

= John Bingham , 7th Earl of Lucan =

Richard John Bingham , 7th Earl of Lucan (born 18 December 1934 ; presumed dead) , commonly known as Lord Lucan , was a British peer suspected of murder who disappeared in 1974 . He was born into an Anglo -@-@ Irish aristocratic family in Marylebone , the eldest son of George Bingham , 6th Earl of Lucan by his marriage to Kaitlin Dawson . An evacuee during the Second World War , Lucan returned to attend Eton College , and then from 1953 to 1955 served with the Coldstream Guards in West Germany . He developed a taste for gambling and , skilled at backgammon and bridge , became an early member of the Clermont Club . Although his losses often exceeded his winnings , he left his job at a London @-@ based merchant bank and became a professional gambler . He was known as Lord Bingham from April 1949 until January 1964 .

Once considered for the role of James Bond , Lucan was noted for his expensive tastes ; he raced power boats and drove an Aston Martin . In 1963 he married Veronica Duncan , with whom he had three children . When the marriage collapsed late in 1972 , he moved out of the family home at 46 Lower Belgrave Street , in London 's Belgravia , to a property nearby . A bitter custody battle ensued , which Lucan lost . He began to spy on his wife and record their telephone conversations , apparently obsessed with regaining custody of the children . This fixation , combined with his gambling losses , had a dramatic effect on his life and personal finances .

On the evening of 7 November 1974 , the children 's nanny , Sandra Rivett , was bludgeoned to death in the basement of the Lucan family home . Lady Lucan was also attacked ; she later identified Lucan as her assailant . As the police began their murder investigation , Lucan telephoned his mother , asking her to collect the children , and then drove a borrowed Ford Corsair to a friend 's house in Uckfield , East Sussex . Hours later , he left the property and was never seen again . The car was later found abandoned in Newhaven , its interior stained with blood and its boot containing a piece of bandaged lead pipe similar to one found at the crime scene . A warrant for Lucan 's arrest was issued a few days later , and in his absence the inquest into Rivett 's death named him as her murderer , the last occasion in Britain a coroner 's court was allowed to do so .

Lucan 's fate remains a fascinating mystery for the British public . Since Rivett 's murder , hundreds of reported sightings have been made in various countries around the world , although none have been substantiated . Despite a police investigation and huge press interest , Lucan has not been found and is presumed dead ; a death certificate was issued in 2016 .

= = Early life and education = =

Richard John Bingham was born on 18 December 1934 at 19 Bentinck Street , Marylebone , London , the second child and elder son of George Bingham , 6th Earl of Lucan , an Anglo @-@ Irish peer , and his wife Kaitlin Elizabeth Anne Dawson . A blood clot found in her lung forced his mother to remain in a nursing home , so John , as he became known , was initially cared for by the family 's nurserymaid . Aged three years , he attended a pre @-@ prep school in Tite Street with his elder sister , Jane , but in 1939 , with war approaching , the two were taken to the relative safety of Wales . The following year , joined by their younger siblings , Sally and Hugh , the Lucan children travelled to Toronto , moving shortly thereafter to Mount Kisco , New York . They stayed for five years with multi @-@ millionairess Marcia Brady Tucker ; John was enrolled at The Harvey School and spent summer holidays away from his siblings at a summer camp in the Adirondack Mountains .

While in the U.S. , John and his siblings lived in grandeur and wanted for nothing , but on their return to England in February 1945 they were faced with the stark realities of wartime Britain . Rationing was still in force , their former home at Cheyne Walk had been bombed , and the house at 22 Eaton Square had had its windows blown out . Despite the family 's rich ancestry , the 6th Earl and his wife were agnostics and socialists and preferred a more austere existence than that offered by Tucker , an extremely wealthy Christian . For a time , John suffered nightmares and was taken to a psychotherapist . As an adult he remained an agnostic , but ensured his children attended Sunday school , preferring to give them a traditional childhood .

At Eton College , John developed a taste for gambling . He supplemented his pocket money with income from bookmaking , placing his earnings into a " secret " bank account , and regularly left the school 's grounds to attend horse races . Although according to his mother his academic record was " far from creditable " , he became Captain of Roe 's House , before leaving in 1953 to undertake his National Service . He became a second lieutenant in his father 's regiment , the Coldstream Guards , and was stationed mainly in Krefeld , West Germany . While there , he also became a keen poker player .

= = Career = =

On leaving the army in 1955 , Lucan joined a London @-@ based merchant bank , William Brandt 's Sons and Co . , on an annual salary of £ 500 (equivalent to £ 11 @,@ 830 in 2015) . In 1960 he met Stephen Raphael , a rich stockbroker who was a skilled backgammon player . They holidayed together in the Bahamas , went water @-@ skiing , and played golf , backgammon and poker . Lucan became a regular gambler and an early member of John Aspinall 's Clermont gaming club , located in Berkeley Square . Although he often won at games of skill like bridge and backgammon , he also accumulated huge losses . On one occasion he lost £ 8 @,@ 000 , or about two @-@ thirds of the money he received annually from various family trusts . On another disastrous night at a casino he lost £ 10 @,@ 000 . That time his stockbroker uncle , John Bevan , helped him to pay the debt , and Lucan repaid his uncle two years later .

Lucan left Brandt 's in about 1960 , shortly after he had won £ 26 @,@ 000 playing chemin de fer . A colleague had been promoted before him , and he protested and then gave up his job , saying " why should I work in a bank , when I can earn a year 's money in one single night at the tables ? " He travelled to the US , where he played golf , raced powerboats , and drove his Aston Martin around the West Coast of the United States . He also visited his elder sister , Jane , and his former guardian , Marcia Tucker . On his return to England he moved out of his parents ' home in St John 's Wood and into a flat in Park Crescent .

= = Personal life = =

= = = Marriage = = =

Lucan met his future wife , Veronica Duncan , early in 1963 . She was born in 1937 to Major Charles Moorhouse Duncan and his wife Thelma . Her father had died in a car accident while she was still very young , following which the family had moved to South Africa . Her mother remarried , and when her new step @-@ father became manager of a hotel in Guildford , the family returned to England . Along with her sister , Christina , she was educated at St Swithun 's School , Winchester , and after displaying a talent for art she went on to study at an art college in Bournemouth . The two sisters later shared a flat in London , where Veronica worked as a model and later as a secretary . Christina 's marriage to the rich William Shand @-@ Kydd introduced her to London high society , and it was at a golf @-@ club function in the country that Veronica and Lucan first met .

News of their engagement appeared in the Times and Telegraph newspapers on 14 October 1963 , and the two were married at Holy Trinity Brompton Church on 20 November . After a high society ceremony attended by , amongst other dignitaries , Princess Alice , Countess of Athlone , the couple honeymooned in Europe , travelling first class on the Orient Express . Lucan 's already embattled finances were given a welcome boost by his father , who provided him with a marriage settlement designed to finance a larger family home and any future additions to the Lucan family tree . Lucan repaid some of his creditors and leased number 46 Lower Belgrave Street , Westminster , redecorating it to suit Veronica 's tastes . Two months after the wedding , on 21 January 1964 , the 6th Earl of Lucan died of a stroke . In addition to a reputed £ 250 @,@ 000 inheritance , Lucan acquired his father 's titles : Earl of Lucan ; Baron Lucan of Castlebar ; Baron Lucan of Melcombe Lucan and Baronet Bingham of Castlebar . His wife became the Countess of Lucan . Their first child

, Frances , was born on 24 October 1964 , and early the next year they employed a nanny , Lillian Jenkins , to look after her . Lucan tried to teach Veronica about gambling and traditional pursuits like hunting , shooting , and fishing . He bought her golf lessons , although she later gave up the sport .

Lucan 's daily routine consisted of breakfast at 9 : 00 am , coffee , dealing with the morning 's letters , reading the newspapers , and playing the piano . He sometimes jogged in the park and , while he had him , took his Doberman Pinscher for walks . Lunch at the Clermont Club was followed by afternoon games of backgammon . Returning home to change into evening dress , the earl typically spent the remainder of the day at the Clermont , gambling into the early hours , watched sometimes by Veronica . In 1956 , while still working at Brandt 's , he had written of his desire to have " £ 2m in the bank " , claiming that " motor @-@ cars , yachts , expensive holidays and security for the future would give myself and a lot of other people a lot of pleasure " . Although he was described by his friends as a shy and taciturn man , with his tall stature , " luxuriant guardsman 's moustache " and masculine pursuits , his exploits made him popular . His profligacy extended to hiring private aircraft to take his friends to the races , asking a car dealer he knew to source an Aston Martin drophead coupé , drinking expensive Russian vodka and racing powerboats . In September 1966 he unsuccessfully screen tested for a part in Woman Times Seven , prompting him to automatically decline a later offer from film producer Cubby Broccoli , to screen test him for the role of James Bond .

As a professional gambler he was undoubtedly a skilled player , once rated amongst the world 's top ten backgammon competitors . He won the St James 's Club tournament and was Champion of the West Coast of America . He gained the moniker " Lucky " Lucan , but as his losses easily outweighed his winnings , in reality he was anything but lucky . He had interests in thoroughbred horses , although in 1968 he paid more in race entry fees than he received in winnings . Despite some arguments over money , his wife remained largely ignorant of his losses , retaining the use of accounts at Savile Row tailors and various Knightsbridge shops . Following the births of George (b . 1967) and Camilla (b . 1970) , she struggled with post @-@ natal depression . Lucan became increasingly involved in her mental well @-@ being and in 1971 took her for treatment at a psychiatric clinic in Hampstead , although she refused to be admitted . Instead , she agreed to home visits from a psychiatrist and a course of anti @-@ depressants . In July 1972 the family holidayed in Monte Carlo but Veronica quickly returned to England , leaving Lucan with their two elder children . The combined pressures of maintaining their finances , paying for Lucan 's gambling addiction and Veronica 's weakened mental condition took their toll on the marriage ; two weeks after a strained family Christmas in 1972 , Lucan moved into a small property in Eaton Row .

= = = Separation = = =

Some months later Lucan moved again , to a larger rented flat in nearby Elizabeth Street . Despite an early attempt by his wife at reconciliation , by that point all Lucan wanted from the marriage was custody of his children . In an effort to demonstrate that Veronica was unfit to look after them , he began to spy on his family (his car was regularly seen parked in Lower Belgrave Street) , later employing private investigators to perform the same task . Lucan also canvassed doctors , who explained that his wife had not " gone mad " , but was suffering from depression and anxiety . Lucan told his friends that nobody would work for Veronica (she sacked the children 's long @-@ term nanny , Lillian Jenkins , in December 1972) . Of the series of nannies employed in the house , one , 26 @-@ year @-@ old Stefanja Sawicka , was told by Veronica that Lucan had hit her with a cane and had , on one occasion , pushed her down the stairs . The countess apparently feared for her safety and told Sawicka not to be surprised " if he kills me one day . "

Sawicka 's time at the Lucan household ended late in March 1973 . While with two of the children near Grosvenor Place , she was confronted by Lucan and two private detectives . They told her that the children had been made wards of court and that she must release them into his custody , which she did . Frances was collected from school later in the day . Lady Lucan applied to the court to have the children returned , but concerned about the case 's complexity , the judge set a date for the hearing three months ahead , for June 1973 . To defend herself against Lucan 's claims about her

mental state , Veronica booked herself a four @-@ day stay at the Priory Clinic in Roehampton . While it was acknowledged that she still required some psychiatric support , the doctors reported that there was no indication that she was mentally ill . Lucan 's case depended upon Veronica being unable to care for the children , but at the hearing , he was instead forced to defend his own behaviour toward her . After several weeks of witnesses and protracted arguments in camera , on the advice of his lawyers he conceded the case . Unimpressed by Lucan 's character , Mr Justice Rees awarded custody to Veronica . The earl was allowed access every other weekend .

Thus began a bitter dispute between the two , involving many of their friends and Veronica 's own sister . Lucan again began to watch his wife 's movements . He recorded some of their telephone conversations with a small Sony tape recorder and played excerpts to any friends prepared to listen . He also told them ? and his bank manager ? that Lady Lucan had been " spending money like water " . He continued to pay her £ 40 a week , although he may have cancelled their regular food order with Harrods . He delayed payment to the milkman and ? knowing that Veronica was required by the court to employ a live @-@ in nanny ? the childcare agency . With no income of her own , Veronica took a part @-@ time job in a local hospital . A temporary nanny , Elizabeth Murphy , was befriended by Lucan , who bought her drinks and asked her for information on his wife . He instructed his detective agency to investigate Murphy , looking for evidence that she was failing in her duty of care to his children . This they found , although he dispensed with the detective agency 's services when they presented him with bills amounting to several hundred pounds . Murphy was later hospitalised with cancer . Another temporary nanny , Christabel Martin , reported strange telephone calls to the house , some with heavy breathing and some from a man asking for non @-@ existent people . Following a series of temporary nannies , Sandra Rivett started work in late 1974 .

= = = Gambling = = =

Losing the court case proved devastating for Lucan . It had cost him an estimated £ 20 @,@ 000 and by late 1974 his financial position was dire . As he drank more heavily and started chain @-@ smoking , his friends began to worry . In drunken conversations with some of them , including Aspinall 's mother , Lady Osborne , and her son , Lucan discussed murdering his wife . Greville Howard later gave a statement to the police describing how Lucan had talked of how killing his wife might save him from bankruptcy , how her body might be disposed of in the Solent and how he " would never be caught " . Lucan borrowed £ 4 @,@ 000 from his mother and asked Marcia Tucker for a loan of £ 100 @,@ 000 . Having no luck there , he wrote to Tucker 's son , explaining how he wished to " buy " his children from Veronica ; the money was not forthcoming . He turned to his friends and acquaintances , asking anyone plausible to loan him money to fund his gambling addiction . The financier James Goldsmith guaranteed a £ 5 @,@ 000 overdraft for him , which for years remained unpaid . Lucan also applied to the discreet Edgware Trust . On request , he supplied details of his income , which was apparently around £ 12 @,@ 000 a year from various family trusts . He was required to provide a surety and received only £ 3 @,@ 000 of the £ 5 @,@ 000 he asked for . Much to their managers ' consternation , his four bank accounts were hugely overdrawn ; Coutts , £ 2 @,@ 841 ; Lloyds , £ 4 @,@ 379 ; National Westminster , £ 1 @,@ 290 ; Midland , £ 5 @,@ 667 . Even though by then he was playing for much lower stakes than had previously been the case , Lucan 's gambling remained completely out of control . Ranson (1994) estimates that between September and October 1974 alone , the earl ran up debts of around £ 50 @,@ 000 .

Despite these problems , from late October 1974 his demeanour appeared to change for the better . His best man , John Wilbraham , remarked that Lucan 's apparent obsession over regaining his children had diminished . While having dinner with his mother he cast aside talk of his family problems and turned instead to politics . On 6 November he met his uncle John , apparently in good spirits . Later that day he met 21 @-@ year @-@ old Charlotte Andrina Colquhoun , who said that " he seemed very happy , just his usual self , and there was nothing to suggest that he was worried or depressed " . He also dined at the Clermont with racing driver Graham Hill . At the time , casinos could open only between 2 : 00 pm and 4 : 00 am , so Lucan often gambled into the early hours of

the morning . He took tablets to deal with his insomnia and therefore usually awoke around lunchtime . On 7 November though , he broke routine and called his solicitor early that morning , and at 10 : 30 am took a call from Colquhoun . They arranged to eat at the Clermont at about 3 : 00 pm , but Lucan failed to appear . Colquhoun drove past the Clermont and Ladbroke clubs , and past Elizabeth Street , but could not find his car anywhere . Lucan also failed to arrive for his 1 : 00 pm lunch appointment with artist Dominic Elwes and banker Daniel Meinertzhagen , again at the Clermont .

At 4 : 00 pm Lucan called at a chemist 's on Lower Belgrave Street , close to Veronica 's home , and asked the pharmacist there to identify a small capsule . It turned out to be Limbitrol 5 , a drug for the treatment of anxiety and depression . Lucan had apparently made several similar visits since he separated from his wife , although he never told the pharmacist where he got the drugs . At 4 : 45 pm he called a friend , literary agent Michael Hicks @-@ Beach , and between 6 : 30 pm and 7 : 00 pm met with him at his flat on Elizabeth Street . Lucan wanted his help with an article on gambling he had been asked to write for an Oxford University magazine . He drove Hicks @-@ Beach home for about 8 : 00 pm , not in his Mercedes @-@ Benz , but in " an old , dark and scruffy Ford " , possibly the Ford Corsair he borrowed from Michael Stoop several weeks earlier . At 8 : 30 pm he called the Clermont to check on a reservation for dinner with Greville Howard and friends . Howard had called him at 5 : 15 pm and asked if he wished to come to the theatre , but Lucan had declined and made the alternative suggestion to meet at the Clermont at 11 : 00 pm . He failed to arrive and did not answer his telephone when called .

= = Murder = =

= = = Sandra Rivett = = =

Sandra Eleanor Rivett was born on 16 September 1945 , the third child of Albert and Eunice Hensby . The family moved to Australia when she was two years old , but returned in 1955 . Sandra was a popular child , described at school as " intelligent , although she does not excel academically " . She worked for six months as an apprentice hairdresser before taking a job as a secretary in Croydon . Following a failed romance she became a voluntary patient at a mental hospital near Redhill , Surrey , where she was treated for depression . She became engaged to a builder named John and took a job as a children 's nanny for a doctor in Croydon . On 13 March 1964 , she gave birth to a boy named Stephen , but , as her relationship with John was failing , she returned home to live with her parents and considered giving the baby up for adoption . Her parents took on the responsibility and adopted him in May 1965 . Sandra later worked at an old people 's home , before moving to Portsmouth to stay with her elder sister . While there she met Roger Rivett ; the two married on 10 June 1967 in Croydon . Roger was serving as a Royal Navy able seaman and later worked as a loader for British Road Services , while Sandra worked part @-@ time at Reedham Orphanage in Purley . In summer 1973 he took a job on an Esso tanker , returning to their flat in Kenley a few months later by which time Sandra was employed by a cigarette company in Croydon . Their marriage collapsed in May 1974 when , suspicious of Sandra 's movements while he was away , Roger went to live with his parents . She was by then listed on the books of a Belgravia domestic agency and had been caring for an elderly couple in that district . A few weeks later she began to work for the Lucans .

Sandra normally went out with her boyfriend , John Hankins , on Thursday nights , but had decided to change her night off and thus , had seen him the previous day . The two last spoke on the telephone at about 8 : 00 pm on 7 November . After putting the younger children to bed , at about 8 : 55 pm she asked Veronica if she would like a cup of tea , before heading downstairs to the basement kitchen to make one . As she entered the room , she was bludgeoned to death with a piece of bandaged lead pipe . Her killer then placed her body into a canvas mailsack . Meanwhile , wondering what had delayed her nanny , Lady Lucan descended from the first floor to see what had happened . She called to Rivett from the top of the basement stairs and was herself attacked . As

she screamed for her life , her attacker told her to " shut up " . Lady Lucan later claimed at that moment to have recognised her husband 's voice . The two apparently continued to fight ; she bit his fingers , and when he threw her face down to the carpet , managed to turn around and squeeze his testicles , causing him to release his grip on her throat and give up the fight . When she asked where Rivett was , Lucan was at first evasive , but eventually admitted to having killed her . Terrified , Lady Lucan told him she could help him escape if only he would remain at the house for a few days , to allow her injuries to heal . Lucan walked upstairs and sent his daughter to bed , then went into one of the bedrooms . When Veronica entered , to lie on the bed , he told her to put towels down first to avoid staining the bedding . Lucan asked her if she had any barbiturates and went to the bathroom to get a wet towel , supposedly to clean Veronica 's face . Lady Lucan realised her husband would be unable to hear her from the bathroom , and made her escape , running outside to a nearby public house , the Plumbers Arms .

Lucan may have called at the Chester Square home of Madelaine Florman (mother of one of Frances 's school friends) sometime between 10 : 00 pm and 10 : 30 pm . Alone in the house , Florman ignored the door , but shortly afterwards she received an incoherent telephone call and put the receiver down . Blood stains , which after forensic examination were found to be a mixture of blood groups A and B , were later discovered on her doorstep . Lucan certainly called his mother between 10 : 30 pm and 11 : 00 pm and asked her to collect the children from Lower Belgrave Street . According to the Dowager Countess , he spoke of a " terrible catastrophe " at his wife 's home . He told her that he had been driving past the house when he saw Veronica fighting with a man , in the basement . He had entered the property and found his wife screaming . The location from which he made this , and possibly the call to Florman , remains unknown . The police forced their way into Lady Lucan 's home and discovered Sandra Rivett 's body , before his wife was taken by ambulance to St George 's Hospital . Lucan drove the Ford Corsair 42 miles (68 km) to Uckfield , in East Sussex , to visit his friends , the Maxwell @-@ Scotts . Susan Maxwell @-@ Scott 's meeting with Lucan was his last confirmed sighting .

= = = Investigation = = =

By the time Detective Chief Superintendent Roy Ranson arrived at Lower Belgrave Street early on Friday 8 November , the divisional surgeon had pronounced Sandra Rivett dead and forensic officers and photographers had been called to the property . Other than the front door , which the first two officers on the scene had kicked in , there was no sign of a forced entry . A blood @-@ stained towel was found in Veronica 's first @-@ floor bedroom . The area around the top of the basement staircase was heavily blood @-@ stained . A blood @-@ stained lead pipe lay on the floor . Pictures hanging from the staircase walls were askew and a metal banister rail was damaged . At the foot of the stairs , two cups and saucers lay in a pool of blood . Rivett 's arm protruded from the canvas sack , which lay in a slowly expanding pool of blood . The light fitting at the bottom of the stairs was missing its bulb ; one was noted nearby , on a chair . Blood was also found on various leaves in the adjoining rear garden .

Officers also searched 5 Eaton Row , into which Lucan had moved early in 1973 , and after interviewing his mother (who had called to take the children to her home in St John 's Wood) , his last address at 72a Elizabeth Street . Nothing untoward was found , although on the bed , a suit and shirt lay alongside a book on Greek shipping millionaires , and Lucan 's wallet , car keys , money , driving licence , handkerchief and spectacles were on a bedside table . His passport was in a drawer and his blue Mercedes @-@ Benz parked outside , its engine cold and its battery flat . Ranson then visited Veronica Lucan at St George 's Hospital . Although heavily sedated , she was able to describe what had happened to her . A police officer was left to guard her , should her assailant return . Rivett 's body was taken to the mortuary , and a search was undertaken of all local basement areas and gardens , skips and open spaces .

After removing her corpse from the canvas sack and beginning the post mortem examination , pathologist Keith Simpson told Ranson he was certain that Rivett had been killed before her body was placed in the sack , and that in his opinion the lead pipe found at the scene could be the murder

weapon . Her estranged husband , Roger , had an alibi for the night concerned , and was eliminated from the police 's enquiries . Other male friends and boyfriends were questioned and discounted as suspects . Her parents confirmed that Sandra had a good working relationship with Lady Lucan , and was extremely fond of the children . Meanwhile , Lucan had yet to make an appearance , and so his description was circulated to police forces across the country . Newspapers and television stations were told only that Lucan was wanted by the police for questioning .

Hours earlier , Lucan had again called his mother , at about 12 : 30 am . He told her that he would be in touch later that day , but declined to speak with the police constable who had accompanied her to her flat ; instead , he said he would call the police later that morning . Ranson discovered that Lucan had travelled to Uckfield when he was called by Ian Maxwell @-@ Scott , who told him that Lucan had arrived at his home a few hours after the murder , and spoken with his wife , Susan . While there , the earl had written two letters to his brother @-@ in @-@ law , Bill Shand @-@ Kydd , and posted them to his London address . Maxwell @-@ Scott also called Shand @-@ Kydd at his country house near Leighton Buzzard and told him about the letters , prompting the latter to immediately drive to London to collect them . After reading them , and noting that they were bloodstained , he took them to Ranson .

When asked why she did not immediately inform the police of Lucan 's presence , Susan Maxwell @-@ Scott said she had not seen any newspapers or television news , or listened to any radio broadcasts that might have warned her of the importance of his visit . Meanwhile , Lucan 's children were taken by their aunt , Lady Sarah Gibbs , to her home in Guilsborough , Northamptonshire , where they would remain for several weeks . On the day Veronica Lucan was discharged from hospital , a High Court hearing confirmed that the children could return to live with her . Repeated press intrusions later forced the family to move to a friend 's home in Plymouth .

The Ford Corsair that Lucan had been seen driving and whose details had the previous day been circulated across the country was found on Sunday in Norman Road , Newhaven , about 16 miles (26 km) from Uckfield . In its boot was a piece of lead pipe covered in surgical tape , and a full bottle of vodka . The car was removed for forensic examination . Later statements from two witnesses suggest that it was parked there sometime between 5 : 00 am and 8 : 00 am on the morning of Friday 8 November . Its owner , Michael Stoop , also received a letter from Lucan , delivered to his club , the St James 's . However , Stoop threw the envelope away and it was therefore not possible to check its postmark to see where it had been sent from .

Ranson suspected a suicide , but a thorough search of Newhaven Downs was judged impossible . A partial search was made , using tracker dogs , although all that was found were the skeletal remains of a judge who had disappeared years earlier . Police divers searched the harbour , and a partial search using infra @-@ red photography was undertaken the following year , to no avail . A warrant for Lucan 's arrest , to answer charges of murdering Sandra Rivett , and attempting to murder his wife , was issued on Tuesday 12 November 1974 . Descriptions of his appearance , already issued to police forces across the UK , were then issued to Interpol .

= = = Forensics = = =

The forensic examination of the lead pipes found at the murder scene and in the Corsair 's boot revealed traces of blood on the pipe from 46 Lower Belgrave Street . This proved to be a mixture of Lady Lucan 's (blood group A) and Sandra Rivett 's (B) blood . Hair belonging to Veronica Lucan was also found on that pipe , but none belonging to Sandra Rivett . The pipe found inside the car had neither blood nor hair on it . Home Office scientists were unable to prove conclusively that both pipes were cut from the same , longer , piece of piping , although they thought it likely . The tape wrapped around both was similar , but those too could not be conclusively linked . The letters written to Bill Shand @-@ Kydd were stained with blood considered to be from both women . The letter to Michael Stoop had no blood on it , but it was later proven that the paper it was written on had been torn from a writing pad found in the Corsair 's boot .

An examination of the blood stains found inside 46 Lower Belgrave Street demonstrated that Rivett had been attacked in the basement kitchen , while Lady Lucan had been attacked at the top of the

basement stairs . The bloodstains found inside the Ford Corsair were of the AB blood group ; the report concluded that this might have been a mixture of blood from both women . Hair similar to Lady Lucan 's was also found inside the car .

= = = Media reaction = = =

By the afternoon of Friday 8 November , the newspapers ' early editions carried photographs of the Lucans across their front pages , accompanied by headlines like " body in sack ... countess runs out screaming " , and " belgravia murder ? earl sought " . A meeting that day at the Clermont , between John Aspinall , Daniel Meinertzhagen , Charles Benson , Stephen Raphael , Bill Shand @-@ Kydd and Dominic Elwes , became the cause of much press speculation . Meinertzhagen and Raphael later insisted that the gathering was just a rational discussion between concerned friends , keen to share anything they knew about what had happened , but the relationship between the police and Lucan 's social circle was strained ; some officers complained that an " Eton mafia " worked against them . Susan Maxwell @-@ Scott refused to add to her statement , and when Aspinall 's mother , Lady Osborne , was asked if she could help locate Lucan 's body , she replied " The last I heard of him , he was being fed to the tigers at my son 's zoo " , prompting the police to search the house and the animal cages there . They searched fourteen country houses and estates , including Holkham Hall and Warwick Castle , to no avail . Amidst concerns expressed by the Labour MP Marcus Lipton that some people were " being a bit snooty " with the police , Benson wrote a letter to The Times asking him to either identify those people or " kindly withdraw his remarks " . To their cost , Private Eye accused James Goldsmith of being at the Clermont meeting , when he was actually in Ireland . Dominic Elwes went to see Lady Lucan in hospital and was reportedly deeply shocked both by her appearance and her statement " Who 's the mad one now ? " Elwes was apparently unhappy at some of the negative press coverage of the countess , and was later ostracised by his friends for his part in an article critical of Lucan , which appeared in the Sunday Times Magazine . He committed suicide in September 1975 .

Rivett 's case made headlines around the world . Within days of the murder , newspapers reported on Veronica Lucan 's statement to the police , with claims that she had pretended to collude with her husband to ensure her safety . In January 1975 Veronica gave an exclusive interview to the Daily Express . She also appeared in a murder reconstruction , in the same newspaper , complete with posed photographs taken inside the house .

= = = Inquest = = =

The inquest into Sandra Rivett 's death opened on 13 November 1974 and was led by the Coroner for Inner West London , Gavin Thurston . Two witnesses were called to the courtroom , which was packed with reporters ; Roger Rivett , who confirmed that he had identified his wife 's body , and the pathologist , Keith Simpson , who confirmed that Rivett had died from being hit on the head with a blunt instrument . At Ranson 's request , the hearing was then adjourned . Further adjournments were made on 11 December 1974 and 10 March 1975 , before a full inquest was scheduled for 16 June 1975 .

The hearing began with the swearing @-@ in of the jury and introductions from various legal representatives , including a lawyer hired for Lucan by his mother . Thurston introduced the jury to the case and explained their duties . He had selected 33 witnesses to be called over the following few days , including Veronica Lucan , who each day wore a dark coat and white headscarf . Thurston questioned her on her relationship with Lucan , her marriage , her financial affairs , her employment of Rivett and what had happened on the night of the attack . The Dowager Countess 's QC attempted to ask Lady Lucan about the nature of their relationship , if she hated her husband , but Thurston ruled his line of questioning inadmissible . Woman Detective Constable Sally Blower , who had taken a statement from Frances on 20 November 1974 , read the young girl 's words to the court . Frances had heard a scream , and a few minutes later had watched as her mother (blood on her face) and father had entered the room . Her mother had then sent her to bed . She later heard

her father calling for her mother , asking where she was , and watched as he left the bathroom and walked downstairs . She also described how Sandra Rivett did not normally work on Thursday nights .

The landlord of " The Plumbers Arms " described how Lady Lucan had entered his bar covered " head to toe in blood " before she fell into " a state of shock " . He claimed that she shouted " Help me , help me , I 've just escaped from being murdered " and " My children , my children , he 's murdered my nanny " , although no name was mentioned . Pathologist Keith Simpson outlined his post mortem examination , concluding that death was caused by " blunt head injuries " and " inhalation of blood " . He confirmed that the lead pipe found at the scene was most likely responsible for Rivett 's injuries , although some , to the left eye and mouth , he thought more likely to have been caused by punches from a clenched fist . The last person to confirm seeing Lucan alive , Susan Maxwell @-@ Scott , told the court that the earl looked " dishevelled " , and his hair " a little ruffled " . His trousers had a damp patch on the right hip . Lucan had told her that he was walking , or passing by the house when he saw Veronica being attacked by a man . He let himself in but slipped in a pool of blood at the bottom of the stairs . He told Maxwell @-@ Scott that the attacker ran off , and that Veronica was " very hysterical " and accused him of having hired a hitman to kill her .

Once the hearing had ended , Thurston made a summary of the evidence presented and told the jury their options . At 11 : 45 am , their foreman announced " Murder by Lord Lucan " . Lucan became the first member of the House of Lords to be named a murderer since 1760 , when Laurence Shirley , 4th Earl Ferrers , was hanged for killing his bailiff . He was also the last person to be committed by a coroner to a Crown Court for unlawful killing ; the coroner 's power to do so was removed by the Criminal Law Act 1977 .

Rivett 's body , which had been held for several weeks following the murder , was released to her family and cremated at Croydon crematorium on 18 December 1974 . A police spokesman cited Lady Lucan 's desire not to upset the family as a reason for her non @-@ attendance at the cremation .

= = = Lucan 's defence = = =

Lucan 's friends and family were critical of the inquest , which they felt offered a one @-@ sided view of events . His mother told reporters that it did not serve " any useful purpose at all " . Veronica 's sister , Christina , said she felt " great sadness and sorrow " at the verdict . Susan Maxwell @-@ Scott continued to press the earl 's claims of innocence and claimed to feel " awfully sorry " for the countess . However , as Lucan remained absent , his description of " a traumatic night of unbelievable coincidence " came only from the letters he authored and the people he spoke with soon after Rivett 's murder . While his fingerprints were not found at the scene , his assertions make no provision for the lead pipe discovered in the boot of the Ford Corsair , the claims by some that he discussed murdering his wife , or the lack of a viable suspect for the man he claimed to have seen fighting her . No sign of a forced entry was found , and officers attempting to demonstrate that Lucan could have seen into the basement kitchen , from the street , could only do so by stooping low to the pavement . The basement light was not working , making it even more difficult to see into the room ; its lightbulb (which was tested and found to be in working order) was found removed from its holder and left lying on a chair . Furthermore , Lady Lucan claimed not to have entered the basement that night , contradicting the earl 's version of events ; his wife 's account is supported by the forensic examination made of the blood splashes and stains around the property . Some traces of her blood were found in the basement , the rear garden and on the canvas sack used to store Rivett 's body , although this may have been due to contamination at the scene . The man Lucan claimed to have seen could not have left through the basement 's front door as it was locked , and the rear door led to a walled garden through which no trace of an escape was found . No signs that the man left by the ground level front door were discovered , and no witnesses reported seeing any such person near 46 Lower Belgrave Street .

In contrast to his defenders , the national press were almost unanimous in their condemnation of Lucan . Their leader @-@ writers ignored the threat of libel and identified him as Rivett 's killer .

= = Bankruptcy and estate = =

As Lucan 's bankruptcy proceeded , in August 1975 his creditors were informed that the missing earl had unsecured debts of £ 45 @,@ 000 and preferential liabilities for £ 1 @,@ 326 . His assets were estimated at £ 22 @,@ 632 . The family silver was sold in March 1976 for around £ 30 @,@ 000 . His remaining debts were repaid by the Lucan family trust in the years immediately following his disappearance . His family was granted probate over his estate in 1999 , although no death certificate was issued , and his heir , George Bingham , Lord Bingham , was refused permission to take his father 's title and seat in the House of Lords . Following the passage of the Presumption of Death Act 2013 , Bingham began a new attempt to have his father declared dead , which proved successful in a High Court hearing at the Rolls Building on 3 February 2016 . He therefore inherited his father 's title , becoming the 8th Earl of Lucan .

= = Ultimate fate and reported sightings = =

The last confirmed sighting of Lucan was at about 1 : 15 am on 8 November 1974 as he exited the driveway of the Maxwell @-@ Scott property , in his friend 's Ford Corsair . Since then , his whereabouts and ultimate fate remain a mystery . Detective Chief Superintendent Roy Ranson initially claimed that Lucan had " done the honourable thing " and " fallen on his own sword " , a view publicly repeated by many of Lucan 's friends , including John Aspinall , who shortly before his death in 2000 said he believed the earl was guilty of Rivett 's murder , and that his body lay " 250 feet under the Channel " . Veronica Lucan believes her husband killed himself " like the nobleman he was " .

Ranson later changed his view , explaining that he considered it more likely that suicide was far from Lucan 's thoughts , that a rumoured drowning at sea was implausible and that the earl had moved to southern Africa . Thirty years after the murder , the detective leading a new investigation into Lucan 's disappearance told the Telegraph that " the evidence points towards the fact that Lord Lucan left the country and lived abroad for a number of years . " Speaking to author John Pearson before she died , Susan Maxwell @-@ Scott suggested that Lucan might have been helped out of the country by shadowy underground financiers , before being judged too great a risk and killed and buried in Switzerland . A similar theory was proposed by advertising executive Jeremy Scott , who was familiar with some of the Clermont Set .

Lucan 's disappearance has captivated the public 's imagination for decades , with thousands of sightings reported across the world . One of the earliest , shortly after the murder , turned out to be a British ex @-@ politician , John Stonehouse , who had attempted to fake his own death . The police travelled to France in June the following year to hunt another lead , to no avail . A sighting in Colombia turned out to be an American businessman . John Miller , a bounty hunter who kidnapped the fugitive train robber Ronnie Biggs , claimed in 1982 to have captured the earl , but was later exposed by the News of the World as a hoaxer . In 2003 a former Scotland Yard detective thought he had tracked the earl to Goa , India , although the man he traced was actually Barry Halpin , a folk singer from St Helens . In 2007 , reporters in New Zealand interviewed a homeless British expatriate who neighbours claimed was the missing earl .

More recently , responding to claims that the two eldest Lucan children were sent to Gabon in the early 1980s so that their father might secretly watch them " from a distance " , George Bingham denied ever visiting the country . His mother dismissed the newspaper claims of sightings as " nonsense " , reiterating that in her opinion " he was not the sort of Englishman to cope abroad " .