

TRUE CRIME



by
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The Canefield Murders

KILLER STILL ON THE RUN

IN BARBADOS, the term “serial killer” could almost be fictional as we tend to believe that such beings simply do not exist in our beautiful paradise. However, many of us are not aware that one of those abnormal beings lived amongst us and struck terror in the hearts of residents during 1973 to 1982.

He was known as the “Canefield Murderer”, as his modus operandi was to kidnap young women, brutally kill them and then dump their bodies in the canefields. Perhaps the most bone-chilling aspect of this horrendous killing spree is the fact that, to this very day, the perpetrator still walks free.

It all started on March 28, 1973, when a dog from Applewaithes Plantation was spotted carrying the bones of seventeen-year old Golda Dash. Panic gripped the residents of St. Thomas when the rest of her bones were found in the canefield, as no one could understand the seemingly senseless murder.

According to her brother, Ryeburn Phillips, ‘Golda was a quiet person; she wouldn’t harm anyone’. No one dared to roam the streets after dark for a while, but Dash’s death soon became a fading memory as no suspects or potential leads were found. Yet, the Barbadian public could have never imagined that this murder would only be the first of many.

On October 18, 1980, an unsuspecting golf caddy was merely carrying out his duty of retrieving a stray ball under a bush, when he stumbled upon the dead body of 18-year-old Janet Smith of Mount Standfast, St. James. Once again, there were no significant leads and the police did not manage to make a connection between the two cases at this time. Until the killer is apprehended, we may never know why Smith’s body was the only one not dumped in a canefield.

The alarm of the public finally heightened in 1982, when several canefields were cleared and the bodies of two of the Canefield Murderer’s victims were discovered by shocked locals.

Fifteen-year old Cheryl McCollin was never reported missing since she had moved out of her family’s home in Black Rock. The killer left her body to rot in the canefield at Belle Plantation, St. Michael on



evidence that would lead to the first breakthrough in the case; an encircled newspaper ad. Through rigorous investigation the police made a connection to the Golda Dash case, and devised a theory that the slain women were lured to their deaths by “influential society people” on the pretext of job interviews advertised in the classified section of a local newspaper. No telephone number was given in the ads, and on investigation it was discovered that the P.O. Box provided was fictitious.

Further evidence mounted when a young woman who responded to the same ad as Robinson, claimed that under the pretext of a job interview she was taken to a canefield in Vacluse and attacked, but managed to escape after the assailant slipped on some wet canes. The police knew that they were finally closing in on a possible suspect, but unfortunately, so did the suspect.

According to retired Assistant Commissioner of Police, Charles Lunn,

the Canefield Murderer was originally from St Andrew, married and operated an office in Bridgetown in building and contracting. He asked his men to pick up the suspect. Other reports claimed that the suspect was under 24-hour surveillance, but happened to have a child with him when he could have been approached by the detective, and so the order was made to apprehend him the next time.

On May 19, 1982, a cane cutter at Kent Plantation in Christ Church assumed that he had discovered the skeletal remains of an animal, until closer inspection revealed that it was yet another victim of the Canefield Murderer; 23-year-old Margaret Turton of Stadium Road, Bush Hall, St. Michael. She had been missing since August 1981 and probably would not have been identified had she not been wearing her trademark gold chain.

Public uproar

With the presence of a serial killer revealed, there was a public uproar and police were under pressure to solve the cases immediately. Little did they know that the killer was about to strike again. On that very day, Sandra Robinson’s mother said goodbye to her 23-year-old daughter, not knowing that the next time she saw her would be on June 5, identifying her body in a canefield at Vacluse, St. Thomas, with a slit throat.

However, Robinson unknowingly left a piece of

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But by then, the alleged Canefield Murderer had been able to sell his truck and the other equipment belonging to his business, and make alternative arrangements with those he was working for before fleeing to the United States.

Of course, the suspect would have needed a passport and a visa to travel, but he managed to obtain these and leave the country despite being watched. It is rumoured that his ‘high class’ status allowed him such a privilege; however, this claim is pure speculation as no evidence has been produced to support it.

No one is certain if the killer is still in the United States as reported, or if he managed to return to Barbados as easily as he escaped. Thirty seven years have passed and the deaths of at least five women still have not been avenged. Our precious canefields remain undisturbed ... for now.