

The respectable businessman by day who was a bomb-making jihadi by night

From the [Mail on Sunday](#) and [Surrey Police](#)

For families in the playground opposite Asad Bhatti's home, the financial analyst working at Legal & General looked like any other businessman in his suit and tie. But the 47-year-old bachelor – whose CV bragged was 'motivated by challenge and responsibility' – hid a secret life as a bomb-making terrorist.

If not for the bravery of two men, his activities may never have been discovered.



When Bhatti turned up at repair firm Computer Solutions in Caterham in the week before New Year's Eve 2020 he looked like any other customer. He made technicians 'swear' they

would not look at his data when he took it in for repairs because it was running slowly.

Bhatti said he would wait in the small store, despite owner Glen O'Dwyer explaining that it was not possible because the

job would take hours at least, possibly up to a few days.

Normally the shop does not look at clients' data, but Bhatti's device had failed so badly that a manual data recovery was required. It meant file names would flash onto a screen. Mr O'Dwyer glimpsed one file called 'How to make nitro-glycerine in your kitchen', an explosive powder. He scrolled through files quickly and would pause every few minutes on increasingly suspicious items.

The 55-year-old, who set the store up 28 years ago, saw titles on jihadist martyrdom, several instructions on how to make detonators and a mobile detonator, and documents on guns and firearms.

He called his ex-police friend for advice on whether to contact emergency services. That friend recommended Mr O'Dwyer call 999. On arrival the next day, officers copied the files.

Mr O'Dwyer, who runs the store alongside 21-year-old Charlie Deville, who was just four weeks into the job at the time of the incident, said: 'He was almost ready to go, could it have been the next Manchester? . . . Even when I saw the files on how to make a mobile detonator I didn't really believe it.

'It was genuinely very fortuitous, I can't see the screens from my desk, and if it hadn't got stuck on a couple of files with very suspicious file names we wouldn't have noticed.

'Had his drive not been so bad we wouldn't have had to do the manual data recovery, and we wouldn't have seen the data. Had they not been so bad, and the files gone really quickly, we wouldn't have noticed. Had I not known someone in the police, I'm not sure I would have called just for fear I would have been laughed at. Phoning up and saying guess what, I've got a terrorist in my shop, and they say no this is just someone doing chemistry degrees. You don't want to look an idiot.

'I still wonder why he brought it in, knowing you've got a

laptop with enough evidence to send you to jail for many, many years. Surely you wouldn't both getting it fixed. Would you risk the chance of losing 20 years of your life to get your laptop back? When he came in his was very normal. We saw he'd applied to Mensa, he was obviously intelligence, how could you be so stupid? . . . most people with anything untoward on their laptop won't go and get it fixed. They'd get rid of it.'

Bhatti was investigated by officers from Counter Terrorism Policing South East ... documents were discovered suggesting whoever was using the device had an interest in explosives and making explosive devices. Following this discovery, Bhatti was arrested and a search was carried out at his home in Redhill and at a storage container he rented.

In the storage unit officers found chemicals, chemistry equipment, electronic circuitry and even an improvised explosive device, which was dismantled by a specialist explosive ordnance disposal team. This device was not deemed to be functional due to some of the materials used. At his property, items including a USB stick containing guides to make explosive devices were seized.

Bhatti was also found to be in possession of manuals he compiled and wrote himself. He had spreadsheets and PowerPoint presentations on making explosives, shooting techniques and hand combat, along with manuals published by others on making explosives and combat.

A 173-page word document called the Believer's Handbook penned by Bhatti was also found on his computer. It detailed his warped worldview and how to make explosives and bombs.

This resulted in suspicion that the possession of all these documents was for a purpose connected with the commission, preparation or instigation of an act of terrorism.

On Friday (17/3), at the Old Bailey, the 47-year-old was found guilty of two counts of possessing an article for the purpose

of terrorism, contrary to Section 57 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and three counts of making or possessing an explosive substance under suspicious circumstances contrary to Section 4 of the Explosive Substance Act.

Bhatti will be sentenced at the Old Bailey on Tuesday 25 April.