

WHO KNOWS THE ANSWER?

by
Philip W Baker

Section 1

"I have often gone to the end first then worked backwards!" he said to the group in the conference room.

"Imagine an accused person, the defendant, was in the criminal court charged with a serious offence after someone died. Then work backwards from there until you reach the very first point where someone could have taken steps to prevent it happening."

A member of the group asked "How will we know how far back to go?"

"Try it, you'll know", the speaker responded. Then added "To make it easy I'll give you an example to work on."

He went to the white board, drew a rough sketch of a building, then added a few details as he spoke.

"Imagine there is a tall office building and the occupiers want a large air conditioning unit put on the roof. They will need a crane to do the lifting, the crane will need an entry route onto the site and a place to park whilst the load is lifted. Then the unit will have to be put in the right place after it has been lifted up."

He observed that some members of the group were making notes.

"OK", he continued, "Now imagine the unit had been placed on the roof where the occupier had indicated it should go, but the roof collapsed, the unit fell through and killed three people who were working in an office below. Who was at fault and when should the first step have been taken to avoid the catastrophe?"

Suggestions came from several members including the crane driver being responsible, the occupier being responsible, poor communications, the dead persons' supervisor for letting them work when something was being lowered onto the roof, etc, etc.

With regard to how far back they should go, nobody got it right.

The speaker started to explain. "The very first point at which someone should have started to take precautions was when the first vestige of an idea crossed the mind of the person who had that idea. Not when the order was placed, as some of you suggested; not when the money was approved; not when the crane arrived on site; not when someone decided it should be done on a normal working day; but way back when the first concept of an idea was born."

He continued "A feasibility study should have been completed and all persons likely to be connected, involved, or affected in any way should have been informed. They may have known something others didn't and it could have been significant."

"Should a project manager have been appointed?" asked one of the group.

Yes" the speaker answered. "Whether they were called that or something else doesn't matter so much as having one "ringmaster" to oversee the thing from start to finish."

"Cradle to grave" muttered one of the group.

"Exactly!" said the speaker. "That terms is often used in projects to support the notion that something will be controlled from start to finish. Unfortunately, in our example things didn't start at the cradle, weren't controlled from start to finish, and there were three graves." He smiled as he said it and knew some of the listeners appreciated his mild humour.

"As some of you know, a structural engineer should have been involved to check the load bearing capacity of the roof, meaning the total weight of the unit should have been known first, a surveyor should have checked the condition of the building, insurers should have been involved, a safety adviser should have been involved, and so the list goes on.

A seemingly simple project can involve a lot of people, a lot of work, a lot of time, and a lot of expense. Ask yourself if it is worth the expense, then think about the people who were killed. What price would you put on a human life?"

"I guess quite a few people would wish they could turn the clock back!" offered one of the group.

"I think you're right", said the speaker. "Does anyone else agree that many people in history have wished they could go back and try again?"

Every member of the group put one hand in the air.

"So where do we go from here?" asked the speaker. "One thing we can do is learn from the mistakes of others and ensure we don't repeat the error".

"What about the communications angle?" someone asked.

"Thanks for raising that", the speaker said. "A wise person once said that all problems are problems of communication. If you think about that, it is true, even though some of us may have trouble with the concept at first!"

He carried on "The air conditioning unit fall caused death because the fact that it was there wasn't communicated to the people below it in time.

The fact that the roof couldn't take the weight wasn't communicated to enough people in time to avoid the collapse.

Along the road were structural engineers and building surveyors who would have known the difference but they were not involved in the project so nothing was communicated to them and obviously nothing was communicated back.

Someone predicted there could be an attack on Pearl Harbor in world war two but it wasn't communicated to the right decision makers.

Things go wrong in human bodies because hormones go out of balance, or someone contracts a virus. The problem there may be lack of communication between microscopic cells.

As you analyse different scenarios you realise that the theory is true. All problems are problems of communication. You can turn it round and say 'lack of communication' but it is still a problem of communication."

"Suppose one of the knowledgeable guys along the road had noticed a crane going onto the office site and raised a concern?" asked a member of the group.

"Very good point", the speaker responded. "That person may have then owned what is sometimes called 'The responsibility of discovery'. They sense something is wrong and stick with it until they can solve the problem or hand it over to someone they trust to handle it properly."

"You mean like a first aider handing over a casualty to a paramedic or doctor?", offered a different member.

"Good example!", the speaker replied. "There have been occasions when someone has attempted to hand a matter over to someone else but, for whatever reason, didn't trust that someone else. So the responsibility of discovery remained with them. It could be, for example, that a person hands a situation over to a police officer but thinks the officer may be drunk, corrupt, forget, or simply not bother to follow it through. All of those situations have arisen before."

"So how does a person know if they are handing it to someone who will act responsibly?", asked yet another member.

"Probably by using the same instinct that told them there was something wrong in the first place", said the speaker. "There is no perfect answer that will suit every occasion and the conscience of the person who made the discovery may be satisfied in different ways, according to who they are.

One person may think about being called to account if they didn't do enough and worry about being adversely criticised or punished in some way. Bt their conscience may be satisfied if, say, they were questioned in court as a witness and the court found they had done all that was reasonable. We know that courts work on the concept of reasonableness.

But a different person may not be satisfied and not too bothered about what others think. They may believe there is more they can do than just hand it over. After an event where something went seriously wrong they may look back knowing there was something more they could have done but didn't."

"Why beat yourself up when it's all over?" asked someone else.

"Maybe shame, the feeling of having failed others, self doubt, guilty conscience, something like that", said the speaker. "However, remember the bit about learning from past mistakes. Learn from the mistakes made by others if you can but learn from your own mistakes as well. Also learn from lost opportunities and try not to miss them in future."

The discussion went on for a while then the session ended whilst everyone had a refreshment break.

Section 2

The speaker was a visitor who used the name Peter Brown. He had been involved in industrial espionage and a variety of other job types in different countries and had many points of advice to pass on to others willing to listen.

Among the corporations he had "worked" in were ACC, General Motors, IBM, Gemenos, Johnson Controls, Union Carbide, Zurich Insurance, local authorities, and others.

He found that getting jobs in those organisations was easy. He smiled to himself that he could have rewritten their personnel manuals and security manuals to prevent individuals such as himself from getting in through the front door.

But that would have been counter-productive to the needs of his principal. The principal who paid him millions over the course of a few years for all the detailed information he amassed and passed on. The value to those who enjoyed the benefit was billions, so the ratio of cost to benefit was very high.

Most of his success came down to the complacency of others. Some were so intent on empire building and toadying they missed what was going on in their own back yard.

He found that introducing a few red herrings was helpful to his cause too.

The talk and discussion he led today was after he became a "poacher turned gamekeeper", to use a popular expression. It was a very old idea. "Set a thief to catch a thief" was another expression that fitted the notion. It was well known that police use former car thieves to tell them how car thieves work and some such 'hot-wirers' have even become television celebrities.

How does someone get a job in a large firm and have freedom to roam around without causing alarm? Easy, he thought. Easy, he knew. Because he had done it.

The Post Room has been a good starting place for many "Mystery Shoppers". Peter Brown was not the speaker's real name and his real name won't be mentioned here. He liked to use the mystery shopper term because that's how he saw himself.

Large retail companies and others employ people to pose as shoppers and note details of how the business is run. It may be a single branch of a national multiple or something else. He had done some of that. The difference was that the business was spying on itself, not the competition. The common denominator was that facts were being collected ready to feed back to whoever the employer was.

He was over-qualified for most of the roles he played and the only acting he had to do was play a little dumb at times.

An interesting aspect of the "mystery shopping" in multinational corporations was his exit strategy. From the moment he started in a new role he planned how to get out at the appropriate time without raising suspicion. That was usually served, again, by the complacency and smugness of others.

One way was to make himself unpopular and get fired. That worked in a few places. The 'tittle-tattles' and other who fell for it were so bound up in their "victory", congratulating themselves on having got rid of him they didn't realise he had "run off with the family silver", so to speak. Some never realised that the "family silver" was missing.

Peter Brown had watched the decline of manufacturing in Britain over many years. It saddened him to see it but he knew most of it was self-inflicted.

But he admired the retail sector for the way they tidied up messes and made things work. He reckoned the large companies used some of the best consultants around, did extensive market research, and approached things in exactly the right way to keep succeeding.

To temper it, though, he also knew nothing lasts forever and some of the empires can disappear, just like the Roman Empire, the East India Company, and Woolworths!

Having made a packet from selling information whilst also being paid a salary by those he collected the information from, Peter Brown wanted to pass on some of his unique knowledge to others.

So he joined the lecture circuit and gave presentations on training courses and the like. He didn't especially favour being an after-dinner speaker, mainly because the members of mixed audiences didn't all appreciate the subtlety of what he was putting across, but he did a few such speeches anyway. Seeing whose faces turned red was quite amusing.

From a few steps back he foresaw what harm would be done in Britain from too much privatisation, the private finance initiative, and other such schemes designed to make the rich richer.

He agreed with some of the thinking about outsourcing non-core activities. Why directly employ a lot of people to provide support services when those services can be contracted out at less cost?

There were good arguments for doing it both ways and a mixture of direct and indirect may have been the optimum for some organisations, but not all. Maybe the retail sector was a good model for that too!

Peter Brown had experienced mixed feelings about both physical security and data security. He thought simple deterrents were worth having. Some modern cars had sophisticated alarms, satellite tracking devices and so forth. But a simple Krooklok was still worth having.

He remembered the case of a friend who had his Jaguar stolen. The police found it abandoned eventually, with a Krooklok under the passenger seat where his friend had left it. If only the thing had been fixed in place and locked it may just have prevented the theft and avoided all the emotion, energy and cost that was expended.

He also mused to himself that vehicle thieves might get further away if they stole models with good fuel economy. Signs were that the Jag had been abandoned because it ran out of fuel. His friend not only didn't bother about the Krooklok, he didn't look at the fuel gauge very often either!

So, Peter Brown, our poacher-turned-gamekeeper, had started telling others, usually in groups, how they could avoid disasters by being smart.

He used many examples from his own career.

Section 3

"How do we apply this forward planning to war situations?" Peter Brown asked the group after the break.

"Not sure what you mean." responded one young man.

"OK", Peter continued, "We looked at how we might start at the end of a bad news event, perhaps with someone in a court of law facing criminal charges, maybe civil lawsuit as well. Then we worked back to identify the earliest point at which we could have taken steps to prevent things going wrong. Does that help?"

"But don't diplomats, the UN, and others try all ways to prevent wars?" asked another of the group.

"Yes, they do, but wars continue anyway and there are those who are intent on starting them regardless. So whatever any peace mission people may do, there will be wars... unless the means to start them is removed!" said Peter Brown.

"How on earth can we do that?" asked a middle aged female member of the group.

"We start by looking at what the warmongers will use", replied Peter.

"For example, take a full round of ammunition, what some call a full metal jacket. Typically, that is a shell casing, a lead bullet, some explosive material such as cordite, wadding, and a percussion cap. When the cap is hit by something like a firing pin the shock wave that is produced causes the cordite or whatever to burn very quickly and the gas produced by the burning forces the bullet out of the casing."

"Those of you who have been in the armed forces know more about that than I do, it was just a rough overview. But the point I was getting to is that all of the components of the round have to be present for it to work as designed. All of the components were invented by mankind and made by mankind. The theory of how it all works is quite complex so people have to be educated and trained to use weapons and projectiles; and they have to have all the right bits.

If they run out of ammunition they may have to surrender. If they don't have any ammunition to start with they may have to rely on some other kind of weapon or not start a war."

"But there were wars before firearms were invented", started another member of the group. "Natives with spears, samurai warriors with swords, natives with curare poison darts and blowpipes, and so on."

"Yes, there were!" replied Peter. "Some weapons can be constructed from things which occur naturally, eg spears and blowpipes. Swords rely on minerals such as iron and carbon, plus a high temperature heat source and the technical know-how. Within reason we can plot weapons development over time in line with scientific discoveries.

Probably, whatever weapons we remove from those with bad intentions would be replaced with something else. So we can't rid the world of items which may cause harm, in fact it's in our interest to have some such items, for example, to protect ourselves from animals, slaughter animals for food, and so on.

But it doesn't have to be all or nothing. We can be selective. We can keep what we need but remove some components so they can't be used against us."

"I don't see how that would work", said one of the group.

"OK", said Peter, "Have you heard of the fire triangle?"

A few hands were raised.

"For the benefit of those who haven't or are unsure", continued Peter, "It is an idea used in fire safety training. A long time ago someone said the three things needed to start a fire were fuel, oxygen, energy. The energy may be direct heat, a spark, a chemical reaction, sun rays, or something else.

Some people use a mnemonic where the first letters of the words Fire, Oxygen, Energy spell FOE and foe is the enemy. Obviously uncontrolled or unwanted fire can be an enemy to any or all of us.

The three components of the fire: fuel, oxygen and energy are represented by the sides of a triangle. If any of them is removed the triangle will have a side missing and will collapse. Fire extinguishers of different types follow that principle.

Water takes away the heat or energy. A fire blanket, halon, carbon dioxide, foam, etc cut off the oxygen supply. The fuel can be cut off or removed, for example by raking wood from the bottom of a bonfire or closing a gas valve. Probably you can think of other examples."

He continued.

"It is well known that in past wars enemy supplies have been targeted. You may have seen war films where fuel dumps were destroyed so army tanks had nothing to drive them, that kind of thing. Then castles and cities were besieged so the enemy was starved to death.

If you were able to interrupt just one of the components of an enemy plan you may prevent fatalities: by being selective. It could be your equivalent of a fire triangle except there may be more than three sides. For example, if our ammunition round had five components it would be a pentagon. Remove one side from it and the bullet may not leave the barrel. Or it may leave but be less effective without all the components in the right order.

There is an old saying 'Necessity is the mother of invention'. After world war two there was a lot of ammunition around. Boys got live rounds and played with them for fun. Some clamped a shell casing lightly in a vice in the garden shed or wherever, held a nail against the percussion cap and hit the nail head with a hammer. The bullet was fired and some boys were injured. The unlucky boys didn't realise there would be an equal and opposite reaction and the shell casing would move the other way.

In warfare some combatants used old bits of pipe as a barrel, fitted a plug with a small central hole in one end and used a similar nail and hammer device as a firing pin. It wasn't accurate and, with no rifling in the pipe, the bullet didn't spin or travel well, but it was still a weapon that could kill or cause damage.

In nature there are plants and other things that can be used as weapons. One of you mentioned curare poison etc. A blowpipe can be made from part of a hollow plant such as bamboo, a dart can be made from wood, and so on. Someone could use parts of plants and perhaps animals to make a sling or catapult and use items such as stones as projectiles.

These things have been done many times over a very long historical period. Logically we can't remove all the things someone may use to make weapons. But we can be clever and limit the damage that can be done by removing some of them or ensuring others don't work. Understanding how different things can be used as weapons helps."

The group members were quiet for a few minutes and Peter Brown said nothing during the lull so they could consider what he had just said.

Eventually one male member said "So if we applied the fire triangle theory to the air conditioning unit project we would have to remove something to prevent the roof collapse. If we removed the crane the unit couldn't be lifted, if the unit didn't arrive on site there would be nothing to lift or fall, if the building was empty there would be nobody for the unit to fall on, etc!"

"You've got it!" said Peter. "At every stage of the process was an opportunity to check and see if the necessary precautions had been taken. If you want you can all draw a diagram to see how many sides the figure would have in the air conditioning unit example. Our friend here just mentioned three: the crane, the unit, the people. Those make a triangle, but how many other factors may have existed and could be represented by the side of a polygon?"

From the buzz of chatter in the room Peter Brown knew he had succeeded in getting his audience thinking actively and the level enthusiasm was pleasingly high.

Section 4

After the lunch break some of the group members put a few more ideas forward, such as 'finding the weakest link in the chain', 'removing a domino to stop the domino effect', and so on. The points had been made in the morning session and understood.

Peter added a bit more. "Some decades ago the DuPont company had the best industrial safety record. They produced a programmed instruction safety training course titled STOP, with the subtitle Stop Unsafe Acts. The sessions were run over a number of weeks and each week a new topic was introduced. There was a booklet for each topic and at the end of each booklet was a self-assessment quiz and some tear-out cards. The cards were colour coded to match the topic and used to report unsafe acts.

The course encouraged the employers who bought the course to form audit teams made up from people in different departments. It was demonstrated that this fresh eyes approach did work and, for example, a young female from accounts might spot an overhead hazard the engineering department had missed. Can't see the wood for the trees kind of thing."

General Motors did something similar with a department it called Quality Audit. There was an initiative called Quick Changeover in which the Quality Audit people set out to reduce the amount of time it took to change press tools and complete other changeover tasks.

The essence of it involved filming a process then getting a small team of individuals from different departments to watch the film, analyse it, note how long each step took, and identify ways to shorten them. Some steps could be designed out. Most of the solutions involved more preparation time and less downtime.

One of the examples they used in training people to use Quick Changeover was a racing car pit stop. That was something most people could relate to easily.

It was a successful programme and was not only used in production departments. For example, it was used in the company's bank and elsewhere. Training people to be observant and spot opportunities for improvement.”

You may like to think about how breaking things down and analysing them can prevent wars. For example, apply the logic to the supply chain. Perhaps lengthen the time steps take so they miss their connection, that kind of thing.

Most people who buy a car assume there will always be fuel available for it, if they think about it at all, that is. Some buy a car with an assumption that it will have a resale value when they have finished with it. But what if there was no fuel available because of a disaster in the world? What residual value would the car have then?

That brings us back to the supply chain for warmongers and the fact that many of them depend on the supply of fuel, ammunition, communications equipment, etc, etc.

The steps we can take to prevent wars are similar to the steps we can take to prevent accidents.

There is another point I would like to make. You may have seen films, TV shows, etc, where a bunch of sailors in a pub or dance hall start a fight with a crew from another ship or from another branch of the armed forces.

Servicemen from both sides end up bruised, injured, and not fully fighting fit. Suppose it was a marksman who ended up with a broken wrist. What good would he be in fighting an enemy next morning?

We know people get injured during training but the "horseplay" antics of fighting people on your own side only weakens the overall effort and plays into the hands of the real enemy.

One of the biggest fears of military commanders is an epidemic such as food poisoning which knocks everyone out together. But people knocking out members of the same side makes no sense either.

The best way is to avoid such waste and keep all the people fighting fit and alert at all times."

Section 5

Peter continued "In Mad Magazine many years ago there was a cartoon strip titled Spy vs Spy in which a spy in black was trying to outwit a spy in white and vice-versa. It was funny enough in its own right but it is also what happens around the world in reality."

"The cat and mouse game of nuclear weapons may be an extreme example of spy versus spy but there are hundreds of other examples.

Many of us believe there is no real intention by countries to reduce their nuclear arsenal, it is rather that they want to stock up on more sophisticated weapons as they are developed and add to their 'firepower'. The spy element is used to try to find out what the others really have."

Some members of the group had started to wonder if this talk was going to be all about international warfare and never reach an end.

As if in anticipation of that, Peter Brown said "Enough of nuclear warfare, though. We were talking about how to prevent things going wrong by considering them early on. Whether it's a nucleonic holocaust or forgetting to post your pools coupon in time, we can be proactive and minimise the chance of lost opportunities."

One member of the group used the name Danny Hoskins. He was a bit under one point nine metres tall, aged around thirty years, had receding dark hair, talked with an effeminate voice but was normally heterosexual.

Danny was intelligent, sharp-witted and had worked in some roles which required a high level of concentration for however long the task lasted. His weak point was managing his own time and, being aware of that, he used a variety of timing methods to try to improve. The device he found most convenient was a mobile phone with a timer feature and a vibrating alarm option. Provided he remembered to charge the battery and set the timer, the vibrations worked most times: but not all.

Danny's reason for being there was to collect ideas. He knew what his mission was and he had a rough idea how long it may take to complete. He had seen the seminar advertised and was curious enough to book a place and see where it led. He had heard elsewhere that if someone attended a talk, lecture, industrial seminar, or other such event and left with one good idea it was worth going.

A past colleague had quipped "if the only good idea you leave with is never attend another seminar, the theory still holds true."

Danny had gained a few good ideas from Peter brown's talk. Not only from what Peter said, also from listening to the mutterings of other audience members. They had come from different backgrounds, spanned a good age range, both male and female. In his considered view the talk had been worth going to.

Section 6

Peter and Danny never met formally but they did have things in common.

Danny had seen Peter as the speaker at the seminar and Peter had noticed Danny in passing but he was one of a group and had no special significance. Danny hadn't asked any questions during Peter's talk, mainly because he didn't want to draw attention to himself.

Privately they had similar thoughts about world matters, global warming, fossil fuel depletion, and many other topics, but neither of them knew what the other was thinking.

They both knew that for houses with wet central heating systems there had been a lot of emphasis put on use of Thermostatic Radiator Valves, known as TRVs for short.

But they knew the total heat energy used to manufacture one TRV was much greater than the energy that TRV would save in the whole of its lifetime. Even if enough metal to make hundreds of TRV casings were melted at the same time it would not help. There was no economy of scale with energy consumption.

"What was it? Mass times Specific Heat Capacity times the Change In Temperature: known as delta t for short. In addition to a metal casing there were plastic components, chrome plating, etc, etc, and all involved consumption of energy: lots of it. Even if the whole valve were made from plastic there would be a disproportionately high energy cost.

They both knew that North Sea Gas of the coast of Britain was almost exhausted and instead of the pressure of the gas itself forcing it out of the ground it was drawn out by vacuum pumps. That meant burning energy to drive the pumps so a percentage of the energy recovered had already been lost just to get it to the surface.

They had similar thoughts and beliefs in many areas but never compared notes because they never met or discussed it.

Peter had presented the talk because he got paid for doing so and because he wanted to pass on some helpful messages to individuals he believed might help make the world a better place.

Danny went to the seminar to see what ideas he could glean because he had something rather complex in mind. He left the session with more than one good idea.

Section 7

The Tourist Trophy or TT races have been held on the Isle of Man since 1907.

Over the decades tens of thousands of enthusiasts have made the journey from the UK mainland on Isle of Man Steam Packet Company ferries, on other vessels, or aircraft.

Some old bikers have been known to retire to "The Island" so they are there for the annual races.

Danny had got a job in Douglas, the capital, and had driven around the Isle of Man at weekends to see what it was like.

He had a map and already knew some of the place names from TV coverage and listening to friends talk about the TT racing. Names like Creg-ny-Baa, The Bungalow, Governor's Bridge, Gooseneck and so on he had heard many times from his old school pal Terry Clarke.

Danny reckoned the ferry crossing would take around five hours. He went across after the TT races had ended that year and after the fatalities had been counted. Every year there are deaths, some during scheduled races, some during "Mad Sunday", some from riders overcooking it on other days. He thought the loss of life unnecessary but knew also that people do dangerous things for thrills, dares, competition, bets, or whatever, and he couldn't stop it.

Air ambulances were seen frequently on the Island and the presence of road ambulances in and around race weeks was a constant reminder of the dangers.

Danny remembered being told by a relation about motorcyclists injured during racing incidents who were taken by ambulance to the Joyce Green Hospital at Dartford in the 1960s. Evidently the nurses regarded such injuries as self-inflicted and although they treated the casualties properly it was still with disapproval, and the riders knew that.

Aside from the downside of motor racing, he did enjoy the scenery and views. There was also the tranquility. He had lived in London earlier and thought he would miss his friends there if he left. But it wasn't like that and there was so much to do he didn't think back to the London scene much at all.

He found the languages strange at first. English, Manx, Irish; plus French, German and Spanish were taught in the schools. He could say Bonjour, Guten Tag, or Buenos Dias to a bunch of schoolkids on a bus and someone would answer. Of course, the races attracted fans from many parts of the globe but most of them spoke English.

The TT races and all those motorcycles were the main reason Danny chose that isle. You can get lost in a crowd and there was plenty of transport.

Danny had travelled to many parts of Great Britain and seen the coastlines in different places.

In his mind he compared the green hills of Wales to the hills of southern England, the hills of Durham, Scotland, Cumbria, and the Isle of Man.

He compared the drab grey coastline of the North East, especially Hartlepool, with the south coast of Sussex with its chalk cliffs and blue sea.

He compared the grey stone houses of North Wales with the houses in Somerset with their red mortar joints between the bricks, the pink painted thatched cottages in East Anglia: and the vast variety of designs in the other counties.

He knew it wasn't the nationality of the people that changed the land, or their regional accents, or their personal beliefs. Nature didn't know what language humans spoke and it didn't matter. It was what the people did to and in their environment that mattered.

Danny Hoskins had favourites, as anyone might expect. Had often pitched his own observations about a place against what others had told him about the same place after their annual holiday or other trip.

Mostly what he heard was pretty accurate and mostly he agreed with their thinking. But he still had his personal favourites.

He was once at Largs near Glasgow watching the ferry go out. He bought two haggii or wee yins as some preferred to call them. Danny bought them at a butcher's shop that wasn't far from the water: one for a friend and one to try himself when he got home to London. He liked Largs, not forever, but he felt comfortable being there.

For one short job at West Nile Street in Glasgow Danny had stayed overnight in a hotel not far from the shops in Sauchiehall Street. That evening he fancied a burger in a bun and found an old phone directory in the room. Looking in the book for a local McDonalds he suddenly felt foolish and thought there must be about ten thousand McDonalds listed. He went for a walk, found a nearby steak house which did trick and forgave himself for momentarily forgetting he was in Scotland.

One year Danny had driven around Majorca in a hired car and found an unmade road that led to a concrete boat jetty. There was nothing else there but the jetty. It was at the foot of a hillside which had been made into terraces for growing food crops. The dirt road between the landing stage and the hill top had tree trunks partly buried at regular intervals to give grip to vehicle tyres. It was like a long track full of 'sleeping policemen', but it worked and he was glad of the grip when driving back up.

Danny couldn't remember the name of the place but he admired the locals for what they had done there. Which did he prefer, Largs or the Majorca cul-de-sac? Both had boat landing places. One was populated, the other was peaceful and warmer. But only one had shops selling haggis and after a bit of comparison and an imaginary clock ticking it was his stomach which decided.

Section 8

The package was carried from continental Europe.

The courier, Catriona, or Cat as she was known to some, had carefully planned a 'dolphin watch' break at Bantry Bay in County Cork, Ireland, as a cover.

She was a native of Waterford who had lived in England, working in a clerical job for a construction company. Cat thought her accent would be OK for the task, so did her colleagues. Rather than have a 'foreigner' pose as a dumb tourist, they believed an Irishwoman travelling the Irish Sea would draw less attention.

Cat had married an Englishman who progressed from laying tarmac on roads to running a night club, but the marriage failed after a couple of years and they went different ways. Around that time she'd called herself Kate. Kate née Cousins. Kate was a short form of Catherine. Catherine with a C, not a K.

Stories about her ex husband, Kenny, were that he drifted into nothingness, became obese, was almost permanently drunk, and his family lost contact with him entirely. Evidently last spotted at Camberwell Green, London, with a woman named Barbara. That was a short time before his "disappearance".

It was only years later when genealogy web sites appeared on the Internet that someone discovered e had cleaned himself up, moved to Kent and remarried: to someone named Gander.

Maybe that was the Barbara he had been seen with, who knows?

Whilst Danny was making his scheduled four hours and fifteen minutes sea trip from Liverpool to Douglas, Cat, or Kate if you prefer, was making the scheduled three hours and fifteen minutes sea trip from Holyhead, Wales, to Dublin Port, Ireland.

During the crossing she thought about Kenny. It was because of another sea trip they had made together some time back from Wales to Dún Laoghaire en-route to visit to her friend's family.

Kenny had bought a classic Vauxhall Cresta car to restore, although he never did restore it properly. It was pretty rusty in places and she was surprised at some of his decisions.

An in-law rebuilt the engine and it was just after that they found how fast Kenny could run. At the time he was still working on the roads, over six feet tall, lean and muscular, fit and healthy, it was not really a surprise he could move quickly.

After the engine was put back in the car it wouldn't start using the starter. Someone suggested bump starting it, so Kenny and his engine builder pushed whilst Kenny's younger brother steered. The engine started alright, but instead of doing as he had been told, little brother floored the accelerator and sent the car hurtling toward a row of garages in a cul-de-sac. Kenny, who was nearest to the driver's side, outran it and got the brake on in time.

Later the "mechanics" tried the starter motor again and saw sparks jumping across the carburettor throttle linkage. They had forgotten to reconnect the earth strap to the engine block! That was why the starter motor didn't work. Kate had heard all the detail during the evening meal.

Kenny got someone to respray the car sky blue. Originally it had been a sober maroon colour which suited the marque much better in Kate's opinion. Black would have been a better choice if the colour had to be changed, she thought, but he wanted blue.

He short-changed the guy, Brian, who did the spraying. Underpaid him, which she thought was a bad move, but that was how Kenny was, not content to get what he wanted, he always had to do someone down in the process. His womanising was usually aimed at married females. He seemed to get more of a kick from defiling someone else whilst having his sexual fulfilment.

The car failed the MoT test because the steering box was loose owing to severe corrosion of the inner wheel arch mounting point. The tester at the garage refused to take it on the road. But Kenny continued to drive the car. He got stopped by police one evening and when one of the officers asked to see the MoT certificate he immediately spotted that the date had been altered. Kenny hadn't told anyone else. He had bodged the certificate on his own, not realising that garages kept their own records and ink smudges were easy to spot.

Fortunately that had happened after they took the car to Ireland and Kate was unaware of just how unsafe the steering was. She became aware progressively of how much of a liar and cheat her husband was and knew he couldn't be trusted.

But the appeal which first drew her to him was still there. He was a good looking person, full of energy. He like Ceilidh music and having fun. He couldn't dance but that wasn't so important. He did make an effort of ambling around the floor when a band played their tune.

They had settled on the very old 'Moonlight Serenade' for some reason, maybe simply because it didn't require much dancing skill.

His womanising was the deciding factor. The night club provided a ready supply of easy targets and she couldn't compete with any of that. If she heard "Our Tune" nowadays it made her cringe not smile. But the thought of the trip to Ireland in the classic Vauxhall did make her smile a bit because it was pleasant in its own right. A stand-alone nice memory!

That was all in the past, though. Now she must concentrate on today's task.

"Not too much of a swell today", said a fellow passenger.

"Pretty good as things go. Top of the morning!" replied Cat.

"And yourself, colleen", continued the man whose age she estimated was late fifties. They talked for a while and Kate told him where she was headed. All part of the cover. She was adept at saying just enough without giving away too much. Oddly, some of that discretion was learned in the construction company offices. Competition was rife in that industry and, as in wartime, idle talk costs... in wartime it can cost lives, in peacetime it can cost money, opportunities, and lives.

But Cat did let something out in her chat with her fellow traveller. He had a newspaper opened at an inner page and she saw a sub heading about communications as he rested the paper on the rail.

"Just noticed your newspaper article", she said. "A teacher at my old school told us a story about communications. She said in the trenches in world war one an officer told his soldiers to pass on the message "Send reinforcements, we're going to advance." When it got to the end of the line the last man said "Send three and fourpence, we're going to a dance".

The man smiled and said "I seem to remember hearing something like that before. Strange how messages can get distorted and how things get lost in translation."

Too true, thought Cat, especially if you are the one doing the distorting. She smiled inwardly to herself.

The chat with Mr fifty-something lasted for a while and was pleasant enough.

Cat made sure it ended without him knowing who she was. No names were exchanged and she sensed he was wise enough not to pry.

Section 9

At Dublin she hired a car for her trip to Cork. It was going to be along drive on the M8, well over three hundred miles, but she wanted to do it without an overnight stay anywhere. She had considered Baltimore for dolphin watching but decided to stick with the Bantry option. Her booking was already done and she could crash out that night.

The next leg, Bantry to Belfast, would be an even longer drive. She would change car rental companies for that.

Cat had heard of low cost businesses that hired out old bangers and used named such as "Rent A Wreck" and "Hire A Heap". How about "Borrow A Banger" she mused and wondered if anyone rented out classic Vauxhall Crestas. Maybe in rust-free California, after all, Vauxhall was part of General Motors, but not here, she thought.

"I spent many a day in Bantry Bay" Cat hummed to herself as she stood under the shower. The Bantry boat trips had been good and she had a collection of photos and video clips on the memory card in her trusty Canon Powershot camera.

She liked the camera. It was very heavy as compact cameras go and that served a useful purpose, in case she wanted to conceal something inside. Nobody would be suspicious of a camera that was known to weigh a lot. But that wasn't necessary this trip and the important package was in her luggage.

She had been careful not to appear in photos taken by others and kept her hood up most of the time. There might be an "audit trail" in people's memories, like the man on the boat, staff at the hotel, and there may be some video cameras at the car rental office, but nothing anyone was likely to latch on to quickly. She remembered the sheer number of mobile phone pictures that emerged after the London Underground bombing and knew there were eyes everywhere. The trick was to avoid anyone wanting to find out what those eyes had seen.

In England Peter Brown had been telling people about preventing bad news events.

In Ireland Catriona was planning one.

What was Danny Hoskins doing?

Section 10

Danny worked in Douglas and had a home at Port St Mary. He loved the town with its terraces of white painted houses and the magnificent coastal views.

In today's world he could still keep in touch with pals in London if he wanted. There were phones, the Internet, Skype, Firefox Hello, webcams and all the rest of it.

But he didn't feel so much need once he settled at the port. There was plenty to do here.

Cat had driven from the south to Belfast with one overnight stop and returned the hire car on arrival. She had planned to travel from Belfast to Douglas by ferry but with only two sailings per week she had to get the timing right. It worked and she got there in good time. Time enough to do some shopping and look for the items shown in the e-mail attachment she had received. She caught a bus out of Douglas.

The package changed hands at a dental studio in Port St Mary. Cat called in to ask reception about new patients, picked up brochures, forms, and so on, and sat to look through them for a short while.

Danny was already there. They both sat in the small reception area and used the well-tried method of picking up each other's bag before leaving. Bags with logos and pictures on the outside were common and nobody noticed that the beach tote bag Cat took in had a picture of 'Joey On The Mountain' and Danny's had a picture of a tram.

The bags were the same colour, size and general shape and the backs were plain. Holding the picture side against their leg reduced the chance of anyone noticing the subtle exchange.

The receptionist was on the phone when Cat left. Cat made sure she left when the receptionist had just taken an incoming phone call and was looking at her screen, probably booking an appointment.

Kate left the studio before Danny and waited briefly outside in case an interfering receptionist or other busybody called "excuse me I think you picked up the wrong bag." But there was nothing and she was on her way out of town a few minutes later.

Danny kept his pre-booked appointment with the hygienist then left, around forty five minutes after Cat. Her part there was almost over. His was continuing and far from complete.

The bus to Douglas was fairly full and Danny nodded to the faces of other passengers he recognised from earlier journeys, but without actually speaking to them. After all, he lived and worked here so why not blend in with the locals!

He had thought about sidecar outfits. They usually had a spare wheel on the back of the sidecar and there were plenty of other places where the contents of the package could be concealed. He had even read that in some countries drug smugglers had fitted false crossbars to women's pedal cycles and hidden their goods there. But Danny didn't have drugs in his package. It was something else and he had to be careful with it. He was not a drug dealer and didn't get involved with drugs.

A spare tube on a sidecar rig would be easy enough to arrange, but sidecar outfits were not as easy to manoeuvre as solo bikes, or as quick. Come to that they weren't so easy to hide or dispose of either.

He had pretty much decided a fast solo motorcycle was what he wanted. Whether it should be a classic or an up-to-date model was not decided. That may depend on what was available, at what price, plus a few specific design details.

In the end he travelled to Ramsey on the Manx Electric Railway, a journey time of about an hour and a quarter, and bought a nearly new Moto Guzzi. Used was better than new because he didn't have to wait for it to be registered.

He bought a helmet, clothing, gloves, boots and a scarf in Ramsey too.

With all the bike details and his driving licence to hand he took a walk to Parliament Square and bought comprehensive insurance whilst the bike dealer checked over the Guzzi.

It was a superb experience. Riding a famous brand vee twin on a world famous road on an island where champions were made. Danny was not a racer but the imagery was good. The TT riders reached speeds of over two hundred miles an hour on old roads with potholes, hedgerows and all the other hazards found in rural areas. He wouldn't even reach half the speed the racers did, although it was tempting to find out what the Guzzi could do. He had to stay in control and not draw unnecessary attention to himself.

The roads were mostly clear and racing was over for the year, although there were still TT enthusiasts camping here and there. Some people just didn't want to go home!

He stopped at a roadside parking lot where some vans and trucks seemed to be positioned for selling stuff. A kind of motorcycle junk car boot sale. Asking around, he soon got the address of a small business on the island that sold Moto Guzzi spares and headed there.

Whilst walking around the shops in Ramsey Danny had bought a roll of masking tape. Out on the open countryside he had pulled off the road behind some trees and stuck tape on the bike's seat so it looked like a bodged temporary fabric repair. It had held firm when he stopped at the 'boot sale'.

On arrival at the spares dealer he asked if they had a seat to fit his bike, indicating his had been vandalised. The owner suggested it could be re-covered if he left the bike there for a couple of days but Danny said he needed to get around and would prefer a spare seat. He was promised they could have a new seat or a good used seat by the end of the week, so Danny settled for that, paid and collected the seat later as agreed. Meanwhile he had removed the existing seat and played around at home to find out how the clips fitted, what kind of padding was inside and so on.

When he had both seats he carefully concealed the contents of the package in the seat he had just bought, slashed the other seat under where the masking tape had been, then put the slashed seat under his bed. He got rid of the masking tape with the household waste. "So far so good!" he thought!

The package fitted neatly in the seat and it felt comfortable when he tried it. Riding at high speed sitting on a pack of plastic explosive may not be everyone's idea of fun but it worked for Danny Hoskins.

The plastic explosive was like putty in his hands, he thought, and smiled because that's what they call it: putty.

What was it Peter Brown had said about breaking the chain? Remove one of the components and...

The electric blasting caps were not with Danny. He had checked various aspects of the Moto Guzzi to see if anything was likely to interfere with the putty, electronic ignition or whatever, but it all seemed OK. Usually the explosive was stable enough and he didn't intend falling off or crashing, so he felt confident of reaching the destination and getting hold of the caps.

Section 11

The caps! They were with Jimmy. That wasn't his real name but Scotsmen are often called Jimmy so he used it as a nickname. It was ironical that the Scotsman's first name was Nicholas and he could just as easily been called Nick, a proper nickname! Nicholas McTavish, the detonator man.

Jimmy, or Nick to be more precise, worked at heights. He was a rock climber in leisure time and a steeplejack by day. Steeplejack? You didn't hear the term much these days, especially since all those old industrial brick chimneys were demolished. He was lean and muscular with a lot of stamina and plenty of energy.

Unusually for a steeplejack Jimmy had high technical knowledge and was good with electronic devices. His interest in them started with mild curiosity, then he completed a course in basic electronics at a local college.

One of the advantages of his normal day job was that he rarely worked evenings or nights and was able to commit to regular college hours. Rock climbing was at weekends.

The college course was fairly elementary. The lecturer, Gary, was an ex Royal Navy artificer who said he had worked mostly with radios in the Senior Service. Gary told the students he had qualified at HNC level in his subject and was allowed to teach up to that level. The course was his first outing as a civilian lecturer and he hoped to get established at the college then progress on to teaching HNC students later.

Normally the course was run for one academic year but this had been compressed into several months by having longer sessions each week. Three hours. That was no problem to Jimmy who found the content of high interest and the course very therapeutic.

Gary said it was the only course which involved hands-on work with components and instruments: the higher courses were theory only.

The fellow students were easy to get along with and because some of them worked in firms which produced electronic goods the lecturer learned things from the students too. High rupturing capacity fuses was one short debate topic.

The end-of-course exam was one and a half hours duration and consisted of questions with multi choice answers. They are not always as straightforward as they may sound and Jimmy knew that. There was also some blank space to write notes in support of the chosen answer to demonstrate understanding. Jimmy used the space for a couple of answers but reasoned the other answer choices didn't need any further explanation.

There was an independent invigilator present and the rule was you could leave when you had finished but not during the first forty five minutes. Jimmy finished before the halfway time but ran through his answers methodically as a check before waiting for the clock.

The first to leave the exam room was Tony, who had a Jeep, rode a Suzuki motor bike, and worked for an electronics firm. Tony had a silver stud in his left ear and during one of the practical session Jimmy had flicked his ear lobe and joked that a blob of solder had somehow landed there. It was a good humoured course!

The results came in the post fairly quickly and Jimmy got a top mark.

The results were rounded up from a percentage so he never knew whether he got a true hundred percent, or ninety seven, or something else.

He had heard about courses where CATS points were used: the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme. Students work was marked to give a percentage then the mark was converted into CATS points between one and sixteen. Someone in that situation could get sixteen cats points but that didn't mean they had scored one hundred percent. It seemed odd to Jimmy that academics could be so unacademic.

Another thing he had heard about which disappointed him was cross marking. Based on statistics lecturers look for marks among student groups or "classes" that fit a certain profile. If a good student gets a high score a point may be deducted so the group results fit the profile.

It also meant a poor performer may get an undeserved additional point, just to make the numbers look right. However well it may be explained away it was still a form of corruption. But it didn't apply to him, his exam didn't involve cross marking.

Jimmy, Danny, and Catriona all hated hypocrisy and corruption. The trouble was, in order to make their protest they had to become hypocritical and corrupt themselves. Needs must!

It amused Danny that the trio comprised an Englishman, an Irishwoman and a Scotsman, a bit of a gender variation from the line stand-up comedians used. He wondered if, in time the "woman" bit would be dropped in the same way that showbiz had now made everyone actors instead of having actors and actresses, and there were no comediennes any more, only comedians.

For a long time it had been the practice in English statutes to apply terms such as "he" to both genders. That was explained in the statutes themselves. How much simpler it made things. How much better still it would be if everyone was either Ms or Mr and forget all the other styles and titles. One of two options based on gender and that is all. It fitted two-state logic and binary arithmetic very well.

Another aspect of titles that Danny was aware of was the posers who pretended to be something they weren't. A person could send an enquiry and Put 'Dr' on the form instead of Mr, Mrs, Ms, or Miss and get a letter addressed to Dr whoever in response. The poser can then pretend they are a doctor and have a letter that 'proves' it. Many such things have been done before and it has been especially convincing if the letter addressed to Dr, for example, came from the General Medical Council or a leading university.

Another 'ploy' was for pretenders to show designatory letters after their name. The letters in many cases indicated the person was a member of a club or society but did not signify any academic qualification. To an innocent observer, though, a bunch of letters after someone's name on a business card can look impressive.

Often the observer would not ask what the letters stood for because they didn't want to look uneducated.

The ploy has worked well for many salesmen who closed sales but had no formal qualifications at all. Some didn't even belong to and clubs or societies, they just borrowed the idea and had cards printed.

Danny had been told once by a senior nurse in a company medical centre of another ploy. She said the centre used agency nurses and each time a new nurse arrived she had to coach them about completing accident forms.

For example, a male employee might go to the medical centre seeking treatment for a foot injury and claim a vice had fallen on their foot. The female nurse would write, under Cause of Injury, "Vice fell on foot" and that became her statement not his.

The employee would then make an industrial injury claim and his lawyer might discover the document and use the nurse's written statement as corroboration. The agency nurse may no longer be around and the claim may well succeed.

So the nurses were told to write "Patient said the injury was caused by...", or "Patient stated..." Then what a nurse wrote was "hearsay" and not the nurse's own statement. A good defence lawyer would probably get around 'mis-statements' quite quickly but why invite complications. Keep it factual and simple. Don't play into the hands of cheats.

Danny knew from personal experience that in the case of company first aiders providing treatment, an injured person is referred to as a "casualty", not a "patient". Their accident forms may read "The casualty said they were injured when..."

Section 12

Jimmy had obtained the detonators in Aberdeen, the Granite City.

Use of explosives at Rubislaw Quarry and other such locations had been common practice in the area for a very long time: through different centuries. Add the North Sea oil and gas exploration industries and it soon becomes apparent that 'tools of the trade' are plentiful in that part of the world. Knowing where to look or who to ask was helpful, so was being a native Scot.

The plastic explosive was brought in from Spain, near the Andorra border, by Catriona. The journey back to the UK was much smoother than she had expected. Hide things in plain sight and act normally she thought. It worked.

Her contact was not part of the EIS trio, E for English, I for Irish, S for Scottish, whose members pronounced it the German way: "ice. Danny, Catriona and Jimmy were not going to advertise themselves as terrorist or freedom fighters, it was simply a private joke between the three of them. The Ice Trio - Stay Cool.

Something else the construction industry had taught Kate was just how popular wooden doors with single glazing still were. Double glazing salesmen, many with bogus letters after the names on their business cards, were ubiquitous and the volume of white plastic around houses continued to increase, but a lot of older style doors and windows were still sold.

That meant something to hold the glass in was needed and often that meant putty. Why not conceal putty in putty. So that's what she did. Spanish putty was not much different to English putty but was competitively priced.

Catriona knew that a number of multi-national manufacturers had quit their plants in the UK in favour of lower wages in Spain. One of them, for example, produced baby powder, baby shampoo and the like. Sales people moving between EC member states was not unusual.

So, setting herself up as a sales rep with a business card sporting designatory letters after her name, and some samples of white and coloured putty was quite easy.

Kate, or, rather, her alter ego thought that working between Spain, England and Ireland, all independent EU states, probably made her an international rep or agent. Catherine T Cousins, International Agent, she mused, smiling to herself and wondering which Double-0 number she should be awarded!

Section 13

The explosions were at an Anglican church bell tower which was extensively damaged; a gay pride exhibition at which eleven people were killed; one of the Thames barrier gates which was not badly damaged and was repairable, but at high cost.

The rationale was environmental pollution in the form of high volume noise, the incessant flaunting of homosexuality in the faces of innocent normal people and the threat of rising sea level because of over use of fossil fuels and the climate change it caused.

Stop the noise, shut up the queers, remind a city of over ten million people what will happen to their homes if they don't stop abusing the environment.

That number of fatalities had not been planned but no member of the Ice Trio lost any sleep over it.

The putty had been placed around a metal post so it exploded radially. The 'package' had been disguised on the outside and blended in pretty well with the props and gaudy paraphernalia planted by others.

Danny had added some nails and that may have been why the casualty rate was so high. He remembered reading about Sefton the horse many years ago and knew what fast-moving steel items can do.

As soon as word got out to to the media the world knew. That happened quickly. It wasn't that the police and politicians wanted the details on the street, it was because it happened on the street. Not literally for all the putty locations, but metaphorically true.

Occupants of the high-rise buildings near the Thames heard their bang clearly enough. Sound travels upward a bit easier than down or across because of the stratification of air. Normal sounds of the river were background noise to local residents after a while and caused no concern. Even bangs were not altogether rare.

But this one was different. Its timbre and ferocity had a different kind of intensity and within minutes about a hundred faces appeared at windows and on balconies.

Because of the nature of the events other nations quickly learned and became involved. The CIA, FBI, Homeland Security, NSA in America, Interpol, and so on around the world. Who did it? Who would claim responsibility? What were they after?

Jimmy used a simple method of transport, a rowing boat. He did it at night and took suction cup arm bands and leg bands in case smooth metal and other surfaces proved challenging. Placing the putty was easier then he thought it may be. The objective was more protest oriented than to cause destruction, so as long as the bang was loud enough and got the right amount of attention it would do.

The river police got there first from the outside. There were employees and contractors inside anyway but none near the explosion position.

Jimmy had long since landed and disappeared.

Members of the trio had talked about how people react to sound of explosions, gunfire and such like. Some go running toward the source of the noise and promptly get blown up or mowed down. Should someone run toward it or run away from it? The answer may be in how well trained they were, but there was no straight answer and reactions among individuals was inconsistent.

"I don't know what they would do!" was the safest answer.

Section 14

Danny's mission had some flexibility. He could place the putty at night or in daylight. He could even ride among the exhibition without looking odd and if someone spoke and he replied, his voice would blend in as well.

But he decided to park the bike a little way off and walk to the destination.

The putty was now in a back pack after he had carefully removed it from the motorcycle seat at the motel. He had considered buying a top box for the bike but decided against it. Too easy to search and the purchase would leave another 'audit trail'. Better to travel lightweight.

The seat padding had been replaced by the scarf and other materials which he acquired en-route. Surprising how many uses there are for bubble wrap!

He didn't think there were any security cameras or traffic cams where he went but didn't really care much anyway. He had a helmet with a tinted full face visor and the other people placing props and placards would confuse anyone watching street cams. His presence would not seem unusual, he hoped, even though he was alone at the time.

After placing the charge and checking the cap was not visible he walked at normal pace to the nearest alley, walked away from where the bike was parked, then zig-zagged back to it later. By the time the detonator did its job he was long gone, just like Jimmy on the Thames.

Cat's task left her a bit more exposed. She had to pose as a sales representative for a glass manufacturer which supplied all the accoutrements as well as glass. Custom made lead lights, glass etching, replacement special windows, artificial lead, adhesives, cleaners, why we even sell putty!

That got her to the stained glass windows, quite easy really. The middle aged woman who showed her round wore glasses and was a lay assistant to the church: a churchwarden. "Lucky she doesn't have one of those dreadful pipes", thought Cat.

Making notes as she went, Cat asked "Is there any glass or spare glass in the tower? Sometimes people use odd bits of out-of-the-way space for storage."

"I don't know for sure", said her hostess. "I don't go up there, my leg, you know, and I don't care much for heights anyway."

"No chance chance of you going to heaven, then", thought Cat to herself, "even if there was such a place."

"But you can have a look if you want, if you are OK going up the ladder on your own. It is supposed to be safe and our safety adviser has checked it out."

"Ill be fine", said Cat, put her notepad in her rather large shoulder bag, and climbed up. She had a pretty good idea where to put the charge and wasn't there long.

She had told the church warden that she carried a camera in the shoulder bag and sometimes took photos of church windows and the like to help with preparing quotations. It all sounded plausible and didn't seem to cause any concern.

"Only one small pane of clear glass", said Cat as she stepped off the ladder. "Looks as though it belongs to a garden shed or something."

"May be from the vicar's", replied the woman, "He is a pigeon fancier, races them and everything. He has a pigeon loft and a few sheds and things. Strange his glass would be up there though!"

"Maybe one of the pigeons put it there", said Cat jokingly.

The woman smiled and Kate left, pleased the meeting ended on a high note.

As she walked away after the meeting Cat smiled because even if there had been no glass in the bell tower the warden wouldn't have known.

"Women", she thought, "So easy to deceive. I wonder what I'm like."

Catriona was about one point six metres tall. Her hair was a mousy brown colour and she was slim; enviably slim she had heard from other women. She moved easily and couldn't have weighed much but she didn't wonder about her weight or body mass index or anything like that.

"Not the prettiest girl in town", she had thought as she looked in a full length mirror one day, "but I do turn a lot of heads."

She was very active and usually thinking ahead. Perhaps it was her energy and liveness that attracted onlookers in some places she went! But that didn't matter because she had things to do. No time to dally.

Section 15

It was expected that owing to the types of incident, security agencies, armed forces, police, intelligence units, terrorist groups and others would have their ear to the ground: globally.

In America the CIA, FBI, Homeland Security, NSA, etc, etc. In Britain military intelligence, anti-terrorist units, Metropolitan Police, Scotland Yard,

The 'listening stations' watched for key words, key phrases, code, TV broadcasts from Middle Eastern and other states. All that most militant groups knew was that it was not their doing. The reason for it wasn't clear. No ransom notes, demands, threats of other 'bombs', or other communications had been received anywhere.

No 'calling card' or clue to those responsible had been found so far and nothing was taken as a trophy, as far as the investigators could tell.

The problem for the authorities was to work out who was responsible and how they got to the targets unchallenged. Part of it, of course, was where did the putty come from?

Section 16

Peter Brown was invited to act as a consultant.

He was told some things about what the investigators knew so far and said "Starting from a zero base, good. That's my favourite place to start."

Any video recordings or photos?" he asked. "Nothing." said his liaison.

"We are looking through masses of security and traffic cam footage, TV news reports etc. SOCO, the scene of crime people, seem to think there were two detonators in the bell tower, maybe one was a backup in case the first one failed", he went on.

So far we think there were three bombs. Maybe technically they were not bombs, but near enough, so we call them that. The explosive seemed to be the same in each of them except there were minute amounts of some kind of colouring agent or pigment.

It hasn't been identified yet but one theory was that the bombs were colour coded so that each one went the intended place.

There is no clue so far as to whether the putty came from a single source, from different sources, and if so how many sources. We don't know how many bombers there were. It could have been one or more.

Officers are asking for witnesses and any photos or video from mobile phones, tablets and all the rest."

Section 17

The church warden was found when investigators asked for anyone with any knowledge to come forward. They had gone through scheduled events, got names and other details of anyone associated with the place, and started interviews.

Julia Cole, was a wife and mother who had a soft spot for churches and had become one of the church wardens a few years earlier. She talked through what she knew about recent visitors, and eventually got to the Irish woman from the glass company.

"Why do you say she was Irish?" they asked.

"Because of her accent!" replied Julia.

"Northern or southern?" they asked, and so the questions continued until there was nothing left to ask or tell, at least for the time being.

They asked whether Julia thought the accent could have been acted but she thought not, relying on her recall of what was said during the meeting the spontaneous way the visitor had answered, and her life experience of dealing with people.

The bit about the glass was checked out. Specialists sifted very carefully but no glass was found anywhere near the bell tower debris or anywhere in the projected outward paths from the explosion.

"Why would someone say there was a pane of glass when there wasn't?" the liaison asked Peter Brown. "Any thoughts on that?"

"Maybe to consolidate the belief that she was from a glass firm", said Peter. "That is assuming she was the bomber and not there on the business she claimed. In which case there may be an unknown quantity who was the real bomber."

"Did she do anything religious?" asked Peter. "For example, did she walk to a font, genuflect, cross herself, comment on anything in the church at all?"

"Doesn't sound like it from what the witness said", responded the liaison. "She seemed to think her visitor was focused on business and didn't want to be distracted by peripheral things. The warden didn't think that strange.

Neither did she think it strange that a sales rep should walk in off the street without an appointment with someone. She knew that cold calling is frowned on these days and even considered a criminal offence, but churches are community buildings, not private homes, and they get all sorts of callers, including political refugees."

"Evidently the Irish woman, if that is what she was, politely asked if she could speak to someone in charge and stated her business. The witness did what she could to be helpful, as is her nature, from what we gathered."

Section 18

Jimmy knew a bit about ebb tides and flood tides.

Years before he had been on holiday in Cornwall with his family. They went to St Michael's Mount, catching a water taxi to get from the promenade to the island when the water was fairly choppy. But by their time their tour was over the wind had dropped, the tide had receded and they were able to walk back across the causeway without having to pay for another taxi ride.

In London the port authority publishes tide tables for the Thames and weather forecasts can give an idea of whether raising the barrier is likely to be necessary on a particular day.

After doing his research Jimmy developed a plan. He had watched yacht owners along the river and chosen one with a tender towed behind it. After the crew left the vessel he simply borrowed the row-boat. Jimmy put a bike in his van, parked some distance away, cycled by an indirect route to fairly near the boat, chained his bike securely to railings and padded along to the mooring.

Nobody was around as far as he could tell. He had a back pack for carrying his goods and took bicycle lamps with him. He thought that if necessary he could clip them on the boat as navigation lights, well one of them anyway, but only if necessary.

He had a reflective tabard as well so he could pose as a council worker or something like that, if anyone asked what he was doing. His black woollen hat also fitted in with that role.

In the backpack with the putty and caps were his suction pad devices. It was fairly bulky on the bike but got lost in the boat. It should be lighter on the way back!

His footwear choice was black trainers with velcro straps. No point in risking long laces getting tangled somewhere, and these shoes were easier to remove in a hurry if that should become necessary.

As it happened the mission went very well. He was able to tie the boat to the barrier where he wanted, plant the putty and arm it, then row away without too much strain.

After delivering his surprise package he rowed back, tide in his favour, secured the painter to the yacht. He was pretty good with bends and hitches and so on, partly from his rock climbing hobby and steeple work. Jimmy was naturally right handed but learned some years ago to throw a rope around his waist and tie a bowline using only his left hand: like the fire and rescue workers do.

Jimmy thought he'd tied the boat the same as he'd found it. No point in raising questions. He placed the oars back the way he'd found them, climbed onto the bank and glided off to find his bike. He used the lamps and, by a staggered route, went back to his van. Then it was load the bike and drive away. About two miles down the road he parked away from houses and checked his kit. It was all there: nothing missing, nothing extra. All seemed OK.

Jimmy had considered using solar switches for one or all the putty bombs, but concluded they were too risky. The chance of them going off at the right time, or all at the same time, was unlikely.

For the church he created two devices. One powered by sound, the other by a timer. The protest was against noise, unwanted sound, especially over-loud church bells. His understanding was that church people followed what they call Canon Law and their in-house rules required them to make noises at certain times. Made it easy to target, he thought.

The church people even seemed to think that their precious 'canon law overrode English law. But it didn't. That was just wishful thinking and some local authority environmental health officers had put notice on churches to stop the noise. That can happen when the local populus has had enough.

Jimmy agreed with the EHOs and their actions. His preference was to let the noise trigger the detonation: ding-bang instead of ding-dong. He knew that there were 'guidelines' for noise levels from church bells with a maximum being stated. Usually sound was measured one metre from a noise source and readings were taken using the decibel A scale, within the range of human hearing.

He could have made it all more sophisticated but kept it simple. As soon as the noise started it would emit a sound pressure wave at a certain frequency and his receiver would switch on the voltage from the battery to the detonation cap.

Just in case the accursed deafening volume 'ding-dong' didn't work, there was the timer.

Some churches used recorded sound instead of bells but it didn't matter which was used here. The idea was to shut it up regardless.

Cat knew whether there were bells or bloody great loudspeakers, but he wasn't bothered. In this twenty-four-hours-a-day modern world there was no need for damned bells to summon the peasants from the fields. People had watches and clocks and mobile phones and alarm call and whatever else. They didn't need church bells.

What about the shift workers trying to get some shut-eye and those cursed over-loud church noises preventing it or interrupting it? Where was the peace on Earth then? Where was the goodwill to mankind? Where was the public entertainment licence? Nowhere!

"Three bombs in different places. One on water, one up a tower, one in the street. What's the link?" asked Peter Brown, mainly to himself.

"They could be unrelated incidents involving three different individuals or gangs, all with different motives. But let's start with no links and brainstorm some ideas about what might link them. We know that chain reactions and domino effects can be spoiled by removing one of more links. Let's put some back." he continued.

"If it was the fire triangle, removal of any one side would stop the show, but these sides remained intact." He added. "If we marked these three location on a map would it tell us anything?" he asked the liaison.

He drew three points on a pad, wrote the type of location against each one and tried to imagine what might link them. No sides to the triangle!

Section 19

Damned faggots. Danny wished they could go back to the old days when queers were thrown on the fire with the bundle-wood faggots to stoke it up for witch burning. It was illegal to be homosexual then and proper thing too, he thought. Even today some countries keep the same laws and throw queers off the roofs of tall buildings. Good for them!

The whole thing about same sex marriage in Britain was really to avoid Inheritance Tax. Imagine those millionaire and billionaire queers and forty percent of the asset value. They had to be cohabiting and legally married was the rule. How much was the Treasury missing out on each year? Think about what good all that money could do for the needy!

Even the word 'gay' had tainted the English language. Old classic pop songs like Elvis Presley's "Paralyzed" was spoiled. He sang "...I'm gay every morning, at night I'm still the same..." but queers would use it to imply Elvis was batting for the other side. He wasn't.

In 1999 there was panic because of the Millennium Bug, Now we are cursed with the millennium buggers. Even dance competition programmes on TV push queers in the faces of young children viewers. It never stops. The jews seemingly learned nothing from the Holocaust and the incessant references to it are causing the same kind of hatred that started the persecution in the first place. People get sick of it.

The fact that Hollywood is run by queer jewish businessmen answers some of the blight, but not all of it.

Perhaps Danny should go to Hollywood and leave his calling card there!

He thought of an old joke someone had told him some years earlier:

A Briton went to Israel and applied to join the Israeli army. Asked why, he said "I hate the arabs, I absolutely hate them, I want to kill as many as possible." He sounded convincing enough so he joined, was trained, then given his first mission.

He was placed behind a sand dune with a machine gun and told "Our lookout is up that tree over there. When he calls out that the arabs are coming get them in your sights and open fire. Then you will get your wish."

After a while the lookout started yelling at the top of his voice "The arabs are coming, the arabs are coming, the arabs are coming", over and over.

The Briton swivelled the machine gun and shot the lookout from the tree.

He was arrested and faced a court martial.

Asked why he shot one of his own side instead of following orders he said "If there's one thing I hate more than an arab it's a loud-mouthed bloody jew!"

Back in his home Danny started his laptop computer and got a newsreel shot of the aftermath of the 'nail bomb' event.

All three members of the Ice Trio used Linux on their computers. The journalling file system and its system of file permissions were good and they had never had to worry about viruses or anti-virus software. Computer viruses! Invented to make money. It was like the old joke about the glazier who sent his son around town with a catapult to generate new business. Create a virus then sell antidote software.

But it had gone beyond the days of the 'green worm virus' which pushed text off the screen, Now rootkits, three-dimensional computers and other evils were posing real headaches, especially in the financial services sector.

Danny opened the news picture in GIMP, the default Linux graphics editor, and played around a bit. He drew a banner across the top as if it was tied to tall lamp posts. The message on the banner was "Welcome To Camp Chaos".

Thinking of something pavements artists used to do, at the bottom, near a kerb, he wrote "All My Own Work". There were certainly some red strokes for the passionate on that particular bit of pavement artistry, he thought. Danny sent the picture to the other two, from his secure mail server.

He thought on, perhaps we should go back to London in November and target queer politicians. He knew about the favourite meeting place at the palace of Westminster. How about calling it 'Gay Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot', or maybe 'Gay Fux and the Gunpowder Plot'.

Perhaps pack a steel belted car tyre with C4 or Semtex or something like. How would that work? A low profile tyre with a high velocity output. Roll it in, use a remote control detonator and call it a "Catherine Wheel" in honour of his female cohort!

After finishing with the laptop Danny retrieved his other motorcycle seat from under the bed. It was one of those wooden frame beds with slats across to support the mattress. He used a memory foam mattress which he found very acceptable.

Fixed to the underneath of the wooden slats was an opaque plastic bag with the other number plate inside. He had held it in place with drawing pins, but now he had to put the plate back on the bike and destroy the phoney one.

Danny had contemplated what to do about registration and insurance. He could have used the official number plate during his trip to London but decided against it.

He knew that many years ago motorcycles had two number plates, one at the back and one double-sided plate on the front mudguard. But the front ones, typically made from aluminium, caused lacerations in crashes so they were dispensed with.

One rear number plate with relatively small characters was not likely to be picked up on a speed camera or much else, so provided he rode responsibly, he should not draw attention to himself.

Danny also got his IAM badge from the sideboard drawer.

Oh yes, he had trained with a group in London and passed the advanced motorcycle test. The badge was green to distinguish it from the car badges and he did display it with pride. The training had been very informative and using the pursuit method to assess his riding during the test was an interesting challenge, which he rose to with enthusiasm. Radio communications help associates to give commentary and respond to tips.

Having also passed the advanced driving test in a manual gearbox car, Danny fully understood that positioning a car too close to the line on a bend might just help decapitate a motorcyclist coming the other way, especially if the rider overdid it as well and had their head over the line!

Without being complacent, he thought he was a safe motorist who made good progress by using skill with responsibility.

He rented a garage which was just big enough to accommodate both the bike and his car. He could put the bike in first then park the car in front of it, or put the car in first and park the bike across the garage in front of the car. There wasn't enough room to roll the bike past the car.

Danny had chosen a compact car so he could get both vehicles in the garage.

He removed the seat with the scarf, etc, from the Guzzi, fitted his green IAM badge in a visible but safe place, and swapped the number plates. He also changed the heads of the rear-view mirrors for those of a different shape and adjusted them near enough. He could check them when he took the bike out on the road again. All the time, the bike was at the back of the garage with the car halfway out of the garage and the up-and-over door fully open. He was just a local resident doing a bit of routine maintenance on his vehicles.

In his home he removed the cover from the seat, fitted the foam interior from the seat that had been under the bed, clipped everything back into place, and later fitted the seat back on the bike. He could dispose of the 'spare' seat bits at his leisure, or keep them. It didn't matter either way. His bike seat had been vandalised, he had bought another one and fitted it. The fact that he had carried enough putty to London to create three impressive explosions was nobody else's business. The chance of it being traced back to him was limited, but not impossible.

What about the mileage on the bike?

Dealers keep records of mileage. Low mileage is a selling point with used vehicles. The bike wasn't old enough to require an MoT test, so no link existed through test records: no mileage recording.

Say seven hundred miles. A short trip to the ferry, Liverpool by sea, London by road; the shortest route. Keep a pump between the bike and the shop when buying petrol so the cashier doesn't see too much, and generally ride the proper way. Pay by cash, not card, and keep the helmet on. Wear spectacles and have a scarf around your mouth, like the old 'coffee bar cowboys' used to. That's what he did. He didn't have the IAM badge on the bike during the London trip, so no unwanted attention or curiosity aroused there.

The TT circuit was a bit under forty miles and it wasn't unusual for people to ride around it during 'peace times', that is to say non race days, out of curiosity. It was also normal for some to ride around the route in the opposite direction. Danny would have to do about eighteen laps of the long TT circuit to explain his mileage. He could 'clock' the mileage recorder. But that would only be necessary if some investigator came calling and he was asked to explain where he had been on the bike.

It was unlikely that would happen, but he took the bike out frequently anyway, parked not too far away from home, but stayed out for hours so neighbours might think he had been for a long ride.

What Danny had was a fairly new motorcycle which he had bought using a plastic card, insurance in his own name for a policy relating to a vehicle which now had its legitimate number plate in place, a replacement seat for which he had a receipt, the old seat, some new mirror heads. There was a warranty on the bike and to satisfy the terms he had to have servicing done by an authorised dealer.

Danny informed the registration authority of the change of ownership of the bike but didn't rush or use first class post. He kept scanned copies of the documents. Knowing that things sometimes go astray in the post, but more often in government offices. In due course he got confirmation of the registration change, just as, earlier, he had got confirmation of the change of address for his driving licence.

Section 20

The investigating officers asked Julia Cole who had been on the church site recently. She said there had been a complaint of ivy and other plants growing over the church yard wall and causing big problems at neighbouring buildings. Some uncontrolled growth had gone up one wall of a food supermarket building and started to penetrate into the upper floor stock rooms.

The church had got some local volunteers to clear it, using extension ladders and hacking the plants off the walls. The locals could be checked, more slog for the Bill, but the mention of ladders drew some attention. Ladders, bell tower, bomb!

When Julia got to the bit about the sales rep they asked if Julia remembered her name, if she had left a card, literature, or anything.

"Yes", replied Julia, "She put a card on the table there near our leaflets and books for sale but I didn't pick it up at the time. I've always thought it is bad manners to study a card as soon as someone offers it. It's as if you are checking up on them. I prefer to listen to what they have to say first and confirm contact details afterwards.

But when I looked later the card wasn't there. She must have picked it up again."

What was the name on the card?" they asked.

"Catriona Handy", replied Julia. "I asked how she pronounced her first name because there is an Irish actress with the same first name in a time travel drama series on television. I thought it was pronounced the way Italians would say it but she said it's 'katreena' or like Katrina, you know, as in 'Katrina and the Waves' who were in the Eurovision Song Contest a few years back.

The last name, Handy, is easy to remember. She said she had a relation named Charles who was a professor and was something to do with in management or something like that."

"How tall was she?"

"Well I'm not very good with feet and inches or metres, have enough trouble with my curtains", said Julia, smiling. But the others didn't smile back so she swallowed and continued.

"She was taller than me and she climbed up that steel ladder. Just before she started climbing I'd say her head was about level with that rung."

"Are you sure it was that rung?"

"Yes because I put my hand on her shoulder and said 'please be careful'. My hand was here, her shoulder was there, and the top of her head was there", said Julia, gesticulating as she spoke.

"How about shoes?" she was asked. "High heels, trainers, did you notice?"

"She wore ankle boots, the heels were quite flat." She looked down and said "Probably a bit thinner than the heels on your shoes."

"Do you usually take a good look at shoes? I know some women like to!"

"Not really", replied Julia, "But I stood here when she climbed the ladder and at one point both her shoes were at eye level, so I couldn't really miss them."

"Very Good!", said the lead investigator. "I wish we had more witnesses as observant as you."

Julia smiled meekly.

"If we bring a sketch artist along could you help to get a likeness, just for our records. You see, in the absence of a card or sales literature we need to establish who this woman is. It's routine stuff."

"Yes, of course", said Julia, "Do you want me to go to the police station or something?"

"Probably best done here", was the reply. "There may be something comes to mind about a facial expression, mannerism, or whatever, which could help paint a fuller picture, so to speak." Julia agreed.

"What about her accent?" "Did it sound phoney or acted, or inconsistent or anything like that?"

"No. Nothing I noticed. She seemed to speak quite calmly, with the kind of accent you hear from Irish people. I thought she was quite friendly and likeable."

"I hope you understand, we have to ask these questions. Your caller may be a perfectly respectable businesswoman doing exactly what she said and being exactly what she seemed. I expect you know the term 'eliminate her from our enquiries'."

Julia smiled and nodded "Yes. I've heard it many times." As she said it she wondered if she was a suspect who had to be eliminated from enquiries, but didn't ask.

The investigators treated everyone as a suspect initially and knew about 'inside jobs'. They also knew about unbalanced cranks and the damage they can cause. The first impression was that Julia was straight and honest but they kept an open mind

Section 21

The card Catriona Handy, alias Catherine T Cousins, had left with Julia Cole was found a few days later. It was in the money box on the wall above the table where the leaflets and other items were displayed. Who had put it there wasn't known for certain.

It may have been the person who put it on the table for Julia, sales people do sometimes put cards in places where they will linger a while and not be dumped straightaway. Library books are one place. Leave a business card between the pages as if it's a forgotten bookmark and one day it may just lead to an enquiry. Such things have been known to work.

The card may have been put in the box as a prank, to keep the table tidy, or for some other reason. The 'treasurer' had found it in the box and mentioned it before banking the money. It wasn't unusual and past finds had been foreign currency, IOU's, apologies for being broke, and abusive stuff. Usually the finds were sorted through by at least two members of the church staff, in case one recognised something the other didn't.

Julia wasn't working there that day but others had heard the story so someone phoned the police. "Don't touch it", they were told. "Leave the card exactly where it is, close the door and we'll send someone to collect it very soon."

They sent a uniformed police constable, not a CSO. Wearing nitrile gloves, he picked the card up by a corner using tweezers, carefully placed it in an evidence bag and took it to the local nick.

The investigators didn't expect to find any useful fingerprints, especially since Julia recalled that 'Catriona' had been wearing leather gloves, but they had to check every possible avenue. They didn't find any fingerprints. But the scientists established from the ink that the card had been printed using a desktop printer, not in a print shop or business card machine. Clever stuff this technology!

But were they any further forward?

Section 22

The members of the Ice Trio had agreed to use their natural voices and not try to put on phoney accents. Most people who try it slip up, even professional actors, and listeners can be pretty quick to pick things up. It is the way the human brain works, sensing differences, not consistencies, part of the natural instinct for survival."

Peter Brown was given plenty of information to help him use his logic and reverse logic theories to identify the links and culprits.

Eventually Kent police found Catriona. She was in Tonbridge visiting an old friend. The sketch artist's likeness had been circulated to enforcement agencies but kept away from the media. Julia Cole had been instructed not to discuss any aspect of the matter with anyone. She didn't.

By facial recognition, other techniques, alertness, Irish accents, and coincidence, someone had made a link. She was followed to a house in a cul-de-sac on a fairly new private housing development.

Approached by plain clothes officers, Catriona was polite and cooperative. She agreed to let the officers look through her car in which they found some shopping which included a packet of almonds, a pack of marzipan, some flour, sugar, plus other baking and cooking ingredients. In a separate bag was a bottle of linseed oil. In yet another bag was a bottle of white spirit, a bottle of turpentine substitute and some new paint brushes.

On the back seat was a small display case containing pieces of coloured glass, some samples of lead, some plastic that looked like lead, and a few other items. In a pocket inside the case were some business cards showing the name 'Catriona Handy' with some designatory letters after it.

The business checked out as one that had been started many years before, in the nineteen eighties, in Northern Ireland with support from the Prince's Trust. That Trust was founded in 1976 by The Prince of Wales. The business started as a cottage industry affair making leaded lights and mirror edgings to special order, then expanding. The business had a stand at the Prince's Trust Exhibition at the NEC, Birmingham, in the late eighties and got some useful publicity from the exposure. The founder was Eileen Brennan who later had a daughter, also named Eileen. They were popularly known as Big Eileen and Little Eileen; or to some as Old Eileen and Young Eileen.

Cat got the latest samples from them during her visits to the province.

The car registration, driving licence, insurance, vehicle tax, all checked out OK. The role as a sales rep for the business checked out OK. The address on the business cards tallied with the business address.

"What's the stuff in the bottles for?" asked one of the officers, Desmond Wakeman.

"The thinners are for paint. Doing a bit of redecoration in my flat and wasn't sure which one I'd need so I got both. Thought I'd get some new brushes because the bristles came out of the last one I bought."

"What about the linseed oil?"

"For his cricket bat", said Catriona, gesturing toward her friend's husband who was just walking out of his garage. "He has an old willow cricket bat and treats it with linseed oil, but last time I was here he'd run out and the shops were shut.

It's his birthday today so for a laugh I brought him a bottle and told his wife I'd bake him a Dundee cake or something. She said he's nuts about icing and marzipan as well, you know Battenburgs and that kind of thing, so I picked up some other stuff as well."

"Vicky and me will probably spend all afternoon in the kitchen while he strokes his precious willow. But I promise not to overdo the cooking sherry, officer."

She smiled in a way that disarmed both of them and they wondered for a moment if they had made themselves look foolish. But they were both professional investigators and the allurements only lasted briefly.

They both knew some explosives have an odour like almonds. They both knew marzipan was made from almonds. They both knew white spirit and linseed oil were used to soften putty. They both knew window putty particles were found with the residue from the explosion at the church. They also both knew that regardless of any suspicion that Catriona was the bomber, there was enough 'plausible explanation' to have a case thrown out of court.

Where do we go from here? They both wondered that.

After Cat, also known as Catriona and Kate, left the church following her one and only visit there, she deftly pulled a black scarf from her bag and wrapped it around her head something like a hijab. Anyone seeing her walking away from the direction of a church may have thought she was mourning someone. Her objective was to cover her face as much as reasonable to avoid recognition.

The only person who had got a good look at her was Julia Cole and her description led to the officers calling at the address in Kent.

Why deny anything, Cat had reasoned. I was there, they know I was there, they know I was in the tower, they know I left. Nobody found any explosive after I left and before the detonation. Nobody saw me plant anything. Nobody can prove anything. Ice Trio - Stay Cool.

Section 23

"Motive", said the lead investigator. "Every crime has a motive, or so we are told, so what was the motive here?"

"Maybe someone had a grudge against insurance companies!" offered one investigator. "They will have to pay out a pretty penny in life insurance and property damage claims. Perhaps someone lost out somehow, maybe had a claim refused, and thought they'd strike back at the industry."

"Good bit of lateral thinking", said the boss. "Any other thoughts?"

A number of theories were put forward but nobody there really believed they had nailed it. Nailed it, that was an unfortunate thought!

The police and other investigators reached an impasse. They knew who Catriona was but didn't know her real name, or even that she used a different name.

The diplomatic senior members knew the dangers of maligning anything or any one connected with royal patronage, so they soft pedalled. If their Irish woman was involved in planting explosives she might slip up later.

She seemed intelligent and would know she was being watched, or surveilled, as the Americans put it. The Brits would rather she was served than surveilled, if it was her.

They knew very well just how easy it was for people to 'disappear' into rural Ireland. It happened with John Murphy and that guy Tim who worked for Laurie Doyle. They didn't disappear in the underworld sense of being zapped by the mob, or Ginger Marks being buried in the concrete foundations of a flyover. Those who fled were welcomed back by their patriots and became 'absorbed' into the landscape.

The Louis Mountbatten boat murder file was revisited in case it provided any links, but nothing emerged.

The authorities still avoided making Catriona's sketch public knowledge. They watched and waited. At least they had a DNA sample, obtained with her consent. Maybe she was a terrorist soldier who would be retired early and given a 'desk job' to keep her out of public view. But which terrorist group?

Catriona had been found through picture recognition and was a partly known quantity. If they had been allowed to sweat her or use 'Guantanamo Bay' methods they may have found who else worked with her. They still didn't know if she had planted one explosive pack, two packs, three of them, or more.

The safe assumption was that there were two or more bombers working together.

The process of establishing and eliminating links continued.

Divers simulated approaches to the Thames Barrier by different methods: land, sea, even by helicopter, sailboard, and paraglider.

The noise of engines, visibility of large objects, chance of being spotted were all considered both methodically and in brainstorming sessions. Chariot, mini submarine? Possible but not likely.

Swimming from the bank? Possible, but the putty was fairly heavy and would cause some tiring on the way there. It would have to be a strong swimmer. Maybe they towed a float with the putty concealed in it. Would they risk it getting wet?

One of the 'tests' was to see how much strength it took someone to lift themselves onto the barrier, what obstructions an intruder may meet, etc, etc. Even the height and build aspects of an intruder were considered. Educated guesses were checked out in 'what if' scenarios until they had an idea of what kind of person it may be.

The preferred 'guess' was a male, mostly because of the chance of detection. A man might be able to explain away their presence on a river barrier at night, and they were pretty sure it was done at night, but a woman would be less convincing.

It could have been someone who had worked on the construction of the barrier or did maintenance. A scaffolder would fit the bill, or a steel erector, or a navy, or an engineer, even a crane inspector. There were too many possibilities to narrow down.

It could even be an engineer surveyor from an insurance company. Maybe that would support the idea of someone with a grudge against the industry: the risk industry. A disgruntled employee, maybe hated their job or were about to get a redundancy package.

Some cranes have to be inspected every day. It takes half a day to climb up them! But once up there they do provide a good view.

That was another thing to check out. Not only dockside cranes but tower cranes used on nearby building sites. After all, someone was always putting up a new weird shaped building in London. It was worse than New York!

Yes, the New Yorkers had been asked to submit ideas and some came. It was all put on the table.

Officers worked along the river's banks, both sides, looked for vantage points where someone might have checked out their target. They went along the river on ferries for the same reason, even checked out which buses went nearest, especially double decker types!

They checked for reports of stolen boats, damage to boats, borrowed boats, maybe one with less fuel than the owner thought they had left in it.

Often in investigations the simplest theories turned out to be the right ones. The old KISS mnemonic: Keep It Sweet and Simple.

"KISS my arse" the bombers seemed to be saying because so far the efforts had produced no clear leads.

Weather reports and temperature recordings were checked. It had been dry several days and nights before the explosion and temperatures were normally high for summer.

The question about DNA from perspiration was asked but no useful evidence was found at the scene.

It is well known that fingerprints from burglars are rarely found around windows and doors after rainfall because the rain spoils the prints. Wind driven sea water and spray can do the same..

Would the bomb planter know all these things? Possibly!

Some troublemakers succeed just by being brazen. They bulldoze through their mission and it works. Maybe they are blessed with serendipity too!

Jimmy had thought about 'drowning' the boat when he finished with it. Sinking it or partly sinking it, just in case he left any fingerprints. But he had decided not to draw attention to the 'getaway vehicle' and he wore black leather gloves all the time anyway.

Section 24

“What did Julia Cole say Catriona Handy was wearing when she climbed the bell tower?? asked Peter Brown.

He was precise about using the correct names to avoid misunderstanding if two people had the same name. If that happened he would distinguish them for clarity, eg Peter Brown Senior instead of his son Peter Brown Junior. Of he could use a date of birth and or or other ways to distinguish them.

Unisex names like “Lee” were OK. “Ms Lee Grant” or “Mr Lee Grant”, for example.

The precise use of names was also important if people used aliases. Some criminals and cheats used the same first name but changed the surname. Catriona Handy could become Catriona Hargrove, for instance. Sticking to one first name could sometimes avoid shock reactions which might give the game away. Use of the same letter for the surname could also be useful. Catriona H and Catriona H.

“Yes, I am Catriona H. H for Hargrove, I think you must be mistaken, but it's an easy one to make, no harm done!” was the kind of response Peter had come across during his career. People being devious but in a clever way.

From the report it seems she was wearing lightweight leather ankle boots, socks, black trousers, a tee shirt, a black jacket, black leather gloves.

”Were the gloves like fingerless mittens?” asked Peter.

“No”, said the liaison, “they had fingers. Why did you ask that?”

“Because I understand she told the warden she used a camera sometimes. Cameras may be harder to work if you're wearing gloves. The idea of gloves could be because she climbs ladders a lot and doesn't want to injure her hands. Women are fussy about their hands.

Also, if they were fingerless there may have been a ring on show, perhaps slipped the warden's mind!

You know some keen cyclists wear fingerless gloves. We don't know how she travelled, but I understand she was a fit type so maybe she had a bike parked nearby. We know how popular bikes are in London.

“Market stall holders wear fingerless gloves so they can handle money”, said the liaison, “Maybe we should check them out as well! Sorry, I didn't mean to sound sarcastic, just thinking aloud.”

The liaison knew that trained and experienced investigators were not usually stupid and in most cases covered all the necessary ground. Like many full time law enforcers he was a bit resentful of outside 'help' such as profilers and consultants and didn't give away all his intelligence straight away.

But he had started to appreciate the extra dimension Peter's thinking brought to the table.

Peter already knew he could contribute a lot, if allowed, and already knew the benefits of fresh eyes. DuPont STOP courses, General Motors Quick Changeover and all that. Proven time after time!

“If Catriona Handy did take photos she could have been marking out the land for someone else” said Peter. “It wouldn't make her any less guilty of a crime, but could suggest another player, a co-worker.”

“There was time but nobody else was seen near the bell tower”, said the liaison. The tower is only accessible from inside the building and that 's locked at times. Forget the notion of churches being open all hours, they aren't. Partly because of vandalism, theft, squatters, asylum seekers and all the rest of it! Someone could have got in from the outside, maybe using one the ladders taken along for the ivy removal, but most likely they would have been seen.”

Any ivy growing up the bell tower?” asked Peter. The answer was negative.

Section 25

Peter had a large laptop computer open on the desk and typed in some entries.

“What's that?” asked the liaison.

“A relational database”, said Peter. “I use various programs to analyse information and sometimes assign probability values to events or perceived events. You know, this thing could have happened but, from everything else we know, the likelihood of it having happened is only zero point two or twenty percent. Once the event details have been entered the numbers can be changed to see what emerges. What if” scenarios, yes?”

“Yes, I get it”, came the reply. “Please go on.”

“OK”, continued Peter, thinking he may now have a good supporter. “Imagine we have a bomber on the river Thames at night, dressed in dark clothing, working their way onto the barrier to do mischief. Think about their body, dress, movements and so on. What would give them away, for example if a light suddenly came on somewhere?”

“Maybe something reflective or light, depends how close they are. The whites of someone's eyes, their face, their hands, light coloured shoes, fluorescent socks which they forgot to change, a zip, belt buckle, something reflective like that.

Body parts may be less conspicuous if they had dark skin, black , Asian, Hispanic, and so on. That's why people use ski masks and so on. But we don't know what nationality they were.”

“Good”, said Peter. “Your thinking is very good.”

“What do we know about a bomb planter? They will use their hands a lot, yes?” The liaison nodded in agreement.

“So”, Peter went on, “If the person was sharp and didn't want their hands exposed they may have worn gloves or some kind of hand covering. That gets them round the fingerprint trail, maybe affords them some grip when climbing about on a structure and perhaps still leaves them enough flexibility to place the putty and set the timer or whatever it was.”

Peter had picked up the term 'putty' and used it to try to fit in with the investigators a bit more comfortably. Normally he would stick to proper technical terms to avoid ambiguity or misunderstandings.

“Why else do people wear gloves?” asked Peter.

“To keep their hands warm and to protect them mainly. Some wear them as a matter of fashion”, was the reply.

“How about the Boat Race?” asked Peter. “Do people wear gloves when they row? After all there are lots of rowing clubs along the river. ”

“May be a clue”, said the liaison. “Even if racers don't wear gloves or mitts or anything, it could be that a person who doesn't row very often would wear them to avoid blister or anything like that. A burst blister could leave a DNA trail. A knowledgeable bomber would know that.”

“Peter updated his PostgreSQL database so gloves showed a high probability.

“What colour gloves?” asked Peter.

“Black”, said the liaison. “Can't see much point in using any other colour!”

“Agreed”, said Peter, pleased that it seemed to be leading somewhere, but not complacent.

“So, imagine we have a link between two of the explosion sites. Black gloves, probably leather, maybe soft leather, chamois, suede, something supple”, Peter offered.

“Imagine further that we introduced that link to the third site to see where it led us. We can always remove it and go back to zero, but many process require a guess to get them started.

Do you think there is any chance of anyone wearing leather gloves at a gay pride exhibition? ”

“Are you kidding?” said the liaison, laughing heartily, “They live for that stuff. Ever been to the gay leather bars in San Francisco, or Brighton come to that!”

“Who frequents gay leather bars?” asked Peter, still smiling from the reaction to his last question.

They agreed that the third bomb could have been planted by someone wearing black leather gloves and maybe the whole leather regalia.

“Not much point in checking glove sellers”, said the liaison. “Too many variables”. Peter Brown agreed.

“Were there any bike riders in the parade?” asked Peter.

“No motorbikes from what we picked up, only someone on a push bike, doing a Freddie Mercury impression. But most likely the putty was put in place well before the exhibition got there”, was the response.

“When was the last time the road was swept? Were there any street cleaners about that week? Those people may wear gloves and could have planted a bomb. What do we know about them?” Peter kept the train of questions flowing as he explored possibilities.

“Two days before the exhibition a road sweeper went along there early in the morning. Two litter pickers did the pavements one each side. The council has to follow a DoT code of practice for safety and it's pretty demanding.

They even have NVQs for what are now called “Waste Technicians” and the staff do a lot of training. We checked out everyone we could find and they came up clean. I think there was a stranger in the camp!” The liaison laughed as he realised what he had just said.

Again Peter updated his notes and the liaison understood. They were on the same wavelength.

Section 26

Jimmy spoke to other people less often than the other two, Catriona's sales rep role, by its nature, required conversation, Danny's movements brought him into contact with people almost every day.

Jimmy's hours climbing rocks and steeples were mostly alone. He was self-disciplined, self-motivated, and normally focused. Someone watching him from a distance wouldn't know what his voice sounded like, or if he could speak at all. He could have been born dumb for all they knew.

But Jimmy had joined a climbing club years ago and people there knew what he sounded like. They knew which part of the country he hailed from.

He had travelled from Aberdeen to Edinburgh Waverley, then on to London Kings Cross. It was an all day event and Jimmy would rather have been doing something active than sitting still. But he was patient, played music through ear buds, played games on his tablet computer, and moved between carriages a few times to find a different seat.

The trio couldn't all meet together so Jimmy met with Danny in one place and with Cat at another, several miles apart. Slipping detonators and timers to someone was less difficult than slipping them plastic explosive.

It could be a rolled newspaper, plastic shopping bag, or any one of a variety of everyday items.

The trio had agreed that leaving things somewhere to be picked up later was too risky and a direct handover was the best option. So that's what they did. Nothing was said between them and as far as they could tell, nobody else really cared very much. The weekday city bustle continued apace.

Danny had stayed in a motel overnight. He wore light casual clothes to go pick up the stuff from Jimmy and left his motorcycle clobber in the room. It was one of those 'barebones' motels that doesn't include breakfast so he went out to eat. He hoped that whilst he was out eating and dressed differently nobody would associate him with the Moto Guzzi rider some guests saw earlier.

He had travelled on the ferry from Douglas and ridden as planned. Going back he would simply be someone who had visited the mainland then gone back home to the land of tailless cats. The number plate on his bike was the same as one in the motorcycle dealer's shop in Douglas. Funny how things get mixed up sometimes, and even shopkeepers make mistakes! There had been three red Moto Guzzis in the shop that day, all similar models, not all the same year, but near enough.

Cat had hired a car and driven from Merseyside to London. She slept in the car and used facilities at a public convenience to tidy up her face next morning. She knew rest rooms in department stores and supermarkets were also quite handy. Unlike Danny and Jimmy she didn't need to go back north after visiting the smoke. After the hire car was returned she would get a bus out of town.

Section 27

“Remind me how the putty was fixed to the post.” asked Peter.

“Thought to be a couple of plastic zip ties. The sort of thing they use to fix notices to lamp posts when there's a car boot sale or whatever. Market traders use them on their stalls as well, but those are usually much smaller and always white for some reason. The bomber's zip ties were black. Oh, yes, some people use them to hold hub caps onto cars as a deterrent. Car rental companies use them for that as well, usually black or grey.”

“Was it just left there as it was, or was it covered with something do you know?” asked Peter next.

“The lab boys think there was some kind of inflatable thing around the outside. Like big water wings, that sort of thing, or like a miniature lilo that was wrapped around the outside of the bomb. They reckon it had been a bright colour but couldn't be too sure. It was perhaps meant to fit in with the theme of the day without looking out of place.

Peter updated his database again with brief details, the said “Are there any places near the scene which sell that kind of thing?”

“Don't know yet. If the thing was inflatable it could have been obtained from anywhere and taken there.”

“Maybe, if the bomber knew exactly where they were going to plant the bomb and knew the diameter of the post and so on. But if it was a more of a last minute decision, you know, necessity is the mother of invention, it may have been gotten near the crime scene”, said Peter.

The liaison said he'd step up the search. An hour later the phone rang and the caller said a beat officer had located 'The Pink Party Shop' about half a mile from the explosion and they sold that kind of thing. A CID inspector was on his way to talk to the owner.

Grahame Gillespie told the CID it had been busy recently. The shop sold decoration balloons, helium filled balloons and a variety of other party goods. He couldn't remember any particular customer but said they did have a couple of people in motorbike type gear. He didn't know if they were motorcyclist or just dressed that way.

The police asked to see records from the cash register and eventually Grahame came up with records of three sales of what he called 'square sausage balloons'.

Grahame's assistant, Jason, said he remembered selling two of them. One to a woman, one to a biker guy who was over average height but didn't speak clearly and kept his helmet on. He had taken the 'balloon' from a display shelf and handed over cash, so there wasn't much to say.

“What colour was he?” asked the officer. “I mean was he African, for example. Or what?”

Jason protested “I don't know, I told you he had his helmet on. His clothes were nearly all black.”

“What about his hands? Did he have gloves on the whole time or what?”

“Oh, yes, sorry”, said Jason, “I forgot. I gave him some change and he took a glove off to undo a zip and put it in one of his pockets. His hand was white, like yours and mine. ”

“Right or left hand?”

“Let me think”, said Jason. My right and his right. Don't tell me, you want to know if he was right or left handed.”

“Well, he was probably one or the other”, said the CID officer with some indignation, wanting to move it on. “Do you have any CCTV or other security system here?” he asked.

Grahame jumped back into the conversation. “We can't afford anything like that, officer. Our margin here is very small. But if you do hear of any bargain cameras or bankrupt stock please let us know!”

The officer took a copy of the till receipt, thanked them for their help, then left. He took a walk around the block, called the police station and asked them to look up details of any cameras in the area.

He went into a cafe for a cup of tea and to listen to any useful banter, as plain clothes policemen do, and shortly after leaving was told by phone of a small car park that had a working security camera system.

It was not far from the cafe so he headed straight there and got to see some recordings from two weeks back.

There were two cameras aimed at the entrance and exit ramps respectively and most of the action was to do with cars on their way in or stopping at the barrier so the driver could pay.

But one camera took in some of the street outside and in one shot a motorcycle stopped for a short while. The bike didn't enter the car park but the officer thought maybe the rider had stopped to consider parking there, then decided not to. If so, was it because he spotted a camera and didn't want to be recognised, because the charges were too high, or something else?

The policeman's training and instinct told him he was on to something. He took the security recordings back to his car, then compared the date and time of the video showing 'biker boy' with the date and time of the balloon purchase. The video came first. So maybe the rider was looking for somewhere to park whilst he went shopping (or bombing).

What was between the road with the car park and the Pink Party Shop? The officer got his tablet computer out and looked at a satellite view of the area. He called for assistance and the duty sergeant sent out couple of uniforms on mountain bikes. They soon located three places where they thought a big motor bike could be parked for a while without interference.

The motor bike make and model were not known yet and the number plate couldn't be read because it was too dark and obscure in the video. The officer used the relative proportions of the bike and rider to determine that he was pretty tall, quite slim, and was a he not a she, going by the narrow hips and other clues. He had a back pack but there was no top box, pannier or luggage rack on the bike.

If he bought that 'square sausage balloon' he must have inflated it somewhere, because they came rolled tightly in plastic bags.

He must have stopped somewhere out of the way after buying it. Best have a look at the places the mountain bikers found.

Door to door didn't produce any evidence of balloon blowing but someone in a private flat said they remembered seeing a red motorbike chained to the railings near the footpath. No, they didn't remember the registration or know what bike it was, but it looked a bit unusual because a cylinder head seemed to sticking out sideways and the passer-by remembered wondering if the rider used to hit their leg on it.

The Traffic boys soon identified the make and took an educated guess at the bike's age and model.

DVLA database next!

“Surprisingly popular these Moto Guzzi vee twins”, the investigator thought, “and like Ferrari cars, red seemed to be the fave colour that year.”

Section 28

Peter Brown added the latest updates to his database and discussed the discoveries with the liaison.

The black leather glove theory seemed to check out OK they agreed. Also they may be looking at one white Irish female and one white male whose nationality was uncertain. It was not known if they knew each other but probably did, because the explosive was the same type, coloured matter was found at all three sites, they both wore black clothing and gloves, were both slim and seemingly fit, around the same age, and so on.

The dates of events were known. All the same day.

Too many coincidences to ignore!

Where did Catriona come from. Where did she go immediately after she left the church premises?

Did she plant the bomb?

Peter entered some more 'What Ifs' with probability ratings against the data fields.

“Tell me how your database works, idiot's version”, said the liaison.

Peter thought about asking him why he wanted to know, but decided to let it run and see where it led. It was not a secret anyway.

Every clump of information goes in a field”. Said Peter.

For example, suppose we had a database to store people's names and addresses. We could have one field for their Title, eg Mr, Mrs, Miss, Dr, and so on. Then we could have another field for their initials, one for their forename, one for their surname, another field for the first line of their address, and so on.

Suppose one entry was for Mr J Smith. If the first name field only allowed initials we would not be able to search the database for a particular name because it would not have been entered.

The J could stand for Jack, James, Juan, Jerry, Jonathan, Jules, or something else. If we want to be able to search for first names only we have to set up a separate field to accommodate and store first names.

It's a similar story with addresses. Some houses have names instead of numbers. Example, Rose Cottage. Lavender Lane, Twickenham.

Another example, 33 Lavender Lane, Twickenham.

In both cases we could have a field for the first line of the address but we couldn't search for number 33 on its own because it wouldn't be in its own stand-alone field.

We can only search for information that has been entered into the database. If it hasn't been entered we won't find it. The more fields we use the better it is for finding links between records.

A record is a block of data belonging to a particular entry. A record for J Smith might show Title, First Name, Middle Name, Surname, Number or Name Of House, Road, Suburb, Postal Town, County, Post Code. Even the two parts of a post code can be broken down into separate fields if we want.

So, if you had suspects and wanted to search for someone with an unusual middle name, you may find it if there was a separate field for middle names.

Earlier databases were quite rigid. If you set one up and tried to add a field you would lose all the data. So you had to get the design right first time.

If you forgot to include a field you later needed, too bad!

I can program my database and add whatever fields I like without losing anything. OK so far?"

The liaison nodded 'OK' so Peter carried on.

We had a woman using a business card showing letters after her name. Suppose there was an organised crime gang whose members all used the same letters, as a kind of code.

Simple example, suppose the letters were MIBM, standing for member of the institute of builders merchants, or something like that.

I can add a field for a set of designatory letters, no problem. Then if someone is arrested and also has such a card, the letters can be added to the database in case they crop up somewhere else. There can be separate fields for different sets of letters, so they don't run into each other and get confused.

Someone may show something like 'PhD MSc BSc(Hons) MiMechE' or something like that on their calling card and be quite genuine and real. But if you put all those sets of letters in one field the computer may churn out some unexpected results and waste your time. The better way is to have a separate field for each set of initials or abbreviations, acronyms, or whatever they are.

I have done that here for Catriona Handy and the biker, showing a separate field for each discrete piece of information about each person of interest. The database can then be programmed to search for data which maybe related. Black leather gloves may be a relationship and work in the same context as 'known associates'."

"Yes, it all makes sense", said the liaison. Peter suspected the man knew a fair bit about databases already and was simply looking for more clarification.

"You know I added number ratings to fields as well. That may prove very helpful later. If we find a link between people, events, places, things, et cetera , we can see how critical those links are."

One of the latest fields I added was 'solo motorcycle'. With an entry for Moto Guzzi. If we find the rider is a member of an owner's club or something it may lead to other links.

The make of the bike may not have a high number and be less significant than the fact that a motorbike was used. No point in raiding a factory in Italy if what you really need to do is see who has obtained full motorcycle licences in Britain in the past ten years and narrow the list down from there, that sort of thing.

There are fields for explosive material, detonator type, the balloon, the shop the balloon came from, and many others. In my experience you can't have enough fields and no input effort is ever wasted."

"How practical would it be to add all that sort of information to, say, the police national database?" asked the liaison.

"Hardly practical at all. The cost would be immense, there would be time delays, probably debugging issues, and it would never end. Somebody would always want more fields, whatever you did. I doubt if it would ever get approval and I wouldn't recommend it.

Instead of having one big one, have lots of little ones. It's much easier to control, much more flexible, and a hell of a lot more secure. If someone hacked into your granddaddy system with the whole world's information on it you would be lost. But if all your case stuff is in a back room like this, nobody else knows what is on your database or how far you've got. Much safer.

“All makes sense to me!”

“Good”, said Peter, “Now we can look for some more links and refine it a bit.”

In Conversation Peter added that he used the word Forename in his database.

He said “I once upset a Jewish doctor in Dulwich when I was filling in a form because I asked what his christian name was. He looked appalled and said quite firmly 'I am NOT a christian'.

It was an innocent slip which I try not to repeat. There are enough conflicts over religion in the world already.”

“Already? Boy you sounded just like a Jewish doctor when you said that”, the liaison uttered, laughing.

Section 29

Jimmy had some steeplejack jobs to do in Scotland. He had considered the train again but preferred freedom and being alone to think. So he hired a car and drove back.

He had wondered about a motor bike too. He had ridden them before but never got the speed bug or any particular yearning. So he left that stuff to Danny. Most of his work required a van or car for carrying equipment, so he was stuck with four wheels most of the time anyway.

He hired the Ford from Avis and it proved very economical on the long journey. Over four hundred miles from London to Dumbarton, with one stop en-route. He listened to old pop songs along the way, some from Scottish groups too. Deacon Blue, Wet Wet Wet, Fairground Attraction and he quite enjoyed it all.

After getting to his destination, Jimmy crashed out in the B&B he had booked and slept until dawn. His steeple jobs meant travelling to where the structures existed and staying in temporary digs was business as usual.

Sometimes he had to take sectional ladders and straps to site, which meant the big van or a drop-side truck. Other times it was mostly just himself so a small van or car was enough.

Before he got out of bed Jimmy thought about the Ice Trio and wondered if anyone would learn how they met and find out about their similar interests. “Enough of that, off to get some breakfast just now”, he thought.

The landlady at the B&B, which was strangely named 'Kalgoorlie', had watched the news broadcasts about the London explosions and mentioned it to Jimmy as she served up his breakfast.

“Don't suppose you saw any flashes from up those towers of yours!” she said, jokingly.

“Not from this bloody distance!” said Jimmy. “I think I was up Inverness way when that lot happened. Mind you, Burns Night firework displays look good from a seat in the sky!”

“Och, you!” said Maureen and made to punch him on the jaw in fun.

Jimmy had stayed there a couple of times before and told her what work he did. It was obvious she liked him. Who could blame her? He wasn't a bad looking guy and, Oh, that six pack!

Little did she know.

It was whilst making his bed later that day that Maureen saw what looked like a rubber sucker cup in a backpack that was partly unzipped.

First off she thought it was some of his work equipment and had visions of him climbing up the face of a glass building like the cartoon superheroes do.

Maureen wondered if he needed the gear today and had forgotten to take it with him. She unzipped the bag a bit more to see if there was a mobile phone number written anywhere but found only four straps with suction cups fixed to them, plus a pair of black leather gloves.

She decided to mind her own business, zipped the bag so it looked the way she found it, and went downstairs.

Jimmy stayed there for two nights then left.

It was a few days afterwards when she was watching TV that the news team mentioned suckers. There was a close up of one of the undamaged pods on the Thames Barrier and the reporter said one theory was that whoever placed the explosive may have used suckers to climb the shell.

Maureen had a friend named Maggie along the road and sometimes Maggie would drop in for a chat. Occasionally Maggie helped out at the B&B when it was busy or if Maureen got one of her headaches.

It was only mentioned in passing to start with. The two women had often exchanged notes about what they found under the guests' beds, from used sheaths, to lost luggage, to surprise tips as a reward for bothering to clean under the bed.

Maggie heard Maureen let slip that she had seen some suction cups in a young man's bag and wondered about them.

They had both seen a very touching news report of a man whose very young son was dying from a rare illness. The boy was a Spiderman fan so dad dressed up in a Spiderman outfit and dropped off the garage roof as junior came through the front door to find his hero in front of him.

The father also shot a video with special effects in support of a charity dealing with his son's type of illness.

“I wondered if my lodger was doing something like that”, said Maureen. “I know he works hard but he's never said anything about a family. I wondered if he was a secret cat burglar or something.

Didn't want him to think I was prying or anything but I am curious. Do you think steeplejacks use suckers much?"

"Don't know, said Maggie, but Ill ask Irene to find out if you like." Maureen agreed.

Irene was Maggie's daughter and a student at The University of Strathclyde. Soon afterwards she asked about steeples and was directed to a staff member named Kincaid who was said to be very technically knowledgeable.

"I was asked to find out if steeplejacks use suction cups when they climb up buildings", she began.

Kincaid, who evidently hailed from Canada, told her that suction cups were normally used on smooth, impermeable, surfaces like glass, plastic, sheet metal and the like. He said if they were tried on brick or stone , probably there wouldn't be much suction because air would escape through the pores and over the rough surfaces.

He added that if a steeplejack took small suction devices they may be for use on cladding or something on part of a structure, so it's not impossible, just unusual. Bigger cups with vacuum pumps are used on some rough surfaces but are much bulkier.

Irene passed the feedback to her ma next day.

"Do you think I should mention it to someone you know, just in case?" Maureen asked Maggie.

"Up to you, lass, whatever your conscience tells you." said Maggie, not wanting to be the arbiter in something that could, just, be rather nasty.

Maureen Miller thought herself broad minded. You had to be if you ran a B&B. The things you found, the things you saw, the things you heard. Sheets and pillows often told their own story. That was all water off a duck's back!

But something had spurred her curiosity, and she felt uneasy, almost as if she had been spurned or betrayed. She was no grass. Suppose her lodger was a burglar, or something worse. A terrorist? Not him, surely. She didn't want to think anything bad about him because she liked him and she like being with him, even if it was only to serve a morning fry-up.

Then there was Maggie. Like most 'best friends' she usually gave her recommendation. "If it were me I would..." that kind of thing. Here, though, Maggie had left it to Maureen: Up to you, lass.

Maureen had once read a book about an American medical doctor who had been jailed after making a big error of judgement. At the bottom of the stainless steel mirror in his cell he had written "Not My Business" or similar words to remind him as he shaved each morning not to poke his nose into other people's affairs.

Doctors were normally very discreet and demonstrated integrity anyway, but curiosity could be fatal within the Department of Correction walls. Funny how that spelt DOC too, she thought when she read it. An errant doc being corrected.

But her problem was here, not in the pages of a novel. Her problem was here and now.

They filmed “Hope Springs” at a studio down the road, didn't they? What was it, 'hope springs eternal in the troubled breast' or something like that? What was she hoping for?

The widow Miller knew that if she kept on like this it would start another one of her headaches. Sharing the problem with Maggie didn't halve it. She needed to tell someone else. Was there an anonymous hotline like Crimestoppers, or could she drop a hint somewhere and purge her mind?

All she had was a question about what the suckers were for. There were gloves, but that wasn't so strange. There was no evidence of any wrongdoing, mainly just an unanswered question.

How had he contacted her to reserve a room the few times he had stayed? A phone call, probably a mobile. He paid cash and took a receipt to claim lodging fees back from his boss. She had the receipt copies with the accounts.

No good going to church and asking a priest for guidance. Last time she went to a church someone was working on an audio system for recording the bells. The techie made a mistake and suddenly played it back without warning. The sound was deafening and definitely gave her a headache. “I wish someone would blow that bloody thing up”, she thought. If only she knew! Surprisingly, Maggie provided a solution. “If you want, Irene will send an email to the police without involving anyone directly. She can give a quick idea of what it's about, give an idea where to look then kill the email account.”

“I don't want to involve your wee girl in some cloak and dagger stuff about a stupid hunch”, said Maureen. “It wouldn't be fair!”

After talking about it for a few minutes she agreed to proceed, but with caution.

Irene sent an email along the lines of “Following the appeals for information after the recent explosions in London I may have a clue. If you could send a plain clothes person to the Kalgoorlie guest house in ... Dumbarton the landlady may be able to help. Please be discreet.

The e-mail was sent from a common-use University computer and she axed the account before going to her next lecture. Irene didn't know too much about the matter and soon forgot it. She had plenty of other things to do and end-of year exams looming.

Section 30

Charlene McCorry rang at the front door and asked if she could speak to the landlady. She could have been a businesswoman looking for a bed for the night, or something else. She had a local accent and looked fairly neat but not overly dressed.

“Aye, she's through there”, said Maggie who had answered the doorbell. Although Maggie helped out she didn't usually make reservations or get involved with payment.

Constable McCorry tapped on the door to the back room and opened it when she heard “Come in”.

Maureen was alone in the room so Charlene carefully closed the door behind her. She didn't introduce herself, simply opened her ID card, held it near Maureen and said “I heard that ...”

“This may be nothing”, started Maureen, “But I saw some straps with rubber suckers in a guest's bag upstairs and it seemed odd. I heard on the telly that suckers may have been used to do with those bombs down south so I thought it might be worth a mention. I don't want to get anyone into trouble or waste anyone's time but...”

Charlene noted the details and told Maureen not to worry. “Can you let me have a look at the room he stayed in and tell me what happened to the bed linen”, said Charlene. “You know, have you washed the sheets and pillow cases or whatever!”

The next caller that day, who wasn't looking for accommodation either, was a scientist who scoured the room for any clues. He also asked about any other rooms Jimmy had stayed in on previous visits. You never know what may emerge.

The police are not fools and understand how to behave so they can amass information without being intrusive. After the investigators and forensic people had finished Maureen didn't feel bad about anything. She felt relieved and even more secure for some reason. “Wonder where it will lead!” she thought.

“All done!” she told Maggie, after Maggie came back from the shops with the breakfast provisions.

They didn't speak about it again.

Section 31

“Something more for your database”, said the liaison.

“We got a tip from Scotland about straps with suction cups. It may be nothing but we both know the score here.”

Peter started to enter details and smiled when he heard the bit about leather gloves in the bag.

“They tried to get DNA from the bed sheets but were too late”, said the liaison. “It doesn't matter too much if we get a live person, but we don't know if it is related yet. Could be sheer coincidence.”

“Recap time”, thought Peter..

London bell tower, female, known, white, probably Irish slim, fit, black leather gloves, putty and coloured matter.

London, street exhibition, putty, nails, coloured matter, balloon, motorcyclist, white, slim, fit, black leather gloves

London, Thames Barrier, possibly suction cups, putty and coloured matter.

Dumbarton, male, white, most probably Scottish, slim, fit,

As the data aligned in Peter's program the liaison could see how it was so valuable and why Peter was so meticulous in the way he set it up and added details.

“This is a bit like those codebreaker puzzles in puzzle books and magazines”, said Peter.

“You know the ones I mean. You have a grid of blank squares with numbers and each number tallies with a letter of the alphabet. You get a few filled-in blanks to start you off and have to work out the rest. Most people start with a guess and check it out as they go.

We started with a guess here, if you recall, then validated it.

“Wish I was clever like you”, said the liaison.

“You are miles clever than me and you know it”, said Peter.

“Not with this database stuff, I'm not.”

“If you really want to explore possibilities you could start with an ordinary spreadsheet program. They make excellent databases. Then maybe progress on to a three dimensional spreadsheet”, said Peter, trying to be encouraging.

“Sounds like an extra thick duvet or patchwork quilt! What exactly is a three dimensional spreadsheet?”

“OK”, Peter started to explain, “Suppose you open a normal spreadsheet . The one I use here is called Libre Office Calc, for example.

As you know, it's made up of rows and columns and the rectangular boxes you see all over the screen are called cells.

Each column is identified by a letters of the alphabet at the top.

Each row is identified by a number on the left.

The location of a cell is determined by the column letter and row number. So the top left cell is A1 and so on. If you click on a cell the location of that cell is shown near the top left of the screen, so you always know where you are. That's all basic stuff.

If you use our Mr John Smith type example, you could use the first row of the spreadsheet for a single record, that is a group of information about one person.

Column A would be for Title, column B for Forename, Column C for Surname, column D for house number, and so on. You save it, then enter the next record on the next row..

On row 2 the entry in Column A might be Ms, then moving across the page you would add data to each column. The complete record might read Ms ,Catriona, Handy, 99, Letsby Avenue, Somewhere, Unknown, OIC UR12.”

The liaison smiled at Peter's humour and asked him to continue.

“When you save a spreadsheet it is saved as a file, usually with a filename extension. This one is saved with a dot ods extension meaning it's an Open Document Spreadsheet. The dot, or full stop, or period as some call it, separates the file name from the extension. You know all that already!

The example we just used will be saved as a two dimensional spreadsheet where columns are one dimension and rows are the other dimension. Like the X axis and the Y axis on a graph or medical chart.

If you open a 2-D spreadsheet file the computer will display what you saved: a two dimensional spreadsheet. You can search for data in the cells but it will only find something that has been entered and can be seen on the screen in those two dimensions.

“With a 3-D spreadsheet there are layers. Imagine you created a database file named suspects-2010.ods containing records of crime suspects for the year 2010. Then you create one for year 2011, one for year 2012 and so on through to 2015.

If you saved each of those six as a separate file, to see if there were any links between suspects in different years you would have to open each file in turn and make notes about each one. It could take ages.

So what you do is put them in a three dimensional spreadsheet, perhaps showing the latest, 2015, on top and the others underneath in year order. You can still only view one sheet at a time but the program can search for data that appears in any of them.

The sheets in the stack appear as tabs at the bottom of the screen so you can flick through them whenever you want, like looking back through pages of a book

Small businesses use 3-D spreadsheets for accounts. They can have the last three years, five years or whatever stacked up and refer back, make comparisons, and so on without having to open a number of separate files.

They can use it for quarterly VAT returns and other things, too. Very useful and the software is free.

Spreadsheets are immensely powerful tools and can be used for things most people don't ever think of.”

Peter took a breather.

“I might have a go at that at the weekend, workload permitting”, said the liaison.

The good humour between them continued and they both related soppy stories and anecdotes from their past.

Peter told the liaison about pranks played on apprentices in firms years ago, like the one about the lad who was told to go to the stores and ask for a long weight, or a left-handed screwdriver, or other such nonsense.

The liaison said they once had a custody sergeant who had difficulty understanding a drunken German left in his charge and mistakenly entered his name in the book as Den Dritten. It turned out it was the third time the man had been arrested and he was trying to tell the officer that.

Section 32

Whilst Peter and the liaison were talking the investigation continued elsewhere. The police and international agencies are like a machine which never stops. As the clues come together a fuller picture emerges and leads to new clues.

'Joining the dots' is one well known phrase. That's what officers and others such as Peter Brown were doing: joining the dots.

There was no overseas link so far. It seemed to be a British Isles matter. Nobody had reported Cat's use of a black black headscarf so nobody had suggested a muslim link of any kind and the investigators were unaware of any such scarf.

Nobody had claimed responsibility for the explosions. The authorities expected from the past that somebody would, somehow, some day.

The comment about the glass in the bell tower was unexplained. Julia Cole told the investigators what Catriona had said, but no evidence of any such glass had been found. The officers who spoke to Catriona didn't mention it to her. They were told to play it down.

Why would someone say a piece of glass from a shed or something was in the tower if it wasn't? Perhaps, if Catriona was the bomb planter, she had hope someone would go up there to check and be taken out by the explosion.

She knew Julia was unlikely to go up there, so perhaps the vicar or someone else was an intended victim. Who else goes into bell towers?

Before Julia said the glass may be for the vicar's shed it was unlikely Catriona would have known he had sheds or was a pigeon fancier. Possible, but unlikely.

Maybe Catriona was genuinely trying to sell glass, any glass, and had invented the line to generate conversation about glass in general. Having been told the vicar had sheds maybe she would contact him separately and try to sell him some bespoke leaded shed lights. Not beyond reason!

Salespeople can elicit information in a subtle way. So can law enforcement officers. It was a bit like the Spy vs Spy stuff that Peter talked about!

Section 33

"Did you look under the stones?" asked the inspector.

"Only the small ones", replied the supervisor in the lab. "We didn't want to disturb anything unnecessarily and some of those things are very heavy. Preserve the crime scene we are told."

"OK, I see all that, but someone said there was a pane of glass in the tower. It was suggested it may have been for a shed window or something like that. You guys said there were no glass fragments in the rubble but I need to know if there is glass buried or concealed there somewhere.

This is very important. We don't want to hang the wrong man, do we!"

He had deliberately said “wrong man”, not woman. “Don't want to give too much away to scientists”, he thought, “ you don't know how much they gossip.”

The inspector thought for a moment about something he'd once heard from a friend. The friend said one of his work colleagues was ex Royal Air Force and was forever going on about the RAF. Every day it was RAF this RAF that, and it was driving the other members of the department nuts. One day someone wrote on the guy's locker “Per Ardua Ad Nauseam”.

“Great hairy sods!” exclaimed Pete Shearer, using his favourite expression, which was well known to his colleagues and family.

Pete was a scientist charged with checking the church premises again, looking specifically for glass. He didn't know of any detection equipment or techniques for sheet glass in such circumstances and refraction of light wasn't much help here, so the searchers resorted to manual lifting to see what they could find hiding under a rock, so to speak.

The seventh stone block was a slightly different shape to the others and that's was where they found it. A sheet of plain glass had been stuck to the block, probably with an epoxy resin adhesive, and below the glass was an inscription about the bell. The resin was clear and hardly noticeable at first. It was only noted in places where the glass was cracked and splintered but had refused to part company with the stone, which was mostly intact.

After some attempted re-creation of lighting condition in the tower, as it might have been at the time of Catriona's visit, the investigators tentatively gave her the benefit of the doubt. She may well have been a glass sales rep looking for business. She may have seen the glass laying on top of the stone and thought it was an orphaned piece.

As each stone was turned over and examined the investigators looked for any evidence of anyone else. There was nothing conclusive.

The bell had been made by Gillett and Johnson in Croydon but hadn't been used for several years.

The bell didn't have a name. Pete Shearer wondered if the tower had a name. That line of thought arose from the common misconception about Big Ben in London. Big Ben was the name of a bell but many people have used the name in reference to the Elizabeth Tower which houses it. There is rarely any mention of the names of the other bells there.

What has that got to do with the explosions? Probably nothing, but if Pete could contribute an idea which proved helpful it may offset the ill feeling about the scientists not finding the glass sooner.

What if the bell or the tower had a name and was the target because of that name? But he couldn't find anything worth mentioning and decided to keep his thoughts to himself.

The scientists still made an inventory of everything they found, though, and took many photographs. The turning of the stones had been recorded on video.

The bell was photographed. The dimensions, type of metal, weight, inscription, apparent damage, etc were recorded.

“I suppose somebody will have to lift that bugger back up some day”, said one of the team.

“Waste of money”, said one of the others. “They use recordings these days. Why hire a crane or whatever and leave the bell hanging there doing nothing but rot? You can't even see it from below. Unless they want to make a load more people unhappy, of course!”

“What do you mean?” asked Pete.

“There was a church in the West Country with a bell that hadn't been used for six years or something. Sleepy, peaceful village, you know the kind of thing. Then without warning the church people started ringing the bell again and angered the neighbours. The council shut it down.

If it had been loudspeakers the volume could have been lowered and may have been acceptable, but bells are harder to control. The sound output may be related to how hard the clanger hits the bell but the turndown ratio is nowhere near as high as with electronic controls. But you know all that kind of stuff, don't you!”

“Thanks”, said Pete, thinking maybe there was a clue in that after all. Suppose it was simply about “isn't it nice when the noise stops!”

He passed the notion onto the CID inspector and later it was passed on to Peter Brown, who added both Noise and Electronics to the existing data fields. The database file size was growing rapidly, but still very small overall.

“Is the Thames Barrier noisy?” asked Peter.

“Not so the neighbours would kick up a stink”, replied the liaison. “Some noise is generated by the mechanism when it's operated but the major noise comes from the flood warning sirens. I doubt if anything would be done to silence them because it's in the interest of boats and people to have them.”

“Merely looking for other links”, said Peter. If noise was a motive at one scene it may be the same for others. I guess a pride exhibition of any kind would be noisy but not repeated very often. Some people hate fireworks but tolerate the noise for a couple of weeks every year. It may be repeated noise or some other kind of frequent disturbance that causes retaliation!”

“OK”, said the liaison, “suppose it was an annoyance of some kind but not necessarily the same kind of annoyance in every case?”

Peter was busy adding “Annoyance” to his database. He knew what hate crimes were and they were quite common.

Hate Crimes. Can retaliation against an annoyance be considered a hate crime? He didn't know, but that could be defined later. They may be on to something here.

Loud church bell noise
Loud demonstrations, loud in more ways than one
Loud sirens? That didn't seem to fit so well.

Was there some other kind of dislike?

The head of the command centre wished they could move quicker but was please with the way information and theories kept rolling, so a message of encouragement was sent out to all participants.

The overseas agencies kept 'listening' and the Irish Government took special note when they were told one of their nationals may be involved. It was 'may be' and not 'was'; the matter being handled diplomatically and largely as a matter of courtesy.

The Scottish Parliament was made aware similarly in case a Scot was later proven to be involved.

Section 34

The Moto Guzzi enquiries were taking a while.

There were twenty one dealers around Britain and the Channel Islands, many machines registered, some off the road with SORN returns, and so on. Some machines may be in the process of registration or off the system for other reasons.

A licence number would be helpful but the police didn't have one and it could be false anyway. Maybe later!

Catriona kept travelling around and seemed to be doing the job she claimed. The firm in Belfast backed her story and commission payments were shown in her bank account details. She paid National Insurance contributions.

Even car hire seemed legitimate. It was said that as she went from place to place, sometimes from country to country, it was impractical to arrange insurance and all the rigmarole for taking a UK registered car to another state so they had a policy of hiring locally.

The investigators didn't follow through on all the trips she'd made, after all, budgets were tight these days, and with austerity cuts as well you had to be selective.

Someone confirmed that Catriona had taken a break in Bantry and assumed she had travelled back over the route she took there. They didn't check any further.

Section 35

Danny Hoskins eventually received confirmation of the updated registration for the motor bike. The insurance, breakdown cover, registration, vehicle licence were all in his name and showed an address at Port St Mary. So did his ongoing membership of the IAM. The records showed he had satisfied the examiners in both the car and motorcycle advanced test categories.

Over the weeks Danny went out on the Guzzi regularly and parked in different places. He listened to local news, especially traffic news bulletins, and tried to remain aware of delays such as road works so he didn't trap himself.

He didn't need someone at work saying "How about that bottleneck yesterday, were you held up for long?" if he had claimed to have ridden somewhere but hadn't really been there at all.

It only had to go on for so long, until the mileage was correct. This was like the opposite of trying to add business miles to a vehicle for tax relief purposes!

Eighteen laps. Say one hour a lap. Eighteen hours to lose himself out of sight. Not too bad.

So, what were the other Ice Trio members up to?

Cat continued to travel around Great Britain and nearer Europe. Her passport was all in order. Her driving licence was in order. It all seemed above board to the authorities.

Jimmy, or Nicholas, to use his real name, continued to work in Scotland and go rock climbing at weekends. He had girlfriends, went to live music concerts sometimes, had even met new girls at a couple of them.

The police traced him through information from the landlady, mainly the phone he used when he booked a room. He never went back to Kalgoorlie again but that was coincidence, not design. He simply didn't have any jobs in the area. His employer verified a number of points, eg payment for B&B accommodation in various places, fuel receipts for the van, etc. It all seemed OK.

The police asked at Jimmy's climbing club about suction cup devices. The secretary said they were no good for rock climbing but they did use suction devices on panels in their hall for training purposes. There were several sets in the club's equipment room and they seemed satisfied that Jimmy may have had the items with him for a legitimate reason. The secretary said all the club's equipment was present and correct.

Section 36

It was by pure chance that they met.

Catriona's friend Vicky went shopping in Tonbridge and called in to some shops to look at photo frames. She had a couple of A4 size prints with her and held one up against a frame which was standing almost upright on a shelf. She wanted to see how the frame looked against the photo. If it worked she might get a proper print made from the file on the memory card in her bag. The 'trial' one she had produced using the ink jet printer. The equality was not as good as a proper one on photo paper and the picture was nice enough to warrant a bit of extra expense.

"You know her too, then!" said a stranger's voice.

A woman, someone Vicky didn't recognise, was standing alongside her.

"Know who?" Vicky asked, looking puzzled.

"Her!" said the stranger and pointed to Catriona in the picture. It had been taken the same day the police had called to speak to Catriona and showed Vicky, her husband, Catriona, a cake they had made, and hubby's willow cricket bat.

They had posed and set the camera's timer. It looked a nicely prepared photo with happy looking subjects.

“You mean Catriona!” said Vicky.

“No, Kate, Catherine, my husband's ex.”

“What, his ex girlfriend?” asked Vicky.

“No, his ex wife”, replied the stranger.

“I think you must be mistaken”, said Vicky. “That is my friend Catriona and that is my husband. Catriona has never been married.”

“No mistake”, said the stranger. “My name is Barbara and I married a man named Kenny after he got divorced from HER”, and she pointed to the picture again. “Her maiden name was Cousins, Catherine Cousins. Her middle name is Theresa and she was born in Ireland. No mistake.”

The woman, Barbara as she called herself, seemed very certain and sounded very convincing. Vicky was taken aback, almost dumbfounded.

“I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be offensive”, said Barbara. “I had nothing against her. My husband was the reason they broke up. I don't think Kate did anything wrong.”

“Did they have any children?” asked Vicky, wondering if things could get any worse. Provided what Barbara said was true, of course.

“No. I think they wanted to but it didn't happen, Not sure why”, replied Barbara.

“Anyway, I'd better get on, thanks for the chat”, said Vicky who smiled, hurriedly put the picture back in her shopping bag and left the shop.

Not quite sure what she should do next, Vicky spotted a supermarket for which she had a loyalty card and bought a strong coffee at the cafeteria there.

“Bugger”, thought Vicky, “I should have asked Barbara what her last name is so I can check this out. I don't even know where she lives.”

That evening she snuggled up with her husband, whom she had nicknamed 'batman' because his love of cricket, and told him the story.

“You can't trust anyone these days”, he said. “She's probably an undercover insurance agent collecting information used to sell PPI policies”, he said joking, as was his nature,.

“Be serious”, said Vicky. This is not funny. “Do you think I should phone Cat and tell her?”

“Most certainly not!” he replied. “We will see how much we can verify first. Tell me again what you learned then we'll go online and see what we can find.”

Her husband, Colin, went to a genealogy web which allowed some free searches and entered what they did know, or thought they knew.

“How old would you say she was, best guess?” Vicky made a stab at Barbara's age then they made a guess at how old Catriona was. They had a birthday for her but not year. They couldn't assume the birthday was authentic either.

Starting with two people of the same age, they guesstimate what age Kenny would have been when he married the first time, how long they may have been married, how long a separation and divorce may have taken, and when he may have married again.

It took a few goes and they kept notes so they didn't duplicate the same search. Luckily the web operators didn't put a limit on the number of free searches allowed.

Without his surname it wasn't so easy, but Barbara said Catriona's name was Katherine Cousins and she had a middle name.

They couldn't find a birth entry, even after trying different spellings and searching with or without the middle name or initial. Nothing in England or Wales but if she was born in Ireland that figured!

Eventually they found an entry for the marriage of Catherine T Cousins to Kenneth J Antrobus in Surrey on a date that seemed to fit the theory. There was no divorce entry, but they found another marriage record for Kenneth J Antrobus to Barbara Gander.

The online phone directory showed a partial address, The full address could be obtained by paying a fee but they had no reason to go there or write.

“There may be an innocent explanation”, said Colin, aware it sounded very clichéd. “Maybe she didn't want to be found or wanted to leave a bad past behind and changed her name.”

“If she did I wonder when she changed her name”, said Vicky.

“Well, if we agree there is some truth in what you were told, you could ask her and see what the reaction is.”

“But if it's all innocent and she thinks we've been snooping on her it will probably end our friendship anyway. I think I'd rather try to find out more first then we can either back her up or forget her”, Vicky said.

“Hey!” said Colin. “Let's search to see if there's a birth record for Catriona Handy. Some people use the name of a dead person, for whatever reason. I saw that in a film once. It may not tell us anything but who knows?” He worked at the keyboard again.

“OK, 141 results but they are mostly Kate Handy, some with only the initial C and no date shown, no Catriona with a C, Four Catrinas with a K but the dates don't tally with her age. Most of them are donkeys years ago”, said Colin.

There may be other sites we can try but my gut feeling is that she changed her name in Ireland. It may have been done by Deed Poll or something, although I think in some countries an adult can change their name just by saying “From now on my name will be...”

“I think bank accounts and anti-terrorism laws would soon put the kibosh on that now”, said Vicky.

Colin continued looking on the Internet. "It says here that a Deed Poll will not get your birth, marriage, or decree absolute certificate changed.

Also it's not possible to get permanent records such as past examination certificates changed.

There are some circumstances that enable you to get a birth certificate changed or reissued thereby avoiding the need for a Deed Poll.

Usually, a Deed Poll has to be shown with the old birth certificate. A child's name can be changed on a birth certificate, but we're not concerned about that here.

He added "I guess it's difficult to erase the past unless you join a witness protection programme or something".

Vicky asked "Is it possible to join a Jehovah's witness protection programme? I get sick of those sodding people annoying me and all the neighbours repeatedly. Who wants to join a group that lets children die!"

"What do you mean?" asked Colin.

"I was watching a repeat of one of those old Kavanagh QC programmes on the telly, you know, with John Thaw.

In this episode there was a woman, a single mother who had one child, a son who had leukaemia or something like that. The doctors said the only way to preserve his life was to give him blood transfusions, but she refused, said it was against the bible or something.

A judge wouldn't issue a court order and the boy died. You'd think a mother's instinct, especially for her first and only child would be to keep him alive, even if she had to give him all her blood to do it. But the cranky bitch let him die.

I expect it was based on a true story and if that is what they preach they can keep out of my street!"

"I agree with you entirely", said Colin, and meant it.

"I knew a Glaswegian who owned a small engineering business near Portsmouth. He was a JW.. But he was also a hypocrite.

Each year at Xmas he cringed, not only because he was Scottish and tight with money, but because the JW's don't celebrate Xmas. But his customers did and they expected the bottles of whisky and other usual handouts. So he set out to suck up to people to keep their business. He hated it.

That's nowhere near as serious as letting an innocent child die, but it did demonstrate an imbalance in my view, and a twisted set of values. Steer clear I say!"

Then he added "We're going a bit off track here."

Section 37

Colin Holderness was an industrial chemist employed by a manufacturing company. He had a first class honours degree from Hull and was a fairly laid back kind of person.

He like doing a bit of gardening, understood a lot about plants, soil types, pH balance, etc, and was quite successful at growing things, perhaps more with a scientific slant than a green fingers one.

Colin also brewed beer, in his garage, and drank one or two pints most evenings. He was a bit taller than average and still remained fairly lean, even with all that beer. His abdomen tightened up a bit in summer when he played cricket, then relaxed again, like a seasonal ritual. Vicky said she didn't care if he grew a beer belly because he was her Colin and she loved him.

Mrs Vicky Holderness had worked for some time in the library of a large hospital. She liked the type of work, and continued to like it through the computerisation of everything. Just as doctors used to have metal trolleys with patient notes in hanging files then progressed on to looking at computer monitors, so she moved from books to looking at computer monitors.

Victoria, or Vicky for short, often thought how unsociable computers made people. Rather like television really! You could sit alongside someone and both look at the same screen, be together in the same room, yes, but with no mutual eye contact or other close personal interaction.

With the introduction of tablet computers and smart phones, people now sat in bed playing games or whatever. Turning off the reading light doesn't help because the devices are backlit. "How unsociable we have become! Can't even look forward to a cuddle in bed the way we used to!" she thought.

She moved a bit closer to her Colin and got back to their search.

"I had a bizarre thought", he said. "Suppose Catriona had a child when she was young, while still a teenager, perhaps. Imagine the child died and she took over the child's identity. She couldn't use the birth certificate because of the age difference, but things can be done with birth certificates. Parents can legally change names on them, like if a mother marries or remarries and wants the child to use the father's or stepfather's name."

"Well, let's look at that", Vicky responded., "In the old days if a schoolgirl got knocked up she was sent to the convent or workhouse and the baby was given away to adopters. We had books about that in the Library and specialist hospital staff dealing with those kinds of family matters. Do you know Social Services have to keep records for more than a hundred years by law?"

"No", answered Colin, "But if Ireland has old records there may be more of Catriona's story over there.

If she had dual citizenship she would use the same name in both countries, no need for any false ID, so that wouldn't seem to fit.

But maybe we are on the wrong track and inventing problems that don't exist."

"I'd agree with you except, and I'd almost forgotten about it, when Catriona came here on your birthday we saw her car being searched by those two men who she said were police officers."

“Yes”, responded Colin, “She said it was a rental car and they wanted to look over it in connection with some crime that must have been committed by whoever hired it before her. She said it was the car they were interested in, not her.”

“Must have been drugs or something, Col. Remember they looked at all the shopping and her work samples.”

Colin had put some notes on his computer and pointed to the monitor. “I did this to see how it worked out”, he said. A rough timeline. Imagine Catriona was born in mid 1984 and normal things occurred.

First birthday in 1985, school in 1989, 11-plus type test in 1995, GCSE in 2000, driving licence in 2001, full licence in 2002, maybe A-levels in 2003, married in 2005, divorced in 2008, remarried in 2011. That is all very rough but we can change the dates and make other estimations.

It raises questions about when she changed her identity and why. But perhaps we are too close to this because we know her.”

“May be a wild goose chase or a storm in a teacup anyway”, said Vicky, “But I keep coming back to that car search. I hate to point fingers but she is from Ireland and strange things have happened before, Who was that Politician who was blown up near Pevensey Bay years ago?”

“Umm, Gow, Ian Gow” replied Colin after thinking for a moment.

Assuming it is the same person, if Catriona married under what appeared at the time to be her birth name, she must have carried a false ID for around half her life. Or have I got that wrong?”

“Maybe not”, said Colin. “Tell me again what she brought with her on my birthday.”

“I’ll do better”, said Vicky, who went to the hall table and retrieved the picture Barbara had seen in the shop. “There is some of it. You, me, her, your cranky old bat, and the cakes we made, all in that lovely picture in our lovely back garden on a lovely summer evening!”

“What are you thinking now?” she asked Colin, who suddenly looked rather pensive.

“Just recalled something I read in a crime novel once. A gumshoe, or whatever he was, saw some wire trimmings near his car and guessed somebody may have been wiring a bomb under the bonnet.

You know how telephone engineers always seem to leave offcuts of phone wire on your carpet and never clear up after them! Well, this guy spotted some bits of insulation, didn’t remember seeing them there when he parked, and saved himself from being hoist by someone else’s petard.

I seem to recall the guy you just asked about, Gow, was killed by a car bomb and it prompted another thought. What exactly did those police officers look at?

“Cake ingredients mostly”, said Vicky. “Flour, caster sugar, icing sugar, dried fruit, almonds, marzipan, candles, food colouring, butter, a cake base, greaseproof paper. She tried to think of everything we might need.

Oh, there was the oil for your bat and she said she'd bought some house decorating stuff too, but she didn't bring that in. Just as well, plaster filler can make cakes a bit hard to chew, you know!"

"Almonds, almonds", said Colin.

"What about them?"

"Police use trackers to detect almond smells because some kinds of explosive substance give off an odour like almonds. Suppose the almonds, and the marzipan come to that, were there as a kind of cover story! Did you ask her to buy those particular things, my tricky sticky Vicky?"

"No", said Vicky, smiling. The humour between them was usually good.

"She said she'd bring a few surprise items along and be prepared to do some cooking. I already had a shop cake stashed away in the fridge but didn't need it because of, you know".

"Assume for a moment all this is true", said Colin as he looked at his notes. "Catriona is really Kate Cousins who was married to a man named Kenny Antrobus and later divorced. She has used a false identity for reasons we don't know and may have tried to disguise traces of explosive using decoy cake ingredients.

What do you think we should do about it?"

"This is beginning to frighten me, really frighten me", said Vicky who now looked more serious than he had seen her for a long time. Not that serious since the breast cancer scare, he thought.

He moved away from the computer, got his mobile phone, dialled 999 and asked for the police.

Vicky started to speak but Colin held up his right hand and she conformed by keeping quiet. Her husband had made his decision and taken control. She had no argument with that.

Colin didn't care whether or not it constituted an emergency. He would not have his beautiful Vicky frightened again. Someone needed to be told about this and he wasn't going through 'normal channels'. That could take weeks!

Section 38

The new information reached Peter Brown quickly and he added the details to the database.

"Still coming together", he thought. "Two names for our suspected bombstress. That should make things easier."

Nicholas "Jimmy" McTavish
Catherine Cousins / Catriona Handy
Moto Guzzi / whoever

Each had a probability number somewhere in the record and the numbers were getting bigger.

“What did Catriona Handy tell Julia Cole about a relation?” said Peter to the liaison. But it was really a rhetorical question.

“A relation named Charles who was a professor...” Peter read from the police report.

He searched the Internet for such a person and the liaison assisted in checking details of 'hits'.

The only prominent person was Irish, yes, was a professor, yes, was involved with management, yes. Had relations named Elizabeth and Scott. but none named Catriona, Cate, Kate, or anything near what they knew about her or variation of her names.

The Handy family was shown Catriona's picture but denied any knowledge of her.

Section 39

Shortly after the Moto Guzzi was registered in his name Danny sold it.

He had got the mileage driven to tally pretty much with his cover story by his imaginary trips around the island over a period of weeks. He now thought he should distance himself from the bike.

At work in Douglas he overheard a conversation between a local and an ex TT rider who had recently bought a retirement bungalow in Smeale near the north east corner of Man.

It seemed a lot of trade in motorcycles occurred around the time of the races and bikes were transported between the island and the mainland on the regular ferries so they could be displayed in showrooms to best advantage.

Some were provided on a 'sale or return' basis and new models were often bought on the island by 'early adopters': those who had to have the latest of everything as soon as it was available.

A lot of the bike transporting was done before the races because the ferries were simply too packed near race time. Some bikes which weren't snapped up on the island during the race fever weeks were sent back to the mainland afterwards so they could be paraded in front of a larger audience.

Danny latched on to an idea and, in short, arranged to sell his Guzzi to a mainland dealer who would come and collect it. The pickup happened quicker than Danny expected, but then most motor vehicles are a depreciating asset, so timing is important.

Bob McGrattan had a large trailer which accommodated several bikes and they were all covered during transit.

Here today, there today, showroom tomorrow.

Vehicle registration can skip a beat, so to speak. A person can sell a motor vehicle to a dealer but the dealer doesn't register it in their name, even though they are the legal owner for a while. Too many previous owners lowers the value whereas 'One careful owner' or similar statements can still attract prospects.

So when Danny's Moto Guzzi was sold by the previous owner to the dealer in Ramsey it was some time before a change of ownership was recorded. Now it may be some time before the name of the next owner is registered. Meanwhile, Danny's name was on the record.

He posted the change details promptly: within an hour of the bike leaving the dock.

Moto Guzzi motorcycles had been flagged and when Danny's recent registration as new owner was entered the investigators were informed.

The DVLA and other registration authorities make checks routinely, for example, sending VIN's of certain suspect models to Interpol when a new registration application is received. That is because of the immense scale and value of vehicle crime worldwide.

Enquiries from police and other agencies regarding 'vehicles of interest' were business as usual at the registration agencies and normally handled with practised efficiency.

Someone was sent to check out Danny because a red Moto Guzzi, a model with a 'sideways' vee twin engine had been registered to him.

In some countries Police drivers are trained to handle both cars and motorcycles. The officer who visited Danny had done both and knew what he was doing.

Using the line that there had been some thefts of motorcycles and he was making routine enquiries, the officer used a friendly approach and got into a conversation with Danny at Danny's home.

He was told that Danny had just sold the bike but continued asking routine questions. He noted the framed IAM certificates on the wall and congratulated Danny on his success.

They dwelt a little on riding, the concept of the moving bend and that sort of thing, and Danny said his advanced training was certainly of value when he was taking his many exploratory rides a round the island. Thus Danny consolidated his mileage story, in case that ever arose, and the officer found out how much Danny knew about the various features and hazards around the track.

"I hope you didn't leave your IAM badge on the bike!" said the officer. "Not likely", Danny responded "Those things have unique serial numbers on the back and I don't want my reputation spoiled." The officer knew what he meant.

"Could you show me where you kept the bike." he asked.

Danny took him to the garage where his car was parked. A few small oil patches were on the concrete floor but could have been there for years.

"Did you make any changes to the bike while you had it?"

"I put a new seat on because someone slashed mine".

"Did you report it?"

“No! No disrespect to you guys but I didn't really think there was much chance of finding who did it or proving anything, so I got another seat.”

“Still got the old one?”

“No. I didn't need it when I sold the bike so I dumped all the old junk I didn't need!”

“How about your clothing? I'm guessing you haven't finished with bikes yet so I imagine you still have the leathers or whatever.”

“Come have a look”, said Danny.

He showed the officer into the small bedroom, opened the wardrobe doors and showed him a one-piece blue outfit with a white stripe down each side, a blue helmet, blue gloves and blue motorcycle boots.

“Very smart”, the officer said. “John McGuinness eat your heart out.”

“Haven't decided on which bike next. Got to save some pennies first”, said Danny

The officer appeared satisfied, thanked Danny for his cooperation and left.

The officer hadn't asked why Danny sold the Guzzi so soon after buying it. Maybe money reasons.

Danny hadn't told the officer he'd changed the mirror heads. Neither had he told him what he did with his old clothing, or when or where he got the blue outfit.

Various points of detail had been omitted by both of them, mostly deliberately. Spy vs Spy!

A police officer contacted the IAM and subsequently spoke to the group in London with which Danny had trained.

He asked for details of the examiner for both the car and motorcycle advanced tests and asked if they had any photos of group members. There was one copy of a cutting showing Danny in a one-piece suit but the copy was in black and white.

“Any idea what colour that outfit was?” asked the officer. “Blue, I do believe, with a white stripe both sides! I remember that because at an event my daughter said he looked like a Smurf”

Section 40

The Moto Guzzi was located in a showroom on Merseyside. Two officers had a look over it and took photos, all with the dealer's consent, of course. The seat was examined and showed signs of having been fitted fairly recently. Small points of detail suggested that.

Back at the office the photos were compared with the photo from the car park camera. Software was used to superimpose a rider next to the showroom bike with the pictures set at the same scale.

“Look like the same bike to you?” the technician asked.

“Something's different. It's the mirrors, they're a different shape. Um, er, the seat looks a bit flatter too, it seems to have something on it.”

The technician zoomed in and enhanced the seat as clearly as he could. “Looks like something held to the seat with a couple of bungee straps. Maybe leggings or something.”

“Why did you say leggings? The road doesn't look wet, there was no rain for days, so why would he wear leggings?”

“It was a guess, maybe it was a towel or something, hard to say. I used to carry waterproof trousers on my bike and kept them handy so I could slip them on quickly.”

If you wear jeans or leather on a motorbike and get a sudden shower it can soak in very quickly”, said the tech.

“Just so I understand what you are saying here, can you run that all by me again”, asked the investigator.

“OK. Towel first. If a bike rider stops to use a public loo he or she may find there are no paper towels or hand dryer. They don't want to linger because the bike may get nicked or interfered with while they are in there. So short stops are all they need. They carry a towel for hand drying.

A towel can also be used to wipe a visor, perspiration, wipe the bike seat if it rains then stops while they are in a shop or something. Sitting on a wet seat is not always the best experience. Many uses for a towel and having one nearby is helpful.

Hope that's OK for towels”, said the tech. “Waterproof clobber next.

Some guys and gals wear leather motorbike gear, separates or one piece, depending on their choice and budget. It may be for fashion, a cult thing, or whatever. In the past some race organisers have insisted on it to prevent laceration in crashes and so on.

Leather has a number of advantages but soaks up water like blotting paper. Some riders keep waterproof stuff handy and put it on over the the leather when necessary. Professional racers do it sometimes.”

“How does that work in a motorbike race?”

“An example, then. You know we get big bike series like British Superbikes, World Superbikes, Moto GP. One race was delayed and it was belting with rain. The riders had to do a lot of laps very slowly and wait for a restart.

They were shivering and put things on over the tops of their racing suits to keep warm. The presenter said these guys were super fit athletes and muscular but they didn't have an ounce of fat on them. Nothing to keep the cold out, so they shivered.

Just on the the muscular bit, in one programme there was a shot of an Irish rider named Jeremy McWilliams stripped to the waist in his garage rippling his abs for the television camera. All entertainment for the fans! He was a very well developed guy but could still shiver without insulation.

When a race is under way they get on with it. Too much clobber can impede them and weight matters so they wear the minimum but are active all the time and blood flow is high so don't feel the cold. When the race is over they shiver again and can't get into the building quick enough. Assen in Belgium is a good example. It always seems to rain in Belgium!"

The tech added a bit more.

"Many years ago, when sidecar outfits were popular riders, often dads taking the wife and kids out, wore long raincoats. Then waterproof suits like the Belstaff suit and the Barbour suit became popular.

Leathers were used for racing but weren't so popular on road bikes, maybe because it drew the attention of speed cops.

The materials and designs have varied over the years but denim jeans are still popular among bikers, so if someone had a rainproof jacket on but wore jeans, they may want some leggings in case a cloud bursts."

They decided to check weather forecasts around the time of the street explosion and found "the possibility of showers" had been published. Evidently one exhibitor had said to a reporter "I hope it doesn't rain on my parade, dear!"

So maybe it was simply a towel or over-trousers secured to the seat for ready use. But who was the rider. The height matched Danny Hoskins and the subject was slim, but from what the tech had said, it seemed many biker riders were.

"What else was found in his home on the IOM?" asked one of the team.

"Usual household stuff. There was a book by Linda Bick, an Englishwoman who did round the world motor bike rides and wrote books about it. That seemed to be a common interest thing that fitted with his enthusiasm for motorcycling.

The place was very clean and he seemed to maintain good standards. The people who bought the bike of him said it hardly needed any valeting for the showroom, he had kept it pretty spotless."

"What did he do for money?"

"Worked in a laser development firm at Douglas. They make special equipment for laser eye surgery, lens replacement and that sort of thing. He wanted to leave London and saw the job advert in a technical journal he subscribed to. The interviews were in London and he was practically offered a job after the second one but had to check out the island first, of course, before committing so he spent a few days looking around then committed. Hasn't been here too long."

"What about money? Is he well paid?"

“About the national average. It was an expensive move because he took on a mortgage for a house with a separate garage. Didn't have much in the savings account, so low deposit and high repayments.

The bit about selling the Guzzi for money reasons may be right. Perhaps he overspent and decided to drop back a bit.”

“Do we know why he wanted to leave London?”

“Not exactly. Some neighbours at his old place said there seemed to be a bit of friction between him and a few locals. Maybe he just wanted a change of scenery, and the enjoyment of bike riding may have been a factor.”

“We can't place him in London for sure around the time of the bang. He said he was on the island at the time. Nobody has disputed that. There are no travel reservations around that time in his name. We have paperwork for the bike he bought, insurance, a new seat. Someone even confirmed they pointed him to a dealer to buy a seat. They said the seat they saw had tape on it. [The seat on the bike in the showroom didn't have any sign of damage or tape adhesive and it seemed to have been fitted recently.

He showed a blue and white bike suit which may have been the one he used with the IAM group. Probably took it with him intending to buy a bike, which he did. What happened to his last bike?”

“A Honda. Sold it in London. May have been to free cash for the move then maybe he had a bit left over for the Guzzi, even though they are more expensive than Hondas.”

“OK, he is still a suspect but we may never be able to prove motive or anything else.”

“We know a fair bit about “Jimmy” but may never be able to prove motive or anything else.”

“How about Catriona. What did enquiries tell us?”

“She produced paperwork which makes her look like Catriona Handy.

Got a licence in England, took lessons with a driving school named Grosvenor, passed the test first time. Worked for a firm named Whyteacre Developments from her late teens, then got a job selling special glass products after they were taken over by a predator.”

“What was the link between her and the glass firm?”

“Friends in Ireland. The firm was started by a woman, taken over by her daughter later, and expanded. They wanted an agent on UK mainland and word got around.”

She said she came from Waterford, which is about the same latitude as Ipswich, not that that really matters, and had some family who worked at the Waterford Glass place. Had glass in her blood she said.”

“Why did she move to England in the first place?”

“Wanted to be independent, get away from parental pressure, express herself, and so on. Maybe a bit of wanderlust!”

How about this marriage to Kenny what's-his-name?”

“There's a record of that and a record of divorce a few years later, his adultery, a decree absolute on file. But no pictures. Nobody at the divorce court can remember faces from cases and the solicitors couldn't say.”

“Who was cited as co-respondent in the divorce?”

“A Jane O'Riordan and a Jackie Vickerman. Those two didn't have to appear, it was all cut and dried and over in a few minutes. Our legal guys said that's what the court is like, packed like a cattle auction and bang bang next please. The absolute was sent out earlier than it should have been by law but nobody was going to complain.”

“O'Riordan sounds Irish, were she or Vickerman from there?”

“No, both southern England born and bred. Bits of stuff who agreed to be named in the divorce suit. Nothing ongoing as far as we can tell and he married someone else later.

Kenny and his present wife reckon Catriona is Kate Antrobus, née Cousins, but don't want to be involved with any of it. Catriona denies she is someone else.”

”How about DNA proof?”

“Nothing to compare it with.”

“The most likely scenario, then, is that this Catriona lied about herself when she got married to Kenny wotsit, not the other way round, ie Catriona morphing into Kate: not Kate becoming Catriona, yes?”

“Sounds about right.”

So we have a third suspect who may be a bomber but we can't provide a motive or any proof that she did it. Sure seems like somebody rained on our parade!”

“Three individuals, each from a different country, may or may not be known to each other, all carrying on as usual, and the only thing they have in common is that they may walk away unscathed. We can't prove they broke any laws, not even an overdue library book!”

Section 41

“Nil Desperandum”, thought Peter Brown. “Something will turn up.”

He added more fields to the database:

Twins

Right Hand

Left Hand

Ambidextrous (Using both hands with equal ease)

It was unlikely any of the three suspects had an identical twin, although that was not discounted.

If Ken had married Kate in a registry office the record might be easier to locate.

A church service may be harder to trace.

If Kate had signed a register, application form, hotel guest book or whatever, there may be samples of her signature for comparison with her signature as Catriona Handy.

If she had used two identities during different time periods the earlier one may have succeeded better. Biometric passports, security checks and so on had been enhanced more recently because of terrorism, immigration, and other issues.

What law or laws were broken if she hadn't impersonated anyone else? Is double identity a crime in its own right?

Peter had once met someone with an unusual ability in a Union Carbide subsidiary. Norman Tidbury was known as “Tiddles” to his workmates. He could write with both hands simultaneously mirror image.

Peter saw him do it. He signed his name with his left hand and with his right hand at the same time.

The right hand output sloped to the right, like a keyboard forward slash.

The left hand output sloped to the left, like a keyboard backward slash. The left-hand signature was backwards.

He could write reams in perfect mirrored symmetry.

Suppose Kate Cousins could do that.

Cousins, Antrobus, Handy. If one or two of the names was written with the left hand and one or two with the right hand would someone comparing signatures realise they were written by the same person? If the ink was in different colours and the pen style differed, would it be picked up easily?

Would a graphologist or other expert, maybe a psychologist, know the difference? Without samples they may never know!

There may be many ambidextrous people in the world, male and female, but how many could do what Tiddles did?

Can someone train themselves to do it? If so, what would be the purpose?

Peter spoke to the liaison who grasped what was being said and put someone on it.

A quick search of the marriage database showed:

Catherine T Cousins married to Kenneth Antrobus, the year, and the registration district as Surrey South Eastern.

There was another Catherine Cousins marriage entry for the following year in Sutton Coldfield.

Two venue possibilities. Church or registry office? The database showed entries from both but did not state which.

Irish woman, probably Roman Catholic. Maybe too young to have been married before. Most likely wed in a church. Which church? Put an officer on it. That's what the liaison did.

Section 42

The young female police constable located the church then had to sort out the records from years before. It took quite a while.

Then it was the DVLA for licence applications details.

There are various places a signature may appear. For example:

- driving licence
- council tax forms
- credit card applications
- credit card
- debit card
- utilities contracts
- income tax returns
- contract of employment
- electoral roll statements
- phone line contracts
- car rental agreements
- general correspondence

As an experiment the investigation team sent a letter to Catriona's private address using the "Signed for" service to see if she would sign for it and, if so, what the signature looked like.

It came back with "Unchecked" written in scrawly upright script. Not exactly a signature but handwriting nevertheless. The "postie" described Catriona and said she used her right hand. Nobody else had answered the door and they were lucky she was in at the time, but the experiment didn't provide anything useful.

The letter had contained some harmless sales promotion bumph and purported to be a targeted advertising mailshot. Similar letters were sent to a few of the neighbours to make it appear authentic.

Catriona Handy used her right hand. Does that mean Catherine Cousins would have used her left hand? They could ask Barbara Antrobus nee Gander. They could ask Kenneth Antrobus. But not yet. They didn't want anything to get out and spook their suspect.

The constable and other junior officers amassed a reasonable number of documents going back some years.

A portable flat bed scanner had been taken to the English church where Kenny and Kate were spliced so the book entry could be copied without distorting the paper. Other pages were copied as exemplars and the outside of the book was photographed. This was to help prove authenticity if the matter went to court.

Kenny was not a catholic so he could not wed Kate in a catholic church, but they had managed a church wedding in a church in Surrey and that suited both of them. He didn't have to follow any religious ritual and she had worn a white dress at a quaint old country kirk. That was good enough.

For anyone keeping score, the English parish church made a few bob from the service whilst the Catholics scored nil!. Contraceptives optional too. Maybe that's why they were childless, Barbara!

These sarcastic thoughts went through the minds of some of the investigators as they collected evidence.

In due course there was a good enough collection of signed documents to compare the handwriting.

After initial naked eye comparisons, computer software was used to manipulate scanned images of some of the signatures: so they could be made the same size and mirrored. It was quite clever really.

It looked clear to the team that someone had done a "Tiddles" and used different hands to write different signatures at different times. Unlike the Tidbury demonstration, though, instead of the left hand signature being written backwards it was written in the proper direction left to right, but sloped backwards. The right hand signatures sloped forward.

They would need an expert witness if this was ever used in prosecution, but that could be a long way off. They may have discovered what someone had done. The big question was why had they done it!

Young woman moves from Ireland to England, gets married using a false name. Why?

Leading a double life? Plenty of those stories in the case files. There have even been people with two families: two homes, two wives, two sets of children.

They all felt there was something very sinister about this one, though.

What crime had been committed? Apart from exploding a bomb, that is.

One of the investigators gave an overview of Catriona's possible activities:

"Assume that in the early 2000s she decided to see how easy it would be to create a false identity for herself. Computers weren't so sophisticated then but still quite powerful and the Internet had been a round since the 1990s.

It was easy to set up a lookalike birth certificate and the Birth Certificate was the starting point for getting other documents.

She needed one from Ireland and preferably from her home town registration district so the paper quality and design details looked right. In her case the registration district was Waterford and she could have used any one of the many towns or villages in the county as her birthplace.

She was, probably, sharp enough to know that if she registered an address in a village it could backfire because everybody knows everybody in a village and her deception may be discovered more easily. Hiding in a crowd was better so a highly populated place was better for her.

She could have gone over the county boundary to Wexford, Kilkenny, Cork, or somewhere, but she stayed inside Waterford.

It is common knowledge that some people have used registration details of deceased people and one tactic was to find details of a child born around the same year as the tactician but had died young.

For example, a premature baby may be registered as a birth and a death in the same day. If someone knows about it they may be able to obtain a copy birth certificate quite easily and use that as a basis for identity theft, fraud, terrorism or whatever evil purpose they dream up.

In older databases the link between birth and death registration was not always flagged up automatically. A person could call at a desk, pay for a duplicate birth certificate, but not even the issuing clerk would realise the subject on the certificate was already dead.

Ireland joined the EEC in 1973 . Applications for document such as birth certificates and driving licences have followed a similar format in Ireland and the UK. There may be slight differences in local detail but the general principles have been similar.

Security has been tightened in most countries over the years.

Her motive was to see if she could do it and how far she could go with a deception. Some people have that kind of drive.

It's rather like the 'runners', the kids who leave home of their own accord and are never found by their parents. No family rows, no abuse or anything, maybe not any kind of allurements, the young person just wants to be independent and has that same kind of internal drive.

The problem with the majority of 'runners' is that nobody gets any feedback about them so there is no closure for parents or the authorities.

Catriona did stay in touch with her family, though and was not a runner. She used contacts to get the glass job and wrote back home in her own handwriting.

Sent a postcard from Bantry Bay about her dolphin trip this year.

What her relations didn't know was that she'd been married, worked , and later got divorced all under a different name.”

There were a few quips about “country Cousins”, “a spare name being Handy” and so on, but the speaker let it run because morale is important for teams and the humour was good for morale

A couple of the listeners started to ask a question but stopped as they worked out the answer for themselves.

“We ran through some 'what ifs' and even did a bit of role play to see if it would work out and it did.

Most likely she did that double identity thing for years and got away with it simply because she didn't start with any malicious end goal. It was a personal adventure.”

“Hiding in plain sight”, said one of the listeners.

“Exactly!”, the speaker confirmed. “We don't even know if it was a crime. Bombings are, yes, but using a spare name may not have been. Legal is checking it out and will get back to us.”

Anything else?” asked the senior officer before ending the session.

“If she was working for an employer as Kate Cousins then Kate Antrobus, and was also Catriona Handy how did she swing national insurance contributions and income tax for the false identity?”

“Inland Revenue gave her a number”, came the quick response. “The tax people were fully aware from the the past of building firms working what they called “the lump”, working 'dead men' and other fiddles and tax evasion, especially where Irish navvies were concerned. So they were very glad to have someone from Ireland come forward and ask to pay their dues.

She had two identities running concurrently, in parallel.”

“One, thing, Sir”, said a constable, “Who insured the Thames Barrier?”

I know the royal palaces etc are not insured and the royals take the loss, like with the fire at Windsor Castle years ago. Well it's actually the public purse that takes the loss, but no private corporation gets a premium.

What about the Barrier, though, is it the Local Authority, the Environment Agency, who sets it up, or do the taxpayers take a loss on that as well?”

“Very good point. This may come within the realms of reinsurance, you know, where insurance companies insure themselves against the chance of huge claims, like after the 1980s hurricane. I'll see what the latest is on that. Any others?”

The senior officer didn't know who insured what and had played for time. He thought he had fielded the question quite well.

The young female constable who asked the question already knew that if the local council carried insurance for the Barrier the policy details would be publicly accessible. She could ask for a copy under the Freedom Of Information Act or go to the civic office and ask to see the certificate.

She reasoned that in some cases taking a loss on an uninsured interest may be less costly than paying huge insurance premiums. It was all part of the risk and that's what actuaries calculate.

Her brother was in the insurance business and they talked about such things. The possibility of the bombings having some kind of insurance connection still intrigued her.

Section 43

Peter Brown had already added a field “Insurance” to his database. He also had a field named “Motive” but no data in it.

He had a record for a woman who wasn't always who or what she claimed to be.

He had possible links between three suspects but no strong evidence of provable criminal acts.

“Where do we think the putty came from?” he asked the liaison.

“Several possibilities. The explosives guys think it most likely came up from Africa and through Europe. Maybe across the Med , Morocco to Spain, something like that. The theory is based on their best intelligence but they don't give out too much detail, you understand!”

Peter did understand.

“Any thoughts on how it was transported?”

“Maybe a car or camper van, caravan, something with places to stow things. Could have been put in a family vehicle to reduce suspicion. Not sure aircraft would work because of the higher security”

“Don't I know it”, said Peter, “That's how I lost my marmalade.”

“What do you mean?” asked the liaison.

“I stayed in Lisbon for a few days and bought a small jar of marmalade from a food supermarket at a place called El Corte Inglés. It was to put on a bit of bread in the hotel room if I felt peckish.

On the way back I put the jar in my laptop bag with my passport and other stuff and didn't think about it. The security guard working the X-ray scanner picked it up and confiscated it.

The young woman working with him pulled the jar out of the bag and asked if I could keep it, saying it had already been opened anyway, but he refused. They counted it as a liquid and, as you know, passengers aren't allowed to take liquids onto planes.

It only cost the equivalent of about thirty five pence and it wasn't about the money, just a bit disappointing. I quite liked the taste of the marmalade.

It's all rather petty really, I just joke about it sometimes. That security guy, probably on a low income, eating my marmalade before his early shift at the airport.”

The liaison laughed as he, too, saw the funny side of it and tried to imagine what other goodies the security people had on their dining table: confiscated from travellers who got it wrong.

“The particles found with the bomb debris were identified as coming from window putty and one theory is that the explosive putty was mixed with or concealed by window putty. Putty with putty. You are not the only one with a sense of humour, Peter, our bomber may have one too!

Some of the team are looking into vehicles carrying old style windows, bits from derelict buildings, and so on, in case explosive was hidden in putty beads around window frames or doors or something like that.

Based on the total length and area of an average putty bead, the lab calculated what sizes of windows might be needed to carry enough explosive to cause the kind of damage that was done.

Sometimes people buy up old items for nostalgia, religious, collector interest or other reasons. They go from England to France, Spain, etc, and barter at markets or boot sales. There have been TV programmes about that kind of stuff.

The drug squad are also interested in because window putty or hollow beads could be used to conceal drugs. Last year they found some in those packets of dessicant beads you get between the panes of glass in double glazed windows.

That guy in Kent who told us about Catriona mentioned Linseed Oil, which is used in some putty. So is White Spirit. She had bottles of both those substances in her car, and some Turpentine Substitute. Her home decorating story seemed reasonable enough but she could be a very astute one who thinks ahead of us."

"Has the diversion theory been explored?" asked Peter. "You know, were the explosions done to distract attention away from something or somewhere else?"

Peter had added a field for that earlier.

"Yes", it's high on our check list", the liaison responded. If it had been a distraction we should have learned something by now. We considered each explosion site separately so one didn't muddy the waters of the others, so to speak.

Two could have been diversions but the street one was a bloodbath. That explosion was designed to do much harm. In the absence of evidence that it was a diversion for a bigger bloodbath somewhere else, it seemed that what happened had been whole intention. No reports of other bangs and a diversion usually happens on the same day, shortly before the big one."

Peter patiently put a low score against the Diversion field in his database.

Do we know whereabouts these three have travelled? " he asked. "We know about Catriona in Cork and Belfast and so on, but do we know if she travels on the continent much. Passport checks, et cetera?"

"A couple of short trips to Belgium, France and Holland", said the liaison. "All seemed above board."

"Whereabouts has our chookter laddie Jimmy travelled to, do we know that?"

"Roughly on a fifty mile radius of Perth. He often stays in digs so he can leave his gear on site and put the hours in without a lot of daily driving. From what we know he works hard and is always busy."

"Does he do his own cost estimating", Peter asked.

“They have a salesman for that. He travels separately, prospecting for work and responds to incoming enquiries with personal visits. He takes a lot of photos and measurements, uses zoom lenses, a telescope and binoculars to get a closer look at the upper parts of chimneys, spires, or whatever, than takes it all back to their office.

Jimmy and the other climbers look at all the stuff and say what they need, how long they need and so forth. The accommodation costs are added to the rest and a quotation put together. Usually sent by e-mail these days.”

“Do we know who their insurers are?” asked Peter.

“Got it in the file there somewhere, help yourself.”

Peter looked at the information and later found that insurers were of indirect benefit to Jimmy's employers. After engineer surveyors, including those generally known as “boiler inspectors”, made their annual inspections and found things in need of repair or maintenance the steeplejack people often got called to quote.

It was rather like an MoT test for a car. The test is required by law, the tester finds something lacking, the mechanics are called on to fix it.

It wouldn't be in Jimmy's interest to cause grief for insurers because he would be metaphorically shooting himself in the foot!

After thinking around that and other aspects of the cases, Peter Brown thought it unlikely that anyone had caused explosions as a grudge against insurance companies. The motive was something else and hate crime was still a contender.

What could a church do to someone to make them hate it enough to plant a bomb?

What could a river barrier do to someone to make them hate it enough to plant a bomb?

What could a gay parade do to someone to make them hate it enough to plant a bomb?

Peter updated his database and backed up the file, something he did regularly.

At any time he could produce a report along the lines of “Considering all the available information the mostly likely cause is X. The probability of Mr/Ms X being responsible is X.XX percent.”

The wording and parameters could be changed and different scenarios run but Peter had used his PostgreSQL database techniques many times in the past and they had always helped.

He thought of Formula 1 car races where the teams used sophisticated computer programs to help them with numbers of pit stops, fuel loads, tyre choice, and many other decisions for each individual circuit. To fans and critics the decisions may have lookas a race progressed and sometimes it didn't work out, but for most teams most of the time their program was right.

Peter was confident that one day, hopefully very soon, he could press the Enter button on his keyboard and get the breakthrough they all wanted.

Section 44

Peter put a field for Transport into his database. There was already one for vehicles but it didn't cover public or chartered transport.

Maureen in Dumbarton told police about Jimmy
Colin in Kent told police about Catriona
Julia in London told police about Catriona
The police found Danny though the motor bike registration

How did those suspects travel?

Danny Hoskins

To move house:

Train from London to Liverpool
Ferry from Liverpool to Douglas
Bus from Douglas to Port St Mary
Bought a compact car in Douglas soon after moving

Buying Moto Guzzi:

Bus from Port St Mary to Douglas
train from Douglas to Ramsey
Moto Guzzi from Ramsey to Douglas

Moto Guzzi used for various local journeys
used car to get to work and local journeys

Catriona Handy

Travelled from Waterford to Wales by ferry years ago
Train from Wales to Surrey, England

After getting full driving licence bought a used car for commuting to work, etc

After joining glass firm used a company pool car sometimes or hired a car as needed, for business travel

Trip to Bantry Bay:

Trains from Surrey to Holyhead
Ferry from Holyhead to Dublin Port
Hired a car in own name in Dublin, drove to Bantry, returned car to hire company branch

Where did she go next?

Nicholas 'Jimmy' McTavish

Has owned a small van for some time, used for commuting and carrying own climbing gear

Regularly uses employer's van and truck for work

Had some holiday time off this year. Where did he go?

Any travel records in his name, car hire, trains, boat hire, ferries, planes
did anyone travel with him?

Peter suggested “We should check with all the hire companies, railways, airports under all three names. Catriona Handy, Catherine Cousins, Catherine Antrobus, and use name variations such as Cate, Kate, Katherine, Katharine, Kathy, and so on.

She may have resorted to using old names or names we don't know about. But we should try the known ones first.”

Peter was there as a consultant and had no jurisdiction over the enforcing authorities' staff so he used the term “We” to introduce suggestions. The liaison seemed to accept his 'suggestions' OK but others team members disliked the idea that they were being told what to do. Human nature!

Peter added two more fields to the database. Holidays, Cashflow. Then he started to look up travel fares on the Internet after outlining his thoughts to the liaison.

Section 45

The three members of the Ice Trio had agreed to use their own normal speaking voices and also decided to travel under their own names when using public transport.

It was agreed that cash would be used for payments wherever possible so there was less of a trail through bank card transactions and the like.

With some purchases, using debit or credit cards was unavoidable. Bantry wanted a card number before reserving the room for Catriona. She used her Ms C Handy card for that and for hiring the cars. She paid cash for tickets at the ferry terminals.

Danny had transferred money online as part payment for the Moto Guzzi purchase, using the dealer's computer to log in. Some cash, some electronic. It was all cleared while he went to buy the insurance, with cash.

The spare seat was bought for cash but he did get a receipt.

Jimmy paid cash for his train tickets. It was cheaper to buy them online but that meant opening an account and using a card number. Buying tickets on a cash pay-as-you-go basis made it almost as easy as hopping on and off a bus.

He destroyed the tickets as soon as they expired, by burning them.

The van he used in London was hired from a small garage which showed it for sale on the forecourt.

He offered a reasonable amount of cash, showed the owner that his own insurance covered the van and used it overnight: to move a chest freezer for his elderly aunt, he told them.

The bike he used was a 'Transport for London' hire model. Normally a bank card is needed to hire one but Jimmy made a different arrangement, what the Americans call a 'Jimmy', oddly enough! The bike was returned to the same docking station promptly after use. He had used his own clip-on lights and the bike was undamaged.

Danny stopped for fuel twice on the trip London. Once going, once on the way back.

He wasn't running low but rather, had timed it so he could choose where to stop. Something he realised was that if motorists keep a near-full tank all the time they may be toting around a lot of weight unnecessarily, meaning higher fuel consumption. But he might have to break that rule. Danny worked out what he needed to do and did it.

His car used the same fuel as the bike and moving petrol from one vehicle to another was easy enough, especially with both of them in same garage.

To ride the 700 miles, or whatever it was, required a lot of fuel, maybe fifteen gallons or so. He needed everything to balance correctly.

Danny made sure there was not too much fuel in the bike tank when he sold it, obviously because he didn't want to give away free fuel, but also because if a neighbour said they could smell a lot of petrol fumes near his garage or thought he was decanting some, he could say "Yes, I was selling the bike so I put some of the fuel from it in the car." Let them do the math!

Section 46

Peter Brown liked watching old films. You could get some good ideas from them.

One he liked was a 1962 black and white drama titled "The Boys". It had a courtroom scene in which the defendants were trapped when a barrister did a bit of money calculation: a kind of 'see if the books balance' exercise.

Peter thought he'd do something similar here.

He noted distances between places where the three suspects had been known to have travelled.

He got an idea of rail and ferry fares, bus fares, and other travel costs. His thinking was about how much a person might spend total for a one-way journey, a return journey, accommodation costs: and how much money a person would need if they paid cash for everything.

If investigators found evidence of cash withdrawals somewhere in the same ball park it might give clues. Follow the money: that well proven method of detection!

In addition to those already there Peter created a database field for Education. In order to get money in the first place most people have to earn it, which means working and some jobs require the incumbent to have formal qualifications. How clever were these people?

Danny worked in a technical job and his CV was fairly open to view, so that was easy.

Jimmy may have had no formal qualifications and they may not have been necessary for his line of work. But he may have attended training courses, Construction Industry Training Board, that kind of thing. Worth checking.

Catriona was less easy and her other name didn't help much. But they did have her driving test details and would keep looking. "Softly, softly", "never say die" and all that kind of stuff.

Jimmy's college course in electronics was soon picked up when names were run past examination boards. So, he knew something about electronics did he!

His employer gave details of leave Jimmy had taken from his accrued entitlement but couldn't say where he had been. "Probably stuck up the side of Ben Nevis knowing him!" was one comment.

But the investigators weren't convinced that someone who did rock climbing most weekends would necessarily want to do it on holiday as well. He may have gone away with a lass or something. The chance of him leaving town could be high.

"Holidays" was also put into the database. If these three were connected maybe they first met on holiday. "Costa del Crime" or somewhere like that, perhaps.

"Costa del Crime", Spain!

Could the putty have travelled from the African continent to Spain courtesy of a holidaymaker? That had already been suggested.

Did Jimmy go to Spain at any time? Danny? Catriona?

What about other suspects? Had Julia Cole been to Spain? Would a person who spent much of their week doing voluntary work at a church want to blow it up? Maybe! Who knows what motivates people? Nowt so queer as folk, they say!

Nothing came up for Danny in relation to Spain or anywhere else much. He had once been on a school exchange trip to France, but that was years ago and such events were quite a common occurrence. London to France and back when he still lived with his parents. Not a contender!

Jimmy hadn't been abroad much either. Scandinavia a couple of times in past years, according to what was turned up. He seemed to like the mountains and trees, maybe did some climbing on holiday after all.

Peter could see the attraction. Fresh air, snow on peaks, unspoiled nature, peace. He had admired that in northern Italy, the Trentino Alps, Lavarone. He rather wished he were there now! But no time for reveries. "Get on with it Brown", he admonished himself.

The detonators were an interesting topic. The explosives team had told the investigators what types of shock waves were needed to activate that kind of putty and how the waves could be generated.

One question had been whether the detonators were carried with the explosive at all times. They had run through that and considered the point about explosives being concealed in window putty.

Unlikely someone would risk being caught with both. Why conceal putty with putty then give the game away by having detonators in your pocket? Or in your handbag!

Peter still had a hunch about Catriona.

He looked through the file again and saw the cutting with Danny Hoskins in a group photo. A group! He had seen the face before. Then remembered where. One of his groups at one of his circuit seminars.

He looked up the attendee lists and the name was there: Daniel Hoskins, London. Nothing strange about that, the talk was in London and Danny had lived in London.

Had he been sent to the talk by an employer, or was it self-sponsored? That may not matter anyway. What had Peter told the group? Could he have unwittingly put ideas in the head of a bomber?

What was it? Break the chain of events to stop something going wrong!

How about break the chain of events to avoid being caught?

Plastic explosive but no caps with it: broken chain.

Rubber suckers in Scotland but no direct link to London: broken chain.

Moto Guzzi on the IoM but no direct link to London: broken chain.

Three explosions, same day, same city but no known motive: broken chain.

Woman with two identities but no obvious link to a crime: broken chain.

What was the common denominator? A broken chain!

That was the thing that linked them, the fact that they were not supposed to be linkable.

Either there were an unusual number of coincidences or someone was very, very cute.

Back to the database and some more fields.

Section 47

Peter not only liked old films, he had recordings of some old black and white TV serials as well.

One, from 1985, was titled "The Price". It involved a woman who was kidnapped in Ireland and her husband's attempts to help police find her. They believed she was being held in a farm house.

The husband had an early PC and started to write a program in an old programming language, probably BASIC or something like that, to narrow down possibilities. He created a database of farms in the area and what they knew about them. It worked.

Peter was doing something similar but his database was much bigger and more comprehensive. As he thought about it he smiled at the recollection that he had the same first name and initials as the actor in the serial. Peter Brown vs Peter Barkworth.

Not exactly Spy vs Spy in this case because Peter and Peter were not in competition with each other: they were both the good guys. But their attempts to outfoil the bad guys by using technology was pretty much Spy vs Spy!

Section 48

Officers doing background checks had spoken to a number of Danny's old acquaintances and got a clearer picture.

One of them said "Let me start with an example. You know an American specialist wrote some years ago that George Bush had an essentially female voice. That is, George Bush Senior.

Bush had been a navy pilot in the military, was in the oil business and made tough decisions all his life, had a son who became a President, and was probably what most folks would call a man's man. But he had a voice that some scientists classed as 'feminine'.

Most of us don't care two hoots about those things but Danny got lots of jibes and mickey taking because he seemed effeminate to other people and was quite particular about his appearance. Dapper I suppose is a good word for it. His voice sounded feminine and people may have thought he was limp-wristed.

A couple of times he was set up by pranksters who got poofers from the Bird In Hand Club in Croydon to try to chat him up. He wasn't best pleased. Once I heard him say "Why don't these bloody turd burglars leave me alone, what have I got to do? I feel like the ugly duckling being driven out of town but I've done absolutely nothing wrong."

He continued. "Danny may have had enough of it and left London for a new start, so to speak. He kept in touch for a short while after he went over the Irish Sea but the messages trailed off. Maybe he found peace of mind.

It's ironical really, isn't it? To get away from homosexual harassment he goes there of all places: Man goes to Man, Danny goes to Douglas!"

The investigating office smiled mildly at the humour then passed on the details to the team.

Peter Brown added relevant notes to his database and a field for Sexual.

Hate crimes, harassment, unfounded accusations, pranks, spite, retaliation, lethal explosive, nails? All because of the way someone speaks? Could they be links? Theory was one thing; proof was something else.

Someone could be placed at a scene, have opportunity, but what motive? Being at the scene and having opportunity doesn't necessarily prove guilt.

Means, motive, opportunity. They form a triangle, like the fire triangle, and all must be present to try to prove the commission of a crime.

If it was him, how many ways could Jimmy have travelled from Scotland to the Thames barrier? All the way by sea possibly. Plane, Aircraft, car, van, train, motor bike.

How about if he and Danny were working together and Danny gave him a lift from somewhere? If so. Where? Carlisle, Penrith, Kendal, Lancaster, somewhere along there? Liverpool, Manchester, Blackpool, Preston?

Would the mileage on Danny's bike match those kinds of detour? Then again, putting two bombers together was making a link and not breaking one, so it didn't fit. If Danny had followed the 'fire triangle' rule he would have created or maintained breaks in chains, not invented links.

So, two or more of them travelling together gets a low probability rating. Two or more of them meeting together gets a high probability rating. Three together is too risky for them so one meets one then one meets the other one, pre-arranged and short duration. Where?

Mr Electronics, Jimmy, may have provided the detonation caps. Would one of the others have taken putty to him in Scotland only for it to be taken taken south again? That would mean more travel, more cost, more chance of being caught.

More likely it was unidirectional flow once the caps had been handed over. Maybe three pieces of putty, three sets of detonators, each 'kit' being carried by one person travelling alone. Then if one got caught the other two may get through.

Could Catriona have planted the Thames Barrier bomb? Unlikely.

Could she have planted the street bomb? Possible but unlikely.

Peter Brown went with the best fit, based on his extensive notes, database output, evidence, witness statements, and his instincts.

He reckoned Danny bought the balloon and planted the bomb after riding to London on his Moto Guzzi, and the motive was hatred of homosexual men. They targeted him to ridicule him so he targeted them in retaliation. How was that for a theory?

Peter reckoned the bomb on the Thames was planted by Jimmy. He was a climber who had the knowledge and skill to negotiate the different types of surface there. The cladding, painted steel and so on. He could support his own weight with his arms for a while and understood equipment.

By contrast, Catriona may not be able to support her own weight with her arms for long, even though she was slightly built. Jimmy had well developed biceps muscles, "good guns", as the rugby players say: Catriona didn't. Her background was not so technical.

Catriona for the bell tower, then!

But what about the motive for he barrier and the tower?

Was there a religious element to this? Was it a Roman Catholic versus Anglican church attack for some reason?

Catriona had not come across to others as being religious. Nothing religious was said to the church warden and she had got married in a non-catholic 'all saints' church in Surrey, England, assuming Catriona was also Catherine Cousins. Religious wars seemed unlikely.

Section 49

The day Jimmy left the Kalgoorlie guest house he had driven to the police office.

“Could I leave some lost property with you officer?” He asked. The officer looked through the back pack, found the straps and suction cups, a pair of gloves, a chipping hammer, and in one of the zipped pockets, some business cards. They showed the name William Cooper and the address of an insurance company. After the name were some designatory letters which seemed convincing and apparently the items belonged to an engineer surveyor.

“I found it in the car park where I left my wheels overnight night”, explained Jimmy. “It looks like someone drove off and forgot about it. I kept it in my digs until I could hand it in”. The officer got Jimmy to complete a form, said “Thanks, laddie”, and Jimmy left.

Maureen had got it wrong! The pack and contents really did belong to Bill Cooper. He'd used the suction cups to lift steel covers panels off an external air conditioning unit on the roof of a building so he could inspect the interior. The police contacted his employer and the items were collected soon afterwards. Peter Brown and the investigation team members didn't know about that.

Section 50

Who arranged to buy or barter for the explosive? Who paid? Who collected it?

Catriona was from Ireland. So was Kate Cousins. Ireland has had terrorists for years plus links with America, Canada, and various other countries with terrorists.

The Isle of Man is in the Irish Sea and one of the main connecting ports is Liverpool, which has had strong links with Ireland since before the Potato Blight. The routes for contact with those able to supply explosives are manifold.

Who would ask questions about what it was for or who it was for? Perhaps not as many as the average person may think! Possibly easier than buying drugs or guns, and there are plenty of those on the street. It may be futile trying to trace the source and easier to concentrate on convicting the users.

Time to talk to the suspects again.

Who first?

Danny was first. The investigators asked if he would help them with their enquiries by answering some questions. Process of elimination. He said he understood and cooperated.

The police were very cautious. In the long history of law enforcement there had been cases where suspects had deliberately left themselves open to repeated questioning: then got lawyers to file complaints of police harassment. It was a pre-emptive defence ploy which often worked.

The senior officers were keen to avoid it on their patch and instructed their subordinates to tread very carefully. Always be polite and ask the suspect to contact the station if they think of anything that may help, instead of keep going back to the suspect with more questions.

The Lieutenant Columbo “Oh, just one more thing, sir” approach may work on TV but not here.

Danny was a model of cooperation. He ran through his move from London after getting the job in Douglas, how he loved exploring the Island by motor bike, how he was being cautious with money, and so on.

There were some pictures of his parents in the house. Asked tactfully if he'd met any nice pillion passengers since moving he answered affirmatively. He said he had contacted an IAM group in Man and an all-female bikers club which had been established well over ten years ago.

He had been out with a couple of girls at different times and hoped to continue that kind of social contact. Danny added that even rough and ready biker girls like to be treated with politeness and tenderness sometimes and he seemed to be able to do that for them.

Before leaving he did ask the officers if that was it, or if they intended to keep calling on him. He didn't want to look too smug and thought that appearing 'ever so slightly rattled' might be about the right measure.

Danny told his boss at work that the police had been asking questions, so the employers got it from him first.

On the next Saturday he took one of the girls in his car to Ramsey and visited the motorcycle dealer again to see what bikes they had in stock. He said he'd sold the last one and was looking for something different, perhaps in a couple of month's time. Pleasant trip, mutual interest topic for him and the girl, keep in touch with the dealer, stay good!

Section 51

Nicholas McTavish was asked to cooperate with the police.

With him, instead of asking soft questions as they had with Danny, they laid out some facts and asked for a response. He was not arrested or charged, simply cooperating by answering questions. That was the official line.

They asked about the guest house in Dumbarton and he confirmed he had stayed there more than once.

“One of the cleaners saw a bag in your room and reckoned it had some suction cups inside. The kind of cups that someone used to climb that barrier in London and plant a bomb. What can you tell us about that?”

“Nothing”, answered Jimmy. “I can't tell you anything about a bomb! There was a bag with things inside. They all belonged to a man named Cooper.”

The officers thought they were about to get some answers flowing and maybe hear some confession.

“Who is Cooper and what happened to the bag and contents?” Jimmy was asked next.

“Cooper is the guy who owned the bag and stuff in it. He's an insurance inspector. I gave the bag to your lot and as far as I know it was returned to him” said Jimmy in response. Ice Trio - Keep Cool.

“When was this?” asked the officer, looking a bit less cocky now, Jimmy thought. He gave them brief details, answering only what they asked and no more.

After that they seemed to be unsure of how to continue and the more senior officer said “I think that will be all for now, but we may need to speak to you again.”

“Why would you want to do that?” asked Jimmy. “I am a very busy man and I can't keep popping along here whenever you feel like a chat. I'm right here, right now, If there's something else you want to ask , ask me now!”

He had done the same as Danny and a made a hint that he was not a police yo-yo. They needed to go carefully. What else did they have to connect him to the explosions? Perhaps nothing.

Before they all left the room one of the officers put a picture of Catriona on the table and asked “Do you know her?” as he pointed to the picture. “Her name is Kate Cousins and she married a guy named Kenny.”

Not a flinch, not a flicker. “No, I don't know her.” Again, he only answered what he had been asked and didn't pursue it. “Anything else, officer?”

Jimmy left.

“Who the bloody hell is Kate Cousins?” he thought. But he had no desire to ask anyone and really didn't care much.

Nothing of use had emerged from the two ”interviews”. That left Catriona.

What could she tell them?

The main concern was that more explosions could occur, more people could die. If the suspects were left free, one, two, or all of them could slide off and blow up something else. But the authorities didn't have enough evidence to hold them.

Section 52

A CPS prosecution team looked at the evidence and confirmed a lot more would be needed before anyone saw the inside of a courtroom.

The bit about the back pack and suction cups didn't help. The police were made to look stupid because they didn't know the stuff had been handed in days before. The landlady in Dumbarton was more awake than they were!

“Time for another recap “, thought Peter Brown.

The suction cups may not have been involved in the case but they had served to link Jimmy with the events. Otherwise the investigators may never have found him. So that was positive. No need to feel sad.

The black leather gloves may not have belonged to Jimmy but he may wear some anyway. They still feature as a link in the database.

There was a person named Catherine (Kate) Cousins who married Kenneth Antrobus in Surrey, whether or not Jimmy knew about that doesn't matter. It isn't even certain that he knows her as Catriona.

There is a chance that Jimmy will contact Catriona or Danny about it. Assuming he recognised her in the picture he may ask Danny if he knew about her being married under a different name.

The officers didn't show Danny her picture so they don't know what his reaction would have been.

How will they make contact? That could be interesting.

What was the timing at the church tower? Catriona leaving to the explosion? The detonator was sound activated and designed to go off when the clock struck ...” It could have been set up to react to any chime, but whoever planted it could have been blown up if they were still there when it detonated.

So it was probably designed to be triggered at a chosen time of day and the backup timer was set to that time as well, timed to allow the bomber to get clear.

The detonators could have been set but not armed and they could have been armed later using a remote device, but the lab boys said that was unlikely and they didn't find any bits in the debris to support that theory.

Who knows what time the bells or any clock chimes are set to sound? The vicar, the church staff, others. Where is such information published? The bombers must have got the griff from somewhere!

The details of all the people killed in the street explosion were combed through meticulously to see if any of them were likely to have been the target with others being unfortunate collateral damage. Nothing came out of it. None of them seemed likely targets.

Section 53

Kenneth Antrobus was one of seven children and had spent most of his life in southern England.

The investigators called at his home on a weekday evening. They found him in and willing to talk to them.

“What can I do for you?” he asked. “What’s this about now?”

“Nothing to be alarmed about, Sir, we would like to ask about your former wife.”

“Kate!” he said, “Why what’s she been up to?”

“Could you confirm that you were married to a woman named Catherine Cousins from Ireland? If you would rather talk to use alone...” and he made an eye gesture to Barbara who was sitting nearby.

“No, Barb can hear anything we talk about, she knows most things about Kate and there’s nothing to hide.” He squeezed Barb’s arm, looked round and smiled at her with reassurance.

“Your wife here, Barbara is it, approached someone in a store and indicated that she recognised Kate in a photograph. Later we were told about it because we’d checked out a car Kate had rented and there seemed to be a matter of mistaken identity somewhere along the line.

We just wanted to ask about Kate’s background so we know we are talking about the same person. It doesn’t look as if a crime was committed, it’s a matter of procedure.”

“What, the car was stolen or taken out in someone else’s name or something?” interjected Barbara.

“Something along those lines, but you understand we can’t say too much at the moment until we know the facts.”

“Mr Antrobus”, he continued, focusing back on the person they had really come to see. “Can you tell us a bit about your first wife, like where you met her, how old she was when you married, just an outline, you know.”

Kenny said they met in Caterham, Surrey when he called in to where she worked to pick up some details of a job. He worked on a road gang for a firm called Holbrook Asphalt and they got odd enquiries from people who wanted their front driveway done, as well as from companies and councils.

He admitted some enquiries were for “fiddle jobs” where a driver would drop a lorry load of asphalt in the road outside someone’s home and a couple of the road gang would turn up on Saturday morning to barrow it and spread it: for cash in hand. Marble chippings a bit extra.

The officers knew of such things and had come across “fiddle jobs” in the gas company where fitters ran gas pipes and connected equipment, some of it quite large, for cash. Asked why the supervisor didn’t query where all the pipe and fittings went, one of them had said “He’s in on it too!” Corruption in the utility companies was rife.

“Have you ever been to Ireland?” the officer asked , looking at both Kenny and Barbara.

“No desire to go there”, said Barbara,.

“I went with Kate once, stayed for a week”, said Kenny. “She had a friend there who put us up. It was a good trip.”

“How did you travel?”

“I had an old classic car. We went in that.”

“Just the two of you?”

“Yep, plus our luggage, of course.”

Kenny told them about the Vauxhall but omitted the bit about the Mot failure.

He said he and Kate had joked on the trip about 'don't drive too far north or you might be going to Kilkenny'.

The officers smiled lightly, wondering how many times that one had been used over the centuries.

“Who was the friend you stayed with in, where was it, Waterford?”

“She was someone Kate had met before she moved to England. They clicked, you know, how some people do, and become friends for life. They wrote to each other and when Kate told her she was getting married she was told 'you must bring him over so I can check him out', so we went.”

“They asked Kenny if the names Hoskins, McTavish, or Handy meant anything to him, asked Barbara the same. They said no and seemed sincere about it.

They asked if he had any old photos, just to help with the 'mistaken identity' thing. With Barbara's agreement they took three that Kenny dug out, saying he hung on to some old photos because they were part of his life, not for any other reasons. He seemed to care a lot about Barbara's feelings.

“What happened to the Vauxhall?” asked one of the officers, seemingly making private conversation, as if he were a classic car enthusiast himself.

“I sold it to a guy who wanted to take it to Spain. He was opening a bar along with his wife and wanted it as a gimmick as well as a hobby, or something like that”, said Kenny.

“I got the lead when we were in Waterford with it. Kate's friend, Eileen, seemed quite fascinated by it and told us she had a cousin who was into old cars. Later he contacted us and bought it. We had to get a bit of welding and stuff done first but he said the climate in Spain was better for old cars than Britain.”

“Did he drive it over?”

“Took it on a trailer. Ferry from Pompey to Bilbao then to Puigcerdà or wherever he lived. I remember that name because it sounded to me like 'pig' and his wife collected pig ornaments, piggy banks and so on.

She even had a Miss Piggy thing tied to the car trailer, you know, like dustmen tie stupid kids toys to the front of their dustcart. He took some photos on the journey and left me a bottle of Spanish brandy next time he was in Britain. Not like our brandy but not bad!”

“See him very much?”

“He came to England twice while I was married to Kate as far as I remember. Called in where she worked to say a quick hello and asked her to give me the bottle. Gave her a pair of castanets because she was into folk music and stuff and he thought they might fit somehow.”

They thanked the Antrobuses for their help and left.

Section 54

A Spanish connection!

Friends with cousins in Ireland. Could that be why the name Cousins was chosen?

Was this all a joke to someone? Not the first time petty humour or twisted humour had been used by perpetrators.

Peter Brown recalled incidents he'd heard about at a multinational computer firm. A person calling himself “Joe Carr” had been a thorn in the side of the security staff there for several years. He said he thought Joe Carr sounded like 'Joker'.

On one occasion he sat pinging a trip wire which ran through the steel fence of a cooling tower compound in the grounds. Every ping triggered an alarm in the security control centre, 'The Pod', as it was known.

On a later occasion 'Joe Carr' got into what was supposed to be the most secure building on the site, the building where customer data was processed continuously. From a corridor wall phone he called The Pod and said “This is Joe Carr, I'm in Building E”.

A staff security manager and others were sent to intercept him but there wasn't much they could do, because it turned out he had been allowed to walk in unchallenged. His motive for riling the firm was never known and he never caused any real damage. Just a joker and a plain pain in the proverbial.

Catherine 'Kate' Theresa Cousins, Catherine 'Kate' Antrobus, Catriona Handy.

An old pen pal in Waterford, a friend's cousin who had travelled between Britain and Spain with a car and car trailer, a wife who collected pig ornaments. It sounded like a cover for drug or money rackets.

Could it be that explosive was brought into England on a trailer? Did Catriona, still posing as Kate, work with the Irish cousin to arrange that?

What was the motive?

Trips abroad cost money. Who would fund it all and why? Was it international terrorism after all? Still nobody had claimed responsibility.

Whilst pondering Peter Brown thought about the music and dance.

Folk Music, castanets! Maybe Kate went from Irish reel to gypsy hora. Maybe she was familiar with Grigoraş Dinicu's work.

What was the old line he'd once heard? "Until I was twenty five I thought the 'Hora Staccato' was a Spanish prostitute!"

The reel is indigenous to Scotland. The Irish reel came later. Maybe there was a musical link between the suspects. Perhaps they met at a dance somewhere, or a concert of some kind. Who knows?

Anyway, work to do. Best forget reel time and get back to real time.

The database was quite large now.

Section 55

The young female constable who had seemed keen on investigation matters came up with some information.

I did some more checking, Sir. There is a Charles Handy in Canada who describes himself as a Chemicals Professional and is a manager at an industrial products company that makes coatings and that kind of thing.

He is known to most people as "Chuck", which as you know, is a popular nickname for people called Charles in North America, and he is related to Catriona Handy of County Waterford.

The relationship seems to be via Newfoundland where a lot of Irish emigrants settled, then later Chuck moved to Vancouver.

Perhaps it's possible that Julia Cole misheard or misunderstood the bit about 'professor' and 'management' and the Irish philosopher Charles Handy was a bit of a red herring, Sir."

"Very good, constable", her boss replied, "Well put it all on file."

He applauded enthusiasm and initiative but had to guard against glory seekers. Nobody had asked her to make further checks, but it was good feedback nevertheless.

Catriona might still look squeaky clean to some. The glass she said she saw was found, she did have a relation called Charles, the things she claimed checked out. Were they imagining she was a bomber?

Overseas liaisons were called upon to check out the car trailer and classic Vauxhall in Spain, and to check out the Irish cousin's background.

The trailer was clean and legal. The driver carried spare bulbs for the car and trailer lights as required by Spanish law, and paperwork was in order. Yes, there was a classic Cresta outside the bar which was called the Dracoleones Bar. The name was a Hispanic variation of another Vauxhall model, the Wyvern.

Feedback suggested the bar business was doing well, largely from the tourist trade and particularly from the tourist fascination with nearby Andorra. Plenty of passing trade!

All of the relevant data was added to Peter's database and he continued to make backups regularly.

He gave a presentation to the whole team of what he had and the results were summarised as charts and in text. Everyone in the room appeared to be on the same wavelength with it all.

A few questions were asked and answered, then the CPS representative who had been sitting at the back of the room went forward and spoke.

“Despite what you have seen and may believe, we cannot proceed with any prosecution because there is insufficient evidence.

The theories are good and may be spot on. Your gut feeling may be spot on and I can understand the disappointment you may feel.

But nothing is likely to change unless someone else comes forward or something else emerges. This has become a cold case in some respects but is not in the deep freezer yet.

Thank you for your very impressive efforts and don't be be disheartened. You may have prevented much greater loss just by doing what you did, so be proud of that.”

The meeting dispersed with mixed feelings and mixed facial expressions.

Section 56

The phrase “Gone Viral” had become popular in the Internet. So had proxy servers, which have been used to conceal the origin of e-mail messages and other things transmitted electronically.

Sometimes, though, messages and statements were published on news web sites which were not disguised in any way. They included video clips of western hostages being decapitated in eastern countries and that kind of thing.

News organisations normally refuse to reveal their sources but with international terrorism they are sometimes forced to. The Ice Team knew all these things.

How safe were proxy servers? Someone was making a lot of money out of selling “secure” services to those who wanted to download pirated material from the Internet, but was it really foolproof?

Maybe only a fool would risk it. “Only a fool breaks the two second rule”, chanted Danny to himself, recalling an old Government road safety message he'd read about.

“Maybe Internet messages can be detected in two seconds”, he thought, “Who knows!”

Section 57

The first 'square sausage balloon' with a message was found tied to a stick pressed into the turf at the church, not far from the damaged bell tower.

The second was found tied to a moored buoy near the Thames Barrier.

The third was found tied to a lamp standard close to where the nail bomb had exploded.

On each balloon was written the reason for the explosion. Noise, Climate Change, Queers.

The handwritten print would never be identified, the investigators knew that, even if the writer was ambidextrous.

There were slight differences in the writing on each balloon. Maybe each was written by a different person. Maybe the writing task was shared on each balloon. Who knows!

Now the reason for the explosions was known, or may be known.

Who caused the explosions may never be known for sure.

Peter updated his database. But didn't feel the matter was over.

For his own amusement he had added a field for “Music”.

In addition to liking films for their dramatic content, comedy content, or whatever, he admired the cleverness of the musical score writers.

The threatening bass tones in “Jaws” to remind the viewer that the predator was nearby was a good example.

He especially liked the score from “The Godfather” and its variety. Scenes with a fun element were accompanied by a light-hearted musical frolic. But after the fun was over the very serious main theme returned to remind the audience that the danger was always present.

Music has been used to communicate many messages. The Beethoven's Fifth opening to signify V for Victory in World War Two was a classic example.

What other ways have messages been sent and received in wartime? Carrier pigeons is one way, used in both world wars.

Did the bombers communicate by carrier pigeon? Something else to check out, perhaps.

A pigeon could carry a written note, a note in code, a microdot, a USB drive or flash card with an encrypted message. Coded with a one-way hash or something like that, perhaps, so interceptors can't read it.

The vicar was a pigeon fancier. Was he somehow involved?

Many possibilities come to mind!

Peter knew that HSE inspectors and a local EHO had been to the church site. He knew police and health and safety people worked together at times.

An EHO was empowered to confiscate equipment, for example hi-fi equipment from a garage rave that angered neighbours. An EHO was legally entitled to ask for police support in case things turned ugly.

The HSE proved useful to police following the De Menezes shooting on the London Underground. Nothing was done to the shooters but police were fined over a third of a million pounds for health and safety offences. "Nicely sidestepped, courtesy of your friends at the IPCC", thought Peter.

"Shoot an unarmed man on a train and let the long-suffering taxpayers pick up the bill. Someone fails to stub out their cigarette properly, an uninsured royal castle burns down, and the taxpayer foots the bill, again. Easy to see why people become angry."

It was the EHO who shed some light on the bell ringing times question.

Evidently, locals had complained about excessive noise so the EHO got together a list of planned "soundings" and advised the church on 'reasonable' sound levels. They were not allowed to make a noise outside the planned times, but it seemed people were still offended by the sheer volume of the noise.

Because the story was newsworthy the details had been published in the local press.

Maybe the bomber had got the timings information from the paper! Who knows?

Section 58

At his next seminar Peter Brown opened by saying:

"There was an Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman.

Correction, let's make one of them a woman for a change. Which one do you think it should be?"

He thought he saw some smiles from the audience.

The End

Who Knows The Answer?

a MIURA genre story by Philip W Baker

Philip W Baker asserts his moral right to be identified as the author of this book

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