

What do I need to know?

- What was it like to live in Whitechapel?
- Why was Whitechapel difficult to police?
- What were the lives of women like in the 1800s?



Why was Whitechapel difficult to police?

• Witness Statements

The police got lots of witness statements at the time from people around Whitechapel, however many of these statements were contradictory or untrustworthy and therefore disregarded.

• Lack of forensic science and evidence

The absence of scientific forensic techniques hampered investigations. There was no DNA analysis, fingerprinting or advanced forensic analysis. The police needed to rely on eyewitness accounts, which were generally unreliable.

• Failure of Co-operation

Multiple police forces would work together on crimes; however, this did not always lead to successful outcomes. It would lead to co-ordination issues and conflicts of jurisdiction. IT would also lead to rivalry between police departments.

• Public

Public confidence within the police force was low at the time. People would usually only come forward if a reward was offered. Many saw the police as incompetent and corrupt.

What was it like to live in Whitechapel in the 1800s?

• Pollution and sewage

The smoke and stinking gas fumes from the coal created smog, which was so thick you could not see. In Whitechapel, sanitation was very poor. There was little healthy drinking water and Sewers ran into the streets.

• Overcrowded housing and lodging housing

The majority of housing was in overcrowded slum areas known for dirt, disease and crime. There could be up to 30 people in one apartment, sharing beds so tightly it was difficult to move about. Accommodation was also offered in lodging houses that offered little more than a bed in dirty conditions. Some lodging houses had three eight-hour sleeping shifts a day, so beds could be used by the maximum number of people.

• Jobs

Sweatshops were small, cramped and dusty, with little natural light. Hours were long (some sweatshop workers worked 20 hours a day and slept onsite) and wages were low.

• Workhouses

Workhouses offered food and shelter to those too poor to survive in the general community. 'Inmates' included the old, sick, disabled, orphans and unmarried mothers.

Key vocabulary

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| Smog | A combination of smoke and fog often known as a 'peasouper' because of its greenish colour |
| Unemployment | When a person does not have a job |
| Domestic Service | A person who works in their employer's home. Jobs include cooking, cleaning and/or doing laundry. |
| Immigrant | A person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country |

What were the lives of Women like in the 1800s?

At home

- Victorians believed that a woman's role in life was as a wife and a mother. As a wife, her duty was to obey her husband and do everything she could to make his life as easy as possible. In fact, their children belonged to him. If the parents separated, the children stayed with him. Until 1870, if a woman had a job and earned money, her husband could take her wages.

In society

- Before 1870, most working-class girls did not go to school. In 1880 it was made compulsory for all children between the ages of five and ten to attend. By 1900, 97% of all children could read and write.
- All the Members of Parliament were men, only men could vote in elections and men had all the important jobs.
- Before 1857 wives could not divorce husbands even if they were violent or committed adultery.

Y8 - Knowledge Organiser -The Historic Environment of Whitechapel

What do I need to know?

- Who were the 5?
- Why did evidence make it difficult to catch a killer?
- What were the problems with the police investigation into the murder?

Mary Ann Nichols murdered Friday 31st August 1888

Annie Chapman murdered Saturday 8th September 1888

Elizabeth Stride was murdered in the early morning hours of Sunday 30th September 1888

Catherine Eddowes was murdered in the early morning hours of Sunday 30th September 1888

Mary Jane Kelly was murdered on Friday 9th November 1888



Why does evidence make it difficult to catch a killer?

Witness statements

- The witness statements were varied between people. Usually, the police would not be able to create an accurate description of murderers as people gave different descriptions. This was due to the conditions around Whitechapel, it was very smoggy and therefore hard to see. Also, as many people were drunk, they also gave incoherent witness statements.



Evidence

- In the late 1880s, the police had no scientific methods of collecting evidence. It was still thought that that you could see the killer in the victims' eyes! Also, sometimes murderers sometimes tried to mess with the police with one murderer sending letters to the police and local papers to tease the police and confuse the investigation.



What were the problems with police investigations at the time?

Media involvement

- Murder usually sparked a lot of public interest, and newspapers and magazines published lots of articles and cartoons on the topic. This caused an issue because lots of the information is not true and there is no proof of what they are saying such as the media reporting that many murderers were Jewish.

Co-operation in the police

- Co-operation within different police units was not always smooth. Police units would be very territorial over their areas they were policing. Indeed, the lack of cooperation resulted in evidence being damaged. It is argued after one murder some officers ordered graffiti to be washed off: 'The Jews are the men that will not be blamed for nothing'. Apparently, they feared this would cause a riot against Jewish people, but others think he wanted to stop a different police force from finding the killer as this fell in their boundaries.

Police technique

- The police had almost no scientific methods to help them in their investigations. It would be almost 12 years or so before fingerprinting was used to detect criminals. DNA evidence only began to be used in the later part of the 20th century. There was also no technology to help solve crimes such as CCTV.

The Whitechapel Vigilance Committee

- A group of local people are getting annoyed that the police have not caught the killer they have formed their own group, The Whitechapel Vigilance Committee. They patrolled the streets to look for the killer and protected the community. They also hired two private detectives to investigate the case.

Key vocabulary

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| Modus Operandi | A particular way or method of doing something. |
| Evidence | Clues that can help the police to catch criminals |
| Witness | A person who sees a crime taking place. |