

Along the Jack the Ripper Trails

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An utter fascination of mine, the mid-19th century mystery of *Jack the Ripper*, an unidentified serial killer believed to have committed London's most notorious unsolved murders. Ripper was believed to have committed the grotesque murders of five prostitutes in the then impoverished area of Whitechapel located in East London (Armijo, Guess, & Jinzo, 2007). The neighborhood was crime-filled and heavily populated by eastern European Jewish refugees, as well as Irish immigrants (Gibson, 2002). A pub laden Commercial Street was an invitation for sex-workers, believed to be the main thoroughfare the victims traveled before their savagery deaths – presumed to have been committed by *Jack the Ripper*, also coined "the Whitechapel Murderer" (Gibson, 2002).

I began my journey at the Whitechapel Underground (Tube) station, traveling east along Whitechapel Road, a community densely populated by middle-eastern and muslim settlers with a host of landmarks, which includes the Royal London Hospital, East London Mosque and the London Ambassador College. An unassuming gentleman directed me to the heart of the Whitechapel murders, the epicenter of its history, a pub called the Ten Bells. A friendly bartender freely provided information on the murders, highlighting the connection between the Ten Bells and the notorious killings. I enjoyed a glass of white wine while I documented details.



The Ten Bells

A restaurant believed to be the last place two of Jack the Ripper's victims were seen before their deaths, photo: Denrique Preudhomme



Inside The Ten Bells

At the bar, in photo: Denrique Preudhomme

Annie Chapman and Mary Jane Kelly, both Ripper's victims (Keppel, Joseph G. Weis, & Welch, 2005) were said to have frequented the Ten Bells. It is believed to be the last place they were both seen before their gruesome deaths. A couple of murals depicting the mid-19th century eccentric dressed prostitutes draped the walls of the Ten Bells, a distinctive attraction for numerous curious onlookers who dipped in and out of the pub to take photos and selfies for memorabilia.

Later, I roamed the alleys where the canonical five were found dead. The experience was still quite daunting even after two centuries. Unburdened by my 3.2-pound camera hanging from my neck, and my aching feet, I journeyed along my self-guided trails aided by a detailed map.



Alley off Commercial Street

Alley where Whitechapel murderer is believed to have stalked his victims

There are several *Jack the Ripper* nightly tours in Whitechapel for as little as £10. Most originate from the Aldgate and Liverpool Street Underground (Tube) station. However, there is a Free tour (donations only) at 8:00 p.m. from the Tower Hill Underground (Tube) station. Just look for the tour guide with the orange umbrella when you exit the station. All tours take you to the murder locations of the canonical five, including the site where the first clue was discovered.

There are many fascinating things to see and do in London. If the Whitechapel murders happen to be one you fancy, an exhibit titled, *Jack the Ripper and the East End* will be on display at the Museum of London this Fall. Perhaps I may journey back to London for its historic unveiling. Until then, Cheers.

References

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