A GUIDE TO THE LITERATURE OF JACK THE RIPPER

By Ken Whiteway

Sommaire
Ces quelques dernières années, en particulier, ont vu une prolifération dans le nombre d’œuvres non romanesques publiées sur les meurtres ayant eu lieu à Whitechapel en 1888-1891. Plusieurs de ces œuvres abordent des théories tirées par les cheveux et elles ne sont aucune-ment ou peu basées sur des faits historiques. Celles qui apportent de grandes contributions à l’histoire juridique, économique et sociale de l’époque sont en grand danger d’être négligées. Le but de cet article est de diriger les chercheurs vers les sources les plus sûres sur ce sujet et de fournir un point de départ aux bibliothécaires impliqués dans la création ou le développement d’une collection abordant le meurtre en série ou les crimes commis à la fin de l’époque victorienne.

Introduction

More has been written about Jack the Ripper than about any other figure in the history of crime. Since the Whitechapel murders occurred in 1888-91 well over 100 non-fiction books have been produced on the subject. Jack has also been featured in thousands of newspaper and magazine articles, novels, short stories, plays, musicals, operas, radio and television programmes, and movies. Largely because of his evocative nickname, and because he has never been identified, he retains a prominent place in the collective imagination. The result is that, for many people, he has become a mythic figure completely separated from his historical reality.

There are, however, several reasons why Jack is the subject of serious study by legal historians. He was the first sexual serial killer to gain international notoriety. The murders occurred at a time when, because of the Education Acts of 1870, 1876, and 1880, working-class Britons were quickly becoming literate, and a large number of daily and weekly newspapers had appeared to meet the needs of the new market.1 This gave wide publicity to the events in Whitechapel and marked the beginning of what has often been an uneasy relationship between the agents of law enforcement and the media. The murders also coincided with the advent of modern forensic investigative procedures. Blood grouping and DNA evidence were, of course, not yet available, and even fingerprint identification would not be adopted by Scotland Yard until 1901.2 However, the police did employ such new tools as crime scene photography, house-to-house inquiries, undercover investigators, and the widespread use of the media to ask for public assistance and to circulate descriptions of suspects. Equally important is the use to which information about the murders can be put by social historians. Since nothing is known about the killer, a great deal of research has centred on the victims. Consequently, more is now known about their day-to-day lives than about any other non-elite women of the late Victorian period.3

But while important data can be gleaned from books about the Whitechapel murders, the topic has also become a minefield for the unwise. Ripper research is "notorious for its cranks and charlatans."4 Many unsubstantiated theories concerning the identity of the murderer have been promulgated and, depending upon the book consulted, a novice researcher might be convinced that Jack was actually Queen Victoria’s grandson Prince Albert Victor (from 1891, Duke of Clarence and Avondale),5 Lord Randolph Churchill,6 the artist Walter Sickert,7 Lewis Carroll,8 or any one of 108 other named suspects.9 There is no compelling evidence against any

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1 The rise in readership was also aided by the repeal, in 1855, of the Stamp Act, which had placed a tax on newspapers that put them beyond the means of the average person.
3 Neal Selden has been particularly diligent in disseminating new information about the victims in his self-published pamphlets: Annie Chapman: Jack the Ripper Victim; A Short Biography (Hornchurch, Essex: N. Selden, 2001); Catherine Eddowes: Jack the Ripper Victim (Hornchurch, Essex: N. Selden, 2003); and, Jack the Ripper and His Victims: Research into the Victims of the Infamous Victorian Murderer (Hornchurch, Essex: N. Selden, 1999).
7 Patricia Cornwell, Portrait of a Killer: Jack the Ripper---Case Closed (New York: Putnam, 2002).
9 John J. Eddleston, Jack the Ripper: An Encyclopedia (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2001) at 195-244.
of these people; in fact, for most, there is no evidence at all, other than in the minds of the authors.

This guide is intended to help researchers find their way through the labyrinth of Ripper literature. It is also intended to act as a starting point for librarians involved in creating or developing a collection based on this aspect of nineteenth-century criminal history. The inquiry is limited to an examination of all full-length monographs on the subject published in English (the first of which appeared in 1929)\textsuperscript{10} and to relevant websites. It is not the purpose of this guide to provide a description of the crimes themselves, since that information is readily available in the material listed below. Only what appear to be the most useful items have been included.

Bibliographies

There are two major bibliographies devoted to Ripper material.


According to \textit{The Jack the Ripper A-Z} (discussed below), Alexander Kelly is a pseudonym used by three authors, one of whom is a former librarian at New Scotland Yard. The bibliography is comprised of nearly 1,000 items. It includes a general discussion of the case and has separate sections which list contemporary records, facts and theories, biographies, fiction and drama, and music, films and television programmes. The facts and theories section contains, for the most part, alphabetically arranged citations to newspaper and magazine articles. They are mixed together with references to monographs, although these entries are enclosed in boxes, which make them easily identifiable. There is also a very good author/title/subject index.

The Introduction, originally written by Colin Wilson for the 1973 edition, can safely be ignored since it contains several statements that, although at the time generally accepted as true, have been proved by subsequent research to be incorrect. The descriptions of some of the bibliographic items are fragmentary and the book contains a few typographical errors. It does not claim to be exhaustive and, consequently, omits several relevant items. And, since the cut-off date is October 1994, more recent books are excluded. A new edition would be helpful, but this is still one of the best places to begin a literature search.


The cut-off date for this book is October 1999 and it lists 93 factual accounts of the Whitechapel murders. The entries include excellent printing histories for each title, and some have short synopses of the contents. Strachan is concerned with producing a comprehensive list of all Ripper-related materials, not with their relative merits. As a result, many unreliable books appear without critical comment.

This is not an easy bibliography to use since most of the entries are arranged chronologically and there is no index. It also has quite a few typographical errors (some involving even such basic things as authors' names) so the information should be used with care. Other sections of the bibliography are devoted to histories of the East End, fiction, translations, magazine articles, comics and graphic novels, audio tapes, music, and recordings. A great deal of useful material is contained in this volume, but it can be difficult to locate quickly.

Background Information

Researchers approaching the Whitechapel murders for the first time may require some background information in order to place the subject in its historical context. Hundreds of books have been written about London, and there are many histories and reminiscences dealing specifically with life in the East End. But, for our purposes, five titles are particularly worthy of note.


This is a social history describing the waves of immigrants (Huguenots, Irish, Jews, West Indians, and Pakistanis) who settled in the East End. It concentrates primarily on the period from the early nineteenth century to the early 1970s. The book is engagingly written and makes good use of contemporary sources.\textsuperscript{11}

Chapter 9, entitled "Jacob the Ripper," explores the possibility that Jack may have been Jewish.\textsuperscript{12} Bermant's brief descriptions of the murders are full of inaccuracies, but that is beside the point. The value of the book lies in its vivid descriptions of East End life.

\textsuperscript{10} Leonard Matters, \textit{The Mystery of Jack the Ripper} (London: Hutchinson, 1929).

\textsuperscript{11} Bermant is, however, somewhat shaky on US history since he seems to believe that Benjamin Franklin was a President (p. 75).

\textsuperscript{12} For more on this theory, see Robin Odell, \textit{Jack the Ripper in Fact and Fiction} (London: Harrap, 1965).

This is a detailed examination of the social, economic, and political conditions that shaped the East End during the late Victorian period. It contains excellent descriptions of the various neighbourhoods based on primary sources, newspaper accounts, and even contemporary novels. It is a very clear exposition of how ordinary people eked out an existence in the workhouses, sweatshops, and crowded tenements during the period that included the "autumn of terror."

Fishman has no particular interest in the Whitechapel murders, which he discusses briefly (pp. 209-229) only in the broader context of his chapter entitled "Crime and Punishment." Even in such a short account, Fishman makes several minor factual errors; however, his focus is on the effect of the murders, not on the murders themselves. The book is very useful in pointing out that a great deal more was going on in London during 1888 than just the hunt for Jack the Ripper.


For our purposes "this study locates the Ripper story as part of a formative moment in the production of feminist sexual politics and of popular narratives of sexual danger" (p. 2). When the book was published, Walkowitz was a Professor of History and the Director of Women's Studies at Johns Hopkins University.

Her meaning in some sections of the book (particularly the Introduction) is obscured by her occasionally infelicitous style of writing, her use of technical and arcane words, and her penchant for placing far too many terms in unnecessary quotation marks. As a result, some early parts of the book will likely prove to be incomprehensible to the average undergraduate. However, as the work progresses, it becomes more lucid and accessible.

The book contains interesting discussions of contemporary social developments such as the "new journalism," which was largely responsible for creating the legend of Jack the Ripper. Walkowitz also offers some unique insights into media coverage of the murders, the role of the inquests in sustaining the momentum of interest among the public, and the function of the published letters, purportedly from the murderer, in focusing societal anxieties. Most importantly, Walkowitz brings a fresh perspective to the study of the Ripper crimes — a field virtually dominated by male writers.14


The subtitle of this book is somewhat misleading. For a full account of the murders, a better source might be Begg's 1988 publication *Jack the Ripper: The Uncensored Facts* (discussed below). But the strength of this book lies in the background information that it provides. About half the text is devoted to the history of the East End and to the social/political/economic context of the murders. The book is very successful in "combining the murders with the key historical events that formed a backdrop to the crimes" and in presenting "the bigger picture of time and place" (p. xi).


Attempting to understand the topography of the various crime scenes can pose difficulties, and good maps of the late nineteenth-century East End are not easy to find. This publication, however, solves that problem by clearly depicting every building, street, yard, and alley that figured in the investigation, including detailed diagrams of the five canonical murder sites. The accompanying text is fragmentary and contains several factual errors, but students of the case will find the maps extremely helpful. Cooper and Punter have also created a large (90 x 56 cm.) folded map of 1888 Whitechapel and environs. Both items are available through the publisher's website.15

**Published Primary Sources**

Until quite recently, it was necessary for researchers interested in Ripper-related primary materials to travel to London to consult the files housed in various archives and libraries. Fortunately, in the last few years, much of this information has been published in book form. If the solution to the crimes is to be found in the original documents, everyone now has an equal chance of discovering it. Below are four of the most useful titles.

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14 Another good, but unfortunately unpublished, example of feminist writing is Kate Karlsen, "Jack the Ripper: 100 Years of Terror." Speech to the Bootmakers of Toronto, 18 September 1988. Typescript. Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, Toronto Reference Library.

15 [http://www.ripperart.com]>

This book consists of material from the Public Record Office, the Corporation of London Records Office, the London Metropolitan Archives, the Archives of the Metropolitan Police, the Royal London Hospital Archives, the British Library Newspaper Library, the City of London Police Museum, and the Royal Archives. It includes the text of all the extant police and Home Office files related to the case as well as pathologists’ reports, witness statements, extracts from police notebooks, and 32 pages of illustrations. It reproduces newspaper accounts of the inquests into each of the victims’ deaths and has detailed references to all the original sources.

The Sourcebook also contains important documents not directly related to the official investigation that have surfaced more recently, such as the Macnaghten memorandum, the Swanson marginalia, and the Littlechild letter. The material covers the deaths of 11 possible victims from Emma Smith on 3 April 1888 to Frances Coles on 13 February 1891. This is a remarkable piece of work and an invaluable resource. It should be included in any Ripper collection.


This volume contains the full text of the correspondence generated by the Whitechapel murders, most of which purport to originate with the murderer. It includes over 200 extant letters from the files of the Metropolitan Police and the City of London Police, with full colour reproductions of the more important ones. Each file number is noted should researchers care to consult the originals.

All of these letters are now generally considered to be hoaxes; nonetheless there is always the possibility that one or more of them may have been written by the killer and that is what attracts the interest of students of the crimes. Some researchers feel that the letters may help to identify a suspect or lend support to a particular theory. The letters may, in fact, tell us nothing about the murderer, but they do help to emphasize the extent of the investigative problem faced by the police, and the reaction to the killings of some misguided members of the public.

The first part of the book consists of an essay on the content and significance of the letters, while the second part has transcriptions of each of them. The authors offer a convincing suggestion as to the origin of the “Royal Ripper” theory (p. 188), and Chapter 18 deals with handwriting samples from seven contemporaneously named suspects. This is quite interesting but, as the authors admit, valueless as evidence, since we do not know which of the letters, if any, are genuine.


Of all the London newspapers, it was, perhaps, the *Daily Telegraph* that devoted the most space to the Whitechapel atrocities. By 1888 it had a circulation of about 250,000. (In comparison, the circulation of *The Times* was about 50,000.)

Each chapter deals with one of the five canonical victims (Mary Ann Nichols, Annie Chapman, Elizabeth Stride, Catherine Eddowes, and Mary Jane Kelly), covering the murder, its investigation, and the subsequent inquest. This arrangement allows researchers to follow the story more or less as it unfolded to contemporary London newspaper readers. The editors correct, in footnotes, much of the misinformation that appeared in the pages of the *Daily Telegraph*. This is particularly useful since many writers have been led astray by accepting as fact questionable information that was churned out by newspaper reporters working to a deadline. The footnotes include references to helpful books and explain words or phrases with which a modern reader may not be familiar. Also included in the text are passages from other newspapers such as *The Star*, *The Times*, and the *East London Advertiser*. The illustrations are good, if sometimes rather graphic, and include the only known photograph of a victim (Annie Chapman) taken prior to her death.

The commentaries at the end of each chapter offer thoughtful insights into various aspects of the case, such as the time of Annie Chapman’s murder (pp. 81-86). Another commentary makes a very persuasive argument that Elizabeth Stride was killed by someone other than the Whitechapel murderer (pp. 138-39). The authors also quite perceptively point out (pp. 36-37) that the coverage of the search for the suspect nicknamed Leather Apron following the Nichols and Chapman killings sold a lot of papers, but that Leather Apron was profitable only as long as he could not be found. When John Pizer was identified, located, arrested, and then exonerated, interest flagged. This, perhaps, gave some enterprising newspapermen the inspiration to boost sales by producing hoax letters and inventing the sobriquet Jack the Ripper.

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16 In April 2003, the Public Record Office merged with the Historical Manuscripts Commission to form the National Archives.

17 To my eye, at least, the authors seem to have mistranscribed the occasional word. However all the important letters are photographically reproduced, so readers can draw their own conclusions.

Although, strictly speaking, this item is not mandatory in a Jack the Ripper collection, it does add an interesting sidelight. The folder includes a 12-page booklet that briefly outlines the facts surrounding the murders of six victims from Martha Tabram on 7 August 1888 to Mary Jane Kelly on 9 November 1888. The rest of the booklet consists of a short, but good, chronological bibliography and descriptions of the contents of the kit.

The kit itself contains 16 colour photoreproductions of some of the most important documents housed in the Public Record Office, the Royal London Hospital Archives, and the British Library Newspaper Library. Among the most significant are copies of the “Dear Boss” letter, the Lusk letter, the “Saucy Jacky” postcard, and a handwritten memorandum by (later Sir) Melville Macnaghten, Chief Constable of the Criminal Investigation Department, dated 23 February 1894 which defines the popularly accepted five victims, and names three men (M.J. Druitt, Kosminski, and Michael Ostrog) regarded by the police as suspects. It also contains handwritten reports by Chief Inspector Donald Swanson and Inspector Frederick Abberline who were in charge of the Metropolitan Police investigation.

This item is more of a novelty than a research aid since the texts of the documents are reprinted in virtually every recent book written on the subject. However, it does allow researchers who are unable to travel to London the opportunity to experience the look and feel of the original sources.

Histories and Theories


This is, quite simply, the best book yet written on the subject. It first appeared in hardcover in 1994 and was followed by a second revised paperback edition in 1995. The book, which is meticulously researched and engagingly written, contains the most comprehensive and accurate discussion of the case currently available. Sugden takes a completely fresh look at the primary sources and clarifies many of the errors and misconceptions that have accumulated over the years.

Sugden began his research from scratch, without relying on previous secondary sources, and harbouring no preconceived theory. He makes excellent use of the primary mater-

18 It is also one of the longest books about the Ripper. In addition, Sugden wrote the smallest book on the subject: Philip Sugden, *The Life and Times of Jack the Ripper* (Bristol: Siena, 1996). 68 p. (11 x 8.5 cm.).


Since its first hardcover appearance in 1991, this has been an indispensable tool for Ripper research. The authors are well respected in the field and each has written at least one book on the subject. Here they arrange, in alphabetical order, virtually all the known information about the murders. The book includes entries on the victims, suspects, witnesses, police and government officials, authors and their books, and a wealth of other material.

It is primarily a reference tool designed to be used in conjunction with other books on the subject, or to check particular facts or theories, but it can be read on its own to great advantage. Its one weakness is that there have been several developments in Ripper research since 1996 and an updated edition is now overdue.


This is a useful and inexpensive overview of the case that begins with a chronology of the Whitechapel murders and then proceeds, in about 100 pages, to state the facts surrounding the five canonical murders, including witness statements, autopsy reports, and other relevant documents. Most of the rest of the book is devoted to articles by 16 experts who expound on their individual theories. Particularly helpful as a summary of the major theories, past and current, is Colin Wilson’s “A Lifetime in Ripperology” (pp. 417-442).
The book concludes with a chronological bibliography and a filmography. One nice touch is that it includes a page listing the prevailing weather conditions in London on the dates of the murders, which establishes that, contrary to the popular conception, there was no fog on any of the relevant nights.


Because this slim volume was issued in a small print run (1,000 copies) it can be difficult to locate, but is well worth the search. It is a collection of very short articles by 53 Ripper theorists and authors. Each is allotted no more than 700 words in which to outline his or her basic view of the case. The space constraints mean that they must state their positions very succinctly and, consequently, it is easy to identify flaws (if any) in their arguments. Researchers can therefore quickly review all of the theories and then pursue those areas of investigation that seem most profitable.


Many books appeared around the time of the Ripper centenary, but nearly all of them were hurriedly written, badly researched, and unworthy of notice. An exception is this commendable volume by Paul Begg. (Begg is currently the editor of *Ripperologia*, the leading journal of Ripper-related studies.) The 1988 edition was the first extensively footnoted book on the subject and was an attempt to return to the verifiable facts that were in danger of being lost in an escalating number of (often outlandish) theories. As he states in the Introduction (pp. 11-12): “This book is a simple, straightforward account of what happened. Of who saw and said what, where and when.” His opening chapter, which describes the political and social background against which the murders were set, is particularly good.

In both editions, readers should be wary of a handful of factual and typographical errors that can lead to confusion, but their strengths make up for any small deficiencies. The first edition is a thoughtful work that attempts to clarify some of the misconceptions of earlier writers. It contains a very cogent account of the murders of the five traditional victims, and a good discussion of the principal suspects as they existed in the mid-1980s. Begg also discovered some new photographs that were published for the first time in this book. He was the first author to print the full text of the Swanson marginalia (pp. 195-96) as well as the first to establish the correct spelling of Catherine Eddowes’ name.

Begg does not advocate a particular suspect, but his statement that “the opinion of Anderson and Swanson must weigh heavily in the balance of any assessment of the evidence” (p. 210) indicates that he is at least somewhat inclined to favour Aaron Kosminski.

The second edition is greatly expanded and brings the topic up-to-date with a discussion of recent suspects. Much new material has been added and, as a result, the second edition is occasionally rather rambling and unfocussed. The first edition is still widely available and is, perhaps, the preferable source for the general reader.


Until recently this was by far the most popular book on the Whitechapel murders. Since its first appearance it has never been out of print. Knight proposes the theory that, through a conspiracy of high-ranking Freemasons (including the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury), the murders were carried out by Sir William Gull (a noted physician), John Netley (a coachman), and Walter Sickert (a well-known artist) to silence five prostitutes who were blackmailing the government with their knowledge of a secret marriage between Prince Albert Victor and Catholic shop assistant Annie Elizabeth Crook. Much of the theory originated with Joseph Gorman Sickert, the alleged illegitimate son of Walter.

It is a compelling story and Knight tells it well. Unfortunately, it has long been established that he either misinterpreted, or deliberately ignored, important pieces of information that he possessed at the time of writing the book. Virtually every book on the subject written since 1976 has devoted a section to explaining why Knight’s theory is untenable.22

Despite the flawed research, Knight’s book has been very

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21 The original edition, also published in 1995, was limited to 100 copies and signed by most of the contributors. It is a book that is much in demand among collectors.

22 See, e.g., Martin Howells & Keith Skinner, *The Ripper Legacy: The Life and Death of Jack the Ripper* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1987). The authors give a detailed refutation of each of Knight’s points (pp. 37-52) but then proceed to propose an equally unsubstantiated theory centred on M.J. Drutt.
influential. Other writers have developed variations on his theme and it has served as the basis for four movies, and several novels. The latest variation by Patricia Cornwell has now, apparently, surpassed Knight's book as the best-selling Ripper title, although it has received almost unanimous condemnation from knowledgeable critics.

But simply because the book has been so influential, researchers may wish to examine it. And the work is not completely without merit: it was Knight who unearthed, among other things, Israel Schwarz's testimony, Sergeant Stephen White's report on his interviews with Matthew Packer, Inspector Abberline's report on Mary Ann Nichols, and a police copy of the Goulston Street graffiti. Knight's fanciful theory also helped to reawaken interest in the Whitechapel murders, and reaction to it led to a great deal of new research.


A scrapbook containing 63 handwritten pages and purporting to be the diary of Jack the Ripper first surfaced in 1992. It appeared to be written by a drug-addicted Liverpool cotton broker named James Maybrick who claimed that he committed the Whitechapel murders as acts of revenge aimed at his adulterous wife, Florence. The book initially created a great deal of interest, but its impact was dulled because of the repeated confessions (and subsequent retractions) by Michael Barrett, the "discoverer" of the diary, that he had forged it. Scientific tests to authenticate the diary have been inconclusive: all that can be said is that, so far, it has not been proved to be a fake.

However, if the diary is genuine, its supporters have failed to convince most observers. This was not helped by the fact that members of the two major pro-diary camps, led by Shirley Harrison and Paul Feldman, spent most of the 1990s squabbling amongst themselves, nor was it helped by Michael Barrett's erratic behaviour. But despite its questionable provenance, and some obvious inconsistencies in the text, the authenticity of the diary has found adherents among a handful of experts, most notably one of the few academic historians to have investigated the murders. The fact remains that Maybrick is one of a very small number of plausible candidates to emerge in the last forty years and, at least until further evidence is forthcoming, he should probably not be completely discounted. Even researchers who doubt the Maybrick theory will want to examine the diary since it has attracted so much attention and debate.


Simply reading the Maybrick diary, without knowledge of the relevant background information, is not particularly helpful. Several books have dealt with the topic, but they were written by people on one side or the other of the debate who brought their various biases along with them. The authors of this book, however, attempt to maintain objectivity in their inquiry into the origins of the diary and, for the most part, they succeed. Keith Skinner was one of the experts consulted about the diary when it first came to light and he participated in many of the incidents recounted in the book.

The book documents, in great detail, the claims and counterclaims made concerning the diary, including the results of all the scientific tests that were conducted on it. Given the flamboyant personalities of some of the leading figures in this story, the book does a good job of presenting the chronology of events in a clear and compelling manner. The authors do not decide if the diary is genuine, an old forgery, or a modern forgery, but they do lay out all the relevant evidence very effectively. Access to particular points in the saga of the diary is facilitated by an excellent index.

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26 *Supra*, note 7.

27 For a scathing, but not untypical, review see Caleb Carr, "Dealing With the Work of a Fiend," *New York Times Book Review* (15 December 2002) 15-16. My thanks to Linda Fritz, a colleague at the University of Saskatchewan Library, for directing me to this review.


30 Researchers with a particular interest in the Maybrick diary may also wish to consult: Paul Feldman, *Jack the Ripper: The Final Chapter* (London: Virgin Books, 1997). Feldman spent a great deal of time and money attempting to prove that the diary is genuine and the book provides an interesting, if obviously biased, account of his efforts. One caveat: Feldman's argument rests, in part, on a letter dated 17 September 1888 which most experts believe was planted among the official documents in the Public Record Office. It is not until the final page of his book (p. 372), in an appendix, that Feldman admits "it is possible that the letter was placed in the files by a modern-day hoaxter, making its connection to the 25 September letter and the Lusk letter a complete fabrication".


If the identity of Jack the Ripper is ever revealed, it is highly improbable that he will be found among the ranks of politicians, royal physicians, artists, or senior Freemasons. This book and the four following titles concentrate on far more likely candidates.

In this volume, Tully suggests that James Kelly was the Ripper. Kelly was a convicted wife murderer with a history of mental problems who escaped from Broadmoor in January 1888 and remained at large until he gave himself up in 1927. He spent part of that time living in Vancouver, but he was known to be in London at the time of the murders.

Tully is a retired banker, not a professional writer or historian, so perhaps he can be forgiven for the occasional minor factual error and the lack of footnotes. The book is well researched and entertainingly written, and the sources are carefully listed in a bibliography. At the very least Tully presents a plausible suspect, and he provides a better than average discussion of eight murder victims ranging from Martha Tabram on 7 August 1888 to Frances Coles on 13 February 1891. The book concludes with a section entitled "Points to Ponder" in which he makes some very cogent observations.


An interesting aspect of this book is its discussion of Charles Booth’s "Descriptive Maps of London Poverty" in which he colour coded each street according to income. A great deal of the East End was designated by black which indicated the lowest classes, defined by Booth as the "loafers," the "vicious" and "semi-criminal," and occasional labourers. Paley uses the work of Booth and others to present an informative depiction of the day-to-day life of the East End poor.

Paley also builds a very persuasive case for Joseph Barnett, Mary Jane Kelly’s lover, being Jack the Ripper. In brief, his theory is that Barnett killed a series of prostitutes in order to frighten Kelly off the streets and, when that failed to work, and she decided to leave him, he killed her also. This theory neatly explains why all the victims came from the same area and why, as many observers believe, the murders ceased with the death of Kelly on 9 November 1888. Paley points out that Barnett fits the description of the suspect offered by some of the most reliable witnesses, and also fits the FBI profile of the typical serial killer developed by Robert Ressler and John Douglas.31 In addition, Paley traced all of Barnett’s known addresses in the East End thereby establishing his detailed knowledge of most of the murder sites. He makes effective use of footnotes and his bibliography is quite good. This is a thoughtful and well-presented argument by a talented researcher who deserves wider recognition.


Beadle is quite forceful in his denunciation of the privations placed on poor East Enders by society; however, typographical errors and his idiosyncratic use of capital letters slow the flow of his narrative. He also holds some odd views of the facts surrounding the murders, particularly those of Elizabeth Stride and Mary Jane Kelly.

He provides a short account of the crimes, but spends most of the book pointing out the errors in existing major theories. Then briefly, at the end (pp. 155-170), he effectively outlines his case against William Henry Bury, a very plausible but largely overlooked suspect. Bury lived in the general area (Bow), was a convicted wife murderer with a history of mental problems, and was known to consort with prostitutes. He fits the FBI psychological profile, was the right age, and matched the descriptions given by some of the witnesses. Beadle’s theory requires that Rose Mylett, who was killed on 20 December 1888, be included among the victims of the Ripper.


This book suffers from a few problems, most of which could have been remedied by a good editor and proofreader. But, despite the typographical errors and the occasional inadvertent mistake, Hinton manages to construct a reasonably compelling case against George Hutchinson, a witness who figured prominently in the Mary Jane Kelly murder inquiry.32 Again, Hutchinson fits the profile and descriptions, and was acquainted with at least one of the victims.

Hinton offers some very thoughtful observations on the murders, particularly those of Annie Chapman and Elizabeth.

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31 However, Douglas disagrees with Paley that Barnett is a likely suspect. See John Douglas and Mark Olthaker, *The Cases That Haunt Us: From Jack the Ripper to JonBenet Ramsey, the FBI’s Legendary Mindhunter Sheds Light on the Mysteries That Won’t Go Away* (New York: Scribner, 2000) at 60-61.

Stride, and he makes a persuasive argument that Stride was probably murdered by her boyfriend, Michael Kidney.33 The book includes photographs of some of the murder sites as they currently look and directions on how to locate them in the now much changed East End. Hinton attempts to discredit all the major theories, including Bruce Paley’s, and presents an interesting discussion of the nature of serial killers. He also attributes the non-fatal attacks on Annie Millwood (25 February 1888) and Ada Wilson (28 March 1888) to Hutchinson.


This work provides an excellent discussion of the case, although it reproduces the minor factual errors common to most of the books published in the mid-1980s. Particularly useful is Fido’s description of the hierarchy of the Metropolitan and City police forces. He gives a balanced evaluation of the major players and (refreshingly) is critical of their actions only when it is truly warranted. He also quite effectively points out the weaknesses in earlier theories. He was the first author to print the notes of Sir Charles Warren’s interview with Matthew Packer (p. 58) and he has some interesting and original thoughts on the sequence of events surrounding the murder of Elizabeth Stride.

The suspect he advocates is Nathan Kaminsky, a 23-year-old bootmaker who lived in Whitechapel and had been treated for syphilis. Kaminsky was found wandering the streets and unable to care for himself, and Fido suggests that on 7 December 1888 he was committed to an asylum under the name David Cohen. He died on 20 October 1889. Fido further suggests that police officials confused the suspect Aaron Kosinsky with Nathan Kaminsky because of the similarity of their surnames, and because they were the same age and nationality and both had received treatment at Colney Hatch Asylum. This painstakingly researched theory has failed to attract much support, but it seems to be as probable as most of the others that have been put forward.

Book Dealers

Books about Jack the Ripper are usually produced in relatively small print runs and often the only way to acquire them is through out-of-print booksellers. The main competition for these titles is among collectors. But when selecting books for the general collection, librarians, of course, seldom require pristine copies of first printings in dust jackets. Consequently, they can often obtain perfectly serviceable copies of books, which are not of interest to collectors, at very reasonable prices.

The following dealers are all extremely reliable and each has a sub-specialty in Victorian true crime. They generally have a good selection of the most common Ripper-related titles in stock and will conduct searches for specific titles. They accept major credit cards or will delay payment and send invoices for purchases by libraries.

Geoffrey Cates Books
4662 Dale Road
Welcome ON L1A 3V5
Canada
Email: gcates@cogeco.ca
Website: www.abebooks.ca/home/geofbook

Janus Books
P.O. Box 40787
Tucson AZ 85717
USA
Email: info@janusbooks.com
Website: www.janusbooks.com

Leslie H. Bolland Books
1 Warren Court
Chicksands, Shefford
Bedfordshire SG17 5QB
United Kingdom
Email: info@bollandbooks.com
Website: www.bollandbooks.com

Clifford Elmer Books Ltd.
8 Balmoral Avenue
Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle
Cheshire SK8 5EQ
United Kingdom
Email: sales@cliffordelmerbooks.com
Website: www.truecrime.com

Loretta Lay Books
24 Grampian Gardens
London NW2 1JG
United Kingdom
Email: loretta.lay@btinternet.com
Website: www.laybooks.com

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33 This idea was suggested at least as early as 1929. See Leonard Matters, *The Mystery of Jack the Ripper* (London: Hutchinson, 1929). It was repeated in William Stewart, *Jack the Ripper: A New Theory* (London: Quality Press, 1939). Stewart was also the first to point out that George Hutchinson’s detailed description of the man he claimed to have seen with Mary Kelly on the morning of her murder was simply too good to be true.
Websites

A recent search of the Internet retrieved over a million references to Jack the Ripper. With so much material from which to choose, it would be easy for researchers to become hopelessly lost. Fortunately, one website will meet nearly everyone’s needs.

Casebook: Jack the Ripper – <www.casebook.org>

The Casebook was begun in 1996 and is produced by Stephen P. Ryder and John A. Piper. It has gradually developed into what is, perhaps, the single most useful source for information on the Ripper murders. It is designed for all levels of interest and includes, as the compilers point out, “introductory material for the novices, in-depth analyses for the intermediates, and up-to-date primary-source material for the experts.”

The site is organized into 16 different sections, and then into one or more subsections broken down by topic. The sections include Victims, Suspects, Witnesses, Ripper Letters, Police Officials, and Official Documents. There is information on 18 possible victims including biographies, site maps, and death certificates. The section entitled Victorian London includes photographs of the East End then and now, and pictures of the gravesites of the five canonical victims. A list of related topics appears at the bottom of most pages.

One of the most interesting sections is Press Reports, which contains complete transcriptions of articles in contemporary newspapers that covered the Whitechapel murders. At the moment it consists of over 2,000 articles from 255 newspapers from around the world. Researchers can conduct full-text searches of the press reports, or search them by individual newspaper or by date.

Reviews of books can be found by following the links Ripper Media - Book Reviews - Non-Fiction. The list purports to include all the non-fiction books ever published, and that appears to be true. The reviews are succinct and, generally, very accurate. This is an excellent source for keeping abreast of new developments in the literature.

The Dissertations section contains articles reprinted from journals and some written specifically for the website. Many of the leading Ripper researchers contribute to this section and their articles, which tend to focus on narrow issues or particular problems, can be very enlightening.

The Casebook has recently begun to add the full text of some of the rarer and sought-after Ripper volumes. Most notable among these is A.P. Wolf’s Jack the Myth which, although published as recently as 1993, is now unobtainable in hardcopy at a reasonable price. Also available are the full text or extracts from several rare books and pamphlets published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Finally there is a Message Boards section in which virtually every aspect of the case is discussed in great detail by members of the public. As is typical of message boards, these areas can contain many inane comments and pointless chatter but, occasionally, an interesting and informative new thread can develop.

Additional Websites

There are hundreds of websites that are at least partially concerned with the Whitechapel murders, or that help to shed light on the history and social conditions of the period. Of course, new material is added constantly, but here are a few of the better sites that are currently available.

The official Metropolitan Police site has a brief but accurate account of the murders and includes the reference numbers and descriptions of the police files held by the National Archives at Kew.

The National Archives Online Catalogue allows researchers access to all the material related to the subject formerly held by the Public Record Office. The reference number is supplied as well as a brief description of the contents of the files. Printed or digital copies of documents may be ordered, for a fee, through the website.

The Charles Booth Online Archive is sponsored by the London School of Economics. It contains, among other things, information on Booth’s survey into life and labour in London between 1886 and 1903. Particularly useful are the poverty maps of London and the ability to search the original survey notebooks.

An increasing number of peer-reviewed journal articles are available on the Internet. A good example is Robert F. Haggard’s “Jack the Ripper as the Threat of Outcast London.” Haggard’s primary interest is not the Whitechapel murders. For this information he relies on some outdated sources, so the article contains a few minor errors; however, it is quite effective in describing the social tensions in London in the mid-1880s.

34 By way of comparison, the same search conducted in early 2003 resulted in only 135,000 references. This may be due to increased interest in the subject, or to the fact that Google added one billion pages to its web index in early 2004.
35 However, the same claim is made for the list of fiction books from which quite a few titles have been omitted. Although the topic is beyond the scope of this article, fictional accounts of the Ripper mystery occasionally propose theories that are more plausible than some of the so-called serious studies of the subject.
36 <http://casebook.org/ripper_media/book_reviews/non-fiction/jackmyth.html>
37 <http://casebook.org/ripper_media/rips.html>
38 <http://www.met.police.uk/history/ripper.htm>
39 <http://www.catalogue.nationalarchives.gov.uk>
40 My thanks to Janet Catterall, a colleague at the University of Saskatchewan Library, for directing me to this website: <http://booth.lse.ac.uk>
Conclusion

The number of serial killers that have surfaced during the last few decades is, unfortunately, quite daunting. A partial list would include names such as DeSalvo, Manson, Berkowitz, Gacy, Buono and Bianchi, Bundy, Ng, Ramirez, Olson, Gein, Dahmer, and Sutcliffe. In the last few months of 2003, and early in 2004, John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo were tried and convicted of the Washington sniper shootings, and Gary Leon Ridgway pleaded guilty to the Green River murders. There is also the upcoming trial of Robert William Pickton who faces charges related to the disappearance of 23 women from Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. It is a phenomenon that appears with increasing frequency that first came to public attention with the Whitechapel murders.

Between 1929 and 1959 only four books on Jack the Ripper were published. Since the mid-1960s, however, a flood of material has appeared. In recent years, the pace of publishing has, if anything, increased. Hardly a month goes by without a new title being announced. Interest in the Ripper murders has never been greater. Yet, as more and more is published, we seem to know less and less about him.

By the mid-1970s, there was general, if not universal, agreement that Jack had claimed five victims beginning with Mary Ann Nichols on 31 August 1888 and ending with Mary Jane Kelly on 9 November 1888. There was also a consensus that the murderer had written two, and possibly three, taunting letters that he mailed to the Central News Agency and to George Lusk, Chairman of the Mile End Vigilance Committee. Now, however, most commentators agree that all the letters, including the original ones signed "Jack the Ripper," were hoaxes. There also seems to be increasing agreement that Martha Tabram should be included as a victim while, at the same time, several theorists believe that Elizabeth Stride should be removed from the list. Even the term Whitechapel murderer is a misnomer. If it is accepted that there were six victims, two (Tabram and Nichols) were killed in Whitechapel, two (Chapman and Kelly) in Spitalfields, one (Stride) in St. George’s-in-the-East, and one (Eddowes) in Aldgate. It might, therefore, be more appropriate to readopt the name originally given to the killer by the press: the East End murderer.

New material stirred up by dozens of theorists seems to have had the effect of making murky waters considerably murkier. We no longer have even a pseudonymous name that can definitely be attributed to the criminal, and there is no complete agreement on such basic questions as when the murders began, when they ended, or the total number of victims. Of course, it is just these uncertainties that continue to attract writers and readers to the mystery. "In terms of historical evidence, he does not exist, so, for all sorts of reasons, he has been constantly re-invented." And it is undeniable that the enduring curiosity about Jack the Ripper is based largely on his continuing anonymity. As the authors of a study on the cultural significance of the crimes have pointed out: "Should someone finally and unequivocally identify the Ripper, our interest in him and his exploits would vanish; we would all wish that someone had minded his or her own business." Based on what is known of modern serial killers, however, it can safely be predicted that the murderer was a heterosexual Caucasian male in his mid-20s to mid-30s who resided or worked somewhere in the East End. Given that all the killings occurred in the early hours of the morning, he was probably unemployed or self-employed, and very likely lived alone. Since at least the later victims must have been wary of strangers yet, apparently accompanied him willingly, he may have been known to the residents of the area and was, perhaps, something in the nature of a local shopkeeper, butcher, grocer, pawnbroker, policeman or publican. The research that has centred on suspects who lived in the neighbourhood, such as Joseph Barnett, William Bury, George Hutchinson and James Kelly is, therefore, more likely to bear fruit than the fanciful theories that lack persuasive evidence.

And, of course, it is not unrealistic to suppose that the real culprit has never come to public attention. As one very astute commentator noted three decades ago, it is likely that, if the name of the killer is ever revealed, people who have studied the case for years will look at one another and say "Who?" Finally, as mentioned earlier, a steady and seemingly endless stream of books continues to be published about the East End murders. Of the books currently in preparation, one is particularly worthy of attention. For several years, Richard Whittington-Egan has been working on a book entitled The Quest for Jack the Ripper. Whittington-Egan is also the author of a very influential book that appeared in 1975. Although now somewhat dated, its meticulous scholarship served as an inspiration for later writers such as Paul Begg and Philip Sugden. Recently, Whittington-Egan has devoted himself to writing about other areas of crime and his work on the Ripper has been limited to the occasional short article. When his new book finally appears, it will undoubtedly be of interest to researchers and librarians.

The search for the killer with the evocative sobriquet will probably go on for another hundred years. But while the chances of discovering his true identity after all this time are, at best, minimal, the search itself continues to provide a focal point for useful investigations into the social, economic, and legal history of late Victorian England.