



Jack the Ripper: The Simple Truth

Bruce Paley

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Recently declared by the editor of The Journal of the Whitechapel Society to be the best Jack the Ripper book ever written, former Private Investigator Bruce Paley spent 15 years painstakingly researching his book. He was the first to declare Joseph Barnett to be the Ripper, and the first to apply modern detection methods to the case. The book has also been widely praised for its "extraordinarily vivid picture of late 19th century London" (Daily Mail). As The Journal of the Whitechapel Society explained: "Paley really does understand the East End A.D. 1888, his words map out its DNA, his sentences tap out the arithmetic of existence. For one to understand the Whitechapel murders, one must understand the times. Nowhere can one do this better than in the chapters Paley devotes to this historical sociology...This is history with a poetical syncopation." As Colin Wilson said in his foreword to the book: "If I had to recommend a single book on Jack the Ripper to someone who knew nothing about the subject, I would unhesitatingly choose this one." To which the Journal of the Whitechapel Society adds: "The list starts with 'Bruce' and ends with 'Paley'." Or, as Val Hennessy said in the Daily Mail: "Bruce Paley's excellent book convinces me, for one, that The Ripper has at last been nailed."

Jack the Ripper: The Simple Truth Details

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KJ says

Boy oh boy, does somebody need to run this one past a decent proofreader! In my opinion this book stands roughly halfway between the lunacy of Knight and Cornwell on the one hand and the workmanlike thoroughness of Rumbelow and Sugden on the other. In other words, Mr. Paley has a theory and he intends to bend some of the evidence to make his case when he feels it necessary.

To be completely fair, Paley's suspicions do appear to have some basis in reality, but I nearly gave up with this one halfway through because of the appalling layout. Words run into each other, "I" is frequently substituted by "1" and, occasionally, sentences were left dangling.

This manuscript needs a damn good spring clean, because its sloppiness lets its author down badly.

Ari says

This book deserves 3 stars for the historical background the author provides. It is very descriptive, delving into many of the socioeconomic factors that made up Victorian life in the time of the Ripper. This book, however, presents a new suspect for Jack the Ripper and discusses it as if it were fact throughout the whole book. The "evidence" he provides is circumstantial and the motive was, in my opinion, somewhat preposterous considering the nature of the murders. As he added more and more "evidence," the more skeptical I became. Through my skepticism, the well researched historical narrative kept me hanging on hoping that a clincher would appear and the author's theory would all of a sudden make profound sense. This didn't happen.

Andrew says

Paley's descriptions of the East End are superb, and because he's gone to the trouble of quoting from lesser-used sources his narrative never feels like a rehash of other Ripper books. In short, however many Ripper books you've read, you'll get something out of this.

Where it slightly falls down is in the laying-out of his theory. From the get-go Paley names Joseph Barnett as the Ripper and the case he presents is convincing enough: Barnett certainly has the opportunity and he fits a sort of serial killer profile. I'm not sure if his motive is entirely consistent with the crimes themselves, though, and neither does Paley unearth anything in Barnett's background to suggest he might have had the personality for the dreadful butchery of the Ripper. Most disappointing is that Paley doesn't attempt to demonstrate why Barnett is a better candidate than other Ripper suspects; in fact, he doesn't even *mention* any other Ripper suspects. Is Barnett a more likely Ripper than Druiitt? Gull? Pedachenko? Maybrick? Actually, he is, but you'll need to read other Ripper books to know that, I'm afraid. That said, this is still one of the better Ripper books out there and I would have no hesitation in recommending it.

Frankie says

Paley did some excellent research about conditions in the East End for his book, and found very interesting information on Joseph Barnett. Where it falls down is his absolute conviction that the murderer absolutely had to be Barnett. It's certainly possible, but I've never been able to get behind writers who insist that their solution is the only one.

It is quite interesting that Barnett lost his steady job right before the killings, as well as the information on the key to Mary Kelly's room. I would have liked it much better if Paley had written more as "this is what I think" rather than "this absolutely has to be what happened."

Marissa says

I'm not a big true crime reader but every now and then I become obsessed with criminal cases... I blame my father who was a big fan of Lizzie Borden and heartily believed she didn't do it! Anyway, I've been super into Jack the Ripper lately and so I did some digging and found this this book is one of the most highly acclaimed Ripper novels. It wasn't the best book I've ever read, I wasn't entirely blown away but I think this has to do more with my inexperience in the genre. I think once I get into other Ripper novels, I will be able to say I appreciate this one more.

That being said, I agree that it is well-written, and the author's theory is extraordinarily sound. I'm a true believe of Joseph Barnett being the Ripper but, then again, I haven't read any other full-length books that argue otherwise.

This book is the perfect length and contains a helpful appendix. I also love that the author has a few chapters dedicated solely to setting the scene. He does a socioeconomic analysis of the East End and reveals the daily life of East Enders. He also describes well the fantastical events that the Ripper inspired and the environment that the murders created.

I recommend this book to Ripper fans and lovers of true crime. It's also appropriate for anyone looking for a meaty but quick read.

steven burns says

A must read.

S must read very informative and to the point this could be a definitive work, it brings London of 1888 to life, the alumna the people the way that the poor made a living.

TAMARA WIDLAKE says

Gives a new perspective on who done it

Not bad the case seems pretty good for who it was although another Ripper book also made a good case for someone else. I have also heard that a female may have assisted the killer although unknowingly
Has any one had this guys DNA tested it might give us more leads

John Dow says

Three stars due to the vivid portrayal of life in Whitechapel in the 19th Century. I think we should all be grateful that Mr Paley is a writer and not a judge. The 'evidence' presented here ranges from the circumstantial to the downright ridiculous and each 'step' in his reasoning is founded on little more than speculation and surmise.

An interesting read, but not exactly enlightening.

Joanie says

I have not read a lot of literature on Jack the Ripper, but Paley does make a compelling case as to the potential identity of Jack the Ripper. It is well researched and raises some very valid points, however at time Paley might be accused of trying too hard to make the puzzle pieces fit together. My one other criticism would be that he later speaks with such certainty as though it is a fact that Joseph Barnett was the killer, when in reality this has not been proven. It is still a great read though, and aside from the compelling case against Joseph Barnett as the infamous Jack the Ripper, Paley does a tremendous job of painting a vivid picture of the White Chapel area in late nineteenth century London.

Victoria Pryor says

Amazing book.

This book is well written. Easy to read. Points clearly made with great evidence. Possibly the best "Jack the Ripper book".

Erika says

I don't remember how I stumbled across this one. It may have been a Kindle recommendation. Regardless, I was intrigued by the recommendations from "Ripperologists" about the detail and detection work, so I picked it up.

Author Bruce Paley offers his solution at the beginning, that the Ripper was Joseph Barnett, the estranged common-law husband of the Ripper's final victim, Mary Jane Kelly.

He builds a good case, using relevant facts. Paley has dug into some detail about Barnett's life and the investigation into the Whitechapel murders. Even so, I found myself channeling my inner lawyer as I read. "Assumes facts not in evidence!"

Paley is usually clear when he has no proof of his claims, and uses lots of qualifying words like "must have been," "should have" and "probably." That doesn't make his assumptions facts.

I'm no expert in the crimes by any means. I came away from the book with a suspect I hadn't considered before (not that I spend a lot of time considering suspects in this case). But I'm not convinced.

By the way, I read the Kindle version. It looked like it was badly scraped from a pdf file. Simply awful errors and erroneous text.

I Sawkins says

Easy five stars

A very well written and in-depth informative book on Jack the Ripper. I have no doubt now thanks to Mr Paleys book that I can at last believe someone has got to grips with Jacks identity. I thoroughly recommend this book for anyone who like me has had a curious interest into who Jack the Ripper was, this book I think will leave you in no doubt.

Stephen McQuiggan says

Out of the dark, dank streets of late 19th Century Whitechapel stalks another candidate to don Jack's bloody cape. Dear Boss, I do love these theories. Paley reconstructs Whitechapel in a manner that gives the impression he was actually there. He's done an awful lot of background research for the period (which many Ripperologists eschew) and it shows. His theory is built around the shy, stammering Joseph Barnett, though at times his conjecture seems laboured as if he is actually trying to convince himself. His descriptions of the murders themselves (esp Mary Kelly's), however is top notch, and he argues well and passionately against other, more popular, suspects. A worthy addition to the ever expanding library of Ripper whodunnits.

Mary Mehl says

MEH!

While I don't doubt that the author truly believes his own theory of Jack The Ripper's identity (which he backs up with addenda and footnotes that comprise more than 25% of the book) I found it just not credible. The motive which the author ascribes to his candidate makes no sense at all and does not in the least account for the savagery of the Ripper's attacks. The book is, however, well-written and grammatical, a rare quality these days.

Doug DePew says

Bruce Paley has written a great piece of Ripper literature. "Jack the Ripper: The Simple Truth" is meticulously researched, well written, and quite entertaining. It paints a picture of Whitechapel and East London that made it quite real to me. He lays out a convincing case against Joe Barnett. Paley's thesis was

quite original when he first introduced it. There is very little actual evidence against Barnett, but Paley uses modern methodology to point right at the person who would be one of the first suspects today. The boyfriend of one of the victims.

The Kindle version does have some formatting problems, but I didn't find any that interfered with the flow of the book. I'm reviewing the book, and I found it very well done. It's well worth a read to anyone interested in Ripperology, Victorian London, true crime, or serial killers. I liked this book very much and could barely put it down. I can't say if this is the best Ripper book out there, but I can say that I enjoyed it a lot.

I also found the meticulous endnotes and research very useful for further study.
