

Boisjoly Bulletin

Quillfeather Chronicle

January '25 ★ New Year Launch Edition ★ Exclusive: Teddy's Track & Turf Tips and Tricks

Frauds on Favourite Is At the Gate



Teddy Quillfeather's second outing is finally out on February 14th.

Teddy's off to the races in this multi-layered multiplier mystery of dark horses and dodgy courses, pawky jockeys, unstable stables, impossible odds, crooked bookies, and a track-wide conspiracy to deny the punter an even chance. That's more than enough to invite a counter-con from Teddy, but when the family paddock is implicated in race-fixing, she does what she does best when the odds go against her — she raises the stakes.

Frauds on Favourite is available for pre-order now

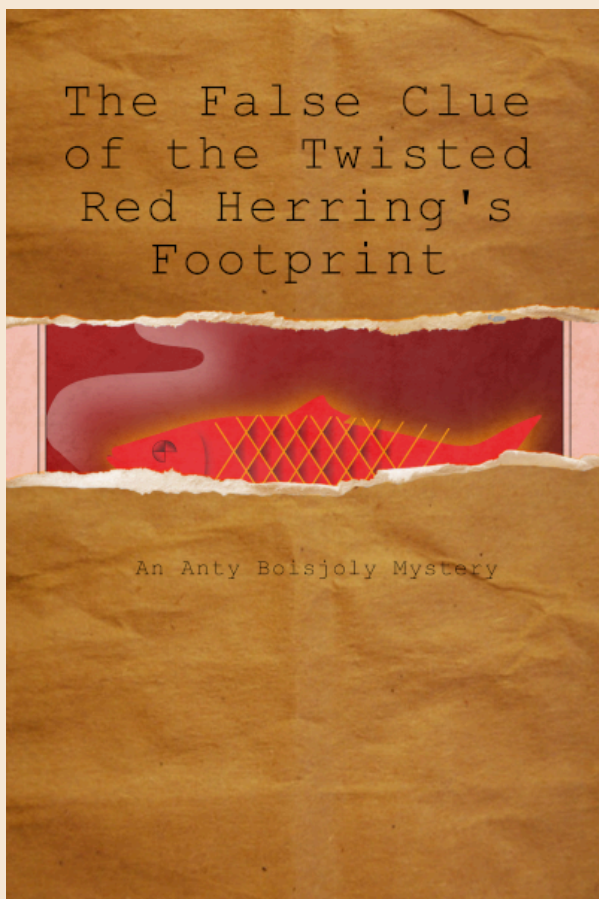
The official census is still being compiled, but *Frauds on Favourite* is almost certainly the largest cast yet assembled under a single Boisjoly/Quillfeather banner, even without including the horses and chickens, and there are definitely record numbers of horses and chickens.

There's a lot of equestrian and bookmaking jargon and practice in *Frauds on Favourite*, and I've done more research for this book than any other. The end result is a level of expertise that only serves to convince me that I got any number of details wrong, but that's not the fault of my sources, such as several racing mysteries in the canon of Dick Francis — *Come to Grief* (Michael Joseph, 1995), *Whip Hand* (Michael Joseph, 1979), *Under Orders* (Penguin, 2006), and *Odds Against* (Penguin, 1965). I gathered rather a lot of matter from Francis' stories along with an admiration for the easy manner in which he presents it.

I also read an entire dictionary: *The Language of Horse Racing*, by Gerald Hammond (Routledge, 2000), which, for a dictionary and, for that matter, any reference book, is a very entertaining read.



With thanks and apologies to Edwin Austin Abbey, *A Christmas Carol*, 1876



Work In Progress Cover Reveal

Anty Boisjoly Mystery number ten!

Coming in Spring '25, it's the biggest Boisjoly by bounds when none other than Anty's friendly rival Inspector Wittersham is the only suspect in a locked-room murder.

Of course Anty doesn't believe for a second that Inspector Wittersham murdered a prisoner locked in a cell to which only he had the key, it's merely unfortunate that the more Anty investigates and the more twists and secrets and hidden treasure he digs up, the more evidence he finds that proves Wittersham guilty.

To save his friend, Anty must draw on his judgemental mum, woolly valet, multitude members of his club, crime-solving cousins, and endless eccentrics from the past as he delves deeply into his own dark family history.

Cast list for Tale of the Tenpenny Tontine

Continuing the tradition from last year, this newsletter's cast list is for The Tale of the Tenpenny Tontine, which can be found where all quality books and audiobooks are sold.

It's another mystifying, manor house murder for Wodehousian bon-vivant and problem-solver Anty Boisjoly, when his clubmate asks him to determine who died first after a duel is fought in a locked room. The untold riches of the Tenpenny Tontine are in the balance, but the stakes only get higher when Anty determines that, duel or not, this was a case of locked-room murder.



Anty Boisjoly (pronounced 'boo-juhlay', like the wine region). Gentleman's clubbing, fun-loving, fast-living, alms-giving Anty is the voice and personality of the story. Very, very 1920s and even more London, though educated at Eton and Oxford educated, he came into his money upon his father's dubious death in 1928 and it's now 1929, making Anty about 29.

By 'Anty' Lager referred to the diminutive for Anthony, widely employed by friend and, if I had any, foe. And by 'that thing you do' he spoke flatteringly of my modest reputation for untangling the odd ball of societal wool. Finally, with 'Boisjoly', Lager spoke of the family curse, normally pronounced 'boo-juhlay', like the wine region...

Tristian ‘Lager’ Tenpenny (pronounced Timpinny). Nephew of Ratcliffe Tenpenny, one of the first two victims, and fellow member of the Juniper, Anty’s club. He has a similar background to Anty but not as much money.

This is where the comparison ends, sadly for Lager, for where I am tall and lithesome and built for speed and cunning, he is designed more along utilitarian lines, like a duffel bag. He has a way of occupying his ground — his leather odeon armchair, to take an example to hand in the moment — as though he’s been briefly abandoned by someone looking for a porter.

Victoria ‘Vicks’ Tenpenny. Niece of Hadley Tenpenny, the other of the first two victims, and neighbour in Wedge Hedge Square. She’ll be the same generation as Anty and Lager and be in a similar financial situation to her second cousin Lager.

Victoria was of the young, fresh, fast-paced breed of London girls with an art deco bob and fitted waistcoat, the sort of wry squint that would host a monocle if girls wore monocles, and, probably somewhere, a fleet two-seater with an eight-cylinder motor that she’s seen from underneath. She seemed the type of girl who could make a fortune breaking hearts if she didn’t enjoy it so much that she did it for nothing.

Lister Babbage. County coroner and near neighbor to Wedge Hedge Square and its dodgy residents, Babbage has a questionable background with Anty’s father, too. He’s reaching retirement age and would very much like to see the back of coronering, an outlook which manifests as withering sarcasm and a fleeting, almost ephemeral patience.

“Not an instant, obviously. What do you expect happens after you’re shot through the heart? You slow down a bit? Move to the country? I hope you have no serious plans to enter the medical profession, young man.”

Ratcliffe Tenpenny. One of the first two victims. He shared a house with his rival for the tontine on Wedge Hedge Square and when he and Hadley have it out in a duel, Anty is called in to settle the tremendously important question of who died first. Anty pursues Ratcliffe’s odd origins to the town of Gutter Folly, where he identifies a peculiar pattern among the naming of the overflow of orphans. Both Ratcliffe and Hadley were in their late seventies to early eighties.

“Not one for adventure, our Uncle Ratcliffe?” I surmised.

“Not unless you count one month out of every two spent in silent retreat at a Carthusian monastery. Do you?”
“I do not.”

Hadley Tenpenny. Another of the first two victims. He and Ratcliffe are the last remaining members of the generation which will liquidate and reap the enormous profits from the Tenpenny Tontine. Tracing Hadley’s past leads Anty to The Swashbucklers Society and tales of daring deeds and dodgy duels.

“That would be Uncle Ratcliffe’s cousin, Hadley. They shared a house off Belgrave Road, the theatre of the most recent hostilities, among many others.”

“I thought they hated each other,” I said.

“Like cats and dogs,” confirmed Lager. “Cats and dogs of diametrically differing religious convictions.”

Miss Belsize. Maid to all three residences on Wedge Hedge Square. She’s a working class, work-shy petty thief who pilfers from her employers to compensate for her poor pay. She’ll be middle-aged, more or less, and probably have an east-end accent.

“...It was between Miss Belsize and a tavern menial who’d done time for selling cat-meat pies on Cable Street. I’m still not convinced we went with the right choice.”

Lucifer (Beelzebub, Old Nick, Mephistopheles, Asmodeus) the Scottish Terrier. Lucifer is a tough-minded, steely-eye, torn-eared, blunt-tailed street dog with an advanced and arbitrary sense of order, particularly with respect to Wedge Hedge Square, pavements, and policemen.

“She means Satan the Scots Terrier,” elucidated Lager. “Wire-haired havoc on four legs. Of highly disreputable parentage and origins which are the subject of much conjecture. Uncle Ratcliffe was of the view that Cousin Hadley had the animal specially-bred in a weapons laboratory in the service of the nation’s enemies.”

Inspector Ivor Wittersham. This is the third time Anty and Ivor are working together on a locked-room murder and the bootstrapping Scotland Yard detective inspector has yet to fully warm to the gadabout’s roundabout approach to crime-solving. Ivor’s accent is London but his background and backbone are thoroughly England. He’ll be about ten years older than Anty, having served in the trenches in WWI where he acquired a claim on the career ladder of Scotland Yard.

He was instantly recognisable dressed, as he always was, in the unerring uniform of the modern detective-inspector from Scotland Yard; trench coat of top-flight war surplus, broken-pencil moustache, and damp, American-style fedora, brim descending.

Kimberly ‘Burly’ Brickstock. Scion of a London City investment banking family and blindly wealthy, Burly doesn’t understand all this bother about a tontine — people should just touch their parents for some cash, if they’re short. Burly is in love with Vicks and none too disappointed that her uncle is no longer able to prevent their marriage, giving her one less excuse. He’ll be a Londoner, like Anty, but his father probably had to donate a wing to get him out the other side of Oxford.

“It’s stepping dangerously outside of my area of expertise, I confess, but I’m going to estimate that the larger-scale the bond issue, the easier it must be. I’ve met Burlesque Brickstock, and were he forced in court to put two and two together, you’d have to give me odds if you wanted me to back him to get it right first try.”

Chancery ‘Chancy’ Proctor. Chancey the Chancy Lawyer is a contemporary of Anty and Lager and serial failed candidate for membership of the Juniper. He studied everything but law before inheriting the family practice and continuing the proud Proctor tradition of losing cases, documents, and clients.

“Mister Proctor, I presume,” Ivor said to the distinctly avian chap perched on a divan and holding his glass of whisky and soda as though he’d just won it in a spelling bee. Possibly the best way of describing Chancy Proctor is to observe that he resembles me, creased down the middle.

Quiescence ‘Quip’ Keats. Willow Willoughby’s daughter. She has a sparkly, *je ne sais quoi* about her that briefly causes Anty to forget his name. She’s also Parish Clerk of Gutter Folly and in this capacity is able to provide Anty with several vital clues regarding the peculiar and potentially pertinent pedigree of Ratcliffe Tenpenny.

Her face was round and pinched and cherry-cheeked in that impossible way that manages to be both adorable and alluring in equal measure. The theme continued down the rest of her, which weaved in and out like a Gutter Folly freeway, highlighted quite definitively by a work shirt and a pair of dungarees pulled tight at the waist with a man’s belt which could have gone round a second time. Her blonde hair was a delightfully insouciant mess, as though she and it were content to allow one another to live their own lives.

Thinner and Redder. These are two residents of the dilapidated Gutter Folly home for aging smugglers who give him an insight into the reliability of Willow Willoughby.

“Oy,” spoke the thinner, trimmer chap on the left. Having locked in my attention, he squinted in all directions before lowering his voice and asking, “Got any cigarettes?”

“No, sorry, I don’t,” I said.

“Want to buy some?”

Willow Willoughby is the aging dowager of the home for aging smugglers, Quip’s grandmother, and caretaker of the Tenpenny legacy in Gutter Folly. She’ll be in her late eighties to early nineties, and exhibit the mixed background of a charwoman who became a woman of means later in life. She provides Anty with guiding intelligence, but has confused him for Stow, her butler from many years prior.

It was the action which the dowager Willoughby performed next that tipped the scales. After giving me fair warning about my impending duties, re the post office, she once again dipped her pen in the inkpot and continued writing with buoyant inspiration, and all this drew my attention to the clear fact that she had run out of ink probably before the turn of the last century, and she was scratching spotlessly onto a sheet of blank paper.

Vickers is the vague valet of a bygone day. He’s Anty’s gentleman’s personal gentleman, just as he was for Anty’s father and his father before him. Vickers’ age is a matter of much conjecture and his long-term memories cease with the coronation of George V. Those memories, however, are unfailingly accurate and an invaluable reference archive for Anty’s investigations.

Vickers was of the aged and elongated variety of valet, like a saged cyprus in goldfinch waistcoat, and while he looked about ninety years old it was broadly assumed that he was much older.

Caius Potts and Dial Crocker are the membership committee of The Swashbucklers Society, an elite Fleet Street meet for the adventuring class, among whose number was Hadley Tenpenny. Crocker and Potts are the same generation as Hadley and have a similarly England and empire outlook and accent.

“Not thinking of joining, are you, young man?” Caius Potts took a step back and appraised the Boisjoly candidacy. “The membership committee is rather an ad hoc sort of affair, if you will, due to the absence of space.” Potts gestured towards the deep, cluttered tunnel that was the interior of the club. “No room for new members until a current member leaves us.”

"I'm afraid that's just what I've come to report, Mister Potts — do you know a Swashbuckler called Hadley Tenpenny?"

"Finally got him, did they?" Potts nodded knowingly. "How did he go?"

Richard 'Chard' Purdy is the pithy page of Claridge's, where Anty and Ivor go to investigate the movements of Burly Brickstock. Chard is fourteen years old but carries himself with the aplomb and accent of the urban urchin who's made his own way in the world.

"I recall that the gentleman neglected to give me a tip, sir."

"Ah, yes, of course," said Ivor. He glanced nervously at me and then produced a medieval change purse, with a draw-string. From it, he withdrew a penny, and placed it on the boy's tray.

"Oh, bless you, sir," said Chard, smiling down on the penny. "You couldn't see your way clear to making it two pennies, could you sir? Then I could buy back the family estate in Harrow."

Minor but notable characters

Hespenal Halisham-Lewes. Halisham-Lewes is the unwed mother of record of Ratcliffe Tenpenny, who was born a Coleridge, according to his birth certificate. Anty discovers that she appears to have had an affair with Ratcliffe's father, who then hid them both away in Gutter Folly.

There he was in school uniform, next to what I took to be his mother, owing to the bearing of barely disguised tolerance of the tall, slim, picture of blue-blooded womanhood with whom he posed.

Sullivan 'Stick Shift' Southey. Station master and sole taxi in Gutter Folly, his name offers Anty an early clue.

"People live here?" I said incredulously to Stick-shift as he manoeuvred us gently through a labyrinth of creeping thistle and dandelion higher and, quite possibly, older than the car.

"Everyone does," answered Stick-shift, somewhat mysteriously, I thought at the time. "Expect to see out my days here, when the time comes."

"Do you? For what crime?"

Reverend Merrion Davidy Lloyd. This was the infamous Victorian era rector of Gutter Folly with a fondness for Romantic poets and a soft spot for unwed mothers.

"His views were famously aligned with those of the Romantics he admired," explained Quip. "He was once reprimanded by the Bishop of Rochester for basing an entire St Martin's Day homily on Cantos five through sixteen of Byron's Don Juan."

"Even fifteen?" I asked.

"Especially fifteen."

Tharrawaddy is steward of The Swashbucklers Society.

Tharrawaddy, who had the very distinct appearance of someone who, when he wasn't wearing a fez, was a much happier person named Bob, wheeled away and spoke briefly to a beefy, jowly chap with a handlebar moustache and eyebrows that, together, could have been sheared to weave a substantial rug.

Claridge's Maitre d' is the sombre maitre d'hotel of Claridge's.

"Anthony Boisjoly. Son of Edmond. Direct descendant of Eadbert the Tardy."

The mortician's eyes fluttered down to the reservation book, like the wings of one of the more patronising species of butterfly. When they fluttered back to the surface they were a gleam with respectful recognition.

"For two, Mister Boisjoly?"

"Unless you'd care to join us."

Constable Pen Constable is a constable whose last name happens to be Constable, and whose intriguing secret isn't revealed until he makes a surprise return in a later book.

"This is what I was doing, sir," explained Constable Constable, "on the advice of Miss Tenpenny. She told me to go stand in the rain and the dog would be by soon enough."

"She's funny that way, is our Vicks."