

= John Martin Scripps =

John Martin (born John Martin Scripps , 9 December 1959 ? 19 April 1996) was an English spree killer who murdered three tourists ? Gerard Lowe in Singapore , and Sheila and Darin Damude in Thailand ? with another three unconfirmed victims . He posed as a tourist himself when committing the murders , for which British tabloids nicknamed him " the tourist from Hell " . He cut up all his victims ' bodies , using butchery skills he had acquired in prison , before disposing of them .

Martin was arrested in Singapore (where he had killed Lowe) when he returned there after murdering the Damudes . Photographs of decomposed body parts were shown as evidence during his trial , making it " one of the most grisly " ever heard in Singapore . He defended himself by saying that Lowe 's death was an accident and that a friend of his killed the Damudes . The judge did not believe Martin 's account of events and sentenced him to death by hanging , making him the first Briton since Singapore 's independence from Britain and Malaysia to be given the death penalty . He is also one of the first Westerners to be executed in Singapore since independence , the first one being Johannes Van Damme .

= = Early life = =

John Martin Scripps was born in Letchworth , Hertfordshire , 9 December 1959 to Leonard and Jean Scripps , an East End lorry driver and a Fleet Street barmaid respectively . He travelled often in childhood , occasionally accompanied by his father , with whom he was very close . Leonard Scripps committed suicide when his son was nine . After his father 's death , Scripps developed problems with reading and writing , which led to him leaving school at the age of 15 . After dropping out of school he continued to travel , raising money for his trips by doing odd jobs and selling antiques .

= = Criminal career = =

Scripps was convicted of his first crime in May 1974 , when he was sentenced to a 12 @-@ month conditional discharge and fined £ 10 by Highgate Juvenile Court for burglary . The punishment did nothing to deter him from stealing , and by August 1976 he had stolen again three times . In June 1978 , he was fined £ 40 for indecent assault .

While traveling in Mexico , Scripps met María Pilar Arellanos , of Cancún , and married her in 1980 . They travelled together for two years until 1982 , when he was sentenced to a three @-@ year jail term for theft , burglary and resisting arrest . His imprisonment upset María , and their relationship was further soured when he ran away from jail during home leave in June 1985 ? just months short of completing his term ? and burgled again . He was sentenced to another three years ' imprisonment , during which she filed for divorce and married Police Constable Ken Cold , an officer in the Royal Protection Squad . This angered Scripps , who acted in revenge , stealing some of Cold 's clothing while released on home leave . He was appeased only when she divorced her new husband and returned to her hometown . After he was released , Scripps legally changed his name to John Martin .

Scripps began trafficking in drugs , and carried heroin between Asia and Europe for a syndicate . Singapore authorities first encountered his name in 1987 , when he was arrested at Heathrow Airport for possessing drugs . Police found a key on him that belonged to a safe deposit box in a bank in Orchard Road in Singapore , from which officers from Singapore 's Central Narcotics Bureau seized 1 @.@ 5 kilogrammes (3 @.@ 3 lb) of heroin worth about US \$ 1 million . For this and another drug offence , Southwark Crown Court in January 1988 sentenced him to seven years in jail . He escaped while on home leave but was later re @-@ arrested . In July 1992 , Winchester Crown Court added another six years to the original sentence , which would have kept him behind bars until 2001 had he not escaped again .

He was in custody at Albany Prison on the Isle of Wight from February 1992 to August 1993 , where he became a model prisoner . Initially he did menial jobs such as dishwashing and general

cleaning and was later promoted to the position of butcher , under the training of James Quigley , a prison caterer with more than 20 years ' experience , and another inmate only identified as " Ginger " , who had been a professional butcher . They taught him how to dismember and remove the bone from animals after slaughtering them . Martin performed his duties with such efficiency that he once told Quigley he wished to open a butcher 's shop after his release .

On 20 August 1993 , Martin was transferred from Albany Prison to The Mount Prison in Hemel Hempstead , Hertfordshire , as a result of a change in his security categorisation . In October 1994 he escaped while on home leave , which was granted only two days after being refused parole . His mother , noting that he had sold all his belongings to fellow inmates while in prison (a clear notice of his intention to escape) , asked prison authorities not to release him . After Martin was sentenced to death , she reiterated :

The Home Office have buried their head in the sand over this . They know full well that if they had done what I told them , none of this would have ever happened . I begged them not to let him go .

His mother gave Scripps £ 200 to go overseas after his arrest . To avoid recapture , he used the birth certificate of another inmate , Simon James Davis , to get a passport in Davis ' name . Within a month of his escape , he turned up in Mexico as John Martin . He reported to the British Embassy there that he had lost his passport , and managed to get a replacement . Martin arrived in Singapore from San Francisco at about 2 a.m. SST on 8 March 1995 (6 p.m. UTC on 7 March) .

= = Murder of tourists = =

Martin killed at least three people in Singapore and Thailand , and may have killed others in Belize , Mexico , and the United States . His modus operandi was to pose as a tourist and converse with another randomly chosen caucasian , either aboard their flights or while waiting at airports . He stayed in the same hotels as his victims in a room near theirs . Once he had an excuse to be in their rooms , he used an electroshock weapon to immobilise them before killing them by striking their heads with a hammer and cutting them up in their bathrooms . He chose caucasians as his victims because they were vacationing far away from their home countries , which made him less likely to be discovered . His motive apparently included money , as large amounts were withdrawn using the credit cards of Gerard Lowe and Timothy MacDowall .

= = = Gerard Lowe = = =

Gerard George Lowe came from Johannesburg , South Africa . He was a chemical engineer with South African Breweries . He went to Singapore to shop for electrical and electronic goods . Before he left Johannesburg on 7 March 1995 , he told his wife Vanessa , a local airlines employee , his exact schedule , saying : " I will call you the moment I check into the hotel to give you the contact number . If you do not hear from me on 10 March , it would mean that I would have a seat on the plane to return to South Africa and would arrive home on 11 March . But if I do call you on 10 March , that would mean that I have not managed to get a seat and would return on 12 March . "

When Lowe arrived at Singapore Changi Airport on the morning of 8 March , he was accosted by Martin (under the assumed name of Simon Davis) , who struck up a conversation with him and suggested that they share a room , to which Lowe agreed . They managed to book Room 1511 in the River View Hotel off Havelock Road . The next morning , Martin asked a hotel receptionist to delete Lowe 's name from the room registration system , saying that he had kicked Lowe out the previous night for being a homosexual . Martin checked out on 11 March and flew to Bangkok the same day .

On 13 March 1995 , a pair of legs , severed at the knees , was found in a plastic bag floating off Clifford Pier . Three days later , a pair of thighs and a torso were found in the same area , also in a plastic bag . Initially , Singapore police could only determine that the body parts belonged to a Caucasian , and they had a possible name after receiving a missing person report for Lowe from the South African High Commission . Vanessa Lowe filed the report because she was distressed that her husband , who used to make daily contact with his family when overseas , had not called home

or returned to South Africa by 12 March . Lowe 's colleagues at work also tried to determine his whereabouts through personal contacts in Singapore . On 1 April , she confirmed that the body parts were her husband 's through visual identification . However , his arms and head were never found .

= = = Sheila and Darin Damude = = =

Sheila Mae Damude and her son Darin Jon Damude came from Saanich , British Columbia , Canada . She was an administrator at the Pacific Christian School in Victoria , while Darin was a college student . They had come to Thailand on holiday , with Darin flying to Asia first before Sheila met him in Bangkok during spring break . They flew to Phuket on 15 March with Martin (still using his assumed name) who was sitting in the same row as them . He befriended the two and they checked into Nilly 's Marina Inn facing Patong Beach . Martin was given Room 48 and the Damudes were given the adjacent Room 43 . The Damudes were not seen again after they ate breakfast the next morning ; at about 11 a.m. THA (5 a.m. UTC) , Martin asked the inn 's receptionist to switch his room to Room 43 , saying that the Damudes had left and that he would pay their bill .

Martin checked out and returned to Singapore on 19 March . On that day the skulls of the Damudes were found in a disused tin mine in Kathu district . A torso and a pair each of arms and legs were found along Bahn Nai Trang Road , 9 @. @ 7 kilometres (6 mi) away , five days later . The body parts were so badly decomposed that visual identification was impossible ; Royal Thai Police used dental records to identify the skulls and forensic analysis concluded that the torso , arms , and legs were likely to be Sheila 's . The other parts of Darin 's body were never found .

= = = Unconfirmed victims = = =

Scotland Yard suspected Martin of having separately killed two men from south London : financial adviser Timothy MacDowall and accountant William Shackel . In Mexico , Martin had discussed with his wife about going scuba diving with MacDowall , who was taking scuba lessons while on holiday on an island off Belize . MacDowall disappeared in Belize in early 1995 but police could not conclusively match him to body parts later found in that country ; the only suspicious activity they uncovered was the transfer of £ 21 @, @ 000 from MacDowall 's bank account to an account in San Francisco under Martin 's name . MacDowall is believed to have been murdered as he slept and his remains thrown into a crocodile @- @ infested river . Martin refused to be interviewed by Scotland Yard while he was on death row in Changi Prison , thus whether he killed MacDowall remains unconfirmed . Shackel was reported missing while on holiday in Cancún , Mexico . Police reports said that Martin was in Cancún the day Shackel cashed traveller 's cheques worth £ 4 @, @ 000 , after which he disappeared .

Martin was also wanted in San Francisco in the United States for the murder of homosexual prostitute Tom Wenger on 28 March 1994 . Wenger 's body was chopped up and drained of blood ; it was found in a garbage skip (dumpster) in Myrte Alley , in the Polk Street district . Although Martin was supposed to be in jail in the United Kingdom at the time , his photograph matched a facial composite picture made by San Francisco police .

= = Arrest and remand = =

Martin was arrested when he arrived at Changi Airport on the evening of 19 March 1995 and produced a passport with his assumed name , Simon Davis . Police had put the name on their wanted list on 14 March after they determined that Lowe had checked into River View Hotel with someone by that name . In a police interview room in the airport , Martin smashed a glass panel and cut his wrist with a shard of glass in a suicide attempt , fearing that he would be hanged like Flor Contemplacion , a Filipino who had been hanged two days before for a double murder . He was taken to Alexandra Hospital for treatment .

The police found five passports on Martin in addition to his own ? two British passports issued to Simon Davis , two Canadian passports issued to Sheila and Darin Damude , and a South African

passport issued to Gerard Lowe ? each with Martin 's photograph affixed . They also found credit cards belonging to Sheila Damude and Gerard Lowe . In addition , police found Simon Davis ' birth certificate , and items that Martin had used to immobilise and kill : a hammer weighing 1 @. @ 5 kilogrammes (3 @. @ 3 lb) , a battery @- @ operated Z @- @ Force III electroshock weapon , a can of mace , two pairs of handcuffs , a pair of thumbcuffs , two Police brand foldable knives , an oilstone and two Swiss army knives . Importation of some of these into Singapore is illegal .

On 21 March 1995 , Martin was taken to court on an initial charge , naming him as Simon James Davis and accusing him of forging Lowe 's signature on a DBS Bank credit card transaction slip to obtain S \$ 6 @, @ 000 in cash on 9 March . Three days later , he was charged under his real name for the murder of Gerard Lowe in a River View Hotel room some time between 8 March and 9 . In subsequent hearings , he was additionally charged with forgery (forging Lowe 's signature five more times to obtain cash and goods worth \$ 3 @, @ 200) , vandalism (smashing the glass panel) , possession of an offensive weapon (the electroshock weapon) , and possession of a controlled drug (he had 24 sticks of cannabis at the time of his arrest) .

On 18 September , a preliminary enquiry in a district court was held to determine whether there was sufficient evidence for a trial to proceed . The magistrate overseeing the enquiry ordered Martin to stand trial for Gerard Lowe 's murder on 2 October after hearing statements from 39 witnesses , and looking at more than 100 exhibits and 100 photographs that the prosecution had prepared as evidence .

= = Trial = =

Before the trial , Martin made a statement explaining that he killed Lowe in self @- @ defence . He said he had fallen asleep after checking in , but woke up after someone touched his buttocks ; it was Lowe , who was clad only in his underwear and smiling at him . To him , this behaviour made Lowe appear to be a homosexual , so he kicked Lowe away . This angered Lowe , who threw Martin 's hammer at his stomach . Martin then grabbed the hammer and " hit [Lowe] several times on the head until he collapsed onto the carpeted floor . " A friend later helped him to dispose of Lowe 's body by throwing it into the Singapore River . Martin continued , " I am not sure what was the next thing I did ... everything was such a blur to me after this incident that I was walking around in a dream world for the next few days . " He refused to identify his friend , saying , " I cannot tell you his identity because if he knew he would harm my family back in Britain . " On 15 March , he flew to Phuket , where he met his friend again . His friend gave him the passports and other items belonging to the Damudes , whom he never met .

In court , Martin argued that he was by nature not a violent person . " I may have worked in the (prison) butchery , but cutting up a human body is another thing . When I saw the photographs (of Lowe 's body parts) , it made me feel sick . " He maintained that he had killed Lowe after the latter made homosexual advances that caused him to " freak out " ; he had previously fended off homosexual attacks twice while imprisoned : in Israel in 1978 , and in England in 1994 . When Deputy Public Prosecutors Jennifer Marie and Norul Rashid asked him what he did after killing Lowe , he said that he could not remember anything because he had drunk heavily and consumed Valium after Lowe 's death until he was arrested . He repeated that he had not killed the Damudes , and that he had come back to Singapore from Phuket to clear his conscience about Lowe 's death .

On 7 November , Judge T. S. Sinnathuray adjourned the trial for three days to consider his verdict . (Singapore abolished jury trials in 1969 .) When the trial resumed , the judge was satisfied that the prosecution had made its case and dismissed Martin 's version of events . In his verdict , he said :

I 'm satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt that Martin had intentionally killed Lowe . After that , he disarticulated Lowe 's body into separate parts , and it was he who subsequently disposed of the body parts by throwing them into the river behind the hotel .

On the evidence , I had no difficulty to find that it was Martin who was concerned with the deaths of Sheila and Darin and for the disposal of their body parts found in different sites in Phuket . The disarticulation of the body parts of Lowe , Sheila and Darin have the hallmark signs of having been done by the same person . Altogether , this similar fact evidence reinforces the decision I have

made , for it puts beyond doubt that Martin is guilty on the charge of murder .

The sentence of this court upon you is that you will be taken from this place to a lawful prison and taken to a place to be hanged by the neck until you are dead . And may the Lord have mercy on your soul .

= = Appeal and hanging = =

On 15 November 1995 , Martin announced he would appeal the sentence . He later dropped the appeal without giving an explanation on 4 January 1996 , four days before it was to have been heard . He turned down a subsequent chance to petition the President of Singapore for clemency , saying that he was impatient to be executed .

In the days before his hanging , Martin wrote of an " emptiness " inside him and lamented that no one had loved him besides his family and his ex @-@ wife María , in a series of misspelled notes (he was semi @-@ literate) :

One day poor . One day reach . Money fills the pane of hunger but what will fill the emptiness inside ? I know that love is beyond me . So do I give myself to god . The god that has betrayed me . Can I be a person again ? Only time will tell me .

You may take my life for what it is worth , but grant thows that I love , peace and happiness .

He complained that in prison , " You are told every day that you are not a member of the human race [a misspelling of ' human race '] . " The week before he was due to hang , he dreamed that he had avoided the sentence by committing suicide :

I tied the rope around my little neck before I got up on the old creaky chair . I reached down and picked up a handful of earth and put it in my mouth . Then I crawled up to the old creaky chair and pulled the rope tighter and tighter still . I was on tiptoe , just one more pull , then my feet left the chair knocking it over and darkness embraced me as the heavens opened . I woke up in darkness and felt a heavy weight on my chest . I cried out , " Mummy , I am here . "

Martin 's mother remarked , " Whoever he is now , he 's the person the prison service trained him to be . These bastards have no right to take my son 's life . I brought him into the world . I am the only person who can take him out of it . " However , no one formally protested against the hanging . At dawn on 19 April 1996 , Martin was hanged in Changi Prison together with two Singaporean drug traffickers . On that day , the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Royal Thai Police closed their files on the murders of Sheila and Darin Damude , declaring the case effectively solved .

When Martin 's ex @-@ wife María heard that he had been hanged , she said :

John disappeared on several trips and went to the United States and Southeast Asia . I knew something awful was happening , but I could not believe he had started killing people .

I knew this would happen to John but I didn 't know it would hurt so much . The last memory I have of him is a message he sent promising we would meet in the next life and that he would never let me go again .

= = Post @-@ death coverage = =

In May 1996 , Tan Ooi Boon , a reporter from The Straits Times who covered Martin 's case from start to finish , wrote a book on the case , titled Body Parts : A British Serial Killer in Singapore . He wrote the book in three months using material he had prepared for the newspaper . It mixed fictional narrative with fact and described how Martin disposed of his victims ' bodies .

In July 1996 , the story of how Martin murdered Gerard Lowe , and the investigation that followed , was featured in an episode of the Singapore Crimewatch , which was shown on Television Corporation of Singapore 's Channel 5 and Channel 8 . In the episode , actual photographs from the autopsy were shown , causing the series to be the first current affairs programme in Singapore to be given the PG (Parental Guidance) warning tag . Police justified their use of the photographs , saying that they wanted to " give an accurate account of the case to the public . " The story was also re @-@ enacted in the last episode of MediaCorp TV 's Channel 5 docu @-@ drama True Files on 23 July 2002 .

On 31 January 1997 , eight police officers who made significant contributions towards Martin 's conviction were awarded commemorative plaques by the High Commissioner for Canada in Singapore , Barry Carin .