

# The Kray Files

The True Story of Britain's Most Notorious Murderers

Colin Fry



Mainstream Publishing *eBooks*



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EDINBURGH AND LONDON

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To the sergeant 'orders is orders'.

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# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Being given the chance to write a book is something that doesn't happen very often to too many people. I have been fortunate in that respect, since this is my second offering – and it is all thanks to Bill Campbell at Mainstream Publishing in Edinburgh.

My wife Eva has, as usual, kept me supplied with coffee and sustenance during the small hours and my children Alexander and Christian have always been on hand to mould the plot into shape and to stop me from being too conservative in my thoughts.

I would like to thank my twin brother, Rod, for reading through my chapter on twins. I know it was a pain, but his efforts were much appreciated. Likewise my mother has always encouraged me with my work.

Friends have been supportive of my new profession as well. Lalit Bagai in Denmark and Charles Rosenblatt in Florida, USA, have always given me the best pragmatic advice based on their long years in business. Thanks to you both.

Newspapers have always been an invaluable source of information – although not exactly reliable for investigative endeavours – and the Internet is proving to be a tremendous source of all kinds of useful knowledge; but who do I thank here? These two sources in particular, coupled with my own intimate knowledge of the Krays, have helped me greatly in the early stages of my investigations. Sifting through the inaccurate and sometimes misleading stories becomes simply a habit, but then this is the stuff of legends and

make-believe plays its part in creating the imagery of the celebrity.

But we must not forget the academics who gave this book a new interpretation on the Krays. Professor Chris Jenks at Goldsmiths College (Head of the Sociology Department) in London has co-written a paper with Justin J. Lorentzen entitled 'The Kray Fascination' and I have regularly referred to this work within my own text. Also Tim Trimble, who lectures in psychology at King Alfred's College, Winchester, was invaluable in the psychological analysis of the background material. Without their guiding framework, this investigative part of *The Kray Files* would have been almost impossible. Other academics include Dr Dick Hobbs at Durham University, with whom I share a book title *Doing the Business*, and Audrey Sandbank who is a family psychiatrist with the Twins and Multiple Births Association (TAMBA). Audrey has just completed editing a new book on twins entitled *Twin psychology - from conception to grave* which will be published by Routledge sometime in 1998. Thanks for the help; it was outstanding and led me in all directions, enabling me to build up the 'big picture' that I was aiming at.

Thank you all for helping me in my quest to write an objective and in-depth analysis of the Krays.



# INTRODUCTION

When deciding on the format of this book, three distinct categories arose immediately: past, present and future.

The past is now history and well documented from many varying sources, the only problem being the grouping of such information into intelligible and readable chapters. Additionally, however, I decided to investigate the background that had so affected the Krays – the East End of London, with its sociology, history and significance within the country's capital. In this respect I was extremely fortunate in that a conversation with Alison McDonald at the Institute of Psychiatry in London led me to Professor Chris Jenks at Goldsmiths College, who had recently lectured on the sociology of the East End and in particular the Krays. A brief telephone conversation with the learned professor soon showed that he was exactly the right man, in the right place, at the right time. Indeed, he sent me a recent academic paper entitled 'The Kray Fascination', that he had written with a colleague, Justin J. Lorentzen. This paper helped to open my mind about the East End of London and I make no apologies for often quoting from his original manuscript (see Volume 14, Number 3, August 1997, *Theory Culture & Society*, publ. SAGE Publications, London).

But these chapters are about more than just the sociological aspects surrounding the Krays, so it was absolutely vital to my investigative work that I found a reputable source within the field of psychology to help create the background analysis so necessary for my investigation. This ultimately led me to Tim Trimble at King Alfred's College, Winchester, and his detailed accounts of

psychological behaviour helped me in focusing my attentions on the right areas of study.

Also, Audrey Sandbank at TAMBA, the twin organisation – with whom I had been in contact some years ago when I was considering writing a book on twins – supplied me with much intriguing information and material. This, coupled with the fact that I am, myself, an identical twin, enabled me to gain considerable insight into what the ‘twins’, Ron and Reg, were like.

My only loose end was getting hold of Scotland Yard and gaining access to their own Kray files. Even though I was initially told that the files would be made available to me, they pulled the 75-year rule and have put them away for safekeeping in a dusty drawer somewhere at Scotland Yard. It became obvious that there were officials in high places who didn’t want me to see these files and to access their data. So, without their help, I created my own extensive files and these form the basis for this book.

My history of the Krays was now complete; indeed the entire outline of the book was taking shape at a rapid and all-encompassing pace. The problem would be what to leave out rather than what to include.

Drawing on my inside knowledge of the Krays I decided on the following structure for my book and I have endeavoured to give a brief account of the reasoning behind why I consider these topics as being the most important and relevant to any work on the enigma known simply as ‘The Krays’.

Initially the Krays were known only as able boxers and petty crooks. It was the out-and-out ferocity of their violence, man to man, gang to gang, that made the Krays what they are today. They didn’t lose fights – unlike during their boxing days – for Ron and Reg Kray it was a win-win situation. It was this incredible ability that first brought them to the attention of Scotland Yard. Hence the title for chapter one: ‘Once Upon a Time There Were . . . The Gang Wars’.

All three Kray brothers were always anti-police, ever since the days of hiding their deserter father from the inquiring eyes of local constables, keen on apprehending 'old man Charlie' for desertion from the British Army. The environment of the East End of London did the rest. The Krays never asked for favours from the police nor did they give any. Their worlds were worlds apart and even now in the 1990s they remain the same, stuck in their own particular time warp with only hatred as their guide; it would appear that the Krays will be forever trying to outsmart Scotland Yard, hence the title for chapter two - 'Trying to Repay the Old Bill'.

When researching the Krays many names arise unexpectedly only to disappear swiftly without trace. Are these people victims of the ruthless methods of organised crime and especially those practices as adopted by the Krays? Or did they get out while the going was good? Indeed, some did manage to escape to South Africa and other Commonwealth countries; but not so George Cornell, shot and killed by Ron Kray in The Blind Beggar public house; not so Jack 'The Hat' McVitie, stabbed to death by Reg Kray; not so the 'Mad Axeman', Frank Mitchell, killed by Kray lieutenant, Freddie Foreman. The list continues, hence chapter three - 'Another One Bites the Dust'.

What made the Krays different, and one of the main reasons for their continual cult status, is their craving for publicity. It was Ron Kray in particular who directly sought the general public's attention, by being photographed with George Raft, Lord Boothby, Henry Cooper, Barbara Windsor and other celebrities. This was all part of his strategy, his own brand of image building. The Krays have become icons of a sort, and celebrities by association. They are, or so it would appear, now part of the establishment, that same establishment that they always feared. Hence the title for chapter four - 'Stars in their Eyes'.

When it came to working closely with the US Mafia no one came nearer to being a part of 'Murder Incorporated' than the Krays. Their involvement was extensive – they protected their clubs in London; they laundered their illicit dirty money; they even protected their close pals. When visiting celebrities from the USA needed 'minding' it was the Krays who got the phone call and the Mob even asked them to protect young Frank Sinatra Junior when he was on a tour of the UK. As a special favour the whole Kray family were invited to see Frank Senior perform when he was on tour in London and to attend the reception party afterwards. Chapter five is therefore entitled – 'Mob Rules'.

Who was the good twin and who was the bad one, or were they both just as bad as each other? A complete psychological profile has never been attempted on the Krays – not, that is, before now. With the assistance of the academics and a number of well-informed and creditable sources, this chapter attempts the impossible. It is not to apportion blame or to excuse anyone for their actions, but to gain insight into the Kray phenomenon and to assist in the understanding of their actions, both now and then. Hence the title for chapter six – 'Twins'. This sets out the basis for a complete understanding and appreciation of the Krays but it is only by looking at events after their apprehension in 1968 and imprisonment the following year that the big picture can be established.

We have now come to the present and this is where my own in-depth knowledge of Kray business activities comes into focus. Remember, at one time I shared an office with Charlie Kray which made me privy to many of his business ventures, or as I like to call them, business adventures. I also made many visits to see Ron and Reg Kray, discussing various business deals with them on each occasion. Let me say here and now, however, that I am not, nor have I ever been, a part of any Kray firm.

This extensive inside knowledge has formed the basis for this section, which starts with an extension of the chapter entitled 'Stars in their Eyes'. As previously, each chapter is preceded by a brief description of its contents.

How has this Kray iconisation come about? Why are all three Kray brothers 'household names' - something that Ron Kray in particular achieved after the notorious 'Boothby Affair' (and in this context I use the word 'affair' advisedly)? Are the media really to blame or are there deeper and more sinister aspects to be considered? Is the celebrity status awarded to crooks and criminals like the Krays and Ronnie Biggs the same as that of those amongst the higher echelons of society, such as Diana, Princess of Wales? Is it 'Myth or Mythology' - my title for chapter seven?

My next chapter is right out of the old days of the Kray empire, but it happened in 1986 and it involved my own personal contribution. Supposedly a genuine music venture in which I had invested much time and money, it was really the creation of a Mafia front company for laundering drug dollars into clean British pounds. This is just one example of the Krays' continuing Mafia connection, and of their power. This chapter is entitled 'Music Mafia Please'.

Many of the 'nice little earners' often favoured by the Krays pitted brother against brother. They were all always on the look-out for easy money, honest or dirty. And Reg and Charlie, after the death of Ron Kray on 17 March 1995, are still at it - after all these years. Some things don't change, do they? Ron and Reg were always serious in their schemes, although they were not clever businessmen by any means. At one time in the mid-'80s they wanted to take over London again and were using a couple of cheap hoods to front the deal. But the whole thing misfired when the petty criminals chosen decided to aim for the major league by killing off Ron and Reg and taking over the business for themselves. Charlie Kray, on the other hand, looks more like a 'Del-boy' derivative by the end of this chapter - entitled

‘Still Wheelin’ and Dealin’’. But they did manage to net £255,000 for the sale of the film rights for their story, called *The Krays*.

Chapter ten goes behind the scenes at Broadmoor. Ron Kray always hated the idea of being locked away with no date for his release. But that is just what he got, and he died in Broadmoor in the spring of 1995. His only form of escape was to get married, write books, get married again, write more books – and to make friends and, sometimes, enemies. Peter Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper, was a sworn enemy – they hated each other (something that I witnessed for myself). He often told me of his dreams – sailing around the world, seeing old friends. This is the story of those lost years, years of insanity. Reg Kray has toured the UK over the past 30 years, going from one jail to the next, heading for parole (due in 1998). I went to see him in Nottingham Gaol where he was steadily getting drunk on vodka and orange juice, smuggled in to him by friends. These friends had a young baby with them, so the vodka was in the baby bottle, but Reg didn’t appear to mind. This is his story; one of brutality, of charitable involvement and finally of marriage. Chapter ten is entitled ‘Lifers’.

Charlie Kray will now always be known as a drug dealer. This is ultimately the story of a deal that went catastrophically wrong, ending with a 12-year sentence for cocaine importation and dealing. Was it a last ditch-effort to make a fortune and retire, or was it just a ‘nice little earner’ that went wrong? I have attempted to clear the picture and to explain the events, but in the end it was a deal too far for Charlie Kray. Hence the title for chapter eleven – ‘Will Charles Kray, Drug Dealer, Please Stand’.

When discussing the Kray fascination it is difficult to get away from the ladies. Indeed, not many would want to get away from the delightful and sexy ladies in the lives of all three Kray brothers. Reg has had many such ‘fans’ while in prison, leading ultimately to marriage inside the walls, but

his first wife committed suicide. Ron was married twice within the walls of Broadmoor, although he had other intimate associations while in the institution (men only). And Charlie Kray had an affair with Barbara Windsor. So what is the fascination of the Krays? Why do they appeal to women the way they obviously do? Are there really any answers to this intriguing riddle? Chapter twelve is called 'The Women in their Lives'.

So what is the future for the Krays? Some would say that it's all over for the Krays, some that it's only just begun. So what is the truth? Since no one yet has been able to predict the future in an accurate and intelligible way anything I have to say is pure guesswork.

Chapter thirteen makes an effort at predicting the future for the Krays. Ron Kray is now dead, so there is no future for him apart from his undeniable place in history. Charlie Kray, at the age of 70, has just started a 12-year prison sentence so what future is there for him? Are Charlie Kray's champagne days really over? And Reg Kray, at 60-something, has just got married again, this time to a well-educated school-teacher. So what can she teach him that he doesn't already know? What then of the Kray dynasty? Is it the end or the beginning, the beginning of a new life? The only man who can answer that is Reg Kray, and what is his future likely to hold? He has been doing time for 30 years now. But surely his celebrity status, which has prospered while inside, will make him a wealthy man. He will certainly be able to make more money from legitimate business dealings than from a life of crime. But is this right? Should Reg Kray be able to make easy money in this way? After all, he is a killer. Chapter thirteen is called - 'The Kray Legacy'.

Happy reading!

# 1. ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WERE . . . THE GANG WARS

If you have ever wondered what it was like in the bygone, war-torn days of London, then I suggest you take a magical mystery tour past Tower Bridge and head east along the Whitechapel Road, through that area haunted by Jack the Ripper, and then out along the Mile End Road to the East End of London.

It is like a time warp, a virtual reality *Goodnight Sweetheart* experience, for any other dweller of suburban London or for any inter-galactic tourist trying to find a worm-hole leading home. It is a strange new (out of the old) world waiting for discovery by anyone who dares enter its dwindling domain and for those thirsting for the ultimate time-travel experience.

This is an area of tradition, a place where family ties and old-fashioned values still come first. But what are these values, the social aspects of daily life still cherished and worshipped by Eastenders, young and old alike?

It is time to put on your thinking cap and to get your head into gear as we go back in time to the early days of the East End after the Second World War; a time of those great aristocrats of crime, Billy Hill and Jack Spot, and to the scene of criminal innovation (often imported from the USA) that rose from the ashes of the *blitzkreig*. This is a time of lawlessness like in the early days of the Wild West of America, an age of personal freedom and cultural change, and a mishmash of new thinking and political ideology that



eventually led to an event that was to change the way of life for almost everyone in the country – and beyond.

This was the time of the gang wars!

The following is an attempt at relating information in a reasonable, articulate and sensible manner in order to give the reader an appropriate sense of what the East End of London is really all about. In the name of communication, however, academic terminology has been ‘dumbed down’ into a more easily recognisable vernacular, although this comes mainly in the latter part of the discussion. In each and every case where I have used academic research papers or previously published academic books, I have sought advice and acceptance from the original author and I am very appreciative of this collaboration. Original text referred to in this book is attributed, enabling the reader to access the original research material.

So come with me back in time to an era of innocence and guile; to a time of progress and stagnation; to a wonderland of imaginative ideas and devious dealings.

We start by looking at the emergence of these gangs as a post-war phenomenon. Later on in the debate, the history of the area is seen through the eyes of the sociologists. Readers can find further information in an academic paper, entitled ‘The Kray Fascination’, written by Professor Chris Jenks and Justin J. Lorentzen, of Goldsmiths College, London. In this Professor Jenks and his colleague look into the background of the East End of London and of the Eastenders themselves.

Another sociologist, Dr Dick Hobbs of Durham University, in his book *Doing the Business*, tells of how the working-class background of the East End helped to maintain and strengthen the position of the Krays within its social structure. (This title is one we share – I also published a book called *Doing the Business*, Smith Gryphon, London, 1993 – dealing with the Krays.)

So, just why and how did the Krays, like so many other gangs, emerge from the ashes of the Second World War? And how did the Krays come to dominate the '50s and '60s, which saw an explosion of criminal underworld activity and a developing and sensitive society full of opportunities for those who were willing and able to impose themselves through violence, fear of retribution and intimidation?

The pre-war community of the East End of London was a very closely knit collection of multiple ethnic groupings. Almost all immigrant groups were there - Jewish, Italian, Maltese, Irish, Bangladeshi and Romany. All were represented among the ancient fabric of the East End in its mainly working-class domains.

'London, like many large conurbations, expanded initially in relation to function and density but divided latterly in terms of largely social and cultural factors,' say Professor Chris Jenks and Justin J. Lorentzen of Goldsmiths College. The East End, we are told, was a disease-ridden den of iniquity, where deprivation and poverty were the order of the day and criminal and political dissidence the norm. Or so it was up until the end of the 1939-45 war, when most of the area lay in ruins. There was no option other than to build it up all over again.

Before the war, crime was a known phenomenon but people left their doors unlocked since there was little or no fear of being robbed. Neighbour supported neighbour and when there were problems, everyone wanted to help; they were supportive to the extreme.

But the war changed all of that. Violence crept in, weaving its bloody trail through the winding streets of both East and West London. There was a blossoming of protection rackets, drinking and gambling clubs and prostitution. The war was a great time for the villains. They ran the black markets and used the Blitz as cover for their ram-raiding and theft from the West End stores where they would dress up as ARP

wardens or police or ambulance crews to deceive their way into the West End. 'For the West End to know the East at all was to apprehend the threat and intimidation, the exotic and even the bizarre,' says Chris Jenks, reflecting on this urban 'great divide'.

Everything was rationed, but people had incurable desires which led to almost everyone buying something through connections or off the back of a truck. Get it at all costs was the name of the game. And people didn't mind how they got it. They turned a blind eye to theft and to crime in general. Everyone managed their own lives the best they could. This was the start of the egoistic era of the '50s and '60s. Acquisition became the order of the day. Eggs, meat, clothing, fuel coupons - they were all highly marketable products in the hands of the crooks. The material world was born.

The criminal has always looked after himself first and everyone else last. And so it was with the war. They defied the call-up, using any means at their disposal to get out of joining the forces. Hitler was seen as a guiding light - he killed and maimed, and succeeded. So the gangsters of the East End began turning the screws. They became more violent, more sadistic, more aggressive.

One such small-time gangster, by the name of Frankie Fraser, actually caused such a rumpus at his medical that he was certified insane and sent to an asylum. The crooks and criminals would go to any lengths to get out of the call-up. No trick was barred. Indeed, if you didn't escape the clutches of the military, you were not a member of the club. All the best villains got out of military service in one way or another, so it was these people, the tricksters and the petty villains, who came to rule the East End of London during the Second World War.

Even the West End was full of deserters. Soho attracted them in their droves. There was money to be made and

suckers to rob. Business was good and the villains and rogues of the East came West in search of an easy target.

The cultural inheritance of the East End of London 'does not conform to either proletarian or bourgeois cultural stereotypes' says Dick Hobbs, referring to the attitude of the East End villain. This covers both the materialistic and the ideological, since the Krays, for example, came from both Jewish and Romany stock, but 'showed a response to poverty and hardship which was at once protective, itinerant and entrepreneurial'. Being a rogue in Bethnal Green was not just accepted, it was welcomed.

The fires of the Blitz shielded the villains who coolly went about their business. They were all kept busy with their robberies and easy-money dealings and there were few police officers around to hinder them; they were all kept busy with the bombs. There was a certain freedom for the villains and they exploited it as much as they could. The war was a watershed in the history of crime.

The villain, previously only tolerated by the Eastenders, became a true friend who could get the good things of life. He became an acceptable part of everyday life. The rogues didn't exist any more, only the villains survived.

By the early '50s, the world of the East End had changed. London was in the grip of violent criminals, men who would stop at nothing to get what they wanted. Billy Hill and Jack Spot, real name Comer, had run the underworld successfully for more than ten years, from their base in the West End of London. Hill was a thief with a passion for organisation, whereas Spot was the minder who arranged the heavy stuff. They were the very best and everyone knew it - from the Krays to the Richardsons and throughout the entire city of London, both East and West. These men were the uncrowned kings of crime.

By 1955 things were changing and the team of Hill and Spot had a falling-out. They disbanded the old guard and

formed new allies. Jack Spot turned to the Krays. Spot took Ron and Reg Kray to Epsom races in April of 1955 and introduced them to real money. Organised crime has always seen supplying protection to bookmakers as an easy racket. If the bookmakers didn't pay then they would be roughed up. So they ended up paying people like the Krays for protection. Violence was now the tool of the gangster and knives and guns became the tools of the trade.

Jack Spot was not a young man and had recently been badly cut around the face by the evil 'Mad Frankie' Fraser, who had joined Billy Hill's forces. So getting the Krays on his side was a bit of a coup. The twins were keen to learn and took time off from the Regal Billiard Hall to size up the opposition. They were fast becoming good businessmen themselves and were quick to spot an opportunity. They could smell the money.

Billy Hill was not a man of violence. He would sooner make a deal and share the profits rather than risk war. It just wasn't good for business. But he could see that the whole underworld scene was hotting up. Violence was now the key.

Gang met gang in minor skirmishes, only using knives or fists. They would arrange for a meet on one of London's many bomb sites, where rubble still littered the streets and back alleys. But these were not important events; they only showed which gangs were the dominant ones. The big business was making money, not war.

Robberies were executed with bloody efficiency. The stakes were high and crimes of violence commonplace. The crooks wanted the good life, no matter what. Callous people committed the most violent of crimes. These people knew that once caught, they would face harsh treatment in prison. The cat o' nine tails was still around and the birch was available for serious offenders; sentences were long. In this dark world of the criminal brutality bred brutality and there was no one better than Ron and Reg Kray when it came to out-and-out violence.

It was the time of the gun and it was also time for Spot and Hill to beat a hasty retreat. In the summer of 1956 Billy Hill retired to his villa in the South of Spain, and Jack Spot took over a furniture business in the West End. They got out while the going was good and before the killings started. It is a pity that the Richardsons and the Krays couldn't have done the same.

For the bosses of the underworld it was a very busy time. They began stock-piling weapons of all kinds in readiness for the war that was sure to come. In the end, however, it was only a war of words – not of deeds. Each of the prominent gangs was ultimately responsible for its own downfall, and the bosses never met each other in the expected gangland brawl. Just who was the biggest and the best was never decided. The clash of the Titans never took place.

## **The Nash Gang**

In the early part of 1960, one of the Nash brothers was involved in a car accident. The other driver was Selwyn Cooney, who ran a spielers in Whitechapel in an area frequented by known villains; it was also the site of the last Jack the Ripper murder. Unfortunately for Cooney, the other guy came off worse. And when the other guy is a Nash then you can expect trouble.

At around midnight on 8 February, Jimmy Nash, the leader of the gang and one of the most respected villains in London, arrived at the back door of the club with two other men. Inside were Cooney and his moll, Fay Sadler; they weren't expecting trouble, but that is just what they got.

Jimmy Nash was a powerful man and, at 28 years old, was thought by many to be destined to remain a top underworld figure for many years to come. He and his six brothers had a string of gambling clubs and were involved in theft and other corrupt activities, and he was a very popular figure throughout the London underworld. There was no need for

Jimmy Nash to be there, but he took it personally and retribution was on his mind.

When Nash stepped into the spielers brandishing a gun, Billy Ambrose stepped in between Nash and Cooney. Ambrose was only a customer, so he really should have known better. Nash shot him. Then Nash turned to Cooney and shot him at point blank range. Cooney died instantly with a bullet in the brain.

When the police arrived at the club, they found carnage. It was Jack the Ripper all over again. There were three witnesses including Fay Sadler, and they were all willing to talk.

The trial, however, had to be staged twice due to threats and attempted intimidation of the jury. But in the end Jimmy Nash was sent to prison for five years for killing Cooney. At the time many people thought he would be hanged.

The Nash family gave up most of their business enterprises in Islington, North London. They slowly and quietly disappeared. The last I heard of them was that they were all living peacefully on the Costa del Sol, but that is another story.

## **The Richardson Gang**

The most powerful of all the gangs, and the richest by far, was that belonging to Charlie and Eddie Richardson. Charlie Richardson was a shrewd businessman and after the war he had entered the field of surplus stocks and scrap metal, but he also ran a wholesale chemists' business, which shows the versatility of the man. The Richardsons, from Lambeth in South London, spent many years building up a respectable business empire, but there was an evil side to their nature and they had a side-line in debt collecting, blackmail and extortion. It was over-indulgence in violence that was eventually to be their downfall.

Charlie Richardson had contacts everywhere. He even had corrupt policemen on his payroll, from Scotland Yard itself. A phone call from Charlie and cases were dropped. Even when it came to government contracts he had friends in high places. Corruption was the name of the game. It was the '50s and the '60s, a time of good living and everyone wanted more of the same. An office in Park Lane was a natural consequence of his success, and the gold mine in South Africa was a constant reminder to other gangs, like the Krays, that here were real adventurers; they would go anywhere and do anything for the dosh.

As a part of the debt-collecting set-up, Charlie Richardson hired Mad Frankie Fraser, a real thug who was hungry for trouble. Fraser was feared by all. He was the best at his game and had even sliced up Jack Spot, the old gangland leader. Fraser was afraid of no man and in 1962 he went to work for the Richardson gang.

The hiring of Fraser was a big mistake, since it forced everyone and everything up a gear. The pace got hotter, the events more violent and serious and there was always trouble in the air. Exactly why Charlie Richardson hired Mad Frankie Fraser is also a bit of a mystery, since he had good working relationships throughout London and had secured recognisable boundaries for his business operations. The threat, however, was to come from another madman, Ronnie Kray, but in a way this was set up by Fraser himself.

With his Scotland Yard pals behind him, keeping the gang out of trouble, Charlie Richardson set about a period of expansion. The 'long firm' frauds continued, but he wanted more income from them. Debts of £25,000 became normal at this time, so profits were naturally good. The idea of a 'long firm' is to build up debts, only to fold the company overnight and get away with the money. The Richardsons were good at it.

The Krays were also involved in 'long firm' frauds. Leslie Payne, their business manager, had set up a whole string of



them throughout the East End. Again, money was good, so the Krays continued to build up their empire on the back of dishonest, devious dealings.

However, the Richardsons had ideas of grandeur; they wanted to be the underworld bosses and the Krays had no place in their business strategy. A meeting was called, with the Richardsons and the Krays putting their own particular point of view and trying to establish some kind of territorial domain for each gang. The Richardsons didn't see how the Krays could fit into their plans and the meeting broke up with everyone expecting out-and-out war. 'Clear off, we don't need you,' was Charlie Richardson's closing remark to Ron and Reg Kray.

The Krays went home and brought out the arsenal. Once again, it was not needed, much to Ron's disappointment.

Billy Haywood was a thief and together with his pal Billy Gardner he ran a spieler in Lewisham. It gave them a good living and gangsters were not allowed. Thieves were, however, allowed into the place and many came to talk and chat and to plan deals. Thieves kept to themselves, they didn't like the gangsters who wanted to take everything away from them.

Eddie Richardson, together with Mad Frankie Fraser, visited the club and asked for protection money. Haywood and Gardner weren't interested. Eddie Richardson and the much-feared Fraser left empty-handed.

Fraser had a reputation to live up to, or to live down, if you like it better that way. So he phoned Haywood to invite him and Gardner to a meeting at Mr Smiths, a gambling club in Catford. Haywood had already been warned, so he and Gardner and a group of pals turned up at the club, heavily armed. Fraser, with Eddie Richardson and a dozen or so members of the gang were already there. They too were heavily armed. Guns galore!

The shooting had to start sooner or later, but it happened sooner than anyone had imagined. Eddie Richardson said only a few words and that was it. Shots were fired everywhere. All the gang members dived for cover and there was blood and guts all over the floor of the club.

Dickie Hart, a member of the Kray gang who was by chance with the Lewisham gang that night, fired at will. He wasn't very accurate, but he did manage to hit one of the Richardson gang. Fraser saw the incident and managed to shoot and kill Hart, but not before Hart had managed to shoot Fraser in the leg.

When the police arrived all they had to do was to go around and pick up the bodies. There was no resistance and even Fraser went peacefully. The battle scene at the back of the club where the police took away the bodies resembled a blood bath. The police found weapons everywhere. There were guns, iron bars, knives – anything and everything that could be used to kill or maim.

Incredibly, only one man was killed – Dickie Hart. Mad Frankie Fraser stood trial for the killing of Hart, but he was found not guilty.

But Eddie Richardson and Fraser were convicted of causing grievous bodily harm and given five-year sentences.

For Haywood and Gardner the game was not finished. Over the next few years everyone who had taken their side in the battle was killed. Only Haywood and Gardner themselves were left unscathed. Whether or not this was retribution on the part of Charlie Richardson has never been proved, but the thought remains ever present in the minds of Billy Haywood and Billy Gardner.

Charlie Richardson kept the business going with new recruits and he continued to collect money on behalf of his clients. One of his debtors was a man called Jimmy Taggart who actually told the police of his treatment. Knowing that the Richardsons had spies everywhere, he was afraid to sign a statement. But he did agree to give a statement, if he

could sign it only when Charlie Richardson was safely behind bars.

Taggart's statement was staggering. It revealed everything about the Richardson gang's use of electric shock, pliers to pull out fingernails and to cut off fingers, drugs and such. It was serious torture according to anyone's standards and it all took place at a yard in Rotherhithe, just south of the River Thames. There was even medical evidence to back up the statement, since Taggart had treatment after the torture at a flat in North London.

Charlie Richardson was pulled in and Jimmy Taggart signed his statement. It was all over bar the shouting for Charlie Richardson. Only five months after his brother's arrest he received 25 years in jail for his part in the crimes, for violence and demanding money with menaces. It was only now that the police realised that there was a connection between the 'long firm' frauds and the beatings at Rotherhithe. That connection was Charlie Richardson.

But this wasn't the only reason why Scotland Yard were after Charlie Richardson. Other evidence was coming into the Yard from other sources, far away in South Africa, of Richardson's dealings there and of how he was involved in murder.

A man by the name of Thomas Waldeck had been murdered by two men, Harry Prince and Johnny Bradbury. Bradbury was an old pal of Charlie Richardson's and had escaped to South Africa in 1964. Harry Prince was the hired assassin, but he needed help from Bradbury to locate his man. The man in question was Waldeck, a man who had committed a most heinous crime – he had borrowed money from Charlie Richardson and hadn't paid it back.

Prince vanished and left Bradbury to stand alone in court. Bradbury was eventually sentenced to life in 1966 and spent 11 years in jail, but he told everything to Scotland Yard, who sent police officers to South Africa to question him. The game was over for the Richardsons. Even Eddie