

Leading articles



Justice and Answers

Paula Gilfoyle's locked box contains evidence central to the murder case against her husband, Eddie. Where has it been all these years?

Before she died, Paula Gilfoyle left a suicide note. And in it, she told her husband, Eddie, not to blame himself. But it was not long before others did blame Mr Gilfoyle. He found himself spending 18 years in jail, convicted of coercing his pregnant wife into writing a note and somehow forcing her to climb a ladder and hang from a beam.

The prosecution theory of how Mrs Gilfoyle met her end is bizarre and the act highly improbable. But one thing above all convinced the jury and two subsequent appeals that the theory was nevertheless correct: Friends and relatives of Mrs Gilfoyle were certain that she was not minded to kill herself. This was much more important than the flimsy physical evidence.

Mrs Gilfoyle's state of mind and what sort of person she was were absolutely critical parts of the case that cost Mr Gilfoyle his liberty. This means that absolutely critical, too, is the existence of a locked box containing her deepest and most personal secrets.

It is therefore astonishing to discover now — after all the years that Mr Gilfoyle has languished in jail, after all the appeals there have been and after all the questions put to the authorities about their conduct of this case — that this box has been in the possession of the police for 16 years. How

could this have happened? How could this have been allowed to happen?

Unlocking the box unlocks much that the jury and subsequent appeals were not told about Mrs Gilfoyle. She emerges, from her diary and the newspaper cuttings that she retained, as a more complex person altogether than the portrait of her that has hitherto been painted.

Would Mr Gilfoyle have spent 18 years in jail if it had been known, from her own words, that his wife had tried to kill herself earlier in her life? Or that she remained in love for a long time with a murderer? Or that a boyfriend wrote her a suicide note phrased similarly to her own, and also observed how she put on a show of happiness for her friends, precisely the people whose description of her happy character made such an impact at the trial?

The story of Mrs Gilfoyle's locked box is thus now a central part of the story of a man's liberty, of the probity and competence of the police, and of the integrity of the justice system. It could hardly be more important. What happened to that box may be a mystery today, but it cannot possibly be allowed to remain one.

The box joins other critical evidence that was withheld from the defence at moments when it

could have made a real difference. Notes of an inquiry that cast doubt on whether Mr Gilfoyle was at home at the time of death were said to be missing, turning up only as a result of discovery by *The Times*. There are serious questions about whether flaws in the case against Mr Gilfoyle have been deliberately protected from exposure.

These questions must be asked at a ministerial level and made subject to an urgent new inquiry. Mr Gilfoyle has been released on licence from his prison sentence having served so many years, but his conviction remains. Every day that it continues to do so, without inquiry and examination is an affront to justice.

From the moment that they arrived at No 6 Grafton Walk on June 4, 1992, the conduct of the Gilfoyle case by Merseyside Police has been catastrophic and a public scandal. They are now adding to this scandal.

Their answers on the locked box are evasive. Are they now using the reference of Mr Gilfoyle's case to the Criminal Cases Review Commission as an excuse to avoid providing a satisfactory explanation of what happened with the locked box? If so, this evasion, like so much else over the past 19 years of the case, is not good enough. It is time for some answers and some justice.

INSIDE 2 TODAY

Welcome to your brilliant daily pullout section
Opposite page 38

times modern

Dyb Dyb Duchess: Rosie Millard on why it's cool to be a Scout
Pages 4, 5



arts

Actor Michael Simkins reveals what really happened on the set of *The Iron Lady*
Pages 6, 7



music

Skinny Love: how singer Kathleen Edwards fell for Bon Iver
Pages 10, 11



TV & Radio

Tonight's listings, plus last night's reviews
Pages 14-16

