

= Philip Smith (criminal) =

Philip John Smith (born 10 July 1965 in Gloucester , England) is a British spree killer serving a life sentence for the murders of three women in Birmingham . A former fairground worker employed at the Rainbow public house in the Digbeth area of the city , Smith killed his victims over a four @-@ day period in November 2000 , befriending two of them at the Rainbow before carrying out the crimes . All three victims were mutilated almost beyond recognition , but Smith was quickly identified as the killer because of the overwhelming evidence linking him to the deaths .

Smith 's first victim was Jodie Hyde , a recovering butane gas addict whom he met at the Rainbow before killing her hours later . He is thought to have strangled her before setting her body on fire near a recreation ground . Three days later , he met mother @-@ of @-@ three Rosemary Corcoran at the same public house and drove her to a rural location , where he bludgeoned her to death and drove over the body . Then , as he drove home , he hit care worker Carol Jordan with his car and , fearing capture , beat her to death . All three bodies were discovered soon after the murders were carried out .

Smith was apprehended after he contacted West Midlands Police saying that he wished to make a statement about Corcoran 's disappearance . At the time , however , her body had not been positively identified , and inquiries quickly established that some aspects of his account were false . The murder inquiry , named Operation Green , uncovered a large quantity of strong evidence incriminating Smith , but at first he denied responsibility . He maintained his innocence as his trial began in July 2001 , but later in the proceedings he changed his plea to guilty and was sentenced to life imprisonment . The motive for his crimes was unclear , but police who arrested him believed that a " lack of permanent sexual relations " was a contributing factor .

Detectives also investigated the death of a woman who had been a colleague of Smith at the Rainbow . Patricia Lynott , a divorced mother of two from Ireland who had moved to Birmingham , had been found dead in her flat in October 2000 . Police had not treated the death as suspicious , but after they discovered her connection to Smith , her body was exhumed for a second post mortem . This proved to be inconclusive , and in January 2003 a coroner 's jury in Birmingham recorded an open verdict after hearing that the cause of her death could not be determined .

= = Background = =

Philip John Smith was born in 1965 at the City Maternity Hospital in Gloucester and grew up in the city . The son of sawmill labourer Henry John Smith and his wife Rose Smith (née Luckins) , he was the oldest of five siblings . The family lived in Midland Road , where they were neighbours of serial killers Fred and Rosemary West , before moving to Hailes Road on the Coney Hill Estate in 1971 . He attended Coney Hill Infants and Junior School and later went to a special school for children with learning difficulties . The family had a modest income , and their situation became worse when Smith 's father was injured in a motoring accident . Smith left school at 14 to join Billy Danter 's Funfair , which toured extensively throughout the United Kingdom and also employed his father . He worked out of season as a farmhand , labourer and security guard .

Smith moved from Gloucester to Tewkesbury and then Ross @-@ on @-@ Wye , where he lived with a female partner . They had a son in 1990 and two more children in 1992 , but Smith left the family and moved to Cardiff when the relationship became difficult . He then spent a year in Ireland lodging with a travelling family who took pity on him while he was hitchhiking in Athlone , County Westmeath , Ireland . He told them he was an English gypsy visiting Ireland , and they allowed him to live rent @-@ free in a spare caravan , while he contributed a portion of his unemployment benefit towards food . They asked him to leave because they were uncomfortable about sexual remarks he had made to young female members of the family . He moved to Birmingham towards the end of 1999 and stayed briefly at the Trinity Centre , a hostel for the homeless in Digbeth , before moving to a property managed by a housing association in Braithwaite Road in the Sparkbrook district of Birmingham . He became well @-@ known locally and was a regular patron of the Shamrock Cafe on Stratford Road and of the Rainbow pub in Digbeth , where he was employed

on a casual basis as an odd @-@ jobber and served as an unofficial taxi driver for drinkers .

Smith received over 30 criminal convictions for minor offences , beginning in May 1984 when he was fined £ 100 for theft . His record also included handling stolen goods , burglary and driving without a licence , but no violence . At 6 ft 4 in and weighing 22 stone , with a dishevelled appearance and a soft West Country accent , he was considered gentle by those he met . In an interview with the Birmingham Evening Mail following Smith 's trial in July 2001 , Jim Smith , proprietor of the Shamrock Cafe , said , " He was a gentle giant who we named ' Bigfoot ' because his boots always used to leave black marks on the floor . Ninety @-@ nine per cent of the time he had a dirty appearance and looked like he had been working on a car . "

= = Murder spree = =

On 8 November 2000 , Smith met 21 @-@ year @-@ old Jodie Hyde , a recovering butane gas addict from Alum Rock , Birmingham , at the Rainbow public house , and they were seen leaving together . He took her to a hospital appointment and later killed her . Prosecutors believed that he strangled her at his flat and dumped her body near a recreation ground near Golden Hillock Road in Sparkbrook , where he set it alight . The still @-@ smouldering remains were discovered at 6 : 15 am next morning (9 November) by two patrolling police officers . The body was barely recognisable and had to be identified using fingerprints . A subsequent post mortem concluded that she had been strangled before being rolled up in a carpet and set on fire .

Three days later , Smith met Rosemary Corcoran , a 25 @-@ year @-@ old mother of three from Castle Vale at the same public house , and again they were seen leaving together . He drove her to Worcestershire before bludgeoning her to death and running over her body near Droitwich Spa . She was found at 8 : 30 am on 12 November by a man walking his dog in a lane near Junction 5 of the M5 motorway .

Smith 's third victim was Carol Jordan , a 39 @-@ year @-@ old care home worker and mother of six from Balsall Heath , who was killed as she walked to work . Smith hit her from behind with his car while driving back from Worcestershire , fracturing her hip . Fearing that he would be caught , Smith moved her to another location and beat her so much that dental records were required to identify her corpse . The body was discovered at 8 : 50 am on 12 November on parkland next to Bell Barn Road , Lee Bank .

= = Investigation = =

= = = Initial statement = = =

When staff at the Rainbow told him of Corcoran 's disappearance on 13 November , Smith telephoned the police station at Castle Vale saying that he wished to give a statement . Significantly , his call came at 4 : 00 pm , before the body found in Worcestershire had been positively identified as Corcoran 's , and within an hour Smith had presented himself at Castle Vale . Detective Constable Ruth Wilkins later recalled Smith 's phone call : " He said he would like to come to the police station to help with the inquiry and that he had seen [Corcoran] on Saturday night leave the pub with an unknown man . He insisted he would like to come over to the police station . He said he had been asked to contact the police by someone else and gave his mobile number . "

In his subsequent statement Smith admitted to being at the Rainbow with Corcoran and a male friend , but claimed they were later separated when they went to another public house , the Kerryman , and the male friend was ejected . Smith said that he and Corcoran then went to Monte Carlo 's , a nightclub in Handsworth , and that when they left some time later , Corcoran was confronted by a man he described as a Teddy Boy , with whom she had argued at the Kerryman . Smith said that the man became aggressive , so he asked Corcoran if she wanted to go home . Claiming that she told him she did not , he said he then left her .

= = = Evidence and murder charge = = =

The murder investigation , named Operation Green , was led by Sir Edward Crewe , Chief Constable of West Midlands Police , and included 100 police officers and 50 support staff from the West Midlands and West Mercia forces . Detectives viewed hundreds of hours of CCTV footage , gathered more than 100 separate exhibits and interviewed witnesses . Evidence was analysed by scientists from the Forensic Science Service (FSS) in Birmingham . Martin Whittaker , the scientist who headed the FSS team , spoke of the huge volume of evidence : " The team pulled together every strand of forensic evidence to create a kind of ' spider 's web ' and in the centre of it all ... was Philip Smith . In 20 years of working for the FSS , I have never had to deal with so much evidence in relation to one suspect . It was quite overwhelming . "

Although Smith maintained his innocence , detectives quickly gathered evidence linking him to Corcoran 's death and those of the other two women . Witnesses had seen him leaving the Rainbow with both Corcoran and Hyde , and he was the last person to see them both alive . CCTV footage from around Birmingham showed his distinctive car visiting key locations linked to the investigation , and even captured Hyde getting out at one point to visit a chemist . Smith was seen buying petrol from a filling station and driving near the area where Hyde 's body was later discovered . Corcoran was seen on camera struggling with Smith outside Monte Carlo 's . CCTV footage showed him driving around Bromsgrove , a town close to Droitwich , after killing Corcoran , and later film showed him returning to Birmingham . At least two witnesses recalled seeing Smith with blood on him : a motorist who saw him buying petrol , and another who spoke with Smith about his appearance . Smith told the latter that he had been in a fight , although he had no visible signs of injury .

In addition to the evidence of witnesses and CCTV cameras , there was substantial forensic evidence linking him to the murders . Investigators found over a dozen bloodstains on his car , on his clothing and in his flat , all matching the victims . There were bloodstains on the boots with which he had kicked both Corcoran and Jordan , which he was still wearing at the time of his arrest . Smith had tried to clean his clothes in the bath of his flat along with a pair of trousers belonging to Corcoran , and a bag containing items belonging to Hyde was discovered outside . Detectives matched the tyre marks from his car , which had four different types of tyre , to the Worcestershire murder scene and to Corcoran 's body , over which he had driven . Paintwork and fragments of glass found on Jordan 's body matched those from Smith 's car , including a broken light cluster which he had thrown into the car 's boot .

Smith was charged with Corcoran 's murder on 17 November 2000 and remanded in custody the following day . By this time her death had been linked to the killing of Hyde . Police interviewed Smith in connection with the deaths of Hyde and Jordan on 28 November and charged him with their murders two days later . While awaiting trial Smith was held as a Category A prisoner in the high @-@ security Woodhill Prison in Buckinghamshire .

= = Trial and sentence = =

Smith 's trial began at Leicester Crown Court on 3 July 2001 , where he pleaded not guilty to the three murder charges . The case was prosecuted by Tim Raggatt , QC , and Smith was defended by Rachel Brand , QC . On the opening day of the trial Raggatt told the Court there was " powerful and compelling " scientific evidence linking Smith to the killings . Smith 's defence was that traces of blood found on his clothes were there because police had tampered with evidence , while the trousers belonging to Rosemary Corcoran found at his flat had been among a bag of clothes Smith had stolen from outside an Oxfam shop .

On 17 July Smith complained of feeling unwell with chest and eye pain while under cross @-@ examination , and proceedings were briefly halted while he was treated for the symptoms of a panic attack . When Smith returned to the witness stand , he said he wished to speak to his barrister . Presiding judge Rafferty told him that he must answer questions , to which Smith replied : " I want to change my plea . I 'm fed up with this . I want to change my plea . " The charges were read to him again the following day , and he pleaded guilty . On 18 July 2001 Smith was sentenced to life

imprisonment . In January 2005 Birmingham 's Sunday Mercury newspaper reported that Smith had decided to change his plea after police agreed to return £ 400 confiscated from him during a raid on his flat after his arrest , and that he wanted the money to buy Mars bars in prison .

Passing sentence , Rafferty said : " You robbed three innocent ladies of their lives . I suspect that their families will suffer the more as they simply don 't understand why you did . The brutality of these ladies ' deaths , designed by you to evade discovery , showing the coldness with which you dispatched them , is appalling . You should clearly have faced up like a man at the overwhelming nature of the Crown 's case against you but you chose to put the victims ' families through misery which you compounded by this trial . " The motive for Smith 's actions remained unclear after the trial , but police believed a " lack of permanent sexual relations " had been a contributing factor .

= = Further inquiries = =

As a result of their inquiries into Smith 's background , police launched an investigation into the death of a fourth woman who was discovered to have had links to him . Patricia Lynott , a 47 @-@ year @-@ old divorced mother of two , had moved to Birmingham from Athlone during the mid @-@ 1990s . On 23 October 2000 , while she was employed at the Rainbow as a cleaner and to look after the licensee 's children , she was found dead in the bedroom of her flat on Maxstoke Street , Bordesley Green . Police believed at first that she had died of natural causes . An autopsy failed to establish a cause of death , and her body was returned to Ireland for burial .

Because Lynott had worked alongside Smith at the Rainbow Pub , West Midlands Police wished to re @-@ examine the cause of her death . In early 2001 , investigators asked the Irish authorities for a new post mortem , and on 8 March Lynott 's body was exhumed by Gardai from a cemetery in Athlone and taken to Dublin City Morgue for further examination by Ireland 's State Pathologist , Dr John Harbison . However , the results of this autopsy also proved inconclusive .

An inquest into Lynott 's death was held at Birmingham Coroner 's Court in January 2003 . The hearing was told that marks found on her back and an arm may have been bruising , but the pathologist who conducted the original post mortem could not be sure how she had died , because her body had lain undiscovered for up to seven days . It was also said that , despite her connection with Smith , police and four pathologists had failed to establish that Lynott had been murdered . The inquest jury returned an open verdict .

Police also conducted a routine re @-@ examination of other unsolved murder cases dating back 20 years in areas where Smith had lived . Officers from West Midlands Police held a conference in October 2001 with representatives from several other forces , including Gloucestershire and West Mercia , to share information about unsolved murder cases in their areas . Detectives interviewed Smith three times , but he refused to answer their questions , and no further charges were brought .