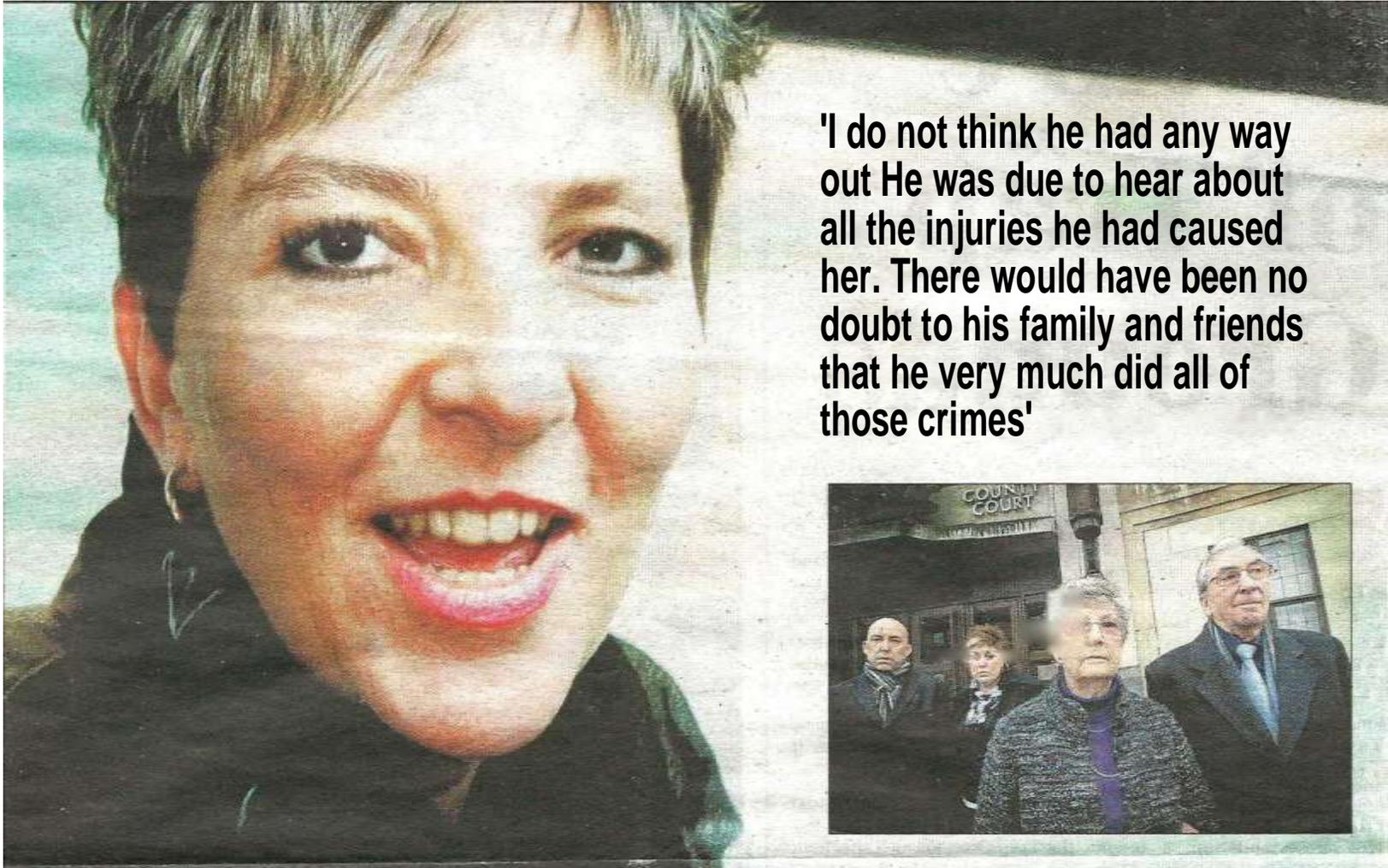


Man on trial for killing his wife in frenzied attack in village is discovered dead in cell in prison

Man found dead in cell

By **ELLIE SIMMONDS**
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■ **VICTIM:** Russell Yeates killed himself in Bullingdon Prison while on trial for the murder of wife Deborah Smith, above. Inset: Ms Smith's parents Mavis and Gerald Wiffen, with son, Gary and daughter in law, Deborah. Below: Police sealed off parts of Wheatley in the aftermath of Ms Smith's death



relationship, otherwise he will Road, Botley, spoke of their shock. Mrs Wiffen said: "I do not think he had any way out — the evidence was so strong.

Another friend, Caroline Elliot, said: "Debbie told me she did not know if she could carry on with the relationship. "I said, 'you need to end the

Michelle Bark, a friend of Ms Smith, said she intervened when she saw Yeates trying to throttle Ms Smith in the summer of 2006.

Yeates's neighbour Anne Ledwith said she regularly overheard violent rows between Yeates and Ms Smith. She said she saw Yeates chase his wife into the street on the afternoon she died.

Yeates was accused of threatening to kill his wife Debbie Smith, 47, before chasing her through the street and slitting her throat in their home in Bell Lane, Wheatley.

Amjad Malik, prosecuting, said Yeates — who denied murder — killed Ms Smith with a kitchen knife before trying to slit his own throat on May 26 last year.

He told the jury there was a history of violence in the couple's relationship and said Yeates had been cautioned by police for assaulting Ms Smith in December -2006.

Yeates, formerly of Horspath, was jailed for three years in 1997 after holding his then-wife Julie and three of her work colleagues captive with a sawn-off shotgun before threatening to kill himself.

He told the jury there was a history of violence in the couple's relationship and said Yeates had been cautioned by police for assaulting Ms Smith in December -2006.

We were shocked, but it was not a sympathetic feeling.

"He was due to hear about all the injuries he had caused her.

"There would have been no doubt to his family and friends that he very much did all of those crimes."

Mrs Wiffen said the family felt robbed of their chance to see justice done.

She said: "I have felt hatred for him from day one."

Mr Wiffen, 74, said: "We feel cheated. I am angry. He obviously just could not see a way out and he felt he just could not spend the rest of his life in prison."

THE TRIAL of a husband accused of killing his wife in a frenzied attack collapsed after he was found dead in his prison cell.

Father-of-two Russell Yeates, 49, was found dead in Bullingdon Prison, near Bicester, last Friday morning. It is believed he slit his wrists.

The carpenter was discovered by prison guards just hours before he was due at Oxford Crown Court for the fourth day of his trial.

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She said she saw Yeates chase his wife into the street on the afternoon she died.

She said: "Most of the noise was coming from Russell. It was not words, it was more of an animal noise. I felt there was something horrifically wrong."

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Inquiry is launched into prison death

POLICE and the Prison Service have launched an inquiry into the death of murder suspect Russell Yeates.

The 49-year-old was the seventh prisoner to commit suicide at Bullingdon Prison since 2003. It is understood Yeates was assessed by staff when he arrived at Bullingdon Prison to determine whether he was at risk of self-harm or suicide.

But Yeates was not subject to a prison Open Suicide Self-Harm

Document. If a prisoner is judged a suicide risk and subject to the document, measures can be imposed including moving the inmate to a 'safe cell' or ensuring regular visits throughout the day and night.

A spokesman for HM Prison Service said: "Russell Yeates was found in his cell at 5.30am.

"Mr Yeates was pronounced dead at the scene. As with all deaths in custody, the prisons and probation

ombudsman will conduct an investigation."

Det Insp Colin Seaton said: "Police are currently investigating an unexplained death at Bullingdon Prison of a male prisoner who has been identified as Russell Yeates.

"His family have been informed of the death and at this stage there are not thought to be any suspicious circumstances."