

The Elephant In The Room

The Case Against William Herbert Wallace

By

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After seeing that the police files showed that Richard Gordon Parry had a solid alibi for the murder of Julia Wallace you might have expected that those interested in the case would have turned their attention onto William but no, theories of ever increasing complexity have been created to try and explain this crime. Yet all the time there has been 'An Elephant In The Room' - William. Statistically the likeliest suspect (the majority of familial murders committed in the home are by family members) William could have made the call and could have killed her. I believe that he did.

So who really did kill Julia Wallace in the Parlour of 29 Wolverton Street on Tuesday 20th January 1931? The true answer of course is that we don't know. It's probably also true that we will never be in a position to arrive at a conclusion that satisfies all or even the majority of us despite ongoing research and debate. Unless someone discovers that previously unseen or ignored piece of evidence then we are destined to remain in the dark about what really happened in Wolverton Street 90 years ago. It doesn't, and shouldn't, prevent us trying though. The truth might still be out there. Or it might have been staring us in the face for 90 years.

Many of the 'facts' in this case are debatable or subject to differing interpretations. For every 'eureka' moment we can come up with an alternative explanation to debate and disagree on. So who are the suspects and what are the theories? Was it William Wallace working alone? Did William get Richard Gordon Parry to make the phone call to give himself a reason to be away from the house that night? Or did Wallace take advantage of a prank call made by Parry? Was William assisted by his sister-in-law Amy? Was it Richard Gordon Parry himself? Or did he plan a robbery which went horribly wrong ending with his accomplice killing Julia after she discovered him rifling the cash box? Was it Parry and Marsden on the instigation of William? Was it the Anfield Housebreaker? Was it neighbour Mr Johnston Or was it none of the above? A random burglar? Someone from Julia's past? We're hardly in the same territory as Jack the Ripper in terms of options but we do have a few possibilities to sift through and weigh up. I'll focus on my case for William as the murderer here though. After all, if he was guilty then no one else was.

Since I first read of the case (admittedly in a book by James Murphy that promoted him as the killer) I've believed that William Wallace was overwhelmingly the likeliest suspect and that he had murdered Julia alone. I certainly don't agree with Murphy on every point though. To see William as the killer we have to begin by overcoming two hurdles. One's that I believe erect a kind of barrier to getting at the truth. First, the fact that friends and acquaintances of the Wallace's believed that they were a contented couple. The neighbours recall hearing no evidence of raised voices let alone violence. And two, the

picture we have of William himself. The quiet, reserved, hard-working, diligent, scrupulously honest, cultured, silver-haired gent in the high collar. Hardly the image of a vicious murderer is it? As we know though looks can deceive and motives can remain hidden beneath a surface veneer. History teaches us this salutary lesson. These two points have had a tendency to create a barrier to many when it comes to considering a motive for William as a murderer.

Motive - The 'Happy' Couple

So could William Wallace have had a motive for murdering his wife? There is no evidence of infidelity on the part of either William or Julia although rumours pretty naturally existed in a case like this. William hadn't recently taken out or increased an insurance policy on his wife's life and he certainly wasn't in debt. There were however dissenting voices to the general impression of the Wallace's as a happy couple and I think that two of these voices carry as much if not more weight than the couples acquaintances. Let's remind ourselves that William and Julia grew up and lived through the Victorian and then the Edwardian periods. A time when people had a horror of gossip, rumour and scandal. A time when 'airing your dirty linen' in public would have been unthinkable. William and Julia were both reserved by nature so if there was marital discord it would hardly have been surprising if this had been kept behind the scenes. We then have to consider the opinions of Doctor Curwen and Nurse Wilson. Both of whom might have seen the Wallace's when their guards were down. Curwen treated them both regularly and felt that they weren't a happy couple and that "harmony was sustained only by indifference." Nurse Wilson had stayed at number 29 around 8 years earlier for 3 weeks and claimed that their relationship "appeared strained" and "devoid of sympathy and affection." How might this situation have worsened over the following 8 years? Curwen and Wilson cannot simply be brushed aside as inconvenient or irrelevant. They tell a very different story to the generally accepted one. We also have Wallace's former colleague Alfred Mather who called Wallace "the most soured man that he'd ever met," and "a bad tempered devil." And he was just as unflattering about Julia. William's sister-in-law Amy was critical of the way he spoke to Julia and Sarah Draper, the char woman, hardly gave them a resounding thumbs up. Did Mather have a grudge against William which biased his opinion? We have no way of knowing but it's difficult to see any reason for bias with Curwen or Wilson.

There are other dissenting voices too. Read this snippet from an email sent to author Antony Brown by a Doctor after he'd read Antony's book on the case (so he can't be accused of simply wanting a mention in the book):

"I treated Julia Wallace's old neighbour who's back yard door faced the Wallace's back yard door. I'm assuming she lived in Richmond Park. This lady was in her 80's 20 years ago and was still very bright when I dealt with her. I asked her about the murder and she mentioned that she remembered that the police taking the body out of the Wallace's back yard in a coffin with bright arc lights and a tarpaulin over the back door. The neighbour knew Mrs Wallace however there was an age gap between the two of them. They did have a mutual friend who was a Mrs or Miss Lamb who was younger than Julia but older than the neighbour but Mrs/Miss Lamb would have a coffee with both parties, though separately. Mrs Lamb told the neighbour that Julia would often say "I need to get home before William gets home." The neighbour describes William as a "street angel/house devil" her words not mine and Mrs Lamb got the impression that if Julia wasn't scared of William she was wary of him."

It's also well worth mentioning that statistically it's more likely that a wife battered to death in her own home is much more likely to have been killed by a husband or partner than by anyone else.

An unhappy marriage doesn't always lead to murder of course so why would he have done so on this occasion? Again the short answer is that we can't know but it's not difficult to come up with a plausible possibility. We have a man who has had a life threatening kidney operation. One which he might well have felt could have cut short his life (which in reality it did). So when William reflected on his life and his future what might he have seen and felt as he looked to the future? A few more years in the same old dreary job (with no prospect of a promotion that he might have felt was due to him by dint of his abilities, diligence and years of service?) More years in a loveless marriage to a woman whose almost constant illnesses made her appear more like an ageing mother than a wife? Not a great prospect for an intelligent, cultured man like William. And then of course there's the fact that Julia had lied to him all those years ago. She was actually sixteen years older than her husband. She was almost seventy. What if William had somehow discovered this fact? What kind of hammer blow might this have been? It's certainly a possibility that he'd found out and we can make a few suggestions as to how this might have happened. It has been suggested that that Julia might have confessed in a bout of conscience. Perhaps Julia had hidden her birth certificate away somewhere but William had come across it by accident? Maybe William found out when looking into some kind of insurance policy? We know that Julia was estranged from her family so maybe a family member told William out of spite or because they felt that he'd deserved to know? It's certainly possible that William had discovered Julia's deceit and that it served as the straw that broke the camel's back and that William decided that Julia had to go if he was to enjoy what years might have been left to him. Whether William had discovered Julia's true age or not we still have convincing pointers that the Wallace's marriage might not have been the kind of marriage that has generally been assumed. It's easily possible therefore that William had a motive.

The Plan

So how would he do it? It's been reasonably suggested that a better plan for William might have been poison. He was a knowledgeable chemist after all and even had his own laboratory in the converted back bedroom. I can only suggest that Wallace might have felt more than a little concerned that suspicions of poisoning might have been considered given that Wallace had his own laboratory. Even the minutest suspicion of poison would have left the police with one suspect and one suspect only....William. He could have arranged for some kind of accident but people can survive accidents. A gun was out of the question for obvious reasons so it had to be either a stabbing a strangling or a bludgeoning. William chose the latter.

So why the phone call? Why didn't William simply kill Julia before he went to the Chess Club? After all he had a legitimate reason for going out that night. I'd suggest two reasons. One is that as an irregular attender the police might have felt it rather

‘convenient’ that William had chosen to visit the club for the first time in three or four weeks on the very night that his wife got murdered. Wouldn’t that have left them with a very lucky killer? After all William never went out alone at night for any other reason and so he certainly needed one. And two, by using the phone call William introduces the police to a ‘Mr X.’ To them the man who made the call would almost certainly have been the killer and so if he could convince them that the caller wasn’t him then he would have been in the clear.

As an addition to this second point we can add that it’s certainly possible that William was more specific in his attentions and that he wasn’t just introducing a Mr X but a named suspect! The suspect would probably have had a shady background. It would have been likely that he’d known where the cash box was located because he went straight to it and he would have been let in by Julia (William having said that his wife wouldn’t have admitted a stranger.) This profile perfectly describes Parry and let’s recall William’s statement on the subject of the people that Julia would have let in. He gave the police a list of potential visitors listing only names and occupations except in the case of two. Joseph Caleb Marsden gets a small paragraph but Parry virtually gets his own essay! When we also note that, during the investigation, William said the he suspected no one and yet, after his acquittal he appeared to have become ‘convinced’ of Parry’s guilt. Why? He’d been thoroughly checked and exonerated by the police.

Taken as a whole it’s appears a reasonable possibility that Wallace, in executing the Qualtrough Plan, was pointing the police firmly in the direction of Richard Gordon Parry, a ready made fall guy. Of course his whole plan didn’t stand or fall on this as he couldn’t have known whether Parry had a convincing alibi or not but it was certainly worth him introducing him into the mix.

The Qualtrough Phone Call

So having decided on his plan William leaves the house on the Monday at around 7.15 to go to the Chess Club to play off one of his tournament matches. He leaves by the back door as usual; goes through the alleyway into Richmond Park and then turns right into Breck Road and walks up to the phone box. Alternatively he could have left by the front door taking a route through the estate which would have taken him into Lower Breck Road and to the box. As he’s walking he’s looking around him; gauging whether anyone is paying him any attention or if anyone that he recognises is around. Remember that none of us know how many people were around at the time and also that it was dark. He’s understandably nervous though. He sees that the phone box is empty and that there’s no one around so goes in and calls the operator. He has problems getting put through though. Maybe he ends up pressing the wrong button due to a combination of nerves and a phone box with no lighting. Eventually he gets through and using a disguised voice gives his message to Samuel Beattie. He checks that no one is looking and leaves the box heading for the tram stop. At the club he ‘receives’ his message from Samuel Beattie. So far so good.

There are questions of course.

Could Wallace have fooled Beattie over the phone?

I've never really understood why this causes so much of a problem for some. For a start Samuel Beattie was a serious man. A man of business. Hardly a man likely ever to have been the victim of a prank call? The idea would probably have been an alien concept to him. He would have been concentrating entirely on the substance of the call rather than the voice itself. It was a call relating to business which was something that he would have taken very seriously. The voice didn't sound like Mr Wallace and the caller was asking for him. Why would he have even compared the voices in his own mind? We also have to consider that the call quality would have been much poorer in 1931 than with today's technology. I see absolutely no reason why Wallace couldn't have made that call and fooled Samuel Beattie into believing that it was someone else.

Would Wallace have risked being seen at the tram stop near to the call box?

This is very valid and reasonable question. How could Wallace have explained away saying that he'd caught the tram at the junction of Belmont Road if he'd been seen at the phone box or getting on at the nearby tram stop? All crimes contain an element of risk of course but what is relevant is not how risky it appears to us ninety years later but how that risk appeared at the time to William Wallace. How can we see the situation through his eyes? If he'd walked to the phone box and, looking around, saw that no one gave him a second look (however many people might have been around) he was ok. Caution around the unlit phone box and he was ok. A tram with one bloke reading a newspaper downstairs? He only has the Conductor to consider. Could a tram conductor, interviewed days or possibly weeks later, have really recalled exactly where a random stranger got onto his tram with anything like confidence? I suspect that a Defence Barrister would have dealt with this easily. "Are you telling the Court Mr Smith that you have perfect recall and can remember exactly where each of your passengers got on to your tram?" William, looking back on the events of the Monday evening, might simply have decided that he was good to go. Let's face it, if he'd have been unlucky enough to have bumped into someone he'd known at the tram stop then he could easily have cancelled the plan. William would have assessed the risk before making his decision.

If it was believed that calls couldn't be traced why didn't William simply say that he'd caught the tram near to the phone box?

It's a question that was raised by Antony Brown and it's a very fair one. I'd suggest that William would have picked over the events of the Monday evening for flaws. On considering the problems that he'd had getting through to the club he might have felt that it was possible that there was a technical fault which would have had to have been reported. This would have meant that the box would have been noted for the Engineer to have made his visit. So William realised that it would have been prudent to place himself far away from the phone box.

One thing that we do know for certain though is that if William had left the house at 7.15 and turned right instead of left he would have arrived at the call box at the moment that the call was made!

Two Stops Avoided?

So I see nothing that precludes William from making the call and catching the tram from the nearby stop. There's certainly another question that's worth asking though. When William allegedly caught the tram from the stop near to the junction of Belmont Road why did he walk past two perfectly serviceable stops? One at the end of Richmond Park and one at the end of Newcombe Street? William made the vague suggestion that he 'might' have posted a letter but the post box was before the Newcombe Road stop so why didn't he use it? Why would he have need to have walked past the Richmond Park stop to post a letter at 7.20pm? Was he so desperate to post a letter that night? Wouldn't the last collection have gone? Why not post it next day? I think it's possible and plausible that when Wallace decided that he needed to place himself away from the phone box he might have felt that the Richmond Park stop might have been too close and that it might have been suggested that he'd made the call and then walked the few yards to the Richmond Park stop so William came up with the vague suggestion about posting a letter to give him an excuse for passing the Richmond Park stop if asked. Of course this doesn't explain why he walked on to Belmont Road but perhaps, if asked, he'd have just said "I could see that the tram wasn't coming so I fancied the stroll to the Belmont Road stop." To the Police's discredit though the Monday night trams were never checked.

The Prank Call?

Author PD James put forward the suggestion that William took advantage of a prank call and who better to have made a prank call than Richard Gordon Parry. The suggestion isn't impossible of course but is it likely? A prank call could hardly have been planned because Parry couldn't have known that William was intending to go to the chess club on that night so it had to have been a spur of the moment thing. Whilst this is still possible it poses an issue in my opinion. For this to have occurred Parry would have had to have the idea of a prank as soon he saw William (possibly in Breck Road) then he'd have decided on the form that the prank would have taken. He'd have come up with an address conveniently close to a real address (Menlove Gardens East when there was only a North, South and West) He'd have added the idea of a daughters 21st as a reason for taking out a policy and he would have come up with the obscure but memorable name of Qualtrough all in the space of what might have been as little as two minutes and whilst driving and finding a place to park. Again, not impossible but it seems a bit much to ask.

Then we have to look at the prank call in relation to William and what we know about him. Methodical, meticulous and by the book and certainly not impetuous. Is it plausible that he found out about the phone call, seized on the idea of using it as part of a plan to murder his wife and then killing her within 24 hours? An undertaking that could have ended on the gallows? Leaving himself a matter of hours to check for errors? Is this likely? Not impossible of course but is it likely? I just don't think is.

Parry's Alibi For The Phone Call

This is a controversial topic and I fully admit that I'm in a minority on this one because I believe that it's at least a possibility that Parry was simply mistaken rather than lying

when he gave the police his whereabouts on the Monday evening. But even if he was lying we still cannot be at all certain that this was connected to the case. As has been stated by others Parry might have been up to something dodgy that was completely unconnected to the case but was of less importance. What Parry said and what the Lloyd's said are a matter of record but it's worth asking why would Parry tell such a stupid, easily disprovable lie when the stakes were potentially so high? After all Parry had a concrete alibi for the time of the murder. He couldn't have done it and as the police were obviously going to conclude that the caller and the killer were one and the same what did he really have to worry about? Even if he was out and about at the time they still couldn't place him at the call box. People generally need a reason to lie and Parry didn't have much of one. And let's face it he'd had the biggest part of three days to work this out so it wasn't as if he was backed into a corner. Surely one of his dodgy mates might have provided him with a false alibi or perhaps Lily Lloyd might have been obliging? So even if Parry lied we can't say for anything like certain that it was connected to this case and I can't even benefit him with a good reason for telling such a childishly disprovable lie. I genuinely think that he could simply have been mistaken.

Tuesday Night And The Question Of Allan Close

This is another controversial topic. What time did Allan Close last see Julia alive? It's an important question as it tells us how long William would have had to murder Julia and get to his tram on time. It was calculated from tests done by the police that William would have had to have left number 29 at no later than 6.50. So if it could have been shown that Julia closed the door on Close at 6.45 then that gave William just 5 minutes which many think impossible. This view however is formed assuming that William would have been drenched in blood and so would have required time to clean up. I don't think that this is the case. Take away the clean up and five minutes would have been ample time in my opinion but the evidence points to Allan Close last seeing Julia earlier. The police did two reconstructions with Close from a starting point of seeing the church clock in Richmond Park at 6.25. They timed Close as he retread his walk, accounting for picking up milk from his dad's shop, making a delivery in Letchworth Street and putting bottles in a garden in Richmond Park, and then arriving at number 29 Wolverton Street. The two trials were timed at 5 and 6 minutes which would have meant Close getting to number 29 at 6.30/6.31. These times have of course been challenged. Close originally told friends that he'd been in Wolverton Street between 6.30 and 6.45. If those that favour Wallace can be accused of pushing for closer to 6.30 then those seeking to exonerate him might equally be accused of going the other way. But we don't just have to rely on a 14 year old boy as a pointer. Mrs Johnston said that the milk was delivered around 6.30 and the Holme's on the other side heard a knock on the Wallace's door at around 6.35 (this can only have been Close.) So the neighbours point to an earlier time. Paper boy James Wildman though said that he saw Close at the Wallace's door at around 6.37/6.38.

So even if the police timings were wrong (and there's no evidence that they were) and we **double** the time we still get Close to the door of number 29 at 6.35. If we believe Wildman to have been accurate then we have him at the door at 6.37/6.38 giving William 12 or 13 minutes to kill Julia and set out for his tram. There is nothing about Close's evidence that puts a dent in the suggestion that William was the killer.

William Does The Deed

It's impossible of course to recreate exactly what happened on that Tuesday evening. For example we simply cannot know the exact position Julia was in when the first blow was struck so we can only posit a possible scenario that is within the realms of possibility. There's nothing to say for example that the killer might have had a stroke of good fortune but we cannot state this possibility as a fact. We should also avoid leaps of faith. We have to accept for example that under stress a killer might not act entirely logically but this doesn't mean that we should postulate that he acted like a deranged lunatic. So what might have happened (keeping it as simple as possible.)

William was getting ready to go on his pre-planned excursion to the non-existent Menlove Gardens East. He realises that he can't do the deed until the milk had been delivered (for obvious reasons) and the milk boy was late. Julia goes into the Parlour and lights a fire as she intends to play the piano for an hour or so while he was out. He was getting nervous as he knew that he couldn't afford to reach his destination late. Allan Close arrives at around 6.35/6.36. I'll use 6.36 as a starting point. Next door the Holme's hear the knock at the Wallace's door (later they say that this was around 6.30/6.35). As Julia answers the door and takes in the milk jug William goes into the Parlour and stands in front of the mirror checking his tie (or pretending to do so.) As soon as he hears the door close he calls out to Julia and asks her if she wouldn't mind bringing his mackintosh in for him. It's now 6.38. Wallace is standing on the right hand side of the fire place and as Julia hands him the jacket he strikes the first blow with either an iron bar or a poker. Julia sags to the ground and falls against the fire grate. William takes a couple of deep breaths to compose himself then he sees a smouldering coming from Julia. He stoops down and sees that the mackintosh is burning. He puts it out using hands or feet, noticing as he does it that Julia's skirt has been singed on the fire grate. He pulls her away from the fire. The first blow might have killed her but William can take no chances either way so he has to continue with his plan. He kneels next to Julia, drapes the mackintosh over his left arm which he holds horizontally from elbow to hand (a little like a Bullfighters cape.) He put his right arm through a sleeve, holds his left arm up to just below his eyes so that the coat reaches the carpet, and rains down the remaining blows. The only parts of his body exposed are his head from the eyes up and his right hand. Wallace gets a bit of good fortune by getting no blood on his head or hand so there's no need to clean up. Suspecting that, on seeing blood spatter on the mackintosh, the police might have suspected a pre-meditated murder and therefore William, he pushes the coat underneath Julia's body. This served to smudge and smear the blood so that it wouldn't have been identified as blood spatter. It's now 6.40. Even if Wallace had gotten blood on his face or hand he could quite easily have cleaned up in the back kitchen sink (taking a minute or two) Leaving traces of blood in the sink would have been no issue as any thief/killer might have done exactly the same before venturing outside.

He then goes into the kitchen where he's left some paper which he uses to wrap the weapon. Then he removes the cash from the box, dropping a few coins in the process to give the impression of a thief/killer leaving in a hurry. This might easily have been done earlier on of course (if Julia had spotted the coins on the floor William could easily have said that he'd dropped them earlier and had thought he'd picked them all up.) It's now

6.42. There's a cupboard with a loose door which he pulls off to imply that someone was looking for valuables before he saw the cash box. He has one eye on the clock. Close being late has caused him to panic slightly. Doing this in reality is never going to feel how it did when he ran through it in his mind and he's worrying that he might have made some kind of error. He turns down the gas jets as the last thing he needed was a visitor turning up at 7.00 to find the lights on but getting no reply and then deciding to go to the police. He puts on his coat and leaves by the back door. It's now 6.45 giving William ample time to get to his first tram. On to the next part of the plan.

Disposing Of The Weapon

This section is a short one as I can do little better than to say that William disposed of the weapon after the murder. The police made what sounds like a thorough search of the route and found nothing. It's pointless trying to conjecture about what he did with it but things hidden or disposed of can remain undiscovered. It's just a fact. I've suggested the possibility that he put it into an ash can somewhere but this also presents issues. Firstly, ash cans were accessed from inside a yard (households simply put the ashes from the fire grate in there to be taken away by the collectors who accessed them from the outside.) I'd ask, if a collector could access the can from outside the garden couldn't a passerby? Was some kind of key involved? I don't know. Or could William have found an unlocked gate and in the dark and in a matter 5 seconds nipped in to dump the weapon. William might previously checked back gates to find the ones left open at that time? Secondly, the police had the ash dumps searched and nothing was found. We might wonder how thorough the search was though? How enthusiastic were the searchers during this unpleasant task? If William planned the murder, and I believe that he did, then I'd imagine that he'd put some thought into the disposal of the weapon.

Another thought occurred to me based on something that William had said in response to being asked about the disappearance of the poker. He suggested that Sarah Draper might have thrown it out with the ashes. The poker was kept at the side of the grate so why would Sarah have left it in the ashes? Why would someone have put wood on top of it without seeing it thus allowing a later of ash to build up and cover it? And then how could she have missed it when emptying the ash out of the grate before taking it outside to put in the ash bin? It doesn't sound a remotely likely suggestion to me. However if the poker was the weapon what if....

When William leaves the house he takes the poker into the outside loo and cleans it in the toilet bowl using paper. He then flushes away the evidence and dries the poker with a handkerchief. Somewhere along the route he puts the poker into someone's ash bin. It's never found of course but, if it had been, Wallace had already planted a seed by suggesting that Sarah might have accidentally thrown it out with the ash and here it was and with no blood or brain matter on it....

The Menlove Gardens East Charade

Journey

This is important. Ask yourself if Wallace's behaviour is even close to reasonable? Especially for a man who allegedly wasn't unfamiliar with the area.

We now have William on his journey to MGE catching 3 trams in the process. Despite having visited the area several times he acts like an inexperienced explorer hacking his way through the Amazon rain forest. And yet after being given possible routes by McCartney and Caird, Wallace told his friend Caird that he'd "Get a tram to town and another out again from town, **as I know the way.**" You would never have thought so! His second tram was from Smithdown Lane. Wallace's sister-in-law Amy lived in Ullet Road which was a major road off Smithdown Lane. They had visited them on numerous occasions. William and Julia had visited Calderstones Park 2 or 3 times a year and they would have used the very same tram. William's Supervisor at the Prudential Joseph Crewe lived in Green Lane which is between Menlove Avenue and Allerton Road. William had been to his house several times for violin lessons. To claim that he was unfamiliar with the area or that he was a complete stranger was a lie. I'm not suggesting that he knew every back street but a complete stranger....definitely not. True he didn't know the exact location of MGE (how could he?) but he was no stranger to the area or how to get there. Despite this he tells tram driver Phillips "I'm a stranger to the district..." and asks about MGE, telling him he has a business appointment. Two minutes later he's hassling him again about MGE. Then within a couple of minutes he's asking the ticket Inspector, Angus, the same question about MGE. A few minutes later William was hassling Phillips again despite being told several times where to change trams. An eight year old would have made less fuss.

An especially important point to consider here is that when he asked Phillips how far it was until they got to Penny Lane the tram was less than half way along Smithdown Lane before it then came to Ullet Road where Amy lived and William had visited several times. He knew perfectly well that Ullet Road came before Penny Lane so even being charitable to William he should have asked after Ullet Road had been reached because he knew that he wouldn't be arriving at his destination unexpectedly.

William's behaviour was strange to the point of being inexplicable. The previous night he'd told Caird that he hadn't even made up his mind to go and yet on the Tuesday evening we have an intelligent, well travelled, reserved man going through an area that he'd visited on untold occasions and yet he's as nervous, jittery and uncertain as a very young bridegroom who is late for his wedding to a bride with a dangerously impatient psychopath for a father!

In my opinion this is a man making sure that he was seen, heard and remembered. It was a charade.

The Search

William arrived to begin his search at 7.20. Might we call this 'cutting it fine' for the meticulous William's 7.30 appointment in an area where he was a 'complete stranger?' Perhaps something at home prevented him from giving himself a little more time? Before looking at his actions though it's worth reminding ourselves that the previous evening William had told his best friend Caird that he wasn't even decided on whether to go or

not. It's worth remembering this because some have tried to explain William's Indiana Jones-like persistence and determination by saying that he would have been desperately keen to land a decent sized commission. Well he was aware of that possibility on the previous evening and yet he didn't appear bothered. What changed in 24 hours? What made William persevere despite being told by numerous people (including a Constable on his beat) that Menlove Gardens East simply did not exist?

William had seen that there was a West, South and North but he could see no Menlove Gardens East. Then he meets a young clerk called Sidney Green who tells him that there was definitely no MGE. William must have thought this, at the very least, strange. He then tries number 25 Menlove Gardens West where Kate Mather gives him the bad news that there was no Qualtrough there. It's an interesting point that was made by Murphy that Wallace said "It's strange, **there is no East.**" So even at this early point William is already thinking that MGE doesn't exist. And yet on he goes. And on...and on.

Then, after talking to someone in Menlove Avenue, William for some unknown reason found himself in Green Lane which he suddenly 'recognised' as the same Green Lane where his Supervisor Joseph Crewe lived and where Wallace had visited many times. As he'd gone into Green Lane from Menlove Gardens he'd have seen the entrance to Calderstones Park. Somewhere else that he'd visited numerous times. How could he not have recognised this area earlier? It beggars belief. But it gets worse. William tries Crewe's house but gets no reply and so moves on.

William made four police statements in total and was interviewed by them several times. In statements 1 and 2 he gave a run down of his search that night listing those he'd talked to and the places that he'd visited. **At no time in any of his interviews or in any of his statements does he mention visiting Crewe's house in Green Lane that night!** Why was that? The others were strangers but Crewe wasn't. Was he simply concerned that this might have given less weight to his claim of being a 'complete stranger.'

A point made by Murphy is that because William said that he'd known where he was by now he walked to the junction of Allerton Road because he knew that there were shops and people in that area for him to ask. So he was looking for shops and people? Sensible move. Then why hadn't he walked to Queen's Drive earlier "where there were shops and people" (along a route that he knew) instead of wandering down a street which he apparently unfamiliar with and which might very well have been devoid of people or shops?

It was at this point that William ran into Constable James Sergeant on his beat. He needlessly tells Sergeant all the details of his quest and is told categorically that MGE doesn't exist but that he might want to try Menlove Avenue (a suggestion that William ignores) Then suspiciously William checks the time with Sergeant so that he could ensure that the Post Office was still open to allow him access to a directory. Why did he have no confidence in his own watch being accurate? Can we imagine William's watch being significantly wrong? William also, according to Sergeant, appeared nervous and stammered his questions. Why? What reason had he to have been nervous? It's difficult to see this

episode as anything other than William establishing his location and time. The fact that he was now talking to a police officer accounts for his apparent bout of nerves.

William then goes to the PO to see if they have a directory. As an aside it's worth asking why he didn't check a directory before he left on his journey if he was so unfamiliar with the area? They didn't have one and William is pointed in the direction of the newsagents over the road but he finds nothing in their directory. The shop manager Lily Pinches becomes the final person to inform him that MGE simply did not exist and that she'd never heard of anyone called Qualtrough so William finally gives up and decides to head home. It's worth noting however that he claimed that he was by now becoming anxious about Julia and keen to get home. Pinches claimed however that he appeared cheerful. The attack of nervousness that afflicted him when he talked to a Police Officer had mysteriously disappeared by then.

The Journey Home

Before we arrive back at Wolverton Street I have to mention William's highly selective memory. When the murder became news the police called for tram conductors to come forward which led to the testimonies of Phillips, Tomlinson and the Inspector, Angus. They all remembered William well because of the fuss that he made on the journey out but not one conductor or Inspector came forward from the journey back. The first tram that William used (the number 8) on his return journey was one that he hadn't used since 1929 when he'd last visited Crewe for violin lessons. Despite William having no apparent cause for concern on the way there but being anxious about for his wife's safety on the way back, we have to ask why the fuss on the more familiar tram route going and yet not a peep on the less familiar tram returning?

William 'Discovers' The Body

William Wallace arrived back at the front door of 29 Wolverton Street at 8.45 after a fruitless and rather obsessive hour long search. He was already anxious about his wife and that anxiety must have increased somewhat when he discovered that he couldn't get in by the front door (William always returned via the front door after dark.) He knocked but got no reply so he went through the alley and in via his back gate to try the back door. He used his key but couldn't get in there either. He knocked but got no response so he returned to try again at the front door but the result was the same. As he returned to try the back door again he bumped into his neighbours John and Florence Johnston who were heading out to visit family. They said hello but the first thing William asked was if they had heard anything suspicious coming from his house. A sure indicator that Wallace, if innocent, must have felt that there was a very real possibility that Julia had come to some kind of harm. Mr Johnston told William to try again a that if he was unsuccessful he'd go and fetch his own key and try that. They felt that as they might have had common locks their key might have worked. William tried again and the door opened.

Those Pesky Locks!

It's certainly worth mentioning here that during the investigation it was found that the backdoor lock was indeed faulty but, and it's a sizeable 'but' in my opinion....William had never been unable to get in before. **The first time ever that the faulty lock had prevented him from getting inside was on the very night that his wife lay dead inside.** I firmly believe that this issue with the doors was another charade. Possibly in the hope that someone would see William 'struggling' to get inside, frantic with worry about his wife. There's a more likely reason though and it's backed up by what William said at his trial. He tried to deny that he might have 'suspected' that there was someone inside the house (apart from Julia of course.) When pressured he conceded that he might have suspected this at the time. I think that William's plan was to have said that when he'd returned to the alleyway for the second time he heard footsteps running down the alleyway. Or even that a shady figure pushed passed him in the gateway and that he'd found the backdoor was now wide open? The appearance of the Johnston's scuppered this plan of course so he was forced to repeat his claim of being unable to get in until the door mysteriously opened.

On the subject of doors let's look at the one at the front of the house. William claimed that this was bolted but we only have his word for it. If it was bolted then the question is who bolted it? If the killer talked his way in then it certainly wasn't Julia as she'd not only intended to have let William in when he returned but also let our Mr X out. Would the killer have bolted it? It's difficult to see why. He certainly couldn't have bolted it when Julia was alive and unsuspecting so could he have bolted it after he'd killed her? Why? He spent no time ransacking the house for valuables so it's almost an absolute certainty that he'd have left the house within a minute or two of Julia's death. Why would he have bothered locking the front door when he would have left almost immediately by the back? Let's look at this interesting snippet from the cross examination of PC Williams by Hemmerde.

Hemmerde: What happened?

Williams: After a few seconds of fumbling by someone inside the door was opened by the accused.....

Hemmerde: While the fumbling was on did you or did you not hear the bolt being drawn?

Williams: **I did not.**

The 'fumbling' was done by Mrs Johnston who tried opening the door but couldn't manage the lock. She stated to Walsh at the trial that it was because it was different type of lock to her own combined with the fact that she was agitated. Not because it was bolted. And so we have PC Williams standing close enough to the door to easily hear the fumbling and yet he hears no bolt being drawn!

This is more powerful evidence of William lying and of William's guilt.

Inside The House

So a very worried William finally got inside to find the lights off; increasing his apprehension no doubt. He called out but the house was in silence as well as darkness. He went through the small back kitchen (often known as the scullery) and into the kitchen (which is the room that they would have used as a sitting room.) He noticed that the door had been torn from a cupboard that he'd used for storing photographing equipment amongst other things so we can safely assume that by this time all thoughts of an innocent explanation would have disappeared. William would have been desperate to have found his wife....wouldn't he? Yet as he gets to the door leading from the kitchen to the hallway all that he had to have done was to have stretched out his left hand and opened the Parlour door. How long? Two or three seconds? No, William completely ignored the Parlour to go upstairs to search the four rooms up there (the Wallace's bedroom, the front bedroom used for storing clothes, the bathroom/lavatory and William's laboratory.) Some have claimed that this action was reasonable because the Parlour was a room used less than other rooms. For the receiving of visitors etc. I'm sorry but this holds little water for me and is used as an excuse to legitimise suspicious behaviour.

Would any normal person, faced with the very real possibility that his wife might have come to serious harm and was therefore desperate to find her, have got within reaching distance of the Parlour door then decided to leave it until last on the basis that the room wasn't used quite as often as some of the others? It beggars belief! Julia's piano was in there for a start. Julia might have had any number of reasons for having gone in there. Certainly more reasons than she would have had for going into William's laboratory unless she'd fancied doing an experiment or two before her husband returned!

Of course we have to ask why William might have deliberately avoided the Parlour and of course I can provide no definitive answer but I can make suggestions. 1) As he was now getting to the serious part of the proceedings, William might have been hit by an attack of nerves and so wanted a minute or two to compose himself. Maybe even a few drags on a cigarette? 2) Maybe a cautious William just wanted to double-check the whole house just to ensure that he'd committed no blunders to be discovered by the police. Or, more speculatively 3) Maybe earlier in the evening William brought down a bottle of chemicals in case he needed to wash away blood from his hands? As he never needed to use it perhaps, in his nervous state, he'd forgotten to return it and seeing it in the back kitchen when he entered he'd realised that he needed to return it to his laboratory before he admitted anyone into the house?

As I've already mentioned, in court Wallace was forced to admit (despite trying to deny it) that he'd originally suspected that someone was inside the house. I've always wondered why, if he felt that this was the case, didn't he ask Mr Johnston to accompany him inside? Does William strike anyone as the have-a-go hero, Bruce Willis type? Perhaps it was because he needed to look around or do something first?

And so William 'discovers' the body and goes to tell the Johnston's. A Doctor and the Police are sent for. The Game's Afoot as The Great Detective would have said.

The Mysterious Mackintosh

The mackintosh belonged to William and it was found bunched up beneath Julia's body and has become quite a controversial object amongst those interested in the case. How did it come to be there? Why was it in the room in the first place for that matter? William had hung it up in the hallway when he'd gotten home that afternoon. There appears to be three main schools of thought. 1) That Julia had thrown the coat around her shoulders to answer the door and kept it on whilst lighting a fire in the cold Parlour. 2) That William wore it to kill Julia or 3) The one that I favour - that William had used it as a shield to prevent himself getting covered in blood. Obviously he couldn't have hung a bloodied coat back up on the rack so he pushed it under Julia's body which would also have served to smear and disguise the blood spatter.

One question to be asked is why would Julia have chosen William's coat as her own coat or coats would have been on the same coat hooks? She couldn't have mistaken it for her own because she didn't own a mackintosh. Also women's coats were often made of thicker, heavier and therefore warmer material than a mackintosh so it would have been interesting to know if Julia owned such a coat. We would then have to ask why she didn't use it to keep warm? Then again why would Julia feel the need to throw a coat over her shoulders just to answer the door as she obviously wasn't that bothered by the cold as she hadn't thrown one over her shoulders when she'd actually gone outside to walk with William to the gate and back? This explanation for why the mackintosh was in the room is not impossible but it's unlikely in my opinion.

The next question is how the coat ended up beneath Julia? Although it's been suggested that it ended up beneath her after she fell from the first blow I simply can't accept this as even possible. How can a woman with a coat over her shoulders fall onto her front with the coat ending up bunched beneath her? Try visualising it. This is a non-starter for me.

I'd never heard of a remotely plausible alternative explanation until very recently. It has been suggested that as the mackintosh was smouldering the killer stomped it out and then dragged Julia's body away from the fire which left her body on top of the coat. I certainly can't think of a reason why this definitely couldn't have occurred apart suggesting that stomping on a coat might have tended to have flattened it out. Also that the coat was apparently really tucked up beneath Julia. So we're left with two possible explanations. Perhaps opinions on this will be guided by whether the individual believes that William was guilty or whether they favour an alternative solution. I certainly believe that the mackintosh was used in the crime.

There's an interesting footnote though which might be a pointer to the truth. In a series of articles for John Bull magazine written after his acquittal William himself suggested that the killer 'might' have used the mackintosh as a shield. Was this William doing a bit of gloating? That only he knew the real reason for presence of the mackintosh.

A Careful Killer?

Another question worth considering is why there was no blood outside of the Parlour? If William was the killer then he **had** to have either cleaned himself up or else taken precaution against getting covered in blood due to his Menlove Gardens East journey.

There was no evidence of any clean up though and clean up would have been more time consuming so the latter would have been far more likely. So no blood on him would have meant no blood elsewhere. Another killer, especially one for whom the murder was unplanned, wouldn't have taken any precaution of course. And if he hadn't have taken precautions then he most certainly would have been contaminated by blood. Would he have left the scene in this state? Doubtful. He certainly didn't clean up in the sink, something that he could have done with no risk at all, but chose not to. Apart from fingerprints an alternative killer really had no need for caution when it came to contaminating the house with blood and yet there wasn't a spot of blood on the gas jets where they were turned down or on the walls or the doors or the door handles or even the handle of the back gate.

What if the killer had worn gloves? Well they might still have been bloody and yet none was transferred and would he have taken them off and risked leaving prints?

Of course it's not impossible that a killer other than William might not have left blood outside of the Parlour but it's certainly suggestive of caution as we can discount a clean up. The suggestion that Julia picked up her husband's mackintosh rather than her own coat simply to answer the door when she hadn't done so to go outside doesn't convince. With William as the killer we have a plausible explanation not only for the presence of the mackintosh in the parlour but also its location and for why there was no blood outside of the Parlour.

Murder In The Dark

Why were the gas jets all turned down? Would Julia have been sitting alone in a house with the lights off? Of course not. So why did our killer turn down the gas jets? I've yet to hear a remotely plausible suggestion for why an alternative killer would have done so. It simply makes no sense. He wouldn't work in the dark (especially in an unfamiliar house) and he certainly wouldn't have wasted time turning the lights off before he made his escape but can we come up with a plausible reason for William to have done so? Yes we can. Caution. William was working to a plan where he would 'discover' Julia later in the evening. What if, say ten minutes after he'd left, the Wallace's had had a visitor? His sister-in-law Amy for example. She knocks the door, sees all the lights on but gets no response. She gets worried, perhaps she goes to talk to the neighbours, and then someone goes for the police. The problem for William would have been obvious. According to him he'd left the house at 6.45. Amy gets no response at 6.55. Would the police really have believed that in the space of 10 minutes a stranger gets inside with no signs of a break in, kills Julia, empties a cash box that he appears to have gone directly to and replaced it on the shelf and then made his getaway? I think not.

Only William had a valid reason for turning off the gas jets.

Summing Up William As The Killer

If, as has been suggested, this was a robbery that went horribly wrong then it's surely the most pathetic of efforts. Even though less than £5 was 'taken,' apart from one cupboard door being pulled off (and expensive photographic equipment ignored) our thief

didn't even make a cursory attempt to look for more cash or valuables to have made his night's work worthwhile. Julia's bag was on a chair in plain view with her purse inside yet our 'thief' couldn't even be bothered to take the 3 seconds required to have a look. Not a single drawer was opened either in the kitchen or in the Parlour. This was quite obviously no robbery so could it have been a premeditated murder by an outsider? Unlikely in the extreme. Julia had a very narrow circle and was a quiet, reserved woman. Who could have hated this inoffensive old lady enough to kill her just for the sake of it? So if it wasn't a robbery and we can't come up with a single person who might have hated Julia enough to have wanted to kill her we are really left with only one killer.....William.

I firmly believe that their marriage wasn't a happy one. William came up with the Qualtrough Plan to give him a reason to be away from the house in a way that would have appeared to others as unplanned and to introduce a 'Mr X' In the form of the now legendary R.M. Qualtrough. He also pointed the police very firmly in the direction of the dodgy Richard Gordon Parry.

(By the way.....Qual-trow or Qual-troff? It doesn't really matter.)

He blatantly lied about being 'a complete stranger' around the Menlove Gardens area. He'd been there numerous times and in several police interviews and in 4 statements (where he recalled the locations he visited and the strangers that he met) he 'neglects' to mention in his police statements and interviews that he'd called at the house of someone that he'd actually known, Joseph Crewe. Why? Because it would have revealed his familiarity with the area.

Despite being familiar with the area and despite the fact that a mere 24 hours earlier he'd been undecided on whether to go or not William acts like a man who's just left the house for the very first time to search for the Holy Grail by constantly pestering tram drivers and an Inspector despite being told how to get to where he had to go. This was play acting in my opinion. William making himself memorable.

Then he ignores everyone that tells him that Menlove Gardens East doesn't exist. Even a Police Officer on his beat who apparently made William inexplicably nervous simply by conversing with him. He stammers his questions and then pointlessly introduces a clock check to establish the time in the Constable's mind.

He finally becomes so worried about Julia that on his journey back, using a far less familiar tram route, he's as silent as a grave. He's now a confident traveller unlike the nervous babbler of the outgoing journey.

He gets home and, for the first time in 16 years, he can't get past his backdoor lock on the very night that his wife lay dead inside. He also claims that the front door was bolted and yet PC William's (who had heard Mrs Johnston fumbling with a strange lock) stated that he heard no bolt being drawn when he was asked in court. More play acting in my opinion. Wallace trying to give the impression that the killer was still inside.

Seeing the house in darkness, getting no response to knocks and calls and then seeing a cupboard door torn off all after being sent on a wild goose chase to a non-existent address would have left any husband frantic with worry and yet William can't even be bothered to reach out his hand and check the Parlour. No, he'd rather leave the Parlour until last based on an estimation of room usage likelihood! This is simply not believable. How many excuses is William allowed?

Conclusion

I said at the beginning that I don't think that the Wallace case will ever be solved to everyone's or even a significant majority's satisfaction and I stand by that statement. I am however as convinced as I can be that William Herbert Wallace killed his wife Julia on that Tuesday night almost 90 years ago. I'd go further and say that in my opinion Wallace stands head and shoulders above every other suspect. I don't intend to discuss other suspects or theories here because I only wanted to put forward my own case for Wallace's guilt. And because there are no other worthwhile suspects of course. 🍊

Questions And Points

- Why would a killer other than Wallace have turned off the lights?
- Why did William avoid that Parlour door to go upstairs?
- Why did William struggle with the backdoor lock for the first time ever?
- Why did he lie about the front door being bolted?
- Why didn't a thief search for money or valuables after the paltry cash box haul?
- Why did William neglect to mention visiting Crewe's house in his statements to the police?
- Why did William pretend to be a 'complete stranger' in the area when he obviously wasn't?
- Why did William persevere after he was told repeatedly that MGE didn't exist and yet 24 hours earlier he hadn't even made up his mind to go?
- Why did William walk past two perfectly good tram stops on the Monday night to get to one further away?
- Why did William lie to Beattie and Caird about being exonerated by the police?
- Why did William try to deny in court that he'd suspected that there was someone in the house when he'd got back until he was compelled to concede the point?
- If someone else planned it how could they have known that William would have taken the bait and gone looking for MGE?
- Why was there no blood outside the Parlour if the killer hadn't taken precautions or cleaned up?
- If a spur-of-the-moment killer killed Julia with an implement from inside the house why didn't he simply wipe it on a towel or on Julia's skirt and leave it rather than fleeing the scene with a bloodied weapon?
- If the killer talked his way in at the front door why did no one see or hear anyone considering that neighbours had heard the milk boy knock and then William knocking the back door with his hand on his return?
- Why would Julia have worn William's coat when her own would have been on the same coat rack?

- Why would she need a coat over her shoulders to answer the door but none when she'd actually gone outside to the back gate and back to see William off?
- Why did the well organised and meticulous William arrive at the Chess Club on the stroke of the tournament deadline at 7.45 risking having to forfeit his game? Was he held up?
- Why did the well organised and meticulous William leave himself only 10 minutes to find 25 MGE in an area where he was a 'complete stranger'?
- Why didn't the well organised and meticulous William simply check a directory during the day on Tuesday before he went looking for MGE?
- Why wasn't William suspicious that a stranger would, a) specifically want to deal with him and not just contact the Prudential, and b) why did he never question how they knew that he'd be at the Chess Club or even have been a member in the first place? He never appears to question the strangeness of the call.
- Why wasn't he suspicious that the caller asked for his address and yet had no intention of going to his house?

There are more questions but I'll leave it at that.

Michael Banks