



THE FUNERALS OF THE VICTIMS OF JACK THE RIPPER

BY TODD W. VAN BECK
PART 2

In December's edition of this magazine, we began the tale of the funerals of five tragic victims of Victorian serial killer Jack the Ripper.

The ceremonies that were afforded these unfortunate human beings tells the stories of the care and sympathy that was extended to each woman by the funeral profession. In a few instances when no-one came forth to help, the funeral professional assumed the entire expenses of these ceremonies.

Here we conclude the article, by regular contributor Todd W. Van Beck, with the stories of Catharine Eddowes and Marie Kelly.

VICTIM IV

CATHARINE EDDOWES 1842-1888

Catharine Eddowes, the fourth Ripper victim, was the daughter of a tinplate worker. Sometime around 1862, she struck up a friendship with a man named Thomas Conway, by whom she bore three children. By 1880, the relationship was over and Catharine began drinking habitually. By September 1888, Catharine was in London sleeping in workhouses. Catharine Eddowes is the only Ripper victim whose identity as a prostitute is unclear and unproven.

At the time of her death, Catharine Eddowes was 46 years-old. At 1:35am on 30 September 1888, witnesses saw Catharine talking to a man by the entrance to Mitre Square. Very shortly after, a police constable passed by on his beat and saw or heard nothing unusual. At 1:45am, another police constable entered the square from the opposite side and found the body. The police found three boot buttons, a thimble and a mustard tin by the body.

The body was then transferred to the Golden Lane Morgue. The police had not yet put together the fact that Elizabeth Stride had been murdered within minutes of Catharine Eddowes. At the Golden Lane Morgue, Dr Frederick Gordon Brown and Dr Bagster Phillips conducted the post mortem examination. It was clear from Dr Brown's notes that the Ripper had more time to spend carving up Catharine Eddowes than he had with Elizabeth Stride.

The Doctor made this statement: "I believe the perpetrator of the act must have had considerable knowledge of the positions of the organs in the abdominal cavity and the way of removing them. The parts removed would be of no great use for any professional purpose. It required a great deal of medical knowledge to have removed the kidney and to know where it was placed. Such a knowledge might be possessed by someone in the habit of cutting up animals."

This statement gave rise to the once common suspicion that the Ripper was



either a physician, anatomist, animal butcher or even an embalmer. Over the years this theory has been roundly discounted as being credible.

The funeral for Catharine Eddowes on Monday, 8 October 1888, was just the opposite. It was a social and media sensation, generating some of the excitement and emotion of a state funeral.

George C Hawkes, the undertaker at 41a Banner Street, was engaged to oversee the funeral and burial for Catharine Eddowes. At 1:30pm on 8 October, the funeral procession for Catharine Eddowes left the morgue on Golden Lane. First, in an open glass hearse drawn by a pair of horses, rode the undertaker George F Hawkes. Catharine's body laid in a handsome coffin of elm with oak molding. One of the sisters of Catharine Eddowes laid a beautiful wreath on the casket as it was placed in the funeral coach and, at the graveside, another wreath was placed. Then, in a mourning coach, rose the chief mourners, all neatly attired in black. They included John Kelly and four of Kate's sisters - Harriet, Emma, Eliza, and Elizabeth. Bringing up the rear in a brougham were representatives of the national and local press.

At the end of the procession came a group of women dressed very poorly and riding in a large wagon. If they could be identified, they were almost certainly Catharine's comrades in prostitution, clothed in the only garments they had. The press was quick to report that "the majority (of these women) were attired in a style not at all befitting the occasion."



THE CROWDS OF SPECTATORS, SWOLLEN BY WORKERS TAKING THEIR DINNER HOUR, WERE PRODIGIOUS. IN THE VICINITY OF THE MORGUE ON GOLDEN LANE THE PEOPLE FILLED WINDOWS AND CLAMBERED ABOUT THE ROOFS OF THE ADJOINING BUILDINGS



The crowds of spectators, swollen by workers taking their dinner hour, were prodigious. In the vicinity of the morgue on Golden Lane the people filled windows and clambered about the roofs of the adjoining buildings as well as choked the route of the procession. With police clearing the way, the funeral procession rumbled slowly along Old Great Eastern and Commercial Streets and turned into Whitechapel High Street. There, lining the route on both sides as far as St Mary's Church, was another dense crowd. All men removed their caps as the hearse passed by.

Shortly before 3:30pm, Catharine Eddowes' body reached its final resting place - the City of London Cemetery at Ilford. The remains were interred in the Church of England section of the cemetery with nearly 500 people already waiting at the cemetery. Hundreds more people, many of the women carrying infants in their arms, gathered about the grave to see her burial. In the cemetery chapel and at the gravesite the funeral service was performed by the Rev Thomas Dunscombe, the cemetery chaplain.

The city authorities who owned the cemetery furnished the grave and undertaker George C Hawkes paid for the funeral expenses.

VICTIM V

MARY JANE KELLY 1863 - 1888

Mary Jane Kelly, otherwise known variously as Marie Jeanette, "Black Mary", "Fair Emma", or "Ginger", was born in Limerick in 1863. In 1879 she married, but her husband was killed in a pit explosion. From that time forward she worked as a prostitute. She went to London in 1884, working first in a high-class West End brothel. During her "West End" period she frequently drove in a carriage. At least once she went to Paris with a gentleman, but returned in a few weeks disliking living in France.

After her experience in France Mary Jane Kelly then used the name "Marie Jeanette", and this affectation was used on the coffin engraving and entered on her death certificate.

Mary Jane Kelly was the youngest of the victims of Jack the Ripper. At the time of her death, Mary Jane Kelly was about 25 years-old. She was last seen alive at 3:30am on Friday 9 November 1888. She went to her room and locked the door. However, at 4:00am, witnesses living in Kelly's building testified hearing the cry "Murder!" No-one investigated as this was a very common occurrence in the East End of London – people were screaming "murder" constantly.

At 10:45am, the landlord, wanting to talk to Kelly, saw the body through the window and summoned the police. Kelly's body was removed to the Shoreditch Morgue on the orders of Coroner Roderick MacDonald. Dr Thomas Bond and Dr Bagster Phillips conducted the post mortem examination.

The Ripper had taken his time with this last victim. It was as if he threw all his insane fury upon this helpless victim. In essence, the body had been butchered. Nothing remained that was recognisable.

Kelly's funeral took place on Monday, 19 November 1888. As she was very popular, there was much public sympathy for her. However, no relatives came forward to claim the remains so undertaker Henry Wilton of 119 High Street, the undertaker

for St Leonard's in Shoreditch, determined that she would not lie in a pauper's grave as Elizabeth Stride had, and hence himself bore the entire cost of the funeral and burial.

The original plan was that Mary Jane Kelly would be buried in the new Chingford Cemetery but, when it was learned that undertaker Wilton was prepared to bear all of the funeral expenses, the decision was made to bury in St Patrick's Churchyard.

At noon, the church bell of St Leonard's began to toll. It was a signal to the residents of the neighborhood and they gathered in a solemn crowd, several thousand strong, about the main gate of St Leonard's. When the coffin, borne on the shoulders of several of undertaker Wilton's assistants, appeared at the gate, scenes of great emotion erupted among the crowd. Men stood bare-headed and women cried as the coffin was placed in an open hearse, people closed around it, jostling and struggling to touch it.

Vehicles of various descriptions took up positions outside the church and traffic was completely blocked until the funeral coach moved off. Shortly after 12:30pm, the funeral procession set off. It was headed at a very slow pace by the open hearse drawn by two horses. The coffin, made of polished elm and oak with metal mounts, was fully exposed to view. Upon the coffin rested two crowns of artificial flowers and a cross made of hearts-ease.

After the hearse came two mourning coaches. This was interesting for, despite widespread publicity, no member of her family was traced to attend the funeral. When the funeral procession moved off, the entire crowd appeared to set off simultaneously in attendance, blocking the thoroughfare and stopping traffic. Only with the greatest difficulty were the police able to clear a passage for the procession through the mass of carts, vans and people.

At length, the little funeral procession made its way along the Hackney Road to



St Patrick's Roman Catholic Cemetery at Leytonstone. The funeral procession was met by the Rev Colomaban, who led the way, preceded by two acolytes and a cross-bearer. The casket was blessed, sprinkled with Holy Water and the ceremony ended. Mary Jane Kelly was buried in the north-east corner of the burial ground.

On Sunday evening, after the funeral, Henry Wilton the undertaker was called upon by an elderly lady who said she wanted a lock of Mary Kelly's hair and that she was willing to pay anything for it. The undertaker replied that the request was impossible, and hence the elderly lady explained her odd request. The elderly woman explained that she was acquainted with a female spiritualist who had been blind since she was three years-old. The sightless spiritualist was a "strong medium" and, could she but have a lock of the deceased's hair, the lady felt sure the murderer's accurate description would be revealed.

Nothing came of the request and to this day the identify of Jack the Ripper is unknown.