

Suzanne Pilley's murderer jailed for 18 years



A man who committed a murder and hid the victim's body was jailed for a minimum of 18 years today.

David Gilroy was convicted of the murder of missing Edinburgh office worker, Suzanne Pilley, last month at the High Court in Edinburgh. Today he was given a mandatory life sentence by Lord Bracadale with a recommendation that he serves at least 18 years before he is considered for release.

The judge, Lord Bracadale, said:-

"Suzanne Pilley was obviously a respected and well liked member of staff in the office in Thistle Street in which both you and she worked.

In May 2010 she was starting a new chapter in her personal life and that included bringing to an end her relationship with you.

On 4 May 2010 she set out to go to work pretty much as usual: the cctv footage showed her getting off the bus in Princes Street; and, after calling into Sainsbury's, making her way to Thistle Street.

Then she just disappeared; and the jury were satisfied on the evidence before them that that was because you murdered her and disposed of her body.

It seems that you are the only person who knows where her body is.

I hope that a day will come in your life when you will feel able to disclose that information and that might bring some

comfort to her bereft family, particularly her mother and father who, after giving evidence, sat with quiet dignity throughout the rest of the trial.

There are two charges remaining on the indictment.

On charge 6, the charge of murder, I sentence you, as I am required by law to do, to life imprisonment.

I am also required to order that you serve a number of years as a punishment part of the sentence; that is a period which must be served before you can apply for release on licence.

In assessing that period I require to take into account the seriousness of charge 6 combined with charge 7 and whether you have any previous convictions.

- I note that you have no previous convictions; indeed, until this sorry pass you had a responsible job and previously had done the State some service.
- I accept that the evidence did not bear the interpretation that you lay in wait for Suzanne Pilley, intending to kill her.
- Rather, and this was the basis on which the Crown presented its case, the evidence indicated that, having confronted her over her decision to end the relationship, you lost your temper and murdered her in a sustained attack.

The evidence in support of charge 7 showed that, after murdering Suzanne Pilley, you immediately embarked on an elaborate plan to dispose of her body and avoid detection.

With quite chilling calmness and calculation you set about the task,

- You successfully disposed of the body, apparently somewhere in Argyll; and,
- but for the commendably thorough investigation carried

out by Lothian and Borders Police, you might well have been successful in avoiding detection and prosecution.

Having regard to all the circumstances, I order that you serve a punishment part of 18 years which will be backdated to 13 March 2012. Because I have combined charges 6 and 7 to arrive at the punishment part I make no separate order in respect of charge.”




Following the sentencing of David Gilroy at the High Court in Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders Police have released maps of the area of Argyll searched by police as part of the search for Suzanne Pilley’s remains.

Detective Superintendent Gary Flannigan said: – “During the course of the trial we have had a significant response from the public suggesting areas of Argyll that should be searched.

“The areas the inquiry team have already covered were selected because other aspects of the investigation led them there. The locations we were directed to tie in with the two extended periods of time where there would be the opportunity to stray from the route, our inquiry leads us to believe there would be very limited time to do anything elsewhere.

“As such, I am releasing this information to highlight the areas that have been searched based on this information using a variety of different techniques.”

Gilroy’s father and brother were in court to hear the verdict, and left by the front door shortly after the proceedings came to a close.

 Suzanne Pilley’s parents left the building by the side door a short time after the courtroom cleared.

The following statement has been issued on behalf of the Pilley family following the sentencing of David Gilroy.

"We are relieved that the legal process has concluded, and it gives us comfort to know justice has been done for Suzanne.

"As a family we will continue to try to move on, but we will never be able to rest completely until we know where our daughter is.

"Suzanne is sorely missed by everyone who knew her, and we would like to say once again how grateful we are for all the support we've had from her friends and colleagues in the past two years."

Commenting on the sentence, Detective Superintendent Gary Flannigan said:

"I note today's sentence, but once again our thoughts are very much with Suzanne's family for whom the ordeal continues.

"Only one person actually knows where Suzanne is, and can bring an end to the uncertainty for all her family and friends.

"Once again, I reiterate that Lothian and Borders Police remain committed to pursuing any new information which comes to light that could help recover Suzanne."

This case had a few unique factors. It is one of very few cases in Scotland where there has been no body found before a murder conviction followed, and also Twitter was used in the court room by journalists keen to get the news out the waiting public as quickly as possible. This is only the second time in Scotland that journalists have been allowed to tweet from court, the first was the case involving Tommy Sheridan.

We were in court tweeting away with all the others, and the only comment we would make is that it was a diversion for us. We did not immediately notice when the convicted murderer was brought in to the dock, as we had our heads down to announce what was going on as and when it happened. So perhaps we

missed something of his demeanour as he entered the court. There were shouts from the public gallery as he was led out. We were not allowed to take photographs or tweet them from our phones, as it was only STV who had permission to film images. Someone in the public gallery suffered the embarrassment of their phone ringing during the judge's speech, only to be firmly reprimanded by police.

But the legal first was that a TV Camera and a still camera were allowed into the courtroom to film the sentencing. However the cameras were trained on the judge and his officials only, not on the convicted murderer or on the victim's family. The footage is being shown on all media now, shot by STV cameraman, Steve Kydd, after STV asked for and were granted permission to film the sentencing diet, although not permission to show it live. So it was shown on STV first, and is now available elsewhere on TV and the internet. Whether this opens the door to all trials being shown on TV is not yet known, but it would probably only be allowed by judges if it did not interfere with the administration of justice. Solicitor Austin Lafferty, who will shortly be the next Vice President of The Law Society of Scotland, has written that he believes the precedent set by both the UK and the Scottish Parliaments which have TV cameras showing the proceedings live, is one which courts should follow.

Suzanne's father Rob Pilley [has told the BBC](#) that he hopes one day her body will be found. Certainly those members of the public we spoke to, who had attended all 19 days of the trial, said that they sympathised most with the victim's family who are left very much in the dark as to Susanne's eventual fate.

We were told that Suzanne's family would not make a statement outside court but Suzanne Pilley: The Woman Who Vanished will be shown on BBC One Scotland tonight at 22:45.