

THE EXPERT WITNESS II

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Examinations of crimes, drugs and
poisons by a forensic toxicologist

A Second Dose

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Dedication

Dedicated to the victims of the crimes and their families, and the police officers and colleagues I have had the privilege of working with on these, and many other cases.

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Introduction

It is a stifling-hot summer day in Sydney, Australia, with the humidity approaching the mid-nineties and a hint of an afternoon thunderstorm. A cloaked barrister blots the sweat off his brow as he strides into the courtroom, passing me in the foyer of the court waiting to give my evidence to the case at hand. One of the many participants in yet another human drama.

Hopefully, when all the evidence is presented due justice prevails, but sadly, not always ...

Poisons and drugs from a variety of sources have been used in an illegal way for centuries, and have an unfortunate, enduring fascination. People appear to be both attracted to them and at the same time repelled by them, due to the fact that they can be deadly, while they can also be very discreet. In forensic investigations, the questions that are usually raised are: Did the victim overdose? What was the poison/drug used? Was it murder, an accident or suicide? How was it taken and how much? Would that dosage be enough to take their life?

The answer will come down to how a substance was administered, probable dosage, levels found in the body, tolerance, as well as any possible motive for carrying out the deed.

As Forrest Gump said in the 1994 movie of the same name, ‘Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you’re gonna get.’ And so it is with criminal cases, where some are darker than others, but none are ever sweet!

Some names in the stories presented here have been changed for legal reasons. However, I hope you the reader find these stories both interesting and informative. Some even request your assistance, if possible.

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1 Misty River Mystery: The Bogle-Chandler Case

'An open marriage is nature's way of telling you
that you need a divorce.'

– Ann Landers

One of the strangest cases, I've come across in my varied career was the mysterious death of Dr Gilbert Bogle and Mrs Margaret Chandler on the banks of the Lane Cove River in Sydney on New Year's Day, 1963. Margaret Chandler, while married to her husband Geoffrey, was attracted to Gilbert 'Gib' Bogle, a senior scientist employed by the Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) where he was carrying out research into the physics of masers, a magnetic version of lasers. It was a brief, salacious affair, which unfortunately resulted in a double tragedy.

It would be some two decades later that I would look at the case and make a curious find.

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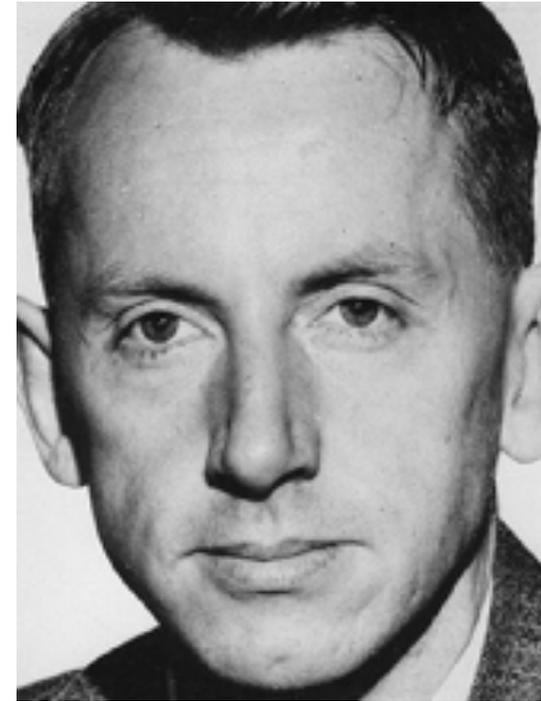


Teenagers Michael McCormick and Dennis Wheway discovered the body of Doctor Gilbert Bogle in 1963. File picture courtesy of The Daily Telegraph.

It was the morning of New Year's Day in 1963 when at 7.45 am two boys were searching the banks of the misty Lane Cove River for stray golf balls to supplement their pocket money. Unfortunately, instead of golf balls, the boys found a man in a suit lying face down on the ground on the narrow dirt track known locally as 'lovers' lane'. The boys initially thought he was just a drunk sleeping off an excess of alcohol consumed at the previous night's New Year's Eve revelries. Probably not unexpected. But when they returned to the man's body sometime later, he hadn't moved and the boys alerted police.

When Sergeant Arthur Andrews and Senior Constable Nicholls arrived in the police-issue Studebaker Lark sedan they found Bogle dead (this was further certified by a medical practitioner), but made a further bizarre discovery: he was not fully clothed as it first appeared, but was naked from the waist down. He had been covered with a piece of carpet and his suit trousers had been carefully placed over the lower part of his body. Documents on his body identified him as Dr Gilbert Stanley Bogle.

But there was more: some 18.5 metres away in a shallow depression on the edge of the river the body of a woman was found under a few sheets

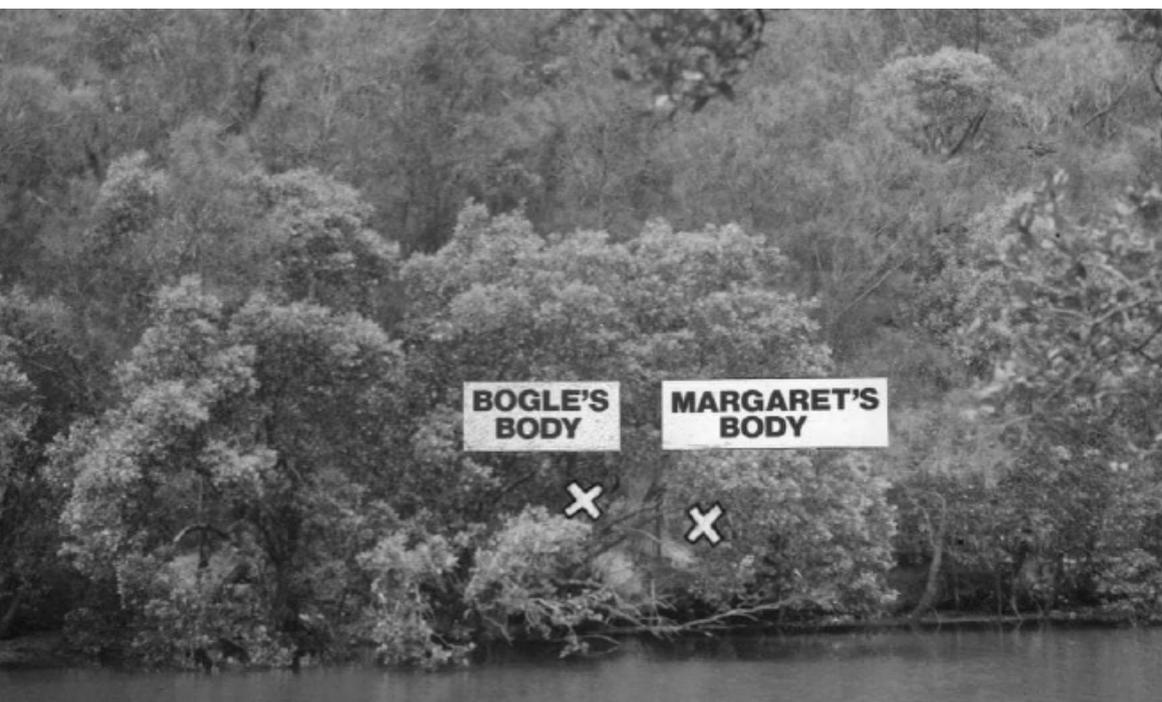


Dr Gilbert Bogle was found to have had a number of extramarital affairs. File picture courtesy of The Daily Telegraph.

of old cardboard from a broken beer box. She was lying face up and her floral frock was bunched up around her waist. In addition, her bra had been pulled down to expose her breasts. A pair of men's boxer underwear lay between her bare feet while her own panties were some metres away. The body was later identified as Mrs Margaret Olive Chandler.

While, the stench of vomit and human excreta at the crime scene made it obvious to police that the couple had been poisoned, it appeared to have taken effect while they were engaged in sexual activity, as semen was later detected on their clothing.

But, in both cases police could find no sign of violence, nor an apparent cause of death. It proved to be a very complex and difficult case with all the ingredients of an unsolved erotic murder mystery and a hint of Cold War espionage, which was to span decades.



*The bodies were found just metres apart.
File picture courtesy of The Daily Telegraph.*

Dr Gilbert Bogle was a talented physicist and Rhodes scholar who worked at the CSIRO and was married to Vivienne Mary Bogle (Rich), a former schoolteacher and fellow graduate of Victoria University College. They had three children, one of whom was born after Gilbert's death. However, police discovered that Bogle was involved in a number of extramarital affairs with other women, many of whom he took to parks for romantic liaisons, as he had a penchant for outdoor sex.

Margaret Chandler was married to Geoffrey Arnold Chandler and the couple had two children. Mr Chandler worked as a scientific photographer in the same CSIRO building as Dr Bogle, while Mrs Chandler was a qualified nursing sister. They appear to have had an 'open marriage' and some sort of understanding that they each could



*Margaret Chandler was a married mother-of two.
File picture courtesy of The Daily Telegraph.*

take on lovers outside their marriage. It was a strange relationship. But appeared to work for the couple.

It was just prior to Christmas 1962 that Dr Bogle, the Chandlers and a number of others, including Ken and Ruth Nash, attended a barbecue. Ken Nash also worked at the CSIRO. It was a small, relatively ordinary gathering. Dr Bogle had been the life of the party and it was soon obvious that Dr Bogle and Mrs Chandler, had 'eyes for each other'.

On the way home Mrs Chandler commented to her husband that she was quite taken with Dr Bogle. He supposedly replied, 'If you want Gib [Gilbert] as a lover, if it would you make you happy, do it.'

Geoffrey Chandler was an associate of the bohemian Sydney Push, a predominantly left-wing intellectual subculture in Sydney at the time which rejected conventional morality and authoritarianism (essentially,

the lack of concern for the wishes or opinions of others). Hence, his lack of concern about his wife's interest in Gilbert Bogle. Besides, he had extramarital interests too!

Ken and Ruth Nash subsequently invited the Chandlers, along with Gilbert Bogle, to their New Year's Eve party, which was held at the Nashs' home in Waratah Street, Chatswood. Mr Chandler and his wife arrived at the party, but at about 11.30 pm Geoffrey left the party, supposedly to buy cigarettes, and drove to the suburb of Balmain where he met Pam Logan, with whom he was having an affair. He returned to the Chatswood party at about 2.30 am but left again to return to Balmain after agreeing that Dr Bogle would take Margaret Chandler home. Sometime after 4 am Dr Bogle and Mrs Chandler discreetly left the party and drove to the nearby Lane Cove River for their final sexual liaison.



*The scene from a journalist's car after it was parked in the same spot in Lane Cove National Park as Dr Bogle's car was.
File picture courtesy of The Daily Telegraph.*



*Geoffrey Chandler was Margaret's husband.
File picture courtesy of The Daily Telegraph.*

It was after midday on 1 January 1963 that the Chandler and Bogle families were notified by police of the grim news of the double tragedy.

The case was soon to be widely reported, resulting in something of a media circus.

Mrs Chandler's husband Geoffrey was accused of the murders, but was never prosecuted due to lack of evidence. The most crazy (and unsupported) theory that surfaced was that Bogle was a spy, another was that the couple had taken LSD. However, none of this speculation was backed up by solid scientific evidence.

More significantly, a fellow party guest said that Bogle and Chandler appeared intoxicated at the party. Curiously, it was apparently a very staid party with a limited amount of alcohol on offer!

The autopsies on the bodies of Dr Bogle and Mrs Chandler showed no

signs of violence apart from some purple/blue-coloured patches on their bodies, and the conclusion was that they had died from a poison that was never identified.

Eventually, a local greyhound trainer owned up to having found the couple early on New Year's Day morning, deciding to cover them up but also to avoid police involvement. He too was cleared of any other involvement in their deaths.



New Year's Eve party hosts Ruth and Kenneth Nash leave the inquest into the deaths. File picture courtesy of The Daily Telegraph.

At an inquest held in May 1963, the coroner, Mr J. J. Loomes, found that Dr Bogle and Mrs Chandler had died because of 'Acute circulatory failure. But as to the circumstances under which such circulatory failure was brought about, the evidence does not permit me to say.' Essentially, they died because either their hearts stopped beating or they stopped breathing.

All deaths occur because of either these failures, whether it be through ill health, poison or fatal accidents from organ damage. But, the actual cause of the deaths in this instance was unknown.

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Fast-forward, just short of two decades after the incident, I found myself working in the Forensic Toxicology laboratory at the Division of



Margaret Chandler is pictured in her nurse's uniform. File picture courtesy of The Daily Mirror.



*Margaret Chandler and Dr Bogle were said to have appeared intoxicated at the party they attended before their deaths.
File picture courtesy of The Daily Telegraph.*

Analytical Laboratories at Lidcombe one evening in 1981, where I was employed as a forensic analyst and had to run a series of post-mortem toxicology samples on the gas chromatographs (GC) for an overnight run. The samples were extracted, but there were several other spaces left in the GC carousel. Then, I saw on entering the cool room, two samples that I thought were worth further screening. There were only two bottles of blood, one labelled 'Dr Gilbert Bogle' and the other 'Mrs Margaret Chandler'.

Unfortunately, no other organ samples were available as these had been used in earlier extensive examinations.

The blood samples were heavily haemolysed and I didn't expect much to come out of the screen. After all, some eighteen years had passed since these unfortunate, albeit controversial deaths had occurred. The

Bogle-Chandler case had become quite well-known due to the strange circumstances in which the bodies were found and also because the cause of death could not be determined. But, I thought it was still worth testing the samples, and included them in the gas chromatographic (GLC) screen. The following morning I checked the chromatograms and apart from the 'usual suspects' (caffeine etc.), the Bogle/Chandler samples were a surprise, particularly for the latter part of their chromatograms.

The earlier part of the chromatogram was a mess due to the extensively haemolysed blood. But, more importantly, there was a late eluting peak which had a Kovats index corresponding to the drug, yohimbine. It was detected in both samples – and confirmed on two chromatographic columns (OV17 and SE-30). The thin-layer chromatographic (TLC) evidence with a reference standard R_f (Retention factor) of –0.5 backed up the GLC data.

This was very unusual for two corresponding deaths.

I was now certain, based on the chromatographic evidence, that the drug responsible was yohimbine. All that was needed now was a mass spectrum of the chromatographic peaks and this would have been the clinching evidence! Unfortunately, this did not eventuate as the laboratory was in turmoil, and I was subsequently transferred to the Blood Alcohol Section.

Yohimbine is found in the barks of two evergreen trees, namely, *Pausinystalia johimbe* and *Corynanthe johimbe* (Rubiaceae), found in parts of central and western Africa. The drug is also found in a number of other plants including *Rauwolfia Serpentina* root, also known as Indian snakeroot, or in this case, appropriately named, devil pepper. Extracts from yohimbe have been used in traditional medicine in west Africa as an aphrodisiac.

The drug can be taken orally to arouse sexual excitement and for erectile dysfunction (ED) by increasing blood flow and nerve impulses to the penis and/or vagina. It also helps to counteract the sexual side effects caused by medications for depression. It is available under several trade names including Aphrodyne and Yohimex. However, adverse side effects include increased heart rate, high blood pressure, dizziness, flushing of



The mystery surrounding the deaths of Margaret Chandler and Dr Bogle has fascinated Australians for years. File picture courtesy of The Daily Telegraph.

the skin and nausea. There are recorded cases of a 69-year-old man dying during sexual intercourse after taking yohimbine and a 30-year-old woman found dead after consuming rauwolfia powder.

Could this have been the means that resulted in the deaths of Dr Gilbert Bogle and Margaret Chandler? I believe the police investigating the matter at the time were very close to the mark.

A similar case in Hong Kong was found four years later in 1967 by Dr Pang Teng Cheung, Director of Forensic Medicine, Hong Kong Police. He had uncovered the deaths of a couple that showed the same strange features as Dr Bogle and Mrs Chandler. This couple had died after taking yohimbine. There were rumours that Dr Bogle was suffering from sexual difficulties, a terrible development for someone with his excessive desires. Could his new lover have tried this exotic drug, with fatal results? Mrs

Chandler was a registered nurse. Hence, she would have had access to various drugs, including yohimbine, at that time.

Police initially suspected poisoning of the couple and I have to agree. Why did the couple choose the riverside location, even with a roll of carpet to lie on, when a vacant bedroom was to be had with a comfortable bed that had been offered? It appeared their lust for each other had eclipsed other rationale, and it was most likely drug enhanced, if not induced.

Many theories were published at the time, some quite outrageous and I'm sure were just to sell papers, so, I will not give them mention these. However, another plausible theory which surfaced quite recently was presented by Peter Butt in his book titled, *Who Killed Dr Bogle and Mrs Chandler?*, where he suggested that the two deaths were caused by accidental hydrogen sulphide poisoning from the contaminated Lane Cove River.

This was followed up by a documentary shown on the ABC in September 2006. I have to agree up to a point; hydrogen sulphide (commonly known as 'rotten egg' gas) is very toxic and is comparable to hydrogen cyanide in toxicity. I had a case where two sewerage workers had climbed down an inspection shaft and succumbed to the gas that had accumulated at the bottom. Their attempted rescuer almost died too, trying to save them. Also, eruptions of noxious gas from river beds (upwellings) and other water sources such as lakes, have occurred around the world. For example, on 21 August 1986, a deadly, cloudy mixture of carbon dioxide and watery mist arose violently from Lake Nyos, Cameroon in west Africa. As the lethal cloud swept down adjacent valleys, it killed over 1700 people, thousands of cattle and native wildlife including, birds and animals. But the most important feature of this awful incident was that it not only killed humans, it also killed much wildlife too.

In the Bogle-Chandler scenario, no other obvious dead wildlife were found on the riverbanks, apart from some dead fish found in the river.



If there was an ‘eruption’ of hydrogen sulphide from the river, as has been suggested, why wasn’t the area ‘littered’ with dead animals such as rabbits, foxes and possums? None were reported apart from a ‘smelly dog’ who had ventured into the area – and was still alive!

Given it was a New Year’s Eve party, and the free and easy relationships that existed at the time amongst this group of people, I believe it was most likely a drink-spiking prank that went terribly wrong – or one of the participants in the sexual tryst wanted to ‘turn the other on’ but used too much of the drug to their terrible detriment.

I believe the latter was the more likely scenario.



Officials arrive to examine the scene where the bodies were found during the inquest into the deaths. File picture courtesy of The Daily Telegraph.

Opposite: Police at the scene after the bodies were found. File picture courtesy The Daily Telegraph.