

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

# Ripperologist

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# Pack Up Your Troubles

**ADAM WOOD, Executive Editor**

**The East End of the late 18th century was, for hundreds of its inhabitants, a place of temporary accommodation: a bed in the lodging house for the night for many, a quiet doorway or the workhouse for others.**

Although thankfully not with the same regularity, I've moved house myself a fair few times over the years - my father's address book contains more pages with crossed-out entries under my name than everyone else put together - and in fact over the past few weeks I've moved again, which is the reason this edition of *Ripperologist* has been slightly delayed.

As now, in the era concerning those of us interested in the Whitechapel murders, the removals business was big business.

Charles Lechmere, the discoverer-of-Polly-Nichols'-body-cum-Ripper-suspect worked for Pickfords, perhaps the most famous name in the business, and indeed was on his way to his work at their Broad Street depot when he came across her body / was interrupted by Robert Paul (delete as preferred).

Pickfords had been established in Cheshire, north west England in 1646, when Thomas Pickford realised that the firm's business of repairing roads using packhorses presented an opportunity to generate income from the return journey by carrying goods for other parties. By 1740 the company had expanded to London, and at the turn of the 19th century owned a fleet of horses, wagons and canal boats. Joseph Baxendale acquired the firm in 1817, retaining the long-established name, and oversaw a rapid period of expansion as the railway network raced across the country. The Pickford's website claims that between 1918 and 1921 their fleet included 1,580 horses, 1,900 horse vehicles and 46 motor vehicles.

Much smaller operations existed of course, such as Frederick Hogg's furniture removals business in north London, at which his brother Frank Hogg worked at the time of his affair with Mary Pearcey.

Another cart driver, this time delivering goods rather than furniture, was a young Louis Robinson, who in 1880 worked for Messrs Copestake, Hughes, Crampton & Co. on Goswell Road in the City. Six years later he joined the City of London Police. Starting on the next page, Amanda Harvey Purse describes how Louis would later encounter a drunken Catherine Eddowes on Aldgate High Street, taking her into custody and, hours later, her eventual doom. Amanda's article is an extract from her forthcoming book, *Jack and Old Jewry*, which details the lives and backgrounds of those City officers involved in the hunt for the Ripper following the murder in Mitre Square.

Elsewhere, Chris George looks at the problem of fake history in Ripperology, while Howard and Nina Brown unearth a newspaper interview with 'One-Armed Liz', friend to Elisabeth Stride.

Enjoy the issue.

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

# Making an Impression of a Fire Engine?

## PC Louis Frederick Robinson and PC George Simmons

By AMANDA HARVEY PURSE

**In the early hours of 30th September 1888, the City of London Police force went from being a close bystander to having an active involvement into the investigation of the world's most famous murder case with the death of one woman: Catherine Eddowes.**

**Amanda Harvey Purse's book *Jack and Old Jewry: The City of London Policemen Who Hunted The Ripper* details the force's participation in the investigation, and looks at the individual lives of those officers involved. The following article, an extract from the book, features PCs Louis Robinson and George Simmons, who, just hours before her murder, discovered the drunken Catherine Eddowes and took her to Bishopsgate Police Station.**

### LOUIS ROBINSON

*PC Louis Robinson was only 23-years-old when he became entangled in the greatest mystery the Victorians had ever known. He had no idea when he started his beat on the night of 29th September 1888 that his meeting with a woman along Aldgate High Street would have such dramatic consequences.*

*Had he turned into Aldgate High Street a few seconds earlier, or later than he did, she may have managed to walk a few more steps into Metropolitan Police territory. She would have been nowhere near Mitre Square at half past one the following morning and her life would not have ended in the way it did.*

*Sadly, this did not happen...*

Born on 13th August 1865 to Edward Robinson and Ellen Tott, who married in Reed, Hertfordshire, on 9th July 1849,<sup>1</sup> Louis Frederick Robinson was the sixth child born to the family.

The family, completed by siblings Annie,<sup>2</sup> Emma,<sup>3</sup> Allen,<sup>4</sup> Henrietta,<sup>5</sup> Edwin,<sup>6</sup> Clara<sup>7</sup> and Reginald,<sup>8</sup> lived in the small village of Therfield, near Royston in Hertfordshire,<sup>9</sup> mainly a farming village. All the Robinson children were baptised at St Mary's church, including Louis on 24th September 1865.

By 1871, the Robinson family lived at 72 Groom's Cottage, which ironically stood near a street called Police Row. Joining the Robinsons in this small farmer's cottage was one William Tott, recorded as Edward Robinson's stepson.<sup>10</sup> This has led to the suggestion that Louis's mother, Ellen, had been married before, but as her maiden name was Tott it is likely that she had given birth to William outside of wedlock.

Edward Robinson worked as a gardener at this time, with eldest son Allen working as a farmer. All the other children were in school, including 5-year-old Louis.

1 Records of St Mary's church, Therfield.

2 Born 25th November 1850. Annie would later marry George Kennett.

3 Born 21st January 1853. Emma ended her days in Arlesey Lunatic Asylum, Bedfordshire, built to replace Bedford Lunatic Asylum which had been built in 1812. It had the longest corridor in Britain at about a half mile long.

4 Born 18th October 1856, Allen later married Annie Bolton.

5 Born 28th January 1859, Henrietta was also confined to an asylum, although where is not known.

6 Born 19th November 1861, Edwin later went on to marry Lizzie Preston on his 26th birthday in 1887. At the time he was working at Copestakes, where his younger brother Louis once did.

7 Born 3rd December 1867. Clara died aged 15.

8 Born 6th May 1869, Reginald also died young, at just 16-years-old.

9 Records of St Mary's church, Therfield.

10 1871 census.

By September 1880, at the age of fourteen, Louis was living in London and working as a porter and delivery driver for Messrs Copestake, Hughes, Crampton & Co.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1881 census Louis was recorded as 'Lewis', a porter residing at 32 Goswell Road, St Luke's, an area dotted with all different kinds of businesses from jewellers to tobacconists. The head of the household was listed as a packer and foreman to Messrs Copestake, Hughes, Crampton and Co,<sup>12</sup> and the fact that the company held business meetings at the address indicates that Louis was given accommodation at his place of work.<sup>13</sup>

Louis completed his application form to become a police officer in the City of London Police Force on 18th October 1886, witnessed by Chief Inspector Robert A. Sillcock.<sup>14</sup> Louis had to provide three references to his good character, and these were provided by Mr J. Calvert, a warehouseman working for the same company at which Louis had been employed for six years before joining the force, William Edward Tinker, a fellow coachman of the same company and who had lived with Louis at 32 Goswell Road in 1881 but now was living at 7 Mortimer Road, Kingsland, and James Sill, another porter.<sup>15</sup>

These references were checked and cleared by Sergeant James Egan.<sup>16</sup> It wasn't until 9th December 1886 that Louis officially joined the City of London Police, at the same time as George Vinden Parton (warrant number 5920).<sup>17</sup>

Louis was recorded as being 5ft 9in tall, with hazel eyes, a dark complexion with dark brown hair and a birthmark on his hip and back.<sup>18</sup>

He was given collar number 931<sup>19</sup> and the warrant number 5921. He was sent to the police surgeon to be certified fit for police service on 4th February 1887, passing without any problems. Louis was now earning 25s a week. However, something happened within the first three months of his service - perhaps a combination of the long hours, bad weather and work conditions proved a shock to his system, as it did for many young officers - and he was sent again to the police surgeon on 10th May 1887, with the result that Louis was signed off work sick for 21 days.<sup>20</sup>

Louis seems to have relaxed in his new career as a policeman and possibly thought he could push his luck a little. This failed on 15th January 1888, when he was caught drinking in the doorway of a public house. The punishment came directly from the Commissioner, with three days deducted from his fortnightly leave. Compared to some other City of London Police officers, Louis Robinson's service record is relatively quiet, possibly the strong punishment of losing three days holiday shocking him enough to abide by the rules.<sup>21</sup>

This may explain why he did not go easy on Catherine Eddowes when he met her at 8:30pm on 29th September

1888 outside 29 Aldgate High Street.<sup>22</sup> He could have been lenient and just given a stern warning - after all, there were worse crimes a person could commit. However, the rules stated that a warning could be issued only if Catherine had not been unruly enough to draw a crowd, but she had, which meant that PC Louis Robinson had only one course of action open to him, going strictly by the rules, and that was to take her to the nearest police station, in this case Bishopsgate, and have her placed in the cells to sober up.<sup>23</sup>



*PC Louis Robinson finds a drunken Catherine Eddowes on the pavement in Aldgate High Street*

11 Messrs Copestake, Hughes, Crampton and Co. began trading in 1825 as Copestake and Co. They were originally a wholesaler dealing in lace, operating from a small room above a shop at 7 Cheapside. By the time Louis Robinson started working for them, the company was making a wide variety of items including artificial flowers, bed linen, shawls and umbrellas, and had premises not just in London but also Manchester, Glasgow, Paris and New York. Records of Therfield held in the Church of St Mary's.

12 1881 census.

13 *Good Templar's Watchword Volume II.*

14 At the time of the 1881 census Robert Sillcock was living at Snow Hill Police Station with his wife Susannah and their children Ellen, Alice, Robert Jr, Ernest and Harry.

15 Louis Robinson's application form to join the City of London Police, CLA/048/AD/01.

16 According to the 1881 census, Sergeant James Egan was living at Bishopsgate Police Station.

17 City of London Police Record file held at Bishopsgate Police Station.

18 Louis Robinson's application form, CLA/048/AD/01.

19 Robinson's collar number would change over the years to 1150, 903 and 303C.

20 Louis Robinson's service record, CLA/048/AD/01.

21 Louis Robinson's misconduct record, CLA/048/AD/01.

22 The address '29 Aldgate High Street' is a mystery in its own right, because officially it did not exist in any records of 1888. According to census returns between 1871 and 1901, the numbering on Aldgate High Street went from 28 to 30. Research in recent years suggests that No. 28 was a furniture warehouse which could have spread over into a space next door, making that No. 29.

23 Order Book for Division Six (Bishopsgate) held at the City of London Police Museum.

Louis' career bloomed after his brush with the Whitechapel murders case. On 17th January 1889 he was promoted to second-class constable, receiving a pay rise. A year and a half later his salary was further increased to 32s 2d,<sup>24</sup> a reasonable sum of money and, with his address at this time being Bishopsgate Police Station, you can imagine that with not much rent to be paid and no travel costs to get to work, he would have been quite comfortable. Life must have seemed very different from his childhood and the thought of having to work hard on the farmlands was long gone from his mind. In 1891 he was still single and living at Bishopsgate Police Station.<sup>25</sup>

At this time there were over 30 officers living at the station, including Inspector Edward Collard and his family.<sup>26</sup>

On 19th August 1892 Louis was again awarded 21 days' sick leave, approved by Commissioner Sir Henry Smith himself. We do not know why Louis required this leave, but it is interesting that while he could have received confirmation of his sick leave from quite a few people lower down on the ladder in the force, he actually received it from the highest possible person.<sup>27</sup>

Due to a change in regulations Louis found himself technically ranked as a third-class constable, but on 19th January 1893 was 'promoted' to second class constable and awarded an increase in his weekly wage to 34s, and just a year later, on 25th January 1894, was promoted to first-class police constable, earning a weekly wage of 36s 3d.<sup>28</sup>

After all the good work, Louis let himself down somewhat on 1st September 1894, when he was caught 'idling and gossiping with PC 954' for roughly ten minutes. Possibly because of his previous good service, Louis received just a stern talking to - it could have been a lot worse.<sup>29</sup>

There are no blemishes on his record for the next five years. Louis is still unmarried living at Bishopsgate Police Station, a first-class constable earning a more than comfortable wage. But on 26th August 1899, thirteen days after his 34th birthday, he was caught drunk at muster before going out on duty, a serious offence. The result was a demotion to second-class constable, and a decrease in pay.<sup>30</sup>

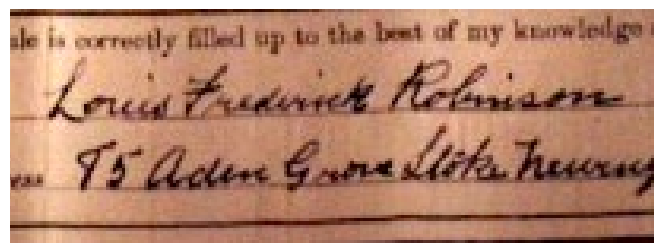
It took Louis a year of good behaviour to return to his first-class position, and the associated salary. A few months later, on 15th November 1900, he received a further increase in wages, so that he was receiving 40s per week.<sup>31</sup>

In the 1901 census, Louis Robinson was recorded as still living within Bishopsgate Police Station with all the

new recruits to the City of London Police force, who were also unmarried. This would have meant that Louis had been living in the same police station for 20 years.

At some point between 1901 and 1910, he met architect's daughter Edith Mary Taperell, and the couple married on 4th October 1910 at St Mary's Parish Church in Stoke Newington,<sup>32</sup> where by coincidence the churchwarden was Wynne Baxter, the coroner at the inquests of Annie Millwood, Martha Tabram, Mary Ann Nichols, Annie Chapman, Elizabeth Stride and Frances Coles.

A year later, in the 1911 census, Louis was living with his wife at 85 Aden Grove North, Stoke Newington, a small residence with three rooms.<sup>33</sup> He was now 45-years-old. Perhaps a combination of a long career and the fact that he was now a married man had resulted in his attitude to policing changing, but within a year Louis decided to retire from the City of London Police force.



*Louis Robinson's signature on the 1911 census*

On 1st February 1912 he walked into Bishopsgate Police Station and handed over the uniform he known for almost 26 years to PC Meads, who then handed it to Inspector Bracknell, the station's storekeeper. As with all policemen who left the force, his description was recorded, revealing that his dark hair had by this time turned grey.<sup>34</sup> Louis was awarded his 25 year pension, which amounted to £62 12s 3d per year.<sup>35</sup>

This was not the last the City of London Police was to hear of Louis Robinson, however. On 4th January 1916 they received a letter from a Mr F C McQuown, secretary

24 Louis Robinson's pay record, CLA/048/AD/01.

25 1891 Census.

26 Ibid.

27 Louis Robinson's service record, CLA/048/AD/01.

28 Louis Robinson's pay record, CLA/048/AD/01.

29 Louis Robinson's misconduct record, CLA/048/AD/01.

30 Ibid.

31 Louis Robinson's pay records, CLA/048/AD/01.

32 Louis Robinson's marriage certificate held within his City of London Police file, CLA/048/AD/01.

33 1911 census.

34 Louis Robinson's service record, CLA/048/AD/01.

35 Ibid.

of the County of London Electric Supply Company, asking for Louis's service record because he had applied for the role of Slot Meter Collector.<sup>36</sup> It seems as if Louis, who was now 51-years-old, could not rest in his retirement. The Commissioner replied with what we can only assume was a good reference, and Louis started working again. However, sadly this new working life was not to last and Louis died within a year, on 30th December 1916.<sup>37</sup>

Thirteen years later, rules had changed yet again and police widows were now entitled to claim on a fund set up to help them. So on 14th December 1929, at the age of 55, Edith could have been entitled to claim on that fund. However, we have to assume she was not informed of this and it was not until 1956, at the age of 82, that she wrote to her local police headquarters in Kent<sup>38</sup> asking whether she could receive the Police Widow's pension. Her letter was sent to the City of London Police, who asked for proof of her marriage to Louis. After Edith sent a copy of her own wedding certificate, her request was granted and from 15th October 1956 she received a weekly allowance of 22s 8d.<sup>39</sup>

### GEORGE SIMMONS

*On the night of 29th September 1888, at just after eight thirty, PC George Simmons walked along Aldgate High Street, as his beat book instructed, when he was summoned by PC Robinson to help with a woman who was quite obviously drunk. The pair helped the inebriate to her feet, and marched her to Bishopsgate Police Station.*



*Bishopsgate Police Station 1910*  
© City of London Police Museum

George Simmons was born in the same year the City of London Police force was created, 1839, to Arthur and Mary Simmons in Cuckfield, Sussex. He was the third of six children, with Arthur Jr (b. 1833), Susan (b. 1835) preceding him, and Elizabeth (b. 1844), Mary (b. 1847) and Caroline (b. 1851) following.<sup>40</sup> At the time of the 1841 census, when George was two years of age, the Simmons family were living at Mackerel's, Newick in Sussex, a small village which in 1831 had a population of just 724.

By 1851 George had left school and was working as an errand boy for a local business within the village. He was now the oldest child still living at home, with younger sisters Elizabeth, Mary and Caroline. George's father was recorded in that year's census as a house servant and groom.<sup>41</sup>

Ten years later, at the time of the census on 7th April 1861, George had moved out of the family home, living in the neighbouring village of Chailey and working as domestic gardener for one of the manor houses.<sup>42</sup>

However, just four months later it seems that George had decided life as a gardener did not suit him, for it was at this time that he joined the City of London Police with the collar number 959 and warrant number 3224.<sup>43</sup> He finally started his new duties on 15th August 1861 after completing his training, on the same day as six other new police officers, John Allen, George Chish, William Green, Charles Mercer, Charles Searle and William Read.<sup>44</sup> George was 22-years-old and was sent to Division Six, Bishopsgate.<sup>45</sup>

In 1863, George met Mary Ann Holmes and returned to his home county of Sussex to marry her in the parish of Worthing.<sup>46</sup>

Two years later, the couple set up home at 3 Gracechurch Street in the City. Their first son, named Arthur George after the child's grandfather and father, was born in 1866.<sup>47</sup> Another boy, William, was born in 1871.<sup>48</sup>

36 Louis Robinson's service record, CLA/048/AD/01.

37 Death register.

38 She was at this time living in Whitstable, Kent.

39 Louis Robinson's service record, CLA/048/AD/01.

40 Simmons family tree.

41 1851 census.

42 1861 census.

43 City of London Police File held at Bishopsgate Police Station.

44 From 1840, this was done at 26 Old Jewry.

45 City of London Police File held at Bishopsgate Police Station.

46 1863 marriage records.

47 1866 birth records.

48 1871 census.

By 1881 George has spent over fifteen years within the force, and the family had grown. Now, the Simmons family also included Edmund<sup>49</sup> and Mary, both born within the City of London. George was now 42-years-old and still a beat constable.<sup>50</sup>

Seven years later, on 29th September 1888, George was walking his beat along Aldgate High Street when he saw fellow City of London Police Constable Louis Robinson struggling with a crowd surrounding the drunken Catherine Eddowes, and helped his colleague take her to Bishopsgate Police Station.

On 8th January 1890, sixteen months later, George retired from the force aged 51. He had served more than 28 years, and was awarded a pension of £54 40d.<sup>51</sup>

George, his wife and their younger children - Edmund, Mary<sup>52</sup> and young Herbert, born in 1884 - moved to Roseberry Cottages on Heatherside Road in Epsom, Surrey. Not just a retired policeman, in the 1891 census George was recorded as a Local County Court Bailiff.<sup>53</sup>

Ten years later, in 1901, George was 62-years-old and retired; wife Mary Ann was 57. Now that the children had finally left home the couple probably hoped for a quiet life. Sadly, it would not be for long.

The *Police Review* of 27th October 1905 reported that there had been an accident involving ex-City of London Constable George Simmons, aged 67, causing 'total paralysis from the shoulders downwards'. It was reported that George regularly travelled on his cart to East Preston, Sussex, and on the day of the accident had been standing on the cart taking some hedge trimming being passed to him by a colleague when he slipped, falling to his death.<sup>54</sup>

His widow, Mary Ann Simmons, continued to live in Epsom,<sup>55</sup> claiming from the City of London Police widow's fund.

George Simmons' role in the hours preceding Catherine Eddowes' murder may seem minimal, but considering he

had met her while she was still alive and carried her the eight minutes or so to Bishopsgate Police Station on the night before she died, we cannot deny that he would have been in a state of shock when news of her murder broke.

49 Edmund married in 1894 and spent the remainder of his life in Epsom, passing away in 1927.

50 1881 census.

51 George Simmons' complete service record is missing at the time of writing, as so many of the files are. Information used in this chapter is from files held at Bishopsgate police station.

52 Mary married Alfred Ernest Lacey in Epsom in 1899, going on to have three children: Ernest (b.1902), Gladys (b.1905) and Herbert (b.1907). Alfred Lacey worked at the City of London Asylum as its Head Attendant.

53 1891 census.

54 *Police Review*, 27th October 1905.

55 At 177 Hook Road, according to the 1911 census.



*Jack and Old Jewry: The City of London Policemen Who Hunted The Ripper* will be published by Mango Books in May 2017. Visit [www.mangobooks.co.uk](http://www.mangobooks.co.uk)

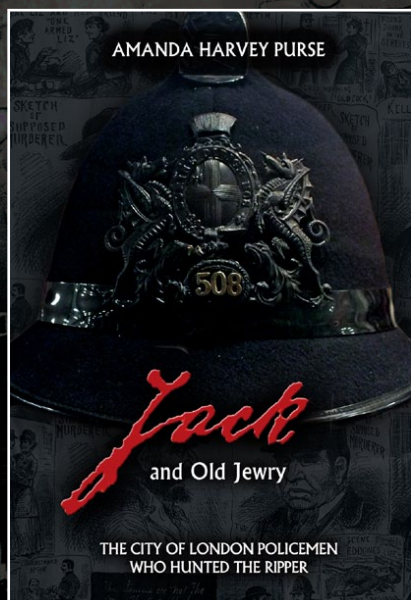


AMANDA HARVEY PURSE has studied the Jack the Ripper case for almost 25 years. Turning her attention to the history of the City of London Police fifteen years ago, she became a tour guide and researcher for the City of London Police Museum.

Amanda has studied various other Victorian and Edwardian crimes, leading her to act as an historical researcher for documentaries and TV shows for the BBC, the History Channel and Channel 4.

She is the author of a series of 'faction' books on the Jack the Ripper case: *Jack The Ripper's Many Faces*, *Dead Bodies Do Tell Tales* and *The Strange Case Of Caroline Maxwell*. She is also the author of the e-book series *Victorian Lives Behind Victorian Crimes*, and has written various crime-related articles for a wide range of magazines, journals and newspapers.

*Jack And Old Jewry: The City Of London Policemen Who Hunted The Ripper* is her first fully factual book on the people surrounding the Jack the Ripper case.



In the early hours of 30th September 1888, the City of London Police force went from being a close bystander to having an active involvement into the investigation of the world's most famous murder case with the death of one woman: Catherine Eddowes. The murderer is still unknown, but has passed into history under the name 'Jack the Ripper'.

If you want to try to find out who Jack the Ripper might have been, there are many books to choose from which will help you. But what if you want to know the history of the City of London Police from its humble beginnings, or to know what it would have been like for a Victorian constable walking his beat?

What if you wanted an indepth look into the lives of each of the City officers who had a role in the Jack the Ripper investigation, making them more real to you than just a name in the inquest reports?

With new, fresh information, JACK AND OLD JEWRY: THE CITY OF LONDON POLICEMEN WHO HUNTED THE RIPPER answers these questions.

Available May 2017 from [www.mangobooks.co.uk](http://www.mangobooks.co.uk)



# Two Contemporary Swedish Pamphlets about Jack the Ripper

By JAN BONDESON

**When visiting the Royal Library of Stockholm some time ago, I had occasion to read two little-known Swedish pamphlets about the Whitechapel murders. The first of these is the 15-page *Hvem är Jack Uppskäraren?* (*Who is Jack the Ripper?*), published in the provincial town of Kalmar in 1889. According to this short and garbled account, Jack had at least ten victims and was still fully active at the time of writing. The fourth victim had been Annie Chapman, the fifth a woman of ill repute in Miller's Court. The months of July and August 1889 had seen three further murders. The eighth victim had been Alice Mackenzie in Castle Alley, the dismembered body of the ninth had been found in the Thames near London Bridge, and the body of the tenth victim, butchered in a terrible manner, had been found near Bromby.**

Since Annie Chapman's uterus had been removed in a manner that required medical skill, the murderer must have possessed some anatomical knowledge. The pamphlet claims that an American named John Fitzgerald had visited a pathological museum and some medical conventions, showing great interest in procuring some uteri that he claimed to need for his scientific research. He was arrested but proved his innocence. Another suspect was a Malay cook called Alaska. A seaman named Dodge claimed that this individual had suffered the misfortune of having two years pay stolen from him by women of ill repute during an excursion to Whitechapel. As revenge, he had sworn to strangle and kill every woman he met in this part of town, if he did not find the thieves and reclaim his money.

Late in 1888, there was a veritable murder mania, spreading from London to reach even the most distant

parts of Europe. The dismembered body of a boy was found in Barford, the pamphlet goes on to state: the ears, nose and legs had been cut off, the heart torn out, the abdomen sliced open and the boy's boots thrust into it. In both Glasgow and Yeobridge, there were murders similar to the Whitechapel atrocities. In Vienna, a prostitute was found strangled in a sofa. In Ljusdal, a quiet little town in the northern outback of Sweden, a man booked into the local hotel, introducing himself as 'Jack'. He seized the chambermaid and tried to strangle her, before running about the hotel and attacking several other women. When arrested by the police, he told them that he wanted to murder women to become blessed by God. There was quite a panic among the local women when this madman that bragged that several other Swedish 'Jacks' were on their way to Ljusdal with the same purpose in mind! In late 1889, two dismembered arms were found in a dustbin in the Norrmalm district of Stockholm. Rumours soon flew that Jack the Ripper was in town: after finding London too hot for him, he had decided to continue his handiwork in the Swedish capital. The Stockholm ladies were very anxious and their male protectors set up a guard of vigilantes to patrol the streets. But the police discovered that the two dismembered arms had been stolen from a dissecting room by an overzealous medical student who wanted some extra dissecting practice; they had been thrown out by his charwoman, who had objected to their pungent smell.

The second pamphlet is the 52-page *Jack Uppsprättaren* (*Jack the Slasher*), written by a Swedish American calling himself Ansgarius Svenson, and published in the provincial town of Malmö in 1889. In this ludicrous fictionalised

account, Jack is a doctor who has sworn to rid the world of prostitutes after contracting venereal disease from one of them. He lives in a haunted house in Whitechapel, making regular nocturnal forays with his knife. One of his victims is the Swedish girl 'Pretty Lisa', who has become a prostitute after her husband, the boxer 'Buffalo John' Stride had drowned in the Thames. Once, Jack is pursued by two huge bloodhounds, but he slashes the throat of one of them and desperately scales a fence. The other bloodhound pulls off one of his galoshes, swallows it, and chokes to death! On another nocturnal expedition, Jack falls headlong down a sewer, but again fortuitously saves his life. When a police detective has him cornered, Jack uses his hypnotic powers to make his foe's revolver shot miss him. The persistent detective tracks him down again, however, and Jack plunges from a window into the muddy waters of the Thames, never to make his presence felt again.

These two Swedish pamphlets are a good illustration of the popular belief that the Ripper was never caught and that the murders continued well into 1889, if not longer. The second of them presents a version of the popular 'insane doctor' hypothesis that was clearly going around as early as 1889. The first pamphlet is more valuable and has some themes of interest. The strange American who shopped round for uteri is known to the Ripperologists, but seaman Dodge's tale may not be as widely known. It appears to have originated as a Reuters telegram about the seaman being in line for a reward if his story tallied and the Malay cook was caught, but ended up as yet another red herring. As for the murdered boy from 'Barford', this is likely to be a garbled version of the Bradford atrocity of 1888, involving the unsolved murder and mutilation of the boy Johnny Gill.

As Peter Turnbull has demonstrated in his overlooked 1996 book *The Killer who Never Was*, there was quite a

'murder mania' in Britain in 1888 and 1889. There was more than one murder that must be suspected to be the work of a Ripper copycat, and numerous Ripper scares in provincial parts of England, Scotland and Wales. It was enough that some woman was found dead in suspicious circumstances, that a drunk boasted of being Jack the Ripper in the pub, or that some hoaxer wrote a 'Ripper' letter to the local newspaper, for the rumour mill to start working. The Kalmar pamphlet reports two Ripper scares in Sweden in 1889 and briefly mentions one in Austria, indicating that this 'murder mania' was not confined to the British Isles.

The Royal Library of Stockholm has attracted unwelcome notoriety in recent time, due to the wholesale theft of valuable books by one of the senior librarians, a man named Anders Burius. Due to the lax routines of this venerable library, Burius could remain at large for many years, pilfering incunabula and vellum-bound rarities with impunity, and selling them to wealthy international dealers. After finally being exposed, Burius committed suicide by opening the gas valves and blowing up his flat, going out with a bang rather than with a whimper. Burius left the two Ripper rarities that I have described well alone, however, since they were both present and correct when I came to see them. Unless one of the other librarians has added them to his Ripper collection, they are likely to be there still, ready for inspection by those conversant with the Swedish language.



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# The Difficulty of Distinguishing Real from Fake History in Ripperology

By Christopher T George

*'First victim in this ghastly parade of death was a woman known as "Fairy Fay" for want of a better name.'*

Terence Robertson, 'Madman Who Murdered Nine Women,' *Reynolds News*, 1950

*'Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts.'*

US Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1927-2003)

**Fake news has been much in the news, with the public being misled by false news reports, particularly by ostensibly authentic 'news' posted on the Internet by less than creditable or downright shady sources. The problem has reached the point that traditional news outlets - e.g. *The Times* of London, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, and TV broadcasting institutions such as the BBC in the United Kingdom and CBS News in the United States now emphasize that they deal only in authentic or 'real' news and not the bogus discredited form.<sup>1</sup>**

Meanwhile, on-line educational sites, alarmed at the proliferation of false news, are striving to direct on-line visitors to what they consider to be reliable news outlets. An example is Durgee Library and Learning Commons, who on 16 December 2016 proclaimed, 'Don't Get Fooled! Combat Fake News!' at [durgeelearningcommons.weebly.com/](http://durgeelearningcommons.weebly.com/) adding: *'The recent US presidential election has demonstrated Americans' inability to tell the difference between real and fake news stories. Often shared via social media, fake news leads to misinformed citizens, and even violence. The best way to combat fake news? Identify the most reliable news outlets, and then stick with these sources. If you're looking for suggestions, check out [our] Real News page on the Durgee Library site [durgeelearningcommons.weebly.com/real-news.html]. To access it, hover over "Research" and then click the link to "Real News."*

Similarly, in 'Real News,' a lead article in *The Times* of

16 November 2016, the editors published the warning that 'False news stories on Facebook and elsewhere are a threat to public discourse':

Pope Francis did not endorse Donald Trump for president. The zika virus is not a hoax perpetrated by Big Pharma. Mark Walker and his wife did not die in a 'hit job' made to look like a murder suicide by associates of the Clinton family. *In fact he and the town he was reported to have died in were invented by a website pretending to be that of a newspaper that does not exist.* [Emphasis mine.]

These stories are examples of 'fake news' that Facebook stands accused of unintentionally promoting. Some of the site's critics go further and accuse it of helping to swing last week's election in Mr Trump's favour...<sup>2</sup>

New US president Donald Trump has been carrying on a 'war' with the media, asserting that some established news outlets are spreading fake news and making up

1 BBC Two. 'Real people. Real opinions. Real news. #CommonSense. Starts tonight. 10pm. BBC Two.' Posted on Facebook, 11 January 2017 at [www.facebook.com/bbctwo/videos/1085862071522960/](http://www.facebook.com/bbctwo/videos/1085862071522960/); *New York Times* promotion, 'Discover the truth with us. More essential than ever' [www.nytimes.com/subscriptions/Multiproduct/lp8XKUR.html](http://www.nytimes.com/subscriptions/Multiproduct/lp8XKUR.html).

2 'Real News' leading article in *The Times*, 16 November 2016, available at [www.thetimes.co.uk/article/real-news-wdlhmgghm](http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/real-news-wdlhmgghm)

phony sources. Although some argue that Trump, the former reality TV star, is loving the attention that his ‘war’ is stirring up, and that he’s actually gaming the press, as it were, to garner even more attention and publicity.<sup>3</sup> Some Trump critics argue that the so-called war is a way to distract from his own falsehoods and failures.



**Legally I can kill him, Queen confirms**

THE QUEEN has confirmed that if President Trump makes a state visit, she can kill him with a sword and nobody can touch her.

THEDAILYMASH.CO.UK

*‘Fake News’ on Facebook about her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the upcoming state visit of US President Donald Trump.*

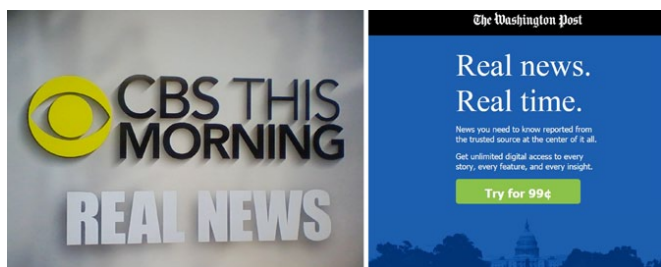
*Author’s screenshot, 17 February 2017*

If it isn’t fake news about current events, it’s fake history disseminated on the Internet and put out as a teaser for us to buy a certain product or products or just click on a link. I haven’t risked trying the following link that I picked up recently from my Internet provider’s home page, but you can, if you dare!

Hitlers Shocking Final Words - Revealed After 71 Years

What was Hitlers Socking [sic] Final Confession  
Seconds Before His Death Go to  
pro1.naturalhealth response.com

The ‘socking’ bad spelling and poor punctuation in this teaser blurb should hopefully provide an immediate alert that all is not right that the link might fail to provide what is claimed. As also, of course, you would be correct to be wary of the ‘phishing’ email you receive from the Nigerian who has the key to the fortune that will solve all your financial problems. Good luck, Playmates! as the late Liverpool comic Arthur Askey would have said.



*CBS Morning News ‘Real News’ logo and Washington Post ‘Real News’ promo.*

*Author’s screenshots, February 2017*

**SPAM, HISTORICAL MYSTERIES, AND SCAMS**

Talking about ‘spam’ and modern-day ‘phishing’ scams, check out this video which claims in an ad for Snapple fruit drink that ‘The first spam was sent by telegraph in 1864’: [youtu.be/VJ0OaiQk4AM](https://youtu.be/VJ0OaiQk4AM).

Forty-eight years have passed since the sensation caused by Erich Von Däniken’s *Chariots of the Gods?* (1969). In this book, the Swiss author claimed that the pyramids of Egypt and other ancient marvels around the world were constructed by ancient astronauts. Indeed, the theorist even suggested that God Himself may have been an astronaut.<sup>4</sup>



*Recent photograph of Erich Von Däniken*

Naturally, Von Däniken’s bold if scantily supported ideas garnered a lot of attention, but was there anything to them? Or was it blatant hokum? To my mind, his hypothesis fails to take allowance of the ingenuity of ancient peoples, i.e. the inherent resourcefulness of mankind. In short, Von Däniken proposed a totally unsubstantiated theory. A non-starter. Mmmmm... Now, doesn’t that sound like many of the theories about Jack the Ripper?

For some 25 years I have served as an associate editor for the *Maryland Historical Magazine* published by the Maryland Historical Society. Recently, I proofread for the

3 Ben Schreckinger and Hadas Gold, ‘Trump’s Fake War on the Fake News,’ *Politico*, May-June 2017, at [www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/04/23/trump-loves-media-reporters-white-house-215043](http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/04/23/trump-loves-media-reporters-white-house-215043). A recent paper by American academics argues that there is a darker intent behind Trump’s strategy, namely as in totalitarian countries, to move toward the stripping away of protections for the press. See Herb Scribner, ‘Trump’s war with the media is “darker” than you think, new study by BYU and U. professors says,’ *Deseret News*, Salt Lake City, Utah, April 18, 2017 at [www.deseretnews.com/article/865678059/Trumps-war-with-the-media-is-darker-than-you-think-new-study-from-BYU-and-U-professors-says.html?pg=all](http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865678059/Trumps-war-with-the-media-is-darker-than-you-think-new-study-from-BYU-and-U-professors-says.html?pg=all).

4 Erich Von Däniken, *Chariots of the Gods? Unsolved Mysteries of the Past*. Translated by Michael Heron. London: Souvenir Press, 1969. Also see Erich Von Däniken in Wikipedia at [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erich\\_von\\_D%C3%A4niken](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erich_von_D%C3%A4niken). A youtube video about *Chariots of the Gods?* at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-MpBDy7RxQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-MpBDy7RxQ) begins by relating scientific facts about the Mount Palomar observatory in the United States but then launches into discussion of Von Däniken’s unsupported ideas.

magazine an article on American Civil War history by Daniel A Masters, which contains a bizarre story that is widely debunked today.<sup>5</sup>

Mr Masters discusses a 1862 letter by Dr Augustin A Biggs of Sharpsburg, Maryland, originally published in the 16 October 1862 issue of the *Weekly Lancaster [Ohio] Gazette*. The doctor was an eyewitness to the bloody Battle of Antietam when the Confederate army made the first of three major incursions in the North, the second being the defeat in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania nine months later in July 1863. Biggs later served as the first president and superintendent of Antietam National Cemetery, so not a man who was a lightweight.

There is room to think - my theory, although not, I think, Mr Masters' notion - that Biggs' letter might be Union propaganda, given that the doctor paints a markedly bleak portrait of the Confederate troops:

They seemed to have no disposition to keep themselves clean, and from appearances their persons are as filthy as time could make them - all alive with vermin. I conversed with many and believe there is universal dissatisfaction in their army. Thousands would desert if they could, but they say their families and property are in the South and to go North they could never return to their friends, and would be deprived of all that they have in this world. Many are anxious for the South to get whipped and the war brought to a speedy termination. Whenever an opportunity offers, they destroy and throw away their guns.

The bizarre claim is as follows:

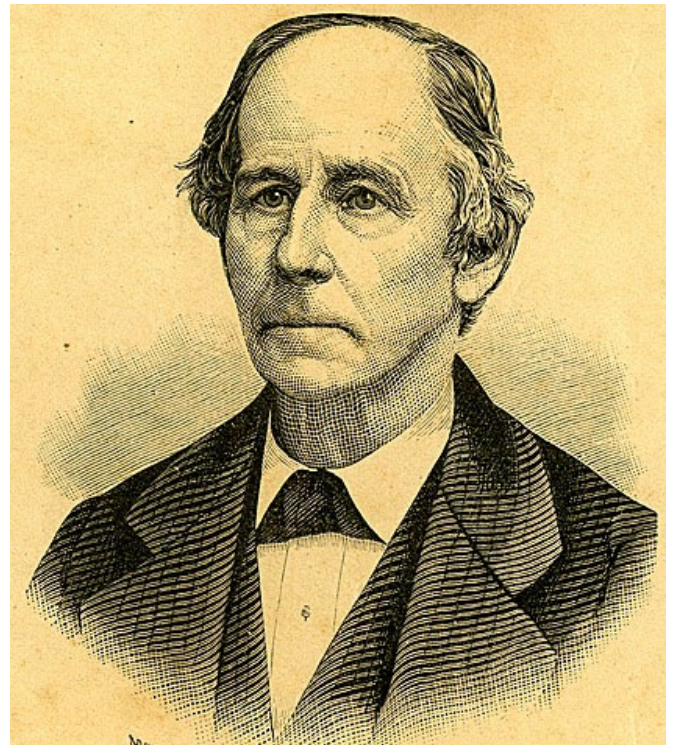
[The Rebels] say fight they must while under their officers, and *before going into battle each man has to fill his canteen with whiskey and gunpowder.* [Emphasis mine.] This was the case before the battle of Sharpsburg...

One thing is remarkably strange, and that is the rapid decomposition of the dead rebels. On Friday, I rode over the battlefield and with few exceptions they were all swollen and perfectly black, while the dead Union men were pale and looked as though life had just departed the body. *All I met observed the same contrast. It must be owing to their taking freely of gunpowder and whiskey.* [Emphasis mine.]

The claim that the Rebel soldiers drank whiskey and gunpowder is labelled 'implausible' by Civil War historian James M McPherson.<sup>6</sup>

Of course, Dr Biggs' idea of a link between the Rebel claim of drinking whiskey and gunpowder and the look of the Confederate corpses following the battle might be dismissed if an uneducated person had made the claim,

but Biggs was a physician. I thus think his thoughts about such a connection need to be treated seriously. Alternatively, perhaps the blackening of the bodies had more to do with the poor nutrition among soldiers of the Confederate Army.



Dr. Augustin A. Biggs (1812-1889).

From J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Western Maryland*. Vol. II. Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1882

However, the identical story that the Confederates drank whiskey and gunpowder before going into battle was told in later life by a woman who lived in Gettysburg at the time of that climactic battle. Nellie Aughinbaugh (later Lane), aged 20 at the time of the summer 1863 battle, like Dr Biggs claimed that the Rebel corpses turned black. Her claim is cited among other Gettysburg civilian recollections in an article by Robert L Bloom published in 1988. Like McPherson, Bloom is doubtful of the story, because of Aughinbaugh's age and inexperience at the time of the battle. He states that she

found herself unprepared for the sight of blackened Rebel corpses. *From inexperience she came up with a unique explanation.* [Emphasis mine.] The

<sup>5</sup> Daniel A Masters, 'A Sharpsburg Resident's View of the Battle of Antietam, Maryland, September 17, 1862.' *Maryland Historical Magazine* Vol. 111, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 2016):489-94. Also see "'One vast graveyard': Doctor's remarkable Antietam letter" on John Banks' Civil War Blog at [john-banks.blogspot.com/2016/03/one-vast-graveyard-doctors-remarkable.html](http://john-banks.blogspot.com/2016/03/one-vast-graveyard-doctors-remarkable.html).

<sup>6</sup> James M McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 53.

Confederates before the battle had been given whiskey mixed with gunpowder to make them 'fight like demons.'<sup>7</sup>

I should add an addendum on the matter of Ms Aughinbaugh Lane's account. Her account was not written down and published until the 1920s. That's not the best for any supposed true account, to have it told much later than the events that are being described: the best accounts are usually those given at the time. In fact, according to blogger Melissa Strobel, 'In the end Nellie's account is one part memoir, one part secondary source. This was actually written by her daughter after Nellie's death in 1926, but is presumably worded as her mother frequently told the story.'<sup>8</sup>

Another questionable story: There exists a tradition that Adolf Hitler stayed in Liverpool prior to World War I, while trying to dodge being drafted into the army of his native Austria. The future Fuhrer's half-brother Alois had left Austria and worked for a while in Dublin where he married an Irish woman named Bridget Elizabeth Downing. The couple settled in Liverpool where Alois worked as a waiter at the Adelphi Hotel. The story of Adolf's stay from November 1912 to March 1913 in the couple's flat on Upper Stanhope Street, Toxteth, Liverpool was made famous by the 1978 comic novel *Young Adolf* by late Merseyside-born novelist Beryl Bainbridge (1932–2010).<sup>9</sup>



Although many commentators and reviewers have labeled Bainbridge's novel a 'whimsical fantasy' there exists a possibly genuine though controversial historical artefact which tells the story of the German Nazi leader's sojourn in Liverpool: a typewritten manuscript entitled *The Memoirs of Bridget Hitler*. The manuscript is now in the New York Public Library. At the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, Alois Hitler abandoned his wife and young son Patrick William Hitler (1911–1987) and went to Germany (he lived until 1956). Bridget and her son emigrated to the United States before World War II. Indeed, around the time of the war, Patrick William Hitler made a number of public appearances based on his kinship to the leader of Germany. In the 1990s, while slamming the controversial Maybrick 'Ripper' Diary, allegedly written by James Maybrick, as a hoax, the late Melvin Harris castigated Bridget's memoirs as a fraud and like the alleged Maybrick document 'a specifically Liverpoolian scam.' Hitler historians have similarly cast doubt on the authenticity of the memoirs, although Michael Unger, who in 1997 published Bridget's memoirs and more recently, in 2011, *The Hitlers of Liverpool*, strongly believes the story is true and that the manuscript documents a missing period in the Fuhrer's life.<sup>10</sup> (Apart from the question of the authenticity of the New York manuscript, and despite Harris's charge that Bridget's typewritten memoirs represent 'a specifically Liverpoolian scam' it seems likely to me that Mrs Hitler's manuscript has never left the United States and that, at least until 1992, the handwritten Maybrick Diary never left Liverpool! So the inferred tie-in between the two artefacts isn't what Harris charged.)

Faithful readers will recall that I published in the June 2016 issue of the *Rip* an article, 'In the Eye of the Beholder: Part One,' about different historical images, Ripper-associated and otherwise.<sup>11</sup> A number of the images

7 Robert L Bloom, "'We never expected a battle': the civilians at Gettysburg, 1863,' *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* Vol. 55, No. 4 (October 1988):161–200; quote on p. 187. Nellie Aughinbaugh, *Personal Experiences of a Young Girl During the Battle of Gettysburg*. Washington, D.C.: Privately printed, 1926, pp. 12–13.

8 Melissa Strobel Blog, 'Nellie Aughinbaugh, Gettysburg Resident - Civilian Account of Battle of Gettysburg' at [theebonswan.blogspot.com/2013/07/nellie-aughinbaugh-gettysburg-resident.html](http://theebonswan.blogspot.com/2013/07/nellie-aughinbaugh-gettysburg-resident.html).

9 Beryl Bainbridge, *Young Adolf*. London: Duckworth, 1978.

10 Melvin Harris, 'The Maybrick Hoax: A Guide Through the Labyrinth' dissertation on 'Casebook: Jack the Ripper' website at [www.casebook.org/dissertations/maybrick\\_diary/mhguide.html](http://www.casebook.org/dissertations/maybrick_diary/mhguide.html). Michael Unger, *The Hitlers of Liverpool*. Liverpool: The Bluecoat Press, 2011. *The Memoirs of Bridget Hitler*, edited by Michael Unger. London: Duckworth, 1979.

11 Christopher T George, 'In the Eye of the Beholder: Part One,' *Ripperologist* 150, June 2016, pp. 22–30.

that I discussed were either fraudulent or misattributed. I recently became aware of another iffy photograph through Twitter - one of a number of supposedly authentic images tweeted out by very active history-oriented Twitter accounts that claim images show something but that, on investigation, turn out to be not what is claimed.

The photograph, from the old American West, is not fake as such, but what is portrayed is not what is claimed. Specifically, as you can see, the photographed tombstone informs us that an infant, 'Erin O'Keefe, daughter of John and Nora O'Keefe, was eaten by mountain rats, 1876.' A very nasty fate indeed! But! The truth turns out to be quite different to that startling inscription.



*Alleged tombstone for Erin O'Keefe on Pike's Peak, Colorado.*

*Author's collection*

As told by Kathleen Wallace in the *New Falcon Herald* in 2011, this was 'a fraud perpetrated in 1876 by John O'Keefe [the supposed father of the dead child], whose job was to take weather readings on the summit of Pike's Peak and signal them to the city below.' His 'tall tale' was printed in various Colorado newspapers. Here is O'Keefe's claim about the death of his baby daughter and the true facts as told by Ms Wallace:

Since the establishment of the government's signal station on the summit of the peak, [O'Keefe said that the rats had] acquired a voracious appetite for raw and uncooked meat, the scent of which seems to impart to them a ferocity rivaling the fierceness of the starved Siberian wolf.

O'Keefe claimed that on his first night at the station, he and his wife were attacked by rats and would have been overwhelmed had they not electrocuted them using electrical wire powered by a battery.

When the battle was over, they discovered the rats had eaten their infant daughter, Erin.

O'Keefe claimed he buried all that was left of Erin (her skull) under a pile of rocks with a marker...

The grave became a popular tourist attraction, and O'Keefe charged 50 cents for tourists to have their picture taken at the site.

O'Keefe was eventually revealed as a fraud. *He didn't have a wife or daughter...* [Emphasis mine]<sup>12</sup>

### **'FAKE HISTORY' IN THE JACK THE RIPPER CASE: A MAJOR PROBLEM AT THE HEART OF 'RIPPERATURE'**

In the study of the Whitechapel murders, 'fake history' remains a recurring dilemma. Indeed, I would say bogus history was a problem in the case from the very beginning. That this is so, is partly the result of the work of gullible, over-eager or possibly duplicitous newspaper reporters and editors, which bends back to the argument about whether news sources truly *do* deal in genuine news, or whether what they publish often might be more a shade of grey!

Anyone who has studied the contemporary press reports on the case quickly learns that the newspapers of the day vary greatly in reliability.<sup>13</sup> And then there's always the lingering stench of the allegation that around the time of the Double Event of 30 September 1888 the staff of the Central News Agency - journalists who were contemporaries of the Whitechapel murderer - mocked up the most famous of 'Jack the Ripper' letters, the 'Dear Boss' letter! If the suspicion is correct, journalists were not only guilty of perverting the course of justice but being themselves actors in the case. For shame, if so.

Because of the sensational nature of the Ripper case, writers, editors and book publishers alike for the last 129 years have been eager to climb on the bandwagon with the latest theory about the man or men behind the murders. Often in the face of lack of actual evidence or exculpatory evidence that could exonerate the person or persons being accused of the crimes. After all, hasn't the world has been panting to put a name to the mysterious Whitechapel murderer ever since those bloody days of 1888?

12 Kathleen Wallace, 'Mysterious postcard sparks investigation,' *New Falcon Herald*, Volume No. 8, Issue No. 9, September 2011 at [www.newfalconherald.com/DisplayPrintArticle.php?ArticleID=7248](http://www.newfalconherald.com/DisplayPrintArticle.php?ArticleID=7248).

13 For a balanced look at the press of the time of the Ripper murders along with a collection of news stories from one of the more reliable newspapers of the era, see Alex Chisholm, Christopher-Michael DiGrazia, and Dave Yost, *The News from Whitechapel: Jack the Ripper in the Daily Telegraph*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co, 2002.

As an example of the effect of published theories about the case, consider that, as discussed in *Ripperologist* 153, Whitechapel murders expert, tour guide, and historian Lindsay Siviter is fighting to rescue the reputation of Royal surgeon Sir William Gull (1816-1890).<sup>14</sup> Sir William's character may have been forever impugned by Stephen Knight and other 'Royal Conspiracy' authors, aided and abetted by various film directors. (*Thar's Gold in them Ripper hills!*)



Lindsay Siviter singing 'Only a Violet I Plucked from My Mother's Grave' at Mary Jane Kelly's grave, Leytonstone Roman Catholic Cemetery, 9 November 2013.

Photograph courtesy of Colin Cobb

One might have anticipated that with the welcome appearance of books that adopted a more objective view of the case, such as Paul Begg, Martin Fido, and Keith Skinner's *The Complete Jack the Ripper A to Z* (2010, first published as *The Jack the Ripper A to Z*, 1992) and Stewart P Evans and Keith Skinner's fine 'Bible,' *The Ultimate Jack the Ripper Sourcebook* (2000), this situation might have changed - that the world might take a more balanced, realistic view of the case. But that's not the case at all, not by a long shot.

We need to recognize that the literature about the Whitechapel murders comprises books openly labeled as

'fiction' and books that are marketed as 'non-fiction' but that are often nothing of the sort, or that contain a sizable percentage of fictional content mixed in with actual history. In *The Identity of Jack the Ripper* (1959), author Donald McCormick was certainly guilty of fabricating supposed facts, as revealed by the late Melvin Harris, who charged that McCormick's faked up history led to the emergence of the controversial Maybrick Diary that Liverpool cotton merchant James Maybrick 'confessed' to being the murderer.<sup>15</sup> I won't wander further into the murky waters of either the Royal Conspiracy or the Diary. Or seek to tackle the recent notion proposed in Bruce Robinson's *They All Love Jack: Busting the Ripper* (2015) that, instead, the alleged diarist's composer brother Michael Maybrick (stage name 'Stephen Adams') was the bloody fiend of Whitechapel.

#### WILLIAM LE QUEUX AND THE 'MINISTER OF EVIL'

Let me mention one early writer who, it is thought, blatantly marketed fantastic ideas about the Whitechapel Murders while pretending he was giving his readers authentic history. That author was London-born William Le Queux (1864-1927), whose fabrications were, as Harris discusses,<sup>16</sup> further elaborated upon by Donald McCormick - one 'pack of lies' built upon another.

In the words of blogger Scott Manley Hadley, Le Queux was essentially 'a writer of faux-factual political novels.'<sup>17</sup> Actually, that Le Queux dealt in fiction and not fact might be readily gleaned merely from the titles of the man's shipload of books, e.g., *The Czar's Spy*, *Mademoiselle of Monte Carlo*, *The Man With the Fatal Finger*, *The House of Whispers*, and *Spies of the Kaiser*. So, just as the fabulist pretended to know so much about the secret services of both Czarist Russia and the Kaiser's Germany, he claimed that he had discovered the ultimate secret to the Ripper murders among the writings of that mad and megalomaniacal monk, Gregori Rasputin. The same man whose sway over the Czarist Royal family, particularly Czarina Alexandra, was brutally ended when Rasputin was assassinated by Czarist aristocrats on 30 December 1916. But the question about Rasputin is - as

14 Lindsay Siviter, 'Celebrating the Bicentenary of the Birth of Sir William Gull,' *Ripperologist* 153, December 2016, pp. 32-36.

15 Melvin Harris, 'The Maybrick Hoax: Donald McCormick's Legacy' dissertation on 'Casebook: Jack the Ripper' website at [www.casebook.org/dissertations/maybrick\\_diary/mb-mc.html](http://www.casebook.org/dissertations/maybrick_diary/mb-mc.html).

16 Ibid.

17 Scott Manley Hadley, *The Minister of Evil - The Secret History of Rasputin's Betrayal of Russia by William Le Queux*. Book review posted 31 January 2015 at [triumphofthenow.com/2015/01/31/review-the-minister-of-evil-the-secret-history-of-rasputins-betrayal-of-russia-by-william-le-queux/](http://triumphofthenow.com/2015/01/31/review-the-minister-of-evil-the-secret-history-of-rasputins-betrayal-of-russia-by-william-le-queux/)



evil and dark in intentions as he may have been with his power over the Czar's wife (due to his supposed ability to help the Royal couple's haemophiliac young son and heir Alexis), did he really wield any actual power within the Czarist government or specifically over the Russian secret police - the Ochrana - that Le Queux would lead us believe?

Le Queux first began reveal to his readers that he had in his possession secret documents that had come directly from Rasputin in *The Minister of Evil: The Secret History of Rasputin's Betrayal of Russia* in 1918, the year after the Bolshevik Revolution. In regard to *The Minister of Evil*, blogger Hadley writes:

The premise of this book is that Le Queux has translated, in late 1917 (only a year after Rasputin's death), a manuscript sent to him by a Russian called Féodor Rajevski. Rajevski was, Le Queux writes, the private secretary of Rasputin and present and a party to all of his murdering, treason and blackmailing... Rajevski didn't exist, though. Le Queux... made him up, as he made up (in my opinion) the vast majority of the narrative of his book...

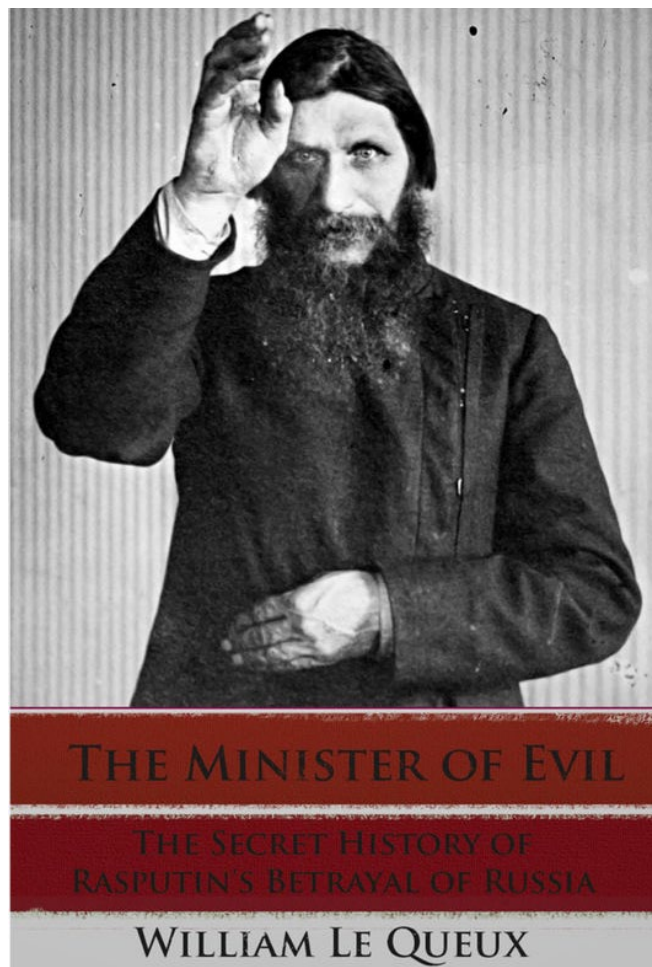
The text was written very quickly (Le Queux published ten (!) other books that year alone...) and it shows. It's full of contradictions - not just in the way people behave or think about others, but in terms of what kind of a document it's meant to be. It runs off at tangents, it disappears into allegations about people who were still alive at time of publication, but also lists crimes and intrigues that I have come across nowhere else in my research and have to conclude are fictional.<sup>18</sup>

It was in his 1923 book, *Things I Know about Kings, Celebrities and Crooks*, that Le Queux, in the words of the authors of the *A to Z*, 'claimed the documents had included a manuscript on "Great Russian Criminals," typed in French from Rasputin's dictation. This [document] stated that Dr Alexander Pedachenko was Jack the Ripper.'<sup>19</sup>

According to this alleged source, delivered to the world straight from the sweaty palms of the mad monk, the Ripper crimes were committed by Pedachenko alias 'Count Luiskovo' as part of a conspiracy against the London police by Rasputin and the nefarious Ochrana, predecessor to the even more notorious Soviet KGB. Begg et al continue:

The Ochrana's aim was allegedly to discredit the Metropolitan Police, who were perceived by Czarists as irresponsibly tolerant of emigrant dissidents and anarchists living in (especially) the East End. When the plot succeeded and Sir Charles Warren resigned in disgrace, the Ochrana smuggled Pedachenko to Moscow, destined for exile to Yakutsk. In fact, five

months later he was caught red-handed, trying to murder a woman called Vogak, and sent to a lunatic asylum, where he died.<sup>20</sup>



*Book cover for a recent edition of William Le Queux's The Minister of Evil: The Secret History of Rasputin's Betrayal of Russia first published in 1918.*

That anyone would believe Rasputin had sufficient influence in Czarist Russia to order the Ochrana to carry out the murder-mutilation of East End 'unfortunates' of course is because of the Siberian monk's outsize evil reputation. But also the story of Pedachenko is given weight due to the enduring idea that the Ripper was a doctor, even a Royal surgeon. A notion that has stayed with us even though, I would urgently contend, more reliable witness sightings indicate the killer was likely to have been a shortish (5'6" or 5'7") working man or sailor in a pea coat and peaked hat.

The idea that the Ripper was a doctor is one theories of the case that has stayed with us, while other notions have fallen by the wayside because in today's 'enlightened' world we

18 Ibid.

19 Entry on 'William Tufnell Le Queux' in Paul Begg, Martin Fido, and Keith Skinner, *The Complete Jack the Ripper A to Z*. London: John Blake Publishing Ltd, 2010, p. 294.

20 Entry on 'Dr Alexander Pedachenko,' op cit, p. 403.

no longer give them any credence. I am thinking here, for example, of the supposed attempt to photograph Mary Jane Kelly's eyes because her retina could have retained the image of her killer. And yet that conceivably unscientific idea was widely believed in the Ripper's day and into the early 20th Century. Indeed, the idea was well enough believed that a murderer on the night of 28-29 September 1927 shot and killed PC George William Gutteridge and shot out his eyes when the bobby encountered a duo of bad characters on a country road near Stapleford Abbots in Essex.<sup>21</sup>

### LEONARD MATTERS: 'THE FIRST RIPPEROLOGIST'

Authorities on the murders disagree as to the reliability and credibility of another early writer on the case: Australian-born Leonard W Matters (1881-1951), author of *The Mystery of Jack the Ripper* (1929). In this book, which goes into much more depth about the Whitechapel murders than Le Queux did, Matters tells the story of a physician whom he calls 'Dr Stanley' - which we are told was not the doctor's real name. The doctor, we learn, sought to slaughter the East End prostitutes who had given his son syphilis, ruining his son's health and the lad's promising career as a physician.

As Eduardo Zinna wrote in a 2001 *Rip* article on 'The Search for Jack el Destripador',<sup>22</sup> Matters claims that he discovered the secret behind the Whitechapel murders 'in a Spanish-language article published in a journal in Buenos Aires' which mentioned Stanley's deathbed confession.

Matters worked for a time as journalist and editor for the English language newspaper, the Buenos Aires *Herald*. Moreover, as Zinna tells us, Matters was apparently fluent in Spanish and was a capable translator of books in Spanish. In other words, the idea that he could have learned the truth about the murders in a Spanish language publication is not implausible. On the other hand, from 1888 onward the press of the world was rife with various answers to the riddle of the murders. So why should this particular story be believed more than any other such tale? In other words, even if Matters did hear such a story, was it true? That is, Matters could have learned of one of the many narratives that provide a solution to the case, decided it was true and it wasn't: it was just one of the many stories about the identity of Jack that were circulating worldwide. Zinna writes:

The story told how a surgeon named Jose Riche had written to the author of the article, also a surgeon, summoning him to a major hospital. When the article's author arrived, Riche took him to a patient occupying Bed 58, Ward V, at whose request he had acted. The surgeon recognised the patient as his

former professor in London and to whom Matters gave name 'Dr Stanley'... Dr Stanley told his former disciple how he had trodden the streets of the East End in pursuit of Mary Jeannette Kelly, the prostitute who had infected his gifted son with syphilis, thus... plunging his father into the deepest despair. As soon as he had confessed to the Ripper crimes, the patient fell back on his bed and died. He was buried in the Western Cemetery...

Stories and unconfirmed rumours about Dr Stanley abound. Many - maybe most - think that he was merely Matters's invention. Yet Juan Jose Delaney has obtained independent proof of his existence. In 1989, an aged Irish priest living in Argentina, Father Alfred Mac Conastair, who died in 1997, told Juan Jose a story. A former chaplain of the Britanico [the British hospital] in the nineteen-twenties had confided in Father Mac Conastair that he had been called to the deathbed of a man of 'another faith' - that is to say, not a Catholic - who wanted to clear his conscience. What burdened this man was his responsibility for the Ripper's crimes...<sup>23</sup>

It is true that Matters had a colourful career as a journalist, newspaper editor and English Labour Member of Parliament for Kennington, London (1929-31), and he would appear to have enjoyed an upstanding perhaps even spotless reputation. So conceivably, some argue, there is no reason to think he would have made up the story of Dr Stanley. Begg et al conclude their assessment of Leonard W Matters:

A journalist of talent and brilliance, and a minor public figure commanding respect in widely varied areas of the world, Matters is a surprising man to become noted as the first 'Ripperologist' and more extraordinary still to be accused of deliberately purveying fiction to provide a solution. Neither his character nor his book warrants this condemnation: failure to trace his main source does not justify concluding that he invented it.<sup>24</sup>

21 'Essex Policeman with Eyes Shot Out, Villain Arrested,' in Martin Fido, *The Chronicle of Crime. The most infamous criminals of modern times and their heinous crimes*. London: Carlton Books Ltd., 1999, p. 164. Also see 'Bronze Memorial Plaque to the Late PC George Gutteridge' at [www.staplefordabbotschurch.com/pc-george-gutteridge](http://www.staplefordabbotschurch.com/pc-george-gutteridge) and Sam Blewett, 'Anniversary of gunned down Romford police officer,' *Romford Recorder* (Romford, Essex), 5 October 2014 at [www.romfordrecorder.co.uk/news/crime-court/anniversary-of-gunned-down-romford-police-officer-1-3792696](http://www.romfordrecorder.co.uk/news/crime-court/anniversary-of-gunned-down-romford-police-officer-1-3792696).

22 Eduardo Zinna, 'The Search for Jack el Destripador,' *Ripperologist* 33, February 2001, pp. 7-12. Available on line on the 'Casebook: Jack the Ripper' website at [www.casebook.org/dissertations/rip-searchforel.html](http://www.casebook.org/dissertations/rip-searchforel.html).

23 Ibid.

24 Entry on 'Leonard Warburton Matters,' Begg et al, *The Complete Jack the Ripper A to Z*, pp. 339-40.



Leonard W Matters as a Trooper in the 5th South Australian Imperial Bushmen's Contingent, Second Boer War (1899-1902).

Author's collection. Was Matters a 'straight shooter' in regard to what he wrote about 'Dr Stanley' being Jack the Ripper?

In a two-part detailed consideration of 'The Matter of Dr Stanley' published in the *Rip* three years ago, Australian-based author Mick Reed took a close look at Matters and his story of Dr Stanley.<sup>25</sup> Reed reveals that prior to the appearance of *The Mystery of Jack the Ripper*, Matters published the story in various newspapers, starting with a number of small Australian newspapers in March 1925. The newspaper versions don't entirely correspond to the published book, particularly the Australian versions of the tale. Reed writes, 'All Australian papers gave the name of the person who had heard Dr Stanley's confession: one H Maris.' This name is omitted from the book. Why? When the book appears, moreover, the Australian newspapers were doubtful of Matters' tale, for example, Reed notes: 'The *West Australian* did not think that the Stanley story "need be taken very seriously."' Note also that Reed tells us:

In the introduction to the 1948 edition of *The Mystery of Jack the Ripper*, Leonard reiterates that he found the Dr Stanley story in a Spanish-language journal in Argentina... Despite being unable to vouch for the story's veracity, he still felt it was 'entitled to some credence'.

Leonard claimed that 'the only fictitious thing about... Dr Stanley is his name'. In the very next sentence, however, he admits that he is unable to prove that such a man and such a story ever existed. He claims to have tried to prove Stanley's existence, but failed at every turn. Yet he asserts that 'none the less, he must have lived'.

Careless language, surely, for an experienced and respected journalist.<sup>26</sup>

That doesn't say much for our confidence in the story! Nonetheless, Reed concludes his two-part look at *The Mystery of Jack the Ripper* by agreeing tentatively with the authors of *A to Z* as to the solidity of the journalist-politician's character. That is, that Reed agreed that the danger to Matters' reputation as a writer and politician would probably have been too great for him to make up the story:

For what it's worth, I cautiously agree with Paul Begg and his co-authors that Leonard's character seems too upright for fraud. The threat to his reputation in political and social terms that exposure of any such fraud could bring seems too great a risk. His other work, while sometimes naïve, seems to have integrity.<sup>27</sup>

Zinna concludes his look at various Ripper suspects in 'The Search for Jack el Destripador' with these words:

Many Ripper roads lead to Buenos Aires. No clear evidence has yet been found to confirm or confound the candidacy of Szemeredy or Maduro, Stanley or Maroni to recognition as the Ripper, but the search goes on. There are old newspapers to read and old documents to study, and there is the ever-present hope that sometime, somewhere a clue may be unearthed which brings the mystery even a step closer to its solution.<sup>28</sup>

Of course, if we are to believe all the divergent narratives about the great Victorian mystery of 1888, alleged 'Ripper roads' lead to innumerable destinations. They, for example, include an execution scaffold in Melbourne, Australia, a seedy waterfront hotel in New York City, a 'murder castle' in Chicago and that serial killer's execution by hanging at Moyamensing Prison in Philadelphia - if one believes H H Holmes aka Walter Mudgett could have been the murderer - the English asylums of Broadmoor and Colney Hatch, the bottom of the Thames, a mansion in Aigburth, Liverpool. On and on... Maybe even an execution by guillotine in the commune of Bourg-en-Bresse in eastern France if we conceive that French serial killer Joseph Vacher could have been the man who rampaged in London's East End a decade before his 31 December 1898 beheading. So the

25 Mick Reed, 'The Matter of Dr Stanley. Part I', *Ripperologist* 135, December 2013, pp. 2-7, and 'The Matter of Dr Stanley. Part II', *Ripperologist* 135, December 2013, pp. 13-18.

26 Reed, 'The Matter of Dr Stanley. Part I', op cit.

27 Reed, 'The Matter of Dr Stanley. Part II', op cit.

28 Zinna, 'The Search for Jack el Destripador', op cit.

case offers plenty of solutions, each of greater or lesser plausibility or mere absurdity.

### **THE END OF "JACK THE RIPPER."**

**The London correspondent of the Dublin Evening Press gives an extraordinary account of the career and death of a man believed by the police to be "Jack the Ripper." Some years ago (says the correspondent) there resided in a country village in Norfolkshire a medical man who was much respected, and who enjoyed an extensive practice. A woman of respectable appearance came to reside in the village, no one knew whence or for what purpose. She became acquainted with the doctor, and gained such an influence over him that he neglected his practice, and eventually became so heavily involved that he suddenly disappeared to avoid his creditors. It was known that he came to London, that his evil companion had abandoned him, and that he was picking up a precarious existence by scavenging and other odd jobs in Whitechapel. That he was in that district during the murders is certain, and that he was almost continually drunk is also equally true. Late one winter's night after the latest murder ascribed to Jack the Ripper was committed, he was thrown out of a low public-house in the East End, and run over by a heavy goods van. He was taken to a hospital and died without regaining con-**

*Yet another solution to the mystery about the Ripper's identity: 'The End of Jack the Ripper,' as reported in the New Zealand Herald, Auckland, New Zealand, 21 May 1892.*

*Courtesy of Howard Brown, JtRForums.com*



*The 'French Ripper,' Joseph Vacher (1869-98).*

*Public domain*

And this brings us to consideration of another journalist who briefly wrote about the case: Terence Robertson (1921-70). On 29 October 1950, Robertson published in the Sunday broadsheet newspaper *Reynolds News* an article titled 'Madman Who Murdered Nine Women.' In this article, the newspaperman introduced the world to an alleged early Jack the Ripper victim. Robertson describes how a woman whom he refers to as 'Fairy Fay' was murdered by the Ripper on Boxing Night, 1887 - a victim who had been overlooked in the official records. What may be unique to the field is that rather than manufacture a suspect, the writer appears to have fabricated a victim - if that is indeed what he did! At any rate, Robertson appears to rank with a long line of what I term 'Creative Ripperologists.'

Longtime readers may recall that Terence Robertson was the subject of an earlier article that I wrote for the *Rip* just over a decade ago. In 'The Strange Career of Terence Robertson and the Origin of "Fairy Fay,"'<sup>29</sup> I investigated the possibility that there might really have been a Ripper victim of that name. Or that, instead, Robertson completely made up the story. If Leonard Matters and his case for 'Dr Stanley' as the Whitechapel murderer are to be judged on the basis of what we know of Matters' career and reputation, a detailed look at Robertson is similarly in order. Today, compared to what I knew about Robertson when I wrote my 2006 *Rip* article about him, I am pleased to say I now know more about the writer and his research and writing methods. But, first, let's take a detailed look at his 1950 article.

#### **THE MURDER OF 'FAIRY FAY' ACCORDING TO TERENCE ROBERTSON**

'Madman Who Murdered Nine Women' is a lengthy article on page 3 of *Reynolds News*, occupying eight columns. And yet Robertson's shocking revelation about a forgotten early Ripper victim takes up only seven skimpy one- or two-sentence paragraphs relatively early in the piece. Here is the passage in its entirety, printed above an advertisement for 'TIBS' cat vitamin supplement, designed to 'Keep Cats Kittenish':

##### **Body in the Doorway**

First victim in this ghastly parade of death was a woman known as 'Fairy Fay' for want of a better name.

On the cold Boxing Night of 1887, she decided to take a short cut home from a pub in Mitre Square.

<sup>29</sup> Christopher T George, "The Strange Career of Terence Robertson and the Origin of "Fairy Fay,"" *Ripperologist* 73, November 2006, pp. 27-35.

This decision, which took her through the dim alleyways behind Commercial Road, cost her her life.

Two hours after she set out, a constable on beat shone his flickering oil lamp into a darkened doorway. At the inquest he said his lamp revealed a sight which sickened him.

In its ray was all that was left of 'Fairy Fay.'

Inspector Reid of Commercial Road Police Station took charge of the investigation. His detectives questioned dozens of people who lived in the drab house overlooking the scene of the crime.

After a few weeks of vain inquiries, Inspector Reid informed his chief at Metropolitan Police Headquarters, New Scotland Yard that the case had been shelved.

Only brief reports of the murder appeared in the Press, and by February the case was forgotten.

makes, rather astonishing for such a short passage:

- There was no pub in Mitre Square at this date. (Another red flag that we are being fed a tale.)
- During the Ripper murders, Detective Chief Inspector Reid worked not out of Commercial Road Police Station but Whitechapel H Division, Commercial Street Police Station. Moreover, all available sources are clear that the inspector never wrote or said anything about such an early victim.
- Metropolitan Police headquarters in 1887 was still in Great Scotland Yard. As many readers will recall, a torso was found in the first week of October 1888 in the cellar of New Scotland Yard on the Thames Embankment (the 'Norman Shaw Building') - then only in the process of being built.

Note one other oddity about Robertson's tale about Fairy Fay. Robertson wrote, 'On the cold Boxing Night of 1887, she decided to *take a short cut home* from a pub in Mitre Square' [emphasis mine].

Almost as if he was thinking of his own comfortable life, home and hearth, not the reality of a homeless 'unfortunate' of the era of the Ripper. All the more remarkable then that Robertson would write that the woman would be forgotten so completely.

The internal evidence in Robertson's account of the alleged murder of Fairy Fay indicates that in writing about the crime he didn't use either official records or the archives of *Reynolds News* as Nick Connell and Stewart P Evans seemed to believe when they wrote *The Man Who Hunted Jack the Ripper*<sup>30</sup> but rather relied on his own imagination to cook up the tale.

#### DID FAIRY FAY OR A WOMAN LIKE HER EXIST?

In terms of whether Fairy Fay or a woman like her was murdered or ever existed, as I noted in my earlier article, Ripperologists have dug in vain in existing official records and contemporary press reports to find any mention of a Boxing Night 1887 victim: Nothing, nada! Moreover, there was certainly no inquest on such a victim as Robertson claims.

There are nonetheless a few press reports published near the end of 1888 which mention an early victim of a year earlier. Some of the reports appear to be a confusion of the facts of the mortal assault on Emma Smith at Easter 1888 on Osborn Street (just north of the present-day Arbor City Hotel) and a late 1887 non-fatal attack on a



Close-up of passage in Robertson's article in the 29 October 1950 issue of *Reynolds News* detailing the murder of Fairy Fay.

Image courtesy of Rob Clack

#### ANALYSIS OF ROBERTSON'S 'FAIRY FAY' STORY

Take careful note of the writer's choice of words in initially referring to the mysterious victim: 'First victim in this ghastly parade of death was a woman known as "Fairy Fay" for want of a better name' [emphasis mine]. 'For want of a better name' - as if the woman could be named anything, or *anything the journalist chose to call her*.

Then consider the following mistakes that Robertson

30 Nick Connell and Stewart P Evans, *The Man Who Hunted Jack the Ripper*. Cambridge: Rupert Books, 2000, pp. 14-16.

woman named Margaret Hayes or Hames who testified at the inquest on Emma Smith. The latter woman told the coroner that the attack on her occurred 'just before Christmas last.'<sup>31</sup>

### WHO WAS TERENCE ROBERTSON?

The journalist who wrote the 1950 article for *Reynolds News* was born *Harold* Robertson to Charles and Winifred Robertson in the Eton district of Oxfordshire on 25 July 1921.<sup>32</sup>

On 12 October 1938, at age 17, Robertson joined the Royal Naval Reserve as a midshipman. In July 1939, he was called up by the Royal Navy. On 1 September 1939, the day Britain declared war on Nazi Germany and her allies, and while still a teenager, he was serving on a gun crew aboard the destroyer HMS *Beagle*. Robertson was promoted to Sub-Lieutenant in the Royal Naval Reserve on 25 July 1941.

Robertson served for eighteen months on convoy duty in the Atlantic before his career in the navy came to an abrupt end when he was brought up on charges and tried before a court-martial in September 1942. The charges were 'intent to defraud forging a certain document purporting to be an authority to draw money from the Accounting Office' from a shore-based facility on the River Humber; falsely obtaining money; and absence without leave. Robertson pleaded guilty. On 26 September, the court-martial found him guilty of forgery, embezzlement and absence without leave. He was sentenced to be imprisoned for one year and to be 'dismissed from His Majesty's Service.'<sup>33</sup>



*HMS Beagle, World War II destroyer in which Robertson served as a gunnery officer.*

*Public domain*

After dismissal from the navy and the year he spent in prison, Robertson joined the merchant navy as a ship's officer for the Anglo American Oil Company, sailing aboard the SS *Umgeni* in a convoy from Cardiff to New York in late 1943, among other voyages. At war's end, he went to South Africa, where he worked for the South African Press

Association. In 1949, Robertson returned to London as news editor of *Reynolds News*.<sup>34</sup>

In March 1951, in Westminster district, London, Robertson married Olgalita 'Lee' Mayne, a ballerina and dancer who performed on stage in London with comedian Bud Flanagan's Crazy Gang. Miss Mayne was the daughter of Walter Clifton Mayne and Olga Mayne. The couple would have one offspring, their son Gawain. By the mid-1950s, Robertson began to run with a very fast set and gained a reputation for being a heavy drinker. After the writer's January 1970 suicide, Lee Robertson testified in 1977 in a lawsuit over life insurance on Robertson's life that her late husband 'was often drunk and subject to depression' and that he regularly threatened to commit suicide 'throughout the 18 years' of their married life.<sup>35</sup>

Around 3.30am on 9 January 1955, the writer's alcoholism appears to have led to a horrendous two-car crash on the Henley Road outside of Maidenhead that killed two people, one from each car.<sup>36</sup>

Robertson and his companion of the night, apparent passenger and model Vicki Martin (real name Valerie Mewes), had left the Chez Peter nightclub on the Thames in Maidenhead minutes before the collision. Miss Martin was killed, her body found on the road although the door of the car was mysteriously closed. Also killed was the driver of the other vehicle, David Salisbury Haig. Robertson sustained a broken leg and head injuries and apparent temporary amnesia.

The Haigs were newlyweds, having only got married six weeks before the tragic collision. Miss Martin was a protégé of Stephen Ward, the society osteopath and key figure in the Profumo Affair (some would say 'glorified pimp') that brought down Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's government in 1963. An accomplished artist,

31 For further discussion of the question of Fairy Fay and possible origins of the story of an early murder, see Connell and Evans, *The Man Who Hunted Jack the Ripper* op cit and Quentin L Pittman, 'The Importance of Fairy Fay, and Her Link to Emma Smith,' at [www.casebook.org/dissertations/importance-fairy.html](http://www.casebook.org/dissertations/importance-fairy.html)

32 Genealogical research by Robert Linford for Robertson's place of birth, and for the precise date of his birth, date as given in 'McClelland & Stewart Ltd v Mutual Life. Judgment of the Supreme Court of Canada, 22 June 1981' available at [scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/4533/index.do](http://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/4533/index.do). On Robertson's family background and naval service see 'Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) Officers 1939-1945' website for entry on Harold Robertson at [www.unithistories.com/officers/RNR\\_officersR.html](http://www.unithistories.com/officers/RNR_officersR.html)

33 National Archives of Britain, Admiralty 194, Vol 71, 'Summary Return of Court Martial held on HMS Philante, 26 September 1942.'

34 'Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) Officers 1939-1945' website for entry on Harold Robertson, op cit.

35 Robertson's widow Lee's testimony quoted in 'Publisher fights for dead writer's life insurance,' *Toronto Star*, 22 November 1977.

36 'Two Killed in Road Crash,' *The Times*, 10 January 1955.

Ward both sketched and painted the model, as he did other celebrities of the day. Vicki Martin was a girlfriend of the playboy and horse racing enthusiast, the Maharajah of Cooch Behar. She had also been a flatmate of Ruth Ellis, the last woman to be hanged for murder in England on 13 July 1955 for the shooting death of Ellis's lover, David Blakely. It was rumored that before going to the night club Robertson and Martin had been at a party at Ward's house on Lord Astor's estate, Cliveden - a scenario that anyone who has studied the Profumo Affair will find reminiscent of escapades reported during the scandal.<sup>37</sup>

At the coroner's inquest held in Maidenhead on 2 March, Robertson arrived to testify walking unsteadily with the aid of two walking sticks. The club's catering manager, Peter Kafataris, told the court, quite implausibly, that the couple had drunk only coffee from 11.30pm to 3.00am. The manager also denied that the writer had been drunk when he arrived at the club. As for the writer, he testified that he couldn't remember the car accident. A statement by the hospitalized Anne Haig was read out and she also stated that she didn't remember the accident! The coroner would not allow certain questions.<sup>38</sup> The skeptical may be led to the suspicion that 'backhanders' were paid to influence the enquiry. Perish the thought! Significantly, three years later, the local authorities shut down the Chez Peter club for flagrant abuse of the prohibition on after-hours drinking.<sup>39</sup>

As Robertson recovered from the trauma of the crash and despite the inglorious end to his career in the Royal Navy in 1942, he successfully parlayed his knowledge of the war and naval matters into a career of writing books on the war. Robertson's naval books are: *The Golden Horseshoe* [about U-Boat commander Otto Kretschmer] (London, 1955), published in the United States as *Night Raider of the Atlantic. The Saga of the German Submarine 'The Golden Horseshoe' and Her Daring Commander, Otto Kretschmer* (New York, 1956); *Walker, RN. The Story of Frederick John Walker, CB, DSO, and 3 bars* (London, 1956); *The Ship with Two Captains* (London, 1957); and *The Channel Dash* (London, 1959). The Kretschmer book continues to garner accolades from reviewers and was most recently republished in 2011 by Naval Institute Press in Annapolis, Maryland, home of the US Naval Academy. Although, bizarrely, the Amazon page for the title asserts, 'Terence Robertson worked as a journalist after serving in the German Navy' (!).<sup>40</sup>

Robertson's book about British Royal Navy U-Boat hunter, Captain F J Walker - *Walker, RN* - was also generally well received, but as with others of his writings, Robertson gets some things wrong. For example, he describes the naval hero's first vessel, HMS *Stork*, as 'a Black Swan Class Sloop.' Rob Jerrard in an on-line review notes 'most of the

records I have consulted list HMS *Stork* (L81) as a Bittern Class Sloop' - a detail also confirmed by Wikipedia.<sup>41</sup> A smaller matter may be that Wiki gives the ace's Christian name as 'Frederic' while Robertson gives the spelling 'Frederick.' Or else perhaps it isn't a small matter at all, considering that a more recent book than Robertson's book is *The Fighting Captain. Frederic Walker* (2006) by Alan Burn.<sup>42</sup>

On the positive side, reviewer Jerrard admires the realism that author Robertson, as a former sailor, conjures up for the reader:

It is interesting that reading Naval books can suddenly move you back in time to another age, on Page 25 it reads at the fifth paragraph, '[HMS] *Stanley's*... masthead lookout wiped off the lenses of his standard Barr & Stroud binoculars for the hundredth time, they weighed three and a quarter pounds but they seemed to double their weight every five minutes. He tried resting his elbows on the rim of the crow's nest. It didn't work.' Only ex-seamen would appreciate that memory! HMS *Stanley* was sunk by U-574 on 19 December 1941, but then [Walker and his crew of] HMS *Stork* sunk the U-Boat. Twenty-eight of *Stanley's* crew survived. I hope the masthead lookout was amongst them.<sup>43</sup>

Did the man at the masthead survive? Did Robertson know? Or was this seemingly authentic scene conjured up out of nothing more than his own imagination and from what he knew of life at sea?

37 Muriel Jakubait with Monica Weller, *Ruth Ellis: My Sister's Secret Life*. London: Little, Brown Book Group, 2012, and Douglas Thompson, *Stephen Ward: Scapegoat*. London: John Blake, 2014. Vicki Martin was said to have been the first 'Stephen Ward girl'; Ward arranged sexual liaisons between Martin and well-to-do men much as he did in the early Sixties for Christine Keeler and Mandy Rice-Davies and other high-class escorts in his coven of women.

38 'Drama of the Man Who Can't Remember the Night of Death,' *Daily Mirror*, 3 March 1955.

39 'The "Chez Peter," a Thames River country club and favorite haunt of Queen Elizabeth's fun-loving cousin the Duke of Kent was closed today because it served liquor after hours.' Reported in 'Duke's Club Closed,' *Beaver Valley Times* (Beaver County, Pennsylvania), 8 October 1958. The article notes that a Maidenhead court ordered the club 'struck off,' for being 'deliberately run without attention being paid to regulations.'

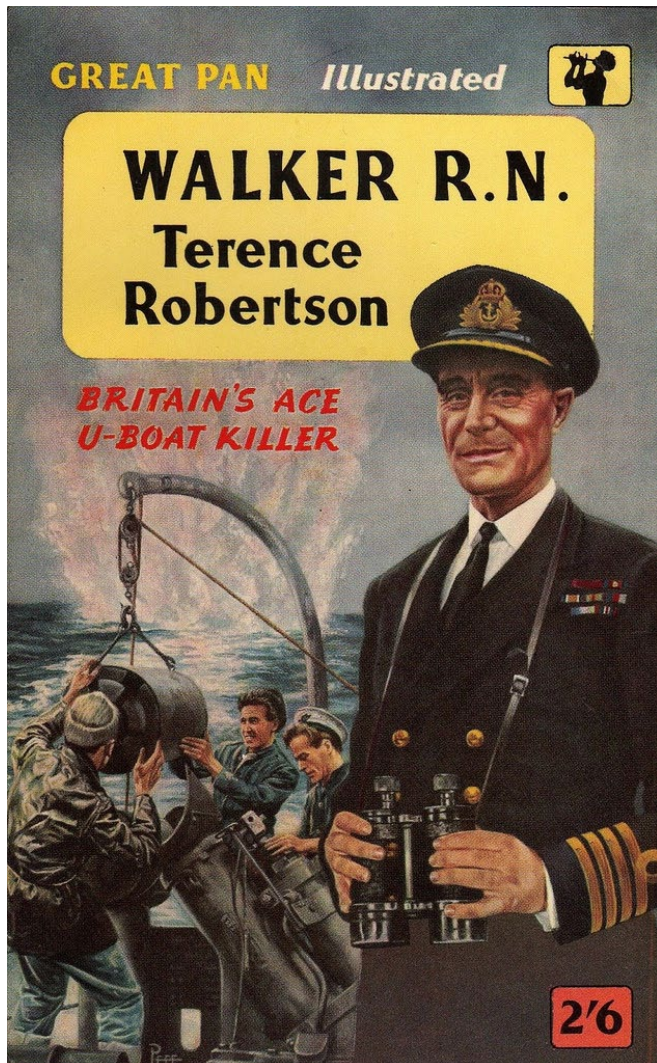
40 Robertson's book publishing credits as noted on 'Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) Officers 1939-1945,' op cit. Amazon page for *The Golden Horseshoe: The Wartime Career of Otto Kretschmer, U-Boat Ace* at [www.amazon.com/Golden-Horseshoe-Wartime-Career-Kretschmer/dp/1591143276](http://www.amazon.com/Golden-Horseshoe-Wartime-Career-Kretschmer/dp/1591143276)

41 Review of *Walker, RN* at [www.rjerrard.co.uk/royalnavy/pen/pen2.html](http://www.rjerrard.co.uk/royalnavy/pen/pen2.html).

42 Wikipedia entry on Frederic John Walker [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederic\\_John\\_Walker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederic_John_Walker). Alan Burn, *The Fighting Captain. Frederic Walker*. London: Pen and Sword Books, 2006.

43 Jerrard, op cit.

Keep in mind that vividly described scene with the sailor holding the heavy 'Barr & Stroud binoculars... resting his elbows on the rim of the crow's nest.' Recall that crewman as we look in detail shortly at Robertson's most controversial book on World War II - about the disastrous 1942 Allied raid on the French port of Dieppe.



### THREE MORE BOOKS BY ROBERTSON

In 1959, Robertson and his family emigrated to Canada and he joined the editorial staff of *The Hamilton Spectator*.

After the number of naval history books that the writer published in the 1950s, he would publish just three more titles: *Full Speed to Heaven*, a novel (1960); *The Shame and the Glory: Dieppe* (1962); and *Crisis: The Inside Story of the Suez Conspiracy* (1965).

At the time of his suicide by barbiturate overdose in a New York hotel room on 31 January 1970, Terence Robertson was at work on a commissioned but unfinished history of the Bronfman dynasty, the Montreal-based Seagram's liquor empire. The writer would insist to some colleagues before his death that he had 'found out things [about the Bronfmans] they don't want me to write about.' To others who have researched and written about the

Seagram empire, the circumstances of Robertson's death were less suspicious than down to the man's alcoholic state and clear psychological problems. In the 1977 trial concerning the life insurance policy taken out on the writer's life by his publisher - a clear sign that they recognized that the project was in jeopardy because of the writer's problems - Robertson's widow stated she had begun divorce proceedings due to her husband's erratic behavior. Appearing before the Ontario Supreme Court in November 1977, she testified that on the night of his death, Robertson phoned her to declare, 'This is the end, you won't see me again.'<sup>44</sup>

In the opinion of a Canadian historian with whom I have been in correspondence but who has asked to remain an anonymous source for the purposes of this article:

Terence Robertson was basically a journalist, not an historian. It was his belief that it was okay to dramatize historical events... Terence Robertson was not going to let the facts get in the way of a good story - *particularly a sensational story*. [Emphasis mine].

In other words, in the view of the historian, Robertson saw himself essentially as a writer of *popular* histories. Not scholarly histories but popular histories. This is significant and should be kept in mind, both for our discussion of his Dieppe work, and in contemplating what Robertson wrote about Fairy Fay's alleged murder at the hands of Jack the Ripper.

### THE SHAME AND THE GLORY: DIEPPE

Soon after his immigration to Canada in 1959, Robertson approached Jack McClelland, president of McClelland & Stewart Ltd publishers, about obtaining a book contract. McClelland, himself a naval veteran, got along well with the Englishman and was no doubt impressed with his published number of books on Second World War naval history. (It is doubtful, however, if Robertson revealed his own chequered career as a Royal Navy officer, something that he had perhaps attempted to mask in changing his first name from 'Harold' to 'Terence.')

McClelland suggested that Robertson write a book on the 19 August 1942 failed Allied attack on the English Channel port of Dieppe in Nazi-occupied France, well aware that the twenty-year anniversary of the action was fast approaching. The raid, known as 'Operation Jubilee,' had featured a large contingent of Canadian troops who were landed on the beaches by the British Royal Navy, and McClelland knew interest in Canada would be high for a definitive mass market history of the affair.

<sup>44</sup> Lee Robertson quoted in 'Publisher fights for dead writer's life insurance,' *Toronto Star*, 22 November 1977.



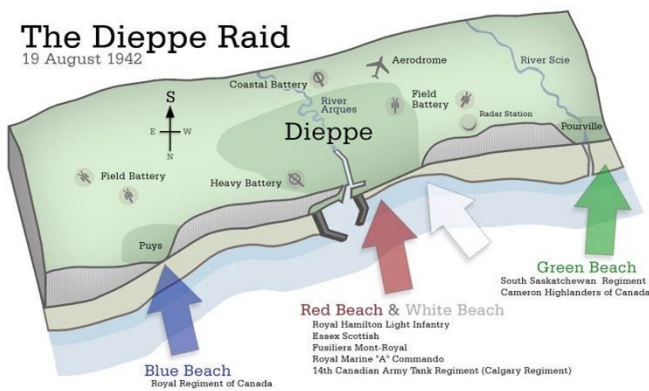
Looking back on Dieppe for a Churchillian magazine in 2002, Terry Reardon, author of a book on Sir Winston Churchill and Canadian prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, described the tragedy and its particular impact on Canadians:

DIEPPE: DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

TORONTO, AUGUST 19TH - Sixty years ago today, 4,963 Canadian soldiers were part of an Allied force of 6,086 who took part in an experimental mini-invasion of Europe to assess tactics, invasion prospects and equipment for the future Allied invasion of Europe. It also was an attempt to placate Stalin, whose forces were carrying the bulk of the fighting in Europe.

The Dieppe raid was a disaster, with 3,626 soldiers killed, wounded or captured, including 3,369 Canadians. It is a major controversy of the war for Canadians although Churchill was not directly involved in the operation. The official position at the time was that important lessons were learned, General Montgomery stating that for every life lost at Dieppe, ten were saved at Normandy.<sup>45</sup>

In other words, as an amphibious attack, Operation Jubilee was a tryout for Operation Overlord, a 'D-Day in miniature' almost two years before the famed landings on the beaches of Normandy. There would be four targeted beach landing areas: Blue Beach at Puy east of Dieppe, Red Beach and White Beach in the vicinity of Dieppe itself, and Green Beach to the west at Pourville. But intelligence on German defenses at those locations was inadequate, one of a number of later acknowledged failures of the operation. Moreover, the Canadians who comprised the bulk of the forces to be landed along with British commandos had not been sufficiently trained.



Map of Dieppe Raid, 19 August 1942 ('south' is at top of graphic). Note Blue Beach located at Puy to the east of the town of Dieppe itself. This was the beach where the Royal Regiment of Canada landed and sustained massive losses to enfilading machine gun fire. Much of that withering fire came from a well situated German bunker on a nearby headland.

Author's collection

The raid was largely the 'baby' of Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten who declared later, and rather arrogantly in light of the tragic losses and sacrifice of the Canadians: 'I would do it again!' The action was slammed in retrospect by British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery as ill-conceived from the beginning. The British Army commander remarked bitterly, 'I believe we could have gotten the information and experience we needed without losing so many magnificent Canadian soldiers.'<sup>46</sup>

Once published, Robertson's book on Dieppe was equally characterised as ill-conceived by the reviewers. D J Goodspeed, writing in *The Canadian Historical Review* in June 1963, was one of the critics who let loose with both barrels about what he considered bad about the work:

[W]hat is objectionable in Robertson's book is its mood and tone, which is the mood and tone of the 'war-stories' commonly found in stag magazines. The Canadian soldier in training is portrayed as lecherous, drunken, and violent to an abnormal degree; Canadian commanders are, by implication, accused of basing decisions on selfish career motives; and the men of one Canadian regiment [the Royal Regiment of Canada aka 'the Royals' who landed at Blue Beach], a regiment which suffered well over 90 percent casualties on the Dieppe beaches, are accused of cowardice. The reality of it all is that, with the information available to him, with his undoubted narrative skill, and with the high drama and tragedy inherent in the story itself, Robertson could easily have made the book a good one.<sup>47</sup>

Reviewers slated Robertson both for factual inaccuracies and his 'purple prose.' Before the publication of the book, such purple passages were a noticeable characteristic of an abridged serialized version of the book entitled 'Dieppe: The First Full Story' that began running in the *Weekend Magazine* on 18 August 1962. The serialization was published in most major newspapers in Canada. One such passage that did not make it intact into the published book is typical of the sensationalized over-hyped descriptions that so Robertson's critics found crass and inaccurate:

The grim sweat-streaked commanders of the landing-craft looked over the heads of the reluctant Royals at the carnage on the beach and delivered their dreadful

45 Quoted in Terence Reardon, 'Dieppe: Day of Remembrance,' International Churchill Society, *Finest Hour* 116, Autumn 2002, available at [www.winstonchurchill.org/publications/finest-hour/finest-hour-116/datelines-15](http://www.winstonchurchill.org/publications/finest-hour/finest-hour-116/datelines-15).

46 Op cit. Also see Montgomery quote at [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dieppe\\_Raid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dieppe_Raid).

47 D J Goodspeed, *The Shame and the Glory: Dieppe* by Terence Robertson (review), *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol 44, No 2, June 1963, p. 162.

ultimatum - *land or be shot on the boats.* [Emphasis mine.]<sup>48</sup>

Robertson had got hold of a story that the Royals had to be forced out of the landing craft and onto Blue Beach at the point of pistols wielded by Royal Navy officers - and he was running with it for all he was worth. To the extent that Canadians then and today feel that the Englishman impugned the honour of the soldiers who gave their lives on that beach.

Beyond that, as in other things he wrote, Robertson was careless in handling the facts. For example, in discussing the Allied inquiry into what went wrong with the Dieppe operation, he gets the date of the inquest held on board HMS *Queen Emma* wrong, stating it was held 22 August 1942, the day after the hearing actually took place. This mistake is difficult to explain because in the records of the inquiry the correct date of 21 August appears at the beginning of each new witness's testimony.

In September 1962 in the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, Colonel Charles P Stacey, retired, who in 1944 had written a classified report on the Dieppe tragedy for the Canadian Department of National Defence, found great fault in Robertson's book:

We have just commemorated Canada's bloodiest day of the Second World War; and Mr. Terence Robertson has marked the occasion, although not improved it, by producing a large book entitled *The Shame and the Glory: Dieppe*.

*My opinion that this is not a very good book* is based mainly on the author's approach, which is reflected in the title. We have here, not the calm assessment which would be in order now, but a *piece of sensationalism*. [Emphasis mine.]

Mr. Robertson actually says the men who flinched 'numbered at least 20 per cent of the Royal Regiment, perhaps higher than 40 per cent.' Just why anybody would invent statistics in a case like this I am at a loss to know. I am still more at a loss to understand why he does not quote another statistic that does not have to be invented. Of 554 Royals who went to Dieppe, 227 never came home. No other Canadian unit in the whole war had so many fatal casualties in a single day. It is strange that an historian so interested in the terrible events on Blue Beach should not find these facts worthy of mention...

Mr. Robertson has done a lot of work, *though he has done it carelessly.* [Emphasis mine.]<sup>49</sup>

In the Canadian Army Journal, Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Wright, a retired officer of the Royal Regiment of Canada that Robertson found so wanting in moral fibre and

courage, not surprisingly protested the book:

I take the greatest exception to what is said about 'The reluctant Royals.' The author relies on some untested testimony to conclude that at least 20%, perhaps higher than 40% of The Royal Regiment of Canada were driven on to the beach and to their deaths by the pistols of junior officers of the Royal Navy. The men who went forth are dead - 227 of about 500 of the Regiment who landed. Should they not be left to sleep in peace, as soldiers sleep? But as they rest come voices to tell the world that these men not only died but they died as cowards. *The charge is not true.* [Emphasis mine.]<sup>50</sup>



*Canadian War Cemetery at Dieppe, France by Terry Daynard who noted on Twitter on 8 November 2015, 'About 1000 graves, almost all killed same day', 19 August 1942.*

In a 2 October 1962 recorded review of *The Shame and the Glory* for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), today available in the CBC Digital Archives, English free-lance writer Wallace Rayburn can be heard giving his impressions of Robertson's book. Rayburn had been a journalist who had accompanied the South Saskatchewan Regiment which had landed successfully and, at first, without opposition on a different beach at Pourville west of Dieppe. He finds fault with Robertson's analysis of the raid and particularly the stinging assertion that the 'Royals' were cowards who had to be forced from the landing craft at gunpoint. Rayburn says that the truth was that the men Robertson labeled as 'yellow' were untested troops who naturally panicked in the face of withering German fire. He

48 Robertson, 'Dieppe: The First Full Story,' *Weekend Magazine*, 18 August, 25 August, 8 September and 15 September 1962.

49 'Army Historian Accuses Author of Sensationalizing Dieppe History,' *Globe and Mail*, 1 September 1962. Stacey's declassified 1944 report on Operation Jubilee is now publicly available: Col C P Stacey, Report No. 128: 'The Lessons of Dieppe and their Influence on the Operation Overlord.' Ottawa, Canada: Department of National Defence Canadian Forces, 1944, [www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/his/rep-rap/doc/cmhq/cmhq128.pdf](http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/his/rep-rap/doc/cmhq/cmhq128.pdf).

50 Peter Wright, 'Neither Shame Nor Glory,' *Canadian Army Journal* Vol. 16, No. 4 (1962), pp. 98-102.

makes the point that in such circumstances a similar panic could have occurred among the Saskatchewaners with whom he clambered ashore but 'the enemy were in their beds when we landed.' By contrast, the poor Royals, trapped between the beach and a high sea wall fortified with barbed wire, made 'easy enfilade targets' for MG34 machine guns firing from a German bunker on a nearby headland.<sup>51</sup>

Also in the CBC Digital Archives, Robertson can be seen in a short televised segment talking somewhat pompously about his book.<sup>52</sup>



*Terence Robertson being interviewed by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 7 September 1962.*

*Author's screenshot from CBC Digital Archives*

### **THE CASE OF THE TRAPPER MURDERER = THE CASE OF FAIRY FAY?**

In my 2006 article on Robertson and Fairy Fay I identified an element in *The Shame and the Glory* which I thought formed a direct parallel to the story of Fairy Fay. It is Robertson's tale of a Canadian trapper named Stanley Jones who kills a hunting buddy in the wilderness, volunteers for the Cameron Highlanders as a private on the very day that war is declared, 1 September 1939, and then is killed by the Germans at Dieppe. The story of the 'trapper murderer' just seems too neat and perfect to be true. For how would Robertson know all those details about things that happened far from civilization if the man was conveniently dead? On the other hand, by writing about such a character, Robertson creates a vibrant and exciting beginning to the book. The backwoodsman turned soldier is a stereotypical loner, a man without dependents who commits a crime in the wilderness; his story is also, of course, iconically *Canadian*, or might have seemed so to an English immigrant writer new to Canada.

In other words, I conjectured that both tales - that of Private Jones of *The Shame and the Glory* and Fairy Fay of Robertson's 1950 *Reynolds News* article - were conjured up

out of the Robertson's vivid imagination.

In my earlier article, however, I somewhat alleviated the suspicion that the trapper story was made up by Robertson out of 'whole cloth' because I was aware that in researching the book Robertson had interviewed one of the key players in the Dieppe Raid. Captain John Hughes-Hallett, RN, had been an aide to Mountbatten at the time of Dieppe and was the operational commander of the raid. By the time, nearly two decades later, that Robertson met the veteran naval officer for lunch at the prestigious Mayfair Hotel in London, Hughes-Hallett was a retired vice admiral and Conservative politician.<sup>53</sup> So thus a man, one should think, who could not be crossed! Or the writer would hear about it.

Nonetheless, the admiral's papers reveal a telling statement in a letter that Robertson wrote to the former navy officer. The letter was posted shortly before the appearance of the book. Robertson sent a copy of the manuscript. The admiral was upset that parts of the manuscript that were not based on fact, and questioned the writer about it.

This gets back to what we spoke about before - that Terence Robertson viewed himself as a writer of 'popular' history - history packaged for the 'masses.' His chosen approach to writing history explains the sensationalism that some of his critics detected in his work, the 'stag

51 CBC Digital Archives. 'Review of Dieppe book "The Shame and the Glory."' Wallace Rayburn dissects Terence Robertson's controversial account of Dieppe.' Broadcast date: 2 October 1962. Sound recording, duration 6.24 minutes, at [www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/dieppe-review-of-the-shame-and-the-glory](http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/dieppe-review-of-the-shame-and-the-glory)

52 CBC Digital Archives. 'Legacy of Dieppe: Interview with Terence Robertson. The author of *The Shame and the Glory: Dieppe* explains his interpretation of the raid and its legacy.' Broadcast date: 7 September 1962. Recording of televised interview, duration 1.57 minutes, at [www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/interview-with-terence-robertson](http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/interview-with-terence-robertson)

53 Admiral John Hughes-Hallett was born 1 December 1901. His father was Colonel Wyndham Hughes-Hallett. He served as a midshipman in HMS *Lion* in 1918 during the last year of World War I. At the beginning of World War II, he was an officer aboard HMS *Devonshire* in the Norwegian campaign of 1940 and was mentioned in dispatches. As described in Robertson's *The Shame and the Glory*, Hughes-Hallett was the Naval Commander during the Dieppe Raid and was Commodore Commanding Channel Assault Force and Naval Chief of Staff, 1942 and 1943. He served as Vice-Controller of the Navy in 1950-2 and Flag Officer, Heavy Squadron, Home Fleet, 1952-53. After retiring from the Royal Navy, Hughes-Hallett served as Conservative MP for East (later North East) Croydon in 1954-64 and Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Transport for Shipping and Shipbuilding, 1961-64 in the Conservative government. If the name 'Hughes-Hallett' sounds familiar, the admiral was a relative although not in the same family line as Colonel Francis Charles Hughes-Hallett, MP for Rochester, Kent, who claimed some involvement in the Ripper case. Colonel Hughes-Hallett told the story of how he trailed the murderer after the George Yard murder. See 'A New Theory Relative to the Whitechapel Murders,' *Reno Evening Gazette*, 8 October 1888. Available at [www.casebook.org/press\\_reports/reno\\_evening\\_gazette/881008.html](http://www.casebook.org/press_reports/reno_evening_gazette/881008.html)

magazine'-style characterisation of the behavior of Canadian troops that disgusted one reviewer, even his sloppiness in handling facts. Realistically though possibly that carelessness might in addition have been a result of the alcoholism that blighted his marriage and career and that ended his life early.

**'TO ADD READABILITY'  
FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

In a letter of 15 April 1962, five months before *The Shame and the Glory* would be published in Canada, Robertson replied to Hughes-Hallett's criticism of the manuscript. He informed the admiral that it was okay to dramatize historical events 'to cater for the popular readership at which the book is aimed' [emphasis mine] and 'to add readability while in no way distorting the basic element of truth.'(54)

Quoting from my earlier article:

Perhaps countering my suspicion that Private Jones was *invented by Robertson* [emphasis mine] just as he apparently conjured up Fairy Fay out of thin air is the fact that, a quarter of the way through the book, Robertson does relate an encounter between a Private John Hallett of the Canadian forces and this Private Jones. Hallett was in reality an Englishman, Captain John Hughes-Hallett, RN, an aide to Lord Mountbatten who had been sent by the British to test the mettle of the Canadian forces ahead of sending them across the Channel for Operation Jubilee... According to Robertson, the former trapper was able to get Hallett out of a sticky situation in a Wooten pub: a bloody fight with three drunken British Pioneer Corps soldiers who were bad mouthing the Canadians. The cold-eyed former trapper dealt with the Brits by slashing one of them with a knife that 'glittered under the naked electric knife' as Hallett beat a hasty retreat on Jones's instructions to leave. At a pub down the road, according to Robertson, Jones told Hughes-Hallett his secret about the murder he had committed before joining the Cameron Highlanders.(55)

Robertson tells us in *The Shame and the Glory* that the admiral shared with him that, as a naval officer, he considered whether to have the self-confessed killer arrested and so risk the success of the approaching operation. The choice for Hughes-Hallett though was obvious: he would keep the soldier's dark secret to himself and wouldn't betray him to the military police. Robertson wrote:

'There was really no decision to make,' [Hughes-Hallett] told me. 'There could hardly have been any question of bringing Stanley to trial for the earlier

incident. So far as he was aware, [the backwoods crime] was unknown to the police, and in any case accused persons are carefully protected from being convicted as a result of their own gossip.'(56)

So perhaps there really was a Private Stanley Jones who was killed at Dieppe and who had committed a murder before joining the Cameron Highlanders. Or else a former trapper of another name (shades of 'Dr. Stanley'). But if Admiral Hughes-Hallett was not objecting to the complete fabrication of the Cameron Highlander killed in the Dieppe raid described in *The Shame and the Glory* might it have been instead the sensationalized way that Robertson writes about the man and the incident in the backwoods? That is, did he dislike the heightened melodramatic way language that Robertson uses to describe what transpired between 'Jones' and his buddy? For example, the opening scene of the book:

[T]wo trappers [are] hunkering down to sleep in the still Canadian wilderness in a summer twilight with its 'unseen armies of insects' making 'a rustle, faint at first but gathering in volume until the earth itself seems to come alive.' One trapper decamps during the night stealing 'six hundred dollars worth of furs, all they had to show for three months spent in the Barren Lands' along with his partner's gun. When the deserted trapper [Jones] wakes, he finds that despite the theft, he still has sheathed at his belt 'a long, wicked-looking skinner's knife.' Over the next week, he tracks the thief who at the moment of their encounter, terrified, stares for 'a brittle moment' at his cold pale-blue eyes, recognizing death in that instant. The angry trapper's long 'wicked' knife 'flickered briefly in the morning sunlight.'(57)

When Terence Robertson died by his own hand in that New York hotel room on 31 January 1970, he took with him the secret of whether he invented Fairy Fay, and whether he likewise invented or significantly 'jazzed up' the story of trapper Stanley Jones or the elements of other 'popular' books that he had written.

Retired Admiral Hughes-Hallett suffered a serious stroke in the late 1960s that significantly hampered his activities. He passed away on 5 April 1972, just over two years after Terence Robertson committed suicide.

54 Robertson to Hughes-Hallett, 15 April 1962. Hughes-Hallett Papers, Imperial War Museum.

55 Robertson, *Dieppe: The Shame and the Glory*. Boston: Little Brown & Co, 1962, pp. 98-100. The book was first published in Toronto by McClelland & Stewart Ltd in 1962 as *The Shame and the Glory: Dieppe*.

56 *Ibid*, 100.

57 *Ibid*, 1-2.

Although it is known that Hughes-Hallett wrote his memoirs, so far they remain unpublished. One is left to wonder if or when his autobiography ever sees the light of day, the admiral might 'dish the dirt' from a sailor's grave on the writing practices of the former Royal Navy gunnery officer.<sup>58</sup>

### CONCLUSION

In the works of certain authors such as Terence Robertson, Donald McCormick, William Le Queux, and (possibly) Leonard Matters, the reader is left to wonder what is true and what is not. In other words, what is authentic and what is fabricated or at the least modified or manipulated to package the story for public consumption.

That is to say, in the writing of history, whether in the Ripper field or in other areas of history, there is always room for true facts and authentic stories but also, in the hands of some writers, much leeway for fabrication and duplicity.

So, dear reader, having read this narrative, take my advice and tread carefully when you explore the groves of Ripperology!

58 The admiral's papers are archived at the Imperial War Museum and at the Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge. See [an.us.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD%2FGBR%2F0014%2FHHLT](https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD%2FGBR%2F0014%2FHHLT) and article on Admiral John Hughes-Hallett in Wikipedia [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Hughes-Hallett](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Hughes-Hallett)



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**CHRISTOPHER T GEORGE is Editor-at-Large of Ripperologist, and organiser of next year's US Jack the Ripper Convention, to be held at Baltimore on 7-8 April 2018.**

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# The Murder of Elizabeth Jeffs

By JAN BONDESON

Montague Place was developed in the early 1800s: a stately Bloomsbury thoroughfare running from Bedford Square in the west to Russell Square in the east. It was named after the first Duke of Montagu [so spelt], whose grand mansion Montagu House became the first home to the British Museum. There are some houses on the south side of Montague Place already on Horwood's 1813 map, and the 1819 map shows houses numbered 1 to 16 on the south side, running from west to east, and houses 17 to 35 on the north side, running from east to west. These large, luxurious town houses attracted a number of well-to-do residents: the Consul-General of Spain, the archaeologist Sir Charles Fellows and Major-General Sir Robert Barton all lived in Montague Place.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1820s, the large and elegant town house at No. 11 Montague Place belonged to the wealthy businessman Mr John Lett Esq. In 1825, the elderly Mr Lett made a permanent move to his country house in Surrey, and left his trusted housekeeper Mrs Elizabeth Jeffs in charge of his town house. Although Mr Lett no longer lived in the house, he thought it should be kept in the family: his wife and son visited it on regular intervals, to make sure that all was well with the house and with old Mrs Jeffs.

Mrs Elizabeth Jeffs, known as Betty by her friends, had been twice widowed, and she had a son named John Knight from her first marriage. John was married and had six children alive. He worked as a feather dresser, making elaborate feather arrangements for ladies' hats, and lodged at No. 32 Cursitor Street, near Chancery Lane. This odd occupation only just enabled him to keep poverty from the door, however, and he more than once needed his mother's charity. John and his children frequently visited Mrs Jeffs at No. 11 Montague Place. Otherwise, the gloomy old housekeeper did not have many callers. Having been in Mr Lett's employ since 1810, she knew the other servants in the neighbourhood quite well. Her frugal and regular

habits often included a visit to the Craven Arms public house, to purchase half a pint of porter for her supper.

At the end of 1827, when Mrs Jeffs was 76 years old, she was still looking after the large empty house at No. 11 Montague Place. On the morning of New Year's Day 1828, the servants in the neighbouring houses saw that the windows of No. 11 were all shuttered, something that went very much against Mrs Jeffs' habits. They knocked on the front door, but there was no response. Had something happened to old Mrs Jeffs? With commendable neighbourhood spirit, Mr Justice Holroyd, who lived at No. 14, sent his butler Thomas Hawkins to call at Mr Lett's London agent, the upholsterer Mr Robinson, of Great Queen Street. Mr Robinson sent his porter Paul Dent and his footman Alexander Bonnick back to Montague Place, with orders to enter No. 11 by whatever means necessary. The three men made their way through Mr Serjeant Bosanquet's house at No. 12 Montague Place, into the rear yard. Dent and Bonnick scaled the tall wall to gain entry to the yard of No. 11, but Hawkins the butler, who was too old and corpulent to attempt climbing walls, had to go back the same way he had come.

Dent and Bonnick made their way into No. 11 Montague Place through an unlocked window. They called Elizabeth Jeffs' name, but the large, spooky house remained as silent as death. They went to the front door to let in Hawkins the butler, whose local knowledge would come in handy, and proceeded to search the house. The three men went upstairs and looked through every room, but without finding Mrs Jeffs. In some of the bedrooms, wardrobes and chests of drawers had been opened, and some of their contents had been strewn on the floor. Some boxes containing feathers had also been opened. Had

1. F.P. Woodford, *Streets of Bloomsbury and Fitzrovia* (Camden History Society, London 1997); [www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project).

there been a burglary? When the three men went into the lower ground floor, where old Mrs Jeffs had for many years enjoyed a gloomy asylum as the sole resident of the servants' quarters, they were aghast to find her dead body in the servants' hall, a small room with a single window to the front area. Her throat had been cut with considerable force.<sup>2</sup>



*Dent and Bonnick enter the murder house, from the Illustrated Police Budget, January 13 1906*



*The three men find the body of Elizabeth Jeffs, Illustrated Police Budget, January 13 1906*

Leaving Bonnick to guard the murder house, Dent and Hawkins went to the public-office, and the local watch-

house, bringing Samuel Furzeman, the Constable of St Giles, and the Bow Street officers William Salmon and Richard Gardener, with them back to No. 11 Montague Place. Furzeman, a clever and experienced officer, proceeded to investigate the crime scene. The servants' hall, where Mrs Jeffs' dead body was lying on its right side, was next door to the kitchen. There was a chair on each side of the table, as if two people had been sitting together. When Furzeman lifted the body, he found a razor case almost completely hidden underneath it. An empty quart pot had been put on the floor near Mrs Jeffs' head. Furzeman rummaged round in the upstairs bedrooms, making note of the open drawers and closets. In a wash-hand stand on the first floor, he found a glove with a mark of fresh blood on it. Part of an old newspaper in a drawer was also stained with fresh blood. In the upper bedrooms, which had obviously been used for storage, old clothes, feathers, and every kind of rubbish was strewn around.



*Mr Plumbe the surgeon and a Bow Street officer arrive at the scene, from the Illustrated Police News, October 17 1903*

The local surgeon, Mr Samuel Plumbe, of Great Russell Street, soon arrived at the murder house. He was of the confirmed opinion that this was a case of the most horrid murder, as he expressed it. Poor Mrs Jeffs could never have cut her own throat with such extraordinary force. Moreover, the murder weapon, believed to be a formidable razor, was not found on the premises. Mr Plumbe agreed with Furzeman in placing considerable

2. In spite of being the 'perfect murder mystery', the murder of Elizabeth Jeffs is surprisingly little known. The main published sources include the *Annual Register* 30 [1827], 308-17, J.J. Smith, *Celebrated Trials of All Countries* (London 1835), 90-7 and Anon., *Mysteries of Crime* (Chicago 1880), 179-98; also the *Illustrated Police News*, April 20 1889 and October 17 and 24 1903, and *Illustrated Police Budget*, January 13 1906. See also *Wayne County Alliance* July 20 1881, *Auckland Star* September 8 1928, and *Toledo Blade* February 7 1942.

importance on the discovery of the razor-case. When Mr John Lett came to No. 11 Montague Place, to identify the body and inspect the house, he could not identify this razor case as one he owned himself. A journalist concluded that it had been deliberately brought into the house by the murderer, and that the razor it contained had assisted in the completion of this sanguinary outrage. Finding the owner of this razor-case was now the most urgent task for the murder investigation. The newspapers were full of London's latest criminal sensation, described as "a most barbarous murder, in many points resembling the horrid affair of Mrs Donatty".<sup>3</sup>

It turned out that the evening of the murder, there had been two independent observations of Mrs Jeffs. When George Gardiner, the pot-boy at the Gower Arms public house in Gower Street, had delivered her a pint of stout at nine o'clock, he had seen her with a young man wearing a blue coat and a white apron. He had not seen the face of this individual. At half past ten in the evening, the watchman James Harman had seen Mrs Jeffs speaking to a young man and a young woman, but he had paid little attention to them. Thus there were no reliable witness observations of the murderer.



*The watchman sees a man and a woman speaking to Mrs Jeffs, from the Illustrated Police Budget, January 13 1906*

There was also the matter of a laundress named Elizabeth Evans, who had picked up some laundry from Mr Serjeant Bosanquet's house at No. 12 Montague Place, in a cart. Just as this vehicle took off, she heard a terrible scream emanating from one of the neighbouring houses. Since the horse was also frightened and gave a jolt, the laundress tumbled down onto the seat, exclaiming "Lord have mercy me, what's that?" The cart driver William Cracknel answered "Oh, it's only some boy in the street", but Elizabeth thought it might have been 'an improper female'. Debating the origin of the unexpected outcry, they drove off without taking any further action.

Once Mr Lett had recovered his composure after seeing

the mangled body of his old housekeeper, the wealthy capitalist provided the police with some very tasty leads. He knew that Mrs Jeffs' never-do-well son John Knight had often visited his mother in the house, and the housekeeper had confided in her employer that he had sometimes bullied her into lending him money. Once or twice, Mr Letts had even given her an advance on her salary, on account of the demands from her son, although he had "represented to her the impropriety of parting with what might be of use to her in old age." Although the house was cluttered with old rubbish, Mr Lett could not see that anything had been stolen, except possibly a few silver spoons. This sounded promising, the policemen thought, and they acted with immediate enthusiasm. John Knight's lodgings in Cursitor Street were raided on the afternoon of January 2, and the startled feather-dresser was taken into police custody. He had not read the morning newspapers, so he was barely able to grasp that his mother had been murdered when the gruff policemen dragged him off to the St Giles watch-house.

In long and gruelling interrogations, Salmon and Furzeman did their best to make John Knight sweat, but the feather-dresser behaved perfectly naturally, and showed considerable grief for his mother. The reason he had not read the newspapers was that he had been out travelling overnight, to purchase feathers in Essex and Hertfordshire. Although Knight admitted that once or twice, he had been badgering his mother for money when he had been particularly hard up, he stoutly denied murdering her, and expressed outrage at the treatment he was receiving. John Knight's young son Charles Edgar also received a proper grilling from the police, but he did not contradict his parent in the slightest. Several witnesses came forward to claim that they had seen Knight outside London, and these sightings agreed very well with his own account of his travels. And when the pot-boy Gardiner saw Knight in a police line-up, he failed to pick him out. But although the case against the unfortunate feather-dresser seemed in serious danger of falling to pieces, he remained in police custody until the coroner's inquest on Elizabeth Jeffs began on January 4.<sup>4</sup>



At the Montague Arms public house, the coroner Mr Thomas Stirling had made sure that a highly respectable jury had been sworn, from some of the principal

3. *Times* January 3 1828 3e.

4. On the early police response to the murder, and the arrest of John Knight, see *Standard* January 2 1828, *Morning Post* January 3 1828 and *Age* January 6 1828.



inhabitants of this affluent neighbourhood. They proceeded to No. 11 Montague Place, to “take a view of the body of the unfortunate old Lady, which remained in the same state as when first discovered. It presented one of the most appalling spectacles ever witnessed. The corpse was lying upon the back, in a small front kitchen – the room the deceased used generally to sit in; the head was literally covered with blood, and nearly severed from the body ...” After the jury had inspected the body, they withdrew to the drawing room as the doctors undressed and examined the body, without finding any further injuries. Instead, the medical men found a secret pocket in Mrs Jeffs’ skirts, where she kept a sovereign and some copper coins. The appearance of the house did not indicate a professional burglary: a few spoons might have been taken, but a good deal of valuable property remained untouched.

When the jury had returned to the Montague Arms, Mr Plumbe the surgeon gave evidence, and so did Dent and Bonnick. They added little to what had already been related, but Furzeman described how he had tracked down a grandson of Mrs Jeffs, who had given him John Knight’s address in Cursitor Street. Knight had told him that he had been out purchasing feathers since 3 am, visiting Longford, Brentford and Stratford. He had then exclaimed “For God’s sake, what’s the matter?” On being told that his mother was no more, he had appeared greatly agitated. When Knight’s clothes and lodgings were searched, nothing incriminating was found. While in custody, he had not asked to see the body of his mother, nor had he asked about the circumstances of her death, something that Furzeman found strange. John Knight, who was himself in attendance at the inquest, was described by a journalist as a slender man about 40 years old; he appeared quite composed and did not show any indication of guilt. In the end, the coroner’s jury returned a verdict of murder against some person or persons unknown, and accordingly, Knight was promptly released.<sup>5</sup>

The majority of the London newspapers fully agreed with the verdict of the coroner’s jury, but not a journalist in the *Morning Chronicle*, who for some reason or other was convinced that Knight was the guilty man. This individual also added the inventions that it had been discovered that Knight had found a medal in Waterloo Bridge Road at the time he was supposed to have been in Longford, and that the feather-dresser was now once more a prisoner at St Giles watch house. For this sloppy journalism, the impudent newspaper man was sternly admonished by Mr Hall the Bow Street magistrate. He pointed out that “such reports could not be tolerated, and the public ought to be very cautious how they credited statements inserted into newspapers, unless they were given with something like accuracy.”<sup>6</sup> Mr Hall also emphasized that Knight’s account

of his travels had been entirely correct, as vouched for by a number of reliable witnesses. On viewing his mother’s mangled body, his feelings had been perfectly natural, and Mr Hall was convinced that he was entirely innocent of the crime.

Instead, it was time to find the real murderer, Mr Hall pontificated. He suspected that this was no ordinary burglary gone wrong, but that Mrs Jeffs had admitted her murderer, a person she appeared to have known, into the house. Mr Hall recommended that the Home Secretary should issue a pardon to any accomplice of the murderer; if he brought the person who had actually committed the murder to justice. As a further encouragement, the Parish Officers of St Giles offered a reward of £100 to any person who discovered the identity of the Montague Place murderer, and provided this information to Mr Stafford, the Chief Clerk at the Bow Street public office.<sup>7</sup>



After being released from police custody as the main suspect in the murder of his mother, the shaken John Knight kept pondering the mysterious case. The circumstances of the murder had been explained to him, and he wondered what kind of young man might be on sufficiently friendly terms with the reclusive old housekeeper, for her to invite him into the house to have a glass of porter. The male servants in the neighbouring houses were mostly elderly or middle-aged, and the gloomy old Mrs Jeffs was not the kind of person to acquire new friends.

But John Knight could well remember that his own father had been on very good terms with a literary man named Stephen Jones, author of a number of books on natural history and the dictionary *Jones’ Sheridan Improved*, and editor of the *General Evening Post*. Stephen Jones had two sons, both of whom had received a superior education. But in 1824, the sons had been suspected of having stolen £40 from their father. A ‘deal’ had been struck, in which the two young Joneses escaped transportation, on the condition that they became sailors and went to India. Both sons honoured this agreement, at least for a while, but after two journeys to India and back, before the mast, young William ‘Bill’ Jones had had enough of life on the ocean wave. He had tried to insinuate himself back into favour with his father; but Stephen Jones was not having any of that, and this

5. On the coroner’s inquest, see *Morning Post* January 4 1828 and *Age* January 6 1828.

6. *Morning Post* January 7 1828.

7. *Times* January 7 1828 2a, *London Gazette* January 11 1828, 74.

meant that Bill was on his own in London, with no money and nowhere to live. For a while, Bill Jones lodged with John Knight, and he paid court to one of the feather-dresser's daughters for a time. Knight was not at all impressed with the lazy, work-shy Bill, however; and he did not consider him good enough for his daughter. Things came to an end when Bill was sentenced to six months in prison for theft in February 1826.

After Bill Jones had emerged from the House of Correction, Cold Bath Fields, his life went from bad to worse. Desperately poor and without any friends, he moved in with a prostitute who called herself Charlotte Berry, and lived on her earnings. For a while, he worked as clerk to the attorney John Dunscombe, but his habitual dishonesty and dissolute habits soon earned him the sack. A worthless scoundrel, Bill tramped the London streets: he and Charlotte moved from lodgings to lodgings, and spent all the money they managed to obtain on gin and beer. Now John Knight knew that during the time Bill had lodged with him, he had more than once visited Mrs Jeffs at No. 11 Montague Place! Thus she might well have invited this scapegrace of a youth into the house for a glass of beer, and who knew what such a desperate wretch might be capable of, if he thought that the old lady had hoarded money and valuables?

John Knight went to the police, where his suspicions were greeted with immediate enthusiasm. It may well be that some other person had already informed against Bill Jones, but nothing was disclosed about this in the newspapers at the time. Bill's mother and unmarried sister lived in King Street, Bloomsbury, but they had not seen him for several days. Furzeman, Salmon and Gardener immediately proceeded to Bill Jones's lodgings at No. 35 Mitre Street, but the suspect and his paramour were nowhere to be found. Bill had occupied the first floor back room, and the three officers searched it thoroughly. In a table-drawer, Furzeman found a razor with one or two small notches. He also found a nearly new umbrella. Salmon found a collar with a dark stain on it. For several days, the officers kept searching London for the fugitive Bill Jones. They found out that already before the murder of Mrs Jeffs, he had been wanted on a charge of forgery. As a newspaper expressed it, "They have every reason to believe, that he is concealed in the Metropolis, and his escape from this country is next to an impossibility, a most particular description of his person having been sent to every sea-port, to prevent his embarkation. He was a very intimate acquaintance of poor old Mrs Jeffs, and is not above twenty-six years of age. The officers appear to be very sanguine that they shall effect his apprehension in the course of a day or two, and Mr Knight has manifested equal anxiety and activity in pursuit of the offender, against whom, in addition to the murder, another crime has been alleged."<sup>8</sup>

Samuel Furzeman and his colleagues had access to a number of police informants, and one of these individuals suspected that Bill Jones might have been arrested for some minor offence, and imprisoned under an assumed name. And indeed, when the three officers went to the City Compter on January 13, to inspect the prisoners there, they saw a shabbily attired young man in a blue coat. When challenged, he said that his name was William Edwards, but Furzeman barked out "Your name is Jones!" and 'Edwards' sullenly replied "Yes it is." Bill Jones had a cut on his left thumb, which he said had been inflicted many weeks earlier, when chopping wood. Furzeman thought it looked much more recent, and without any further ado, he seized hold of the thumb and forced the cut open. As Bill gave a yell of pain, and blood spurted from the injured thumb, the forthright constable gloated that his suspicion had been proven correct.

Shaken by this unseemly display of police brutality, Bill Jones did not resist when the three officers stripped him of his clothes to look for bloodstains. His trousers were too dirty to provide any worthwhile clues, but his blue coat showed signs of recently having been sponged clean. As his coat was pulled off, the facetious Bill exclaimed "You see what a situation I am in – I do not have a shirt to my back!" He claimed to have pawned this shirt a few days earlier, in order to raise some much-needed cash. His waistcoat had a suspected bloodstain on the right pocket, however.<sup>9</sup>

Once Bill Jones was in custody, Mr Hall gave orders that he should be put in solitary confinement at the House of Corrections; it was of the utmost importance that he did not have communication with any other person. On January 14, when Bill was not represented by a solicitor, he unwisely made a long statement to the police. Bill said that the evening of the murder, he had been at the Adelphi Theatre alone, sitting through the performances of 'Nelson', 'The Married Bachelor', and a pantomime whose title he did not recollect. He had enjoyed a quick drink at the public house next door to the theatre, before returning to Charlotte across Blackfriars Bridge. He had not met any person he knew during this excursion. The reason he had possessed a good deal of money in early January was that he had sold some pawnbroker's tickets to a person whose name he did not know, for items of clothing that he and Charlotte had previously pawned. The blue coat he was wearing had been borrowed from Mrs Williams, his previous landlady. The collar found by Salmon at the Mitre Street lodgings was his, but he could not explain the bloodstain on it. When

8. *Morning Chronicle* January 14 1828.

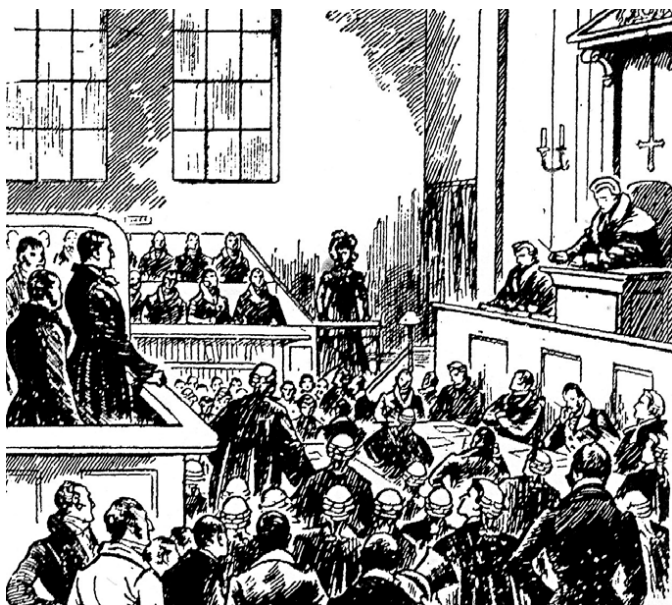
9. On the suspicions of John Knight, and the arrest of Bill Jones, see *Morning Post* January 16 1828 and *Standard* January 16 1828.

this imprudent statement was later read to Bill by the Bow Street magistrate, he declined to sign it, at the advice of his solicitor.

The news that another suspect was in custody for the murder of Mrs Jeffs spread like wildfire, and thanks to liberal leaks of information from the police, the journalists soon knew all about Bill's sordid background. His father Stephen Jones had died just before Christmas 1827. The police knew that Bill had known Mrs Jeffs, and that he had visited her more than once. They believed him to be the only man of loose character who had been in contact with the murdered woman. Furzeman, Salmon and Gardener were all working overtime to collect further evidence against Bill Jones, and to build up a strong case against him when he was examined in front of the Bow Street magistrates. In particular, they were keen to trace the origins of the razor case found underneath the body of the murdered woman, and to try to tie it to Bill Jones.



On January 21, Bill Jones was removed from the House of Corrections by Salmon and Furzeman, handcuffed, and taken to Bow Street. News of his forthcoming examination "excited an extraordinary anxiety in the public mind, and great numbers thronged Bow-street at an early hour who wanted to see the prisoner, and to learn the result of the inquiry." One newspaper reporter described Bill as a short man with a mean and shabby appearance, and a scar on one cheek; another thought him exceedingly pale, with an unwholesome, emaciated appearance. He seemed very agitated when brought into the public office, but soon calmed down and paid the utmost attention to the evidence given.<sup>10</sup>



*The trial of Bill Jones,  
from the Illustrated Police News, October 17 1903*

Dent, Hawking and Bonnick gave their evidence as outlined before, but Mr Plumbe the surgeon had some new information to share. Firstly, when he was asked whether Mrs Jeffs had struggled with her assailant, he replied that there had been an extraordinary expression of horror upon her countenance. Secondly, her neckerchief had been thrust into the wound, probably by the foot of the murderer; her cheek and the kerchief had both been dirty, with the mark of a foot. Mr Hall had ordered Furzeman to re-examine every room of the murder house closely, and to collect evidence of bloodstaining from their contents; as a result, samples of blood-stained linen, gloves, newspapers and feathers were exhibited. This proved that Mrs Jeffs had clearly been murdered, and that after the crime, her murderer had prowled through various upstairs rooms, probably looking for valuables. After the examination at Bow Street had been going on for six hours, it was adjourned to ten o'clock the following day.

On the second day of the examination, Salmon and Furzeman told how they had captured Bill Jones at the City Compter. Then, the star prosecution witness Mrs Sarah Williams was introduced. She described herself as a widow, residing at No. 29 Gray Street, Lambeth. In late 1827, she had lived at No. 30 Wootton Street, where Bill Jones and Charlotte Berry had lodged with her for three months. They had both gone under the name Roberts at the time. At 10.30 am on December 29, she had visited her lodgers, finding them still in bed. Charlotte complained that they had no money, and she sent Mrs Williams' daughter Mary Ann to her mother Mrs Berry to ask for a shilling, but the disappointing response, relayed through the same messenger, was that she herself did not even have enough money to buy herself Sunday dinner. When Bill asked to borrow a handkerchief and a razor, Mrs Williams obliged him. When shown the razor case found underneath the body of Mrs Jeffs, she exclaimed "This is very like the one I lent to the prisoner on the Sunday night, and I believe it to be the same ... I feel positive it is the same; it has the same marks on it, and I know it to be the same."

Mrs Williams also testified as to lending Bill a blue frock coat, the property of her son. She had again visited Bill and Charlotte on New Year's Day. They had looked much jollier than before, and had got their clothes out of the pawnshop. Bill had bought some beer and gin, from which he and Charlotte were drinking thirstily. For some reason or other, Bill was keen to get hold of a newspaper. When his coat fell down from a chair, there was a rattling noise as if the pockets were full of money. When Mrs Williams asked for two shillings rent that were due, she was both surprised and delighted when Bill paid her in full. Mary

10. *Morning Chronicle* January 22 1828; *Times* January 22 1828 3b.

Ann Williams, the 14-year-old daughter of the landlady, could well remember bringing one of her late father's razors to Bill Jones. When she was shown the fatal razor case, she exclaimed "This is it! I know it is part of the razor-case which I took by my mother's direction to the prisoner; I had frequently seen it before; it was my father's!" The second day of the examination ended on a farcical note, when nine-year-old Diana, the younger daughter of Mrs Williams, was introduced as a witness. But since "she did not know what an oath was; she could not read; she had never been to school nor to Church; she had never said her prayers, nor had she heard the name of God", this naughty girl was ordered to withdraw.

On the third day of the examination, Mary Parker, alias Charlotte Berry, was brought from prison to give evidence. A rather sluttish-looking young woman, about twenty years old, she was led to the witness-stand by two officers. It is unfortunately not known what degree of pressure had been put on Bill Jones's paramour to persuade her to testify against him, but she was clearly in a most agitated state of mind already when taken into the police office. When she saw a glimpse of Bill in the dock, she threw up her hands, shrieked aloud, and collapsed into Furzeman's arms in a hysterical fit. Mr Hall ordered her to be taken out of the office, for the benefit of taking some fresh air, and this treatment soon had the desired effect: Charlotte, as she will henceforth be called, was soon back in the office and took the oath to testify. She admitted that although her proper name was Mary Parker, she had used to call herself 'Charlotte Berry', 'Mrs Roberts' or 'Mrs Edwards'. Charlotte said that the day before the murder, Mrs Williams had sent her daughter Mary Ann to bring Bill a razor, but she was quite unable to describe it, or tell whether it had been in a sheath or razor-case. The evening of the murder of Mrs Jeffs, she had accompanied Bill to Bridge Street, Blackfriars; then she had gone on to Fleet Street, presumably to prostitute herself. The day after the murder, Bill suddenly had a lot of money: he purchased an expensive umbrella, paid the rent, and ordered a quantity of beer and gin. He had a cut on his thumb, which he blamed on injuring himself while cutting the bread. On regular intervals, Charlotte burst into tears, when recalling some distressing episode, and once she had to be led out of court, where she had a proper fit of 'hysterics': the people in the police office could hear her outside braying like a donkey.

On the fourth day of the examination, Mr Halls sternly requested Charlotte to compose herself, since some very important questions would be put to her. The razor-case found at the murder scene was shown to her, and she was asked if she recognized it. "That is the case!" she exclaimed, pointing at a mark on the bottom part, before screaming out "That is the case, I know it!" She then shrieked aloud,

and was carried out by Furzeman to get some fresh air. She was shown the blood-stained collar, which she identified as belonging to Bill Jones, although it had been very dirty when she had last seen it, and not stained with blood. Mr Butler, the solicitor acting for Bill Jones, suggested that he had worn the collar while he had cut his thumb with the kitchen-knife, but Charlotte could not recall which collar he had worn at the time. After being pressed about her recollections of the events the evening of the murder, she was conducted out of the office in a state of extreme agitation. John Knight was then called to explain why he had begun to suspect that Bill Jones was involved in the murder. His son Charles Edgar testified that he had once accompanied Bill to take tea with Mrs Jeffs, and that Bill had told him that he had gone to see her at least three more times. On the fifth and final day of the examination, all witnesses were bound over to give evidence when Bill Jones faced trial for murder at the Old Bailey. On the advice of Mr Butler, Bill offered no explanation of his doings the day of the murder.<sup>11</sup>



The trial of Bill Jones was quite a media event: dozens of London journalists were present, the majority of them expecting a conviction. Mr Justice Bailey presided, and Messrs Adolphus and Law conducted the prosecution.<sup>12</sup> The first witness for the prosecution was John Letts, who testified as to owning the murder house and employing Mrs Jeffs for many years. Under cross-examination by Bill Jones' barrister Mr Coleridge, he had to admit his early suspicion that John Knight was the murderer. Dent, Bonnick and Hawkins then described finding the body. The prosecutors pointed out the significance of the two chairs at the table, and the empty ale pot, indicating that Mrs Jeffs had invited her murderer into the house, and that she had sat down at table with him prior to the crime. Samuel Furzeman described his search of the murder scene, the finding of the razor case, and the arrest of Bill Jones. The prosecutors emphasized the importance of the relatively fresh cut on the prisoner's thumb, and the bloodstains the murderer had left behind on the papers, feathers and band-boxes in the murder house. Surgeon Plumbe hammered yet another nail into Bill Jones's coffin when he described the ferocity of the murder, and the fact that one of Mrs Jeffs' cheeks had been dirty, like if the murderer had trod on her face. There were also some stains on her clothes that were consistent

11. A full report of the Bow Street examination of Bill Jones is in the *Morning Chronicle* January 22, 23, 25, 26 and February 18 1828.

12. The trial of Bill Jones is available via OldBaileyOnline; see also *Times* February 23 1828 3b.

with her killer having an injured thumb. There were no defensive wounds on Mrs Jeffs' hands, perhaps indicating that the murderous attack, quite possibly from a person she knew well, had taken her completely by surprise.

The pot-boy Gardiner described seeing Mrs Jeffs with a man wearing a blue coat and an apron, and the watchman Harman described seeing a young man and a young woman speaking to her on the night of the murder. John Knight described how his suspicions against Bill Jones had developed, and his son Charles Edgar gave corroborating evidence about Bill's association with the family. The long and unwise statement made by Bill Jones at Bow Street was read aloud in its entirety, with the addition that at the advice of his solicitor, Bill had declined to sign it.

Mrs Eliza Williams next gave evidence that she knew the 21-year-old Mary Parker, alias Charlotte Berry, alias Charlotte Edwards. It was under the latter of these names that this young floozie had lodged with Mrs Williams, with her 'husband' Bill Edwards, alias Jones. Mrs Williams had got on reasonably well with the easygoing Charlotte, and even befriended the lazy, truculent Bill. She was impressed that he had once seen better days, and that he could read and write. Her son lent him the blue coat he had used to wear, and Mrs Williams allowed him to use her late husband's razors. After the murder of Mrs Jeffs, Bill had started behaving suspiciously. He had been very keen to get his hands on a recent newspaper, something she could not recall him being interested in ever before. When Bill's coat had fallen off a chair, there had been a great jingling of money, and Bill had given her a strange look. Later, when Mrs Williams and Charlotte were alone, she had suggested that Bill might well be the Montague Place murderer, but Charlotte firmly declared that this was not the case: the reason that he was so very secretive and reluctant to go out was that a former friend of his had set the police on him, on a false charge.

Mrs Williams positively identified Bill's blue coat as the one she had lent him. It was quite dirty, but had been even dirtier when she had seen Bill wearing it. She had once sent her daughter to bring Bill one of her late husband's razors, and she believed it to be the one shown to her in court, but she could not swear to it. Mary Ann Williams testified that her mother had once sent her to Bill with a razor, which she believed to be the same one shown to her in court, although she could not be certain. Charlotte Berry told the court about her relationship with Bill Jones, and their penurious life together, moving from lodgings to insalubrious lodgings. She graphically described watching Bill cutting his thumb at breakfast, and bandaging the wound with his handkerchief. She tentatively identified the razor-case as the one lent to Bill by Mrs Williams, but could not be sure.

Bill Jones himself stood up to address the court. The pale, shabby-looking young man was surprisingly articulate, and he showed signs of great emotion as he spoke: "My Lord and Gentlemen of the Jury – I feel confident of your attention and favourable consideration of the few words I have now to address to you. If now, for the first time, you learned the charge against me, my situation would be one sufficiently alarming – but how much more frightful is it in consequence of the spreading throughout the country of details which have excited universal indignation. I will mention only one instance of the misrepresentation with which my name has been associated; at the very time when the bill against me was before the Grand Jury, a man was engaged near the Sessions-house, proclaiming with a horn the infamous story that I had made a full confession of the murder, and had committed suicide in the House of Correction." Every detail had been turned to his prejudice, and circumstantial evidence accumulated to bring about his downfall, and to 'solve' the murder of Elizabeth Jeffs.

Bill went on to explain why he had been hiding after the murder: it was because he had been informed against for forgery, and was a wanted man. The reason he had suddenly had money was the proceedings from this forgery. As for the small bloodstains on his clothes, they had occurred when he cut his thumb with the kitchen-knife. He had been at the theatre with Charlotte at the time of the murder, and as for the infamous razor-case, he could well remember cutting it to pieces with the razor he had borrowed, in a fit of desperation. No witness was in court to verify these allegations, but Bill was on firmer ground when it came to his blue coat. The chemist Mr Barnard Guest swore that he had given this coat to his apprentice Nicholas Halford, the son of Mrs Williams. Nicholas himself swore that he had cleaned this coat by sponging it, two weeks before it had been passed on to Bill Jones. The case for the defence ended with this successful refutation of the coat evidence.

Mr Justice Bayley summed up the case with great minuteness, and the jury retired for twenty minutes, before returning with a verdict of – Not Guilty! Then Bill Jones was charged with another offence, namely the theft of a coat, to which he pleaded Guilty. Mr Justice Bayley sentenced him to transportation for seven years. Sir Richard Birnie, the Bow Street magistrate, later asked the journalists in court whether they had learnt about the verdict on Bill Jones, they answered in the affirmative, adding that he had been very fortunate in escaping so well, since they knew that he had been detained upon charges of forgery to a considerable amount. Sir Richard then said that he had heard a rumour that an eminent solicitor had been involved, and that a great tragedian [Edmund Kean, who might have known the Jones family?] had interfered on behalf of Jones, and that the forgery charge had been withdrawn on account that

some of the money was returned to the person upon whom the forgery had been committed. When the reporters expressed surprise, he added that such underhand 'deals' were done by wholesale in the city.<sup>13</sup>



So, was Bill Jones guilty or not guilty of the murder of Mrs Jeffs? It must be admitted that the case against him, as presented at Bow Street, was by no means unimpressive, and that it was definitely right to commit him for trial at the Old Bailey. Bill was a desperate character, poor as a church mouse and without prospects in life, with strong alcoholic tendencies, and a convicted thief. Still, we must remember that he had no history of violent crime. Would this short, thin, pale and malnourished wreck of a human being really have had the strength and courage required to murder Mrs Jeffs, in such a ruthless and effective manner, and later assert his innocence with such impressive candour? It is true that several witnesses agreed that he had gone to have tea with Mrs Jeffs on three or four occasions, at the time when he lodged with her son John Knight, but would such a brief acquaintance really have persuaded the suspicious, reclusive old lady to invite him to No. 11 Montague Place for a glass of beer? We must remember that Bill was a far from attractive specimen of humanity, dirty and bedraggled, and belonging to the destitute underclass of society, whereas Mrs Jeffs was old-fashioned and respectable, and not fond of consorting with convicted thieves.

When considering the motive for the murder, there are further difficulties. There is no evidence that Bill Jones held any grudge against Mrs Jeffs, or that he considered her as an enemy. Thus the only realistic motive would be robbery, and yet there is no evidence that any proper effort had been made to search the house for valuables, or steal anything more than perhaps a few silver spoons. The cut on Bill's thumb is of course a damning circumstance, since this is an injury perfectly consistent with cutting away at another person with a razor, and injuring the thumb by accident. If the police that arrested Bill were telling the truth, it was a reasonably fresh cut, and Bill lied about it being an old one; yet if we believe what Charlotte Berry testified at the Old Bailey, Bill cut himself on the kitchen knife the morning after the murder. As for Bill's blood-stained clothes, the evidence of the 'sponged' coat was effectively demolished at the Old Bailey. Then there were the bloodstains on his collar and waistcoat, but this may have happened when he cut his thumb the morning after the murder. If he had really seized hold of Mrs Jeffs and cut her throat with great violence, much more extensive bloodstaining of his clothes would have been expected.

Then there is the evidence of the razor-case. At Bow Street, the girl Mary Ann Williams had positively identified

it as the one lent to Bill Jones, and both Mrs Williams and Charlotte Berry had corroborated her. Still, at the Old Bailey, none of these three had been able to identify the razor-case with certainty, thus probably saving Bill Jones from the gallows. If we assume that the razor-case found underneath the body of Mrs Jeffs was really the one lent to Bill Jones, then either he was the guilty man, or the razor-case had deliberately been left at the murder scene in an attempt to 'frame' him. After all, if you bring a razor in a case, planning to murder some person, it is natural to make exertions to bring both the razor and the case away from the scene of crime. The problem then would be what person would know both Mrs Jeffs and Bill Jones, and be in a position to leave the razor-case in the murder house. John Knight might have had a motive to murder his mother, and then blame Bill Jones, but he seemed like a decent man, and had a castiron alibi for the night of the murder. There is a more promising candidate, however, and he will next be introduced.



After Bill Jones had been transported, a *Times* journalist had some very spicy details to disclose.<sup>14</sup> George Coombes, a young London criminal, was a very smooth operator indeed. After a good education, he had become clerk to a solicitor, but honest work and hard graft was not to the liking of this talented young man. He dabbled in property crime, burglary, and forgery, but always took good care not to be directly implicated in these crimes himself. He directed burglars to addresses of wealthy people, at times when these individuals were not at home, instructed forgers to steal cheques and forge signatures, and aided and abetted various white-collar criminals, all for a substantial cut in the proceedings of these villainies. Unknown to his criminal cohorts, Coombes was also a police informer: this came in useful when he wanted to 'neutralize' some competitor, or punish some former ally who had tried to double-cross him.

George Coombes was always on the lookout for 'mugs' who might be useful for his criminal operations, and then take the blame for the crimes. When he met the drunken, muddled Bill Jones in 1827, he knew that he had come onto a good thing. Bill was at that time still clerk to the solicitor Mr Dunscombe, and without any difficulty, the talented Mr Coombes persuaded him to forge some cheques. Several banks, one of them Coutts & Co., were swindled out of several hundred pounds. The proceeds of this crime appear to have been divided as unfairly as those from the fairytale

13. *Times* April 18 1828.

14. *Times* July 21 1829 2d.

agricultural exploits of the fox and the bear, with Bill obtaining the share of the latter animal. Not unnaturally, he fell out with Coombes, and threatened to give information against him to the police. The experienced police informer Coombes was wise to this trick, however, and he made sure that he 'squealed' on Bill himself! This was why, already before the murder of Mrs Jeffs, Bill Jones was a wanted man, on the run from the police! According to the *Times* journalist, who clearly knew Coombes well, this talented young man had made haste to Bow Street after Mrs Jeffs had been murdered, to inform against Bill Jones, and to provide them with details of his various lodgings; this information, as we know, eventually led to Bill's arrest.

... have found an innocent man guilty." EDWARD MARTELLI, aged 25, } were guilty of forging and uttering a check for £200 upon the bank of Sir Coutts Trotter and Co. HENRY JUBILEE CONWAY, aged 18, } found guilty of forging and uttering a check for £200 upon the bank of Sir Coutts Trotter and Co. The evidence against these men chiefly rested upon the testimony of an accomplice named Coombs, who stated that he met the prisoners several times, and had with them committed several forgeries upon the public; that the one in question was planned by Martelli, who said that he was in want of money, and money he must have. He then pulled a check-book of Messrs. Coutts out of his pocket, and wrote an order for £200, and signed it with the name of T. Hamlet, the jeweller, of Coventry-street. When the check was presented for payment, it was discovered to be a forgery, and Martelli was taken into custody. A great number of checks were found in the privy at Conway's lodgings, with the name of T. Hamlet affixed. The prisoners were found guilty on a second indictment for forgery, and there were several other cases against them.

*Part of an illustrated handbill about the luckless Martelly and Conway*

For George Coombes, the best outcome of the trial of Bill Jones would of course be if Bill was promptly convicted and executed for the murder of Mrs Jeffs. But as we know, this did not happen, due to a fair judge and an unbiased jury. According to the aforementioned *Times* reporter, a 'deal' was then made with Bill's respectable family. If Bill pleaded guilty to stealing the coat, he would be sentenced to seven years' transportation. And if the Jones family repaid some of the money that Bill and Coombes had swindled Coutts & Co. out of, the forgeries would not be mentioned in court. As we know, this is exactly what happened: Bill was carted off to the Antipodes, his family was spared a further scandal, and Coutts & Co. got some of their money back. For George Coombes, it was of course good news that his enemy Bill Jones had been removed from London, but the police may well have put pressure on him to repay Coutts & Co. some money as well. Paying back money he had stolen and invested was not at all to this talented young man's liking, however. He instead agreed to testify against two members of his own gang, Edward Martelly and Henry Jubilee Conway, when they were on trial at the Old Bailey on June 11 1829, for

forging a cheque for £100. Martelly and Conway were both convicted, largely on Coombes' evidence, sentenced to death, and executed, whereas the creature Coombes got off scot-free once again.<sup>15</sup>

The sinister George Coombes next moved in with Mrs Nelson, a relation of his mother, at a slum dwelling in No. 6 Newcastle Court, and tried to get on with his life of crime as well as he could. But since he had openly given evidence against Martelly and Conway at the Old Bailey, he was now a *marked man* in London's criminal fraternity. His former associates turned their backs at him, and the friends of Martelly and Conway damned and blasted him as a perjurer. There were also dark rumours about his involvement in the murder of Mrs Jeffs. Even the neighbours in Newcastle Court joined in the vendetta: on August 7 1829, Mrs Nelson summoned a law-writer named Evans before the Bow Street magistrates, for threatening to take her life. She told the magistrates that "the defendant used every species of annoyance to get them all out of the house, and that he was assisted and aided by two young men, who he called his jackalls. They were in the habit of setting up mock trials, and whenever the young man (Coombes) made an appearance, they would cry out 'We will have no informants - nor perjured witnesses!'" When asked whether Evans had really threatened her life, Mrs Nelson answered in the affirmative, adding that her husband Mr Nelson had once been accosted by Evans and his 'jackalls', and accused of having murdered Mrs Jeffs on Montague Place. As cool as a cucumber, Mr Evans retorted that the person he had accused of murdering Mrs Jeffs was not Mr Nelson, but the creature George Coombes, who had later implicated his former friend Bill Jones, and informed against him to the police. Evans was given bail by two friends of his, and this is the last we hear of this particular lawsuit.<sup>16</sup> It also the last we hear of the talented George Coombes, who never made the news again; it seems likely that he changed his name and left London.



The houses in Montague Place remained fashionable well into the 1860s and 1870s, but in late Victorian times, the entire Bloomsbury district went rapidly downhill. The large old houses in Montague Place, No. 11 not excluded, were converted into hotels or cheap lodging-houses. The old crime author Guy Logan, who had an encyclopaedic knowledge of London's criminal history, had a funny story to tell about the old murder house. In the autumn of 1893, Guy was invited to a dinner party at the lodging-house at No. 11 Montague Place, where a friend of his was living. As

15. *Times* June 19 1829 3d; *Standard* June 18 and 19, 1829.

16. *Times* August 8 1829.

Guy himself later expressed it, "We had an excellent dinner, but at the sweets stage I completely ruined the harmony of the repast by more or less innocently remarking, "Talking about past crimes' – no one had been talking about them but by the way! – 'I dare say no one present has knowledge of the fact that a brutal murder was once committed in the kitchen of this very house!' Grim silence, of the kind that can be felt, followed this auspicious preamble; but, regardless of the scared looks of the lady boarders, and the frigid frowns of the landlady, I plunged into a full account of the sensational murder of Mrs Jeffs, and unfolded, for the general edification, a truly harrowing tale. That dinner party broke up 'in most admired disorder.'" But when Guy next met his actor friend, this individual looked most gloomy, reproachfully exclaiming "A nice thing you did for me with your sanguinary tales! I was ordered to leave the very next day, which was deuced inconvenient, I can tell you, and Mrs B--- hasn't got a boarder left. Why can't you leave your beastly murders to yourself?"

Which was all the thanks I got for entertaining (?) the guests on that memorable night in a certain house in Montague Place, Bedford Square."<sup>17</sup>

Guy Logan kept an eye on the old murder house at No. 11 Montague Place. In 1904, he could report that "A great portion of Montague Place, Bedford Square, is shortly to be absorbed by the British Museum". This would mean that London would lose one of its most famous murder houses. And indeed, nearly all of Montague Place was demolished, and the ghost of Mrs Jeffs must now be haunting the North Galleries of the British Museum.<sup>18</sup> But unbeknownst to Guy Logan, two of the original houses in Montague Place have survived until quite recently; perusal of the relevant Ordnance Survey maps show them to be the original No. 1 and No. 2, on the western extremity of the southern terrace. There is no reason to believe that the old murder house at No. 11 looked any different from these two houses. It was not until 2012 that this final remnant of old Montague Place was eradicated from the map of London, as the result of some further development of the British Museum.



*Only a rump today remains of once-proud Montague Place*

17. *Illustrated Police Budget*, January 13 1906.

18. *Famous Crimes Past & Present* 6(70) [1904], 120.



In 1906, Guy Logan wrote an account of the Montague Place murder in the old crime periodical *Illustrated Police Budget*. He summed up the known facts about the case, and after admitting that the evidence was hardly sufficient for a conviction, postulated that Bill Jones was nevertheless “almost certainly the guilty man”. The canny Guy suggested that Bill had gone to see Mrs Jeffs, but that she had rebuffed him when he asked for money. Rendered desperate by poverty, he pulled the razor he had intended to return to Mrs Williams, and attacked the old lady in a murderous frenzy, cutting her throat, and his own thumb in the process. Aghast at what he had done, he stole only a pair of silver spoons, and made no attempt to search the house for such valuables that an ordinary burglar would have carried away. He forgot the razor-case on the floor of the room, something that would almost lead to his downfall.

Guy Logan’s hypothesis is a good one, and it neatly explains some puzzling aspects of the case, but it is not without flaws. Firstly, if Bill Jones was not planning any mischief the evening of the murder, why was he then carrying the razor? And if he had the common sense to take the razor away with him, why leave the razor-case behind? A second objection is that Guy ends his account by claiming that “Jones is said, on good authority, to have confessed on his death-bed, far away in some back Australian settlement, that Mrs Jeffs perished by his act, and that of no other!” This ‘good authority’ would seem to be the *Morning Post* newspaper, which tells that the night before Bill Jones was to be executed in Van Diemen’s Land, for some unspecified misdeed, he sent for the Sheriff of the Colony, and confessed himself guilty of many crimes and several murders, one of them that of the unfortunate Mrs Jeffs.<sup>19</sup> This account is later reprinted verbatim in the *Sydney Herald*, which in its turn quotes the *Sunday*

*Times*, but there is no evidence that a William Jones was executed at Van Diemen’s Land in 1834, and the *Sunday Times* article does not appear to exist.<sup>20</sup> Canards like this were as commonly met with in the 1830s as they are today. Thirdly, we have the mysterious sighting of Mrs Jeffs speaking with a young man [Bill Jones?] and a young woman [Charlotte Berry?] the night of the murder. But would Bill really bring this foolish, volatile young woman with him to a meeting of some importance? Or was she perhaps there with someone else?

For those with an interest in conspiracies, the scenario would of course be that George Coombes murdered Elizabeth Jeffs, possibly with Charlotte Berry as an accomplice, and that he left Bill Jones’s razor case in the murder house. Coombes definitely had a strong motive to get Bill Jones out of the way, and he informed against him after the murder, telling the police about his lodgings. It may be objected that Coombes was not a violent criminal, but neither was Bill Jones. Coombes may well have persuaded some desperate wretch in London’s criminal underworld to commit the murder, and plant the incriminating razor-case. But this is just speculation, and although it is possible to argue for and against the guilt of Bill Jones, and the role played by the mysterious George Coombes, the murder of Elizabeth Jeffs will never find a solution.

19. *Morning Post* November 27 1833.

20. *Sydney Herald* June 12 1834.



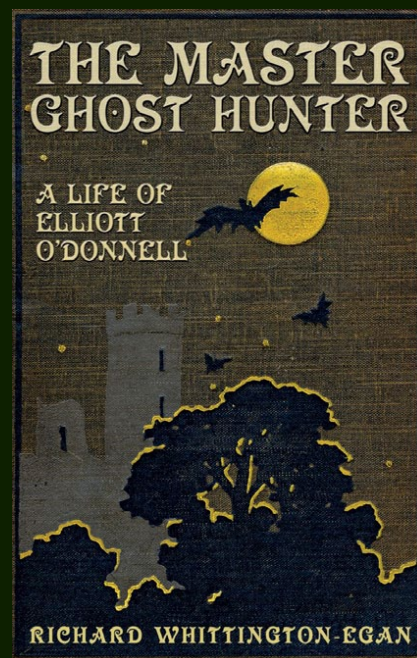
JAN BONDESON is a senior lecturer and consultant rheumatologist at Cardiff University. He is the author of *Rivals of the Ripper*, *Murder Houses of London*, *The London Monster*, *The Great Pretenders*, *Blood on the Snow* and other true crime books, as well as the bestselling *Buried Alive*.

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

The final book 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 hauntings 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.



# An Interview With One-Armed Liz

By NINA and HOWARD BROWN

**In the early hours of September 18th, 1888, just ten days following the murder of Annie Chapman on Hanbury Street, an either unbalanced or inebriated (or maybe a little of both) German hairdresser named Charles Ludwig (press sources named him as Wietzel or Wetzel) was in the company of a one-armed 42-year-old prostitute named Elizabeth Burns (her age was erroneously given as 18 by the Press Association) on their way to the Three Kings Court, Minories, which led to railway arches.**

At some point in their brief interlude, Ludwig allegedly pulled a knife on One-Armed Liz, as she was known, to which she hollered, "Murder !" City Police constable John Johnson hurried to the spot from his beat. He dismissed Ludwig, apparently satisfied that the dust-up was over with. He subsequently walked Burns to the end of his beat, while Ludwig went on his way. However, Burns went on to tell the constable that Ludwig had pulled a large knife on her and that she was frightened to say anything about it at the time of Johnson's arrival. Johnson took off in the direction Ludwig and headed towards but to no avail. Johnson alerted his fellow constables to the situation and it is probable that they searched for Ludwig immediately afterwards.

At 3:00am, Ludwig stopped by a coffee stall (this time in Metropolitan Police territory) and had words with one Alexander Freinberg, whom Ludwig felt was staring at him. Another fracas broke out, with Ludwig pulling a knife on the bewildered Freinberg. Fortunately, PC 221H Gallagher arrested Ludwig before things got worse. Later that day, the harrasing hairdresser was standing before the judge in Thames Magistrate Court and was remanded for being drunk and disorderly and threatening to stab.

One thing I'm sure other Ripperologists have wondered themselves is what would have happened had Ludwig used the knife on Burns, perhaps injuring if not mortally wounding. Conceivably, had he been caught, he would

have been touted as the Whitechapel Murderer or Leather Apron (there was no 'Jack the Ripper' at the time.. this was 13 days before that moniker would become a household name). It's not beyond the realms of possibility that had he been jailed in either Leman Street or Commercial Street police station, an attempt to storm the gaol might have transpired. Several possibilities present themselves had Ludwig used the knife on One-Armed Liz... but fortunately he hadn't, and we also know he wasn't Jack the Ripper in light of the two murders which occurred on September 30th while he was simmering in the slammer.

But enough of Ludwig.

The following two articles, one of which I located a few years ago in a mid-West American newspaper and the other found in *The Star* of October 1st, 1888 by Paul Begg concern Elizabeth Burns. She lived, at the time of the incident with Ludwig, in Cooney's lodging house at 55 Flower and Dean Street, and was still there at the time of her *Star* interview following the Double Event.

From here, it seems that the American version of the interview was simply a reprint of the London newspaper account with some slight touch-ups. Nevertheless, One-Armed Liz had her fifteen minutes of fame in both Britain and the United States in the Fall of 1888.



*Wilson Mirror (North Carolina),  
28 November 1888*

## THE HAUNTS OF CRIME. THE SCENES OF THE WHITECHAPEL MURDERS

### A Midnight Interview with One-Armed-Liz Morbid Curiosity of People to See the Slums.

A Cincinnati Commercial correspondent has been making a tour of Whitechapel in London, the scene of the

horrible series of murders recently perpetrated. He says: It was a few moments after 9 o'clock when we began our tour of inspection in the disturbed territory. Wending our way through the labyrinth of narrow byways that lead into Spitalfields, we found ourselves in Hanbury Street, the scene of the most revolting of the horrible series of crimes previous to the Mitre Court [sic] outrage. We encountered little groups of poorly clad, pinch-faced women, standing under the flickering glare of the street lamps, or huddled together in doorways, discussing with eager voices the details of the ghastly topic of the hour.

"He'll be comin' through the houses and killin' us in our beds," I heard one woman exclaim.

"Not he," cried another, He's too sly for that; he'll lay for the late birds - them's that are out all night."

"Then he won't catch me," replied the first speaker with a coarse laugh. "I don't leave the doorway after dark!"

We drew closer together as we groped our way into the lighter places. And one of our party, a fastidious little dame, in frightened tones, begged us to retrace our steps. Here and there we met odd looking groups speaking in a most outlandish tongue, and later on we overheard opinions expressed in the well-known Whitechapel vernacular. Once in Brick Lane we began to pay the penalty of being well-dressed, for we were assailed at every step by whining beggars. While we were discussing between ourselves the miserable straits which reduced the poor wretches to such persistent begging, the leader of our party, an ambitious young reporter, was approached by a policeman who knew him and offered to escort me to Flower and Dean Street. We followed our guide down a narrow, ill-smelling lane, and found ourselves before a low, barrack-like lodging-house. We paused while our guide spoke to a miserable-looking man puffing away at a short pipe.

"Do you want to see her, she's in here," he remarked with a gesture, indicating the door.

Our young reporter suggested that the woman should come out and speak to us.

"Oh, you walk right in," he said assuringly, "You needn't be afraid, they're all ladies and gentlemen in there."

Thus encouraged we entered. The door opened into a large room with a ceiling so low that a tall guardsman, who arose from his seat between two girls on seeing us, could not stand up-right. The filth of the room was terrible. The walls were black with grime and dirt, and the floor was inches deep in a greasy mud, while the atmosphere seemed so thick with fetid smoke that it could have been sliced with a knife. The dim lights threw the room, with its groups of men and women, into fantastic relief, until it resembled some masterpiece of Hogarth. The huge

fireplace at the end, with its display of cooking in course of preparation, gave the whole a weird and fiendish aspect, well calculated to send a creeping chill of disgust and horror down one's back.

There, in a halo of vapor and amid an incense of fried fish, stood the woman we had come to see - one-armed Liz.

Her gaunt, yellow features bore a self-satisfied smile, and she bowed with an assumption of great dignity when she learned the object of our visit. She was ready to answer any questions the "quality" pleased to ask, she observed with a grim smile.



*Courtesy Howard Brown*

"Yes, I knowed Liz Stride, the murdered woman, well. I'm sorry she's dead, but I'm glad if poor Liz's death will lead to the arrest of the butcher."

Here one-armed Liz made use of certain adjectives sufficiently expressive of how deeply she felt on the subject. She did not refuse the price of her bed, tendered for the information; neither did the unkempt keeper of the door, who politely opened it for us as we turned to leave the loathsome atmosphere. As we walked away, a woman

with a bundle of canes approached us, offering her wares for sale. An examination showed them to be swordsticks of a cheap but dangerous pattern. The woman cried:

“Here you are now; sixpence for a swordstick; that’s the sort to do for them.”

We were astounded, but the old door-keeper assured us the woman did good business.

“She’s down in Berners Street [sic] all day,” he added, “and lots of the women carry whistles now.”

When we emerged from the dark and narrow lane we proceeded to find our way to Berners Street [sic], where the unfortunate victim, the subject of one-armed Lizzie’s commiseration, had met her fate. It required moral courage to wend one’s way through the dark, sinister looking streets, where at any turning the eyes of the lurking murderer might be peering out at us.

The moon had risen, and her pale light gave a ghostlike aspect to the forms in the semi-darkness hurrying by. When we reached the little court in Berners street [sic] it was empty, and looked mournfully desolate in the moonlight. The policeman showed us the spot of the tragedy. We looked at it a few moments and spoke in whispers. It seemed that the unavenged spirit of the dead woman hovered around it. We passed out of the court with a shudder and a silent prayer for that lost soul.



*The Star,*  
1 October 1888

**“ONE-ARMED LIZ,”**

that had just given the police all necessary information? To be sure, “One-armed Liz” had good reason to be kind to the police. She occasionally fell into their hands, and needed all the mercy she could get laid up in her favor, but she had done her duty to-night, and was the heroine of the hour. “Did you want to see her? Here she is, in here.” The speaker led the way to one of the barrack-like lodging-houses half way down the street. “Can’t you get her to step out?” asked the reporter. “Oh, you walk right in; you needn’t be afraid. They are all ladies and gentlemen in there.” Thus encouraged, the *Star* man entered. The door opened into a large room, of which the ceiling was so low that a Guardsman who rose from a seat between two girls to see what was to do couldn’t stand upright, and the walls were black as grime and filth could make them. The floor was inches deep with dirt, and the atmosphere could have been served up with a spoon. On the benches and tables sat or squatted some half a hundred of men and women of all ages and degrees of poverty. A huge fireplace at the

end of the room held a cooking apparatus, on which were displayed a score of suppers in course of preparation. And there, in a halo of vile vapor and amid an incense of fried fish stood “One-armed Liz.” She had the air of a queen as she bowed in deference to the greeting of the scribe, and she had an answer of some sort to every question. She had known Liz Stride well. She was sorry she was dead, but she would be glad if Liz’s death would lead to the capture of that butcher. “One-armed Liz” made use of certain adjectives

**SUFFICIENTLY EXPRESSIVE**

of how deeply she felt on the subject, but the reporter omitted to take a note of them. She did not refuse the price of her bed, nor yet did the unkempt personage who had shown the way to the house. He was outside waiting, and a character he was too. “I’m all right, guv’nor,” said he; none of your “Leather Apron” style. Everybody about here knows.



*Courtesy Robert Clack*

While Toby was speaking a woman came along with an armful of walking sticks, each one showing that they were swordsticks of a cheap but dangerous pattern. “Here you are, now,” she cried, “sixpence for a swordstick. That’s the sort to do for ‘em.” The man of news was astounded, but

Toby only smiled. "Oh!" said he; "she does a good business, she do. She's been down in Berner-street all day, and sold a lot of 'em."

Presently this good-natured native got back to the subject of his murdered neighbor.

"I didn't know this woman to talk to," continued Toby, "but I had seen her in a lodging-house where I had been at work."

"Did she have any particular follower, Toby?"

"Not her," was the answer, "she wasn't particular. I wasn't a bit surprised when I heard it was her. That sort of women are sure to get done by him."

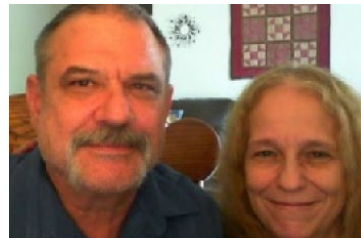
"Then you think there is someone on the look out for that sort?"

"Don't it look like it?" queried he.

### "WELL, WHAT SORT OF A MAN

do you think it is?"

"Well, now, I'll tell you," said Toby, with a wise look. "It warden't none of the kind that puts up at a six-penny doss. That chap's got a room to wash himself in."



NINA and HOWARD BROWN are the proprietors of JTRforums.com.

With thanks to 'Nashwan' for his transcription of the Wilson, NC article, and Paul Begg for the *Star* article. Information on Charles

Ludwig taken from *The Jack the Ripper A-Z*.

## THE WHITECHAPEL ALBUM

### JACK THE RIPPER'S EAST END IN 1995

This 50-page hardback book features a nostalgic look back at 'Jack's' East End as it was captured, in colour, in 1995 by enthusiastic photographer and Ripperologist, Ray Luff.

True Crime bookdealer Loretta Lay recently acquired Ray's catalogue of over 430 photographs, and with Adam Wood's expertise and in-depth knowledge of the East End, the results have been published in this limited edition book, with 87 carefully-selected photographs to represent the area as it was 21 years ago, along with six rare black/white photographs taken in the mid-1960s.

The book's publication is limited to 100 numbered copies.

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# Dear Rip

## YOUR LETTERS AND COMMENTS

DEAR RIP

Thank you for the chance of sharing a few thoughts re edition 154 which introduced my recently published book. It was a pleasure to see it grace the pages of *Ripperologist* and for it to be considered by Paul Begg. I am particularly aware of the co-ordination it took, and the courtesy afforded, in the form of a flexible deadline so as to work around my travels. After the kind intercession of Gareth Williams, a copy was finally organised for dispatch to Adam Wood, belatedly and literally, from the middle of the Solomon Sea, north of Torres Strait.

I enjoyed and very much appreciated the review - mindful too, that authors do receive lacklustre takes on their work. From Paul Begg's commentary describing what is served up to him, it sounds as though many of these are well-enough deserved, and there are plenty-enough of them. I am less objectively placed than anyone to determine how my book may fair in this regard, but personally, I might be tempted to cast it onto that inglorious heap if only for the self-deprecating comedy on offer. At issue, however, would be the potential for new research and insights to be laughed-off, in particular, the new theory of the title.

It forms the story's backbone and rationale, and pertains to the socio-economic conditions on the ground in Whitechapel. Namely, the demographic shift under way in the East End's population, intertwined with the industrial and reverberating impacts at street level. Essentially, the terrain of 1888 in some respects resembled a turf war - this is well attested to, from excellent sources, both gentile and Jewish. (The book's full title is *Jewbaiter Jack The Ripper: New Evidence & Theory* and features the houses of parliament on the cover, for reasons I will explain).

To reduce a broader discussion to a few paragraphs: it was among the reasons cited above that two parliamentary select committees were dispatched in early 1888 to investigate what has been described as 'the foreign Jewish question'. That the average worker was aware of the existence of the committees might be gauged when

considering an irate statement like the following, preemptively lashing out at the government and quoted in the *British Weekly* in May: "If we broke the heads of fifty Jews down here in Whitechapel something would be done to prevent this immigration". Indeed, in some quarters, there had been a naïve expectation that parliament would act quickly, and deal commensurately, with the not entirely unrelated industrial issue of the sweating system.

Instead, during the summer, the select committees dashed the hopes of many when they brought down their reports and proposed to simply keep taking evidence, essentially postponing recommendations for what would turn out to be, subsequent years. One of the select committees broadcast its intention to abandon its geographic focus on the East End altogether, once the coming autumn had passed - a geographic focus which formed part of its very terms of reference. This development was well reported, and the implications of which should be easy enough for readers of *Ripperologist* to contextualise, if only by way of pricking up the ears.

There was at this time a gross superstition abroad in streets of the East End and beyond, namely the 'blood libel', which slandered the Jewish community and held it responsible for the supposed ritual butchering of women: anti-Semitic rot of the worst sort. Two recent such accusations in particular, as expressed in the infamous Tisza-Eszlar and Ritter cases from Austria-Hungary, had featured prominently in the British press, both in lead-up years and during the 'Autumn Of Terror'. Though not strictly in the same category as these causes-célèbres, the widely reported Leskau case (Austria-Hungary, Oct. 1888) needs to be mentioned in this context given heightened sensibilities after the double-event and in those weeks leading up to Mary Kelly's murder. As per the Leskau atrocity which immediately preceded it, the Miller's Court victim had both her breasts cut off. Something to ponder.

What I propose in my book, is that somebody was trying to use the architecture of a racist lie, in other words, the mirage of 'Jewish ritual murder', to try and

incriminate the Jewish community at a most sensitive political juncture. As the *Jewish Chronicle* put it back in 1888, "There are not wanting signs of a deliberate attempt to connect the Jews with the Whitechapel murders". The full gamut of the methods employed by the killer to try and point blame at Whitechapel's Jews are discussed in the book. Certainly, the mutilations and method of dispatching the victims bear a resemblance to central elements of these two most infamous blood libel cases as they were reported in the press in the lead-up to, and during, 1888. Here, to my mind, was an anti-Semite elaborately staging a mock ritual for dramatic effect, as brazenly contrived as it was callous: a media-monster taking his cues from the hype he had been reading in the newspapers.

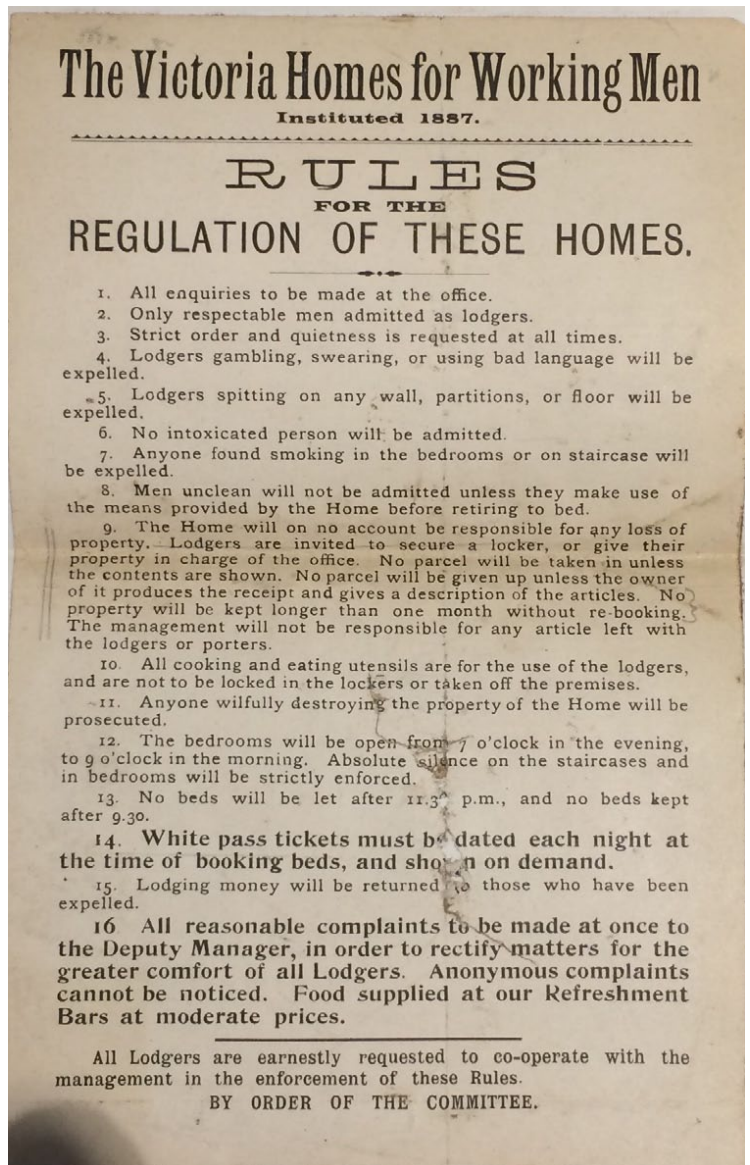
A final point or two.

I was hoping to get some feedback on what I understand may be, new information brought forward in the book regarding the Victoria Home where George Hutchinson (GH) was known to reside, and with implications for boosting the arguments of the Hutchonistas. I refer in particular, to excerpts from never before published correspondence between the owner of the Commercial Street property, Miss Amelia Levy and the lessee Lord Radstock, providing a glimpse of its physical make up at the commencement of the lease in 1887 and 1888. In this regard, my daughter and I are under the impression we may have viewed a file kept at William Booth College, Salvation Army Heritage Centre, London, which was hitherto unknown to Ripperology - early indications would seem to confirm our suspicion.

On a purely subjective note, I also mention Superintendent Thomas Arnold's detailed testimony of 1889 before the House of Commons Select Committee on Emigration & Immigration (Foreigners) - not to be confused with his slightly better known appearance before the same committee in 1888. I make reference to it, because I found his contribution so illuminating by way of gaining a better understanding of the East End street at that moment.

Without going into detail about other discussions - like the book's exploration of the great dichotomy that is Cox and GH's evidence; or that GH seems to have been channelling Leather Apron in describing his "Jewish" gentleman; or the full extent to which Spitalfields was more Jewish in character than has been popularly conceived; or the chapter-length evaluation of the McKenzie murder; or a look at what seems to be the spacial relationship between the location of the Nichols and Wilson attacks; or the exploration of the literary devices employed by Bram Stoker in *Dracula* in pursuit of an ugly, subtextual motif (the same one I suggest was propelling JTR's real-life plot) - I hope here, more broadly, to have given an idea of the book's bare bones, not to call them plot-spoilers. To that end of course, good reviewers remain circumspect. Authors, on the other hand, have fewer inhibitions, not to mention the prerogative of casting off a veil or two. Let's say three, on this occasion.

With heartfelt thanks to *Ripperologist* magazine for the publication of this letter, and in appreciation of Paul Begg's esteemed work and his kind words for my writing.



SINCERELY,  
STEPHEN SENISE

Victorian Fiction

# The Spider of Guyana

By Erckmann-Chatrian

Edited with an introduction by Eduardo Zinna

## INTRODUCTION

In early days, long before the beginning of recorded history, men (and women) did not feel too different from the animals with whom they shared their world. Animals were to them prey or predator, as they were to them. Animals were to be loved or feared, used or avoided, ignored or admired. There were qualities animals possessed that men envied and wished they could acquire: the strength of the lion, the cunning of the fox, the speed of the deer. Men believed, many centuries ago, that animals possessed souls same as they did. They believed it was possible for them to become animals and for animals to become men. They believed that men and animals may mate and procreate. In many cultures, animals were the companions of the gods and sometimes gods themselves.

The world has changed since then. Man has become the greatest predator of all and every animal is his to exploit, for its flesh, its skin or its teeth. At the present rate, many species will soon vanish, and within a few generations man may be alone in the dark world he has created.

Yet old fears still survive. Many animals, including the most vicious ones, have been sanitized or disneyfied. But a few have resisted all efforts to improve their image. Sharks, snakes, spiders and creepy-crawlies, among others, can still make people feel uneasy in their proximity. Fiction and films about them turning on their human oppressors are impressively successful. Off the top of my head, I could mention *Jaws*, *Orca* and *Piranha* for ferocious fish, and *Anaconda*, *Conan the Barbarian* and *Snakes on a Plane* for snaring snakes. Spiders have starred or guest-starred most effectively in *Tarantula*, *The Thief of Baghdad*, *The*

*Incredible Shrinking Man*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Fly*. They also claim a major role in our present Victorian Fiction offering, *The Spider of Guyana*.

It would seem that when it comes to frightening an audience size definitely counts. In the age of nuclear power, radiation stimulated the growth of various creatures in *Them!*, *The Deadly Mantis*, *The Giant Behemoth*, *It Came From Beneath the Sea*, *The Monster that Challenged the World* and a number of Japanese efforts. But even before the atom came to fascinate and terrify mankind, some authors speculated on the factors that could stimulate nature in unexpected and disturbing ways. Such is the case of *The Spider of Guyana*.

But enough spoilers. Now a word about the story's title, in case there are some bibliophiles among us. The original French title of the story is *L'Araignée-crabe*, which translates into English as *The Spider Crab*. I felt it was not evocative enough and, having considered several of the titles given the story in translation, was still undecided between two of them: *The Spider of Guyana* and *The Waters of Death*. The first was used, among other places, in issue 97 of *The Strand Magazine*, published in January 1899; the second, in Julian Hawthorne's anthology *The World's Best Detective and Mystery Stories*, published in 1907. I have often wondered whether it is better for a work of fiction to have a title that makes it clear what it is about or a title that is ambiguous enough to afford some suspense to the reader or the movie-goer. I abhor those blurbs or trailers that reveal main plot points - though I must admit that sometimes the blurbs or trailers are better than the books or the movies themselves. I eventually decided on



the more explicit title. If *Snakes on a Plane* could make it, so could *The Spider of Guyana*.

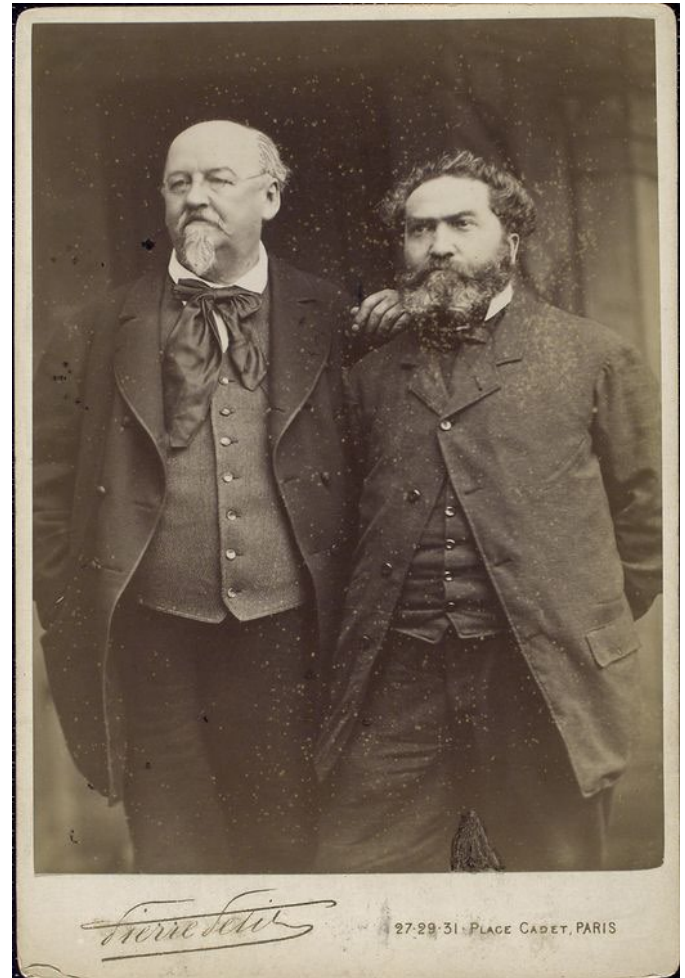
I must admit, not for the first time, that when I read the English translation I had available I didn't like it. And for good reason: the text was poor, inaccurate and incomplete. I didn't translate the story again from scratch, although it well deserves it, but revised what I had at my disposal so thoroughly that the present text is virtually a new translation. I hope it can do its job, which is to introduce a new audience to a foreign masterpiece from the past - the Victorian past.

In revising the text, I came across a problem that seems to crop up more and more often in these politically correct days. One of the main characters in the story - indeed, one of the four main characters in the story, including the narrator - is an old black woman. She is a sympathetic character, perhaps the most endearing of all. But she is described as an ill-favoured woman, who sings and dances and wears loud colours. I have read that such description is racist. This, to my mind, is nonsense. I have known women of great dignity and inner beauty who could easily answer to such description. The woman in the story is the object of great curiosity in a German village at the beginning of the nineteenth century. So would, I think, be a white woman in an African village at that time.

What I have done, however, is to update some of the terms used in the story to adapt them to present sensibilities. In French, this woman is referred to as a 'négresse', a word that at the time bore no negative implications. Its translation in the text I had before me was 'Negress' - a word that until a few years ago was unusual but not pejorative. The situation appears to have changed. I have consequently substituted 'black' for 'Negress' - rendering the text slightly anachronistic, but I think it is for a good cause.

*The Spider of Guyana* is signed by Erckman-Chatrion, the pseudonym of Émile Erckmann (1822-1899) and Alexandre Chatrion (1826-1890), both born in the French region of Lorraine, which together with Alsatia changed hands several times between France and Germany between 1870 and 1944. They first met in the spring of 1847 and wrote a number of novels and stories mainly dealing with military fiction and horror. Probably their best known work is *Le Juif Polonais* (*The Polish Jew*) a play first published in 1867 which was adapted several times into film. In 1871 it was translated into English as *The*

*Bells* and became one of Henry Irving's greatest successes. Their best known tales of horror include *The Wild Huntsman*, *The Man-Wolf*, *The Invisible Eye*, *The Spider of Guyana*, *The Killer of Souls*, *The Queen of the Bees* and *The Owl's Ear*. Both H P Lovecraft and M R James praised their work. *The Spider of Guyana* is often cited as an inspiration for James's own story *The Ash Tree*.



Émile Erckmann and Alexandre Chatrion

Erckmann and Chatrion worked together for over 30 years, from the 1850s to the 1880s. In 1887, Chatrion admitted to Erckmann that he was paying ghost-writers to help with his work out of their common income. Both their friendship and their professional association came to an end on that occasion. In 1889, Chatrion, who had been battling mental illness for some time, lost his reason entirely. He died on 3 September 1890. After Chatrion's death, Erckmann published several works under his own name. He died on 14 March 1899.

# The Spider of Guyana

By Erckmann-Chatrian

The mineral waters of Spinbronn, situated in the Hundsrück, several leagues from Pirmesens, used to enjoy a magnificent reputation. All who were afflicted with gout or rheumatism in Germany went there. The wild aspect of the countryside did not deter them. They lodged in pretty cottages at the foot of the mountain, they bathed in the cascade, which fell in large sheets of foam from the summit of the rocks, and drank two or three pints of the water daily. The local doctor, Daniel Hâselnoss, who handed out his prescriptions clad in a great wig and brown coat, had a very prosperous practice.

Today Spinbronn is no longer a favourite watering-place. There is no one left in the village but a few poor woodcutters, and, sad to say, Dr. Hâselnoss has left. All this resulted from a series of very strange catastrophes which Councillor Bremer of Pirmesens recounted to me the other day.

'You should know, Master Frantz,' he said, 'that the Spinbronn spring issues from a sort of cavern, about five feet high and from twelve to fifteen feet across. The water has a temperature of sixty-seven degrees centigrade, and it is saline. As for the cavern, it is entirely covered outside with moss, ivy and low shrubs. Its depth is unknown because the thermal exhalations prevent entering it.

'Yet, oddly enough, it was noticed early in the last century that local birds - hawks, thrushes, and turtledoves, were engulfed in it in full flight, and it was never known of what mysterious influence this was the result. 'In 1801, at the height of the season, owing to some circumstances which are still unexplained, the spring became more abundant, and the bathers walking below on the lawn saw a human skeleton as white as snow fall from the cascade.

'You may imagine, Master Frantz, the general alarm; naturally, it was thought that a murder had been committed at Spinbronn years earlier and the body of the victim had been thrown in the spring. But the skeleton weighed no more than twelve pounds, and Hâselnoss concluded that it must have spent more than three centuries in the sand to have been reduced to such a state of desiccation.

'This very plausible reasoning did not prevent a number of bathers from regretting they had drunk the saline water and leaving before the end of the day; those worst afflicted with gout and rheumatism remained, consoled with the doctor's version. But as the overflow continued, all the

debris, silt and detritus which the cavern contained was disgorged on the following days. A veritable ossuary came down from the mountain: skeletons of animals of every kind - quadrupeds, birds and reptiles - in short, all that's most hideous.

'Hâselnoss published a pamphlet demonstrating that all these bones came from the antediluvian world: that they were fossil bones, accumulated there in a sort of funnel during the universal flood - that is to say, four thousand years before Christ. One might therefore consider them as nothing but stones, and there was nothing repulsive about them. But his work had scarcely reassured the gouty when, one fine morning, the corpse of a fox, and then that of a hawk with all its feathers, fell from the cascade. It was impossible to maintain that these remains antedated the flood. At any rate, the revulsion was so intense that everybody packed and went to take the waters elsewhere.

"How infamous!" cried the fine ladies, "how horrible! So that's where the virtue of these mineral waters came from! Oh, it would be better to die of rheumatism than continue such a treatment!"

'After eight days there remained at Spinbronn only a stout Englishman afflicted by gout in both hands and feet. He called himself Commodore Sir Thomas Hawerburch, and lived lavishly, as is customary with British subjects abroad. He was tall and corpulent and had a florid complexion. His hands were literally knotted with gout and he would have drunk skeleton bouillon if it would have cured his affliction. He laughed heartily over the desertion of the other sufferers, and installed himself in the prettiest villa, at half price, announcing his intention of spending the winter at Spinbronn.



Here Councillor Bremer leisurely took a large pinch of snuff as if to refresh his memory. He then brushed his laced jabot with his fingertips and continued:



'Five or six years before the Revolution of 1789, a young doctor from Pirmesens named Christian Weber went to Saint-Domingue in the hope of making his fortune. He had amassed several hundred thousand livres in the practice

of his profession when the slave revolt broke out.

'I need not remind you of the barbarous treatment to which our unfortunate fellow countrymen were subjected in Haiti. Dr Weber had the good luck to escape the massacre and retain part of his fortune. He travelled for a while in South America, especially in French Guyana. In 1801 he returned to Pirmesens and established himself at Spinbronn, where he bought Dr Hâselnoß's house and what remained of his practice.

'Christian Weber brought with him an old black woman called Agatha: a plain-looking creature, with a flat nose and lips as thick as your fist. She used to wrap her head in three kerchiefs of startling colours. The poor old woman loved the colour red and wore earrings which hung down to her shoulders. The mountain people of Hundsrück came from six leagues round to stare at her.

'As for Dr Weber, he was a tall, thin man, invariably dressed in a sky-blue swallow-tailed coat and leather breeches. He wore a soft straw hat and boots with light yellow tops, on the front of which hung two silver tassels. He talked little; his laugh had something of a nervous tic, and his grey eyes, usually calm and meditative, shone with singular brilliance at the least sign of contradiction. Every morning he rode in the mountain, letting his horse go where it wanted, for ever whistling in the same tone some melody from an African song. Lastly, this eccentric man had brought from Haiti a number of cardboard boxes filled with strange insects - some black and reddish brown, big as eggs; others small and shimmering like sparks. He seemed to set greater store by them than by his patients, and, from time to time, coming back from his rides, brought a quantity of butterflies pinned to his hat brim.

'As soon as he was settled in Hâselnoß's vast house he filled the backyard with unusual birds: Barbary geese with scarlet cheeks, Guinea hens and a white peacock, which perched habitually on the garden wall, and which shared with the black woman the admiration of the mountain people.

'If I enter into these details, Master Frantz, it's because they recall my early youth. Dr Christian happened to be both my cousin and my guardian, and as soon as he returned to Germany he took me to his house at Spinbronn. At first I was a little frightened of Agatha, and only got used to her unusual face with considerable difficulty; but she was such a good woman, who knew so well how to make spiced patties, and hummed weird songs in a guttural voice, snapping her fingers and raising her fat legs one after the other in cadence, that we wound up becoming close friends.

'Dr Weber was friendly with Sir Thomas Hawerburch, who represented the majority of his clients then in

evidence, and I was not slow in perceiving that these two eccentrics held long conversations together. They discussed mysterious matters - such as the transmission of fluids - and indulged in certain odd gestures which one or the other of them had picked up in his voyages; Sir Thomas in the Orient, and my guardian in South America. This puzzled me greatly. As children will, I was always trying to discover whatever they seemed to conceal from me; but despairing in the end of finding out anything, I took the course of questioning Agatha, and the poor old woman, after making me promise I would say nothing about it, told me that my guardian was a sorcerer.



'Besides, Dr Weber had a singular influence over the mind of the black woman, and she, habitually so lively and for ever ready to be amused by anything, trembled like a leaf when her master's grey eyes chanced to alight on her.

'All this, Master Frantz, seems to have no bearing on the Spinbronn spring. But wait, wait; you will see by what a singular combination of circumstances my story is connected with it. I told you that birds and even other, larger animals, were engulfed into the cavern. After the final departure of the bathers, some of the oldest inhabitants of the village recalled that some fifty years ago a young girl named Lōisa Müller, who lived with her sickly old grandmother in a cottage on the pitch of the slope, had suddenly disappeared. She had gone to gather herbs in the forest, and had never been heard of afterwards, except that, three or four days later, some woodcutters who were

descending the mountain had found her sickle and apron a few steps from the cavern.

'From that moment on it was evident to everyone that the skeleton which had fallen from the cascade, on the subject of which Håselness had wrought such fine phrases, belonged to no other than Løisa Müller. The poor girl had doubtless been drawn into the chasm by the mysterious influence which almost daily overcame weaker beings. What could this influence be? Nobody knew. But the inhabitants of Spinbronn, superstitious like all mountain people, maintained that the devil lived in the cavern, and terror spread in the whole region.



'One afternoon in the middle of July 1802, my cousin undertook a new classification of the insects in his cardboard boxes. He had secured several rather curious ones the previous afternoon. I was with him, holding with one hand a lighted candle and with the other a needle which I heated in the flame. Sir Thomas, seated, his chair tipped back against the sill of a window, his feet on a stool, watched us work, smoking his cigar with a dreamy air.

I was very friendly with Sir Thomas Hawerburch, and accompanied him every day to the woods in his carriage. He enjoyed hearing me chatter in English, and wished to make of me, as he said, a thorough gentleman.

Having labelled the butterflies, Dr Weber at last opened the cardboard box containing the largest insects, and said:

"Yesterday I caught a magnificent stag beetle, the great *lucanus cervus* of the oaks of the Hartz. It has the peculiarity that the right mandible ends in five points. A rare specimen."

At the same time I offered him the needle, and as he pierced the insect before fixing it on the cork, Sir Thomas, until then impassive, got up, and, drawing near a cardboard box, he began to examine the spider crab of Guyana with a feeling of horror which was strikingly portrayed on his plump, ruddy face.

"That is certainly the most frightful work of the creation," he cried. "The mere sight of it makes me shudder!"

'And, sure enough, a sudden pallor spread over his face.

"Bah!" said my guardian, "all this is only a prejudice from childhood. One hears one's nurse cry out, one is afraid, and the impression sticks. But if you should examine the spider with a powerful microscope, you would be astonished at the delicacy of its members, at their admirable arrangement, and even at their elegance."

"It disgusts me," interrupted the commodore brusquely.

"Ugh!" And he turned and walked away. "Oh! I don't know why," he declared, "spiders have always frozen my blood!"

'Dr Weber began to laugh, and I, who shared Sir Thomas's feelings, exclaimed:

"Yes, cousin, you ought to take this ugly beast out of the box. It is disgusting. It spoils all the rest."

"Little idiot," he said, his eyes glittering, "who is forcing you to look at it? If you don't like it, go somewhere else."

'Evidently he had taken offense; and Sir Thomas, who was at the window contemplating the mountain, turned suddenly, took me by the hand, and said to me in a manner full of good will:

"Your guardian, Frantz, sets great store by his spider; we like the trees and the vegetation better. Come, let's go for a walk."

"Yes, go," exclaimed the doctor, "and come back for supper at six o'clock." Then, raising his voice:

"No hard feelings, Sir Hawerburch."

The Commodore turned, laughing, and we got into the carriage, which was waiting as usual before the house.

'Sir Thomas wanted to drive himself and dismissed his servant. He made me sit beside him and we started off for Rothalps. While the carriage was slowly ascending the sandy path, an invincible sadness possessed itself of my spirit. Sir Thomas, on his part, was serious. He perceived my sadness and said:

"You don't like spiders, Frantz, and neither do I. But thank Heaven, there aren't any dangerous ones in this country. The spider crab which your tutor has in his box comes from French Guyana. It inhabits the great, swampy forests filled with warm vapours, with scalding exhalations; this temperature is necessary to its life. Its immense web, or rather its net, envelops an entire thicket. It catches birds in it as our spiders catch flies. But drive these repulsive images from your mind, and have a sip of Burgundy."

Turning, he lifted the cover of the rear seat, and drew from the straw a sort of gourd from which he filled to the brim a leathern goblet.

'When I had drunk all my good humour returned and I began to laugh at my fear.

The carriage was drawn by a little Ardennes horse, thin and active as a goat, which clambered up the nearly perpendicular path. Thousands of insects hummed in the bushes. At our right, at a hundred paces or more, the sombre outskirts of the Rothalp forests extended below us, the profound shades of which, choked with briers and foul brush, showed here and there an opening filled with light. On our left tumbled the stream of Spinbronn, and the

more we climbed the more did its silver sheets, floating in the abyss, grow tinged with azure and redouble the cymbal-like sound they made.

'I was captivated by this spectacle. Sir Thomas, leaning back in the seat, his knees at the height of his chin, abandoned himself to his habitual reveries, while the horse, labouring with its feet and hanging its head on its chest as a counter-weight to the carriage, held us as though suspended on the flank of the rock. Soon, however, we reached a pitch less steep: the deer pasture, surrounded by tremulous shadows. I had had my head turned and my eyes lost in the immense perspective. When the shadows appeared I turned round and saw that we were a hundred paces from the cavern of Spinbronn. The encompassing shrubs were a magnificent green, and the stream which, before falling, spreads over a bed of black sand and pebbles, was so clear that one would have thought it frozen if pale vapours had not covered its surface.

'The horse had just stopped of its own accord to catch its breath; Sir Thomas, rising, cast his eye over the countryside.

'How calm everything is!' he said. Then, after an instant of silence:

'If you weren't here, Frantz, I would certainly bathe in the basin.'

'But, Commodore,' said I, 'why don't you? I can go for a stroll in the area. On the next hill there is a large pasture where wild strawberries grow. I'll go and pick some. I'll be back in an hour.'

'Ha! I should like to, Frantz; it's a great idea. Dr Weber says that I drink too much Burgundy. It's necessary to offset wine with mineral water. This little bed of sand pleases me.'

'Then, having both set our feet on the ground, he hitched the horse to the trunk of a little birch and waved his hand as if to say "You may go." I saw him sit down on the moss and draw off his boots. As I moved away he turned and called out:

'In an hour, Frantz.'

'Those were his last words.

'An hour later I returned to the spring. Only the horse, the carriage and Sir Thomas's clothes met my eyes. The sun was setting. The shadows were lengthening. Not a bird's song under the foliage, not the hum of an insect in the tall grass. A silence as of death filled this solitude! This silence frightened me. I climbed up on the rock which overlooks the cavern and looked to right and left. Nobody! I called. No answer! The sound of my voice, repeated by the echoes, filled me with fear. Night was slowly settling down. A vague sense of horror oppressed me.

'Suddenly the story of the young girl who had disappeared came to mind. I began to hurry down but, arriving before the cavern, I stopped, seized with unaccountable terror. Casting a glance into the deep shadows of the spring I had caught sight of two motionless red points. Then I saw long lines wavering in a strange manner in the midst of the darkness, at a depth where no human eye had ever penetrated.



"I SAW TWO RED, MOTIONLESS POINTS."

'Fear lent my sight, and all my senses, an unprecedented subtlety of perception. For several seconds I heard very distinctly the evening chirping of a grasshopper down at the edge of the wood, and a dog barking far, very far away, in the valley. Then my heart, constricted for an instant by emotion, began to beat furiously and I no longer heard anything. Uttering a frightful cry, I fled, abandoning the horse and the carriage. In less than twenty minutes, bounding over the rocks and brush, I reached the threshold of our house, and cried in a stifled voice:

'Run! Run! Sir Hawerburch is dead! Sir Hawerburch is in the cavern!'

'After speaking these words in the presence of my guardian, old Agatha, and two or three people invited that evening by the doctor, I fainted. I have learned since that during a whole hour I was delirious.

'The whole village went in search of the Commodore. Christian Weber had dragged them along. At ten o'clock in the evening they all came back, bringing the carriage, and in the carriage Sir Hawerburch's clothes. They had discovered nothing. It was impossible to take ten steps into the cavern without suffocating.

'During their absence Agatha and I had remained sitting at the chimney-corner: I, in my terror, uttering incoherent words; she, with her hands crossed on her knees and her eyes wide open, going from time to time to the window to find out what was going on, because from the foot of the mountain we could see torches flitting in the woods and hear hoarse, distant voices calling to each other in the night.

'At the approach of her master, Agatha began to tremble. The doctor entered brusquely, pale, his lips tight, despair written on his face. Some twenty woodcutters in their large felt hats with wide brims, their faces sunburnt, followed him in turmoil, shaking the remnants of their torches. The moment he was in the room his flashing eyes seemed to look for something. He caught sight of the poor black woman, and without a word having passed between them, she began to cry:

"No! no! I don't want to!"

"And I want you to!" replied the doctor in a hard tone.

'It could be said that the black woman had been seized by an irresistible power. She shuddered from head to foot. Christian Weber pointed to a chair and she sat down on it as rigid as a corpse. All those present, witnesses of this shocking spectacle, good folk with primitive and rough manners, but full of pious sentiments, crossed themselves. I, who was not then aware, even by name, of the terrible magnetic power of the will, began to tremble, believing that Agatha was dead.

'Christian Weber approached the black woman, and making a rapid pass over her forehead said:

"Are you there?"

"Yes, master."

"Sir Thomas Hawerburch?"

'At these words she shuddered again.

"Do you see him?"

"Yes-yes," she gasped in a strangled voice. "I see him."

"Where is he?"

"Up there in the back of the cavern. Dead!"

"Dead!" said the doctor. "How?"

"The spider. Oh! The spider crab. Oh!"

"Control your agitation," said the doctor, who was quite pale. "Tell us clearly"

"The spider crab holds him by the throat. He is there at the back, under a rock, enveloped in its web. Ah!"

'Christian Weber cast a cold glance toward those present, who standing round him, their eyes wide open, were listening, and I heard him murmur: "It's horrible! horrible!" Then he resumed:

"You see him?"

"I see him."

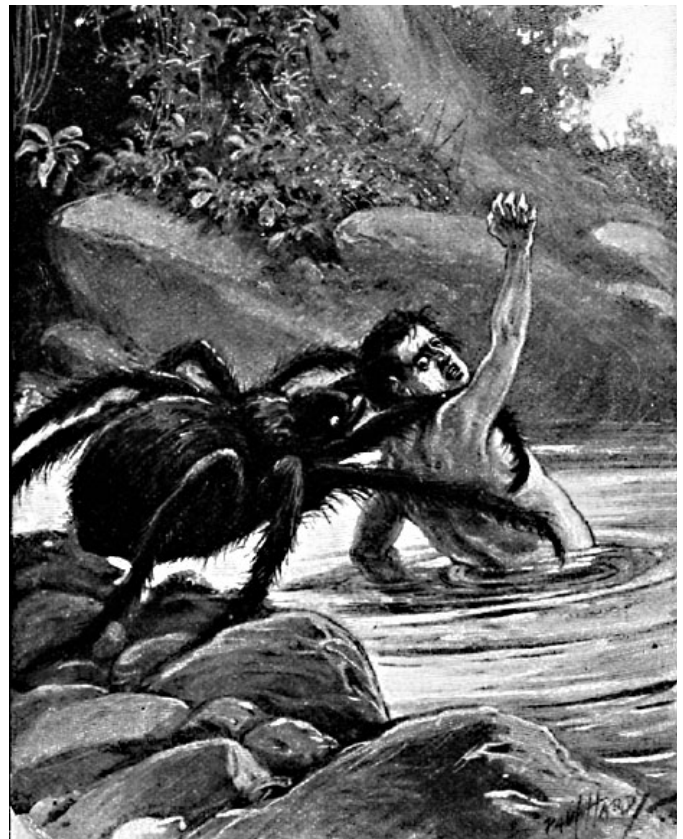
"And the spider. Is it large?"

"Oh, master, never, never have I seen such a large one; not even on the banks of the Mocaris or in the lowlands of Konanama. It is as large as my head!"

'There was a long silence. All those present looked at each other, their faces livid, their hair standing on end. Christian Weber alone seemed calm. He passed his hand several times over the black woman's forehead and continued:

"Agatha, tell us how death befell Sir Hawerburch."

"He was bathing in the spring basin. The spider saw him from behind, his back bare. It was hungry, it had fasted for a long time; it saw him with his arms on the water. Suddenly it came out like a flash and put its fangs round the Commodore's neck, and he cried out: 'Oh! Oh! My God!' It stung and fled. Sir Hawerburch sank in the water and died. Then the spider returned and enveloped him with its thread, and he floated gently, gently, to the back of the cavern. It drew in on the thread. Now he is all black."



'The doctor, turning to me, who no longer felt the shock, asked:

"Is it true, Frantz, that the Commodore went bathing?"

"Yes, Cousin Christian."

"At what time?"

"At four o'clock."

"At four o'clock. It was very warm, wasn't it?"

"Oh, yes!"

"That's what it is," said he, striking his forehead. "The monster could come out without fear."

'He pronounced a few unintelligible words, and then, looking toward the mountain men: "My friends," he cried, "that is where the mass of debris and the skeletons that spread terror among the bathers came from. That is what has ruined you all: the spider crab! It is there, hidden in its web, awaiting its prey in the back of the cavern! Who can tell the number of its victims?"

'And full of rage, he led the way, shouting:

"Bring logs! Bring logs!"

'The woodcutters followed him in turmoil.

'Ten minutes later two large wagons laden with logs were slowly mounting the slope. A long file of woodcutters, their backs bent double, followed, enveloped in the sombre night. My tutor and I walked ahead, leading the horses by their bridles, and the melancholy moon vaguely lighted this funereal procession. From time to time the wheels grated, and then the carts, raised by the irregularities of the stony road, fell again on the track with a heavy jolt.

'As we drew near the cavern, our procession halted at the deer pasture. The torches were lit, and the crowd advanced towards the chasm. The limpid water, running over the sand, reflected the bluish flame of the resinous torches whose rays illuminated the tops of the black firs overhanging the rocks above us.

"This is where we unload," the doctor said. "We must block up the entrance to the cavern."

'It was not without a feeling of terror that everybody set to carry out his orders. The logs fell from the top of the carts. A few stakes placed before the opening of the spring prevented the water from carrying them away.

'Towards midnight the mouth of the cavern was completely closed. The water, hissing below the logs, flowed right and left on the moss. The logs on top were perfectly dry. Then Dr Weber, taking a torch, lit the fire himself. The flames ran from twig to twig with an angry crackling, and soon leaped toward the sky, preceded by

clouds of smoke.

'It was a strange and wild spectacle, the great woods with trembling shadows lit up in this manner. The cavern poured forth black smoke, constantly renewed and disgorged. All round the woodcutters waited, sombre, motionless, their eyes fixed on the opening. As for me, although trembling from head to foot in fear, I could not look away.

'We had waited a good quarter of an hour, and Dr Weber was beginning to grow impatient, when a black object with long, crooked claws appeared suddenly in the shadows and rushed towards the opening. A cry resounded round the fire.

'The spider, driven back by the flames, re-entered its cave. Then, doubtless smothered by the smoke, it returned to the charge and leaped out into the midst of the fire. Its long legs curled up. It was as large as my head, and of a reddish violet colour. It looked like a bladder full of blood.

'One of the woodcutters, fearing lest it get clear of the fire, threw his hatchet at it, with such good aim that the flames round it were for an instant covered with blood. But soon the flames burst out more vigorously over it and consumed the horrible insect.



'Such, Master Frantz, was the strange event which destroyed the fine reputation which the waters of Spinbronn formerly enjoyed. I can attest to the scrupulous precision of my account. But as for giving you an explanation, that would be impossible for me to do. However, allow me to say that it does not seem absurd to admit that insects, under the influence of the high temperature of certain thermal waters which offer them the same conditions of existence and development as the scorching climates of Africa and South America, could attain a fabulous size. It is this same extreme heat which explains the prodigious exuberance of this antediluvian creation.

'Be it as it may, my guardian, concluding that after this incident it would be impossible to resuscitate the waters of Spinbronn, sold Hâselno's house and returned to America with his black woman and his collections. As for me, I was sent to boarding school in Strasbourg, where I remained until 1809.

'The great political events of the time which then absorbed the attention of Germany and France explain why the events I have just told you about went completely unnoticed.'

# Fiction Reviews

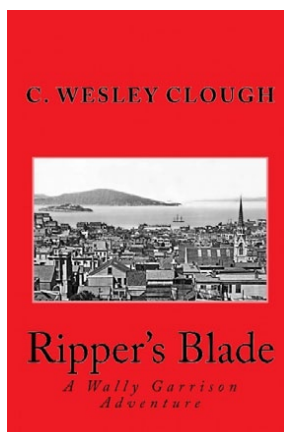
By DAVID GREEN

Included in this issue:

*Ripper's Blade, Killing Time, Starched White Linen and more.*

## RIPPER'S BLADE

C. Wesley Clough  
2017  
ISBN 13: 978-1544050195  
Kindle Edition, 65pp  
£4.08



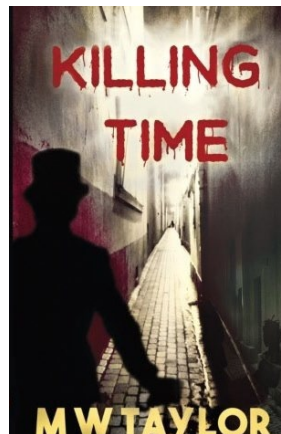
It's 1895. Young Wally Garrison (12) and his cousin Abigail (14) are growing up fast in a small family-run hotel in San Francisco. One day a strange dark-suited Englishman turns up in a horseless steam-powered carriage; his luggage consists of a recording phonograph and a black doctor's bag. He is Dr John Seward, the lunatic

asylum psychiatrist from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. His arrival coincides with a series of "soiled dove" prostitute murders in the city, which the newspapers soon link to Jack the Ripper. Wally and Gail set out to investigate. Is Dr Seward their man? Or is the killer a Chinatown butcher named Leather Apron? And there are other puzzles, too: What is Inspector Lestrade doing in the city? And who is piloting a steam-driven 'helicopter' around the city skyline?

*Ripper's Blade* is an entertaining murder mystery celebrating the marvel and excitement of adolescence. C. Wesley Clough wears his influences rather heavily, though. The novel is filled with characters and themes from other writers' books, and the mashup of steampunk, alternative history, detective fiction and the Cthulhu Mythos makes for a rather hectic and loose-jointed tale. If the novel is a little over-written in places - the denouement on Alcatraz Island is especially brazen - it nevertheless presents a convincing image of the era and is deserving of notice.

## KILLING TIME

MW Taylor  
Savant Press, 2017  
ISBN 10-0995476225  
Paperback, 342pp  
£7.99



From bygone San Francisco to London in the near-future.

The new science of Awakening enables people to visit their past lives and recall the events leading up to their deaths. When a grisly series of murders in the East End suggests that Jack the Ripper may have escaped from a past life and taken over a living identity, Scotland Yard enlists the help of past life investigator Jason Ives. He teams up with Swedish ice maiden DCI Sabina Bjorkman and an oddball Ripperologist called Isambard Smythe who 'revels in the grimy limelight of the case' and talks in cod-archaic language ('I poop you not, fine sir'). Smythe's role is to provide historical facts and background analysis on the original Ripper killings.

Events quickly turn complicated. Ives sets out to interview the women (and men) who were the canonical victims in earlier lives, while a Frenchman called Guy Rochelle (Frederick Abberline in a previous existence) also enters the hunt for the killer. Meanwhile, the reincarnated Ripper is out on the streets, slicing and dicing like a chef...

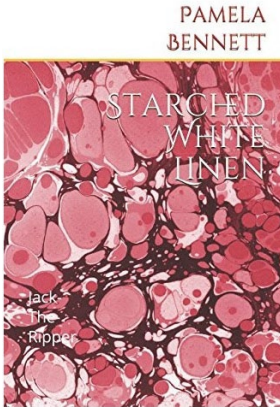
This is an above average science fiction detective thriller with believable characters, a strong sense of place, and plenty of gruesome crime scene action drawing on the author's own experience as a forensic photographer for Scotland Yard. It's good to know that Ripperology is still going strong in 2065, even if Isambard Smythe is a



fairly eccentric ambassador.

**STARCHED WHITE LINEN**

Pamela Bennett  
 2017  
 Independently published, 85pp  
 £3.71



Pamela Bennett's grandparents and great-grandparents lived and worked in the East End during the 1880s. Her great-grandmother claimed to have seen Jack the Ripper washing his face and hands in a horse trough behind a public house. Her grandfather was a London Bobby drafted into Whitechapel to help hunt for the killer; supposedly he guarded the entrance to Miller's Court, and may even have glimpsed the body inside...

Now, Pamela Bennett has taken these family stories and turned them into a sad, rather beautiful tale about working class life and a community's response to the Ripper murders. It's only a slim book, barely 80 pages, but it lingers in the mind long after you've finished reading it.

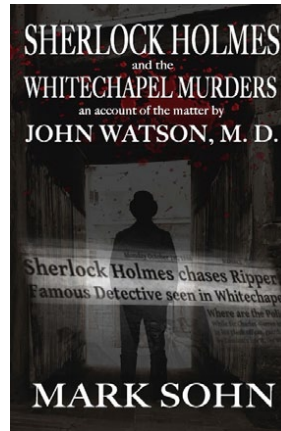
The story is mainly told from the point of view of Marie Tierney, a parlour maid at the Queen's Head, who finds herself in Buck's Row on the night Polly Nichols is slain. She catches sight of the murderer fleeing the scene, a handsome dark gentleman with mesmerising blue eyes and a sunburnt face.

But the Ripper is no Romantic figure plagued with melancholy and misanthropy. He is Charles Chatsworthy, formerly a lieutenant in the Royal West Fusiliers, and now a businessman in the East End. As the narrative slowly unfolds we get to learn his terrible history - the mutilated bodies of cats and dogs left to rot on his Wiltshire estate, the native Indian girls torn apart as if by wild animals, the dreadful childhood games of hide and seek played out in the rambling corridors of the family home at Stafford Manor. Many years later the game of hide and seek continues on the streets of the East End as Chatsworthy and Marie hunt each other down...

*Starched White Linen* offers a compelling portrait of human evil, and I liked the way the author pauses every now and then, even amid the horror, to dwell on the small comforts of life - the smell of warm hay on a winter's night, a slice of pie and a mug of tea in the backyard of a pub.

**SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE WHITECHAPEL MURDERS**

Mark Sohn  
 MX Publishing, 2017  
 ISBN 10-1787050599  
 Paperback, 252pp  
 £9.99



Do we really need another yarn pitting the world's greatest detective against the world's greatest villain?

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson are initially called in by Robert Sagar of the City Police (?) to solve the murder of Martha Tabram. Soon, though, they find themselves on the trail of a different monster altogether. As is usual in these

capers, the Baker Street duo spend their time dashing around London in a hansom cab, attending post mortems, visiting crime scenes, meeting the Met top brass, dressing up as police constables, and slumming it in East End pubs. There is a rooftop chase, and a lurch into the supernatural when the spirit of Mary Ann Nichols is channelled during a stage séance: "There he is," hisses dead Polly, pointing to someone in the audience, "that's 'im that done fer me right there!"

Mark Sohn has created an enjoyable romp out of some fairly familiar material. It's an animated and flamboyant yarn containing several dazzling set pieces that lift the book out of the ordinary. It oozes affection for the Conan Doyle oeuvre and is a very satisfying first novel.

**TERROR IN LONDON: JACK THE RIPPER & OTHER TALES**

Dark Moon Press, 2017  
 ISBN-13: 978-1545238462  
 Kindle Edition, 152pp  
 £2.39



This slim volume brings together half a dozen ghost and horror stories loosely (very loosely) connected to the theme of London. The best pieces evoke a sense of menace and eerie dread - in 'The Fog', for example, the ghosts of drowned sailors exact revenge on a gang of smugglers, while in 'Anoch' the narrator discovers why the street lamps in a

quiet country village burn brightly all day and night. But

elsewhere the horror is laid on so thickly there is hardly any room for unease or frightening sensation.

There are two Jack the Ripper tales. In one of them Alex Rondini serves up a dreary police procedural about a copycat murder spree in present-day Whitechapel. Kevin Eads contributes a slightly more polished effort in 'When Jack Almost Terrorized London a Second Time', which riffs on goths and vampire serial killers in Thatcher's Britain.

A mediocre collection not worth your time or money.

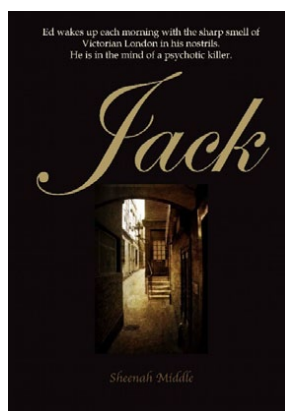
## JACK

Sheenah Middle

2017

Kindle Edition, 125pp

£2.99



This thriller, set in Glasgow in 2016, is not so much a crime story as a study in abnormal psychology. Edward Ryder is having recurring nightmares in which he inhabits the mind of Jack the Ripper. He is a passenger as Jack prowls the streets of Victorian Whitechapel in search of victims. Then, disturbingly, Jack starts intruding into

Edward's waking life in Scotland...

It's a plot we've come across many times before, but Sheenah Middle adapts the idea in a clever way, and she's good at depicting the paranoid, claustrophobic sensation of sharing consciousness with a killer and being forced to witness shocking events.

There are exposition defects early on - Ripper fiction is never at its best when regurgitating press reports and inquest testimony - and the story is annoyingly interrupted by some overdeveloped secondary characters. Nevertheless this is an interesting short novel in which domestic detail and looming horror are adroitly contrasted.

## THE CUTTHROAT

Clive Cussler and Justin Scott

Penguin, 2017

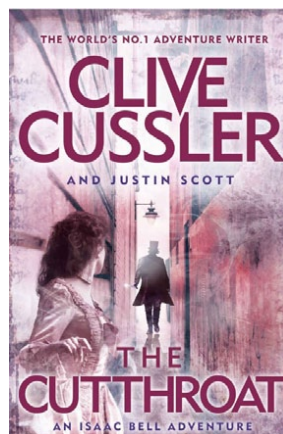
ISBN 0727845187

Kindle Edition, 395pp

£9.99

Here we have the tenth outing for Clive Cussler's fearless private detective Isaac Bell.

Set in 1910, Bell is hired to track down a teenage girl who has run away to New York to become an actress.



Her body shortly turns up in an apartment in midtown Manhattan; she has been nearly decapitated, her torso has been butchered, and there are curious crescent-shaped cuts on her legs and arms.

Bell soon discovers there have similar unsolved murders stretching back over twenty years, not just in New York but all over the States and in London, the victims typically being petite fair-haired teenage girls without family or husbands to protect them. A Cutthroat Squad is formed to hunt the killer. Dogged detective work eventually leads to a breakthrough: the most recent killings appear to be linked to the touring schedule of a theatre company staging a modern version of 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde'. Could the killer be a member of the troupe? Even worse, could the killer actually be Jack the Ripper in middle age? Bell thinks so, and he steams across the Atlantic with grim purpose...

This is a Clive Cussler novel, so expect a fast moving, action-packed adventure story with thrills on every page. There are twists, false leads, impostures, and cliff-hangers in abundance, although curiously there isn't much gore, and you'll wait in vain for reflections on suffering, mortality, or human evil. There isn't time!

Cussler and his writing partner Justin Scott do this kind of thing extremely well. The plot may be a little far-fetched in places, but the story rattles along at such a pace that questions of plausibility and credibility are irrelevant. Pleasingly, the authors have done their homework on the Ripper and Torso murders, which makes for a neat, clever, and professional mystery.

There's no doubt about it, of all the novels and stories reviewed this issue, *The Cutthroat* offers the best all-round entertainment.



## PROPER RED STUFF: RIPPER FICTION BEFORE 1900

*In this series we take a look at forgotten writers from the 1880s and 1890s who tackled the Jack the Ripper theme in their novels and short stories.*

### NO. 5: ANON: THE ADVENTURES OF THE ADVENTURERS' CLUB (1890)

It's a dreadful thought, but Jack the Ripper could have bought a copy of this novel from his local railway bookstall,

lured by George Storey's startling cover illustration.<sup>1</sup>

Published anonymously in 1890 by Gardner & Co., and selling for a shilling, *The Adventures of the Adventurers' Club: A Shocker in Six Shocks by Five Men & A Woman* contains one of the finest short stories ever written about Jack the Ripper.

The novel uses the framing device of a private gentlemen's club whose members gather once a month in rooms above a shop in Regent Street. Drawing lots at random, each member selects a district of London and ventures out into the darkness in search of excitement, meeting up the following night to recount their adventures.

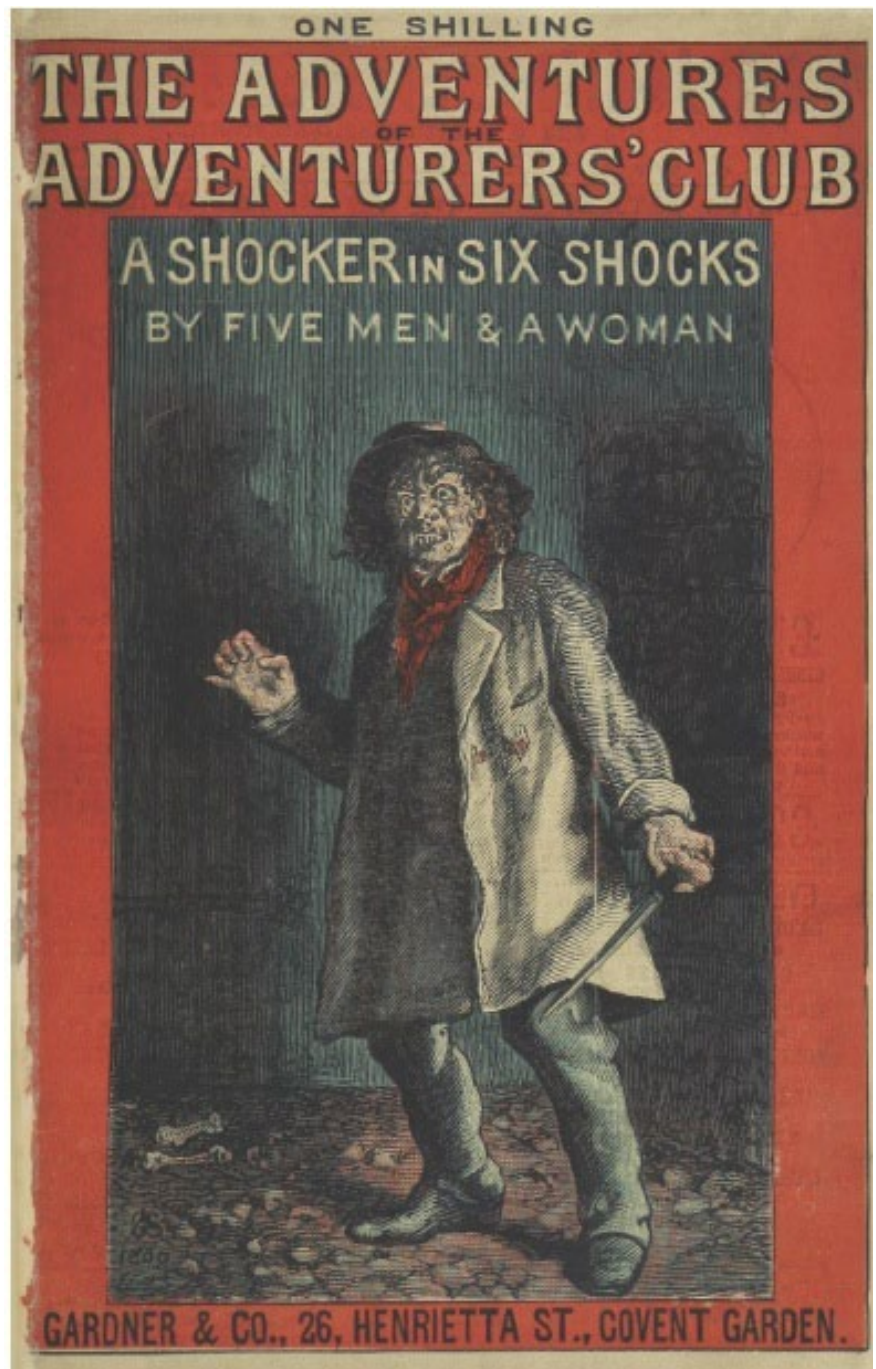
On this particular occasion, one member returns from Hackney in a comatose state, having ingested a zombie potion distilled by Haitian cannibals. A second member narrowly escapes being dissected by a team of crazed nerve surgeons working out of a private laboratory in Soho. The President of the club becomes the victim of an ingenious swindle in Hammersmith and Kensington; in Southwark, a fourth member falls into the clutches of vengeful German terrorists. And there is an honorary lady member, who relates how she married a corpse.

But the darkest, most chilling tale is the one narrated by Horace Jeaffreson, who has the misfortune to draw the lot for Whitechapel. Off he goes 'to the sordid heart of London, the home of vice, of misery, and crime'. At length he comes to the Melmoth Brothers knackers' yard, an atrocious, foul-smelling place littered with animal bones, where the bodies of horses are thrown into furnaces and rendered into glue and manure and cat's meat. It's here, skulking in the shadows, that Jeaffreson encounters Jack the Ripper:

There was the man, the murderer, the wretch who had been so accurately described to me, the crouching figure in the brown tweed coat, with the red cotton comforter loosely wound round his neck. In his left hand there was something long and bright and keen that glittered in the soft moonlight of the silent summer night.

It's a deeply unsettling story, powerful and engrossing, and doubly effective because it is contemporary with the events it describes.

The novel has clearly been written by a single hand despite being presented as the work of five unnamed men and a woman. Who could have authored this story?



<sup>1</sup> George Adolphus Storey (1834-1919) was an English portrait painter and illustrator better known for his pictures of middle class life.



A couple of weeks after *The Adventurers' Club* was published, a young author called Arthur Spencer Thurgood shot himself through the heart in a railway carriage at Carshalton station. It was a bizarre incident. A search of his clothing revealed two cigarette cases, a cheque book, a pair of gloves, and a copy of *The Adventurers' Club*. At the coroner's inquest the jury heard that Thurgood 'was in very delicate health, and had latterly been working very hard on some literary productions'. A verdict of 'suicide during temporary insanity' was recorded.

Thurgood was born in 1867, and grew up in Lambeth. After the death of his mother, he moved with his father to the new family home on Abbeyville Road in Clapham Park. He trained as a surveyor, but it seems his real interest was in the Arts. He had recently written several operettas and other dramatic works.

But he was not a well man. For over a year he had been suffering from rheumatic fever and abscesses, and was prone to fainting fits.

At 8.40am on Wednesday, May 14 he boarded a train at West Croydon. Earlier that morning he had purchased a revolver and a box containing 44 cartridges from the Army and Navy Stores in town. He now showed the loaded weapon to a fellow passenger, saying 'If you had travelled abroad as I have, you would do [the same]'. He then complained of pains in his eyes and spent the rest of the journey with an arm shielding his face. As the train approached Sutton, he began vomiting. Getting off the train he vomited some more on the platform. When the connecting service to Carshalton arrived, he boarded a third-class compartment. As the train was departing, Arthur pulled out the revolver and shot himself in the heart. He was found dead on the carriage floor when the train rolled into Carshalton.

At the inquest his father insisted that Arthur had no financial worries and no love troubles, but among his possessions were found three letters from a professional lady intimating that an engagement had recently been broken. Did Arthur Thurgood kill himself from a broken heart while in a state of exhaustion brought about by chronic illness and overwork on his literary productions? Had authorship of *The Adventurer's Club* unnerved him in some way, or fractured his sanity?

We will probably never know. It's sobering to reflect, though, that wherever Jack the Ripper went, even in fictional form, death inevitably followed.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Details of the Thurgood inquest taken from *The Times*, May 17, 1890 and *Sussex Agricultural Express*, May 20, 1890. There is a copy of *The Adventures of The Adventurers' Club* in the British Library; the work is also available as a print-on-demand paperback from British Library Historical Print Editions. Michel Parry included the Whitechapel chapter ("In the Slaughterhouse") in his 1975 Mayflower anthology *Jack the Knife*, and its most recent outing has been in Otto Penzler's *The Big Book of Jack the Ripper* (2016).



IN THE NEXT ISSUE we review *Apologies to the Cat's Meat Man* by Alan M. Clark, the latest volume in his *Jack the Ripper Victims* series; also reviewed is *Jack the Ripper: Case Closed* by Gyles Brandreth and *I Was Jack the Ripper (Parts 2 & 3)* by Michael Bray.



**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.**

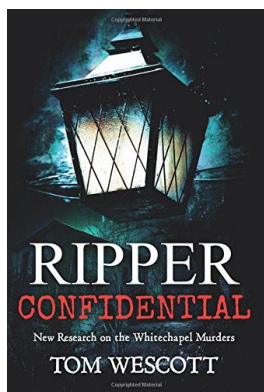
# Reviews

Included in this issue:

***Ripper Confidential, Squaring the Circle, Jack the Ripper: The Real Truth, H. H. Holmes: The True History of the White City Devil and more***

**RIPPER CONFIDENTIAL:  
NEW RESEARCH ON THE WHITECHAPEL MURDERS**

Tom Wescott  
Crime Confidential Press, 2017  
www.RipperBooks.com  
First Published:  
softcover & ebook  
364pp; Notes; References  
ISBN:978-0692838723  
softcover £16.99, ebook £5.61



This is Tom Wescott's second contribution to RipLit and differs from his previous offering by being a collection of essays old and new. Wescott, of course, is no newcomer to the field, and in his introduction he gives a personal account of his time in the world of Ripperology, from catching the bug when he stumbled

across a Ripper tome misplaced in the horror section at his local library, through to his place today as one of the original thinkers in the field. He isn't always right - who ever is? - but he looks at old evidence in different ways (which is hardly ever unrewarding) and he's researched out new information, and although some people may disagree with his conclusions (sometimes vehemently), those conclusions are generally well thought out and intelligently presented.

As Wescott acknowledges, *Ripper Confidential* isn't a book for anyone new to the subject. He expects the reader to have a reasonably solid grasp of at least the basic facts. I confess that I'm not a fan of reading the same old story over and over, which is probably why I found this book enjoyable, but even when he does have to go over old ground he manages to do it entertainingly, adding some colour to the bare facts of his narrative. For example, early on he paints a brief portrait of the people of the East End

being adrift from society as a whole and almost forgotten by the passage of time and technology, but about to be visited by the future in the very real shape of a type of murderer they had never encountered before. It's not strictly true of course, but it makes the bare facts palatable.

The first part of Wescott's book is completely new and largely concerns the murder of Mary Nichols in Bucks Row. A lot of it covers the usual well-trodden ground - although, as said, Wescott's writing generally manages to make it interesting even for jaded Ripperologists - but there's a fair bit of new information and new thinking. For example, Wescott takes a fresh look at the story told by Harriet Lilley, someone who Wescott was astounded to discover had been left out by the authors of *The Jack the Ripper A to Z* and thought worth mentioning. That omission has been gratefully noted in case there should be another edition. It's a valid observation because Mrs Lilley merits more attention than she's been given. She lived in Bucks Row, was apparently awake throughout the night when Mary Nichols was murdered, and at some time in the early hours she heard sounds that she took to be made by a person in distress. But the sounds died away and a train passed and afterwards all was quiet. This train was identified in one newspaper as the 3.07am from New Cross, which passed Bucks Row at about 3:30am. If the sounds of distress (if that is what they were) were made by Mary Nichols, Mrs Lilley's account would place the murder ten minutes earlier than usually assumed. Most timings were estimated, so it remains to be seen whether this makes much difference to the known sequence of events, although Wescott says it places the murder ten minutes before Charles Cross/Lechmere entered Bucks Row. This clearly has implications for the largely unpersuasive theory that Cross/Lechmere was Jack the Ripper, but I suppose Cross's timings may have been lies and that he entered Bucks Row earlier than he claimed. Wescott nevertheless rehabilitates a witness whose story merits closer examination than hitherto given.

Another story from the night Nichols was murdered that Wescott rescues from near obscurity and one that is arguably more important is that told by Mrs Coldville (or Colville) and the bloodstains that were or weren't in Brady Street. Wescott plumps for the former, that the bloodstains were there, including a bloody hand print. Interestingly, some detailed research in the London Hospital records pulled the name of Margaret Millous, a 35-year-old hawker who was admitted with a bad wound to the arm and required surgery. Wescott suggests - and at first glance makes a persuasive case - for her having left the bloody hand print and suggests that she may have been a failed attempt at murder by Jack the Ripper.

Section Two deals with the murder of Elizabeth Stride in Berner Street, starting with a look at the sale of grapes to Stride by Matthew Packer. This essay first appeared in *Ripper Notes* back in January 2006, albeit considerably longer, a good chunk having been removed for this book, most of it about Wescott's suspect Le Grand, the promised subject of Wescott's next book. Perhaps one of the most interesting chapters is the detailed walk through Berner Street, a sort of step back in time that's very well done. It's again a fairly old piece, having first appeared in *Ripper Notes*, but Wescott assures his readers that he's updated the essay extensively. Further essays about Berner Street look at the claims suggesting that Stride was murdered by Michael Kidney, the man with whom she lived; Albert Bachert, an article pre-dating the recent book advancing this odd young man as a possible Ripper; what could and couldn't be seen by Fanny Mortimer, who lived almost opposite the murder scene; and a timely analysis of Israel Schwartz, who may have seen the murderer almost in action. The latter are particularly interesting pieces. They have all previously appeared in several excellent but now defunct Ripper journals. Wescott was never a big contributor to *Ripperologist*. Make of that what you will.

And finally there is Section Three, a collection of unconnected essays: 'The Ghoul of Goulston Street', 'The McCarthys of Dorset Street', 'Mary Kelly and the Descendants'. In the latter there is one error that leapt out of the page for me: he says 'As a child [Jean Overton] Fuller would listen to the stories of her mother's friend, Florence Pash...'. One could only wish that that was true, but in fact Jean heard the story in 1948 from her mother, who had received it in dribs and drabs during her collaboration with Florence Pash. There is no reason to believe that Jean invented the story, even Richard Whittington-Egan assessing her as a fiercely honest person, so the question remains: what did Florence Pash say in 1948?

*Ripper Confidential* contains errors here and there - what book doesn't? - and I'm sure a few people won't hold back

when it comes to letting Wescott know about them, but the book has been one of the highspots of a fairly dire period of Ripper publishing. Over the last few years mainstream publishers haven't been falling over themselves to publish well-researched rather than sensationalist Ripper books, and the ebook market, currently facing declining sales, is full of second-rate and badly written tosh or repeats of the old story. A book like Wescott's aimed at the seasoned Ripperologist is therefore a joy to behold, warts 'n all, and it goes to show that a collection of essays works well too. I hope to see other collections coming along - just as long as the essays are first submitted to *Ripperologist* of course!

### SQUARING THE CIRCLE:

#### WILL THE REAL JACK THE RIPPER PLEASE STAND UP

Alan Razen

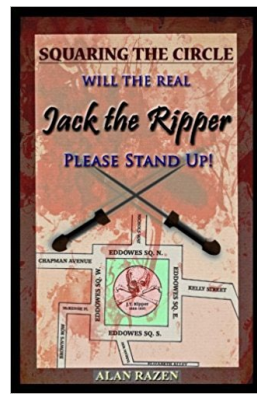
CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017

ebook

182pp;

ISBN:154509912X

£0.99



*'A Ripping yarn is solved. You have heard it all before, but this time it's for real.'*

We have heard it all before and I doubted that it would be the real deal this time round.

If you have a bookshelf of Ripper titles, take a look at it. What you have there is a lot of tombstones commemorating raised hopes and dashed dreams. With a few exceptions they all advance a suspect supported by a theory, and if they were really lucky they'll have enjoyed a measure of discussion on the message boards, but most will have made their way to the remainder bin unnoticed. Why anyone thinks they have solved the mystery of Jack the Ripper's identity baffles me, but to have the confidence to say, "Hey, loads of people have said this before, but they were just exercising their sphincters. I've really solved it!" To say that really takes chutzpah!

Alan Razen, who wrote *Hanratty: The Inconvenient Truth* a couple of years back, here tells his readers that he's solved the mystery of the Ripper's identity, then takes an awful long time to tell us who he thinks it was.

And he thinks the murders were committed by Jacob Levy and Harold (Harry) Harris.

Levy, Harris, and Joseph Lawende, left the Imperial Club, at 16-17 Duke Street (renamed Duke's Place in 1939), opposite the Great Synagogue, at about 1:30am on the morning of Sunday, 30 September 1888, and about

five minutes later passed Church Passage, which led into Mitre Square, and at the entrance saw a man and a woman talking. Lawende apparently paid more attention and was able to identify the woman from her distinctive clothing as Catherine Eddowes. Levy and Harris claimed to have paid the couple no attention at all, but the press thought both men saw more than they were prepared to say. Few serious students of the case have failed to think the same ever since. Mr. Razen thinks it too, and finds it so suspicious that he believes Levy and Harris quickly said goodbye to Lawende, briefly waited until Eddowes' companion had left, then legged it over to where she was standing and coerced her into Mitre Square, with the known results.

Razen has done quite a bit of genealogical research, confirming and expanding on what I think he says he found on Casebook, so he has invested both time and some money into his research, and he discovered that Harry Harris gave his address as Castle Street, Whitechapel, which he says doesn't exist. In fact present day Old Castle Street, back then known as New Castle Street, ran off Whitechapel High Street, parallel with Goulston Street. For reasons that weren't altogether clear to me, Razen thought this very suspicious because it would have meant 'that the three men were supposed to be walking in the opposite direction' to the one in which they meant to go. Maybe Razen's right and I read through the explanation without making any notes, but it seems to me that the three men would have walked down Duke Street to Aldgate/Whitechapel High Street, whereupon Harris at least would have turned left and headed to Old Castle Street. He would have thereby avoided potentially dangerous and unsavoury side streets.

Anyway, Razen thinks he's solved the case by pointing the finger of guilt at Levy and Harris, and with a burst of self-congratulatory back slapping he expresses what many people in his shoes might think: 'I have no doubt that the die-hard Ripperologists will not be happy with my conclusions, especially as the answer was staring them all in the face for so long.'

I suspect that what Ripperologists won't be happy with is that Razen simply hasn't made his case. He can perhaps show that it was physically possible for Levy and Harris to do what he theorises, but Levy falls a long way short of showing that the circumstances would have permitted it. What if they hadn't been able to get rid of Lawende without rousing his suspicions? What if the woman's companion left before they could dump Lawende? What if the woman wasn't Eddowes at all?

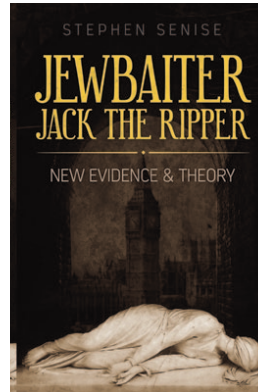
Razen has produced an engaging enough read and if nothing else his theory prompts a closer look at Levy and Harris, and maybe even at the Imperial Club, about which I suddenly realised I know nothing. Or if I do I couldn't

recall it. Anyway, the investment of 99p shouldn't leave anyone's piggy bank empty.

### **JEWBAITER JACK THE RIPPER: NEW EVIDENCE & THEORY**

Stephen Senise  
Acorn Independent Press, 2017  
Jewbaiter Jack The Ripper: New Evidence & Theory  
First Published:  
hardcover / softcover / ebook  
288pp; illus; appendices; notes  
ISBN:1912145073  
hardcore £24.99/softcover £24.89/ebook £7.99

I reviewed *Jewbaiter* in the last issue of *Ripperologist* but I didn't have the publishing details, so I give them here.



Just to briefly recap, Senise has found an Australian convict named George Hutchinson and argues that he was the same George Hutchinson who claimed to have been the last person to see Mary Kelly alive.

There isn't much to connect the two men, but the Aussie convict was an Englishman who arrived in Australia in 1889 and landed himself in trouble a few years later when he sexually assaulted two young boys.

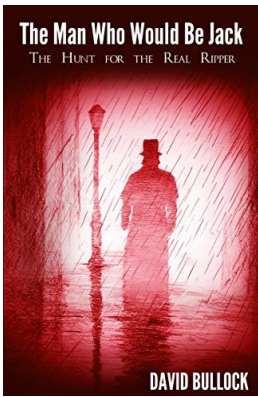
For me, the most interesting part of Senise's argument was his speculation that the Ripper fled London in 1889, taking the opportunity presented by the dock strike, when ship owners grabbed what blackleg labour they could, no questions asked. This may in reality be with way convict George went to Australia himself, whether he sought to escape the law or simply found passage when at any other time he possibly wouldn't have.

Senise writes well and it is easy to get swept along with the story, but the problem is that if even if convict George and London George were one and the same, there is no evidence that London George was Jack.

### **THE MAN WHO WOULD BE JACK: THE HUNT FOR THE REAL RIPPER**

David Bullock  
Thistle Publishing, 2017  
First Published: London: Robson Press, 2012  
Revised ebook  
335pp; illus; notes; biblio  
ISBN:B06Y28XH8  
£3.99

I reviewed this book when it was first published (*Ripperologist* 128, October 2012) and although I warmly recommended it, I expressed reservations, a particular concern being the absence of sources. Every Ripper book



should identify the source of the information used, but in this case Bullock had found some important witnesses who I had not come across and since no source was given the story they told couldn't be checked. I especially drew attention to Bullock's claim that Nichols had picked up a client by 3:30am because at about that time she

was seen with a man named Jim at a coffee-stall run near Bucks Row by a man named John Morgan, who had given the story to the newspapers.

I'm pleased to say that Mr. Bullock has addressed my criticism and now provides notes and sources. Unfortunately in doing so he has awakened other concerns. I'll return to Mr Morgan and his coffee stall in a few paragraphs.

I was also concerned by Mr Bullock's use of questionable sources, such as Edwin T. Woodhall who is the authority for a policeman in Bucks Row to have seen a tall, well-dressed young man at the spot where shortly afterwards the body of Nichols was found. Bullock claims that two journalists heard of this story when covering the *Sun's* Cutbush story, which was years before Woodhall wrote. Since we know the names of every policemen on a beat in or near Bucks Row, we can be fairly certain that there wasn't one who saw a man near the scene of the murder and therefore no rumours were circulating that the newspaper's reporters could pick up. Unfortunately Woodhall and the questionable copper remain in Bullock's book and one can't help but wonder whether Mr Bullock isn't choosing sources that say what he wants or can twist from them.

Which brings me back to the coffee-stall keeper, John Morgan. I located the story a while back in the *London Echo* (1 September 1888) and I'm afraid to say that the full tale is substantially different to that suggested by Bullock. This isn't the place and there isn't the space to delve into this story too deeply, but the upshot is that John Morgan was interviewed before he viewed Nichols in the mortuary and after he had done so he received no further press coverage, from which a reasonable conclusion is that he did not identify her as his customer. Another problem with the identification is that although Mr Morgan said he had seen the woman before and knew her to be a prostitute, as she left with her male companion she said, "Come on, Jim, let's get home", which doesn't sound like something a prostitute would say to a punter with whom she was planning to disappear to a dark back street for quick, paid for sex. And as if all this wasn't enough, there is a bit of a

problem with timings, the worst of them being that the woman and her male companion may have arrived at Mr Morgan's stall at the same time as Nichols was in Bucks Row and probably already dead or dying.

The inclusion of the coffee-stall keeper's story makes me wonder how uncritical Mr Bullock has been with other and perhaps more important sources. Certainly his chapter about Superintendent Charles Cutbush needed a few amendments.

Melville Macnaghten wrote that Supt. Cutbush was the uncle of Thomas Cutbush and Bullock draws attention to a statement in *The Sun* in 1894 which he attributes to journalist Louis Tracy, who commented that Jack the Ripper had relatives 'some of them in positions which would make them a target for the natural curiosity'. Naturally, Mr Bullock thinks this is a reference to Superintendent Cutbush, but an alternative is that it referred to the family of the horticulturists, William Cutbush and Son. *The Sun's* owner, T.P. O'Connor, would write in later years of Thomas Cutbush, although not naming him, that he was a member of the family of famous horticulturists. Unfortunately, research has failed to confirm that Thomas Cutbush was related to William Cutbush's family or that of Supt. Cutbush, although Bullock does quote the superintendent's great-granddaughter, Claire Chevin, as saying that Charles Cutbush took his life because the suspicions surrounding Thomas worsened his already existing clinical depression. I can think of no way of testing this, but it would be interesting to know precisely what she said.

All the foregoing makes David Bullock's book sound pretty bleak, but it is a well-written and easy read - a bit like reading a novel, which I know has put quite a few people off, but for the general reader the descriptions provide colour to what would otherwise be a short narrative. It's also the only full-length book available about Thomas Cutbush, who really deserves an in-depth, fully sourced, and critical assessment. That said, Bullock has made a real effort with this ebook revision. The notes and sources section, though small, is a valuable means of checking Bullock's sources (which, as said, unfortunately needs to be done), and there are some minor textual changes (I didn't make a page-by-page comparison), plus two additional chapters. One is about Cutbush's burial. The other is a rather persuasive bullet-pointed list of all the things that make Cutbush as likely Ripper, but, alas, one must also report a problem here.

In 1929 *John Blunt's Monthly* published an article by a man apparently recently released from Broadmoor who told a story about a man named 'Taylor' (an acknowledged pseudonym) who was generally believed to have been Jack the Ripper. Bullock suggests that Taylor was Cutbush.



However the article says that ‘Taylor’ had been in the asylum ‘for more than thirty years’ when the anonymous ex-patient arrived in the asylum. Cutbush died in 1903, twelve years after being committed. He cannot have been ‘Taylor’.

I am impressed that David Bullock took the criticisms of the first edition to heart and made appropriate changes and I still recommend the book because Bullock writes well and provides a pleasant few hours reading in a comfy armchair with Jeff Beal paying in the background, but far more importantly because it’s the only book about Cutbush and may inspire someone to undertake further research. Sadly, it lacks the accuracy and objectivity one demands from a serious biography or history. I didn’t check every claim Bullock made, but the sources for John Morgan and ‘Taylor’ didn’t allow for Bullock’s interpretations, the uncritical use of Edwin T Woodhall was disturbing, and, notwithstanding Claire Chevin, no evidence has been found to support the claims that Thomas and Charles Cutbush were related.

### JACK THE RIPPER - THE REAL TRUTH

Trevor Marriott

www.trevormarriott.co.uk

Trevor Marriott, 2017

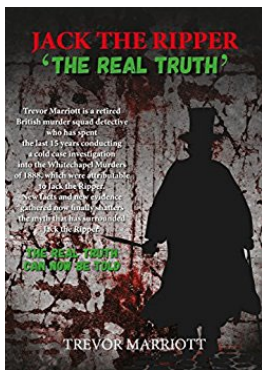
First Published: *Jack the Ripper: The Secret Police Files*.

Trevor Marriott, 2013

ebook

400pp; illus some in colour;

£4.99



*‘The content of this book covers the second and final part of my long and protracted investigation into the Whitechapel murders. For continuity purposes and in order to highlight the results of significant new lines of inquiry it has been necessary to use a significant amount of original material from my previous book “Jack the Ripper: The Secret*

*Police Files” first published in 2013.’*

Trevor Marriott wrote the above at the front of this book, and the clear and presumably intended impression is that *Jack the Ripper: The Real Truth* is a new book, albeit one that incorporates a ‘significant amount’ of material from his ‘previous book’. In fact *Jack the Ripper: The Real Truth* doesn’t use a ‘significant amount’ of material from *The Secret Police Files*, it uses ALL the material in *The Secret Police Files*. In fact it is *The Secret Police Files* and it’s safe to say that no part of it was included for continuity and highlighting. A new jacket and a new title does not a new book make, but it might stick a few undeserved quid

into Marriott’s pocket from those who think it’s a new book.

Whilst nothing has been taken away from *The Secret Police Files*, some new material has been added. It consists of a few paragraphs here and there and some cosmetic changes, but the longest additions are an extension to Marriott’s contention that Mary Kelly’s heart was not taken away by the murderer, already expounded at length on Casebook, where it was hotly disputed, and a section of short portraits of a handful of the 100 suspects named over the years (Marriott said there were 200 suspects in *The Secret Police Files*). The suspects he considers are James Sadler, William Bury, Thomas Cream, Thomas Cutbush, James Kelly, Alfred Blanchard, Lewis Carroll, Frederick Deeming, Jill the Ripper, Jacob Levy, Hyam Hyams, Francis Thompson, Sir John Williams, Robert Stephenson and Dr. Barnardo. These mini-essays don’t present anything new.

This isn’t the place to review *Jack the Ripper: The Secret Police Files*, which is essentially a long account of Trevor Marriott’s laudable but perhaps misguided and ultimately failed efforts to have some Special Branch material (the secret police files of the title) opened to public inspection. Marriott’s account should be read in conjunction with the official report. It would appear that Marriott eschewed brevity and facts in favour of a 44-page witness statement, much of which ‘was pure argument’. Marriott also seems to have been over concerned with the potential impact of the material on his efforts to discover the identity of Jack the Ripper, a fact the MPS and the Information Commissioner emphasised ‘and to characterise it as no more than an individual’s personal wish to solve a mystery which, although of evident interest to many members of the public, is not a matter of significant public interest so long after the events.’ Ripper researchers should take to heart the dire warning that solving the mystery of who Jack the Ripper was is not considered to be of historical significance. It’s a pity that nobody explained this to Marriott, who could then have modified his approach accordingly. Alas, nobody did.

The main value of the book are the expert medical opinions Marriott solicited, although a fair proportion of it was directed at whether or not the organs removed from Catherine Eddowes could have been carried away wrapped in the apron piece found in Goulston Street. Unfortunately, all of this was based on Marriott’s mistaken belief that it was ever seriously theorised that the apron piece was actually used for such a purpose. The opinions of Dr. Biggs are worth the purchase price of the book, however, just as long as one doesn’t give much attention to Marriott’s interpretations of them.

This, then, is a reissue of an old book, nothing of

significance having been added or removed, and obviously nothing was included for the purpose of continuity and highlighting!

### H. H. HOLMES: THE TRUE HISTORY OF THE WHITE CITY DEVIL

Adam Selzer

New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2017

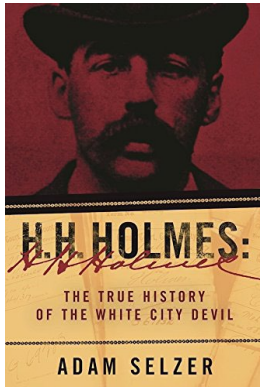
www.skyhorsepublishing.com

hardcover & ebook

430pp; illus; appendices; notes; index

ISBN: B01M8M0570

hardcover £17.99, ebook £11.69



He was a con man, a bigamist, and a serial killer sometimes credited with having murdered in excess of two hundred women. His name was Herman Webster Mudgett, but he is known in the annals of infamy as H.H. Holmes. Widely regarded as the first serial killer in American history, there's a small library of books about him, the best known

probably being Erik Larson's *The Devil in the White City* (2003), apparently to be filmed and starring Leonardo di Caprio as the murderer, a part I suspect he'd carry off very well indeed, but I couldn't find reference to it on the IMDB and can therefore give no further information. There's also an upcoming television documentary series called *American Ripper* on which I believe I am appearing, along with almost everyone else I know, and their mothers. I gather that among those appearing is Adam Selzer.

Selzer has been a pretty prolific author of books about H.H. Holmes and seems like a veritable database of information about his life and times. I guess the long-accepted definitive title about Holmes was Harold Schechter's *Depraved*, first published back in 1994, and whilst I can't claim to be an authority on Holmes, my guess is that that book is now rubbing the metaphorical dust out of its eyes as *H.H. Holmes: The True History of the White City Devil* rushes by.

Holmes hasn't enjoyed the same degree of international infamy as Jack the Ripper, but he is unquestionably almost as big a man of mystery. Adam Selzer began an earlier book with the statement: 'If I have come to one conclusion in my exhaustive research into the career of H.H. Holmes, it's that we really don't know a damned thing about him. There's hardly a single piece of reliable information - even his census forms seem to include a lie or two...' On this basis Holmes' story was ready-made for sensationalising and some people sensationalised it with unbridled

enthusiasm. It's probably therefore no surprise that it would eventually be claimed that H.H. Holmes was also responsible for the murders attributed to Jack the Ripper. As far as I know, the theory surfaced with Jeff Mudgett, the great-grandson of the murderer, who wrote a novel called *Bloodstains* and contributed an article, 'Jack is Holmes', to *Ripperologist* (July 2011, no.121). This was followed with an overtly non-fiction book by Dane Ladwig, *Dr. H.H. Holmes and The Whitechapel Ripper* (2014), in which he claimed that Holmes 'rented a property in the Whitechapel district on Middlesex Street' and also rented property in Rotherham 'a mere few hours northwest of Whitechapel'.

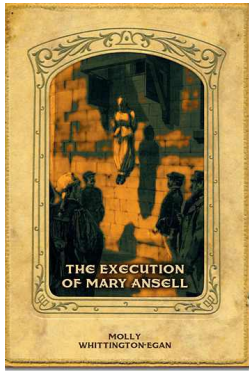
Holmes arrived in Chicago in August 1886 and in 1887 he purchased a plot of land on which he built a two-storey building that would become known as the 'Murder Castle'. In 1888 he was sued because he hadn't paid his architect or suppliers. He also registered to vote in October 1888 and his long-estranged parents claimed that he visited them in that month too. Searchers for smoking guns understandably claim that this material doesn't rule Holmes out as the Whitechapel murderer, which is true, but it doesn't rule him in either, and given the paucity of verifiable facts about his life it's probably better than anything one could have expected. Selzer makes no mention of Whitechapel or Rotherham. Or England for that matter. He doesn't dismiss the idea that Holmes was Jack the Ripper, he simply doesn't address the matter at all, presumably finding it too ridiculous to bother with. As for Ripperologists, the idea that it was H.H. Holmes hasn't enthused very many of them. In fact, as far as I know it hasn't enthused any, and Holmes being the Ripper seems as likely as the Ripper being Joey - I mean my childhood budgie not Joey Tribbiani, the character in *Friends*, although he's no more likely either.

So Selzer can't be moved to even discuss the claim that H.H. Holmes was Jack the Ripper, which to my mind speaks volumes about how seriously that suggestion needs to be taken, but I wait to see what *American Ripper* has to say. I don't have high hopes though. But Selzer's book is about Holmes and it is an utterly absorbing read. The research has been extraordinary and the number of myths dispelled is extraordinary too. In fact, this book should almost be made compulsory reading as an example of what can happen when rigorous historical methodology isn't applied and stories are simply accepted as being true, the fact repeated by author after author and not questioned. Thank goodness we have writers like Selzer to get back to the truth.

Buy this book.

**THE EXECUTION OF MARY ANSELL**

Molly Whittington-Egan  
 London: Mango Books, 2017  
 www.mangobooks.co.uk  
 hardcover & ebook  
 188pp; illus; appendix; biblio; index  
 ISBN: 978-1911273134  
 hardcover £15, ebook £8.00



Sometimes there isn't a lot you need say about a book. This book is an example. It is by Molly Whittington-Egan, and that's all you really need to know in order to buy it. Anything by Molly Whittington-Egan will be well researched, its arguments carefully considered, and the story well-written.

On the face of it the crime committed by twenty-one year-old Mary Ansell was simple, sordid, and stupid, having nothing about it to merit further discussion, let alone worthy of a book one hundred and eighteen years afterwards. Mary baked her sister Caroline a cake with a yellow cream filling which her sister ate and shared with friends. The filling was yellow because it contained phosphorus rat poison. Her sister died in agony and her friends were extremely lucky to survive. The crime was quickly traced back to Mary, whose motive was to obtain an £11 life insurance payout. Ansell went to the gallows at St. Alban's Prison on 19 July 1899.

What elevated the murder of Caroline Ansell is the question of whether or not Mary Ansell should have hanged or not.

Quite a few people thought Ansell was a brick short of a load, among them L. Forbes Winslow, the subject of an earlier book by Molly Whittington-Egan and himself a bit of an obsessive when it came to Jack the Ripper. On the rear jacket there is an extremely unflattering drawing of Mary Ansell and below it a quote from Forbes Winslow, who wrote, 'I consider this to be a very good likeness, and illustrates the type of degenerates to which she belongs.' The drawing suggests that Mary Ansell looked like someone you wouldn't want to bump into down a brightly lit alley, let alone a dark one, but both the drawing and Forbes Winslow's observation were intended to help!

In 1899 Mary Ann Ansell was the only domestic servant employed at a boarding house in Great Coram Street, still notorious since the murder of Harriet Buswell at no.12 nearly thirty years earlier. Ansell was permitted to sleep in the kitchen, which gave her access to the oven and the things necessary to bake her cake. Ms. Whittington-Egan

doesn't say whether or not the cake had a soggy bottom, but the rat poison filling would have won few points from Mary Berry. Wrapped in brown paper and addressed to Caroline, the cake found its way to Leavesden Asylum, where her sister and her sister's friends was patients (along with Ripper suspect Aaron Kosminski). She was an epileptic. Mary and Caroline came from a family in which mental illness was common.

The public's attitude towards murder was changing. In some places it was known that juries were so opposed to capital punishment that they would return a verdict of innocence even when the evidence of guilt was overwhelming. Mary Ansell's was a case of clear premeditated murder, but there was nevertheless a groundswell of public opinion agitating for a reprieve, not only because of diminished responsibility, but also because of her age and sex. However, apart from the fact that the Home Secretary could find no evidence on which Mary's sentence could be commuted on the grounds of mental illness, Molly Whittington-Egan shows that the young murderess also faced overwhelming social obstacles.

In 1883 Sir Francis Galton, who a few years later, in 1888, would deliver a paper to the Royal Institution on fingerprints, coined the term 'eugenics', which was all about creating a master race, even advocating compulsory sterilization, which was actually adopted in some parts of the United States. Galton even calculated the worth of a child, concluding that a labourer's child was worth about £5, whereas the child of rich and influential parents was valued in thousands. Eugenics enjoyed a tremendous social following and would bloom in Nazi Germany. The degenerate Mary Ansell, product of a family of mental deficiencies, was just the sort of person who many thought deserved to be at the end of a rope.

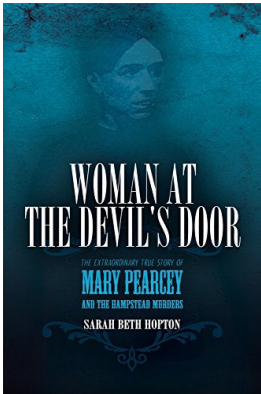
Mary Ansell was also a servant. Having complete strangers in your home was fine just as long as they knew their place and stayed firmly in it. But the working classes had been flexing their muscles, unionizing and making demands - making demands of their betters for goodness' sake! Women even wanted the vote! And servants were stealing from and even murdering their employers. Obviously those people privileged to be invited into the homes of their social superiors to serve them merited the severest punishment if guilty of a wrongdoing, just like policemen or doctors who abused the authority they were given. Although Mary had murdered her sister, she was still a servant.

Mary Ansell clearly wasn't just a sordid murderess.

An excellent book.

**WOMAN AT THE DEVIL'S DOOR:  
THE EXTRAORDINARY TRUE STORY OF  
MARY PEARCEY AND THE HAMPSTEAD MURDERS**

Sarah Beth Hopton  
London: Mango Books, 2017  
www.mangobooks.co.uk  
hardcover and ebook  
270pp; illus; notes; biblio; index  
ISBN:1911273159  
hardcover £20, ebook £8.00



As the subtitle of Ms Hopton's excellent book tells you, it's all about the murders committed by Mary Pearcey, who is an unlikely candidate to be Jack the Ripper, yet her crimes and those of Jack were linked almost from the minute her victims were discovered.

Some people have unnecessarily complicated lives. Mary Eleanor Wheeler Pearcey was enjoying an affair with Frank Hogg and Frank Hogg was enjoying an affair with Mary Pearcey and Phoebe Styles, and the inevitable happened and Phoebe became pregnant, Frank, to his credit, did the decent thing and married her. Mary Pearcey wasn't pleased but was slightly pacified by Frank's assurances that his marriage would not interfere too much with their relationship.

One day Mary Pearcey invited Phoebe and her little baby around for tea. Phoebe was apparently aware that Frank had been having a relationship with Pearcey and that she hadn't been too chuffed when he broken it off to marry Phoebe, so why Phoebe accepted the strange invitation to tea is a mystery. She visited Mary's lodgings on 24 October 1890 and during the afternoon neighbours heard a frightful commotion coming from Mary's house.

Early that evening Phoebe's body was found unceremoniously dumped near a rubbish heap. The baby's body was found a short time later. The police soon learned the identity of the murdered woman and her child and quickly discovered that she had intended visiting Mary Pearcey that afternoon for tea. So they paid Mary a call and found a lot of blood, which Mary implausibly attributed to killing mice. She was arrested and her trial was pretty open and shut. She was hanged.

Before she died Mary made an odd request. She asked that an advertisement be placed in any London newspapers read in Madrid. The message was, 'M.E.C.P. Last wish of M.E.W. Have not betrayed.' The man who placed this advertisement on Mary's behalf later explained that Mary had told him that the message referred to her

marriage, and she said that she had been married by a robed clergyman in some chambers in Piccadilly in the presence of the man's valet. The marriage had not lasted long, the man had briefly supported her, and she had sworn an oath never to divulge his name.

Strange.

On 14 December 1890 the *Sunday Times* ran a quite lengthy piece persuasively arguing (although evidently not arguing persuasively enough) that Pearcey was insane when she committed the murders. On 28 December it carried a very short piece under the heading 'Mrs Pearcey's Real Name'. It concerned a letter received from Perpignan, a city in southern France, the writer of which gave no name but signed the letter with a Maltese Cross and said, "We both thank you for trying to save Mrs. 'Pearcey' - Mdme, Previst (Miss M.E. Wheeler)." The *Sunday Times* conjectured that 'Previst' was the real married name of Mrs Pearcey.

The advertisement was evidently to someone with the initials M.E.C.P., the 'P' perhaps being for 'Previst', and M.E.W. is evidently Mary Eleanor Wheeler, but what secret had she not divulged? Why was it so important that as Mrs. Pearcey's life was about to end that she wanted to assure someone that she had not revealed it?

But to turn to Jack the Ripper, it was almost as soon as the body of Phoebe Hogg was discovered that people understandably saw in it a familiar hand, as a correspondent for *Lloyds' Weekly News* (26 October 1890) reported, 'When the murder was first bruited abroad the alarming rumour spread that Jack the Ripper had been at work in the locality...' The reporter noted that the details of the crime 'were of a sufficiently horrible nature to be considered well akin thereto', but quickly stated that his inquiries had put pay to the suggestion, the murder was not that of Jack.

It's interesting, albeit probably unsurprising, that the crime was initially laid at Jack the Ripper's door, but the twist that was given to the story after her execution (if not before) was that Mary Pearcey was Jack the Ripper!

A correspondent for the *Western Daily Mercury* said that Inspector Bannister, who had taken charge of the investigation soon after the discovery of the body, had his own suspicions about a connection between Pearcey and the Ripper. The *Pall Mall Gazette* drew a connection to the rings and suggested they were a link between Pearcey and the Ripper. In 1939 William Stewart wrote a book (now famous for being one of the most expensive, if not the most expensive) about the Ripper, *Jack the Ripper: A New Theory*, in which he claimed that Jack the Ripper was a woman - Conan Doyle is supposed to have first mooted this suggestion (I haven't a source for him doing so, however;

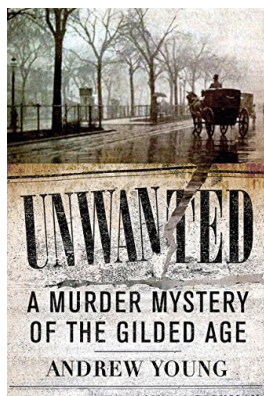
it seems to have originated with his son, Adrian, who told it to the late Tom Cullen, who authored *When London Walked in Terror* in 1965), although it was a suggestion that actually had a brief life following the discovery of two women's hats at the scene of the murder of Frances Coles in 1891. William Stewart did not actually state that Pearcey was Jack, but the insinuation was heavy enough. Mary Beth Hopton states 'It should go without saying - yet I will say it here definitively - that Mary Pearcey was not Jill the Ripper.' One can't really disagree.

The Pearcey case was open and shut. There was no doubt whatsoever that Mrs Pearcey had committed the murders and as terrible and sensational as they were, interest soon dimmed, which may explain why there has never been a full account of the crimes. Now there is one and thankfully Sarah Beth Hopton has done a fantastic job in telling the story.

One thing. There is a mortuary photo captioned Phoebe Hogg, but it looks awfully like Mrs Pearcey to me. Or did Frank Hogg have a thing for women with slightly protruding and gappy teeth?

### UNWANTED: A MURDER MYSTERY OF THE GILDED AGE

Andrew Young  
 Yardley, Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2016  
[www.westholmepublishing.com](http://www.westholmepublishing.com)  
 hardcover & ebook  
 268pp; illus; sources; index  
 ISBN:9781594162466  
 hardcover £20, ebook £8.15



Histories of Victorian Britain often poke at the dying embers of Victoria's reign as if nothing of significance happened. The 1880s must seem duller than most decades, only the matchgirls striking a brief flame of interest. It was in fact a decade of considerable social change and uncertainty. Much of it centred on London's East

End where dockers were flexing their muscles, women were agitating for the vote, and a religious cult was trying to militarise religion. Much the same was happening in America, where the era is known as 'the Gilded Age', a term picked up from Mark Twain's 1873 novel *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*.

It was a morning damp with a winter fog when a young lad crossing a field in northern Kentucky came across the body of a woman. Her clothing was torn and heavily spattered with blood, and her head was missing. She would be identified as an attractive young woman named Pearl Bryan and she was the daughter of a respectable

farmer.

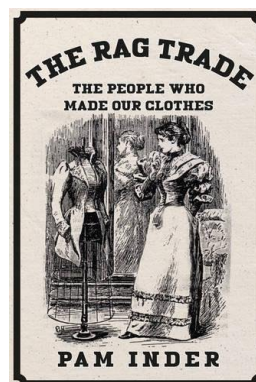
The year was 1896 and America was changing. There were cameras, telephones, ragtime music pounding out of bordellos, racism, economic turmoil, drunkenness, and Gibson girls. The murder of Pearl Bryan was a horrific crime that the police and public alike were determined to solve, and solve it they did, but it also touched on many aspects of the time and some raw nerves too.

The crime isn't forgotten in the annals of American crime. In fact there's a folk song, 'Pearl Bryan', which tells the story of her murder. It's been recorded so many times, albeit with words changed (my favourite is by Burnett and Rutherford, recorded in c.1926), that Paul Slade produced a book in 2012, *"Please Tell Me Where's Her Head": Pearl Bryan in Song and Story*, which you can get on Kindle for a mere 99p. Other books include the anonymous *The Mysterious Murder of Pearl Bryan; or The Headless Horror* and *The Perils of Pearl Bryan: Betrayal and Murder in the Midwest in 1896* by James McDonald and Joan Christen (2012). But Andrew Young has delved deep into surviving reports of the case to produce a sober and rewarding account of the murder that explores (sometimes perhaps too tangentially) the world and time in which it occurred, in particular how the police worked in this CSI-free landscape to identify the victim, trace the culprits and tighten the noose around their necks.

This is true crime and history rolled into one, a combination that few writers manage to pull off. Andrew Young has done a good job. Furthermore, this is a book I'm looking forward to reading again. I don't often have the time or inclination to do that.

### THE RAG TRADE: THE PEOPLE WHO MADE OUR CLOTHES

Pam Inder  
 Stroud, Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing, 2017  
[www.amberley-books.com](http://www.amberley-books.com)  
 softcover & ebook  
 256pp; illus; notes  
 ISBN:1445657295  
 softcover £16.99, ebook £13.80



I can't say that I am very interested in fashion, but one of the problems with the reign of Queen Victoria is that it was so long that the fashions at the start of her reign would have looked like fancy dress costumes at the end - just think Mr Pickwick at the former and Sherlock Holmes at the latter - so what people were wearing when the

Ripper was prowling the streets wasn't the same as when the streets in the imagined eye of Charles Dickens were

home to Bill Sykes and Nancy. The poor, of course, wore whatever they could lay their hands on, no matter how old or unfashionable or what the state of repair. But if you weren't on the breadline then fashion was important. And complex.

Style was important. It was important to look good, but equally important not to look as if you'd worked hard to look good. You were expected to take an interest in your appearance, yet you had to make sure you didn't look like you were taking an interest in your appearance. That would make you look shallow. You had to wear fitted clothes of good quality and elegance, yet avoid looking overdressed or flashy. How you achieved this effect of studied indifference and natural good taste needed a miracle. Especially if you didn't have much money. And the miracle came in the shape of your dressmaker, off the peg garments being a rarity.

How the dressmaker worked, her relationship with her customers, her social standing, and much else besides makes interesting reading. Pam Inder's PhD was on 'English Provincial Dressmakers in the 19th century' and *The Rag Trade* is a direct consequence of that study, albeit one that has been a long time coming, and in this volume she provides biographies of eleven women in the 19th century clothing business. Each belongs to a different background, with a different clientele, at a different time. Importantly, each of them has a story to tell and many will certainly resonate with modern readers, if its only the problems posed by difficult customers.

I suspect that *The Rag Trade* has a relatively small niche potential readership, thus accounting for what in my meanness I consider a fairly high cover price for a softcover book, £16.99, and a high ebook price. The book also doesn't have an index, which probably isn't absolutely essential in this case but would have been beneficial. Overall, though, interesting reading.

### **MAD OR BAD: CRIME AND INSANITY IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN**

David J Vaughan

Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword History, 2017

[www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk)

[criminalunacy.blogspot.co.uk](http://criminalunacy.blogspot.co.uk)

First Published:

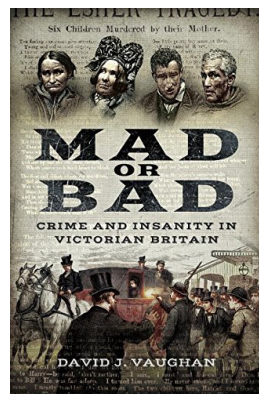
Softcover & ebook

187pp; illus; appendices; biblio; index

ISBN:1473864135

softcover £12.99 / ebook £9.35

Although the history of psychiatry stretches back into pre-history, the understanding and treatment of mental illness in the past probably wouldn't be recognisable as such to the untrained eyes until the 19th century. The term itself seems to have been coined in 1808 and throughout the century psychiatrists - often called alienists - fought for



recognition, and sometimes you could be forgiven for thinking that nowhere was the battle more keenly fought than in the courtroom. Arguing insanity in mitigation of a criminal act also dates back into the mists of time, but the M'Naughten rules are normally cited as enshrining the rules for criminal defence based on mental deficiency - Daniel

M'Naughten murdered Edward Drummond in 1843 in mistake for the Prime Minister, who he deludedly believed was responsible for all his problems; the jury returned a verdict of 'Not guilty by reason of insanity'. Since that time psychiatrists tried, often against almost insurmountable odds, to demonstrate that they were in a position to not only identify when a person was insane, but also when they were sane or when they had fully recovered from their mental illness. They didn't always succeed.

David J. Vaughan, formerly the Assistant County Archaeologist in Wiltshire and author of at least two books with which I've come into contact, *The Secret Life of Celestina Sommer - A Very Victorian Murder* (2014) and *Bloody British History: Salisbury* (2014), has for a while been a mad blogger, or to rephrase that, a blogger about insanity, 'Mad, Bad or Desperate'. Pen and Sword seem to have been searching the bloggosphere for quite some time for subjects and writers that would make good books. *Mad or Bad* is the latest.

It consists in the main of twenty-five mini pen portraits of men and women whose fate was decided on whether or not they were mad or bad. They range from the infamous to the forgotten. The book also contains a who's who of lawyers and medics - it includes Forbes Winslow (father and son) and the odd comment that L. Forbes Winslow's description of Jack the Ripper led the police to think he was describing himself, which is a story I can't recall hearing before. There's also a glossary of terms and a number of short chapters discussing the history of insanity.

Another book that made enjoyable reading.

### **LONDON'S EAST END HISTORY TOUR**

Michael Foley

Stroud, Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing, 2017

[www.amberley-books.com](http://www.amberley-books.com)

[www.michael-foley-history-writer.co.uk](http://www.michael-foley-history-writer.co.uk)

softcover & ebook

96pp; illus

ISBN:978-1445668826

softcover £6.99, ebook £4.79

I'm not sure what to make of this little book - and it is little, just 168x124mm - which is evidently designed to slip



into a jacket pocket. The book is essentially your tour guide, obviously not as knowledgeable and chatty as a real person and the book can't answer questions, but you can do the tour as quickly or slowly as you like, taking a break whenever an interesting-looking pub or coffee shop comes into view.

The book also has the advantage of enabling you to do the tour over and over until you are sick of it.

The book opens with a map showing some twenty-four locations. They start from Bow Road and move to West Ham, so all but begin where Jack the Ripper's tramping down finished. Each place has two pages devoted to it, but these are pretty much used up by one or more pictures, some of which appear to have been colourised. One paragraph, and sometimes a very short paragraph, describe the place.

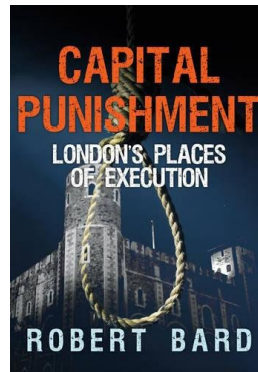
The book has two tours, the second has twenty-four locations too and heads towards Plaistow.

I must say that I was baffled by some of text. Not by what it said, more by why it bothered to say it all. For example, at the junction of Romford Road and Woodgrange Road there was or is a pub once called the Princess Alice. Michael Foley says there is some dispute over whether it was named after Queen Victoria's daughter or the Thames steamer that sank in 1878. All very interesting, no doubt, but I'm not sure whether the pub is still there. Mr Foley says that it's not known as the Princes Alice now, but he doesn't say by what name it currently goes, and he opens the paragraph by saying that it 'stood' at the junction, the past tense indicating that it is no longer there. There are several entries like that, leaving you wondering why one should go there. I mean, no offence but I don't have to do a tour of the East End to see a pub that's not there or has closed and is now an insurance office or just rotting, and has nothing of interest about it except a slight mystery about why it has the name it has or had.

So, as I said, I'm not sure what to make of this little book. It takes you into an area not often dealt with by books about the East End. Indeed, some people would even dispute whether the area covered by the book is the East End at all, its boundaries always having been fluid. And the text sometimes leaves you wondering what's so special about what you are looking at. On the other hand, some of the paragraphs are interesting and the old photographs let you see what the location looked at in the past.

## CAPITAL PUNISHMENT: LONDON'S PLACES OF EXECUTION

Robert Bard  
Stroud, Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing, 2016  
www.amberley-books.com  
First Published:  
softcover & ebook  
96pp; illus in colour; biblio  
ISBN:978-1445667362  
softcover £14.99, ebook £12.00



It crossed my mind that the author of this book, Robert Bard, might not be a popular guest at parties. In my mind's eye I pictured a stick-thin man with unruly hair, cheeks grey with stubble, and watery black-rimmed eyes that only came alive when someone mentioned a London location. He would then quietly observe, "They

hanged Tom the Strangler there. Very nasty." Or, "That's where Bessie Bludgeon was buried and you could see her for a long time, mostly maggots."

I say this because he's the author of this book about the places where folk were sent into eternity, as well as the book reviewed below about the places where folk were buried. Of course, it's entirely possible that he's not like that at all. In fact he probably isn't like it - he's a former airline pilot and a yachtsman - and I don't picture airline pilots and yachtsmen as gloomy-looking and cadaverous-faced - but when a picture like that has settled in your head, it's hard to shift.

As it happens, this is a great little book. but frankly an expensive one for what you get, and there isn't an awful lot to say about 90-odd heavily illustrated pages. The places to which Mr Bard takes us are Tyburn, St Giles-in-the-Fields, Newgate, Charing Cross, Old and New Palace Yards in Westminster, Tower Green, Tower Hill, Lincolns Inn Fields, St Paul's Churchyard (I should have but didn't know that four of the Gunpowder Plot conspirators went to meet their maker here), Smithfield, Wapping (Captain Kidd met his end here, of course), and Kennington Common.

I'll mention one small error; a passing reference was made to John Bell, a 14-year-old lad who has the distinction of being the youngest person executed in Britain since 1800, being hanged in Rochester. In fact Bell was hanged in Maidstone, the county town of Kent, on a gallows specially constructed near the main gate of the new prison and he did not have an easy death. Maidstone doesn't have much going for it and I don't think it should

be robbed of this bit of notoriety.

A little expensive and no index, but lots of colour pictures and a text that isn't detailed but is as informative as the limited word length allows, make this an interesting if somewhat gruesome bit of reading.

### LONDON'S HIDDEN BURIAL GROUNDS

Robert Bard, & Adrian Miles

Stroud, Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing, 2017

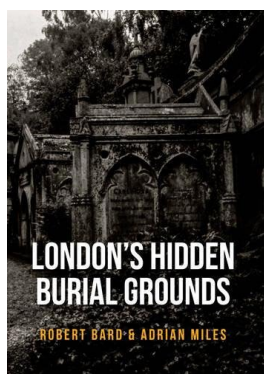
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96pp; illus in colour; biblio

ISBN:978-1445661117

softcover £14.99, ebook £8.28



Tootling along Whitechapel Road in the 1830s you would come to the St. Mary's Church with its famous outside pulpit and a white-painted facade from which the road and, indeed, the whole district took its name. What you'd also probably notice, in fact you probably wouldn't have much choice in the matter, were dead bodies, most of them

quietly decomposing in a way upsetting to the eye and offensive to the olfactory senses. As one observer of this repugnant scene remarked, 'The ground is so densely crowded as to present one entire mass of human bones and putrefaction.'

The churchyard has gone now. So has St Mary's. And so have a lot of London's burial grounds. In fact, they've been disappearing for quite a while. Back in the 1800s a Mrs Holmes was looking at an old map of London when she noted that quite a few burial grounds had vanished from the landscape. Most people might have made a mental note of that and got on with something else, but Mrs Holmes set out to find out more about these forgotten places and see what remained to be seen. This was probably not very easy for a woman to do in the late 1800s, but it proved of sufficient interest to merit a book, *The London Burial Grounds*, published in 1896.

Robert Bard and Adrian Miles are following in the footsteps of the trendsetting Mrs Holmes with this slender book. And very absorbing it is too.

### STALAG LUFT III: AN OFFICIAL HISTORY OF THE 'GREAT ESCAPE' POW CAMP

Howard Tuck, & Howard Grehan

Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Frontline Books, 2017

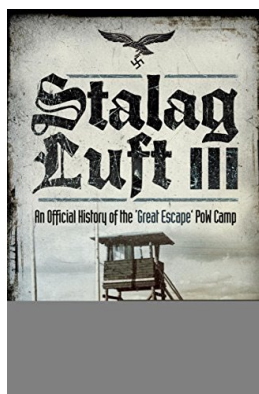
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hardcover & ebook

276pp; illus; index

ISBN:1473883059

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and on the orders of Hermann Goering it was specially designed and constructed to prevent escapes, especially by tunnelling. It was called Stalag Luft III and it is probably the most famous PoW camp in the whole of WWII, even more famous than Colditz, although it's entirely possible that you are unfamiliar with the name.

It was from Stalag Luft III that two famous escapes took place, the first, in October 1943, is known as the 'Wooden Horse' escape, the other, in March 1944, is known as the 'Great Escape'. Both have been the subject of excellent books and, of course, movies.

There have been several books written about Stalag Luft III and the Great Escape in particular, but this one differs because it is a collection of official papers and first-hand accounts that describe the administration of the camp, the ingenious escape plans, and much else besides, all of it compiled for the War Office at the end of the war. The material here was never made public and, indeed, much of the information concerning prisoner conditions, punishments, and escape plans remained classified for many years after 1945.

As Howard Tuck says in his foreword, this book gives us a very valuable insight into life in this PoW camp, the determination of the men to escape, and the dangers involved, especially as the guards learned and adapted their methods.

I have long been interested in Stalag Luft III, probably since I watched the movies on television, particularly *The Wooden Horse*, a staple for wet Sunday afternoons, and I once had the privilege of talking to the former prisoner who made some now hugely important and valuable drawings of 'Tom', 'Dick', and 'Harry', the three tunnels through one of which two hundred men planned to make their escape. Seventy-six actually made it through, but seventy three were caught. Although for many of the men making a 'home run' was the aim, the plan was to cause



as much disruption and divert as much manpower as possible. Adolf Hitler's blind fury at the escape was not expected, nor was the cold-blooded murder of fifty of those caught expressly on the orders of Hitler, against strong advice, and in violation of the Geneva Convention. The story of the Allied investigation after the war to hunt down and bring to justice those responsible is another story.

The book is in five parts:

1. East (Officers') Compound, April 1942 to January 1945, consists of ten chapters each exhaustively covering every aspect of life in the camp, escape plans, materials and methods, and much else down to intelligence gathering and anti-German propaganda.

2. Centre (N.C.O.s') Compound, April 1942 to June 1943, follows much the same structure, although the conditions and the way things were done here was slightly different.

3. North (Officers') Compound, March 1943 to January 1945, pretty much the same structure but different details. The other parts deal with the Centre (Officers') Compound and the Belaria Compound.

I have a small library of books about Stalag Luft III, including one owned by my father, and in time this one will probably be one of the most well-thumbed. Highly recommended.

### THE TIME TRAVELLER'S GUIDE TO RESTORATION BRITAIN

Ian Mortimer

London: Bodley Head, 2017

[www.penguinrandomhouse.co.uk/publishers/vintage/bodley-head](http://www.penguinrandomhouse.co.uk/publishers/vintage/bodley-head)

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

hardcover & ebook

464pp; illus; notes; index

ISBN:1847923046

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I don't recall how I came to have a sample of Ian Mortimer's *The Time Traveller's Guide to Medieval England* on my Kindle, but I do recall that I began reading it when I was on a train journey just before Christmas 2008. I was utterly absorbed. I'd never come across anything like it before. It was real history, the history of how ordinary

people lived and behaved. Mortimer followed it up with *The Time Traveller's Guide to Elizabethan England* (2012) and that was fantastic too, but the years passed and I thought we'd see no more. I wasn't surprised, the

research involved must be phenomenal and the writing demanding, but when I learned that *The Time Traveller's Guide to Restoration Britain* was due, I couldn't wait to get my hands on it.

The concept behind the 'Time Traveller's Guide...' series is simple. Imagine that the past is a foreign country - just like L.P. Hartley said in his opening to *The Go-Between*: 'The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there' - and write a guidebook for visitors; what the people are like, what to see, what to beware of, what to eat, what to wear, how to get around, where to stay, what to do if you are taken unwell or if you're the victim of a crime. That's what Ian Mortimer's 'Time Traveller's Guides' are all about, and they are jam-packed with information and facts, but all presented in a disarmingly chatty and easy-to-read style.

The period covered by this book is the time after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 following the Interregnum or Commonwealth when Oliver Cromwell banned Christmas. It probably shouldn't extend much beyond a few years following the accession of Charles II, but I've seen the term applied almost to the fifty years up to the death of Charles II's niece, the often maligned Queen Anne in 1707, and the start of the Hanoverians.

The Restoration was the time of Samuel Pepys, whose diaries provide much of our insight into the period, and Ian Mortimer makes full use of them, but not so that his book is a Pepys's London. It was a time when dancing and music came back after the winter landscape imposed by Cromwell. It was a renaissance of English drama and the often sexually explicit Restoration comedies, with actresses like Nell Gwyn and Anne Bracegirdle achieving fame. So there is much to see.

On a personal note, you will be delighted to learn that it is now possible to wash your hands, face, and neck with soap and water, bars of Castile soap, a type of soap similar to one made in Castile in Spain, now being cheap enough to be used for such a purpose. However, the water is likely to be cold. The body is not usually washed, but is rubbed clean with a cloth, clean linen clothes being used to absorb sweat. Don't expect a bath. Nobody has them unless prescribed by a doctor as a treatment for some malady or other, and the bathwater will be cold. Cleaning oneself in this way would survive well into the Victorian era. Oh, and you'll be expected to wash your hands before and after every meal. Fail to do that and people will think you are disgusting. Clothes can be and are washed as frequently as possible, but it's almost impossible to avoid fleas, and bed bugs will be a commonplace in practically every place you decide to spend the night.

So you get a little idea of what Ian Mortimer's books

are all about. Extremely well researched and full of fascinating details, they bring the period as alive as the beds in a cheap Restoration lodging. And the good news is that 'Time Traveller Guide' addicts such as myself have *The Time Traveller's Guide to Regency Britain* to come next year!

### ARTHUR AND THE KINGS OF BRITAIN: THE HISTORICAL TRUTH BEHIND THE MYTHS

Miles Russell

Stroud, Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing, 2017

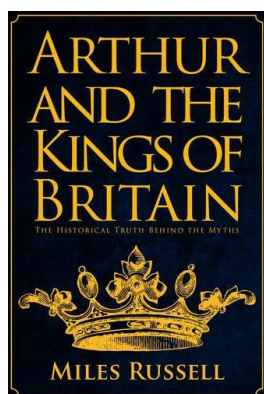
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Sometime between 1123 and 1139 an ecclesiastic in Oxford and future bishop of St. Asaph wrote one of the most influential books in the world. He is known as Geoffrey of Monmouth and he called his book *Historia regum Britanniae*, which on the off-chance that you can't read Latin means the *History of the Kings of Britain*.

It's a magnificent, sweeping and majestic story that traced the nation's history from the supposed foundation of its ruling dynasties by descendants of the survivors of the Trojan Wars to the kings of post-Roman Britain. Most importantly it popularised the story of King Arthur.

The only trouble is, Geoffrey of Monmouth made it all up.

At least that has been the unanimous opinion of generations of scholars and it is so ingrained that it's probably been repeated without thought or consideration, but in recent years a few intrepid historians have looked afresh at the *Historia* and begun to wonder whether it wasn't altogether a product of Geoffrey's imagination after all.

Geoffrey claimed that his book was a translation of 'a very ancient book' brought from Brittany and given to him by Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford. Several documents survive that bear both their signatures so Geoffrey is unlikely to have said he'd received something of the kind from Walter if Walter could have roundly denied it. However, what is certain is that the *Historia* is not derived from a single historical narrative but from a collection of sources.

Dr. Miles Russell is senior lecturer in archaeology at Bournemouth University and the author of a number of of

popular books, notably *UnRoman Britain* and *Bloodline: The Celtic Kings of Roman Britain*. This volume returns to that theme, but is altogether more speculative. And it actually has very little to do with Arthur.

I can't pretend that it is an easy book. In fact, if you're not familiar with the subject then it's likely that you'll be completely baffled by all the unfamiliar names, and there are lots of them, nearly all tough to get your tongue around. Even if you manage that, you might find Dr. Russell's arguments difficult to follow, especially as I got the feeling that he'd written various parts of the book at different times. I don't want to make the book sound too difficult though. Dr. Russell's thesis is actually quite straightforward once the fundamentals are understood.

Britain before the Romans consisted of a number of tribal territories governed by warlords. For the sake of convenience they are generally described as kingdoms and kings, and from time to time a king would create a list of his forebears, usually tracing his lineage back to the traditional dynastic founder. Many of the later Anglo-Saxon kings traced their origins back to the Norse god Odin. The Britons would appear to have traced theirs back to Brutus, a descendant of a heroic Trojan. It has been theorised that Geoffrey may have possessed several of these dynastic lists or pedigrees but assumed that they represented a single royal line instead of multiple royal lines, many of the kings being contemporaries rather than successive kings separated by decades or centuries.

Dr. Russell goes one step further and suggests that Geoffrey actually possessed several narrative histories of the same event seen from different perspectives. Not realising what he had, Geoffrey assumed he was dealing with different but similar events. Very few of the figures named by Geoffrey are identifiable, but some are, especially Roman generals. So are some Britons, notably Cassivelaunus and Mandubracius - see what I mean about the names! These two fellows were kings in southern England when Julius Caesar popped across the Channel, then popped back home again.

Julius Caesar came to Britain twice, in 55BC and 54BC. Between these two visits there was a bit of bother between two tribes, the Trinovantes - whose leader was Imanuentius - and their neighbours the Cattevelauni and their king Cassivelaunus. Imanuentius had been killed and his son Mandubracius had fled to Caesar for protection. When Caesar returned to Britain in 54BC he found Cassivelaunus ruling over an alliance of kingdoms and kinglets, and he didn't make things easy for the Roman general. However, terms were eventually agreed and Mandubracius was restored to his kingdom, and Caesar went home.

What Dr. Russell persuasively demonstrates in this book is that Geoffrey of Monmouth's sources told this story from the perspective of the Cattuvellauni, and then repeated it from the perspective of the Trinovantes, attributing the tale to different period in time and against unnamed enemies. And he suggests that other stories in the *Historia* may reflect the same events from other points of view. This may not sound too exciting, but if Dr. Russell is correct then in the long-dismissed tales of Geoffrey of Monmouth we have preserved accounts from the British perspective of momentous historical events in Britain's past before the birth of Christ. Furthermore, if Dr. Russell is correct, Geoffrey of Monmouth may also preserve within those stories a lot about what the pre-Roman Britons passed down about their beliefs concerning their

own origins and the things they valued and cherished, such as the fearless berserker rage referred to in several stories.

I thoroughly enjoyed Dr. Russell's book. It is complete speculation, of course, but then almost everything about pre-Roman and immediately post-Roman Britain is. It may well be shot out of the water, may even have been sunk by the time you read this review, and if that is what happened then I'm still pleased that Dr. Russell had the courage to present these ideas for assessment. I'm looking forward to taking another careful read of Dr. Russell's book and I thoroughly recommend it, but it ain't an easy read.

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