

In 1887 Government inspectors were sent to investigate the Old Nichol, a notorious slum on the boundary of Bethnal Green parish, where almost 6,000 inhabitants were crammed into thirty or so streets of rotting dwellings and where the mortality rate ran at nearly twice that of the rest of Bethnal Green. Among much else they discovered that the decaying 100-year-old houses were some of the most lucrative properties in the capital for their absent slumlords, who included peers of the realm, local politicians and churchmen. The Blackest Streets is set in a turbulent period of London's history when revolution was in the air. Award-winning historian Sarah Wise skilfully evokes the texture of life at that time, not just for the tenants but for those campaigning for change and others seeking to protect their financial interests. She recovers Old Nichol from the ruins of history and lays bare the social and political conditions that created and sustained this black hole which lay at the very heart of the Empire.

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The Blackest Streets by Sarah Wise, , available at Book The Blackest Streets: The Life and Death of a Victorian Slum.

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