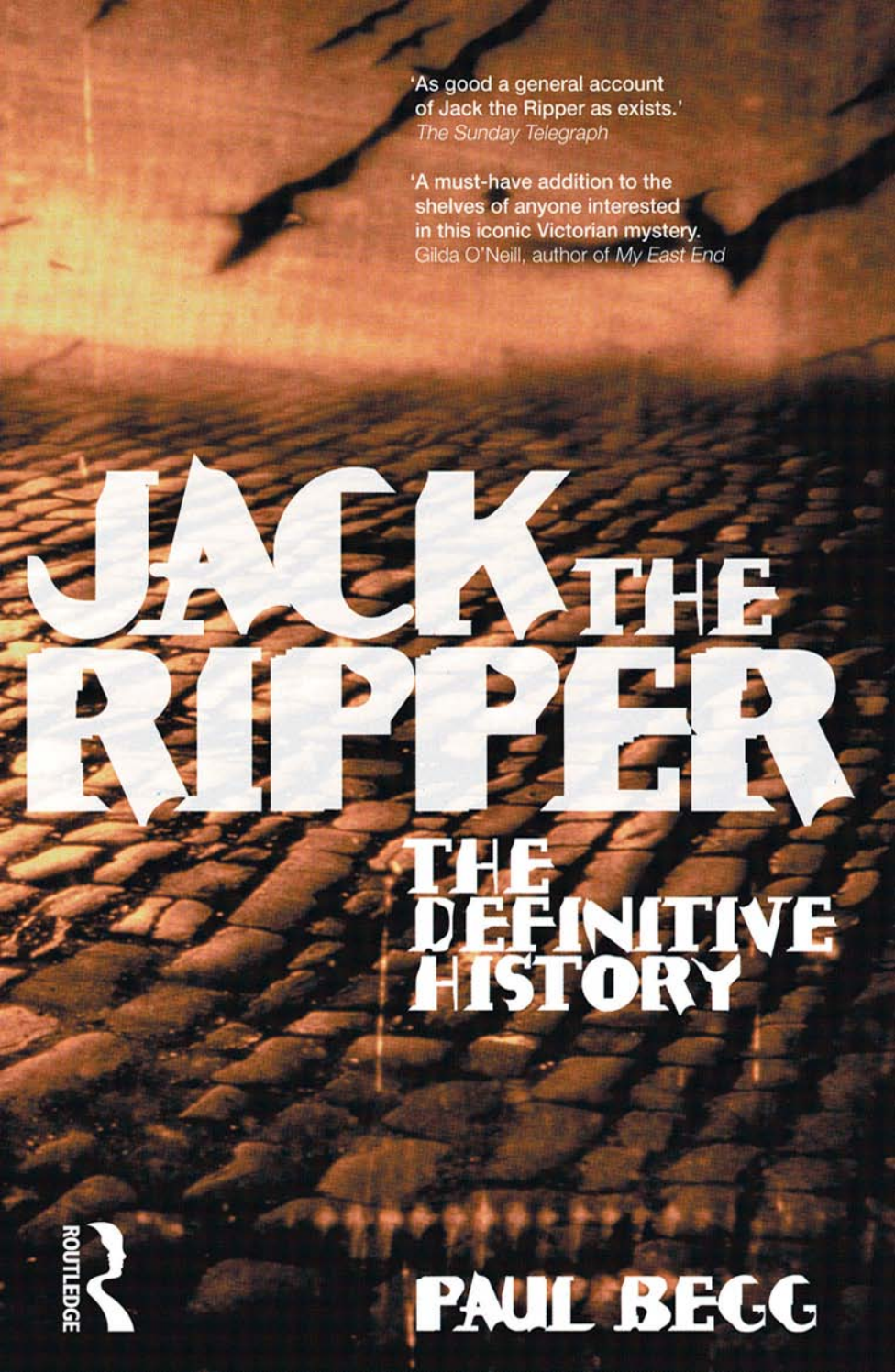
'As good a general account of Jack the Ripper as exists.'
The Sunday Telegraph
'A must-have addition to the shelves of anyone interested in this iconic Victorian mystery.
Gilda O'Neill, author of My East End
JACK THE RIPPER
THE DEFINITIVE HISTORY
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PAUL BEGG

Jack the Ripper

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JACK THE RIPPER

THE DEFINITIVE HISTORY

PAUL BEGG

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Set by 3

for
Martin Fido and Keith Skinner

in the sincere hope that they will find some merit in this effort to set the crimes in their historical context

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INTRODUCTION

Why does Jack the Ripper exert such fascination?

The quick and easy answer is that the mystery of his identity taunts the curiosity and inspires the imagination of the armchair detective. But such a simple answer, although true, dodges the question. There are lots of unsolved crimes, but none has the allure of Jack the Ripper. Being unsolved doesn't explain the continuing fascination with the case. The horrific brutality of the murders is even less of an answer. It is difficult to imagine how a murderer could be more brutal than Jack the Ripper, yet recent history has produced killers whose sickening depravity has far exceeded the Ripper's post-mortem mutilations – so the shock and horror of the crimes don't explain Jack the Ripper's notoriety either. As Jack the Ripper observes in Nicholas Mayer's 1979 movie, *Time After Time,* 'Ninety years ago I was a freak. Now I'm an amateur'.

It should also be observed that the 'Great Victorian Mystery', as the Jack the Ripper murders have been dubbed, hasn't always received the profound interest and detailed study it does today. The bookshelf of an enthusiast of the Ripper mystery could easily contain over eighty non-fiction books, almost all of them propounding a theory about the killer's identity, but more and more of them being highly factual reference titles. What would be noticeable, though, is that nearly every one has been published since 1960. The question about Jack the Ripper's appeal would therefore seem to have not only to do with what happened way back then but also to do with what happened in or about 1960 to ignite a mini-publishing boom that has lasted for forty years and shows no sign of dying out.

In late 1959 the pioneering television journalist and broadcaster Daniel Farson[1] was making a series called 'Farson's Guide to the British' and was introduced to Lady Aberconway, the youngest daughter of Sir Melville Macnaghten, one time Assistant Commissioner CID, Scotland Yard. She possessed some of her father's papers, amongst them a transcript of a memorandum he had written in February 1894 in which he named three men who were suspected of being Jack the Ripper, including the man he considered the most likely suspect. Farson's programme was broadcast on 12 November 1959. Macnaghten's suspect was identified only by the initials 'MJD' – who was revealed as Montague John Druitt by American-born author Tom Cullen in 1965,[2] Farson published his own investigations in 1972.[3] For the first time it seemed possible that the mysterious Jack the Ripper might be given a face – and interest in the mystery began to increase.

Interest was heightened on the publication of an article by Dr. Thomas Eldon Stowell, 'Jack the Ripper – A Solution?' in *The Criminologist* in November 1970. Stowell maintained that he had seen in the papers of Sir William Gull that Jack the Ripper was Prince Albert Victor,[4] the grandson of Queen Victoria. Despite the relative obscurity of *The Criminologist*, the story made headlines in newspapers around the world. People who had never before had an interest in the Ripper, who had never even heard of Jack the Ripper, suddenly became fascinated and the story spawned further tales. In 1973 a BBC Television series called 'Jack the Ripper' featured Joseph Sickert telling a story about how the marriage between Prince Albert Victor and a Catholic shop girl named Annie Crook had been witnessed by Mary Kelly, who later, with other prostitutes, began blackmailing the government. The Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, turned to the Freemasons for help and Sir William Gull sought out and murdered the conspirators. This story was picked up by other writers, notably Stephen Knight in his book *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution*, Frank Spiering's *Prince Jack*, Melvyn Fairclough's

The Ripper and the Royals and Jean Overton Fuller's *Sickert and the Ripper Crimes*. Purists fulminate against such highly imaginative theorising, but the fact is that such sensational tales introduced people to the mystery of the Ripper, in turn creating an audience for the plethora of books published since then, including the more serious theories and growing number of specialist books.[5]

But of course the Ripper *was* remembered before 1960. He was remembered differently though. For reasons which in essence are the *raison d'être* of this book, very soon after the murders stopped – and probably even as they were being committed – Jack the Ripper passed through a strange transformation from real life murderer to bugaboo of nightmare. It is said that mothers warned their children to 'be good or Jack the Ripper will get you!'. Jack the Ripper became the ultimate representation of human evil, a 'lurker in the shadows', the personification of the feared and unknown. The image is reflected in numerous stories going back to Frank Wedekind's turn of the century *Lulu*, in which the predatory Lulu ends up a victim of the predator Jack the Ripper. References can also be found in diverse offerings like *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949), a movie about the successful American campaign in 1945 to capture the small island of Iwo Jima, 660 miles south of Tokyo. In one scene near the beginning of the movie two soldiers are complaining about the bullying Marine Sergeant John Stryker (John Wayne). In mitigation one soldier says, 'But at least he knows his job'. Unimpressed, the other soldier replies, 'So did Jack the Ripper'. It isn't a great moment of cinema history, but it illustrates how Jack the Ripper had passed into the common language as an icon of evil. It wasn't necessary to say who Jack the Ripper was, what he did, or when he did it. People didn't have to know even that Jack the Ripper really existed. People understood because they knew what Jack the Ripper represented. The question, however, is why? Why did Jack the Ripper develop this almost mythic status? What distinguished Jack the Ripper from other murderers of the day?

That's the question that this book attempts to address, and the argument being advanced in these pages is that Jack the Ripper would probably have been forgotten had he murdered somewhere else, at some other time, or murdered upper-class women rather than the lowest prostitute. But Jack the Ripper murdered in the East End of London, a stage already primed for something sensational to happen. This book explains what primed it. Whether it succeeds or not is something you will have to decide, but in combining the murders with key historical events that formed a backdrop to the crimes, I hope readers will have an opportunity to see the bigger picture of time and place.

Notes

1. Daniel Farson (1927–97) played himself in 'The Angry Silence' (1960) and shortly before his death made a cameo appearance in the Derek Jacobi movie 'Love is the Devil' (1998), inspired by Farson's 1993 memoir, *The Guilded Gutter Life of Francis Bacon* published in New York by Pantheon Books.
2. Cullen, Tom (1965) *Autumn of Terror: Jack the Ripper His Crimes and Times*. London: Bodley Head.
3. Farson, Daniel (1972) *Jack the Ripper*. London: Michael Joseph.
4. Stowell called him 'S', but the veil was thin and easily seen through.
5. Titles that simply wouldn't have had a market 20 or more years ago include Begg, P., Fido, M. and Skinner, K. (1990) *The Jack the Ripper A to Z*. London: Headline; Evans, Stewart P. and Skinner, Keith (2000) *The Ultimate Jack the Ripper Sourcebook*. London: Robinson; Curtis, Jr, L. Perry (2001) *Jack the Ripper and the London Press*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press; and Chisholm, Alexander, DiGrazia, Christopher-Michael and Yost, Dave (2002) *The News from Whitechapel. Jack the Ripper in The Daily Telegraph*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Co.

CHAPTER ONE

THE EAST END

… An evil plexus of slums that hide human creeping things; where filthy men and women live on penn'orths of gin, where collars and clean shirts are decencies unknown, where every citizen wears a black eye, and none ever combs his hair.[1]

I have seen the Polynesian savage in his primitive condition, before the missionary or the blackbirder or the beach-comber got at him. With all his savagery, he was not half so savage, so unclean, so irreclaimable, as the tenant of a tenement in an East London slum.[2]

During the 1880s the East End became the focus of a great many general anxieties about unemployment, overcrowding, slum dwellings, disease and gross immorality. It was feared that the unwashed masses would tumble out of their dark alleys and bleak hovels, sweep beyond their geographical containment and submerge civilised society. A working class uprising and revolution was an imagined reality that waited just around the corner. Jack the Ripper gave those fears substance and form, flesh and bone, because Jack the Ripper was a product of 'the netherworld'[3] who could – and in one case fractionally did – move out of the warren of hovels and alleys into the civilised city. And if Jack the Ripper could do it, so could the diseased savages themselves, espousing socialism, demanding employment and fair wages, education and acceptable housing, and bringing an end to the world as the Victorian middle classes knew it.

This isn't an exaggeration or an attempt to give Jack the Ripper greater importance than he deserves. Many saw the hand of the social reformer in the Ripper crimes, most famously George Bernard Shaw, whose letter to *The Star* newspaper is often quoted:

SIR, – Will you allow me to make a comment on the success of the Whitechapel murderer in calling attention for a moment to the social question? Less than a year ago the West-end press, headed by the *St. James's Gazette*, the *Times*, and the *Saturday Review*, were literally clamouring for the blood of the people – hounding on Sir Charles Warren to thrash and muzzle the scum who dared to complain that they were starving – heaping insult and reckless calumny on those who interceded for the victims – applauding to the skies the open class bias of those magistrates and judges who zealously did their very worst in the criminal proceedings which followed – behaving, in short as the proprietary class always does behave when the workers throw it into a frenzy of terror by venturing to show their teeth. Quite lost on these journals and their patrons were indignant remonstrances, argument, speeches, and sacrifices, appeals to history, philosophy, biology, economics, and statistics; references to the reports of inspectors, registrar generals, city missionaries, Parliamentary commissions, and newspapers; collections of evidence by the five senses at every turn; and house-to-house investigations into the condition of the unemployed, all unanswered and unanswerable, and all pointing the same way. The *Saturday Review* was still frankly for hanging the appellants; and the *Times* denounced them as 'pests of society'. This was still the tone of the class Press as lately as the strike of the Bryant and May girls. Now all is changed. Private enterprise has succeeded where Socialism failed. Whilst we conventional Social Democrats were wasting our time on education, agitation, and organisation, some independent genius has taken the matter in hand, and by simply murdering and disembowelling four women, converted the proprietary press to an inept sort of communism. The moral is a pretty one, and the Insurrectionists, the Dynamitards, the Invincibles, and the extreme left of the Anarchist party will not be slow to draw it. 'Humanity, political science, economics, and religion', they will say, 'are all rot; the one argument that touches your lady and gentleman is the knife'. That is so pleasant for the party of Hope and Perseverance in their toughening struggle with the party of Desperation and Death![4]

The Ripper wasn't a social reformer, nor did Bernard Shaw mean to suggest that he was. However, it was recognised then, as it has been

recognised since, that the crimes provoked a horrified response from those who had hitherto disregarded or ignored the appeals of traditional reformers and for a short time brought a clamouring for change that would in its small way bring about both social changes and changes to the very fabric of the area, such as hastening the destruction of notorious slums. As Jerry White has written:

> Within six years, then, Jack the Ripper had done more to destroy the Flower and Dean St. rookery than fifty years of road building, slum clearance and unabated pressure from police, Poor Law Guardians, vestries and sanitary officers.[5]

England in the 1880s was in transition, shedding the skin of Victorianism and moving towards a more modern age. Winston Churchill described the 1880s as:

> the end of an epoch. The long dominion of the middle classes, which had begun in 1832, had come to its close and with it the almost equal reign of Liberalism. The great victories had been won. All sorts of lumbering tyrannies had been toppled over. Authority was everywhere broken. Slaves were free. Conscience was free. Trade was free. But hunger and squalor and cold were also free and the people demanded something more than liberty …[6]

Society was undergoing fundamental and far-reaching changes to its social, political and economic structure, and as with anything new and different it was frightening, especially for those who by nature or desire abhorred change. By the end of the decade people genuinely felt that revolution was in the air and that there would be an uprising of the masses – as Basil Thompson, Assistant Commissioner CID from 1913 recalled: 'unless there was a European war to divert the current, we were heading for something very much like revolution'.[7] And the social evils of London as a whole, and the country beyond, came to be embodied by the poor, the destitute and the unemployed of the East End. As Peter Ackroyd observed in his remarkable and monumental *London: The*

Biography: 'All the anxiety about the City in general then became attached to the East End in particular, as if in some peculiar sense it had become a microcosm of London's own dark life'. And Jack the Ripper came to represent the East End and so to represent all the anxieties of the age, again as Peter Ackroyd perceptively observed,

> … the defining sensation which for ever marked the 'East End', and created its public identity, was the series of murders ascribed to Jack the Ripper between the late summer and early autumn of 1888. The scale of the sudden and brutal killings effectively marked out the area as one of incomparable violence and depravity … The fact that the killer was never captured seemed only to confirm the impression that the bloodshed was created by the foul streets themselves; that the East End was the true Ripper.

It can therefore be fairly said that had Jack the Ripper killed anywhere else or killed at any other time he would today be a footnote in criminal history, a mere idle curiosity, the subject of a book here and there. But that didn't happen. By accident – it is unlikely to have been by design – Jack the Ripper committed his crimes in an area that had come to represent the dangerous and threatening underbelly of Victorian society. His notoriety for generations to come was thus assured. But what was so special about the East End? Why was it perceived as representing the evils of society? How did it come to be the way it was? We shall be exploring some of these issues in the coming chapters, but the East End itself is a special place, perhaps even a magical place for those with the gift to feel and sense it. It has a distinct character and a colourful and vibrant history, but it is not a single entity, it did not even exist in the sense of a place defined by the use of capital letters – East End – until the 1880s, when the phrase was first coined.[8] What the East End is and how it came to be the way it is forms the backdrop to this story and much is down to local geography and the Romans.

The Thames, with marshes stretching from its north and south banks, and the tidal River Lea flowing into it at what is now Poplar,

created frontiers and natural barriers and isolated the East End from the surrounding areas like the houses in a cul-de-sac. The area never seems to have enjoyed any concentration of population. About ten thousand years ago some Maglemosean people left a few traces of their habitation in Hackney. This evidence and signs of a pre-Roman trackway running north of the Thames along the line of the modern Bethnal Green Road to a crossing of the Lea at Old Ford are pretty much the only evidence we have of pre-Roman settlement. London itself seems to have been a Roman foundation, although 'Londinium' is not a wholly Roman name. Indeed, it may not be Roman at all, but derived from a pre-Roman place-name of considerable antiquity.[9] Little remains in legend beyond a few stories, perhaps the best known being that of King Lud,[10] who was king of a territory with its capital at London, called Caer Lud, later corrupted into Caer Lundein and then London, and who is today remembered in the place-name 'Ludgate'. However, there remains little or no archaeological evidence to support significant pre-Roman habitation.

London developed essentially as a Roman city and it appears to have become a rather important trading centre, rather than a place of political or military significance. The Roman historian Tacitus, describing the uprising of a British tribe called the Iceni under the leadership of Queen Boudica in AD60 said that London 'undistinguished by the name of a colony, was much frequented by a number of merchants and trading vessels'.[11] The Boudican revolt[12] was a disaster for Roman Britain: Dio Cassius says that 'eighty thousand of the Romans and of their allies perished' and London was razed along with St. Albans (Verulamium) and Colchester (Camulodunum). Following Boudica's eventual defeat London was rebuilt, expanded, and provided with a forum, basilica, public baths and a palace for the provincial governor. By AD200 it had acquired considerable status and the Romans built a protective wall around the 330 acres that the city then occupied. This wall was about 21 feet

(6.4m) high, ran for about 2 miles (3.2km) around the perimeter and probably used about 86,000 tonnes of stone. The wall essentially defined the City of London, what would become known as the square mile, the financial and commercial heartland. The City was entered and exited through one of five large gates that opened onto superbly constructed roads linking London with several nearby towns, and beyond them across the country. These gates have not survived, the last gates to the City and surrounding walls being demolished between 1760 and 1766, but the locations are preserved in London place-names. Newgate and Ludgate converged outside the city perimeter and ran westwards to Silchester, Hampshire. Aldersgate led out to the famous Roman road called Watling Street, then ran north-west towards St. Albans in Hertfordshire. From Bishopsgate the road led north to Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire. And from Aldgate the road ran north-east to Colchester. This was the east gate (Aldgate perhaps derived from the Saxon *Æstgeat*) and that part of London within the wall by Aldgate would have been the original East End.

The gates were grand affairs. We don't know what the original Aldgate looked like, but it was reconstructed in the late 1500s and a description has been left us by Don Manoel Gonzales in 1731:

> Upon the top of it, to the eastward, is placed a golden sphere; and on the upper battlements, the figures of two soldiers as sentinels: beneath, in a large square, King James I, is represented standing in gilt armour, at whose feet are a lion and unicorn, both couchant, the first the supporter of England, and the other for Scotland. On the west side of the gate is the figure of Fortune, finely gilded and carved, with a prosperous sail over her head, standing on a globe, overlooking the city. Beneath it is the King's arms, with the usual motto, *Dieu et mon droit*, and under it, *Vivat rex*. A little lower, on one side, is the figure of a woman, being the emblem of peace, with a dove in one hand, and a gilded wreath or garland in the other; and on the other side is the figure of charity, with a child at her breast, and another in her hand; and over the arch of the gate is this inscription, viz.,

Senatus populusque Londinensis fecit, 1609, and under it, Humphrey Weld, Mayor, in whose mayoralty it was finished.[13]

Roman cemeteries have been found outside the City walls at Minories and Trinity Square. Three other cemeteries further out have suggested small communities, although the Romans did bury their dead along roadways. One cemetery was found at Old Ford, which was a place where roads met to cross the River Lea, an unsurprising place for a community to have developed. Another has been found at Shadwell, which is where access to the Thames is easier than at any place between the City and Blackwall, so a community may have grown up there. But the Roman cemetery discovered in Spitalfields is more difficult to explain.

In 407 the Roman troops in Britain elevated to emperor a soldier named Constantine and in 409 he withdrew the garrisons to Boulogne to seize and secure Gaul. He enjoyed success until betrayed, after which his campaign collapsed and he was captured and executed at Ravenna in 411. Constantine had not abandoned Britain, but intended to return. Troops would therefore have been deployed, albeit in seriously depleted numbers, and the political, administrative and commercial machinery would have remained in place, strong enough after three hundred years of Roman rule to survive Constantine's collapse, although officials appointed by Constantine probably changed sides, fled or quietly retired. There is even a vague suggestion that the Britons rose against and ruthlessly slaughtered Constantine's appointees.[14] Whatever happened, by 410 someone had acquired sufficient power that they could communicate on behalf of the country and pledge the allegiance of the *civitas* (cities) of Britain to Emperor Honorius. London is unlikely to have been abandoned and left to decay and collapse, as is the impression most often received. We know that a leader called Vortigern (it's a title meaning 'High King', not a personal name) acted on behalf of an organisation known as the Council of Britons, and from what

meagre evidence exists, Britain seems to have been settled, prosperous and intellectually active. We know that the Britons adopted a heretical teaching called Pelagianism (which denied original sin – the hereditary stain inherited from Adam – and Christian grace) and that the Pope and the bishops of Gaul became so alarmed that in 429 they sent an important cleric named Germanus to Britain to confront the Pelagian leaders. The fact that a religious heresy could have gained such a foothold and cause such concern suggests that despotic leaders, civil wars, foreign invasion or major strife did not trouble Britain at that time. Germanus, we know, confronted the Pelagian leaders in a major debate and it has been plausibly argued that this took place in London. E.A. Thompson has surmised that the pope and Gallic bishops would have been little concerned had the heresy merely contaminated an out of the way town, but from London the heresy could 'vomit its poison'[15] across Britain: 'London, we need not doubt, was still by far the largest centre of population in Britain. The road system of the entire island was based on it . . .'.[16]

Eventually Romano-Britain suffered a severe blow. Vortigern had followed the Roman practice of hiring mercenaries to protect vulnerable areas from attack in return for lands on which they could settle, but a mercenary army settled in Kent, under the leadership of two brothers called Hengest and Horsa, rebelled. As one chronicler described it:

> All the major towns were laid low by the repeated battering of enemy rams . . . swords glinted all round as the flames crackled. It was a sad sight. In the middle of the squares the foundation stones of high walls and towers that had been torn from their lofty base, holy altars, fragments of corpses, covered with a purple crust of congealed blood, looked as though they had been mixed up in some dreadful wine-press. There was no burial to be had except in the ruins of houses or the bellies of beasts and birds.[17]

Whether or not London was one of the 'major towns' isn't known, but it probably was not.[18] Archaeological investigations suggest that

the Roman way of life continued in London into the fifth century, and the lack of Saxon burials anywhere close to London suggests that someone was strong enough to protect it. There is some slight textual evidence to support the view as well.

What is curious, however, is the almost complete dominance of Saxon place-names in the area. An assimilation of Romano-British and Saxon culture would have given us a mixture of Celtic, Romano-British and Saxon names. The dominance of Saxon names doesn't suggest a gradual collapse of what went before, but a complete and sudden end, as in the case of a massive slaughter or, perhaps more likely, an evacuation following a formal cessation of territory. Whatever happened, the Roman city of London within the walls was almost completely abandoned. Eventually a Saxon trading settlement called Lundenwic established west of the city walls, in the area that is now the Strand and Charing Cross, was by the middle 600s a thriving 'market for many peoples coming by land and sea'.[19]

Whatever happened to London and its immediate environs, the Roman influence appears to have been almost completely obliterated. The influence in the East End is almost completely Saxon. The names of villages are Saxon. The names of fields are Saxon. 'The disappearance of earlier traditions is apparent in the English names given to all the natural features peculiar to the locality save the Thames and the Lea. The only names of wells, springs and steep slopes which ante-date the Norman Conquest are English; none retains the least accent of the Celt, not one recalls the terseness of the Latin tongue'.[20] Here the place-names derive from early settlers: Stibba (Stepney), Waeppa (Wapping), Blida (Bethnal), Deorlof (Dalston), Haca (Hackney), Hunberth (Homerton) and Lull (Lollsworth).

The first named place in the area of which we have a record is Stepney, mentioned in a document dated about 1000 and called Stybbanhythe. This was originally the name of the landing place of a Saxon named Stibba or Stebbe and probably referred to modern-

day Ratcliff, a natural landing place on the north bank of the Thames between the marshes of Wapping and the Isle of Dogs. Stepney church, St. Dunstan's,[21] is of great antiquity and until the thirteenth century was the only church for the whole of Stepney.[22] In medieval times the parish of Stepney was huge, extending from the City to the River Lea and from Hackney to the River Thames, and it is known that from at least the reign of Edward the Confessor the lands (which then included Hackney) were held by the Bishop of London.

> The origin of the Bishop of London's estate in Stepney is unknown. Some would have it that the episcopal estates, lying as they did in 1086 in a semi-circle round London from Stepney on the east to Fulham on the west, dated from a time when the bishop had assumed or had had laid upon him the duty of protecting the City from the barbarians without. There is no evidence other than the disposition of the estates to support this view but that disposition, while it may be due to chance, is certainly arresting.[23]

Stepney is the only place in the eastern marshes of London mentioned in the Domesday Survey. The area appears to have been a well-established farming community with some landowners and peasant households. There was arable land with good meadows, rich pastures and woodlands; mills were on the Lea,[24] perhaps for milling grain destined for London, which had a population estimated to be 10,000–15,000. There were 183 peasant households consisting of 74 villeins, 52 borders and 57 cottars, and on the standard estimate of five people per household, this would have given the area a population of about 900. We know nothing about any of them.

London grew. The area within the walls was eventually rebuilt and the city grew and prospered. William the Conqueror granted London special rights and privileges and built the Tower of London, thus protecting London's population and trade. The walls around London were rebuilt and repaired several times. Roger of Wendover recounted how in 1215, the year the Magna Carta was signed, the

barons entered the city by Aldgate and robbed the Jews of what money they possessed and broke their houses, afterwards repairing the walls and gates of the city with stone taken from the Jews' houses, in particular Aldgate. Another chronicler, Matthew Paris, records that Henry III ordered further repairs to Aldgate in 1257. In 1282, however, Robert Kilwarby, Archbishop of Canterbury, wanted to extend Blackfriar's Church and Edward I gave him permission to take down part of the wall for the necessary bricks. Fortunately, Edward IV permitted Ralph Joceline, mayor of London, to repair the wall between Aldgate and Aldersgate.

Beyond the walls roads radiated out and hamlets developed along their route and at river crossings; or around institutions such as hospitals such as St. Mary Spittal and Bethlehem. The East End was a quiet rural retreat, comprising fields and farmland, some cottages scattered here and there, and as time passed some grand country houses built by the affluent and influential. It would have taken a significant leap of the imagination to foresee how this idyllic rural landscape would become a *terra incognita* populated by savages.[25]

How the East End turned into that *terra incognita* – and how Jack the Ripper helped to transform that landscape – is the story of rapid development, fascinating for anyone interested in knowing the origin of the places so closely associated with Jack the Ripper and his victims. Defining the East End, however, is another matter. Strictly speaking, the East End was that part of the walled City near the eastern gate, Aldgate, and that is the view taken by the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which declares that the East End began at a place called the Aldgate Pump, 'a stone fountain constructed beside a well at the confluence of Fenchurch Street and Leadenhall Street; the existing pump lies a few yards to the west of the original'.[26] Others have argued that the real East End begins at the point where Whitechapel Road and Commercial Road meet, for long known as Gardiner's Corner after a large and now demolished department store that dominated the area. But the real problem is defining

where the East End ended and what land it encompassed, because not only do the boundaries seem to expand and contract almost at the whim of the authority consulted, the East End for many has more than just a geographical context. Some commentators[27] include Bermondsey and Rotherhithe on the south side of the river, others thought with some justification, socially but not geographically, that it exclusively denoted the riverside districts on the north of the Thames,[28] and others included West Ham and East Ham in Essex.[29] Such diversity explains why each area had its own 'peculiar flavour'. As William Booth put it, 'One seems to be conscious of it in the streets. It may be in the faces of the people … or it may lie in the sounds one hears or in the character *of the people*'.[30] But as a widely accepted[31] rule of thumb the East End is the area of land bounded to the east by the River Lea, which joins the Thames at Poplar and formerly marked the boundary between Middlesex and Essex, to the west by the city wall, to the north by Clapton Common and to the south the Thames.[32] To all intents and purposes it includes the three old Metropolitan Boroughs of Stepney, Poplar and Bethnal Green and is essentially the area of Tower Hamlets. It must be said, however, that the real East End is the community just within and just beyond the eastern gates, primarily Spitalfields and Whitechapel, the heartland of Jack the Ripper.

From the Roman walled City three roads ran vaguely eastwards. The most important was Ermine Street, which ran from Bishopsgate through Spitalfields and Shoreditch to Kingsland and Stamford Hill and then to the north. A second road ran from Aldgate, inclined north and crossed the River Lea at Old Ford, continuing on to Stratford Langthorne, and then splitting into two branches, with one going into Essex and the other turning north-eastwards towards East Anglia and Colchester. Its precise route is not known, although an early map shows a road diverging from the Essex road at Mile End Gate and then proceeding westward to Old Ford. The third road left a picket-gate near the site of the

future Tower of London and followed a route similar to the modern Ratcliffe Highway towards Shadwell.

Aldgate opened onto what is today Aldgate High Street, which has various name changes as it runs towards Whitechapel – from which the Jack the Ripper murders derived their early name of the Whitechapel Murders – and on through Mile End to Bow and the River Lea. Whitechapel itself takes its name from the lime-washed chapel dedicated to St. Mary Matfelon (the derivation of *Matfelon* is uncertain but may be the name of a founder) that gave the district its name. The chapel was built in the thirteenth century and in about 1338 became the parish church of St. Mary Whitechapel. It was rebuilt several times over the succeeding years and in most recent times was noted both for an open-air pulpit from which preachers could either harangue pedestrians or, more often, preach to crowds too large to all get into the church itself, and for a clock that overhung Whitechapel Road. During World War II the church was badly damaged by German bombing and had to be demolished. The area is now a small park.

Beyond Whitechapel was Mile End, which retained its ruralness throughout the Middle Ages, a favourite place of recreation for Londoners and a convenient place close to the City for people to gather. It was where the men of Essex met Richard II during the Peasants' Revolt (1381) and where in 1299 a parliament was held in the home of Henry de Waleis, Lord Mayor of London, to confirm Magna Carta. By the end of the sixteenth century Stow was complaining that 'this common field, being sometime the beauty of this city on that part is so encroached upon by building of filthy cottages, and with other purpresSors, inclosures and lay stalls, that in some places [Mile End Road] scarce remaineth a sufficient highway for the meeting of carriages and droves of cattle'. It developed very rapidly, the western part, being named Mile End New Town, becoming little more than an extension of Spitalfields.

Mile End, Whitechapel and Spitalfields were all victims of the growth and expansion of London. People moved beyond the City

walls and they moved west. Both the river and the prevailing winds went from west to east. This meant that the Thames, the main source for the disposal of effluent, provided comparatively clean water in the West and carried the effluent to the East. The winds did the same with smoke and all manner of noxious fumes from thousands of homes and businesses. This had two profound effects. Those who could avoid it lived in the healthier and more sanitary west and only the poorest lived in the east; and the east was accordingly a good place to locate the most noxious of trades, such as tanning, glue-making and brewing, all of which produced odours that hung heavy over the surrounding district. Thus it was that the stink industries moved east, along with the poorest of people, who in turn needed basic housing. The east was unfashionable for homes, the locale of unpleasant, malodorous and sometimes dangerous jobs, and dominated by the poor and deprived. It was a 'nether world', its inhabitants perceived as troglodytes, barely aware of the civilised standards and morals of the West End. Mile End was home to a large dye-house, extensive warehouses for Trueman's brewery, metalworks, a sugar refinery, saw mill, timber yards and a fish-curing factory. Between 1802 and 1901 the population increased from 5,000 to 18,000.

The Priory of the Holy Trinity at Aldgate was founded in 1108. It applied for, and was granted ownership of, the lands immediately beyond the City wall – what would in future be called Portsoken Ward. In the middle of the twelfth century it gave land to the east of the Tower for a hospital for the poor, which later took the name of the Royal Hospital of St. Katherine and enjoyed the patronage of all the Queens of England throughout the Middle Ages. For this reason it was not dissolved by Henry VIII, and survived until the site was required for docks in the 1820s, when it was demolished. Walter Besant in his book *London*[33] exclaimed: 'Poor East London! It had one – only one – ancient and venerable foundation, and they have wantonly and uselessly destroyed it'.

From the Royal Hospital of St. Katherine to Aldgate ran a road called the Minories that took its name from the Convent of the Sisters of St. Clare, the sisters being known variously as 'Poor Clares', 'Little Sisters' or 'Minoresses'. The convent was founded in 1293 by Edmund, Earl of Lancaster, Leicester and Derby (brother to Edward I), probably on behalf of his wife Blanche d'Artois, queen of Navarre. It survived until surrendered to Henry VIII in 1539 by Dame Elizabeth Salvage, the last abbess. Thereafter, as London chronicler John Stow recalled:

> In place of this house of nuns is now built divers fair and large storehouses for armour and habiliments of war, with divers workhouses, serving to the same purpose: there is a small parish church for inhabitants of the close, called St. Trinities.
>
> Near adjoining to this abbey, on the south side thereof, was sometime a farm belonging to the said nunnery; at the which farm I myself in my youth have fetched many a halfpenny worth of milk, and never had less than three ale pints for a halfpenny in summer, nor less than one ale quart for a halfpenny in the winter, always hot from the kine, as the same was milked and strained. One Trolop, and afterwards Goodman, were the farmers there, and had thirty or forty kine to the pail. Goodman's son, being heir to his father's purchase, let out the ground first for grazing of horses, and then for garden-plots, and lived like a gentleman thereby.[34]

By the 1890s it was a place of general trade but the church of the Holy Trinity of the Minoresses was destroyed in 1940.

At Aldgate, almost opposite Minories, was a street called Hogge Lane which connected with Bishopsgate Street. Another road, Houndsditch, also ran north from Aldgate, but it wasn't a street until the mid-1500s. Prior to that time it was a moat or ditch that bounded the City wall and according to John Stow derived its name because it was used by the City to dump rubbish 'especially dead dogges'. Another and perhaps more reasonable suggestion is that it was the location of the kennels for the dogs for the City hunt. The chronicler Richard of Cirencester[35] says that King Edmund

Ironside's (c.980–1016) murderer, the traitorous Edric, was slowly roasted to death in the flames of torches and his body then flung into Houndsditch, but Richard of Cirencester is an unreliable source and it is likely that Edmund Ironside died of natural causes. John Stow claimed that in his youth there was a field next to Houndsditch owned by the Holy Trinity Priory where sick people had cottages and where every Friday people gave them alms. By the time he wrote in the 1590s, however, the ditch had been filled in and levelled and carpenters' yards and large houses built on it. It eventually became the location of an old clothes sellers' market and was notorious for pickpockets, visitors in the nineteenth century being advised to leave their valuables at home and not take offence at what was called 'Bishopsgate Banter'.

Hogge or Hog Lane was known at least by the end of the 1500s as Peticote or Petticoat Lane, so named, it is popularly said, because of the increasingly fashionable clothes dealers who carried on business in the area. It wasn't until after 1665, when the Great Plague drove out the fashionable folk, that Huguenot weavers and Jewish traders moved in – and by the 1750s it was a well-established trading centre. The name was changed to Middlesex Street in about 1830, though it never successfully threw off the name Petticoat Lane, and in the Ripper's day, as today, it formed the boundary between the City of London and Tower Hamlets.

Hog Lane joined Bishopsgate and led to the Priory of St. Mary Spital, of which more shortly.

The Bishop's Gate which stood at the northern end of modern day Camomile Street led out onto Ermine Street, which ran north to Lincoln and York. Being a major road – one of the most important roads in Roman Britain – it was quickly lined with buildings, among the first being the Priory of St. Mary Spital. The Priory of St. Mary Bethlehem was another establishment, founded in 1247 by Sheriff Simon Fitz Mary. By 1377 a hospital attached to this priory was being used for the care of 'distracted people', although 'care' meant

being chained to a wall, or when violent, ducked in water or whipped. The priory itself was bought from the King at the time of the Dissolution and converted into a lunatic asylum, when it was known as 'Bedlam'. The hospital was relocated in 1675 and the site is now occupied by Liverpool Street Station.

According to John Stow, in his day a large inn called the Dolphin stood at the junction of Houndsditch and Bishopsgate Street, and a short distance away was a large and sumptuous house where Stow says Queen Elizabeth once stayed. It was so overwhelmingly grand that it was known mockingly as Fisher's folly. Stow wrote:

> From Fisher's folly up to the west end of Berward's Lane, of old time so-called, but now Hogge lane, because it meeteth with Hogge lane, which commeth from the bars without Aldgate, as is afore showed, is a continual building of tenements, with alleys of cottages, pestered, etc. There is there a large close called Tasel close, sometime for that there were tassels planted for use of cloth-workers, since letten to the cross-bow makers wherein they used to shoot for games at the popinjay: now the same being enclosed with a brick wall, serveth to be an artillery yard, whereunto the gunners of the tower do weekly repair namely, every Thursday; and there levelling certain brass pieces of great artillery against a butt of earth, made for that purpose, they discharge them for their exercise.

A map of the area dating from before 1600 clearly shows how the area of Spitalfields was an idyllic country retreat. Buildings line the main arteries, but behind them are fields which show animals grazing, archers are practising, a few cottages scattered here and there, and the dominating hospital of St. Mary Spital with large formal gardens and orchards beyond. A far cry from the slum it became in Jack the Ripper's day. Along the riverside, however, there was a different story.

The natural landing place of Ratcliff had been used as a docks for shipbuilding in the 1300s, but increasingly it was an area for repairing, fitting out and victualling ships, including many ships

engaged in the sixteenth century voyages of discovery. But in the first half of the 1500s Wapping Marsh was drained by a Dutchman, Cornelius Vanderdelft, and the waterfront began to be developed, the hamlets there expanding into peculiarly narrow and serpentine shapes as they followed the line of the river. By the end of the 1500s the area was becoming slumland and Stow described Wapping High Street as 'a continual street, or filthy straight passage, with alleys of small tenements or cottages, built, inhabited by sailors' victuallers'. By Charles II's day the area was mainly populated by seamen of the royal navy and Pepys often described the disturbances they made. In 1688 the notorious Judge Jeffreys was captured at the Red Cow, one of many alehouses in Wapping, whilst trying to escape to France. Dr. Johnson recommended Wapping as a colourful place to visit, but Boswell was unimpressed. It was at Wapping that pirates were hanged at what was called Execution Dock, their bodies left to hang until covered by three tides. Captain Kidd and one of his companions, Darby Mullins, were hanged here on 23 May 1701.

Nowhere really suffered from misreporting – or invention – more than Limehouse, a primarily Chinese quarter that developed a terrible and sinister reputation for opium dens and villainous orientals. Sax Rohmer[36] created Limehouse-based Dr. Fu Manchu – 'a brow like Shakespeare and a face like Satan . . . the yellow peril incarnate' bent on world domination. Thomas Burke wrote several stories based here, collected most notably in *Limehouse Nights* and *The Pleasantries of Old Quong*, which feature innocent young girls and dope-driven deviant orientals. Rohmer had never been to Limehouse and Burke admitted in his autobiography *Son of London* that he knew nothing at all about the Chinese and was 'thus able to write those stories with the peculiar assurance a man has who knows nothing of what he is writing or talking about'.

Apart from the docks, it was in the area of Spitalfields that expansion began, spreading beyond to Whitechapel and Mile End in one direction and Bethnal Green in the other. This would be Jack the Ripper's territory, a land of extreme poverty and vice.

Spitalfields derived its name from the Priory of St. Mary Spital, a religious house founded by Walter and Rosia Brune in 1197 and refounded as a hospital in 1235, eventually becoming the largest hospital in medieval London. Surrounded by open space, a cemetery, a farm, gardens and an orchard, its existence meant that the area remained largely rural until the priory was dissolved in 1538 and it became courtiers' residences, as Stow recorded: 'In place of this hospital, and near adjoining, are now many fair houses built for receipt and lodging of worshipful persons'. Much of the land was bought from the King by Stephen Vaughan, although he didn't buy it all in one go, but acquired it over time, and on his death the estate was inherited by his son, also named Stephen, among whose prominent tenants was the French Ambassador, Charles de Foix.

Vaughan's estate did not include the area known as Lolesworth Field. Records from as early as 1276 refer to *Lolsworth* Fields and probably recall an owner or tenant named Loll; but by the late twelfth century the area was known as *Spittellond* (in records of 1399) and by 1561 as *Spyttlefieldes*, at which time they were sold to a man named Christopher Campion, whose heirs allowed much of Lolesworth Field to be dug for brickearth in 1576. According to John Stow:

> On the east side of this churchyard lieth a large field, of old time called Lolesworth, now Spittle field; which about the year 1576 was broken up for clay to make brick; in the digging wherof many earthen pots, called urnæ, were found full of ashes and burnt bones of men, to wit, of the Romans that inhabited here … Every one these pots had in them with the ashes of the dead one piece of copper money, with the inscription of the Emperor then reigning: some of them were of Claudius, some of Vespasian, some of Nero, of Anthoninus Pius, of Trajanus and others.

Other items were found including jars of various sorts containing, or once containing, oils and waters, and stone coffins which Stow supposed to be of important Britons or Saxons, plus the bones of people buried in long-rotten wooden coffins.

The ownership of Spitalfield passed through several hands, Campion's heirs selling it in 1581 to Richard Celye, who sold it to Ralph Bott in 1590, who in turn sold it to a London goldsmith named Richard Hanbery in 1594. Hanbery bequeathed the land to his son-in-law, Sir Edmund Wheler, another London goldsmith, who lived in the village of Datchet in Buckinghamshire and was Sheriff in 1602. He expanded the estate with other purchases until it was divided in 1649, the northern part of the estate, roughly that which extended along the line of Lamb Street and Hanbury Street towards Shoreditch, going to Sir William Wheler of Westbury, and the southern part placed in the care of Edward Nicholas and George Cook, trustees of the seven daughters of Sir William Wheler of Datchet. Sir William Wheler of Westbury began to lay out streets on his property in the 1650s and 1660s, most notably Wheler Street which ran north–south and was a main thoroughfare almost completely obliterated when a more modern street, Commercial Street, was built. The remains of Wheler Street can be seen today running up the side of the Commercial Tavern.

The southern part contained the Spitalfield. Daniel Defoe could remember it as 'a field of grass with cows feeding on it' and it was crossed by footpaths from Lolesworth Lane (later Browns Lane and then Hanbury Street[37]) to Vine Court (formerly on the north side of Lamb Street); from the 'Red Lion' (an inn on the corner of Puma Court, which is a small passage breaking the block of buildings between Hanbury Street and Fournier Street) to Smock Alley; and from the 'George' to Smock Alley (today's Artillery Passage). Nicholas and Cook built the western side of Crispin Street and petitioned to close the footpaths crossing Spitalfield. The permission was granted in June 1673, but only on condition that they replaced them with a road, which the authorities stipulated must be about 40 feet long and 24 feet wide. Nicholas and Cook complied and the result was Datchet Street, which was of the stated dimensions. Datchet Street became corrupted to Dorset Street and in due course

it would become one of the most notorious and reputedly one of the most dangerous streets in the neighbourhood. Jack the Ripper's last victim was horribly butchered here. It was at this time that the neighbouring street, New Fashion Street (later White's Row[38]), and Paternoster Row (the eastern end of Brushfield Street) were built.

In 1679 a man named John Balch, a silk thrower probably of Somerset origin, married Katherine Wheler, one of the seven Wheler daughters, and bought out the shares in Spitalfield of three other sisters (Frances Wheler, spinster; Anne Pitcarne, widow; and Mary, wife of Martin Vandenancker). He then applied for the right to hold a market on the land, which was granted on 29 July 1682, market days being restricted to Thursdays and Saturdays. The market was for both vegetables and meat and it grew in importance, by 1770 being described as 'of great reputation for all sorts of provisions'. It was in 1875 that the leasehold interest in the market together with the market franchise was sold to Robert Horner, who had begun his working life as a porter in the market, and the building was completely rebuilt. The plaster panel over the arched entrance in the south range is inscribed 'Spitalfields Market rebuilt by Robert Horner during the year of Queen Victoria's Jubilee 1887'. On the Lamb Street corner is a plaster panel inscribed 'This market was finished rebuilding by R. Horner 1893'. In 1920 it was bought by the Corporation of London, who over the next seven years extended the market, in the process acquiring property on the north side of Lamb Street, the south side of Brushfield Street and also in the area of the Old Artillery Ground. Enlargements to the market caused the destruction of the northern part of Crispin Street and one side of Dorset Street.

Apart from Spitalfields market – the foremost fruit and vegetable market in London (and now entirely relocated) – the most dominant feature of the area is the magnificent Christ Church. At a meeting in 1710 it was decided that Spitalfields should become a Parish and an organisation known as The Commissioners For Building Fifty New

Churches in London and Westminster and the Suburbs[39] decided that the parish church would be designed by their surveyor, Nicholas Hawksmoor, a pupil of Sir Christopher Wren. The foundations were dug in 1714, the foundation stone laid the following year and the church, completed at a cost of £40,000, was consecrated in 1729. It still stands, an imposing structure that would once have looked far grander, being set back off the road (before the present Commercial Street was built). It was struck by lightning in 1841 and some fairly nasty alterations were carried out, but it remains one of Hawksmoor's masterpieces. By the 1880s it reflected the general dilapidation of the area and the churchyard was commonly known as 'Itchy Park' because of the number of bug-infested and scratching homeless people who gathered there. Even at the turn of the century Jack London described it as 'a welter of rags and filth, of all manner of loathsome skin diseases, open sores, bruises, grossness, indecency, leering monstrosities and bestial faces'.[40]

Christ Church stands today on the corner of Commercial Street, which was laid out in 1849, many buildings being demolished in the process, including several buildings at the Market end of Church Street (present Fournier Street). It was therefore some distance down the street that a carpenter named Joseph Drew built three houses and, in March 1758, a 'messuage … and wharehouses thereunto adjoining' was built on Joseph Drew's instruction by John Sabatier. In due course it would become a public house named Ten Bells, after the number of bells then in the church, and with the construction of Commercial Street would become a corner pub. It was the last place in which a Ripper victim named Mary Kelly was seen drinking and some two hundred years later an enterprising landlord renamed the pub the 'Jack the Ripper'. Although it reverted back to its original name in the late 1980s, it remains a mecca for Ripperphiles and tourists.

Fournier Street itself contains some fine examples of Georgian houses built at a time when the area was the largely prosperous

home of silk weavers known as Huguenots, the French Protestant followers of John Calvin. When, in 1685, Louis XIV revoked the 1598 Edict of Nantes, so ending their freedom to worship, over 200,000 Huguenots fled France. About 50,000 settled in England, some in Soho and Wandsworth, but most in Spitalfields. They quickly established a silk weaving industry that was hugely successful, employing a large number of people and proving highly profitable. Many people made large fortunes, as some of the fine houses in the East End today reveal, but in 1860 the Government introduced a free-trade policy that allowed the duty-free import of French material. The effect on the British silk industry was catastrophic: in 1854 50,000 people in East London were employed in the silk industry; by 1880 the figure had shrunk to just 3,300. The knock-on effect was poverty, unemployment and a deterioration of social conditions.

Roughs inhabited some of the streets in the area and crime was beginning to increase. Some infamous characters in Whitechapel during the 1700s included the thug Dick Turpin, who was made unjustly famous as a highwayman by Harrison Ainsworth in his novel *Rookwood*. Born in Essex in 1705, Turpin was apprenticed to a butcher in Whitechapel until he was discharged 'for the brutality of his manners'. He turned to crime, including highway robbery, teaming up sometime after 1735 with Matthew King and operating largely in the East End, until ambushed by the law when drinking in an inn called the Old Red Lion[41] on Whitechapel High Street. King was mortally wounded, possibly shot in the back by Turpin to create a diversion, but Turpin escaped and fled to York (his horse wasn't called Black Bess and he didn't complete the journey in a single fifteen hour ride), where he was eventually discovered and executed on 7 April 1739.

But the worst of the slums to emerge from all this building had its origins in 1642 when Lewis and Thomas Fossan acquired land in the area and began to lay out the streets. By 1654 they had built

Fossan Street (which over time became corrupted into Fashion Street), George Street (now Lolseworth Street) and part of Thrall Street (corrupted to Thrawl Street). Then in August 1655 the Fossans leased two plots south of Fashion Street to John Flower and Gowan Dean, bricklayers of Whitechapel, who built Flower and Dean Street. The houses originally built were not high quality and ceased to be maintained, and additional building was of the lowest standard. About 1676 the northern and eastern parts of the Fossan Estate were owned by George Keate, described as a merchant of St. Bartholomew's Exchange, London. The property was passed down through Keate's family, who did much building: Upper Keate Street (the western part of Thrawl Street) and Lower Keate Street (which ran south from Flower and Dean Street and no longer exists). The quality of the houses erected was appalling, so bad in fact that in 1854 the fronts of five houses were so ruinous that they had to be demolished. A line of men named George Keate came to own the property. Of them, one was a man of note and distinction,[42] being a writer, artist and antiquarian who moved in elevated circles and counted Voltaire among his friends. He did some rebuilding but 'without any very deliberate policy of development or improvement'[43] and on his death the properties passed via his wife to their daughter Georgiana[44] and her husband John Henderson.[45] None of these people did anything to the buildings they owned, but left them to deteriorate. The majority became common lodging houses of the most disreputable kind, offering a bed for the night, often shared, for a few pence. By 1805 Georgiana and her husband John Henderson owned 250 dilapidated houses that brought in an annual rental of £700. F.H.W. Sheppard comments:

> That these lodging houses made a profit for their owners seems incredible in view of the tenants' poverty but … it was done. A proprietor of six houses in Thrawl Street, who had 'a country house in Hampstead' installed in each house a 'deputy' on whom he calls every week to collect his dues.[46]

Seventy years later, in 1877, it was reported that the registered common lodging houses of the Flower and Dean Street area contained in all 123 rooms with accommodation for 757 occupants. At 4d a night per person, this would have generated an annual income of £4,368 – not a bad profit from some crumbling old houses. The area had become notorious, James Greenwood in 1885 describing the 27 courts, streets and alleys packed into the square quarter mile area collectively known as, and centred on, the Flower and Dean Street rookery, as 'what is perhaps the foulest and most dangerous street in the whole metropolis'.

Some effort was made to clear away the rookeries, not because anyone was really much concerned about the brutalising lives the people living there suffered, but because they feared the squalid conditions might provoke action which would spew out from its East End confinement and confront respectable London – 'What concerned the middle classes were street crime, prostitution, the threat of revolt, expensive pauperism, infectious disease spreading to respectable London …'.[47] Perhaps the most significant measure, as we shall see, was the building of Commercial Street. For a long time nothing was built on the road, some sites remaining undeveloped as late as 1870. It was during this time that many buildings were erected, among them the Commercial Tavern at the junction of the old main thoroughfare of Wheler Street and the new one, Commercial Street, which was built about this time by Abraham Keymer of the Norfolk Arms in Bethnal Green on a site leased to him in February 1865. The H Division police station in Commercial Road, the scene of so much activity during the Ripper scare, was built in 1874–75 by Messrs. Lathey Brothers to the design of Frederick H. Caiger, Surveyor for the Metropolitan Police. At that time it had a three-storey frontage, the top storey and Elder Street wing not being added until 1906.

This, then, was Jack the Ripper's East End. A place of noble origins – fields and streams, grazing land, rural inns, the finest strawberries

and cream – that fast became a gigantic slum. Most of the buildings are long gone, but a few remain, now renovated, restored and expensive, but when walking the Ripper's East End, as thousands of people do every year, or merely returning from the comfort of one's armchair to those streets of carboniferous fogs, gas lamps and hansom cabs, it is valuable and instructive to know a little of its history, to know how it got that way.

Commercial Street connected Whitechapel with another noted slum district, Shoreditch, which has a long history stretching back to Roman times. In 1576 James Burbage founded the Theatre, the first playhouse in England, which was dismantled in 1598 and moved across the river to Southwark, where re-erected it became The Globe. The area began to undergo considerable development and very soon established for itself the reputation of being 'a disreputable place, frequented by courtesans'. By the mid-nineteenth century it was perhaps best known for its violent street gangs, particularly one known as the Old Nichol Gang after their notorious place of origin, The Nicol, to be immortalised in literature as the Jago. These gangs roamed the district and caused considerable trouble. They were even suspected of committing the Jack the Ripper murders.

Notes

1. Morrison, Arthur (1894) *Tales of Mean Streets*. London: Methuen.
2. Huxley, T.E. quoted in Besant, Walter (1901) *East London*. London: Chatto and Windus.
3. Gissing, George (1889) *The Netherworld*. London: Smith Edler.
4. Shaw, George Bernard (1888) 'Blood Money To Whitechapel', *The Star*, 24 September.
5. White, Jerry (1980) *Rothschild Buildings: Life In An East End Tenement Block 1887–1920*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, pp.29–30.

6. Churchill, Winston Spencer (1906) *Lord Randolph Churchill*. New York: Macmillan.
7. Thompson, Basil (1922) *Queer People*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
8. Barnett, Samuel (1886) 'Sensationalism and Social Reform', *Nineteenth Century*, xix, no. 2, February.
9. See for discussion Rivet, A.L.F. and Smith, Colin (1979) *The Place Names of Roman Britain*. London: B.T. Batsford.
10. Lud may be a fictional figure with his origins in mythic pre-Christian beliefs, but the chronicler Geoffrey of Monmouth portrays him in his audacious *History of the Kings of Britain* as the elder brother of Cassivellaunus and father of Tenuantius, two genuine historical figures. Cassivellaunus was the overlord of a confederation of several tribes collectively known as the Catuvallauni which opposed Julius Caesar in his second expedition to Britain in 54BC. Caesar said that Cassivellaunus's territories 'are divided from the maritime states by the river called Tamesis, about eighty miles from the sea' (Caesar De Bello Gallico v.11) and went on to say that he 'led his army into the borders of Cassivellaunus as far as the River Thames, which can be crossed at one place only on foot, and that with difficulty …' (Caesar De Bello Gallico v.18). But it is Tenuantius who is utterly fascinating because his name is derived from Tasciovanus, who ruled the Catuvallauni from c.20BC–c.AD10 and is known to us only from coins uncovered by archaeologists. That Geoffrey of Monmouth knew about Tasciovanus is seen as evidence supporting his claim to have possessed '… a certain very ancient book written in the British language' brought for him from Brittany by Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford. Geoffrey of Monmouth's history might therefore have a factual foundation insofar as many of its characters are concerned, albeit that their lives are largely Geoffrey's invention.
11. Tacitus, *Annales* xiv, 33.
12. Prasutagus, the king of one of the native tribes of Britain called the Iceni, had voluntarily placed his people under the rule of the Romans in the belief that they would be treated honourably, but on his death the Romans behaved as if the Iceni had been defeated in war; property was plundered, Prasutagus's widow, Boudica was scourged and his