

= William Henry Bury =

William Henry Bury (25 May 1859 ? 24 April 1889) was suspected of being the notorious serial killer " Jack the Ripper " . He was hanged for the murder of his wife Ellen in 1889 , and was the last person executed in Dundee , Scotland .

Bury was orphaned at an early age and was educated at a charitable school in the English Midlands . After a few years in regular employment as a clerk , he fell into financial difficulty , was dismissed for theft , and became a street peddler . In 1887 , he moved to London , where he married probable prostitute Ellen Elliot . During their stormy marriage , which lasted just over a year , they faced increasing financial hardship . In January 1889 , they moved to Dundee . The following month , he strangled his wife with a rope , stabbed her dead body with a penknife , and hid the corpse in a box in their room . A few days later , he presented himself to the local police and was arrested for her murder . Tried and convicted , he was sentenced to death by hanging . Shortly before his execution , he confessed to the crime . Although Bury 's guilt was not in doubt , Dundee had a history of opposition to the death penalty and The Dundee Courier printed an editorial the day after his execution decrying the " judicial butcheries " of capital punishment .

Bury killed his wife shortly after the height of the London Whitechapel murders , which were attributed to the unidentified serial killer " Jack the Ripper " . Bury 's previous abode near Whitechapel and similarities between the Ripper 's crimes and Bury 's led the press and executioner James Berry to suggest that Bury was the Ripper . Bury protested his innocence in the Ripper crimes , and the police discounted him as a suspect . Later authors have built on the earlier accusations , but the idea that Bury was the Ripper is not widely accepted .

= = Childhood and youth = =

William Bury was born in Stourbridge , Worcestershire , the youngest of four children of Henry Bury and his wife Mary Jane (née Henley) . He was orphaned in infancy . His father , who worked for a local fishmonger called Joscelyne , died in a horse and cart accident in Halesowen on 10 April 1860 . While on an incline , he fell beneath the wheels of his fish cart and was killed when the horse bolted and pulled the cart over his prone body . William 's mother may have been suffering from post @-@ natal depression at the time of her husband 's death and was committed to the Worcester County Pauper and Lunatic Asylum on 7 May 1860 suffering from melancholia . She remained there until her death aged 33 on 30 March 1864 .

William 's eldest sibling , Elizabeth Ann , died aged seven during an epileptic fit on 7 September 1859 , which may have contributed to Mary Jane 's depression . The other two children , Joseph Henry and Mary Jane , both died before 1889 . William was raised initially in Dudley by his maternal uncle , Edward Henley , and by 1871 he was enrolled at the Blue Coat charity school in Stourbridge .

At the age of sixteen , he found work as a factor 's clerk in a warehouse at Horseley Fields , Wolverhampton , until the early 1880s when he left the warehouse after failing to repay a loan . He then worked for a lock manufacturer called Osborne in Lord Street , Wolverhampton , until he was dismissed for theft in either 1884 or 1885 . For the next few years , his whereabouts are not known for certain , but he appears to have lived an unsettled life in the English Midlands and Yorkshire . In 1887 , he was making a living as a hawker , selling small items such as lead pencils and key rings on the streets of Snow Hill , Birmingham .

= = London = =

In October 1887 , Bury arrived in Bow , London , and found work selling sawdust for James Martin , who appears to have run a brothel at 80 Quickett Street , Bow . Initially , Bury lived in the stable , but later moved into the house . There , he met Ellen Elliot , who was employed by Martin as a servant and probably a prostitute .

Ellen was born on 24 October 1856 in Walworth , London , at the Bricklayer 's Arms public house

run by her father , George Elliot . In adult life , she worked as a needlewoman and in a jute processing factory . In 1883 , she had an illegitimate daughter , also called Ellen , who died in Poplar workhouse in December 1885 . Within a year of the death of her daughter , she began working for Martin . In March 1888 , Ellen and William left Martin 's employ and moved to a furnished room at 3 Swaton Road , Bow , where they lived together until their marriage on Easter Monday , 2 April 1888 , at Bromley Parish Church . Martin later said he had dismissed William because of unpaid debts .

Martin and the landlady at 3 Swaton Road , Elizabeth Haynes , described Bury as a violent drunk . On 7 April 1888 , Haynes caught Bury kneeling on his bride of five days threatening to cut her throat with a knife . Haynes subsequently evicted them , and Ellen sold one of six £ 100 shares in a railway company that she had inherited from a maiden aunt , Margaret Barren , to pay William 's debt to Martin . William was re @-@ employed by Martin , and the couple moved to 11 Blackthorn Street , close to Swaton Road . According to Martin , William was then suffering from venereal disease . In June , Ellen sold the remaining shares , and in August they moved to 3 Spanby Road , adjacent to where William stabled his horse . With the money from the shares , the couple had a week 's holiday in Wolverhampton with a drinking friend of William 's and Ellen bought new jewellery . William continued to assault his wife throughout the latter half of 1888 . By the first week of December , Ellen 's windfall was nearly spent , and William sold his horse and cart . In January the following year , he told his landlord at 3 Spanby Road that he was thinking of emigrating to Brisbane , Australia , and asked him to make two wooden crates for the journey . Instead , William and Ellen moved to Dundee in Scotland . Ellen was not keen to go and only did so after William lied that he had obtained a position in a jute factory there .

= = Dundee = =

The Burys travelled north as second @-@ class passengers on the steamer Cambria . They arrived at Dundee on the evening of 20 January 1889 , and the following morning they rented a room above a bar at 43 Union Street . The Burys stayed for only eight days before they moved on 29 January to a squat at 113 Prince 's Street , a basement flat under a shop . William had obtained the key under false pretences by telling the letting agents that he was a viewer interested in renting the property . Meanwhile , Ellen found a job as a cleaner at a local mill , but she quit after a day . William continued to drink heavily , often with a decorator called David Walker , who was re @-@ painting the public house frequented by William .

On Monday 4 February , William bought some rope at the local grocer 's shop , and spent the rest of the day observing cases at the Sheriff Court from the public gallery . He was later reported to have listened attentively to the proceedings . On 7 February , he attended the court sessions again . On 10 February , he visited his acquaintance , Walker , who lent him a newspaper that featured a woman 's suicide by hanging . Walker asked Bury to look up any news of Jack the Ripper , at which Bury threw down the newspaper with a fright . That evening , he walked into the Dundee Central Police Station on Bell Street and reported his wife 's suicide to Lieutenant James Parr . He said they had been drinking heavily the night before her death , and he had woken in the morning to find his wife 's body on the floor with a rope around her neck . Bury had not summoned a doctor , but had instead cut the body and concealed it in one of the packing cases brought from London . Bury told Parr that his actions were now preying on his mind , and he was afraid that he would be arrested and accused of being Jack the Ripper .

Parr took Bury upstairs to see Lieutenant David Lamb , the head of the detective department . Parr told Lamb , " This man has a wonderful story to tell you . " Bury retold his story to Lamb , but omitted the reference to Jack the Ripper , and added that he had stabbed his wife 's body once . Bury was searched , and a small knife , bankbook and his house key were confiscated pending inquiries . Lamb and Detective Constable Peter Campbell proceeded to the Burys ' dingy flat , where they discovered the mutilated remains of Ellen stuffed into the wooden box Bury had commissioned in London .

= = Investigation = =

Lamb returned to the police station and charged William with Ellen 's murder . Ellen 's jewellery , found in William 's pockets , was confiscated . A preliminary search of the premises revealed chalk graffiti on the rear door of the flat , which read " Jack Ripper [sic] is at the back of this door " , and on the stairwell leading up from the rear of the property , which read " Jack Ripper is in this seller [sic] " . The press and the police thought they had been written by a local boy before the tragedy , but the writer was never identified . A more extensive search the following morning found blood @-@ stained clothing in the crate that had contained the body , and the remains of more clothing and some of Ellen 's personal effects burned in the fireplace . The flat was bereft of furniture , indicating that it may have been burnt on the fire , either for heat or to destroy evidence . A large penknife was found with human flesh and blood upon it , and the rope that William had bought on the morning of 4 February was found with strands of Ellen 's hair caught in the fibres .

Ellen 's body was examined by five physicians : police surgeon Charles Templeman , his colleague Alexander Stalker , Edinburgh surgeon Henry Littlejohn and two local doctors , David Lennox and William Kinnear . They concluded that Ellen had been strangled from behind . Her right leg was broken in two places so it could be crammed into the crate . Incisions , made by the penknife , ran downwards along her abdomen and had been made " within at most ten minutes of the time of death " according to Templeman , Stalker and Littlejohn . Lennox disagreed and thought the wounds were made later on the basis that when he examined the body the wound was not everted , but Templeman and Stalker said the wound was everted when they examined the body . Littlejohn explained that as Lennox made his examination three days after the others , the shape of the wounds could have changed , to which Lennox agreed .

Chief Constable Dewar sent a telegraph detailing the circumstances of the crime to the London Metropolitan Police , which was investigating the crimes attributed to Jack the Ripper . Detectives from London did not consider Bury a realistic suspect in their investigation into the Ripper murders , but Inspector Frederick Abberline did interview witnesses in Whitechapel connected to Bury , including William 's former employer James Martin and landlords Elizabeth Haynes and William Smith . According to the executioner James Berry and crime reporter Norman Hastings , Scotland Yard sent two detectives to interview Bury , but there is no surviving record of the visit in the police archive .

= = Trial and execution = =

On 18 March 1889 , Bury was arraigned for the murder of his wife ; he entered a plea of not guilty . The trial was seen before Lord Young in the High Court of Justiciary on 28 March . Bury 's defence team comprised solicitor David Tweedie and barrister William Hay ; the prosecution was led by advocate deputy Dugald or Dill McKechnie . The hearing lasted 13 hours . The prosecution witnesses included Ellen 's sister Margaret Corney , William 's former employer James Martin , the Burys ' London landlady Elizabeth Haynes , William 's drinking partner David Walker , Lieutenant Lamb and Drs Templeman and Littlejohn . After a break for supper , Hay presented the defence case , which was heavily dependent on Dr Lennox 's testimony that Ellen had strangled herself . At 10 : 05 p.m. , Lord Young finished his summation , and the jury of 15 men retired to consider their verdict . After 25 minutes , the jury returned with a verdict of guilty with a recommendation for mercy . Lord Young asked the jury why they recommended mercy , and one of them replied that the medical evidence was contradictory , referring to Lennox 's testimony . Dundee had a history of opposition to the death penalty , and the jury may have been trying to avoid passing a death sentence . Young told the jury to retire and reconsider their verdict until they were decided by the evidence one way or another . At 10 : 40 p.m. , they returned with a unanimous verdict of guilty . Lord Young passed the mandatory sentence for murder : death by hanging .

On 1 April , Bury 's solicitor , David Tweedie , petitioned the Secretary of State for Scotland , Lord Lothian , for clemency . Tweedie argued that the sentence should be commuted to life imprisonment on the grounds of the conflicting medical evidence and the jury 's initial reservations . Tweedie

further argued that Bury could have inherited insanity from his mother , who had died in a lunatic asylum . A clergyman whom Bury had befriended , Edward John Gough , minister of St Paul 's Episcopalian Church in Dundee , also wrote to Lothian asking for a reprieve . The Secretary of State refused to intervene in the normal course of the law , and Bury was hanged on 24 April by executioner James Berry . The following day , The Dundee Courier printed an editorial lambasting capital punishment :

There are still to be found persons who profess that when one murder has taken place a second should follow . Yesterday 's proceedings amounted to nothing less than cold @-@ blooded murder ... [which] perpetuate judicial butcheries ... it is not pleasant to be assured that it is incumbent upon men to slay one or two of their fellow @-@ creatures occasionally for the purpose of keeping humanity human .

It was the last execution held in Dundee .

A few days before the execution , Bury confessed to Reverend Gough that he had killed Ellen . At the urging of Gough , William wrote a confession on 22 April 1889 , which he asked to be withheld until after he was dead . William claimed that he had strangled Ellen without premeditation on the night of 4 February 1889 during a drunken row over money , and that he had tried to dismember the body for disposal the next day but was too squeamish to continue . The latter part of this confession does not match the expert testimony of the physicians , who said that the incisions were made " within at most ten minutes of the time of death " rather than the next day . William stated he had stuffed Ellen 's body into the crate as part of a later plan for disposal , but instead concocted the suicide story when he realised that Ellen 's absence would be noted .

= = Jack the Ripper suspect = =

Traditionally , five murders (known as the " canonical five ") are attributed to the notorious serial killer " Jack the Ripper " , who terrorised Whitechapel in the East End of London between August and November 1888 . Authorities are not agreed on the exact number of the Ripper 's victims , and at least eleven Whitechapel murders between April 1888 and February 1891 were included in the same extensive police investigation . All the crimes remain unsolved .

Claims that Bury could have been the Ripper began to appear in newspapers shortly after Bury 's arrest . Like Bury , the Ripper had inflicted abdominal wounds on his victims immediately after their deaths , and Bury lived in Bow , near Whitechapel , from October 1887 to January 1889 , which placed him fairly near the Whitechapel murders at the appropriate time . The Dundee Advertiser of 12 February claimed that the Burys ' " neighbours were startled and alarmed at the idea that one whom in their terror they associated with the Whitechapel tragedies had been living in their midst . " The New York Times of the same day connected Bury directly to the atrocities and reported the theory that William had murdered Ellen to prevent her from revealing his guilt , a story picked up and repeated by The Dundee Courier the following day . The Courier alleged that Bury admitted to Lieutenant Parr that he was Jack the Ripper , but Parr 's version of the story says only that Bury said he was afraid he would be arrested as Jack the Ripper . Bury denied any connection , despite making a full confession to his wife 's murder . Nevertheless , the executioner James Berry promoted the idea that Bury was the Ripper . Berry did not include Bury or the Ripper in his memoirs , My Experiences as an Executioner , but Ernest A. Parr , a journalist in the Suffolk town of Newmarket , wrote to the Secretary of State for Scotland on 28 March 1908 that Berry " told me explicitly that Bury was known to have been Jack the Ripper " .

In the 1920s , Norman Hastings built on Berry 's hypothesis proposing Bury as the Ripper , and 100 years after the Ripper murders William Beadle and Dundee librarian Euan Macpherson published books and articles popularising Bury as a Ripper suspect . They highlighted that the canonical five Whitechapel murders ended in November 1888 , which roughly coincided with Bury 's departure from Whitechapel . There was graffiti at Bury 's Dundee flat that implied that Jack the Ripper lived there , and Macpherson supposed this was written by Bury as a form of confession . William took Ellen 's rings , and the Ripper is believed to have taken rings from victim Annie Chapman . Bury was persistently violent to his wife , threatened her with a knife , and cut open her abdomen after death

in a manner not dissimilar to the Whitechapel murderer . In a conversation with her neighbours , Marjory Smith , who ran the shop above the Burys ' Prince 's Street flat in Dundee , asked them " What sort of work was this you Whitechapel folk have been about , letting Jack the Ripper kill so many people ? " Bury did not answer her , but Ellen replied " Jack the Ripper is quiet now . " She reportedly told another neighbour , " Jack the Ripper is taking a rest . " Beadle and Macpherson argued that Ellen 's comments might indicate that she had knowledge of the Ripper 's whereabouts .

Others contend that Bury only imitated the Ripper , citing differences between their crimes . Ellen Bury was strangled with a rope and sustained comparatively few knife wounds compared to the Ripper 's victims , whose throats were cut prior to sustaining deep abdominal slashes . Ellen Bury 's throat was not cut , and only relatively shallow cuts were made to her abdomen . The identity of the Whitechapel murderer is unknown , and over one hundred suspects , in addition to Bury , have been proposed . While some Ripper writers consider Bury a more likely culprit than many of the other suspects , other writers dismiss the theory because , " as happens all too frequently in this field , the theorizing appears to have a few disturbing leaps of logic as well as mere anecdotes used as evidence . "