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Betrayal and Regret: Friend of Murdered 21-Year-Old Showjumper Speaks Out

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Behind the glamour of the equestrian world lay a chilling secret of abuse and betrayal that ultimately cost a talented young woman her life.

More than three years after 21-year-old showjumper Katie Simpson was brutally raped and murdered, Jill Robinson, one of the women who shielded her killer, has publicly admitted her shame.

In a recent documentary, Robinson broke her silence and confessed to helping Jonathan Creswell, the man convicted of Katie's murder, by cleaning his bloodstained clothes and remaining silent, despite knowing something was deeply wrong.

She described the emotional control Creswell had over her, which left her unable to question him despite his violent behaviour.

Katie was raped and killed by Jonathan Creswell, the partner of her sister Christina and a former jockey, whose charm hid a sinister and violent nature.

Her sister Christina, both horse enthusiasts from the village of Tynan, were part of a small circle that included groomer Hayley Robb and teenage equestrian star Rose de Montmorency-Wright. At the centre was Creswell, a 36-year-old trainer widely respected in local equestrian circles.

Many saw him as a hero after he claimed to have found Katie hanging from a bannister and tried to save her. But police later revealed that Katie's death was not a suicide. She had been beaten, raped, and strangled by Creswell in a jealous rage.

Despite bruises and other injuries noted by hospital staff, and Creswell's complicated relationships with multiple women, including Katie, it took months before the police launched a full investigation. In March 2021, Creswell was finally arrested and charged with Katie's rape and murder.

Further shock came when it was revealed that Rose de Montmorency-Wright, Jill Robinson, and Hayley Robb, three women close to Katie, had obstructed justice by lying and withholding information to protect Creswell. All three pleaded guilty to offences including perverting the course of justice and received suspended sentences.

Community Betrayal

Creswell's abusive history extended beyond Katie. Abi Lyle, an Olympian who dated him in 2008, revealed how he subjected her to physical violence, including strangulation and threats to kill. Abi eventually escaped and helped secure Creswell's conviction for assault. Yet, Creswell returned to the equestrian world, welcomed by friends who dismissed the abuse claims.

Detective Sergeant James Brannigan, who led the investigation, revealed how Creswell had groomed Katie from a young age. Katie reportedly lived in fear of him and begged friends not to mention other boys near him. Despite these warning signs, local police initially failed to investigate properly. A journalist who raised concerns was dismissed, and crucial evidence was overlooked.

It was only after months of determined work by Detective Brannigan and pressure from Katie's family that Creswell was finally charged. He was later found dead at his home in April 2024, the day after the prosecution presented its case in court.

The case has raised questions about how allegations of abuse are handled, the failures in the early stages of the investigation, and the extent to which individuals close to offenders can obstruct justice.