

Catherine Eddowes

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Catherine (Kate) Eddowes (14 April 1842 - 30 September 1888) was one of the the Whitechapel murder victims. She was the second victim of the night of Sunday 30 September 1888, a night which already had seen the murder of Elizabeth Stride less than an hour earlier. These two murders are commonly referred to as the "double event" and have been attributed to the mysterious serial killer known as Jack the Ripper.^[1]



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Life and background

Eddowes, also known as "Kate Conway", "Kate Kelly", and "Mary Ann Kelly", after her two successive common-law husbands, was born in Graisle Green, Wolverhampton on 14 April 1842. One year later she moved with her family to London, but later returned to Wolverhampton to gain employment as a tin plate stamper. Losing this job she took up with a man called Thomas Conway in Birmingham and moved with him to London. By him she had three children, a girl and two boys. Taking to drink, she split from the family in 1880 and a year later was living with a new partner named John Kelly at Cooney's common lodging-house at 55 Flower and Dean Street, Spitalfields, at the centre of London's most notorious criminal rookery. Here she took to casual prostitution to pay the rent.^{[2][3]}

At the time of her death she was described as being five feet tall, with dark auburn hair, hazel eyes, and a tattoo in blue ink on her left forearm, "TC".^[4]

Friends of Eddowes described her as "intelligent and scholarly, but possessed of a fierce temper".^[4]

Last hours and death

At 8.30 pm on Saturday 29 September, Eddowes was found lying drunk in the road on Aldgate High Street by PC Louis Robinson. She was taken into custody at Bishopsgate police station and detained until 1am on the morning of the 30th. When leaving the station, instead of turning right to take the shortest route to her home in Flower and Dean Street, she turned left towards Aldgate. She was last seen alive by three witnesses, Joseph Lawende, Joseph Hyam Levy and Harry Harris, standing talking with a man (presumably her killer) at the entrance to Church Passage (which leads west to Mitre Square) at 1.35am. Only ten minutes later (1.45 am) her mutilated body was found in the south corner of Mitre Square by PC Edward Watkins on his beat.^[1]

Though this murder occurred within the City of London, it was close to the boundary of Whitechapel where the previous murders in the series had occurred. The mutilation of Eddowes' body and the abstraction of her left kidney and part of her womb by her murderer bore the signature of 'Jack the Ripper' and was very similar in nature to that of earlier victim Annie Chapman.^[1]

Due to the location of Mitre Square, the City Police under Detective Inspector James McWilliam joined the murder enquiry alongside the Metropolitan Police who had been engaged in the previous Whitechapel murders. At 3am on the same day as she was murdered, a blood-stained fragment of Eddowes' apron was found lying in the passage of the doorway leading to Flats 108 and 119, Model Dwellings, Goulston Street, Whitechapel. Above it on the wall was a graffito commonly held to have been inscribed: "The Juwes are the men that Will not be Blamed for nothing".^[5] The lettering was washed away before photographs could be taken, possibly due to concerns about racial tensions.



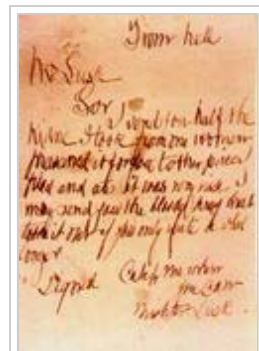
Mortuary photograph of Catherine Eddowes, before post-mortem stitching

The Royal London Hospital on Whitechapel Road preserves some crime scene drawings and plans of the Mitre Square murder by the City Surveyor Frederick Foster.^[6]

"Letter from hell"

On 16 October 1888 a parcel containing half a human kidney accompanied by a note was received by George Lusk, Chairman of the Whitechapel Vigilance Committee. The note has become known as the "Lusk letter" or the letter "From Hell". The text ran as follows:

From hell. Mr Lusk, Sor I send you half the Kidne I took from one women prasarved it for you tother piece I fried and ate it was very nise. I may send you the bloody knif that took it out if you only wate a whil longer Signed Catch me when you can Mishter Lusk



"From Hell letter".

The kidney was taken to Dr. Thomas Horrocks Openshaw at the nearby London Hospital. He believed that the kidney was human and from the left side. This half kidney, which was believed to have been preserved in "spirits of wine" (ethyl alcohol), is thought by some to have been the kidney that had been removed from Eddowes' body.^[7] The kidney was then handed over to the City of London Police, in whose jurisdiction Eddowes had been murdered.

The examination proved only two things: one, that the kidney came from a woman, aged 45, or older, and that the person from whom it came suffered from Bright's Disease. Eddowes suffered from Bright's Disease, as she was a very heavy drinker.

Post-mortem

Extract from the report of police surgeon Dr. Frederick Gordon Brown:

"The body was on its back, the head turned to left shoulder. The arms by the side of the body as if they had fallen there. Both palms upwards, the fingers slightly bent. The left leg extended in a line with the body. The abdomen was exposed. Right leg bent at the thigh and knee. The throat cut across. The intestines were drawn out to a large extent and placed over the right shoulder -- they were smeared over with some feculent matter. A piece of about two feet was quite detached from the body and



Mortuary photograph of Eddowes after post-mortem stitching

placed between the body and the left arm, apparently by design. The lobe and auricle of the right ear were cut obliquely through. There was a quantity of clotted blood on the pavement on the left side of the neck round the shoulder and upper part of arm, and fluid blood-coloured serum which had flowed under the neck to the right shoulder, the pavement sloping in that direction. Body was quite warm. No death stiffening had taken place. She must have been dead most likely within the half hour. We looked for superficial bruises and saw none. No blood on the skin of the abdomen or secretion of any kind on the thighs. No spurting of blood on the bricks or pavement around. No marks of blood below the middle of the body. Several buttons were found in the clotted blood after the body was removed. There was no blood on the front of the clothes. There were no traces of recent connexion. (...) After washing the left hand carefully, a bruise the size of a sixpence, recent and red, was discovered on the back of the left hand between the thumb and first finger. A few small bruises on right shin of older date. The hands and arms were bronzed. No bruises on the scalp, the back of the body, or the elbows. (...) I believe the perpetrator of the act must have had considerable knowledge of the position of the organs in the abdominal cavity and the way of removing them. It required a great deal of medical knowledge to have removed the kidney and to know where it was placed."

Funeral

Catherine Eddowes was buried on Monday, 8 October 1888 in an elm coffin in the City of London Cemetery, in an unmarked (public) grave 49336, square 318.

Today, square 318 has been re-used for part of the Memorial Gardens for cremated remains. Eddowes lies beside the Garden Way in front of Memorial Bed 1849. In late 1996, the cemetery authorities decided to mark her grave with a plaque.

References

- [^] ^{*a b c*} Stewart Evans and Donald Rumbelow (2006) *Jack the Ripper: Scotland Yard Investigates*: 114-40
- [^] Paul Begg (2006) *Jack the Ripper: The Facts*: 166-7
- [^] Jerry White (2007) *London in the Nineteenth Century*: 323-349
- [^] ^{*a b*} Casebook: Jack The Ripper
- [^] Stewart Evans and Donald Rumbelow (2006) *Jack the Ripper: Scotland Yard Investigates*: 132
- [^] Stewart Evans and Donald Rumbelow (2006) *Jack the Ripper: Scotland Yard Investigates*: 129
- [^] Stewart Evans and Donald Rumbelow (2006) *Jack the Ripper: Scotland Yard Investigates*: 167

Further reading

- Paul Begg, *Jack The Ripper - The Definitive Story* ISBN 1405807121
- Philip Sugden, *The Complete History of Jack the Ripper* ISBN 0786702761

External links

- Casebook: Jack the Ripper

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