

## Petty Criminal turned serial killer

It's 20 years since a drifter named Mark Martin arrived in Nottingham. He soon gained a reputation among the homeless community as something of a bully - intimidating people, and forcibly taking their benefit money.

5 But beyond this behaviour there was something even more disturbing. He would tell people that he was dangerous and that he was going to hurt people. At one point, he even boasted about becoming Nottingham's 'first serial killer'.

In late 2024, he became part of the homeless community, turning up at soup kitchens and befriending alcoholics and drugs addicts.

10 By December 2004, Martin was living in a tent on land near the warehouses off Great Northern Close, near London Road, in Nottingham.

The exact date when Martin committed his killings is not clear. He ended up being charged with murdering both Katie Baxter between December 31, 2004, and February 1, 2005; Zoe Pennick between the same dates; and Ellen Frith between January 23 and 25, 2005.

Ellen was recovered first, from the burnt-out squat in Marple Square, on January 25, 2005.

15 The area was a well-known haunt of the city's homeless because some of the flats - which were due to be demolished - still had gas and electricity. It did not take detectives long to establish who Ellen was, or track down the people who had used the squat, including Martin and 34-year-old John Ashley.

20 Inquiries among the homeless community turned up the names of the accused. One person described how he saw Martin in an alleyway after the fire at Marple Square. Martin had told him he had strangled and killed Ellen after she would not lend him a tenner.

One homeless person said at the time: "When we heard about the bodies, a lot of people disappeared from the streets."

"No one would go out on their own."

By Sam Dimmer, in *Nottingham Post*, Oct. 2024