

= Ipswich serial murders =

The Ipswich serial murders took place between 30 October and 10 December 2006 , during which time the bodies of five murdered women were discovered at different locations near Ipswich , Suffolk , England . All of the victims were women who had worked as prostitutes in the Ipswich area . Their bodies were discovered naked , but there were no signs of sexual assault . Two of the victims , Anneli Alderton and Paula Clennell , were confirmed to have been killed by asphyxiation . A cause of death for the other victims , Gemma Adams , Tania Nicol and Annette Nicholls , was not established .

Suffolk Police linked the killings and launched a murder investigation codenamed Operation Sumac . Due to the size of the investigation police officers were drafted from several other police forces . Two arrests were made in connection with the murders . The first suspect , who was never officially named by police , was released without charge . Forklift truck driver Steven Gerald James Wright , then aged 48 , was arrested on suspicion of murder on 19 December 2006 and charged with the murders of all five women on 21 December .

Wright was remanded in custody and his trial began on 14 January 2008 at Ipswich Crown Court . Wright pleaded not guilty to the charges , although he admitted having sex with all five victims and that he had been patronising prostitutes since the 1980s . DNA and fibre evidence was presented to the court that linked Wright to the victims . He was found guilty of all five murders on 21 February 2008 and was sentenced the following day to life imprisonment with a recommendation that he should never be released from prison .

The murders received a large amount of media attention , both nationally and internationally . The press often compared the murders to those committed by the Yorkshire Ripper , Peter Sutcliffe , who murdered 13 women and attacked seven others (mostly prostitutes) between 1975 and 1981 . There was some concern that the level of media coverage at the time could jeopardise a trial . The murders also sparked debates in the media over the laws surrounding prostitution .

= = Police investigation = =

The body of a young woman was discovered in the water of Belstead Brook at Thorpe 's Hill , near Hintlesham , by a member of the public on 2 December 2006 . The body , later identified as 25 @-@ year @-@ old Gemma Adams , had not been sexually assaulted . Six days later , on 8 December , the body of 19 @-@ year @-@ old Tania Nicol , a friend of Adams who had been missing since 30 October , was discovered in water at Copdock Mill just outside Ipswich . There was no evidence of sexual assault . On 10 December , a third victim , found by a member of the public in an area of woodland by the A14 road near Nacton , was later identified as 24 @-@ year @-@ old Anneli Alderton . According to a police statement , she had been asphyxiated and was about three months pregnant when she died .

In a press conference police warned all women to stay away from the red light district of Ipswich . On 12 December , Suffolk police announced that the bodies of two more women had been found . On 14 December , the police confirmed one of the bodies as 24 @-@ year @-@ old Paula Clennell . Clennell had disappeared on 10 December and was last seen in Ipswich . According to Suffolk Police , Clennell died from " compression of the throat " . On 15 December , the police confirmed that the other body was that of 29 @-@ year @-@ old Annette Nicholls , who disappeared on 5 December . The bodies of Clennell and Nicholls were found in Nacton near the Levington turn @-@ off of the A1156 , close to where Alderton was found . A member of the public had seen Clennell 's body twenty feet (six metres) from the main road and a police helicopter dispatched to the scene discovered the second body of Nicholls nearby .

Suffolk police linked the killings and launched a murder investigation , codenamed Operation Sumac . Chief Constable Alastair McWhirter acknowledged that Suffolk Constabulary would be reliant on external assistance due to the magnitude of the investigation . A senior investigator with the Metropolitan Police , Commander Dave Johnston , was reported to have been drafted into the murder inquiry team from Scotland Yard in London in an advisory capacity . The day @-@ to @-@

day investigation was conducted by Detective Chief Superintendent Stewart Gull .

During press conferences on 13 and 14 December , DCS Gull revealed that police believed the locations where the five bodies were found to have been ' deposition sites ' , not murder scenes , indicating that the victims were all killed elsewhere and transported to the locations where they were later found ; no comment was made on where the women may have been murdered . DCS Gull also revealed that some items of women 's clothing and accessories , including a handbag and jacket , had been recovered and were being forensically tested to establish whether they belonged to any of the murdered women .

During the course of the press briefings , DCS Gull stated that over 300 police officers were involved in the investigation , and some 400 ? 450 calls were being received daily by detectives .

On 15 December , Suffolk Constabulary 's website revealed that a total of 7 @, @ 300 telephone calls had been made to police regarding the investigation , and that over 300 police staff and specialists were working on the cases , with support from at least 25 other police forces . As of 18 December , the number of officers involved in the investigation had increased to 650 including 350 officers from 40 other police forces who had assisted in the inquiry . The number of calls received regarding the case had also increased to around 10 @, @ 000 .

= = Victims = =

= = = Tania Nicol = = =

Tania Nicol , aged 19 , from Ipswich , the first of the victims to be reported missing , disappeared on 30 October and was reported missing by her mother 48 hours later . Her body was discovered on 8 December near Copdock Mill in a river by police divers ; there was no evidence of sexual assault and a post mortem could not establish a definite cause of death . Nicol attended Chantry High School but had left home at 16 to live in a hostel , where she began to use heroin . Nicol , the youngest of the five victims , worked as a prostitute to fund her addiction to heroin and cocaine . She had originally worked in massage parlours , using the alias of Chantelle in one , but was asked to leave on suspicion that she was using drugs . Her mother was unaware she was a prostitute , and thought she had been working in a bar or a hairdressers .

= = = Gemma Adams = = =

Gemma Rose Adams aged 25 , born in Kesgrave , last seen outside a BMW dealership on West End Road in Ipswich , where she had been living , disappeared on 15 November at about 01 @. @ 15 (UTC) . She was reported missing the same day by her partner , with whom she had been for ten years . Her body was found on 2 December , in a river at Hintlesham ; she was the first of the victims to be found . Adams was found naked , in a brook , but had not been sexually assaulted . Adams had been a popular child ; she came from a middle @- @ class family and had a love of animals . As a teenager she started taking hard drugs , becoming addicted to heroin . She had been working as a prostitute to cover the cost of her drug addiction , which had already led to her being dismissed from her job with an insurance firm . Her partner was at the time also a heroin user , and was aware she was working as a prostitute , although her family were not .

= = = Anneli Alderton = = =

Anneli Sarah Alderton , aged 24 , a mother of one who was also in the early stages of pregnancy , had been living in Colchester , Essex . Alderton disappeared on 3 December and was last seen on the 17 @. @ 53 train from Harwich to Manningtree . Alderton got off the train at Manningtree at 18 @. @ 15 before going on to Ipswich on another train , arriving at 18 @. @ 43 . Alderton 's body was found on 10 December near Nacton , in woodland in front of Amberfield School . Alderton had been asphyxiated and was found naked , and was posed in the cruciform position . Her pregnancy was

also revealed by the autopsy and her family were first informed of it by police officers . Anneli moved to Cyprus with her mother in 1992 after her parents separated , and they returned to Ipswich in 1997 . Alderton attended Copleston High School and gained good grades in her exams . Alderton had been addicted to drugs since age 16 , shortly after her father 's death from lung cancer in 1998 .

= = = Annette Nicholls = = =

Annette Nicholls , aged 29 , a mother of one from Ipswich , was initially thought to have gone missing on 4 December , but at the trial it was revealed she was last seen in Ipswich town centre on 8 December . Her family reported her missing after they grew concerned at the news of the other murders . Nicholls ' body was found on 12 December near Levington , naked but not sexually assaulted , and also posed in the cruciform position ; a definite cause of death could not be established , but her breathing had been hampered . Nicholls , the oldest victim , had been a drug addict since the early 2000s , shortly after completing a beautician 's course at Suffolk College . Soon afterwards , she had started working as a prostitute to fund her addiction . After moving to a housing association home from her council house , Nicholls asked her mother to look after her son . She was thought to be staying with a man in Ipswich at the time of her death .

= = = Paula Clennell = = =

Paula Lucille Clennell , aged 24 , born in Northumberland and living in Ipswich , disappeared on 10 December in Ipswich at approximately 00 @. @ 20 . Clennell 's body was found on 12 December near Levington on the same day as Nicholls ' . Clennell was found naked but not sexually assaulted and a post mortem reported that she had been killed by a compression of her throat . Prior to her death , Clennell commented on the then recent murders in an interview with Anglia News , stating that despite them making her " a bit wary about getting into cars " she continued to work because " I need the money . " Clennell moved to East Anglia ten years before her death , following the break @- @ up of her parents ' marriage . Clennell had three children with her partner ; all had been taken into care and adopted due to her drug addiction . Clennell herself had spent some of her childhood in a referral unit , and it was shortly after being placed there that she started taking drugs .

= = Arrest of suspects = =

On 18 December 2006 , Suffolk Constabulary reported that they had arrested a 37 @- @ year @- @ old man on suspicion of murdering all five women . The man was arrested at 07 @. @ 20 at a house in Trimley St. Martin near Felixstowe , Suffolk . The detention of the suspect was extended by magistrates by a further period of 24 hours , to the maximum of 96 hours allowed under English law . On 19 December , at 05 @. @ 00 , police arrested a second suspect , a 48 @- @ year @- @ old , at a residence in Ipswich , on suspicion of committing murder . The following day , 20 December , police were granted a 36 @- @ hour extension to question the second suspect in detention . On 21 December , a joint statement was issued by DCS Gull and Michael Crimp , senior prosecutor for the Crown Prosecution Service in Suffolk , announcing that the second suspect identified as Steve Wright had been charged with the murder of all five women . Police said that the first suspect , who was not officially named , was released on police bail . Bail conditions were cancelled on 6 June 2007 for the first suspect , as no more inquiries concerning the case were planned involving this person .

= = Court appearances = =

Wright appeared before magistrates in Ipswich on 22 December 2006 and was remanded in custody . On 2 January 2007 , Wright appeared before Ipswich Crown Court and was remanded in custody to appear before a court on 1 May . At the 1 May appearance , Wright formally entered a plea of not guilty . In July 2007 , Wright appeared at a pre @- @ trial hearing in London where it was

announced the trial would begin 14 January 2008 .

On 14 January 2008 , Wright appeared at Ipswich Crown Court ahead of his trial , which began on 16 January , with the prosecution opening their case . The court heard how the bodies of two of the victims , Anneli Alderton and Annette Nicholls , were deliberately posed in the cruciform position , with DNA evidence linking Steve Wright to three of the victims and fibre evidence also connecting him to the victims . The defence argued that Wright was a frequenter of prostitutes , and he had " full sex " with all of the victims , barring Tania Nichols , whom he " picked up " with the intention of sexual relations , but apparently changed his mind and dropped her off back in the red light district of Ipswich . This contradicted Wright 's earlier statement when stopped by police in the district in the early hours of the morning , when he gave the police the impression he was unaware he was in the red light district and that he was driving around because he could not sleep . Wright 's rented flat is located in the red light area .

On 21 January , jurors were taken to sites involved in the case . These included Wright 's rented house , which they viewed only from the outside , and the areas where the victims were found .

During the trial , the prosecutor , Peter Wright QC , suggested that Steve Wright may not have acted alone , as the remains of Anneli Alderton were found some distance from the road but with no evidence that her body had been dragged by one person .

= = = Jury = = =

The jury in the trial was the second group chosen for the task , as a member of the original jury had a health issue which would have been prohibitive for the trial . The jury consisted of nine men and three women . All potential jurors had to complete a questionnaire , which asked if the candidates knew any of the victims , witnesses , or the suspect . The judge told jurors that they should not do their own research or obtain information from the media on the case . When it came time to sum up the evidence in the case , Mr. Justice Gross asked the jury to put aside their emotions stating :

= = = Verdict = = =

On 21 February 2008 , after eight hours of deliberation , the jury returned a unanimous guilty verdict against Steve Wright on all five counts of murder . A murder conviction carries an automatic term of life imprisonment but the judge could decide if Wright would be awarded parole at any point . The prosecution QC argued that Wright should receive a whole life tariff and thus never be released from prison . Subsequently , on 22 February 2008 , Wright was sentenced to life imprisonment and Mr Justice Gross recommended that life should mean life , on the basis that the murders resulted from a " substantial degree of pre @-@ meditation and planning " .

After the verdict , relatives of the victims thanked the police for their efforts to solve the crime , while some expressed their feelings that life imprisonment was not enough (even if Wright were to ultimately end his life behind bars) , and that he should face the death penalty . Craig Bradshaw , brother @-@ in @-@ law of Paula Clenell , stated :

However , other family members seemed satisfied with the verdict . The father of Gemma Adams said :

Prime minister Gordon Brown praised the " professionalism and dedication " of the police and prosecutors involved in the case , whilst using it as an example of what he believed to be the importance of the national DNA database .

= = Steve Wright biography = =

Steve Gerald James Wright was born in the Norfolk village of Erpingham in April 1958 . Wright joined the Merchant Navy after leaving school . In 1978 , he married and had a son soon afterwards ; the couple later divorced . In 1987 he married another woman ; they separated in 1988 , and later divorced . He worked as a dock worker , a steward on the QE2 , a lorry driver , a barman , and , just prior to his arrest , a fork @-@ lift truck driver . He became a father again with another lover in 1992

. Wright built up large debts largely through gambling , and had recently been declared bankrupt . Wright had twice tried to commit suicide , firstly by carbon monoxide poisoning and then , in 2000 , by an overdose of pills . Wright met his last girlfriend , Pamela Wright (the shared surname is a coincidence) , in 2001 in Felixstowe , and they moved to the house in Ipswich together in 2004 . Wright had always admitted that he had used prostitutes , firstly whilst in the Merchant Navy , and continuously throughout his life .

Investigations into other crimes Wright might have committed continue , including the possibility of an involvement in the Suzy Lamplugh disappearance . However Metropolitan Police have stated that this is not a strong line of enquiry .

= = Media coverage = =

The murders have been likened to those by Peter Sutcliffe , the " Yorkshire Ripper " who was convicted of murdering 13 women (and wounding seven others) , mainly those who worked as prostitutes , over a period of five years from 1975 to 1980 in northern England ; and to " Jack the Ripper " , the infamous Victorian serial murderer who also targeted prostitutes .

As with previous serial killers dating back to Jack the Ripper , many sections of the media have attempted to coin a name for the presumed murderer , using the " Suffolk Strangler " , and other terms to refer to the case .

A reward was offered , first by local business Call Connection , who initially offered £ 25 @, @ 000 and later raised it to £ 50 @, @ 000 . Shortly after , the News of the World offered a £ 250 @, @ 000 reward for leads to a direct arrest and conviction of the murderer / murderers , bringing the total reward on offer to £ 300 @, @ 000 .

= = Concerns about the media coverage = = =

On 21 December 2006 , the then Attorney General Lord Goldsmith issued guidance to the media after concerns were raised by Suffolk Constabulary about the coverage and potential prejudice of a future trial . Lord Goldsmith urged the media to show restraint in what they reported about the two suspects being held , for fear of prejudicing any possible trial . A senior prosecutor on the case , Michael Crimp , also expressed his concerns that media coverage could jeopardise the trial , stating :

= = Coverage of related issues = = =

The murders refocused press attention on a number of controversial issues in British politics .

The first is that of prostitution in the United Kingdom . The murders have highlighted the vulnerability of prostitutes and the lack of action taken by the government , whether to be more punitive in the hope of reducing the numbers of prostitutes on the streets , to move towards legalised brothels and other measures to improve the safety of the women , or to target the demand for prostitution through prosecution of the clients , as is done in Sweden . The government has moved in the direction of tough " anti @-@ prostitution " laws which target the clients . The government had at one point considered allowing " mini brothels " , but abandoned this plan after fears that such establishments would bring pimps and drug dealers into residential areas . Instead , the laws became tougher : the Policing and Crime Act 2009 made it illegal to pay for sex with a prostitute who has been " subjected to force " and this is a strict liability offense (clients can be prosecuted even if they did not know the prostitute was forced) .

The second is that of drug use and whether it should be legalised or decriminalised , provided on prescription to registered addicts , or penalised more harshly . High numbers (95 % according to the Home Office) of street prostitutes in the United Kingdom have a history of substance abuse , and prostitution is one means of funding addiction , known to have been used by all five of the victims .

= = Appeals = =

On 19 March 2008 , it was announced that Wright would be lodging an appeal against his five convictions for murder , as well as the trial judge 's recommendation that his life sentence should mean life . Amongst other things , Wright has claimed that the trial should not have been held in Ipswich , and that the evidence against him was not sufficient proof of his guilt , thus giving him grounds for an appeal . Wright was reported to have written to the court of appeal " All five women were stripped naked of clothing / jewellery / phones / bags and no evidence was found in my house or car . " Wright has also applied to receive a new solicitor .

The news of his planned appeal sparked outrage among those affected by his crimes , including Brian Adams , father of victim Gemma Adams , who remains convinced of Wright 's guilt and urged him to instead " come clean and stop wasting everyone 's time " . This first appeal was rejected in July 2008 .

On 15 July 2008 , it was announced that Steve Wright had renewed his appeal against convictions , and it would be considered by three judges in an open court hearing , the Royal Courts of Justice said . In February 2009 , it was reported that Wright had dropped this bid to appeal against the convictions , though some of his family hoped to convince the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) to take the case on .

On 3 December 2012 , Wright announced that he would be launching a third appeal against his conviction .

= = Dramatisations = =

The BBC Drama department commissioned a dramatisation of the murders and the investigation from screenwriter Stephen Butchard . The three @-@ part production , entitled Five Daughters , began filming in November 2009 , and was broadcast on BBC One from 25 ? 27 April 2010 . Only a few days after the BBC 's announcement of the drama , Brian Clennell , the father of Paula Clennell , complained that it would portray the victims in " a bad light " . Wright 's brother David also complained that it would jeopardise any future retrial . Sarah Lancashire and Ian Hart led the cast .

A musical play , London Road , commissioned by the Royal National Theatre and written by Alecky Blythe and Adam Cork , is based on interviews with residents of the street in Ipswich where Steve Wright lived . A film adaptation of the play was released in the UK in 2015 .

The case was featured in an episode of the documentary series Real Crime .