



WHITECHAPEL

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A Repository of History, Literature & General Intelligence

The Whitechapel Society promotes the study of the Whitechapel murders of 1888 and the social impact this event had on the East End of London. The society also promotes the study of Victorian/Edwardian life and culture in the East End of London.

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## Welcome to the October 2019 edition of the Whitechapel Society Journal.

As we put the finishing touches to this journal, I reflect on what a pleasure it is working with George Sotiriou

our Production Editor and Neil Watson our Copy Editor.

George's technical and artistic skills are second to none and he, and indeed all the committee, are delighted that we have been able to develop the journal into incorporating a colour cover front and rear. This will be a permanent feature and we feel that we have built on the progress that successive editors have made, most recently Samantha Hulass.

I must also pay tribute to Neil Watson's research and writing skills, and his meticulous proof reading. His articles are always a joy to read and have become a looked-for feature in recent editions. I recently spent a day with Neil at The National Archives and I can tell you that he absolutely fizzles with ideas for articles.

But as Commissioning Editor, I must offer my heart felt thanks to all those writers who contribute articles – without them there would be no journal. The depth and variety of articles never ceases to amaze me.

I feel very humbled by the support that we get from our regular contributors as well as those submitting a one-off. Please don't stop! And for anyone who has an inner article just waiting to get out – I'd love to receive it, simply email it to me at [susanmarieparry@hotmail.com](mailto:susanmarieparry@hotmail.com)

**Sue Parry**

Commissioning Editor



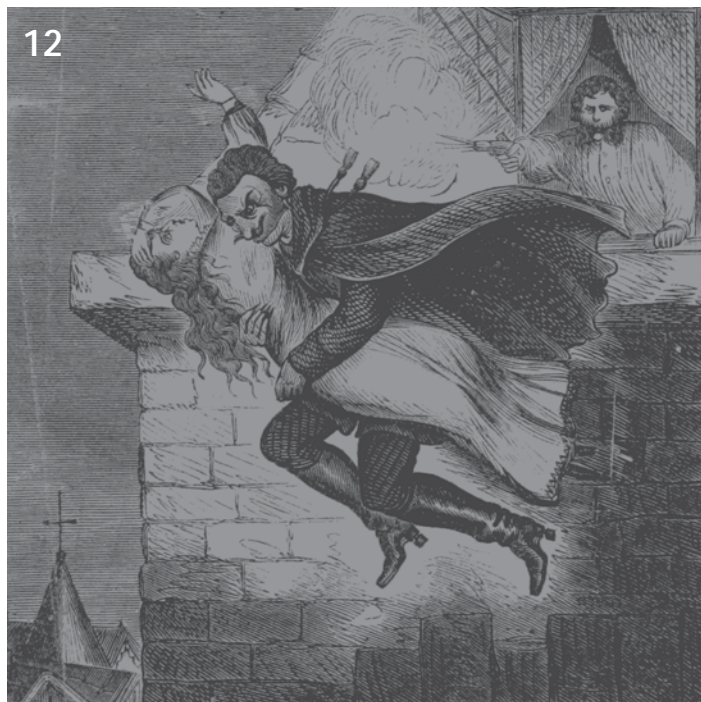
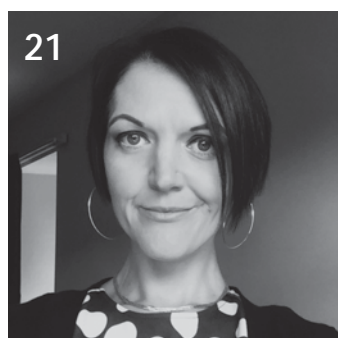
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The Whitechapel Society 1888

# OCTOBER 2019

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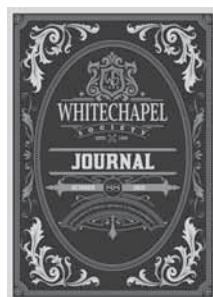
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**COVER IMAGE**  
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redesigned Whitechapel  
Society logo

By George Sotiriou ©2019





## WHITECHAPEL VIGILANCE COMMITTEE

Don't put your daughter on the stage Mrs Worthington! By Neil Watson

**W**ith no productive arrests and no positive leads for the Whitechapel Murders, the local tradesmen were getting desperate, as the public fear of Jack the Ripper was very bad for business. It was time for action. So they formed a committee! The locals were getting restless as the huge police enquiry ground on but without any good result. This was a pre forensic science police enquiry, and random, unprovoked murders were going to be hard to solve.

And so it was that the Whitechapel Vigilance Committee (WVC), was born. The public wanted more police officers patrolling the streets, (not unlike today), and they also wanted a reward offered for information leading to the capture of the murderer. Like a sort of 'hands on' Victorian Neighbourhood Watch, the WVC took to patrolling the streets each night armed with a police whistle and a stick.

The Committee consisted of various tradespeople including the president, George Lusk. Also sitting on the WVC was one Charles Reeves of 209 Jubilee Street Mile End. The involvement of the WVC is well known, but the life of Mr Reeves is probably less so. It is him and his theatrical family that this article is about.

When Charles Reeves joined the WVC in 1888, he used his 'new' name rather than the one that he had been born with. He was Jewish and had been born Samuel ISAACS in Norwich in 1843 to parents John Isaacs and Adelaide Kauper. At some point after his 16th birthday he left his family and changed his name to Charles Reeves, ending up in London. He married Harriet Saunders in the City of London in 1873. It was a productive and successful family unit. Harriet gave birth to 16 children!

I found a clue to the possible meeting of the couple in various newspaper articles in the East London Observer which reviewed theatrical productions. Both Harriet Saunders and Charles Reeves appeared on the same bill in several shows at the Pavilion Theatre in

1873, the year of their marriage. One such production was *'Little Emily'* in May of that year. Love must have blossomed behind the footlights.

Charles became an actor and a comedian. He certainly had a busy time of it, appearing in countless shows, mostly at the Pavilion Theatre in Whitechapel. At this point I turned to The Stage newspaper to give me more of a flavour of Charles and his theatrical exploits. He certainly did have a great variety of parts, and reviews were generally good, though some were less than flattering. He didn't always have a starring part either. Some of his roles included the following:- *'A footman'* in *Lost in London*; *'Mr Harebell'* (an invalid old gent) in *Dora Graham*; The *'Young lover Hedrick'* in *Rip Van Winkle*; *'King Cobweb'* in *Cinderella*; *'Tony Plainface'* in *The Workmans Wife*.

Some of the comments went up and down the scale of star quality. *'Decidedly tame'*; *'satisfactory'*; *'efficient'*; *'a useful actor'*; *'capable'*; *'amusing'* and *'caused great laughter in his pretending mad scene with his wife and mother-in-law'*.

I have a picture in my mind of a versatile comic actor in the style of Les Dawson. He's behind you!

One particular article in The Stage on 3 January 1890 painted quite a glorious picture of late Victorian theatre and theatre goers. The Christmas holiday show at the Pavilion Theatre was opened by the proprietor, Mr Morris Abrahams on Boxing Day. Both the matinee and evening performances of Dick Whittington were 'filled to bursting' with the East End crowd getting their moneys worth from the actors who had mastered their lines so well. The show contained some funny characters such as *'Lord Lollipop'*, *'Dolly Mops'* and *'Sergeant Muttonhead'*.

The article described Charles Reeves in the part of *'King Rat'*, being *'the model of what a pantomine fiend should be'*. Keeping it in the family, his daughter Ada Reeves was also in the show and was described as *'a very clever little lady, delightful as the Geni of the Bells'*.

A visit to a theatrical performance must have been a special event for working class punters in the late



Ada Reeve as Julie Bon Bon in 'The Gay Parisienne' Ogden's cigarette card 1896. ©National Portrait Gallery, London.

1800's. Entry to a warm, racous venue as impressive as the Pavilion, and being able to shout 'Oh no he isn't' must have seemed magical in that era. If you had chosen to see the panto, Alladin at Crystal Palace instead of the Pavilion, you would have been entertained by a cast of 28 players. The array of inventive names for the performers was impressive. They included;- Sau-Cee; Ching-Chang; Dar-Ling; Swee-Tee; Wa-Ta-Loo; Char-Ring-Khros; Goa-Long; Han-Kee and Pan-Kee.

The Pavilion Theatre was an important place of entertainment in London. The building had been built and rebuild, several times during the Victorian period. The rebuild of 1871 had seen the seating numbers raised to 4,000, a significant increase. By 1892 the seating had been reduced to 2,650. The Pavilion referred to itself as the 'Drury Lane of the East'. Indeed the numbers compared favourably with the principle London theatres at the time. Drury Lane, held over 3,000; Pavilion, 2,650; Princess's 2,500; Adelphi, 2,083; Gaiety 1,176.

The Pavilion was described as 'One of the most beautiful in London', and its drop curtains had a painting of Tower Bridge on them. It was the hey day of the theatre. Sadly it closed in 1934 and was destroyed in the Blitz of 1940.

The Victorian period wasn't noted for workers being paid high wages, and actors were much the same. Unless you were top of the bill, most run of the mill thespians would have lived frugally like most other people. The problem of providing for a large family weighed heavily on Charles Reeves. As with a lot of other professions, some of his children followed him into the theatre. Of the Reeve offspring, little Ada, (born, Adelaide Mary at 22 Jubilee Street, Mile End on 3 March 1874), was the most successful, and it was her money that on occasions rescued the family from poverty.

Charles normally had a steady amount of parts at the Pavilion to keep him going, though his wages didn't normally keep the Reeves' far ahead of the rent man. In a later interview in 1908, Ada told of a difficult situation in 1884:

*'When business was bad as often happened, and no salaries were forthcoming, we were frequently in very bad financial straits. On one occasion, when I was 10, the company with which my father and I were playing, after struggling for months, collapsed, owing us a considerable amount in arrears of salary. Having no engagement to follow it being the dead season, we were in a terrible plight. My father who was a brave man, but handicapped with a large family, rather than run into debt, decided that we should sing on the beach of the southern watering place at which we were stranded. By this means the wolf was kept from the door until another engagement was secured.'*

Ada mentioned the effect that keeping their heads afloat had on her father:

*'When I was 14, my father's gentle nature was unequal to coping with the soul grinding poverty that clouded our lives and his health gave way. I, the only bread-winner was not re-engaged for the next tour. It was decided that I should call on a music-hall manager who was acquainted with my father. I pleaded so hard for a hearing that the good hearted man patted me on the head and said, 'You can open on Monday'.*

Initially managed by her father, Ada went onto become a big theatrical star, but his death at the age of 63 overwhelmed her with sorrow'. Charles was described in the papers at his death as an 'old East End theatrical star', as well as 'a stock actor in Mile End'.



*Ada Reeve by Bassano Ltd, published by The Philco Publishing Co postcard print, 1900s. ©National Portrait Gallery, London.*



He died of pneumonia in Bow on 22 November 1906, leaving £545 in his will to his wife Harriet.

As a child actor, she was known theatrically as 'Little Ada Reeves', but she later removed the word 'Little' as well as shortening her surname to Reeve. Her career took off hugely and she was much in demand. She appeared often in musical comedies and played in the style of Marie Lloyd with risqué winks and gestures. Due to her popularity, she was able to cash-in making lots of money by personal appearances, product endorsements and appearing on hundreds of post cards.

If you care to check the website for the National Portrait Gallery in London, you will be rewarded with seeing 24, charming, mainly Edwardian theatrical photographs of her.

During WWI, she performed to wounded soldiers. The Australian's referred to her as 'Anzac Ada, the soldiers friend'. She did a huge amount of philanthropic work for British & Commonwealth soldiers for which she was much loved. She later spent several years living in Australia from 1929 before returning to Blighty in 1935.

The exploits of Ada Reeve were enough to fill a book. Indeed she went on to write her autobiography, *'Take it for a Fact'* in 1954 after a lifetime of 70 years in the 'business'. Twice divorced following disastrous marriages, and with many financial mishaps along the way, she appeared on stage, screen, radio and television, from Britain to Australia. She earned big money. One nine week tour of South Africa in 1906 earned her a £5,000 fee alone. In 1956 she appeared on the Eamonn Andrews, 'This is your Life' show. If you search 'YouTube' for Ada Reeve you will find a video of part of that show as well as other clips of her films.

She never retired, and kept busy until a stroke at her home in Notting Hill Gate in 1966 took her to the St Charles Hospital, North Kensington where after a month, she passed away aged 92. One newspaper headline described her as the *'Gayest of the Gaiety Girls'*. The Daily Mirror reported her demise, mentioning that when aged 84, the BBC had mistakenly announced her death which cost them a *'slap up meal'*. She had boasted at the time that she would survive till at least 100. She didn't quite make it to that golden number, but she had had a remarkable life, a girl from the East End had made her theatrical parents very proud.



*Ada Reeve in 'Kitty Grey' by Lallie Charles, published by Rotary Photographic Co Ltd 1901. ©National Portrait Gallery, London.*

The Aberdeen Press later that year noted that Ada had left just £447 net in her estate. Worth a modest £8,500 today.

The Stage reported that her memorial service was held at St Martins in the Fields, Trafalgar Square with lessons being read by Dame Sybil Thorndyke and a young Judi Dench, with a tribute from Sir John Betjeman. As a star of the music hall days who had made it through from the Naughty Nineties to the Swinging Sixties, her final appearance was a fitting way to end, at the top of the bill at an amazing stage at St Martin's being celebrated by the best actors in the business. Ada was a real trouper, and at this, her very last curtain call, as the applause of 70 years died down she took her final bow. Not bad eh, Mrs Worthington, for putting your daughter on the stage.



## ALBERTOPOLIS

By Amanda Harvey Purse

**I**f we are lucky, we can still find elements of London that can remind us of the Victorian past. With Victorian buildings, parks, street names, streetlamps and post boxes to name but a few, if we position ourselves correctly, it can seem as if we have time-travelled back to Victorian times.

With playful images of the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson running around the smog filled streets entering our minds, or it may be little boys with soot filled faces shouting out the words 'Read all 'bout it'. It may even be thoughts of 'Bobbies' walking their beats with truncheons in hand and oil lamps clipped to their belts that come easy to you, or it may be just the feeling that Queen Victoria could still have been on the throne. All this we can imagine when we look at certain areas of London today.

*However, was it just the Victorian period?*

*If we think outside the box a little, wasn't it also, for a few years anyway, the Albertian period?*

Yes, Prince Albert was Victoria's husband, the father of her children including the future heir to the English throne. Yes, Prince Albert was the Queen's closest confidant and quite often her most trusted advisor. Nonetheless, as much as architecture of that day is named 'Victorian' after the monarch of the time, isn't there a part of London, still famous today, where the architecture should be called 'Albertian'?

Let me explain...

The Great Exhibition of 1851 was an international exhibition that took place within Hyde Park from the 1st May to the 15th October 1851 and was the platform for the World Fairs that followed. Not just organised by the Prince, it was also organised by Henry Cole, the man that sent the first ever Christmas Card in 1843. As well as showing the spectators the world's industrial age, it also allowed the world to celebrate their own achievements for the first time.



*Portrait of Queen Victoria in her coronation robes and wearing the State Diadem by Franz Xaver Winterhalter, 1859. ©RCT*

This drew in the crowds, some of them being famous people of the time such as Charlotte Brontë, Charles Darwin, Charles Dickens, Lewis Carroll and William Makepeace Thackeray, to name but a few.

Of course, there were doubters that Prince Albert wouldn't be able to make the Great Exhibition... great, but a success it was.

*After Prince Albert had proved all his doubters wrong and came away from the exercise, a more prominent and braver man who had the profit from this idea in his back pocket. What did he do?*

*Did he place it back into the Royal purse?*

**No, he gave it back to the people in the only true way Prince Albert probably knew how, through education.**





*Dickinsons' comprehensive pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Source archive.org*

He brought an area of land in the capital from the profits of the Great Exhibition and named the main road through Exhibition Road. From the 1850s this area of London was called 'Albertopolis', after all the effort Prince Albert placed in it. However, after the Prince's death that name was dropped and over time it became as known South Kensington<sup>1</sup>.

In this area Prince Albert built places of education. Places that anyone could visit because then, *like today*, these buildings were free to enter.

These places included were the Imperial College London, founded in 1845. Its first patron was of course Prince Albert and it also included the Natural History Museum. This museum was officially known as British Museum (Natural History) until 1992 and is known for its unique style of architecture, with statues of animals placed all around the building. Civil engineer Captain Francis Fowke won a competition in 1864 for the design. However, Fowke passed away before he could see his design realised and the work was taken over by Alfred Waterhouse, an architect famous for his Gothic Revival style; his design of Manchester Town Hall being a good example. Work began on the Natural History Museum in 1873, and the building we know day was finished in 1880, opening to the public 1881.

Another building within Albertopolis was the Royal College of Art, originally named Government School of Design when the college was at Somerset

House in 1837. This college expanded and to do that, they moved the college over to Marlborough House in 1853, moving again into Albertopolis in 1857. However, the college wouldn't be known as the Royal College of Art until 1896. Other colleges and institutes included in Albertopolis, were the Royal College of Music, Royal Geographical Society, Royal Institute of Navigation, Royal College of Science, Geological Museum, Royal School of Mines, Royal College of Organists, Royal School of Naval Architecture, Imperial Institute and the Royal School of Needlework.

More famous buildings included the Science Museum. Founded in 1857, it was originally called the Museum of Patents, mainly due to it holding the Patent Office Museum inside. It wasn't called the Science Museum until 1885.

There was also the Victoria and Albert Museum, which had its origins within the Museum of Manufactures, which first opened its doors to the public in the May of 1852 at Marlborough House, before moving to Somerset House in the September of the same year. In 1854, ideas to move this museum to South Kensington were underway, with the hope of renaming it the South Kensington Museum.

However, when Queen Victoria laid the foundation stone to the new museum, she wanted it to be renamed after herself and her husband. There is even a reference to the Great Exhibition within Victoria



and Albert Museum. If you were to look up in the internal courtyard, you can see a frieze showing a depiction of Queen Victoria in front of the glass building that once held the Great Exhibition, Crystal Palace.

To end Albertopolis in the most fitting way, two monuments were erected in honour of Prince Albert after his early and unexpected death. The first monument is the Albert Memorial, placed in Kensington Gardens. Its placement was meaningful, being placed directly north of a Royal Hall named after the Prince. It was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott in a gothic style and it is fifty-four meters tall.

The main piece was a bronze statue of Prince Albert dressed in his Knight of the Garter robe. Gilded in gold as he was the Queen's golden Prince, it sits underneath what is meant to represent a high altar of a church.

However, it has not always been in gold leaf. During the First World War it was painted in black. Several theories have been suggested for this; protection from overhead bombings or maybe anti-German sentiment. However, when tests were done on the black paint by English Heritage, they discovered the black paint was older than 1914. The altar was placed first on the grounds within the park, being opened in July 1872 by Queen Victoria, while the statue of Prince Albert was placed later, in 1876.

The memorial was not just about the Queen's love and grief over losing her husband. It has a lot of symbols and codes on it that are only noticeable if you are standing close and spend some time studying it. All around this memorial are references to Prince Albert's love of education and bringing the world together through this subject.

There are sculptures depicting industrial arts and sciences, such as agriculture, commerce, engineering and manufacturing and four more statues depicting the four continents, Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe, with animals such as a camel, bison, an elephant and a bull. The canopy over Prince Albert is covered with imagery depicting the four arts of poetry, painting, architecture and sculpture by showing people such as Homer, Raphael, Solomon and Michelangelo.

Upon this canopy are also the words: *Queen Victoria And Her People – To The Memory Of Albert Prince Consort – As A Tribute Of Their Gratitude – For A Life Devoted to the Public Good* and around the pillars that hold up the canopy are symbols depicting arts and sciences such as Astronomy, Geology, Chemistry, Geometry, Rhetoric, Medicine and Philosophy. Virtues such as Faith, Hope, Charity, Humility, Fortitude, Prudence, Justice and Temperance are also depicted.

However, what is not widely known is this Albert Memorial was not the first one made. Within Albert



*The grand opening of the Royal Albert Hall in London by Queen Victoria on 29 March 1871 as illustrated in 'The Graphic'*

Square in Manchester is another memorial very similar to the one in South Kensington. In this memorial, Albert is depicted as standing rather than sitting and he is not in gold. This was unveiled in 1865, just four years after Albert's death.

However, the second memorial for Prince Albert in his Albertopolis is perhaps on a grander scale. This is the Royal Albert Hall, a concert hall on the northern edge of South Kensington. Through the profits of the Great Exhibition, Gore House was brought, it being situated where the Hall is now located.

This scheme was slow running and sadly the Prince died before it was completed. But Queen Victoria took over the mission and in April 1867 she signed the Royal Charter of the Corporation for the Hall to be a part of Arts and Sciences within the area and on the 20th May 1867, the Queen laid the Hall's foundation stone.

The design was heavily influenced by the ancient amphitheatres of the Roman period, so that the music that would be played for years to come inside, could sound smoother and better. However, when it first opened there were a few issues with the sound, so much so that at one time, it was jokingly said that the hall was the only place where a British composer could be sure of hearing his work twice! Works were due to be completed on Christmas Day in 1870, however it over ran slightly, with the official opening ceremony being on the 29th March 1871. The Queen was sadly too overcome with grief to speak, so a speech was made by her son, Edward, Prince of Wales instead<sup>2</sup>.

*Today...*

To celebrate Queen Victoria's 200th birthday in August 2019, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the Royal Collection Trust allowed Queen Victoria's gold-leaf piano to be played outside Buckingham Palace, something that had not been done since Queen Victoria was given the piano in 1856. And the place they chose for this celebration?

*Well, it was none other than the Royal Albert Hall.*

As wonderful as it was to hear this important historical piano being played in an outstanding building that really was built for it, I was saddened to think that the last time it was probably played would have been in a family setting. Victoria Queen of England would have been a mother and wife, playing the same keys with her husband and children within the Palace that she made her own.



*Portrait of Prince Albert; the three chains are (from top to bottom) the collars of the orders of the Golden Fleece, Bath and Garter. ©The Royal Collection*

As I watched the piano being played at the BBC Proms, it was being overlooked by a grey statue of Prince Albert. Maybe it was the stage lighting that made me feel that it was Prince Albert rather than Queen Victoria who was looking down upon this moment. Suddenly the thought came to me that, as much as we should celebrate the 200th birthday of a Queen of England, would it not be just as wonderful to celebrate the 200th Birthday of Queen Victoria's consort, Prince Albert (for he was born in the same year as Queen Victoria) as well?

*And what better way to do that than write and read an article we can all share on Prince Albert's lasting vision of free education for all?*

*Of his lasting mark on the capital?*

*Of his Albertopolis?*

**Happy 200th Birthday Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha**

**May your educational legacy live on for many more years.**

*Footnote:*

1. Royal Albert Hall website.

2. The building – Royal Albert Hall [web.archive.org](http://web.archive.org)





# SPRING HEELED JACK – A STRANGE ROMANCE: PART 1

By Chris Warman

**S**he was the beautiful daughter of a British ambassador with a love of Renaissance art and a considerable talent of her own with the paintbrush. She also a philanthropist with a deep commitment to the well-being of a remote rural community, and her legacy lives on to this day.

He was an aristocratic scoundrel, relying on his wealth and social position to get away with creating mayhem for the sheer fun of it and one of his stunts did at least add a colourful phrase to the English language. Yet he has also been named as a night prowling fiend, terrorising the innocent and making his escape by the exercise of apparently superhuman powers.

Reader, she married him!

## THE PHANTOM MENACE

London in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century was a city riven by what sociologists are pleased to call moral panics among a population facing both real and imaginary threats. The regular occurrence of domestic violence and drink-fuelled aggression was pretty well taken for granted, as it has been until very recently, but there were darker forces at work to terrify the inhabitants of the great city and the press was only too ready to feed their fears. In the mid-nineteenth century garrotting in the furtherance of robbery caused such terror, especially after an attack in 1862 on the MP Hugh Pilkington, that potential victims went to extreme lengths to defend themselves. You could wear a huge spiked collar, or a gun fastened to your backside to hit an attacker where it hurt or hire the enormous Bayswater brothers to walk with you. Two decades on came a crime that has re-emerged in recent years, acid attacks. The ready availability of vitriol – sulphuric acid – for industrial and household use made it a convenient weapon for settling a grudge and the perpetrators were just as likely to be women as men.

While such crimes undoubtedly took place, they were also in a sense the creation of the media. The number and gravity of attacks is hard to quantify

but probably subject to exaggeration. The British public had an insatiable appetite for ‘facts’ and ready access to newspapers and works of fiction; and it can be hard at times to distinguish one from the other. Things have not changed that much..... Jack the Ripper was undoubtedly and lamentably real, but he too is surrounded by myth, with faked letters and victims that never existed. In fact, he has become so embedded in fiction that I have been asked whether or not he had actually existed.

There were threats to the people of London which were certainly less firmly grounded in reality. One of the most alarming, and picturesque, was ‘Spring-heeled Jack’ who comes to prominence around the time of Queen Victoria’s accession to the throne (1837). Jack was a demonic figure who molested young women and then made his escapes by phenomenal leaps beyond the abilities of mortal man. Throughout the nineteenth century and beyond he has been a popular subject for publications which purport to be based on actual facts. Illustrations for playbills and penny-dreadfuls show a masked and cloaked figure in tight fitting clothes which have a somewhat military cut. Witnesses also reported that he breathed fire and raked his victims with iron claws. He may not have been the only terror in the night, at the time of his outrages there were also reports of mystery assailants dressed as bears or wrapped in a bullock’s hide, and London had long been plagued with spectral visitants which delighted in frightening good citizens out after dark.

A typical night-time attack, said to have taken place in October 1837, involved a servant girl returning from a visit to her parents – a being leapt out at her from a dark alley and seized her. He kissed her face and ripped her clothes until his claws, cold and clammy as the touch of a corpse, touched her flesh. At her screams several local residents rushed out of their homes and her assailant fled. The next night he leapt out at a carriage, causing the driver to lose control and fall, suffering serious injuries. The assailant, laughing madly, then disappeared with a mighty bound. It has to be said that these accounts cannot be traced back to the time in question but came to light in later years.



Two more descriptions of assaults, complete with the names of the victims, are dated to February 1838. On the twentieth of that month a girl called Jane Alsop answered the door just after five in the evening to a caller who claimed to be a policeman and asked Jane to bring a light because they had caught Spring-heeled Jack. When she came out with a candle a fire-breathing apparition grabbed her and tore at her with his claws, ripping her clothes and pulling out quantities of her hair. In this case there is a contemporary account from a most respectable source. On February 22nd The Times reported the incident as 'The Late Outrage at Old Ford'. Some days later, on February 28th Lucy Scales and her sister were walking home through Green Dragon Alley in Lambeth when they came upon a tall dark figure carrying a bull's eye lantern. He turned and breathed fire in Lucy's face, causing her to be deprived temporarily of her sight, and she fell to the ground in convulsions.

These two reported outrages seemed to have been part of a pattern of attacks, and the matter had already received the fullest publicity in January of that year when the Lord Mayor of London Samuel Wilson addressed a public meeting at the Mansion House. He quoted from a letter sent to him by 'A Resident of Peckham'. The complainant stated;

*'It appears that some individuals (of, the writer believes, the highest ranks of life) have laid a wager with a mysterious and foolhardy companion, that he durst not take upon himself the task of visiting many of the villages near London in three different disguises, a ghost, a bear, and a devil – the wager, however, has been accepted and the unmanly villain has succeeded in depriving seven ladies of their senses, two of whom are not likely to recover'*

As might be expected, there followed a spate of alleged attacks not only upon young women but also boys and the elderly. The tally soon rose to thirty victims, some of whom were alleged to have died. The assailant presented in various guises, witnesses alleging a figure clad in an animal skin or even in armour, which would explain the fact that bullets were ineffectual against him. The matter was taken seriously; the police were put on alert; rewards were offered. The Duke of Wellington, by then in his late sixties, was said to have patrolled the streets by night on horseback and armed with a brace of pistols, a nice idea, but there are no reliable reports of such a prominent and busy public figure taking such a personal interest.

'Jack' had quite a career ahead of him. In the mid nineteenth century he became the hero of numerous publications, and the covers of these give us the most familiar image of the leaping figure with his iconic boots. In the real world 'Jack' put in appearances again at various times throughout the nineteenth century. There seem to have been a spate of incidents in the 1870s, including an occurrence at the Army barracks in Aldershot when someone approached a sentry, ignored his challenge and slapped the soldier's face several times, either the sentry or his comrades fired at the figure, which fled in a series of 'astounding bounds, apparently unhurt; I dare say they missed. In truth, any silly prank might be attributed to 'Jack', but he certainly remained in the public consciousness, because in March 1877 Beatrix Potter wrote complaining of 'the singular nuisance' of gangs of young men claiming to be Spring heeled Jacks, assaulting and robbing people. It is quite probable that whoever claimed the name of 'Jack' for the Whitechapel murderer – he remained anonymous - took inspiration from the earlier terror of the night.

So, who was this scoundrel? Did he really find love? Make sure you look out for part two of this article in the December 2019 journal to find out 'Who was Spring heeled Jack'?

## INTERIM MEETING

2nd November 2019

### 'WERE ALL THE VICTIMS PROSTITUTES'

We shall start between **17:00 to 17:30** hrs  
as the pub closes at **22:00** hrs.

There will be an event during  
the day so please check the Facebook  
Interim Group page for details.

The Crutched Friar  
39-41 Crutched Friars  
London  
EC3N 2AE

 **The Whitechapel  
Society 1888**





## BUCKS ROW: INSIDE OUT

Review of the August 2019 Whitechapel Society Meeting by Louise Grace



**In a very hot and sticky evening, the Whitechapel Society warmly (a somewhat apt word), welcomed guest speaker and long serving member, Steve Blomer.**

Steve was introduced by Karl Coppack, a self-confessed Bucks Row enthusiast and avid reader of Steve's book (more of that later): "Inside Bucks Row- an anatomy of a murder".

Steve's talk, as the title suggested, was an in-depth examination of the history of Bucks Row and the surrounding area. Steve drew on an extraordinary number of old maps to demonstrate the evolution of place and street names. His maps started from an uncredited map of the area from 1767, followed by Dicey of 1765 and 1789, Bowles of 1775, Needle of 1791, Carey 1795, Mogg 1803, Strangers 1814, Crutchley 1827, Smith 1830, Cross 1844 & 1850 and Rocque of 1846 and 1856.



the south side, the now demolished Roe Buck Public House (possibly just a beer house), adjacent to the murder site the North-South railway line constructed around 1875 and the Board School (the only building which remains today).

Bucks Row opened into a larger space, Great Eastern Square, narrowed down as it got towards Thomas St and then joined the narrower Whites Row and proceeded onto Baker's Row.

Steve quoted from Leonard Matters' book "The Mystery of Jack the Ripper". Matters had visited Bucks Row in 1928 describing Bucks Row as a slum saying:

*"....Bucks Row cannot have changed much in character since its named altered. It is a narrow, cobbled, mean street having on one side the same houses, possibly tenanted by the same people, which stood there in 1888. They are shabby, dirty little houses of two storeys, and only a three-foot pavement separates from the road, which is no more than 25 feet wide from wall to wall".*

Starting with a sketch map of Bucks Row in 1888, Steve demonstrated how the position of Bucks Row had moved over the years. It ran from Brady St (also called North St) as far at least as Thomas St, though some would argue it only went as far as Queen Anne Street.

### **The road consisted of 3 parts:**

The long narrow part in which the murder of Polly Nichols took place included Brown & Eagle Warehouse, Schneiders Factory and Essex Wharfe. On

Steve disputed the 25ft measurement and said that from the OS map of 1893-95 the wall-to-wall measurement was actually 24ft. Winthrop Street to the south was even narrower at 15ft.

In 1890 Kearley & Tonge built a warehouse on the North side of Bucks Row and in 1892, following a petition to the council from the local residents, Bucks Row was renamed Durward Street.

But as Steve tracked back through old maps, it was clear that the original name of Bucks Row/Durward St was



Ducking Pond Row. Bucks Row did not appear until 1850 and the name Winthrop Street in 1866.

When the road split into north and south parts it seemed that the south road was the one which usually kept the Ducking Pond Row name, though maps of 1827 and 1830 called this road Watson's Buildings.

These early maps of the late 1700s and early 1800s showed various roads called various names. The same name was given to different roads on different maps and conversely the same road could have a variety of names.

However, the Ducking Pond was located at the east end of what we today call Durward Street. It was fed by natural water which ran from Shoreditch to Limehouse. The pond dried up due to over extraction by the Whitechapel Distillery in the early 1800s which occupied the north side of Bucks Row from 1767 to 1861.

Steve told the members that it has been suggested that the name "Ducking Pond" had its origins in punishment but no records exist to support that. Steve felt it was more likely to have originated from a dubious sport in which dogs were set upon ducks!



*Behind the Wood Building Metal Door. ©Lofty Ford.*

However, Steve found records of two drownings of women in this pond. One in 1753 and another in 1798.

Regarding the origin of the name "Bucks Row", Steve said that one theory was that "Buck" was a corruption of "duck". However, he felt that it was far more likely to be named after Mary Buck, the widow of Ralph Davenant, the rector of St Marys in the late 17th century.

The Crossrail project now means that the murder site is in-accessible and Winthrop Street has totally disappeared. All that remains of Winthrop Street can be accessed via Woods Buildings through a door on Whitechapel Road (see article on p16).

Taking a wider look: Court Street was named after the manorial courthouse which once stood on the corner and its claim to fame is that it is only one of two streets not to have changed its name since 1800. Directly opposite and to the north of Court Street was Queen Anne St, later renamed Woden St (after the local vicar) but no trace of it remains to-day. However, at the north end of today's Castlemaine St lies Trebourn Close and on careful inspection one can just make out the route of Queen Anne Street running north.

The present-day sports centre covers John St (which had long gone even in 1888), Thomas Street, Queen Anne Street and Cross Street which had at one time connected Queen Anne St and Thomas St.

To finish this in-depth study, Steve went through a brief history of Bakers Row (today Vallence Road). Bakers Row ran north from the junction with Whitechapel Road to the junction with Hanbury Street, though called High Street on a 1775 map it became Charles Street to the north of Hanbury Street. By 1888 however, this was amalgamated into Bakers Row.

This fascinating talk sparked a lively Q&A session where questions ranged from possible escape routes from the Bucks Row murder site, through to the issues surrounding the Lechmere theory to Hallie Rubenhold's book "The Five Women".

*For more information about Steve Blomer's book – email him on [insidebucksrow@gmail.com](mailto:insidebucksrow@gmail.com) The publication is an e-book which if printed would fill 544 pages. There are two different resolution sizes – for most people the 13MB size would be adequate, but if viewing on a 20 inch screen or larger, then the 40+MB version would be advisable. The book contains over 3000 links.*

# A WALK WITH STEVE BLOMER

By Sue Parry

**F**ollowing Steve's excellent talk, "Buck's Row Inside Out", the night before, a group of intrepid walkers met up with Steve at The Blind Beggar pub the following morning.

Steve took us on a guided walk around the area surrounding Buck's Row and we paid special attention to the route that Charles Lechmere/Cross could have taken from his home in Doveton Street to the Polly Nichols murder site in Buck's Row and onto his place of work at Pickfords in Broad Street.

The depth of Steve's research, if it hadn't already been apparent the night before, was almost mind blowing and a write-up of this walk is probably best done in the pictures.

My thanks to Lofty and Melissa Ford who supplied most of the pictures and to Tony Power for providing the map of the route we took.

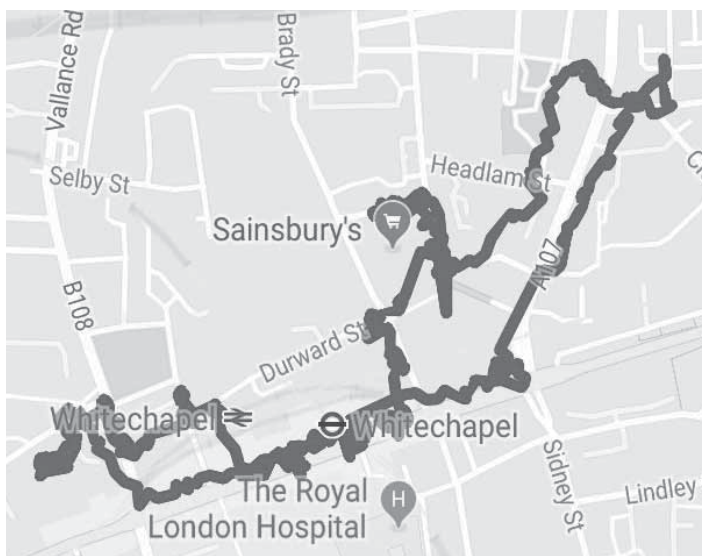
It was with some pride that Tony told us on our arrival back at The Blind Beggar that during the course of the walk we had expended a total 480 calories. I thought this was pretty good until I realised that was equivalent to about two 4-finger kitkats (other chocolate bars are available).



*Site of 22 Doveton Street, home of Charles Cross/Lechmere*



*Site of The Roebuck Public House in Brady Street. Demolished in 1995*



*Route of Steve Blomer's walk*



*Site of Whitechapel Union Workhouse and nearby Davenant School. Mortuary in the grounds of the workhouse to which some of Jack the Ripper's victims were taken*





*Top of Durward Street and Vallence Road*



*Looking north from Durward Street*



*The Grave Maurice Pub at 269 Whitechapel Rd. Opened in 1874 and closed in 2010. Frequent customers included Ronnie Kray and "Mad" Frankie Fraser.*



*Door to the right - the home and surgery of Dr Llewelyn at 152 Whitechapel Rd*



*Entrance to Wood's Building and behind the metal door, a narrow passage which ran north from between 263 and 265 Whitechapel Road to Winthrop Street.*



*A welcomed drink and lunch in the garden of The Blind Beggar at the end of the walk. Our thanks to Steve for an excellent morning*



# WHAT'S ON

## WILTON'S

MUSIC HALL

**Guided Tours 3rd July to  
22nd November 2019 (4pm)  
£8 per person**

Discover the diverse history behind the row of five terraced houses and performance space that form Wilton's Music Hall. This guided tour takes you on a journey from the 17th century through to the present. Learn about the people, events and performers that have made Wilton's the place it is today.

**Film Tours 10th September to  
19th November 2019 (4pm)  
£10 per person**

Wilton's has been used as the location for numerous films, television shows and music videos. Join us as we delve into our cinematic past and discover the creative process behind greats such as *Muppets Most Wanted*, *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*, *The Krays*, *The Great McGonagall* and *Frankie Goes to Hollywood's 'Relax'* as well as many more.

Tours are 50 minutes, followed by a 10 minute Q&A.

**Christmas Carol – A fairy tale by Piers Torday** Based on A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. 29th November to 4th January 2020. 7.30pm Monday - Saturday; Weekly matinees.

**£12.50 – £36 Full Price,  
£10 – £32 Concessions  
Previews 29th November –  
5th December (Matinee)**

This Christmas rediscover a classic British fairy tale. Refreshed and relevant for the 21st century, this traditional story inspired by the politics of nineteenth century London comes to life in the true Dickensian atmosphere of the world's oldest surviving music hall, Wilton's Music Hall.

## ROYAL LONDON HOSPITAL

**I am Human**

**A walking tour of the Royal London Hospital**

*I am Human* retells the story of the hospital's most famous resident, Joseph Merrick, the so-called 'Elephant Man', through the eyes of Merrick himself. Based on sources held in the Hospital's archives, the audio guide brings 1880s Whitechapel to life through the voices of Merrick, the Hospital's celebrity surgeon Frederick Treves, its resourceful young Matron, Eva Luckes and a medical student training at the College. Follow a route around the old hospital site using the audio guide and/or accompanying walk leaflet, finishing up in the museum, where you can learn more about Merrick, Treves and Luckes.

## ASHMOLEAN

MUSEUM OF ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

**Last Supper in Pompeii**

**On until 12th Jan 2020. Entry £11/£12**

See over 400 rare objects, including fine masterpieces of Roman art which range from the luxury furnishings of Roman dining rooms to the carbonised food that was on the table when the volcano erupted. Everything from the exquisite mosaics and frescoes in the villas of the wealthy to the remains found in kitchen drains, show what the Pompeians loved to eat and drink. This remarkable exhibition provides an extraordinary insight into their everyday lives.



**The Spitfire Experience – Cockpit Tour £10**

**On until 31 December 2019.** Tour operates *Tuesdays, Thursdays and weekends* – 11.15am – 4.15pm.



**Reopening at  
Sulhampstead,  
near Reading  
(10 mins from M4)  
on 4th Sept 2019.**

The museum includes displays on the history of Thames Valley Police and the five police forces that merged to form it: Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxford City, Oxfordshire and Reading Borough. The museum's collections include items from the Great Train Robbery of 1963, uniforms, equipment, medals, scenes of crime evidence, the Denham Murders and Amelia Dyer.



**BISHOPSGATE  
INSTITUTE**

### **Archives Tour – London Collections**

Join Special Collections & Archives Manager Stefan Dickers to hear about London's celebrity detectives and gangsters

and find out what happened to a rowdy group of builders drinking on a rooftop in 1806. **Thursday 17th October 6:30pm.** Book on-line. **£7/£5**



The authentic handmade set offers a blood-curdling experience which will weave people through the smoke-filled alleyways of Victorian London. In the narrow streets and dark rooms hide actors who are poised to get hands on, make the pulse race, and the adrenalin rocket.

This one-hour experience in Brighton is not for the faint-hearted as it will uncover fears and shake the soul with a terrifying onslaught of the senses.

**Jack the Ripper Walk of Terror**  
attraction costs **£12.50** and can be  
booked online at  
**www.  
phileasfoggsworldofadventures.  
co.uk**



### **Jack the Ripper CSI : Whitechapel**

Begg (Paul) & Bennett (John G.) h/b Signed..... **£35**

**Capturing Jack the Ripper** Bell (Neil R.A.) p/b Signed .. **£10**

### **E.1 A Journey through Whitechapel & Spitalfields**

Bennett (John G.) s/c SignedA..... **£25**

### **Whitechapel Doors** Berk (Louis) & Kolsky (Rachel)

New s/c Numbered, Signed, Ltd. Edn. .... **£20**

### **The Cleveland Street Affair**

Chester/Leitch/Simpson hb/dw..... **£25**

**Etched in Arsenic** Christie (Trevor L.) hb/dw..... **£20**

### **East End 1888** Fishman (William J.)

hb/dw Facsimile Reprint ..... **£12**

### **The Trials of Israel Lipski**

Friedland (Martin L.) hb/dw ..... **£20**

### **Black Boar – Whitechapel Freak**

Hitchcock (David) Tabloid Newspaper style ..... **£25**

### **Policing From Bow Street** Kennison (Peter) & Cook

(Alan) New h/b Numbered, Signed, Ltd. Edn. .... **£25**

### **The People of the Abyss**

London (Jack) h/b (2002 reprint)..... **£20**

**Days of My Years** MacNaghten (Sir Melville L.) h/b ..... **£425**

**Inquests Jack the Ripper** Neil (C.) s/c ..... **£20**

### **The Illustrated Police News**

Purkess (George) Ed. by: Facsimile Set 5 copies..... **£130**

### **The Highways and Byways of Jack the Ripper**

Riley (Peter) s/c Signed..... **£20**

### **From Constable to Commissioner**

Smith, K.C.B. (Lieut.-Col. Sir Henry) h/b..... **£600**

**Prince Jack** Spiering (Frank) hb/dw..... **£20**

### **Swanson: The Thurso Boy Who Became**

**Scotland Yard's Top Detective (Abridged)**

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### **Trial of Percy Lefroy Mapleton** Wood (Adam)

Ed. by: No. 86 NBT Series hb/dw new Signed..... **£25**

### **Crime and the Supernatural**

Woodhall (Edwin T.) h/b ..... **£30**

### **LORETTA LAY BOOKS**

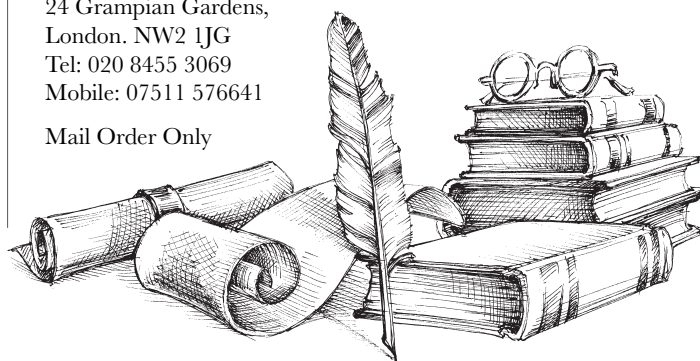
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## INTERIM MEETING 7TH SEPTEMBER 2019

By Steve Rattey

**T**he September interim was certainly a thought-provoking one. Some of us had been on the Great Fire of London Walk which I had suggested two weeks proceeding in the wake of Channel 5's extensive documentary on the subject with Suzannah Lipscomb, Dan Jones and Rob Bell.

Whilst awaiting arrivals a brief chat about matters topical took place and the predictable word Brexit appeared. The very worst portmanteau of recent times and in fact I find the word Gastropub less offensive. We didn't have to endure that for long thank goodness and we were into the topic of the night 'who in the East End of 1888 would carry knives'? When it was proposed in July I thought it was a subject far too general to be stimulating and that was a very poor assumption.

For a fair stretch the conversation really generated steam and powered its way down the tracks. Who carried a knife? Well Jack the Ripper for a start and of course butchers, people in the leather trades, sailors, slaughterhouse workers to name but a few. The list expanded yet took a swerve when the question as to whether the police would have been concerned by someone who carried a knife.

Of course, the wounds of the victims arose and someone pointed out that none of the medical people who inspected the bodies were specialist pathologists. Did the murderer have anatomical knowledge?

Only good ol' George Bagster Philips said so. How about differences in the knives used and of course the knife found by Thomas Coram in Whitechapel Road. In addition, blood deposits on knives and how the first strike will not leave a blood stain. Both these points are covered in a great article on the Casebook website written by our own Bill Beadle.

At the end of the evening conclusions were of course inconclusive but it was really fascinating getting to that point. These discussions are so motivating and if you have never attended an interim please come along.

Your thoughts will be of value.

Attendees in the house were:  
- Bill Beadle, Richard Kane, Mark Galloway, Samantha Hulass, Martyn Priestnall, Christine James, Tony Power and of course yours truly Steve the Rattey.

The next interim will be at The Crutched Friar on 2nd November and the subject

proposed by Tony Power should be a good contentious one reflecting on articles in the media around this time last year is to be 'Were all the victims prostitutes?'

We shall start between 17:00 to 17:30 hrs as the pub closes at 22:00 hrs. There will be an event during the day so please check the Facebook Interim Group page for details. I won't be able to attend as I'll be in Australia so Tony Power or Mark Galloway will be able to answer and questions. It'll be about 06:00 hrs on Sunday morning for me but I'll be tempted to phone with a couple of contributions to the evening.





# THE DECEMBER WEEKEND

7<sup>TH</sup>/8<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2019

As has become customary, the December meeting in 2019 will be spilling into most of the weekend.

**Saturday 7th December** kicks off with the Whitechapel Society's AGM at **6pm** at The Crutched Friar. Below is a list of committee positions which are to be elected during the AGM.

Position	Current holder	Standing for re-election
<b>Chairman</b>	William Beadle	Yes
<b>Secretary/Legal Adviser</b>	Louise Grace	Yes
<b>Treasurer</b>	Sue Parry	Yes
<b>Facilities Officer</b>	Steve Rattey	Yes
<b>Production Editor</b>	George Sotiriou	Yes
<b>Members Rep</b>	Catherine Tobin	Yes
<b>Technical Manager</b>	Steve Forster	Yes

The meeting will be presided over by the society's honorary president, Mark Galloway.

Any nomination for these positions must be received by email by **31st October 2019** with your name and position you would like to be put forward for to: **whitechapelsociety@gmail.com**

Nominees must be current members of the Whitechapel Society with at least **3 years** uninterrupted membership to the date of the AGM.

At **7pm** the meeting will start and details of our guest speakers and their topic are on the back page of this journal.

During the evening, there will be an auction of items and the money raised will be going to charity in memory of Martin Fido who sadly passed away in April of this year.

## SUNDAY 8th DECEMBER 2019

We plan to visit The Old Operating Theatre & Herb Garret at **9am** St Thomas Street, London SE1 9RY. Entry is at **10:30am** and from **11am** until **12** there will be a talk, in the operating theatre, on Victorian Surgery. Entry is **£7.50** and those wishing to join us there need to book their own tickets through the Old Operating Theatre's website.

We suggest you contact Sue ASAP at **susanmarieparry@hotmail.com** if you are interested in joining us for this visit and she will contact you just before the tickets go on sale. The theatre only holds 45 people and members of the public will also be there, so early booking is strongly advised to avoid disappointment.

We then meet at The Chamberlain Hotel in Minories at **12:45pm** to sit down at **1pm** for a 3-course Christmas lunch at **£29.95**. The meal needs to be ordered and paid for in advance. More details will follow via email, our website and our facebook page.

Following the meal, our after-lunch speaker is the renowned Dr Elizabeth Yardley and she will be asking the question *"Why are we so fascinated by Serial Killers?"*



Elizabeth Yardley is a Professor of Criminology at Birmingham City University. Her research focuses on homicide and violent crime, particularly in terms of how society and culture makes sense of those who choose to do harm to others. In her talk, she will explore the reasons behind the public's fascination with serial killers.

Why do some serial killers gain notoriety and a place in history whilst others go relatively unseen? Why do we seem to care more about some victims than others? What does our fixation with serial murder say about the state of society in the twenty-first century? Could it be that the values inherent in serial murder are the very values underpinning all of our lives in a neoliberal consumer society?

So all in all, an exciting weekend and we look forward to seeing you.



## INTERIM AFTERNOON EVENT: GREAT FIRE OF LONDON WALK

By Tony Power

**“So down [I went], with my heart full of trouble, to the Lieutenant of the Tower, who tells me that it began this morning in the King’s baker’s house in Pudding Lane, and that it hath burned St. Magnus’s Church and most part of Fish Street already. So I rode down to the waterside, . . . and there saw a lamentable fire. . . .”**

So wrote Samuel Pepys in his diary for 2nd September 1666; the great fire of London had started!

A number of us have been engrossed by Channel 5’s documentary “The Great Fire of London: hour by hour”. In it Suzannah Lipscomb, Dan Jones and Rob Bell, follow the trail of the fire from its origins on Pudding Lane right across London.

For our afternoon event on 7th September Steve Rattey, Mark Galloway, Richard Kane and myself made our way to Monument to retrace the steps of the fire and see what remnants there are of that calamitous event.

We began at the Monument which was built between 1671 and 1677 to commemorate the fire and stands at the junction of Monument Street and Fish Street Hill in the City of London. A stone marker on the ground next to it was inscribed with the following..“East of this tablet on 2nd September 1666 was the bakers oven woodpile where began that dreadful fire...”, in fact the fire started 61 metres (202 feet) east of it which interestingly is the exact height of the monument. We managed to find the approximate location of bakery and speculated as to how different the street would have looked then surrounded by wooden houses crammed in closely together which made it so easy for the fire to jump from one building to another.

From there we headed up Canon Street towards Mansion House near where one of the three residents used in the channel 5 documentary had his banking business and home which the fire was fast approaching by the early hours of Sunday morning. We continued towards St Pauls Cathedral which was in flames by the following Tuesday where another local inhabitant had his book shop along with many others.



Monument ©Tony Power





*In Carter Lane ©Tony Power*

At this point we couldn't resist taking a slight detour to visit the wonderfully preserved Carter Lane, the layout of which dates back to the 12th century. There we visited the Cockpit pub which is located down a narrow alley and does a very good real ale in cosy intimate surroundings.

Suitably refreshed, we continued up Ludgate Hill and Fleet street and past dear old St Brides Church the spire of which all wedding cakes are modelled. The fire was eventually stopped in nearby Fetter Lane and we headed up this street to locate **The Golden Boy of Pye Corner** which is also linked to the fire. This small chubby cherub was erected to commemorate the stopping of the fire and because the calamity was ascribed to gluttony, he was made to look prodigiously fat. Initially, he was placed in front of a bar called the Fortunes of War which was famous for being the haunt of 'resurrection men' (body snatchers) and was demolished in 1910.

The walk was very interesting, and we discovered some of the oldest parts of the city most of which have undergone many changes.

However, wandering down Carter Lane really gave us an idea of how the buildings would have been laid out in those days and we could really imagine the terror experienced by the local citizens as the fire progressed, seemingly unstoppably, from one building to the next.

Even though there was little loss of life, the fire decimated much of London and thousands of Londoners lost their homes and businesses. Following the catastrophe London was rebuilt and new building regulations were put in place specifying that all buildings had to be made of stone. A new London was born from the ashes and a new and improved St Pauls Cathedral was built under architect Sir Christopher Wren.

The fire also saw the birth of the fire insurance industry as well as the creation of fire brigades. It is comforting to know that something positive came of a so horrifying event. We will leave the last word to Samuel Pepys "I home to bed...and myself and wife lie in our own chamber again. But much terrified in the nights now-a-days with dreams of fire and falling down of houses".



*The Golden Boy of Pye Corner ©Tony Power*



## POISON PEN

By Mickey Mayhew

**I** guess you could call this a sort of macabre obituary.

Can a comparison be made between the countless hoax letters sent to the police and press during the Jack the Ripper murders, and the letters sent by 'Wearside Jack', aka John Humble, who pretended to be the Yorkshire Ripper during 1978/79, at the height of that particular spate of attacks?

Well, for starters no one particular person was ever singled out as having been behind a particular portion of the hoax Jack the Ripper letters - we'll come to the individual cases later - but in the case of the Yorkshire Ripper things were quite different. John Humble, who died in July of this year, was convicted of having sent an audio recording as well as several letters to the police during the hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper, Peter Sutcliffe. The audio recording was distinctive with Humble's heavy Wearside accent and this, along with the fact that he introduced himself as 'Jack' on the recording, led to the name of 'Wearside Jack' being given. He wasn't actually caught and convicted for the crime until 2006, when DNA evidence from an envelope led the police to his doorstep. It was Humble's fraudulent penmanship that led to police diverting resources away from the real Yorkshire Ripper's trail and following up on him instead, thereby prolonging Sutcliffe's reign of terror.

Humble's first letter, sent to Detective George Oldfield, read:

*'Dear Sir, I am sorry I cannot give my name for obvious reasons. I am the Ripper. I've been dubbed a maniac by the Press but not by you, you call me clever and I am. You and your mates haven't a clue that photo in the paper gave me fits and that bit about killing myself, no chance. I've got things to do. My purpose to rid the streets of them sluts. My one regret is that young lassie McDonald, did not know cause changed routine that night. Up to number 8 now you say 7 but remember Preston '75. get about you know. You were right I travel a bit. You probably look for me in Sunderland, don't bother, I am not daft, just posted letter there on one of my trips. Not a bad place compared with Chapeltown and Manningham and other places. Warn whores to keep off streets cause I feel it coming on again. Sorry about young lassie. Yours respectfully Jack the Ripper'*

In 1979, Humble then sent the aforementioned audio - a cassette - to the police:

*'I'm Jack. I see you are still having no luck catching me. I have the greatest respect for you George, but Lord! You are no nearer catching me now than four years ago when I started. I reckon your boys are letting you down, George. They can't be much good, can they?'*

Despite the fact that even the FBI advised the police that the tape came from a hoaxer, the police persisted in their efforts to trace the sender, with continued focus on the heavy Wearside accent as a pin pointer to his possible location. During this time, Humble had even telephoned the police to admit his guilt, primarily because he felt responsible for the fact that his hoaxes had misled the investigation.

Despite the more obvious links to the 1888 murder hoaxes - sans cassettes - the fact was that Humble himself was also a man 'obsessed' with the murders of Jack the Ripper; The Times newspaper said that '...he had become fascinated with the 19th century murderer Jack The Ripper after borrowing books about the brutal killings in London from his local library in Sunderland.'

As said, countless letters and postcards were sent to the police and press during the original Ripper's 'autumn of terror', including the now 'legendary' 'From Hell' letter to George Lusk, the chairman of the Whitechapel Vigilance Committee, along with half a kidney purportedly taken from the body of Catherine Eddowes. Alongside these and certainly prominent in notoriety, are the 'Dear Boss' letter and also the 'Saucy Jacky' postcard. The general consensus among that tribe of forever bickering basement-based factions - aka Ripperologists - is that all of these are fakes, although a select few believe that some or all of them may in fact be genuine. However, countless people - and notably among them several women - were in fact discovered having penned fake Jack the Ripper letters, including Charlotte Higgins in Devon, and also 'prankster' Mrs Miriam Howells from Wales; she escaped conviction but had to pay costs. In fact, the list of women faking Jack the Ripper letters continues; one 'Maria Coroner' of Bradford was charged on the 21st October 1888 with a breach of the peace for sending letters to the police and also to local papers signed 'Jack the Ripper'

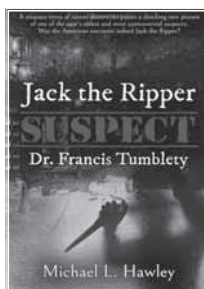






## NEW BOOK TITLES

Courtesy of Robbie Ives



### **Jack the Ripper Suspect, Dr Francis Tumblety** **Michael L Hawley**

Jack the Ripper Suspect Dr. Francis Tumblety highlights the most recent groundbreaking discoveries concerning one of Scotland Yard's top Jack the Ripper suspects in the 1888 Whitechapel Murders Investigation, Dr.

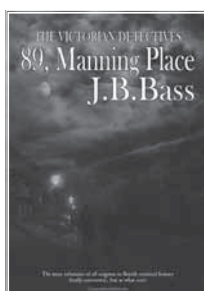
Francis Tumblety. Among the discoveries is over 700 pages of never-seen-before sworn testimonies revealing not only a picture of an antisocial narcissist with a single-minded lifelong drive for exploitation but also damning evidence that he may indeed have been the Whitechapel fiend.



### **Places of Pleasure By Lee Jackson**

In this vivid, captivating book, Lee Jackson charts the rise of well-known institutions such as gin palaces, music halls, seaside resorts and football clubs, as well as the more peculiar attractions of the pleasure garden and international exposition, ranging from parachuting monkeys and human zoos to theme park thrill rides. He explores

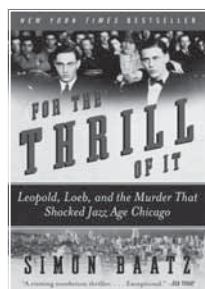
how vibrant mass entertainment came to dominate leisure time and how the attempts of religious groups and secular improvers to curb 'immorality' in the pub, theatre and dance hall faltered in the face of commercial success.



### **89 Manning Place By J B Bass**

Following their honourable discharge bearing full military honours from many years of distinguished service with the British Army and Her Majesty Queen Victoria's Covert Special Forces Unit, Major James Bartholomew Bass and Commander Alan Tiberius Blackmore are immediately recruited into the service of the London Metropolitan

Police Force and tasked with the specific brief of solving the conundrum of without doubt one of the most elusive enigmas from within the files of British criminal history: Exposing the true identity of "Jack The Ripper".

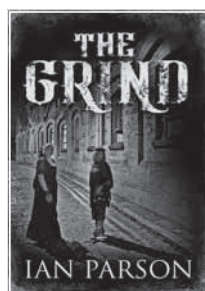


### **For the Thrill of It.** **By Simon Baatz**

It was a crime that shocked the nation: the brutal murder in Chicago in 1924 of a child by two wealthy college students who killed solely for the thrill of the experience. Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb were intellectual and too smart, they believed, for the police to

catch them. When they were apprehended, state's attorney Robert Crowe was certain that no defence could save the ruthless killers from the gallows. But the families of the confessed murderers hired Clarence Darrow, entrusting the lives of their sons to the most famous lawyer in America in what would be one of the most sensational criminal trials in the history of American justice.

Set against the backdrop of the 1920s, a time of prosperity, self-indulgence, and hedonistic excess in a lawless city on the brink of anarchy; For the Thrill of It draws the reader into a world of speakeasies and flappers, of gangsters and gin parties, with a spellbinding narrative of Jazz Age murder and mystery.

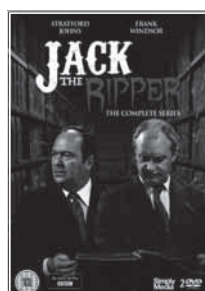


### **The Grind By Ian Parson**

This is the story of two girls who just call it home. One on her way up, the other on her way down. Mary and Liza are best friends. A workhouse girl from birth, Liza likes working the streets.

Liza wishes life could stand still. She thinks ambition will be their downfall.

If only she was brave enough to say what she really thought. As the girls become mothers they drift further apart. Suspicion sets in. When things get so bad, a young woman looks in the mirror and smiles at the prospect of violence.



### **DVD: Jack the Ripper: The Complete Series.**

**The 6-part 1973 BBC TV drama starring Stratford Johns & Frank Windsor.**

Release date 21st October 2019. Being sold by Simply Home Entertainment ([www.simplyhe.com](http://www.simplyhe.com))



## THE TRUE STORY OF *POLDARK*'S LATEST VILLAIN

Joseph Merceron, the Godfather of Regency London by Julian Woodford

**W**ere you one of the 4 million or so people watching the final series of *Poldark* this summer? If so, you will have seen the kestrel-carrying corrupt magistrate Joseph Merceron, whose antics led to the public execution of Ross's friend Ned Despard and almost led Captain Poldark himself to be falsely branded as a traitor to King and Country.

You may be aware that 'the Unfortunate Colonel Despard' – as he became known – was a real character. But so too (although without kestrel!) was Joseph Merceron, and to all intents and purposes he was the 'Godfather' of Regency London and a complete tyrant over most of the East End. The plot line used in *Poldark*, with Merceron the magistrate responsible for Coldbath Fields Prison in Clerkenwell, where the Pitt government held political prisoners like Despard for years without trial, was true, and is based on my biography of Merceron, *The Boss of Bethnal Green*\*.

In real life, Merceron's corrupt rule over Bethnal Green began in 1787 at the age of 23 and lasted – despite a short spell in prison – for more than 50 years. During that time, as landlord, parish officer, magistrate or in a myriad of other positions of power, he controlled almost every aspect of local life. He owned or managed hundreds of houses but was also responsible for setting and collecting the rates and taxes. He controlled a quarter of Bethnal Green's public houses, turning many of them into brothels and gambling dens, but for many years he was also the man who licensed them. His stranglehold on local amenities was so absolute that every local shopkeeper and artisan needed his protection to work and survive.



From his base in Brick Lane, Merceron controlled a huge swathe of the infrastructure of London's East End. How did a man of humble beginnings, the son of a refugee pawnbroker, rise to such a level of importance? The answer lies in that his domination coincided with a period of serious civil unrest, from the weavers' riots of the 1760s to the movements for electoral reform leading to the Reform Act of 1831. For decades, increasingly desperate and paranoid national governments saw the corrupt elite of the

East End as the front line in the fight to hold back the tides of revolution and reform. As was dramatized in *Poldark*, Merceron had links to a network of government spies, set up to monitor the activities of underground revolutionary societies during the Napoleonic wars. By keeping Merceron and his associates in power, successive British governments, desperate to stamp out radical republicanism after the French Revolution, turned a blind eye to his criminal operations, leaving him free to enrich himself at the expense of the local population. By his death, he was extraordinarily wealthy

– by some estimates almost a billionaire at today's values – while Bethnal Green had become the epitome of the East End Victorian slum..

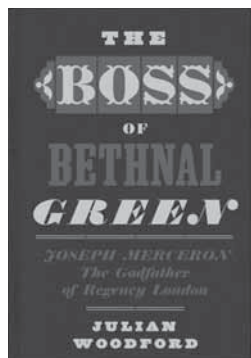
And so Merceron's story turns out to be more than a tale about a man and his money. It is also about the very origins of London's East End, a world of riots, lynching and public executions – and the begetting of a social catastrophe. By 1838, when a young Charles Dickens chose it as the home of the murderer Bill Sikes in *Oliver Twist*, Bethnal Green was bankrupt, the home of cholera and typhus, with more than a thousand starving paupers crammed into its rotting workhouse.



By that time, early Victorian social reformers had begun to expose Bethnal Green as a national disgrace. Perhaps the most shocking account is Hector Gavin's 1848 Sanitary Ramblings, a harrowing, street-by-street description by the surgeon to the Bethnal Green workhouse. In mind-numbing detail, Gavin makes clear that these conditions were established on Mercer's watch before his death in 1839.

According to Gavin, Bethnal Green had 'long possessed an unenviable notoriety on account of its neglected state and defective sanitary condition.' One street, the ironically named Pleasant Place, is described as 'the *ne plus ultra* of street abomination... nothing more or less than an elongated lake or canal; only, in place of water, we have a black, slimy, muddy compost of clay and putrescent animal and vegetable remains.' Another area, Lamb's Fields, was 'a stagnant lake of thickened putrefying matter; in this Pandora's box dead cats and dogs were profusely scattered, exhibiting every stage of disgusting decomposition.' Streets where Mercer had personally been the landlord or agent were described variously as 'very filthy', 'beastly' and 'perfectly dirty', with deaths from fever routinely reported. Swan Street, where many of the houses had been owned and let by Mercer for decades, was 'an abomination, its condition utterly disgraceful'.

It would be unfair to blame Joseph Mercer for all the social evils of London's Victorian East End. If he hadn't been there, or had not been tolerated by the national government, the system would most likely have led to another petty tyrant quickly taking his place. But I would argue that it was no accident that Bethnal Green was for many years the epicentre of East End poverty. The appalling housing conditions and sanitation established and presided over by Mercer and his cronies, while they enriched themselves of the funds intended for poor relief, could have been avoided. For this the governments of the day, far too ready to look the other way, must share the blame.



*\*THE BOSS OF BETHNAL GREEN, by Julian Woodford, is published by Spitalfields Life Books and is available from all good booksellers.*



## JACK THE RIPPER PLAY

A hit in Las Cruces, New Mexico, USA



one-act play called "Abberline Speaks: The Truth About Jack The Ripper," was one of eight original plays produced and performed as part of the Las Cruces Community Theatre's annual One-Act Play Festival back in April 2019 in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

The play was written by Mike Cook, who also performed the part of Inspector Frederick George Abberline. Fellow actor Lennie Marie Brown played the part of "Jacketa," an amalgamation of the Ripper's five or six confirmed victims. Both Cook and Brown are amateur actors in Las Cruces.



Cook, 62, has been fascinated by Jack the Ripper for more than 45 years. His Jack the Ripper library contains about 100 books and he has been planning to write the play for several years.

*Mike Cook as London Metropolitan Police Inspector Frederick George Abberline and Lennie Marie Brown as "Jacketa," an amalgamation of Jack the Ripper's either five or six confirmed victims in the one-act play "Abberline Speaks: The Truth About Jack The Ripper." Photo by Brandon Brown, Las Cruces, New Mexico, USA.*

More than 400 people attended three performances of "Abberline Speaks" and the seven other plays that were part of the One-Act Play Festival.

"I was so pleased with the response we received to the play," Cook said. "Even 130-plus years after the murders and thousands of miles away from Whitechapel, people continue to be interested in Jack the Ripper."

Cook is now at work on a full-length play with music about Jack the Ripper. Cook may be reached at [goodguymwc9264@gmail.com](mailto:goodguymwc9264@gmail.com)

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