

## **'The Patricia Curran Murder 1952'**

### **Mr Stephen Cameron 14 March 2018**

Mr de Cogan the society's chairman, introduced our speaker for the night, Mr Stephen Cameron, who gave the large audience a most interesting and informative talk on the Patricia Curran murder of 1952. Mr Cameron began by giving the background to the case. He expressed his opinion that in the early 1950's Northern Ireland was quite a safe place to live. Authority was respected and the police were also respected. The murder of Patricia Curran on the 12th November 1952 came as quite a shock to society. This sense of shock was made worse by the fact that her father was a well respected judge and former Member of Parliament, Lancelot Curran.

At the time of the murder the family lived at Glen House in Whiteabbey north of Belfast. Their home was set in its own grounds which were quite extensive and well wooded. Patricia lived with her father, her mother Doris and the brothers Desmond and Michael. Patricia was attending Queen's University where she was studying to be a social worker. She travelled to and from University by bus and when she returned to Whiteabbey she walked from the bus stop to her home.

On the day of the murder Patricia Curran arrived back at Whiteabbey about 5:30 pm. About 15 minutes later the local paper boy delivered newspapers to the house and when interviewed later by the police said he had seen nothing unusual when going to the from the Curran home. That evening Judge Curran was at the Reform Club in Belfast when he received a phone call at about 7 pm asking him to come home. It is thought that it was his wife who called and the judge left the Reform Club immediately.

At about 1 am the next morning Mrs Curran woke her husband and son Desmond who was also in the house and said that Patricia had not come home. The family said that Desmond then searched the grounds but found nothing. The father then phoned the police and the family solicitor. When they arrived they were informed that Desmond had just found Patricia's body in the grounds. When the body was examined it was found to have 37 stab wounds. There was no sign of any blood at the site suggesting that she may have been killed elsewhere and the body dumped in the grounds.

The police investigation was hampered by the Curran family. They refused to let the police search Patricia's bedroom and were reluctant to talk about what happened on the night Patricia died. Did she come home? What was her relationship with her family? Scotland Yard was asked to help. They sent over two detectives, Superintendent Capstick and Sergeant Hawkins, both of whom were well known for their irregular approach to interviewing suspects.

Not long after they arrived, a member of the RAF, Scotsman Ian Gordon was arrested. He had become friendly with Desmond Curran and had been invited to Glen House. He was interviewed by the Scotland Yard detectives without having a solicitor present. Under relentless pressure from the policemen Gordon eventually confessed to the murder.

His trial began in March 1953. It was regarded as being very unsatisfactory. Many witnesses were not called and the defence barrister did little to help his client. When the trial ended the jury were warned by the judge that they would get no food or drink until they came back with a verdict. Within a short time Gordon was found guilty but insane. He spent seven years in Muckamore hospital before being released. He returned home to Glasgow. Over the next forty eight years he worked hard to appeal against his conviction. In 2000 his appeal was heard and granted. Ian Gordon was now a free man. The murder of Patricia Curran remains a mystery, one which probably will never be solved.