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Fascinating stories from each day of the year about the people and events that have shaped the culture and history of Italy

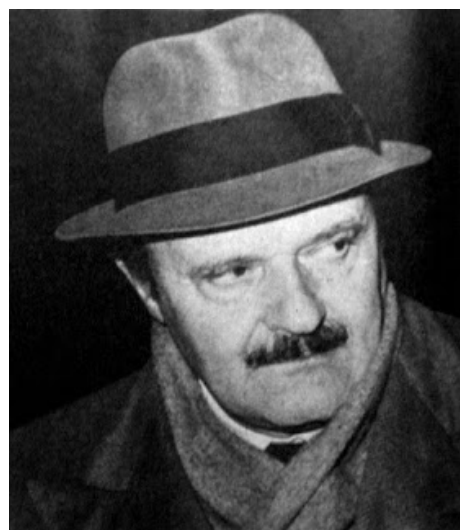
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13 April 2016

Roberto Calvi – banker

Mystery remains over bizarre death of bank chairman



God's Banker: Roberto Calvi

Roberto Calvi, dubbed God's Banker by the Press because of his close association with the Vatican, was born on this day in 1920 in Milan.

In 1982 his body was found hanging from scaffolding beneath Blackfriars Bridge close to London's financial district. His death is a mystery that has never been satisfactorily solved and it has been made the subject of many books and films.

Calvi was the chairman of **Banco Ambrosiano** in Milan, which had direct links to Pope John Paul II through his bodyguard, Archbishop Paul Marcinkus, who was also was head of the Vatican Bank, which had shares in Ambrosiano.

Calvi had been missing for nine days before his body was found by a passer-by in London. At first police treated his death as suicide but a year later a second inquest overturned this and delivered an open verdict.

In October 2002, forensic experts commissioned by an Italian court finally concluded Calvi had been murdered.

Calvi had become chairman of Ambrosiano, Italy's largest private bank, in 1975 and had built up a vast financial empire.

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But three years later the **Bank of Italy** issued a report claiming Ambrosiano had illegally exported several million lire.

Calvi was arrested, found guilty and sentenced to four years' imprisonment but was then released pending an appeal.

During his short time in prison he had attempted suicide. But he disappeared after his release before he could appear in court to appeal against his conviction.

He was also due to be tried on charges of fraud involving property deals with a Sicilian banker, who was at the time in prison in America following the collapse of a bank in New York.

Calvi is known to have fled to Venice and hired a private plane to take him to London but nothing is known about the time he spent in the city.

The day before his body was found hanging under the bridge, his secretary had jumped off the fourth floor of Ambrosiano's headquarters in Milan.

When Calvi was found he had bricks in his pockets and in the fly of his trousers, but forensic tests later revealed that his hands had never touched them. He was also carrying large sums of money in different currencies, which seemed to rule out robbery as a motive.

The tests also concluded that the injuries to Calvi's neck were inconsistent with hanging and it was revealed that at the time of his death the level of the river had been high enough for someone to have tied his body to the bridge while standing up in a boat below it. There was no evidence from Calvi's hands or feet that he had climbed over the parapet and fixed the rope himself.

Five people were tried for Calvi's murder in Rome in 2005 but after proceedings lasting almost two years they were all acquitted, the judge citing "insufficient evidence." Marcinkus was granted immunity from questioning as a Vatican employee and has since retired and died.

Calvi's death remains a mystery but claims have been made about it at various times in books and newspapers that involve the Vatican Bank, the Mafia, and Propaganda Due (P2), a clandestine Masonic Lodge, of which Calvi was a member.

P2 members sometimes referred to themselves as *frati neri*, black friars, which led to suggestions Calvi might have been murdered and left hanging below that particular bridge as some kind of Masonic warning.

Travel tip:

Milan is the main industrial, commercial and financial centre of Italy. The business district is home to the **Borsa Italiana** (stock exchange) and the headquarters of the main national banks. The Borsa is located in **Palazzo Mezzanotte** in **Piazza Affari** (Business Square).

Travel tip:



Blackfriars Bridge in London, where Calvi's body was found
(Photo: Peter Trimming CC BY-SA 3.0)

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Palazzo Mezzanotte, home to the Milan Stock Exchange
(Photo: Goldmund 100 CC BY-SA 3.0)

The **Vatican Bank** in Vatican City is also known as the Institute for the Works of Religion and was founded by Pope Pius XII in 1942. In June 2013, Pope Francis appointed a commission to review the Institute's activities and in October of the same year the first ever annual report was published and made available for download from the Institute's new website, www.ior.va.

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Posted by [The Editor: Italy On This Day](#) at [06:00](#)

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THE SHOOTING IN SORRENTO

The beautiful southern Italian resort of Sorrento is the setting for *The Shooting in Sorrento*, a

crime novel by Val Culley.

Believed to be the first British crime novel to be set in the Italian seaside town, *The Shooting in Sorrento* is the second Butler and Bartorelli mystery, following on from *Death in the High City*, which was set in Bergamo in Lombardy in northern Italy. Available from Amazon, *The Shooting in Sorrento* will appeal to readers who enjoy the cosy crime genre, or perhaps have spent time on holiday in Sorrento.

Journalist Kate Butler and her partner Steve Bartorelli, a retired Detective Chief Inspector, are in Sorrento for the wedding of one of Steve's Italian relatives.

When tragedy strikes an English family staying at their hotel, Kate feels she has to help them. She joins forces with another visitor to Sorrento to investigate for herself when it becomes clear the Italian police are looking no further than the English family in order to solve the crime.

The Shooting in Sorrento is available from Amazon as a **Kindle e-book** or a **paperback**.

amazon.co.uk



[The Shooting in Sorrento...](#)

£2.35

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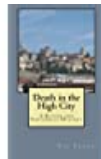
DEATH IN THE HIGH CITY

Set in the magical city of Bergamo in northern Italy, *Death in the High City* introduces detective duo Butler and Bartorelli.

Kate Butler, a freelance journalist, arrives in Bergamo to try to get some answers about the unexplained death of her cousin, Sophie, who has been living in the city while doing research for a biography of the Bergamo-born opera composer Gaetano Donizetti.

After her own life is threatened, Kate is joined by her partner, Steve Bartorelli, a recently retired Detective Chief Inspector of Italian descent, who helps her solve the

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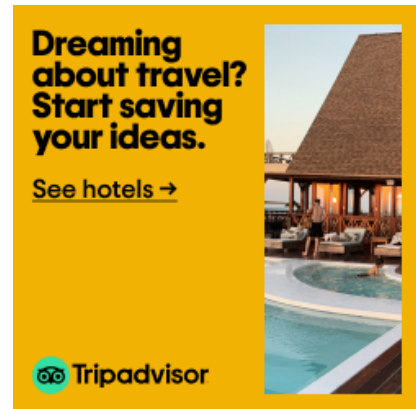
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crime.


Death in the High City, believed to be the first British crime novel in which Bergamo provides the backdrop, is available from Amazon as a [Kindle e-book](#) or a [paperback](#).

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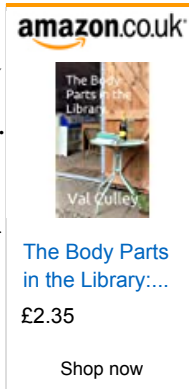
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THE BODY PARTS IN THE LIBRARY


The Library Ladies, a new detective duo, make their first appearance in *The Body Parts in the Library*, now available for sale on Amazon.

Set in an English country village, this first Library Ladies mystery is a cosy crime novel by Val Culley, the author of *Death in the High City* and *The Shooting in Sorrento*.

Sallie and Jo are both Library Assistants who have recently been made redundant. A group of volunteers have taken over the running of the village library where they used to work and when one of them is the victim of a prank, the Library Ladies are immediately suspected and find themselves shunned by most of the village. Determined to clear their names, Sallie and Jo try to find out who was really responsible. But after more bizarre events occur, a grim discovery is made in the



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[The Body Parts in the Library:...](#)

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library. The Library Ladies decide to conduct their own investigation to make sure the culprit is exposed and life in the peaceful south Yorkshire village of Upper Mickle can return to normal. The Body Parts in the Library is available from Amazon as a [Kindle e-book](#) or a [paperback](#).

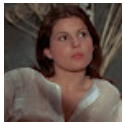
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