

MURDEROUS WORDPLAY

PETER NEWBY

Chesterfield, Derbyshire, England

The 1678 murder of Justice Godfrey is known as 'England's longest unsolved murder' despite the fact that three men were hanged, drawn and quartered for the crime. These dupes were--as Lee Harvey Oswald is alleged to be--the 'fall guys' for a powerful group of conspirators whose ultimate target was the head of state, the Stuart monarch.

Over the years, many historians have attempted to solve the mystery and the most logical conjecture has Godfrey a member of a republican secret brotherhood which ordered his execution but in such a manner that blame for his death should be laid upon the Papists, then the targets of the odious Titus Oates and his fevered imagination.

Godfrey's body was discovered on Primrose Hill where it had obviously been dumped after he had been killed elsewhere. Contemporary wordsmiths made much of the fact that the three 'killers', Green, Berry and Hill, coincided with the earlier name of Primrose Hill--Greenberry Hill. Another discovered that SIR EDMUND BERRIE GODFREY nearly anagrams I FIND MURDERED BY ROGUES (an E and R replaced by a U). An anagram of EDWARD COLEMAN, a second victim of these conspirators, who faced trial for Papist sympathies, is LO! A DAMNED CREW.

The full list of this 'damned crew' is headed by its leader, and suitable anagrams are solicited for the others:

Sir Robert Payton
 Sir William Bowles
 Georg Welch
 Richard Adams
 Peter Sabbs
 John Barker

Sir Reginald Foster
 Sir Edmund Berrie Godfrey
 William Barker
 William Hempson
 Samuell Buck
 Charles Umphreville

The spellings of such as GEORG and SAMUELL are as given on a list written at that time. Even BERRIE was sometimes spelt BERRY or BURY but my preference is for that used by Godfrey's father which perpetuates a family surname. The conspirators favoured a restoration of a Cromwellian republic under his son, Richard Cromwell, whose name contains CRILE or CROIL, an obscure word for a dwarf!