

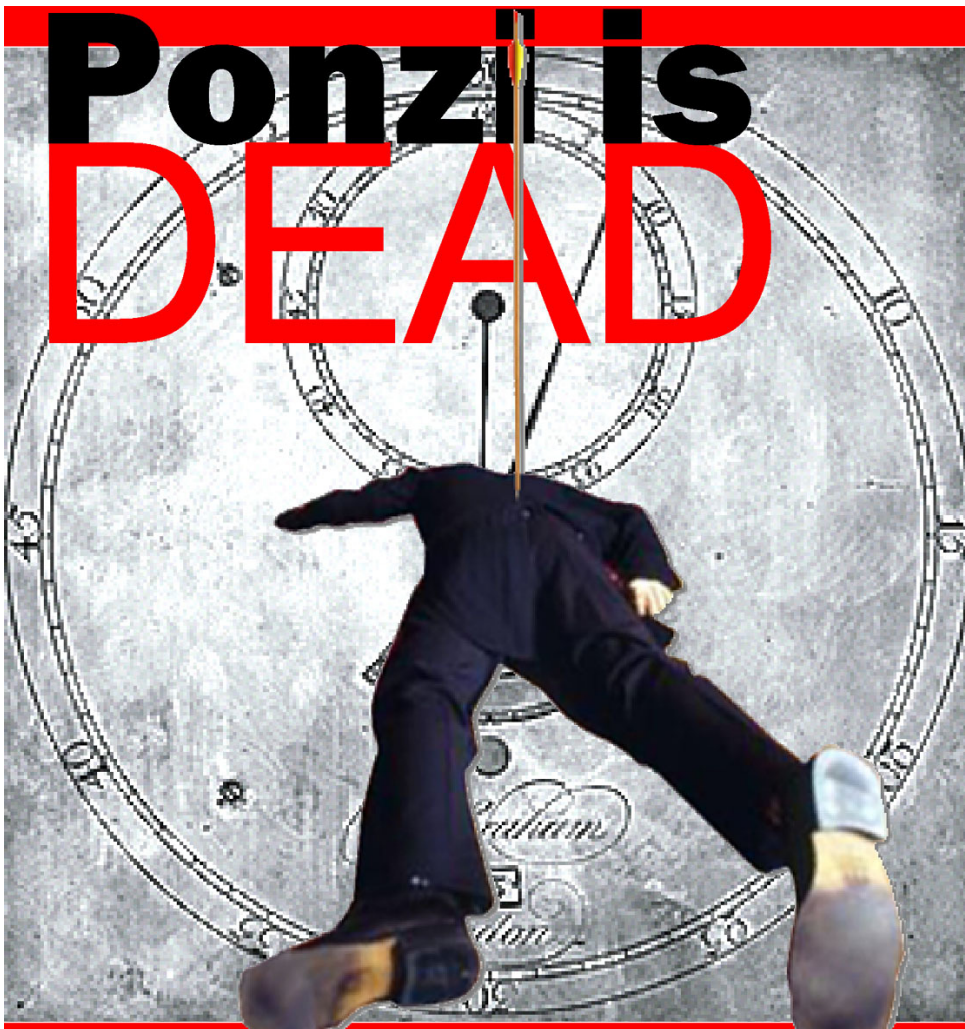


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# Pollok House

Murder Mystery 2011



...but who killed him?

# The Mystery Solved ...



WELL, IT SEEMS THAT killing off a banker this year proved quite popular, and I had to keep emptying the box to leave room for more entries. I must say that I had much fun writing this and I hope you all had fun doing it, which is the whole point, really.

In real life, Charles Ponzi was a famous twister and crook (*Truffatore*) who ran a scheme in the 1920s in International Reply Coupons (IRCs). There was no way he could have made the money he promised his investors, but he convinced them

anyway and paid his early investors from money acquired from later investors (which is how James got paid in our play and, therefore, thought Ponzi innocent). This type of scam has become known as a Ponzi Scheme, which the infamous Bernie Madoff recently used to acquire billions of dollars in the USA – Ponzi served two jail sentences totalling 12 years, while Madoff is now serving 150 years. It was the Madoff case that inspired me to use our own Ponzi as the murder victim.

“Marko“, our clever cop, is a little nod towards Harry Markopolos the financial analyst who uncovered Madoff’s Ponzi scheme.

The other characters’ names are little homages to my favourite fictional characters, actors, poets and writers. Chauncey Gardiner (Chance the Gardener) was the name of the character in Peter Sellers’ last film: *Being There*. I changed it a little to Garner as James Garner was a favourite actor of mine when I was young.

So, to the foul deed; who dunnit? As usual, there were lots of clues and red herrings, and clues disguised as red herrings, but did you get the clues pointing to the murderer?

Now, as it was, all of the main characters could have had reason to want to kill Ponzi. It was apparent to everyone, except James, that Ponzi was guilty, but finding the evidence proved difficult – and he was, after all, still under investigation.

Sir Chauncey was a proud man and Ponzi could have ruined his family’s reputation if he had not been able to suppress the story of his wife’s affair, but jealousy would not have been a reason for him to kill Ponzi.

The Major, may well have done the deed to protect his old friend Reggie's family from dishonour, but did he? He went downstairs: "to the cloakroom to get my cigars ..." he had no alibi for the time of the killing. Neither did James, who also admitted to being downstairs: "to get the *Château Latour 1920*". His lighter was found at the murder scene. James, too is like his father proud of the family and he found out Ponzi had an affair with his mother, surely a betrayal of trust? Everything begins to point to James, even if circumstantial.

Morelle, is a little flighty, a typical young woman of her age. She had known the Garner Woods most of her life and she and James were now in love, and could soon be married. Even though her father lost money, her financial future was not threatened, and the Garner Woods were wealthy. Her father's apparent suicide may have been a reason to make her a suspect in the case. She says she went out to get her cardigan, but could easily have got confused over the time.

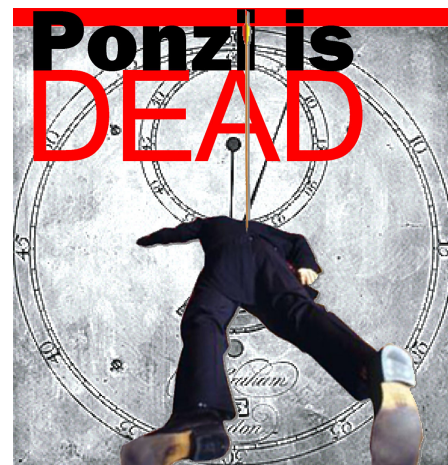
One person we do know who was distraught enough to kill was Mr Spark, but the only person he killed was himself, or did he? His body was never found. Nah, I wouldn't be that cruel! It wasn't him.

Lady Margaret, if we are to believe her, had no reason to kill Ponzi. She says she was not upset at the affair ending with Ponzi; she appears philosophical about her political career ending before it had begun. It appears she was not involved in stock markets, therefore, had not lost any fortunes to it. She appears to be "out of the frame", but is she? She had opportunity to get downstairs unseen to return the murder weapon – and though only a few feet away it took her many minutes to respond the shouts outside her door.

Branwell Hughes and Miss Dickinson, both many years in loyal service to the Garner Woods, were apparently going about their duties upstairs. When questioned about investments Branwell says only a few pounds, but Miss Dickinson says it was much more. Why would Branwell lie? Branwell also said he did not know who Mr Spark invested with when Miss Dickinson said it was Ponzi. They are both nearing retirement and invested their hard-earned savings with Ponzi on the strength of James' large returns – they lost it all.

However, even though their stories do not match it was not this duo who did the deed! So, who dunnit!

Well .... it was, of course ....



## **Morelle Spark, James' girlfriend**

### **What lie(s) did she need to tell?**

Morelle tells three lies in a row when questioned

- She lied about arriving that morning – James said they arrived the previous evening;
- She lied about getting her cardigan from the car insinuating (though not actually saying) she used the front door. She could have confused the timing, of course, but then ...
- She lied about not being near the gun room – if she had gone out to the car she could not have gone, or returned, through the main front door as we were told it was locked at 8.30, therefore, she had to use the luggage entrance where the Gun Room is. She said she did not go to that end of the House.

The timing would have ensured she would have seen who returned the archery equipment to the Gun Room – however, she could have seen who was there and was covering for them, but she wasn't.

**Why?** Her father, also a broker, killed himself due to the stress of losing his friends' fortunes in a Ponzi scam.

### **How did she do it without being seen?**

She arrived with James the previous evening (though she lied about that). She set up the kill early in the morning – oiling the squeaking door and hid the bow and arrows above the door in the servants' stairway.

Other wee clues. For the astrologically minded: she said she her sign was Sagittarius (the Archer); also she had a Scorpio ascendant (can carry a grudge and they have a sting in their tail).

She would have known where to find the key to the Gun Room.

She is a young and fit woman, but tries to make out she is weak and girly, but admits to having done archery for fun. You don't need to be a champion to hit someone from six feet away. She overplayed her weak hand methinks!

Also, she never mentions to Marko her father's death and the link to Ponzi; this should have made any good detective suspicious!

Well done all of you who got it right. Prize winners will be drawn very soon.

Till Next Time ...

Joe