



Underwater Raid on The Tirpitz (Secret Ops)

Peter Howard

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Scarcely a year goes by without a new book, TV programme or magazine article claiming to have solved the mystery of Jack the Ripper - the perpetrator of five brutal prostitute murders that shocked London in the summer and autumn of 1888. The fascination with this squalid episode is partly because Jack the Ripper is widely believed to have been the first serial killer, although the main draw of the case undoubtedly stems from the Ripper never having been positively identified - hence he remains a blood-spattered silhouette upon which fantasies have been projected. Although 'Jack' as an entity was almost certainly invented by an unscrupulous hack, he was also an archetype of his time - decked in the top hat and cloak of a Victorian melodrama villain, stalking the fog-wreathed streets of old London. The genesis of 'Jack' lies in London folklore, which attributed the name to many of its most flamboyant or infamous, figures, real or mythical. Numerous Ripper theories emerged at the time, which tell us more about the prejudices and attitudes of the Victorian mind than they do about the killer's true identity. Xenophobia reared its head in the racist conviction that he was a 'Hindoo' cultist performing human sacrifices according to the phases of the moon, or that the Ripper was a Russian or a Jew. The misogyny of the day was expressed in the 'Jill the Ripper' theory, painting the murderer as a maverick midwife turned abortionist, whilst Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had a more novel theory, believing the Ripper must have been passing undetected while dressed as a woman. As fascination with the case has endured, so theories of the Ripper's identity, both novel and outlandish, have reflected the concerns of the time; the Duke of Clarence has had the finger pointed at him by anti-monarchists, while upper class disdain for prostitution prompted George Bernard Shaw's ironic observation that the Ripper was "a great social reformer". Recently explored by interviewee Ivor Edwards was the idea that the killer was a Satanist. Ironically, this theory rests heavily on the claims of Edwardian black magician Aleister Crowley who often hinted he knew the identity of the killer. However, the most highly touted recent revelation comes from mooted interviewee and best-selling crime fiction author Patricia Cornwell who believes the Ripper was in reality the impressionist artist Walter Sickert. This gripping new book examines the heinous case from every angle, exploring theories both plausible and eccentric which have captured the imagination of the public for over a century. Jack the Ripper - the legacy of a serial killer or the product of nightmarish obsession and prejudice? This intriguing study opens the bloody case once more, giving every reader the chance to conclude for themselves, once and for all, the true answer to one of history's most elusive mysteries.



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