

The Times Online:

## Honest copper who was thwarted at every turn

**Dominic Kennedy**

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Paula Gilfoyle was found hanged in the last weeks of pregnancy in 1992 and her husband Eddie was convicted of her murder - RICH EATON/NEWSTEAM

Much has happened to Graham Gooch since he was sent to look into concerns about shortcomings in the investigation that led Eddie Gilfoyle to be convicted of the murder of his wife.

The detective became convinced that Paula Gilfoyle, who was eight and a half months pregnant, had committed suicide rather than being murdered.

When she died in 1992 she left a handwritten suicide note but prosecutors convinced a jury that her husband tricked her into writing the letter and then hanged her. Gilfoyle, who has always protested his innocence, served 18 years of a life sentence before being released on licence but remains a convicted murderer and is still fighting to clear his name.

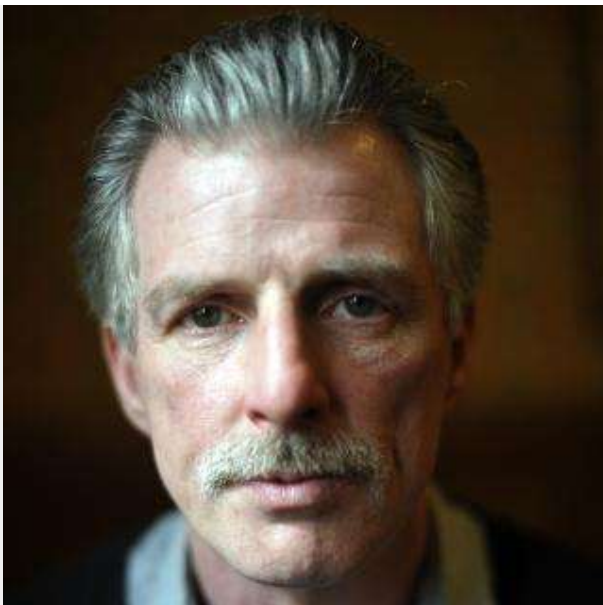
Mr Gooch was the trusted detective dispatched by the Police Complaints Authority (PCA) in 1993 to look into a complaint by Gilfoyle's relatives about the handling of the murder investigation.

One ambition the policeman failed to achieve was to see, read or hold the notes taken by Merseyside police during an internal inquiry into its own copious blunders at the scene where Mrs Gilfoyle was found hanged on a Thursday afternoon in June 1992. That is because the force told him, untruthfully, that the notes did not exist.

Mr Gooch, from Lancashire constabulary, sought information from Chief Superintendent Edward “Ted” Humphreys, who had led the force inquiry into errors at the death scene and produced a report.

Mr Humphreys told him: “We spoke with pertinent police officers regarding their order of attendance at the scene, its condition and control, who was requested to attend from other agencies and their role. We did not take any statements at all and to the best of my recollection no notes were taken.”

Detective Inspector Andrew McDiarmid, who had assisted Mr Humphreys, said: “No statements were taken although I made notes either during the interviews [or] at the end of the interviews. I used these notes in collaboration with Detective Superintendent Humphreys to compile a report on the above. After the compilation of the report the notes were disposed of.”



Eddie Gilfoyle on his release in 2011 after serving 18 years. He is on licence but remains convicted of his wife’s murder and is still fighting to clear his name -CHRIS HARRIS/THE TIMES

Twenty-two years later, in the handsome Victorian splendour of County Hall in Preston, Lancashire, Mr Gooch was finally presented with a copy of the notes, about 50 pages of them, in neat cursive handwriting. They were handed over by Matt Foot, the current solicitor for Gilfoyle.

Mr Gooch's experienced detective's eye quickly fell on what he has described in a statement as "many pieces of evidence relevant to the murder inquiry". The notes included timings of Gilfoyle's movements and his wife being "OK" when he left home. There was also discussion of paternity because there was "doubt about child, admitted he not father a while ago. Pressure building up as birth gets nearer . . . she had marital problems and was upset."

Mr Gooch said: "All these matters were pertinent to the investigation and should have been available to me in my inquiry into the complaints. They should also have been offered to the defence."

Surprisingly, the notes state: "Cut rope in two places." Mr Gooch said: "That is not seen anywhere else in the inquiry. How was that information obtained? When that is coupled with the note of PC Tosney's interview where it is noted that he saw a rope in DC Jones' [from the coroner's office] pocket, it does raise concern.

"There is probably an innocent explanation but this really needed further investigation to see whether a section of rope had been removed for some purpose and why an exhibit had been put in an officer's pocket instead of an exhibit bag. Had I been in possession of the notes at the time of my inquiry this would have been done."



Prosecutors convinced a jury that Eddie Gilfoyle had tricked his wife into writing her suicide note and then hanged her - PA WIRE

Mr Gooch only discovered about the Humphreys report by chance. “One of my officers made the enquiry of a senior Merseyside officer and was told that no such report existed. My officer was persistent and insisted he would not leave the building without being provided with a copy.” After Mr Gooch completed his inquiry, he was informed that the elusive notes to the inquiry did in fact exist. He alerted the Police Complaints Authority to this, which contacted Merseyside police.

The Merseyside assistant chief constable, David Westwood, wrote back, making the apparently misleading claim to the PCA that Mr Gooch “has been asked to look into and report on the circumstances of their recovery”.

Mr Gooch denies this account, saying: “I was never asked to make enquiries into the Humphreys saga.”

He added: “The Humphreys report included statements made by officers who were prosecution witnesses in the case and the defence should have been made a gift of the information contained therein. The notes should have at least been revealed to the [Crown Prosecution Service] and if any doubt arose submitted to counsel.”

Mr Gooch said: “One of the main causes of the problems with the investigation at the scene was that the coroner’s officer, [in the form of] DC Jones, assumed the role of an investigating officer, a role for which he

was not qualified.” Mr Gooch was never told that it was policy on the Wirral for the coroner’s officer to attend all suspected suicides.



Police called to the scene of Mrs Gilfoyle’s death in the couple’s house on the Wirral made mistakes by losing evidence and cutting down the body before the CID arrived - TRINITY MIRROR

Mr Gooch has now been shown newly released internal documents including one he described as “an unusual memorandum” in which Chief Superintendent Tony Isaac, who handled the Gilfoyle family’s complaints about errors in the murder investigation, “appears to be writing to himself”.

In the document, addressed to Mr Isaac and signed by him on behalf of the deputy chief constable, he states that the Gilfoyle family complaint had been seen. Mr Gooch said this raised doubts as to whether the senior officer had actually seen it.

Another document shows that Mr Isaac had previously reminded staff to follow the policy of calling the coroner’s office to all suspicious deaths.

Mr Gooch stated: “In the circumstances of these complaints where the main problem seems to have stemmed from the policy he promulgated it looks like a professional conflict for Isaac not to have distanced himself from this complaint.”

Mr Gooch retired as a detective superintendent in 2001 and became a lecturer in policing and criminal investigation and is an elected county councillor.

### **Unravelling: the Gilfoyle case**

**June 4, 1992** Paula Gilfoyle was found hanged in the garage of her marital home in Upton, Merseyside. She was eight and a half months pregnant. Police called to the scene made mistakes by losing or damaging evidence, failing to take photographs and cutting down the body before the CID arrived.

**July 3, 1993** Jury finds Gilfoyle guilty of murder. The trial was told by 17 family and friends that Paula seemed bubbly and was looking forward to her first baby. Gilfoyle was jailed for life.

**October 20, 1995** Court of Appeal dismisses Gilfoyle's first appeal, based on a witness who said she had seen Mrs Gilfoyle in the post office later than the time her husband was supposed to have killed her.

**December 20, 2000** Court of Appeal rejects Gilfoyle's second appeal, dismissing new pathological findings and expert evidence about the rope.

**July 29, 2010** After the Attorney General apologises to MPs for parliament being misled on the case by Merseyside Crown Prosecution Service, openness is promised. Police accede to Gilfoyle lawyer's request to see the unused exhibits in the case and he discovers a box containing Mrs Gilfoyle's diary which had not been provided to the defence. It showed that she had a troubled mind. Her first boyfriend was a sex killer, she had previously tried to kill herself, two of her ex-lovers threatened suicide and one wrote a suicide note which she kept until her dying day. It used similar wording to her own, supposedly dictated, note.

**December 22, 2010** Gilfoyle released from prison on licence. The parole board gags him from saying that he is innocent — a decision reversed after an outcry. He protests at a House of Lords press conference: "I didn't kill my wife and I didn't kill my baby."

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/honest-copper-who-was-thwarted-at-every-turn-275w3qzq2>