

WHERE IS MY DAUGHTER'S KILLER?



This man's 22-year-old daughter was killed in a Tokyo apartment. The police were standing outside the door when her killer came out. Yet he is still free 20 months later. David James Smith investigates the body-in-the-bath murder of Lindsay Hawker

They should have parted ways when the English lesson was over. Lindsay would have left the cafe alone and gone to work at the language school and got on with her life. She would have come home to England, eventually, returned to study, surely, become a GP, inevitably, as she had always intended, married Ryan maybe, had children, made grandparents of her parents, Bill and Julia, aunts of her sisters, Lisa and Louise, and made old bones herself.

Instead, for some inexplicable, unfathomable reason, Lindsay left the cafe with the student and went with him to his home. Almost certainly because it was sheeting rain on that Tokyo Sunday morning in March 2007, she got into a taxi with him and was delivered the few hundred yards down the road to his apartment block.

There is CCTV footage of the taxi pulling up outside the building. This has only just emerged, but it has already been watched with agony by Lindsay's mother and father, who can see their daughter leave the taxi with the young man who will kill her, watch her leaning in briefly to the driver, asking him to wait just a minute until she comes back, so that the taxi driver can take Lindsay on to her place of work. She clearly had no intention of remaining at the apartment. Don't go, Lindsay, turn back, don't go into that building. But she continues. That's her right there in the CCTV footage, beautiful and alive, the pride of her family, on her way ➤➤➤

The murder victim Lindsay Hawker in Tokyo, three months before her death



into the young man's apartment and to her death in the suburb of Ichikawa City, around 10am on Sunday, March 25, 2007. The taxi driver will wait, but after seven minutes he will take another job. He will be grilled by the police later and be stricken with guilt when he finds out why the young woman never came back.

"She doesn't look like my girl," Bill said when he first saw that footage. He thought she was walking like a... he didn't want to say it... like a zombie and believed she must have been drugged — why else would she go to the apartment? But Lindsay had not been drugged; there were no traces of any drug in her body. Why had she gone, and why only, as she had thought, just for a minute?

When I met Lindsay's parents at their home in a village outside Coventry last month, they were overwhelmed by grief and gave voice to unimaginable feelings of loss, pain, anger and frustration. Bill told me before we began that he would become upset when he talked, and he did, crying openly as he described what they had been through.

He had needed counselling afterwards, not least because he had hated other girls of a similar age to Lindsay. He regarded them as wasters and chavs when he saw them out and about, and compared them with his daughter, who barely wore make-up and never dyed her hair and was always smart and could speak to anyone, to tramps and university professors alike. Of course, he realised now it was post-traumatic stress that made him think like that, and those girls couldn't help the fact that they were alive when Lindsay was dead.

Then Julia arrived home from work, made a round of teas and coffees, and stood in the garden smoking. It was not long before she too broke down. They were tender with each other, drawn together rather than pulled apart, she reading the renewed distress on his face and correcting his blurred memories, while he questioned her interpretations of some of the few facts they had to work with after 20 months.

As Julia said, only one thing mattered, and that was how Lindsay's life had been taken away in the most horrible circumstances. But it did not help that they had felt so alone and unsupported and insulted by people who ought to know better — take note, the Foreign Office. Neither did it help that the Japanese police had not only let Lindsay's killer slip past them and escape — not

once, but twice, as The Sunday Times Magazine has discovered — but were still failing to recapture him over a year and a half later, despite more than 5,000 reported sightings.

The Hawkers' home is nine hours behind Tokyo time, so it was still a Saturday night when Lindsay stepped out of the taxi, 6,000 miles away. It did not take her parents long to sense something was wrong. Lindsay had been in close contact in the six months she had been in Japan, e-mailing, Skype-ing or calling several

SHE MADE A STRIKING FIGURE IN TOKYO. HER DAD TOLD HER TO KEEP HER HEAD DOWN TO AVOID UNWELCOME ATTENTION

times a week. That Sunday, bizarrely, as if it were an act of premonition, a powerful earthquake shook Japan at 9.42am, about 20 minutes before Lindsay left the taxi. When the Hawkers woke up, Julia e-mailed Lindsay to check she was okay. She became uneasy when there was no reply, and as the day wore on she was getting beside herself. The whole family was calling, texting, e-mailing. Nothing came back.

Bill was offering reassurance, knowing that Lindsay was due out at a party that evening — a leaving do for a fellow English teacher. But Julia could barely sleep that night and couldn't face work the next day until she decided to go in to occupy herself. She left and just as she arrived, Bill pulled up. He'd had a call from the school where Lindsay was teaching to say she hadn't turned up. It was now Monday evening in Japan and this was the second day of work Lindsay had missed. Why hadn't the school reacted sooner?

Another question that would remain unanswered. Lindsay had never missed one shift before, let alone two in a row. She worked six days a week at the Koiwa International Language School opposite Gyotoku station, one of a chain of schools throughout Japan at the time run by the Nova Organisation (the company declared bankruptcy six months after Lindsay's death).

After leaving Leeds University in 2006 with a first in biology, Lindsay could have gone on to do a masters, but said she wanted a year away and

would try teaching. She picked Japan, saying it was the second safest place in the world — after New Zealand — and because she had long taken an interest in Japanese culture and was knowledgeable about its distinctive codes of behaviour.

She took with her 100 lavender bags (paid for by her dad) to give as token gifts to people she met. She had lived at first in an unfriendly area where she was sometimes abused in the street as a *gaijin* (a derogatory Japanese word for a "foreigner"), but had soon moved and been happy there, as her family discovered on a visit for her 22nd birthday, just months before she was murdered. Lindsay was tall with long hair, and her dad recalled how heads turned in the restaurant where they went. She made a striking figure in Tokyo, and her dad tried to tell her to keep her head down so as not to attract unwelcome attention. Instead he saw how Lindsay talked to the locals in their own language. You've got to be careful, he warned >>> 27

Wanted posters show both male and female Ichihashis

her, don't speak to them. This is my community, she said, they all know I'm the English teacher, I have to speak to them. When you're on the train, just read a book, Bill told her. Don't freak, Dad, she said, it's just crazy Japan. She was always saying that. Crazy Japan.

She thought it was crazy on Tuesday, March 20, when a young man who had been sitting opposite her on the train approached her as she left the station on her way home from work. You're my English teacher, he said, as she was getting on her bike. I'm not, she said. But you are an English teacher? Yes, she said.

As she described it in an e-mail to Ryan, her boyfriend back home, the man had run after her as she cycled away and he had come to her apartment asking for water. Out of precaution, rather than recklessness, she had invited him in so that he could see she was living with two flatmates.

He had taken out a pen and paper and drawn a picture of Lindsay there and then — that would have impressed her, Bill said — and signed it with his name, telephone number and e-mail address.

He had not seemed scary, more ridiculous, and Lindsay felt sorry for him and said she would try to help. That was her nature. Once with her family a beggar had asked for money for tea and Lindsay had given him £2. Bill was furious and pointed out he was working all the hours God had sent — running a driving school — to fund her education. Lindsay pointed out that the beggar had not had the opportunities Bill had given her. As Bill said, they were a close, happy family with a comfortable lifestyle living in their safe little bubble. "And somebody popped that bubble big time."

Bill and Julia don't know if Lindsay contacted Ichihashi again or if he contacted her, but she made an arrangement to give him a lesson at the cafe that Sunday morning. She did everything she was supposed to do. Nova advised teachers that it was all right to give private lessons, but only in public places and always leave a note of where they were going and who they were going to meet. Lindsay had given a formal private lesson before and had often talked with Nova students in cafes after school.

The police were not informed by Nova that Lindsay was missing until around 2.30pm on Monday, March 26, the second day she had not arrived for work. Friends had also tried to report her missing, but the message had not been passed on from one police station to another. Lindsay had left Ichihashi's name and address on a note in her flat, so it was not exactly hard to trace him. The police timeline, made public here for the first time, does not suggest they were in a great hurry. It was three hours and 10 minutes after they had



received the missing-person report, at 5.40pm, that the police sent two officers from Funabashi station in Chiba prefecture to visit Ichihashi's apartment in Ichikawa City, one train stop from Lindsay's home. The police had by now discovered that although Ichihashi had no history of convictions, there was a previous allegation of "theft and injury" against him. The story was that he had assaulted a woman in the street during a robbery, possibly as far back as six years ago. The Sunday Times Magazine was told that Ichihashi's father, acting in line with Japanese law, prevented the case going to court by paying ¥1m — around £6,000 — to the victim to buy her silence.

The police carefully noted how, on discovery of this information, they realised that "Lindsay

IT WAS HARD FOR BILL TO DESCRIBE WHAT HAD BEEN DONE TO HIS DAUGHTER. SHE WAS BOUND AND GAGGED WITH PLASTIC TIES AND SCARVES

may have been the victim of a crime". The officers did not arrive at the apartment until 7pm (by now 10am Monday morning in England, where Bill and Julia were frantic and had still not heard from Nova). They did not go and knock at the apartment — apparently they could not do so without proper cause, even though they by now suspected that Lindsay might have been the victim of a crime — but instead observed some "doubtful points" inside, particularly that there was no light on, but somebody appeared to be there. The officers called for assistance and three more were dispatched, and then, at 7.45pm, four more, making a total of nine. It is worth noting that, even though the police specifically thought it could be a hostage situation, these nine officers did not have walkie-talkies to communicate with each other.

Neighbours were asked if they had seen a foreign woman; they hadn't. The police went through the neighbouring apartment onto the balcony overlooking Ichihashi's home. It was dark, but they were right next to Ichihashi's balcony. He had dragged his bath out onto it and Lindsay was dead inside it with her hand sticking out, but the police did not see her. The police could see there was somebody inside the apartment but, their notes said, they could not go in because they could not obtain a key.

Nearly two hours after the nine officers had assembled, at 9.45pm, some were standing outside the apartment door when it opened and Ichihashi came out, closing the door behind him. He had a rucksack on and was barefoot, in the Japanese tradition of keeping your shoes outside your door. The police said: "You are Ichihashi and we want to talk to you about a foreign woman and we want to come in." They later said they could not "compulsorily restrain him" because they did not have a "grasp of detailed facts".

Ichihashi turned back, took the key out and began to open the door, then he turned away, pushed past the officers and ran off down the stairs. An officer grabbed at the rucksack, which came off while Ichihashi kept running. He was 28 and very fit. Some officers gave chase but could not of course use the walkie-talkies they didn't have to give a quick alert to their colleagues downstairs. Ichihashi vaulted the last few feet from the open stairwell to the ground and kept running. The officers in pursuit did not jump after him — the Hawkers think this was for health-and-safety reasons — and Ichihashi ran off into the dense neighbourhood of apartment blocks.

The police began searching for him and must have been persistent as he suddenly reappeared, now wearing shoes that he must have stolen from

outside a nearby apartment, and ran right past officers for the second time, haring down the street, turning left and left again before disappearing, never to be seen since.

Meanwhile, other officers had entered the apartment and found Lindsay. It was hard for Bill to describe what had been done to his daughter. She had been bound and gagged with plastic ties and scarves, but only apparently after a life-or-death struggle. Barely an inch of her body was unmarked by bruises or injuries, even her feet. Lindsay was 5ft 10in and had learnt martial arts. But Ichihashi was taller — just under 6ft — and a black belt, constantly at the gym practising his own martial arts and habitually cycling 25 kilometres every day. He had finally strangled Lindsay, breaking her neck. >>> 29

It has been widely reported since that he was trying to escape when he left his apartment but all he had with him was the small rucksack with gym clothes. The police apparently think he was only going to the gym to wash — after all, he had no bath now that he could use. If Lindsay had not left the note with his name and address she might never have been traced.

Again, it was widely reported that she was found in a bath full of sand but this too was wrong. Lindsay had actually been buried in a mixture of sand and compost soil which Ichihashi had soaked in a chemical the Japanese use to compact and decompose waste. The police believe he had simply taken a practical approach to disposing of Lindsay's body. It would be hard to take her out and hide her so he would keep her there until eventually all trace of her was gone. He had cut her hair off and left it in a bag found in the apartment. Hair is evidently slow to rot.

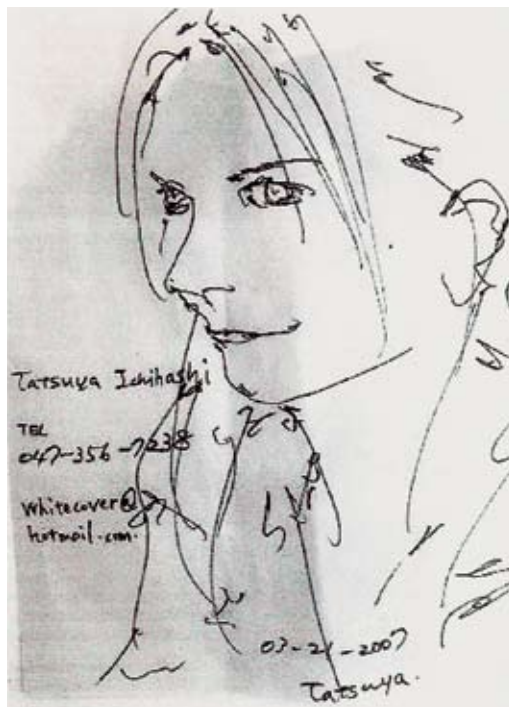
Ichihashi had studied botany at university and so would have been familiar with the process involved. In time, perhaps the bath would've become a decorative feature, a flowerbed maybe. Japanese plumbing is not like the UK's. Taps are plumbed into walls, and baths aren't sealed into place but can easily be unclipped and moved.

In the hours before he was interrupted by the police he had been out six times to a local hardware superstore to buy the materials.

There was little else in the apartment — a computer, a few hundred Manga comics, and a large number of empty cartons of pomegranate juice. There were also some wigs that led the police to wonder for a while if Ichihashi was gay or bisexual or a transvestite. But there was no other evidence — apart from one man's unsubstantiated claim to have had gay sex with Ichihashi, since his escape, in a club in Tokyo's gay quarter, Shinjuku.

In fact, as I discovered, Ichihashi had a Japanese girlfriend and they had been together for 12 months in what was described to me as a normal relationship. He had been due to meet her that Sunday evening, March 25, but instead e-mailed her saying he had something to sort out and would be in touch later, which he never was. The woman was not named to me and all I know is that she was of a similar age to Ichihashi and that her face was featured in one of about 12 portrait drawings of women — Western and Japanese — which Ichihashi left behind in his apartment.

It appears he sometimes used the drawings as a pick-up technique and there have been reports — which I could not substantiate — that he has been asked to leave bars frequented by Western women after complaints of harassment. If the wigs are not evidence that Ichihashi was a “sister-boy” (in Japanese parlance), then possession of them becomes a puzzle. Young Japanese men do not commonly wear hair-pieces. One theory is that he was fascinated with Western culture and



Ichihashi's sketch of Lindsay, made the first time they met

rying out “cancer and hernia” operations, even though he is officially said to be a neurosurgeon.

In the UK a parental combination of neurosurgeon and dentist would make for a wealthy upper-middle-class lifestyle, but Japanese values are different and, although again there are contradictory reports, it appears that the parents live in modest comfort in a town some 200 miles outside Tokyo.

The Japanese press camped outside their house after the murder, waiting for the parents to appear with expressions of sorrow and shame. The press left disappointed. Instead the parents sent Lindsay's parents an e-mail expressing “regret”. Bill and Julia think it was a disgrace.

In Britain, if there was such a manhunt, the police would have wanted to put pressure on Ichihashi, wheeling his parents, his sister, his girlfriend into press conferences to make appeals to him to give himself up. Ichihashi's parents have declined to participate in any such appeal as they believe it might provoke their son to suicide.

In any event, the police in Japan do things differently to the police in the UK. They are not seeking Ichihashi on suspicion of murder but want to accuse him merely of disposing of a body. They do not run massive crime inquiries around computer-based systems of storing and cross-referencing information but rely on what was described to me as the “human wave” approach.

There are 140 officers involved in the search for Ichihashi and they are generating vast heaps of paperwork all the time. The inquiry room on the fourth floor of police headquarters in Chiba is apparently like a scene from the television series *Life on Mars*, which reflects the old school of UK policing, in the days before the Yorkshire Ripper inquiry when the police were overwhelmed by paperwork and consistently missed vital clues. In Chiba, there are said to be something like 20 yards of shelving filled with files of documents

THE JAPANESE POLICE ARE NOT SEEKING ICHIHASHI ON SUSPICION OF MURDER BUT FOR DISPOSING OF A BODY

an early ambition to become a dentist, meeting her husband at college. She had eventually worked at the practice but closed it down some years ago when the grandmother became ill.

Restrictive Japanese privacy laws mean I have been unable to find out much more about the background of Lindsay's killer, not even his parents' names. Japanese press reports have been contradictory. Patients, for instance, are quoted on the gentle manner of the surgeon father in car-

generated by the hunt. Whereas the Holmes computer at the centre of large-scale investigations in the UK might easily and instantly make key associations and breakthroughs, how can anyone keep on top of the information in all those files?

Still, even the Hawkers would concede that the police are nothing if not determined. The officer in charge, Superintendent Oguma, made a promise to Bill that Ichihashi would be caught. On meeting his deputy, Tahisha, Bill discovered that >>>>

he and many other officers do not go home for days, even weeks at a time, but sleep on roll-out mats in the gymnasium across the corridor from the incident room. Tahisha told Bill he would not rest until his boss's promise had been kept.

These officers are “salarymen”, in the great Japanese tradition of the hard-working employee who appears to place his job before his family.

Suspecting that Ichihashi might have tried to escape abroad, perhaps to Canada where he had once lived and studied in the city of Edmonton, but knowing he had left his passport in his apartment, the police have investigated around 350,000 of the 700,000 passport applications made in Japan since his escape. Because pomegranate juice is so unusual — even in Japan — they obtained a list of retailers and went out and spoke to all of them, in case it might lead to Ichihashi. They have travelled widely throughout Japan, investigating many of the 5,200 reported sightings of their suspect, many generated by 30,000 wanted posters the police have distributed.

Ichihashi can have had little or no money with him when he fled and has not attempted to access his bank accounts. He had never worked but lived on an allowance of around £600 a month from his parents. The police are convinced he is still alive and in Japan. Naturally, they must be wondering if he is being sheltered or supported by friends or family and, even though they are limited in their powers of surveillance, there is some evidence that they are monitoring the family's communications. He was otherwise said to be a solitary character with few friends, in stark contrast with the popular young woman he murdered.

Lindsay's mother, Julia, told me she had actually spoken by phone to one of the officers stationed outside Ichihashi's apartment on the evening he escaped. The officer was a woman who spoke good English, and Julia had been urging her to go into the apartment.

The call had been made possible by some of Lindsay's teacher friends who had also gathered outside Ichihashi's apartment. Bill had been urging them to break in. Poignantly, when we considered the timeline together, it became apparent that Lindsay's body must have been discovered when these conversations were taking place.

The first Lindsay's parents knew of what had happened came not from the police but from the father of one of Lindsay's fellow teachers who called to say they should prepare for the worst as his own daughter had rung him to say that a body had been discovered. Bill and Julia prayed in vain that Lindsay might have killed her student and the body would be his but the terrible confirmation came with a visit from Warwickshire police officers in the early hours of Tuesday morning.

It wasn't long after this that they heard the suspect had got away. Twenty months later this was still eating away at them. Knowing who he was and what he'd done, and how the police had let



A police tarpaulin on the back balcony of Ichihashi's flat

Blair's legacy was considerably more helpful, in this case at least. After Julia wrote to him, the prime minister's office called Warwickshire police and more or less ordered them to send officers out to Japan to support the Hawkers and establish liaison with the Japanese police. A senior investigating officer, Detective Chief Inspector Ally Wright, was assigned to the role and has now been out three times to Tokyo.

Wright is convinced that the Japanese police's methodical approach will eventually pay dividends. He has seen them working at close quarters and says that he can see they are working with the same determined ethos as the British police would. He also knows they are feeling the pressure of the family's campaign to keep the case at the forefront of public attention. In recent weeks there have been reports that Ichihashi might have killed himself, but these have been dismissed by the police.

As Wright put it, Ichihashi has to be lucky every day of his life but the police only need to be lucky once to catch him. Bill and Julia would like to share Wright's certainty and don't want to be seen to criticise the Japanese police but, understandably, they struggle to get past their frustration that Ichihashi was able to slip past them.

They continue to be tormented, too, by the unexplained details of the case. They know Ichihashi must have tricked Lindsay into returning to his apartment, but how? There is some suggestion he was fumbling for money at the cafe as they left and they wonder if he claimed he had left her fee behind and she could come to collect it. Or, Bill speculated, had he discovered Lindsay's ambition to be a GP and told her his own father was a

ICHIHASHI CAN HAVE HAD LITTLE OR NO MONEY WHEN HE FLED. HE HAD NEVER WORKED BUT LIVED ON AN ALLOWANCE

again, to the new prime minister, Gordon Brown, and his foreign secretary, Ed Miliband, and this time she heard nothing back. When she and Bill were eventually invited to the FO for a meeting with junior minister Lord Malloch Brown, he told them that Ed Miliband had received and noted their e-mails, and Julia thought, well why hadn't he bothered to reply, then?

It was an uphill battle with the FO, and they were not strong on sensitivity, telling the Hawkers that they were fortunate that the Japanese police had seen fit to communicate with them and again that they were fortunate to have been able to bring Lindsay's body home to the United Kingdom. Fortunate? Were they insane, those people?

doctor and she could meet him at the apartment? Then there is the missing memory card from the camera Lindsay had with her. The camera was found at the apartment but minus the card, and they wonder what it might have recorded.

Above all, why was Lindsay's hand raised up from the sand and soil that he had used to cover her? They dread the thought that she might have been buried alive and trying to reach out. All the experts have told them she was dead by then.

But they would say that, wouldn't they, said Bill, who has suffered a catastrophic breakdown of his faith in human nature ■

Additional reporting by Shota Ushio. www.lindsayannhawker.com