

THE CASE OF IVAN MILAT

In 1992, British travelers Caroline Clarke and Joanne Walters met in Australia and teamed together with the aim of touring around the south of the country. In April that year, they left a backpackers hotel in Sydney and headed for the south-east of New South Wales. In September, their bodies were found buried in an area known as “Executioners Drop” in the Belangalo State Forest.

Weeks after the discovery of the two bodies, detectives had gathered lots of physical evidence from the crime scene(s) but were no closer to gathering any real clues as to the identity of the person responsible. In an attempt to try to shed new light on the investigation, Dr Rod Milton, a forensic psychiatrist with over twenty year’s crime scene experience, who was working for the New South Wales Police force, was asked to consult on the case. Dr Milton had previously helped the police in the hunt, and subsequent arrest, of John Wayne Glover, the “North Side” serial killer, who had bashed and strangled six elderly women in Sydney in 1989. The **criminal profile** that Dr Milton had provided to police was incredibly accurate except for the age. Milton had suggested the killer would be a teenager, based on historical data that indicated the most serious offences against elderly victims were committed by people under twenty years of age. His analysis, although slightly inaccurate, led to Glover’s capture. Glover was fifty-nine years of age at the time of his arrest.

The detectives drove Dr Milton to Belangalo State Forest at his request. As he explained to them, even though he had access to the detailed police reports and photographs, he needed to view the crime scenes for himself so that he could “get a feel” for the way the killer had approached his victims. He stepped from the car and walked to the two grave sites in turn. After wandering slowly around the area for some time, he sat quietly in the middle of the scene and thought about *why* the killer had chosen that particular site. Why did he leave the victims the way he did? What was his motivation? His first thought was that the killer was familiar with the area. From experience he knew that killers very rarely operated in unfamiliar surroundings. These weren’t crimes of opportunity, but rather premeditated murders.

Dr Milton then thought about the murders. Caroline Clarke was killed in a cold and calculating fashion. He examined the **signature behaviours**. She had a single stab wound to her body, which he believed was inflicted after death as a final example of the killer’s control over the victim. The manner in which Miss Clarke’s body was ‘laid out’ with the arms above the head also suggested control and planning on the part of the killer. He then analysed the death of Joanne Walters. Her underwear was missing from the crime scene and Dr Milton theorised that these had been taken by the killer as a “trophy”. When asked by police for a possible motive, Milton uttered a single word: “pleasure”. Later in his Sydney office, Dr Milton wrote out his **criminal profile** of the killer he thought responsible for the two deaths. He believed the killer would:

- Live on the outskirts of a city in a semi-rural area
- Be employed in a semi-killed job probably out of doors
- Be involved in an unstable or unsatisfactory relationship with a woman
- Have a history of aggression against authority
- Be aged in his mid thirties.

In October 1993, two more bodies were discovered along the same stretch of the remote Belangalo Forest. The bodies were identified as those of 19 year old James Gibson and Deborah Everist, also 19. Both had gone missing since 1989. It then became apparent that a serial killer had been responsible for all these murders. On 1st November the same year, a fifth body was found. It was the body of a German backpacker who had been missing since 1991. After an intensive search of the area, two more skeletons were found on 4th November. Progress continued to be made in the forensic examinations of evidence gathered at the scene – cartridges from a .22 rifle had been found near one of the bodies.

Despite having a profile of the likely offender, it was not until the end of February, 1994 that there was a breakthrough in the police investigation. Two British backpackers came forward. One of them, Paul Onion, told police that in 1990 he was hitch-hiking and had accepted a lift from a driver. The driver of the vehicle had produced a gun from the glove compartment. Paul ran away from the vehicle but the driver had fired shots at him. Paul was able to identify his man from police mugshots and identify the vehicle that he had driven at the time.

The detectives searched criminal records and found that the man who had been identified by Onion, Ivan Milat, had been found guilty of committing various offences and had served several years in prison. He had an obsession with guns and owned several. Forty-nine year old Milat lived on the outskirts of Sydney and worked for a concreting company. After digging further through the archives further, the detectives found something that really aroused their suspicion. In 1971, Ivan had picked up two girls hitch hiking from Liverpool to Melbourne and had allegedly raped one of them. Both girls testified that he was armed with a large knife and carried a length of rope. He was later acquitted when the prosecution case was dismissed as unproven. Dr Milton watched carefully as his criminal profile began to take realistic shape.

The painstaking search for supportive evidence continued through to March 1994. The "Milat" team obtained records of all premises and vehicles that Milat and his brothers had owned in the past. They found that three of the Milat brothers owned a small property on the "Wombeyan Caves" road, twenty five miles from Belangalo. In addition, one vehicle found was a silver "Nissan Patrol" four-wheel-drive that had been owned by Ivan Milat.

The new owner was interviewed and showed police a bullet that he had found under the driver's seat. It was .22 caliber and was later analysed and found to be consistent

with the empty boxes found in "Area A" and cartridge cases found at the Clarke and Walters gravesites. Milat had sold the vehicle two months after the bodies of the two English girls had been discovered. Police also checked Milat's work records and confirmed with their employers that Ivan had not been working on the day of Paul Onion's attack.

They now had enough evidence to arrest Milat for the attack on Onion. At precisely 6:36 a.m. Detective Gordon dialled Milat's phone number from outside his house. He advised Milat to come out with his girlfriend and surrender to police. Ivan mumbled something and hung up. After several minutes, nothing had happened. Mindful of the guns that Milat was known to possess, police were reluctant to storm the house. The presence of his girlfriend was also a factor. Gordon again dialled the number and spoke to Milat a second time. Several minutes later, the front door opened and Ivan Milat and his girlfriend stepped onto the front lawn and were taken into custody.

The police then searched Milat's house. The rooms were searched one at a time. In the second bedroom, two sleeping bags were found in a wardrobe. They were later identified as belonging to the German backpacker and Deborah Everist. They also found a .22 caliber rifle. In Ivan's bedroom, they found a photo of his girlfriend wearing a top identical to one owned by Caroline Clarke. As the search progressed, even more items came to light. For example, a camera belonging to Caroline Clarke and camping and cooking equipment belonging to the German backpacker. Nearly all the camping equipment belonging to the victims was found in Milat's possession. The ballistics experts matched the cartridges found at the crime scene to the bullets found in Milat's old car with the .22 rifle found in Milat's home.

Forty-nine year old Ivan Robert Marko Milat was charged with the murders of the seven backpackers, and the attack on Paul Onion, and was committed to stand trial. In March 1996, he was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment. Milat is serving his sentence in the Goulburn Jail, Sydney.

