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RETIRED: Edmund aged 66 in a Palmer postcard with the Hampton Inn in the distance



OFFICER: Edmund Reid aged about 50

Photo: Prices Gazette



LOST: Eddington Gardens in 1910, just before the homes disappeared into the sea

Unnamed man on signboard was Jack the Ripper detective

Way We Were



David Lewis
Canterbury
Historical and
Archaeological
Society

TWO recent TV events have reminded me of Edmund Reid, a



amed man on signboard Jack the Ripper detective

Way We Were



David Lewis
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TWO recent TV events have reminded me of Edmund Reid, a London detective born in Canterbury.

One was the series *Ripper Street*, based on Edmund's unsuccessful attempts to catch Jack the Ripper. The other was the news that the identity of the Ripper has been proven through use of DNA tests - he was apparently the known suspect Aaron Kosminski, a Polish immigrant with psychiatric problems.

The life of Edmund Reid started in Canterbury - Boer Cart Lane to be precise, at 12.15am on March 21, 1946. We know the time as it is stated on his birth certificate. Herein lies the first oddity of his life, as times of day are required on birth certificates only for cases of multiple births - primarily for inheritance purposes - and there is no evidence for any Reid siblings born that day.

A second oddity is that Edmund achieved some fame for the thing he totally failed to do - as detective for the Whitechapel area in 1888, his prime challenge was to bring Jack the Ripper to justice.

A third surprising feature of his life is that, alongside the challenge of being a senior detective in the Met, he found time to excel in the new sports of ballooning and parachuting. His 29 ascents from Crystal Palace and Alexandra Palace included a jump from 1,000ft and won him a gold medal.

Unsurprisingly, Edmund took a keen interest in parachute



REMEMBERED: Edmund Reid on the signboard at Hampton-on-Sea

design. To test his new parachute design theory, Edmund attached an experimental parachute to a mouse which he then threw from a high building. The animal landed intact and duly walked off with its parachute in tow.

Exploits

In retirement, Edmund lived in Herne and later in nearby Hampton-on-Sea. For 16 years he thrived, giving interviews about his police career and parachuting exploits, carrying out private detective work, writing sarcastic letters to local papers, engaging in disputes with the council, and generally enjoying his minor celebrity status. Several picture postcards showed Edmund with his dog and seaside Hampton home in Eddington Gardens.

Unfortunately, the sea was undermining the street, and one by one, the properties collapsed. Edmund had to leave his home, which he'd named Reid's Ranch, in 1916. It included a small kiosk where he sold lemonade and

postcards, and had paintings of cannons along its wall, intended to deter any German invasion of Britain. All that remains is a few stones covered by each incoming tide.

An odd local memorial is the information board in the car park by the Hampton Inn. This shows an enlarged photo of Edmund, together with an image of him standing in front of the Hampton Inn. What it fails to mention is his name - an enigmatic memorial to a very unusual man.

■ If you wish to know more about Edmund, his family, and his life in the Met, consult the CHAS website or *The Man who Hunted the Ripper* (N Connell and S P Evans, 1999). He appears on several postcards published by Fred C Palmer.



■ Read more of David Lewis' stories from the past at canterburytimes.co.uk/nostalgia