

DOROTHY TURTLE

Best known for: Successfully campaigning for the overturning of the wrongful conviction of Iain Gordon

Link to Ireland: Although born in England she ended up teaching at the Quaker School in Lisburn, Northern Ireland (Friend's School) from the 1950s through to the 1970s. Her mother was a Cronin from Co Kerry. After becoming a music teacher, she met Henry Turtle, a Quaker, and soon adopted his religion, following which both of them taught at Friends School Lisburn.

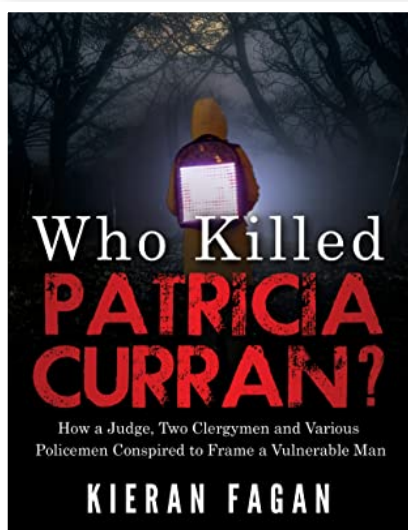
Her connection to Iain Gordon: Dorothy met and befriended Iain's mother, Brenda Gordon who was also a school teacher, during her regular visits from Scotland to see her son Iain whilst he was held in a secure mental health facility in Co Antrim, known at that time as the Holywell Asylum. Putting her up for the night on her trips to Antrim, and visiting Iain during term time when his mother couldn't get over from Scotland.

The Wrongful Conviction: Gordon was not a murderer. A judge's daughter had been stabbed 37 times. When the RUC didn't make an immediate arrest a detective from Scotland Yard was brought in and intimidated a vulnerable young man into confessing, and the whole sorry performance was given credence by a psychiatrist who gave "evidence" of a recovered memory of an event which had not happened. In fairness, that evidence made the guilty but insane verdict possible, and saved Gordon from the hangman's rope.

FRIENDS SCHOOL LISBURN



Dorothy taught for around 20 years at Friends School Lisburn. The School was founded – as The Ulster Provincial School – on the basis of a bequest in 1764 of a prosperous linen merchant, John Hancock, who left £1,000 for the purchase of land in or near Lisburn on which to build a school for the children of Quakers



"Who Killed Patricia Curran?" By Kieran Fagan

Dorothy's Campaigning: Dorothy Turtle led a small group of women supporters with Belfast addresses, she persistently lobbied civil servants and ministers to release Gordon. At their urging an independent doctor from England examined the young man and found him sane.

The next step was to convince the politicians to take the difficult action to release a man who had been convicted of the murder of the daughter of a judge who had served as a unionist attorney general. For this, Stormont (NI's Parliament) ministers Walter Topping, who began the release process, and Brian Faulkner, who followed it through, deserve honourable mention.

The Release of Iain Gordon There's a significance in the way the local community – Holywell is just two miles from Antrim town – tacitly accepted that Gordon's presence was not a danger, as he cycled around the neighbourhood on various hospital errands. Gordon spent seven years in Holywell. In 1960 a man in a suit from London arrived to visit him. He was told he was free to go home to Scotland and ordered not to discuss the case with anyone there.