



## Parcel-bomb Murder, 1962

In the Andersons Bay cemetery is interred the mangled body of the tragic victim of an unsolved murder.

On a sunny Monday morning, 5<sup>th</sup> February 1962, as residents of Dunedin hurried to work down lower Moray Place near Stuart Street they were startled by a massive explosion. A third storey window blew out of the Security Building at 111 Stuart Street, on the corner of Moray Place and Stuart Street, and they were horrified to see a human hand follow the window into the street below.

At 8.55 a.m. James Patrick Ward a well-known Dunedin barrister, had arrived at his law office, greeted his secretary, and exchanged pleasantries with his partner, Owen Toomey. He went into his office and noticed on his desk was a parcel which had arrived in the mail, which had been collected by his secretary a few minutes earlier from the Chief Post Office.

A few minutes later the building was shaken by a huge explosion. Toomey rushed in and found Ward minus his left hand and with severe injuries to his chest, and muttering “who could have done this to me?” Ward was rushed by ambulance to the Dunedin Public Hospital, and was attended by resident surgical officer Michael Shackleton and senior thoracic surgeon John Borrie. In spite of their best efforts he died at 3.15pm.that afternoon.

Although the police, in the course of their painstaking investigations, established the method by which death was inflicted, they were unable to discover any motive for the crime or to gather sufficient evidence to justify an arrest. From an examination of the debris in Ward's wrecked office, the police found that the parcel had been posted in Dunedin during the preceding weekend. It contained a roughly made wooden box in which were two torch batteries, a pull-through switch, an electric detonator, a quantity of explosive, electrical wiring, and pieces of tin. Apparently the opening of the parcel completed an electrical circuit which detonated the explosive.

Ward was a competent lawyer, was a staunch Roman Catholic and president of the local St. Vincent de Paul Society. Although the police went through all Ward's files, and his community connections, no evidence of motive for the murder was ever discovered. A suspect was interviewed but his hand-writing did not match that on the parcel.

To this day no-one has been arrested for “the perfect murder”.