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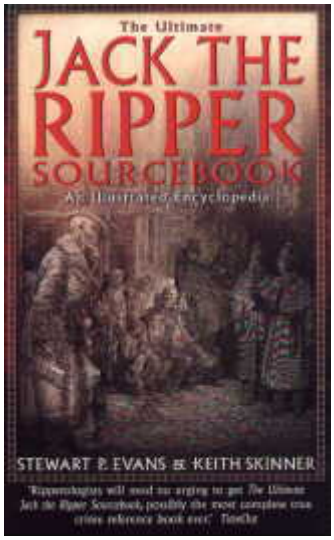
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THE ULTIMATE JACK THE RIPPER

The Ultimate Jack the Ripper: An Illustrated Encyclopedia *by* Stewart P. Evans and Keith Skinner Constable and Robinson Ltd, 3 The Lanchesters, 162 Fulham Palace Road, London W6 9ER, , : x + 758 Pages: Publication Date - 2001, ISBN 1-84119-452-2: Price £15.99

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The victims...

The five "canonical victims" of Jack the Ripper. Top row: left - Mary Ann Nichols (First Victim); right - Annie Chapman (Second Victim)

Middle row: left - Elizabeth Stride (Third Victim); right - Catherine Eddowes (Fourth Victim)

Bottom row: left - Mary Jane Kelly (Fifth Victim).. and right - the original police files, where the records of their murders lie buried. The book under review is the first book to make them accessible to everyone.

These pictures come from 32 plates given in the book under review. There are more for you to relish, if you love the bizarre and the macabre!













"Jack the Ripper! Few names in history are as instantly recognizable. Fewer still evoke such vivid images: noisome courts and alleys, hansom cabs and gaslights, swirling fog, prostitutes decked out in the tawdriest of finery, the shrill cry of newsboys -'Whitechapel! Another 'orrible murder! Mutilation!' - and silent, cruel death personified in the cape-shrouded figure of a faceless prowler of the night, armed with a long knife and carrying a black Gladstone bag."

Thus writes Philip Sugden in his "*The Complete History of Jack the Ripper*" describing very vividly the images Jack the Ripper arouses in all of us even today. It has been alleged that more books have been written on him, than on all the American Presidents combined! How far is this true is anybody's guess, but it remains a fact that the Ripper is the single most popular murderer in public memory today.

View this book on Amazon

We talk of the "canonical Ripper murders" just as we talk about the "Sherlockian canon". He is perhaps the only murderer who has given rise to a whole new legitimate field of study - Ripperology! We have songs, operas, ballads, periodicals, movies, novels, plays, even crosswords and games completely devoted to Jack the Ripper. Jack the Ripper has provided themes for numerous literary and dramatic works. Perhaps the most notable was a horror novel by Mrs. Belloc Lowndes, *The Lodger* written in 1913. Motion picture were made on this work in 1926, 1932, and 1944. And today on the web you find a number of sites on the Ripper, one of the most impressive being a 90 MB (or thereabouts) site, maintained by Stephen P. Ryder at http://www.casebook.org/

...Who was Jack the Ripper? Was he a homicidal Russian doctor called Michael Ostrog or a woman-hating Polish Jew called Kosmanski? A depraved lawyer called Montague John Druit or an English doctor Dr. Stanley? A Russian sadist..Well, if you want to write your own book on a new theory, this book is for you!...

For the last century or so, we have been inundated with a number of books on Jack the Ripper. Nobody knows for sure, who he was, but everyone seems to have a theory - from the probable to the bizarre. And almost everyone seems to have a antitheory too, to counter it. He was a homicidal Russian doctor called Michael Ostrog; a woman-hating Polish Jew called Kosmanski; a depraved lawyer called Montague John Druit; an English doctor Dr. Stanley; a Russian sadistic maniac Alexander Pedachenko, sent to England by the Russian secret police to embarrass the British Police Force; a poet and lawyer James Kenneth Stephen; Sir William Gull, Queen Victoria's physician; Duke of Clarence, Queen Victoria's grandson - the list is endless. Almost every person living about that time has been incriminated. One theory would have us believe that Jack the Ripper actually did not exist; it was a Jill the Ripper - a she, not a he!

But who actually was he? Do you have any ideas? Want to write a book on it? Then surely you must have access to the original documents related to this case. The book under review provides you with just that - uncontaminated original records - all connected with the murder of Jack the Ripper. These include the police reports of those times, the police correspondences, their letters and other documents, Jack the Ripper's letters, contemporary newspaper reports and so on.

The police files on Ripper have been kept secret all through. They were made public only in 1992. Until now there was no one book that served as a source of contemporary evidence, objectively presented in detail and with minimum intrusion from the author. The book under review, for the first time, provides all the relevant records, completely uncontaminated from authors own observations. It is left to the reader to interpret the facts and evidence himself.

...And the Suspects

Some of the many suspects. Top row: left - Montague John Druitt; right - Michael Ostrog

Bottom row: left - Dr. Francis Tumblety.. and right, a hypothetical suspect in a famous contemporary sketch from the *Illustrated London News*. It shows Vigilance Committee members watching him in the East End.

These pictures come from 32 plates given in the book under review.









Compiling these records have not been easy for the authors. They tell us in the introduction, that many reports were damaged. Some were virtually illegible. Handwriting in some of them proved difficult to identify. Often the original documents contained faint annotated marginalia, which were impossible to detect or discern when examining the files in their preserved microfilmed state.

Reading through these you get a feeling as if you have been transported physically into those times. You start getting a feeling of Whitechapel of late nineteenth century. You start getting the same chills which Londoners of those times must have got.

...if you want to speculate on the identity of Jack the Ripper, grab a copy of this book, and go through it. I already have a couple in my mind...

For the uninitiated, let us have a brief look into who Jack the Ripper was and what he did. He stepped into London's Whitechapel's area in or around 1888, and one by one killed five prostitutes for no rhyme or reason at all. He was not content to just murder them. He would mutilate them badly too. Undoubtedly he suffered from mutilomania. Frequently he sent letters to the Police daring them to catch him if possible. Nobody knows exactly how many murders he committed. Speculations range from 4 to 14. But most experts now agree that he killed five prostitutes. These are now known as the "canonical victims". These are (i) Mary Ann 'Polly' Nichols killed on 31 August 1888, (ii) Annie Chapman, alias 'Dark Annie' Siffey or Sievey, killed on 8 September 1888 (iii) Elizabeth 'Long Liz' Stride killed on 30 September 1888 (iv) Catherine Eddowes, alias Catherine Conway or Mary Anne Kelly killed on the same day, i.e. 30 September 1888 and (v) Marie Jeanette or Mary Jane or Janet Kelly killed on 9 November 1888. After this, the murders stopped as suddenly as they began. Theories of his identity have ranged from the probable to the bizarre.

The book gives a number of original photographs and drawings in 32 plates which are scattered across the book in three groups. Most of these sketches, diagrams and photographs are from the contemporary sources, and are difficult to access otherwise. For the benefit of the readers, I am reproducing some of them in the two side bars above. Never before have I seen so many photographs related to Jack the Ripper at one place.

The book undoubtedly forms a foundation for further research into the identity of Jack the Ripper. So if you want to speculate on the identity of Jack the Ripper, grab a copy of this book, and go through it. But if you are thinking on the lines that Jack the Ripper was an extraterrestrial or may be a bloodhound, this book is not likely to help you much. It keeps you on the ground and lets you think rationally.

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