



FITTED UP
THE MITCHAM CO-OP MURDER AND
THE FIGHT TO PROVE MY INNOCENCE
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An innocent man lays bare one of Britain's most infamous miscarriages of justice in this frank and revealing autobiography

Fitted Up is the remarkable true story of George Thatcher, who spent four weeks in a death cell awaiting the noose for murder following the Mitcham Co-op robbery in 1962. He was later reprieved, but would still serve twenty years for a crime he did not commit.

This is a story of how corrupt police 'fitted him up' for the crime; a story of a life of poverty in the 1930s and '40s as a child and young man – a life of petty crime in London's bleak 1950s underworld reminiscent of all those black and white gangster films of the period.

Thatcher was a non-violent 'peter' man, a safe-blower, famous for blowing the safes of three Surrey cinemas in one night. He was a West End 'Jack the Lad', but not a murderer. So when he was sentenced to death following the botched robbery, which he wasn't even a part of, his life was turned upside down.

There is a detailed retelling of the farce of the trial. Thatcher's brief was the renowned Christmas Humphreys, who, during the whole trial, spent barely 15 minutes talking to him. The policeman in charge of the case subsequently committed suicide over the guilt of seeing an innocent man imprisoned for life alongside men such as the Krays, Frankie Fraser and Ronnie Biggs, who would later become Thatcher's friends.

- Exemplifies the frailty of the death sentence and corruption in the British judicial system at the time
- A fascinating insight into London's criminal underworld of the 1950s and '60s
- Features a host of famous names, including the Krays, Ronnie Biggs and Frankie Fraser
- A move to get George Thatcher pardoned will coincide with the release of his book

George Thatcher, who was wrongly convicted of murder during the Mitcham Co-op raid in 1962, placed an advert in the *New Statesman* that said: 'Lifer Needs Help'. Thus playwright David Halliwell replied and encouraged Thatcher to write a play about his experience in the death cell. He did so, and this is when actors **Anthony May** and Michael Elphick, together with Halliwell went to Albany prison and smuggled the play out in a painting frame. It was subsequently put on to much acclaim at the Royal Court Theatre in London. Forty years later Anthony found a document George had written about his case in his quest to prove his innocence. After forty years in a weather beaten loft it had become too damaged to read so he tracked George down to a small village in Western Ireland. He found George had written a full account of his life which has now become 'Fitted Up'.

Requests for review copies, images and interviews contact **Rachel Jewitt** at 01453 732505 email: rjewitt@thehistorypress.co.uk