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Friday, 29th August 2008

Serial rapist trapped by sister's DNA



Dangerous: James Lloyd, who admitted raping four women and attempting to rape two more, had more than 100 pairs of stiletto shoes hidden at his workplace.



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Shoe-obsessed attacker stole victims' footwear
Police fear he assaulted dozens more women
Advances in technology solve 20-year mystery
Lucy Harvey and Paul Whitehouse

A TROPHY rapist who confessed in court to a string of attacks on Yorkshire women in the 1980s may also be responsible for a catalogue of unreported crimes, investigators fear.

James Desmond Lloyd, 49, admitted at Sheffield Crown Court he was the notorious Dearne Valley "shoe rapist" who preyed on women as they walked home alone.

His trademark in each attack was to steal his victim's shoes, but he managed to evade capture for 20 years.

When advances in DNA technology finally allowed police to track him down officers were alarmed to discover hundreds of shoes carefully hidden at his workplace, alongside hundreds of pairs of stockings and tights.

Last night detectives made an appeal for other women who believe they have been attacked by Lloyd to come

forward.

Lloyd admitted four rapes and two attempted rapes when he appeared in court yesterday before the Honorary Recorder of Sheffield, Judge Alan Goldsack. He was remanded in custody and will be sentenced in September after psychiatric reports have been prepared.

He was only caught by ground-breaking "familial DNA" technology, a technique where samples taken from victims are compared with those already on the police database in an effort to trace relatives of offenders. Lloyd had no criminal record so his DNA did not appear on the national database, but the familial search revealed more than 40 close matches, each of whom police planned to interview. As it turned out the third door they knocked on was that of Lloyd's sister, who had given a sample when she was arrested for drink-driving.

When Lloyd was told police were looking for him he called his father to say he was in trouble after committing a series of offences 20 years ago, and attempted suicide by hanging.

When further police checks revealed a complete DNA match he was charged with a string of attacks, including two he denied. The offences he admitted began with an attempt to rape a 53-year-old woman in February 1983 at Kimberworth, Rotherham. She has since died but her children were in court to see Lloyd face justice.

That assault was followed by a rape 10 months later, a further attempted rape in October 1984, and another rape two weeks later. He admitted raping a teenager three days before Christmas that year and admitted another rape in August 1986.

He pleaded not guilty to robbing a woman of her gold and black stiletto shoes in October 1982, and to attempting to rape a disabled 21-year-old in June 1984. No further action will be taken on those matters.

Lloyd, a married father-of-three, had an unblemished career with a printing company at Wath upon Dearne, a few miles from his detached four-bedroomed home at Howell Gardens, Thurnscoe, Rotherham, South Yorkshire.

He was originally going to plead to the charges two weeks ago, but the case was adjourned after he attempted suicide in prison. His father has died while he has been in custody.

Many of Lloyd's victims were in court to see him admit the crimes and one observer shouted "rot in hell" as he left the dock.

His barrister, Peter Kelson QC, spoke of the "exceptional gravity" of the offences and told the hearing: "For a campaign of rape he will be facing a long sentence."

During Lloyd's reign of terror he became increasingly confident and violent, carrying a knife on at least one occasion.

His victims were dragged from the street late at night then bound and gagged with tights or stockings before being raped.

After the assaults, he would steal the victim's shoes and other trophies, including jewellery, handbags, make-up and bottles of perfume which he kept even after meeting his current wife and starting a family. He has two children from his second marriage and one from his first.

At the time of Lloyd's offences, a woman constable was used as a decoy – wearing stiletto heels and a short skirt, in an attempt to catch him.

That officer, Det Sgt Sue Hickman, has worked on the final inquiry which ended with Lloyd's conviction and is now appealing for other victims to contact the force.

Retired Det Supt Ernie Roper, who led the fresh investigation into the crimes in 2002, was in court yesterday and said Lloyd was "a ticking time-bomb" who would almost certainly have re-offended had he not been caught.

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High-heel clues to other victims



The collection of shoes amassed by James Lloyd – and hidden at the printing works where he was a manager – is evidence of his dangerous obsession. Some were kept as trophies from the women he is known to have raped; others are new, presumably obtained to help satisfy his fascination with women's footwear. But police also found shoes fitting a more sinister category.

They were items which had been worn, but could not be linked to any of the victims known to police.

Anyone with information is urged to call officers on 01709 832689.

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