

RIPPEROLOGIST

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EDITORIAL

April 1998

Editor: PAUL DANIEL
Sub-Editor: ADAM WOOD

Once again we must thank all our Members and visitors to the last Club Meeting for making it such an overwhelming success. We started with the premise that a certain change was necessary as the rigid format of a single speaker giving a talk of his choice at each gathering was becoming a little inflexible. It was Keith Skinner's original suggestion that we might try an 'interview', though he was not suggesting *he* should do it! That came later when I suggested that with his stage experience, his research into, and knowledge of, the case, he was the ideal person to do so, he accepted the challenge. And as everyone present at the meeting will attest, he was the perfect choice!

Then we had the luck to be able to arrange for Paul Feldman to be the first to try out this scheme. And without doubt it was his name that filled the club, not only with extra visitors, but also with many of the well-known connected to the Whitechapel Murders case who were present, and these included Bill Beadle, Paul Begg, Martin Fido, Shirley Harrison, Andy and Sue Parlour, and Donald and Molly Rumbelow. We hope they all enjoyed their visits (and will hopefully come again!) and thank them for attending in the first place.

The only apology we have to make, and this was completely out of our hands, was that the room, which comfortably holds our usual amount of attenders, was on this evening, when we had something in the region of 25% more visitors, more than a little hot, over-crowded and uncomfortable. For those of you who were unable to find seats or suitable lolling places, we certainly do apologise. However the logistics of the place and the extra influx of bodies was not compatible. Other than that, we were extremely happy with the meeting, and from the feed-back we have had since, we understand that others were also.

And it is mainly Paul Feldman that we have to thank for the amazing success of the evening - and we might say, now that it is over, that Paul was extremely ill on the night, and we would like to thank him for holding to his commitment and coming to the Club, regardless, for the discussion.

As a result of the success of Paul's interview with Keith Skinner, we would like to tell our Members that we felt it only fair to offer the platform to Melvin Harris to put forward his side of the Maybrick Diary controversy, and have invited him to either give a talk of his own, or be interviewed, again, by Keith. We have not yet heard whether or not our offer has been taken up, but we'll keep everyone informed.

Over the last few meetings we have noticed that visitors to the Club are getting a mite impatient and over-expectant by the time our Speaker of the evening is scheduled to deliver his talk. Consequent to this brilliant observation we feel it might be appropriate to commence the evening's lecture slightly earlier. SO: all readers of this journal, please note: at the next *Cloak and Dagger Club* meeting on 6th June, Andy Parlour, again in conversation with the inestimable Keith Skinner, will be 'on stage' at a quarter to eight - put another way, these two gentlemen will commence their debate at seven forty-five (7.45pm)!

We hope that no one turned up at The City Darts on 4th April - it was no April Fool joke that there'd be no meeting on that evening! We've tried our best for some months to warn our readers that this month's meeting would not take place owing to the closeness of the JTR Conference, and I don't think we could have done more to this end - we just hope that no one slipped through our publicity net, or happened to pick up an old copy of *Ripperologist* and think they might try 'the first Saturday' in April. And while we're on the subject, please note (and, again, we are stressing this point well in advance) the August Meeting will be held, *NOT* on the first Saturday in the month - but the second - SO -

August meeting on the 8th, everyone !!

April 1998

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLOAK AND DAGGER CLUB

The Meeting held on 7th February 1998

It would be nice to think that it was because this was the first C&D meeting of the New Year, but in reality the number of people who attended this meeting - both member and non-member - was down to the scheduled speaker of the evening. Some 65 people turned up in the end, most of them well in advance of the 7pm Club opening time, to hear the comments of **Paul Feldman**. Many regular Members were present and amongst them was a chapter of well-known Ripper writers. **Don Rumbelow**, **Shirley Harrison**, **Andy** and **Sue Parlour** were first-time visitors, while **William Beadle** and **Paul Begg** are regular attenders to the Club. **Martin Fido** also made a rare appearance and the trio of *Jack the Ripper A-Z* authors was made complete by the presence of **Keith Skinner** who was taking on a sort of Michael Parkinson role.

The sheer number of people present and the very topic of anticipated conversation was always going to make for a very tense and volatile evening, and this proved to be the case as soon as **Andy Aliffe** took the microphone to present Paul and Keith.

Keith set the scene for the questions to come, outlining Paul's background and bringing us up to date with the amount of effort he had put in to research and produce his book *Jack the Ripper: The Final Chapter*. After being warmly received by the audience Paul revealed that although sales of his book had started slowly it was in fact now sold out in hardback, and a revised paperback would be released in June, containing much new information. In response to Keith asking if he had now changed his perception on other writers Paul replied that he hadn't realised until well into his own book that there were a substantial amount of politics involved. He had also come to the conclusion that if a writer had achieved their goal of finishing a book and having it published they had to be respected whether you agreed with them or not.

Paul then gave an outline of how he'd entered the Ripper world, much as described in the pages of his book. He told the audience that the expense of the research and other costs had totalled an estimated £150,000, and a time-span of some five-and-a-half years had been spent in getting the facts together and writing them up.

After 'setting the scene' the debate proper began. Keith listed some of the Ripper 'names' who were convinced that the Diary was a modern forgery - **Melvin Harris**, **Philip Sugden**, **Stewart Evans** and **Martin Fido**. When asked who felt the whole thing has become 'a tiresome distraction', a show of hands of those present produced a result of six or seven - a mere 10% of the audience.

Disappointingly, though unsurprisingly, the debate soon moved away from Paul's book and onto the pros and cons of the Diary. Some interesting points were made in response to Keith's query as to how much investigation had been put into the physical aspects of the journal rather than the actual content on its pages. It has always been assumed, for instance, that some 48 pages were missing from the beginning, but Don Rumbelow had counted 62. Touching on the presence of chloroacetamide, Paul suggested that this could easily have come from any of the numerous times that the document had been handled. Don then pointed out that while all manner of tests had been performed on the ink and handwriting style, amazingly not a single test had been performed on the paper itself - something that might well supply more information on the age of the document.

The provenance of the Diary was debated in a very animated fashion, with Paul stating that the Diary had been in Anne Graham's family for at least 30 years. He shared some of the ways in which he'd tried to prove the provenance, such as contacting the electricians who had claimed to have unearthed the Diary. He then revealed some startling information that will be included in the paperback version of *The Final Chapter*.

At the end of the talk Keith asked for an indication of those in the room who still felt, after having heard Paul present his case, that it had not been proved that the Diary was *not* a modern fake - a different thing to believing it WAS a recent forgery. Ten to fifteen hands were raised, but of these not one person claimed they could reproduce the Diary themselves - content, journal and ink.

Up to this point the evening had been well paced and controlled by Keith. Predictably things became

much more heated when the opportunity came for questions from the floor. Martin Fido stated that it was not necessary to name the forgers to prove a forgery. Referring to Anna Koren's statement that those with multipersonality disorders displayed a wide variety of different handwriting, **Adrian Morris** asked why the Diary seemed to be composed entirely in the same hand. Paul's reply was that the words 'Dear' and 'Abberline', which appear many times throughout the Diary, should be examined as they are produced in starkly contrasting styles. This period in the evening produced some unwelcome rudeness on the part of some involved as the 'war of words' heated up, and we hope this is purely as a result of the conflicting emotions brought about by the controversy over the Diary rather than a sign of change in the debating style at the Club, which has, until now, always been intelligent and friendly.

Coral Kelly had arranged for students of the BRIT School of Performing Arts and Technology to video the evenings activities for a Jack the Ripper project they were involved in, and they were so unobtrusive that most visitors didn't realise they were there. Most of the above-mentioned Ripper writers were kind enough to allow themselves to be interviewed towards the end of the evening and we have been

promised a viewing of the results when the project is completed, with the possibility of copies being available on sale to Members, should all interviewees give their consent. We would like to give our condolences to **Dave Lambert**, one of the students, whose father sadly passed away later the same night. Mr Lambert had ferried the boys and their equipment to the Darts and during the course of the evening confided to me that he was a lapsed Ripperologist himself, and was somewhat surprised at the level of interest today.

In closing, we thank both Paul and Keith very warmly for their participation in this excellent discussion, and for helping to make the evening so electric, especially as it transpired later that they were both unwell on the night. Considering this was the first time the format of an interview had been attempted at the Club it was an exceptionally fascinating and successful evening.

In June we continue the series of 'In Conversation' with Andy Parlour. Notes on Andy will be found in the next issue - June, #17. Bring your rulers and pencils as Andy promises us a lesson in trigonometry!

Adam Wood, Sub-Editor

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Coming up in our June issue we start with an 'in depth' article by stalwart **Adam Wood** on Joseph Merrick, better known as the Elephant Man, who was very much a part of the Whitechapel scene at the time of the murders - albeit it a sad and degrading part. Another piece from **Bernard Brown** on the topographical state of Bell Lane and Commercial Street at the time of the 'double event'. A piece on the career of Laird Cregar, the Jack the Ripper actor, researched by **Ross Strachan** will also be included. **Des McKenna** has contributed his thoughts on the possible escape of Mary Kelly indicating his feeling that another person might have been killed in her place and **Coral Kelly** has sent us another discovery, being a chapter on the Ripper murders from Guy B H Logan's book *Masters of Crime* which was published in 1928.

Signs of the Times will feature a short biography of **Arthur Morrison**, and there will be the usual regular columns of letters and current happenings and comments, not forgetting the seventh instalment of *Whitechapel Whispers* which takes us to the night of the double killing. Of course, there will be no *Proceedings...* this time, as there will have been no meeting for April to process! Instead, we will be reporting on the JTR Conference with a survey, breakdown and comments and we hope to include views from a selection of other attenders, giving their impressions and feelings on the event. If all goes well, there could be photographs included!