

Elizabeth Stride

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Elizabeth "Long Liz" Stride (Née Gustafsdotter) (27 November 1843 - 30 September 1888) is believed to be the third victim of the notorious unidentified serial killer called 'Jack the Ripper', who killed and mutilated prostitutes in the Whitechapel area of London from late August to early November 1888.^[1]

Elizabeth Stride was 44 years old at the time when she was murdered. She was nicknamed "Long Liz"; multiple explanations have been given for this pseudonym. Some believe it was related to her married surname "Stride", while others believe it was because of her height¹ or the shape of her face. At the time of her death she was residing in a common lodging-house at 32 Flower and Dean Street, Spitalfields, within what was then a notorious criminal rookery.^{[2][3]}



The canonical five Jack the Ripper victims

Mary Ann Nichols

Annie Chapman

Elizabeth Stride

Catherine Eddowes

Mary Jane Kelly

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Life and background

Stride was the daughter of a Swedish farmer, Gustaf Ericsson, and his wife Beata Carlsdotter. She was born Elisabeth Gustafsdotter in the parish of Torslanda, west of Gothenburg, Sweden, on 27 November 1843. In 1860, at the age of nearly seventeen, she took work as a domestic in the Gothenburg parish of Carl Johan, moving again in the next few years to other Gothenburg districts. Unlike most other victims of these crimes, who fell into prostitution due to poverty after a failed marriage, Stride took it up earlier. By 1865 she was registered by the Gothenburg police as a prostitute, was treated twice for sexually transmitted disease and gave birth to a stillborn girl on 21 April 1865.

The following year she moved to London, possibly in domestic service with a family. On 7 March 1869 she married John Thomas Stride, a carpenter who was 13 years her senior, and the couple for a time kept a coffee room in Poplar, east London. In March 1877, Liz Stride was admitted to the Poplar Workhouse, suggesting that the couple had separated. They had apparently reunited by 1881 but separated permanently by the end of that year. Her husband died on 24 October 1884.

At the time of her death in 1888 many people mentioned that Elizabeth frequently claimed that she lost her husband and two children in the *SS Princess Alice* sinking in the Thames in 1878.

After separating from her husband she lived in common lodging-house in Whitechapel, with charitable assistance once or twice from the Church of Sweden in London, and from 1885 until her death lived much of the time with a dock labourer, Michael Kidney. Friends described her as having a calm temperament, though she appeared numerous times in court for being drunk and disorderly. Her relationship with Kidney continued in an on-and-off fashion; in April 1887 she laid an assault

charge against him but failed to pursue it in court. She earned some income with sewing and housecleaning work. She left Kidney again a few days prior to her death, and several witnesses claimed to have seen her in Berner Street shortly before she was found dead.

Last hours and death



Mortuary photograph of Elizabeth Stride.

Elizabeth Stride was killed on the night of the "Double Event" that saw the murder of Catherine Eddowes less than an hour later. Stride's body was discovered close to 01:00 in the early morning of Sunday, 30 September 1888, lying on the ground in Dutfield's Yard, off Berner Street (since renamed Henriques Street) in Whitechapel. The yard was so dark that the steward of an adjoining club, who discovered her body on driving into the yard with a pony and cart, was hardly able to see it without lighting a match. With blood still gushing from her wound, it appeared that she was killed just moments before he arrived; the steward told officials that he believed that the killer was still in the yard.

A few authors of Ripper theories believe that Stride was not a victim of the same killer. Some suggest that she was killed by her lover, Michael Kidney. Unlike the other victims, she had no mutilations beyond a cut throat, and some have expressed doubt about the way it was inflicted. Additionally, alleged witness Israel Schwartz reported seeing Stride being attacked by what could have been two men and thrown to the ground on the street outside Dutfield's Yard around 12:45 a.m.

The murder of Stride shares some strong similarities to the pattern of Ripper killings, such as date, time, type of site, characteristics of the victim and the method of murder. Those who support her canonical status argue that no mutilations were inflicted on Stride because the killer was interrupted by the club steward's arrival and that the coincidence of Catherine Eddowes' murder within walking distance less than an hour later was the consummation of the earlier "unconsummated" Ripper killing of Stride. Ironically, it was the deaths of both Eddowes, and Stride, that sent the city of London into a panic, because it was the first time that the Ripper had struck twice in one night, earning the two murders the dubious nickname, "**The Double Event**."

Post-mortem

Dr. George Bagster Phillips, who also handled the Chapman and Kelly murders, performed the post mortem on Stride. His testimony to the inquest included the following statements:

"The body was lying on the near side, with the face turned toward the wall, the head up the yard and the feet toward the street. The left arm was extended and there was a packet of cachous in the left hand. [...] The right arm was over the belly, the back of the hand and wrist had on it clotted blood. The legs were drawn up with the feet close to the wall. The body and face were warm and the hand cold. The legs were quite warm. Deceased had a silk handkerchief round her neck, and it appeared to be slightly torn. I have since ascertained it was cut. This corresponded with the right angle of the jaw. The throat was deeply gashed, and there was an abrasion of the skin about one and a half inches in diameter, apparently stained with blood, under her right brow. At 3 p.m. on Monday at St. George's Mortuary, Dr. Blackwell and I made a post mortem examination. Rigor mortis was still thoroughly marked. There was mud on the left side of the face and it was matted in the head. [...] The body was fairly nourished. Over both shoulders, especially the right, and under the collarbone and in front of the chest there was a bluish discoloration, which I have watched and have seen on two occasions since. There was a clear-cut incision on the neck. It was six inches in length and commenced two and a half inches in a straight line below the angle of the jaw, 3/4 inch in over an

undivided muscle, and then, becoming deeper, dividing the sheath. The cut was very clean and deviated only a little downwards. The arteries and other vessels contained in the sheath were all cut through. The cut through the tissues on the right side was more superficial, and tailed off to about two inches below the right angle of the jaw. The deep vessels on that side were uninjured. From this it was evident that the hemorrhage was caused through the partial severance of the left carotid artery. Decomposition had commenced in the skin. Dark brown spots were on the anterior surface of the left chin. There was a deformity in the bones of the right leg, which was not straight, but bowed forwards. There was no recent external injury save to the neck. The body being washed more thoroughly, I could see some healing sores. The lobe of the left ear was torn as if from the removal or wearing through of an earring, but it was thoroughly healed. On removing the scalp there was no sign of bruising or extravasation of blood. [...] The heart was small, the left ventricle firmly contracted, and the right slightly so. There was no clot in the pulmonary artery, but the right ventricle was full of dark clot. The left was firmly contracted as to be absolutely empty. The stomach was large and the mucous membrane only congested. It contained partly digested food, apparently consisting of cheese, potato, and farinaceous powder. All the teeth on the lower left jaw were absent."

Funeral

Elizabeth Stride was buried on Saturday, 6 October 1888 in the East London Cemetery Plaistow, London, in grave #15509, square 37. The sparse funeral was paid at the expense of the parish by the undertaker, Mr Hawkes.

Further reading

- *The Complete History of Jack the Ripper* by Philip Sugden, ISBN 0-7867-0276-1.

References

- ↑ Stewart Evans and Donald Rumbelow (2006) *Jack the Ripper: Scotland Yard Investigates*: 96-113
- ↑ Stewart Evans and Donald Rumbelow (2006) *Jack the Ripper: Scotland Yard Investigates*: 96-8
- ↑ Jerry White (2007) *London in the Nineteenth Century*: 323-350

External links

- Casebook: Jack the Ripper

Note 1: At 5 ft 5 in (165 cm), Stride was around 4 to 5 inches (10 to 12.5 cm) taller than the average for Whitechapel women of the era — although Mary Jane Kelly was even taller.

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