



The Complete History of Jack the Ripper

By Philip Sugden

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The murders in London between 1888-91 attributed to Jack the Ripper constitute one of the most mysterious unsolved criminal cases. This story is the result of many years meticulous research. The author reassesses all the evidence and challenges everything we thought we knew about the Victorian serial killer and the vanished East End he terrorized.

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The Complete History of Jack the Ripper By Philip Sugden Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #350274 in Books
- Published on: 2002-01-09
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 5.71" h x 1.42" w x 7.87" l, .93 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 544 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

British historian-researcher Sugden here presents an exhaustive study of the Whitechapel murders of 1888 (some would say 1888-91) and examines the books by other "Ripperologists" to show that many have been derivative or have succumbed to the mythology surrounding the case. He makes it clear that, given the state of forensic medicine at the time, the police did good work but had almost no clues. Sugden concludes that none of the prime suspects was the Ripper, except perhaps George Chapman. Born in Poland as Severin Klosowski, he apprenticed as a surgeon; in London, where he was a hairdresser, he was suspected of several slashings but was never arrested. Included are photos and sketches of the murder locations and the women who were butchered.

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From Booklist

The series of murders in London in 1888 attributed to someone called Jack the Ripper constitute one of the most famous and mysterious unsolved criminal cases. Time has not diminished the gruesomeness of the killings: all the victims' throats were cut (some were almost beheaded), some victims were disemboweled, and from a few the killer took organs. When fear of the Ripper peaked, the killings stopped, and a century of speculation ensued. Sugden does not resist adding to the inquiry a chapter on his theory of Jack's identity, yet his book isn't intended to solve the puzzle. Rather, he painstakingly sifts through press clippings and police records to dispel misinformation, much of it stemming from police refusal to release information to the newspapers, as a result of which the press published rumors as facts, which were subsequently used by researchers as the basis of their books. Sugden is exhaustive, and his book is for the serious student, not light reading. Future writers on Jack the Ripper will use this text as the basis of their research. *Jon Kartman*

From Kirkus Reviews

This exacting book adds a cogent historical investigation to the relatively few intelligent books about the father of all serial killers. Sensationalistic distortion and overimaginative theorizing have been part of this anonymous criminal's history since the first contemporaneous tabloid stories on the Whitechapel murders and continue in the inquiries of modern "Ripperologists." For example, the letter signed "Yours truly, Jack the Ripper" that christened the legend was probably a journalist's headline-grabbing forgery, perpetuated in more hoax letters from the Ripper-crazed public. British historian Sugden corrects such myths and errors with donnish competitiveness, spending only a little time dispatching the more bizarre hypotheses (such as the recent Ripper diary hoax, the fanciful implication of the royal family in the murders, and the innumerable post-Victorian pseudo-suspects). Avoiding the penny-dreadful archives of Ripperology, he diligently approaches the voluminous police work and forensic evidence on the "canonical" four victims, all prostitutes, and an equal number of possible ones. Drawing on previous research and his own, he reexamines the eyewitnesses' testimony, inquest reports, newspaper accounts, and police leads (and red herrings).

Although the material is still compelling and timely after a century, Sugden's sometimes sluggish prose and narrative do not bring to life the panicked atmosphere of the East End or the tensions within the police department. In the end, though many inconsistencies are swept away and many ambiguities left warily intact, Sugden produces an approximate modus operandi around which a convincing psychological profile can be constructed. His examination of suspects exonerates previous favorites, such as Michael Ostrog, whom Assistant Chief Constable Melville Macnaghten called a "mad Russian doctor"; but with even his preferred suspect, a Polish con man and poisoner, he reaches the verdict "not proven." Sugden's factual treatment of the murders provides a meticulous and reasoned profile for readers and future detectives. (Photos and maps, not seen) -- *Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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