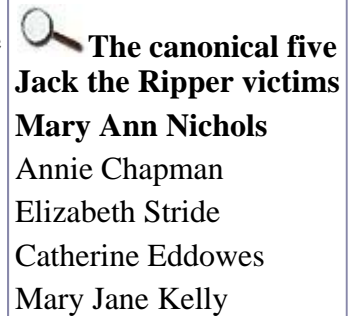


Mary Ann Nichols

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Mary Ann "Polly" Nichols (26 August 1845 - 31 August 1888) was one of the Whitechapel murder victims.^[1] Her death has been attributed to the notorious unidentified serial killer named Jack the Ripper who killed and mutilated several women in the Whitechapel area of London from late August to early November 1888.^[2]



Contents

- 1 Last hours and death
- 2 Life and background
- 3 Inquest
- 4 Funeral
- 5 Fictional portrayals
- 6 Further reading
- 7 References
- 8 External links

Last hours and death

About 11 p.m. 30 August Mary Ann "Polly" Nichols was seen walking the Whitechapel Road, at 1.30 a.m. she was seen to leave a pub in Brick Lane, Spitalfields. An hour later she left a common lodging-house in Thrawl Street as she was lacking fourpence for a bed, implying by her last words that she would soon earn the money on the street with the help of a new bonnet she had acquired. She was last seen at the corner of Osborn Street and Whitechapel Road, at 5.30 a.m., an hour before her death. At about 6:40 in the early morning she was found dead in front of a gated stable entrance in Buck's Row (since renamed Durward Street), a back street in Whitechapel about 150 yards from the London Hospital and 100 yards from Blackwall Buildings.^[3] Neither the police officers patrolling nearby streets nor the residents in houses alongside Buck's Row reported hearing or seeing anything suspicious.



Mortuary photograph of Mary Ann Nichols (1845-88)

Life and background

While her death certificate stated she was forty-two at the time of her murder (an apparent error reflected on her coffin plate and gravestone), birth records indicate she was forty-three, a fact confirmed at her inquest by her father, who described her as looking "ten years younger" than her age. She was born Mary Ann Walker in Dawes Court, off Shoe Lane in London on 26 August 1845. On 16 January 1864 she married a printer's machinist, and the couple had five children: the names were

- Edward John
- Percy George
- Alice Esther

- Eliza Sarah
- Henry Alfred

Their marriage broke up in 1880 from disputed causes. Polly Nichols was reported by her father and others to be a heavy drinker. William Nichols in turn was accused by her inquest of leaving her for an affair with a nurse, though he claimed to have proof that their marriage had continued for at least three years after the date alleged for the affair. He also maintained that his wife had repeatedly deserted him.

Legally required to support his estranged wife, William Nichols paid her an allowance of five shillings a week for a year or two but terminated it when he reported hearing she was living with another man. Nichols spent most of her remaining years in workhouses and boarding houses, often living off her meagre earnings as a prostitute. Later she lived for a short time with her father but left after a quarrel; her father stated she subsequently lived with a blacksmith for a while. In May 1888, the year of her death, she was living in the Lambeth workhouse but left to take a job as a domestic servant. Dissatisfied with the position, she left her employers a month later, stealing clothing worth three pounds ten shillings. At the time of her death she was living in a Whitechapel lodging house.

Inquest

The coroner at Nichols' inquest was Wynne Edwin Baxter. Inquest testimony as reported in *The Times* stated: "Five teeth were missing, and there was a slight laceration of the tongue. There was a bruise running along the lower part of the jaw on the right side of the face. That might have been caused by a blow from a fist or pressure from a thumb. There was a circular bruise on the left side of the face which also might have been inflicted by the pressure of the fingers. On the left side of the neck, about 1 in. below the jaw, there was an incision about 4 inches in length, and ran from a point immediately below the ear. On the same side, but an inch below, and commencing about 1 inches in front of it, was a circular incision, which terminated at a point about 3 in. below the right jaw. That incision completely severed all the tissues down to the vertebrae. The large vessels of the neck on both sides were severed. The incision was about 8 inches in length. the cuts must have been caused by a long-bladed knife, moderately sharp, and used with great violence. No blood was found on the breast, either of the body or the clothes. There were no injuries about the body until just about the lower part of the abdomen. Two or three inches from the left side was a wound running in a jagged manner. The wound was a very deep one, and the tissues were cut through. There were several incisions running across the abdomen. There were three or four similar cuts running downwards, on the right side, all of which had been caused by a knife which had been used violently and downwards. The injuries were from left to right and might have been done by a left-handed person. All the injuries had been caused by the same instrument."

Funeral

Mary Ann "Polly" Nichols was buried on Thursday, 6 September 1888. That afternoon, Polly was transported in a polished elm coffin to Mr Henry Smith, Hanbury Street undertaker. The cortege consisted of the hearse and two mourning coaches, which carried William Nichols and Edward John Nichols (her eldest son, who was approximately 22 years of age.) Polly was buried at the City of London Cemetery, in a (public) grave numbered 210752 (on the edge of the current Memorial Garden).

In late 1996, the cemetery authorities decided to mark Polly's grave with a plaque.

Fictional portrayals

Polly Nichols was played by Christiane Maybach in the 1965 film *A Study in Terror*, and by

Annabelle Apsion in the 2001 film *From Hell*.

Further reading

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

References

- ↑ The Metropolitan Police History of Jack the Ripper
- ↑ The Metropolitan Police History of Jack the Ripper
- ↑ Stewart P. Evans and Keith Skinner, *The Ultimate Jack the Ripper Sourcebook*, p. 27

External links

- Casebook: Jack the Ripper

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Categories: 1845 births | 1888 deaths | 1888 crimes | Jack the Ripper | Jack the Ripper victims | People from London

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