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# GUILTY!

**Rory Christie has been found guilty of the murder of his wife Susan whose body has never been found since she vanished from her Daglish home two years ago.**

By **BRET CHRISTIAN**

Both the convicted man and a juror wept when the verdict was delivered.

It apparently stunned Mr Christie, most members of the public gallery, his lawyers and family because of the extraordinary way it was delivered with a pause that led him and them to believe for a moment that he had been found not guilty.

He now faces a sentence of life imprisonment; which usually means 12 to 14 years.

A Supreme Court jury took two days to reach the verdict they delivered on Thursday afternoon.

Christie (34), of Derby Road, Shenton Park, spent 16 months in custody waiting to face trial.

He now has a minimum wait of six weeks for a psychiatric report before being sentenced.

His lawyers say they will lodge an appeal.

There was a long moment of emotional confusion at 2.35pm in the court when the jury foreman delivered the verdict on the first of three possibilities.

Mr Christie had sat nervously in the cage-like dock at the back of the jarrah-panelled Supreme Court 3 that has been used for murder trials for 100 years.

Mr Christie wept with relief when the jury foreman replied "Not guilty" to the question of wilful murder.

Mr Christie's solicitor, Ian Farquhar's head hit the desk with relief when this verdict was announced.

But then the foreman replied "guilty" to the question of murder.

There were cries from Mr Christie's family in the public gallery and Mr Christie's chin slumped to his chest.

The large group of reporters present gasped with surprise.

Sobbing continued from the public gallery as Mr Christie's younger sister Diana collapsed and had to be taken from the court by her father Ron.

Both family members had travelled from Canada for the trial.

Rory Christie's seven-year-old son is being cared for by family



Rory Christie has been found not guilty of wilful murder, but guilty of murder of his missing wife Susan.

members in Canada. Many people in court had assumed that either Mr Christie had killed Mrs Christie or had not killed her.

They said there had been no discussion about degree of intent or room for alternative verdicts.

The distinction between wilful murder and murder is the intent at the time of the crime.

Wilful murder means the killer intended to kill.

Murder means the killer intended to inflict grievous bodily harm

but the victim died as a result.

The Crown case was that Mr Christie planned the murder of his wife and cleverly executed it, leaving no traces.

Shortly before the verdict, the jurors returned to the court

and asked the judge to read them his directions on how to consider the tie blood-spot evidence.

Mr Christie's father Ronald, a wealthy Canadian, watched from the public gallery with Rory Christie's new woman friend who has been visiting him in Hakea prison and attended most of the five week trial.

Mr Christie's relatives are now torn between staying in Perth to be near him to support him in his appeal, and going home to care for his dying mother in Canada.

Outside the court, a family friend said they regarded the verdict as a travesty of justice.

Mr Farquhar said Mr Christie was "absolutely devastated" by the verdict.

"It is the most interesting and extraordinary case I have been involved with in

35 years a lawyer," he said.

The jury in the Christie murder mystery case of sex, drugs and death in Daglish had deliberated for two days.

The court heard four weeks of evidence about the "lost souls" of the western suburbs and the people whose lives were affected by the life and presumed death in 2001 of Susan Christie, then aged 42.

Mr Christie has sat in the dock each day dressed in smart suits, listening intently to the evidence but showing little expression.

An extraordinary cast of characters paraded through the court, 110 witnesses who opened a window on a slice of life in the western suburbs that many people did not even suspect existed.

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## Dorothy gives fortune

By **LINDA CALLAGHAN**

**A quiet, 83-year-old Wembley spinster has left a small fortune to help sick children.**

Dorothy Surman, who once ran a kindergarten in the town and taught piano, stunned charity chiefs by leaving about \$750,000 in property and shares to the Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation - without ever giving them a hint.

The charity's staff had never had any contact with Miss Surman and had no inkling she intended to bequeath her estate for research and the comfort and help of sick children, or why she chose their charity.

Miss Surman, who outlived her sisters Dora and Phyls and brother Hugo, lived alone in the family home in Pangbourne

Street, Wembley.

She died in May, a month before her 84th birthday.

She lived in a two-bedroomed 1920s house and drove a 1950s Holden until a few years ago.

Dr Peter Bladen, Miss Surman's GP, said he met her when she became a patient about 30 years ago, and since then they had become good friends.

"She was a very independent woman, very astute and had a sharp wit," Dr Bladen said.

Miss Surman had severe scoliosis, which caused her spine to twist, and she was hunched.

"It is something that would be picked up early these days, but it was probably something that influenced her to leave her money to the hospital," Dr Bladen said.

"She always loved



Dorothy Surman, who loved children and left all her money to them.

children."

He said Miss Surman had smoked a lot in earlier years and she suffered chronic respiratory problems.

"But she was determined to live in her own house.

"I used to see her once a week and we would sit and chat.

"She did not talk

much about the early days. She liked to talk about current world events and the share market.

"She was very astute and had lots of shares, particularly Wesfarmers.

"She did not have a lot of friends, but the friends she did have were good friends," Dr Bladen said.

A family friend who met Dorothy Surman when they both went to St Edmund's Church said she was a very active member of the church.

"Everyone loved her. She never needed to be strict with the children," said the friend, who did not want to be identified.

"She was slight and short in stature and the children never really had to look up to her - she was very much on their level.

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 These suburbs are shown on the map on page 2. Extra copies are delivered to other selected riverside suburbs.



# 'Christie took a big risk with the body'

Rory Christie took an enormous risk when he removed his wife's body from her Daglish apartment, according to the prosecution in the murder trial of his estranged wife Susan Christie.

But in doing so, he removed a world of incriminating evidence, prosecutor Troy Sweeney told the jury.

Ms Sweeney said her case relied for its strength and its logic on the proposition that Mr Christie (34) killed

his wife (then 42) at her apartment on Friday, November 16, 2001, between 9 and 10am, after his partner Michelle Terdich dropped him off at the Daglish train station, as she did most weekdays.

The court heard earlier that Mr Christie did not have a job but dressed each day in a suit and tie and allowed Ms Terdich to believe that he was going to work.

Ms Sweeney suggested to the jury that Mr Christie dragged

Mrs Christie's body to the bedroom of her apartment, where it could not be seen through the blinds, then returned in the evening to dispose of it.

She said it was proved that Mr Christie was out that night because bank records showed that he withdrew \$100 from an ATM in Leederville at 10.14pm.

She said the jury should not believe Mr Christie's evidence that his relationship with Mrs Christie was "light years better" than it



Susan Christie: her body has never been found.



Rory Christie: killed his estranged wife.

had been and that, in the months before she disappeared, she was generally sober when

he dropped their son off for the court-ordered access visits.

She quoted the evi-

dence of Ian Ure, the father of Mrs Christie's oldest son, who said that her drinking had been getting heavier before she disappeared and that he was considering "taking steps" in the Family Court.

Ms Sweeney said Mr Christie was upset that his wife had got away with lying to the Family Court about her drinking and had, in August that year, been granted unsupervised access to their son, then four.

He was to stay with Mrs Christie every second weekend and for half of each school holiday period.

She said Mrs Christie had been unreasonable, aggressive, irresponsible and wanted her son to live with her again.

"He had motive to burn," Ms Sweeney said.

"He had a very intense, long-standing motive."

Ms Sweeney said Mrs

Christie had planned to take their son to Myalup on Boxing Day to stay with friends for a week but Mr Christie wanted to take him to Canada.

She said Mr Christie killed her, then invented an "amicable discussion" about Christmas plans at her unit the day earlier in case somebody saw him there.

But Ms Sweeney said it was simplistic to say that Mrs Christie died over a dispute about Christmas access.

Ms Sweeney submitted that Mrs Christie was killed after "five years of heavy drinking, abusive behaviour, irresponsible behaviour, turning up at the house screaming, insulting Michelle, taking off to England and not seeing (their son)".

"She had caused a situation that went on and on and on with no end in sight," she said.

## Your reticulation has the day off.

Unless today is one of your two watering days.

All households and businesses are reminded that the two-day-a-week sprinkler restrictions remain in place. Average winter rains this year have meant that the water level in our dams has begun to recover from the critically low levels of the previous two years. However, restrictions will be maintained until the end of next winter when we know how well our dams have recovered. At this time of the year we only need to water our gardens once a week, for 10 minutes per station, either before 9am or after 6pm. In case you've forgotten the watering days for your home or business, simply take the last digit of your house/building number and apply it to the table. For more information about Scheme Water Restrictions, visit [www.watercorporation.com.au](http://www.watercorporation.com.au) or call the Waterwise Helpline on 13 10 39.

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1	WEDNESDAY	SATURDAY
2	THURSDAY	SUNDAY
3	FRIDAY	MONDAY
4	SATURDAY	TUESDAY
5	SUNDAY	WEDNESDAY
6	MONDAY	THURSDAY
7	TUESDAY	FRIDAY
8	WEDNESDAY	SATURDAY
9	THURSDAY	SUNDAY
0	FRIDAY	MONDAY

## Guilty verdict

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Evidence of drug dealing and sexual encounters was heard by the court as witnesses told what they were doing at the times surrounding Mrs Christie's disappearance.

Mrs Christie touched many lives with her vicious personality.

Witnesses described her as intelligent, witty, caring and loving.

But in England in the 1980s she suffered a head injury in a fall.

After an operation, doctors told her not to drink, but she ignored the advice and slipped into a sad life of alcoholism.

She maintained her attractive personality when sober, but when drunk she had a vicious tongue and became abusive, aggressive, superior, violent and promiscuous.

She had a procession of lovers. Taxi drivers who drove her to the Wembley Hotel to buy her favoured Goundry wine told the court of being invited to her flat in Currie Street, where she kissed them and stripped.

She had many male friends who frequented the bars of Wembley and Subiaco from mornings onwards, some of whom became her lovers.

There was a tangled web of romances and lovers, friends and neighbours and a connection to the Darlington community through former Shenton Park resident Kelli Budrikis, who moved to the Hills.

But she had two sons who she loved, and they became a great point of conflict between her and the two men who were their fathers.

Both fathers had won custody battles for their boys on the grounds that Mrs Christie was a neglectful mother when drunk.

The crown said that Rory Christie killed Susan Christie because he wanted her out of his life.

Crown prosecutor Troy Sweeney told the jury Mr Christie believed Mrs Christie had tricked a Family Court judge a few months before she disappeared.

She had told the judge she was now a social drinker, and she was granted unsupervised access every second weekend to her son, then aged five.

Mr Christie maintained that while he had a tumultuous relationship with Mrs Christie, things had improved greatly by the time she disappeared and they were able to sit down at her unit over a coffee and have a reasonable discussion about Christmas holiday arrangements.

The crown said this was a lie, and that such a relationship was not possible. No such meeting had taken place, Ms Sweeney said.

Mrs Christie vanished some time after 10.30pm on Thursday, November 15, 2001.

The crown said that Mr Christie went to her flat on the Friday morning, killed her, then returned that night in his partner's car to remove her body, having thoroughly cleaned the flat.

Mr Christie pleaded not guilty to the charge of wilful murder. He said he simply did not do it and did not know what had happened to her.

His defence counsel said that at least three other men had the motive and opportunity to kill Mrs Christie.

He maintained that someone else committed the murder on the Thursday night, when loud thumps were heard from Mrs Christie's flat.

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