

Tales of Olde Fransham - Murder Most Foul

Part 2

In the previous part of this story I set down a little of the history of Sidney Harry Fox, of Great Fransham, and his mother Rosaline, also of this parish. Sidney was a con man who believed that he was entitled to live above his income at the expense of others.

He developed a penchant for staying in the best hotels where he would book in, with his mother, and leave a parcel with reception asking that it be placed in the hotel safe - the implication being that the parcel contained something of considerable value. In fact the parcel would contain nothing and Sidney and his mother were living on their meagre pensions and whatever they could find to pawn. They had little more than the clothes that they stood up in. They would leave the hotel and move on to another as soon as the management started pressing them for payment of the outstanding bill.

On Wednesday 16th October 1929 Sidney and his mother arrived at the Metropole Hotel in Margate, on the Kent coast. They had no luggage and Sidney remarked vaguely that it had been "sent on". They looked reasonably respectable as the devoted son supported his silver haired elderly mother and he reinforced his pretence of respectability by asking the receptionist, Miss Hopper, to take good care of a packet of "valuable papers". Initially they asked for rooms for one night only but, by a series of tales, Sidney extended their stay at the hotel.

It was on the evening of October 23rd shortly after 11:30pm that an extraordinary sequence of events began: Mr Hopkins, a commercial traveller sitting in the hall of the hotel, was astonished to see a man in his underclothes running down the main stairs. An agitated and dishevelled Sidney Fox was shouting "*Fire! Fire! Call the Boots! I believe there is a fire!*"

Mr Hopkins found the "Boots" and roused a couple of gentleman from the billiard room. Sidney led the way to Room 67 - his mother's room. It was Hopkins who forced his way into the smoke filled room where he discovered a woman's body which, with some difficulty, he dragged out into the corridor. Another person attempted to extinguish the burning carpet whilst Sidney remained in his own, adjacent, room. The interconnecting door was closed. The dead woman was, of course, Sidney's mother Rosaline.

.....to be continued

Bob Jenkins