



Title of Paper: **Internal politics at the Metropolitan Police and the detrimental impact of organisational dysfunction on the 1888 Jack the Ripper investigation**

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Abstract: The investigation into the Whitechapel murders of 1888 was perhaps the greatest challenge faced by the London Metropolitan Police throughout its history. Failing to catch the culprit – arguably the first modern serial killer – was not purely due to the actions of the heavily mythologised ‘Jack the Ripper’; instead, the investigation was hindered by the internal politics that existed within both the force itself and its relationship with the Home Office. A prolonged feud between Police Commissioner Charles Warren and Assistant Commissioner James Monro led to a crisis of leadership within the organisation that inevitably trickled down to affect the morale and functioning of the investigation team. Monro’s resignation resulted in a vacuum of leadership at the CID, undoubtedly contributing to a lack of direction and mistakes being made by investigating officers. The Metropolitan Police were essentially a dysfunctional organisation that were incapable of forming a united front in order to catch the individual responsible for at least five brutal murders. Research highlights several critical issues that would have – in hindsight – improved the chances of a successful investigation; these include managerial relations, the absence of key figures at critical moments of the investigation and poor decision-making leading to the destruction of evidence.

Keywords: crime, politics, police, leadership, management, Victorian, United Kingdom, London, Ripper

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Introduction

Often considered the first modern serial killer, the Jack the Ripper murders of 1888 have consistently proven to be a subject of conjecture in the 128 years since they occurred. Most particularly, the failure of investigators to identify and capture the perpetrator has spawned a diaspora of 'Ripperologists' attempting to determine who was responsible for the Whitechapel murders. Whilst many theories as to the killer's identity and motive have been proposed over the years, less attention has been given to the contextual reasons that prevented an effective investigation from taking place. Although the victims of the Whitechapel murderer were uniformly deprived sex workers from the East End of London, responsibility for the failure to catch Jack the Ripper can be attributed to a combination of bureaucratic in-fighting and nationalist policy emanating from a centre of power at Westminster. The circumstances faced by leading members of the Metropolitan Police prior to and during the Whitechapel murders undoubtedly impacted upon their ability to mount an efficient investigation into the crimes; significantly, professional conflict between Police Commissioner Charles Warren and former CID chief James Monro led to the development of factionalism within the force. This factionalism clearly affected the police's ability to work as a united front to hunt down Jack the Ripper and contributed to the ongoing mystery surrounding his or her identity.

The internal conflict at Metropolitan Police impacted the Ripper investigation in a range of direct and indirect ways. Monro's resignation as head of the CID - the unit tasked with hunting the killer - shortly prior to the commencement of the Whitechapel murders effectively precluded one of the police's most experienced investigators from taking a leading role in the case. This resignation had several knock-on effects that also negatively affected the police's attempts to catch the Whitechapel murderer. Monro's successor at the CID took a leave of absence during the early stages of the investigation, leaving officers effectively leaderless and further frustrating an already demoralised and under-staffed constabulary. The bureaucratic dispute between Warren and Monro also caused a schism between the Metropolitan Police and the Home Office; by retaining Monro's services as head of the independent political intelligence unit Section D, the Home Office gave the former CID boss considerable investigatory powers. This mandate allowed Monro to become involved in the Ripper case under the tenuous claim that it may have been linked to Irish nationalists; this effectively meant that rival factions under Warren and Monro were investigating the same crimes without sharing information or resources, limiting the police's collective ability to apprehend the killer. The threat posed by destabilising elements within British society was not only felt through Monro's involvement in the Ripper investigation: Warren faced significant criticism in the press as a result of his aggressive approach towards combatting socialist demonstrators the year prior to the murders. This led to Warren developing an overly cautious attitude and desire for total control over high-profile investigations like the Ripper case. His centralised-command approach directly resulted in evidence like the Goulston Street graffiti



The Victorian

being destroyed and crime scenes like Mary Kelly's home being compromised. It is clear that the failure of police to discover the identity of the Ripper was not solely due to the offender's criminal prowess; extrinsic bureaucratic factors were involved within the police force that unduly influenced officers and contributed to a fundamentally inefficient investigations.

Background

Jack the Ripper's reign of terror (1888)

Although there were only five canonical victims of the serial killer known as Jack the Ripper, eleven murdered women were included in the Metropolitan Police Service's investigation that were collectively labelled as 'the Whitechapel murders'. With the benefit of hindsight and over a century of analysis, it is clear that these murders were unlikely to have all been committed by the same perpetrator; although the victims were all women from within the same general geographic area in east London, the specific style of attack ranged considerably from frenzied stabbing to the more precise slashings commonly associated with the Ripper murders (Sugden 2012). The first victim noted in the Whitechapel murders file, Emma Smith, even survived her initial attack and identified her assailants as a group of two or three men before succumbing to her injuries (Begg 2013). Despite the obvious wave of violence occurring throughout the East End at the time, it was the crimes of Jack the Ripper that most captured public attention. The first of the canonical five to be murdered, Mary Ann Nichols, was discovered on 31 August, 1888, in a Whitechapel alleyway. In what would become characteristic of the Ripper murders, her throat had been severed and the lower part of her abdomen had been sliced open. Slightly over a week later on 8 September, 1888, the body of Annie Chapman was discovered in a backyard in nearby Hanbury Street. Like Nichols, her throat had been severed with two cuts, however in this instance her uterus had also been removed (Sugden 2012).

It was almost a month before the Ripper struck again, taking two victims in an incident known as the 'double event' on 30 September, 1888. Elizabeth Stride was discovered with her throat slashed in Berner Street, Whitechapel, however her body had not been mutilated in a similar manner to that of Nichols or Chapman. Around 45 minutes later, the body of Catherine Eddowes was found in Mitre Square in an area of the City of London bordering the East End (Rumbelow 2004). Her throat was severed, and in this occasion her left kidney and most of her uterus had been removed. The Ripper did not strike again for over a month before claiming their final official victim: Mary Kelly was found murdered in her Miller's Court lodgings on 9 November, 1888, with a severed throat and body that had most of its organs removed (Eckert 1981). All of the women whose murders were attributed to the Ripper were prostitutes, and each bore the hallmarks of being victim to a killer whose brutality only seemed to be escalating before coming to an abrupt conclusion.

The police investigating the Ripper murders



Given the high-profile nature of the Whitechapel murders, a considerable police effort was mounted to catch the individual or individuals responsible. During the course of the investigation, over 2000 people were questioned and 300 people were actively investigated by the Metropolitan Police's H Division Criminal Investigation Department, based in Whitechapel and led by Detective Inspector Edmund Reid (Jakubowski 2008). After the Nichols murder took place and the canonical five Ripper killings began, Commissioner Warren assigned several senior officers from the CID Central Office to assist Reid's team. As Eddowes body was discovered within the City of London Police's jurisdiction, a team of officers representing this organisation also became involved after the penultimate murder (Rubinstein 2000). Encouraged by Warren, a group of local volunteers formed the Whitechapel Vigilance Committee and also contributed to the hunt for the killer. This vigilante group supplemented police patrols of the streets and even hired private investigators to conduct their own independent inquiries (Eddleston 2001). The addition of Section D – or 'Special Branch' – further complicated the tapestry of organisations investigating the Ripper; independent from the Metropolitan Police and answerable solely to the Home Office, the group led by Monro examined potential political links to the murders and drew upon a wide range of confidential informants to compile their own dossier on the Whitechapel killer (Clutterbuck 2002).

Police investigations were heavily compromised by the media furore surrounding the murders, with the popular press receiving hundreds of letters regarding the case including some claiming to be from the murderer himself. It was in one of the most prominent of these communications known as the 'Dear Boss letter' that the pseudonym Jack the Ripper is believed to have originated. This and the subsequent 'Saucy Jack postcard' were apportioned a level of credibility given the fact that they included information that was no public knowledge at the time that they were sent; as a result, Warren allowed the publication of the Dear Boss letter in the hopes that the handwriting was recognisable to someone who may be able to identify the culprit (Evans & Skinner 2013). Both the Dear Boss letter and the Saucy Jack postcard were later deemed to be hoaxes perpetrated by journalists hoping to stir public interest in the case. A package received by head of the Whitechapel Vigilance Committee George Lusk has traditionally been considered a more credible communication from the actual killer. The 'From Hell' letter was written in different handwriting than other letters, was not signed 'Jack the Ripper' and was included with a portion of kidney allegedly taken from Catherine Eddowes. After investigation by eminent physician Dr Thomas Openshaw, it was determined that this was a human's left kidney that matched that taken from Eddowes although very little could be deduced beyond that (Wolf 2008).

Poverty and social upheaval at the time of the Ripper killings

Areas like Whitechapel had become a haven for immigrants throughout the 19th Century; as a result, waves of Irish and Jewish immigration had caused overcrowding and endemic poverty throughout the East End. Poverty gave rise to a myriad of social



The Victorian

issues including robbery, alcoholism and – pertinently – prostitution. At the height of the Ripper murders, police estimated around 1200 women were working as prostitutes in Whitechapel alone, increasing the tensions surrounding the Ripper's choice of victim (Gibson 2002). The lack of available housing and associated vagrancy in the community also contributed to Whitechapel being perceived as a deprived area. It was common for underprivileged locals to seek out accommodation at common lodging houses known colloquially as 'doss houses'. H Division police estimated that 233 doss houses were operating in the local area providing nightly accommodation to those that could afford it (Rumbelow 2004). It was the inability to afford these rates that drove many women to prostitution – in fact, the inability of Ripper victims Mary Ann Nichols and Annie Chapman to pay for lodging at a doss house has regularly been cited as a contributing factor in their death (Laite 2012).

Broader social issues also reverberated throughout Whitechapel and the East End, impacting upon the public's perception of the Ripper crimes and setting a context for the investigation into who was responsible. The influx of immigrants to working class communities inevitably put a spotlight on labour issues; in some instances this resulted in rising nationalism and anti-Semitism whilst in other cases this contributed to rising endorsement of socialism and the trade union movement (Jones 1974). Tensions between socialist sympathisers and the establishment peaked the year prior to the Jack the Ripper killings with a significant clash at a protest in London that would become widely known as 'Bloody Sunday' (Fellman 1990). It was not only socialists that were seen as threats to British society: the Whitechapel murders occurred at the same time that the Home Rule movement in Ireland was gaining strength and militant groups like the Fenians remained active throughout the expatriate community (Adams & Wilson 2015). Irish nationalists were a particular concern for the British government, with the formation of Monro's Section D specifically targeted at combatting this movement and ensuring the political stability of the United Kingdom.

Methodology

In order to effectively study the individuals responsible for investigating the Whitechapel murders, it is essential to engage with primary sources that are relatively untainted by the mitigating influence of hindsight. One of the major benefits of studying historical bureaucracy is that ease of access to documentation recording the actions and opinions undertaken by participants in the events being analysed; the records of many police officers who were involved in the Ripper investigation have been released given the considerable passage of time, whilst public interest in the case means that developments in the investigation were thoroughly covered by media outlets at the time in which they were occurring. Although the passing of time has resulted in greater access to official documentation, it has also resulted in a number of useful primary sources having been lost or destroyed in the years since the murders. This has proven to be the case with a number of pieces of evidence associated with the original Ripper case file: items like the From Hell letter and the kidney



purportedly taken from Eddowes are no longer able to be located, with some speculation that this evidence was taken as souvenirs at some point after the murders. The disappearance of some primary evidence may be problematic for researchers, however the significant base of records and copies of documents that exist in relation to the case means that enough material exists in order to conduct an effective evaluation of the police's handling of the Whitechapel murders investigation.

Literature Review

The significant cultural impact of the Jack the Ripper case has inevitably led to a significant amount of content being published in an attempt to analyse and add further contributions to the investigation. In drawing upon this literature, it is important to be discerning and separate the work of professional historians with that of their more amateur counterparts; the ongoing mystery surrounding the identity of the Whitechapel murderer has caused the events and the killer themselves to be heavily mythologised by conspiracy theorists who have regularly misrepresented the facts of the case in order to support their assertions as to who Jack the Ripper was and what their motivation may have been (Whiteway 2004). Despite the preponderance of these amateur theorists within the field of Ripperology, there are a number of well-respected researchers who can provide critical insight into the events of 1888 and the actions taken by police in the course of their investigation. Perhaps the most pre-eminent of these Ripperologists is former police officer and crime historian Donald Rumbelow; Rumbelow is a former curator of the City of London Police's Crime Museum and twice served as chairman of England's Crime Writers' Association. The 2004 edition of his book *The Complete Jack the Ripper* provides a broad overview of the events surrounding the Whitechapel murders and the individuals associated with the case, whether as investigators or potential suspects. Although this book provides a wide-range of information relating to the case, an earlier book written with Stewart P. Evans provides a great deal of information specifically related to the police investigation of the case; *Jack the Ripper: Scotland Yard Investigates* (2006) is a useful tool in both understanding the institutional politics of the Metropolitan Police at the time of the Ripper murders, and in providing a context to the operational standard of the force throughout the late 1800s.

Rumbelow's *The Complete Jack the Ripper* is certainly not the only publication aiming to provide thorough coverage of the Whitechapel murders. A wide cross-section of literature exists that serves to examine the case through a range of prisms, some with designs to prove a theory as to the Ripper's identity and others suggesting that Jack the Ripper never existed in the first place. It is not the intention of this article to endeavour to solve the Ripper murders; as such, the literature focused more on the political context of 1888 is of far more use than the publications focused on proving the case for any particular suspect. Andrew Cook's 2009 book *Jack the Ripper* is one of those which seeks to examine the political ramifications of the Ripper murders, albeit through the spectrum of the involvement of the popular press in mythologising the killer. Others like Fido's *The crimes, detection and death of Jack*



The Victorian

the Ripper (1993) are more focused on naming a killer, however are still useful given their specific focus on tracking the investigation rather than rehashing the somewhat repetitive conspiracy theories endemic to the field of Ripperology. It is rare to find a publication focused purely on analysing the dynamics that existed between investigators hunting the Ripper, however researchers like William Rubinstein have provided some examination of the police hunt for the culprit behind the Whitechapel murder (2000); that aside, it appears that the key difficulty in researching the Ripper investigation is avoiding literature that has fallen victim to the impulse towards attempting to solve rather than analyse the case.

Issues of bias and agenda-based assertions that plague Ripper-orientated literature are not as prevalent when expanding the scope of research to account for the contextual issues facing the police around the time of the Whitechapel murders. For example, Fellman (1990) provides a comprehensive account of the social circumstances driving the protest movement that would culminate in the Bloody Sunday riot that would impact significantly on Charles Warren's tenure as police commissioner; Marks (1990) further expanded upon the analysis of Bloody Sunday in 'History, the Nation and Empire: Sniping from the Periphery', an article which examines the place of social activism within British society and makes specific reference to the events surrounding the Bloody Sunday incident. Emsley (2003) explored the development of techniques used by the Metropolitan Police in his contribution to *Handbook of Policing*, also providing some reference to the Fenian threat and the way in which this highly-politicised issue underlined the friction between Special Branch and the rest of the police during Warren's tenure. There are also a limited range of publications specifically designed to contextualise the Ripper murders and ground them in the socio-political concerns of the era. Neil Bell attempts to put a firsthand spin on the issues impacting the working lives of police during their hunt for the Ripper in *Capturing Jack the Ripper: In the Boots of a Bobby in Victorian London* (2014); Gray (2011) takes a more academic approach to the issue of historical context in "Contextualising the Ripper murders: poverty, crime and unrest in the East End of London, 1888". These publications are highly useful in an evaluation of police action during the Ripper murders, given the fact that these crimes did not occur in a self-contained bubble and a range of issues undoubtedly impacted upon the decision-making of the constabulary.

Discussion

The Metropolitan Police in 1888: A dysfunctional organisation?

In analysing the response of London's Metropolitan Police to the Whitechapel murders, it is pertinent to note the relative infancy of organised law enforcement in the United Kingdom in 1888. The service was established under the *Metropolitan Police Act 1829* after rapid urban growth during the Industrial Revolution made the existing system of volunteer-based community policing unsustainable; prior to 1829 justice was dispensed by unpaid constables who were generally untrained in



The Victorian

investigative techniques (Shpayer-Makov 2011). Officers were primarily tasked with conducting routine patrols and maintaining public order in the early years of the Metropolitan Police Service, however the institution of the Detective Branch in 1842 demonstrated an increased focus on actively pursuing offenders and preventing further criminal activity (Shpayer-Makov 2011). Although the Detective Branch – later renamed as the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) – had been in existence for around 46 years by the time of the Ripper murders, it had remained a relatively small unit without access to many of the investigatory practices available to their modern counterparts; during his time as CID chief, Monro petitioned Warren to train more detectives and was denied as the commissioner believed that uniformed officers were equally competent of performing the same duties as Monro’s specialised unit (James 2013). Aside from the lack of trained CID investigators, the police force on the whole was undoubtedly undermanned at the time of the Ripper murders. Warren expressed his own concerns in his annual report to the Home Office in 1897, noting that “London of today, with its 5,476,447 inhabitants and 8773 police to protect them, is in far worse case than the London of 1849” (Warren 1888a).

An understrength police force was not the only problem facing the Metropolitan Police in the period prior to the Whitechapel murders. Disciplinary issues had resulted in 215 officers being arrested for being intoxicated whilst on duty in 1863, whereas strike action in 1872 occurred after the dismissal of a key labour organiser within the force (Boothman 1985); morale within the CID had reached an even lower point directly prior to the commencement of the Whitechapel murders after heightening tensions between Warren and Monro forced the well-respected CID leader to resign (Evans & Rumbelow 2006). Lack of adequate discipline and low morale within the force could be seen as a reason for the police’s failure to catch the Whitechapel murderer after the death of Mary Ann Nichols. Despite the Metropolitan Police’s emphasis on preventative policing through regular patrols, Constable John Neil failed to be on the scene to stop the first of the canonical Ripper murders; although his beat would theoretically allow him to pass through the crime scene at Buck’s Row every twelve minutes, he had not been down the alleyway for half an hour at the time Nichols’ body was discovered (Rumbelow 2004, p. 25). Police inaction could also be seen to have impacted upon the investigation of the second Ripper murder: witnesses told a coronial inquest that they notified a nearby police constable about the discovery of Annie Chapman’s body, however they were allegedly told to inform someone else about it as the officer was not allowed to leave his position due to organisational regulations (Rumbelow 2004, p. 45). Preserving these early Ripper crime scenes was of critical importance to the investigation and as such it could be seen that the dysfunctional nature of the 19th Century Metropolitan Police contributed to the organisations ultimate failure in catching the Whitechapel murderer.

Warren v Monro and the internal politics of the Metropolitan Police

More than any other single issue that impacted upon the hunt for Jack the Ripper, the feud between Police Commissioner Charles Warren and CID chief James Monro contributed to the Metropolitan Police’s inability to mount a thorough investigation in a range of direct and indirect ways. The men who would both lead the Metropolitan



The Victorian

Police in due course initially joined within two years of each other, however approached the practice of urban law enforcement in widely divergent ways. Monro joined the Metropolitan Police in 1884, leaving his role in the Indian Civil Service and being appointed as the inaugural Assistant Commissioner (Crime); in this role, Monro took control of the CID and was tasked with investigating and neutralising the Fenian bombing campaign taking place in London (Fido & Skinner 1999). His success in this position put him in close contact with Home Office bureaucrats and ultimately led to Monro being named as head of Section D – the ‘Special Branch’ political intelligence unit answerable only to the Home Secretary and outside the Metropolitan Police’s traditional chain of command (Allason 1983). Monro’s ability to operate independently of the commissioner proved a considerable source of conflict after the appointment of Charles Warren to the post in 1886; a decorated military leader, Warren firmly believed in centralised command and as such did not approve of Monro’s dual role as Assistant Commissioner and head of Section D (Warren 1888, 16 May). This conflict was exacerbated by Warren’s poor relationship with the Home Secretary, Henry Matthews, who strongly supported Monro and allowed him to retain control of Section D even after his resignation from the Metropolitan Police (Evans & Rumbelow 2006).

Monro resigned from his position as Assistant Commissioner (Crime) on 31 August, 1888 – the day of the first canonical Ripper murder. His resignation came after continued internal conflict with Warren arising from the commissioner’s refusal to appoint Monro’s friend Melville Macnaghten to the newly-created position as Chief Constable of the CID; both Warren and Monro threatened to resign over the issue and – despite his personal preference for Monro – the Home Secretary elected to accept the CID chief’s resignation (Stubley 2012). As a result of this internal politics, Monro was not directly involved in the investigation of any of the canonical Ripper murders. Operationally, this precluded a highly experienced investigator with intricate knowledge of the CID from assisting in the most significant murder investigation of the era; on a broader scale, the resignation of Monro caused a further slump in the morale of CID officers left leaderless as a result of an internal organisational conflict (Toughill 2012). It is inaccurate and simplistic to suggest that Monro’s presence as an investigator would have automatically led to the Whitechapel murderer being apprehended; however, it is clear that the prolonged dispute between Warren and Monro had been recast as an institutional struggle between uniformed officers and the CID (Evans & Rumbelow 2006). Given their loyalty to Monro, CID officers did not display the expected level of support for Police Commissioner Warren throughout the investigation and made his position precarious to the point that he would also be forced to resign before the final Ripper victim had been discovered.

Robert Anderson: The case of the missing CID chief

Monro’s resignation was not the sole cause of dysfunction within the CID at the time of the Ripper murders, with the absence of his successor in the role contributing greatly to a lack of leadership during a critical period of the investigation. Although it was Warren’s refusal to support the appointment of his ally that precipitated the CID



The Victorian

chief's resignation, Monro was replaced in the role of Assistant Commissioner (Crime) by his former Home Office colleague Dr Robert Anderson. A Dublin-born lawyer, Anderson came to London as part of the Home Office's attempts to infiltrate and combat the Fenian threat in 1876; in this position, Anderson worked closely with Monro's Section D and as a result his appointment to the now-vacant CID position was a somewhat unusual choice (Porter 1987). Anderson's first weeks in his new role at the Metropolitan Police coincided with the commencement of the canonical Whitechapel murders, however this did not prevent him from taking a month's leave from the position effective immediately. Anderson was suffering from exhaustion after a prolonged period without a holiday and – on doctor's advice – left for Switzerland on 8 September, 1888; his absence began on the same day that the second Ripper victim was discovered, with Anderson not returning to his post until summoned by the Home Secretary on the day after the 'double event' on 30 September (Evans & Skinner 2013). Anderson's absence during a considerable period of the Ripper investigation meant that he was forced to essentially reinvestigate the murders upon his return. This caused further delay to the progress of the case and restricted the police's ability to effectively hunt the killer (Begg 2013).

The most immediate effect of Anderson's return was in his approach to the sex worker community from which the killer appeared to be selecting his victims. In his memoir, Anderson wrote that he returned to find that measures in place to prevent further attacks were "wholly indefensible and scandalous"; he directed that police "receive orders to arrest every known 'street woman' found on the prowl after midnight, or else let us warn them that the Police will not protect them" (Anderson 1910, p. 136). Given the significant amount of women working as prostitutes in Whitechapel in 1888, Anderson's directive that they were all arrested for their own protection was fundamentally not viable; that being said, it is indicative of a proactive response to the Ripper murders that had been lacking in his absence. In the month between Monro's resignation and Anderson's return from continental Europe, four women had been killed by a suspected serial killer and the investigation had been left without authoritative leadership. Not only was the CID effectively operating without direction or oversight, the absence of a CID commander negatively impacted upon Warren's career as commissioner. Already in a precarious political position after his conflict with Monro, he was essentially forced to take personal responsibility for the Ripper investigation in the absence of a deputy to act as a buffer between the executive office and the force itself. Anderson's absence, therefore, played a considerable role in forcing Warren to make unpopular and ineffective decisions during the hunt for the Ripper; several of these poor decisions would ultimately lead to his resignation on the night prior to the final canonical murder.

Special Branch and the Irish threat: Monro's continued involvement in police affairs

Although he had resigned from his role as head of the CID, Monro continued to play an important role throughout the Ripper investigation in lieu of his absent replacement. Monro maintained control of Section D – the 'Special Branch' – after leaving the Metropolitan Police; in addition, the Home Secretary appointed him to a



The Victorian

newly-created position based out of the Home Office with the title ‘Head of Detectives’ (Evans & Rumbelow 2006). This position did not exist within the hierarchy of the Metropolitan Police, however with Matthews’ approval Monro continued to be actively involved in the CID’s investigation in the Whitechapel murders. Official support for Monro is clearly demonstrated in a memorandum sent by Matthews to his private secretary on 22 September, 1888 (Ruggles-Brise 1938, p. 72); in this note, Matthews directed her to “stimulate the police about the Whitechapel murders. *Absente* Anderson, Monro might be willing to give a hint to the CID people if needful.” It is apparent that Anderson’s leave of absence provided Monro and Matthews with a prime opportunity to continue exerting over the CID during this period and to further undermine the authority of Commissioner Warren. It undoubtedly complicated the relationship between the commissioner’s office and the CID particularly given the lack of clarity as to where Monro now stood within the chain of command. By retaining Monro in a specialised consulting role, the Home Office contributed to the existing division within the Metropolitan Police at exactly the time that it should have been advocating for collaboration to ensure that the Ripper investigation was successful.

Monro’s position as head of Section D also provided cause for him to become involved in the Ripper case, with the extent to which Special Branch investigated the Whitechapel murders unclear until relatively recently. As a specialised unit dedicated to combatting the threat of Irish nationalism Monro’s squad were heavily involved in the attempted assassination of Arthur Balfour, chief secretary of the Irish Office; this attempt was acknowledged in a letter written by Queen Victoria on 11 August, 1888, which stated that “the Government had had notice from America of a plot to kill Mr. Balfour, which is terrible, and he has to be well watched” (Buckle 1888, p. 435). Monro – who would have been placed in charge of Balfour’s security – confirmed the existence of this threat in his unpublished personal memoirs, writing that “the Fenians ... resolved to inaugurate a system of assassination of eminent persons, Mr Balfour especially” and naming the chosen assassin as an individual previously involved in the Phoenix Park murders (Jakubowski 2008).

Browne noted the connection between the Balfour plot and the Ripper investigations, suggesting that Monro’s colleague Melville Macnaghten appeared to “identify the Ripper with the leader of a plot to assassinate Mr. Balfour at the Irish Office” (1956, p. 208). The veracity of this claim has been questioned given that it does not correlate with any of Macnaghten’s published theories on the case, however it is unquestionable that Special Branch had taken a considerable interest in the Ripper investigation despite the existence of little apparent connection between those crimes in their political intelligence brief. Clutterbuck (2002), a researcher who had personal access to Special Branch files, claimed that registers from the period showed that the squad had “more than a passing interest” in the Ripper murders; despite petitions for these documents to be released for further study, Special Branch has continued to deny access to these registers under the condition that doing so would breach departmental protocol regarding revealing the identity of sources (Barrett 2011). It is unlikely that Monro would have shared the information collated by Special Branch



The Victorian

with the general constabulary for exactly these reasons, once again frustrating the ability of investigators to gather a complete brief of evidence that may have led to a more successful pursuit of the Whitechapel murderer.

Warren and the failure to preserve evidence

Crime scene investigation was an unrefined discipline at the time of the Ripper murders, however several command decisions made by Charles Warren undoubtedly contributed to the police's failure to catch the Whitechapel murderer. The most notorious of these actions was his destruction of evidence in the case of the Goulston Street graffito. After the 'double event' of 30 September, 1888, police attempted to trace to movements of the Ripper after his murder of Catherine Eddowes in Mitre Square; in doing so, Constable Alfred Long discovered a torn and bloodstained piece of apron in the doorframe of a tenement block on Goulston Street in Whitechapel. This piece of apron was later confirmed to have been cut from that worn by Eddowes, most likely during the course of her mutilation (Alison & Ogan 2013). Found above the apron was several lines of graffiti written in white chalk and attributed to Eddowes' killer; the exact wording of the graffiti has been a point of contention, however it is generally accepted to have been some variation of "The Juwes (sic) are the men that will not be blamed for nothing" (Rubinstein 2000). Although the meaning of this text is unclear, there already existed a considerable anti-Semitic sentiment surrounding the Ripper investigation. Shortly after the body of Annie Chapman was discovered, crowds had gathered claiming that the killer must have been Jewish as "no Englishman could have perpetrated such a horrible crime"; police had also arrested and released a local Jewish bootmaker named John Pizer, further stirring anti-Semitic feeling within Whitechapel (Rumbelow 2004, p. 37).

Given that the graffiti was relatively recent, and was found directly above evidence taken from the scene of a Ripper murder, it was reasonable for police to infer that it may have been left as a message by the Whitechapel murderer. As the Ripper was suspected of having communicated with police and the media with missives like the Dear Boss letter and the Saucy Jack postcard, Goulston Street graffiti could have proven to be highly useful as a verifiable example of his writing style and give clues as to his background (Evans & Skinner 2013). Despite objections from their City police counterparts, Warren and attending Superintendent Thomas Arnold agreed that the graffiti should be removed as soon as possible in order to avoid a potential riot in the East End. City detective Daniel Halse had waited at the scene until it was light enough to take a photograph of the graffiti, however Warren "considered it desirable to obliterate the writing at once" and – as Goulston Street was within Metropolitan Police jurisdiction – this potentially vital piece of evidence was destroyed before any pictures could be taken (Warren 1888b). Warren's decision to remove the graffiti was in direct opposition to the basic tenets of any police investigation. Without a photograph of the Goulston Street message, it was impossible to compare the handwriting to that of any of the letters supposedly received by the Ripper; it also caused dissension between attending officers from the City and Metropolitan Police, who had slightly differing versions of the graffiti's text copied into their logbooks



The Victorian

(Marriott 2005, pp. 150-151). Warren's fear of increasing anti-Semitic sentiment was undoubtedly valid, however the decision to destroy evidence in an attempt undoubtedly frustrated the attempts of investigators to gather evidence that may identify a suspect.

Goulston Street was not the only occasion in which Warren's leadership prevented investigators from taking decisive action in hunting the Whitechapel murderer. Throughout the Ripper investigation, the commissioner had advocated for the use of bloodhounds as a possible means to track the killer through the streets of Whitechapel; upon the discovery of Mary Kelly's body at her Miller's Court lodgings around 10:45am on 9 November, lead investigator Frederick Abberline ordered the scene to be closed until the bloodhounds could be summoned (Fido 1993). A telegram was sent to Warren notifying him of the situation, and police at the scene maintained an exclusion zone around the lodgings to prevent potential contamination. It was not known at the time that Warren had resigned his position the evening prior to the discovery of Kelly's body and – as a result – the scene remained undisturbed for almost three hours before City police finally broke down the door at 1:30pm (Rumbelow 2004).

The decision to wait for the commissioner's response before entering the Kelly scene was not purely the instinct of Abberline: Warren had specifically ordered that no one was to enter the scene if another murder occurred that might have been linked to the Ripper (Trow 2012). Regardless of his resignation, this order inevitably hindered the investigation into Kelly's murder as it prevented the timely documentation of a scene that was rapidly deteriorating. Although the victim was dead long before police arrived on the scene, each moment that officers wasted waiting for the commissioner allowed the perpetrator's trail to grow colder. On entering the Kelly scene police discovered that the Ripper had burned a range of items in the fireplace throughout the murder; as the ashes of the fire were still warm, the delay in entering Kelly's lodgings may have led to the further destruction of evidence that may have shed light on the killer's motives or identity (Rumbelow 2004). In this sense it was Warren's inaction that led to the destruction of evidence, further demonstrating the detrimental impact of his leadership on the ability of police to carry out a thorough investigation.

Charles Warren and the problem of public relations

Warren's feud with Monro had reached some form of conclusion prior to the commencement of the Ripper murders, however his poor relationship with the press continued to have an impact on public faith in his ability to handle the investigation. Warren's role in the Bloody Sunday riot of 1887 had undoubtedly tarnished his reputation throughout a broad cross-section of London society; his initial failure to clear Trafalgar Square of squatters and socialist protestors had on one hand provoked West End shopkeepers to make threats that they would hire their own gangs for protection, while his use of almost 5000 officers to clear the area on 13 November drew significant criticism in the media (Fellman 1990). Pertinently to the Ripper investigation, the events of Bloody Sunday were widely perceived as a manifestation



The Victorian

between the establishment and the working classes typically found in the impoverished East End. It was Warren's view that the visible presence of uniformed officers would serve to demonstrate that the police were actively pursuing the Whitechapel murderer and soothe community tensions, however this belief was based in the false apprehension that the working classes would respect and trust Warren's officers. In a sense, the elevated presence of uniformed officers likely had the opposite effect to that which Warren intended: instead of assisting in the investigation, this technique reinforced the belief that police were being used as a tool of the establishment to oppress and control the working classes as had occurred the previous year at Trafalgar Square (Gidley 2000).

Warren's attempt to control the public perception of the Ripper investigation and the Metropolitan Police ultimately proved to be the trigger that forced his resignation as commissioner on 8 November, 1888. In response to the considerable criticism levelled against the Metropolitan Police in the popular press, Warren composed an article for the November edition of *Murray's Magazine* in which he critically analysed the administration of the force and made reference to political interference. Matthews noted in a 10 November letter to Queen Victoria that Warren's unsanctioned article directly contravened an 1879 regulation prohibiting civil servants from writing about their own department (Buckle 1888, p. 448). Aside from Warren's contravention of Home Office protocol, his article in *Murray's Magazine* made his position even more untenable by attracting even more rancour within the mainstream media. An editorial in the 9 November edition of *The Star* newspaper criticised Warren, calling the article in *Murray's Magazine* "maniacal" and describing him as "not only lawless but mutinous". Indeed, it is clear that even in the aftermath of the Ripper murders, Warren's position in the press was still largely dominated by his handling of the Bloody Sunday riot the year before. On 14 November, the *Evening News* published a summary of parliamentary discussions regarding Warren's resignation in which Liberal MP Robert Cunninghame Graham made reference to Bloody Sunday in claiming that the former commissioner was a scapegoat for the Home Office who had "not scrupled to override the Constitution, and to treat British citizens half a mile from the House as if they were rebels in the South Seas." It is clear that the public relations disaster of the Bloody Sunday riot had lasting consequences for Warren, influencing the attitude of the press towards his actions as commissioner and undermining his management of the Ripper investigation.

Conclusion

The Whitechapel murders of 1888 proved to be a significant test for the Metropolitan Police and came at a time of significant upheaval impacting upon their ability to conduct a thorough and efficient investigation. Although the organisation had existed for almost sixty years at the time of the Ripper murders, the Metropolitan Police continued to struggle with a myriad of issues associated with officer discipline and investigatory procedure. It was also subject to the undue influence on the part of the Home Office, particularly given the tenuous set of circumstances surrounding the



The Victorian

conflict between Charles Warren and James Monro. Support given to Monro in his efforts to maintain the independence of the CID essentially served to undermine the position of the police commissioner; the subsequent resignation of the CID chief and the absence of his replacement culminated in an investigation that was effectively leaderless during a crucial period. The fault cannot be squarely levelled at Monro and his Home Office supporters, however; whilst his resignation set the tone for a lack of cooperation within the Metropolitan Police, he was not directly involved in the investigation and should not bear the brunt of criticism over the organisation's handling of the case. The lack of leadership within the CID shifted a considerable amount of responsibility onto the commissioner, with Warren providing to be somewhat ineffective and actively contributing to the destruction of evidence.

It is impossible to pinpoint a single issue that led to the police's failure to catch Jack the Ripper. There was a wide array of suspected culprits and a lack of clarity about what constituted a Ripper killing in the period before Macnaghten established the canonical five victims. These aspects considered, it is fair to say that the investigation into the Whitechapel murders was hindered by a series of institutional failures within the Metropolitan Police. These issues existed prior to the Ripper investigation and were fuelled by the increasingly politicised nature of the police hierarchy; at a time when the threat of political violence had reached a crescendo, the Home Office was particularly active in ensuring that the opinions of high-ranking officers were in line with those of the government. To a large degree and despite the sustained interest in the case in the 128 years since the Whitechapel murders occurred, the crimes of Jack the Ripper were not the most important issue facing the Metropolitan Police in 1888; instead, the organisation was ravaged by internal conflict that would determine important issues like the role of the force and the relative autonomy from government. It was these concerns that distracted the Metropolitan Police during a critical investigation and undoubtedly contributed to their failure to identify the Ripper and bring a serial murderer to justice.

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