

Funeral date set for university professor

THE funeral of a much-loved university professor will be held on Saturday.

Sasha Spinelli, who died in a car crash, will be mourned at St Pancras Church, Lewes, at 1pm, not 1.30pm as previously stated in The Argus.

Mrs Spinelli, 40, of The Course, Lewes, was involved in the fatal collision with a lorry on the coastbound carriageway of the M2 between Sittingbourne and Faversham, Kent, on September 7.

She is survived by husband

Martin Spinelli and her son Lio, four, who was also in the car and is still recovering at a specialist hospital in London.

She also leaves behind parents Nigel and Penny Roberts, brother David and his wife and two children in Italy.

The family have asked for donations to the Sasha Roberts Scholarship fund to help students in early modern literature rather than flowers.

For more details, call Richard Green Funeral Service on **01273 488121**.

Husband who hid body in the attic is jailed for life

Wife killer could not accept that his marriage was over

'ON THE BRINK':
Johanna Croxton had told friends 'He is the kind of bloke who would kill me'



by **LEE GIBBS**

A CONTROLLING husband who strangled his wife and hid her body in their attic after suspecting she was having an affair has been jailed for life.

Unemployed Jonathan Croxton, 25, killed his 21-year-old wife Johanna in a jealous rage at their rented home in Plympton Road, Hastings, in December.

During a two-week trial at Lewes Crown Court, the jury heard he wrapped her body in paddling pool sheeting, a duvet and a plastic Ikea bag before concealing it.

He claimed he had flipped during a row, placed his hands around her throat and throttled her after finding "love-dovey" text messages on her mobile phone from her work colleague at the Child Support Agency (CSA) in Hastings, Glenn Mills.

Croxton showed no emotion as he was found guilty of murder yesterday. The jury rejected his plea of guilty to manslaughter on the grounds that she provoked him by having an affair.

Judge Anthony Scott-Gall said he would serve a minimum term of 15 years and two months before he became eligible for parole.

He told Croxton: "The evidence was all one way, showing you to have been an aggressive and, on occasion, violent bully towards your wife.

"In a marriage lasting only 16 months it's no surprise to me that by the end of November 2005, Johanna had had enough of your ways.

"Were it not for your daughter, you would have separated much earlier.

"As it was, you callously strangled your wife that Tuesday evening as you could not face up to the fact she had become friendly with a colleague at work and your life with her was over."

The court heard Mrs Croxton had confided to friends and family she was unhappy in her abusive marriage.

She told friends: "He is the kind of bloke who would kill me, kill the baby and kill himself."



VIOLENT BULLY: Jonathan Croxton

In his opening, Richard Camden-Pratt QC, prosecuting, said Croxton had hit his wife, told her she was an unfit mother and threatened to take their 14-month-old daughter from her.

On December 1 last year, a neighbour reported hearing raised voices from their home, followed by the sound of someone being pushed or falling down the stairs.

The six-man, six-woman jury heard that colleagues at the CSA became concerned for Mrs Croxton after she failed to turn up at work the following day.

Mr Camden-Pratt said their concerns were heightened by Mrs Croxton's disclosure that she was unhappy in her marriage. Five days before her death, she had told a neighbour she thought their relationship was "on the brink".

Two work friends visited her home without managing to find her and repeated calls and text messages to her mobile phone went unanswered.

A missing persons inquiry was launched. Later Mr Mills received a text message from Mrs Croxton's mobile phone stating: "Sorry, didn't get to sleep till five. Going up to my sister's. Got to get away."

Mr Camden-Pratt said Croxton sent the text message to reassure him she was still alive when he had already killed her.

On December 4, police picked up Croxton from his mother's home in Eastbourne and took him to the police station for questioning. While en route, a message came over the radio asking officers to check the loft at the couple's home.

Mr Camden-Pratt said: "The defendant heard this and told the officers, 'You can't get into the loft. Our landlord doesn't let us up there. I have never been in there'."

Police could not reach the loft because of its height and lack of stairs but officers returned with a ladder two days later and found nothing.

Mr Camden-Pratt said the following day, Croxton became convinced police had found the body and confessed to the killing to his stepfather, Chris Cunningham.

Later, police arrived again at Croxton's mother's house and he told police: "I have been waiting for you to come. You've found the body, haven't you?"

To his surprise, police disclosed they had not found the body. In the police car he told officers: "I have told everybody what I did but nobody would believe me."

During a second search, Mrs Croxton's body was found in the heavily insulated loft wrapped in paddling pool sheeting, a duvet and a plastic Ikea bag. A post-mortem examination showed she had been strangled by hand.

In interview, Croxton said: "We were having a big row ... I flipped, put my hands round her throat and the next thing I know, she is dead."

However, in his closing remarks the judge said there was no clear evidence Mrs Croxton had provoked him.

Detective Chief Inspector Adam Hibbert, of Sussex Police, said: "Our sympathies today are with Johanna's family, and in particular for her little daughter, who will never know her mother.

"It is important for anyone in that position to know there is help available for those who are suffering domestic violence. Even if they feel unable to call the police, other support agencies are there to assist. They need to seek help."

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