**PATRICIA CURRAN MURDER**

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Dear Editor

In a Belfast Telegraph news article (20 November 2019) about the imminent new book by Kieran Fagan on the Patricia Curran murder it was stated, “Iain Hay Gordon, a young Scottish RAF technician, was later found guilty of the killing, but he was cleared in 2000 after the case against him was exposed as a tissue of lies.”

This is not borne out in the appeal judgement in 2000 by Lord Chief Justice Carswell. There was no tissue of lies. Indeed the only mention of anyone lying in the judgement concerned the alibi Iain Gordon gave for the time of the murder. There was however a dispute over whether he had dictated his confession or, as the police averred, it was taken down in question and answer form.

Lord Carswell made it plain that the procedural safeguards to which a suspect would now be entitled, including the provision of a solicitor were not afforded to Iain Gordon. His questioning was also seen as oppressive in that the police sapped the will of someone “vulnerable to suggestion” and also when interrogating him on his sexual proclivities. Using modern standards, and legally that was what had to be used, he said the confession would be ruled inadmissible. What was left, consisted “of a certain amount of circumstantial evidence and some suspicious behaviour”.

The Judge therefore concluded “that the jury's verdict cannot stand. There can be no question of ordering a retrial after this length of time and we therefore allow the appeal and quash the finding of guilt.”

I have written before about the murder of the daughter of a judge who had been a Unionist MP. Others have dramatised or novelised the events. I would caution that the same standards of evidence and fairness that were applied to Iain Hay Gordon in his 2000 appeal are applied to a family who lost their daughter in 1952 and can no longer answer back.

Yours sincerely

Jeffrey Dudgeon

**Very important people' behind infamous 1952 murder of NI judge's daughter:**

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/very-important-people-behind-infamous-1952-murder-of-ni-judges-daughter-38708012.html>

**2** **2** Patricia Curran (centre) with her family

[Claire McNeilly](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/belfasttelegraph-journalists/claire-mcneilly/)

By [**Claire McNeilly**](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/belfasttelegraph-journalists/claire-mcneilly/)

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An Irish author believes he knows who murdered the daughter of a leading Northern Ireland judge in November 1952, but you'll have to read his book to discover the killer's identity.

Kieran Fagan, who was seven years old when Patricia Curran was killed, has spent the past three years investigating and writing about the case, which was riddled with inconsistencies from the outset.

The 19-year-old Queen's University student was stabbed 37 times in the grounds of the family's palatial home, The Glen in Whiteabbey, Co Antrim, in a frenzied attack that shocked Northern Ireland.

Her body was discovered 40 yards from her home hours after her death by her father Judge Curran and her 26-year-old brother Desmond, who moved her body to a nearby doctor's house, telling a policeman she was still alive despite one arm already being stiff with rigor mortis.

Iain Hay Gordon, a young Scottish RAF technician, was later found guilty of the killing, but he was cleared in 2000 after the case against him was exposed as a tissue of lies. Mr Fagan (74) said his book would reveal all when it is published next September.

In the meantime, the author is hoping to "flush out some photographs" of the Curran family with which to illustrate his publication.

"I remember being at home from school with measles when the trial into Patricia Curran's murder took place in 1953. I was bored and I devoured every line in my father's newspapers about it," he said.

"It was only when I finished writing my first book, The Framing of Harry Gleeson, that someone suggested that this would be a good topic, so I jumped at it.

"The idea was in me, but I needed somebody to poke a stick at me and get it out."

The former Irish Times journalist and ghost writer said his book is a work of fact propelled by his "curiosity" over what happened. While writing it, he spent time in Whiteabbey, Antrim and Belfast for research purposes.

"I was in Northern Ireland twice a month for the last three years," he said.

"I'd take the train from Dublin to Belfast in the morning, talk to people, do some research and write up my notes on the train coming back."

When asked who he thinks killed Patricia Curran on November 12, 1952, he replied that he didn't "want to say exactly" but promised that he does offer up a theory in his book. He said his work deals with the conviction of Gordon - thought to be one of the greatest miscarriages of justice in recent history - and said "he was lucky not to be hanged at the time"

"There was a sense almost immediately in official circles that they'd got the wrong guy, so he was sent to an asylum immediately," he added.

"Then in 1960 he was told to change his name and clear off back to Scotland. His conviction was eventually set aside."

Mr Fagan said his research "unearthed quite a bit of documentary evidence which isn't in the public arena", adding: "I think people will be interested in that."

He also believes "the people who carried out the murder were very important people and that's why they were protected".

The Dublin-based writer revealed that "one of the things that bothers" him is the "sense that Patricia was promiscuous and that in some way she brought it on herself - and that's absolutely not true. The autopsy showed that she was a virgin".

"I believe she was killed in the escalation of a very minor row. It was a real tragedy. I don't think anyone intended to kill her," he added.

* If you have any photographs of the Currans, please email cmcneilly@belfasttelegraph.co.uk See Letters, page 30

EXTRACT FROM APPEAL JUDGEMENT ON LIES

The statement is long and detailed and contains a denial that the appellant murdered Miss Curran and an account of his movements which places him in the camp from 5 pm onwards on 12 November. In one important respect, however, there is an admission by him that he lied to the police earlier about being with Connor. The portion of the statement in which he discloses this reads as follows:

"I want to tell you the truth about what happened on Wednesday night. On Thursday, 13th November, at about 5.5 p.m. or 5.10 p.m., I was having my tea in the dining-hall. The dining-hall was full. One of the N.C.O.'s – I believe it was Flight-Sergeant Maxey – shouted from the doorway something like, 'Arrange between yourselves who you were with between 5 and 6 last night'. I am almost certain the Sergeant said between 5 and 6. I understood it to mean between 5 and 6 p.m. The Sergeant said we were to report together – those who had been together – to the R.A.F. Police. I am not certain whether the R.A.F. Police were in the room when the announcement was made, but eventually they sat at the far end of the dining-room interviewing the airmen. I understood this was in connection with the murder, although it was not announced. It was the first time that an announcement of this kind had been made. I was not worried at this particular time. Corporal Connor was sitting two or three seats away from me at the time. He came to me and said, 'You say you were with me'. He gave me no reason for saying this. We were fairly friendly, although he was an N.C.O. He never said why he wanted me to say this, but it might have been because he was on his own at the time. Everybody else was discussing between themselves who they were with. I said to Connor, 'I cannot very well say that, because I went straight to the Registry after tea'. Another airman, who was standing by – I do not know who it was; it might have been an airman by the name of Davidson – said 'It won't matter'. To me, it conveyed that it was not a matter of importance who you were with between 5 and 6 p.m. on Wednesday evening. I said to the Corporal, 'What are you going to say?' He said, 'Say you had your tea with me, and walked over to the billet'. I was not too happy about it, but I said to him, 'Are you sure it's all right?' He reassured me that everything would be all right with something like 'Don't be daft' or 'Don't be stupid'. I had serious misgivings about it, but did, in fact, agree to tell the R.A.F. Police a lying story. It was a lie, because I was not with Connor on the Wednesday evening. We both went to the R.A.F. Police together, and told them the same story. I have told you that I was with Corporal Connor in the dining-hall and in the billet on the Wednesday. That is a lie. I do not remember seeing Connor at all that day. That is the truth. It was not for my own ends that I agreed to say that I was with Connor, although I realised it was a murder investigation."

He added in a later passage: "I have no idea where Corporal Connor was on the afternoon of the murder. I do not know why he approached me about the alibi. It did not occur to me that he may have had a reason for approaching me."

….We therefore conclude that the jury's verdict cannot stand. There can be no question of ordering a retrial after this length of time and we therefore allow the appeal and quash the finding of guilt.