

Angus Sinclair guilty of 'World's End' murders



A man responsible for the brutal rape and murder of two young women from Edinburgh almost 40 years ago has been convicted in Scotland's first double jeopardy trial.

Angus Sinclair was found guilty of raping and then killing Helen Scott and Christine Eadie, after the Crown presented conclusive forensic evidence carefully preserved since 1977.

Over the course of the five-week trial at the High Court in Livingston, the jury heard how Sinclair and his brother-in-law Gordon Hamilton (now deceased) met the 17-year-olds at the World's End Pub on Edinburgh's Royal Mile on 15th October 1977 before leaving the bar with the pair.

The following day, the teenagers' bodies were found in separate locations within East Lothian; both had been bound, beaten, raped and strangled. One of the largest investigations in the history of policing in Scotland began to find the killers.

In 1977 the police had no access to the forensic techniques, which exist today and nor could they could have known that years later DNA would be discovered, never the less detectives and scientist meticulously set about recovering and preserving clothing and samples from the scenes.

Instead, they relied upon a sketch of the males last seen with Helen and Christine.

Detectives took statements from hundreds of members of the public. At the time there was no evidence to link any individual to the murders, however, officers took

unprecedented steps to store DNA samples for future analysis.

In the late 1980s advances in DNA technology began to develop and the investigation was continually reassessed, leading to a full review in 1996. By 1997 detectives were able to confirm that DNA found on Helen Scott's coat belonged to two different males. However, no match was found at the time and the case remained unsolved at the start of the 21st century.

A further sample taken from the same coat in April 2004 provided a positive match to Angus Sinclair who was at the time serving a life sentence for a range of sexual assaults that took place in Glasgow.

Sinclair was subsequently charged in connection with both murders and the trial began on 27th August 2007. However, by September the case had been abandoned after Judge Lord Clarke ruled there was insufficient evidence to proceed.

Once again all of the evidential samples and data were appropriately stored so that detectives could continue with their efforts to find justice for Helen and Christine.

Legislative change to the Double Jeopardy Law in November 2011 allowed police to once again present evidence to the Crown Office in relation to the World's End murders and pursue Sinclair for prosecution.

Further scientific advances meant that forensically only four people could be linked to the crime scene – Sinclair, Hamilton and the two teenagers.

Police Scotland has welcomed the conviction following almost four decades of investigation.

Detective Chief Superintendent Gary Flannigan from Police Scotland's Major Investigation Team said: "Today's verdict is the culmination of 37-years of dedicated police work and continued partnership working alongside the Crown Office and

Procurator Fiscal Service.

“The World’s End murders investigation is a remarkable enquiry. Not only because it is the first where a conviction has been secured following the Double Jeopardy legislation, but also because of the exemplary level of foresight demonstrated by police and forensic scientists during the initial stages of the investigation.

“Over the years we have become accustomed to reviewing historic enquiries from this period and have realistic expectations around the likelihood that we’d be actually able to find the recovered clothing never mind have any hope that it would have been stored and retained in the amazing condition that everything in this case has been.

“Those officers and scientists from 1977 and continuing through the generations are true heroes, for without their care and attention, without their absolute determination to preserve the clothing and samples for some development they could not have dreamt off, then this historic moment could not have happened.

“The actions and the determination of everyone over the years to fight for justice for Helen’s and Christine’s families is ultimately what has led to this moment.

“I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been involved with World’s End investigation during its 37-year duration.

“My thoughts are with both victims’ families at this time. They have all shown such great dignity and strength during what has been the most horrendous periods of times. I thank them for their continued support of our endeavours to bring Helen and Christine’s killers to justice.

“Nothing can ever bring either of the girls back, but it is my sincere hope that today’s verdict will finally deliver the

closure that both families have been craving for the past four decades.”

Former Detective Superintendent Allan Jones said: “It brings a great level of satisfaction to see this verdict rendered. The families of Christine Eadie and Helen Scott have waited 37 years to see justice, and today that has finally been delivered and I hope this will bring them a degree of closure and solace.

“I worked on this case, at varying levels, for 35 years. It was a case that got under the skin of everyone who worked on the enquiry, and indeed, everyone who worked within the former Lothian and Borders Police force.

“After the disappointment of 2007, it brings a degree of personal and professional satisfaction to see a positive result.

“Angus Sinclair is a dangerous man who has several convictions for murder and sexual assault. He should never again be at liberty.”

Speaking following the sentencing of Angus Sinclair at the High Court in Livingston for the murder of two teenagers in 1977, Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill said:

“This case came to court after the Scottish Government brought forward the Double Jeopardy (Scotland) Act, which was unanimously passed by Parliament. Double jeopardy is a centuries old principle of Scots law which prevents a person being tried twice for the same offence, but in this day and age, there should be no escape from justice.

“We modernised the law, with safeguards, to make it fit for the 21st century. If new evidence emerges which shows the original ruling was fundamentally flawed, it should be possible to have a second trial. And trials which are tainted by threats or corruption should also be re-run.

"We have acted in the interests of Scottish justice, victims and their families and we hope this news brings some comfort to the families of the victims of these terrible crimes."