

# FOOTSTEPS OF THE RIPPER

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I have followed the trail of Jack the Ripper through the very streets where he lurked.

While on leave recently from the University, I spent several months in London researching crime in England, and was able to visit the sites of the Ripper murders and other places associated with the Ripper.

Jack the Ripper committed his horrific crimes within a period of seventy-one days, from late August to early November 1888.

During those ten weeks he murdered five women--each a down and out, part-time prostitute with an alcohol problem. All but one of the victims were slain out-of-doors; only the last, and most ghastly, murder was committed inside, in the victim's lodgings.

All five Ripper killings were in the ancient parish of Whitechapel or its surrounding vicinity. Four of the murders were perpetrated not in the City of London but in adjoining Middlesex County; only one of the murders, the fourth, actually was committed within the city limits of the City of London.

The five Ripper victims were:

1. Mary Ann (Polly) Nichols, 43 years old, found dead by the side of the road on Buck's Row (now Durward St.) on Aug. 31.
2. Annie May (Dark Annie) Chapman, 47 years old, found dead in the back yard of a residence dwelling at 29 Hanbury St. on Sept. 8.
3. Elizabeth (Long Liz) Stride, 42 years old, found dead inside a walled courtyard off Berner St. (now Henriques St.) on Sept. 30.
4. Catherine Eddowes, 46 years old, found dead less than an hour later that same Sept. 30, in Mitre Square in the City of London, less than a mile from where Stride had been found.
5. Marie Jeanette (Black Mary) Kelly, 25 years old, the only victim slain indoors, in her rented room at 13 Miller's Court (since demolished), off Dorset St. (now Duval St.), on Nov. 9.

The Ripper murders were committed late at night or in the early morning hours. The killing weapon was a knife with a thin, extra-sharp blade about six inches long and a sharp point. All the victims had their throats slit, and most of the victims were horribly mutilated in the abdominal area as well as slashed in the face. The victims were violently seized by the throat, then throttled into unconsciousness before the knife was used.

The victims were almost certainly killed where they were found. No witnesses heard or saw the murders. The stealthy killer was able to approach and kill his victims and escape through the streets of Whitechapel, completely unseen and undetected. Jack the Ripper was never caught or even identified by English police.

In England there are no official plaques or historical markers that make reference to Jack the Ripper. Nonetheless, the Ripper is big business there and an important part of the tourist trade. There are even several escorted Jack the Ripper walking tours, which take visitors around the Whitechapel area where the murders occurred; I went on two of them myself. I also took many walks on my own until I had familiarized myself with Whitechapel and its vicinity.

Last November, paying my final visit to the Whitechapel area, I took the photographs of the Jack the Ripper murder sites.

The locales where the Ripper struck still exist, but greatly changed.

Buck's Row, where the first Ripper murder victim died, was renamed Durward St. shortly after the murder. Almost all the buildings on both sides of Durward St. recently were demolished as part of a general renovation of the area and in conjunction with the construction, now underway, of a nearby school. However, the vacant, decrepit Board School, a massive 4-story brick building which was standing in 1888, remains on the south side of Durward St., its top surrounded by a rusting cast iron fence enclosing the school playground, which strangely was on the roof of this grim, dirty, monolithic structure. And a brick wall which connects to the Board School and extends east along Durward St. for about 20 yards is still there, as it was in 1888. The body of Polly Nichols was found, lying parallel to the street with the feet toward the Board School, in the small area where the street curb is indented, just beyond the end of the brick wall.

All the buildings on the north side of Hanbury St., where Annie Chapman, the second Ripper victim, died were demolished in the early 1970's and replaced

with a Truman Beer brewery still occupying the entire side of the street. The approximate site of the entrance to the former building at 29 Hanbury, in whose backyard the murder occurred, is marked today by a small, indented doorway in the brewery on the north side of Hanbury St. The brick buildings on the south side of Hanbury St., opposite the brewery, were standing in 1888 and look very much as they did when the Ripper was stalking his victims.

Berner St., where the third Ripper victim, Elizabeth Stride, perished, was renamed Henriques St. shortly afterward. Today Henriques St. has hardly any buildings dating to 1888. The enclosed yard in which Stride was found and the buildings that stood nearby have been demolished, and a school, surrounded by a modern, tall brick wall surmounted by wire fencing, now occupies their sites, on the west side of Henriques St.

Although the 19th Century buildings that once lined its sides have disappeared, Mitre Square remains. It is paved with the same brick stones it had when it was trod by Ripper and victim. The place where the body of Catharine Eddowes, the fourth victim, was found, still known as Ripper's Corner, is now an elevated brick island recently equipped with several park benches for weary pedestrians, located in a corner of the Square.

Dorset St., where Marie Kelly, the final Ripper victim, was cut to ribbons in her own room, has been renamed Duval St. and made a private road. On one side of the street there is now a parking garage; on the other side of the street is a modern commercial building with loading bays and offices.

The Ripper murder sites are located within a rather small area. Walking briskly, I was on several occasions able to visit all five murder sites within less than one hour. It was thrilling! Here I was, an Athenian, prowling the haunts of the Ripper and walking in the steps of his victims! I even had time to visit The Ten Bells, a pub once patronized by several Ripper victims. Remodelled this century, The Ten Bells is a watering-hole for persons interested in the Ripper, and inside its walls are covered with posters and articles about him. One cold wet London night, after completing a spooky walk through the dark streets of Whitechapel, I warmed myself with a glass of brandy at The Ten Bells, soon to change its name to The Jack the Ripper!