

The ability of people to keep their most desperate innermost thoughts hidden from those around them is surely something that juries ought to be reminded of in cases where a death could be suicide or murder. But in 1993, when Eddie Gilfoyle was convicted of the murder of his wife Paula no such guidance was given to the court. The judge noted that 14 witnesses had seen Paula in the weeks and days before her death and she had seemed her usual bubbly self. She was 8 and half months pregnant when her body was found hanging in her locked garage and all her friends said she was delightedly looking forward to the birth, so would never have killed herself and the baby.

As is so curious in this type of case the person on trial was really the deceased, Paula, rather than the accused, Eddie. Her mental state was the central issue because only circumstantial evidence pointed to Eddie as the culprit. However, the court chose to accept the public face of Paula as seen by friends and relatives rather than try to ascertain whether there was something that she was hiding. The new evidence that has become available in a locked black metal box provides insight into Paula's character that was not available at the original trial or in Eddie's two appeals.

Paula's family had all insisted she was happy and undisturbed. Any suggestions from Eddie and his family that this was not the whole story was dismissed as being part of an elaborate fiction concocted to exonerate the murderer. .

Yet the newly found evidence shows that in a private letter to Paula her partner of ten years, Gordon Gumley, wrote "The only time I see you happy is when your friends are around when they call you're a different person. Smiling joking all that kind of stuff. I think you talk more to your lodger than you do to me." Here is what Eddie's defence team tried to indicate but never had the evidence to support. Paula was very able to present a positive face to the world, hiding her true emotions.

It was known at the trial that her teenage boyfriend had killed a girl after he had had sex with this victim. At the trial it was claimed that Paula had quickly got over this and expunged him from her life. But the tokens in the closed metal box show that she had kept in a relationship with him, even buying him a wedding ring when he was in prison to honour their earlier engagement. This provides further evidence of her ability to keep secrets from even close family members.

The proposal at the trial was that Eddie had dictated the suicide note found in Paula's handwriting that had been found shortly before her hanging body was discovered. There was only gossip and speculation that this had happened, no clear evidence. But the way the note had clearly absolved Eddie from any culpability was taken as an indication of why he had dictated it in that way. However, in Paula's secret box was a suicide note from Gordon Gumley in which he had said "don't blame yourself". Words repeated in Paula's suicide note. Research shows that people who kill themselves learn from other suicides. Was this something Paula had learned to write from the note she had carefully preserved.

In the light of these revelations the suicide note that Paula left takes on a new clarity. It had been read throughout Eddie's trial and subsequent appeals as being dictated by Eddie to imply he was not guilty of Paula's death. This is a remarkably subtle reading of both the note and the inventive authorship skills that Eddie has never displayed in any other situation. A much more direct reading is that Paula did indeed think she had something to hide. She wrote 'I've done thing in my life that I'm not proud of but I got through somehow but this is just too much' she also wrote 'explain things as best as you can'. Reading these phrases carefully at their face value, does suggest a person who

could no longer live with a secret. Was this her anxiety that she was not carrying Eddie's baby, but someone else's? The tragic irony was that it was Eddie's.

In some literary traditions, notably the Japanese, the honourable solution to a conflict of loyalties is ritual suicide. It is not an act that comes out of depression but out of a courageous determination to do what is right. Was Paula's act a mistakenly heroic one as she saw it?

When the Wales football manager, Gary Speed, was found to have killed himself surprise and shock reverberated amongst those who knew him. No-one expected this affable public figure, who had appeared on television the day before without any sign of stress, to commit suicide. Yet from my studies and reports from the Samaritans it is known that more than one in ten suicides give no obvious prior warning, suicide notes or obvious explanations that emerge after the event.

There is a mistaken belief that all suicide is a product of chronic depression or inescapable despair that will be evident to most of the people that the person is in contact with. But time and again celebrities who seem to have everything to live for are found dead by their own hands. The list is legion. But people not in the public eye can also surprise those around them by a totally unexpected decision to take their own life.