

Murder Trial Begins After Woman Found Dead in Hotel

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— Categories: Crime



The trial has begun for a man accused of raping and murdering his ex-fiancée, who was found dead during what was supposed to be a birthday celebration at a luxury hotel.

Samantha Mickleburgh, a 54-year-old mother of two from Axminster in Devon, United Kingdom, was discovered dead at Pennyhill Park Hotel in Bagshot, Surrey, on the morning of April 14, 2024. She had checked into the hotel the night before with her former fiancé, James Cartwright, to mark his 60th birthday.

On Tuesday, Guildford Crown Court heard emotional testimony from Samantha's children, who revealed that their mother had expressed serious doubts and discomfort about the trip.

Alexander Mickleburgh, Samantha's youngest son, told the court he last saw his mother on April 13, when she dropped him off at a friend's house. He said she appeared uneasy about the plans with Cartwright and explained, "She said, 'I made a promise and so I have to stick by it.' But she was uncomfortable." He added, "She made it clear this was the last time she was going to see him."

The court also heard from Samantha's daughter, Jessica Mickleburgh, who described how her mother had struggled with feelings of guilt brought on by Cartwright. According to Jessica, he would often send her mother messages accusing her of being cruel for not wanting to celebrate his birthday. Jessica said she had advised her mother to book separate rooms, but financial concerns ultimately stopped her from doing so.

A visibly emotional Jessica told jurors that her mother had wanted to put boundaries in place. "I didn't think it was a good decision," she said. "But because of costs, she didn't feel right doing that."

During the hearing, a juror was seen wiping away tears as Jessica gave her statement.

The court also heard that Samantha and Cartwright were previously engaged in September 2023, but their relationship ended in February 2024. Alexander described Cartwright's behavior during their time living together in 2023 as controlling and emotionally demanding. "If mum ever did manage to go out without him, it would be constant texting and calling," he said, describing the defendant's actions as "poor, pathetic, and needy."

James Cartwright, who has no fixed address, denies all charges, including rape, murder, and one count of controlling and coercive behavior spanning from May 2022 to April 2024.

The trial at Guildford Crown Court continues.

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