

Peter Tobin - sky Online

BY Mark Williams-Thomas - Criminologist and Child Protection Expert.

All major enquiries such as murder and abduction need to focus on their key elements. These are 'Access', 'Opportunity' and 'Motivation'. For me motivation is the least important - I am less interested in why people commit a crime, such as murder but more in how they had the Access and Opportunity to commit the crime - it is not about getting into the mind of the killer.

Over the last 24 hours the police have made the grim discovery, in the rear garden of a terrace house in Kent, of the remains of Vicky Hamilton, a 15 year old girl that vanished 500 miles away from Bathgate in West Lothian, Scotland on the 10th February 1991.

It is clear that the current police operation at the former address of the police key suspect, Peter Tobin is intelligence lead - the police clearly searching one specific area, rather than a full excavation at this stage, of the rear garden.

I have no doubt that over the next few days we will see a thorough excavation and search of both the garden and inside of the house.

So faced with such a discovery what will the police be focussing on and what will be the key lines of enquiry?

The police have a suspect, a victim and a crime scene- the latter two will certainly provide key information even if the suspect is not talking. The crime scene and the victim giving up to the Forensic Archaeologists an indication of time and cause of death.

What is key now is to focus on Peter Tobin - the police need to build up a detailed picture of his movements and his life. Who he has worked for, what areas he frequented for work-what addresses he has lived in or had access to- what transport he has had access to- who have been or are his associates or contacts- what his family background is- his relationship with his wife/partner. The list is extensive....

By focussing on the background of the suspect the police will be able to identify areas that he has had access to, allowing them to focus on cases of missing adolescent girls and young women from that area. An offender, even those that are serial killers, will tend to operate in an area close to their home or work. Using this geographical knowledge the police will be focusing on missing person cases in Scotland- such as the disappearance of three young women- Patricia Docker (25) Jemma McDonald (32) and Helen Puttock (29) between February 1968 and October 1969 from the Glasgow area, a locality that Tobin had connection with around the time.

All the above questions and lines of enquiry will be raised as 'Actions' and run on HOLMES 2 (Home Office Large Major Enquiry System) and will enable the police to co-ordinate what has the strong possibility of being a very large investigation.

We know that the police have undertaken a 'scoping' exercise over the past few months asking police forces to look at missing persons cases- but we must remember that this may produce limited results. Indeed a number of the women murdered by Fred West were never reported missing.

Research shows that at any one time there are 2 'serial killers' (someone who has murdered 3 or more people) operating in the UK -knowing what I do about this investigation and the background of the suspect I think we may have found the latest serial killer.