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A Cautionary Tale For E-Petitioners Wanting To Bring Back Hanging

Q: Who was the first person to be wrongfully executed in modern times?

A: Most people would probably say, “Timothy Evans in 1950... or Derek Bentley in 1953”.

Few people might know that in the very month that Evans was wrongly hanged, George Kelly met the same fate at Walton Prison, Liverpool. But it took much longer to show that Kelly was innocent — 53 years in fact.

Kelly was put to death for the brutal murders of the manager and assistant manager of the Cameo Cinema, Wavertree, both gunned down one evening in 1949 whilst counting the night’s takings. Kelly swore that he was elsewhere at the time but was executed all the same.

The case serves as a telling reminder to those who would now bring back hanging at a time when most civilised people in the UK thought that it had been consigned to the dustbin of history.

Kelly was fitted up as “riff-raff” by Liverpool CID – led by Chief Superintendent Herbert Balmer, known as “The Exterminator” – the victim of a lynch mob mentality, hints of “good riddance to bad rubbish” and at a time when “no questions were asked” by a beguiled public.

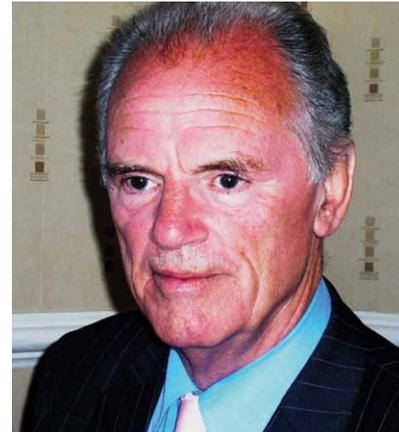
The Cameo case involved police corruption and official manipulation — both again worryingly believable today.

Still protesting his innocence, Kelly met his solitary end at the hands of public executioner Albert Pierrepoint. Nothing can rectify such an error.

In 2003, the Court of Appeal quashed his conviction referring to it as a tragic breakdown in the administration of justice “which was to be deeply regretted”.

This blemish on face of British justice might have gone undiscovered altogether but for the work of writer George Skelly (right) and Liverpool businessman Lou Santangeli.

An expanded version of “The Cameo Conspiracy: A Shocking True Story of Murder and Injustice”, by George Skelly, which contains the whole tragic story, is released by Waterside Press on Monday August 22.



For more information or if you would like to speak to the author please contact

- Bryan Gibson on 01256 882250
- or email; bryangibson@watersidepress.co.uk
- More details about the book can be found at www.WatersidePress.co.uk/Cameo

