

Montague John Druit

'I keep on hearing the police have caught me but they wont fix me just yet . . . My knives so nice and sharp I want to get to work right away if I get a chance . . . Yours truly Jack the Ripper.'

(The 'Dear Boss' letter, received by Central News Agency on 27 September 1888)

At around 1 pm, on Monday 31 December 1888, the decomposing body of a man was pulled out of the River Thames at Chiswick in London. Henry Winslade, the waterman who had discovered it, notified the authorities. Large stones placed in the pockets had weighed the body down in the water, keeping it hidden for about a month. Other items found on the body included a silver watch on a gold chain, two cheques (one for £50, a considerable sum, the other for £16), a first-class season rail ticket from Blackheath to London, and the second half of a return ticket from Hammersmith to Charing Cross dated 1 December.

completely removed. Dr Phillips was of the opinion that 'the work was that of an expert'. It was the first time a suggestion had been made that the killer possessed some anatomical knowledge.

On 29 September, the Metropolitan Police received a letter forwarded from the Central News Agency that had arrived at their offices two days earlier. Dated 25 September, addressed 'Dear Boss' and written in red ink, the author chillingly declared he was 'down on whores and I shant quit ripping them till I do get buckled'. While it is now considered to be the work of an enterprising journalist, this letter provided the world with a lasting legacy as the signature gave the Whitechapel murderer his notorious nom-de-plume.

The early hours of the following day, 30 September, saw what has become known as the 'double event'. At about 1 am, Louis Diemschutz, the steward of the Jewish Socialist club, arrived with his pony and cart at Dutfield's Yard off Berner Street. The pony suddenly shied to the left and stopped. Looking down, Diemschutz saw the body of a woman, later identified as Elizabeth Stride, a 44-year-old Swedish-born prostitute. Her throat had been cut, though not as deeply as the previous victims and there was also no sign of further injuries or mutilations. While the police believed the killer was indeed that of Nichols and Chapman because of the similar *modus operandi*, it was assumed that he had been interrupted in his work by Diemschutz's entrance, and that when the steward went into the club for help, the killer made his escape.

At 1.44 am, forty-five minutes or so after the discovery of Elizabeth Stride's body, P.C. Watkins of the City of London Police arrived at Mitre Square once more. He had passed by at 1.30 am, just fourteen minutes earlier, and found it deserted. This time he discovered the body of Catherine Eddowes lying in a pool of blood. Her throat had been cut, almost completely severing the head. Her body had been cut open from her breastbone down to her stomach and the intestines had been pulled out and placed on her right shoulder. Her face had been severely mutilated, her eyelids and earlobes had been slashed and part of her nose had been cut off; the post-mortem later revealed that half of her uterus and her left kidney had been completely removed. Despite the proximity of PC Watkins, and other witnesses, nobody had heard anything and the killer had simply vanished. One key factor of this murder was that the Ripper had

'Yours truly Jack the Ripper'

found on his body (1 December). Although his tombstone gives the date of his death as 4 December, arguably a date a few days earlier may be more likely, given that his brother William was informed on the 11th that Montague had not been seen for *over* a week. It has been postulated that the cheques found may have been his final salary settlement from the school. The reason for his dismissal was unrecorded and remains unknown—it has been speculated that Druitt was a homosexual and there was a related incident at the school but this is unsupported by any evidence.

It has already been noted that in July 1888 Druitt's mother, Ann, had been institutionalised in Brooke Asylum, Clapton as a result of depression and paranoid delusions. She was to die still incarcerated in 1890. Notably, it would appear that mental illness was common in the family. His grandmother on Ann's side had committed suicide, while her sister had attempted it as well. Montague's eldest sister was also to kill herself in her old age by jumping from an attic window. [1nr>] TJEi15C>-4<00115C>-4<nC5100570044004A>-3<005800488p(p7000008871

No further insights into the identity of the Ripper were forthcoming until 1959. The broadcaster Daniel Farson was preparing a television documentary on the case when he was introduced to Lady Aberconway, Sir Melville Macnaghten's daughter. It was discovered that she had a copy of Sir Melville's original draft notes on the Ripper murders, which revealed the names of his three prime suspects for the first time. At Lady Aberconway's request, however, the resulting programme² only referred to the number one suspect by his initials: MJD. It was writer Tom Cullen who finally identified and revealed Dr. Jekyll's full name to the public in 1987.

No. 1, Mr M J Drutt a doctor of about forty-one years of age and of fairly good family, who disappeared at the time of the Miller's Court murder, and whose body was found floating in the Thames on 31 December: i.e. seven weeks after the said murder. The body was said to have been in the water for a month or more . . . From private information I have little doubt but that his own family suspected this man of being the Whitechapel murderer; it was alleged that he was sexually insane.

Two decades later, in his memoirs *Days of My Years* published in 1914, Macnaghten claimed that the killer 'resided with his own people' and had committed suicide 'on or about the 10th of November 1888'. This latter date was the day after the murder of Mary Kelly.

estimated at about 4 am, he would have had a long wait after killing Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddowes at between 1 am and 1.45 am—and, as noted above, he did not run for the refuge of his chambers. He may possibly have rented a room in a lodging house, though he probably would have attracted some attention, being a 'respectable' man.

Through August and September 1888, Druitt continued to play cricket and the dates of his matches have been used in his defence. He played in Canford, Dorset on 1 September, necessitating a significant journey, the day after the murder of Mary Ann Nichols at around 3.45 am. On 8 September he played in Blackheath at 11.30 am, just six hours after the murder of Annie Chapman. It would not have been impossible to make the fixtures, but it would have been difficult, especially in the latter case.

Montague John Druitt, teacher and barrister, educated at Winchester and New College, Oxford, was first publically connected with the identity of Jack the Ripper in the mid-1960s, through the researches of Tom Cullen and Daniel Farson. Subsequently, he became for many people one of the principal suspects, if not *the* principal suspect, in the mystery. The case against him was founded on the discovery of the notes written in 1894 by Sir Melville Macnaghten, then Chief Constable of the Metropolitan Police, in which he clearly stated his strong suspicions that Druitt was the killer.

However, as has been noted in this article, there are many problems attached to using the Macnaghten Memorandum as evidence against Druitt, not least the numerous factual errors contained within, as well as the uncertainty concerning the 'private information' he had received, or had seen (and subsequently destroyed), which obviously strengthened his belief in Druitt's guilt.

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officer on the Ripper