

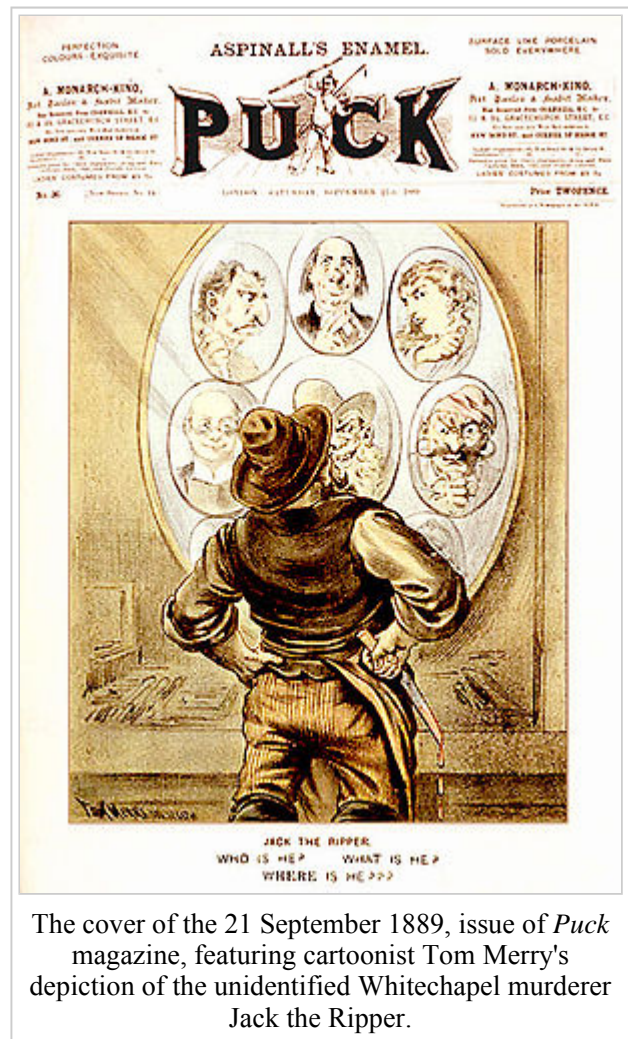
# Jack the Ripper suspects

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A series of murders that took place in the East End of London from August to November 1888 were blamed on an unidentified assailant known as "Jack the Ripper". Since that time, the identity of the killer has been hotly debated, and over one hundred **Jack the Ripper suspects** have been proposed.<sup>[1][2]</sup> Though many theories have been advanced, experts find none widely persuasive, and some can hardly be taken seriously at all.

## Contents

- 1 Contemporary police opinion
  - 1.1 Montague John Drutt
  - 1.2 George Chapman
  - 1.3 Aaron Kosminski
  - 1.4 Michael Ostrog
  - 1.5 John Pizer
  - 1.6 Francis Tumblety
- 2 Other contemporary opinions
  - 2.1 William Henry Bury
  - 2.2 Thomas Neill Cream
  - 2.3 Thomas Hayne Cutbush
  - 2.4 Frederick Bailey Deeming
  - 2.5 Carl Feigenbaum
  - 2.6 Robert Donston Stephenson
- 3 Opinions by later authors
  - 3.1 Joseph Barnett
  - 3.2 Lewis Carroll
  - 3.3 David Cohen
  - 3.4 William Withey Gull
  - 3.5 George Hutchinson
  - 3.6 James Kelly
  - 3.7 James Maybrick
  - 3.8 Alexander Pedachenko
  - 3.9 Walter Sickert
  - 3.10 Joseph Silver
  - 3.11 James Kenneth Stephen
  - 3.12 Francis Thompson
  - 3.13 Prince Albert Victor
  - 3.14 Sir John Williams
- 4 Further theories about the Ripper
- 5 Notes
- 6 References
- 7 External links



The cover of the 21 September 1889, issue of *Puck* magazine, featuring cartoonist Tom Merry's depiction of the unidentified Whitechapel murderer Jack the Ripper.

## Contemporary police opinion

The following suspects were named by one or more police officials as possibly being Jack the Ripper:

## Montague John Druiitt



**Montague John Druiitt** (15 August 1857 – 1 December 1888)<sup>[3]</sup> was born in Wimborne Minster, Dorset, England, the son of a prominent local physician. He was educated at Winchester College and New College, Oxford. He graduated from Oxford in 1880 and two years later was admitted to the Inner Temple. He was called to the bar in 1885, and practised as a barrister and a special pleader until his death.<sup>[4]</sup> To supplement his income, he was also employed as an assistant schoolmaster at George Valentine's boarding school, 9 Eliot Place, Blackheath from 1882 until he was dismissed shortly before his death in 1888.<sup>[5]</sup>

His body, which had been kept at the bottom of the river for about a month by stones placed in his pockets, was found floating in the River Thames off Thorneycroft's torpedo works near Chiswick on 31 December 1888. Some modern authors suggest that Druiitt was homosexual, and that his dismissal from his post at the boys' school was due to this and may have driven him to suicide,<sup>[6]</sup> but it is just as likely that he was dismissed because of an underlying psychiatric illness.<sup>[5]</sup> His mother suffered from depression and died in an asylum in 1890.<sup>[7]</sup> The coroner's jury concluded that he had committed suicide by drowning "whilst of unsound mind".

His disappearance and death shortly after the fifth and last canonical murder (which took place on 9 November 1888) and alleged "private information" led Assistant Chief Constable Sir Melville Macnaghten to name him as a suspect in a memorandum of 23 February 1894. However, Macnaghten incorrectly described the barrister as a doctor and his age is incorrectly given as 41 (he was 31 at the time of his death).<sup>[8]</sup> On 1 September, the day after the first canonical murder, Druiitt was in Dorset playing cricket, and while he could have used his city legal chambers as a base from which to commit the murders, most experts believe that the killer was local to Whitechapel, whereas Druiitt lived miles away in Kent.<sup>[9]</sup> Inspector Frederick Abberline dismissed Druiitt as a serious suspect.

## George Chapman



**Seweryn Antonowicz Kłosowski** (alias **George Chapman**—no relation to victim Annie Chapman) (14 December 1865 – 7 April 1903) was born in Poland, but came to the United Kingdom sometime between 1887 and 1888, shortly before the start of the murders. Between 1893 and 1894 he assumed the name of Chapman. He successively poisoned three of his wives, and was hanged for his crimes in 1903. At the time of the Ripper murders, he lived in Whitechapel, London, where he had been working as a barber.<sup>[10]</sup> According to H. L. Adam, who wrote a book on the poisonings in 1930, Chapman was Inspector Frederick Abberline's favoured suspect,<sup>[11]</sup> and is considered by a number of commentators, including Sugden and R. Michael Gordon, to be a likely culprit. However, others think him unlikely as he murdered his three wives with poison, and it is uncommon for a serial killer to make such a drastic change in modus operandi.<sup>[12]</sup>

## Aaron Kosminski

**Aaron Kosminski** (born Aron Mordke Kozminski; 11 September 1865 – 24 March 1919) was a Polish Jewish barber born in Kłodawa, who was certified insane and admitted to Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum in February 1891. He was named as a suspect in Melville Macnaghten's

memorandum, which stated that there were strong reasons for suspecting him, that he "had a great hatred of women ... with strong homicidal tendencies".<sup>[13]</sup>

Written comments by former Assistant Commissioner Sir Robert Anderson and former Chief Inspector Donald Swanson claimed that the Ripper had been identified by the "only person who had a good view of the murderer". Anderson and Swanson further stated that no prosecution was possible because the witness was not willing to offer testimony against a fellow Jew. In marginalia in his copy of Anderson's memoirs, Swanson said that this man was "Kosminski", adding that he had been watched at his brother's home in Whitechapel by the police, that he was taken to the asylum with his hands tied behind his back, and that he died shortly after.<sup>[14]</sup> This last detail does not match Kosminski, who lived until 1919. The copy of Anderson's *The Lighter Side of My Official Life* containing the handwritten notes by Swanson was donated to Scotland Yard's Crime Museum in 2006.<sup>[15][16]</sup> Some authors express skepticism that this identification ever happened, while others use it as evidence for their theories. For example, Martin Fido thought the witness was Joseph Lawende, but fellow Ripper author Don Rumbelow thought it unlikely.<sup>[17]</sup>

Kosminski does meet some of the criteria in the general profile of serial killers as outlined by Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) criminal profiler John Douglas and Robert Ressler. He may have lived close to the sites of the murders. Each victim was murdered within a mile of Goulston Street, where a bloodstained piece of one of the victim's clothing had been found, and a family with the surname Kosminski supposedly lived near Goulston Street.<sup>[18]</sup> However, he was described as harmless in the asylum, although he had once brandished a chair at an asylum attendant. Reputedly, he threatened his sister with a knife. These two incidents are the only known indications of violent behaviour. His insanity took the form of auditory hallucinations, a paranoid fear of being fed by other people, and a refusal to wash or bathe.<sup>[19]</sup>

## Michael Ostrog



**Michael Ostrog** (1833–1904?) was a Russian-born, professional con man.<sup>[3]</sup> He used numerous aliases and disguises. Among his many dubious claims was that he had once been a surgeon in the Russian navy. He was mentioned as a suspect by Macnaghten, who joined the case in 1889, the year after the "canonical five" victims were killed. Researchers have failed to find evidence that he committed crimes any more serious than fraud and theft.<sup>[20]</sup> Research by author Philip Sugden discovered prison records showing that Ostrog was jailed for petty offences in France during the Ripper murders. Ostrog is last mentioned alive in 1904, though his date of death is unknown.

## John Pizer



**John Pizer** (1850–1897) was a Polish Jew who worked as a bootmaker in Whitechapel. After the murders of Mary Ann Nichols and Annie Chapman in late August and early September 1888 respectively, Police Sergeant William Thicke arrested Pizer on 10 September 1888. Pizer was known as "Leather Apron", and Thicke apparently believed that he had committed a string of minor assaults on prostitutes. In the early days of the Whitechapel murders many locals suspected that "Leather Apron" was the killer. He was cleared of suspicion when it turned out that he had alibis for two of the murders. He was staying with relatives at the time of the first canonical murder, and he was talking with a police officer while watching a spectacular fire on the London Docks at the time of the second. Pizer and Thicke had known each other for years, and Pizer implied that his arrest was based on animosity and not evidence, though he did have a prior conviction for a stabbing offence. Pizer successfully sued for wrongful arrest, and was awarded monetary compensation by the law court.<sup>[21]</sup>

## Francis Tumblety



**Francis Tumblety** (c. 1832–1903) was a seemingly uneducated or self-educated Irish-American from Rochester, New York. He earned a small fortune posing as an "Indian Herb" doctor throughout the United States and Canada, and occasionally travelling across Europe as well.<sup>[3]</sup> He was commonly perceived as a misogynist and was connected to the deaths of some of his patients; he was charged by the authorities in Canada, but skipped the country. He was also charged with supplying herbs to procure an illegal abortion. He gained a reputation for his eccentric, ostentatious clothes, which were frequently of a military nature. Tumblety was arrested on 6 May 1865 in St. Louis, Missouri and incarcerated in the Old Capitol Prison, Washington, for complicity in the Abraham Lincoln assassination, but was later released as having no involvement.<sup>[22]</sup>

Tumblety was in England in 1888 and had visited the country on other occasions; during one such earlier trip he became closely acquainted with Victorian writer Thomas Henry Hall Caine, with whom it was suggested he had an affair and from whom he tried to borrow money. He claimed to have treated many famous English patients, including Charles Dickens, for a variety of illnesses. He was arrested on 7 November 1888, on charges of "gross indecency", apparently for engaging in homosexuality, which was illegal at the time. Awaiting trial, he instead fled the country for France on 24 November 1888, and thence to the United States.<sup>[23]</sup> It has been suggested that he was released on police bail before the final canonical murder of Mary Jane Kelly (on 9 November). Already notorious in the United States for his self-promotion and previous criminal charges, news of his arrest led some to suggest he was the Ripper.

After the initial media interest in Tumblety in 1888, he was mentioned as having been a Ripper suspect by former Detective Chief Inspector John George Littlechild of the Metropolitan Police in a letter to journalist and author George R. Sims, dated 23 September 1913 and rediscovered approximately 80 years later by author Stewart P. Evans.<sup>[3]</sup> Claims that Scotland Yard sent an officer to the United States in 1888 to try to bring Tumblety back in connection with the crimes have been disputed by recent research, although there are anecdotal American newspaper reports to suggest that this was the case.

He died in a St Louis hospital in 1903 due to a kidney ailment and is buried in Rochester, New York.

## Other contemporary opinions

Various other people were named at the time as potentially being guilty of the Whitechapel murders by journalists and others. Some of the most notable are:

### William Henry Bury



**William Henry Bury** (25 May 1859 – 24 April 1889) had recently relocated to Scotland from London, when he strangled his wife Ellen Elliot, a former prostitute, on 5 February 1889, inflicted deep wounds to her abdomen after she was dead and "packed" her into a wooden box, which he subsequently used as a table on which to play dominoes. She remained in the box and Bury went about his normal life for almost a week before reporting the murder to the local police on 10 February. Some people believe the wounds were similar to ones inflicted upon Martha Tabram and Mary Ann Nichols. In fact, Bury claimed the reason he inflicted these wounds and packed her in the wooden box was because he was frightened that people would think he was Jack the Ripper. Bury was hanged soon afterwards in Dundee, having by then made a full confession to his wife's murder.

### Thomas Neill Cream



**Neill Cream** (May 1850 – 15 November 1892) was a doctor secretly specialising in orn in Scotland, educated in London, active in Canada and later in Chicago, Illinois. In found to be responsible for fatally poisoning several of his patients of both sexes. ere was no suspicion of murder in these cases, but Cream himself demanded an of the bodies, apparently an attempt to draw attention to himself. He was imprisoned in State Penitentiary in Joliet, Illinois, from November 1881 until his release on good behaviour on 31 July 1891. He moved to London, where he resumed killing and was soon arrested. He was hanged on 15 November 1892. According to some sources, his last words were reported as being "I am Jack the...", interpreted to mean Jack the Ripper.<sup>[24]</sup> However, police officials who attended the execution made no mention of this alleged interrupted confession.<sup>[24]</sup> As he was still imprisoned at the time of the Ripper murders, most authorities consider it impossible for him to be the culprit. However, Donald Bell suggested that he could have bribed officials and left the prison before his official release,<sup>[25]</sup> and Sir Edward Marshall-Hall suspected that his prison term may have been served by a look-alike in his place.<sup>[26]</sup> Such notions are unlikely, and contradict evidence given by the Illinois authorities, newspapers of the time, Cream's solicitors, Cream's family and Cream himself.<sup>[27]</sup>

## Thomas Hayne Cutbush

**Thomas Hayne Cutbush** (1864–1903) was sent to Lambeth Infirmary in 1891 suffering delusions thought to have been caused by syphilis. After stabbing one woman and attempting to stab a second he was pronounced insane and committed to Broadmoor Hospital that same year, where he remained until his death in 1903.<sup>[28]</sup> The *Sun* newspaper suggested in a series of articles that Cutbush was the Ripper. There is no evidence that police took the idea seriously, and, in fact, Melville Macnaghten's memorandum naming the three police suspects Druitt, Kosminski and Ostrog was written to refute the idea that Cutbush was the Ripper.<sup>[29]</sup> Cutbush was the suspect advanced in A.P. Wolf's 1993 book *Jack the Myth*.

## Frederick Bailey Deeming



**Frederick Bailey Deeming** (30 July 1842 – 23 May 1892) was a sailor living at the time in Sydney, Australia, with his wife and four children. A British subject, Deeming was brought to court in England on 15 December 1887, on charges of bankruptcy. Sentenced to fourteen days' imprisonment, he was apparently released on 29 December 1887, and promptly fled with his family to Cape Town, South Africa to escape debt collectors. Soon after arrival he was brought to the attention of the local police on charges of fraud. He sent his family to England and headed to recently founded Johannesburg, disappearing for a time from historical record. There is no reliable account of his activities or his whereabouts between March 1888 and October 1889 (covering the period of the murders). He resurfaced in Kingston upon Hull back in England, where he was known by the name of Harry Lawson, one of his many aliases. Well into a career as a professional con man, he apparently attempted to reconcile with his estranged wife. They moved together with their children to a rented house in Rainhill in July 1891. The reconciliation ended on 11 August 1891, when he cut his wife and children's throats as they slept. Having introduced himself to the locals as a bachelor and his family as his visiting sister and nephews, it proved easy to explain their absence. He wooed Emily Mathers, his landlord's daughter, and they married on 22 September 1891. The newlyweds left by ship from Southampton, on 2 November 1891, and arrived in Victoria (Australia) on 15 December 1891. He murdered Emily nine days later, buried her under their rented house, and left. Her body was soon found, resulting in a local investigation and the discovery of the other bodies in England. This led to his arrest on 11 March 1892, and his trial and subsequent execution by hanging. The Australian public was convinced he was the Ripper.<sup>[30]</sup> He is said to have been an acquaintance of victim Catherine Eddowes and to have maintained correspondence with her, but this allegation



remains unproven.

## Carl Feigenbaum

**Carl Feigenbaum** was arrested in 1894 in New York for cutting a woman's throat. After his execution his lawyer claimed that Feigenbaum had admitted to having a hatred of women and a desire to kill and mutilate them. The lawyer further stated that he believed Feigenbaum was Jack the Ripper. This theory gained some press coverage at the time but was disputed by the lawyer's partner, and the idea was not pursued for more than a century. Author Trevor Marriott, a former British police murder squad detective, argues in the second edition of his book, *Jack The Ripper - The 21st Century Investigation*, that Feigenbaum was in Whitechapel at the time of the Ripper murders and also that he was responsible for other murders in the United States and Germany between 1891 and 1894.

## Robert Donston Stephenson

**Robert Donston Stephenson (aka Roslyn D'Onston)** (20 April 1841 – 9 October 1916) was journalist and writer known to be interested in the occult and black magic. He arrived as a patient at the London Hospital in Whitechapel shortly before the murders started, and left shortly after they ceased. He is the author of a newspaper article and letter to the police concerning the case. His strange manner and interest in the crimes resulted in an amateur detective reporting him to Scotland Yard. Two days later he visited them himself to report his own suspect, a Dr. Morgan Davies. Subsequently he fell under the suspicion of newspaper editor William Thomas Stead, the writer Mabel Collins and her friend Baroness Vittoria Cremers. Author and historian Melvin Harris argued in his two most recent books that Stephenson was a leading suspect.

## Opinions by later authors

Several other names have been mentioned as possibly being the killer in the years after the murders. They include:

### Joseph Barnett



**Joseph Barnett** (1858–1926) was a one-time fish porter, and victim Mary Jane Kelly's lover from 8 April 1887 to 30 October 1888, when they quarrelled and separated after he lost his job and she returned to prostitution to make a living. He visited her daily afterwards, reportedly trying to reconcile. There are suspicions that he was denied. He was proposed as a suspect for her murder as a scorned or jealous lover, although some people attribute the other murders to him as well. His accounts about what Kelly is said to have told him about her life constitute most of what is known of her. The validity of both her statements and his reports have been questioned.

### Lewis Carroll



**Lewis Carroll** (pen name of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) (27 January 1832 – 14 January 1898) was the author of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. He was named as a suspect based upon anagrams which author Richard Wallace devised for his book *Jack the Ripper, Light-Hearted Friend*. This claim is not taken seriously by scholars.

### David Cohen

**David Cohen** (1865–1889) was a Polish Jew whose incarceration at Colney Hatch asylum roughly

coincided with the end of the murders. Described as violently antisocial, the poor East End local has been suggested as a suspect by author and Ripperologist Martin Fido in his book *The Crimes, Detection and Death of Jack the Ripper* (1987). Fido claims that the name 'David Cohen' was used at the time to refer to immigrant Jews who either could not be positively identified or whose names were too difficult for police to spell, in the same fashion that 'John Doe' is used in the United States today. This has been disputed by other authors. Fido speculated that Cohen's true identity was Nathan Kaminsky, a bootmaker living in Whitechapel who had been treated at one time for syphilis and who allegedly vanished at the same time that Cohen was admitted. Fido and others believe that police officials confused the name Kaminsky with Kosminski, resulting in the wrong man coming under suspicion (see Aaron Kosminski above). Cohen exhibited violent, destructive tendencies while at the asylum, and had to be restrained. He died at the asylum in October 1889. In his book *The Cases That Haunt Us*, former FBI criminal profiler John Douglas, has asserted that behavioural clues gathered from the murders as well as linguistic hints from the "From Hell" letter (the only one he considers to be authentic) all point to Cohen, "or someone very much like him."

## William Withey Gull



**Sir William Withey Gull** (31 December 1816 – 29 January 1890) was physician-in-ordinary to Queen Victoria. He was named as the Ripper as part of the evolution of the widely discredited masonic/royal conspiracy theory outlined in such books as *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution*. Thanks to the popularity of this theory among fiction writers and for its dramatic nature, Gull shows up as the Ripper in a number of books and films (including a 1988 TV film *Jack the Ripper* starring Michael Caine and the graphic novel *From Hell* written by Alan Moore with art by Eddie Campbell).

## George Hutchinson

**George Hutchinson** was a labourer. On 12 November 1888, he went to the London police to make a statement claiming that he spent a long amount of time on 9 November 1888, watching the room that Mary Jane Kelly lived in after he saw her with a man of conspicuous appearance. He gave a very detailed description of a suspect despite the darkness of that night. The accuracy of Hutchinson's statement was later disputed among the senior police of the time. Inspector Frederick Abberline, after interviewing Hutchinson, believed that Hutchinson's account was truthful. However, another police official later claimed that the only witness who got a good look at the killer was Jewish. Hutchinson was not a Jew, and thus not that witness. Some modern scholars have suggested that Hutchinson was the Ripper himself, trying to confuse the police with a false description, but others suggest he may have just been an attention seeker who made up a story he hoped to sell to the press. [31]

## James Kelly



**James Kelly** (no known relation to the Ripper victim Mary Kelly) (20 April 1860 – 17 September 1929) murdered his wife in 1883 by stabbing her in the neck. Considered insane, he was transferred to a mental asylum, from which he escaped in early 1888. The police searched for him unsuccessfully during the period of the murders, but he had apparently disappeared with no trace. He unexpectedly turned himself back in to officials in 1927, and died two years later, presumably of natural causes. His whereabouts and activities at the time of the murders remain unknown.

## James Maybrick

**James Maybrick** (24 October 1838 – 11 May 1889) was a Liverpool cotton merchant. His wife Florence was a much younger American related to a wealthy Alabama banking family. She was



convicted of poisoning him with arsenic in a trial that was in its time sensational, primarily because of the extreme bias of the judge's summation and the omission of important evidence. A diary purportedly by Maybrick, published in the 1990s, contains a confession to the Ripper murders. It was an instant best-seller. However, the diary was discredited by historians who pointed to factual errors in relation to some of the crimes. Document expert Kenneth W. Rendell pronounced the diary a fake. In his analysis, he was struck that the handwriting style seemed more twentieth century than Victorian. He also noted factual contradictions and handwriting inconsistencies.<sup>[32]</sup> Several experts have noted that the handwriting in the diary does not match that of Maybrick's will.<sup>[33]</sup> In 1995, the apparent person who claimed to have found the diary, Michael Barrett, confessed to being the author and described counterfeiting the diary.<sup>[34]</sup> Barrett later retracted this confession and changed his story several times over the years.

## Alexander Pedachenko

**Alexander Pedachenko** (alleged dates 1857-1908) was named in the 1923 memoirs of William Le Queux, *Things I Know about Kings, Celebrities and Crooks*. Le Queux claimed to have seen a manuscript in French written by Rasputin stating that Jack the Ripper was an insane Russian doctor named Alexander Pedachenko, an agent of the Okhrana (the Secret Police of Imperial Russia), whose aim in committing the murders was to confuse Scotland Yard. However, there is no confirmed evidence that Pedachenko ever existed, and many parts of his claims fall apart when examined closely.<sup>[35]</sup>

## Walter Sickert



**Walter Richard Sickert** (31 May 1860 – 22 January 1942) was a German-born artist of Dutch and Danish ancestry, who was first mentioned as a possible Ripper suspect in Donald McCormick's 1959 book *The Identity of Jack the Ripper*.<sup>[36]</sup> Sickert subsequently appeared as a character in the well-known royal/masonic conspiracy theory concocted by Joseph Gorman, who claimed to be Sickert's illegitimate son.<sup>[37]</sup> The theory was later developed by author Jean Overton Fuller, and by crime novelist Patricia Cornwell in her book *Portrait of a Killer*. However, Sickert is not considered a serious suspect by most who study the case, and strong evidence shows he was in France at the time of most of the Ripper murders.<sup>[37][38][39]</sup>

## Joseph Silver

In 2007 South African historian Charles van Onselen claimed, in the book *The Fox and the Flies: The World of Joseph Silver, Racketeer and Psychopath*, that **Joseph Silver**, also known as Joseph Lis, a Polish Jew, was Jack the Ripper.<sup>[40]</sup> Critics note, among other things, that van Onselen provides no evidence that Silver was ever in London during the time of the murders, and that the accusation is based entirely upon speculation. Van Onselen has responded by saying that the number of circumstances involved should make Silver a suspect.

## James Kenneth Stephen



**James Kenneth Stephen** (25 February 1859 – 3 February 1892) was first suggested as a suspect in a 1972 biography of another Ripper suspect, Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence and Avondale by Michael Harrison. Harrison dismissed the idea that Albert Victor was the Ripper but instead suggested that Stephen, a poet and one of Albert Victor's tutors from Trinity College, Cambridge, was a more likely suspect. Harrison's suggestion was based on Stephen's misogynistic writings and on similarities between



his handwriting and that of the "From Hell" letter, supposedly written by the Ripper. Harrison supposed that Stephen may have had sexual feelings for Albert Victor, and that Stephen's hatred of women arose from jealousy because Albert Victor preferred female company and did not reciprocate Stephen's feelings.<sup>[41]</sup> However, Harrison's analysis was rebutted by professional document examiners.<sup>[42]</sup> There is no proof that Stephen was ever in love with Albert Victor,<sup>[43]</sup> although he did starve himself to death very shortly after hearing of Albert Victor's death.<sup>[44]</sup>

In 1978, Frank Spiering further developed the theory in his book *Prince Jack*, which depicted Albert Victor as the murderer and Stephen as his lover. The book is widely dismissed as a sensational fiction based on previous theories rather than genuine historical research.<sup>[45]</sup> Spiering claimed to have discovered a copy of some private notes written by another suspect, Sir William Gull, in the library of the New York Academy of Medicine and that the notes included a confession by Albert Victor under a state of hypnosis. Spiering further suggested that Albert Victor died due to an overdose of morphine, administered to him on the order of Prime Minister Lord Salisbury and possibly Albert Victor's own father, Edward VII of the United Kingdom. The New York Academy of Medicine denies possessing the records Spiering mentioned,<sup>[46]</sup> and when Spiering was offered access to the Royal Archives, he retorted: "I don't want to see any files."<sup>[47]</sup>

## Francis Thompson

**Francis Thompson** (18 December 1859 – 13 November 1907) was a member of the Aesthetic movement and influenced the young J.R.R. Tolkien, who purchased the *Works of Francis Thompson* in 1913–14.<sup>[48]</sup> Perceived as a devout Catholic, in 1889 Thompson wrote the short story "Finis Coronat Opus" (Latin: "The End Crowns the Work"). It features a young poet sacrificing women to pagan gods, seeking hell's inspiration for his poetry in order to gain the fame he desires. Thompson is alternatively seen as a religious fanatic or a madman committing the actions described in his story. In 1877 Thompson failed the priesthood and in the Autumn 1878 he entered his name on the Manchester Royal Infirmary register. The infirmary, in which he studied for the next six years as a surgeon, required that its students have a strong physique for the gruelling workload. The study of anatomy, with dissection classes, was a major part of study from the first term. Between 1885 and 1888 Thompson spent the majority of his time homeless, living in the Docks area south of Whitechapel. Thompson tried a number of occupations. As well as a surgeon and a priest, Thompson tried being a soldier, but was dismissed for failing in drill. He also worked in a medical factory. This may have been where, apart from his years as a surgeon, Thompson procured the dissecting scalpel which he claimed to have possessed when he wrote to the editor of the 'Merry England' in January 1889 of his need to swap to a razor for shaving.

## Prince Albert Victor



**Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence and Avondale** (8 January 1864 – 14 January 1892) was first mentioned in print as a potential suspect in 1962 when author Philippe Jullian published a biography of Prince Albert Victor's father, Edward VII of the United Kingdom. Jullian made a passing reference to rumours that Albert Victor might have been responsible for the murders. Though Jullian did not detail the dates or sources of the rumour, it is possible that the rumour derived indirectly from Dr.

Thomas E. A. Stowell. In 1960, Stowell told the rumour to writer Colin Wilson, who in turn told Harold Nicolson, a biographer loosely credited as a source of "hitherto unpublished anecdotes" in Jullian's book. Nicolson could have communicated Stowell's theory to Jullian.<sup>[49][50]</sup> The theory was brought to major public attention in 1970 when Stowell published an article in *The Criminologist* which revealed his suspicion that Prince Albert Victor had committed the murders after being driven mad by syphilis. The suggestion was widely dismissed as Albert Victor had strong alibis for the murders, and it is unlikely that he suffered from syphilis.<sup>[51]</sup> Stowell later denied

implying that Albert Victor was the Ripper<sup>[52]</sup> but efforts to investigate his claims further were hampered as Stowell was an old man, and he died from natural causes just days after the publication of his article. The same week, Stowell's son reported that he had burned his father's papers, saying "I read just sufficient to make certain that there was nothing of importance."<sup>[53]</sup>

Subsequently, conspiracy theorists, such as Stephen Knight in *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution*, have elaborated on the supposed involvement of Albert Victor in the murders. Rather than implicate Albert Victor directly, they claim that he secretly married and had a daughter with a Catholic shop assistant, and that Queen Victoria, British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury, his Freemason friends, and the London Metropolitan Police conspired to murder anyone aware of Albert Victor's supposed child. Many facts contradict this theory and its originator, Joseph Gorman (also known as Joseph Sickert), later retracted the story and admitted to the press that it was a hoax.<sup>[54]</sup> Variations of the theory involve the physician Sir William Gull, the artist Walter Sickert, and the poet James Kenneth Stephen to greater or lesser degrees, and have been fictionalised in novels and films, such as *Murder by Decree* and *From Hell*.

## Sir John Williams

**Sir John Williams**, a friend of Queen Victoria and obstetrician to her daughter Princess Beatrice, was accused of the Ripper crimes in a 2005 book, *Uncle Jack*, written by one of the surgeon's descendants, Tony Williams, and co-authored by Humphrey Price.<sup>[55]</sup> The authors claim that the victims knew the doctor personally and that they were killed and mutilated in an attempt to research the causes of infertility. The book also claims that a badly blunted surgical knife, which belonged to Sir John Williams, was the murder weapon.<sup>[56]</sup> Jennifer Pegg demonstrated in two articles that the version of the notebook entry used in *Uncle Jack* to show that Sir John Williams had met Ripper victim Mary Ann Nichols had been altered for print and did not match the original document. She further demonstrated that much of the other research in the book arguing for a link between Sir John Williams and the Ripper crimes was flawed.<sup>[57]</sup>

## Further theories about the Ripper

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and William Stewart advanced theories involving a female murderer dubbed "Jill the Ripper." Supporters of this theory believe that the murderer worked, or posed, as a midwife. She could be seen with bloody clothes without attracting unwanted attention and suspicion and would be more easily trusted by the victims than a man. A suspect suggested as fitting this profile is Mary Pearcey, who in October 1890, killed her lover's wife and child, though there is no indication she was ever a midwife. E. J. Wagner, in *The Science of Sherlock Holmes*, offers in passing another possible suspect, Constance Kent, who had served 20 years for the murder of her younger brother at the age of sixteen.

DNA analysis has been attempted on some letters that are believed by a few sources to have been sent by the killer, but the results have been inconclusive. The available material had been handled many times and therefore too contaminated to provide any meaningful results<sup>[58]</sup>, and most sources do not believe the killer sent any of these letters (except perhaps for one that has been lost) and that they were hoaxes. A 2006 analysis of the gum used on a postage stamp of one of these letters was "inconclusive" and "not forensically reliable" but partial results showed that the DNA could have been that of a woman.<sup>[59]</sup>

It is also possible the Ripper was an unknown Whitechapel resident. Serial killers, like the BTK killer, Ted Bundy, the Green River Killer, etc., are typically deft at "hiding in plain sight", appearing normal and blending into the background. The Ripper's apparent ability to stalk, kill, and then immediately disappear suggests an intimate knowledge of the Whitechapel neighbourhood. This

knowledge likely included back alleys, hiding places, and police patrol schedules.

There are also several theories suggesting that "Jack the Ripper" was actually more than one killer. Some authors (for example Stephen Knight) argue that this is the explanation for why police could not pinpoint a single suspect and how the murders on 30 September could happen so closely timed together.

## Notes

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- Casebook: Jack the Ripper
- FBI criminal profile of the Ripper

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