss E. Bush, Mrs. Hamilton, &c., have been helpful and able coadjutors for a long period. For several years the majority of the Choir was composed of patients.

By way of recognition of services rendered, annual visits were paid to places of entertainment: the Crystal and Alexandra Palaces; to various Exhibitions - "Spanish," "Naval," "Healtheries"; to Battersea Park. The 'honorary' has recently been given in the form of a small present. For many years Nurses have formed the majority of the Choir, which, in 1898, was much strengthened and improved by members of the Male Staff, former military bandsmen, whose choral aid, on special occasions, is instrumental as well as vocal. Much credit is due to the labour and skill of the Organist and Choirmaster, Mr. Klitz. His deputy, Mr. Hewett, has during many years given valuable help. The "greater choir" of many members of the congregation greatly contribute to the heartiness of the singing of the Psalms and Spiritual songs.

### Confirmations

Confirmations of about 215 members of the Community have taken place at Monken Hadley, Highgate, Friern Barnet, New Southgate, St. Michael's, Cornhill, St. Paul's Cathedral, the Chapel of the Colney Hatch Asylum, by Bishops Anderson, Fraser, Claiighton, Jackson and Temple (of London), Billing, Browne, Turner, Tozer. Bromby, Speechly.

### Charitable Offertories

It is believed that in the early days of the Asylum, alms were given at the offertory at the Communion Service. From 1868, for some years contributions were forwarded for the Missionary purposes of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign parts, which celebrates its bi-centenary this year. About £100 sent to the Society. The Chapel alms-boxes were fixed, by permission, in 1883. The total amount contributed previously, through the boxes and departments, has amounted to about £500. The objects of the collections have been very various; of late years the Sunday Hospital Fund having been the chief recipient. Mr. Sterland has very kindly checked intermediate amounts, and the late Chief Clerk, the much-regretted Mr. Eade, made the annual audit.

Mention of the Workshops and other Industries may recall names and persons still remembered by a few. Mr. Clark, of the Bakery\* (succeeded by Mr. Woodroffe) and of the 'Stores'; Mr. Iredale, master shoemaker, who used to walk from Harrow on a Monday morning to his work here; Benjamin Searle and Cooper, of the Engine Rooms; Newby, who, before retirement, had reached 'fourscore': Winter, of the Carpenter's Shop.

*\* The output is about 18,000 lbs. of bread weekly, besides cake, &c*

A visit to the Lower Lodge, now disused for ordinary exits and entrances, might revive memories of Underhill and Fensom, whose stony yard was brightened, in season, by chrysanthemums in the flower-bed by the wall, both himself and his wife are buried in Friern churchyard. The Farm suggests remembrance of "Master" Hutton, of Somersetshire, succeeded by Mr. and Mrs. King. Murdoch lived in the gasman's house, now occupied by Mr. Baynham. The Lodge, tenanted by Mr. Toon, is a building of later days. 'Tom Alison,' who died on a cold winter morning, stricken on his way to work, in 1888, was long time head gardener in the front grounds. In former years, sturdy Heslett, formerly seaman, granted or forbad entrance at the front gate, of which Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, were next guardians. Courteous Mr. Smith, of the old 89th, nows holds the fort.



*The gate which replaced the Lower Lodge entrance, closed in 1889. This was used until 1937, wehn the front gate was reopened.*

A few Notes from old Diaries. 1851 - of a violin in Chapel, of a school for patients, of the organ (which could also be played by a handle) being first used on Christmas Day: 1852 - of the first Fair Day, of an old patient asking for a spinning wheel: 1854-5 - of Chapel services in reference to the Crimean War, of a want (now supplied by the services of Mrs. Friedman) of an official who could speak foreign languages; May-Day amusements are mentioned; 1864 - Sunday Evening services for the Staff discontinued in 1894, on account of alteration of Sunday arrangements; 1866 - Service of Humiliation for cattle plague, Male Attendants' Class taught by teacher from Working Men's College; 1870 - stimulants discontinued on Fair Day; 1873 - Hospitals (Asylum) Sunday Fund initiated: 1887 - Victoria Jubilee; 1896 - Annex; 1897 - Diamond Jubilee.

Other Recollections arise. Of **Visiting Rooms** - crowded, as on Bank Holidays, &c, or sparsely occupied, as on some wet afternoons; and here remembrance revives of a German mother's visits to her daughter, year in, year out; of a sister's to a weak-minded brother; of a daughter's to an aged mother; of an octogenarian father, or perhaps of only a friend, "who yet may sticketh closer than a brother." Full of interest and valuable lessons are those Male and Female Visiting Rooms! - "Visiting Day at the Asylum" (S.P.C.K.)

**Fire Brigade.** - A shrill summons suddenly hastens the Fire Brigade to the scene of an imaginary fire. The engine is vigorously handled, under the eye of a member of the London Brigade. "Ready, aye ready!" But what cause for thankfulness to God, that in the course of fifty years no serious outbreak of fire has occurred!

The Asylum Band was formerly conducted by Dr. Clavk Shaw; poor Millwood played the flageolet; Mr. Dendy was prominent. Then a London trio played the dance music; now various regiments supply the orchestra which enlivens the Recreation Room and Grounds.

The Staff of Attendants, of various grades, numbers about 114 males and 210 females. The advantages of their position are substantial and improving: their professional standing is recognised: pay good; hours of daily duty, though long, yet limited and defined; prospect of promotion: choice of companionship, &c. Freedom of action after hours of duty is, as regards the Nurses, ampler than formerly; annual holidays are longer; and - an important consideration in days when examinations are becoming preliminaries to successful progress - opportunities of acquiring theoretical and practical instruction on matters relating to the duties of attendants, are periodically afforded. That such opportunities are improved is testified by the increasing number of badges of competency and efficiency exhibited.

As regards the Asylum to which the foregoing remarks have special reference, it may be asserted that, as years have gone by, the relations between different departments of the House have been less restrained - more

sociable. The "once upon a time" aloofness of "A and B," &c, has lessened, or disappeared. Friendly fusion has, no doubt, been in large measure due to the unification of the present management in place of the duplex regime - the House divided - of former years.

It must, perhaps, be admitted that among the younger Female Staff there is less "stationariness" and stability than formerly. Love of change, facilities for going from place to place, competing offers of service elsewhere, the restlessness of the times, partly account for frequent migrations.

The fact of many male attendants being married is, of course, one explanation of their longer continuance in service. They are necessarily "anchored."

A large number of the men attendants have been in the Army; fewer, yet some, in the Navy. More than once a list has been drawn up of members of the Services - Engineers, Artillery, Cavalry, Infantry, and of the R.N. No need of repetition here.

From that opening day in 1851 to the present year 1901, what a mixed multitude, as years have gone by, have gathered within the Asylum walls! Natives of probably every English county, from Northumberland to Cornwall, from Norfolk to Shropshire: natives of "Wild Wales," Caledonia, stern and wild, of the Sister Isle, of France Belgium, Holland, Italy, Norway, Russia, Japan, not (within recollection) from China, though members of the Embassy once paid a visit.

Again, how many forms of Religious belief have been represented. Professed members of the Church of England, and Nonconformists, Roman Catholics (about 259 resident, with their Chapel and visiting Priest), 240 Jews, looked after by a Reader and Lady Visitor of their own Faith, and considerately treated in the preparation of food according to the customs of their religion; consignments of unleavened biscuits, oranges, &c, at Passover season, Jewish parties from time to time, are tokens that they are kindly considered.

Of the Professions, representatives of Law, Physic and Divinity have been members of this populous household. Barristers, Doctors, Clergymen, Officers of the Army (no recollection arises of any Naval Officer), members of three Universities - one a distinguished Prizeman and Scholar, Public School men, Artists, Literary men have been residents. On the Female side - Governesses, Musicians, Actresses, employees of almost all descriptions.

In a recent official report, some 380 different occupations of male patients, and about 150 of females, are registered. In the Wards have been persons of all ages - the newborn infant and the centenarian.

While, on the one hand, it is a painful reflection that during the first half-century of the existence of the Asylum many thousand cases of insanity have been admitted, on the other hand, there is satisfaction in the thought that of that large number very many have been "made whole," by God's blessing on human ministries; others, if not discharged "recovered," have yet been improved in their mental and bodily condition. Others again, permanently invalided, have found in the Asylum a hospitable dwelling-place.

The residence of a *present* inmate is all but commensurate with the Asylum's history as a Hospital. Facing the congregation in the Chapel is the text, "He shall be for a Sanctuary, a Place of Refuge." - How many afflicted in mind, suffering from various phases of insanity - despondency, delusions, violent excitement, impulses to injure themselves or others, incapacity for the work of life - have found within Asylum wards shelter, sustenance, guardian, ship, a harbour of refuge, in part, from troubles within and without?

### Supplementary Notes

P. S. - A few supplementary Notes are appended. Out-door reminiscences: of May Day "Jack-in-the-Green:" of the annual hay party - was not Mr. Marshall once a victim of hay-field 'assault and battery?' of field sports, races, jumps, &c, on Male side - on a certain occasion, a historical race between Longster and Mapleson, the Yorkshireman winning! of the Cambridgeshire mowers, with Master "Bird" their Captain, year after year! Or again, in-door recollections of a Nurses' Evening Class, or Dorcas Meeting, the garments made being sent to poor districts.

A Memorial Note about the Chapel Services. During many years, three (including one for the household) on Sundays, and Morning and Evening Prayer daily throughout the year, rarely intermitted; which considerate provision for the Spiritual benefit of the Asylum was available from its opening. The feelings of how many among the congregations have been in unison with those of one who said:

*The Services of the Chapel, which I have had the privilege of attending, have been as it were way-side seats, where I have often sat and refreshed myself; - or of another's Remembrance: "Dear old Chapel I have spent many sacred hours there."*

Another recollection, a sad one, of the Winter of 1892, when influenza was so fatal in the building; when Mr. Davis, Head Out-door Attendant, Mr. Nutt, and many other members of the community were carried off by the epidemic. Later in the same year, the beloved Physician, Dr. William Hemming-George, and Nurses Ding and Daniel were called away. Again, from grave to gay, recollections of how many Fair Days! The first, on 17th July, 1852; held for many years in the Field, now the site of the 'Annex' - the lively scene of so many annual gatherings of residents and their friends, in groups on the mown grass: walking, talking, round the Band, dancing, looking at Nemo's Troupe; at last, towards sundown, wending their way station-wards or to their rooms, many first winding up the July holiday with a merry dance in the Great Hall.

The vast Kitchen, superintended during many years by its chef, Mr. Gilbey, prepares daily meat and drink - fish, flesh, puddings, vegetables, cocoa, tea, &c. - for more than 2,800 persons.

\* \* \* \* \*

*A biography of Rev Henry Hawkins and his work at Colney Hatch Asylum can be read at [www.together-uk.org/wp-content/plugins/download-monitor/download.php?id=3](http://www.together-uk.org/wp-content/plugins/download-monitor/download.php?id=3)*



# Rivals of the Ripper The Great Coram Street Murder, 1872

By JAN BONDESON

By many a death-bed I have been,  
And many a sinner's parting seen,  
But never aught like this.

*Scott, Marmion.*

At Christmas 1872, life was not kind to the 31-year-old London prostitute Harriet Buswell. She was not spending Christmas Day in the Workhouse, but still her situation was very precarious indeed: being very short of money, she had pawned most of her jewelry, and even some of her clothes. She was badly in arrears with the rent in the shabby lodging-house she inhabited, at No. 12 Great Coram Street, Bloomsbury. For poor Harriet, there was no rest on Christmas Eve: at ten in the evening, she borrowed a pathetic shilling from fellow lodger Alice Nelson, donned her tawdry finery, and sought out the gas-flare and warmth of Leicester Square, ending up at the Alhambra Theatre of Varieties, a notorious haunt for mid-Victorian prostitutes.

Harriet Buswell returned to Great Coram Street at half past midnight, accompanied by a gentleman friend. He swiftly and wordlessly went up the stairs to the back room on the second floor, where Harriet lodged, but she remained downstairs for a while, chatting to her friend Alice Nelson and the landlady Mrs Harriet Wright. Harriet told Alice that she

had chanced to meet “a very handsome German gentleman”, whom she had invited home with her. She seemed childishly pleased that

he had bought her a bag of Christmas treats: apples, oranges and nuts. Harriet pressed half a golden sovereign, which her customer had given her, into the landlady's grateful hand for some of the rent she owed, and received a shilling change. Although not severely drunk, she seemed quite chatty and exhilarated, and Alice warned her that she should not keep her upstairs visitor waiting for too long. After asking the landlady for a bottle of stout to share with her gentleman friend, Harriet went upstairs to her room, bidding her two friends goodnight and merry Christmas.



*Harriet Buswell at the Alhambra  
from the Illustrated Police Budget for 1906*



*The Alhambra, from a postcard stamped and posted in 1908*

Darkness reigned among the shrouded streets of Bloomsbury that sinister Christmas night: as little children lay dreaming of reindeer, sleigh-bells and the delight of Christmas presents, and their parents dreamt of turkey, pudding and the delight of Christmas food, an invisible vortex of Evil, as silent as Death, surrounded the shabby lodging-house at No. 12 Great Coram Street, and the Devil waited, quivering, for Murder!

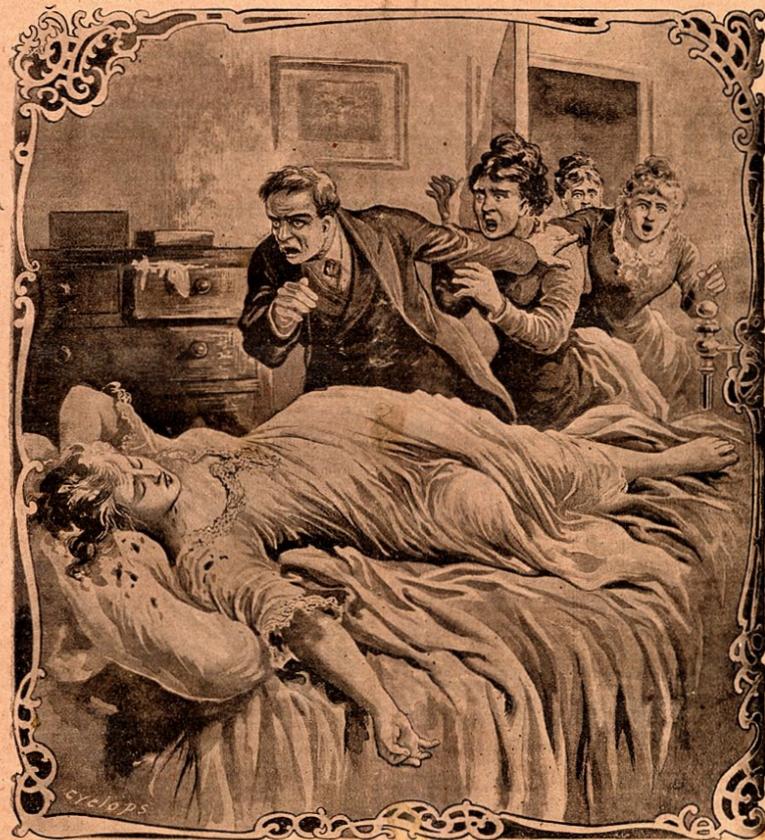
\* \* \* \* \*

On Christmas Day, no person stirred in Harriet Buswell's room. She was habitually a late riser, but when Mrs Wright's son came knocking at midday, carrying a breakfast tray, there was strangely no response. The landlady was fetched, the door rattled, and Harriet's name shouted, but all in vain. When the door was eventually broken open, it was obvious that the bed of lust and sleep had become the blood-soaked bier of death: Harriet was lying on the bed with her throat dreadfully cut. There was one deep wound under the ear, severing the jugular vein, and another deep cut lower down, extending to the upper part of the left breast. Dr Murphy, of No. 43 Great Coram Street, declared life to be extinct, and Police Constable John Hoyle speedily alerted his superiors at the Hunter Street police station. Superintendent James Thomson, who was just visiting the police station, personally took charge of the case, and inspected the murder room. The bedclothes, pillows and mattress were saturated with congealed blood. The murder weapon, presumed to have been a sharp knife or razor, was not found in the room, nor had it been thrown from the window. A jug full of blood-stained water indicated that the killer had washed his hands before leaving the room; in front of the wash-stand were ten large drops of blood, and on the towel a mark as if a pocket-knife had been wiped clean. An apple was found in the murder room, and some person had taken a bite from it; it did not match Harriet's teeth, so the detectives made sure a cast was made to prevent this valuable clue being ruined by the effects of shrivelling. The murderer had acted with great determination, and he had managed to kill his victim in complete silence; the house had been full of people, and man had been sleeping in the adjoining second-floor front room without waking up. The door to the murder room had been locked from the outside, and the murderer had carried away the key.

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In one corner of the murder room was a round mahogany table with three books on it: 'Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded', 'Sir Charles Grandison' and, quite possibly to provide some light relief after the sentimental and antiquated outpourings of Mr Richardson, 'A Book of Five Hundred Jokes'. Near the books was an empty leather watch case, and a black velvet hat with a crimson feather. Close to the door was an old mahogany chest of drawers, with one of the drawers containing a large bundle of letters, and another an album of cabinet card photographs. The letters were eagerly read by the police, in the hope there would be one from a 'customer' with a German-sounding name, but the letters were either from friends and family, or from a certain William Kirby, a former lover of Harriet Buswell, who liked sending her letters full of moral advice. He had clearly been very fond of her once, and wanted to halt her decline into London's seedy world of street-walking prostitutes. The cabinet cards were another puzzle for the detectives, but again there was nothing to suggest that one of them depicted the murderer: there were photos of Harriet's brother and sister, various lady friends of hers, and cards depicting various churches. These cards are still kept in one of the capacious folders of

POLICE BUDGET EDITION EDITED BY HAROLD FURNISS  
**FAMOUS CRIMES**  
PAST AND PRESENT ONE PENNY



THE DISCOVERY OF THE MURDER IN GREAT CORAM STREET.  
Vol. I.—No. 13.

*The murder of Harriet Buswell is discovered, from Famous Crimes Past & Present*



*The murderer sneaks downstairs,  
from the Illustrated Police Budget for 1906*

police documentation on the Great Coram Street mystery, with notes on the backs showing that the detectives eventually managed to identify some of Harriet's friends; others of these ghostly mid-Victorian faces have managed to keep their shroud of mystery until the present day. Strangely, there is no photograph of Harriet herself in the collection.

At between six and seven in the morning, the landlady Mrs Harriet Wright had heard the murderer descending the stairs, taking good care not to make too much noise. He had some trouble managing to open the front door, but eventually managed to exit the house. The streets were practically empty at this early time on Christmas Day, but the servant girl Mary Nestor, of No. 51 Great Coram Street opposite No. 12, was letting her master's dog out at 7.15 in the morning. She saw a man emerging from the front door of No. 12, and walking towards Brunswick Square. When he saw that she had spotted him, he tried to hide his face, but she had nevertheless managed to get a good look at him. He was young, about 25 years of age, and vaguely foreign-looking. He had neither beard, whiskers, nor moustache, but he had not shaved for several days, since he had quite long stubble. He had a rather dark complexion, with some nasty blotches or pimples on his face. He was wearing a dark overcoat, a billycock hat, and rather heavy boots. A number of people had seen Harriet with a man at the Alhambra Theatre, and some other central London locations, and a fruiterer had sold them some of his

goods. They agreed that he looked foreign, possibly German, but otherwise their descriptions diverged in a worrying manner.

After a reward of £100 had been posted for the detection of the Great Coram Street murderer, the amount of alleged witness observations, and letters to the police, exceeded all precedents since the hunt for the London Monster back in 1790. Various mischievous people informed against old enemies, and other jokers offered some friendly advice to the detectives. It was recommended that all Germans in London should be imprisoned in a [concentration] camp, so that the witnesses could see them there and pick out the murderer. 'One who abhors crime' suggested that Harriet Buswell's body should be exhumed and her eyes photographed, for an image of her killer to appear. A man using the signature 'M.D.' presumed that Harriet had used lemon juice locally to prevent venereal disease, and that this liquid had entered her guest's urethra, the pain sending him off into a murderous rage. This hypothesis, which is not as crazy as it seems, would have received useful support if a freshly squeezed lemon had been found in the murder room. The pilot Fred Copeman suspected the captain of an Italian brig of being the Great Coram Street murderer, whereas an anonymous letter from Paris pointed the finger at the German Adolphus Stumpf, of No. 42 King's Cross Road. Henry Franklin, of the Ratcliffe Relief Office, who believed himself to be a great observer of faces, thought he had seen the killer in a London pipe shop; all these leads were followed up by the police, and found to be worthless. A Birmingham joker who called himself Peter Porter provided some light relief: he assured "the Chief of the Detectives, Scotland Yard" that the murderers of Jane Maria Clouson and Harriet Buswell were both in this town, and if a cheque for £500 was sent to 'Mr P. Porter, Post Office Birmingham, *to be called for*' he would tell the police their names and whereabouts. Spotting a fault in his original plan, he added as a postscript "If on sending for your letter my messenger should be detained you will not get the information you desire".

It turned out that Harriet Buswell had come from a respectable lower-class family. Her father, the Wisbech tailor Henry Buswell, had married Isabella Place in 1838, and they soon had a family of two sons and three daughters. Mary, the eldest daughter, was born in 1839, and Harriet in 1841. But Isabella Buswell died in 1857, and her husband Henry followed her into the grave the year after. The five children were now orphans, and although their maternal uncle, the toll collector Dover Place, did his best to help them, the daughters had to go into service in London, and the young son Henry was admitted to the Wisbech Union Workhouse. Mary Buswell married a man named Horwood and settled down in Hurst Green, Sussex, but Harriet and her younger sister Ellen remained unmarried. Harriet worked as a servant girl in Finchley for three years, but she was seduced by a coachman named Burton, and after giving birth to an illegitimate child, she had to leave her situation. Young and quite pretty, with long dark hair, she put her little girl out to nurse, and became a ballet dancer performing at various London theatres, under the name Clara Burton. When she was still

quite young, she befriended a certain Major Brown, and he kept her as his mistress for three years, during which time she gave birth to two stillborn children. She then had another permanent lover, Mr William Kirby, who was very fond of her; even after he had left London and gone to Hong Kong in business, he kept sending her letters containing moral advice, and sometimes money as well. Charles A. Lees, a young ship's surgeon, became her next lover, but in 1869, he had to join a ship bound for Asia, and Harriet was alone in London. After she had taken to drink, her position in society had gradually declined: in 1870, she moved into a lodging-house cum brothel at No. 27 Argyle Street, near King's Cross. She was now a streetwalking prostitute, picking up customers in various London restaurants, theatres and music halls, being known to some of her customers as Clara Burton, and to others as Mrs Brown. Her gradual downfall continued as the years went by: she was not a very successful prostitute, and spent most of her earnings on drink. The old woman who looked after Harriet's daughter often came to No. 27 Argyle Street, asking for money, and this along with Harriet's drunken habits meant that she was evicted from this lodging-house in November 1872, and had to move to the dismal old house at No. 12 Great Coram Street, where fewer questions were being asked by the landlady.

The coroner's inquest on Harriet Buswell was opened on December 27, at the King's Head tavern in Broad Street, before Dr Edwin Lankester, the Coroner for Central Middlesex. After the jury had been duly sworn, and proceeded to see the body in the mortuary of St Peter's Workhouse, the first witness was the 18-year-old Henry Buswell, younger brother of Harriet, who worked as footman to Mr Charles Knight Watson, Secretary to the Society of Antiquaries at Somerset House. Henry had last seen his sister a month ago, at her old lodgings in Argyle Street; he was not aware that she had moved to Great Coram Street. He told the coroner about her irregular life, and her illegitimate little daughter. Mrs Harriet Wright the landlady was the next witness. Harriet had lodged with her four weeks, and owed her more than £3 in rent. Two gentlemen came to visit her regularly, one of them an Italian. She described how Harriet had brought a 'gentleman friend' home with her on Christmas Eve, adding that since the entrance hall had been dark, she had not been able to have a look at him, before he had made a rush up the two flights of stairs, without speaking to anybody. She would not recognize him if she saw him again.

Dr Murphy described how he had been called in to see the body of Harriet Buswell on Christmas Day. The wound below the lower jaw had severed all muscles and arteries down to the spinal column, and both wounds had partially severed the windpipe. Her face had been quite calm, like if she had been murdered in her sleep, with one or two bloodstains and a clear fingerprint of a thumb on the forehead, indicating that the killer had seized hold of her face with one hand, to prevent her from screaming. The post-mortem showed that her inner organs were in a healthy state, albeit pale from the loss of blood. There were no solid particles in the stomach, apart from some lemon-peel, and nothing to suggest that she had been drugged or poisoned. She had been dead between eight and ten hours when the doctor saw her in the early afternoon. She could not have inflicted these terrible wounds herself, and nothing resembling the murder weapon had been found in the room. The wounds had been caused by a large and strong knife, not a penknife or a razor. After it had been decided that the jury should make a further inspection of the murder room, the inquest was adjourned for a week.

Placards offering the £100 reward for the capture of the Great Coram Street murderer were spread far and wide: at every police and railway station, and at Channel ports and shipping offices. The police in Berlin, Paris, Brussels, Hamburg, Ostende, Calais, Boulogne and Dieppe were communicated with. Two professional translators were employed to prepare French and German versions of the police placard, for insertion in the main newspapers of those countries: there was odium when the German version was found to contain a long list of linguistic lapses, and Dr Althschul the Professional Translator had to submit a ten-page memorandum in his defence, saying that it was all just jealousy from colleagues who envied his position. The newspapers were full of the Great Coram Street murder, and the police kept receiving a steady flow of tips from the general public. The Reading schoolmaster George Smith had seen a suspicious-looking man with a pimply face near the local church, but when the police investigated this sighting, he turned out to be a respectable boat builder lodging nearby. Lieutenant-Colonel Grieg, of Deane House in Micheldever, had encountered a dodgy-looking German tramp calling at his house, but this turned out to be just another harmless vagabond according to the police. Mr R. Sherwood, of Carey Street, Lincoln's Inn, pointed the finger at an Italian newspaper editor named Caratti who had once cheated him about a renting room, but the police tracked down the Italian, who could prove that he had been at home on the evening of Christmas Eve.



*A portrait of Harriet Buswell, from the Illustrated Police News, January 11 1873*

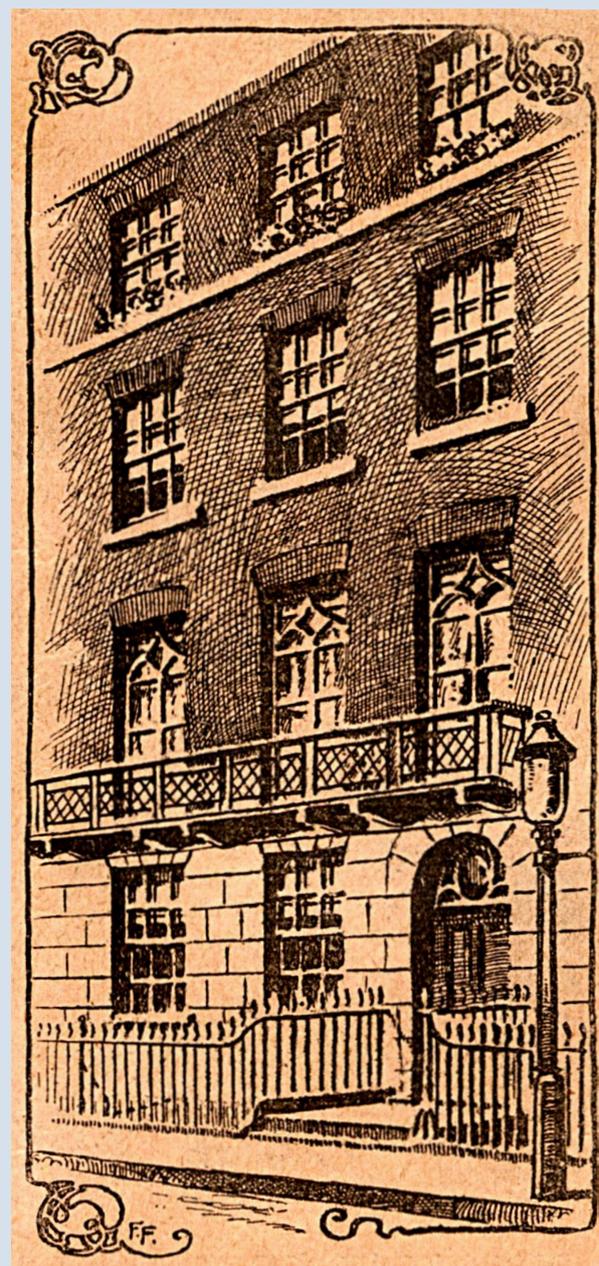
Charles de Coutouly, the Berlin correspondent of the *Le Temps* newspaper, instead accused a Swede named Frans August Sundberg, a disreputable character who claimed to be a man of letters and a journalist. After borrowing money from de Coutouly, the Swede had left Berlin for London; he could speak English, but in a thick German accent. Nothing appears to have come of this lead, nor from a letter from an anonymous German residing in Edinburgh, who claimed to have met Harriet Buswell at the Argyll Rooms in Windmill Street, another well-known haunt for prostitutes at the time, along with another German named Theodore Gertrum, who seemed to be an intimate friend of hers. This initially sounded promising, the police thought, but when he was tracked down, Gertrum turned out to be a respectable man, and not less than 65 years old. A prostitute who called herself 'Mrs Cavendish' claimed to have known Harriet Buswell for at least six years. Harriet had often consorted with a young Englishman, who had later been sentenced to seven years in prison; she did not know his name, or if the sentence had expired.

On Boxing Day 1872, a woman named Louisa Janoska had either fallen or been thrown out of a first-floor window at No. 40 Bloomsbury Street, dying from her injuries the same day. Her common-law husband, the Hungarian meerschaum pipe manufacturer Martin Janoska, and a shady German pocket-book maker who called himself Charles Piker, were both taken into custody and charged with murder, since they had been in the house with Louisa when she fell to her death. The police could not help noticing that here were two dodgy foreigners, who had quite possibly murdered a woman on Boxing Day, whereas Harriet Buswell had been murdered by a suspected foreigner the day before. The fruit seller George Fleck, who had seen Harriet with the man she was taking home to Great Coram Street, saw Piker while he was in police custody, and confidently ruled him out. The coroner's inquest on Louisa Janoska eventually returned an open verdict, and the two suspects went back to obscurity.

The detectives had many questions to ponder. Had the killer just been a random 'John' picked up by Harriet Buswell at the Alhambra Theatre, or had they met before? The way she had spoken of him to her two friends at Great Coram Street indicated that he had been a stranger to her, but then he appeared to know where her room was, although it remains possible that she had told him its location. Some objects had been stolen from the murder room, namely a red morocco purse containing the shilling change Harriet had received from the landlady, a pair of jet black ear-rings, a small brooch, and a pawn-ticket for five pairs of drawers. Still, since the murderer had paid Harriet half a sovereign for her services, plunder was clearly not the motive for the crime. Since the murderer had brought a formidable knife along, and since the crime had been committed with such impressive determination, it seemed rather as if he had decided to find a random prostitute, and to murder her just for the fun of it.

Harriet Buswell was buried at Brompton Cemetery on Tuesday December 31. The body was taken from the mortuary at St Peter's Workhouse and placed in a plain elm coffin with the inscription 'Harriet Buswell, born the 4th of February 1841, died Dec. 25th 1872, aged 31 years'. A crowd of onlookers congregated outside Mr Powis' undertaker's shop in Drury Lane, awaiting the arrival of the hearse and the mourning coach. Henry Buswell the brother followed the remains to the grave, as did Mary Horwood and her husband. A number of people attended the funeral service, held in the chapel at Brompton Cemetery, before the coffin was carried to the grave, where a further short service was read, before the coffin was lowered into the grave.

The inquest on Harriet Buswell was resumed on January 3. Harriet Wright was the first witness. She said that in addition to herself, her husband and two sons, a total of six lodgers slept in the house at No. 12 Great Coram Street. She claimed not to know that Harriet Buswell had been a prostitute, and indignantly denied that her house was a

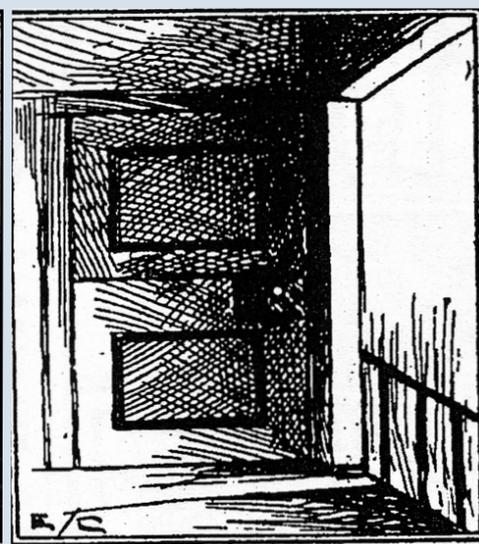
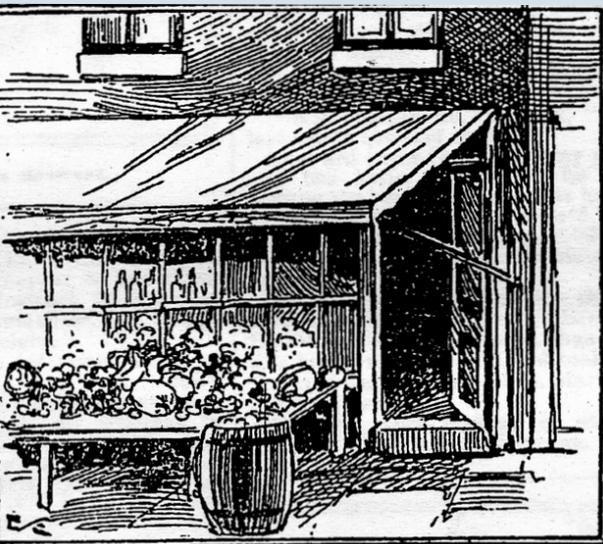


*The murder house, from Famous Crimes Past & Present*

brothel. All she had seen of the man accompanying Harriet home was that he had been wearing a dark overcoat and a billycock hat. Alice Nelson, who may well have been of the same occupation as Harriet Buswell, had often met her at the Alhambra and at the Holborn Casino. Interestingly, she now testified that Harriet had told her that she had walked from the Alhambra to Russell Square, presumably alone, and while she had been listening to the waits there, a foreigner had addressed her, saying that he had been to the Argyll Rooms, where he had spent nearly all his money treating the ladies. Harriet had brought him with her home to Great Coram Street nearby. She had told Alice that since he spoke with a heavy foreign accent, she could hardly understand him. After some of the other lodgers had given evidence, the inquest was again adjourned.

The police had a star witness, the Compton Street greengrocer George Fleck, who knew Harriet Buswell by sight, since she had visited his shop more than once in the past. At a little before one on Christmas morning, his shop being open unusually late, Harriet came in together with a man. She was showily dressed, like a woman of the town; he was rather rough-looking, and wore common-looking dark clothes and a low round-shaped hat. When Harriet turned to him and asked "My dear, will you buy me some grapes? I should like some ..." he gruffly replied 'No!' in a foreign accent, and the startled Fleck had a good look at him. The man's face was heavy in expression, and his cheeks were thickly spotted with black marks. He had neither whiskers, moustache nor beard, but he was quite unshaven and looked rather sinister, and in Fleck's own words, 'Capable of anything'. The man paid six shillings and twopence for a bag full of oranges and nuts, but he was not satisfied with the quantity of fruit provided, so Fleck gave him an extra apple. He spoke in what Fleck believed to be a guttural German accent; the greengrocer did not know German himself, but he had several German customers. Fleck's description tallied very well with that of Mary Nestor, who had seen the murderer leave No. 12 Great Coram Street.

The police were also cheered by a number of witnesses coming forward to detail Harriet Buswell's nightly revels on Christmas Eve, and many of them gave evidence when the inquest was resumed on January 6. Mary White, cloakroom attendant at the Alhambra, had seen Harriet enter the premises, and leave at around eleven in the evening. The barmaid Jessie Read had served Harriet some whisky at the bar. Another barmaid, Tryphena Douglas, could remember that Harriet had approached the bar and ordered two whiskies and two brandies, for which a man paid two shillings. The next sightings came from the headwaiter Oscar Phillips and the waiter William Stalker, at the Alhambra Restaurant; at a quarter past eleven, they had served Harriet Buswell and her gentleman friend a meal of cold fowl, salad and bread, with some stout to drink, for which he had paid four shillings and sixpence. The waiter Stalker, who knew Harriet as the regular 'Mrs Brown', and had a good look at the man, thought he spoke like a German: he had dark hair, was badly unshaven, and had curious red spots on his face, one of them almost the size of a threepenny piece. He looked rather common, and not like a gentleman. After leaving the Alhambra Restaurant at just before midnight, Harriet and her gentleman friend had taken a stroll at Piccadilly Circus, before boarding the Brompton to Islington bus. The two barmaids Alice and Tryphena Douglas saw them taking their seats on the upper deck of the omnibus: he was aged about 24, with no moustache or beard, stoutly built and broad shouldered, and dressed in a soft black hat and shabby dark



*Left to right: Fleck's shop, a drawing of Harriet Buswell, and the door to her room from Lloyd's News, October 20 1907*

clothes. Harriet had recognised Alice Douglas, wished her a merry Christmas, and asked if she was carrying a turkey on her lap; it had in fact been a goose. When the bus had got past St Pancras Church, Harriet had said 'It's time to pay' and when her companion had asked 'How much?' she had answered 'Sixpence'. George Fleck then gave evidence, as outlined above. The greengrocer's boy James Connolly, who worked for him in the shop, had also noticed Harriet and her sinister companion, since he had growled 'No, no, no!' when she had asked him for some grapes. He had been quite an ugly man: rough-looking, unshaven and with nasty black spots on his face.

# £200 REWARD MURDER

Whereas **HARRIET BUSWELL**, aged 26, was found with her throat cut, at No. 12, Great Coram Street, Russell Square, on the 25th December, 1872.

The Murder is supposed to have been committed by a Man of the following description, who was seen in company with the Deceased on the evening of the 24th, and to leave the house at 7 a.m. on the 25th:— Age 25, Height 5 feet 9 inches, Complexion swarthy, red spots on face, Black Hair, no Whiskers or Moustache, but not shaved for two or three days, Stout Build; Dress, dark tight-fitting Coat, dark Billycock Hat, a Foreigner (supposed German).

## TWO HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD

Will be paid by Her Majesty's Government to any person who shall give such Information and Evidence as shall lead to the discovery of the Murderer; and the Secretary of State for the Home Department will advise the grant of

## Her Majesty's most Gracious Pardon

To any Accomplice not being the person who actually committed the Murder, who shall give such Evidence as shall lead to a like result.

Information to be given to SUPERINTENDENT THOMSON, Police Station, Bow Street, London, or at any of the Metropolitan Police Stations.

METROPOLITAN POLICE OFFICE,  
4, Whitehall Place, London,  
1887, January 1873.  
**E. Y. W. HENDERSON,**  
The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

*The police poster offering an increased reward for the capture of the murderer of Harriet Buswell*

The police were in the fortunate position of having quite a number of witnesses who had seen Harriet with her murderer, in the evening before the crime was committed, and also another reliable witness who had seen him stealthily leaving the murder house on Christmas morning. The problem was that in spite of all their exertions, they had no suspect in custody, with whom these witnesses could be confronted. Although the government reward for the capture of the Great Coram Street murderer had been increased to £200, there were no trustworthy takers. An Irishman named Pius McKinnon was arrested at Sheerness, for getting drunk and behaving obnoxiously. Since he rather resembled the descriptions of the murderer, the greengrocer's boy James Connolly was sent to see him; he confidently ruled him out, and the prisoner was released. An unemployed French labourer named Jovet Julien was arrested at a pub near Guildford, for behaving suspiciously, and answering the description of the murderer, but the greengrocer Fleck and the waiter Stalker failed to recognize him, and he was also set free.

When the inquest was resumed on January 15, one of Harriet Boswell's regulars was in court: the veterinary student George Studdert, who had returned from a visit to Ireland when he had read about the Great Coram Street murder. He had known Harriet for several months, and often met her at the Alhambra; he had once given her three sovereigns. Studdert often got very drunk during their nocturnal revels, and once threatened to fight another drunk at the Alhambra, although they never actually came to blows. He

believed that Harriet was receiving money from a man in China or Hong Kong, and did not know any person who nourished hostile or jealous feelings towards her. Studdert had a solid alibi, having been in Ireland at the time of the murder. Emma Wilson, the landlady at No. 27 Argyle Street, who had once evicted poor Harriet from the premises due to her tipsy habits, had nothing but good to tell about her when she was dead. She had been very well behaved, and although men came to the lodging-house to sleep with her, she handled her affairs with decorum. Her brothers and sisters, all decent and respectable people, regularly came to visit her. Two fellow prostitutes testified as to Harriet's regular habits, and her predilection for the Alhambra as a nocturnal meeting-place; neither had any idea who had murdered her. Superintendent Thomson then addressed the jury at length. Neither the door nor the window in the murder room had any marks of blood. There was a lamp on the table, containing about a pint of oil, a quantity indicating that if it had been lit at 1 am, it would have remained burning until approximately 6 am. He could not say with certainty whether two people had been sleeping on the bed. He presumed that Harriet had been murdered while still asleep. The bag of nuts and oranges found in the room matched those used by Fleck in his shop. He told the jury about Harriet's youth in Wisbech, and that when working as a servant girl in Finchley, she had been seduced by the coachman Burton, who had died shortly afterwards. After giving birth to little Katie, her illegitimate daughter, Harriet adopted the name 'Clara Burton' and took to an immoral life, slowly but steadily sliding down the scale of respectability. William Kirby appears to have been the love of her life: a decent man who sent her some heartfelt letters about their past affair, and who also sent her money at regular intervals, to the tune of £50 in all. The inquest was again adjourned, this time to January 29, at which time the coroner would deliver his summing-up and a verdict be returned.

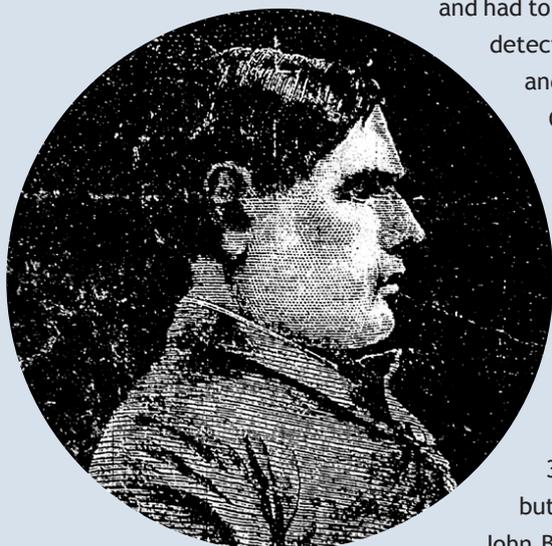
On January 16, a drunk named Frederick George Williams gave himself up for murdering Harriet Buswell, but he retracted his confession after sobering up, and was discharged by Sir Thomas Henry at the Bow Street magistrate's

court. On January 18, another drunk named John King gave himself up for the murder at Hackney Station, but he did not at all resemble the description of the murderer, and the two Misses Douglas, the barmaids from the Alhambra, and the two boys employed by Fleck, confidently ruled him out as the man they had seen with Harriet Buswell. After being able to waste some more police time, King was also discharged. Then there was the matter of a young Frenchman named Georges Monduit, who was found dead from heart disease in his Soho lodgings in late January. A policeman thought Monduit looked rather like the description of the Great Coram Street murderer, but the witnesses who had seen Harriet Buswell's companion did not agree. It was considered curious that one of the inhabitants of the Soho lodging-house where the deceased Frenchman had expired was none but Mrs Harriet Wright, formerly the landlady of No. 12 Great Coram Street. She, her family, and all the lodgers, had left the murder house, in a hurry, since it was haunted by the spectre of Harriet Buswell: strange unearthly noises emerged from Harriet's second-floor room, and no person would stay in the house. In a newspaper interview, Mrs Wright declared that the murder had been her ruin: all her lodgers had left her, and she was alone in the world with a family of seven young children.

\* \* \* \* \*

On January 18, Superintendent Buss, of the Ramsgate police, received a tip that a party of Germans from the emigrant ship 'Wangerland' had made a trip to London on December 22, staying at the Kroll Hotel in America Square; they had thus become Great Coram Street murder suspects. One of them was the apothecary Carl Wohllebe, who was, for some reason or other, thought to be a suspicious character, who had been behaving strangely since returning from

London. The Wangerland was on its way to Brazil, but the ship had run aground on Goodwin Sands, and had to take refuge in Ramsgate Harbour for repairs after being pulled afloat. The London detectives brought the greengrocer Fleck and the waiter Stalker down to Ramsgate, and an identity parade was arranged at the Ramsgate Town Hall, with some other Germans from the Wangerland making up the numbers. The detectives were astounded when without hesitation, both witnesses pointed out another man in the line-up, namely the ship's Lutheran chaplain, Pastor Gottfried Hessel, and identified him as the man they had seen with Harriet Buswell!



*The only known portrait of Dr Hessel, from the Illustrated Police News, February 22 1873*

And indeed, it turned out that Pastor Hessel had also come along for the trip to London on December 22. Rather shamefacedly, the police released Wohllebe and took Hessel into custody instead. On January 20, he was taken to London, and the following morning, he was brought before the Bow Street magistrate Mr Vaughan, for examination. Pastor Hessel, a stout, well-made 31-year-old man with a closely shaven face with a few pimples, was very pale but managed to maintain his self-composure. His full name was given as 'Henry John Bernard Gottfried Hessel'. The solicitor Mr Douglas Straight had been instructed by the German consul to defend him. Harriet Wright the former landlady was the first witness, telling how Harriet had brought her gentleman friend home on Christmas Eve, and how he had stealthily left the house early the following morning, leaving

Harriet's dead body in the back room on the second floor. William Stalker, under-waiter at the Alhambra Restaurant, testified that he had seen Harriet Buswell, alias 'Mrs Brown', at least a dozen times. At twenty minutes past eleven, he served her and her friend some supper; since the restaurant was not very busy, he had good time to observe them. He also heard the man speak in a rough voice, with a strong foreign accent, quite possibly a German one. At Ramsgate, he had seen a line-up of ten men, and picked out Dr Hessel as the man he had seen in the restaurant, without any hesitation. When asked to identify the man in court, he pointed at the prisoner and exclaimed "There, sir! If it is not he, sir, it is his twin brother!" He knew Hessel from his general appearance, his face, and the spots on his cheeks, although when he had seen him at the restaurant, he had been very unshaven. At Ramsgate, he had heard Hessel speak, and had at once recognized his voice as that of the man who had accompanied Harriet Buswell into the restaurant. When Superintendent Thomson boasted that he had several other witnesses who could identify the prisoner as the man seen with Harriet Buswell on Christmas Eve, Mr Straight countered that he had a number of witnesses who could prove that on Christmas Eve, Hessel had been lying ill in bed at Kroll's Hotel in London. The prisoner was remanded until January 29.

There was much alarm among London's respectable German immigrants that one of their number had been arrested for murder. Many of them called at the Kroll Hotel in America Square, to express sympathy for Dr Hessel, and to bemoan

the unfortunate position in which he was placed. Some of them knew his family, which was said to be highly respectable: he had been the Lutheran minister at the New Peter's Church in Danzig, where he had also kept a boarding-school for young gentlemen. He had recently married, and his wife was very solicitous about his health, since he was said to suffer from bronchitis. Dr Hessel had accepted a ten years engagement from the German Lutheran Church to go out as pastor to form a new church for German emigrants to Brazil; he had been on the way there with his flock, as a first class passenger on the Wangerland, when he had been arrested in Ramsgate. The London detectives lost no time before contacting the British consul in Danzig, to find out more about Hessel's antecedents. It turned out that he had a bad reputation for various dubious financial transactions in the past, and these were supposed to be the reason he joined the emigrant ship, to start a new life in Brazil. He had no convictions for violent crime, but was known for "keeping very low company". Interestingly, the police file on the case contains a translation of an anonymous letter from 'The Betrayed Believers in Dr Hessel', detailing his various misdeeds: he had mixed in society above his station in life, drunk too much, borrowed money, and contracted considerable debts. He had left his friends to pay for his farewell dinner party after he had been forced to resign to go to Brazil, and he owed some of them thousands of thalers.

When the examination at the Bow Street police court was resumed on January 29, Mr Harry Poland, who had also been involved in the prosecution of Edmund Pook, prosecuted, and Mr Douglas Straight again defended the accused. After Mrs Wright and William Stalker had repeated some of their evidence, the next witness was Tryphena Douglas, barmaid at the Alhambra. She told the court how a man had bought Harriet some whisky at the bar. She had then left work at a quarter past midnight and took the Islington omnibus together with her sister Alice, who also worked at the Alhambra. She saw Harriet Buswell walking near the Piccadilly, together with a man, but she could not say that it was the same man she had seen at the Alhambra.



*Leicester Square, from an old postcard; note the Alhambra to the right*

All four of them boarded the same omnibus: the man sat opposite Tryphena, and Harriet opposite Alice. All he had said was 'How much?' when Harriet had prompted him that it was time to pay. She had noticed that he held his eyes down all the time he was in the omnibus. He had been wearing a dark overcoat and a round felt hat; he had rather a full face with a thin nose, and no pimples that she could see. At the Ramsgate Town Hall, she had been shown a crowd of about 40 men, and Superintendent Thomson had asked her if she could recognize the man she had seen with Harriet Buswell on Christmas Eve. After walking round and having a good look at each of them, she had picked out Dr Hessel. When the Superintendent had asked her "To the best of your belief do you see any one here you know?", she answered "Yes, that gentleman", pointing out Hessel. But when Harry Poland asked her to identify the prisoner as the man she had seen, there was dangerous prevarication: Tryphena Douglas said that she thought the man she had seen with Harriet Buswell was rather taller than Dr Hessel, and she said "I don't think this is the gentleman because he was rather taller". Mr Straight gloatingly repeated the words, adding "I am much obliged to you!" When Harry Poland asked why on earth she had picked Hessel out at Ramsgate, when she was unable to swear to him in court, the confused witness just responded "I don't know what to say."

Alice Douglas, the next witness, had seen and spoken to Harriet Buswell as they were riding along in the omnibus, but unlike the observant sister Tryphena, she had not paid any attention to her male companion. James Griffin, waiter at a public house in the Haymarket, had travelled on the same omnibus, and recognized Harriet Buswell, who was accompanied by a foreigner with a dirty, unshaven face and a thin dark moustache. He was taken down to Ramsgate but could not pick anybody out. George Fleck, the next witness, confidently picked out Dr Hessel as the man who had been in his shop with Harriet Buswell, without the slightest doubt. In cross-examination, Mr Straight tried his best to confound the witness, asking about how busy the shop was, and the quality of the lighting, but Fleck could not be shaken; nor was he willing to admit that prior to identifying Hessel in Ramsgate, he and the witness Stalker had been discussing

the suspect's appearance. Since Fleck had several German customers, he was certain the man had spoken in a strong German accent. Then another key witness, the servant girl Mary Nestor, described how she had let her master's dog out early on Christmas morning. In a police line-up at the Bow Street station, she had picked out the man she had seen leaving No. 12 Great Coram Street; when asked if she could see him in court, she exclaimed "There he is, sir!" pointing at the prisoner. Dr Hessel bent forward and stared at her, and when she expressed herself absolutely certain that he was the man she had seen leaving the murder house, he looked round with an air of surprise. Mr Straight again did his best to confound the witness, asking her what had been so very striking about the man she had seen, but she turned out to be just as stalwart as Fleck: the light had been perfectly good, and she could see his face just as plainly as she did now.

The next witness was William Clements, head-porter at the Royal Hotel in Ramsgate. Dr Hessel had come to the hotel on December 15, occupying Room 17 together with his wife. The apothecary Carl Wohllebe had also stayed at the hotel, as had another German named Louis Hermes. On December 22, these four had all left the hotel, going to London for some Christmas fun. Hessel had seemed to be in good health and spirits as they walked to the railway station, Clements carrying their luggage; the Pastor had been wearing a grey suit, patent-leather boots and a billycock hat. The housemaid Jane Summers testified that the four Germans had left the Royal Hotel on December 22, and that they returned on December 28. When Hessel had asked for turpentine to clean his clothes, she had given him some. On January 1, she had taken a bundle of laundry from Hessel's room and given it to the laundress Margaret Ledner. When the laundress had examined the bundle of laundry, she was astonished to find a number of white pocket handkerchiefs stained with blood, one of them completely saturated. The laundresses Margaret Ledner and Elizabeth Gosby were both present in court, to describe the blood-stained pocket handkerchiefs, and their evidence was not challenged. John Popkin, head-waiter at the Royal Hotel, could remember when Wohllebe had been arrested by the Ramsgate police on January 18. Dr Hessel, who had been sleeping on board ship, came to the hotel, saying that he was very sorry for his friend, who was no more a murderer than he was himself. Hessel would now go to the police station to console him, and he would leave his boots off while Wohllebe would be wearing his, since if the witnesses picked him out, his wife could prove that he had been with her the night of the murder. He seemed quite distracted and incoherent, saying that he was worried that his wife's evidence would not be accepted in court, before he left the hotel. Popkin could not explain what Hessel thought he might be able to achieve by not wearing his boots. Superintendent Edward Buss, of the Ramsgate police, explained how he had arrested the apothecary Wohllebe. On the morning of Sunday January 19, Hessel had come to the police station, and asked if he could see the witnesses from London. Buss told him that they had not arrived yet. Hessel then repeated his request, demanding to see the witnesses when they arrived, but Buss told him the matter would now be placed into the hands of the London police. It is curious, and noteworthy, that Hessel had clearly attended the police identity parade in the Town Hall by his own free will. The only statement Dr Hessel had made, after being arrested on January 19, was that on Christmas Eve, he had been lying in bed at the Kroll Hotel in America Square, being nursed by his wife.



*The Inner Harbour, Ramsgate, from a postcard stamped and posted in 1904; note the prominent Royal Hotel, where Dr Hessel had been staying*

When the laundress had examined the bundle of laundry, she was astonished to find a number of white pocket handkerchiefs stained with blood, one of them completely saturated. The laundresses Margaret Ledner and Elizabeth Gosby were both present in court, to describe the blood-stained pocket handkerchiefs, and their evidence was not challenged. John Popkin, head-waiter at the Royal Hotel, could remember when Wohllebe had been arrested by the Ramsgate police on January 18. Dr Hessel, who had been sleeping on board ship, came to the hotel, saying that he was very sorry for his friend, who was no more a murderer than he was himself. Hessel would now go to the police station to console him, and he would leave his boots off while Wohllebe would be wearing his, since if the witnesses picked him out, his wife could prove that he had been with her the night of the murder. He seemed quite distracted and incoherent, saying that he was worried that his wife's evidence would not be accepted in court, before he left the hotel. Popkin could not explain what Hessel thought he might be able to achieve by not wearing his boots. Superintendent Edward Buss, of the Ramsgate police, explained how he had arrested the apothecary Wohllebe. On the morning of Sunday January 19, Hessel had come to the police station, and asked if he could see the witnesses from London. Buss told him that they had not arrived yet. Hessel then repeated his request, demanding to see the witnesses when they arrived, but Buss told him the matter would now be placed into the hands of the London police. It is curious, and noteworthy, that Hessel had clearly attended the police identity parade in the Town Hall by his own free will. The only statement Dr Hessel had made, after being arrested on January 19, was that on Christmas Eve, he had been lying in bed at the Kroll Hotel in America Square, being nursed by his wife.

The greengrocer's boy John Murray, who was employed in Fleck's shop, had seen Harriet Buswell and her sinister admirer, and heard him speak. He thought Hessel resembled the man, but the shop visitor had been taller and rougher-looking. His colleague James Connolly also thought Hessel very much like the man he had seen with Harriet Buswell, but he promptly added that he was still certain that he was not the man, since the man entering the shop had been fairer, and also quite unshaven. After the prisoner had once more been remanded in custody, until tomorrow when the examination would be concluded, a large crowd had gathered outside the police court, hoping to see Dr Hessel as he was taken to the police van, but Superintendent Thomson had arranged that Hessel was taken away in a cab, accompanied by two detectives.

When the examination of Gottfried Hessel was resumed, on January 30, the Bow Street police court was quite crowded. All the newspapers had reported the capture of the Great Coram Street murderer in much detail, and public interest in the prosecution of Dr Hessel was intense. When opening the case for the defence, the eloquent Douglas Straight pointed out the terrible injuries to the deceased: surely, they could only have been inflicted by a person who had indulged a long-nurtured feeling of spite against her? Mr Poland had not suggested any motive for Dr Hessel to murder Harriet Buswell. Hessel was a very respectable man, 31 years of age and a doctor of philosophy; he had married in 1868, and his wife was of course extremely anxious about his current situation. In 1872, a distinguished gentleman had proposed to form a colony for German emigrants to Brazil, and Hessel had been appointed pastor to that colony. Three witnesses, namely Fleck, Stalker, and the servant girl Nestor, had sworn that Hessel was identical to the man seen together with Harriet Buswell on Christmas Eve, but six or seven other witnesses had failed to identify him as the man they had seen. He suggested that Stalker had been influenced by the £200 reward, and that Fleck had been less than honest when he said that he had not read about the Great Coram Street murder in the newspapers; moreover, Fleck was contradicted by both the boys he employed. Mistaken identity of people was of daily occurrence, he pontificated, and although he did not deny that Dr Hessel must resemble the presumed murderer, they were not one and the same person. As for the evidence of the turpentine requested by Hessel, to clean up some clothes, and as for the blood-stained pocket handkerchiefs, Frau Hessel could have provided some very good evidence, if it had been possible to call her as a witness. And was it at all likely that any murderer with a sense of self-preservation would have brought six or seven handkerchiefs stained with the blood of his victim from London to Ramsgate, and then put them in the laundry where they were bound to attract unwelcome notice?



*Harriet Buswell is picked up by the murderer: was it Dr Hessel? from the Illustrated Police Budget for 1906*

The first defence witness was the apothecary Carl Wohllebe, who had known Dr Hessel and his family before they went to sea on board the Wangerland. Together with the two Hessels and Mr Louis Hermes, he had gone to London on December 22, staying at Kroll's Hotel in America Square. On the afternoon the following day, Dr Hessel was suddenly taken ill, with fever, headache, and a persistent cough. Wohllebe advised him to drink some camomile tea. On Christmas Eve, Wohllebe gave the ailing Hessel some chloral hydrate to help him sleep, before he went out with Hermes for an evening about the town, visiting Gatti's restaurant at Charing Cross, and some other establishments in the Haymarket. He got home at 1 am, and was let in by the waiter Christian Cazalet; when passing Hessel's room, he heard him coughing, and saw his boots outside the door. Wohllebe next saw Hessel at ten or eleven on Christmas morning; he seemed a little better, but was still in bed. He said that he had been taking too much chloral hydrate, and that his wife had heard him walking in his sleep. He claimed to have made a diary of his doings in London, which was produced in court, with entries to the effect that the Pastor had been very ill on the 23rd of December, but that he perked up after receiving some chloral hydrate. No doctor was called in, and although Wohllebe was not a qualified medical man, Hessel relied upon his ministrations. On December 27, Hessel was well enough to accompany his friends to the Covent Garden Theatre. He told Wohllebe that he had never been to London before, a very important point that was not contested by the prosecution. When they had returned to Ramsgate, the stairs at the Royal Hotel were being painted, and after Frau Hessel had got some paint on her dress, Wohllebe had recommended her to use turpentine to get it clean.

The next witness was George Evers, a porter at Kroll's Hotel. He could well recollect how Dr Hessel, his wife, and his two friends had come to the hotel on December 22. The following day, Hessel had ordered a cab to take a ride around London with his wife, but when he returned in the early afternoon, he complained of catching a cold, and feeling quite unwell. Evers was certain that Hessel had not left the hotel from the afternoon of December 23 until December 26. Hessel had only brought one pair of boots with him to London, and Evers had seen them outside the door, and heard the ailing Pastor coughing inside his room on Christmas Eve. At between 5.30 and 6 am on Christmas morning, he had cleaned and oiled Dr Hessel's boots, which were still outside his room. Christian Cazalet, a waiter at Kroll's Hotel, also remembered the four Germans arriving at the hotel. He could remember Hessel going for a drive with his wife on December 23, and afterwards complaining of feeling ill, and asking for some camomile tea. On Christmas Eve, Hessel and his wife had come down to the hotel dining-room at seven in the evening, expressing approbation at the handsome

Christmas-tree that had been erected in Mr Kroll's room. They retired to bed at eleven, but Hessel had rung his bell for some tea and a glass of rum at a quarter to midnight. When Cazolet went to bed at 1 am, Hessel's boots were outside his room door. On Christmas morning, Hessel had rung his bell at eight in the morning; he was still in bed, and ordered breakfast for his wife only. He still seemed quite unwell, but roused himself at two in the afternoon, to dine with Herr Kroll the hotel proprietor. Cazolet said that the front door of the hotel was always locked at ten past eleven in the evening: guests who wanted to get out or come in had to ring for assistance.

Ernest Kroll introduced himself as the proprietor of the hotel in America Square, and a naturalized British citizen. His hotel was particularly popular among the German visitors to London. He knew Louis Hermes, who had reserved rooms for himself and his three companions. On Christmas Eve, Kroll had seen Hessel and his wife at seven in the dining-room at seven in the evening; the Pastor had seen the children decorating the Christmas-tree, and expressed his pleasure that Christmas was observed the same way as in Germany. Hessel had retired to bed close to eleven in the evening, at about the same time that the front door was locked and bolted. At shortly before midnight, he had heard Hessel ring his bell, and ordered Cazolet to answer it; he had later seen the camomile tea boiling on the hob. On Christmas Day, Kroll had dined with Hessel, who had spoken at length of the good feeling between England and Germany. Hessel had not left the hotel at all on that day, but on Boxing Day, he had perked up, being able to go out with his wife in the morning, and to visit the theatre in the evening. He had brought only one suit of clothes to the hotel: a grey coat and dark trousers, and a little round hat. Like Cazolet, Kroll had not noticed any pimples on his face during his stay at the hotel.

Since there was no further evidence to present, the magistrate Mr Vaughan summed up the case. He declared that to his mind, the witnesses for the prosecution picking out Dr Hessel had been mistaken, and it had been conclusively proven by the defence that he had not been the companion of Harriet Buswell the evening she was murdered. He ordered Hessel to be released, to leave the court without suspicion, and without a stain upon his character. There was much cheering and waving of hats from the spectators, and from the enormous pro-Hessel crowd that had congregated in the street. The Pastor was recognized by the crowd as he left the court, and cheered all the way up Bow Street.

\* \* \* \* \*

As for the press reaction to the release of Dr Hessel, there was much sympathy with the luckless German clergyman, and much criticism of the police. The *Globe* deplored the recklessness and audacity of the police in snatching the worthy chaplain away from his flock, and kicking him into a cell accused of being a murderer. The *Weekly Dispatch* predicted that after the Hessel debacle, the Great Coram Street murderer would never be found: all the detectives could do was to worry publicans and orange girls. *The Times* was most indignant, saying that a cruel injury had been inflicted on Dr Hessel without the slightest justification; what would the English public say if such unjust treatment had been administered to an Englishman abroad? A certain Waldemar Fitzroy Peacock, a vociferous critic of the police, wrote a pamphlet about the Great Coram Street murder, which was published by the anti-establishment F. Farrah, of 282 Strand. Peacock deplored the lack of analytical skill possessed by the Scotland Yard detectives: "They possess none, and it is notorious that they make a mull of nearly every intricate case taken in hand. What about the Eltham murder, the Hoxton murder, or the murder of Eliza Grimwood (which in its features was counterpart with the present Coram-street Tragedy). Moreover, the circumstances connected with the George-street murder are somewhat identical with those of the present, and the criminal is at liberty." Peacock boldly proposed that Harriet Buswell had dined with a foreigner at the Alhambra Restaurant, but that they had afterwards parted company, only for her to be 'picked up' by another man at the Christmas waits in Russell Square. This individual, a hired assassin employed by some deadly enemy of Harriet Buswell, was the real Great Coram Street murderer. Peacock makes much of some minor discrepancies between the descriptions of the man seen at the Alhambra, and the later sightings by Fleck and his two boys, and by Mary Nestor. He was in difficulties when attempting to point out the instigator behind the murder; he asked a question concerning the father of Harriet's illegitimate child, but according to the police, this individual was long since dead. Having little respect for the budding sons of Aesculapius, he suggested that the hired assassin might have been some dissolute German medical student. According to a note in the police files on the Great Coram Street murder, the Peacock pamphlet contained "nothing of the slightest utility," and as for the publisher Farrah, he had been proceeded against at Bow Street and the Old Bailey for other matters.

As for the police investigation of the Great Coram Street murder, it entered a hibernating stage after the discharge of Gottfried Hessel. When the coroner's inquest was resumed on February 3, Dr Lankester summed up the case. He presumed that Harriet Buswell must have been murdered by the man she had met at the Alhambra. The evidence

suggested that he had remained in the room with the body for several hours after the murder, and that he had been more or less familiar with the layout of the house, to facilitate his escape. The jury returned the verdict that Harriet Buswell had been murdered by some person or persons unknown. In April 1873, a man named Joseph Stadden was prosecuted for obtaining money by false pretences: among other misdeeds, he had cheated a police sergeant out of five shillings by falsely alleging that he could identify the Great Coram Street murderer. The police files on the case mention Patta Hunt, alias Sidney, a London prostitute who was said to nourish ill feelings against Harriet Buswell, after she had given information to the police when one of Patta's male friends had been charged with stealing a coat at the Holborn Casino. They also mention a certain J.W. Pycroft, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, who contacted the police in April 1874, saying that he very much deplored that part of the Society's library had been converted into a sleeping-room for the Secretary's footman Henry Buswell. He claimed to know that Harriet Buswell had visited her brother at the Society, and suggested that the Secretary Mr Charles Knight Watson should be investigated: a plain-clothes policeman should be employed to fetch the Great Coram Street landlady and have her identify Mr Watson as the murderer. But since Pycroft appeared very eccentric, and was shabbily dressed, the police did not follow up this lead. There were also tips concerning a thief named Edward Murray, who was said to have once cohabited with Harriet Buswell; a German named Weiss who played in a marching band in Brighton; and a troupe of Japanese gymnasts performing in Brighton.

As for Gottfried Hessel, he proved to be a great whinger, complaining at length about the quality of his prison cell: it had been quite cold, aggravating his bronchitis, and there had been an unpleasant draught. The prison 'grub' had been unprepossessing: he had only been served two eggs with his luncheon, and not enough *Bier* for his liking. The police had been officious and overbearing, and the prison warders gruff and unfriendly. In the end, Hessel was awarded £1000 compensation, and an apology from Prime Minister William Gladstone. Queen Victoria personally sent him a sympathetic message, regretting that he had been subjected to such ill-treatment while behind bars. Hessel sent a share of this money, and an engraved silver cup he had been given, to his sorely afflicted father, the Pastor of Langenlonsheim near Kreuznach. There is nothing to suggest that he went to Brazil, since a newspaper notice records that he was the translator of a German edition of the lectures of Ernest Renan, given in London in April 1880. He later adopted the name 'Heinrich Jacob Bernard Gottfried Hessel', and was in Baden in early 1882. An individual by that exact name, "formerly of Berlin, Germany, and believed to be late of Chicago, U.S.A.", died intestate on New Year's Eve 1901.

As for the apple found in the murder room, the cast of it was never made any use of: Sherlock Holmes would of course have given Dr Hessel another apple to eat, snatched it away from him after one bite, and made a comparison with the cast, but he had not been invented by that time, and good old-fashioned policework was considered more important than such flashy showmanship. Or perhaps the dodgy German parson was wearing patent dentures, thus invalidating the evidence from the apple? The apple and the cast were deposited into that rather disreputable repository of criminal memorabilia, the Black Museum at Scotland Yard. In a feature on the Great Coram Street murder published in 1890, a journalist could describe and depict quite a host of murder memorabilia: apart from the shrivelled apple and the case of the murderer's teeth, there was Harriet Buswell's box, with the oranges and nuts the murderer had given to her, her prayer-book and bible, and two cigarette boxes, one of which contained a cigarette with the impression of a blood-stained finger. The apple was said to have remained at the Black Museum in 1894, in 1901 and in 1923. When Richard Whittington-Egan searched for the apple and cast in the early 1980s, he was told that they had been lost, and when I contacted the Crime Museum in late 2006, they denied possessing any Great Coram Street murder memorabilia.



*Great Coram Street murder memorabilia in the Black Museum, from the Illustrated Police News, August 9 1890*

As for the murder house at No. 12 Great Coram Street, it still stood empty in July 1873, “and the greatest difficulty has been found in getting any one to occupy it, the popular idea being that the house is haunted.” There was a plan that was to be let to Miss Rye, “whose exertions in educating and providing for destitute children have been attended with much success.” But although Miss Rye was to have the house rent-free for two years, her tenure in the Great Coram Street house of horrors does not appear to have been a lengthy one: the formidable spectre of Harriet Buswell soon put Miss Rye and her disadvantaged urchins to flight. In April 1874, a man named Gould was summoned before the Hammersmith police court for making a racket outside a house in Notting Hill, which was presumed to be haunted by the locals. His defence was that he would like to rent a house in the neighbourhood, and that he had heard that haunted houses, like the notorious one in Great Coram Street, could be had for a discount. The Post Office Directory for 1874 has the murder house inhabited by a certain John George L’Anson, but he did not last long either. When the house was again put up for sale, a lady evangelist bought it for a knockdown price and reopened it as Miss Stride’s Home for Destitute Girls and Fallen Women. The haunting continued for several decades: the second floor back room, where the murder had been committed, was always kept locked, due to the eerie, unworldly sounds emanating from it at night. The murder house at No. 12 Great Coram Street stood for many decades to come, even after the street had been renamed Coram Street in 1901. In 1912, a woman named Annie Gross shot her rival Jessie Mackintosh dead in the lodging-house at No. 2 Coram Street. Both murder houses are gone today, victims of the construction of mansion flats.

\* \* \* \* \*

To sum up the case from an anti-Hesselian standpoint, a key fact is that the police detectives strongly suspected that he was the guilty man, even after the Bow Street magistrate had discharged him. The main evidence against Dr Hessel is that two people identified him as the man they had seen with Harriet Buswell on Christmas Eve, and that a third reliable witness identified him as the man she had seen leaving the murder house on Christmas morning. His alibi relied on one friend, a hotel manager he knew, and two young hotel servants. Hessel had behaved strangely after Wohllebe had been arrested, he had ordered turpentine at the Ramsgate hotel saying that he wanted to clean clothes, and then there was the matter of the blood-stained handkerchiefs found in his laundry. The old crime writer Hargrave Adam, who had excellent Scotland Yard contacts, accused Hessel of being the guilty man, claiming that his alibi had been a concoction. The shrewd crime writer Guy Logan hinted that Hessel had been a lucky man to get off scot-free, as did, many years later, none less than Richard Whittington-Egan. As for a motive, Hargrave Adam alleged that Hessel did not need one: the murder was simply a case of proto-Ripperine blood lust. Was there a rough-looking, stubbled, murderous Mr Hyde, behind the unctuous, clean-shaven facade of Dr Hessel?

There is no shortage of arguments in favour of the innocence of Dr Hessel. Whatever we think of the German Lutheran Church, Pastor Hessel must have had good knowledge of the Bible in general and its sixth commandment in particular, and if his religion was sincere, this would impede any predilection for nocturnal expeditions to decimate London’s defenceless prostitutes. Hessel came from a respectable family, and had no history of committing violent crime. Since he had never been in London before, and was not known to seek the company of prostitutes, there is no suggestion of a motive: why would this meek German clergyman run the risk of a noose round his neck, and then hellfire for eternity, just for some ill-defined ‘blood lust’? Seven out of nine witnesses who had seen Harriet Buswell with her sinister companion did not pick out Hessel; it is instructive that several of them thought him very much like the man, but the latter had been taller and rougher-looking, with long stubble, and dressed in workman’s attire. The clothes and boots that Hessel had brought with him to London did not match the dress of the murderer. His desire for turpentine to clean clothes can be explained by his wife’s mishap on the newly painted hotel stairs; the blood-stained handkerchiefs by some unanticipated feminine emergency, as indicated by Mr Straight. What murderer would be foolish enough to bring blood-stained articles back with him to the hotel, and then put them in the laundry, instead of simply getting rid of them? Dr Hessel’s alibi depended on four witnesses, whose stories did not contradict each other on a single point. Why, if Hessel had been the Great Coram Street murderer, would he attend a police identity parade from his own free will, running the risk of being picked out by the witnesses? Finally, Hessel arrived at the Kroll Hotel on December 22, in a clean-shaven state, and he must have shaved before going for his coach trip on December 23; this would not have given him time to develop the long, unattractive stubble that had adorned the murderer’s face.

As for the murderer of Harriet Buswell, he clearly must have resembled Dr Hessel in many respects, but he was taller, rougher-looking, and quite unshaven, rather like a young German labouring man. Since none of the servants recognized him as a habitué of the Alhambra, and since he did not know the correct omnibus fare, he may have been a sailor on

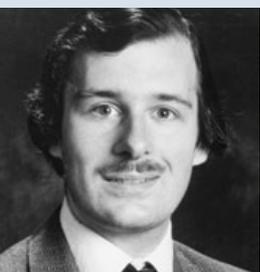


*Only a rump remains of Coram Street today; the remainder is buried underneath the unappealing concrete of the Brunswick Centre*

shore leave; since he could not afford to buy grapes for Harriet Buswell, and made a quarrel about the amount of fruit he had bought, he may well have been rather short of money. As for a motive for his hatred of prostitutes, it might well have been the classical one: vengeance after he had caught venereal disease, perhaps syphilis, from one of them. There is a note in the *Illustrated Police Budget* for 1906, to the effect that a few years earlier, a German silversmith named Toller had died in America. Among his effects was found a cabinet card photograph of Harriet Buswell, marked C.B. and with the date 24.12.1872, wrapped in a page from a Sunday newspaper giving an account of the murder. Since the *Illustrated Police Budget* had a low reputation, this may well be a hoax, but it is noteworthy that the police files on the Great Coram Street murder make particular mention of Harriet Buswell's collection of cabinet cards, and that no photograph of herself is included among the cards today kept in the file at the National Archives. Did the unknown murderer of Harriet Buswell, be he labouring man, sailor, or silversmith, enjoy celebrating Christmas each year, eating generous helpings of *Wurst* and *Sauerkraut*, with a liberal supply of good Yuletide *Bier*, and having a sentimental look at the cabinet card he had once taken away with him to celebrate his sanguineous masterpiece back in 1872, before going to bed and sleeping the sleep of the righteous; or did he lay trembling in fear, Scrooge-like, when he was haunted by the terrible Ghost of Christmas Past, late of Great Coram Street?

\* \* \* \* \*

*This article is an extract from Jan Bondeson's Rivals of the Ripper (The History Press, 2016), reviewed in this issue.*



JAN BONDESON is a senior lecturer and consultant rheumatologist at Cardiff University. He is the author of *Murder Houses of London*, *The London Monster*, *The Great Pretenders*, *Blood on the Snow* and other true crime books, as well as the bestselling *Buried Alive*.

# A Fatal Affinity: Marked for a Victim

## Chapter Seven: The Strange State of Colonel Mansfield

By NINA and HOWARD BROWN

127 years ago this month, the noted 'thought reader' Stuart Cumberland's Whitechapel murders-influenced fiction novel, *A Fatal Affinity*, was serialized in issues of the *South Australian Weekly Chronicle* (Adelaide). Cumberland's book was just one of several Ripper-related works which appeared contemporaneously to the East End murders. In the last issue of *Ripperologist* we published Chapter Four; here, we give Chapters Five and Six.

### A FATAL AFFINITY.

By STUART CUMBERLAND,  
Author of "The Queen's Highway," "The Rabbi's Spell," "A Thought-Reader's Thoughts," "The Vastly Deep," &c.

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#### Chapter VII The Strange State Of Colonel Mansfield

The news of the attempt on Miss Hardcastle's life speedily became known and created a profound sensation.

The newspapers issued special additions and placards bearing the following head-lines were carried about by yelling newsboys - THE MYSTERIOUS MURDERS! AN ATTEMPT!! THE WOULD-BE VICTIM SAVED BY A- CHARM!!!. The most extraordinary rumors were current. The murderer, it was said, was now known, and his arrest would be only a question of hours. One paper stated that the murderer, the keeper of an antiquity shop, had actually been arrested, and that Miss Hardcastle had indentified a dagger in his possession as the one that had been aimed at her heart. But these statements were flatly contradicted in subsequent editions; and as the day wore on, the police were, was asserted, without a clue. Miss Hardcastle was too ill to be seen by anyone; and the reporters had to content themselves with interviewing her father and Dr. Harvey. Dr. Harvey stated that, impelled by some unaccountable premonition, he had decided to keep guard outside his fiancee's house, believing, as he did, that her life was in danger. He added that he must have fallen asleep, for he was suddenly aroused by a piercing shriek coming from Miss Hardcastle's room. Fearing the worst, he rushed to the house-bell and rang it, at the same time crying loudly for help. The house was speedily aroused, and by the time the door was opened two policemen had appeared upon the scene. One accompanied him inside the house, whilst the other went round to the back. The back door, like the front, was fastened inside. All the windows too, were shut and latched, and the assassin could not have possibly left the house. Miss Hardcastle was found lying in her dressing-gown on the floor in a dead faint. She was, however, uninjured. Of the murderer there was no trace. The most rigorous search was made everywhere- even to the chimneys, but without avail. He certainly had not left by either the windows or the doors, and he was not in the house. Could the assassin be amongst the servants?. They were placed under arrest pending the return to consciousness of the young mistress. When she came to it was a strange story that she told- so strange, in fact, that every one thought her laboring under a hallucination; and were it not for the deep scratch on the locket made by the dagger, as evidence of the attempt the whole affair would have been put down as a disordered creation of the brain. The medical evidence went to show that the dagger scratch was in all probability

made by the very weapon used in connection with the previous murders, and that it was beyond question that the young lady owed her safety to the locket she wore round her neck. Had it not been for Colonel Mansfield's souvenir a tenth victim would of been added to the list. "What was the virtue of this talisman?" asked the writers in the papers. "How did Colonel Mansfield know the attempt would be made?"

"For he must have known, they argued; otherwise he would not have made the gift and have given the sole- mn instructions he did as to the wearing of it. "Couldn't Clonel Masfield throw some light upon the mystery?"

Couldn't he give a clue to the discovery of the murderer?" "We await Colonel Mansfield's explanation."

Dr. Harvey, as soon as he had assured himself of Evelyn's safety and the hopelessness of finding the assassin in the house or grounds, had driven to Colonel Mansfield's chambers in the Temple. It was close upon 10 o'clock when he arrived there, and he felt sure of finding his friend at home. But to his disappointment the caretaker told him she believed he was out. "When did her go out?" asked Harvey. "I don't know, Sir." Was the curt reply.

"E was out when I knocked at 'is door - at least 'e didn't answer; but when 'e went hout, sir, I don't knoe."

"Did he leave any message for me?" "None as I knows of, sir; shall I go and see?" "Thanks; I will go myself."

Harvey mounted the stairs and knocked at his friend's door. There was no answer. He entered the room; Mansfield was not there. His things were lying about so he evidently intended to return. On the table propped against the inkstand was a bulky packet, It at once attracted Harvey's attention. It was addressed as follows:-

"To F. Harvey, Esq, M.D. Not to be opened till the 20th of the present month. Dated 6th Sept, 18-".

So he was gone. His departure hinted at the night before had actually taken place. "But did he had gone to India, why had he left his wardrobe and travelling things behind him?" thought the young doctor. "But perhaps he has altered his mind," he concluded, "and has simply gone into the country for a few days." He knew him to be a man of curious habits, and not to be judged by ordinary rules; and his sudden departure did not particularly surprise him. It was, however, he said to himself, most unfortunate that he should be away at a time when his services might be of the greatest use. But there was no help for it; he was gone, and his reasons for going were probably contained in the packer he had left behind - a packet which, according to the instructions written thereon, was not to be opened for another fortnight. In the meantime the assassin, who with Colonel Mansfield help might be brought to justice, would probably escape. Harvey looked about the sitting room for some further signs of his absent friend. The fire grate was strewn with torn and burnt pieces of paper. Drawn on the carpet was a black ring, as if made with hot iron. "Queer idea to brunn one's carpets in this fashion" thought Harvey; "some chemical experiment, I suppose," he added, stepping inside the ring. "What is that?" said the young man looking hastily around. He thought he heard a sigh. "I wonder if there is anybody in the next room? Perhaps Mansfield's not up yet, although he us a deuce of an early riser." He went, as he said this, to his friend's bedroom, and knocked. He tried the handle- the door was fastened. "Are you in, Mansfield?" he called out, rattling the door handle. There was no reply. "I suppose he doesn't want anybody to meddle with his things whilst he is away," thought the young man, "and so locked up his room before going." Then something prompt- ed him to strike a light and look through the key-hole. The door was fastened from the inside, and the key was still in the lock. "Good God! can anything have happened to him?" exclaimed Harvey "It must have been his sigh I heard; perhaps he is lying there dying." "Mansfield! Mansfield! answer me, for Heaven's sake, if you are in there!" shouted the young man. But all was silent as the grave in a closed room. "The door must opened and the worst known," said Harvey, ringing the bell. The housekeeper after some moments of tantalising delay appeared in the answer to the summons. "Did you ring, sir?" "Ring, woman! why every one in the whole place must have heard me." "And what do you please to want, sir?" "I want this door opened; I believe my friend to be in there" "Goodness, me, sir, what make you think that? 'E ain't inside or 'e'd 've 'eard me knock when I brought 'is 'ot water cup. "E's a dreadful hearly riser is the colonel. When I knocks, sir, there his few as can't 'ear me;" and the woman gave a loud rat-a-tat-tat at the door. "There, you see, sir, 'e aint' in there; I told you so."

"But the door is locked from the inside, and the key is in the lock," explained Harvey. "'his it? Well. that's a rum go," replied the housekeeper, with a curious look on her not over-clean face. "Doors, sir, can't lock theirselves, especially from the inside," and you may depend upon it, sir, that the colonel is inside after all. Now, if the door 'd been locked from the outside, even if the key 'adn't bin in the lock, I should 've said as 'ow the colonel was hout and not him; but seein' as 'ow-" Harvey cut her short, and requested her to get something with which to force the door. "Something to force the door with! Bless you, sir, it don't want much forcing. These doors is that rotten and shaky that I expects every puff of wind to blow 'em horf their 'inges. A little shove with your shoulder, sirm and it'll bust open at once." Harvey applied his shoulder to the door, and in a little while it gave way.

**MARKED FOR A VICTIM**  
**A THRILLING STORY OF LOVE**  
**AND MYSTICISM**

**FOUNDED ON WHITECHAPEL'S TRAGEDIES**  
 and Expressing the Author's Theory of that Series  
 of Mysteries.

BY  
**STUART CUMBERLAND,**  
 "Thought-Reader" to Europe's Crowned Heads,  
 Occultist and Psychologist.

No sound came from the inner room as the door swung back. "Was Mansfield in there, after all? If so, was he alive or dead?" were the thoughts that coursed through the young man's mind as he entered the room.

For answer he saw his friend lying on the bed, still and rigid as if in death. A cry escaped his lips, which was taken up by the housekeeper with vigor. "Poor gentleman, 'e's dead, sure enough," she said. "Only last night as hever was I 'eard the death-watch tick. I knew as 'ow it wasn't tickin' for nothink, but I didn't think it was meant for the poor colonel. No, that I didn't;" and the good woman wiped away a tear with a corner of her apron. "But only fancy, sir 'm a puttin' on

'is shrowd before dyin'." She pointed to the motionless form of Mansfield, which was covered with the long white robe he has worn whilst evoking the Shade of Darkness. By this time Harvey was by his friend's bedside. He lifted the left arm; it was stiff as in death. He put his ear to his heart; there was no sign of life. He tried to lift his eyelids, but they were set fast,.

Yet the young doctor did not believe his friend was to be dead. There was all the outward appearance of death, but all the same body looked more like that of one in whom life was suspended than one in whom life was extinct. Something seemed to tell him that his friend although absolutely insensible to all around him was not actually dead but in a deep trance. As he was examining the body his eyes alighted on a note pinned to the breast of the long white robe. Harvey unfastened it and read its contents, which ran as follows:-

"I am not dead, but am merely asleep. Do not move me or disturb me in any way. The packet I have left in the next room addressed to my friend Dr. Harvey will explain everything. I place myself in Dr. Harvey's charge, and I wish him to take possession of the keys of my room. "Lionel Mansfield. "Sept. 6th, 18-." "That packet; I wonder what it contains?" thought Harvey. "There is something strange about the whole thing; the mystery increases instead of diminishing, and this" (taking the bulky envelope out of his pocket) "is apparently the key to it." He logged to tear open the cover and read its contents then and there; but his friend's instructions were imperative, and he restrained himself. "Not to be opened till the 20th of September," he muttered to himself.

"Well, old fellow, your wishes shall be strictly carried out." after giving instructions for someone to sit by Mansfield's bedside whilst he was absent, Harvey took his departure.

*To be continued in the next issue of Ripperologist*



NINA and HOWARD BROWN are the proprietors of *JTRForums.com*.  
 With thanks to Zenaida Serrano.

Victorian Fiction

# The Amputated Arms

By Jørgen Vilhelm Bergsøe

Edited with an Introduction by Eduardo Zinna

## Introduction

I first came across our Victorian Fiction selection for this issue in Volume 5 of the *Library of the World's Best Mystery and Detective Stories* edited by Nathaniel Hawthorne's son Julian. It was nestling discreetly amid other mysteries from Germany, Russia and Scandinavia, minding its own business and not drawing any attention to itself. Yet it stood out by reason of its title, *The Amputated Arms*. This title both intrigued and dismayed me. On the one hand, it was simple and direct and promised the sort of thrills which *Ripperologist* readers would enjoy. On the other, it might preside instead over an early specimen of the rather nasty *conte cruel* best exemplified by the *Pan Books of Horror Stories* and the *Saw* and *Hostel* series of films. Not bad, of their type, but not for every palate.

I had no reason to fear. *The Amputated Arms* is free from gruesome physical horrors and the limbs of its title do not belong to a living person but to an anatomical model. Yet this does not mean that the story does not offer thrills of its own. It starts gently enough with an elderly physician recalling his days at university - a time, it seems, of friendship and drinking and laughter as much as of study - and evolves gracefully into an encounter with the supernatural; a modern retelling, in fact, of a very old legend. I will not commit the solecism of identifying this legend, but will leave to you the pleasure of encountering it for the first time or rediscovering it, like an old friend, after an unexpected absence.

The author of the story, Jørgen Vilhelm Bergsøe, was unknown to me. Nor did he appear in the most basic articles on Danish literature, which boasts of a score or two of noteworthy writers, including two Nobel prize winners, Henrik Pontoppidan and Johannes V Jensen, the philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard, the favourite fabulist Hans Christian Andersen and Karen Blixen of *Out of Africa* fame. Bergsøe was, however, a popular novelist, poet and short-story writer, as well as a naturalist, zoologist and numismatist. He was born on 8 February 1835 at the Royal Porcelain Factory in Copenhagen - now Royal Copenhagen - of which his father was the Director. He studied zoology, graduating in 1860 and obtaining his Ph.D. in 1864, and wrote profusely on the subject. Owing to the serious impairment of his eyesight, which for a while threatened to develop into blindness, he was forced to abandon his career. In 1861 he went on a study and convalescence journey to Italy, where he remained several years. Back in Denmark, in 1866, he dictated *From Piazza del Popolo*, a novel consisting of seven long stories told by members of the Danish artists' colony in Rome as they wait for the release of a colleague kidnapped by brigands. Their characters include British lords and ladies, Danish students, Italian prostitutes and thieves. The novel enjoyed notable success and from then on Bergsøe devoted himself fully to literature.

Other novels included *From the Old Factory* (1869), a fictionalized account of Bergsøe's own childhood at the Royal Porcelain Factory. It has been pointed out that it 'features one of the first appearances



Jørgen Vilhelm Bergsøe

# Gjengangerfortællinger.

VILHELM BERGSØE

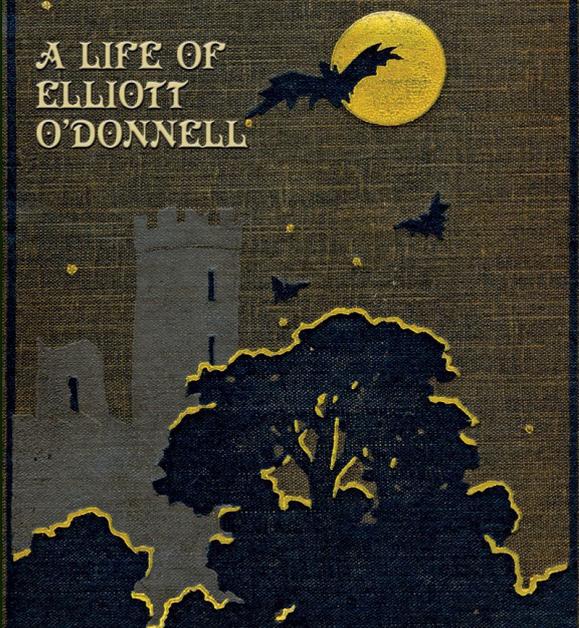


of factory life in the Danish novel, albeit from the perspective of the director's son.' Later followed *In the Sabine Mountains* (1871), *Rørvig's Wife* (1871), *Italian Stories* (1874), *Under the Sunset* (1876), *Who Was He?* (1878), *In the Old Days* (1885) and *From the Countries of the Sun* (1886). His books of verse included *Nostalgia* (1872) and *Floral Vignettes* (1873). Again and again he returned to life in Italy; in 1877 he published *Rome Under Pius IX: Sketches and Descriptions*. In 1869 Bergsøe wrote one of the first Danish science-fiction novels, *A Journey on the Flying Fish 'Prometheus'*, a narrative of a transatlantic voyage on a vessel which can fly above the waters and dive beneath their surface which has been embraced by Steampunk aficionados. In his waning years he tackled social subjects in *The Man of Truth* (1894) and *The Counterfeiter* (1900). Jørgen Vilhelm Bergsøe died in Copenhagen on 26 June 1911.

*The Amputated Arms* first appeared in book form in 1871, in a collection entitled *Gjengangerfortællinger*. It had, however, been published before. Apparently the title of the book is a play on words inspired by the title of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales*. It indicates that the stories it contains are both ghost stories and repeated stories, that is to say, stories that had appeared before in magazines and other publications.

## THE MASTER GHOST HUNTER

A LIFE OF  
ELLIOTT  
O'DONNELL



RICHARD WHITTINGTON-EGAN

COMING SOON

## The Master Ghost Hunter A Life of Elliott O'Donnell

By Richard Whittington-Egan

A dapper figure - gold-rimmed pince-nez, scarlet-lined cloak, silver-knobbed cane - Elliott O'Donnell was the world-famed prince of ghost hunters. His life spanned 93 years, 1872-1965.

He remembered Jack the Ripper, the ghost of whose victims he sought, and Kate Webster, the savage Irish cook of Richmond, who slaughtered her mistress, Mrs Julia Thomas, and boiled her head up in a saucepan. Other phantoms ranged from poltergeist, weird box-headed elemental spirits with eyes that glowed like yellow moons, sweet-visaged old ladies in bonnets and crinolines, to an evil Dublin ghost that tried to strangle him. He hunted the haunted and the hunters throughout England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Further afield, he came face to face with supernatural horrors in New York, and San Francisco, and we accompany him on a horse-ridden expedition into the heart of a haunted American forest.

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

# The Amputated Arms

By Jørgen Vilhelm Bergsøe

It happened when I was about eighteen or nineteen years old (began Dr Simsen). I was studying at the University, and being coached in anatomy by my old friend Sølling. He was an amusing fellow, this Sølling. Full of jokes and whimsical ideas, and equally merry, whether he was working at the dissecting table or brewing a punch for a jovial crowd.

He had but one fault—if one might call it so—and that was his exaggerated idea of punctuality. He grumbled if you were late two minutes; any longer delay would spoil the entire evening for him. He himself was never known to be late. At least not during the entire years of my studying.

One Wednesday evening our little circle of friends met as usual in my room at seven o'clock. I had made the customary preparations for the meeting, had borrowed three chairs – I had but one myself – had cleaned all my pipes, and had persuaded Hans to take the breakfast dishes from the sofa and carry them downstairs. One by one my friends arrived, the clock struck seven, and to our great astonishment, Sølling had not yet appeared. One, two, even five minutes passed before we heard him run upstairs and knock at the door with his characteristic short blows.

When he entered the room he looked so angry and at the same time so upset that I cried out: 'What's the matter, Sølling? You look as if you had been robbed.'

'That's exactly what has happened,' replied Sølling angrily. 'But it was no ordinary sneak thief,' he added, hanging his overcoat behind the door.

'What have you lost?' asked my neighbour Nansen.

'Both arms from the new skeleton I've just recently received from the hospital,' said Sølling with an expression as if his last cent had been taken from him. 'It's vandalism!'

We burst out into loud laughter at this remarkable answer, but Sølling continued: 'Can you imagine it? Both arms are gone, cut off at the shoulder joint; and the strangest part of it is that the same thing has been done to my shabby old skeleton which stands in my bedroom. There wasn't an arm on either of them.'

'That's too bad,' I remarked. 'For we were just going to study the anatomy of the arm to-night.'

'Osteology,' corrected Sølling gravely. 'Get out your skeleton, little Simsen. It isn't as good as mine, but it will do for this evening.'

I went to the corner where my anatomical treasures were hidden behind a green curtain – 'the Museum,' was what Sølling called it – but my astonishment was great when I found my skeleton in its accustomed place and wearing as usual my student's uniform – but without arms.

'The devil!' cried Sølling. 'That was done by the same person who robbed me; the arms are taken off at the shoulder joint in exactly the same manner. You did it, Simsen!'

I declared my innocence, very angry at the abuse of my fine skeleton, while Nansen cried: 'Wait a moment, I'll bring in mine. There hasn't been a soul in my room since this morning, I can swear to that. I'll be back in an instant.'

He hurried into his room, but returned in a few moments greatly depressed and somewhat ashamed. The skeleton was in its usual place, but the arms were gone, cut off at the shoulder in exactly the same manner as mine.

The affair, mysterious in itself, had now come to be a serious matter. We lost ourselves in suggestions and explanations, none of which seemed to throw any light on the subject. Finally we sent a messenger to the other side of the house where, as I happened to know, was a new skeleton which the young student Ravn had recently received from the janitor of the hospital.

Ravn had gone out and taken the key with him. The messenger whom we had sent to the rooms of the Iceland students returned with the information that one of them had used the only skeleton they possessed

to pummel the other with, and that consequently only the thigh bones were left unbroken.

What were we to do? We couldn't understand the matter at all. Sølling scolded and cursed and the company was about to break up when we heard someone coming noisily upstairs. The door was thrown open and a tall, thin figure appeared on the threshold – our good friend Niels Daae.

He was a strange chap, this Niels Daae, the true type of a species seldom found nowadays. He was no longer young, and by reason of a queer chain of circumstances, as he expressed it, he had been through nearly all the professions and could produce papers proving that he had been on the point of passing not one but three examinations.

He had begun with theology; but the story of the quarrel between Jacob and Esau had led him to take up the study of law. As a law student he had come across an interesting poisoning case, which had proved to him that a study of medicine was extremely necessary for lawyers; and he had taken up the study of medicine with such energy that he had forgotten all his law and was about to take his last examinations at the age of forty.

Niels Daae took the story of our troubles very seriously. 'Every pot has two handles,' he began. 'Every sausage two ends, every question two sides, except this one—this has three.' (Applause.) 'When we look at it from the legal point of view there can be no doubt that it belongs in the category of ordinary theft. But from the fact that the thief took only the arms when he might have taken the entire skeleton, we must conclude that he is not in a responsible condition of mind, which therefore introduces a medical side to the affair. From a legal point of view, the thief must be convicted for robbery, or at least for the illegal appropriation of the property of others; but from the medical point of view, we must acquit him, because he is not responsible for his acts. Here we have two professions quarrelling with one another, and who shall say which is right? But now I will introduce the theological point of view, and raise the entire affair up to a higher plane. Providence, in the material shape of a patron of mine in the country, whose children I have inoculated with the juice of wisdom, has sent me two fat geese and two first-class ducks. These animals are to be cooked and eaten this evening in Mathiesen's establishment, and I invite this honoured company to join me there. Personally I look upon the disappearance of these arms as an all-wise intervention of Providence, which sets its own inscrutable wisdom up against the wisdom which we would otherwise have heard from the lips of my venerable friend Sølling.'

Daae's confused speech was received with laughter and applause, and Sølling's weak protests were lost in the general delight at the invitation. I have often noticed that such improvised festivities are usually the most enjoyable, and so it was for us that evening. Niels Daae treated us to his ducks and to his most amusing jokes, Sølling sang his best songs, our jovial host Mathiesen told his wittiest stories, and the merriment was in full swing when we heard cries in the street, and then a rush of confused noises broken by screams of pain.

'There's been an accident,' cried Sølling, running out to the door.

We all followed him and discovered that a pair of run-away horses had thrown a carriage against a tree, hurling the driver from his box, under the wheels. His right arm had been broken near the shoulder. In the twinkling of an eye the hall of festivities was transformed into an emergency hospital. Sølling shook his head as he examined the injury, and ordered the transport of the patient to the city hospital. It was his belief that the arm would have to be amputated, cut off at the shoulder joint, just as had been the case with our skeleton. 'Damned odd coincidence, isn't it?' he remarked to me.

Our merry mood had vanished and we took our way, quiet and depressed, through the old avenues toward our home. For the first time in its existence possibly, our venerable 'barracks,' as we called the dormitory, saw its occupants returning home from an evening's bout just as the night watchman intoned his eleven o'clock verse.

'Just eleven,' exclaimed Sølling. 'It's too early to go to bed, and too late to go anywhere else. We'll go up to your room, little Simsen, and see if we can't have some sort of a lesson this evening. You have your coloured plates and we'll try to get along with them. It's a nuisance that we should have lost those arms

just this evening.’

‘The Doctor can have all the arms and legs he wants,’ grinned Hans, who came out of the doorway just in time to hear Sølling’s last word.

‘What do you mean, Hans?’ asked Sølling in astonishment.

‘It’ll be easy enough to get them,’ said Hans. ‘They’ve torn down the planking around the Holy Trinity churchyard, and dug up the earth to build a new wall. I saw it myself, as I came past the church. Lord, what a lot of bones they’ve dug out there! There’s arms and legs and heads, many more than the Doctor could possibly need.’

‘Much good that does us,’ answered Sølling. ‘They shut the gates at seven o’clock and it’s after eleven already.’

‘Oh, yes, they shut them,’ grinned Hans again. ‘But there’s another way to get in. If you go through the gate of the porcelain factory and over the courtyard, and through the mill in the fourth courtyard that leads out into Spring Street, there you will see where the planking is torn down and you can get into the churchyard easily.’

‘Hans, you’re a genius!’ exclaimed Sølling in delight. ‘Here, Simsen, you know that factory inside and out, you’re so friendly with that fellow Outzen who lives there. Run along to him and let him give you the key of the mill. It will be easy to find an arm that isn’t too much decayed. Hurry along, now; the rest of us will wait for you upstairs.’

To be quite candid I must confess that I was not particularly eager to fulfil Sølling’s command. I was at an age to have still a sufficient amount of reverence for death and the grave, and the mysterious occurrence of the stolen arms still ran through my mind. But I was still more afraid of Sølling’s irony and of the laughter of my comrades, so I trotted off as carelessly as if I had been sent to buy a package of cigarettes.

It was some time before I could arouse the old janitor of the factory from his peaceful slumbers. I told him that I had an important message from Outzen, and hurried upstairs to the latter’s room. Outzen was a strictly moral character; knowing this, I was prepared to have him refuse me the key which would let me into the fourth courtyard and from there into the cemetery. As I expected, Outzen took the matter very seriously. He closed the Hebrew Bible which he had been studying as I entered, turned up his lamp and looked at me in astonishment as I made my request.

‘Why, my dear Simsen, it is a most sinful deed that you are about to do,’ he said gravely. ‘Take my advice and desist. You will get no key from me for any such cause. The peace of the grave is sacred. No man dare disturb it.’

‘And how about the gravedigger? He puts the newly dead down beside the old corpses, and lives as peacefully as anyone else.’

‘He is doing his duty,’ answered Outzen calmly. ‘But to disturb the peace of the grave from sheer daring, with the fumes of the punch still in your head – that is a different matter – that will surely be punished!’

His words irritated me. It is not very flattering, particularly if one is not yet twenty, to be told that you are about to perform a daring deed simply because you are drunk. Without any further reply to his protests I took the key from its place on the wall and ran downstairs two steps at a time, vowing to myself that I would take home an arm let cost what it would. I would show Outzen, and Sølling, and all the rest, what a devil of a fellow I was.

My heart beat rapidly as I stole through the long dark corridor, past the ruins of the old convent of St. Clara, into the so-called third courtyard. Here I took a lantern from the hall, lit it and crossed to the mill where the clay was prepared for the factory. The tall wheels and cylinders, with their straps and bolts, looked like weird creatures of the night in the dim light of my tallow candle. I felt my courage sinking even here, but I pulled myself together, opened the last door with my key and stepped out into the fourth courtyard. A moment later I stood on the dividing line between the cemetery and the factory.

The entire length of the tall blackened planking had been torn down. The pieces of it lay about, and the earth had been dug up to considerable depth, to make a foundation for a new wall between Life and Death. The uncanny emptiness of the place seized upon me. I halted involuntarily as if to harden myself against it. It was a raw, cold, stormy evening. The clouds flew past the moon in jagged fragments, so that the churchyard, with its white crosses and stones, lay now in full light, now in dim shadow. Now and then a rush of wind rattled over the graves, roared through the leafless trees, bent the complaining bushes, and caught itself in the little eddy at the corner of the church, only to escape again over the roofs, turning the old weathercock with a sharp scream of the rusty iron.

I looked toward the left—there I saw several weird white shapes moving gently in the moonlight. ‘White sheets,’ I said to myself, ‘it’s nothing but white sheets! This drying of linen in the churchyard ought to be stopped.’

I turned in the opposite direction and saw a heap of bones scarce two paces distant from me. Holding my lantern lower, I approached them and stretched out my hand—there was a rattling in the heap; something warm and soft touched my fingers.

I started and shivered. Then I exclaimed: ‘The rats! Nothing but the rats in the churchyard! I must not get frightened. It will be so foolish—they would laugh at me. Where the devil is that arm? I can’t find one that isn’t broken!’

With trembling knees and in feverish haste I examined one heap after another. The light in my lantern flickered in the wind and suddenly went out. The foul smell of the smoking wick rose to my face and I felt as if I were about to faint. It took all my energy to recover my control. I walked two or three steps ahead, and saw at a little distance a coffin which had been still in good shape when taken out of the earth.

I approached it and saw that it was of old-fashioned shape, made of heavy oaken boards that were already rotting. On its cover was a metal plate with an illegible inscription. The old wood was so brittle that it would have been very easy for me to open the coffin with any sort of a tool. I looked about me and saw a hatchet and a couple of spades lying near the fence. I took one of the latter, put its flat end between the boards—the old coffin fell apart with a dull crackling protest.

I turned my head aside, put my hand in through the opening, felt about, and taking a firm hold on one arm of the skeleton, I loosened it from the body with a quick jerk. The movement loosened the head as well, and it rolled out through the opening right to my very feet. I took up the skull to lay it in the coffin again—and then I saw a greenish phosphorescent glimmer in its empty eye sockets, a glimmer which came and went. Mad terror shook me at the sight. I looked up at the houses in the distance, then back again to the skull; the empty sockets shone more brightly than before. I felt that I must have some natural explanation for this appearance or I would go mad. I took up the head again—and never in my life have I had so overpowering an impression of the might of death and decay than in this moment. Myriads of disgusting clammy insects poured out of every opening of the skull, and a couple of shining, wormlike centipedes—Geophiles, the scientists call them—crawled about in the eye sockets. I threw the skull back into the coffin, sprang over the heaps of bones without even taking time to pick up my lantern, and ran like a hunted thing through the dark mill, over the factory courtyards, until I reached the outer gate. Here I washed the arm at the fountain, and smoothed my disarranged clothing. I hid my booty under my overcoat, nodded to the sleepy old janitor as he opened the door to me, and a few moments later I entered my own room with an expression which I had attempted to make quite calm and careless.

‘What the devil is the matter with you, Simsen?’ cried Sølling as he saw me. ‘Have you seen a ghost? Or is the punch wearing off already? We thought you’d never come; why, it’s nearly twelve o’clock!’

Without a word I drew back my overcoat and laid my booty on the table.

‘By all the devils,’ exclaimed Sølling in anatomical enthusiasm, ‘where did you find that superb arm? Simsen knows what he’s about all right. It’s a girl’s arm; isn’t it beautiful? Just look at the hand—how fine and delicate it is! Must have worn a No. 6 glove. There’s a pretty hand to caress and kiss!’

The arm passed from one to the other amid general admiration. Every word that was said increased my disgust for myself and for what I had done. It was a woman's arm, then—what sort of a woman might she have been? Young and beautiful possibly—her brothers' pride, her parents' joy. She had faded away in her youth, cared for by loving hands and tender thoughts. She had fallen asleep gently, and those who loved her had desired to give her in death the peace she had enjoyed throughout her lifetime. For this they had made her coffin of thick, heavy oaken boards. And this hand, loved and missed by so many—it lay there now on an anatomical table, encircled by clouds of tobacco smoke, stared at by curious glances, and made the object of coarse jokes. O God! How terrible it was!

'I must have that arm,' exclaimed Sølling, when the first burst of admiration had passed. 'When I bleach it and touch it up with varnish, it will be a superb specimen. I'll take it home with me.'

'No,' I exclaimed, 'I can't permit it. It was wrong of me to bring it away from the churchyard. I'm going right back to put the arm in its place.'

'Well, will you listen to that?' cried Sølling, amid the hearty laughter of the others. 'Simsen's so lyric, he certainly must be drunk. I must have that arm at any cost.'

'Not much,' cut in Niels Daae; 'you have no right to it. It was buried in the earth and dug out again; it is a find, and all the rest of us have just as much right to it as you have.'

'Yes, every one of us has some share in it,' said someone else.

'But what are you going to do about it?' remarked Sølling. 'It would be vandalism to break up that arm. What God has joined together let no man put asunder,' he concluded with pathos.

'Let's auction it off,' exclaimed Daae. 'I will be the auctioneer, and this key to the graveyard will serve me for a hammer.'

The laughter broke out anew as Daae took his place solemnly at the head of the table and began to whine out the following announcement: 'I hereby notify all present that on the 25th of November, at twelve o'clock at midnight, in corridor No. 5 of the student barracks, a lady's arm in excellent condition, with all its appurtenances of wrist bones, joints, and finger tips, is to be offered at public auction. The buyer can have possession of his purchase immediately after the auction, and a credit of six weeks will be given to any reliable customer. I bid a Danish shilling.'

'One mark,' cried Sølling mockingly.

'Two,' cried somebody else.

'Four,' exclaimed Sølling. 'It's worth it. Why don't you join in, Simsen? You look as if you were sitting in a hornet's nest.'

I bid one mark more, and Sølling raised me a thaler. There were no more bids, the hammer fell, and the arm belonged to Sølling.

'Here, take this,' he said, handing me a mark piece; 'it's part of your commission as grave robber. You shall have the rest later, unless you prefer that I should turn it over to the drinking fund.' With these words Sølling wrapped the arm in a newspaper, and the gay crowd ran noisily down the stairs and through the streets, until their singing and laughter were lost in the distance.

I stood alone, still dazed and bewildered, staring at the piece of money in my hand. My thoughts were far too much excited that I should hope to sleep. I turned up my lamp and took out one of my books to try and study myself into a quieter mood. But without success.

Suddenly I heard a sound like that of a swinging pendulum. I raised my head and listened attentively. There was no clock either in my room or in the neighbouring ones—but I could still hear the sound. At the same moment my lamp began to flicker. The oil was apparently exhausted. I was about to rise to fill it again, when my eyes fell upon the door, and I saw the graveyard key, which I had hung there, moving slowly back and forth with a rhythmic swing. Just as its motion seemed about to die away, it would receive a gentle push as from an unseen hand, and would swing back and forth more than ever. I stood there with open mouth and staring eyes, ice-cold chills ran down my back, and drops of perspiration stood out on my

forehead. Finally, I could endure it no longer. I sprang to the door, seized the key with both hands and put it on my desk under a pile of heavy books. Then I breathed a sigh of relief.

My lamp was about to go out and I discovered that I had no more oil. With feverish haste I threw my clothes off, blew out the light and sprang into bed as if to smother my fears.

But once alone in the darkness the fears grew worse than ever. They grew into dreams and visions. It seemed to me as if I were out in the graveyard again, and heard the screaming of the rusty weather vane as the wind turned it. Then I was in the mill again; the wheels were turning and stretching out ghostly hands to draw me into the yawning maw of the machine. Then again, I found myself in a long, low, pitch-black corridor, followed by Something I could not see—Something that drove me to the mouth of a bottomless abyss. I would start up out of my half sleep, listen and look about me, then fall back again into an uneasy slumber.

Suddenly something fell from the ceiling onto the bed, and ‘buzz—buzz—buzz’ sounded about my head. It was a huge fly which had been sleeping in a corner of my room and had been roused by the heat of the stove. It flew about in great circles, now around the bed, now in all four corners of the chamber—‘buzz—buzz—buzz’—it was unendurable! At last I heard it creep into a bag of sugar which had been left on the window sill. I sprang up and closed the bag tight. The fly buzzed worse than ever, but I went back to bed and attempted to sleep again, feeling that I had conquered the enemy.

I began to count: I counted slowly to one hundred, two hundred, finally up to one thousand, and then at last I experienced that pleasant weakness which is the forerunner of true sleep. I seemed to be in a beautiful garden, bright with many flowers and odorous with all the perfumes of spring. At my side walked a beautiful young girl. I seemed to know her well, and yet it was not possible for me to remember her name, or even to know how we came to be wandering there together. As we walked slowly through the paths she would stop to pick a flower or to admire a brilliant butterfly swaying in the air. Suddenly a cold wind blew through the garden. The young girl trembled and her cheeks grew pale. ‘I am cold,’ she said to me, ‘do you not see? It is Death who is approaching us.’

I would have answered, but in the same moment another stronger and still more icy gust roared through the garden. The leaves turned pale on the trees, the flowerets bent their heads, and the bees and butterflies fell lifeless to the earth. ‘That is Death,’ whispered my companion, trembling.

A third icy gust blew the last leaves from the bushes, white crosses and gravestones appeared between the bare twigs—and I was in the churchyard again and heard the screaming of the rusty weather vane. Beside me stood a heavy brass-bound coffin with a metal plate on the cover. I bent down to read the inscription, the cover rolled off suddenly, and from out the coffin rose the form of the young girl who had been with me in the garden. I stretched out my arms to clasp her to my breast—then, oh horror! I saw the greenish-gleaming, empty eye sockets of the skull. I felt bony arms around me, dragging me back into the coffin. I screamed aloud for help and woke up.

My room seemed unusually light; but I remembered that it was a moonlight night and thought no more of it. I tried to explain the visions of my dream with various natural noises about me. The imprisoned fly buzzed as loudly as a whole swarm of bees; one half of my window had blown open, and the cold night air rushed in gusts into my room.

I sprang up to close the window, and then I saw that the strong white light that filled my room did not come from the moon, but seemed to shine out from the church opposite. I heard the chiming of the bells, soft at first, as if in far distance, then stronger and stronger until, mingled with the rolling notes of the organ, a mighty rush of sound struck against my windows. I stared out into the street and could scarcely believe my eyes. The houses in the market place just beyond were all little one-story buildings with bow windows and wooden eave troughs ending in carved dragon heads. Most of them had balconies of carved woodwork, and high stone stoops with gleaming brass rails.

But it was the church most of all that aroused my astonishment. Its position was completely changed. Its front turned toward our house where usually the side had stood. The church was brilliantly lighted, and

now I perceived that it was this light which filled my room. I stood speechless amid the chiming of the bells and the roaring of the organ, and I saw a long wedding procession moving slowly up the centre aisle of the church toward the altar. The light was so brilliant that I could distinguish each one of the figures. They were all in strange old-time costumes; the ladies in brocades and satins with strings of pearls in their powdered hair, the gentlemen in uniform with knee breeches, swords, and cocked hats held under their arms. But it was the bride who drew my attention most strongly. She was clothed in white satin, and a faded myrtle wreath was twisted through the powdered locks beneath her sweeping veil. The bridegroom at her side wore a red uniform and many decorations. Slowly they approached the altar, where an old man in black vestments and a heavy white wig was awaiting them. They stood before him, and I could see that he was reading the ritual from a gold-lettered book.

One of the train stepped forward and unbuckled the bridegroom's sword, that his right hand might be free to take that of the bride. She seemed about to raise her own hand to his, when she suddenly sank fainting at his feet. The guests hurried toward the altar, the lights went out, the music stopped, and the figures floated together like pale white mists.

But outside in the square it was still brighter than before, and I suddenly saw the side portal of the church burst open and the wedding procession move out across the market place.

I turned as if to flee, but could not move a muscle. Quiet, as if turned to stone, I stood and watched the ghostly figures that came nearer and nearer. The clergyman led the train, then came the bridegroom and the bride, and as the latter raised her eyes to me I saw that it was the young girl of the garden. Her eyes were so full of pain, so full of sad entreaty that I could scarce endure them; but how shall I explain the feeling that shot through me as I suddenly discovered that the right sleeve of her white satin gown hung empty at her side? The train disappeared, and the tone of the church bells changed to a strange, dry, creaking sound, and the gate below me complained as it turned on its rusty hinges. I faced toward my own door. I knew that it was shut and locked, but I knew that the ghostly procession were coming to call me to account, and I felt that no walls could keep them out. My door flew open, there was a rustling as of silken gowns, but the figures seemed to float in in the changing forms of swaying white mists. Closer and closer they gathered around me, robbing me of breath, robbing me of the power to move. There was a silence as of the grave—and then I saw before me the old priest with his gold-lettered book. He raised his hand and spoke with a soft, deep voice: 'The grave is sacred! Let no one dare to disturb the peace of the dead.'

'The grave is sacred!' an echo rolled through the room as the swaying figures moved like reeds in the wind.

'What do you want? What do you demand?' I gasped in the grip of a deathly fear.

'Give back to the grave that which belongs to it,' said the deep voice again.

'Give back to the grave that which belongs to it,' repeated the echo as the swaying forms pressed closer to me.

'But it's impossible—I can't—I have sold it—sold it at auction!' I screamed in despair. 'It was buried and found in the earth—and sold for five marks eight shillings—'

A hideous scream came from the ghostly ranks. They threw themselves upon me as the white fog rolls in from the sea, they pressed upon me until I could no longer breathe. Beside myself, I threw open the window and attempted to spring out, screaming aloud: 'Help! help! Murder! They are murdering me!'

The sound of my own voice awoke me. I found myself in my night clothes on the window sill, one leg already out of the window and both hands clutching at the centre post. On the street below me stood the night watchman, staring up at me in astonishment, while faint white clouds of mist rolled out of my window like smoke. All around outside lay the November fog, grey and moist, and as the fresh air of the early dawn blew cool on my face I felt my senses returning to me. I looked down at the night watchman—God bless him! He was a big, strong, comfortably fat fellow made of real flesh and blood, and no ghost shape of the night. I looked at the round tower of the church—how massive and venerable it stood there, grey in the grey of the morning mists. I looked over at the market place. There was a light in the baker shop and a farmer stood before it, tying his horse to a post. Back in my own room everything was in its usual place.

Even the little paper bag with the sugar lay there on the window sill, and the imprisoned fly buzzed louder than ever. I knew that I was really awake and that the day was coming. I sprang back hastily from the window and was about to jump into bed, when my foot touched something hard and sharp.

I stooped to see what it was, felt about on the floor in the half light, and touched a long, dry, skeleton arm which held a tiny roll of paper in its bony fingers. I felt about again, and found still another arm, also holding a roll of paper. Then I began to think that my reason must be going. What I had seen thus far was only an unusually vivid dream—a vision of my heated imagination. But I knew that I was awake now, and yet here lay two—no, three (for there was still another arm)—hard, undeniable, material proofs that what I had thought was hallucination, might have been reality. Trembling in the thought that madness was threatening me, I tore open the first roll of paper. On it was written the name: ‘Sølling.’ I caught at the second and opened it. There stood the word: ‘Nansen.’

I had just strength enough left to catch the third paper and open it—there was my own name: ‘Simsen.’ Then I sank fainting to the floor.

When I came to myself again, Niels Daae stood beside me with an empty water bottle, the contents of which were dripping off my person and off the sofa upon which I was lying. ‘Here, drink this,’ he said in a soothing tone. ‘It will make you feel better.’

I looked about me wildly, as I sipped at the glass of brandy which put new life into me once more. ‘What has happened?’ I asked weakly.

‘Oh, nothing of importance,’ answered Niels. ‘You were just about to commit suicide by means of charcoal gas. Those are mighty bad ventilators on your old stove there. The wind must have blown them shut, unless you were fool enough to close them yourself before you went to bed. If you had not opened the window, you would have already been too far along the path to Paradise to be called back by a glass of brandy. Take another.’

‘How did you get up here?’ I asked, sitting upright on the sofa.

‘Through the door in the usual simple manner,’ answered Niels Daae. ‘I was on watch last night in the hospital; but Mathiesen’s punch is heavy and my watching was more like sleeping, so I thought it better to come away in the early morning. As I passed your barracks here, I saw you sitting in the window in your nightshirt and calling down to the night watchman that someone was murdering you. I managed to wake up Jansen down below you, and got into the house through his window. Do you usually sleep on the bare floor?’

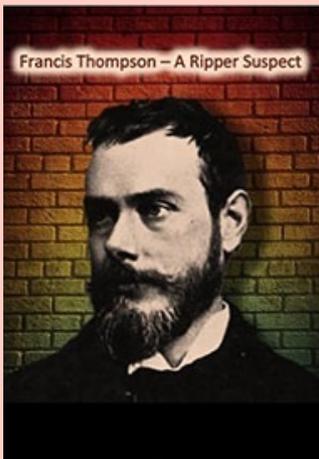
‘But where did the arms come from?’ I asked, still half bewildered.

‘Oh, the devil take those arms,’ cried Niels. ‘Just see if you can stand up all right now. Oh, those arms there? Why, those are the arms I cut off your skeletons. Clever idea, wasn’t it? You know how grumpy Sølling gets if anything interferes with his tutoring. You see, I’d had the geese sent me, and I wanted you to all come with me to Mathiesen’s place. I knew you were going to read the osteology of the arm, so I went up into Sølling’s room, opened it with his own keys and took the arms from his skeleton. I did the same here while you were downstairs in the reading room. Have you been stupid enough to take them down off their frames, and take away their tickets? I had marked them so carefully, that each man should get his own again.’

I dressed hastily and went out with Niels into the fresh, cool morning air. A few minutes later we separated, and I turned toward the street where Sølling lived. Without heeding the protest of his old landlady, I entered the room where he still slept the sleep of the just. The arm, still wrapped in newspaper, lay on his desk. I took it up, put the mark piece in its place and hastened with all speed to the churchyard.

How different it looked in the early dawn! The fog had risen and shining frost pearls hung in the bare twigs of the tall trees where the sparrows were already twittering their morning song. There was no one to be seen. The churchyard lay quiet and peaceful. I stepped over the heaps of bones to where the heavy oaken coffin lay under a tree. Cautiously I pushed the arm back into its interior, and hammered the rusty nails into their places again, just as the first rays of the pale November sun touched a gleam of light from the metal plate on the cover. Then the weight was lifted from my soul.

# Reviews



## Francis Thompson - A Ripper Suspect

Richard Patterson

Richard Patterson, 2016

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

ebook;

approx 277pp;

£3.44 ebook

Francis Joseph Thompson (1859-1907) was born in Preston, Lancashire, the son of Charles and Mary Thompson, both Roman Catholic converts who in 1870 sent Francis, who was then eleven years old, to St Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, near Durham, where his education was designed with a view to the pupil entering the priesthood. However, Thompson's interests, particularly his obsessive interest in Romantic literature, were not compatible with someone training for the Church, and in 1877 he began medical training in Manchester. He didn't succeed at that either and this put a strain on his relationship with his father, leading Francis to break with his family

altogether when his beloved mother died. Thompson went to London but couldn't get work; he soon ran out of money, and was driven to live on the streets, scratching a living by holding the reins of cabs and carriages and selling matches. His use of opium, to which he was already addicted, grew at this time. In late 1886 he was given a job in a shoe shop by a man of good heart named John McMaster, but he stupidly caused McMaster to fire him in mid-January 1887. By the autumn of that year he was contemplating suicide but was rescued by remarkable young woman, a prostitute about whom nothing is known, not even her name. She took him back to her lodgings, looked after him through the winter and encouraged him to write his poetry. Then, in the spring of 1888, Thompson's fortunes changed. He'd sent some poems and essays off to a Catholic literary journal called *Merry England*, and the editor, Wilfred Meynell, published one of the poems, 'The Passion of Mary'. It was now that the woman who had cared for him, aware she would now be a hindrance to him rather than a help, disappeared from their lodgings, never to be seen again. In February 1888 Thompson went to stay at the Premonstratensian priory in Storrington, Sussex, but apparently he was soon back in London. He would die on 13 November 1907 at the Hospital of St John and St Elizabeth, London, and be buried on 16 November at Kensal Green Roman Catholic cemetery.

Reading this book left me with the conviction that Francis Thompson ought to have been certified and looked after in an asylum. He was evidently a very troubled young man, almost childlike in his inability to function in the real world. He certainly had an idealised opinion of women, he didn't think highly of prostitutes, once writing: "These girls whose practice is a putrid ulceration of love, venting foul and purulent discharge, for their very utterance is a hideous blasphemy against the sacrosanctity of lover's language!" Yet he owed his life to one and tried hard to find her after she left him. To many he was a druggy failure, a representation with which it is difficult not to have some sympathy. To others he is the last word in pious Catholic orthodoxy. In fact, Patterson describes in some detail how his early biographers

carefully removed anything from his writings that revealed that he had been a drug addict living off immoral earnings.

Richard Patterson suggests that Francis Thompson could have been Jack the Ripper. At the beginning of the book he states that hardly any credible experts on the Ripper murders give even a nod of recognition towards Francis Thompson as a suspect. He is overlooked, says Patterson, because he was/is a celebrity, a famous poet. Patterson actually repeats this so often it might almost be called his mantra. I'm not sure it's true, however. I think the explanation is that nobody has hitherto made a strong case for Thompson, even the *Jack the Ripper A to Z* having dismissed him because most of the reasons put forward in support of his candidacy are claimed without evidence. This certainly needs to be reconsidered in light of Patterson's book! Francis Thompson merits a close re-examination.

There are many reasons why Patterson pokes the finger of guilt at Francis Thompson, but to mention a couple: there seems little doubt that Thompson stayed at the Providence Row Night Refuge at the top end of Dorset Street and Patterson plausibly argues that the only time Thompson met the necessary conditions to stay there was in November 1888. Thompson apparently wrote about it in an essay called 'Catholics in Darkest England', but the references were removed by Wilfred Meynell, his editor.

Patterson also rightly makes much of a link between Thompson and Jack the Ripper by the academic J.E. Walsh in his biography of Thompson, *Strange Harp, Strange Symphony: The Life of Francis Thompson*. When writing this book, Walsh came across a reference in Tom Cullen's *Autumn of Terror* to a suspect who, says Patterson, 'eerily matched that of Francis Thompson'. He goes on to explain that this suspect tried to trick prostitutes into going with him by offering brightly polished pennies 'made to look like farthings' - which is improbable, no doubt a mistake resulting from Patterson (an Australian) being unfamiliar with Britain pre-decimal currency; a farthing was a quarter of a penny. The suspect, he says, had been a medical student (like Thompson), had been in an asylum (Thompson had suffered a mental breakdown), he associated with prostitutes (Thompson had lived with one), and he was found walking in Rupert Street, Haymarket (a short street which ran in Panton Street where Thompson had worked for the shoe seller Mr McMaster). The suspect, says Patterson, 'talked his way out of suspicion'.

Now, this is in fact the very well known and engagingly self-effacing story told by Major Smith in his autobiography *From Constable to Commissioner*; after the murder of Annie Chapman he had suspected a man who had been a medical student, had been in a lunatic asylum, who associated with loose women, who tried to con them by passing off farthings for sovereigns, and who lived in Rupert Street, Haymarket. Now, Patterson has been naughty with the other details because he says the two detectives found the man walking in Rupert Street, which suggests that he may have lived elsewhere, such as Panton Street, whereas he actually lived in Rupert Street. And Patterson says the man was able to talk his way out of it, whereas Smith says 'he proved an alibi without the shadow of doubt'. That's a lot different from talking his way out of it!

Patterson tells the reader at length why in 1968 Walsh may have recoiled from advancing Catholic Thompson as a Ripper suspect and instead did no more than observe in a footnote the coincidence that Thompson had resided close to where Smith's suspect lived and wondering in passing if he'd been questioned by the police. But did Walsh really suspect anything more than that Thompson may have inadvertently found himself being questioned? Thompson had worked in Panton Street from late 1886 until mid-January 1887, so why would he have been there in September 1888?

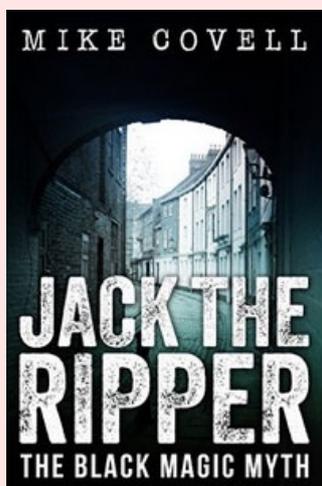
Patterson also argued on the authority of John Walsh that Francis Thompson was the pseudonymous poet and opium addict 'Mr Moring', written about by R Thurston Hopkins in *Life and Death at the Old Bailey* and said to have been a friend of Mary Kelly. Hopkins wrote about Thompson in his book *This London - Its Taverns, Haunts and Memories*, his research taking him to John McMaster, in whose shoe shop in Panton Street Thompson had worked, so it is not unlikely that 'Mr Moring' could have been Thompson, albeit that the former's father was a prosperous East End tradesman, which the latter's wasn't.

Overall, I think Richard Patterson has made a very good case for Francis Thompson to be taken off the shelf of neglected Ripper candidates and to be looked at more closely. I'd be keen to check Patterson's sources, however, as the medical student stuff mentioned above has caused me to question whether Patterson is always giving a fair and unbiased interpretation.

I must conclude by observing that this isn't a well-written book. A *bête noir* of mine is sloppy writing and Patterson's book is littered with punctuation errors, missing words, and so on. It strongly suggests to me that this is a first draft. Richard stated on Facebook that the copy I bought was uncorrected and that a corrected copy would soon be available. I certainly hope he supplies a corrected copy to everyone who bought the uncorrected one, but what I don't understand is

why he published an uncorrected book to begin with. It is incomprehensible to me that someone can spend a lot of time, effort, and money researching and writing a book, then publish it without trying to make it as error free as possible. It's like sending one's child off to school unwashed and in filthy clothes.

Anyway, I approached this book with a sense of duty. I left it knowing a lot about Francis Thompson, with a couple of biographies on order, a Kindle edition of his complete works, and plans to seriously update the A to Z entry. I'm not convinced that Thompson was Jack the Ripper, I'm not even certain he is a good candidate, but, as said, I think Richard Patterson has made a good case and that Thompson deserves to be looked at closely.



## Jack the Ripper - The Black Magic Myth

Mike Covell

Foreword by Howard Brown

Creativa, 2016

softcover and ebook;

£18.99 softcover/£4.99 ebook

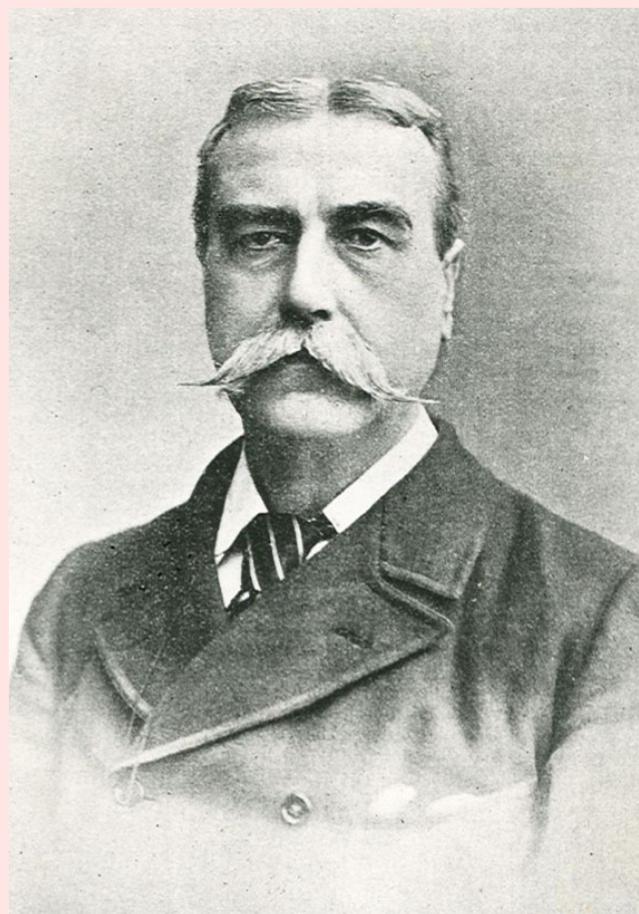
At first glance Roslyn D'Onston Stephenson looks like one of those eccentric or larger-than-life characters like Tumblety who populate the Ripper story, but that's a very thin veneer which slightly scratched reveals a far less interesting individual. He claimed to be a black magician, he kitted himself out with a glamorous biography, and he rubbed shoulders with the great campaigning journalist W.T. Stead, who was a bit gullible when it came to spiritualism and magic, the best-selling writer Mabel Collins, and the strange and fiercely lesbian Baroness Vittoria Cremers. The reality is that Stephenson was an alcoholic, sometime hack journalist, and full-time fantasist.

Mike Covell has compiled several volumes of transcribed press reports which are valuable to researchers but of doubtful interest to the general reader because Covell added no text to contextualise the cuttings. This book is different. It is a narrative and it is probably true to say that it describes everything you ever wanted to know about Stephenson's life and a lot more besides. It's probably the last word on Stephenson for a good few years to come and should be on every serious Ripper researchers bookshelf (real or virtual). It's not a book without problems, however, and the first you encounter is that the book is littered with examples of clumsy writing. It's the sort of stuff that should have been picked up when the manuscript was proof read and the fact that it wasn't suggests that Covell has published his first draft. If an author doesn't have sufficient pride in his book to proof read it, one can only wonder if he was as equally slapdash with his research. In this case, however, Covell's research has been extraordinary, very detailed, no avenue left unexplored. For example, there is a chronology of Stephenson's life that's a very impressive two hundred pages long and which traces his ancestry back to 1701. I'm not sure it was necessary to be so exhaustive, but it goes to show the depth to which Covell took his research.

If it was *his* research. It has been pointed out to me that a lot of the spadework I took to have been Covell's was in fact the work of other people. Covell has a lengthy acknowledgements section, but it's questionable whether it is adequate. For example, I was very impressed that Covell had actually researched out the surviving records of the Pompadour Cosmetics company, and in fact he claims that their first publication was in his book. In fact, the research is at least eight years old, was apparently undertaken by researcher Robert Linford, and was made public, along with contributions from the likes of the indefatigable Stewart Evans and Debra Arif, and is here: [www.jtrforums.com/showthread.php?t=4561&highlight=Pompadour](http://www.jtrforums.com/showthread.php?t=4561&highlight=Pompadour).

In fact this does not appear to be a recently-written book, the introduction by Howard Brown being dated two years ago.

Covell spends rather a lot of time examining almost every reference to Stephenson he can find in books by other authors. Whilst he is able to show how the myths surrounding Stephenson grew and developed, it's



difficult to escape the impression that Covell's purpose was to display the errors the authors made. This leaves a bit of a bad taste.

All this aside, the book nevertheless brings all this research together in a single volume.

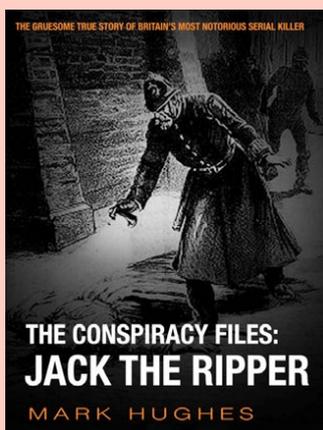
On the subject of Pompadour Cosmetics, Vittoria Cremers told Bernard O'Donnell that she, Mabel Collins, and Stephenson set up this business in Baker Street and that it was in a room on these premises occupied by Stephenson that Cremers found a box containing several blood-encrusted ties that confirmed to her that Stephenson was Jack the Ripper. According to Cremers, the business did not prosper and was sold to a consortium of businessmen. A later writer, Ivor Edwards, discovered and published the aforementioned Pompadour Cosmetics logo, but Covell points out that the business address on the logo is Regent Street, not Baker Street. Research has shown that the company trading from this address was called Pompadour Cosmetics. The surviving documents also show that the business had absolutely nothing to do with Cremers et al. The whole story was a lie, says Covell positively. Cremers invented it just so she could plausibly explain the discovery of the blood-encrusted ties.

I'm not so sure.

Firstly, there were many ways Cremers could have accounted for discovering the ties without going to the length of inventing a business and giving it a name, a location and a fate. Secondly, Ivor Edwards assumed the logo was for the business started by Cremers et al and Covell has followed suit, despite being aware that the business address was different to the one given by Cremers. Thirdly, Pompadour Cosmetics of Regent Street was registered as a limited company on 15 October 1891 by a group of businessmen - a couple of solicitors, an engineer, a patent agent, a gentleman, and a couple of clerks - who do not appear to have had any interest in cosmetics. They look like a consortium of businessmen who invested in existing companies. In fact, they look like the consortium of businessmen Cremers said bought the business. So, I think Covell needs to further investigate.

I must say that Creativia have really let Covell down. This is a big book with lots of short chapters and it is a nightmare to navigate on Kindle, being impossible to go straight to the chapter you want. There are also tons of footnotes, but you can't click from the text to the footnote and back again. The layout of the footnotes is also a bit of a mess with some notes indented and others not.

So, this is a book with significant faults, but for all that it is a great book and is probably going to be the definitive source for material about Stephenson for years to come.



## The Conspiracy Files: Jack the Ripper

Mark Hughes  
Amazon: 2016  
ebook; 47pp;  
£1.40

The author has produced six 'books' under the generic title of 'The Conspiracy Files', covering such well-trodden ground as the fate of Lord Lucan, the Kennedy assassination, the mystery of D.B. Cooper, and the Black Dahlia case. Jack the Ripper is the sixth in the series.

Hughes takes a traditional approach by having a short introductory chapter about conditions in the East End in the 1880s and concluding with the murders of Emma Smith and Martha Tabram. He follows this with a short chapter about each of the murders and a chapter taking a very brief look at some of the usual theories - Prince Albert Victor, Walter Sickert, D'Onston, Tumblety, and Druiitt, Kosminski and Ostrog. Mark Hughes delivers no personal judgments.

The final chapter is basically a simple discussion of the Ripper case, from profiling the killer through to the reasons why the case has become so popular.

There are a few errors, such as the statement that Sir Melville Macnaghten succeeded Sir Charles Warren as Commissioner.

At less than 50 pages, this title treats the subject superficially, to say the least, and for the same price or a few quid more there are far better ebooks available that give a solid overview of the case.



## Jack the Ripper: An Introduction to Jack the Ripper

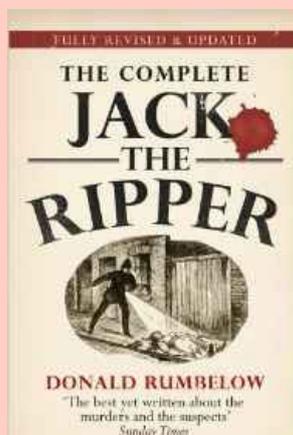
James Tyrell  
James Tyrell, 2016  
softcover and ebook  
114pp  
ISBN: 9781523689767  
£7.99 softcover / £3.15 ebook

James Tyrell has written a whole host of 'An Introduction to...' books on a diverse range of topics from secret societies and freemasonry to the English civil war and Lord Nelson. If all the books are like this one, they deliver what it says on the tin. This book is an introduction to Jack the Ripper and very little else.

Tyrell begins with a short chapter looking at the various theories about Jack, fairly concluding that the trouble with Jack is that when he is stripped of his iconic veneer he is revealed as just a particularly nasty murderer. The difficulty, he says, is getting people to realize that. All of which is fair enough, of course, but Jack the Ripper isn't just about the identity of the killer. Indeed, for many people, myself included, suspect Ripperology is not what fascinates us.

The next chapter is a sprint through the murders of Emma Smith and Martha Tabram. Then it is the usual chapter per victim, taking us through the murders of Nichols, Chapman, Stride, Eddowes and Kelly. Finally, as one would expect, there is a chapter looking at the usual suspects. Tyrell gives the facts and doesn't venture any hard and fast opinions, but he seems unaware of evidence that has damned certain theories, such as that which firmly nailed the coffin lid on the idea that the Ripper was Dr. John Williams.

This book is marred by the lack of an index and, especially in an introduction to the subject, a further reading list, but overall, as introductions to the Ripper case go, this one isn't too bad. The trouble is, how many introductions to this case do we really need?



## The Complete Jack the Ripper (revised edition)

Donald Rumbelow  
London: Virgin Books 2016  
First published in hardcover London: W.H. Allen, 1975.  
This edition first published in softcover London: Virgin Books 2013  
[www.eburypublishing.co.uk](http://www.eburypublishing.co.uk)  
ebook  
350pp; illus; biblio; index  
ISBN: 9780753549933

Donald Rumbelow is one of the nicest and most generous Ripperologists I have ever had the good fortune of being able to call a friend, and he's been at the forefront of Ripperology since the Seventies. At long last, here's an ebook of the updated 2013 edition of Don's 1975 classic, one of the most highly regarded of all Ripper books, albeit that sadly is now showing its age.

It isn't immediately obvious what's been updated since the 2004 revision, but, as Don explains in his brief introduction, he has changed his mind about Timothy Donovan being Jack the Ripper. One of the reasons why *The Complete Jack the Ripper* attracted attention when it was first published was because Don didn't have a suspect, so his analysis of other suspects was totally objective. However, he gradually came to think Donovan was a good candidate and eventually he rather reluctantly said so. Things didn't pan out about Donovan, so Don has withdrawn him and skilfully edited him out of the text.

Don doesn't think Elizabeth Stride was a Ripper victim, a conclusion I am inclined to share, although I can easily be swayed into thinking that she was. There weren't too many murders committed in the 1880s, despite what some writers have claimed, and one could argue that it was improbable that two women killers were out on the same night, killing in a fairly close geographical area within an hour of each other. On the other hand, she wasn't mutilated, so maybe she was murdered by another hand.

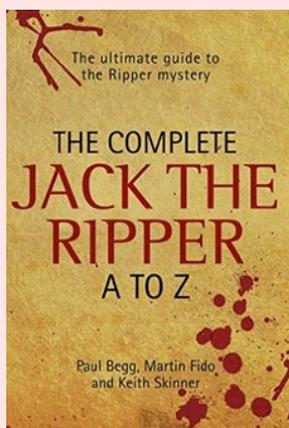
Don also includes an alleged photograph of Inspector Abberline, a Ripperological Holy Grail. No certain photograph exists of the great man and this photo (left), enlarged from a group photograph



taken outside Lemn Street at a time when Abberline was stationed there and first published in *Jack the Ripper: Scotland Yard Investigates*, does look like some of the sketches of Abberline. I'd like this to be a photograph of Abberline. I want it to be a photograph of Abberline. I'm not convinced that it is a photograph of Abberline, and frustratingly I'm not sure why.

If you already own a copy of *The Complete Jack the Ripper* you can probably do without this one. If you don't have one, apart from hanging your head in shame, you should get this one (or the 2013 paperback).

A classic that should be on everyone's bookshelf or ebook reader.



### **The Complete Jack the Ripper A-Z: The Ultimate Guide to the Ripper Mystery**

*Paul Begg, Martin Fido and Keith Skinner*

London: John Blake, 2016

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

First Published in hardback London: John Blake, 2010. UK ebook London: John Blake, 2015.

ebook US edition;

580pp;

\$2.67

This isn't a review - it would be unethical to review my own book and I think I'd find it difficult too; there aren't as many superlatives as you think and I'd soon start repeating myself - but is an announcement that the ebook of *The Complete Jack the Ripper A to Z* is at long last available in the United States. Hooray! Hurrah!

It is the same book as has been available in the UK since March 2015, but is different from the hardback edition published in September 2010. These differences are mainly corrections to the hardback, but there is some updated information and I think maybe a couple of new entries. The biggest difference is that the ebook lacks the 100 or so illustrations that were in the hardback.

Just in case you don't know, *The Jack the Ripper A to Z* is often described as the 'bible' of Ripper studies and the ultimate reference for anyone interested in the Jack the Ripper mystery. It was first published way back in 1995 by Headline and it went through three revisions before Headline decided to stop publishing true crime and the rights reverted to the authors. John Blake then took over publication and the book acquired 'Complete' in its title. Why? I have no idea. It's not as if previous editions had been incomplete. In fact, once upon a time the book included a lot of geography and even plays and movies, which it doesn't anymore. Some news about that may be forthcoming in the months ahead!

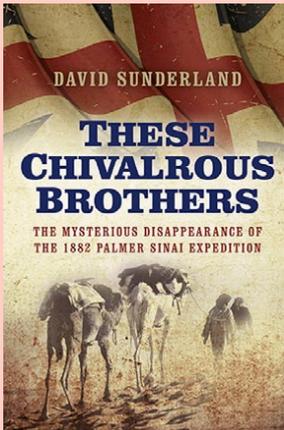
So, the *A to Z* has an entry for almost every person involved in the Ripper mystery; I say 'almost' because there may be some very peripheral individuals who don't feature, such as the drunks and similar folk who had the misfortune to be picked up, questioned, and very quickly released. I hope the book is also as objective as possible. We spent a lot of time combing the book for personal opinion and getting rid of it, so that's good.

It's impossible to remember everything about this case, so *The Complete Jack the Ripper A to Z* is an essential reference to have to hand. The authors regularly refer to it and quite a lot of people have said they use their copy so much it's falling apart. That's one thing that can't happen to an ebook. The ebook also has the advantage of being fully searchable and is easy to navigate. Perhaps needless to say, the Kindle app lets you read it on everything from your iPhone to your desktop computer.

### **WANT US TO REVIEW YOUR BOOK?**

*Ripperologist magazine has a circulation list of over 900 readers,  
each with an interest in Jack the Ripper, Victorian crime and London's East End.*

*If you are an author or publisher of a forthcoming book and would like to reach our readers,  
please get in touch at [contact@ripperologist.biz](mailto:contact@ripperologist.biz)*



**These Chivalrous Brothers:  
The Mysterious Disappearance of the 1882 Palmer Sinai Expedition**

*David Sunderland*  
Airesford, Hants: John Hunt Publishing, 2016  
[www.johnhuntpublishing.com](http://www.johnhuntpublishing.com)  
softcover, ebook;  
328pp; maps; notes; biblio  
ISBN: 978-1785352423  
£17.00 softcover / £5,62 ebook

About 400-500 people were gathered outside the little crypt in St Paul's Cathedral when the coffin of panelled English oak, covered with the Union Jack and laden with flowers, was gently lifted and taken to its final resting place between the tombs of Wellington and Nelson. Inside the coffin was a professor of linguistics, a man whose name only a few weeks earlier was completely unknown to almost everybody, but was now being buried with the nation's great and good, celebrated as a

national hero.

The coffin actually contained five bodies; the professor, two wealthy Englishmen, a Jew and a Syrian. They had been found in a ravine, mutilated beyond recognition, so all five shared a casket. They had been brought home from the deserts of Egypt, where they had been heartlessly murdered.

Britain and Egypt were heading towards war, and Britain wanted to know whether the allegiance of the Bedouins who lived close to the Suez Canal could be bought or otherwise be obtained. The mission was entrusted to Professor Palmer, who had good relations with the Bedouins, and he and his small party were put ashore in Egypt under cover of darkness - and promptly vanished.

In due course, rumours reached the British that the Bedouins had killed Palmer's party, or were holding them to be ransomed at some later date. It became necessary to know which, so someone had to lead a small group into Egypt, where he would have to conduct a delicate investigation with tact, diplomacy, and extreme resourcefulness. The man chosen was a Royal Engineer named Charles Warren - the same Charles Warren who would soon be appointed Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.

Warren was soon on the trail, interviewing tribal leaders, traders, and assorted others, picking up bits of information here and there, and putting the jigsaw together until he was able to venture into the desert and eventually to the ravine where the remains of Palmer and his party were found. It was a great achievement, but Warren went further and discovered the names and the whereabouts of the men involved in the crimes, and they were duly arrested and stood trial.

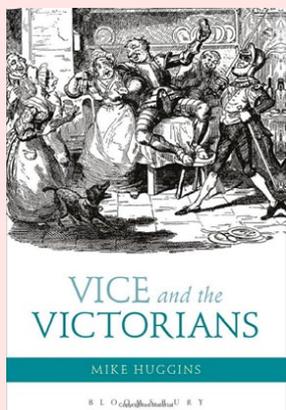
What followed did not redound well on anyone, particularly the British, as David Sunderland recounts in this brilliant book. The trial of the accused and the court martial of five who were sentenced to death was a farrago, which some in Britain recognised and expressed concern, but it was overshadowed by exaggerated stories told about Professor Palmer and his companions, such as



their defence of the Suez Canal against marauding Bedouins, which was completely untrue, to how Palmer and his team bravely threw themselves into the ravine rather than give the savages the satisfaction of killing them. In fact Palmer had grovelingly pleaded for his life. But Palmer became a national hero.

And so did Charles Warren, upon whose modest head praise was heaped and who received a stack of honours and an invitation to stand for the Liberals at the forthcoming elections. He fought a keen battle against C. Stuart-Wortley, losing by less than 700 votes. Warren, then, was a hero when appointed Commissioner.

To the best of my knowledge this is the first book to be written about the Palmer expedition and Warren's efforts to establish their fate, and it has been something I have wanted to know more about for quite some time, so I was pleased when I saw David Sunderland's book was to be published. I found it a riveting read, there being so much more to the story than I had imagined. The funny thing is that books are like buses, you wait forever for one to come along and then two arrive at the same time; a book with the curious title of *Captain Gill's Walking Stick: The True Story of the Sinai Murders* is slated for publication in September and the author Saul Kelly is one who knows his stuff too. I am now looking forward to that book. Anyway, *These Chivalrous Brothers* is well written and thoughtfully presented account of an almost forgotten episode that in 1886 held the nation enthralled. Needless to say, the book provides some insights into Sir Charles Warren and should be on the reading list of anyone interested in the Whitechapel murders. Very highly recommended.



### Vice and the Victorians

Mike Huggins

London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016

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

hardcover, softcover & ebook;

257pp; notes; index

ISBN: 978-472529732

£65.00 hardcover / £19.99 softcover / £18.99 ebook

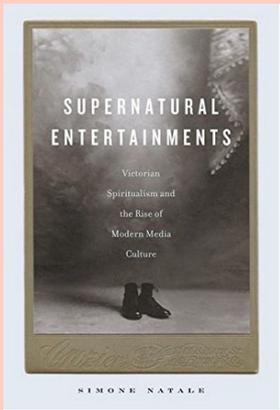
The 18th century was brazenly licentious. Pornographic literature was popular, Molly Houses openly catered for gentlemen homosexuals, contraceptives were widely on sale, there were gossip magazines, an over-indulgence in alcohol, and a general, bawdy permissiveness. But by the mid-1800s that had changed so dramatically that the Victorians are generally thought of today as prudes, even doing absurd things such as covering the curved legs of tables in case they inspired lewd thoughts. But there was a genuine desire for moral improvement and a belief that hard world, abstinence, and upholding traditional Christian teachings was the way forward. Huge efforts were made to improve towns and cities and to encourage civic pride, a priority was given to educations, and laws were introduced, such as the Obscene Publications Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, both introduced in 1885.

We know, of course, that Victorian society had a dark underbelly and in this book Mike Huggins, Emeritus Professor of Cultural History at the University of Cumbria, ventures into its darkest corners to look at how the Victorians really defined vice, and how attitudes to vice were different across the country. The book looks at how vice was defined, then the geography of vice, and three chapters looking at one of the unholy trinity of vice, alcohol, gambling and sex. A final chapter considers the people who campaigned against vice.

The book is academic, so it's a little heavy going in place, but Huggins is mostly informative reading. For example, when discussing prostitution he remarks on the number of foreign prostitutes imported into Britain, mostly from France but also Germany and Belgium. In 1858 *The Times* complained of their 'open and disgusting indecencies and practices...' He adds that 'London still had colonies of French prostitutes in the 1880s', which immediately brought to my mind Mary Kelly's claim to have worked for a French madam when she first arrived in London. Where, I wondered, were these French enclaves?

Jack the Ripper gets a couple of mentions in passing, one in connection with the *Pall Mall Gazette's* campaigning against the 'decadent' upper classes, and another when Huggins briefly discusses the poor and the supposedly vice-ridden slums.

Overall, this is a very accessible book and one which I think should be on the reading list of everyone interested in the period - although the book deals with all the Victorian period so a lot isn't immediately relevant to the 1880s. A highly enjoyable book, warmly recommended.



## **Supernatural Entertainments: Victorian Spiritualism and the Rise of Modern Media Culture**

Simone Natale

University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016

[www.psupress.org](http://www.psupress.org)

hardcover;

235pp; notes; biblio; index.

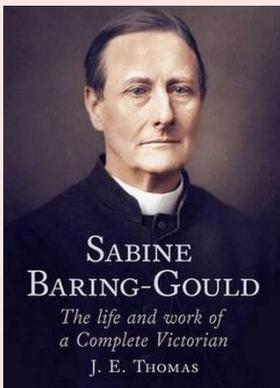
ISBN: 0-271-07104-6

£55.00

As far as I know, Francis Tumblety left Rochester in 1850, so it is entirely possible that on 14 November 1849 he was one of nearly four hundred people who spent twenty-five cents to see a demonstration of spirit communication at the Corinthian Hall by sisters Kate and Margaret Fox. The sisters had first demonstrated their ability to communicate with the dead the previous year at their home in Hydesville, a little town in upstate New York. This was where and when spiritualism began. It should have ended in the year of the Ripper, 1888, when the sisters confessed that it had been a hoax. Their reputations lay in tatters and within five years both were dead, but for many the sisters' severe alcoholism made their confession less than believable, and as spiritualism continued to grow many retellings of the sisters' story don't refer to their confessions at all.

The argument advanced in this entertaining book by Simone Natale is that spiritualism was strongly connected to the growth of the media entertainment industry in the 19th century - in other words, spiritualistic mediums adopted many of the same techniques as were employed by more legitimate entertainment professionals; they had managers and agents, they advertised in the press, they used spectacles to attract audiences. For many, spiritualism was fast becoming a religion, but there is not only a very distinct overlap between spiritualism and 19th century showbusiness, the latter in turn impacted on the development of showbusiness in the 20th century.

Simone Natale is Lecturer in Communication and Media Studies at Loughborough University, and *Supernatural Entertainments* is certainly an original study, entertaining as well as interesting, albeit, I would have said, of limited appeal. But as I was reading this book the latest copy of *The Whitechapel Journal* plopped through the letterbox and the lead article was 'Victorian Spiritualism' by Samantha Hulass. Anyone who read that and found it interesting will definitely want to read this.



## **Sabine Baring-Gould: The Life and Works of a Complete Victorian**

J. E. Thomas

Stroud, Gloucestershire: Fonthill Media, 2015

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

hardcover; 288pp; notes; biblio; index.

ISBN: 978-1-78155-459-3

£30.00

He had gone to visit a Druidical relic near Champigni, a walk of some ten miles from the post-house where he had taken lodgings with his family. It was late, he had miscalculated the time it would take to reach the site, and he was tired. A short diversion took him to a small hamlet where he hoped it would be possible to hire some sort of transport, but none was available. The local priest offered to accommodate him for the night, but he was obliged to decline as his family was waiting for him, so he prepared to continue his onward journey. The mayor of the remote hamlet looked horrified, "Monsieur can never go back to-night across the flats, because of the - the..." His voice dropped, "the *louis-garoux*."

There followed a discussion among a group of men who had gathered. The priest said that if the stranger insisted on continuing his journey then two men from the village should accompany him - they could protect the stranger going out and protect each other coming back. The men agreed, but no one volunteered. None of them wanted to come face to face with the werewolf they knew to be out on the flats. Some of them claimed to have actually seen it. They didn't want to see it again. Those who hadn't seen it didn't want to see it for the first time. The stranger, however, was not the superstitious resident of a remote hamlet and the werewolf held no terror for him, so he fearlessly announced his intention of returning to the town alone. But he arms himself with a stout stick, just in case, and tried not to let his imagination run wild.

The date was mid-19th century, and the man thought it was remarkable then that in those enlightened times a whole village could not only believe in, but also be terrified of the werewolf. The man resolved to investigate the myth and collect werewolf stories, which he did, writing a book that is highly readable even today and relevant insofar as it has been suggested that tales of such things as werewolves and vampires may embody the activities of early serial killers.

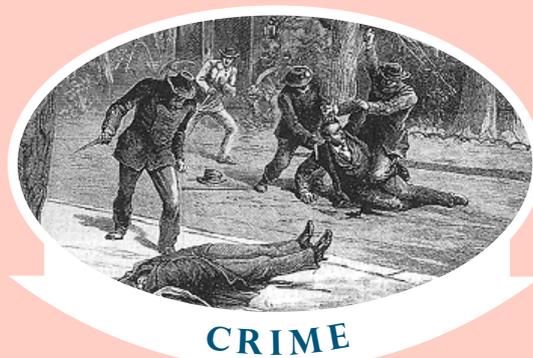
The man's name was Sabine Baring-Gould and years ago, when I first began researching and writing about historical mysteries, his was a name that frequently cropped up as a source for all sorts of stories ranging from werewolves to mysterious disappearances such as that of Benjamin Bathurst. From somewhere I gleaned that he was a reverend and that he'd written the hymn *Onward Christian Soldiers*, which had occasionally relieved the monotony of insipid hymns sung at my own school assemblies. What I didn't know was just how fascinating a man Sabine Baring-Gould actually was.

Born on 28 January 1834 in Exeter, Devon, on the death of his father in 1872 he became the lord of the manor of Lew Trenchard, near Okehampton, and in 1881 appointed himself to the living of Lew Trenchard parish. His interests were many and varied, he wrote over 1,000 works of various sorts, and he wrote very well, his books about the strange and mysterious still being highly readable. He was a pioneer archaeologist, the first collector of West Country folk music, a popular author of Gothic fiction, a writer of hymns, a critic of the Anglican church, the father of fifteen children, and the overseer of a 3,000 acre estate.

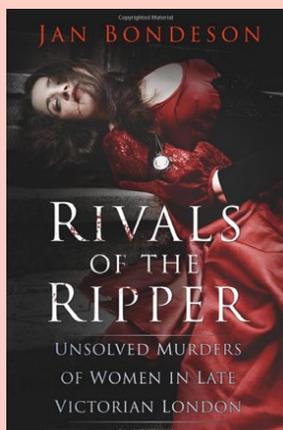
Needless to say, I was delighted when I saw that J.E. Thomas's biography of Sabine Baring-Gould was to be published, but I was disappointed. As said, I didn't know much about Baring-Gould, so I can't comment on the extent and quality of Thomas's research, but I thought that more space than was necessary was given to discussing Baring-Gould's novels.

He wrote about thirty of them and they were very popular in their day, but they are not now what he's best known for. They didn't interest me. Overall, I am not sure that I came away from the book with an understanding of Sabine Baring-Gould. I don't really have any idea of what made him tick.

As for Baring-Gould's writings, many of his books are available for the Kindle and are free to download, so please give them a try. I noted the following titles: *The Book of Were-Wolves*, *Curiosities of Olden Times*, *Historic Oddities*, *A Book of Ghosts*, and *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*.



## CRIME



### **Rivals of the Ripper: Unsolved Murders of Women in Late Victorian London**

Jan Bondeson

Stroud, Gloucestershire: History Press, 2016

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

hardcover; 352pp; notes; biblio; index.

ISBN: 976-0-7509-6425-8

£20.00

None of the murderers were actually rivals of the Jack the Ripper. Their victims were women and the murderer escaped detection, but there is otherwise no real comparison between these crimes and the Ripper's. But none of that matters because this book is written by Jan Bondeson and therefore it is going to be a good read. And it is. In fact there are twelve stories ahead, spread over thirty-six years and involving some of the most intriguing murder mysteries of the late Victorian

period.

Martha Halliday and the Kingswood Rectory case of 1861 is an extraordinary mystery. Thieves broke into Kingswood

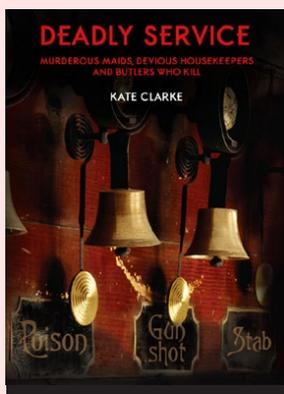
Rectory and killed the 55-year-old housekeeper, Martha Halliday. But packet of papers, including a passport, was found on the floor and must have been dropped by one of the murderers. The passport was traced to a German called Karl Franz and in due course he was arrested. It looked like a slam dunk, but the case quickly began to unravel and eventually it had to be listed as unsolved.

Next up is Emma Jackson. This was a sordid prostitute murder and it has hardly received any attention since it was committed in 1863. Jackson was found dead on a bed in a busy brothel in St Giles, her throat had been cut and there were two severe stab wounds to her neck. The investigation was headed by the newly-promoted Inspector Frederick Adolphus Williamson, who would later achieve lasting fame in the history of Scotland Yard as being the first person to go through the ranks to achieve the heady heights of Chief Constable. Sadly, for Williamson, his first major case as an inspector went nowhere.

One of the most interesting cases discussed is that of 26-year-old Harriet Buswell, found dead on her bed in a second-floor backroom in Great Coram Street. It was Christmas Day 1872 and her throat was cut. In *Police Work From Within* (1914), H.L. Adam gave it as his opinion that she was a victim of Jack the Ripper. There is no evidence that she was, but the case had a few unexpected twists, as can be read in the extract in this issue of *Rip*.

An almost Fortean chapter is that concerning the murder of Amelia Jeffs and a series of disappearances from West Ham in 1890. Finally, Bondeson takes a look at the murder of Elizabeth Camp (1897) in a railway carriage. The first railway murder, that of Thomas Briggs by Franz Muller (if, indeed, Franz Muller was guilty of the crime), has always enjoyed the notoriety that the first of anything gets, and the second railway murder, that of Frederick Gold by Percy Lefroy Mapleton, is remembered because it was the first time that a 'photofit' led to the arrest of the culprit. Miss Camp, the third railway murder, hasn't enjoyed the same notoriety, even though her murderer was never caught (although the police claimed to know who it was!).

Recommended.



### **Deadly Service: Murderous Maids, Devious Housekeepers and Butlers Who Kill**

*Kate Clarke*

*Revised Edition*

*London: Mango Books, 2015*

*www.mango-books.co.uk*

*Originally published by Carrington Press, 2011*

*hardcover and ebook*

*266pp; biblio; index.*

*ISBN: 978-0-9931806-6-8*

*£15.00 hardback / £5.50 Kindle*

A few months ago Mango Books published *In The Interests of Science*, Kate Clarke's classic examination of the celebrated Adelaide Bartlett case, and not missing the chance of adding another book by this excellent writer to its list, Mango has followed up with this collection of murders committed by servants. And the cases which have come under Kate Clarke's eagle eye make fascinating reading.

Pictures of Kate Webster show a face that would have sunk a thousand ships: hard, with cold coal-black eyes staring at the artist and a mouth turned down at the sides, the lips firmly pressed together. Some other pictures give her softer features, even a hint of prettiness, and I suspect these are more accurate, otherwise I can't imagine Webster being employed by anyone. Who'd want to open one's eyes on a new day to be greeted by that face accompanying one's cup of English Breakfast? Mind you, Julia Martha Thomas, an ex-schoolteacher who did employ her as a maid, wasn't the easiest of employers and staff didn't stay around for too long, so she may not have had much choice.

In March 1879 Webster and Thomas quarrelled, and Webster flew into a rage, throwing Thomas down the stairs, then strangling her, dismembering the body and boiling off the flesh in the laundry copper. She tried burning the bones and internal organs, but eventually disposed of the bones in the Thames, where they were found. Except for the head, the discovery of which made headlines in 2010 when it was unearthed in the garden of the journalist and naturalist Sir David Attenborough.

Kate Clarke returns to her old stamping ground with a long chapter about Jane Cannon Cox of Florence Bravo notoriety. The only one of that cast of characters to come out of the mess with good fortune, in every sense of the word, Cox is one of the people suspected of murdering Charles Bravo, killing him because he had threatened to dismiss

her from the comfortable and, for her, lucrative position she held in the Bravo household. The downside to that theory, however, is that she was in line to inherit substantial estates in Jamaica, so why would she have been concerned about her job, especially sufficiently concerned to kill to keep it, when she didn't need it? Kate offers a possible explanation.

It was on 2 February 1933 that sisters Christine and Lea Papin firmly stepped into infamy when they murdered their employer's wife and child. The sisters were a decidedly odd couple who lived in Le Mans and worked as maids in the home of a retired solicitor named Rene Lancelin. They killed Lancelin's wife and adult daughter, battering them to the point of unrecognizability and gouging out their eyes. When investigators arrived, the sisters were found upstairs, naked in bed together. An extraordinary story would emerge: Christine Papin dominated her sister to the point where Lea, who wasn't a particularly intelligent young woman, all but lost her own personality and did what Christine told her.

Sometimes an uncertain future can be so suffocatingly bleak that there doesn't seem to be any future at all. Sunk in a miasma of uncertainty and fear, it is difficult to view the future with optimism. Add a little impotent rage at people whose real or imagined actions have brought you to this emotional precipice and the mixture is right for murder. It's probably how Charles Houghton felt when he picked up a gun and shot dead his employers. Wealthy Ella and May Woodhouse were good and considerate employers, but when their butler's heavy drinking began to impede his ability to do his job, they decided with great reluctance that they had to let him go. The shock to Houghton may have been profound. He'd given long and loyal service to Ella and May, but when he had a problem their tolerance had evaporated and they'd dispensed with his services, doing so in the knowledge that he'd never find employment elsewhere and certainly never find anything as congenial and comfortable as the one he enjoyed in their employ. So it was that Charles Houghton seems to have taken the view that as Ella and May had robbed him of his future, he would rob them of theirs, and did so with a gun. In due course, dressed in a navy blue suit, he mounted the gallows steps and plunged into eternity and onto the pages of Kate Clarke's book.

Other cases include the crimes of Louise Merrifield, Ray Fontaine, and the aforementioned John Lee, in what I thought was a most engagingly written collection of murder cases involving one's servants. And now, if you will excuse me, I rang for tea ten minutes ago and I haven't seen hide nor hair of that maid... I don't know what she's up to, but she'll have to go...



### Tales From The Dead-House

Richard Whittington-Egan

Stroud, Gloucester: Amberley Publishing, 2016

[www.amberley-books.com](http://www.amberley-books.com)

softcover and ebook;

286pp;

ISBN: 978-1-4456-5404-1

£12.99 softcover / £10.20 ebook

On the back cover of this book Richard Whittington-Egan is described as the 'grand doyen of Ripperology'. I have called him the 'doyen' myself, but on reflection I don't think he is, and I think it is questionable that he ever was. My handy dictionary defines 'doyen' as the most respected or prominent person in a particular field, and whilst that could certainly describe Stewart Evans, whose contribution as a researcher and writer has been considerable, Richard Whittington-Egan is respected for his clear-eyed and objective reviews of Ripper books, but otherwise his contribution to Ripperature was until recently a single, very slender volume published back in the 1970s. Not much on which to be called 'grand doyen'.

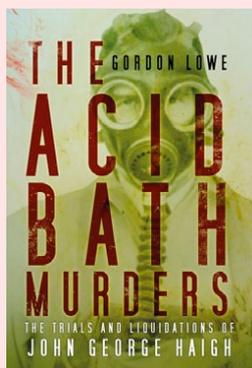
Now, I should quickly explain that I don't mean this critically. You see, Richard Whittington-Egan is far more than a respected figure in the rather narrow field of Ripperology. He is the doyen of true crime writing. With the late Jonathan Goodman, plus some of the giants of the past, like F. Tennyson-Jesse, Whittington-Egan is one of the great stylists of genre, as this book demonstrates.

'...the man sitting across the table from Edgar Lustgarten and me...' is how one of the chapters starts. And the man in question was Cecil England, better known as Toni Mancini, and still better known as the Brighton Trunk Murderer. Whittington-Egan has not only researched true crimes, he has dined with those who committed them! He's more, much more, than a mere doyen of Ripperology. So is Stewart Evans for that matter.

Anyway, in this collection of essays he recounts a number of true crime tales with an edge of the macabre about them. For example, consider this: a man dies from cyanide poisoning, but he's a patient in Broadmoor, the secure establishment in Berkshire for the criminally insane, where cyanide isn't even kept in the dispensary. How on earth

did the man, whose name was Berridge, get hold of cyanide? Well, in the grounds of Broadmoor there was a plentiful supply of highly poisonous laurel bushes, and inside Broadmoor was a chap called Graham Young, and if anyone had the knowledge to make a lethal poison it was the misplaced genius of the poison-obsessed Young. And he confessed to it, but the authorities dismissed the idea. The other choice is that the suicidal Berridge was sent the cyanide by the Soviet Secret Service, for whom the young man claimed he had once spied. Back in the day, that seemed highly fanciful, but these days, with Alexander Litvinenko and Georgi Markov in mind...

Whittington-Egan kicks off with a long chapter about Dr Harold Shipman, and follows it up with Evelyn Foster, William Hepper, railway murderer Percy Lefroy Mapleton, Elizabeth Berry (the subject of *There Must Be Evil* by Bernard Taylor reviewed an issue or two back), and more. Altogether a smashing book by a genuine doyen of true crime writing.



### The Acid Bath Murders: The Trials and Liquidations of John George Haigh

Gordon Lowe

Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2015

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

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

softcover and ebook;

191pp; biblio; index.

ISBN: 978-0-7509-6181-3

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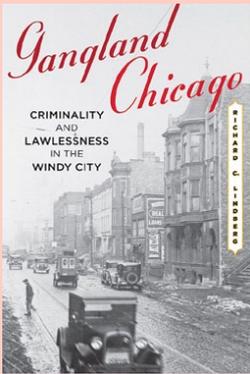
When I grew up, Sunday lunch was timed to coincide with BBC radio's comedy hour which featured *Hancock's Half Hour*, *The Clitheroe Kid*, *The Navy Lark*, and *Round the Horne*, but for an earlier generation a full stomach of roast beef and Yorkshire pud was followed by a cup of nut-brown tea, a nicely drawing pipe, a fire burning brightly in the grate, and details of the latest murder in the *News of the World*. That was the comfortable picture drawn by George Orwell in his classic essay *Decline of the English Murder* published in 1946. He thought Jack the Ripper was in a class of his own, but included most of the most celebrated murders up to the distressing case of Thompson and Bywaters in 1923. Thinking of the twenty years after poor Edith Thompson was taken kicking and screaming to the gallows, a time when I am certain the *News of the World* continued to offer its gruesome pleasures on a chilly Sunday afternoon, Neville Heath, John George Haigh and John Christie all became notorious because of the press coverage of their crimes. In fact a book published a few years ago (*Frenzy* by Neil Root) described those three as the first great tabloid murderers.

Haigh's crimes were basically unremarkable and tawdry murders committed by a wastrel whose high-living lifestyle exceeded his income by quite a large margin, so he turned on his considerable charm and romanced some wealthy widows toward the altar. Needless to say, they never got there. As soon as they assigned control of their money to Haigh they ended up in pieces in a vat of sulphuric acid, Haigh believing that no crime could be proved unless there was a body. That fallacy was brought home to him when he stood in the dock charged with murder, at which point Haigh managed to elevate his crimes to the bizarre by claiming to be a vampire who drank the blood of his victims. That convinced no one, but made grand newspaper headlines and ensured Haigh's place in the annals of crime.

Not surprisingly, there are quite a few books about him, including a volume by Lord Dunboyne in the *Notable British Trials* series. In fact, it wasn't that long ago that I reviewed *John George Haigh, The Acid Bath Murderer* by Stephen Wade, so my first thought on seeing this book by Gordon Lowe was why we needed another. And I don't know the answer. The cover blurb says the author used unpublished archive papers, including recently-released letters Haigh wrote from prison while awaiting execution, but I don't recall that the book offered anything that Stephen Wade's book didn't, including the letters. Admittedly it has been a while since I read Wade's book and an awful lot of books have been read since then, so maybe there is some stuff in Lowe's book that's new, but it escaped me if it did.

What completely ruined the book for me is that Lowe supposed the thoughts of the players in the drama, something he could not possibly have known. He also has invented dialogue and even introduced an entirely fictional character.

Some people consider this legitimate, and point to books such as Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*. However, apart from factual inaccuracies, Capote also altered actual events so that they better fitted his narrative. Although rooted very firmly in fact, *In Cold Blood* is regarded by many true crime writers as a novel, and rightly so. So, despite the literary pedigree afforded by the likes of *In Cold Blood*, authors should avoid introducing fictional elements to their books if they expect them to be treated as history. Gordon Lowe's book entertained me for an evening or two and I can't say I didn't find it an enjoyable read, but, sadly, there are better offerings about Haigh. This isn't a book I can recommend.



## **Gangland Chicago: Criminality and Lawlessness in the Windy City**

*Richard C Lindberg*

*London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016*

*www.rowman.com*

*www.richardlindberg.net*

*hardcover and ebook;*

*372pp; notes; biblio; index*

*ISBN: 978-1-4422-3195-5*

*£24.95 hardcover / £23.95 ebook*

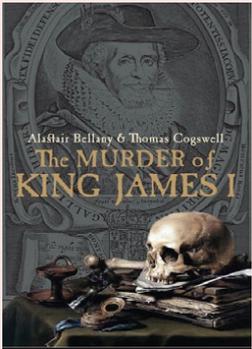
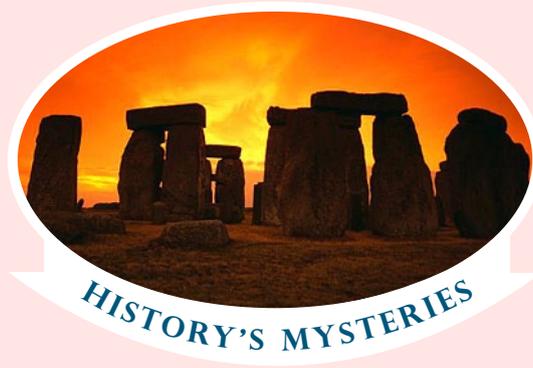
In the early years of the 20th century a famous New York journalist named Lincoln Steffens wrote of Chicago, 'First in violence, deepest in dirt, lawless, unlovely, ill-smelling, irreverent... the 'tough' among cities, a spectacle for the nation.' In 2015 a report by the University of Illinois described Chicago as the 'corruption capital of America'. Violent crime in Chicago is substantially higher than the national average. The murder rate in Chicago is nearly four times higher than New York and is higher than Los Angeles. Last year there were 488 murders in Chicago, the highest number since 2012 (when there were 516) and 2008 (513). The good news, however, is that this figure is significantly lower than any time between 1964 and 2003. Between those years the number of murders was between 600 and 800, peak years being 1974, when there were 970 murders, and 1994, when there were 931. The violence and high murder rate is generally laid at the door of the street gangs which infest most Chicago neighbourhoods and are thought to account for 60% of the murders in the city. In fact, Chicago is the gang capital of America with more than sixty different gangs and a total of over 100,000 active members. These gangs have been mindlessly violent, terrifying and financing themselves through all manner of crime. There are also more alarming features as the gangs morphed into 'nations', perhaps the most famous of which was the Black P. Stone Nation co-founded by Jeff Fort and which was found to be involved in an audacious plan to commit terrorist activities inside America on behalf of the Libyan president Muammar al-Gaddafi! The gang was crushed and Jeff Fort is now kept in isolation in a maximum security prison from which he is unlikely to be released.

Chicago seems a great place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there, but plenty of people do live there and a lot of them love the place. Richard Lindberg is one of them. He's lived in Chicago all his life and as a historian, author and journalist, he has written extensively about his hometown, being a recognised authority on the evolution of Chicago's organised crime and gangs. It's a story he tells in this marvellous, enthralling and must-have book.

Lindberg heads back to the early 19th century when Chicago was a trading post, a cluster of shanties and Fort Dearborn. And the smell of onion. Built upon a marshy swamp, the native Indians called the place Checa-gou, meaning 'wild onion'. The local population was reputedly an unsavoury bunch of roughs, but when Fort Dearborn was rebuilt after being razed to the ground in the war of 1812, a small group of ambitious easterners saw a future there. More people moved there following the creation of an important waterway.

Chapter one looks at the growth of the city and the parallel growth of the criminals who thrived there, one of the first bearing the name of Roger Plant, a product of the Liverpool docks who opened a very successful brothel, from which he became a wealthy man who had other ventures to which the police mostly turned a blind eye. By the third quarter of the 19th century, Chicago was noted for its gamblers, card sharps and cheats. These are discussed in chapter two, along with the Chinese tong wars and the rise of organised crime. The next three chapters take a close look at the gangs of the South-, West- and North-side, before moving onto a discussion of the gangs of the Prohibition. The book concludes with a quick tour of gangdom in the 1950s and 1960s, gangs becoming 'nations', focusing in particular on the Blackstone Rangers founded by the aforementioned Jeff Fort, described as quiet and unassuming and with an IQ of 48-58, what we would today describe as 'severely challenged', yet he had the innate ability to form and develop and control the most feared street gang of the 1960s. Towards to 1970s Fort rebranded his gang the Almighty Black P. Stone Nation. A rival gang, the Gangster Disciples became a nation too. Gang wars became particularly bloody affairs. Eventually, however, the authorities cracked down on the Black P. Stone following its attempt to conduct terrorist acts within the United States. It was gone by 1989, which is when Lindberg concludes this rather disturbing but utterly absorbing book. Is a sequel in the offing?

Historians know that the present is the product of the past and this is clearly demonstrated in this history of Chicago, the seeds of today's problems having been sown long ago.



## The Murder of King James I

Alastair Bellany and Thomas Cogswell

London: Yale University Press, 2015

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

hardcover and ebook;

618pp; notes; index.

ISBN: 978-0-300-21496-3

£30.00 hardback/£26.40 ebook

Thursday, 26 March 1603, was only a couple of hours old when Queen Elizabeth I quietly passed away in her sleep at Richmond Palace, and a few hours later King James VI of Scotland, the son of Mary, Queen of Scots, and Lord Darnley, was proclaimed king of England. He was James I of England, founder of the House of Stuart, and he would reign for twenty-two fairly unremarkable and peaceable years. He wasn't a particularly good king, his close relationships with men caused a scandal at court that undermined the respect for the monarchy, and he may have laid the foundations for the Civil War, but he remained popular with the people and didn't really make an impact on history in the way Henry VIII or Elizabeth I did. His death, though, is an altogether different matter.

His last year was spent in almost continuous ill-health. He suffered a particularly painful form of arthritis, as well as gout, kidney stones, and the consequences of heavy drinking. Then he came down with something called tertian ague and died. In 1626 George Eglisam, a Scot, a Catholic, a physician, and a sometime counterfeiter, wrote a book entitled *The Forerunner of Revenge*. A thin quarto volume, it had of three parts. The first two dealt with the poisoning of the Marquis of Hamilton, and the last was an account of the poisoning of King James I:

*'The King being sick of a tertian ague, and in the spring, which was of itself never found deadly, the Duke took his opportunity, when all the King's Doctors of Physicke were at dinner, upon the Monday before the King dyed, without their knowledge or consent, offered to the King a white powder, the which the King long time refused, but overcome by his flattering importunity, at length took it, drank it in wine, and immediately became worse and worse, falling into many soundings and paynes, and violent fluxes of the belly, so tormenting that his Majesty cried out aloud, "O this white powder; this white powder, it will cost me my life." In like manner, the Countesse of Buckingham, my Lord of Buckingham's mother, the Fryday thereafter, the Physicians also being absent, and at dinner, and not made acquainted with her doings, applied a plaster to the King's back and breast, whereupon his Majesty grew faint, short breathed, and in great agony.'*

Although Eglisam's story was popularly accepted during the 17th century, historians have been inclined to dismiss it as a manifestation of the anti-Stuart bias of the time. However, in this fabulous 600+ page investigation, Alastair Bellany and Thomas Cogswell show that it might have had a foundation in fact. The great thing about this book is the authors' extensive research, the strict objectivity with which they have evaluated the evidence, and the way in which they have examined the evidence from every conceivable perspective.

The story goes that one evening George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham (1592-1628), a close friend and possible lover of James, put something in the king's wine which he promised would act as a restorative. Soon after the king was reduced to agony, screaming: 'O this white powder! This white powder! Would to God I had never taken it.'

In one of Buckingham's account books preserved in the British Library Bellany and Cogswell found a record of two purchases of medicine from a doctor named John Remington which was intended for the king, and which Buckingham and his mother later give him. This discovery seemed to confirm the story. It also seemed to squash the idea that James

I was murdered by the Duke of Buckingham, because he was hardly likely to have recorded in his accounts book the purchase of poisons with which he intended to kill the king.

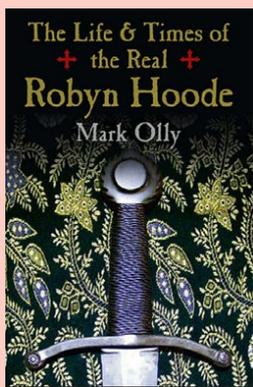
If Buckingham administered the fatal medicine to the king, he appears to have done so in the genuine hope and belief that it would help him, but how and why would Buckingham have given the king anything without the king's physicians agreeing to it? And why would James have taken it?

The plausible explanation is that the king and the duke had an intimate relationship that not only allowed the latter to bypass the authority of the physicians and to gain access to James, but also gave him the opportunity to give the king a home remedy and for the king to have trustingly taken it. The story therefore takes off in a different direction as Bellamy and Cogswell look beyond the murder (if it was murder) to look at the intimacies of James's court and how Buckingham achieved a position in which he wielded very considerable power and exerted a lot of influence not only over James but also his son and heir Charles, who was destined to be beheaded by Oliver Cromwell.

On top of this, the authors also look at how the story was used by assorted groups of people to engineer their own ends, including Charles I's downfall.

The authors' detailed examination of the actual circumstances of James' death looks at it from the perspective the medical practices of the day, how the physicians of the king cared for him, what happened in the king's sickroom, and so on. There's an almost surgical dissection of the rumours that Buckingham bypassed the king's physicians to administer a medicine to James. The authors explain everything in detail, which is helpful in a number of ways, not the least making the story accessible to those whose knowledge of the Stuart period is as meagre as mine.

Highly recommended.



### The Life and Times of the Real Robyn Hoode

Mark Olly

Airsford, Hants.: John Hunt Publishing, 2015

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

illus.;

ISBN: 978-785350597

£9.99 softcover / £4.79 ebook

If you are slightly familiar with Biblical source analysis you will know about the "Q" manuscript and will now be wondering what on earth it has to do with Robin Hood. If you don't know about the "Q" manuscript, let me very briefly explain. The Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke were not actually written by the authors to whom they are credited. Mark is generally believed to be the oldest of the Gospels and to have been written shortly before 70 AD. Matthew and Luke were written later

and used Mark as a source, but they also contain material, mostly sayings attributed to Jesus, that come from another source that we no longer have. Scholars call this source "Q".

And what does this have to do with Robin Hood? Well, Mark Olly suggests that there is probably a "Q" source for the Robin Hood story and that it might be possible to dig back through stories of Robin to get a rough idea of what the original tale was like.

It's a sort of literary archaeology - there were lots of stories about Robin Hood, each telling of a different adventure. These were written at different times and some of the stories we have today were retellings of older stories, or even retellings of retellings of older stories, and contain elements and themes which can be identified to the times when the stories were told or had material added. By dating the later accretions and 'digging' down to the original tale, it should be possible to not only date when these different stories were created, but to identify the now lost original story. This literary archaeology would also identify when various characters and events were added - when did Little John, Maid Marian and Friar Tuck appear? Was the story always set during the reign of King Richard and the evil Prince John? When did the Sheriff of Nottingham become the villain of the piece?

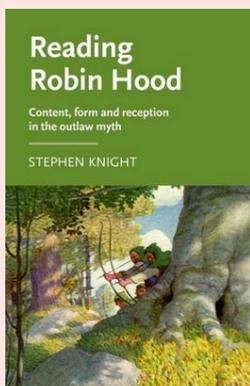
This literary archaeology sounds such a simple idea that one wonders why nobody has thought of it before, or - seeing as I am rather cynical about such things - did someone think of it and abandon the idea when the results proved worthless? I have no idea about the answer to that question, but it is what Mark Olly has attempted for this book and whilst I am a very, very long way off being Stephen Knight (see *Reading Robin Hood*, also reviewed in this issue of *Ripperologist*), it seems to me that he's succeeded rather well. But if nothing else, he has produced a very readable and on many levels informative book.

Hardly anything is known about the 14th century Shropshire cleric William Langland, tall and thin and thought by some to have lost his senses, but it is in his *Piers Ploughman*, a work probably composed about 1370, that Robin Hood makes his first and fleeting appearance. A character called Sloth, a drunken priest, confesses that he does not perfectly know the Lord's Prayer, called the Paternoster, but well knows the rhymes of Robyn Hood and Randolph, Earl of Chester.

What we don't know is whether there were two separate cycles of stories, one about Robyn, the other about Randolph, or whether there was just one set of stories involving both men, and if the latter, whether they were companions and confederates or in conflict with one another. We also don't know which Randolph was being referred to, Ranulf I (1120-1129), Ranulf II (1129-1153), or Ranulf III (1181-1232). The smart money seems to be on Ranulf III with Ranulf II a distinctly distant second. What is clear, however, is that by the last quarter of the 1300s it was unnecessary to explain who Robin Hood was, Langland assumed his audience was well aware what the rhymes of Robin were about. It is also clear that there were several stories about Robin Hood and that they enjoyed a popularity among the ordinary people, good, yeoman stock. The date when *Piers Ploughman* was composed also shows that the original stories had nothing to do with Richard the Lionheart and his dastardly brother John, because Richard I ascended the throne on 6 July 1189, after the composition of *Piers Ploughman*. Mark Olly's literary archaeology suggests that the story harks back to the early 1100s, possibly to the time of the civil war (called the Anarchy) between King Stephen and the Empress Matilda. Stephen ascended the throne in 1135 and the Anarchy led to many dispossessed people turning to brigandry. It is also known that Ranulf II had a dispute with Stephen.

Perhaps one of the most surprising things Olly's research suggests is that Robin took to the greenwood when he was getting on in years, maybe in his 60s.

Whether you think Robin Hood really existed or instead hold the view that he is a mythical folklore figure, Mark Olly's literary archaeology has led to an interesting book presenting a credible timeline showing the possible origin of the outlaw of the woods and when and how various events and characters became part of the story. Olly isn't at all "academic" in his writing style. The text is highly readable and easy to follow, and if you're not familiar with the sources for the story of Robin then you'll find this book an easy place to get started. In fact, whilst there are a number of easy-to-read books about Robin Hood - and my favourite, J C Holt's *Robin Hood*, should be at the top of your Robin reading list - I think this is probably one of the easiest and most interesting and original I've come across.



## Reading Robin Hood: Content, Form and Reception of the Outlaw Myth

Stephen Knight

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015

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

[www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2014/11/07/4123661.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2014/11/07/4123661.htm)

hardcover;

285pp; illus; notes; biblio; index.

ISBN: 978-0719095269

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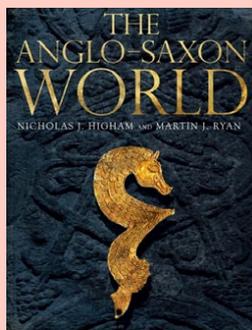
No, this book is not written by *that* Stephen Knight. This Stephen Knight is Stephen Thomas Knight, formerly distinguished research professor at Cardiff University and currently a Research Professor in English Literature at the University of Melbourne in Australia. He is one of the foremost authorities on Robin Hood and has written several essential books on the subject.

Unfortunately, Knight regards as a myth and the story Robin Hood is all about the mythic and folklore traditions, which is a bit disappointing for those of us who hope against our better judgement that Robin really existed. Let me say from the get-go if the development of the legend doesn't grab you and if you aren't excited by the 19th century reimagining of Robin or by the treatment of Robin in novels, television and films of today, then this book will be particularly heavy going. Couple that with the hefty price tag and it seems to me that all but the most serious aficionado will order from the library. I'll therefore keep this review brief.

Planned to be Knight's last book on Robin Hood, this scholarly study looks at how the story of the outlaw of Sherwood has been adapted to suit the needs of successive generations, going back to the early poems and coming up to date through the aforementioned re-imagining of the story in the 19th century to the portrayal of the outlaw in novels, television and films today. This book is essentially a roundup of all the stuff Knight hasn't been able to deal with in his earlier books.

Knight begins by addressing the long-standing question of whether the tales of Robin were originally literary or oral, concluding rather disappointingly that they were both. Other essays look at the Scottish legends of Robin Hood, or Rabbie Hood as maybe he should be called, and, in the longest essay in the book, in some detail at the popular outlaw novels of the nineteenth-century.

If you are interested in how the Robin Hood story has been adapted by successive generations, or you are sufficiently interested in Robin to want to read everything serious that's written about him - which isn't much - then this is a must read. If not, it's probably a book you can miss.



## The Anglo-Saxon World

Nicholas J Higham and Martin J Ryan

London: Yale University Press, 2015

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

First published in hardcover London: Yale University Press, 2013

softcover and ebook;

477pp; sources; biblio; index

ISBN: 978-0-300-21613-4

£30.00 hardcover / £16.99 softcover / £16.14 ebook

Mystery surrounds the beginning of English history like an old fashioned pea-souper fog. It's possible to see the vague, shadowy outlines of people and things, and sometimes a figure comes into sharp focus, only to vanish again. We're told that after the Roman troops left Britain, traditionally round about 410, a Briton known as Vortigern followed the Roman practice of hiring foreign mercenaries to defend vulnerable parts of the coastline. They were two brothers, remembered only as Hengest and Horsa, and they were Jutes, coming from Jutland, the western peninsula of Denmark. They arrived in Kent with their followers in three boats and are traditionally the first English settlers in Britain.

Relations between the Britons and the Jutes quickly deteriorated and eventually Hengest rebelled, Vortigern's regime collapsing amid such terrible destruction that it was later remembered as stretching across the country. What isn't certainly known is whether any of the story is true. That the traditions of both sides remember it suggests that something of the sort probably took place, although Saxons, Angles and Jutes had probably been settling in Britain long before Hengest and Horsa.

More and more Anglo-Saxons arrived in Britain, little being known about them except in very broad outlines. They were pagans and tribal, but by the end of the 6th century the tribal leaders had through conquest and amalgamation come to be recognised as kings, and in 597 St Augustine and his fellow missionaries arrived in Kent and began to Christianise the leaders and people, King Æthelberht of Kent being the first to be baptised.

This outstanding book tells the story of the Anglo-Saxons from these shadowy beginnings to the Norman Conquest in 1066. Up until now, the book on the subject has been Penguin's *The Anglo-Saxons* by Campbell, John and Wormald, but I think Nick Higham and Martin Ryan have the edge, mainly because it is bang up to date with the latest discoveries and interpretations.

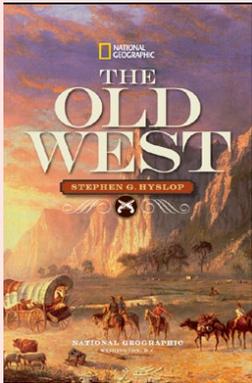
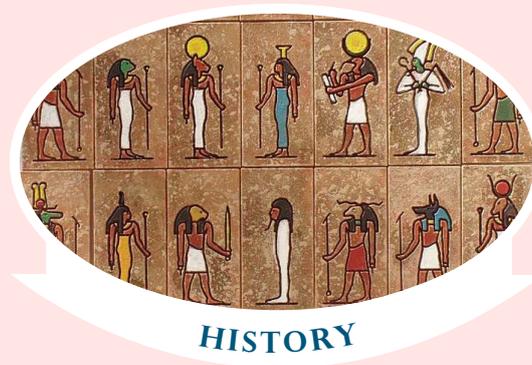
Higham and Ryan are two of the most knowledgeable historians on this period, they write engagingly and they achieve the near-impossibility of combining something for the well-informed reader with comprehensibility for the newcomer. The book is very handsomely illustrated, and the softcover edition is exceptional value for money.

This is a great book and very highly recommended.

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please get in touch at [contact@ripperologist.biz](mailto:contact@ripperologist.biz)*



## The Old West

Stephen G Hyslop

Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2015

[www.nationalgeographic.com/books](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/books)

hardcover;

310pp; further reading; index

ISBN: 978-1-4261-1555-1

£25.00

From the Louisiana Purchase, announced by President Thomas Jefferson to the nation on Independence Day, 4 July, 1803, to the carnage of Wounded Knee in 1890, the sweeping story of the American West is one of truly epic proportions. This wonderful, lavishly-illustrated book can therefore cover no more than the basic facts, so I didn't expect detail or much that's new, but in my opinion what the book delivers is fantastic.

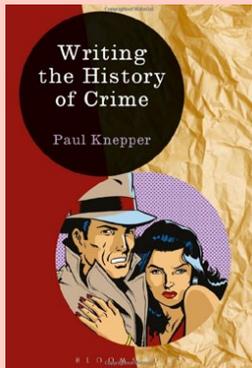
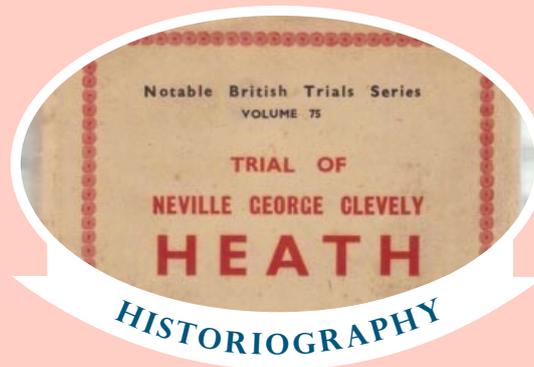
Hyslop's book is very much a book of our time. Previous authors have glossed over unpleasant aspects of the Old West, such as the gross racial intolerance to pretty much everybody, including native Americans, Chinese, Mexicans, African-Americans, or women. Hyslop tackles such things head on, which is good.

Hyslop begins with the aforementioned Louisiana Purchase, the purchase by America of something like 500 million acres for \$15 million from France, and the pioneers of westward expansion, such as Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, the wonderfully named Zebulon Pike, and John C Fremont, who were sent out by the government, and so-called Mountain men who were pioneers almost by default, like Joseph Dickinson and Forrest Hancock who were simply searching for beaver pelts and had no real idea that they were carving themselves a place in history.

This is followed up with a chapter looking at the Mexican War in 1846 and the Gold Rush in California in 1848. The Mexican War resulted in Mexico ceding a large portion of its territory to America. John Sutter and James Marshall had a sawmill known as Sutter's Mill and one day in 1848 Marshall saw something shining at the bottom of a newly dug ditch. He picked it up and realised it was - gold. In due course fortune hunters from around the world would descend on California in what became known as the gold rush. Sad to say, Sutter didn't profit at all.

The Civil War and the trouble that followed leads to the war for the Plains, then comes a chapter about what probably interests us most - especially if, like me, television when growing up included a diet of westerns featuring everyone from Wyatt Earp through Bret and Bart Maverick, Ben Cartwright, Lucas McCain, Tom Brewster, Cheyenne Bodie, and Jim Hardie, to Matt Dillon (and well done if you know the names of the television series to which these were the main characters). The chapter is about law and order in the Old West, when 'cowboy' ceased to mean a cattle herder and was instead the term applied to cutthroats, thieves, and all manner of lawless characters. Here we meet the real life Jesses James, Billy the Kid, Wyatt Earp, Belle Starr, Roy Bean, the range wars, and, eventually, the taming and mythologising of the Old West.

This is a smashing book. Thoroughly recommended.



## Writing the History of Crime

Paul Knepper

London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016

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

hardcover, softcover and ebook;

241pp; notes; index

ISBN: 978-1-4725-1852-1

£65.00 hardcover / £19.99 softcover / £18.99 Kindle

Just in case the title of this book misleads you into thinking it is about something it's not, such as a guide to writing about historical crimes, let me say right from the off that this is historiography - the history of the history of writing about crime, specifically how historical writing on the subject of crime has developed over the years. It's heavy going.

Crime is a relatively new area for historical study, which is surprising given that everybody is touched by crime, whether a victim of crime taking the precautions necessary to avoid becoming a victim of crime. Crime as a subject for historical study began with lawyers in the 19th century, James Fitzjames Stephens, a name well known to Ripperologists, being among its pioneers, but it has only been during the last forty years that it has been recognised as an important topic for historical study.

As Knepper says in his introduction, his book concentrates on a discussion of what to examine in the past, how to study it, and why it matters, much of the discussion covering controversies, debates and disagreements, Knepper seeking to explain why historians disagree. It examines the way crime became a subject for historical study, looks at the questions historians seek to answer, and the trends in historical crime writing. Knepper states in his introduction that the book should bridge the gap between historians who want to know about crime and criminologists who want to know about history. For what my opinion is worth, I think he succeeds in that aim perfectly.

Each chapter covers an approach to crime history, which is where I'm afraid it helps to have a prior knowledge of the subject. Most of the chapters are self explanatory, such as legal history, urban history gender history and so on, but quantitative history and biological and psychoanalytic theories are less clear.

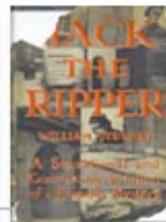
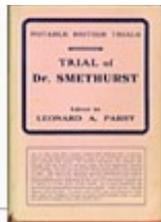
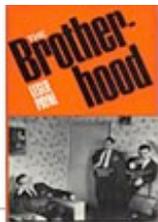
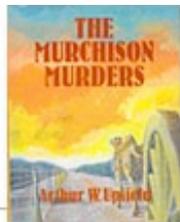
Overall, this is a rewarding read, even if much of it flies above the lay reader's head, as it flew high above mine, but it is really aimed at the specialist, academic reader. If you fall into that category, you will undoubtedly get a lot of value from this book.

*All reviews by Paul Begg*

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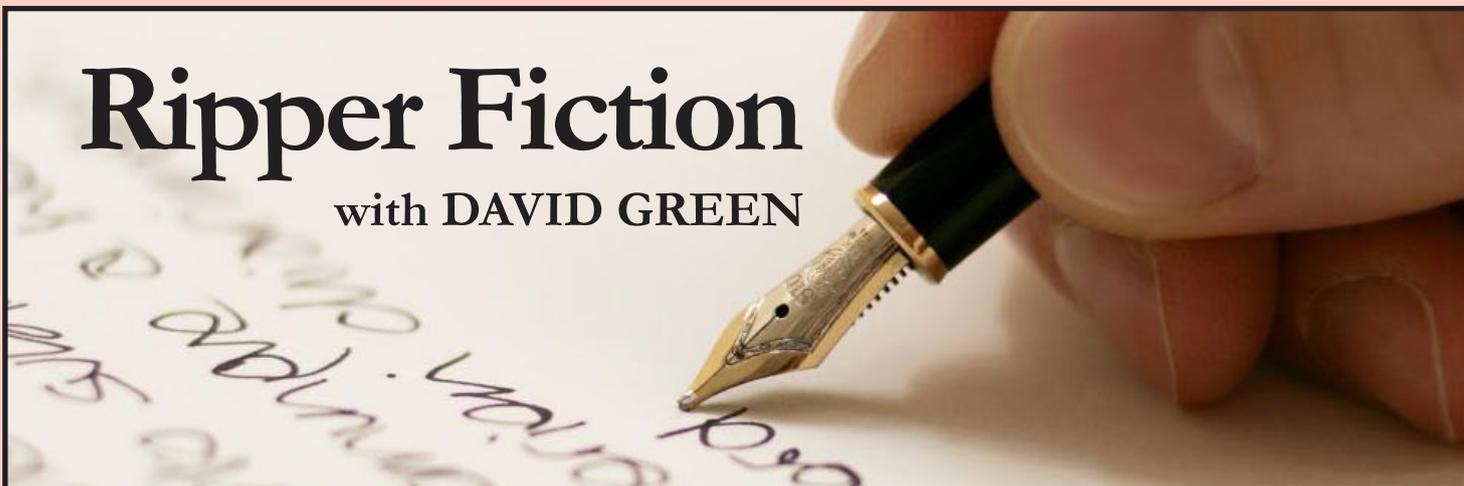
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# Ripper Fiction

with DAVID GREEN

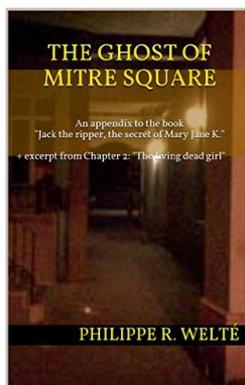


There was Mary.

She didn't look like much of a person at all, the way she was carved up. It was so awful, if I did any kind of job telling you about it here, you might get so revolted you'd quit reading my book. Besides, I'd feel guilty for putting such pictures into your head. My aim is to inform you and entertain you with the tale of my adventures...

from *Savage* by Richard Laymon (1993)

\* \* \* \* \*



## Jack the Ripper: The Secret of Mary Jane K.

Philippe R. Welté

Vol 1. *The Untold Story* (72pp; £2.66)

Vol 2. *The Rose & the Blade* (76pp; £3.08)

Appendix: *The Ghost of Mitre Square* (16pp; £1.40)

Kindle Editions (2015)

In 1985 the French author and paranormal investigator Philippe Welté encountered the ghost of Mary Jane Kelly in Durward Street. She was an 'invisible feminine presence' at his side, smelling of violets. She guided him towards a shining white building - a sort of café or tavern - where slovenly bearded customers slurped broth from bowls and gazed at the world with unspeakable terror in their eyes. It was, says Welté, a scene straight out of a George Romero zombie movie.

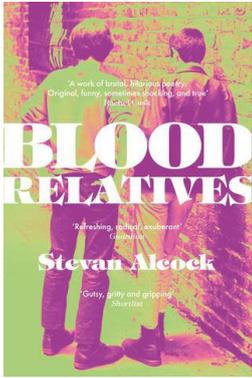
These strange events sparked Welté's 20-year fascination with the Whitechapel murders. In 2006 he published a book on the case called *Jack L'Eventreur: Le Secret de Mary Jane K.* (Paris: Alban Editions). Now there is an abridged three-part English language translation billed as the definitive writer's cut edition. The first two volumes have already been released, and the third comes out next month.

Welté is a colourful character. He directs horror films and has an interest in vampire lore. He claims he can converse with the Dead. Here he expounds the theory that Jack the Ripper was a French doctor working at the Royal London Hospital: in order to divert suspicion away from his paramour Mary Kelly (who has just stabbed Martha Tabram to death in self-defence), the Frenchman begins murdering and mutilating prostitutes in the style of the Paris Ripper who struck in Montrouge in 1886.

It's an interesting theory although it has no real evidence to back it up. Ted Ball rightly trashed the book when he reviewed it for the Whitechapel Society Journal in 2007. Welté does himself no favours by issuing an English language edition that is poorly translated and riddled with spelling and grammatical errors. It shows contempt for the reading public.

One feature that may appeal to readers is Welté's account of the so-called Mary Kelly ghost film, which he discusses in an Appendix. In July 2006 Welté was in Mitre Square making a promotional TV documentary for his forthcoming book. Unnoticed at the time, a flash of light (or a mist-like substance) was momentarily caught on camera as he filmed outside a taxi rank at night. Welté believes this mysterious glare (he calls it a 'translucent veil worn by the wind') is the spirit of Mary Jane Kelly manifesting as a simulacrum of the naked model in Walter Sickert's painting *The Camden Town Murder*.

This is dire, embarrassing stuff. A photograph of the 'ghost' is reproduced in the Appendix, and if you squint hard enough and suspend all rational thought and critical judgment you can just about make out what Welté thinks he can see. But sharing the same perceptual worldview as Philippe Welté, even briefly, is far scarier to me than any zombie-haunted café in Buck's Row.



## Blood Relatives

Stevan Alcock  
London: Fourth Estate (2016)  
ISBN-978-0-0075-80866  
Paperback 311pp  
£8.99

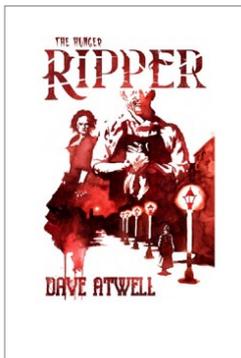
Stevan Alcock's debut novel is set in Leeds during the time of the Yorkshire Ripper murders.

With little plot to speak of, it describes the coming-of-age (and the coming out) of a happy-go-lucky working class gay teenager called Ricky Thorpe as he struggles with family life and an okay job as a delivery boy on the Corona soft drinks van. Not only does it evoke Ricky's adolescence with skill and humour, it renders an authentic portrait of northern England in the late seventies, recreating the time and the place in great gulps of nostalgia and turning the ordinary into something astonishing.

There are space hoppers, Jubilee street parties, and freshly baked parkin on wire trays; there are National Front skinheads, punk rockers, and characters like Camp David and Ben Her moving through a grey world of squats, scuzzy nightclubs and dreary bedsits.

But the Ripper murders are always there in the background, polluting the novel like a stench from a sewage farm. Every chapter in the book is named after one of Sutcliffe's victims. Alcock reminds us of the fear and the dread inspired by the Ripper. The Geordie hoax tape was played everywhere, in schools and in work canteens, and most women were too frightened to walk home on their own at night. And in the roasting hot summers of the late 70s, the mutilated bodies of prostitutes regularly turned up on playing fields and behind railway embankments. As Ricky says, people are born, people die, and in-between people buy bottles of orangeade and dandelion and burdock.

This is a fantastic piece of writing.



## The Hunger: Ripper

Dave Atwell  
Realmwalk Publishing Group (2015)  
ISBN-978-1943670161  
Paperback 232pp  
£6.00

Dave Atwell is the author of the *Rotting Frontier* series, a sort of Weird Western/post-Civil War horror story mash-up where packs of 'zombies' lay siege to frontier towns and the wide Montana landscape reverberates to the crunch of tomahawks thudding into undead meat. In this latest volume the narrative shifts from the Great Plains to the slums of Whitechapel in 1888.

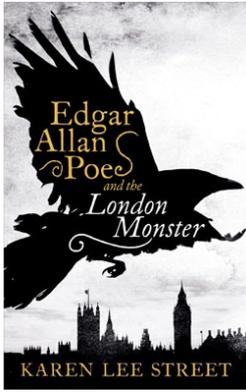
Major Royce Marsden, a Union Army deserter, is cursed with the craving for human flesh. In an attempt to escape his past, he sails to London and opens a mortuary business in the East End. It's a good move - he gets paid to deal with the dead while at the same time he feeds on their buttocks and limbs. Extra spice comes in the shape of a corrupt Metropolitan police constable and a prostitute called Jane Fletcher. And of course Jack the Ripper, who lies waiting just offstage, ready to join in the bloody action...

This probably isn't the sort of book you'll want to read at the dinner table. Dave Atwell is very good at the gruesome, squeamish stuff, but I found myself slogging through it with the same sort of desultory effort required to eat potato crisps. His characters have no real depth, and the novel offers few meaningful insights into Victorian life or human behaviour. The Jack the Ripper setting is basically just a vehicle for scenes of carnage and necrophagy. It's palatable enough as a schlock horror novel, but easily forgotten. After you've finished, all that remains is the taste of salted human flesh on your fingers.

## Edgar Allan Poe and the London Monster

Karen Lee Street  
OneWorld Publications (April 7, 2016)  
ISBN-978-1-78074-9303  
Hardback 384pp  
£12.99

Before Jack the Ripper there was The London Monster. Between 1788 and 1790 he attacked as many as fifty women, approaching them from behind and slashing their buttocks and thighs with a knife. He may have worn blades strapped to his knees like the spurs of a fighting cock. He caused so much panic and terror that fashionable ladies started wearing copper pots



over their petticoats when they ventured outdoors.

This peculiar and very creepy series of attacks is the subject of Karen Lee Street's highly impressive first novel. The original London Monster may have been an unemployed artificial flower-maker called Rhywick Williams, but in this fictional account the perpetrators are Edgar Allan Poe's maternal grandparents Henry and Elizabeth Arnold. Elizabeth, a struggling stage actress, uses her cross-dressing and acting skills to roam the streets at night as a male piquerist, attacking the derrières of her husband's mistresses. Inspired by his wife's example, Henry begins attacking female pedestrians in a similar vein, and soon the couple are exchanging erotically-charged letters detailing each others vicious crimes.

Fifty years later, Poe inherits a mahogany box containing his grandparents' letters. Intrigued, he sails from Philadelphia to London to investigate what he believes at first is a case of forgery. He teams up with his old friend C Auguste Dupin, the polymath and ratiocinator, whose cold, logical detective methods are nicely counterpointed to Poe's more introspective, emotional personality.

The general tone of the novel is deliciously morbid. Nervous readers may find it difficult to breathe amid the crimson silk draperies, the heavy rosewood furniture, the candlelit catacombs, and the overpowering stench of graveyard mould. The prose has a lush, sumptuous rhythm to it:

*"He slashed across her flank and back again. The knife slit through the green silk like a thorn tearing through flower petals, and the flesh underneath gave way like a peach..."*

The novel is full of shuddersome gothic effects. Gusts of wind extinguish candle flame, horror lurks in gloomy dank cellars, and characters constantly suffer from raw nerves and a sense of impending doom. It may be that some of the uncanny sounds you can hear are the creaks and screeches of familiar, well-loved plot devices. But Karen Street is fully in control of her material and the sheer exuberance of her writing ensures that the story never once tips over into parody or pastiche.

Edgar Allan Poe and the London Monster explores themes of tainted biography, revenge and retribution, and it examines the ways in which the sins of the past still haunt the present. This is a dark, highly satisfying mystery combining beautiful writing with suspense and unease. A powerful, exciting new voice and a great start to OneWorld's crime fiction imprint.

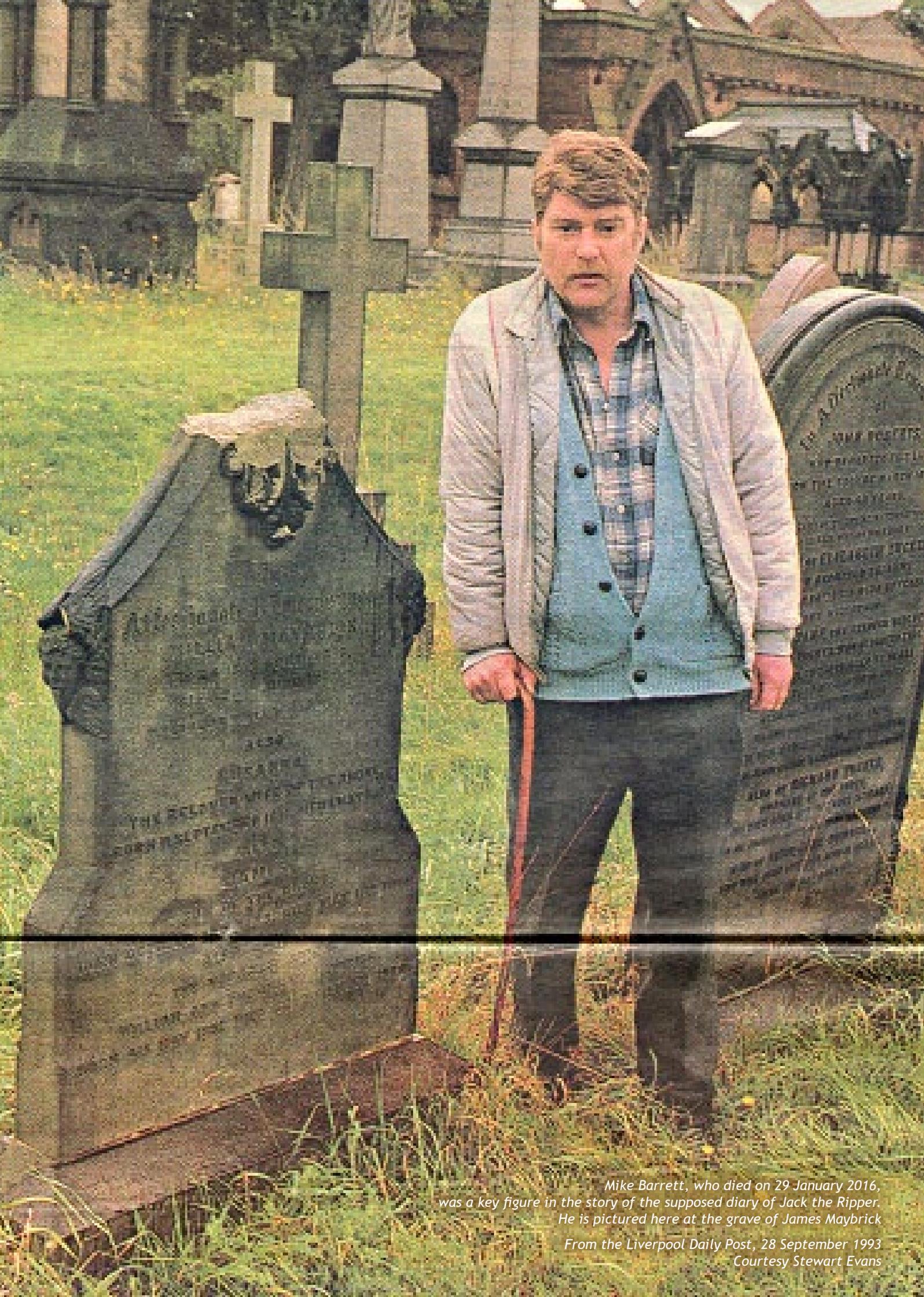
IN THE NEXT ISSUE we review Eileen Seymour's comedy melodrama Jack A Gory, and take a look at Bonnie MacBird's Art in the Blood, a Sherlock Holmes mystery set in 1888. Plus all the latest Ripper fiction.

DAVID GREEN lives in Hampshire, England, where he works as a freelance book indexer. He is currently writing (very slowly) a book about the murder of schoolboy Percy Searle in Hampshire in 1888.

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*Mike Barrett, who died on 29 January 2016, was a key figure in the story of the supposed diary of Jack the Ripper. He is pictured here at the grave of James Maybrick*

*From the Liverpool Daily Post, 28 September 1993  
Courtesy Stewart Evans*