

THE SUNDAY TIMES *magazine*

OCTOBER 20, 1968

Did she poison
Charles
Bravo?

Did he really
kill
Pat Curran?

Was he
Sir Roger
Tichborne?

**GREAT
UNSOLVED
MYSTERIES**

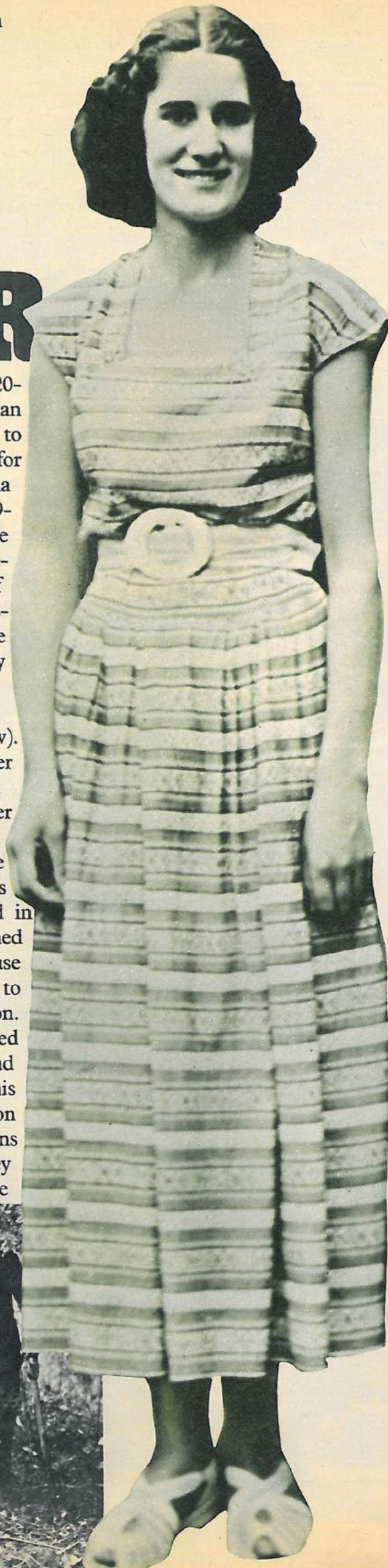
by Agatha Christie, James Fox, Elizabeth Jenkins, John Mortimer



The Dowager Lady Tichborne in 1868. "When she entered the bedroom she was obviously determined to recognise her son. 'Oh, my dear Roger, is it you?' she said, lifting the handkerchief from his face - and he had come too far to deny it"

MURDER IN THE GLEN

In March 1953, Iain Hay Gordon, a 20-year-old Scottish National Serviceman stationed near Belfast, was sentenced to be detained at Her Majesty's Pleasure for the murder of Patricia Curran (right), the 19-year-old daughter of one of Northern Ireland's present Judges of Appeal, Lord Justice Curran. She was found early one November morning in 1952 by members of her family, lying in the undergrowth beside the driveway to their house in Whiteabbey, near Belfast (below). Thirty-seven stab wounds had been inflicted on her body, eight of which could have been fatal. The Curran murder resulted in the biggest crime investigation ever conducted in Northern Ireland. For the first time in Ulster's history, Scotland Yard detectives, led by the late Supt. John Capstick, were called in. Gordon was arrested (far right) on January 15, 1953, and tried in March. He was found guilty but insane and interned till August 1960, seven-and-a-half years later. The case against Gordon depended on a confession he made to the police after three days of intensive interrogation. The circumstances of this interrogation have since led psychiatrists and lawyers to believe that Gordon had reached a 'brainwashed' condition at the time of his confession. The reasons why the police picked Gordon from a small community, channelled their suspicions on him and obtained a confession from him when they had little evidence to corroborate it are examined here



Iain Gordon met Desmond Curran, Patricia Curran's brother, four times before the murder in 1952. The relationship, which was superficial, is important. Police were able to have a full file on Gordon before his severe "confession interrogations" began, and Curran, who was lightly cross-examined at the trial, gave evidence for the prosecution in both courts.

On a Sunday morning in June that year, Gordon was sitting in the Presbyterian church in Whiteabbey, near Belfast, in the same pew as Curran, who was then a barrister, a member of the MRA and was highly respected in the Presbyterian church community. (He has since become a Roman Catholic priest, ordained and trained in Rome, and is at present working in Cape Town.)

Curran approached Gordon after the service. "He shook hands with me, using the left hand," says Gordon, "introduced himself, told me that his father was Judge Curran, and invited me to lunch." Gordon was 19 and doing his national service with the RAF at Edenmore camp, a converted country house 800 yards from the entrance to the Currans' home, Glen House, in the grounds of which the body of Patricia was found. His life consisted of parades and mundane clerical work, broken up by occasional transfers and a little social life, usually around the church community in Whiteabbey or Belfast. Gordon went to church twice on Sundays.

His particular responsibility at the camp was to take the post to Whiteabbey and during his time at Edenmore he had become quite well known by the shopkeepers and residents. But his life was lonely and dull. He wasn't a mixer. In a mild way he was Edenmore's version of the local buffoon, the butt of their jokes. He was shy, gullible and nervous, according to his contemporaries, falling over backwards to carry out orders. His fellow airmen said "he couldn't stand up for himself either verbally or physically . . . blushed at the slightest pretext . . . he never went with the other chaps for a drink or to the pictures. He wasn't quite right, somehow." One day they persuaded him to put L-plates on his bicycle.

He wasn't really a problem kid, but he was awkwardly immature and, as his mother says, psychologically unfit for life in the RAF. Although he had a steady girl friend for a time, during his excursions to Belfast he had been with two prostitutes and had had adolescent homosexual experiences - anathema to his mother and the values of his strict puritan background. The guilt involved proved to be an indispensable lever for the police in eliciting Gordon's confession. (Gordon's early life had been disrupted

and this was described in the evidence on the insanity issue. His parents were living in Burma at the time of the Japanese invasion and at the age of 13 Gordon was taken to India. The family returned to England in a convoy which was constantly under the threat of attack from aircraft and submarines.)

Gordon accepted Curran's invitation to lunch. He admits it was probably out of loneliness. On this occasion in June, 1952, he made his first contact with the Curran family – the Judge, Patricia Curran and her mother. Gordon says, "The father joined us at the table, and very little was said in front of him. Everybody seemed so quiet and subdued, unnaturally. Mrs Curran and Patricia tried to instil some life into the conversation, but they were not very successful. The Judge seemed to dominate the table, with nobody very anxious to open up the conversation." Desmond discussed his involvement with the MRA briefly that afternoon and they made a plan to meet again. During the second meeting Moral Re-armament came up in the discussion again, and at Desmond's suggestion they sat together and made lists of their aspirations and ideals. In Gordon's long autobiographical statement about the events of 1952 and '53, written in the mental hospital, he describes the meeting. Curran's list, he says, contained nothing but references to Gordon. "He said such things as 'God has a plan for Iain. I have a plan for Iain if only he will put himself in my hands. I will enable him to lead a richer and a fuller life if he lets me guide and direct him.'"

This was only the second meeting – an attempt by two lonely people to establish a friendship, although Gordon says he found Curran odd and uncompanionable. "He never smiled, he was very nervous and talked about nothing except the MRA and law."

Before the third meeting, in late September, Curran introduced Gordon to the Rev. S. J. Wylie, the Presbyterian minister of Whiteabbey and the camp's chaplain, whose background role in the events before and after Gordon's arrest is also important. Wylie was in touch with the police and later, apparently, with the Ministry of Home Affairs, and took up the role of Gordon's mentor from the time of this meeting.

Gordon met Patricia Curran for only the third time during the final meeting with Desmond Curran at Glen House. (She had greeted him in church on one other occasion.) This time they met briefly. "Later during this last visit, we went into the other room, where Patricia was sitting in front of a fire, on a cushion, and we had tea together," said Gordon. ➤➤➤➤➤





Desmond Curran (left, in 1953) was a barrister, a member of Moral Re-armament and the Presbyterian Church. Eleven years later he had become a Roman Catholic priest and was photographed in Rome (right) with Iain Gordon's mother. She had flown to see him in the course of her inquiries about her son's case

Gordon left about 10 o'clock and describes his walk back through the Glen on a night which must have been very similar to the night of the murder. "Desmond said he would see me back to the camp, as their avenue was very dark and nobody liked walking down it after dark. Even in the daytime it was not very light and the tall trees on each side of the avenue almost met at the top, and let little light penetrate through the branches. The night was damp and cold and we walked by the light of Desmond's torch." It was the last time Gordon saw any of the Curran family before the murder.

Patricia Curran was studying at Queen's University, Belfast, during that winter, and living with her parents at Whiteabbey. She had begun her course there only a short time before she was killed. She was a strong, athletic girl, played squash frequently, and before going to university had driven a van for a building firm to fill in holiday time, something which Desmond said was rather distasteful to his mother.

In the tradition of crime histories Whiteabbey was the most unlikely place for the biggest murder investigation in Northern Ireland's history. It was small, quiet, a totally characterless place, ugly, depressing and gossipy. The neighbourhood still ripples from the eruption which the Curran murder caused and from the rumours which followed it. (When Gordon pleaded "Not Guilty" in the lower

court, a group of women in the public gallery broke out in applause.) Many of the witnesses and the peripheral figures who were involved at the time are still living in Whiteabbey main street, along the sea wall of Belfast Lough or in the new neighbouring council estates; all 15 years older, still telling the same stories with the same accurate detail of the police statements they made in 1952-53. No-one ever says they can't remember that far back. The rumours stay alive in the Whiteabbey bar where the detectives used to drink, and consist mostly of distorted and badly informed assumptions - the inevitable oozings of a case which had so many incongruous sidelights, all so close to home.

The driveway into the Glen House started on the main road, went through thick woods for 600 yards. The Currans shared the drive for about 300 yards with Sir William Hungerford, at which point the Currans' drive narrowed and forked away to the left.

It was just beyond this fork on the left-hand side that the body of Patricia Curran was found around 2 a.m. on November 13, 1952. It was lying face upwards in the shrubbery at the base of a tree. In a paroxysm of acutely horrifying violence the murderer had inflicted 37 stab wounds on the body, over the chest, neck and legs, and had cut the face quite deeply. Her various personal effects lay scattered about - a glove, a handbag, shoes, a yellow

juliet cap, a portfolio with two books inside it, two scarves. . . . Her watch was broken, the glass missing, the hands and the winder also missing.

The last person to see Patricia Curran apart from the murderer and perhaps her travelling companions on the bus from Belfast was John Steele, a university friend, who said that he had a cup of tea with her that afternoon and then walked with her to the Smithfield bus station, putting her on the 5 o'clock bus to Whiteabbey. The bus arrived just after 5.20 in Whiteabbey, but although she had been seen getting off the bus, no-one had seen her after she turned the bend between the bus stop and the gates of the Glen. During the investigations, the time of the murder was fixed at 5.45 when no member of her family was at home, although preliminary investigations were based on a much later time. Patricia never walked up the Glen alone after dark which is understandable - even now, with a good many trees pared away, it is an intimidating place at night. The noise from the main street is sealed off soon after you walk through the front gates and the ambiguous wood sounds take over quite suddenly.

Around 1.30 a.m., over two hours after the arrival of the last bus from Belfast, Mr Justice Curran telephoned a policeman and the family solicitor, Mr Malcolm Davison, and Desmond and Mrs Curran went out to search the



The driveway of the Glen. The body



Lord Justice Curran, Patricia's father



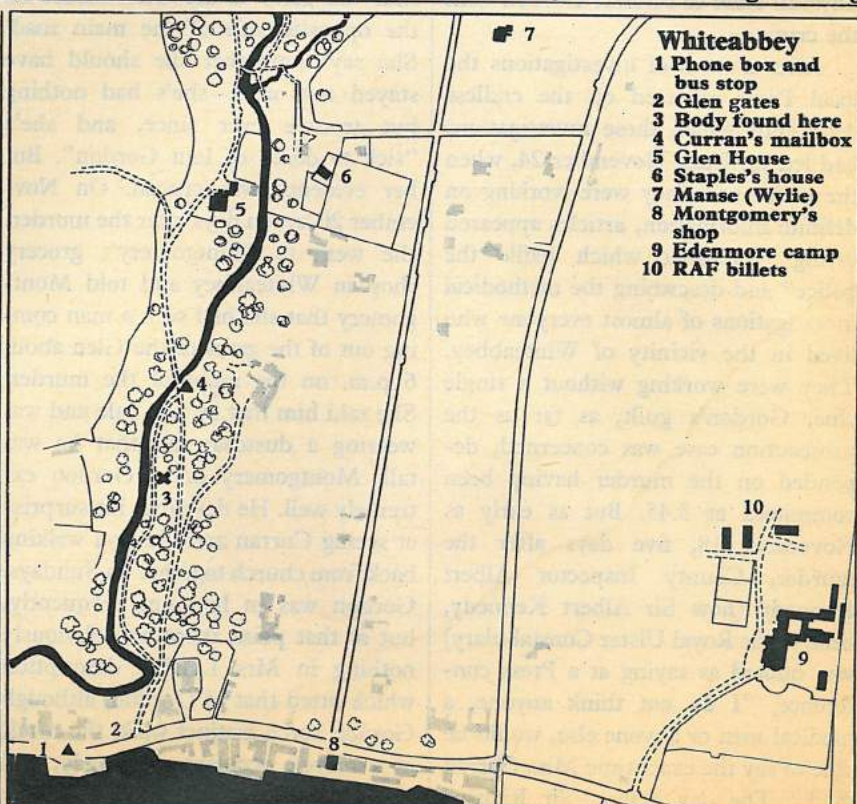
was found in the undergrowth on the right. Her belongings lay near the edge of the drive, but several people passed by without seeing a thing

Glen, which was now inky black and dripping with water from the continuous drizzle which had started falling at dusk the previous evening. Desmond and his mother made inquiries about Patricia at a house nearby and went to borrow a torch from a neighbour. Desmond Curran then left his mother and began to search through the dense wood and undergrowth of the Glen.

It was over in 20 minutes. Desmond said: "I started searching in a zig-zag fashion through the shrubbery and I heard my father shout from the drive. I then knew that he was helping in the search." He came across his sister's body soon afterwards. He saw that she was badly injured and covered in blood. "I bent down and put my arms under the body and raised it, and as I did so there was a sound which I took at the time to be breathing, but which I now know was not," said Curran at the trial.

Desmond's discovery of the body coincided, within the minute, with the appearance of Mr Malcolm Davison and his wife, Lord Justice Curran and a policeman. Davison said: "I found Desmond Curran standing over the body and it seemed as if, at the same time, Mr Justice Curran and the constable entered from somewhere." The policeman and the three lawyers, Lord Justice Curran, Desmond Curran and Mr Malcolm Davison lifted the body and carried it to the car. The legs were already stiff with rigor mortis and they had considerable difficulty getting it into the back seat.

Apart from the coincidental time factors of the search, the discovery of the body and the arrival of the witnesses, the only explanations in this case for three lawyers and a policeman moving a dead body from the scene of a crime (cardinal mistake number one as any comic strip criminologist knows) are that they panicked, or



that perhaps, as Desmond said, he heard an exhalation as he raised her chest from the ground and thought that she was still alive. Photographs of the body where it lay would have helped forensic experts to discover whether Patricia Curran had been murdered somewhere else and placed by the side of the drive - something which puzzled the police soon after the murder, and became important again in later investigations. Three leaves spotted with blood, which were found by the police at the scene of the crime, were the only traces left in the undergrowth of the girl's 37 stab wounds and face and neck injuries.

Patricia Curran's body was taken to Dr Kenneth Wilson's surgery in Whiteabbey in the solicitor's car at 2.20 that morning. Dr Wilson at this point estimated the time of death at between 11 p.m. and midnight, and suspected that the damage had been caused by a shotgun. From 5 a.m., when the pathologist arrived and the police started collecting clues and photographing the place of the crime, a murder investigation of huge proportions was under way.

Detectives and uniformed police began investigations which finally totalled 40,000 interviews and 9000 statements. A thorough search was made of the Glen grounds in the hope of finding a clue. Mine detectors, sensitive enough to pick a button out of the shrubbery, were used to cover literally every inch of the area, which was marked out in parallel lines and sections. Nothing of interest was found. The murder weapon was not discovered in the search although two knives were produced at the magistrates' court and one at the trial. Neither had any connection with the murder. There was a total lack of any physical clues to connect Gordon with the crime.

After a week of investigations the local Press reflected on the endless dead ends which these investigations had led to. Until November 24, when the police said they were working on definite information, articles appeared listing "questions which baffle the police" and describing the methodical investigations of almost everyone who lived in the vicinity of Whiteabbey. They were working without a single clue. Gordon's guilt, as far as the prosecution case was concerned, depended on the murder having been committed at 5.45. But as early as November 18, five days after the murder, County Inspector Albert Kennedy (now Sir Albert Kennedy, head of the Royal Ulster Constabulary) was quoted as saying at a Press conference, "I do not think anyone, a medical man or anyone else, would be able to say the exact time Miss Curran died." The day before, Sir Richard

The identity parade - and the woman who picked out Gordon

Pym, the RUC Inspector General, doubted that the murder had been committed where the body was found. In the *Belfast Newsletter* he said the body may have been "carried to the spot where it was found". Police gave evidence at the trial, however, that the body had been dragged about 40 feet through the shrubbery.

Scotland Yard was asked to take part in the investigation in an "advisory capacity", for the first time in the history of Northern Ireland crime investigations. The men assigned to the job were the late Detective Inspector John Capstick and Detective Sergeant Denis Hawkins, now retired from the police force.

On November 24, the same day that the police told Gordon's father, who was visiting Northern Ireland, that Gordon was "in the clear", they finally announced that they were on a definite line of inquiry. It turned out to be another red herring, but it was an interesting remark. The person who turned the course of the trial (the only witness who said she had seen a man near the gates of the Glen around the time of the murder), Mrs Hettie Lyttle, had gone to the police four days beforehand and made a statement describing the man she later identified as Gordon in a parade. It was still seven weeks before the police arrested Gordon and at least six weeks before they started putting the pressure of full interrogations on him.

Mrs Lyttle, one of the most controversial figures in the case, was a factory worker in Whiteabbey. She still lives there in Harmony Row, very near the gates of the Glen House on the opposite side of the main road. She says now that she should have stayed out of it - she's had nothing but trouble ever since, and she's "sick to death of Iain Gordon". But her evidence was crucial. On November 20, seven days after the murder, she went to Montgomery's grocery shop in Whiteabbey and told Montgomery that she had seen a man coming out of the gates of the Glen about 6 p.m. on the night of the murder. She told him that he was pale and was wearing a dustcoat and that he was tall. Montgomery knew Gordon extremely well. He describes his surprise at seeing Curran and Gordon walking back from church together on Sundays. Gordon was in his shop frequently, but at that point there was obviously nothing in Mrs Lyttle's description which fitted that of Gordon, although Gordon had a distinct walk, the result of a bicycle accident previously, and had a black eye on the night of the

murder, the result of a fight with a drunken airman in the billet. He never possessed a dustcoat - his own overcoat had a belt, and it is unlikely that he changed into civilian clothes that evening.

She made a statement. On November 23 she was shown police photographs of suspects, and told Montgomery later that she had seen a picture which resembled the pale-faced man but had not been able to identify him. She had considerable difficulty in picking Gordon out at a parade 73 days after the murder, and after she had given her information to the police they issued descriptions which bore no relation to Gordon's. Witnesses at the identification parade on January 23, eight days after Gordon's arrest, say that Mrs Lyttle walked up and down the line looking at the faces of the men. Asked whether she recognised the man, she said "No." They then began walking in a circle, and Mrs Lyttle picked Gordon. Eye-witnesses say that he was dressed in an ill-fitting coat at the parade; his face had already been in the evening paper, which Mrs Lyttle took every day. She had also stated since the trial that the man she saw did not have a black eye. Asked by the Judge whether the man she saw was the same man she picked out, she replied, in the trial, "Well, I think it was the man."

In all the investigations and statements produced by the police there is no evidence to corroborate that of Mrs Lyttle - and there is one statement to deny it.

There were only 22 airmen in the camp at the time, including Gordon. The RAF had begun their investigations on November 13 when the airmen were interviewed separately and asked to account for their movements between 11 p.m. and 12 midnight. After Gordon was called, he went back and told the investigating officer that he had known the Curran family - but no notice was taken of him. On the 14th the airmen arranged among themselves who they were with between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. and reported to the RAF police. Gordon concocted a fatal alibi with a Corporal Henry Connor. Each still says the other initiated the alibi. In fact since they were both alone, Connor's alibi was as weak as Gordon's and he could quite easily have found himself in the same position as Gordon, although his personality might have stood up better to continuous interrogation. At one stage Connor alleges he was actually accused of it by the police. Gordon's story was that he was practising typing in the Central Registry. Usual practice in the RAF, according to Gordon's contemporaries, was to cover up automatically for each other, and the alibi appears to have been made

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flippantly. Gordon was teased about it. Nobody thought it out of the ordinary.

Gordon says that it never occurred to him that the interest the police had in him, which slowly built up, was likely to lead to his arrest for the murder. Two things, both of which make his behaviour seem suspicious, seem to be running parallel in his mind during the investigations – the fear in itself of continued police interrogation, of having been alone on the night of the murder and having created a false alibi, and the fear of his homosexual activities being discovered, the latter taking over completely as time went on. Remarks which he made early on in the investigations seemed to point towards his guilt. For example on November 14, outside the camp office where several airmen were waiting to be interviewed, Gordon asked three airmen, at the same time, whether they would say they had seen him on the night of the murder. "You lads being friends of mine might stick up for me," he said. In the context of Gordon's character any slight onset of nerves about anything he may have been doing might have prompted this remark, and he made three or four similar inquiries "just in case someone had seen me and I hadn't realised it".

These statements are in fact consistent with an amazing capacity that Gordon has, and always has had, even after his discharge from the mental hospital, of talking himself into trouble. His mother says, "When he's in trouble, Iain gets excited and starts talking his head off. He's his own worst enemy. He could talk himself into anything."

Gordon's first contact with Scotland Yard was on November 29. He had already made a statement to the RUC about his friendship with the Curran family and his movements on the night of the murder, and during this interview Gordon showed Hawkins over the various places mentioned in the statement. Hawkins examined Gordon's clothes in his locker, but in cross-examination at the trial said he could find "nothing of interest".

Ten days later Gordon was taken to see Capstick, who asked him to expand on the various statements he had made to the police by this time. In Capstick's cross examination about this interview, he says that he questioned Gordon about sexual matters, which defence counsel described as "outside the scope of the case". "I asked him plenty of questions about indecency," said Capstick. His interrogation technique at this point was consistent with his later exertions to obtain the confession, according to Gordon's description; the element of suggestion showed itself in a mild form. "He said over and over again that perhaps I had taken a walk down to the



The search for clues – with mine detectors on Whiteabbey beach

village again, that I had perhaps left a bundle of sticks behind a wall or that perhaps I was out for a walk and went behind a wall to urinate and saw Patricia Curran going up the drive."

This was the last interview Gordon had with the police until January 13, when the three days of interrogation began which were to end in his confession and arrest.

In the meantime he had a meeting with the Rev. S. J. Wylie and one with Desmond Curran before going home to Scotland on holiday. These two meetings had a considerable effect on later events, and provide a possible explanation for the detectives turning back to Gordon over a month after they had apparently decided to leave him alone. Gordon saw Wylie directly after the interview with Capstick on December 10. Gordon says: "I was very worried and wondered why they went on questioning me. The impression grew on my mind that somehow they did not believe me." He imparted these fears to Wylie and asked him if he would put in a good word for him to the police and tell them that he had nothing to hide. The meeting developed into a general conversation about murders, and then into a discussion about Gordon's private life. Wylie, as a later description will show, was being very helpful; and from remarks made later, and subsequently denied by an official of the Ministry of Home Affairs in Northern Ireland, it is almost certain that Wylie helped to fill in Gordon's background for the police and passed his conversation with Gordon on. Hawkins said recently: "Wylie helped us with information on the Curran family – we wanted to know quite a lot about them to start with."

Wylie very much occupied the attention of the various people, including Mrs Brenda Gordon, who went back over the ground of the case for some years afterwards. According to descriptions of his behaviour in the pulpit, he was a fairly hysterical, excitable Old Testament Bible thumper, the carica-

ture of a "hoarse protestant". Even Patricia Curran, during one of her two or possibly three short conversations with Gordon, said, "He would be all right if he could control his emotions. He's always letting them run away with him." An eye-witness of one of his sermons in 1958 says, "He often worked himself up into a passion, his face becoming flushed and his hair dishevelled. He swung both arms about violently with the fists clenched and bared his teeth several times. He also banged his fists on the Bible and on the pulpit. Several times his speech became confused and he could not get the words out. After these outbursts he suddenly became quiet and dropped his voice almost to a whisper." Describing the sermon, the same eye-witness says: "Later he mentioned that Luther had maintained that the writer of the first book of the Revelation was insane. He spoke of those who had stood up for the truth and how some had had their tongues pulled out with red hot pincers and their bodies broiled . . . He said that sin leads to insanity and insanity leads to murder . . . at another point he spoke about monsters. These included horses with dragons' tails and dragons with horses' heads and humans with horses' tails . . . there was no connection between the subjects mentioned . . . he read the text from Revelations again, by this time the children had gone out; ' . . . I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead.' He worked himself up to a passion on this theme, then he added the remark, 'Dead as mutton.' Suddenly he introduced a story about a king who was fighting with a blunt sword . . . He made a movement of picking up the 'blunt instrument' as he called it. He then proceeded to stab repeatedly into the Bible on the pulpit."

Gordon's father, who flew over to Northern Ireland immediately after his son's arrest, says he was advised by Capstick and Kennedy to see Wylie, who subsequently assured him that Gordon was guilty. When Gordon

senior asked him how he knew, he was told that the information was confessional and could not be given to anybody. When in 1958, someone acting on Gordon's behalf was having an interview with the commanding officer of Edenmore camp, Wylie, to their surprise, came in, and repeated his affirmation that Gordon was guilty.

Mrs Gordon herself had two interviews with Wylie before he left for Canada in 1959, leaving his wife in Northern Ireland. She asked him, during the second interview, how he was so sure about her son's guilt. His alleged reply was, "Of course I'm sure. I know he did it. If you don't let this pass you will get more than you will like. I went and told what I knew."

(Wylie continued to visit Gordon after he was sent to Belfast's Crumlin Road jail to await trial until the visits were stopped by the Gordon family at the suggestion of the prison chaplain. On one occasion he brought a message from, of all people, Desmond Curran, hoping Iain would think of "everything that would help him in his defence".

Gordon's last meeting with Curran before his arrest was on December 23. He owed Curran £1 which he had borrowed to pay for some shoe repairs, and the murder had intervened in the repayment. One evening, for some reason, Gordon telephoned Wylie and asked him if he thought it would be all right for him to see Desmond and to repay his debt. Gordon says, "He almost fell over himself in his enthusiasm for me to see Desmond again."

Gordon telephoned Curran and agreed to meet him at the Val d'Or café in Belfast at 8 o'clock that evening. The meeting was a major part of the Crown evidence both in the magistrate's hearing and at the trial—Curran made a long deposition about Gordon's suspicious behaviour. It was particularly damaging evidence but it was only lightly tested in cross examination.

Curran was asked 13 questions in cross examination by the defence. His evidence was that he and Gordon left the café and went to the Presbyterian hostel, where they both had friends. They had a long talk about the murder, and as they were going up in the hotel lift, Gordon said to Curran, "Now we go up to the heavens." Curran continued: "Gordon turned rather pale and it seemed to me he said, 'Someone will be asleep in about five minutes.'" Cross-examined Curran said, "It struck me as being rather strange." "Then Gordon asked me what I had told the police about the murder," said Curran in the lower court; "I replied that I had told them everything I knew. He said he had done the same about me, even some things he didn't want to tell. Then he asked me what she (Patricia Curran) ➤ ➤ ➤

had said about him after she met him, if she kept a diary and if so was it of facts or opinions; was there any mention of him and had the police got the diary. I asked Gordon what he thought about the weapon, and he said revolvers were used now. He wondered what were the advantages of an Italian stiletto.

"He said he supposed it would go in and out more easily but thought an English or an Irish knife might be used." Curran continued, "He said he could not understand why, if Patricia was killed by the fourth blow, 20 other stab wounds were inflicted. When I asked him how he knew she had been killed by the fourth blow, he replied, 'Wasn't it in the papers?'"

When Capstick wrote his memoirs in the *Empire News* in February, 1958, he mentioned this meeting. "A conversation I had with Desmond Curran," he says, "convinced me that we were on the right track." Of the remarks Gordon made going up in the lift, Capstick says: "Curran was frightened. He thought Gordon was taking him to a quiet place to kill him."

Gordon, who pleaded not guilty at the trial, was never put into the witness box and was therefore never given an opportunity to deny this story. He wrote to his mother at this time, however, and said he couldn't understand why Desmond Curran went on talk-

'A conversation I had with Curran convinced me we were on the right track' - Capstick

ing about the murder. He says now: "When he wouldn't keep off the subject, I suppose he got me talking too. He distorted the conversation in court." Gordon went to Scotland soon after the meeting and his mother describes how he was disturbed, "slept long and late, sat staring at the fire unable to mobilise himself and was particularly sensitive to the visits of the postman". Both he and his mother say that letters were exchanged between Curran and Gordon in December 1952 and early January 1953. This is corroborated by Capstick in his memoirs.

A letter from Desmond Curran which Gordon received at the beginning of January would, he says, have shown the real nature of the meeting between them in Belfast, or at least would have put a different complexion on Curran's evidence. It was taken from Gordon at the time of his arrest with his other belongings and never returned to him. The real cause of Gordon's worry about his conversation with Desmond, which was only hinted at in the letters he sent him, was that he had told Curran that Wesley Courtenay, a contemporary of Gordon's

who lived in Whiteabbey but who has since died, had made a homosexual advance to him, and that he had rejected it. Gordon told the police about this during the first day of his "confession interrogations", January 13. Gordon knew that Curran was in contact with the police after their conversation and was obviously extremely worried about the police having information of this sort. After Gordon's committal for trial, while he was in Belfast's Crumlin Road jail, he repeatedly asked his parents to "get Wesley Courtenay", and Courtenay himself told a private detective, before his death, that he had information which would lead to Gordon's release, but he wanted money - more than anyone could afford.

Gordon returned to Belfast on January 10. On the 11th he saw Mr Wylie, who told him, "I believe the police are getting ready to make an arrest and if it is God's will it is all to the good." The interrogations began on the 13th.

The official times of the interrogations on these three days are January 13, 3½ hours; January 14, 6¾ hours (one and a half hours for lunch - with the police - in between); January 15, 9 hours 5 minutes, no break. Gordon's statement alleges that the times were, in fact, much longer - he remembers to this day the times when he returned

to the camp in the evenings and went to the police barracks in the morning.

Hawkins and Russell interviewed him on the first day. Gordon spoke about Wesley Courtenay, and his relationship with the Curran family, but no questions relating to the murder and Gordon's movements on the night of the murder were asked. He made a long statement. He was asked to return the next day for more questioning and placidly consented. On the second day, January 14, the Connor alibi was broken. "I think this was the day the damage was done," says Gordon. The interrogation started shortly after 9 a.m., and Gordon says he returned to the camp at 7.45 p.m., went to the NAAFI and then to bed - at least 9½ hours of questioning with a break for lunch of one hour. Connor had been questioned in the middle of Gordon's interrogation by Det. Head Const. Sam Russell, now a top-ranking officer in the RUC, and Hawkins, and had admitted the false alibi. When Gordon broke down on the alibi after lunch, the tempo started to speed up. "Capstick must have got the scent then," says Hawkins. Gordon thought they would ease up after he had told them about the alibi, but found that everything he said was subsequently disbelieved. Gordon says, "I had also told them about my meetings with Courtenay and what happened at

"The trouble with skiing is the 2 days travel" . .



them, and also about my private life and other aspects of my sexual life.

"Capstick went on about me going to hell, something I was very frightened of then. I blurted out anything to try and save myself. Also I didn't want my mother to know about my life in Belfast, and would have done anything to prevent her finding out." From 5 p.m. Capstick, Kennedy, Hawkins and Russell were all interrogating Gordon. Here is Gordon's account of Russell's interrogation: "He stood right beside me, standing up and raising his fists above his head, and waving his arms all over the place. He shouted, and my head was splitting and spinning. The room seemed to be going round one way, I seemed to be going round the other. The noise seemed to vibrate all round me and back off the wall. It seemed as if there was a million voices being thrown back at me off the wall. I felt that if I didn't confess, I wouldn't have a dog's chance and would be hanged and go to hell." Hawkins and Russell both admitted at the trial that the interrogation was a "pressing one".

Gordon returned to the camp. "I passed Airman Brown in the dining hall as I was going in, and he coming out. He said to me: 'You look all in.' I replied: 'I have had a bad time with the police.'"

During all Gordon's statements,

except the confession, he told the same story with minor variations about his movements on the night of the murder.

The Connor alibi paled away, Gordon said that he had delivered the mail to Whiteabbey post office at 4.30 p.m., returned to the camp to have tea at 5, stayed in the dining hall for 5 or 10 minutes. He then went to the Central Registry to practise typing, leaving to go to the NAAFI between 7 and 7.30, returning to the Central Registry until 9.30, then going to his billet and to bed.

Gordon's description of the events leading to his confession on January 15 is important in the light of the report of one forensic psychiatrist, and the supporting statements of two others, as to its validity. The report was made some time after the trial.

Gordon says, "My mind seemed all muddled up and confused and a complete blank . . . I felt sick, I thought I was going to faint . . . I had no energy. I saw Capstick alone and he asked me again, in detail, about my sexual activities and said, 'We have a very good place in Belfast where you can be tested for V.D. Are you willing to come?' I said 'Yes'. Then Capstick repeated, 'You're a sick boy, Iain', and he promised me repeatedly that if I confessed to the murder I could go home and see a doctor."

"Your parents and friends will never know about it because you're

'You're not a bad boy. If you confess you'll be allowed to go home'

over 16. You did it in a blackout. You're not a bad boy. If you confess you will be allowed to go home a free man and none of your past life will come out," are remarks which Gordon attributes to Capstick. Gordon says he asked Capstick if his past life would come out if he did not confess and that Capstick replied, "Undoubtedly." The interrogation went on for 9½ hours that day without a break. Capstick's note on the morning's interrogation, read out in court, said: "10.20 a.m., 15.1.53. Saw Gordon at office. Nelson [an RUC detective] left him and I questioned him at length re masturbation, gross indecency, sodomy."

During the last part of the interview, Capstick and Gordon were alone again. "Capstick began his patter all over again. But I couldn't stand it any longer," says Gordon. "I got up and began walking around the room saying, 'You have me very worried because I have told you the truth and you won't believe me. What will my parents and friends say if I confess?' 'What can they say?' he replied. 'You were sick and didn't know what you were doing.' I must have gone on for 15 minutes and my thoughts came out probably not

very coherently at times because I was in such an agitated, upset state. Capstick suggested I could do with something to steady myself and I am convinced this last lot was doped because after I had it I just sat at the fire without an ounce of energy. I had no more strength to resist him. I was just done. I sat, splayed out, my body completely limp, my legs stretched out but with no feeling in them; my arms dangling aimlessly by my sides. Several times I almost dropped off to sleep, I was so drowsy."

It is reasonable to suppose that if Gordon had been subjected to "brain-washing conditions" by Capstick, which is the opinion of the psychiatrist who is a retired psychiatric consultant of a leading London teaching hospital and who examined him later, he could have felt that his tea was drugged. The psychiatrist's report says, "He developed what is called a dopey, muzzy condition before the final breakdown. This is recorded as occurring in this sort of situation under the names of state of collapse or inhibition - which predisposes to the acceptance of suggestions before the confession is made. It seems to me unlikely that he could have invented this feeling unless it occurred. Not so many, except in exceptional circles, know of this phenomenon."

Gordon's description con- ➤➤➤

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tinues, "He then asked me what would have happened supposing I had met Miss Curran. "Would you see her at the Glen entrance? Would you offer to escort her home? Would you ask her for a kiss?" Gordon says he replied "Probably" to this series of questions. "He then asked me to repeat it all back again," says Gordon, "having asked Kennedy to come in. I just repeated his questions as a statement of fact. He then asked me to write it out for him, or whether he would write it, and I agreed. . . . So he just wrote out the words he had put into my mouth. The whole statement was his entirely, in thought and wording, though I seem to remember, although I am not quite sure, writing something myself. To give just one instance which is typical of the whole statement, when he said, 'Would you offer to escort her home?' and I said 'Probably', it went down as 'I offered to escort her home'."

Gordon then says he wondered for a few minutes whether to sign it. When it came to a formal charging, Kennedy, according to Gordon, said, "Shall I say it was not wilful murder?" and he replied "Yes". This was the first quote from Gordon to reach the Press after his arrest, "It was not wilful murder." It can hardly have been a stroke of luck that Kennedy was available to be called in when Capstick had interrogated Gordon to the 'confession stage'. At the trial it was Kennedy who produced the confession and the jury heard nothing of Capstick's exertions earlier that day.

In his summary of his examination of Gordon, the psychiatrist says: "I am disturbed by the circumstances in which this confession was obtained. The sequence of events corresponds closely with those known to be conducive to brainwashing, in which false ideas may be planted and false statements made without necessarily conscious intention on the part of the interrogator to obtain a 'false confession' . . . the form of the confession is consistent with its having been obtained in response to questioning and suggestion." The psychiatrist in question, who has had experience of over 70 murder cases, including those of Christie, Evans, Haigh, Heath, Straffen and Podola, concluded that he doubted Gordon's guilt.

"He was such a chuckle-headed gull that I don't think he was guilty. He wouldn't have kept his head," he said. The Gordon case, he feels, was "quite the most fascinating" he had examined.

Capstick says in his reminiscences: "I took the only course open to me. I had to make that boy tell me the truth about his private life and secret thoughts. Only then could I begin to believe him when he began to tell the



Supt. Capstick (left), Gordon's chief interrogator, with Sgt. Hawkins (centre) and Sir Albert Kennedy, now Inspector General of the RUC

truth about the death of Patricia Curran. I hated to use what might seem like ruthless measures."

During his description of the taking of the confession, Capstick alleged that Gordon said: "Did anyone else see me leaving the Glen," presumably having just been told that Mrs Lyttle had said she had seen him. It is interesting that in his memoirs Capstick changes this remark to "Did anyone see me leaving the Glen?" The difference is crucial.

All the accepted conditions for the inducement of a brainwashing atmosphere were there - the introduction of feelings of guilt; of mental conflict; promises that Gordon could go free if he confessed, weighed against prolonged tension; isolation from his friends; the allegation that everything was known about him; concentration on a particular incident in Gordon's life about which he felt guilt; the development of a feeling of gratitude towards the interrogator, Capstick.

Without the confession, the Crown would not have had a case. (This and the evidence of Mrs Lyttle are the only two pieces of evidence to show that Gordon was at the scene of the murder at 5.45 p.m.) The confession said: "I left the camp shortly after 4 p.m. on

November 12 to deliver the mail to Whiteabbey P.O. . . . I think I then went back to the camp. I probably had my tea about 5 p.m. . . . I think I then changed into my civilian clothes . . . I then walked back to Whiteabbey, met Patricia Curran between the Glen and the post office. She asked me to escort her home; I agreed. I asked her 'Do you mind if I kiss you?' We stopped walking and stood on the grass verge on the left of the drive . . . she laid her things on the grass . . . I kissed her once or twice . . . I struggled with her. I then lost control and Patricia fell to the ground sobbing . . . I believe I stabbed her with my service knife . . . as far as I know I crossed the road and threw the knife into the sea. I returned to the billet at roughly 6.30 p.m. There was no-one in the billet at the time . . . I saw I had patches of Patricia's blood on my flannels . . . I scrubbed it off. I must have done this but I do not quite remember." He then confessed to having concocted alibis, says he did it in a blackout, and makes his apologies.

It is alleged that at least two other people were at various times accused of the murder before Gordon's arrest. Although in itself not particularly important, the circumstances of these

accusations throw some light on the attitude of the police. Connor, with whom Gordon created the alibi, describes his interrogation by the police: "I was very frightened by their menacing attitude particularly when I was told, 'If you don't tell the truth we will send you to prison. You and Gordon did the murder, didn't you, didn't you?'" Connor added: "Gordon was a weak character and if he had received the same treatment as I had for a much longer period I can quite understand him making a false confession of murder in order to stop the questioning. It is not an experience I would like to repeat in my lifetime."

A woman who was working at the school used for the interrogations describes the interrogation of George Morrison, a Whiteabbey boy who had done some wood chopping for the Currans. "One night he was kept at the school until after 1 a.m. The Deputy Matron told me she heard shouts of 'You did it, you did it'."

"At about 6 p.m. on January 15," she said, "Superintendent Capstick came down to the house matron and told her that Gordon had confessed to the murder. Later when having tea with some of his own staff, he said, 'We will get him off insane.' I heard this." Gordon alleges that Capstick told him that the medical evidence would save him after his arrest. (The medical evidence given later at the trial has been challenged by doctors who examined Gordon subsequently.)

Although Hawkins, Capstick and Russell were strenuously cross examined about their interviews with Gordon, and one whole day of the trial was taken up with defence submissions on the admissibility of the confession itself, the defence failed completely to draw attention to the glaring discrepancies in the document. Apart from anything else the confession brought up no new evidence, which must be rare in criminal history and contained *all* the facts known to the police. It covered up for itself on the whereabouts of the murder weapon by saying it was thrown into the sea, was in strict chronological order and stylistically it consisted of endless repetitions of "I probably; I think; I must have; I am not sure; I don't know." It is awkward and hesitant and Gordon is a fluent writer as his letters and other statements show.

The confession says: "*I probably had my tea about 5 p.m. I think I then changed into my civilian clothes.*" If he had changed at that time, sometime between 5 and 5.10, one of the other airmen would almost certainly have seen him. Four and possibly five airmen have shown in their post trial statements that they were in the billet during this period. Two airmen subsequently said they had seen Gordon in

uniform much later. Gordon says later in the statement that he "returned to the billet at roughly 6.30 p.m. (after the murder). There was no-one in the billet at the time. I saw I had patches of Patricia's blood on my flannels. I scrubbed it off. I must have done this, but I do not quite remember." If he had returned at 6.30 and scrubbed the blood from his trousers, the other airmen, who were preparing to go to a dance in Belfast that night, would certainly have seen him. The billet and the ablutions, as statements from no less than six airmen show - and they remember seeing others - were particularly crowded at 6.30. But, in fact, nobody saw Gordon that evening - that is the tragedy. Gordon was obviously under suspicion a few days after the murder. If an airman had seen him scrubbing his trousers, or seen him at all, it would have been mentioned. Gordon said, "I then walked back to Whiteabbey" - confession. The case against Gordon hung delicately on his having committed the murder at 5.45, or between 5.20 and 6.10.

Apart from Mrs Hettie Lyttle's evidence, the Crown only had the evidence of George Chambers, an 11-year-old newsboy, to corroborate it. He was delivering papers to the Currans' post box at the fork of the drive on the murder night. The box was put there by Judge Curran after the newspaper boys refused to deliver to the house because of the fierceness of the Currans' dog. On his way back he heard a noise, "like somebody's foot in the leaves, louder than the other noises. I ran . . . because I was frightened." Chambers made a statement after the trial saying that the noise lasted "only a fraction of a second". He didn't hear scuffling or screams on his way up or down the drive.

A Crown witness, Mrs Mary Jackson, wife of the Wing Commander at the camp, came forward at a very late stage and said she passed Gordon walking down the camp drive at 5.10 p.m. Mrs Jackson knew Gordon well. She knew most, if not all the airmen by sight, and Gordon particularly. One day he had taken her bicycle from outside the post office mistaking it for his own, and Mrs Jackson had attempted to have him charged. If Mrs Jackson had seen him at 5.10 walking down the drive, Gordon's movements would have had to be extremely rapid. He had about ten minutes to have his tea, return to his billet, fling on his civilian clothes, and be down the drive on his way to the Glen. She didn't mention that he was in a hurry, and why would he have been in a hurry anyway? Lighting-up time that night was 4.58. At 4.30 it was too dark for a local gardener to work and at 5 to 5.10 it was black, and there was no artificial light on the drive.



The Rev. S. J. Wylie, Presbyterian Minister of Whiteabbey. Patricia Curran told Gordon in 1952: "He would be all right if he could control his emotions. He's always letting them run away with him"

Mrs Jackson apparently saw it was Gordon, but "because of the light" couldn't tell whether he was in uniform or civilians. She didn't mention his peculiar walk or his black eye. She also said she saw another person following Gordon, but couldn't identify him. He was never brought forward to corroborate her evidence. When Mrs Jackson says she saw Gordon, he still had 800 yards to walk to the Glen gates and over three quarters of a mile to the murder spot.

"And met Patricia Curran between the Glen and the Post Office." - confession. No independent evidence was produced anywhere to show that Gordon met Patricia after she got off the bus, although two witnesses, George Chambers and Andrew Patterson, who were on the same bus did not see anyone with Patricia Curran, and Tom Elliot, who is a gardener still working in the grounds of the school used for the interrogations, was on the bus immediately following and walked in the same direction as Patricia, passed the meeting point but saw neither Gordon nor Patricia. His statement was available but was never produced. Neither could the Crown produce anyone who had seen Gordon during his 5 or 6 minute walk between the camp and the Glen, although he passed two bus stops on the busy main street of Whiteabbey. Had he been walking down the camp drive at 5.10 he would have reached the Glen gates at 5.18 at the outside. He would have waited a few minutes for Patricia to appear, spent another few minutes in "short general conversation" with Patricia (as the confession states) and would therefore have been on the spot for between 7 and 9 minutes, in full view of the

main road.

Neither Tom Elliot, nor his daughter, Pat, who was on the following bus - there was less than a minute between them - and who got off at a stop beyond the gates of the Glen and walked back, saw Patricia or Gordon at this point.

In the description of the scene of the crime, a yellow juliet cap and a portfolio containing two books were lying eleven inches from the edge of the drive. Gordon said in the confession, "She laid her things on the grass." But little George Chambers who heard the noise in the undergrowth, as the Whiteabbey factory hooter sounded at 5.45, didn't see the portfolio or the hat on his way up the drive, although he was carrying a torch. Neither did Mr Justice Curran, nor his taxi driver, nor Desmond Curran, nor Mrs Curran although they all passed the spot after 5.45. The photographs show that the undergrowth was bare (it was winter) and the articles would have stood out quite clearly.

"I struggled with her. I then lost control and Patricia fell to the ground sobbing. I believe I stabbed her with my service knife" - confession. The post mortem evidence given by Dr James Firth of Belfast at the time showed that Patricia had been standing for a short while during the stabbing. This is supported by another forensic pathologist who has seen the photographs recently. The introduction of the service knife in the confession caused the Crown a certain amount of frustration. Gordon never possessed a service knife. Forensic experts then and now say that the stab wounds could not have been inflicted with a service knife which has a short, thick blade, but by a stiletto-type dagger, with both sides sharpened until half-way up the blade when one side becomes blunt.

All the way through the case Gordon's characteristic tendency to inculpate himself by his own words and behaviour was probably the most damaging part of the evidence against him, apart from the confession. An incident in the lower court, which Gordon considers did him the greatest harm, illustrates this. While he sat in the dock a Constable Herdman dropped a knife on to the floor, and Gordon is alleged to have said: "That's not it," and to have added, "that's the ordinary type issued in the service, as used in the offices. The one I had had a longer blade. Sure, they haven't found it yet. I believe Miss Curran carried one in her handbag." The last bit was not admitted at the trial. The words, "That's not it" would have appeared to any jury as a significant slip of the tongue from a guilty man who felt he had caught the police out. Gordon's description of this event made after his conviction goes: "When Mr ➡➡➡

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Hanna (prosecution Q.C.) was handing a paper knife to somebody it fell from his hands to the floor with a clatter, whether accidentally or on purpose, I don't know. This constable (Herdman) who had kept up the patter said to me, 'Is that the knife, Iain?' I said, 'No'. I meant that it was not ours and if I added, as Herdman says I did, 'ours had a longer blade' I was simply referring to the type we used at Edenmore for eating. Regarding the handbag I cannot possibly imagine how she could possibly have come to have a knife in it." Lord McDermott finally commented that, apart from this remark, "the case for the Crown . . . has not brought into association with the prisoner that particular knife at all . . . the knife seems to be out of it".

"As far as I know I crossed the road and threw the knife into the sea" — confession. This is directly contradictory to Mrs Lyttle's other evidence. Mrs Lyttle was walking with Mrs Agnes Currie, a fellow factory worker, when she says she saw Gordon. They had tried to cross the road but found the traffic too heavy and turned for the pavement again. She was asked:

Q. Had you got near the footpath at the time when you saw the man.

A. Not quite.

Q. Where was he at the time.

A. He was coming on past us, he was walking on the footpath.

Had Gordon crossed the road and thrown his knife into the sea, he would have had to turn back a little having walked past Mrs Lyttle. She would certainly have seen him. If he had come straight out of the Glen entrance and thrown it into the sea, he wouldn't have walked past her. One of the two is possibly correct, not both. But the whole of Mrs Lyttle's evidence has come under grave doubt. Secondly, Mrs Currie, who was with her, denies to this day that she saw a man coming out of the Glen and told her, when she first mentioned it a couple of days after the murder, that she was "daft". Mrs Currie says, "Mrs Lyttle said to me 'Do you remember we saw that man coming out of the Glen'. I said 'No, Mrs Lyttle, I don't.' Mrs Currie's evidence was known to the police, but she was not called.

"I returned to the camp at roughly 6.30 p.m. I saw I had patches of Patricia's blood on my flannels. I scrubbed it off. I must have done this but I do not remember" — confession. There were three tiny spots of blood discovered on Gordon's clothes over two months after the murder — one in the pocket of his trousers which the forensic report said could have been caused by a ragged nail; one found on one of Gordon's eight ties, not necessarily the one he was wearing on the night of the murder (the RAF camp

The evidence of the knife: did Gordon throw it into the sea?

fight which blacked his eye also gave him a nosebleed; the jury were not told this), and one on one of Gordon's towels, taken from him after January 15. No forensic pathologist who has studied the case has disagreed with the view that a fierce struggle took place between Patricia Curran and the murderer. Most of them are surprised that no trace of this struggle was apparent on Gordon's body, or his clothes. The police said early on that the murderer would have been "covered in blood", and one pathologist has described this lack of blood evidence as quite striking. There was no evidence of scratch marks having been noticed on Gordon's face when he returned to the camp, that evening. No evidence was produced to show that the blood found on Gordon's clothes could have been Patricia's, although admittedly they did have the same blood group. The whole of the evidence of blood was a series of assumptions, hardly worth mentioning if the case for the Crown had been stronger. The Lord Chief Justice ignored it in his summing up.

Another aspect which helps to undermine Gordon's confession is the possibility that Patricia Curran was murdered somewhere else and her body placed where it was found — as far as possible from the road on one hand and from the two nearby houses, on the other. Only the three leaves with spots of blood were found at the scene of the crime. Although the chest wounds would not necessarily have caused much bleeding if Patricia was on her back when they were inflicted, the face and leg wounds would have produced quite a large amount of blood according to forensic men. There was a light drizzle at some point that evening, but not enough to penetrate the thick trees and completely cleanse the undergrowth. The doubts of the police early on in the case have already been mentioned. If the body was moved (which would contradict the confession), it would be consistent with the neat arrangement of the books in the portfolio. If the books were dropped, as a police experiment pointed out, they would fall out of the portfolio. There was, in fact, no direct evidence to connect Gordon with the crime — no hairs (some found on Patricia's clothing, which were not hers, were never attached to Gordon); no blood, no vegetable matter or mud, no footprints, not even any accidental transfer evidence, no knife, no scratches. And on the other hand nobody saw him between 5 and 7 at the camp.

The jury were out of court when the defence challenged the admissibility of the confession and consequently when Dr Arthur Rossiter Lewis, submitting defence evidence on insanity, told the court that Gordon had confessed to the murder again, under a truth drug (a thiopentone test) carried out by Dr Lewis for eleven hours, they must have been convinced. Gordon had been deprived of food for twelve hours previously for the purposes of this test.

Gordon describes Lewis' methods almost in the same terms as he describes those of Capstick. The Defence submitted that Gordon was suffering from schizophrenia at the time of the murder and, on the basis of tests carried out four months after the crime, spontaneous hypoglycaemia – a low sugar curve in the blood. (Rossiter Lewis, now dead, had submitted exactly the same formula – schizophrenia and hypoglycaemia – in a murder trial some months previously, on behalf of the defence. He was an expert witness). Gordon's mother told the court of his difficult early days in Burma, how Iain had become hysterical at one point. A newsagent from Dollar, Gordon's home town, told the court how he had faltered in a running race when "there was plenty of running left in him", and a hospital doctor told of a fracture of the skull that Gordon had suffered some time previously. He was convicted "guilty but insane".

Since then the independent psychiatrist who examined Gordon in April 1957 has said, "I could find no evidence that the patient is suffering or has ever suffered from schizophrenia or hypoglycaemia. I could find no evidence that the patient is now suffering or had ever suffered from any mental disorder or disease. You don't suddenly develop hypoglycaemia with no previous history of the disease." His view has been endorsed by two other psychiatrists as well as a doctor who had the closest observation of Gordon since his detention in Holywell Mental Hospital, and another doctor who visited him twice a year. These last two doctors, both with long experience of mental diseases, said that Gordon was definitely not insane, and they could find no trace of schizophrenia, or any clinical evidence of hypoglycaemia.

To all these doctors Gordon denied the crime and said that the confession was obtained by questioning and suggestion. The first doctor was asked whether it would be a lie that the Minister for Home Affairs had said: "Gordon is receiving treatment appropriate to his condition." He replied: "Yes, that would be a lie."

This doctor added: "I considered that he had an immature personality; he was childish in many ways, ➡➡➡"



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he had odd, boyish mannerisms and was perhaps rather naive and gullible, but I feel that if he did anything wrong he would give himself away by losing his head."

Gordon spent seven and a half years in Holywell Mental Hospital in Northern Ireland, the first 18 months in the locked observation ward. Describing his detention and the effects of his confession interrogations, Gordon says in his statement: "I knew deep down I had not killed Patricia Curran but Capstick had convinced me I had against my will. So half the time I told myself I had not killed her and the other half I kept telling myself I must have killed her because I had confessed. It was just awful. I kept asking myself, 'Did I meet her?', 'Did I do all the other things mentioned in the confession?' and worked myself up into such a state, not knowing where I was or what I was doing sometimes, as a result of the interrogations. Sometimes I had great difficulty in believing it was really happening, it seemed such an awful nightmare. Sometimes I just did not know where I was that night, or what I was doing, and this feeling lasted right up to the time I was sent here (Holywell) and it took about a year before I grew out of it."

During these years the Gordon case caused the successive Ministers for Home Affairs a certain amount of political embarrassment. Delegations of people working on Gordon's behalf were granted continual interviews by the Minister and his aides. The case was never allowed to drop. The late Duncan Webb, a journalist working for *The People*, spent six months investigating the Gordon case, and went as far as removing a floorboard in the Glen House to have it tested by forensic experts for human bloodstains. Justice, the British branch of the International Commission of Jurists, decided to do an unofficial report on the case. The report, which took a long time to produce, showed a sufficient degree of doubt about Gordon's conviction, so that Justice sent a delegation to see the Home Secretary, consisting of Frederick Lawton Q.C. (now Mr Justice Lawton) and Mr Hugh Pierce, another barrister member of Justice. This representation may have speeded Gordon's release. But Mrs Brenda Gordon feels that her assurance to the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Brian Faulkner, that she would take Iain away immediately if he was released and avoid any publicity, was the final decider. Elaborate arrangements were made by the Ministry of Home Affairs to get Gordon on to an aeroplane in August 1960, under the name of John Cameron, and fly him back to Glasgow with his father. Despite their fear of publicity, but perhaps because of their anxiety

that Gordon's release should not look like an admission of a mistaken conviction, the Home Office issued a statement from Stormont five days after Gordon returned home.

In their considered opinion, the statement said, Gordon was "sane enough to be released". Since then Gordon has been involved in menial jobs, his life is restricted and the whole of the Gordon family life badly disrupted. Twice Gordon, who is now 36, has been questioned by the police about murders which have taken place in Glasgow, and both times he has had an alibi. The case, he says, has ruined his life. "It has come down like a curtain. If you lose five pounds, it's your own fault. You can economise and make it up again. But if it's something that's gone out of your life like this, your freedom really, you can't bring it back again. In that sense it doesn't matter how you feel, you can't travel back in time. I think unless my name's cleared any future I have is very limited. What do I say if I want to change my job? Do I blurt it all out or what? I can't feel bitter, because I know that if I went on like that it would just destroy me."

The ghost of the Gordon case still appears at Stormont. The copious documents which the Ministry have collected over the years are hauled out from the basement periodically as the officials cope with another enquiry.

Lord Justice Curran, the father of the murdered girl, says, "In my opinion, Gordon was rightly convicted." The case will probably always be a mystery, mainly because the trial, although impeccably handled by Lord McDermott, was extremely unsatisfactory from Gordon's point of view, and since there was very little evidence against him, disproving conclusively that he did it is like "fighting against cotton wool", as one barrister put it. But it does bring the whole argument about police confessions into clear perspective. If Gordon was brainwashed by Capstick into confessing, it is likely that the police were not aware of it. One of the detectives involved, Denis Hawkins, believes that brainwashing takes "weeks, usually months". In Gordon's case it looks as if it took only a few hours. There is really very little between Capstick's alleged methods and those of Judge Jeffreys in 1685, and they seem to have produced the same effect, judging by this excerpt from Judge Jeffreys' cross-examination of a witness:

Jeffreys: That is all nonsense. Dost thou imagine that any man hereabouts is so weak as to believe thee?

Witness (Mr Dunne): My Lord, I am so baulked, I do not know what I say myself; tell me what you would have me to say, for I am cluttered out of my senses"●