**Project Crime from the Inside: The London Mail-van Robbery of May 1952**

Mark Roodhouse

For those interested in criminal organisation, the term *project crime* trips off the tongue and onto the page with barely a thought. It has formed part of their basic vocabulary since the sociologist Mary McIntosh coined the term in her 1971 essay “Changes in the Organisation of Thieving,” a concept that she developed further in her 1975 pamphlet *The Organisation of Crime*.[[1]](#footnote-1) Crime reporters and writers soon latched onto an idea that they understood readily, labelling *any* crime that a commentator thought involved “concerted action by a group, with advance planning, against a high-value target” as a project crime.[[2]](#footnote-2) Today, it is central to the study of serious fraud, where predatory fraud is categorized as a project crime in which teams of fraudsters plan, organise, and conduct sophisticated multiple frauds for a fixed period of time.[[3]](#footnote-3)

For McIntosh, project crime was one of four forms of criminal organisation: picaresque, craft, project, and business. Early modern bandit groups and pirate crews typified picaresque work groups involving a permanent gang with a single leader while pickpockets and confidence tricksters exemplified the small teams who practised crime as a routine craft activity. Burglars, robbers, smugglers, and fraudsters who “engaged in large-scale crimes involving complicated techniques and advance planning” epitomised project crime, while racketeers supplying illegal goods and services, including protection from other criminals, organised themselves like businesses with the connivance of the authorities.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Although all four organisational forms could (and did) co-exist at any point in time, their relative significance waxed and waned. McIntosh implied that one form was dominant at any times, amounting to distinct historical periods with more complex forms succeeding less complex ones as the dominant form.[[5]](#footnote-5) Picaresque crime was the dominant and possibly the only organisational form found in rural societies. Craft crime, project crime, and business crime were characteristic activities of professional criminals in urban societies with project and business crime assuming greater importance in advanced industrial economies. Although McIntosh based her four-fold schema on European and North American historical experience, she thought it a universally applicable model. When it came to her own society, McIntosh thought project crime was the dominant form that professional crime took in 1970s Britain. Hermann Mannheim had been making a similar observation in successive editions of his textbook *Comparative Criminology* since the mid-1960s.[[6]](#footnote-6)

An established form from the late 1930s, according to McIntosh, project crime flourished in the 1950s “when the high-jacking [sic] of lorries, pay-roll robberies, bank robberies and burglaries, and smash-and-grab raids became a regular part of the English crime scene.”[[7]](#footnote-7) According to Laurie Taylor and Dick Hobbs, its practitioners displaced safebreakers at the top of the criminal pecking order.[[8]](#footnote-8) North American criminologists Joseph Albini and Donald Cressey, who both spent time studying British crime in the early 1970s, agreed with McIntosh’s characterisation. In their view, “organised criminal gangs” or “task forces of criminals” represented the pinnacle of British criminal organisation, and the best teams bore comparison with their most accomplished American counterparts.[[9]](#footnote-9) What Albini called syndicated crime and Cressey dubbed confederated crime – business crime in McIntosh’s schema – was peculiar to North America; something Philip Jenkins and Gary Potter later challenged in their historical surveys of crime in mid-twentieth-century London.[[10]](#footnote-10)

By the 1980s, British crime reporters had begun to observe that the country’s most accomplished professional criminals had switched their attention from robbery to other types of project crime, pointing to the involvement of former train robbers Charlie Wilson and Roy James in tax fraud and Wilson’s subsequent involvement in drug smuggling. In doing this, they followed criminal-justice professionals who considered fraud and drug smuggling emerging threats with robbery a diminishing one from the late 1970s onwards. Both criminologists and historians re-published this first draft of criminal history with few if any corrections.[[11]](#footnote-11) When major heists occurred from the 1990s onwards, both popular and expert narratives understood them as historical throwbacks, organised by “diamond wheezers,” the last remaining practitioners of a disappearing craft tradition.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Based on popular literature that shaped public understanding of crime in the English-speaking world, McIntosh’s influential schema is a work of proto-historical criminology insofar as she raided the library for historical anecdotes from Britain and North America to pepper the text and lend her ideas authority. As a rhetorical strategy, it worked, persuading others to further elaborate her schema.[[13]](#footnote-13) It offers a Whiggish account of how urbanisation and industrialisation prompted the emergence and growth of an increasingly self-aware and complex occupational community of people who made their living through crime. In doing this, it reworks the underworld idea McIntosh found in five centuries of popular criminology. When it came to her discussion of project crime, two American works of popular criminology supplied the key to understanding the limited evidence of project crime from a criminal perspective in British and American true crime writing.[[14]](#footnote-14) Despite a subsequent boom in true crime literature, and the opening of criminal-justice records, there has as yet been no attempt to re-evaluate McIntosh’s account of project crime in light of this evidence.

What follows attempts to do just that through a study of London’s 1952 Eastcastle Street mail-van robbery, the most successful project crime committed in 1950s Britain. In so doing, it highlights the advantages of taking an historical approach to serious and organised crime.[[15]](#footnote-15) For me, these are that there is little or no personal risk to the researcher or their research subjects. One cannot libel the dead, obstruct ongoing investigations, or be found in contempt of court — three major obstacles facing studies of the criminal present. When it comes to the living, they are often willing to talk about their criminal pasts in surprising and sometimes tedious detail, statutes of limitations permitting. This can be cross-referenced with material from a wide range of sources including criminal-justice records if file closure periods allow. The historical criminologist has time and a reader’s card on their side, two assets that often trump a court warrant in one’s ability to investigate past crimes.

Although, as Dick Hobbs notes, “major era-defining crimes have gone virtually unrecorded by British academics,” historical research affords them a second chance.[[16]](#footnote-16) The Eastcastle Street mail-van robbery of May 1952 was such a crime, widely attributed to London villain Billy Hill and for which he claimed the credit with a nod and a wink in his ghost-written memoir *Boss of Britain’s Underworld*.[[17]](#footnote-17) Contemporaries recognised the robbery as epochal. Insurers ranked the loss of £236,748 in used banknotes alongside losses incurred as a result of the robbery of jewels worth £213,000 from the Aga Khan in France in 1949 and of £426,333 cash from a Brink’s counting house in the USA in 1950.[[18]](#footnote-18) Terence Morris and Pauline Morris, after conducting fieldwork for the influential study of London’s Pentonville prison between 1958 and 1960, noted that the professional criminals who they met inside considered the Eastcastle Street robbery “one of the ‘great jobs’ of all time.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

Law enforcement officials viewed the robbery in a similar light. Writing in his memoir, barrister and police officer Sir Richard Jackson, one of the fixtures and fittings in Scotland Yard conference rooms from 1946 to 1963, dated the opening of a new era of large-scale robberies to the Eastcastle Street job.

As a result of that night's work, the organiser was seen to have become a rich man and to have acquired immense prestige. He was admired by other criminals, and admiration leads to emulation. Even more important was the realisation that, with profits on this scale, crime had become big business. For such a haul it was worth taking trouble, worth laying careful plans, buying information, corrupting employees. If anything went wrong, there would be plenty of money to pay for the defence of any member of the gang unlucky enough to be arrested: and, if the worst came to worst, his wife and family could be properly looked after while he was away.

This was a self-sustaining development as “each successful operation provided capital for the next.”[[20]](#footnote-20) If a signal crime changes public behaviour and beliefs, then the mail-van robbery was surely an era-defining (or “epochal crime”) that changed criminal behaviour through the copycat effect.

What follows explores this epochal crime reconstructing events from the perspective of law enforcement, the media, and the robbers in turn. These perspectives reflect the three principal sources of information on which the study of serious criminality is based. Of the three, the media is the most commonly used, and the one on which McIntosh based her theories. They are also the sources on which today’s environmental criminologists draw when producing crime scripts. Again, the media is the most important source for academic scriptwriters. But first, let me tell you a story about a robbery.

# **Ambushed**

Early on the morning of Wednesday 21 May 1952, seven masked men hijacked a Post Office van as it travelled slowly through London’s West End from Paddington railway station to the main sorting office for London, the East Central District Office at St-Martin’s-Le-Grand. The van carried hundreds of High Value Parcels (HVPs) in 31 mailbags that the crew had collected from the Great Western Travelling Post Office. Under the eyes of railway police, the crew swiftly loaded the bags into their van after the mail-train arrived sometime around 3.50 am. The mailbags contained £392,882 10s. cash in low denomination banknotes mailed from West Country banks to their head offices in London.

At 4.20 am, ten minutes after leaving Paddington, the van, following a traffic diversion, turned into Eastcastle Street from Berners Street, off Oxford Street. As it picked up speed, a green Riley saloon car turning right onto Eastcastle Street from Berners Place edged out of the side-street in front of the van. The car crawled along for a few yards past some roadworks blocking the left-hand lane before coming to a halt. Thinking the car had stalled, the van driver stopped alongside the roadworks and applied the handbrake. Focused on the car in front, the driver did not notice a second green Standard Vanguard saloon car pull up behind him.

As the mail-van came to a standstill, three or four masked men opened the driver's door, grabbed the driver’s foot, and dragged him from behind the wheel onto the street. At the same time, two or three men opened the passenger door and yanked another of the van’s three-man crew onto the pavement. The last man sitting on the bench between the other two was slow to react. He failed to press the button triggering the emergency siren before he too was pulled from the cab, leaving the keys to the loading bay behind. Even if he had pressed the button, the alarm would not have sounded, as subsequent inspection revealed that its battery had been disconnected. All three men took a beating with the attackers punching, kicking, and clubbing them to the ground.

After seizing the mail-van, three of the robbers left the scene on foot, running north along Berners Mews, discarding hats, gloves, and coats behind some dustbins before crossing a bombsite to Newman Street. The other men drove the cars and van west along Eastcastle Street before turning left onto Newman Street and heading north.

The robbers drove the mail-van to a disused yard on Augustus Street, off Albany Street, Regent’s Park. Less than a mile from the scene of the hold-up but hidden from view with buildings on either side and walls to the front and back of them, the robbers transferred 18 of the 31 mailbags from the van onto a flatbed lorry with railed sides that the team had placed in the yard approximately three hours earlier. The team hid the bags in a central well created by stacking apple boxes on four sides of the flatbed. Leaving the van behind, the robbers drove the lorry to Spitalfields Market where they parked it outside The Gun Hotel.

Meanwhile other members of the team dumped the two cars on Floral Street, near Covent Garden Market. Both cars had been stolen from lock-up garages in Bathurst Mews sometime between midnight and 1 am. Police thought that a third scout car containing two men may have been involved as one witness reported seeing two men who arrived by car checking the Augustus Street yard at 2 am. Two others had noticed two men standing alongside a black parked car with its bonnet on Berner’s Street between 2.30 am and 3.45 am. A fourth witness saw a black car drive north along Berner’s Street in the direction of the yard shortly after the van had been seized.

At some point in the next 24 hours, the robbers collected the lorry and drove it to an unknown location to the east of London, possibly near Romford, Essex, where they unloaded and emptied the mailbags. Several days later police recovered six mailbags from a flooded gravel pit near Dagenham, Essex, but forensic tests could not link the bags to the robbery.[[21]](#footnote-21)

# **Known and suspected thieves**

This narrative account crafted from internal Metropolitan Police and Post Office reports summarises what investigators believed they could *prove* in court. Scotland Yard detectives and Post Office investigators pieced it together over several months from witness statements, evidence recovered from the crime scenes, and tips from criminal informants. The police linked one man to the scene through the laundry mark on a discarded raincoat, but he told them that he had mislaid it and one of the caps while at a pub. Unable to forge a stronger link between him and the crime, detectives prosecuted the man for receiving stolen sweets and rationing offences.

They identified the person they considered the most likely organiser within hours of the robbery taking place. Reviewing what they knew at 10 am on the day of the robbery, investigators concluded that it was the work of Billy Hill, a man “brutal to the extreme,” “principal in three West End clubs,” and a “police informant” known for “hold-ups” and “smash and grab” using stolen vehicles.[[22]](#footnote-22) Their reasoning was straightforward. The “method adopted, the planning involved and amount stolen suggested the work of Billy Hill.”[[23]](#footnote-23) Within days, an informant named those involved in the hold-up itself and a few others providing support.

The investigators placed Hill, his supposed team, and some of their known associates under observation, tapped their phones, brought them in for questioning, and searched some of their properties. With a team of the calibre needed for such a job, they realised that “arrests would probably depend upon finding the stolen money intact or in large enough sums to make untrue explanations difficult.”[[24]](#footnote-24) The searches came to nought. The police found a single £1 note under floorboards at a suspect’s home, but forensic tests failed to prove it came from the robbery. Surveillance led investigators to suspect a bookmaker and a corrupt solicitor's clerk of helping some of the team launder their shares of the cash but, once again, they lacked hard proof.

When a London bank reported two suspicious cash deposits of £2,000 in soiled £1 notes in June, it looked like detectives might crack the case wide open. West Country cashiers’ pencil marks on the notes tied them to the robbery. The resulting prosecution of two Warren Street motor traders for handling the stolen money failed. Frustrated at this result, detectives continued their pursuit of the two men, later securing the conviction of one for dealing in stolen cars.

Assuming that the robbers received inside information about arrangements for transporting HVPs and practical assistance to disable the mail-van siren, investigators also interviewed mail-van crew members. Unable to narrow down the list of suspects to manageable proportions due to lax security arrangements that had not changed for a quarter of a century, Post Office investigators had to rely on tip-offs from employees with murky motives. A year after the robbery, investigators admitted defeat. Both police detectives and Post Office investigators ceased making enquiries. They did, however, keep their files open, but closed them in 1961 and 1957 respectively.

Revisiting these failed investigations highlights the yawning gap that exists between what law enforcement knows and what it can prove about serious criminality. Scholars have long appreciated that law enforcement knows more than it says, cosying-up to agencies to secure privileged access to this secret knowledge. John Landesco made much of his use of police files in his ground-breaking 1929 study *Organized Crime in Chicago*, as did John Mack in his study of Glasgow’s full-time criminals during the years 1957-1973.[[25]](#footnote-25) The bargains they struck to secure access to police files prevented them from citing their sources with the result that readers had to take their findings on trust. As respected academics, this trust was forthcoming. Their academic credentials and observation of disciplinary conventions generated trust. By acknowledging police knowledge as patchy and inferential, they anticipated obvious criticisms from colleagues and further bolstered the truthiness of their work.

But, pouring over the files from the 1952 mail-van robbery, one must ask whether such trust is merited. Law enforcement knows more than it says, but not as much as we think it does about serious crime. Working with the Eastcastle Street robbery files, one views events like a detective. This should alert environmental criminologists, historical or otherwise, to the danger of analysing and scripting crimes using law enforcement records. Yet, seeing like a police officer is preferable to seeing like a crime reporter. As we shall see from media coverage of the mail-van robbery, the perils facing the would-be scriptwriter are magnified when crime news and true crime writing are primary sources of information.

# **Read all about it**

The British press and foreign news agencies offered newspaper readers a garbled and inaccurate version of the mail-van robbery in their coverage of the police investigation and resulting trial. It is these first drafts of history that all too often inform academic writing about serious crime, especially project crime. Initial press reports misrepresented the haul, valuing it at £25,000 and describing its contents as a mix of used banknotes and industrial diamonds. Subsequent reports established a more accurate, but still misleading, description of a haul of used banknotes destined for pulping when only a fraction were. The estimated loss also grew from an initial £25,000 to £100,000 within the first 24 hours. It hit £200,000 the following day. Four months later in September, the reported value of the loss stood at £250,000. A few estimated the robbers’ haul as £287,000. All were wrong. The official figure was £236,748 10s. from 18 mailbags, with the gang leaving a further 13 bags containing £156,134.

While fluctuating press valuations reflected initial confusion, information about the gang was mere guesswork bolstered with titbits from detectives and witnesses. The number of people involved varied, going as high as twelve but eventually settling at seven or eight persons. One of the robbers was possibly a woman dubbed “the Black Orchid” by some. That a single “mastermind” directed the robbery was taken for granted. Impressed by the robbers’ military-like precision, reporters concluded that the leader and likely the team possessed military training. With scant regard for the criminal genius of the British working-class, the *Daily Telegraph* pointed the finger at an American deserter, reporting that “at least one experienced American criminal” planned, but did not take part in, the robbery. Other papers attributed the “raid” to a middle-class British ex-commando officer.

How the gang carried out the robbery and what happened to the money were also subjects of much conjecture. Crime reporters based their theories on scraps of information shared or leaked by police detectives. That the robbery involved an inside man seemed likely to crime reporters despite political correspondents noting that mail-van routes and security precautions had remained unchanged for 25 years.[[26]](#footnote-26) Despite different MOs, recent mail-train robberies were also attributed to the gang. When police found amateur radio equipment near the mail-van depot, the *Daily Express* leapt to the conclusion that this was how the gang communicated as it tracked the mail-van across central London.[[27]](#footnote-27) A police circular asking shopkeepers, bank managers, bookmakers, and pawnbrokers to notify them of suspiciously large cash transactions led to reports of criminals laundering money at British and Irish racecourses.

Scotland Yard and the Post Office left all but one report unchallenged. In mid-August, Duncan Webb of *The People* reported that police had arrested a senior detective involved in the investigation and searched his home on suspicion of corruption. Under false pretences, according to Webb, three men connected with the gang arranged to meet the detective at a London hotel where they would tell him about the robbery. Someone told his superiors that the detective was collecting a £50,000 bribe, and they promptly set a trap for him.[[28]](#footnote-28) An Australian paper later identified the man as a detective superintendent.[[29]](#footnote-29) Secondary reports like this one ensured that such rumours received wide currency at home and overseas. They embroidered what was otherwise a thin account of the attack itself.

# **Revising the first draft of history**

After the failed prosecution in autumn 1952, the press lost interest in the robbery until two years later when Duncan Webb secured a cryptic confession to the robbery in the form of a professional appraisal from Billy Hill, “London’s No. 1 gangster”.[[30]](#footnote-30) Rather cheekily, the interview on which Webb based his article provided Hill with his alibi for a second coup: the theft of gold bullion worth £46,000. This was the first of three published versions of events surrounding the mail-van robbery based on Webb’s conversations with its supposed organiser. Webb included a lengthy account of the robbery in his book *Deadline for Crime*, published in May 1955. The source was “Bill” known as “The Guv’nor.” Webb’s third and final account of events appeared in Billy Hill’s memoir *Boss of Britain’s Underworld*, ghostwritten by Webb and published in November 1955.[[31]](#footnote-31)

The composite narrative that emerges from these three accounts suggests that Hill became interested in HVPs in mid-1951 and began to gather information about their transport from Post Office and railway employees who he met in London pubs. Through these contacts, he learned of a mail-van regularly carrying £40,000 to £50,000 of used banknotes from Paddington station to the St-Martin’s-Le Grand sorting office. With a target selected, Hill began planning in earnest, breaking the job into tasks, and recruiting people to perform them.

Post Office “snouts” provided inside information on the mail-van route and security precautions while “look-out men” followed the van for months. On the night of the hold-up, one of the snouts would disable the alarm and a look-out would report when the van left the station. Hill recruited “get-away drivers” and “operators” from the “Heavy Mob” for the hold-up. He picked eight men to travel in two cars (stolen to order) that would sandwich the van before forcing it to stop. After overpowering the van crew, three men would drive the van to a quiet location and there transfer its contents to a waiting lorry bought months in advance of the robbery, re-registered and adapted to the purpose.

At the yard, two “cover-up men” would take over from the “operators” and drive the lorry to Spitalfields Market, where they would park it for 24 hours. Meanwhile, the five remaining robbers would dump the two cars in Covent Garden Market. Someone else would pick them up and drive them home. The following day, one of the team would collect the lorry, drive it to Dagenham marshes, empty the mailbags, count the money, and divide it between 12 people. Each team member would receive part of their share immediately with the rest hidden for several months.

An initial team briefing took place in Hill’s illegal gambling club. Rehearsals followed. These took place outside London. On the night of the robbery, the team gathered in a West End flat where they received a final briefing at midnight. While this took place, a man in a postman's uniform entered the St-Martin’s-Le-Grand sorting office yard and disabled the mail-van’s siren before leaving to phone the flat to report the job done. Meanwhile, the car thief delivered two stolen vehicles to the street outside the flat, which the eight men drove in teams of four to Eastcastle Street. There they waited, one car parked in Berners Mews and another in Berners Place. A lookout posted at Paddington rang the flat to report the mail-van’s departure from the station. As the mail-van turned onto Eastcastle Street, the attack took place in accordance with the plan. It took seven minutes.

While the hold-up went to plan, the cover-up men had to change plans due to the unexpectedly large sum stolen. The sum involved prompted a more vigorous and sustained police response than Hill anticipated. As a result, the cover-up men moved the money more regularly than planned to avoid its discovery. When the robbers realised that police could identify some notes as coming from the hold-up, the robbers were forced to adapt their plans once more. They weeded out the identifiable notes and burned them. They also took some of the money to Belfast and Dublin where they changed it.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Of the three Webb versions of events, criminologists from McIntosh onwards treat his last one, Billy Hill’s ghost-written memoir, as an authoritative inside account of criminal life.[[33]](#footnote-33) Reviewing the book in 1956, the historian Eric Hobsbawm disagreed, describing it as “a hotted-up version of Sunday newspaperese spiced with crooked slang.”[[34]](#footnote-34) Hill’s common-law wife Gyp was not a fan either. She refused to attend its launch and referred to it as “a mug’s book.”[[35]](#footnote-35) That such books provide weak evidential foundations for any theories of criminal organisation would have been obvious to both Hobsbawm and Gyp. That criminologists treat crime news and the “Rolls Royce end” of true crime as reliable and build their theories on it is concerning. Fortunately, other historical sources and methods can underpin McIntosh’s typology and the work of academic scriptwriters.

# ***Criminal* scriptwriters**

Having highlighted the limitations of crime news and true crime as evidence of how a job was done, we must not forget their value in understanding the process by which an epochal crime like the mail-van robbery changes criminal practice through stimulus enhancement and imitation. While Duncan Webb’s accounts of the robbery and those of his fellow reporters are incomplete, inaccurate, and downright misleading at times, they repay our attention. Of limited value to the academic scriptwriter trying to analyse a project crime, journalistic accounts are vital in understanding how a criminal coup like the mail-van robbery leads to copycat crimes. Webb and his colleagues alerted many aspiring and active criminals to the rewards of mail-robbery. As well as drawing their attention to the mail (stimulus enhancement), detailed press coverage provided a template for cash-in-transit robberies (imitation).

Four months after the mail-van robbery one West London team of criminals carried out a similar attack targeting a wage delivery. A witness saw the team rehearse the crime several times, which they had scripted using press reports of the mail-van robbery.[[36]](#footnote-36) It was one of many cash-in-transit robberies resembling the 1952 hold-up. In the words of former armed robber Freddie Foreman, later convicted for his part in the epochal 1983 Security Express cash robbery, it was “a ground-breaking blagging.” From reading press accounts of the mail van robbery and similar coups, Foreman and his friends concluded “that we had to step up to the mark and begin running professional teams of robbers, because there were rich pickings out there if we got our acts together.”[[37]](#footnote-37)

Aspiring robbers like Foreman were not the only people to study crime news and true crime writing. Criminal justice professionals and criminologists with more respectable forms of criminal expertise both wrote and used popular crime literature. Former Flying Squad officer Jack Henry drew on his experience to assess the crime for several regional papers, while academics like Hermann Mannheim cited what they considered authoritative press accounts of this and other major crimes in their footnotes.[[38]](#footnote-38) Webb’s accounts of events proved the most influential, however.

# **Playing with the dinosaurs**

If the tales told by reporters and detectives provide limited evidence of how serious criminals work, there is one obvious source left: the criminals themselves. Amongst criminologists there is a much-vaunted tradition of talking to people about their recent criminal pasts, often dated from the 1937 publication of *The Professional Thief* by Edwin Sutherland and “Chic Conwell.”[[39]](#footnote-39) As an approach, it is more honoured than practised. And even its most distinguished practitioners like Dick Hobbs acknowledge the obvious problem: criminals lie. This led Hobbs “to enter Jurassic Park and play with the dinosaurs” whose life stories “represent excellent source material for any researcher.” For Hobbs, this was an alternative to prison research or ethnography.[[40]](#footnote-40) He is not alone in playing with the dinosaurs.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Talking with former criminals as opposed to active or imprisoned ones is not without its problems, however. The principal danger facing criminologists like Hobbs who enter Jurassic Park is an intellectual one: retired criminals believe their lies. When reading or listening to villainous life stories, Hobbs warned his colleagues of placing too much trust in ex-criminals’ accounts of “halcyon days of honourable gore and filthy lucre.”

Deception is part of the criminal game, yet it is upon these often cosy elderly-male reminiscences of blags, shags, and sawn-offs, in a fog-bound Ealing-comedy post-war Britain, where ritual slaughter and American saloon cars merge seamlessly with full employment and outside privies, that our vision of the British underworld has been constructed.[[42]](#footnote-42)

 The work of Sutherland, Hobbs and a handful of other criminologists complements the work of pioneering oral historians who sought to recover the lives of the poor. Several of the earliest oral histories from the 1970s and 1980s captured something of petty crime. Serious crime has eluded them, however. The one exception is Raphael Samuel who published *East End Underworld: Chapters in the Life of Arthur Harding* in 1981. Based on tape-recorded interviews with former “East End terror” Arthur Harding, it stands alone more than forty years later. This is not to say that there is no contact between crime historians and former criminals, but their interests are rarely compatible with one group seeking to monetise their criminal pasts while the other wants to understand them.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Burgeoning interest in a lost criminal underworld, reflected in a late-twentieth-century boom in true crime memoirs, histories, and documentaries, led to one such encounter between the academic historian Robert Murphy and suspected 1952 mail-van robber Alexander “Sonny” Sullivan. Unable to persuade either Martin Short or James Morton, then popular chroniclers of London gangland, to write a book about his life, Sullivan turned to Murphy, author of the popular history *Smash and Grab*. Recorded at Sullivan’s North London home in the presence of his son sometime between 1994 and Sullivan’s death in 1998, their conversation sheds new light on the mail-van robbery. While low sound levels make their conversation inaudible at points, what Sullivan told Murphy transforms our understanding of this epochal crime and, with it, McIntosh’s theory of project crime.[[44]](#footnote-44)

# **The robber’s tale**

During his conversation with Murphy, Sullivan glossed the accepted version of events and filled in many missing details. While Billy Hill planned it, Sullivan organised it. Neither man went on the job — nor did Sullivan’s younger brother “Slip,” who, like him, worked for Hill. Seven men, not eight, held up the mail-van, with two of their number taking it away. Sullivan neither confirmed nor denied George “Taters” Chatham’s assertion that Terence “Lucky Tel” Hogan drove the van to the yard. [[45]](#footnote-45) He did confirm that Taters was on the team, as Taters had already admitted his involvement on national television.[[46]](#footnote-46) Sullivan also named Billy Benstead as a team member.[[47]](#footnote-47) In the days before the robbery, detectives observed Hill meet with Jock Gwillim and Teddy Machin. Gwillim and Machin also met with Machin’s brother Frank, Taters, and Patsy Murphy.[[48]](#footnote-48) This is strong circumstantial evidence of their involvement in the robbery, if not the hold-up itself.

Of obvious interest to annalists and chroniclers of gangland, such facts should also interest criminologists as they highlight that these were able criminals who practised a mix of craft, project, and business crime. With residential addresses spread across the capital, this was not a neighbourhood team. All were working-class Londoners and everyone but Hogan was middle-aged. A few had military experience, but their conduct was far from exemplary. Most had Criminal Record Office numbers which identified them as experienced and serious offenders who had spent time in adult prisons and, often, borstal institutions for young offenders. Their Post Office intelligence files, from which this information comes, record experience of burglary, motor theft, and safecracking, as well as blagging.[[49]](#footnote-49) With the exception of Gwillim and Frank Machin, all feature in the true crime histories cited frequently by criminologists.[[50]](#footnote-50) Theft was not their only pursuit. Post Office investigators noted that Billy Hill, the Sullivan brothers, Teddy Machin, and Patsy Murphy were involved in running and protecting illegal gambling clubs. Several had legitimate but dead-end jobs with irregular hours.

Although Webb credited Hill with the general idea of a mail-van robbery, Sullivan stumbled across the target and did all the intelligence gathering. At night, Sullivan was a croupier in one of Hill’s illegal gambling clubs but during the day he worked as a minder for a Dagenham greengrocer. The job took him to Spitalfields Market regularly where a porter Sullivan knew told him that “a pal of mine who’s got a pal working on the mail-vans” wanted to find someone to rob one carrying £30,000 in cash.[[51]](#footnote-51) Sullivan informed Hill, who asked him to get more details. On learning its route, Hill, Sullivan, and his brother Slip watched the van make its regular Saturday morning delivery to two banks in the City of London. They concluded that while snatching the mailbags would be easy, getting away was not. Hill declared it a “walkaway,” “no ifs and buts,” but told Sullivan to ask whether they could force the rear doors and take the mailbags from the loading bay while the van stopped at traffic lights.[[52]](#footnote-52) Sullivan discovered that the rear doors were alarmed. On learning this, Hill instructed Sullivan to “keep in touch and see if there’s anything else.”[[53]](#footnote-53)

Frustrated at going “backwards and forwards like a yo-yo” to get information “third-handed,” Sullivan demanded that he meet the mail-van driver supplying the information.[[54]](#footnote-54) At this point, a once promising but stalling criminal project turned into an epochal one. When they met in person, the driver told Sullivan that “I go and pick a million pound in old notes that come down from the north.”[[55]](#footnote-55) Although this had been going on for 25 years, it was the first that Hill and Sullivan, from nearby Camden Town and Holloway respectively, had heard of it. On learning this, Hill gave Sullivan the job of watching the mail-van collect banknotes from King’s Cross railway station very early in the morning and deliver them to the St Martin’s-Le-Grand sorting office. The van travelled along Gray’s Inn Road in full sight of a policeman directing traffic outside King’s Cross. Presented with this problem, Hill suggested diverting the mail-van into a quiet side-street using road signs. Sullivan began looking for road signs.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Although Hill and Sullivan got further with this plan than their previous two, it proved trickier than first expected. Sullivan found sourcing and storing the road signs less straightforward than they had imagined. When it came to staging the robbery, they were also limited to days the driver did not work. While the man knew that all van-crew members working the route would be suspects, he thought that the crew on the day of the robbery would be prime ones. Poor early spring weather was also a limiting factor. When Sullivan updated the driver on their thinking, the driver casually mentioned that another mail-van collected used banknotes from Paddington station. Hill seized on this new information as targeting the second route removed their biggest constraint: the driver’s shift pattern.[[57]](#footnote-57)

The project now assumed its final form. Although Hill switched the target from the King’s Cross route to the Paddington one, the plan to divert the mail-van onto a quiet side-street for the hold-up remained unchanged. He told Sullivan that, “We’ll wait another month … and we’ll go.”[[58]](#footnote-58) Scouting the route, Hill settled on diverting the mail-van from Oxford Street onto an 80-yard section of Eastcastle Street where the two side-streets, Berners Place and Berners Mews, faced each other. As they walked the route, Sullivan recalled Hill telling him that, “We’ll have two cars there, a car there. When the mail van comes round, that one pulls out in front and that one pulls out behind so that he’s sandwiched. He can’t do nothing.”[[59]](#footnote-59)

The plan became unexpectedly easier to execute when, “Lo and behold, a fortnight afterwards, Oxford Street is all pulled up.” “Where’s the diversion? Round that exactly. The diversion was exactly where we were going to put a diversion.”[[60]](#footnote-60) The scheduled roadworks began at the western end of Oxford Street on 1 April, with the diversion to the north moving eastwards in tandem with the workmen. From 10 May to 21 May, the diversion routed traffic along the chosen spot for the hold-up. This is when Flying Squad officers observed Gwillim meet with several of the men they later suspected of involvement in the robbery. The detectives had received a tip that Gwillim was involved in an upcoming job from a recently imprisoned associate.[[61]](#footnote-61)

# **Cutting a long story short**

As Sullivan’s account shows, planning was an ongoing process involving several people rather than a discrete event or an opening act in a multi-act crime script. The robber’s tale is far longer than those of detectives and reporters on which criminologists rely. Reflecting on the planning and organisation of the robbery, Sullivan noted: “I done everything. I done all the organising.”[[62]](#footnote-62) Sullivan obtained the tip and recruited the team. He also located a derelict yard for the mailbag transfer onto a lorry. Sullivan borrowed the lorry from his other employer, the Dagenham greengrocer, who was a former thief himself. Sullivan piled boxes on this lorry, leaving a hidden well in the middle, with a tarpaulin pulled across the top. He slit the tarpaulin to allow the robbers to throw the bags into the well. In effect, the lorry became a large mobile piggy bank. Sullivan also found “a closed down old factory on plenty of ground” to unload, count, and divide the money.[[63]](#footnote-63)

When asked what Hill’s role was, Sullivan replied that “All he done was sit in that chair and tell you *everything* to do.”[[64]](#footnote-64) Hill, “a perfectionist” with “brains,” insisted that Sullivan pay specialists to steal the cars for the hold-up to increase security.[[65]](#footnote-65) For similar reasons, he refused to allow Sullivan and his brother to take part in the hold-up. He also stressed that Sullivan must get the stolen mailbags off the road as soon as possible as “The police will fill London.”[[66]](#footnote-66) To do this, they needed a temporary hiding place where a lorry was unremarkable early in the morning. Sullivan suggested a wholesale market. Hill advised Spitalfields as Sullivan knew it well.[[67]](#footnote-67) Much of this chimes with the few details about the staging of the robbery that Hill gave Webb, and that detectives had learned from informants.

In Sullivan’s telling of the robbery, Hill exemplifies the idea of the background figure who plans and organises large criminal operations that others conduct. Contemporaries inferred the existence of such “masterminds” from their supposed work. Glaswegian criminologist John Mack captures this inferential reasoning well when he writes that:

The big job requires a great deal of information, even a central collator of such information; it requires equipment of a specialised kind which is hard to get without expert aid; it requires high-level planning skills, not usually combined with high-level executive capacities in one individual; it requires above all extensive and on-going systems for the large-scale disposal of stolen property.[[68]](#footnote-68)’

Similar inferential reasoning underpinned McIntosh’s ideas about project crime. When set alongside the accounts of investigators and reporters, Sullivan’s testimony establishes that background organisers existed in 1950s London. Mack also found evidence for their existence in Glasgow police intelligence files from the mid-1950s into the early 1970s.

While commentators inferred the existence of background organisers like Hill from their supposed projects, much of their work necessarily took place off stage and was largely unknown. What happened in the days, weeks and months after a robbery was the least understood aspect of major robberies. A share-out that satisfied all involved was vital in securing everyone’s silence. According to Sullivan, sub-contractors received fixed fees, principally the ringers who supplied the stolen cars and the Post Office insiders. These were taken “off the top” after counting but before dividing the haul. By prior agreement, all team members received “equal shares.”[[69]](#footnote-69) Although Hill got the same as everyone else, he expected some of the team to lose all or part of their shares in his gambling clubs. Taters Chatham did just that.[[70]](#footnote-70) Hill also gifted any money left to his relatives, business partners, and employees in other criminal enterprises.[[71]](#footnote-71) Sullivan considered this an act of “friendship.”[[72]](#footnote-72) By happy coincidence, it also served as insurance; silencing potential informants by implicating them and assuaging any jealousy they felt as well as obliging them to reciprocate at a later date.

When it came to laundering their shares, team members made their own arrangements. Surveillance suggested some paid others to mind, move, and launder their money. Whether they paid them fees or commissions is unclear. Others treated the stolen notes as a commodity which they sold to others at a discount. Police suspected Hill of laundering the notes through his illegal gambling clubs, the kerbside used car dealers of Warren Street, and making various cash investments. A corrupt solicitor’s clerk known to Hill and other members of the team likely washed some of the money through his firm’s client account.[[73]](#footnote-73)

What Mack described in study of Glasgow criminals as “system handling” was an important aspect of pulling off the Eastcastle Street job. First, all team members had to pass anticipated police interviews. Limiting individual knowledge through compartmentalising the job and using cut-outs made this easier. Use of disguises was another precaution. Given most people’s poor recall of precise times, ensuring the hold-up and getaway were swift helped the team establish their alibis for which they took personal responsibility. All this was obvious and routine for team members as was saying little or nothing during an interrogation.[[74]](#footnote-74) It was part of the blagger’s craft as were counter-surveillance techniques practised before and after the robbery: shaking off tails, committing nothing to paper, talking in person, saying little over the telephone, and scrutinising those around you.[[75]](#footnote-75)

What distinguished the aftermath of the Eastcastle Street robbery from craft robbery was the thought and energy that went into sabotaging the police investigation through planting false rumours. Hill monitored the course of the investigation through his contacts with crime reporters and police officers. Hill had long acted as a police informant, first for Percy Burgess and then Ted Greeno.[[76]](#footnote-76) He was also on friendly terms with the former detectives Ronald Sandison and John Walsh who attended the launch of his memoirs.[[77]](#footnote-77) Sullivan knew nothing of these relationships. As well as seemingly letting things slip in pubs, clubs and bars, and other places where detectives and their informants might overhear him, Hill talked with journalists.[[78]](#footnote-78)

Hill exploited the desire of crime reporters for additional details and clues about the robbery that would allow them to scoop their colleagues for his own ends. Duncan Webb of *The People* was his most important tool in this regard. Faced with a determined, talented, and ethical opponent in Detective-Superintendent Bob Lee of the Flying Squad, Hill set out to intimidate and impugn him. “Mad Frankie” Fraser, another Hill associate, and Jack “Spot” Comer, Hill’s former business partner, told of Hill hinting to Lee that he knew of his supposedly corrupt dealings with a South London criminal of mutual acquaintance.[[79]](#footnote-79) Webb also reported a failed attempt to entrap a senior officer whose rank an Australian newspaper gave as superintendent.[[80]](#footnote-80) When the prosecution of two motor traders for handling some of the stolen money failed, detectives and criminals believed that Hill had tampered with the jury.

For Hill, the Eastcastle Street job ended when active investigation ceased in 1953. Two unexpected snags forced him to revisit the job four years after planning commenced in 1951. The first, according to Sullivan, was the stabbing of his brother Slip in 1955. During a row with his partner, she stabbed him twice with a bread knife. Hearing this while casing another mail-van job in Winchester with Sullivan, George Walker, and his common-law wife Gypsy, Hill told Sullivan to rush to his brother’s bedside and persuade him not to talk. Nobody wanted his partner to face a murder charge for fear she might use her knowledge of the mail-van robbery to arrange a plea bargain.[[81]](#footnote-81) In 1957, a similar problem occurred when a fellow criminal Johnny Carter visited Scotland Yard offering to tell them what he knew of the robbery. Carter knew little and what he did know was already known to police. To ensure the more knowledgeable did not follow his lead, Hill made an example of him with his injuries receiving extensive press coverage.[[82]](#footnote-82)

# **Conclusion**

So, what should we conclude from the detective’s, the reporter’s, and the robber’s account of a crime that took place more than 70 years ago? First, in their haste to grasp the historical development of criminal organisation, many criminologists have misunderstood and misapplied McIntosh’s schema, including McIntosh herself. They have cut a longer story short, focusing their attention on the planning, preparing and carrying out of predatory crimes while overlooking subsequent stages in the criminal redistribution process. This reflects the necessarily limited point of view that using law enforcement or media sources forces on their work; the subject of ritual acknowledgment but limited reflection on criminologists' part.

Seen from an insider perspective, cross-referenced with these sources, project crimes like the Eastcastle Street mail-van robbery appear more complicated in some regards yet far simpler in others, and always buffeted by events beyond the criminals’ control. Unwitting condescension towards blue-collar criminals has led some to exaggerate the complexity of project robbery and overlook the planning involved in craft crime. Although routine, all craft crime requires some planning and organisation. As such, craft crime is frequently mistaken for the much rarer project crimes like the Eastcastle Street job.

Able criminals involved in what John Mack dubbed “the Bill Sikes type of thing,” “the comparatively well-planned operations of full-time substantial criminal predators of the traditional type — burglars, robbers, confidence men, thieves and so on,” practised both craft *and* project crime. In some cases, they also turned their hands to business crime, too.[[83]](#footnote-83) The reason for this is easy to discern. In an enlightening analogy, McIntosh noted how the organisation of project crime was “reminiscent of the way in which a small builder and decorator gather together a team including plumbers and electricians to carry out a house-conversion.”[[84]](#footnote-84) But small builders and decorators take on minor routine jobs to keep themselves and their associates in work between major projects, as do professional criminals.

One interesting implication of this conclusion is that it helps explain the increasing rarity of project robbery. Epochal project crimes were masterworks executed by criminals immersed in craft traditions. The near disappearance of “major blags” reflects the de-skilling and disappearance of the craft tradition from which they sprung. Increased security made routine robbery, the training and recruiting ground for project robbery, too costly a prospect for the able criminal who looked elsewhere for sources of income. The able pursued criminal careers in “the Al Capone kind of thing” – the supply of illegal goods and services, drug smuggling especially – and “the Stavisky kind of thing” — business-type crime, primarily tax fraud.[[85]](#footnote-85) Craft and project crime flourished in these growing areas of illegal enterprise while robbery went the way of other endangered British heritage crafts like gold beating, diamond cutting, and safecracking. Robbery is, however, one craft that no one seems keen to save.

All of this should give contemporary researchers pause for thought before labelling something a project crime, then scripting it. First, reliance on media or law enforcement sources means that our tales are necessarily told from a limited third-person point of view. Whether we recognise it or not, most crime scripts are unperformed metadramas, scripts of a play within a play like Michael Frayn’s *Noises Off*, written for a non-criminal audience by non-criminals from sources provided by non-criminals but never to be performed. This impoverishes our understanding of craft crime and project crime and may lead us to mischaracterise them, which in turns leads us to miscategorise individual crimes. From reading the robber’s tale, or even those of the detective and the reporter, it is obvious that the Eastcastle Street mail-van robbery epitomised project crime. It was the first performance of a new play written and produced by Billy Hill that a hand-picked company of London villains rehearsed and performed under his direction. Not all crimes are so easily classified in the absence of an insider perspective.

Not only does employing historical methods and sources to look at the Eastcastle Street robbery from the inside confirm the value of the craft-project binary that McIntosh introduced in 1971, while also cautioning how we deploy it, but it also underlines the value of the historical approach to the study of serious and organised crime. To date, charting the historical development of American organised crime in order to undermine the notion of organised crime as an ethnic conspiracy has been its most notable contribution.[[86]](#footnote-86) In doing so, it birthed important new ideas about ethnic succession in organised crime and established a distinction between illegal enterprise and illegal governance structures, amongst other things.[[87]](#footnote-87) Meanwhile, Italian historical research has established the continuous existence of the Sicilian mafia since the late nineteenth century.[[88]](#footnote-88) Contemporary discussion of the nature, origins and growth of mafia-like organisations rests and builds upon all of this work.[[89]](#footnote-89) When it comes to understanding organised crime, it would seem that the archival pass is often more useful than a police warrant card, and historical investigation safer and more enlightening than criminal investigation.

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2. John Ball, Lewis Chester and Roy Perrott, *Cops and Robbers: An Investigation into Armed Bank Robbery* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1978), 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For a recent example, see: Michael Skidmore and Beth Aitkenhead, *Understanding the Characteristics of Serious Fraud Offending in the UK* (London: Police Foundation, 2023). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. McIntosh, *Organisation of Crime*, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Michael Levi, *The Phantom Capitalists: The Organization of Long-Firm Fraud* (London: Heinemann, 1981), 279. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Hermann Mannheim, *Comparative Criminology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), 656-659. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. McIntosh, “Changes,” 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Laurie Taylor, *In the Underworld* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 78-79; Dick Hobbs, *Bad Business: Professional Crime in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
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13. Dick Hobbs, “The Nature and Representation of Organised Crime in the United Kingdom,” in Cyrille Fijnaut and Letizia Paoli (ed.), *Organised Crime in Europe: Concepts, Patterns and Control Policies in the European Union and Beyond* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2004), 413-434; Heather Shore, “A Brief History of the Underworld and Organized Crime, c.1750-1950,” in Paul Knepper and Anja Johansen (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Crime and Criminal Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 170-191. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
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24. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
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30. Duncan Webb, “‘I got back Gordon Richards’ golden spurs’,” *The People*, 26 September 1954, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Webb, “‘I got back Gordon Richards’ golden spurs’”; Duncan Webb, *Deadline for Crime* (London: Frederick Muller, 1955); *Evening Times*, 3-7 October 1955, 3; Billy Hill, *Boss of Britain’s Underworld* (London: Naldrett Press, 1955), 162-168. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
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33. McIntosh, *Organisation*, 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Thomas Greene [Eric Hobsbawm], “Muck-raking in London’s gangdom,” *Books and Bookmen* 1, no. 5 (February 1956), 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Justin Hill and John Hunt, *Billy Hill, Gyp and Me* (London: Billy Hill Family, 2012), 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
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40. Hobbs, *Bad Business*, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Roger Hood and Kate Joyce, “Three Generations: Oral Testimonies on Crime and Social Change in London’s East End,” *British Journal of Criminology* 39, no. 1 (1999), 136-160. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Hobbs, *Bad Business*, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. As a doctoral student, I experienced one such attempt when London villain “Mad Frankie” Fraser refused to talk with me unless I paid him for his time. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Alexander (“Sonny”) James Sullivan (1907-1998), interview by Robert Murphy, London, undated [fl.1994-1998], TDK D90 Cassette, *Sonny Sullivan*: Side A: Sonny Sullivan 1, 01:03:28; and, Side B: SS 2, 00:30:02. For Sullivan’s detailed account of the robbery, see 00:02:38-00:42:04 on Side A. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Sullivan, Side A, 00:15:56-00:16:32. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. George “Taters” Chatham, interview by Martin Short, “Kings of the Underworld,” *Gangsters*, ITV Carlton, London, 22 February 1994, <https://youtu.be/1G6n3DFJpZQ>, 00:11:48-00:12:27. This episode also includes a filmed interview with Slip Sullivan in which he discusses Hill’s Soho protection racket but not the mail-van robbery. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Sullivan, Side A, 00:21:18-00:21:22. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Osmond, “Report,” 20 March 1953. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. For photographs and personal particulars of the Eastcastle Street robbery suspects, see POST 120/43 at the Postal Museum, London. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
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52. Sullivan, Side A, 00:07:59-00:08:06 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Sullivan, Side A, 00:08:28-00:08:42. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Sullivan, Side A, 00:09:10-00:09:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Sullivan, Side A, 00:09:16-00:09:33. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Sullivan, Side A, 00:10:13-00:12:17. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Sullivan, Side A, 00:12:43-00:13:39. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Sullivan, Side A, 00:13:36-00:13:39. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Sullivan, Side A, 00:15:15-00:15:28. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Sullivan, Side A, 00:13:40-00:13:54. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Osmond, “Report,” 20 March 1953. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Sullivan, Side A, 00:15:39-00:15:41. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Sullivan, Side A, 0029:06-00:29:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Sullivan, Side A, 00:21:48-00:21:51. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Sullivan, Side A, 00:14:45-00:15:54. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Sullivan, Side A, 00:20:09-00:20:11. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Sullivan, Side A, 00:20:20-00:21:11. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Mack, “Criminal Organisation,” 297. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Sullivan, Side A, 00:30:24-00:31:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Chatham, 00:11:48-00:12:27. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Sullivan, Side A, 00:41:19-00:41:28. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Sullivan, Side A, 00:41:51-00:41:57. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Osmond, “Report,” 20 March 1953. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Sullivan, Side A, 00:33:23-00:34:00. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Sullivan, Side B, 00:10:02-00:11:00. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. “William Charles HILL.” [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. G. Carmichael, “Minute,” 25 November 1955, The National Archives, London, HO 287/162. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Webb, “‘Arrested’ Scotland Yard chief.” [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Frankie Fraser and James Morton, *Mad Frank: Memoirs of a Life of Crime* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1994), 108; Arscott and Osmond, “Memo,” 8 November 1957. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Webb, “‘Arrested’ Scotland Yard chief”; “‘Black orchid’.” [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Sullivan, Side B, 00:24:03-00:29:00. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. “£250,000 raid: ‘I’ll tell police secret of the potato sacks’,” *Sunday Pictorial*, 16 November 1958, 3; “Scarface Johnny locks the door,” *Daily Express*, 20 November 1958, 7; Robert Hill, “Squealer leaps into canal to escape gang,” *The People*, 14 December 1958, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. J.A. Mack and H.J. Kerner, *The Crime Industry* (Farnborough: Saxon House, 1975), 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. McIntosh, “Change,” 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. J.A. Mack, “‘Professional Crime’ and Criminal Organisation,” *International Journal of Criminology and Penology* 6, no. 4 (1978), 296. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. For an overview, see Jay S. Albanese, *Organized Crime: From the Mob to Transnational Organized Crime*, 7th ed. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Joseph L. Albini, *The American Mafia: Genesis of a Legend* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971); Mark H. Haller, “Illegal Enterprise: A Theoretical and Historical Interpretation,” *Criminology* 28, no. 2 (1990), 207-236. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. For an English-language synthesis of this work, see John Dickie, *Cosa Nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. For example, see Federico Varese, *Mafias on the Move: How Organized Crime conquers New Territories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-89)