



How **Harold Shipman** hid in plain sight as he killed up to 250 of his own patients

Grim secrets of Dr Death

THE SHIPMAN FILES: A VERY BRITISH CRIME STORY

Mon-Wed
9pm BBC Two



In 1998 a doctor called Linda Reynolds in Hyde, Greater Manchester, became suspicious of another GP in town.

She felt there was a high death rate among patients of Dr Harold Shipman, for whom she had to co-sign a lot of cremation forms for elderly women. Many patients died suddenly, fully clothed in the afternoon, with their doors unlocked, all of which was unusual.

She alerted the coroner and the police got involved. However, as this three-part documentary reveals, the resulting investigation was poor, amounting to just three pages of scrawled notes.

But three months later, relatives of former mayoress Kathleen Gundy were suspicious when she died suddenly. Though 81 years old, she was an active woman – and had recently changed her will, leaving everything to Shipman, who was the last person to see her alive.

This time Greater Manchester Police got serious, and Mrs Grundy's body was exhumed. She had been given a lethal dose of diamorphine, or pure heroin.

Soon the police were exhuming many more former patients of the doctor. Fearful relatives besieged the police asking whether their deceased loved ones could also

have been murdered by Dr Shipman.

The 57-year-old GP was charged with the murder of 15 women. However, an inquiry identified 215 victims, with a possible final total of 250, mostly older women. He is thought to be the most prolific serial killer in modern history.

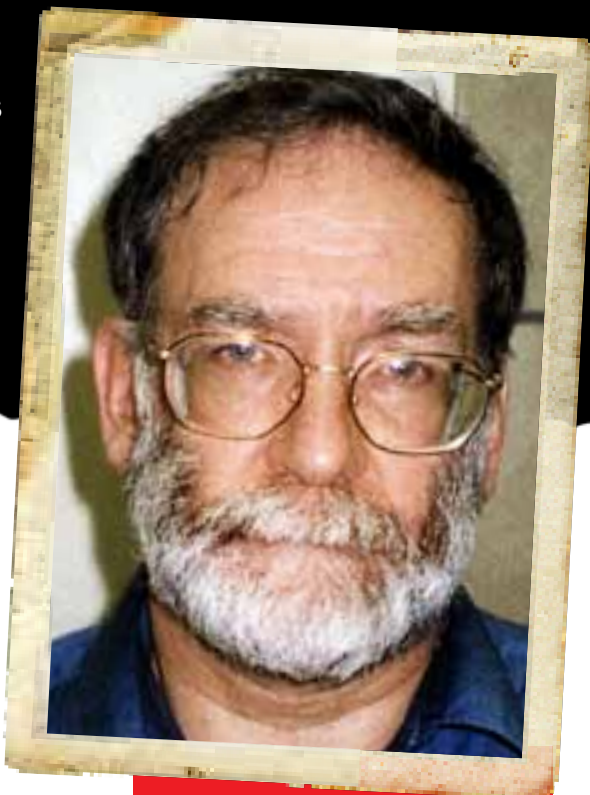
Filmmaker Chris Wilson has set out to understand how Shipman got away with murdering patients in plain sight for more than 20 years.

'The idea that a family doctor could be killing his patients was hard to believe,' says Chris. 'Shipman has haunted me.'

Wilson meets relatives and neighbours of victims, detectives and journalists who covered the case. One of the questions he asks is whether older people, particularly women, are not valued by society, making them an easy target.

Manchester Evening News reporter Mikaela Sitford recalls how she once spoke to two retired women in Hyde. When she explained she was looking into the Shipman story, one said: 'Oh, you mean Dr Death. All the old ladies die with him. They say he's a good doctor, but you don't last.'

'That a family doctor was killing his patients was hard to believe... he's haunted me.'



CASE FILE

Name: Dr Harold Shipman

Born: Nottingham, 1946

Children: Four

Criminal period: 1975-1998

Victims: At least 215

Trial: January 2000 – he was sentenced to life imprisonment for 15 murders and forgery

Death: Suicide by hanging at Wakefield Prison in 2004

Victims (from top left): Norah Nuttall, Jean Lilley, Marie West, Irene Turner, Lizzie Adams, Winifred Mellor, Kathleen Grundy, Joan Melia, Bianca Pomfret, Maureen Ward, Kathleen Wagstaff, Pamela Hillier and Marie Quinn



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