

# THE BUILDING SURVEYOR

BY LLOYD NELSON

## ONE

Keiran Shotwell-Webb is walking to work at the Borough of Kent. He is mousing along down Ormond Street which joins the main drag. Right on the corner on his left is the Greater Midland Bank and on the opposite corner is Truform Milk Depot. Keiran saw the building of the large bank from planning to finish in his daily work as head Building Surveyor of the Borough. He has an intimate knowledge of the nether regions of the Bank having perused the plans and checked the building contractor from start to finish. He has put some very deep inputs into the Bank with an eye to the future.

This future which has been an abeyance now for six years is now about to arrive. It is heralded by a big Realty sign on the Milk Depot reading boldly 'This site is available for a two year Lease'. Keiran quickens his pace, he is well aware that the potential of the Milk Depot is in being a redevelopment site and is surprised the Firm is not moving immediately on this.

A few phone calls later and he has the bones of the lease offer. He now leaves the office to find a phone box about a block away and makes a call to his co-conspirator on the Bank job, the building contractor Bob Bailey.

They consult for a while and lay out their plans.

Bob's company, Bailey, Blenheim & Gray stitches up a lease within hours. There's no Blenheim & Gray now, Bob is the sole shareholder and is quite a good mid range size builder who gets a lot of good work because he is reliable and doesn't sting his clients pricewise.

He builds branches here and there for Greater Midland, Great Thames side houses and the odd council block. His success generally lies in his workers. They are all Belfast Irish and like Bob are tight with the I.R.A.. A good many of the stunts the I.R.A. pull in Britain have been carried out by working in with the resources of Bailey, Blenheim & Gray to transport this and that to the point of use. The I.R.A. cell Bob is tight with are close mouthed and probably no-one in the U.K. apart from the working Paddies have any idea of the strength of the contact between the building firm and the bombers, at least Special Branch have never been near Bob's firm which is now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year of participation in the long running conflict with the Poms.

Nothing significant happens for a while as the Milk Depot relocates to an Industrial Park further out and the building firm moves in bringing a fair quantity of building related gear. It's useful to the building company for truck and container storage and they have in fact a very legitimate use for it although their plans lie in another direction.

## TWO

Keiran continues to walk to and from work along Ormond Street and observes the scene which is usually calm and settled looking. Only two people, Bob and Keiran, know that the massive and prosperous Great

Midland Branch building or the vault anyway, which houses the Bank's assets and a huge number of client's safe deposit boxes, is probably the unsafest bank vault in the English speaking world. This all comes about in the construction stage when the sewerage header pipe is found to be much closer to ground level, or in this case, it being basement work closer to the excavated ground level. This is a problem that can possibly have quite an effect on the vault pouring as they can't pour over the header pipe and very major work is involved in relocating either vault or the header sewer pipe.

Bob brings this problem to Keiran at his Borough work place. The former is quite concerned as he's hit a bad divorce bump and his ex has mopped up a lot of his cash.

"Bloody hell Keiran" he says "a delay or reworking of this project could see me in the Court of the Bankrupts, it's quite catastrophic to me".

"MMn, it needn't be" Keiran says "indeed it's perhaps a golden opportunity."

"How so" Bob asks?

"Let's pick up a cappuccino to go and perhaps a doughnut and take a turn around the park."

They do and strike a deal. Keiran has long studied Bob and his background as a pre-requisite to setting up this deal and is well aware of Bob's contacts with the forces of darkness in Ulster.

What they do is leave things as they are and Bob puts a foam slab into the mix and skims it top and bottom. This, in effect, provides a cork that can be easily removed to allow entry to Aladdin's Genie Bottle which will be of course be full of goodies.

Having created an easy to remove plug in the vault floor it's now going to be a longish wait for the rest of the equation to come into effect. Bob's company finishes the bank building, the Bank moves in. Keiran signs off the finished job and so on.

Keiran lives a quiet life. He has a garret flat in a building that has glimpses of the Thames. It's a bit of a climb up as the building is a huge converted old mansion sans lifts.

He is a nice looking man, a tad over six feet, even featured and doesn't have a lot to say. He has a presence though and in a group scene seems to make a contribution even though he doesn't talk much.

### THREE

His secretary Bette Green, trim, relaxed and fortyish caters to his needs. She thinks he's marvelous and she comes around whenever he crooks his finger.

Betts has a fine looking daughter, a uni student. She's rather an outstanding or perhaps more aptly a memorable girl. Marvelously straight limbed and over six feet in height.

Keiran sees a bit of her when she drops in to see Mum but he is never at the Green's house (Bette is a widow) if the girl is around. Sometimes when Rachel is away on uni camps Bette moves into Keiran's flat and they romp together more than somewhat.

One wild winter evening he is expecting Bette and answers his door to find Rachel there. Boots, south wester and a very long black coat.

“Whatever” he asks?

“Mums had to visit her sister” Rachel says, “her hubby died suddenly. I’m about to stand in for her.”

“Does she know” Keiran asks?

“Hell no” Rachel replies “and there’s no need to.”

“Do you know what you’re doing Rachel” he asks?

“Oh Keiran” she replies “on our Archeo Archeological dig on Salisbury Plain I went through a gross of condoms over 37 days, yes I know what I’m doing.”

“How’d it go” Keiran asks? “That’s an awful lot of Frenchie’s.”

“MMMN” she says “in general the boys weren’t much chop but I dragged in the 40 year old dig master in the finish and every night was Mafeking night.”

Rachel pulls off her boots and takes off her coat. She’s now wearing only an ankle bracelet and a tiny, tiny Grecian short night rail. He is stunned with his good fortune.

“Shall we” she says?

And they do and do and do.

## FOUR

Keiran now has two lights of loves on the go, Mum and Daughter.

“Christ” he thinks “I should write a book about this.”

Returning to the main theme, Bob and Keiran now get down to taws on the vault clearance project.

Bob puts together a small steel rail line and sunken sleepers and matching tracks. This is fabricated in Belgium at a workshop B.B. & G have at Ostend and put in containers and moved into the Milk Depot. Several other containers are also filled and moved to the same spot.

Bank holiday weekend arrives and as soon as the Bank closes the action starts. The rail lines and trucks are moved into the sewer via a huge sewer inspection plate that has stood forever in the Milk Depot yard. An onsite crane lowers these in, gangs of Paddies put the trucks on the rails and build the meccano like scaffold under the plug.

The plug comes out like a dream and a set of extension steps, broad and strong allows entry. They carry up huge hardened steel bars built when the Bank was and remove huge double nuts off near the door of the vault and thus fully secure the vault from outside entry.

Similar provisions have been made to drop down the steel cage cutting off the private boxes from the main vault and these are easily and quietly dismantled and work commences on removing the private boxes. Each are foam wrapped and in deathly silence they are transported six at a time to the top of the plug steps and placed in the trucks. The trucks are manhandled to the inspection hole and a brickies hoist stolen from a building site, electrically powered starts transporting the goodies to the yard where a big gang of Paddies fill containers. Work proceeds a pace and in no time the first semi trailer loaded with several containers is out the gate headed for Europe. Thus Friday night flashes past and at false dawn all work ceases.

Saturday dark sees the last of the private boxes out and gone and a start is made on bullion, specie, notes and negotiable looking paper, all of which live in big quantities in the vault.

Final night of real work is Sunday and by daylight Monday the last of the prize is hauled away. They continue then to dismantle the trucks and rail although in view of the high rise in the area overlooking the depot yard nothing is bought out of the tunnel until dark Monday. All of this goes into the containers and is moved on and out while the I.R.A. ordinance men start laying booby traps. A huge device is placed in the vault and fitted with trembler exploders. This will certainly slow vault entry.

Huge grilles are placed in the main sewer (they are cut and prefabbed six years earlier) and before being attached a very dirty cyanide gas bomb is stationed each end. Trembler devices of a large size are attached to these also but with not so easy to detonate fuses. Cyanide of this quantity in a sewer main is enough to frighten anyone away for a while without detonating them easily. The boys now booby trap the inspection entry and booby trap the yard.

## FIVE

The fruits of their labors are now well away in Belgium in storage units that have been held for years against this day and workman now start on opening the personal boxes. These yield an amazing assortment of treasure troves including three old Master paintings long thought lost to the world.

The split of the loot is a three way deal. One third each to Bob, Keiran and the Paddies. Bob, who is officially on holidays, sees to a fair split, Keiran of course can't leave town. Bob and helpers relocate the loot into Swiss banks, melting down in a huge crucible much of the gold items and batching the gemstones against later dealing. Its pure treasure trove and every one of the three parties to the heist have huge value now in their bank vaults.

However we are getting ahead of ourselves and must return to the crime scene.

Bob has been busy putting the icing on the cake. On the day of the vault pour Bob cast from the same batch of aggregate onto a form on a trailer an exact size slab as the foam slab. This has been sitting in the rear of a dark shed ever since and the Thursday of the break in Bob drills this to pieces using a tungsten carbide drill. The pieces are all there on the sheet of black builder's plastic and the whole lot is dumped at the up sewer before they seal the area off and arm the bombs.

The finder of the bust will of course think the original floor has been drilled for access and the wash of the main sewer will help this theory along. A forensic investigation may find out the truth but not easily and not for quite a while. It is a priceless rabbit for the police to chase and being of the exact same pedigree as the rest of the vault it won't be easy to piece it all to bits. The presence of the up sewer lends credence to the builder having to do a separate slab pour initially.

## SIX

Keiran goes to work down Great Ormond as usual. Nothing is unusual except that the power people are busy replacing the power transformer which the Paddies knocked out on Friday night to obfuscate any mains driven video cameras.

All is quiet on the banking front and the ex Milk Depot yard, which is not used a lot, stands quiet also.

Consternation sets in about noon when they, at the bank, realize the vault is shut tight. So it should be, huge tungsten steel bars fabricated six years ago during construction have been bolted across the vault doors and there is no chance, no chance in the wide world of these doors ever swinging inwards until someone gets inside to unbolt them.

The police arrive at the Borough office to have a look at the original plans. Keiran anticipated this some years back and the plans have been put onto microfiche and misfiled (as so many are) at the main storage and the chap who runs this or is in charge of running this has out of the blue won a prize holiday in Malta and is doing just that. He is with a woman he shouldn't be with and has understandably left no contact address. This is one of Keiran's brain waves and it's a very good one.

With the build up of police, fire, rescue and others the Paddies cell phone detonate the spare bomb in the vault and the rotten egg stench and smoke this puts out sees a huge evacuation of the building.

At midnight they use another phone to raze the Milk Depot yard. The fire is intense as they've used incendiary stuff for fear that a strong explosion may set off the vault and sewer bombs. By late afternoon Wednesday the sewer people become aware of the bomb down there and after reading the well lettered notice of danger leave well enough alone. Before the S.A.S. Bomb Squad arrive the Paddies code word ring in a strong warning of the bombs in place and tell the Police that if they leave things alone until next Monday they will mail the directions to dismantle the devices to them.

To the amazement of the Paddies the special branch people on the advice of the Bomb Squad, who have never seen such a potentially damaging and very, very volatile bomb ever, they do just that.

A courier company drops off the instructions on Monday at 4 p.m. and by dint of a long shift they have the sewer bomb out and can access the vault. The I.R.A. have built a few fizzers into the vault bomb and these, as they go off, cause panic and havoc amongst the Bomb Squad who eventually are able to secure and open the vault by Tuesday noon.

The world press suitably primed by devious means by Keiran are rushing around like bitches on heat by this time. CNN are practically living on site.

Keiran is going back and forth between his garret flat and Kent Borough office but not via Ormond Street which is a barricaded off crime scene.

The tension in the area is palpable and Bette comes around to relieve Keiran's tensions closely followed by Rachel who is keen on Keiran.

Absolutely nothing happens for a while. Keiran is available every day. Bob the builder is not around, he's holiday walking in the Austrian Tyrol and keeping right out of sight.

The Paddies trade away in the gem market, they've got a heap of stones to trade and do most of this through Singapore and cash in gold in Turkey.

Keiran thinks the treasure trove of the private boxes, the real treasure trove including the old Master are better held for a ransom effort a year or three down the track. He is amazed to find that they have Bearer Bond shares in some huge companies in their possession. They, in fact own these companies but they can't claim them or at least not yet.

There is also a marvelous Picasso amongst the loot, its all quite mind boggling.

Bob the builder returns to survey his wrecked yard, talks and talks with Special Branch, he's bland and believable and nothing happens.

We are of course not in the clear but we're clearly running well in front of the hounds.

## SEVEN

Three winters pass. Rachel wants to plan marriage, Keiran's not so sure, not about marriage. It's an enticing prospect with this totally outstanding girl but he doesn't want to unravel his potentially rich tapestry.

Eventually he applies for an overseas job and the Albury Wodonga group on the river Murray in Victoria, New South Wales fly him out for an interview. They interview him (he has a very good university degree) and wine and dine him and takes him to see a Collingwood/Essendon Australian Rules Football match.

He accepts the job, flies home to wind up his affairs. He fully expects Special Branch to interview him before he leaves but nothing, nothing at all happens. The Borough gives him a great send off and Rachel and Bette see him aboard a British Airway's flight at Gatwick.

Keiran greatly enjoys his time at Albury which is of course on the mighty river Murray. It has a lot going for it and he goes to Melbourne quite a bit to watch the latest efforts of the Collingwood Football Club.

Running true to past form he forms a close liaison with his Secretary, a married woman and thus his needs are well taken care of. The girl's husband is a fly out fly in oilman on oil rigs in the Bass Strait (only a hop step away) and this gives Keiran and the girl plenty of trouble free play time.

Keiran is no fool and he realizes that his freedom and his fortune depends entirely for the moment on not touching his Zurich millions. He doesn't access a cent of this money and lives entirely within his means.

Bob and the I.R.A. are working now on ransoming the contents of some of the private safety deposit boxes and this is a mother lode indeed. They do it through Cayman and Panama Banks and find in the main that the victims pay up on the spot, no questions asked. There's many good reasons for them not to ask questions they find.

## EIGHT

Rachel flies out for a visit. They jointly essay a trip down the Murray to its sea mouth at Goolwa in South Australia. For this they use Keiran's Heron Class sailing dinghy equipped with a decent size outboard motor. They camp

on the river bank or stay at a motel, depending on where they are towards late afternoon.

They get along well in all ways. Rachel re-raises the question of marriage or living together. They don't decide anything firm though the options are on the table.

Keiran does about three years at Albury. His secret fortune grows quite a bit after Bob and Co greenmail the old Masters back to their owner. The Picasso they quietly and lucratively sell back to the Picasso Museum in Paris.

Keiran's married girl has a brother in law in Brisbane. He's with the Brisbane City Council and through him the girl hears of a good building surveyor's job coming up in Brisbane.

"MMMn" Keiran says "I think I'd miss you to much."

"Rubbish" the girl says "we sailed and sailed here in Albury but we have been sailing pretty near to the wind. I often go to Brisbane to visit, we can kick along there just as well."



Keiran enjoys his football but he is also getting a bit shut off with the sharp northern Victorian winters so he gives Brisbane a fly and gets the job. This is no surprise as he has had a lot of experience at this profession and of course is very well qualified anyway.

## NINE

He moves to Brisbane and loves it straight away. He leases an apartment in a huge apartment converted brick wool store near the river in Teneriffe. Each morning he walks down the river to the ferry wharf where a small ferry takes him over the river to the Bulimba wharf to pick up one of the very regular and very quick city catamaran ferries. In a pleasant space of time he gets off the ferry in central Brisbane and walks up the Queen Street Mall to Brisbane City Hall.

It's a most pleasant environment, a warm sub tropical climate and the weekend options of the Gold Coast to the south or the Sunshine Coast to the north are brilliant and pleasant. Rachel comes out again and this time stays.

The wool store apartment block they rent in is brilliant and well managed. There's secure car parking for their runabout, a well managed Olympic pool and on the ground floor of the block there are convenience and liquor stores plus restaurants and a brilliant little bar called the Ice Bar. It has shutters opening onto Macquarie Street and passers by stop to chat with the drinkers as they sip.

The chap who runs the Ice Bar is a Pom and his mother in Liverpool gets quite sick. He confides in Keiran and Rachel late one evening that he would like to go back and see how she's going but he can't get away as he has no-one to manage the Ice Bar. Keiran perks up.

"Heck Louie" he says "family always comes first. We'll run it for you for a month or two if you like."

This is what happens and the couple has quite a bit of fun running the business. Louie's cook gives Keiran a crash course in quick cooking in case she doesn't turn up one night and while its pretty basic stuff he cooks up a storm and the patrons don't grizzle. He generally does iced soup, good T-bone steaks and bought in salads and apple pies (bought in) and cream. This with a fish and chips side line suits most of the easy going Banana Landers.

## TEN

Louie writes from Liverpool. His mum is mortally ill, will Keiran either buy him out or otherwise hang in.

"Whatever" they reply and just keep on doing what they are doing.

Rachel holds the fort from mid afternoon opening and Keiran is off the ferry in time to control or do the cooking.

He blows in one evening and Rachel with a jerk of head says "MM people waiting to see you. Rozzers without a doubt."

Keiran puts on his white jacket, talks to his troops and goes over to talk to the Rozzers.

"Special Branch" they say.

"Oh Gawd, not the Bank job again" he asks?

"Bang on" they say. "Nothing deep but the Bank's insurers who nearly bled to death over that matter have funded up closer checks. That's why we're here."

"What are you looking for" Keiran asks?

"Oh the usual, conspicuous consumption etc."

Keiran chuckles. "Well" he says "I don't own this, we're helping a friend out and paying tax on the bit we get out of it excluding meals, drinks and phone calls. Come up to our flat and you can point out anything conspicuous if you can find it."

"MMMn" the Rozzers say "that'll do, we have a warrant of course."

They turn the flat over, it's as clean as a whistle and the paperwork unincriminating.

They do their work thoroughly and finish.

"Come back to the Ice Bar and I'll stand you a drink and a feed" Keiran says and does.

It goes pleasantly but they turn up at City Hall next day and turn his office desk over again totally unavailingly.

"See you" Keiran says and they go out of his life altogether.

## ELEVEN

Six years drift painlessly by.

The life of the Shotwell-Webbs (they were married in the fine old Brisbane Catholic Sandstone Cathedral) runs along very evenly. At high summer they escape the humidity occasionally, week ending at their cottage near Picnic Point at Toowoomba. From their front terrace they can see almost to Surfers Paradise. The cottage by the way is owned by a very

anonymous Swiss company, the owners of the latter are Bearer Bond holders. Sherlock Holmes himself would find it pretty difficult to do a due diligence on this faceless Swiss company.

Bob the builder lives close to his huge fortune, sends a card every now and then from his mountain eyrie near Zermatt.

Bette comes out once a year to visit and see the kids.

Keiran, in his family, is the only one who knows of the vast pile of loot he has stashed with the Gnomes of Zurich.

They are not glitzy people, live modestly and Keiran, though he has set up huge trust funds for Rachel and the kids, plans to keep his secrets.