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Jack the Ripper



The identity of the killer of five - or possibly six - women in the East End of London in 1888 has remained a mystery, but the case has continued to horrify and fascinate.

Between August and November 1888, the Whitechapel area of London was the scene of five brutal murders. The killer was dubbed 'Jack the Ripper'. All the women murdered were prostitutes, and all except for one - Elizabeth Stride - were horribly mutilated.

The first murder, of Mary Ann Nicholls, took place on 31 August. Annie Chapman was killed on 8 September. Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddowson were murdered 30 September and Mary Jane Kelly on 9 November. These are often referred to as the 'canonical five' Ripper murders, although Martha Tabram, stabbed to death on 6 August 1888, is considered by some 'ripperologists' to be the first victim.

There has been much speculation as to the identity of the killer. It has been suggested that he or she was a doctor or butcher, based on the evidence of weapons and the mutilations that occurred, which showed a knowledge of human anatomy. Many theories have been put forward suggesting individuals who might be responsible. One theory links the murders with Queen Victoria's grandson, Prince Albert Victor, also known as the Duke of Clarence, although the evidence for this is insubstantial.

Violence to prostitutes was not uncommon and there were many instances of women being brutalised, but the nature of these murders strongly suggests a single perpetrator.

A quarter of a mile from the scene of Catherine Eddowes' murder, the words 'The Juwes [sic] are not the men to be blamed for nothing,' were found scrawled on a wall in chalk, and it was suggested this was written by the killer. A police officer ordered the words to be removed, fearing an anti-Semitic backlash in an area with a large Jewish population. The murderer is also sometimes thought to have made contact by letter with several public figures. These letters, like the chalk message, have never been proved to be authentic, and may have been hoaxes.

Jack the Ripper was never caught and he is not thought to have killed again after November 1888.