

= Mark Speight =

Mark Warwick Fordham Speight ( 6 August 1965 ? 7 April 2008 ) was an English television presenter , best known as the host of children 's art programme SMart . Speight grew up in Tettenhall , Wolverhampton , and left school at 16 to become a cartoonist . He took a degree in commercial and graphic art and , while working in television set construction , heard of auditions for a new children 's art programme . Speight was successful in his audition and became one of the first presenters of SMart , working on it for 14 years .

Speight was also a presenter on See It Saw It , where he met his future fiancée , actress and model Natasha Collins . He took part in live events , such as Rolf on Art and his own Speight of the Art workshops for children . He was involved in charity work ; he became the president of the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign 's Young Pavement Artists Competition , and was a spokesperson for ChildLine .

In January 2008 , Speight found Collins 's body in the bath of their shared London flat . He was arrested on suspicion of her murder , but not charged with any offence . An inquest later determined that Collins had died of a drug overdose and severe burns from hot water . In April that year , Speight was reported missing and was later discovered to have taken his own life by hanging himself near Paddington station . Two suicide notes were discovered , describing how he could no longer live without Collins .

= = Early life = =

Speight was born in Seisdon , Staffordshire , and grew up in Tettenhall , Wolverhampton . Speight had two siblings , Tina @-@ Louise Richmond ( née Speight ) , and Jason Speight . His father , Oliver Warwick Speight , is a property developer , and his mother , Jacqueline Fordham Speight ( née Parker ) , was an art teacher . Jacqueline died on 5 September 2008 , aged 62 , from a stroke allegedly brought on by the stress of her son 's death . Speight attended the independent school Tettenhall College for a year , before moving to state comprehensive Regis School , now known as King 's C.E. School , also in Tettenhall , at the age of 12 . Speight stated in an interview he was a slow learner at school , with a short attention span , and art was a way for him to communicate . He said he did " very badly " because he was a victim of bullying , and the " daily ordeal for two years " forced him to become the " class joker " . Speight left aged 16 and went on to attend Bilston Art School , where he took a degree in commercial and graphic art .

= = Career = =

He intended to become a cartoonist , but Speight eventually became a TV presenter following a job painting the set of a television production . He auditioned for SMart and , following a successful interview where he met future co @-@ presenter Jay Burridge , he went on to present SMart from its first edition in 1994 . Speight became close friends with Burridge , whose art studio in West London was used to create all of the art content for SMart ; Burridge noted : " We would bounce ideas and jokes off each other all day until we had developed an almost telepathically linked knowledge of what made each other laugh . " Speight and Burridge were joined by third presenter Zoë Ball , who was replaced first by Josie d 'Arby , and then Kirsten O 'Brien and Lizi Botham . With Burridge O 'Brien and Botham Speight presented the spin @-@ off shows SMart on the Road , and SMarteenies and participated in various live events . He achieved further fame while starring in the BAFTA @-@ nominated ITV Saturday morning show Scratchy & Co. from 1995 until 1998 .

Speight worked on numerous other shows , ranging from children 's television to adult factual programmes . His children 's television credits include playing the Abominable No Man in Timmy Mallett 's Timmy Towers and presenting Beat the Cyborgs , Name That Toon , On Your Marks , Insides Out , and History Busters , the last of which won a Royal Television Society Award . Speight also worked on This Morning , The Heaven and Earth Show , The Big Breakfast and was a contestant in ITV 's Celebrity Wrestling . Speight also played the king on children 's programme See

It Saw It , where he met Natasha Collins . Collins was seriously injured after being hit by a car in 2001 , and had to leave See It Saw It . Speight began dating her in 2003 , and they became engaged in Barbados in 2005 . They planned to get married in fancy dress and Speight joked that the wedding might feature monkeys , his favourite animal .

In 2004 , Speight participated in Rolf Harris 's Rolf on Art , for which a giant reproduction of John Constable 's The Hay Wain was created in Trafalgar Square . In 2005 , he was involved in a similar project where Hans Holbein 's portrait of Henry VIII and Leonardo da Vinci 's Mona Lisa were both reconstructed , the latter in the grounds of Edinburgh Castle . Speight had planned a project involving a trip to Borneo in March 2008 to train abused orangutans not to fight each other , but this never took place . Speight regularly toured with Speight of the Art , a series of art workshops he ran for children , and during the Christmas period , he performed in pantomime as " Buttons " in Cinderella at the Watersmeet , Rickmansworth , in December 2007 .

Speight was involved in charity work . He was President of the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign 's Young Pavement Artists Competition , originally a one @-@ off , year @-@ long project that ended up lasting eight years , and he was a spokesperson for ChildLine . In 2007 he was the presenter of the Müller Big Art Project for Comic Relief in Trafalgar Square .

= = Arrest and disappearance = =

On the afternoon of 3 January 2008 , Speight called emergency services after waking up to discover Natasha Collins 's body in the bath at their St John 's Wood flat , in north @-@ west London . Speight told police that he and Collins had spent the previous evening " partying " , drinking wine and vodka , and taking cocaine and sleeping pills . Speight was questioned by police and was subsequently arrested on suspicion of murder and of supplying class A drugs , but was released on bail until the first week of February . Because of this , the BBC cancelled the Saturday repeat edition of SMart . An inquest , which opened on 8 January 2008 , heard that the death was not thought to be suspicious but should be " subject to further investigation " . At that point , police were awaiting results of toxicology tests after a postmortem examination was inconclusive . The BBC cancelled repeat broadcasts of SMart and SMarteenies until further notice , and on 28 February Speight announced he was quitting SMart , because the " tragic loss " of Collins had left him unable to continue with the show . Speight denied any involvement with Collins 's death , and on 19 March it was reported that the police were no longer considering Speight as a suspect .

In April 2008 , the coroner recorded a verdict of death by misadventure in relation to Collins . The cause of death was " cocaine toxicity and immersion in hot water " , according to the consultant pathologist . The inquest found that she had taken " very significant " amounts of cocaine with sleeping pills and vodka , and that she had suffered 60 % burns to her body , including her tongue . The coroner noted that at some stage in the night after both Speight and Collins had gone to bed , Collins got up to have a bath . He said that it was " more likely than not " that a heart problem had caused Collins to fall unconscious while the hot tap was running . Following Collins 's death , Speight moved in with Collins 's mother .

Speight planned to meet with Collins 's mother at Covent Garden for coffee on the afternoon of 7 April . He was dropped off at Wood Green tube station that morning , but never appeared at the planned meeting . Speight missed an appointment with a counsellor , but this was because of confusion over dates . Two police officers spoke to him , as he appeared " vacant " , " distracted " and " deep in thought " , but he refused their help . He was captured on CCTV in the afternoon taking money from a cash machine at Queen 's Park station , and he subsequently boarded a southbound Bakerloo line train . He was reported missing the following day by family and friends , and his mother and the mother of Natasha Collins made a public appeal in which they urged him to make contact . Speight 's father also appealed for him to get in touch .

= = Death and legacy = =

On 13 April , Speight 's body was discovered hanging from the roof of MacMillan House , adjacent

to London 's Paddington Station , hidden from public view , six days after he died . The discovery was made by railway workers at 10 : 00 am , and British Transport Police confirmed that the body was Speight 's on 14 April 2008 . An inquest into his death opened on 16 April 2008 , and a post @-@ mortem confirmed the cause of death as hanging . It was then adjourned until 20 May . The police said Speight may have used a sixth floor fire exit to get to the area where he was found .

The report of Speight 's death on the BBC 's children 's news programme Newsround provoked complaints that it upset young viewers . The BBC decided to avoid using the word " suicide , " and instead Newsround reported that " police don 't think he was killed by anyone else . "

Speight 's funeral was held on 28 April at St Michael and All Angels Church in Tettenhall and hundreds went to pay their respects . The service included a performance by the choir from Tettenhall College , Speight 's former school , and his coffin was carried out of the church accompanied by the theme tune of SMart . He was later cremated and his ashes were interred in Tettenhall . In May , the inquest resumed and determined that Speight was deeply depressed by his fiancée 's death . It was also disclosed that suicide notes had been found , one in his left pocket , and one addressed to his parents in his diary at his home . The notes described how he could not " contemplate life without [ Collins ] " . The coroner , Dr Paul Knapman , said there were no suspicious circumstances surrounding the death . In May 2008 , Speight 's father created a foundation , Speight of the Art , or SP8 of the Art and launched it at a memorial service that took place on what would have been his 43rd birthday , 6 August 2008 , at St Paul 's Church in Covent Garden , London .