During the industrialisation of Glasgow in the 1800s, many of Irish and Highland origin, and others from elsewhere in Britain and Europe, made Pollokshaws their home. This gave rise to the notion of the Queer Folk of the Shaws, people who were in some way different from their neighbours in the surrounding villages which made up Glasgow at that time.

Old Pollokshaws had grown up around the river, (the White Cart), and under the stewardship of Sir John Stirling Maxwell who owned the Pollok Estate and much of the surrounding area. Old Pollokshaws became a centre for textile production, clothing manufacture and light engineering. Perhaps the original Queer Folk were from Holland or Belgium, people said, bringing with them their expertise in the dyeing of materials.

During the first half of the 1900s the village became subsumed into a growing Glasgow and connected to it by the world renowned Glasgow Tramway System. Piped gas manufactured from coal, (town gas), was installed in most houses for cooking and lighting. The Lampleerie was a common sight. As Pollokshaws became fully under the control of Glasgow Corporation, mains water was provided from the Gorbals Waterworks at Barhead. Sir John Maxwell Primary School was developed under the auspices of Glasgow Corporation and the class numbers of up to fifty pupils arose from the post-WW2 baby boom.

Throughout Glasgow during the 1950s there was a severe housing shortage, exacerbated by the Baby Boom. In Pollokshaws housing quality remained variable, with many living in the relative luxury of red and blonde sandstone tenements with internal plumbing and bathrooms. Others less fortunate lived in older sub-standard properties that would soon be swept away by the slum clearance programme, already underway in other parts of Glasgow. The Pollokshaws Public Wash-house (The Steamie) and Public Baths with its full-sized swimming pool were a boon for such unfortunates.

In the late autumn of 1953, about four miles from the bustling centre of Glasgow, remnants of Old Pollokshaws and its Queer Folk still persisted.

ooOoo

'But Mum, I don't want to go there. It's horrible and she's like a witch. She is really, with those smelly cats. Please can I do it another time? Please?'

'No, be a good boy Kenny, and go now, before it gets too dark. Remember, tonight is Wednesday, and that means the Band of Hope, doesn't it?'

'Aw, Mum, do I have to go? I want to hear Dan Dare on the wireless.'

'That's quite enough, Kenneth McKinlay, off you go before I take the carpet beater to your legs. NOW, before I lose my temper!'

Kenny had been sent by his mother Chrissy to do an errand for a neighbour, Annie Burgoyne. The six-year-old was scared of this woman and her houseful of mangy cats. He always tried to find excuses not to go to her place but it never worked. His mother knew that the woman suffered from a fear of going out of her house.

Her home was a single room, (a single end), on the upper level of a block of mews houses. Each block consisted of two closes. In each close, there were four single homes on the ground floor, two on each side of the close, back and front. This was repeated upstairs, with access from an open external stone stairway without handrails. The entire block housed comprised two of these closes, mirrored to provide accommodation for a total of sixteen families. Each close had two shared two external WC's in the back court, serving eight families.

These buildings had been built in the late 1800s to provide homes for the weavers and dyers who had come to Pollokshaws to work in the expanding textile industry. Their construction was very basic. A cold water supply was provided to a single tap over a fireclay sink, (sometimes referred to as a Jawbox). Heating and cooking were done on a coal-fired range. In the 1930s town's gas had been piped in for cooking and lighting. After WW2 a few tenants had paid for a 5Amp electrical supply to be added, providing electric lighting, and perhaps to power a wireless and support the luxury of a low-powered electric iron.

Annie Burgoyne's single end was in a mews block behind the impressive red sandstone Bank Building in Greenview Street. Kenny and his parents and his baby brother, lived in a similar single end five minutes away. But their single end was on the ground floor, where they fought a constant battle against rising damp which rotted the floorboards within a few months of each renewal. Fortunately Kenny's father, Sandy, was a joiner, and could make repairs when required. Perhaps the only merit of this accommodation was that it was cheap; and at that time Pollokshaws was still a thriving, intimate and caring community.

ooOoo

Annabelle Eunice Burgoyne (nee McWilliams) was originally from Donegal. She thought she might have been born in 1900 but she wasn't sure. Her mother Eliza was a maid in a big house. Annie had been born on the wrong side of the blankets. She had been very lucky. Her father, the Master, then a widower, had included Annie with his own family, and she had learned to read, write and count to a good standard.

When the Master re-married, the new Mistress had replaced all his original servants, substituting people of her own choice. The teenage Annabelle and her mother Elizabeth McWilliams were destitute. They had travelled first to Liverpool and then two years later, to Glasgow. Elizabeth died of consumption in the squalor of a Gorbals multi-occupancy tenement and Annie, again destitute, was alone. A downstairs neighbour suggested Pollokshaws where her sister might be able to get the girl a job in the Linen Works. The factories were busy because the Great War was now in its second year.

Annie was now an attractive dark-haired rosy cheeked young woman, with a sharp wit and tongue to match. She caught the eye of several young men who were quick to see the advantage of courting a single girl with no family to impede their advances. One of these young men was Daniel Maguire, originally from Sligo, a handsome young man who worked as an assistant to William MacIntyre (Joiner and Undertaker), a taciturn highlander from Loch Awe-side.

But prudence overcame Annie's ardour and she chose a less attractive older man, the burly thirty-two year old Walter Burgoyne, a man from a place called Milngavie, which Annie thought might be near Glasgow. The main attraction of the older Walter Burgoyne was that he had a good secure job as the Boilerman at the Pollokshaws Dye Works, in which he was a secret Investor. And he had a nice single end with its own front door. He told her that he owned the house and this turned out to be true. In fact he owned all sixteen of the single ends which together formed the mews building, providing a small but steady income. To marry into such wealth seemed to Annie an incredible stroke of good fortune, but this knowledge of his great wealth was not fully revealed to her at the time of her marriage.

ooOoo

It took Kenny nearly an hour to reach Annie Burgoyne's place, even though it was only five minutes from his own door. He had met Colin (MacTaggart), his friend from school and they had played at marbles, or 'jorries'. Colin was much better and so Kenny had lost all of his small glass marbles and had only his big 'steelie' left. His Uncle Wullie, who worked in Weirs of Cathcart, had given Kenny this stainless steel ball-bearing. It was more than an inch in diameter, Kenny's prize possession.

Kenny climbed the fifteen steps slowly, keeping to the middle, away from the edges, there were no handrails, and stood outside her door for a long time before he lifted the knocker. Before he could drop it, the door swung open a few inches. Three cats scurried past him and dreeped down into the ash pit to relieve themselves.

The stench which blew out from the room was horrible, fishy and fetid, making his eyes smart and his nose prickle. The room beyond the small crack which framed her face was dim, and the air was thick with dark blue smoke from her clay pipe, gripped between her teeth, to the left-hand-side of her narrow mouth. Her skin was grey and wrinkled and she wore a small round black hat with her grey-black hair stuffed up untidily under it. She was dressed in widow's black, a black shawl over an ankle length dress with short black socks and fancy black shoes. To Kenny she looked as if she was a hundred years old.

'So, you came after all. You're late.'
'Sorry Mrs. Burgoyne, I had other messages to do for my Mum.'

This was a lie and his face started to get red. He seldom told lies and he knew he would have to confess this at the Band of Hope later.

'Aye, I bet you did! Don't tell lies unless you can do it right, Kenneth.'

She barked her instructions, the pipe wobbling as she did so, sending up little embers which fell unheeded to land on her shawl. Without waiting for him to repeat these back to her, as most adults insisted, she slammed the door shut. He ran off to do her bidding, glad to be away from the big orange cat that had appeared beside him, sniffing at his socks.

Some days Mrs Burgoyne gave him a shopping list with a ten shilling note or a pound wrapped inside it. When she did this he was always worried he would lose this money or part of the 'change back please' and so always kept his hand pressing down on it inside his pocket, both on his way to the shops, and back again. On other days he was sent with a pile of books to the penny lending library where Mrs Duffy the Owner knew which books Mrs Burgoyne liked, the ones with the symbol of a gun on the spine. And sometimes, like today, he was sent to deliver a message and, where necessary, bring a reply. Usually these messages were written down and inside a sealed envelope. Almost always the reply was "Tell Mrs Burgoyne, thank you and yes, please." On this mission, Kenny's message had to be delivered by word of mouth, as its receiver was illiterate.

Kenny also did errands for several other old ladies and gentlemen who sometimes gave a half-penny for a sweetie or sometimes a piece of home-made toffee, tablet or a biscuit. Mrs Burgoyne almost always gave him a penny and sometimes a thrupenny bit.

She must be very rich, he had told his mother, who had laughed at the idea.

Ten minutes later Kenny arrived outside the Workshop with the sign above it "William MacIntyre, Joiner and Undertaker". The boy pulled down on the bell chain and waited as it clanged in the distance. Nothing stirred inside, just the sound of voices arguing on the radio. He pulled again, over and over. He heard the man fiddling with the long bolts and then the big door swung inward until it jammed on the cart.

'Oh it's you again, son. Whit's yer name?'

'Kenny McKinlay. Can I have two bunches of sticks for Mrs Burgoyne, please Mr Maguire?'

'Ah don't suppose she gied ye ony money?'

'No, she said it would be all right.'

'Aye, Ah suppose she did, right enough. Right son, here ye urr.'

'Can I see Paddy, please, Mr Maguire?'

'Aye, a'right then. Tak an aypul frae the bin fur him, an' remember, haud it flat on yer haun, a' right, unless ye want him tae nibble yer fingars aff, heh, heh?'

The boy laid the two bunches of sticks on the floor inside the big door and weaved his way through the chaos of Daniel Maguire's workshop to the apple barrel. He chose the biggest apple and went out through the back door to the small field where, increasingly, the old horse spent his time.

Nowadays Danny Maguire with Paddy pulling the cart was a rare sight. The man, like Annie Burgoyne, seldom left his workshop. If they did venture out, it was to trade 'Toys for Rags' (or scrap metal). At other times to sell sticks and coal briquettes. The original business had fallen away quickly with the death of William MacIntyre. The original owner had tall well-dressed man, well-spoken with a clerical presence, unlike the small scruffy man that the once handsome Daniel Maguire had gradually become over the years.

As usual Paddy stood in the far corner of the field, on three legs, the hoof of the fourth tipped at an angle to the ground. The pony was twenty-two and suffered from several

untreated ailments, the most painful of which was arthritis in his right hind leg. The old horse was asleep under the bedraggled rowan tree in full berry.

'Paddy, Paddy, look boy! Look what I've got for you!'

But Paddy, nearly deaf, dozed on.

'PADDY!'

Still no response. Kenny picked up a stick and threw it, but it fell short. The second one landed on the horse's back and bounced away.

'PADDY! Come on boy, come on!'

It worked. Paddy hirpled over to the boy who stretched his arm through the rickety fence with the apple perched on his flat hand. At the last minute Kenny's fear of being bitten was too great, and he let the apple fall to the ground. Paddy leaned down and moved it around, crunching at it with his yellow-brown teeth until it was all gone. Kenny McKinlay had a fear of animals, a fear that he had learned from his mother who was wary of animals of all kinds, particularly cats.

The huge grey cat called Kremlin approached silently from behind and rubbed himself against the boy's bare legs. The cat was dirty and smelly and Kenny had been warned by his mother not to touch it. The cat however seemed to like Kenny and stood on its hind legs, stretching its front legs up onto Kenny's cardigan, purring loudly and then, baring its claws, pulling at the hand-knitted garment, using the boy as a scratching post. Kenny stood rigid with fear.

He was saved by Betsy the collie-type mongrel who waged a constant battle with Kremlin for supremacy. The dog hurtled from the darkness of the workshop towards the cat snarling. But Betsy missed her target and whacked into the boy, knocking him sideways. Kremlin had already leapt away and hissed at Betsy from the safety of the fencepost, before scrabbling and screeching to leap up into the rowan tree out of reach, the dog chasing, snarling at yowling up at him in frustration.

Paddy leaned over the fence and stared at Kenny with his large pleading black eyes, grinding his teeth in the boy's face, pulling back his lips in a sort of smile. Kenny stepped back, but as he did so Paddy leaned forward, hoping for another treat.

'Mr Maguire, can I give Paddy another apple, please?' Kenny called back into the workshop. The boy always asked like this, but he had learned not to expect a reply. The only sound to be heard was the wireless blaring from the room at the far corner, where the old man lived in squalor. The boy wound his way back to the barrel and decided to take three of the biggest apples.

Standing well back from the fence, making Paddy stretch to his full extent towards him, Kenny held out an apple on his palm. Paddy opened his mouth widely and took the apple, leaving a coating of slimy drool on Kenny's fingers. He wiped it off against a rough brown sack hanging over a pile of logs waiting to be chopped to sticks. Kenny watched as Paddy chewed.

Betsy raced back and jumped up on Kenny, her face next to his, her hot breath panting at him. He patted her head gently, warily. She twisted her head and licked his hand then took it gently between her teeth and gave him a play bite. He was really scared now. The first time she had done this he had cried but now after a few months of bringing her food he was getting used to it.

The young dog now turned her attentions to his pockets. Kenny had a broken biscuit for her, leftover from his play piece, a ginger snap. Kenny was not keen on ginger snaps but these had been made by his Aunty Margaret and he knew that to refuse them when offered would be rude. He fished the bits out for Betsy, pulling his pocket inside out, letting them drop to the ground. She ate them up in seconds putting her nose inside his other pocket, the one with his steelie, hoping for more.

'So, you liked it all right then, Betsy. Not too spicy? Well even though my Mummy says you're half-starved you seem to be getting plenty to eat. Just look at your tummy, how fat it is.'

Betsy nudged the boy again, hoping for more food. He offered her an apple but she sniffed and rejected it. He held it out for Paddy who took it at once, re-coating Kenny's fingers with drool. The other apple went the same way. The boy kneeled down beside the dog and she lay on her back. He stroked her tummy very gently and it moved, little lumps moving as he watched.

'It looks as if you've swallowed an octopus, Betsy. Have you? Look, it's trying to get out!'

The dog let out a high pitched yip and rolled onto her side. The boy shot to attention, worried that she would attack him. Kenny hadn't meant to hurt her. He eased himself up onto a log beside her and looked across at the little hut-like room where the old man lived, wondering if he would come out because of the dog.

'Oh Betsy, I forgot to tell him what Mrs Burgoyne said.'

Kenny knocked loudly at the door and waited.

'Aye, whit are ye wantin' noo, son?'

'Sorry, Mr Maguire, but I nearly forgot, Mrs Burgoyne said to tell you she's not going to the Housie-Housie on Saturday night.'

The man's face creased into a smile.

'Oh, a'right then. Ah getit. Well, ye can go an' tell hur Ah'll see hur it the usual time and place, a'right son. An' don't be tellin' onywan else, a'right. If ye dae, ye'll no' be able tae come back here again, a'right?'

'So it's a sort of secret, Mr Maguire?'

'Aye son, it's oor private business, alwiz hiz been, alwiz wull be. Noo aff wi' ye and gie her ma message, a'right?'

'Yes, Mr Maguire, I'm good at secrets, honest.'

'A'right, here's a tanner tae seal the deal, a'right?'

'No, it's not necessary to pay, I do it for Jesus at the Band of Hope, go messages, I mean.'

This was a speech that Kenny had rehearsed with his Mummy many times and he always felt proud when he said it. But he also took money when it was forced on him.

'A'right then son. Huv it yoor ane wiay, pittit in the wee baggie. Dae they still huv' that?'

'Yes. It's for the poor children in Africa, I think.'

'Aye, Ah don't suppose we've ony poor weans aboot hereabouts, heh, heh?'

The man followed Kenny to the big door where the boy picked up the bundles of sticks. As he left he heard the door bang and the bolts slide back into place.

Ten minutes later the boy ran through the early dark of the November night into the pitch black pend which curved under the tenement buildings into the backcourt where the mews houses stood huddled in the gloom.

ooOoo

Annie Burgoyne had occupied this small room since her marriage. As was the custom at that time she had had to give up her job. Because he worked mainly at nights, Walter was around most of the time during the day but in his nightly absences she had carefully searched through his papers and had discovered his secrets, including the fact that he owned all the mews block in which they lived as well as several other properties, including the workshop occupied by William MacIntyre (Joiner and Undertaker).

Walter Burgoyne had turned out to be mean-spirited in marriage, and had skelped across her ankles with his belt for the slightest mistake, or any imagined suspicion that she was looking at other men. Walter had expected Annie to produce a son and heir, but for whatever reason children did not come. He blamed her and renewed his efforts with selfish vigour, coming at her whenever he felt the urge.

Shortly after their second wedding anniversary her ordeal ended. Walter electrocuted himself, it seemed, while trying to repair an electric pump that supplied hot water from the Boilerhouse to the Works. Annie buried him and waited, fearful that she would become destitute again. Although she had been allowed by William MacIntyre to see

the body, she still could not believe Walter was dead. For weeks she had expected that he would appear and start beating her again. She was still young and attractive but as an Irish immigrant she was unsure of her status before the law as his inheritor. With each passing day her focus changed from the spectre of Walter returning, to that of his family in Milngavie, fearing they might pitch up and claim his wealth, cast her out and make her destitute again.

The only person who called was Miss Cranston from Messrs Redpath Longman. Miss Cranston worked in the Offices of the Factors who collected the rents for the various properties which Annie now learned had been owned by Mr Walter Burgoyne. The middle-aged spinster explained that in the past Mr Burgoyne had always called to their Offices at Charing Cross to collect his rents in cash. Would Mrs Burgoyne prefer to have Miss Cranston deliver these rents in cash to her personally? Miss Cranston lived in nearby High Shawlands, and so it would not be a great inconvenience for her to do so, if Mrs Burgoyne so wished.

Annie continued to wear her widow's clothes and waited nearly a year, before she decided to act. It was then that she resumed her affair with Daniel Maguire. In the beginning she had been reluctant to allow full sex, but eventually it happened without a child arriving. They always met on Saturday evenings, but only when she agreed to this in advance. Daniel would arrive secretly, after dark, to spend a few hours with her. When William MacIntyre died, she helped Daniel to take over his Workshop, waiving the rent for a two year period, to allow Daniel to establish himself as the new owner.

The years passed and Annie Burgoyne's home remained unimproved; she still used a paraffin lantern for lighting and the original range for cooking. She did not use the external WC, continuing with her commode and emptying it only occasionally, contributing to the ripeness of the atmosphere which pervaded her small dwelling.

Daniel's clandestine visits had continued until one day, in a moment of bravado, he had revealed his dark secret. This new knowledge had set Annie's head spinning. She had sent him away, telling him never to come back to her door again. She wanted no truck with a murderer, no matter how much she had benefited from it.

ooOoo

Kenny arrived back at Annie's door just as her clock rang out five chimes. There were six cats of various sizes and colours sitting or curled near the door mat. On seeing him these cats started a chorus of complaint. He reached across them and lifted the door knocker and again the door edged open to reveal her face. The cats fought to be first to enter, screeching and howling at each other.

'Well?'

Kenny handed over the two bundles of sticks and delivered his secret message.

As she nodded her head she gave out a small grunt, which Kenny thought might be a sound of laughter, before closing the door slowly. As he turned to leave she opened it again and called him back.

'Remember you must keep this as a secret, Kenneth, are we agreed?'
'Yes, I'm good at keeping secrets. I told Mr Maguire, before.'

She handed him a silver sixpence. This one was bright and shiny, brand new. But before he could say his speech she had closed the door and he was alone on the step.

Kenny stood at the bottom of the steps for a long time. It became darker and darker. He should go straight home now, he knew that, or he would be late for the Band of Hope.

In his right-hand pocket he held the two silver coins tightly, squeezing them together. In his left-hand pocket he rolled his lonely steelie around and around. Molly Murray's Newsagents shop would still be open, and she sold good marbles for four-a penny and an extra two if you bought thruppence worth. He tried to count it up but the total always became too big. But it would definitely be a lot, maybe even fifty, which might even be more that Colin, whose pockets had been bulging for weeks, while the jorries craze raged through the school.

ooOoo

Kenny was a few minutes late arriving at the Salvation Army Band Hall in Christian Street[1] He slipped in and sat near the back of the hall. He pulled off his hand-knitted balaclava and joined in with the singing.

When it was time for 'private prayers', Kenny confessed everything to Jesus.

When Kenny sang "Jesus wants me for a Sunbeam" and Deep and Wide", he did so with absolute sincerity, in a sweet clear voice.

When the Salvation Army Captain, Huge Maguire[2], counted the collection after the Band of Hope that night he was astonished to find two silver sixpences amongst the farthings and half-pennies.

[1] This building still stands today (2014), as does the now redundant but still impressive red sandstone bulk of Sir John Maxwell School directly across from it.
[2] Daniel's estranged brother.