

Douglas and Mary Addison - November 2017

A retired policeman killed his dementia-stricken wife after caring for her 'simply became too much'. Douglas Addison - who also has Alzheimer's - hit 88 year old Mary with a walking stick before smothering her.



The 89-year-old had become confused by the rapid onset of his own condition and turned down attempts by his GP and social workers to help him look after his wife, a court was told. A hearing found he had killed his wife of 67 years, and the judge ordered he be detained in hospital indefinitely. The couple's neighbours said he had coped well caring for Mrs Addison until he became ill a few weeks before her death in February. Her body was discovered by a GP and social worker who visited the couple's bungalow for a check-up, and saw Addison standing over the body through a bedroom window. When they went in, he said: 'I was thinking about calling you. She is on the floor and she can't get up.' The severity of his condition only became clear when police searched the home in St Merryn, Cornwall. The fridge contained almost no food, but was packed with more than a dozen bottles of milk. A large pile of newspapers had built up in another room. A post-mortem examination found the main cause of Mrs Addison's death was suffocation, but she had also suffered multiple blunt force trauma. There had been an attempt to strangle her and her right shoulder was dislocated. A wafting stick was found nearby. Addison was charged with murder, but was diagnosed with advanced Alzheimer's after his arrest. He was also beginning to suffer dementia. There is no doubt he wanted to care for her. They had been in a relationship for decades but he was unable to provide the care she needed. He was too ill to enter a plea or attend a two-day 'trial of the facts' - held to establish what happened rather than find him guilty or innocent.

This week a jury found that he killed Mrs Addison. The judge, Mr Justice Dingemans, made an indefinite hospital order under the 1964 Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act. Exeter Crown Court heard the couple married in 1950 and were often spotted walking around the village holding hands. Prosecutor Anna Vigers QC said attempts to offer support came to nothing, as Addison believed he could cope with his frail wife. She said the GP and carer went to their home to find Addison 'overwhelmed, with appalling consequences'. She added: 'It all simply became too much.' A doctor and social worker had visited the couple twice in the week Mrs Addison died after their son raised concerns. On the first occasion, the doctor was able to examine her but on the second occasion Addison turned him away. Tragically, events overwhelmed Addison with appalling consequences for his wife. He found it increasingly difficult to care for her. Mrs Addison was unable to move around without help and the final straw may have been her soiling the bed that morning. Things went very badly wrong, possibly because she soiled the bed; possibly because it built up and he was worried about the social workers and carers becoming involved. Ignatius Hughes QC, defending, said Addison is now being treated at a specialist hospital in Berkshire. After the case, Detective Chief Inspector Jo Hall said: 'This is very sad set of circumstances.'

Comment:

Looking after a dementia sufferer without adequate support can become very frustrating and challenging to the point where it becomes so hopeless for the carer, and with one thing after another, it looks as if he just flipped. Unless you have actually been there, it can be difficult to comprehend.