

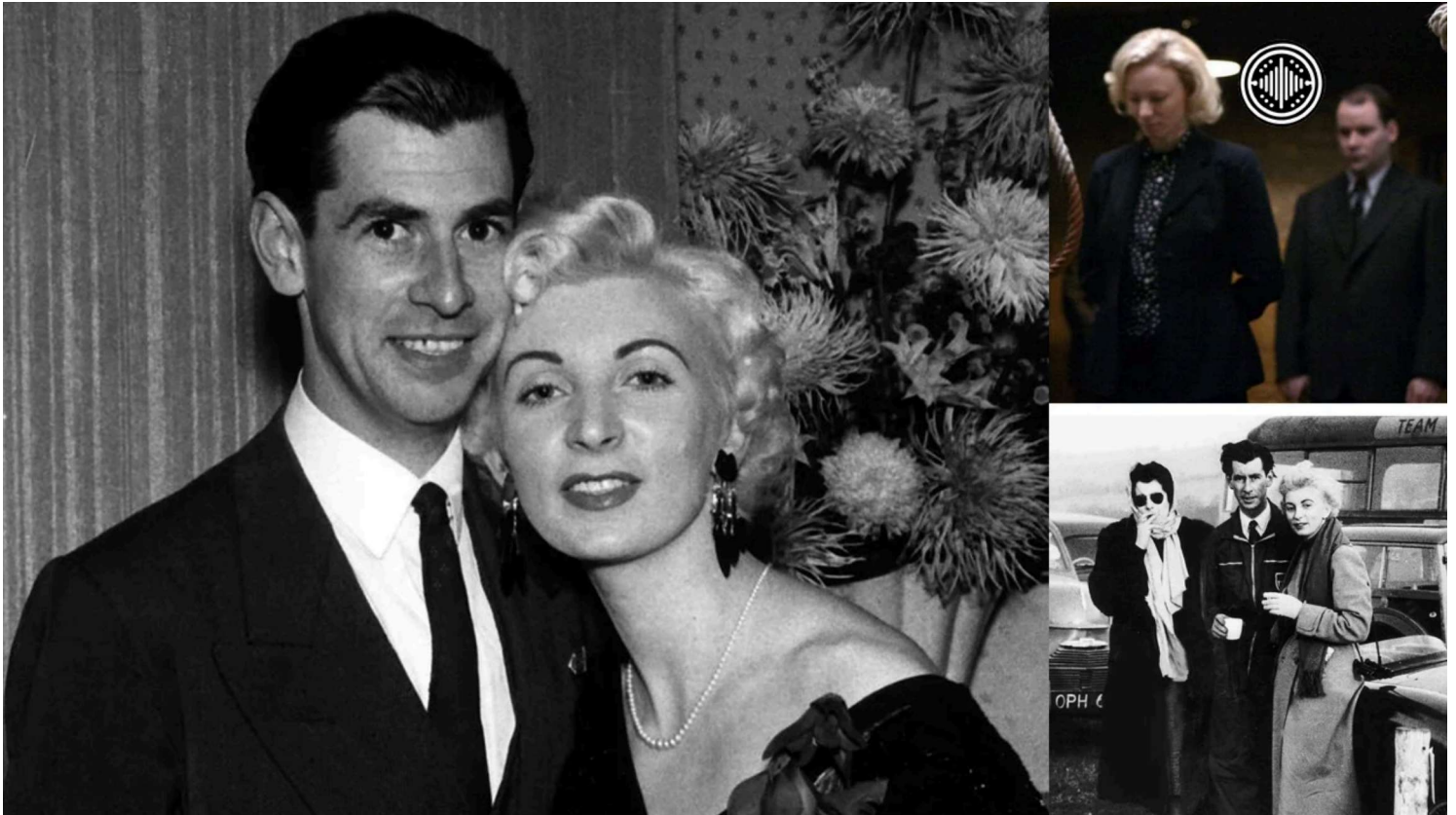
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## Grandson Seeks Posthumous Pardon for Ruth Ellis, 70 Years After Her Hanging

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— Categories: Crime



Seventy years after Ruth Ellis was executed for the murder of her lover, her grandson is leading a campaign to clear her name, claiming she was a victim of domestic abuse and a miscarriage of justice.

On July 13, 1955, Ruth Ellis became the last woman to be hanged in the United Kingdom after being convicted of shooting her ex-lover, racing driver David Blakely. Now, her grandson, former Hollyoaks actor Stephen Beard, is urging the government to grant a

posthumous pardon, arguing the trial ignored vital evidence about the years of abuse Ellis endured.

Speaking to *The Mirror*, Beard, now 36 and living in Dubai, explained that he has instructed a respected legal firm to begin the formal process for a conditional pardon. Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood is expected to review the application this autumn and then advise His Majesty the King. While not overturning a conviction, a conditional pardon may be granted where moral and technical innocence can be demonstrated.

Beard said, “This was an injustice. Don’t we, as a society, want to explore how it happened? Doesn’t Ruth deserve a second chance to be heard?”

Ellis was 28 when she was convicted of killing Blakely outside the Magdala pub in Hampstead, London, on Easter Sunday 1955. She was arrested at the scene and later told police she was guilty but confused. At her trial, she admitted to firing the fatal shots, but the court was not made aware of the full extent of the violent relationship she had endured.

Originally from Wales and one of six children, Ellis had a difficult life marked by abuse. By her mid-twenties, she was a single mother working in Soho as a nightclub hostess and occasional escort. She met Blakely in 1953 while managing a Knightsbridge nightclub. Their relationship, though passionate, was also turbulent and violent. Ellis once testified that he “only hit me with his fists or hands.” She suffered a miscarriage after one of his assaults.

## Legal Gaps

The pistol Ellis used to kill Blakely belonged to another man in her life, former Royal Air Force (RAF) pilot Desmond Cussen, who had also taught her how to use it. This detail, along with his role in her life and offer to financially support her children, was not disclosed to the jury.

Beard argues that Ellis was demonised not only for her crime but for who she was: a divorced, working-class woman, a single mother, and someone associated with the London nightclub scene. “She didn’t fit the image of what a ‘proper’ woman should be in 1955,” he said.

The legacy of Ellis’s execution has haunted her family. Her former husband died by suicide just three years later, and her son took his own life in 1982. Her daughter, Georgina,

struggled with addiction and died at 50.

Beard's sister, Laura Enston, recalled being bullied at school after classmates discovered who their grandmother was. "People shouted that my grandma was a murderer," she said. "I carried shame for years."

Legal associate Grace Houghton, from Mishcon de Reya, said the firm had long-standing ties to Ellis's case. Its founder, Lord Mishcon, made a last-minute effort to save her in 1955, just 22 hours before her execution.

Two years after Ellis was hanged, the Homicide Act 1957 introduced the partial defence of diminished responsibility. Houghton believes that had Ellis been tried after this change in the law, she would likely not have been sentenced to death.

Her grandson agrees. "She was a brave, determined woman. Not a monster. She was also a victim, and that should have been recognised. It still should."