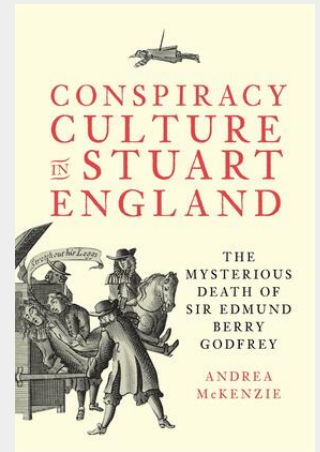


McKenzie

## Conspiracy Culture in Stuart England

The Mysterious Death of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey

The death of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey has baffled scholars and armchair detectives for centuries; this book offers compelling new evidence and, at last, a solution to the mystery. On a cold October afternoon in 1678, the Westminster justice of the peace Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey left his home in Charing Cross and never returned. Within hours of his disappearance, London was abuzz with rumours that the magistrate had been murdered by Catholics in retaliation for his investigation into a supposed 'Popish Plot' against the government. Five days later, speculation morphed into a moral panic after Godfrey's body was discovered in a ditch, impaled on his own sword in an apparent clumsily staged suicide. This book presents an anatomy of a conspiratorial crisis that shook the foundations of late Stuart England, eroding public faith in authority and official sources of information. Speculation about Godfrey's death dovetailed with suspicions about secret diplomacy at the court of Charles II, contributing to the emergence of a partisan press and an oppositional political culture in which the most fantastical claims were not only believable but plausible. Ultimately, conspiracy theories implicating the king's principal minister, his queen and his brother in Godfrey's murder stoked the passions and divisions that would culminate in the Exclusion Crisis, the most serious challenge to the British monarchy since the Civil War.



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