

## The Legal & General Gang

### *People in the case*

<u>Billy Moseley</u>	<u>murder victim</u>	<u>Commander Albert Wickstead</u>	<u>metropolitan police, leading murder inquiry</u>
<u>Micky Cornwall</u>	<u>murder victim</u>	<u>Detective Chief Superintendent Ronald Harvey</u>	<u>Hertfordshire CID, leading murder inquiry</u>
<u>Bob Maynard</u>	<u>convicted of murder</u>	<u>Sylvia Maynard</u>	<u>wife of Ernie Maynard</u>
<u>Reg Dudley</u>	<u>convicted of conspiracy</u>	<u>Anthony Wild</u>	<u>prosecution witness</u>
<u>Charlie Clarke</u>	<u>convicted of murder and conspiracy</u>	<u>Oliver Kenny</u>	<u>landlord of Brighton pub</u>
<u>Kathy Dudley</u>	<u>acquitted of murder and conspiracy</u>	<u>Frank Read</u>	<u>prosecution witness</u>
<u>Ronnie Fright</u>	<u>trial judge</u>	<u>Frank Happer</u>	<u>defence witness</u>
<u>Ernie Maynard</u>	<u>prosecution counsel</u>	<u>Sharon Saggs</u>	<u>daughter of Colin Saggs; prosecution witness</u>
<u>George Spencer</u>	<u>defence counsel</u>	<u>Charlie Morrish</u>	<u>newspaper-seller; witness</u>
<u>Mr justice Swanwick</u>	<u>wife of Billy Moseley</u>	<u>Duncan Campbell</u>	<u>journalist following the case</u>
<u>Michael Corkery QC</u>	<u>car dealer</u>	<u>Johnathan Goldberg</u>	<u>solicitor for Reg Dudley</u>
<u>John Platts-Mills QC</u>	<u>half-brother of Billy Moseley</u>	<u>Michael Mansfield</u>	<u>Dudley's defence counsel</u>
<u>Ann Moseley</u>	<u>wife of Ronnie Fright</u>	<u>Michael Hill</u>	<u>prosecution counsel</u>
<u>Phil Luxford</u>	<u>boyfriend of Kathy Dudley</u>	<u>Bobby Maynard</u>	<u>son of Bob Maynard</u>
<u>George Arnold</u>	<u>friend of Micky Cornwall</u>		
<u>Frankie Fright</u>	<u>girlfriend of Micky Cornwall</u>		
<u>Ray Baron</u>	<u>friend of Micky Cornwall</u>		
<u>Colin Saggs</u>			
<u>Gloria Hogg</u>			
<u>John Moriarty</u>			
<u>Professor James Cameron</u>	<u>pathologist</u>		

On 17 June 1977, at the end of the longest murder trial in British legal history, the Old Bailey jury reached varying verdicts on the seven defendants. Ronnie Fright was acquitted of all charges, as were George Spencer and Ernie Maynard. Charlie Clarke and Kathy Dudley were found guilty of conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm. Each was given a two-year term of imprisonment, though in Kathy Dudley's case the sentence was suspended.

Bob Maynard and Reg Dudley, Kathy's father, were found guilty of the murders of Billy Moseley and Micky Cornwall. Both were sentenced to life imprisonment, with a recommendation that they serve at least fifteen years.

The trial attracted sensational, albeit far-fetched, publicity about gangland activity in north London; but for all that there was, as the prosecution counsel admitted, little material evidence against the defendants, and no forensic evidence at all.

The burden of the prosecution case lay in statements which the accused were alleged to have made – and which all vigorously denied making.

Billy Moseley disappeared eight days after being released from Bedford prison on 18 September 1974. He and Bob Maynard – “Fat Bob”, as he was

usually known, an epithet that was less unkind than it sounded – had grown up together, having once lived next door to each other in Holloway, north London. From playing truant together during schooldays, they moved on, predictably perhaps, to crimes like shoplifting and breaking and entering. Neither climbed high on the criminal ladder. Their offences, however frequent, were never grave.

They seemed to serve their intermittent prison sentences alternately. (Once only, back in 1965, had they been convicted together.) ‘It was a longstanding arrangement,’ wrote Duncan Campbell, ‘that whoever was “out” looked after the interests of whoever was “away”.’ During Moseley's latest spell “away”, Maynard had been paying the weekly rent on his Stoke Newington flat.

While in prison, Moseley learned, to his consternation, that his old friend had become – to coin a phrase – thick as thieves with Reg Dudley, who lived in the Finsbury Park area of north London. Dudley made a comfortable living in Hatton Garden, the centre of the country's jewellery trade and an irresistible target for many London criminals. Maynard, who had become less agile, physically and mentally, after suffering serious head injuries in an incident in a Tottenham Court Road club, assisted him in his dealings which

were, at best, of borderline legality. Dudley had served innumerable prison sentences for a variety of offences, including one of six years in Dartmoor for slashing his wife's face.

Moseley heard that Maynard and Dudley had been seen so regularly in each other's company that they had been dubbed “the Legal & General”. The soubriquet had originally been acquired after they had walked into a Kentish Town pub wearing similar overcoats; their appearance had reminded one customer of a Legal & General Assurance Society television advert. It stuck because it was so apposite: while Dudley had a habit of inquiring of any transaction, ‘Is it legal?’, Maynard guardedly used to describe himself as a ‘general dealer’.

The association perturbed Moseley because there were those who suspected Dudley of being a police informer. Nevertheless, it was of no immediate concern to him when he was released. For one thing, Dudley was away in Spain, extricating his daughter Kathy from problems incurred by a failed night-club venture in Lloret de Mar.

Moseley visited his mother, and also his estranged wife Ann, and their three children, the youngest of whom, Bobby, was named after Maynard. One old friend, Micky Cornwall, was then finishing an eight-year sentence for

armed robbery in Hull prison, but Moseley did see others: Maynard; Phil Luxford, a car-dealer who loaned him a Rover; and George Arnold, his half-brother.

Luxford and Arnold were the only ones who knew that Moseley's primary concern after his release was to get together with Frankie Fright, a woman with whom he had been having an affair prior to his conviction for shoplifting in October 1973. In those social circles there were strong sanctions against becoming involved with a woman while her husband was "away", and the affair had blossomed while Frankie's husband, Ronnie Fright, was in Chelmsford prison, completing a seven-year sentence for robbery. Moseley had violated one of the basic tenets of the underworld's code of ethics. Moreover, Fright, while in prison, found out about the affair.

With Moseley's release, it was agreed that he and Fright should meet to discuss the position. Frankie herself arranged the rendezvous: outside a bookmaker's, the Victoria Sporting Club, in Dalston at 6.30 p.m. on 26 September 1974.

Moseley disappeared after setting out for the meeting. At about the same time, Dudley arrived back in the UK from Spain. A week later, at the funeral of an elderly relative, Bob Maynard and his brother Ernie were overheard talking

to George Spencer, who sometimes acted as Dudley's chauffeur. The gist of the conversation was that they could not expect to see Moseley again.

His body – or, to be gruesomely precise, bits of it – turned up on 5 October in the Thames at Rainham, Essex. Though there was some initial speculation that the torso could be that of Kenneth Littlejohn, it was soon being assumed in north London that the missing Moseley had surfaced.

The local pathologist did what he could with the incomplete cadaver. He was able to confirm to the police that this was a case of murder. Since the head and hands were missing, however, no positive identification could be made.

Scientific ingenuity ultimately triumphed over criminal cunning. Moseley had suffered from a very rare skin disease. With information about this, and that of an unusual gallstone condition which had been registered on a routine X-ray taken in Bedford prison, and of blood samples which were matched with those of his children, Professor James Cameron was able to give the coroner's court the categorical assurance that the body was William Moseley's.

On his release from prison on 18 October Micky Cornwall was greatly

distressed to learn that Moseley had been murdered and his body dismembered. Moseley had visited him several times in Hull.

Cornwall was an armed robber, known, on account of his conviviality and his professional fearlessness, as "the Laughing Bank-Robber". Far from emerging from prison a reformed character, he returned immediately to crime, as though desperate to make up for lost time. He did house-breaking, and some hotel robberies. (Bank-snatches, which had been all too easy at the time of his arrest, now presented much greater difficulties.) Cornwall was apparently hopelessly trapped in a life of crime.

Some months earlier, in 1974, Kathy Dudley had become involved with Ray Baron, also a bank-robber, whom Dudley had met in prison. (Back in 1962, Baron had been convicted with Cornwall and Colin Saggs – of whom more shall be heard – of a bank-raid in Barnet.) By this time, though, Baron was back inside, doing another stretch for armed robbery. Apparently less chauvinist towards women than his peers, he consented to Kathy having other relationships while he was away. In December Micky Cornwall started seeing her, but it was just a brief fling, and she went back for another spell in Lloret.

In April 1975 Cornwall met Gloria

Hogg, a twenty-one-year-old secretary. Their relationship seems to have been a mutually satisfying one, although he never confided in her how he made his living, and she was too afraid of the answer to ask. They went together to Blackpool, where Cornwall apparently had associates. He often spoke of pulling off the big one, the coup that would enable them to buy a home in the country. He told one friend, John Moriarty, of just such a job that he had arranged; Moriarty was taken aback by his indiscretion. It was perhaps no surprise that the West Midlands crime squad placed Cornwall under surveillance; they believed him to be planning a robbery on their patch.

At 5.00 p.m. on Sunday 3 August Cornwall, then staying with Gloria, was collected by a friend in a mustard-coloured Range Rover. She saw him again on the Tuesday, and gathered that, "the big one" had been scheduled for the following day.

Cornwall had been renting a room from the Saggs family, Colin Saggs being once again in prison. Cornwall left later that week, early one morning. He seemed agitated, and packed hurriedly. Two men arrived for him fifteen minutes after his departure. Fourteen-year-old Sharon Saggs, who answered the door, was unable to say where he had gone.

After that, Cornwall was sighted

around north London. As late as 22 August Moriarty saw him standing by a bus-stop in Highgate.

His body was discovered in a makeshift grave in woodland, just outside Hatfield, Hertfordshire, on 7 September. He had been shot through the head.

The Hertfordshire police who investigated the murder discovered that their inquiries kept leading to London; and that a number of those questioned brought up the name "Moseley". Without solid information to nurture it, the police investigation into the latter's fate had been desultory from the start. By now, it was at a standstill.

Some bizarre incidents deepened what now seemed to be a double mystery. The *Islington Gazette* received a letter signed "Fat Bob", which concluded, 'It's been said that Mick was asking too much about Bill's death. The police seem to have forgotten Billy. They may forget about Mick.' The *Gazette* passed the letter on to detectives.

Maynard subsequently presented himself at the *Gazette* offices, identified himself as "Fat Bob" and adamantly disclaimed all knowledge of the letter. The paper published an apology, but was somewhat bewildered; the police had told them the letter was genuine. Maynard said, 'I have never been

interviewed or questioned about this letter or this case. I don't know who wrote it. I certainly didn't.'

Nor was this the only matter to disconcert Maynard. He had also received through the post, wrapped in cotton wool, a .22 bullet. So, similarly, had Phil Luxford.

In this atmosphere of intrigue and tension, Hertfordshire police ceded absolute control of the investigation to a special squad of men drawn from both the metropolitan and Hertfordshire police forces, and headed by Commander Albert Wickstead and Detective Chief Superintendent Ronald Harvey, head of Herts CID.

At this stage, Moseley's body was formally identified. Part of the evidence which Professor Cameron gave at the long-delayed inquest referred to the torture that Moseley had undergone prior to his death. All his toenails had been pulled out, and he had been burned with a naked flame. Cornwall's murder had already been popularly described as 'a gangland execution'. These fresh revelations lent even more chilling overtones to the investigation.

On Thursday 22 January 1976 eighteen people were taken for questioning to Loughton in Essex. They included the seven ultimately charged, together with Ernie Maynard's wife, Sylvia, and friends of Cornwall such as John Moriarty. The tabloid newspapers

had a field day. 'Four Killings Linked as Yard Grab 50' proclaimed the *Sun*, characteristically heedless of accuracy. Other papers suggested that the police were holding professional killers, and breaking up a vast, ruthless crime syndicate. It was believed that 'millions of pounds in stolen bullion, diamonds and jewellery are involved'.

They were all interviewed over a period of four days. Of the eighteen, eleven were then released. Charges were preferred against the remaining seven, who were remanded in custody.

At the committal proceedings at Epping magistrates court in May, police objected to bail because they said that two others were still being sought in connection with the crimes: 'we have been trying to trace them for some months'. It was argued on behalf of the police that, if the defendants were granted bail, it would hinder the police search for the other men. Also, it was stressed that witnesses went in fear of the defendants, and one man had disappeared during the committal.

Nothing further was ever heard about either absent witnesses or additional suspects.

The trial opened on 11 November 1976. The prosecution case was that Moseley had had an affair with Frankie Fright, which the north London criminal fraternity had regarded as "out of order"; that he had fallen out with

Dudley back in the sixties; that he had further provoked Dudley by suggesting that he was a grass; that he was sitting on the proceeds of a large jewellery robbery. Cornwall had set out to avenge Moseley's death; he had discovered that Maynard and Dudley were the culprits; and had then attempted to get close to Dudley by striking up a relationship with his daughter.

Clearly, Maynard and Dudley were the central figures. Fright was thought to have been deliberately late for his appointment, and thus helped to lure Moseley to his death. Kathy Dudley was involved through her relationship with Cornwall (which the police believed had been more intimate than she had admitted). George Spencer and Charlie Clarke, a stallholder in Soho's Berwick Street market, were implicated through their friendship with Dudley. Ernie Maynard was alleged to have been involved in the plot against Moseley. It was implicit in the prosecution case that all had been connected with the Legal & General gang. The press was able to take its cue for some extravagant headlines from the opening remarks of Michael Corkery QC, prosecuting, who said that there was 'no shortage of horror, appalling cruelty and sheer evil in this case'.

In the course of his summing-up, Mr Justice Swanwick told the jury that 'without the evidence of the alleged oral confessions, there would not be evidence on which the Crown could ask you to convict'. He was referring in part to "confessions" which were supposed to have been extracted from the defendants under interrogation at Loughton. The police stated on oath that they were accurate; the defendants maintained just as vehemently that they were fabricated. Whom should the jury believe?

The statements included a number of remarks that, although they fell short of straightforward admissions, were damaging at best and damning at worst. Dudley was quoted as saying, apropos of Cornwall's relationship with his daughter: 'I told him if he had sex with her, I would kill him.' Similarly, Cornwall was supposed to have written to Ray Baron in prison, boasting about his conquest of Kathy (although evidence of the existence of this letter was never produced). Dudley said, 'Yes, but Ray never mentioned it to me. If he had, I would have given Cornwall his last rites earlier. . .'

Maynard's interview was also recorded as being self-incriminating. He seemed to contradict himself over whether or not he knew of the liaison between Moseley and Frankie Fright. Also, he was asked, 'Did you tell Ronnie

Fright to be late at the meet and did you meet Moseley yourself?' He replied: 'I'm not answering that, otherwise I'm finished.' With reference to the Cornwall murder, it was put to Maynard that 'You went to a certain address – the Saggs' house – looking for him?' Maynard responded, according to the statement, 'It was business.'

The jury was confronted with a mass of statements such as these, the validity of which was fiercely contested by prosecution and defence, and on the interpretation of which, according to the judge himself, the outcome of the trial hinged.

This kind of argument, with defendants disputing the substance of what the police say they've said, is not unfamiliar in the courts. If the prosecution relies for its evidence, in whole or in part, on statements made in police custody, the defence will almost inevitably riposte with an accusation of "verbals", (underworld slang for concocted statements). Since the police will have worked hard to construct a case against someone they believe guilty, one can sympathise with their weariness when the "verbals" charge is levelled once again.

In this case the defendants characterised the statements as "link verbals", meaning that although they had actually spoken much of what was attributed to them, their words had

been put in a different context.

It emerged during the trial that the office in which the contentious interviews were conducted was equipped with tape-recording facilities. The microphone was concealed inside a dummy telephone on Commander Wickstead's desk.

The tape, however, was not used.

Why not? the defence wanted to know. Why have such equipment at all if not to use in the pursuit of those responsible for particularly malicious crimes?

Wickstead replied, 'I am a police officer who believes in police methods and tape recorders are not used in police interviews.' He explained that the tape was used when people were supplying information.

In response to further questioning, another police officer gave three reasons for not using the tape: that it was not police practice, as the evidence so obtained would have been inadmissible in court; that because of the 'street noise on that Saturday afternoon' the answers would have been inaudible anyway; and that also 'the noise of the officers in the room scraping their chairs and coughing would interfere with the tape'.

The first point again begs the question of why the equipment was installed at all; and the other points beg

the question of why such apparently inadequate equipment was installed. The room, in any case, was carpeted.

The most important prosecution evidence apart from the police statements was given by Anthony Wild, an armed robber. He seems to have hitherto enjoyed an extravagant standard of living. However, he claimed to have undergone a spiritual conversion after his last job, a raid on a Securicor van outside Sainsbury's in Redhill, Sussex.

Wild said that he had met Maynard, Dudley and Clarke when they were all on remand in Brixton prison. While playing cards together, they had openly boasted to him of having committed the crimes. In doing so, they employed rather colourful phrases, which testified to the levity with which they regarded the matter.

Wild also related a bizarre anecdote. Dudley, he said, took Moseley's head in a bag to a Brighton pub, the Horse & Groom, where the landlord, Oliver Kenny, was an old friend. Dudley gave him palpitations by publicly producing it in the bar. (This tale immediately gave the underworld rich scope for black humour. 'I hear your beer doesn't have much of a head on it,' ran one version, 'so I brought along one of my own.')

There are grounds for treating Wild's

testimony with considerable caution. It seems to have been an open secret throughout the prison that Wild was an informer. Even if the defendants hadn't known this, they would hardly have taken him into their confidence, partly because Wild was a weird personality (described as 'a reformed criminal' by the prosecution, and 'unbalanced' by the defence); and partly because, as experienced criminals, they would have been very wary of police tactics of this sort.

Nevertheless, Wild's ebullient repartee under cross-examination did have an electrifying effect in court. Lawyers dubbed his performance "the Wild West Show". The prosecution took his story about Moseley's head seriously. There was surmise that it had been thrown into the sea at Brighton. A local fisherman was called to the witness box to describe having seen something which could have been a head bobbing out to sea. Mr Justice Swanwick, in his summing-up, briefly speculated about what the specific gravity of a head might be.

Ronnie Fright was remanded not to Brixton but Pentonville, ostensibly because Bob Maynard had virtually accused him of Moseley's murder, and had threatened him. A prisoner named Frank Read testified that Fright had confessed to him in prison, blurting out the words, 'We done one, we sawed

one up.' However, this part of the case against Fright was effectively demolished. Two trusted prisoners gave evidence that they had offered to help Fright because they were sure that Read was perjuring himself. More importantly, the assistant governor of the prison testified that the police had tried to interfere with prison administration, and had tried to trap Fright by putting him together with a prison grass.

There was another embarrassing moment for the prosecution at this stage of the trial. Another prisoner, Frank Happer, testified that the police tried to recruit him as a grass, asking him to get a confession out of another defendant, George Spencer. The police vigorously denied attempting to construct the prosecution case in this way. However, when asked who had approached him, Happer replied, 'That man there', pointing to a plainclothes policeman who was sitting in court with a group of lawyers. The defence asked the jury to consider how, if the incident had not occurred, Happer could possibly have known that the man was a policeman.

The rest of the evidence was wholly circumstantial. Maynard's remarks at the funeral seemed damaging. How could he have been so sure that Moseley was dead even before his body had been found? Maynard

argued that he had feared the worst, and what had been said was just pessimistic speculation.

George Arnold, a witness for the prosecution, said that when he and Maynard went together to look over Moseley's flat after his disappearance, Maynard picked up a key. The latter responded that it was of no significance. Nevertheless, the incident, tiny as it was, launched a thousand rumours.

Another element in the prosecution case was that Dudley had harboured a grudge against Moseley ever since the two had come to blows back in the sixties. However, the two witnesses produced to give details of this incident contradicted each other. One, a man with a hearing-aid who admitted that he was unwelcome in their circle because he interfered with small boys, dated it firmly in 1968; the other was just as certain that it had occurred in 1964.

Sharon Saggs, who was sixteen at the time of the trial, identified the two men who had called at her home two years earlier asking for Cornwall as Maynard and Dudley. This was a positive identification, but unusual circumstances surrounded it. She had identified the men from photographs, and the photograph of Dudley was significantly larger than all the others. Secondly, she was accompanied by her father at the time, even though

Colin Saggs was then serving a sentence in a Lincolnshire prison. Why, the defence asked, wasn't she simply given the chance to pick out Maynard and Dudley from an identity parade?

One identity parade did take place. Kathy Dudley was put in a line during her remand at Holloway prison, with the intention of showing that she was still going out with Cornwall in the summer of 1975. Charlie Morrish, a Clapton newsagent, was supposed to have seen them together in a pub. Remand prisoners are allowed to wear their own clothes. As they lined up, Kathy wondered if Morrish might have been told that she was wearing a red jumper, so she swapped with the girl next to her, whose jumper was green. As she did so, she noticed a policeman looking hard at her. When he retreated to fetch Morrish, the girls hurriedly swapped back again. Morrish picked out the girl in the green jumper.

Towards the end of the trial John Platts-Mills QC, defending Spencer, referred with some vehemence to 'these piffling pieces of evidence'.

Michael Corkery QC, prosecuting, stressed that he was under no obligation to establish a motive for the crimes, but he would nevertheless put forward some possibilities. Moseley was killed either because of his assertions that Dudley was a grass; or because Dudley was taking revenge for the fight

in 1964 or 1968; or because he had a key to a secret hoard of valuables (which would explain the torture aspect of the killing); or because of his affair with Frankie Fright; or out of sheer sadism. Cornwall was killed because he tried to avenge the murder; or because of his relationship with Kathy Dudley.

The profusion of possible motives in itself casts doubts on the validity of the prosecution case. After all, a murderer needs only one motive. Here, the prosecution seemed to be clutching at straws. Moseley may have had an "out-of-order" affair with Frankie Fright, but surely it was no business of Maynard and Dudley's to avenge it. No evidence has ever been produced to substantiate the theory of a hidden cache of robbery proceeds. (For all their allusions to this, the press just as frequently described Moseley as a 'small-time-crook'.) Dudley may not have liked Moseley, but that was hardly persuasive evidence of a murderous intent.

Cornwall seems to have been genuinely, understandably upset about what had happened to his friend, but he didn't seem bent on revenge. If he was, he displayed a procrastination which might have stood him in good stead had he ever been required to play Hamlet, but which was highly unusual in north London gangsters.

In the witness-box, Maynard was

reduced to tears when describing the last time he had seen Moseley alive. His longstanding friendship with Moseley was surely a persuasive argument for his innocence. Moseley's widow, Ann, gave evidence for the defence at the trial (and was demeaned by the judge for her pains). After the convictions, she, with her eldest son, was among the first to lend support to the campaign calling for the release of those who, according to the verdict of the Central Criminal Court, had murdered her husband.

A story is told in legal circles of a trial that had been going on, and on, and on. At length, counsel felt obliged to apologise to the judge.

'I'm sorry, m'lud, for taking up so much of the court's time.'

'Time?' responded the judge wearily. 'You have exhausted time and encroached upon eternity.'

The remark was not made during the torso trial, but it could not have been more apposite. The duration of the trial, as preposterous as it was unprecedented, could hardly have benefited the defendants.

First of all, the trial must have become unacceptably arduous for the members of the jury. When they had been sworn in, they were told that the trial would last eight weeks, not seven months, of which twenty-six entire days

were spent outside the court while the judge listened to legal submissions. They should not have been expected to scrutinise the ebb and flow of prosecution and defence argument over such a period. At one stage in his summing-up, the judge referred the jury to a point made previously, 'which you have probably forgotten and which I ought to remind you of'. He was then referring to something mentioned a few *days* earlier in his twelve-day summing-up. If memories needed refreshing in that instance, what about all those pieces of evidence that had been presented *months* before?

Also the tension associated with such a serious matter as a murder trial evaporated. The business took on the languor of a long-running show. Barristers left proceedings in the hands of their juniors, as they were called away elsewhere. Those who could not escape attempted to relieve the boredom with humour. Duncan Campbell noticed that on one sunny afternoon in court, four barristers were all apparently asleep.

Finally, the longer a trial endures, the harder it becomes for the jury to believe that the whole thing could possibly be a gigantic mistake.

As it happens, the verdicts showed that the jury gave rigorous thought to their unenviable task. They spent two nights in a hotel before coming to

decisions on all the charges. Ronnie Fright left the court after being acquitted on 15 June, the first day of their deliberations.

The judge had directed the jury to acquit Ernie Maynard, and they also acquitted George Spencer. The other four were found guilty, the decisions against Bob Maynard being majority ones. As his brother, Ernie, stepped down from the dock, he indicated the remaining defendants, and said to the judge, 'They are all innocent.'

The sense of unreality which had been occasionally noticed during the trial survived its conclusion, and penetrated the post-trial newspaper reports. Generally, the opportunity to put evil-doing into nefarious perspective is enthusiastically seized, as it was on this occasion. But it was clear that even the most seasoned crime correspondents could not agree on what the trial had been about. Gang-land revenge? A secret hoard of diamonds? There was only disharmony in Fleet Street.

Once a miscarriage of justice has occurred, new evidence to confirm the wrongful conviction has to be painstakingly winkled out by assiduous solicitors, legal organisations or journalists. The process is invariably a lengthy and dispiriting one. In the Maynard-Dudley-Clarke case, however, new evidence emerged in quite sensational fashion.

On 28 July 1977, six weeks after the end of the trial, Moseley's head was discovered on a lavatory seat in public conveniences in Barnsbury, Islington. The skull was covered by a plastic bag. Wrapped around the head was a copy of the *Evening News* dated 16 June 1977, when the jury had spent all day considering their verdicts. Those who had anticipated that this development would lead to the expeditious release of the three men were, however, disappointed. The discovery did not seem to galvanise the police. When Duncan Campbell asked Scotland Yard who was in charge of inquiries, he was informed that there were none in progress. Apparently, the police believed that further action was unnecessary, since the head had, in their view, been placed there by associates of Maynard and Dudley in the hope that it would discredit the correct verdict of the court.

This is not a plausible theory .

The inquest did not take place until October at Walthamstow coroner's court, when Professor James Cameron once again gave evidence. He was closely questioned by Dudley's lawyer, Jonathan Goldberg. Though initially reluctant to answer questions ('I have given my report to the DPP, and I shouldn't divulge it until he tells me'), he was instructed to do so by the coroner. The skull had been in 'extremely good

condition' (as rotting heads go, presumably). His examination revealed that Moseley was not shot, but had choked to death on his own blood and saliva. Cameron was unable to say for certain where the head had been kept for almost three years, although traces of car paint indicated that it may have been stored in a garage. It had also been buried at one point. For much of the time it must have been in a deep freeze; it was thawing out when it was found.

The head thus yielded more forensic evidence than the totality of what had been put before the trial jury, and it comprehensively shattered two elements of the prosecution case. Right from the outset, at the committal hearing, the prosecution asserted that Moseley had died in the same way as Cornwall – with a single bullet through the head. Corkery stated during the trial that he was '98 per cent certain' that Moseley had been murdered in this way. Now that this link between the murders was disproved, the nexus between the crimes was that much more slender. Further, the head had clearly not been washed out to sea at Brighton. The various references in court to this eventuality now seemed jejune.

If accomplices of Maynard and Dudley were in possession of such dramatic evidence, it would have been sheer perversity not to have produced it

while the trial was in progress (there was, after all, plenty of time), rather than waiting until the men were convicted.

A different, more credible explanation is that Maynard and Dudley were both innocent. Whoever was guilty wanted to ensure his own safety by waiting until someone else had been convicted of his crime – and was now trying to salve his conscience by offering a public indication that the convictions were erroneous.

It is one of the vagaries of the English judicial system that even such a significant development as the discovery of the head availed the convicted men nothing when their case went to appeal. Nor was it even expected to: however bizarre, it was, in hard legalistic terms, a matter of no great consequence. A court of law could infer from it nothing about the guilt or innocence of the men.

The appeal was argued on different grounds – that the judge should have used his discretion to rule that the two murders should have been dealt with separately; that what was described as the 'inordinate length' of the trial unfairly disadvantaged the defendants; and that the evidence of uncorroborated oral confessions was insufficient on which to convict.

Michael Mansfield, appearing for Dudley, also raised the 'hostile nature'

of the charges. By this he meant that 'the murders were of a class which would horrify anyone who read about them and that a jury would approach their task on the basis that it would be utterly wrong if at the end of the trial they were to reach a conclusion that no one was to be punished for these murders'. In this respect, the publicity surrounding the case was 'highly prejudicial'.

An interesting argument, but the court would have none of it. 'There are plenty of examples of horrifying crimes going unpunished because the Crown has been unable to adduce proper proof of the guilt of the particular alleged criminal who, on the evidence, has been rightly acquitted.'

Lord Justice Roskill, Lord Justice Ormrod and Mr Justice Watkins delivered judgment on 2 April 1979: 'the appeals all fail and must be dismissed'.

Almost from the moment that sentences were passed, a campaign for the release of the three men was set in motion. At that time, there was probably greater optimism that those wrongly imprisoned would be able to find rapid redress. A number of cases in the mid-seventies had illustrated the uncertainty of the judicial process, and some were remedied.

The MDC campaign was spearheaded by Bob Maynard's wife, Tina. It was very well organised, which

perhaps indicated a metropolitan awareness of the advantages of good publicity, and how to get it. Badges and T-shirts were printed with the slogan, 'MDC – Not Guilty, Right V'. On 18 September 1977 about a hundred people marched in protest from Camden Town to Hyde Park Corner.

Six of the erstwhile defendants lent what support they could. Bob and Ernie Maynard, Reg Dudley, Charles Clarke and George Spencer all took truth-drug tests, and Kathy Dudley a lie-detector test. All, "passed" in so far as those administering the tests were able to report that all had been telling what they perceived to be the truth, and that all had disclaimed knowledge of any events leading to the Moseley and Cornwall murders.

However, this didn't constitute hard evidence as far as the Home Office was concerned.

In August 1980 Anthony Wild was released from prison, and was subsequently interviewed by Duncan Campbell and Graham McLagan, BBC Radio 4's home news correspondent. They found Wild quite willing to discuss the MDC trial. He said that he could get Maynard and Dudley out of prison 'tomorrow', because he had given untrue evidence. He claimed – with some pride, apparently – to have invented the story of the head in the Brighton pub: he seemed to think it was

a highly imaginative touch.

Campbell and McLagan reported the conversation to the Home Office. The barrister Michael Hill who had been Corkery's junior at both the original trial and the appeal was asked to investigate. Nothing resulted from this fresh investigation.

There was some renewed activity in 1984, when Campbell's examination of the case was presented in the magazine *Unsolved*. Bob Maynard's eldest son, also Bobby, purchased eighty copies with a view to arousing new interest. He had been only fifteen at the time of the trial, but now – by trade a butcher in Knightsbridge – he was in a position to play a leading role in the MDC campaign. He stood as a candidate in the elections for the European parliament in June 1984. Reg Dudley persuasively pleaded his innocence in a programme in the BBC 2 series, *Lifers*.

Some cases which have resulted in erroneous convictions remain mysteries. There is no such uncertainty here. The names of those who murdered Moseley and Cornwall are common knowledge among the clientele of several north London pubs. The detection went wrong from the outset because both the police and the press jumped to conclusions. The murders were not

linked, nor were they ever the result of gang warfare: there never was a Legal & General gang. The idea that there could have been was simply a notion that took root and blossomed in the media.

Other avenues could profitably have been explored. In particular, Gloria Hogg's statements should have been followed up. However, once the judge had refused a defence application at the start of the trial for the murder charges to be tried separately, then the chances of disentangling the mundane truth from the extravagant myths that enveloped the defendants became remote. In the circumstances, the jury responded with creditable resolution. It wasn't their fault that they got it wrong.

The MDC case also illustrates one of the advantages which the prosecution naturally enjoys over the defence: that of being able to call witnesses whose testimony is advantageous, and to exclude those whose testimony could prove disadvantageous. Both Colin Saggs and George Arnold were made available to assist the prosecution, although both were serving prison sentences at the time, having been convicted in November 1974 of taking part in an abortive jewellery raid in Southend.

However, Oliver Kenny, the landlord of the Brighton pub, who would have been able to scotch Wild's story about

the severed head in his pub, was not available to the defence. He had been taken into custody for an alleged connection with offences that had taken place in 1965. (In the event, Kenny died of a heart attack in October 1977, prior to standing trial.)

A number of interesting parallels can be drawn between the Torso Murders trial, as the Maynard–Dudley proceedings inevitably became known, and one of Commander Wickstead’s previous cases. This concerned Arthur John Saunders, who in 1970 was jailed for fifteen years for his part in the Barclays Bank robbery in Ilford. This was especially notorious since its cash haul – over £237,000 – made it the most successful criminal operation of its kind.

In 1972, police arrested Bertie Smalls, who subsequently agreed to turn Queen’s Evidence. In return for his own freedom, he provided exhaustive details about a number of bank-snatches and other robberies including the Ilford one. According to *Cops and Robbers*, ‘Smalls had been involved in the job from the earliest planning stages down to the final share-out for each member of the team. He was adamant that Saunders, who had by that time been in jail for over two years, was not part of the team.’

Saunders’ case had already been to

appeal, unsuccessfully, in December 1971. In view of what Smalls had said, it was reconsidered. On 12 October 1973 Lord Widgery, Lord Justice James and Mr Justice Geoffrey Lane heard the fresh appeal. Widgery noted that (as in the Maynard–Dudley case) what mattered at the trial was what the defendant was supposed to have said in police custody. According to the judgment, ‘In the course of this interview as recounted by Police Superintendent Wickstead, one does not find Saunders positively admitting that he had anything to do with the Ilford bank robbery; on the other hand there is a noticeable absence of any positive denial of such association, and indeed many of the answers which I have read, equivocal in themselves, were certainly, one would have thought, answers which did not lie readily in the mouth of an innocent man, who would have asserted his innocence in a positive way.’

Widgery went on to comment that the record of this police interview was ‘in many ways the most substantial contribution which the prosecution was able to make’. Soon, he was referring to ‘the essential weakness of the prosecution case’. This is fascinating; the Crown cases in the Saunders and the Maynard–Dudley trials had clearly been cast from the same mould.

Basically, Widgery had to weigh the

testimony of Police Superintendent Wickstead against that of the arch-criminal Bertie Smalls. He allowed the appeal, quashed the conviction, and freed Saunders.

In 1985, Wickstead published his memoirs, *Gangbuster*. In view of the way in which the Saunders case had collapsed, it was perhaps not surprising that it did not feature in the book. What was more notable, perhaps, was the complete omission of any reference to the Legal & General gang. After all, the Torso Murders trial had made legal history. Its total cost was in excess of half a million pounds; the court transcript ran to more than three and a half million words. It was the longest murder trial ever to have taken place in the UK. As such, it featured in the *Guinness Book of Records*. How extraordinary that something so significant, so sensational, should apparently have slipped the memory of Gangbuster himself.