

Annie Chapman

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Annie Chapman (born **Ann Eliza Smith**, c. 1841 - 8 September 1888) was a victim of the notorious unidentified serial killer Jack the Ripper, who killed and mutilated several women in the Whitechapel area of London from late August to early November 1888.

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The canonical five Jack the Ripper victims

Mary Ann Nichols

Annie Chapman

Elizabeth Stride

Catherine Eddowes

Mary Jane Kelly

Life and background

Annie Chapman was born Eliza Ann Smith. She was the daughter of George Smith of the 2nd Regiment Life Guards and Ruth Chapman. Her parents did not marry until nearly six months after her birth, on 22 February 1842, in Paddington. Smith was a soldier at the time of his marriage, later becoming a domestic servant.

Marriage and children

On 1 May 1869, she married her maternal relative John Chapman, a coachman, at All Saints Church in Knightsbridge in London^[1]. For some years the couple lived at addresses in West London, and they had three children:

- Emily Ruth Chapman, born on 25 June 1870.
- Annie Georgina Chapman, born on 5 June 1873.
- John Alfred Chapman, born on 21 November 1880.

In 1881 the family moved to rural Clewer in Berkshire, where John Chapman took a job as coachman to a farm bailiff. But young John had been born disabled, while their firstborn, Emily Ruth, died of meningitis shortly after at the age of 12. Soon afterward, both Chapman and her husband took to heavy drinking and separated in 1884.^[1]

By the time of her death, young John was said to be in the care of a charitable school and the surviving daughter Annie Georgina, then an adolescent, traveling with a circus in the French Third Republic.^[1]



Mortuary photograph of Annie Chapman

Life in Whitechapel

Annie Chapman eventually moved to Whitechapel, where in 1886 she was living with a man who made wire sieves; because of this she was often known as Annie "Sievey" or "Siffey". For three or four years she had been receiving an allowance of 10 shillings a week from her husband, but at the end of 1886 the payments stopped abruptly. On inquiring why they had stopped, she found her husband had died of alcohol-related causes. The sieve-maker left her soon after, possibly due to the cessation of her income. One of her friends later testified that Chapman became very depressed after this and went downhill.

By 1888 Chapman was living in common lodging houses in Whitechapel, occasionally in the company of Edward Stanley, a bricklayer's labourer, and earning some income from crochet work, making antimacassars and selling flowers, supplemented by casual prostitution. Acquaintances described her as a more accomplished woman than some in the area, and inoffensive, though she drank regularly and her health was failing.

A week or more before her death she was feeling ill after being bruised in a fight with Eliza Cooper, a fellow resident in the lodging house. The two were reportedly rivals for the affections of Edward Stanley.

Death and last hours

Shortly after midnight on the morning of her death, Chapman, like Mary Ann Nichols, found herself without money for her lodging and went out to earn some on the street. Elizabeth Long testified that she saw a man and a woman she believed to be Chapman conversing outside 29 Hanbury St at approximately 5:30 am. If correct in her identification, it is likely that Long was the last person to see Chapman alive besides her murderer. Chapman's body was discovered about 5:50 on the morning of 8 September 1888, lying on the ground near a doorway in the back yard of 29 Hanbury Street, Spitalfields.



The location of 29, Hanbury Street in 2008

"There are two front doors, one leading into a shop and the other, on the left, into a passageway which goes through the building and opens into the back yard. The door to the back yard swings to the outside from right to left and, when open, covers a small recess of the yard. It is a self closing door. Baxter refers to it as a swinging door. The back yard is separated from the adjoining yards by a five foot high wooden fence. There are three stone steps leading down to yard level. Looking from the top of the steps there is a small wood shed to the left, Annie's feet pointed directly at it. To the right is the privy. The yard itself is a patch work of stone, grass and dirt."

The body was conveyed later that day to Whitechapel mortuary in the police ambulance by Sergeant Edward Badham. Badham was later to be the first to testify at the subsequent inquest.

Inquest

Evidence indicated that Chapman may have been killed as late as 5:30am, in the enclosed back yard of a house occupied by seventeen people, some of whom were already up and about, with windows overlooking the yard, the only convenient escape route being the narrow passage through the building by which the workman discovering her body had entered the yard. Residents however had seen and heard nothing at the time of the murder. Dr. George Bagster Phillips described the body of Annie Chapman as he saw it at 6:30 a.m. in the back yard of the house at 29 Hanbury Street:

"The left arm was placed across the left breast. The legs were drawn up, the feet resting on the

ground, and the knees turned outwards. The face was swollen and turned on the right side. The tongue protruded between the front teeth, but not beyond the lips. The tongue was evidently much swollen. The front teeth were perfect as far as the first molar, top and bottom and very fine teeth they were. The body was terribly mutilated...the stiffness of the limbs was not marked, but was evidently commencing. He noticed that the throat was dissevered deeply; that the incision through the skin were jagged and reached right round the neck...On the wooden paling between the yard in question and the next, smears of blood, corresponding to where the head of the deceased lay, were to be seen. These were about 14 inches from the ground, and immediately above the part where the blood from the neck lay." "The instrument used at the throat and abdomen was the same. It must have been a very sharp knife with a thin narrow blade, and must have been at least 6 to 8 inches in length, probably longer. He should say that the injuries could not have been inflicted by a bayonet or a sword bayonet. They could have been done by such an instrument as a medical man used for post-mortem purposes, but the ordinary surgical cases might not contain such an instrument. Those used by the slaughtermen, well ground down, might have caused them. He thought the knives used by those in the leather trade would not be long enough in the blade. There were indications of anatomical knowledge...he should say that the deceased had been dead at least two hours, and probably more, when he first saw her; but it was right to mention that it was a fairly cool morning, and that the body would be more apt to cool rapidly from its having lost a great quantity of blood. There was no evidence...of a struggle having taken place. He was positive the deceased entered the yard alive..." "A handkerchief was round the throat of the deceased when he saw it early in the morning. He should say it was not tied on after the throat was cut."

Dr. George Bagster Phillips, who examined the body, concluded that her recent ill health was due to tuberculosis. Phillips concluded that the victim was sober at the time of death and had not consumed alcoholic beverages for at least some hours before it.

Funeral

Annie Chapman was buried on Friday, 14 September 1888.

At 7:00 a.m. that day, a hearse supplied by Hanbury Street undertaker H. Smith, went to the Whitechapel Mortuary in Montague Street, the utmost secrecy having been observed, and none but the undertaker, police, and relatives of the deceased knowing anything about the arrangements. Annie's body was placed in a black-draped elm coffin and was then driven to Harry Hawes, a Spitalfields undertaker, who arranged the funeral. At 9:00 a.m., the hearse (without mourning coaches so as not to attract the public's attention) took Annie's body to the City of London Cemetery, Aldersbrook Road, Manor Park, London, E12, where she was buried in (public) grave 78, square 148.

Her relatives, who paid for the funeral, met the hearse at the cemetery, and, by request, kept the funeral a secret and were the only mourners to attend. The coffin bore the words "Annie Chapman, died Sept. 8, 1888, aged 48 years."^[2]

Chapman's grave no longer exists; it has since been buried over.

Chapman in film

Chapman was played by Barbara Windsor in *A Study in Terror*. Katrin Cartlidge portrayed Chapman in the film *From Hell*.

References

- [^]^{*a*}^{*b*}^{*c*} 'Annie Chapman: Jack the Ripper Victim A Short Biography'. Written and published by Neal Shelden (2001)
- [^] The Daily Telegraph 15 September 1888, page 3

Further reading

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

External links

- Casebook: Jack the Ripper

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