

= Lady in the Lake trial =

The Lady in the Lake trial was a 2005 murder case in which Gordon Park (25 January 1944 ? 25 January 2010) a retired teacher from Leece , near Barrow @-@ in @-@ Furness , Cumbria , England , was jailed for life for the murder of his first wife , Carol Ann Park , in 1976 .

Carol Park went missing on 17 July 1976 , and was never seen alive again by her family . In 1997 , her body was discovered by divers in Coniston Water and Gordon was arrested on suspicion of murder . The charges were subsequently dropped but in 2004 Gordon was arrested again and found guilty of his wife 's murder . The trial judge sentenced him to life imprisonment and recommended that he should serve a minimum of 15 years before being considered for parole . He was held at Garth prison , Leyland , Preston . In December 2007 he lodged an appeal against his conviction which was dismissed in November 2008 . On 25 January 2010 , he was found hanged in his cell , and pronounced dead at the scene .

The details of the murder are sketchy . Carol was killed due to blunt trauma to her face by means of some instrument , alleged in court to have been an ice axe . She was then bound with rope , using complex knots , weighed down with rocks and lead pipes and thrown overboard from a boat on Coniston Water . The body landed on an underwater ledge where it was later found by amateur divers . Had it been dropped a few metres further from the shore , it would have sunk to the much deeper bottom and probably never have been discovered .

There was a great deal of controversy surrounding the case . Gordon received much support from his family and friends and maintained his innocence . There was a large amount of local interest in the trial as shown by the sales of the local paper , the North @-@ West Evening Mail . Some claimed that much of the evidence against him could be discounted and there were vigils and petitions in attempts to free Gordon from prison and clear his name . The case featured prominently in the book No Smoke : The Shocking Truth About British Justice which outlined seven cases the author believed to be examples of innocent people being convicted of murder .

= = Case history = =

= = = Carol Park vanishes = = =

Prior to her disappearance , according to her friends , Carol was feeling depressed . She had talked of tracing her biological parents , as she was adopted . On 17 July 1976 , she went missing . Gordon claimed that she had left home for another man , and Carol had left their home in Leece twice before . It was for this reason , Gordon claimed , that he did not report her missing for six weeks . Carol was said to time her periods away from home to coincide with the school holidays . Gordon claimed that it wasn 't until she didn 't return in time to take up her job as a primary school teacher in September (the start of the school term) that he realised that there was a problem . At this time he reported her missing via his solicitor , and her family was informed . On the day she vanished , the family had been due to visit Blackpool on a day trip . However , Carol said she felt unwell and wanted to remain behind in bed . She was never seen alive again by her family . Gordon claimed he returned home to find Carol had left the house , leaving behind her wedding ring , and that there was no sign of a struggle . A missing persons enquiry was launched , but nothing came of it . This missing persons report was subsequently lost , and it was implied by some that it was because both Gordon and a senior police commander (who , by the time the article was published , had died) involved in the case were freemasons . This was refuted by Sandra Lean , who , in No Smoke , claimed that Gordon had never been a freemason . At the time , police told Gordon that , should a body be found , he would be the main suspect .

= = = Discovery of body and post mortem results = = =

On 13 August 1997 , amateur divers discovered Carol Park 's body , clad only in a nightdress , 75

feet down at the bottom of Coniston Water . She was nicknamed " the Lady in the Lake " by detectives after the 1943 detective novel by Raymond Chandler , The Lady in the Lake . The body had been wrapped in a pinafore dress , a canvas rucksack and plastic bags , tied with several knots , and weighed down with lead piping . Her eyes had been covered by plasters . It was later reported that the body had landed on an underwater ledge , and had it been thrown into the water a few metres farther from the land , it would probably never have been found .

Details of Carol 's death were revealed in the post mortem . There were severe injuries to the skull , and it was said that her face had been smashed by multiple blows . It was later found in court that the murder weapon had been an ice axe . The body was found to be in a foetal position , which suggested that the body had been dealt with within a few hours of death , before rigor mortis could settle in . It has since been said that the investigators failed to acknowledge that rigor mortis passes in a 24 ? to 48 ? hour time period , and that the body could feasibly have been trussed once rigor mortis had passed . Many unusual knots were used to tie the body , and the same knots were said to be used in Gordon Park 's house and boat . This was one of the key pieces of evidence used against Gordon in the trial .

= = = Gordon Park is arrested , but charges are dropped = = =

At the time of the discovery of the body , Gordon and his third wife , Jenny , were on a cycling holiday in France . They heard news of the discovery of the body , and are said to have seen footage of the police searching their house . On 24 August , they arrived home , and Gordon was arrested on suspicion of murder at 8.00am the next morning . He was charged with the murder of Carol Park , and remanded in Preston prison . However , after two weeks , his solicitors managed to persuade the court to grant him bail . On 6 January 1998 , the charges against Gordon were dropped due to lack of evidence . The Crown Prosecution Service released a statement saying-

After a conference with leading counsel and the police , a decision was taken , in agreement with all parties , that there was insufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction .

Reportedly he told another inmate that " she deserved it " as had discovered his wife being unfaithful .

After the charges were dropped , Gordon said that he wished to " try to put all this , including the events of 21 years ago , behind me and try to return to my everyday life " . However , the fact that the charges were dropped angered Carol 's brother , Ivor Price , who said that he was disgusted by the way that Carol was portrayed in the proceedings , and talked of how Carol was not " someone who [was] cheap or had a string of lovers . "

= = = Gordon Park 's second arrest and trial = = =

Gordon was again arrested on 13 January 2004 . Police said at the time that the murder file had never been closed , and that the arrest followed new leads . These new leads were later reported to be a confession by Michael Wainwright , who claimed to have been a cellmate of Gordon 's during his short prison stay in 1997 . The police then revisited the site where the body was discovered , and found a piece of Westmorland green slate , a stone that matched the rocks that made up the wall of the family 's bungalow . The case was brought to trial at Manchester Crown Court , and lasted ten weeks . There was no single piece of evidence that pointed to Gordon indisputably , but the prosecution argued that when the evidence was placed together , it could only point at Park , and not a " mysterious stranger or secret lover " . Primarily , the case for the prosecution rested on circumstantial evidence , with the jury being asked to consider knots , rocks used to weight down the body and the ice axe , all linking Gordon Park to the crime . However , the statements of Michael Wainwright , and another of Gordon 's cellmates , who had learning difficulties , were also used as evidence by the prosecution . He was sentenced to be jailed for life , and told that he must serve at least 15 years . The judge said that he had taken into account the " terrible concealment " of the body .

Park claimed he and his wife had an open marriage

The court found that Gordon had first put his hands around Carol 's neck to strangle her , but that she had struggled . He then grabbed his ice axe , and brought it down with what was described as " considerable " force on Carol 's face , and smashed the front right @-@ hand side of her face , splitting open her head and smashing her teeth . He then did this again ? the attack was described as consisting of " two big heavy , crushing blows " by pathologist Dr. Edwin Tapp . After this , Gordon dumped his wife 's body in the lake , and went back to his day @-@ to @-@ day life . During the trial , the prosecution speculated that Gordon had " drugged his wife , possibly on or around the 17 July , tied her up and stored her body in a chest freezer before dumping it in Coniston Water " .

= = = Gordon Park 's appeal = = =

On 6 December 2007 , it was reported that Clarion Solicitors , representing Gordon Park , said that they would launch an appeal . In a public statement , they said :

The appeal is based upon fresh evidence that was not available at the original trial , it is hoped the conviction will be quashed and a retrial ordered ... Upon his conviction , Mr Park 's family and friends launched a campaign to clear his name , claiming there was no single piece of evidence that pointed indisputably to him .

Representing Park in the appeal was solicitor Rob Rode and Simon Bourne @-@ Arton QC . They did not initially reveal what the new evidence was , only that it " was not available at the original trial " and that it was " very strong and significant " . Cumbria Constabulary released a statement saying :

Detectives from Cumbria Constabulary carried out a full and thorough investigation and the full facts of the case were presented to the CPS . The case was then tried by a jury , where Gordon Park was found guilty of the murder of Carol Park in 1976 .

In October , campaigners in support of Park said " We have in our possession , a signed , witnessed , statement , made this week , by one of the main prosecution witnesses , stating , ? police officers did put words in my mouth regarding Gordon Park ? and ? the police told me what to say in court . ? " Pastor George Harrison , acting as a spokesperson for the campaigners , also claimed that the appeals process was flawed and " rendered virtually impossible " due to costs .

In November 2008 , the appeal bid was rejected by three judges at the Court of Appeal in London . QC Simon Bourne , representing Park , had wanted to call an expert witness to challenge geological evidence used at the trial . Lord Justice Keene said that the new evidence did not raise " a reasonable doubt as to the safety of this conviction " , saying that the geological evidence was only a small element of the " strong circumstantial case against the applicant " . The new evidence presented by geologist Andrew Moncrief concerned the rock found with the body , said to have been from the wall outside the Parks ' house . Moncrief argued that the rock was " indistinguishable " from others in the area , and therefore " meaningless " .

= = = Gordon Park 's death = = =

On 25 January 2010 , the morning of Park 's 66th birthday , he was found hanged and unconscious in his prison cell in Garth Prison , and pronounced dead at the scene later in the morning . It is believed that a ligature was involved , and that Park inflicted the injuries upon himself . Park had not been assessed for the risk of suicide . Jeremy Park said that " we are all completely devastated and still believe his innocence 100 % . " Since his death , Carol Park 's family have tried to trace her ashes .

= = Review = =

On 26 November 2014 , it was confirmed that the Criminal Cases review Commission were examining the verdict , and new DNA evidence had come to light . Carol Park 's niece has accused Gordon Park 's family of ' clutching at straws ' and has argued : " Gordon went to the High Court of

Appeal and lost , so what makes them think after all this time they could find any information that could overturn the court ? s decision ? "

= = Case controversy = =

= = = Support for Park = = =

There was much local interest in the matter , as was shown by the sales of the local paper , the North @-@ West Evening Mail , when it ran special editions on the case . Park maintained his innocence , and received much support from his family and friends . His children , Jeremy and Rachael , appointed a new legal team in an attempt to find grounds for appeal . Jeremy also set up a website , www.freegordon.com , in a bid to raise awareness and support of the case for Gordon . Notable individuals offering support include Tony Benn , who said that there was considerable doubt about Gordon 's conviction , and that he would do all he can to help campaign for his freedom . Benn has been quoted as saying the case is a " grave injustice " . He is one of the over 300 people who have signed the " Gordon Park is Innocent " petition .

A year into Park 's life sentence , around 40 family members and friends held a vigil at Strangeways Prison , in a bid to raise awareness of " the fact that there is an innocent man in prison " . Another was held a year later , led by Jenny Park , and a third on the third anniversary of Park 's imprisonment . It was due to these vigils , claimed Evangelical Pastor George Harrison , that he was barred from visiting Park once he was transferred to Garth prison , in Lancashire . Other fronts for the campaign included an offer of £ 5 @,@ 000 for anyone providing evidence that lead to Gordon 's freedom . Included in this were planned adverts in the North @-@ West Evening Mail and leaflets to 20 @,@ 000 homes in the Furness area . However , this was being organised by Harrison , with whom Gordon and his third wife Jennifer stayed during the trial . Jeremy Park wrote to the North @-@ West Evening Mail to confirm that he wanted nothing to do with the reward , and that Harrison had no right to include his name , contact details or email address , or mention the freegordon website , in the adverts . Subsequently , Harrison claimed to have delivered 6 @,@ 000 booklets and leaflets in the Furness area .

Not everyone with a link to the family supported Gordon 's attempts to clear his name . Vanessa Fisher , Park 's adoptive daughter , appeared as a witness for the prosecution at the trial , telling of how her father would hit the children with " a stick or cane " and how he would not discuss his wife 's disappearance . She was not in court at the time of Park 's sentencing . Ivor Price , Carol 's brother , has spoken publicly at various times about his feelings about Gordon , and the Price family even sat away from Park 's supporters during the trial itself . In a statement shortly after Park 's guilty verdict , he said he had " no doubt " that justice had been done , and added that " Carol was a lovely , bubbly girl who was very clever and intelligent . What has been said about her has been heartbreaking . This was about one thing : justice for Carol . " Around the same time , Price said that although he believed Gordon at the time of Carol 's disappearance , upon the news of a body being found in Coniston Water , he " knew it was her , and knew who had done it " , expressing his conviction of Park 's guilt . More recently , he said that he was " distressed " by the ongoing campaign to free Park . After Park 's unsuccessful appeal , Price 's daughters , Kay Washford and Claire Gardener spoke to the North @-@ West Evening Mail , their parents having died before the appeal was rejected . Washford said " It is brilliant , an amazing result . Our mum and dad Ivor and Maureen Price fought hard for this justice and now they can rest in peace because justice has been done . We are so thankful for the result and so glad he will be staying in there . " She added that " It is finally justice for Carol . " The Park family and Cumbria Constabulary did not comment .

= = = Claims of flawed investigation = = =

The case was reported to be difficult for the prosecution , with the time between the murder and the trial making it extremely difficult to track potential witnesses . Keith Churchman , a police officer

involved in the case , said that " the other difficulty was of course the body was taken away from the place where it was killed . " However , on top of the difficulties outlined by the police , the freegordon website detailed a number of what Park 's supporters claim are holes in the evidence used to convict him . A story about the problems with the evidence was published in the Daily Mail on October 12 , 2005 , at the request of Jeremy , though it was not written by him . Bob Woffenden , the author , later wrote an article for Inside Time , in December 2006 , talking about the trial and its controversies . Another similar article , pointing out holes in the evidence , was published in the Sunday Herald , on July 23 , 2006 .

= = = = Witnesses = = = =

The first problem with the evidence is the use of inmate informant evidence , such as that from Michael Wainwright , described as " the most disreputable [form of evidence] of all " , despite the fact that it was one of the key pieces of evidence in the trial . Glen Banks , a man with whom Park had briefly shared a cell and who claimed in court that Park had admitted his guilt to him , was described as " highly suggestible " , frequently changed his story , and also claimed that Park had admitted to killing Carol while sailing to Blackpool . Wainwright , the other informant , was said to be a heavy cannabis smoker and admitted to hearing voices . He claimed that Gordon had said that he went upstairs , found Carol in bed with another man , and killed her in a fit of rage . This seemed unlikely , as the Parks lived in a bungalow , and the supposed lover has never come forward . Park also claimed to have never actually met Wainwright .

Joan Young , who was the only first @-@ hand witness , is challenged in both articles . She came forward in 2004 , claiming that she had seen someone push something over the side of a boat on Coniston Water . This testimony is challenged , because so much time has passed and the fact that her husband saw nothing . However , he claims to have been reading his paper at the time . Also , it has been said that Young was too far away to identify the person in the boat , and that it couldn 't have been Carol Park 's body that was being dumped , as the Youngs were positioned so that the location Carol 's body was found would have been visibly blocked by an island . The article even points out that Young described a boat that appeared to be a cruiser yacht . Despite the fact that Gordon did own a large yacht in 1997 , in 1976 he owned only a 505 racing dinghy , which he sold later that year .

There are three witnesses who provide direct evidence supporting the idea that Park was innocent . The first , a neighbour , claims that they saw Carol at the bottom of her driveway . A second , another neighbour , claims that they saw an unidentified man in a Volkswagen Beetle in the Parks ' drive for twenty minutes . The presence of the unidentified car has never been accounted for . Around 6pm that night , another witness , a woman who knew Carol , saw her at Charnock Richard services . She had mentioned to her husband the fact that Carol had not greeted her , describing her as " snobby " .

= = = = Other evidence = = = =

The rock supposedly found in the lake , said to be taken from the Park 's garden wall , has been challenged as evidence in multiple places . Both articles say that the police diver had no memory of recovering it , and he claimed that if he had found it , he would have placed it back . Professor Kenneth Pye , a defense witness , said that there was no evidence that the rock had ever been on the lake bed at all . The article in the Sunday Herald also claims that the policeman said to be responsible for finding the rock fainted when it was produced in court , offering no explanation , but still denying that he ever found it .

Two more issues are addressed in the Sunday Herald article , but not in the Daily Mail article . The first is of the knots used to tie up Carol 's body ? the knots on Carol 's body were mostly granny knots , of which there was no evidence that Gordon ever used ? indeed during the trial he was specifically asked this , and he responded , " I do not use granny knots " . The granny knot is always a mistake , used by someone who should have used a reef knot ; those learning knot @-@ tying

frequently make this mistake . Gordon Park , an experienced knot @-@ tyer , would likely never use a granny knot , and their frequent appearance on the body of Carol is strong evidence that it was not Gordon who tied them . The article also claims that the evidence of knots was irrelevant anyway , as climbers and yachtsmen were so common in the area . The other piece of evidence related to another rock taken from the lakebed , which had supposedly come from the Parks ' roof . However , the prosecution eventually admitted that Westmoreland green slate had been worked in the area for hundreds of years , and could have come from anywhere . The Herald also mentions the fact that the police files from the original missing persons inquiry into Carol Park had gone missing themselves , but does not draw any conclusions from this .

Both articles address the issue of who the killer could alternatively have been , and both of them mention Carol 's other lovers , and John Rapson , responsible for murdering Carol 's sister . Both of the articles mention that he was in the Barrow area around the time of the murder , but both of them are careful to point out that they are not accusing him of being the murderer .

= = = No Smoke = = =

On 1 May 2007 , No Smoke ? The Shocking Truth About British Justice , by Sandra Lean , was published by Exposure Publishing . This book features the stories of seven high @-@ profile convicted murderers , including Park , Luke Mitchell and Sion Jenkins . The book claims that the expert testimonies in the Lady in the Lake trial were flawed , that certain evidence was withheld , and that the sensationalist reporting of the press at the time influenced the court by persuading them that Park was the only person who could have killed his wife .

= = Personal life of Gordon Park = =

Park worked as a village primary school teacher , but was retired by the time he was prosecuted for the murder of his first wife , Carol . Park had two children by Carol , Jeremy and Rachael . Gordon and Carol also adopted their niece Vanessa when she was 18 months old after her mother , Christie (who was Carol 's sister) , was murdered by her boyfriend in 1969 , aged 17 . This was described as a " rare and appalling coincidence " , but has been picked up on by the case for the defence since the trial .

Park remarried twice after Carol was murdered . His second wife was named Catherine , and his third , to whom he remained married until his death , is named Jenny . Park met all of his wives through teaching , Carol was a teacher at Askam Village School when she was killed . When rejecting Park 's request for appeal , Lord Justice Keene , Mr Justice Beatson and Mr Justice Macduff noted that both Gordon and Carol had had affairs in the year leading up to Carol 's disappearance .

Park 's interests included sailing and climbing , which was relevant to the case due to the knots used to tie his wife 's body . While in prison , Park spent time practising t 'ai chi , taking a maths degree and keeping fit .

In an exclusive written interview with The Westmorland Gazette nine months into his sentence , Park talked of how he had struggled with prison , saying : " They [other inmates] may smoke incessantly , play loud music , the TV or video games , rifle your drawers , steal , lie etc . There is not a lot you can do about it ... I watched a guy " chasing the dragon " . It frightened me to death . I had never seen that before . " He refused to answer detailed questions about the trial or case , but protested his innocence , saying " If I knew who killed my wife , how , where , why , then I would have said so . I did not know then . I do not know now . "