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In many ancient civilizations,
the oak tree was considered to be sacred.
Some believed that the mighty oak held great healing powers
or could facilitate communication with the gods.
Oak trees can live for hundreds of years.
It takes many years for them to bear acorns
and thus acorns are often used
as a symbol of patience and maturity.
With their tall sturdy trunks,

deeper roots and sprawling branches,
today the oak tree continues to be viewed
as a symbol of strength, power, stability
and protection.

From a young age,
Andrew Gosden was fascinated by science.
A gifted straight A student,
he effortlessly soared through school,
winning mathematics competitions at a European level.
His above average intellect eventually earned him a place
in the United Kingdom's National Association
for Gifted and Talented Youth,
a government scheme aimed at the country's top 5% of students.
When Andrew read that an acorn planted in a tub
could grow into a miniature oak tree,
he had to try it for himself.
He enlisted the help of his father, Kevin,
who was always willing to support Andrew's curiosity
and encourage his love of learning.
Kevin gathered up a few discarded acorns
and together the father and son planted them into tubs
at their Victorian Terrace home in Borby,
a suburb in England's South Yorkshire region.
Now all they had to do was wait.

MUSIC

On the evening of Friday, September 14, 2007,
Kevin Gosden and his wife, Glannis,
both returned home from work to find a typical scene.
School had only just returned after summer holidays
and the couple's children, 14-year-old Andrew
and his 17-year-old sister Charlotte,
had settled back into their familiar routines.
For Andrew, this meant using his spare time
to do the things he enjoyed most,
playing video games in his family's converted cellar,
or playing snooker on the half-sized table in his bedroom.
Although he had a small group of friends
he spent time with at school,
Andrew was a shy, quiet teen who was content
with his own company.
He preferred spending time at home alone,
over going out and socialising
and could often be found with his face buried
in one of his well-read books.

When Andrew didn't surface to say hello,
his parents thought nothing of it.
They assumed Andrew was busy with one of his hobbies
and would come out when dinner was ready.
Dinner was always a special time
for the Gosden family to come together and connect.
Kevin and Glannis began unpacking groceries
and preparing for the meal.
They were being joined that evening
by the family's vicar and close friend, Alan Murray,
who lived nearby.
The Gosdens were Anglican,
but Kevin and Glannis wanted their children
to make up their own mind about religion
rather than having it forced upon them.
Because of this, they never baptised their children
and took no issue when Charlotte and Andrew
both made the decision to stop attending church.
By six p.m., dinner was ready.
The parents called out to their children
to come and join them.
Charlotte quickly emerged from her room,
but there wasn't a peep from Andrew.
Kevin went to check Andrew's room.
As part of the teen's post-school routine,
he always hung his school blazer and a tie
on the back of his bedroom chair
before putting his trousers and shirt in the washing machine.
This evening was no different.
The blazer and a tie were on the chair
and the rest of Andrew's uniform was in the wash,
but there was no sign of him anywhere throughout the house.
Andrew was the type of person who left a note
even if he was just ducking to the corner store,
but there was no note to be found.
Although this was strange,
Andrew's parents weren't overly concerned.
Andrew had friends who lived nearby.
They assumed he'd gone to visit one of them
and had lost track of time.
Andrew didn't have a mobile phone,
so they couldn't call or text him.
He'd had a couple of phones in the past,
but had barely used them

before managing to misplace them altogether.
He could be quite absent-minded at times
and simply wasn't interested in the devices.
He'd even rejected his parents' offer of a new one
for his recent birthday,
requesting an Xbox gaming console instead.
The Gosdons called the homes of Andrew's friends
only to discover that he wasn't with any of them.
They were also told that Andrew hadn't been at school that day at all.
That Friday morning had started out like any other.
Andrew had woken a little later than usual,
but it still managed to get ready in time
to catch the bus to school.
Andrew attended Macaulay Catholic High,
which was roughly four miles,
or a 15-minute bus ride from the Gosdons' home.
At around 8.05am,
he said goodbye to his parents
and left the house dressed in his school uniform.
Shortly after this,
Vika Rallon Murray recalled driving by Westfield Park,
which was across the street from the Gosdons' home.
He'd seen Andrew in his uniform as he passed by,
but hadn't thought anything of it,
given that the park provided a shortcut to the school bus stop.
With Andrew's uniform at home,
but no sign of Andrew himself,
the Gosdons didn't know what to think.
They contacted Macaulay High.
An administrator confirmed that Andrew had been absent that day.
This was entirely out of character.
Andrew had a 100% attendance record.
The school had even issued him certificates
attesting to his flawless turnout.
One staff member had tried calling the Gosdons
that morning to notify them of Andrew's unusual absence,
but there hadn't been an answer.
On reflection, the staff member realized
they must have accidentally dialed the number listed
either above or below Andrew's on the register,
leaving his family out of the loop.
Although it didn't explain why Andrew's uniform was at home,
the Gosdons considered the possibility
that he could have been involved in some kind of incident

on his way to school.

They searched the area surrounding their home before driving the route Andrew typically took to school.

There was no sign of him anywhere.

They called the local hospitals,

but no one fitting the teenager's description had been admitted.

When there was still no sign of Andrew by 9pm,

his family contacted the police.

The Gosdams were absolutely certain that Andrew hadn't run away.

They described him as a reliable, gentle and caring young man

who would never do anything to intentionally cause them to worry.

According to the Gosdams, their home life was happy and harmonious.

Both Kevin and Glannis worked as speech therapists.

Their incomes afforded them a modest yet comfortable lifestyle,

which included family holidays abroad to such places as Egypt and Tunisia.

As far as the Gosdams knew,

Andrew had no mental health issues,

didn't experience bullying,

and had no other problems he might want to escape from.

Nothing in his recent behaviour had been out of the ordinary.

If anything, he had been slightly quieter and even less social than usual,

but this wasn't exactly cause for concern.

Andrew was the type of person who didn't speak

unless he felt he had something worthwhile to say.

Kevin had recently asked his son how the new school year was going.

Andrew gave no indication that anything was amiss.

If he didn't feel comfortable speaking to his parents for whatever reason,

they were sure he would confide in his sister, Charlotte.

The Gosdams' siblings had a close bond.

Both were highly intelligent and were on track to be accepted

into England's most prestigious universities.

The pair also shared a similar taste in music,

favouring heavy metal, rock and post-hardcore bands,

including Slipknot, Funeral for a Friend, Muse,

Evanescence and Dragonforce.

The evening before Andrew went missing had been unremarkable.

Andrew and Kevin had done a puzzle together before the whole family ate dinner together.

The father and son then washed the dishes.

Afterwards, Andrew watched some light-hearted television with his mother.

He'd been his normal self upon going to bed,

although he had seemed slightly irritable upon waking the next morning.

While this was out of character, it wasn't cause for alarm.

He was a teenage boy after all.

As Kevin Gosden told the Daily Mail,

if Andrew was unhappy or suffering a mental illness, he did an amazing job of hiding it. Andrew's bank account revealed that after leaving home that morning, he walked to a nearby petrol station and used the ATM to withdraw 200 of the 214 pounds he had in savings. A neighbour of the Gosden family had a CCTV camera pointed towards the street. Its footage from that day revealed something highly unusual. At around 8.30am, just after Kevin and Glannis left for work, Andrew returned home. Minutes later, he appeared back on the street no longer wearing his school uniform, but jeans and a black slipknot band t-shirt. He carried a black canvas satchel adorned with band patches that his sister had helped him sew on. Nothing in Andrew's room was missing besides his wallet, keys and PlayStation portable handheld gaming console. He didn't take the console's charger, nor did he take a jumper, despite the temperature dropping in the September evenings. To Andrew's family, this indicated that he didn't intend to be gone for long, but the fact that he ditched school and cleared his bank account without explanation left them completely baffled. Even if Andrew had run away, due to his age, police immediately categorised him as a high-risk, vulnerable missing person. They focused their attention inwards. Despite his family's insistence that Andrew was a happy, well-adjusted teen, experience had taught police that most young runaways were typically trying to escape from some kind of situation at home. They sat each member of the Gosden family down for an interview to see if they could uncover any signs that Andrew was being abused or neglected. The Gosdens were adamant that Andrew had an open and honest relationship with his parents, who were neither strict nor controlling. Kevin and Glennis trusted their children implicitly and supported their need for individuality and independence. Although police took Andrew's disappearance seriously, of the roughly 70,000 youths under 16 who ran away in the UK each year, 80% returned within 24 hours, 91% returned within two days. Statistics indicated that it would likely be a matter of time before Andrew Gosden returned home. Located 85 miles north of Doncaster, the seaside town of Whitby was a much-loved vacation spot for the Gosden family. Andrew adored Whitby and knew the area well. If he was going to take off for whatever reason, there was a good chance this would be the place.

Over the weekend, friends of the Gosdens travelled to Whitby to scour the area for any sign of Andrew.

They checked his favourite haunts, asking if anyone had seen the teen.

Andrew was roughly 5'3 and of slim build, with medium-length light brown hair that swept across his brown eyes.

Most notably, he wore strong prescription glasses, was deaf in his left ear and had a double ridge on his upper right ear, unique traits that made him easily identifiable.

The weekend passed with no sightings of Andrew in either Doncaster or Whitby, nor did he make contact with his family.

The Gosdens wondered whether Andrew could have gone to London.

Although the capital city was 170 miles away, it could be reached by train in just under two hours.

While the bustling city could be seen as an intimidating place for a lone shy teen from the suburbs, Andrew wasn't completely new to the area.

His family had friends and relatives who lived in London, including Andrew's grandparents.

Over the years, the Gosdens had travelled to London numerous times.

Andrew knew the city well,

and his family thought he would feel comfortable navigating his way around alone.

Although it would be entirely out of character,

they wondered whether Andrew could have made the spontaneous decision to spend the Friday in the city.

He'd recently mentioned having an interest in seeing the Tutankhamen exhibition at the British Museum.

Perhaps ditching school was an act of teenage rebellion,

and he'd then found himself in some kind of trouble.

Inquiries were made with the local train station.

When the employee who had been working the sales counter on Friday morning was questioned, she distinctly remembered serving Andrew.

He had bought a one-way ticket to London's King's Cross station departing at 9.35am.

She recalled the interaction because Andrew looked young to be travelling alone.

But more notably, he had refused her offer of a return trip, even though it only cost around 50 pence more.

The Train Station

Multiple passengers saw Andrew on the train to London that morning.

There had been nothing unusual about his behaviour.

He had kept his head down for the entire journey, absorbed in his PlayStation portable.

One passenger recalled seeing Andrew disembark at King's Cross station, but no one could attest to where he went from there.

The task of scanning through CCTV taken from King's Cross station on September 14 was given to the British Transport Police.

The train from Doncaster had arrived at 11.20am,

but finding Andrew Gostin in the crowd would be no easy feat.

King's Cross is one of the busiest railway stations in the United Kingdom,

with approximately 300,000 passengers passing through each day.

Those assigned to the job were unable to locate Andrew among the throng.

The fact that Andrew had travelled to King's Cross was a major revelation, but it raised even more questions.

Over the summer holidays, Andrew's parents had given him the option of going to London to stay with his grandmother, but he'd refused.

So why go there now without asking for permission?

The Gostin family got their hands on a copy of the latest edition of Time Out, a free, weekly guide detailing all the latest events happening in the city.

They scoured each page on the lookout for anything that might have motivated Andrew's travels.

Kevin had recently taken his children to London to watch Muse play live.

It was the first major rock concert that Andrew had been to, and he thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

The Gostins looked into what other bands were playing in London on Friday, September 14, 2007.

They considered whether Andrew could have taken off to the city for a weekend of music and sightseeing.

Perhaps he was following the mentality of asking for forgiveness rather than permission.

American rock band 30 Seconds to Mars were playing that night at Brixton Academy.

As far as the Gostins were aware, Andrew wasn't familiar with their music.

A prog metal band called Sixth were playing at the O2 Academy, Islington, which was about a 15-minute walk from Kings Cross.

Although the Gostins didn't know if Andrew knew of Sixth, the band did have links to Slipknot.

It was a significant show, too, being the last time singer Mikey Goodman would feature on the lineup.

Furthermore, Finnish rock band HIM were doing an in-store signing at a HMV record store on the 17th of September,

and Andrew was a fan of their music.

If music wasn't the motivation, Andrew's parents wondered whether he could have gone to London seeking work experience.

His sister Charlotte had done so at Andrew's age.

It was possible he wanted to follow in her footsteps.

The fact that he'd only bought a one-way ticket didn't seem too strange to the Gostins.

Perhaps he'd made a momentary error, wasn't entirely sure of his plans, or intended to spend the night with one of the family's friends or relatives.

The problem with this theory was that none of these people had seen or heard from Andrew.

Police made inquiries with each one and found nothing to indicate that they'd crossed paths with the 14-year-old.

At the time, Bascent tram travel was free for children under 16 in London, meaning Andrew would have had the means to get around town.

But the £200 that he'd taken with him wouldn't get him very far in terms of food and shelter.

This led to the possibility that Andrew was sleeping rough, making him vulnerable to the dangers that lurked in the busy city streets.

If Andrew had left home without intending to return,

it didn't make sense that he hadn't brought a change of clothes or at the very least a warm jumper.

Andrew was a creature of habit who enjoyed home comfort.
For all his intelligence, he lacked street smarts.
He also looked much younger than 14.
His family didn't think he would willingly put himself in an uncomfortable, dangerous position.
That led to another possibility.
When Bascent said she wanted her usual for breakfast, you immediately knew two things.
One, she was talking about her favorite breakfast for Mickey D's.
And two, her usual always includes some of yours.
Order wisely, my brother.
With the deluxe breakfast platter, it's easy to share.
Hotcakes, sausage, scrambled eggs, hash browns, bacon and an English muffin start your day deliciously.
Even better when you pair them with an iced coffee at Participating McDonald's.
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Did Andrew Gosden meet someone in London?
Given that he spent most of his spare time at home,
this left him with very little opportunities to cross paths with someone outside of school.
Ever since Andrew was a young boy, he'd attended boy scouts and church.
In the months leading up to his disappearance, he'd stopped going to both.
For his family, there was nothing suspicious about this.
Andrew had cited boredom as the reason for leaving scouts,
and his parents thought he was likely just following in Charlotte's footsteps by stopping church.
Inquiries were made with members of both organisations.
No evidence emerged to indicate that Andrew stopped going for any other reasons.
The previous summer of 2006, Andrew had attended summer school as part of the gifted and talented youth program.
It was a residential program that required him to spend two weeks away from home.
He'd embraced the experience and returned home in a great mood.
Some speculated whether he could have connected with someone during this time,
but there was no evidence to support this.
Andrew's classmates and teachers were also unable to shed any light on why he travelled to London.
The Gosden household only had one computer, a laptop that Charlotte had recently received for her birthday.
Andrew had barely touched it in the eight weeks since.
He'd never shown much interest in computers.
As far as his family was aware, Andrew didn't even have an email address.
At the time, social media was still in its infancy, and Andrew had shown no desire to participate.
Facebook and MySpace were the major networking sites, but Andrew didn't have an account with either platform.
Examination of Charlotte's laptop failed to uncover anything to indicate that Andrew had been talking to anyone online.
He hadn't conducted any online searches that hinted as to why he'd travelled to London,
or what his intentions were once he got there.

[Transcript] Casefile True Crime / 309: Case 264: Andrew Gosden

Computers used by Andrew were also seized from his school and the local Doncaster Library. Nothing was found on any of them that helped with the investigation.

There was no inexplicable activity on the Gosden family's home phone line.

Given that Andrew didn't have a mobile, this meant the only other way he could have accessed the internet was via one of his gaming consoles.

Andrew's Xbox didn't have online capabilities, but his PlayStation portable did.

He would have been able to communicate with others using its text, voice or video chat features.

Doing so would require him to have an online account, which would in turn require him to have an email address.

Checks with PlayStation's producer, Sony, revealed no such account existed for Andrew Gosden.

The Gosden's worst fear was that Andrew was groomed by a pedophile or sex trafficker and lured to London under false pretense.

Due to Andrew's high intelligence, he was mature for his age and had always related particularly well to adults.

Although Andrew had never expressed it, his family considered the possibility that he could have been struggling with his child.

When Andrew had never expressed it, his family considered the possibility that he could have been struggling with his sexual orientation and had run away because he felt ashamed or too awkward to come out.

If this was the case, it could also explain why he might be more susceptible to grooming by an older male.

But with no phone or online activity supporting this theory, it remained to be seen how Andrew could have come into contact with the predator.

In the week leading up to his disappearance, there had been a slight change in Andrew's routine.

While he typically caught the bus to school, in the new academic year he'd twice chosen to walk instead, a four mile trip that took around an hour and twenty minutes on foot.

The teenager could have been approached by someone during this time.

He could have secretly been given a mobile phone which he used exclusively to speak with this person.

The two could have made plans to meet in London for one reason or another with the grimmer promising Andrew a ride home, hence why he had only bought a one-way ticket.

But Andrew's family told The Times that these long walks could have just as easily been practiced for a future plan of wandering the streets.

Kevin and Glenys Gosden travelled to and from London numerous times, scouring the streets for their son.

They visited all the sites that he'd ever shown interest in, distributing missing person posters at every museum, train station, restaurant and homeless shelter they could think of.

They drummed up as much media as possible, doing whatever they could to keep Andrew's case in the public consciousness.

Several witnesses believed they'd seen Andrew on the day he went missing.

One alleged sighting took place at a Pizza Hut restaurant on Oxford Street, just a short walk from King's Cross station.

The way this witness described the boys' mannerisms led the Gosdens to believe that this sighting

was credible, but the police were unable to confirm it.

Another witness reported seeing someone matching Andrew's description sleeping rough near London's South Bank District.

Another believed they'd seen Andrew at a South Bank Park near the London Assembly building. The Gosdens followed up every lead, visiting these locations for themselves to question locals and look for their son, but not a single clue as to Andrew's whereabouts emerged.

As days passed with no breakthroughs, officers from South Yorkshire Police were sent to London to review the CCTV footage taken from King's Cross station.

They scanned through hundreds of hours of recordings before something finally caught their attention.

At 11.24am, four minutes after the train from Doncaster arrived at King's Cross station, the unmistakable sight of Andrew Gosden in his black slipknot t-shirt emerged from the crowd.

The teenager unremarkably exited through the station's main entrance alone before disappearing from view.

By the time police uncovered this sighting, Andrew had been missing for 27 days.

It was a bittersweet discovery for the Gosden family. They were frustrated by what they perceived to be a quote, slow, chaotic and disorganised police response.

King's Cross essentially acts as an interchange station. A plethora of other tube stations and bus stops are located there, including an international station with links to other parts of Europe.

The existing CCTV footage only confirmed that Andrew disembarked the train in London. He gave no indication as to his movements from there.

Andrew hadn't taken his passport with him, making it unlikely that he travelled onwards to another country, but it was entirely possible that he could have gotten off one train and strayed on to another.

London is considered to be one of the most heavily surveilled cities in the world. According to some sources, the average person living in London can be caught on CCTV up to 300 times per day.

But to the dismay of the Gosden family, police hadn't requested to check the footage from any other cameras.

By the time requests were made to view CCTV footage owned by local authorities, no such footage existed. As was protocol, recordings were only kept for a certain number of days before the tapes were wiped clean.

By Wednesday, October 17, over a month had passed with no word from Andrew.

As reported on the BBC television programme *Missing Live*, a woman named Philippa was standing on a busy street in London's Covent Garden District when she noticed a passer-by who bore similarities to Andrew Gosden.

Philippa approached the boy and tried to engage him in conversation, remarking that he looked like the missing teenager.

The boy denied being Andrew Gosden, but Philippa's curiosity was peaked. She followed the boy until losing sight of him near a café called *The Poetry Place*.

Philippa reported this potential sighting to police. According to the Gosdens, it wasn't followed up until six weeks later.

The location where Philippa spoke to the boy was outside of an office building. CCTV cameras were fitted to the entrance of the building, but weren't working at the time the alleged interaction took place.

[Transcript] Casefile True Crime / 309: Case 264: Andrew Gosden

When shown a picture of Andrew Gosden, an employee at The Poetry Place thought she might have seen him in the café in the company of two girls.

Although she acknowledged it could have just been someone who looked similar, as many teenage boys in the area had a similar, trendy haircut.

Whether Philippa's sighting was legitimate or not couldn't be ascertained.

Reported sightings of Andrew continued to come in, some from as far as South Wales.

According to Kevin Gosden, the police were either slacked to respond to these leads or didn't follow them up at all.

Kevin believed that their focus remained on uncovering why Andrew had left home, rather than what happened from there.

As Christmas approached, the police asked to question Kevin Gosden under caution. For Kevin, this was the last straw.

He was convinced that the reason police weren't making a greater effort to find his son was because they were wasting their time and resources on investigating him as the prime suspect in Andrew's disappearance.

A thought gnawed away at Kevin. What if he removed himself from the picture, forcing the police to focus on the search for his son instead?

One day in the lead-up to Christmas, Vicar Alan Murray went to the Gosden's house with some food, eager to help in any way he could.

As Alan approached the door, he heard a crushing noise coming from inside. He let himself in using a spare key.

There, Alan found Kevin Gosden hanging from the upstairs balustrade.

He managed to cut Kevin down and rush him to hospital, where it took seven hours before he regained consciousness.

Kevin spent the next few months receiving treatment in a mental health facility, telling the Yorkshire Post,

I cannot begin to describe the depths of misery that this involved. No amount of therapy helped because the situation was unresolvable.

Strained but unturtured, the Gosdens continued doing all they could to keep Andrew's case in the spotlight,

appearing on numerous television and radio shows and speaking to any reporter willing to listen.

Kevin became the family's spokesperson, establishing a website dedicated to the case titled Help Us Find Andrew,

where he shared news along with photos of Andrew's happy childhood and blog posts about the impact of him being missing.

Police ultimately found no evidence to indicate that the Gosdens were anything other than the close knit, loving and supportive family that they described themselves to be.

A friend of Andrew's who had known the Gosden family for ten years told the Daily Mail,

People wonder if something was happening at home, but I know for a fact that's not true. They're one of the nicest families I know.

This made Andrew Gosden's disappearance all the more baffling. According to his teachers, Andrew had been a shoo-in for Cambridge University.

But despite his intelligence, he'd never been particularly enthusiastic about his studies.

The way Kevin saw it, Andrew viewed school as a necessity to ensure he had choices in the future.

[Transcript] Casefile True Crime / 309: Case 264: Andrew Gosden

Maybe he'd gotten bored or frustrated with the conventional path set out for him and had run away to start a new life.

One of Andrew's favourite television shows was *The Rise and Fall of Reginald Perrin*.

The British sitcom was about a man who faked his own death to escape the daily grind.

Prior to his disappearance, Andrew had also been reading the work of famous philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

He encouraged people to be free thinkers, find their own values and stand out among the masses.

As his mother told the *Telegraph*, maybe Andrew wanted to step off the treadmill.

But the theory that Andrew had run away to start a new life didn't quite fit.

Those close to Andrew knew him to be nothing but sweet and thoughtful.

They didn't think he was capable of putting his family through such immense suffering.

Four months before Andrew vanished, three-year-old Madeline McCann went missing from her family's holiday villa in Portugal.

The story had dominated the news in the UK.

Kevin and Andrew had spoken about how awful it was.

If Andrew wanted to disappear for good, those close to him felt sure that it had left a note who had made some kind of contact by now.

On top of the fact that he didn't bring more personal belongings with him, was the fact that he hadn't brought more money.

Although Andrew had essentially cleared out his bank account, he'd left almost £100 in birthday money untouched in his bedroom.

The family also kept a box full of emergency cash for bus fares and the like, but Andrew had no idea what to do with it.

Given Andrew's age and the fact that he looked even younger than his 14 years, it was unlikely that he could have secured legitimate work or started a new life without adult help.

His disappearance was also highly publicised.

If Andrew was squatting somewhere, he'd have to go to the hospital.

It seemed to be a little bit of a lie, but the doctor had no idea that he'd gone to bed at all or had had to go to work or started a new life without adult help.

His disappearance was also highly publicised.

If Andrew was squatting somewhere, sleeping rough or had gotten caught up with the wrong crowd, it seemed to mind boggling that someone somewhere wouldn't have recognised him.

Before Andrew went missing, he'd expressed his desire to grow his hair long and dye it black.

He could have just as easily shaved his head or bleached his hair blonde.

Even if he did alter his looks, there was no getting away from the unique double ridge on his upper right ear.

That led to the next possibility.

The reason that Andrew hadn't made contact or been found was because he was no longer alive.

If Andrew was indeed being groomed, he might have been kidnapped upon his arrival to London.

It could have been part of a carefully orchestrated plan involving one or multiple perpetrators, which ultimately ended in Andrew being held captive or killed.

But if Andrew had fallen victim to foul play, it wasn't necessarily a premeditated attack.

It was just as possible that Andrew had travelled to London of his own accord, simply to have

an adventure.

He could have had every intention of returning home without his family finding out, before crossing paths with the wrong person.

Andrew's age and the fact that he was travelling alone would have made him particularly vulnerable to opportunistic criminals.

He could have been the victim of a robbery gone wrong, or placed his trust in a stranger who ultimately caused him harm.

Alternatively, his death could have been the result of an accident.

If Andrew hadn't voluntarily run away, fallen victim to foul play, or been involved in an accident, it left just one other possibility.

Andrew had never shown any signs of depression or self-harm.

Regardless, the possibility that he could have taken his own life was considered.

Andrew had always been a deep thinker.

While it seemed unthinkable to his family, it was possible that Andrew had an inner world that he'd never revealed to anyone else.

Perhaps he'd gone to London to spend one final day enjoying some of his favourite sights before ending things for good, saving his family the trauma of discovering his body.

This could explain why he only bought a one-way ticket and hadn't bothered to bring a jacket or the charger for his PlayStation portable.

Yet, it didn't explain why he'd taken his keys, or why he hadn't left a note for his family whom he knew would be worried sick.

Most significantly, it didn't explain the absence of a body.

The Gosden family remained insistent that Andrew hadn't been bullied.

His sister Charlotte attended the same school and was an active member of an anti-bullying program.

It was an issue often discussed at the family dinner table, and Andrew had never mentioned any problems.

This was supported by one of Andrew's teachers, who told The Times.

Andrew is deep and mature beyond his years.

He's quite happy and self-contained in his own company, but he's not a loner.

He always had a little posse of friends with him.

Likewise, the school principal said,

Andrew is a very likable, self-effacing boy.

No one's got a bad word to say about him.

This is not the sort of school where you can get lost in the system.

If there had been any bullying going on, we'd have known about it.

In the wake of Andrew's disappearance, a post appeared on an online forum hosted by British Music magazine, Corang.

According to a user who identified themselves only as Bex, she attended the same school as Andrew and the two were in all of the same classes.

Bex wrote,

Andrew did get singled out a lot and only had a couple of friends.

People bullied him.

They wonder why he ran away.

[Transcript] Casefile True Crime / 309: Case 264: Andrew Gosden

If true, it offered a reason why Andrew had recently avoided taking the school bus. He had also explained why he ditched school completely, sort a new beginning, or took his own life.

But as the weeks turned into months, none of the belongings Andrew left home with on September 14 surfaced.

If Andrew had gone to London or beyond to end his own life, chances were that at least something would show up to prove this theory.

The same went for the possibility that Andrew had innocently travelled to London to play hooky for the day and been involved in a fatal accident.

Most accidents would attract attention, yet no one had witnessed a thing.

The River Thames runs through central London.

Even if Andrew had intentionally jumped or accidentally fallen in, someone would have noticed or a body would have surfaced.

Every potential outcome just raised even more questions.

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By the time Andrew Gosden had been missing for a year, a total of 122 unconfirmed sightings had come in from all over the UK.

A church service was held in London to mark the anniversary, with Kevin and Glenis Gosden penning an open letter to their son that read,

We have all missed you so much since the day you left.

Not a day goes by that you are not in our minds constantly.

If you should ever read this, forget about any water under the bridge and please have no fear about making contact with us.

We do not care where you have been or what lifestyle you choose for yourself.

We only want to know that you are safe and well, and to help and support you if we can.

We remain as proud of you as we have always been, and to love you deeply.

In conjunction with the anniversary, Andrew's face was printed on milk cartons in Iceland as part of a widespread missing persons campaign.

A month later, Kevin and Glenis shared their story on BBC's popular current affairs program, The One Show.

Within hours, the intercom buzzed at the Lamster police station, a market town 150 miles south east of London.

The station was located in a business park, and the desk wasn't manned around the clock.

Instead, visitors could announce their arrival via an intercom outside.

A male voice said he wanted to report a sighting of Andrew Gosden.

An officer was sent down to take the details.

By the time they arrived, the man was gone.

Shortly after, an anonymous letter arrived at the BBC offices.

The author claimed to have been the man who fled from the Lamster station.

He said that Andrew had been spotted in the town of Shrewsbury, 150 miles north west of London.

Police were unable to verify this claim, or even confirmed that the two informants were one and the same, adding to what Kevin Gosden described as, a new form of subtle torture. He told the Doncaster Press, Andrew knows that part of the world we've been on holiday there, but we don't really know enough.

Perhaps there's somebody that knows something that we don't. But the longer it goes, the more we get thinking he's probably either dead or not free. If he's still alive, I suspect that he'll wait until his 16th birthday next July to show his hand.

Andrew's birthday came and went with no breakthroughs. Since Kevin's suicide attempt in 2007, he'd been unable to work, plagued by depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

He did everything he could think of to find his son. He relayed messages to Andrew through the media, begging him to let them know he was safe.

He emailed schools across the country and appealed to the gay community, telling Andrew that his family loved him unconditionally no matter what.

He attended concerts and music festivals of bands he thought Andrew might like, handing out flyers and scanning the crowds for anyone who bore a resemblance to his son.

Kevin said, I've really just run out of ideas now.

I suppose this is the last hope of finding out what has happened.

An ongoing concern for the Gosdams was how much Andrew's appearance could have changed in two years.

With the photos of him as a baby-faced 14-year-old still circulating, they worried that if Andrew was still alive, he might be unrecognizable.

On the two-year anniversary of Andrew's disappearance, his family worked with charity organization Missing People to produce several computer-generated images of what Andrew might look like with the passing of time.

The images brought some comfort to his family, with Kevin remarking, It's reassuring to look at that and think, yes, I don't know you anywhere.

By May 2011, three and a half years had passed with no developments.

The Gosdams were growing increasingly certain that Andrew hadn't run away.

Kevin told the BBC,

We just find it impossible to conceive that he would allow us to go through all this for so long, without even some kind of message to let us know he's okay.

Instead, the absence of confirmed sightings led the family to believe that Andrew must be dead.

With the help of a friend, the Gosdams approached a private firm that specialized in advanced sonar technology typically used to locate drowning victims at sea.

They arranged for a roughly seven-mile portion of the River Thames to be searched from Woolwich Barrier to Tower Bridge in central London.

The sonar revealed a sunken boat, an upturned car, and finally, a body.

It wasn't Andrew.

[Transcript] Casefile True Crime / 309: Case 264: Andrew Gosden

The results sparked mixed feelings for the Gosdens.

Kevin remarked that it was slightly positive because it raised a statistical possibility that Andrew was alive and well somewhere, but, quote, it still leaves us in this horrible ongoing, never-ending limbo of just thinking, why did you go?

September 2017 marked 10 years since Andrew Gosdens' disappearance.

Police launched a fresh appeal for information, circulating Andrew's DNA, fingerprints, and dental and medical records to authorities and healthcare professionals.

Given that Andrew relied on strong prescription glasses, if he was still alive, many believed he would have at the very least sought optical care at some point, perhaps making the switch to contact lenses to further alter his appearance.

A police spokesperson urged the doctors, dentists, or hospital staff who might have treated a 24-year-old man with no records from the previous 10 years to come forward.

The call-out was extended to any members of the general public who might currently know Andrew Gosdens, but be unaware of his true identity.

Appealing to Andrew directly, the police spokesperson added, please contact us completely confidentially and let us know you are safe and well and we can reassure your family you have come to no harm.

Andrew Gosdens became the face of missing people's Find Every Child campaign.

His age progression images appeared everywhere from doctors' offices and hospitals to bus stations, garbage trucks, and shopping centres.

The Gosdens even consulted with a behavioural analyst to try and figure out why Andrew might have gone to London on the day he went missing and whether there were any places they might not have thought to check.

At the time, statistics released by the National Crime Agency revealed that 98% of children who go missing in England are found within one week.

This put Andrew Gosdens in the rare 2%.

He was one of 3,000 people in the United Kingdom who had been missing for more than 10 years.

To mark the decade-long mystery, Kevin Gosdens raised money for missing people by holding a 10-hour vow of silence, one hour for every year his son had been missing.

At this time, Michael Dixon, not his real name, was chatting online with a young man who went by the username Andy Rue.

Andy Rue said he needed help.

His partner had just walked out and he needed £200 to pay his rent.

Michael noticed that Andy Rue was listed as living in Lincoln, a city in the English Midlands.

Michael didn't live nearby, but he offered to transfer Andy Rue some money.

Andy Rue declined the offer.

He claimed he didn't have a bank account because he'd left home at the age of 14.

Michael asked him why, wondering if it was because there had been problems at home.

Andy Rue responded, no, I just felt like it.

He then cut the conversation short.

Michael Dixon had seen the ongoing publicity about Andrew Gosdens' disappearance and began wondering if Andy Rue and Andrew could be one and the same.

He reached out to the Gosdens family, whose interest was immediately sparked.

[Transcript] Casefile True Crime / 309: Case 264: Andrew Gosden

When Andrew was a kid, his small bouncy demeanor earned him the family nickname Rue, as in kangaroo.

Although it could have been a coincidence, the Gosdens were taking no chances.

They notified police about this online interaction and an investigation was launched.

Andrew's family met with Michael Dixon and travelled to Lincoln.

They made inquiries with locals and thousands of missing persons leaflets were distributed around town.

All possible sightings were reported, but none of them turned out to be Andrew Gosdens.

Meanwhile, police made inquiries with the chat provider, the name of which has not been made public.

The website administrators had recently made changes to their system, during which a lot of the user data was lost.

No information about who owned the Andy Rue profile was able to be ascertained.

The Gosdens continued to work with specialists to release age progression images of what Andrew might look like as the years went by.

If he was still alive, investigators believed that the best chance of finding him was the distinctive double ridge on his right ear.

If photos of Andrew were posted on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram, facial recognition software could pick up this unique detail.

The possibility that Andrew could have left home that Friday to attend a concert in London before meeting foul play hadn't been excluded.

Since 2015, Metropolitan Police had begun working with a team of so-called super recognisers.

These are individuals with innate, above-average skill for spotting faces in a crowd.

Police appealed for anyone who had attended any concerts around London on the weekend of September 14, 2007 to come forward with any photos or videos they might have taken so that the super recognisers could scan them for anyone who looked like Andrew.

In early 2020, the Gosdens received word that Andrew's favourite band, Slipknot, was touring the UK.

If Andrew was still alive and living of his own free will, his family felt certain he'd attend one of the gigs.

Andrew's missing person posters were displayed at the events, including at a meet and greet with the band's guitarist, Mick Thompson.

No new leads were generated, but the ongoing search efforts continued to catch the attention of the public who remained gripped by the case 13 years later.

Andrew Gosdens' disappearance remained a hot topic for online sleuths, each with their own theory as to what had happened.

Every possibility had been considered, from Andrew falling victim to a serial killer, to him travelling to London to buy the latest PlayStation portable before an incident occurred.

Then, in January 2022, a story appeared in the news that no one saw coming.

South Yorkshire Police confirmed that on Wednesday, December 8, 2021, an arrest had been made in relation to the Andrew Gosdens case.

Two unnamed men, aged 38 and 45, had been taken into custody on suspicion of kidnapping and human trafficking.

The older of the two was also arrested for possessing indecent images of children.

Police seized a number of electronic devices from the pair, but they said that a comprehensive review of the devices could take up to a year.

Both men were therefore released while the enquiries continued.

Police refused to disclose any further details, telling the media,

◆Our priority at this time is supporting Andrew's family while we work through this new line of inquiry.

We are in close contact with them, and they ask that their privacy is respected as our investigation continues.◆

Almost two years passed before any sort of update.

In late September 2023, South Yorkshire Police announced that the two unnamed suspects in the Andrew Gosdens case had been eliminated from their investigation.

A spokesperson said they were confident the two men played no part, adding, ◆The investigation remains open and active, and we would urge anyone with information to come forward.◆

Kevin Gosdens told the Thin Air podcast that if his son's disappearance has taught him anything, it◆s that a child can have the most secure and comfortable life, and still think the grass might be greener on the other side.

He is now an ambassador for the charity Missing People, educating young people about how to stay safe if they are thinking about running away from home, or what to do if they already have and want to return.

Kevin told Woman◆s Own Magazine, ◆I hate the idea that Andrew might have had a problem he felt he couldn◆t tell me.

That's why I implore all parents, talk to your children, let them know they can tell you anything, and tell them if they ever consider running away or make a foolish decision, there are people who can give them the proper support they need.◆

Although Andrew◆s bank account hasn◆t been touched since his final withdrawal on September 14, 2007, his family continues to top it up just in case.

His room has since been repainted and decorated, but his presence is still strong.

His favorite t-shirts are still sitting in a drawer, and his prized gem collection displayed on a shelf.

The Gostons have never changed their locks, just in case.

July 10, 2023 marked what would have been Andrew◆s 30th birthday.

He had now been missing for longer than he was around.

These years, Kevin Goston continued to nurture the acorns that he helped Andrew plant when his son was just 10 years old.

Just as Andrew predicted, several of the acorns sprouted and grew into miniature oak trees.

Kevin gradually replanted them over the years, keeping one in his own back garden.

By Andrew◆s 30th birthday, the oak tree stood at 6 feet tall and had sprouted acorns of its own.

On his blog, Kevin wrote, ◆As Andrew◆s oak tree bears the fruit of the acorn, we hope that awareness of his case bears the fruit that others are helped to find positive solutions in their lives, and that other families are spared the pain that too many of us live with every day.◆

In the 16 years since Andrew Goston uncharacteristically caught the train to London and mysteriously

went missing.

No evidence has ever emerged to indicate whether he is alive or dead, and none of the belongings he left home with have ever been found.

Kevin Goston finds comfort in the fact that one of his last memories with Andrew was a happy one.

The night before Andrew went missing, the father and son did the dishes together after dinner.

As they stood in the kitchen with tea towels in hand, Kevin gave Andrew a quick hug and told him, "I love you."

As Kevin wrote on his blog, "I am glad that is one of the last things I ever said to him." Andrew is never far from his parents' minds.

Racked with ambiguous loss, Kevin ashamedly admitted to the son that he sometimes felt envious of parents whose children had been murdered because at least they had closure.

He described the experience of not knowing as an endless cycle of horror, explaining,

"The pain is like when you have a little kid and you turn your back for two seconds and they vanish but then you find them again.

That horrible panic-stricken gut-wrenching feeling you have in that moment goes on and on and on forever for us."

Glanis once described it as someone coming up to you and sticking a knife in your gut.

Normally, it would hurt, but the knife would be removed and the wound would be stitched up and healed after a period of time.

With this, someone has stuck the knife in, but you have to walk around with it and it's always there, always hurting, and getting twisted frequently and regularly.