



Crime and Criminal Portraits in Victorian and Edwardian Bath

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There have always been crimes and criminals since time immemorial, but the modern notions of crime and the practice of modern policing, outside the metropolis, came in the early Victorian period. The concept of a 'criminal class', or what became known as the Victorian underworld, owed something to contemporary ideas on social hierarchy. The criminal class was to be found at the base of society. *Frazer's Magazine* in June 1832 reported the existence of a new and well-organised criminal class. Its members thrived on the certainties of making substantial gains while the chances of being caught were fairly remote.¹

The modern distinction between the fear of crime and known levels of criminality in society were evident throughout the nineteenth century. These increased in intensity through a series of 'moral panics', fuelled by newspaper hysteria, and were commonly followed by an increase in police powers or regulation by the state in a seemingly inexorable march towards what has been dubbed 'a surveillance society'.²

As is well known, the first professional police force introduced in England was the Metropolitan Police force in London in 1829 by the Home Secretary, Sir Robert Peel (hence the nicknames of uniformed police as 'peelers' or 'bobbies').³ Provincial forces followed after the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, with incorporated boroughs having powers to establish borough police forces. The Bath Police force was early off the mark when established in January 1836. Nationally, as Stanley Palmer has shown, it was the fear of Chartist activity, in the period 1836 to 1848, and the threat of disorder that prompted many northern cities to set up their own forces.⁴ County forces followed legislation in 1856 to allow the policing of rural areas. The fear of lawlessness was also fuelled by the rapid growth of urban populations, driven by industrialisation. The Reform riots in Bristol and Nottingham in 1831 prompted fears among the authorities that the sheer size of towns was creating a worrying separation of the classes. The result was that whole districts of towns became centres of poverty and moral destitution, with a complete absence of moral supervision by the respectable

middle classes, who were moving to the leafy suburbs.⁵ Crime and poverty were seen as defining characteristics of inner-city slum districts.

Edwin Chadwick's monumental report on the sanitary condition of the great cities, published in 1842, had shown that crime, poverty and disease were seen as inevitable companions.⁶ However, it was the pioneering work of the journalist, Henry Mayhew and his assistants, who brought to vivid life the street people of the metropolis in a series of memorable interviews during the 1850s.⁷ Middle-class readers of *The Morning Post* were treated to vicarious accounts of the lives of street traders, petty criminals and prostitutes in London. These accounts, interspersed with heavy moral condemnation by Mayhew, confirmed respectable people in the view that there was a substratum of society that was as alien to them as the savage tribes of distant continents. Crime was understood in terms of a moral framework. Further incidents, such as the garrotting panic and Fenian outrages in the 1860s and the infamous Whitechapel Murders, committed by 'Jack the Ripper' in the 1880s, contributed to public alarm and led to increased police powers.

Adding to the certain belief in the existence of a criminal class at the base of society was the increasing popularity of the pseudo-science of physiognomy. This was especially influential in the 1860s in Britain and America. At its centre, was the belief that certain physical characteristics denoted criminal tendencies. Hence the fascination with the measurement of skulls, the shape of the jaw, the shape and length of noses and the angle of the forehead.⁸ Charles Darwin's publication of *The Origin of Species*, in 1859, gave a certain credence to the belief in various stages of human evolution, with some nations and some people regarded as more advanced than others.

The alleged simian features of Irish revolutionaries were depicted in *Punch* cartoons by Tenniel and remain a subject of continuing scholarly controversy.⁹ A recent biography of Tenniel also shows how unflattering depictions of working-class stereotypes were commonly deployed in Victorian cartoons, appealing to the all-too-evident class prejudice of the time.¹⁰

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Crime in Bath

The streets of early, nineteenth-century Bath were plagued by juvenile gangs, hawkers and street sellers of every description, and most notoriously by

beggars. The noise and disorder were wholly out of keeping with its reputation as a quiet resort for the invalid and elderly among its residents. In the 1820s and 1830s, Bath was appealing to a new clientele of middle-class visitors and new residents to replace the loss of the fashionable company in its Georgian heyday. A contemporary complaint, in satirical verse, listed some of the cries that assaulted the senses of visitors from street sellers, chairmen, chimney sweeps, coal-dealers and fruit women, who all vied with each other for public attention, and created a chorus of ill-assorted sounds in the streets. Most feared and despised were the beggars:

'I always have heard that the provident mayor
Had a terrific rod to make beggars beware;
But I find to my cost, they infest ev'ry street –
First, a boy with one eye, - then a man without feet,
Who cleverly stumps upon two patten rings, -
One bellows, one whispers, one snuffles, one sings; -
From Holloway's garrets and cellars they swarm;
But I'll pause, - on this subject I'm growing too warm.'¹¹

The establishment of a borough police force in Bath in 1836, under the central direction of the Watch Committee and the Chief Constable, provided the city with a single authority, and took on a closer regulation of street activity as an important function of police duties.

'The Watchmen, too, are all dispersed,
And Bath with new Police is curs'd,
Commanded by a sturdy tar,
Who'd rule – as in a man of war –
For C——l keeps 'em all in check,
As on his own quarter-deck,
Now – if a beggar asks a groat,
A fellow, in a smart blue coat,
Stalks up, and orders him away,
Although, perhaps, he starves that day;
For begging here a perfect trade is –
Supported chiefly by the ladies,'¹²

These features were not to disappear from the streets of Victorian Bath, but were undoubtedly brought within a more acceptable level after the establishment of regular day and night patrolling of the city streets. In this regard, Bath shared in the common experience of Victorian cities in improving public order. However, unlike the great industrial cities, where, in addition to some full-time criminals, there were also juveniles who took to crime only as a secondary occupation, in towns such as Bath, the typical juvenile criminal looked to crime alone for his livelihood.¹³ Poverty, loss of parents, lack of education and a shortage of employment in the city created conditions favourable to the development of juvenile crime:

'George Kingston, under 14, charged with stealing a tin canister and 7s. in money belonging to Jane Collet of Abbey Green. She keeps a coal shed and employs the boy. He took off with the money. The prisoner was one of that unfortunate class of children, uneducated, uncared for, destined to become criminals. He had already been in prison, and his father was in the Workhouse. According to his mother, the boy finds a refuge at night "in passages, or where he can!" He was convicted and sentenced to 14 days hard labour, and to be once whipped,'¹⁴

In the 1850s and 1860s, as Bath attracted fewer visitors, the extent of juvenile and other crimes appeared to decline. At Bath Quarter Sessions in 1864, the small number and petty nature of crimes committed gave rise to expressions of satisfaction. Only ten prisoners were before the Recorder and five of them stood charged with robbing their lodgings. Such persons were generally poor and any theft was due to the embarrassment of having no food, they took what was readily to hand, often with the expectation of being able to redeem the things without despoiling the owners.¹⁵

With the revival in the numbers of visitors in the last twenty years of the century, there was an accompanying increase in the presence of tramps, beggars and prostitutes in the city.¹⁶ The level and structure of criminal activity in Bath was closely associated with the city's prosperity. This was not always appreciated at the time, but with hindsight it is clear that crime was an integral part of Bath's function as a resort. Moreover, in an economy where traditional employment was being lost in trades such as shoemaking and clothmaking,

more working people were compelled to make a living on the streets as hawkers and costermongers. The move-on policy of police control in the central commercial streets threatened the livelihood of the urban poor and was a continual source of conflict. The police also focussed attention on working-class districts, where closer regulation of lodging-houses, pubs, and popular forms of recreation was enforced by a uniformed authority. Working-class hostility towards the police stemmed from a challenge to a traditional way of life.

Benjamin Disraeli's famous dictum, 'lies, damned lies and statistics' applies with full force in relation to criminal statistics in Victorian Bath as well as in our own time.¹⁷

The two primary sources, the Petty Sessions and Chief Constable's Reports can merely provide a broad framework. Petty offences formed the great bulk of known criminal activity. For the year 1852, a total of 1,412 offences, a miscellaneous category, offences against the Borough Bye-Laws ranked highest with 276 or a fifth of the total. These included offences such as obstructions of the footway by the baskets of streetsellers, carts left unattended, ale houses left open after hours, and non-payment of rates, so confirming the importance of police supervision of the public streets. A characteristic example follows:

'Charlotte Perry summoned for assaulting Elizabeth Davis in Avon Street. The parties are fruit women, and a dispute arose between them on a rival claim to occupy a place under the arch leading from Cheap Street to the Abbey Churchyard, for the sale of fruit. According to the evidence which was given by several loquacious females, both complainant and defendant indulged freely in the use of the vulgar tongue. After a patient hearing of the most conflicting evidence, which disclosed on both sides conduct discreditable to the sex, the magistrates ordered each party to find bail to keep the peace for seven days.'¹⁸

Closely related were offences related to various forms of drunkenness – escalating from drunk and disorderly, drunk and incapable to drunk and riotous. As the Temperance lobby never failed to point out, drink was also identified with many crimes over and above the number of drunkenness

offences.¹⁹ In 1852, the latter numbered 242 or (17.1 per cent of the total), but drink was also commonly associated with common assaults. These amounted to 218 offences or (15.4 per cent). Larceny, including all forms of petty theft and embezzlement, totalled 195 offences (13.8 per cent of the total). Closely behind came begging with 192 cases or (13.6 per cent), almost certainly a decline on the amount of begging recorded earlier in the century when it was of legendary proportions. The remainder of offences formed a miscellaneous grouping, including some of recent origin: workhouse offences, cruelty to animals, damage to property, breaches of the peace and offences related to prostitution.

Some comparisons can be made with the figures recorded in the Chief Constable's Reports from later in the century. A measure of the extent of crime, known and acted on by the police, can be taken in terms of the number of persons proceeded against in relation to the population of Bath. This measure produces a remarkably constant figure – 2.6 per cent in 1852, 2.7 per cent in the period 1878 to 1883 and 2.4 per cent between 1886 and 1894. However, the figures are seriously misleading. In the period, 1878 to 1894, a substantial proportion of cases came under a new heading of offences against the Elementary Education Act, the failure of parents to send their children to school. Before the 1870s, there was no such legal requirement for parents and therefore no recorded offences. It is a classic case of new legislation seriously distorting the pattern of criminal offences. For purposes of comparison, education offences need to be excluded. When this is done, the extent of prosecutions appears to be reduced by half from 2.6 per cent to 1.3 per cent. Indictable offences were also included in the totals for the later period, so disguising the extent of the reduction. The conclusion must be that there was a significant fall in the number of prosecutions for comparable offences in Bath in the second half of the century. This almost certainly meant a corresponding reduction in the level of criminal activity in the city.

This was in line with the national pattern, that after a probable increase in crime in the first half of the century, particularly in juvenile crime, there was a reduction in the incidence of crime in the period after 1850.²⁰

A similar reduction occurred in the number of persons conveyed to gaol in the 1880s and 1890s compared with the 1840s. The average annual number of persons committed for trial and summarily convicted in Bath for the years 1842 to 1849 amounted to 636.²¹ Between 1886 and 1894, the average numbers

sent to gaol had fallen to 198.²² Changes in sentencing policy, and a lower proportion of convictions ending in prison sentences, distorted these comparative figures. Debtors, for instance, were no longer imprisoned so frequently in the later period. This, in part, explains the reduction in numbers conveyed to gaol, but the scale of the reduction reinforces the conclusion that the level of comparable criminal activity had declined substantially.

Vagrants, however, were an exception to the general rule. In the 1840s, the authorities were alarmed at the annual influx of 5,000 tramps admitted to the Union Workhouse. Contemporaries regarded them as part of the criminal classes, 'a highly dangerous set of persons (travelling) over the country passing their nights at workhouses, and their days in begging, stealing, and drunkenness'.²³ Despite the efforts made to restrict their numbers, they came in increasing numbers in the closing decades of the century – 4-5,000 in the 1880s rising to 7-9,000 in the 1890s.²⁴ With the Workhouse unable to accommodate such numbers, alternatives were found in the Refuges for the Destitute and in the city's registered and unregistered lodging houses, concentrated in the poorest areas of the city. On any one night, there were likely to be a hundred or more lodgers in the registered lodging houses in Avon Street alone.²⁵ Against this background prison served as an overflow for vagrants.

Other trends identified between offences, committed in 1852 and in the 1880s and 1890s, show a decline in levels of drunkenness that fit in with the national pattern of a peak of beer consumption in the 1870s.²⁶ The prosecution of drunkenness offences of various kinds totalled 242 in 1852 but had fallen to 60 or 70 by the 1880s. A more tolerant attitude on the part of the police may explain some of the reduction, but a movement of population away from the inner city to the suburbs could also have been responsible. The number of inns remained high, increasing from 208 to 243 between 1860 and 1900, while the number of beershops declined from 21 to 1 in the same period.²⁷ Allied to drunkenness offences was a decline in the number of common assaults, falling from 218 in 1852 to 143 in 1883. Larceny cases had a more pronounced decline, from 195 in 1852 to 57 in 1883. What these changes suggest is that a stricter system of law and order was in place by the later Victorian period. The Police, armed with wider powers, had become less tolerant of street offences of all kinds, with the result that the central streets of Bath would have become quieter and safer places for respectable citizens than at mid-century.

Criminal photographs and record keeping

In addition to increased powers for the police that included the introduction of finger printing, plain-clothes detectives, and the establishment of MI5 to combat the threat of Fenian violence, a new weapon in the fight against crime was presented with the development of photography. Police forces began to take photographs of prisoners and to circulate them around the country. The result was that by the 1880s, records began to be collected of criminal 'mugshots', usually in the form of full-face pictures, but also with occasional side-on shots. I came across a series of volumes in Bath Central Police Station in Manvers Street that contained several hundred photographs of criminals, usually appended to a page that listed the criminal record and a description of the individual in question.²⁸ The colour of hair, eyes, type of build, and distinguishing marks such as moles, scars and tattoos (both of the latter were very common) were all listed, plus details of occupation and birthplace. Some criminals operated under a number of aliases, as a means of avoiding being caught, so these were assiduously recorded alongside each known crime committed and where the system of justice had caught up with them.

What I found to be most interesting about the kind of criminals who came before local justices was that it became clear from the photographs that Victorian ideas of physiognomy were quite misplaced. While there were a few examples of 'rough-looking' characters and certainly evidence of poverty in the clothes they wore, the surprising conclusion was that many were good looking, well dressed, and would have clearly merged into respectable society. Most importantly, the conclusion reached was that crime in Bath was a reflection of the social and economic structure of its community. Bath, with its surfeit of wealthy women of mature years, attracted con artists who preyed on their loneliness and vulnerability.

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Criminal Portraits

The photographs appear in the top corner of a page of information on the prisoner's criminal record as illustrated with the first case. A summary of the information provided is given so that focus can be concentrated on the faces and appearance of each of them.

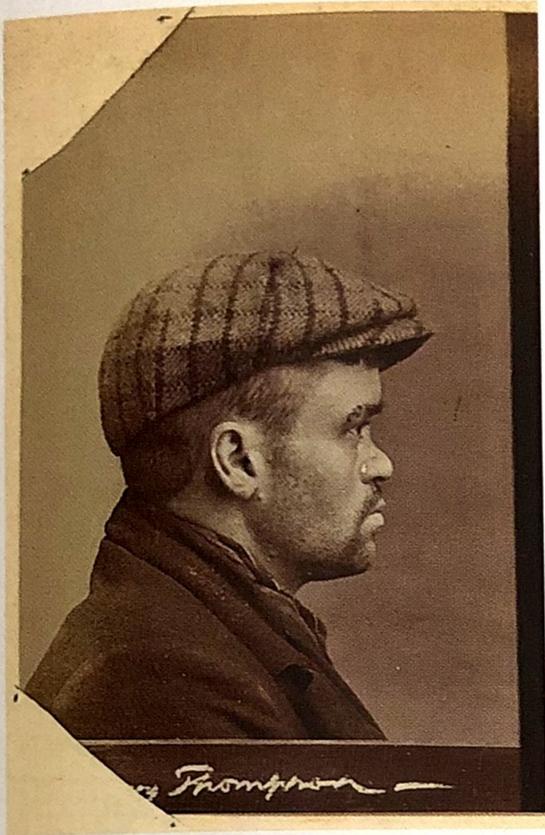


fig 1: Profile and Portrait of Henry Thompson, 1907.
 Photographed on the 22nd November, 1907.
 Bath Record Office, Bath & North East Somerset Council

245

Henry Thompson @ Harry
 Thompson & Harry Weeks
 Age 33 years 1907
 Ht- 5 ft. 1
 Hair Brown
 Mouth "
 Eyes Grey
 Build "
 Native Breconshire
 Trade Labourer
 Marks 2 cupping marks on
 chest - several on back. bridge of nose broken

Date	Name	Place	Offence	Consequences
24. 6. 87	Henry Thompson	Crickhowell P.C.	Stg a tame rabbit	One days imp and 6 strokes
15. 2. 89	"	"	2 iron wheels	10 days & 5 years Repr.
15. 8. 92	"	"	Playing Pk & Lost	Fined
18. 11. 92	"	"	Assault on Police	B.C. and pay costs
9. 4. 96	Harry Thompson	Cardiff Boss Less	Housebreaking & Stealing	4 Months H.L.
28. 5. 97	"	Crickhowell P.C.	Assault on Police	Sent to Hospital
5. 1. 99	"	Plymouth Less	Housebreaking	4 Months H.L.
19. 10. 99	"	Roborough P.C.	Stg Bones	14 Days H.L.
23. 5. 00	Harry Weeks	Stafford Less	Housebreaking	3 Months H.L.
22. 3. 01	Henry Thompson	Crickhowell P.C.	Drunks &	Fined
20. 5. 01	Harry	Gloucester P.C.	Assault	1 Month H.L.
23. 6. 04	"	Devon Ass. Exeter	Stg Horse hair & changed	6 Months H.L.
21. 3. 05	Harry Weeks	Leicester P.C.	Found on enclosed premises	1. 6. Months H.L.
16. 10. 06	" Thompson	Wakefield L. Less	Wounding	12 Months H.L.
20. 11. 07	"	Bath P.C.	Stg 30/- in Money	3 Months H.L.

fig 2: Portraits of Henry Thompson and criminal record, 1907. A criminal record of over 20 years is listed.
 Bath Record Office, Bath & North East Somerset Council

Henry Thompson [fig. 1 and fig. 2] is the first of a select few chosen to illustrate key patterns of criminality. His face-on and side-on photographs are a rare example of the physical characteristics Victorians associated with criminal types. His stunted stature, (5 ft. 1inch) the snub nose, and poor appearance, all mark him out as a stereotype criminal. His use of aliases – Harry Thompson and Harry Weeks – reveal a deliberate calculation to avoid arrest. Described as a labourer from Brecon, his first offence, committed at the age of 13, was the stealing of a rabbit. His punishment was a day in prison and six strokes. This was followed by stealing two iron wheels and the minor offence of playing pitch and toss. These were juvenile offences of no great significance, but he then got into more serious trouble with assaults on the Police, housebreaking, wounding, theft of money, drunkenness and being found on enclosed premises. These crimes were committed across a wide geographical territory – Cardiff, Plymouth, Rodborough, Gloucester, Exeter, Leicester, Wakefield, and finally in Bath. This was an unusual pattern for a labourer. Broadly, the cases suggest that the better-educated, higher-class criminals tended to move more widely than the common, petty thief. For most offences, the sentences were imprisonment with hard labour, but one offence led him to be sent to an asylum, which suggests that he may have suffered from mental ill-health. The association between drink and violence will come as no surprise to modern readers. In conclusion, Harry Thompson may be regarded as a classic recidivist, petty criminal. His long career in crime, lasting twenty years, points to the failure of the justice system in either deterring him or in reforming him away from future criminal acts.

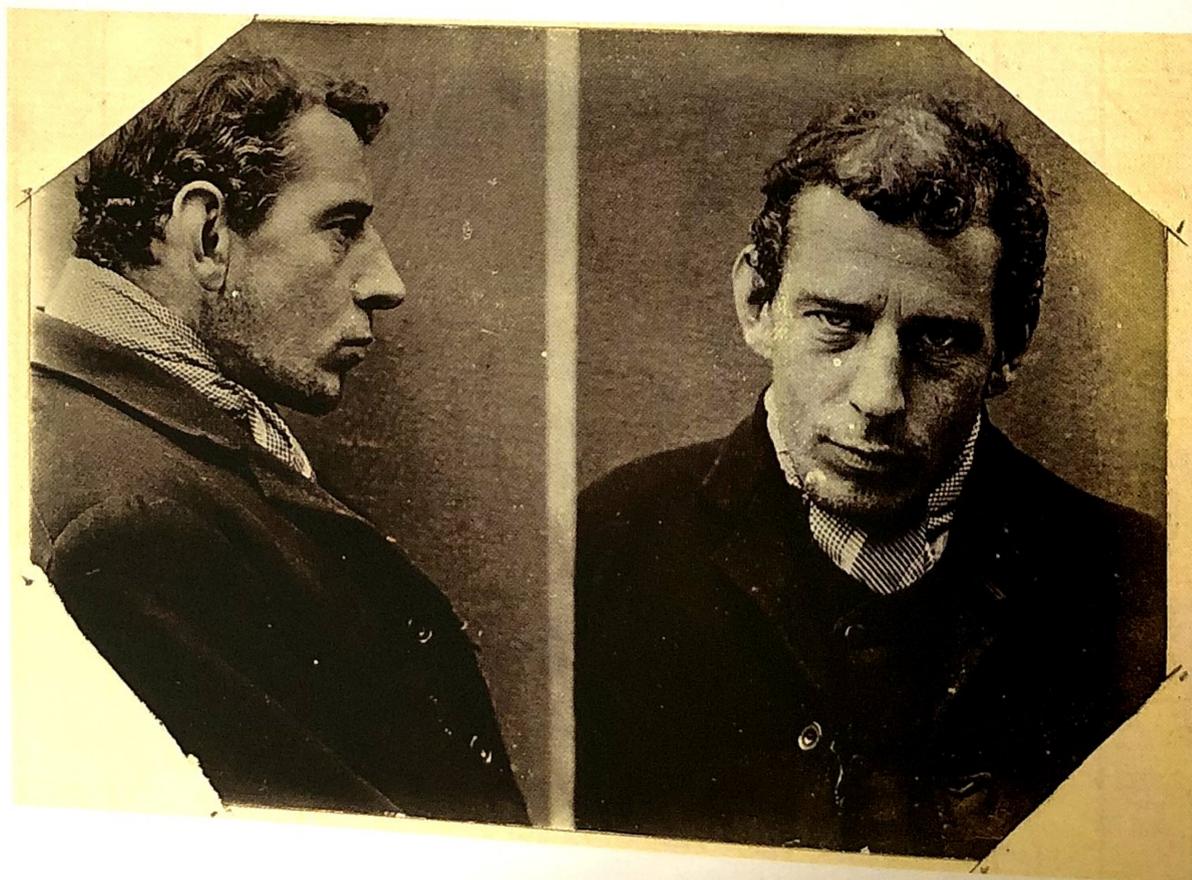


fig 3: Profile and Portrait of William Jackson, 1904. A begger who feigned blindness.
Bath Record Office, Bath & North East Somerset Council

William Jackson [fig. 3] was more characteristic of criminals attracted to Bath. A native of the Rhondda, aged 34, 5 ft 6 inches in height, of medium build, dark brown hair (slightly bald) with brown eyes and a fresh complexion. He also had a large lump at the back of his neck and what looks in the photograph as evidence of scrofula on the side of his face. His record showed three offences of begging, in Oxford and in Bristol twice, but a revealing comment may be quoted in full: 'This man is a clever imposter + feigns Blindness and is led about by a dog. He was examined at Oxford by 5 doctors who found the Blindness was entirely feigned.' Even though there are no recorded instances of Jackson begging in Bath, it is quite likely that he would have tried his luck in the city. The Police were certainly made aware of his mode of operation and would have been on the look out for him. He received 5 days hard labour, then 14 days hard labour on the second and third offences.

Annie Nash [fig. 4], alias Annie Strain, a well-dressed young lady of 19 in 1912, represented the most common kind of female criminal. She was a domestic servant, one of a huge army of servants in Bath, who combined low wages with the opportunity to steal from employers. Being in the presence of a higher standard of living could only have added to temptation. She was described as 5 ft. 4 inches in height, of thin build, pale complexion, having black hair and brown eyes. She was born in West Lavington, near Devizes. The interesting feature of her record was that she began her career, stealing ten shillings, at the age of eleven in Bath. She spent a day in prison on promising to go to the Salvation Army Home. Eight years later, she was convicted of acquiring money



fig 4: Portrait of Annie Nash, 1904. A domestic servant, the most common occupation of female criminals. Bath Record Office, Bath & North East Somerset Council



fig 5: Profile and Portrait of Annie Cerney, 1907. Another domestic servant, convicted of drink related offences.

Bath Record Office, Bath & North East Somerset Council

by false pretences in Bristol and then two offences of stealing rings and other things. She served three and six months in prison with hard labour.

Annie Cerney [fig. 5], alias Ellen Williams, was another domestic servant who had clearly followed a downward path over a period of eighteen years. This is reflected in her sad appearance in the photograph, taken in 1907 when she was 30 years old. A native of Bath, she was 5 ft. 1 inch tall, with light brown hair, blue eyes and a slim build. Her first offence of larceny occurred in Bath in 1892 when she was 15. She received one month in prison with hard labour. There followed four more similar offences of larceny when she used different names. Then in 1908, she was charged with being drunk in charge of a child in Bath and stealing a pair of boots. In 1910, she was convicted of five offences of being drunk and disorderly in Bath. These resulted in sentences of between 14 days and one month hard labour. Finally, the magistrates resolved to send her to a Home for two years in an attempt to ween her off the drink.

Annie Cerney's criminal career began as a young girl involved in theft from her employers. It took a turn for the worse when her drink problems became endemic. Her prospects may have improved with time spent in a home for inebriates. Otherwise, her future life would have been very bleak.

Jane and Annie Flint [fig. 6 and fig. 7], alias Jackson and Shaw, aged 65 and 30 in 1896, a mother and daughter combination, were professional con artists who toured the country, preying on religious sympathies. Jane was 5 ft 1 inch, of stoutish build, fresh complexion, with grey hair and brown eyes. Annie was 5ft 4 inches, well proportioned, with a pale face and full eyes. The record shows



fig 6: Portrait of Jane Flint, 1896. The mother and one half of a notorious pair of con artists. Bath Record Office, Bath & North East Somerset Council



fig 7: Portrait of Annie Flint, 1896. The daughter and the other half of a notorious pair of con artists. Bath Record Office, Bath & North East Somerset Council

that they were sentenced to three months hard labour for larceny at Leek in Staffordshire in 1896 and were wanted in many parts of the country for similar charges. Their *modus operandi* was to take lodgings and make themselves acquainted with the clergy, and join the Church Guild, and thus steal several articles. Bath, with its many religious charities, might well have been an obvious target for this notorious pair.

Tom Rostren Stewart [fig. 8], alias George Richard Brooks and Lees, was one of three examples of male con artists who, as sophisticated types of criminals, were especially attracted to Bath. In appearance, they were far removed from the likes of Henry Thompson, looking every inch members of respectable society and relying on an assumed social status and bearing, that put them beyond suspicion given the attitudes of contemporaries. A native of Bury in

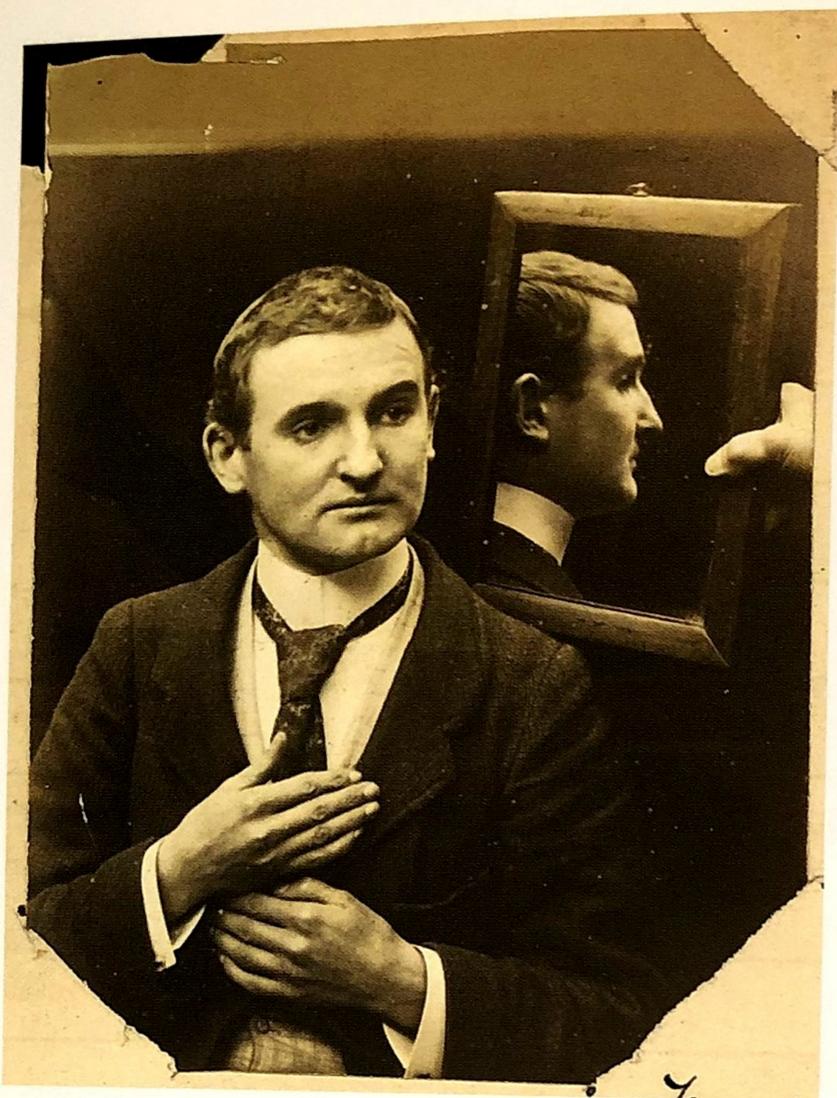


fig 8: Portrait of Tom Rostren Stewart, undated.
 Con artist of respectable appearance.
Bath Record Office, Bath & North East Somerset Council



fig 9: Portrait of Samuel Zucker, 1903. Con artist with multiple aliases.
Bath Record Office, Bath & North East Somerset Council

Lancashire, aged 27, 5 ft. 5 inches in height, of medium build and having light brown hair, grey eyes and a fresh complexion, he was handsome and well-dressed. He could have been an actor which, of course in a criminal way, he was. Perhaps, surprisingly, his appearance was not without blemish. He had a scar in the centre of his forehead, a white mole near the corner of his eye and the bridge of his nose was broken. He also had scars on his fingers, right wrist and on both shins, a boil mark between his shoulders, 3 blue prison marks on his right thigh, and was suffering from scaly skin disease. He was brought before Bath Petty Sessions for the offence of false pretences. His father and brother were bound over in the sum of £20 each for 12 months. So he was bailed out by his family that had the means to find the required sureties.

Samuel Zucker [fig. 9.], alias Edward Von Dalwick, Baron Jules Mercy and Camillon, another con artist, aged 18 in 1903, was 5 ft. 7 inches tall, with black hair, dark brown eyes, of sallow complexion, medium build, and with good teeth. The latter was an important part of the con artist's equipment, especially if the likely victims were women. The bowler hat, starched collar and waistcoat were

all part of the con artist's uniform. The only blemish was a mole on the right side of his chin. There were two offences on his known record, at an interval of ten years, suggesting that this was simply the tip of the iceberg. In 1903, he was convicted for false pretences before Bath Quarter Sessions, receiving a sentence of 4 months in prison. In 1913, he committed the same offence and was convicted at Bradford Quarter Sessions, receiving a sentence of 9 months. Zucker, as his name implied was probably Swiss or German, and posed as a continental aristocrat as part of his method of relieving people of their money or jewellery. **J. Bassett [fig. 10.]**, alias Freckett, Foster, Vincent, Harris, Walter, aged 26, had travelled widely during a long, criminal career extending from 1891 to 1913. He was 5 ft. 8 inches, with brown hair, grey eyes, a fair complexion, of medium build, and with the indispensable good teeth. Slightly marring his handsome appearance were the scars on each eyebrow and another on his forehead. What is extraordinary is the geographical range of his criminal activities, beginning in Rochester, through Tralee, Dublin and Cork in Ireland, Berwick, Northampton, Reading, Stafford, Wakefield and finally at the Taunton Assizes. All the cases were larceny and false pretences and sentences rose from 3 months with hard labour to 5 years penal servitude. Clearly, the more sophisticated the criminal, the more mobile they were, not only in Britain, but including some from abroad.

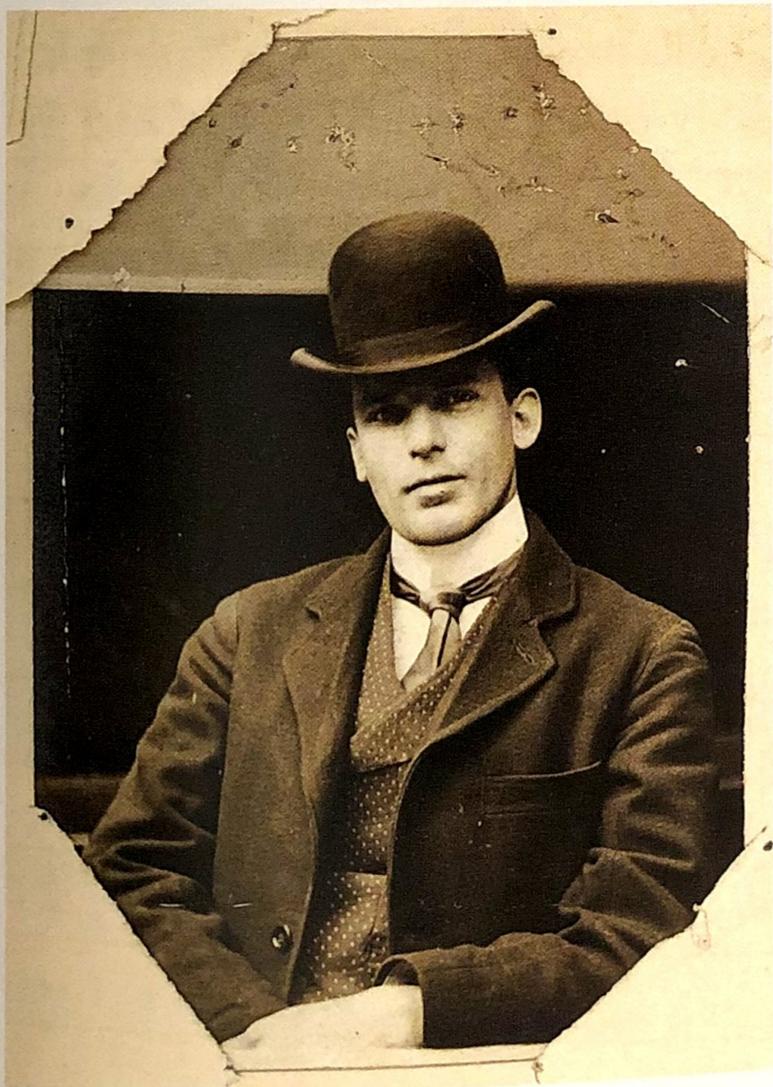


fig 10: Portrait of J. Bassett, undated. A much travelled con artist with a long criminal career.
Bath Record Office, Bath & North East Somerset Council

Conclusion

Studying the faces in these and many other criminal portraits of the time has its own, intrinsic fascination. In the great majority of cases, faces do not reveal criminal tendencies as Victorians believed. They do reveal a capacity for artful disguise and deliberate deception and all too often show the ravages of drink and the toll of terms of imprisonment served with hard labour. Then as now, the prison system may have succeeded in locking people away from the public, but signally failed in deterring criminals from committing future crimes. The pattern of crimes in Bath was, at least in part, determined by its social structure. The common presence of beggars, some of whom feigned disability, reflected the strength of charities in Bath and the willingness of the clergy and ladies to donate money to them. The tradition is continued with the present-day buskers who are all too evident in the central streets of Bath. Crime among female domestic servants reflected the presence of the servant-keeping classes who lived in the big houses in the city, prominent among them were elderly widows living in Lansdown and Bathwick. The presence of the latter was also an attraction for professional con artists who made their way to Bath from other parts of the country and abroad, looking for unlawful gains from wealthy widows who might fall prey to the flattery and attention from handsome, well-dressed young men. Again, a certain historical continuity suggests itself. In Georgian Bath, rakes and fortune hunters made their way to the city in search of heiresses and the 'swell mob' sought criminal opportunities as card sharps or pickpockets. In Victorian and Edwardian Bath, the con artists came in search of rich pickings, an appropriate form of crime for a city that prided itself on its genteel image.²⁹

Notes

1. Donald Thomas, *The Victorian Underworld* (London, 2000), p.1.
2. *History of Surveillance*, Part 1, Channel 4 television series, 2001.
3. The first modern force was the Irish county police system founded in 1787.
4. Stanley H. Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland 1780-1850* (Cambridge, 1988), pp.435-57.
5. See the evidence of M.D.Hill, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1852, vii, Report of the Select Committee on Criminal and Destitute Juveniles, Minutes of Evidence.
6. Edwin Chadwick, *The Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*, 1842, rep. 1965.

7. Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London, 1861).
8. L. Perry Curtis Jr., *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (rev. ed. Washington and London, 1997), chapter 1, Physiognomy, pp. 1-15.
9. L. Perry Curtis Jr., *Apes and Angels*.
10. Frankie Morris, *Artist of Wonderland: The Life, Political Cartoons, and Illustrations of Tenniel* (Cambridge, 2005).
11. Fussleton Letters, Letter VIII, From Sir Hector Stormer to Admiral Tornado, Bath Pamphlets, Vol. 40. Bath Central Library.
12. Fussleton Letters, Letter IV, Will Fussleton Esq., to J.O. Esq., Feb. 1836. Capt. Carroll, R.N., became the first Chief Constable of the Bath Police in 1836.
13. J.J. Tobias, *Crime and Industrial Society in the 19th century* (Batsford, 1967), p.140.
14. *The Bath Chronicle*, April 26th 1849.
15. *The Bath Chronicle*, July 7th 1864.
16. Reports of the Chief Constable, 1885-1894, include annual totals of tramps and vagrants conveyed to the Casual Ward of the Workhouse. The figures suggest a rising trend in the 1880s and 1890s: 1885 – 4,675; 1886 – 4,624; 1887 – 5,074; 1888 – 5,853; 1889 – 6,204; 1891 – 4,578; 1892 – 5,633; 1893 – 7,727; 1894 – 9,577.
17. There is a gap between the number of offences known to the Police and the actual level of crimes committed because not all crimes are reported to the Police, especially cases of personal assault and rape cases. Comparing the number of offences recorded over time can be distorted by changes in legislation, so creating new crimes, and by a crackdown on certain offences such as begging or vagrancy at the whim of the Chief Constable.
18. *The Bath Chronicle*, September 13th 1849.
19. See Memorial to the Watch Committee, 1865 on the closing of public houses at 1 am. Bath Record Office.
20. Tobias, *Crime and Industrial Society in the 19th century*, pp. 122-147.
21. Report of the Chaplain, W.C. Osborne, Bath City Gaol, 1849, Bath Record Office.
22. Reports of the Chief Constable.
23. *The Bath Chronicle*, October 12th 1848.
24. Reports of the Chief Constable.
25. For instance, there were 139 lodgers recorded in the census for Avon Street in 1871. Census Enumerator's schedules, Walcot Parish, Bath.
26. A.E. Dingle, 'Drink and Working Class Living Standards in Britain, 1870-1914', *Economic History Review*, 1972, pp. 608-622.
27. Post Office Directory, Bath, 1860-1 and 1900.
28. I would like to acknowledge the help given me by Sergeant Bob Allard of the Bath Police in accessing the records. They are now held in Bath Record Office.
29. Graham Davis and Penny Bonsall, *A History of Bath: Image and Reality* (Lancaster, 2006).