

'My son murdered his partner with an axe – but I still love him'



Margaret still visits her son in prison

Following a recent catalogue of shocking murders, mum Margaret Kelly tells Closer about the anguish of coming to terms with a violent death – when your son is the killer

Although she regularly visits him as he serves two life sentences in prison, Margaret says she can never forgive him and her life has been shattered.

She tells *Closer*: "I'm disgusted. I can't believe he is part of me. I can't understand – not just how he could kill two people – but the way he did it, with an axe. How could anyone do that?"

"Everyone thinks I should disown him – but I can't. I hate him for what he's done, but I'm still his mum. I still love him."

Since December, a handful of violent killings have hit the news – including that of 19-year-old babysitter Katie Wynter, who was stabbed in Hertfordshire, the New Year's Day shooting of three women

by taxi driver Michael Atherton in County Durham and, last week, Sarah Laycock, 31, and her eight-year-old daughter Abigail who were found dead at their home in West Yorkshire. Her partner, John Miller, was arrested on suspicion of murder and attempted murder.

For Margaret, the horrific catalogue has brought back her own pain. Sobbing, she says: "It's made me relive the fear and confusion I went through. My hell can't compare to that of Sally and Martin's family – they'll never get their loved-ones back – but these crimes are life-shattering for the killer's family, too. We carry the guilt very publicly – and lose the person we thought we knew."

Widower Margaret, 71, a former restaurant manager from Swindon, insists Kelly had never shown signs of violence before. Growing up with her, her husband Jim, an army corporal, and his three siblings, Margaret describes Kelly as a "loveable" child and "popular" teen.

A car plant worker, he married in 1988 and had two sons, now nine and seven, but the marriage broke down in December 2009. The next month, he began emailing Sally Cox after meeting her on Facebook.

Margaret reveals: "He was obsessed with her before they even met. I warned him it was too quick, but he didn't listen."

Within days of meeting, Kelly moved into Sally's home in Banbury, Oxfordshire, where she lived with Martin and her two daughters, aged 13 and 15.

Margaret says: "I asked him to wait. I liked Sally, but I'd never seen Michael so infatuated and I was worried he'd get hurt."

Less than a year later, Sally ended the relationship and Kelly moved back in with his mum for a while.

Margaret recalls: "Michael said having her kids at home meant they'd struggled to spend time alone together."

However, she has since learned that Kelly was being controlling towards Sally. She adds: "He was constantly on his phone or Facebook, desperate trying to get Sally back. He just couldn't accept it."

Unbeknown to Margaret, Kelly's obsession was reaching boiling point. On 13 December 2010, he bought an axe in a DIY store and then drove to Sally's house.

Sickeningly, he put on a horror mask and bludgeoned Sally with the axe, leaving her dying from multiple head wounds.

with him'



▲ CRAZED Michael Kelly

Double axe killer's given life in prison

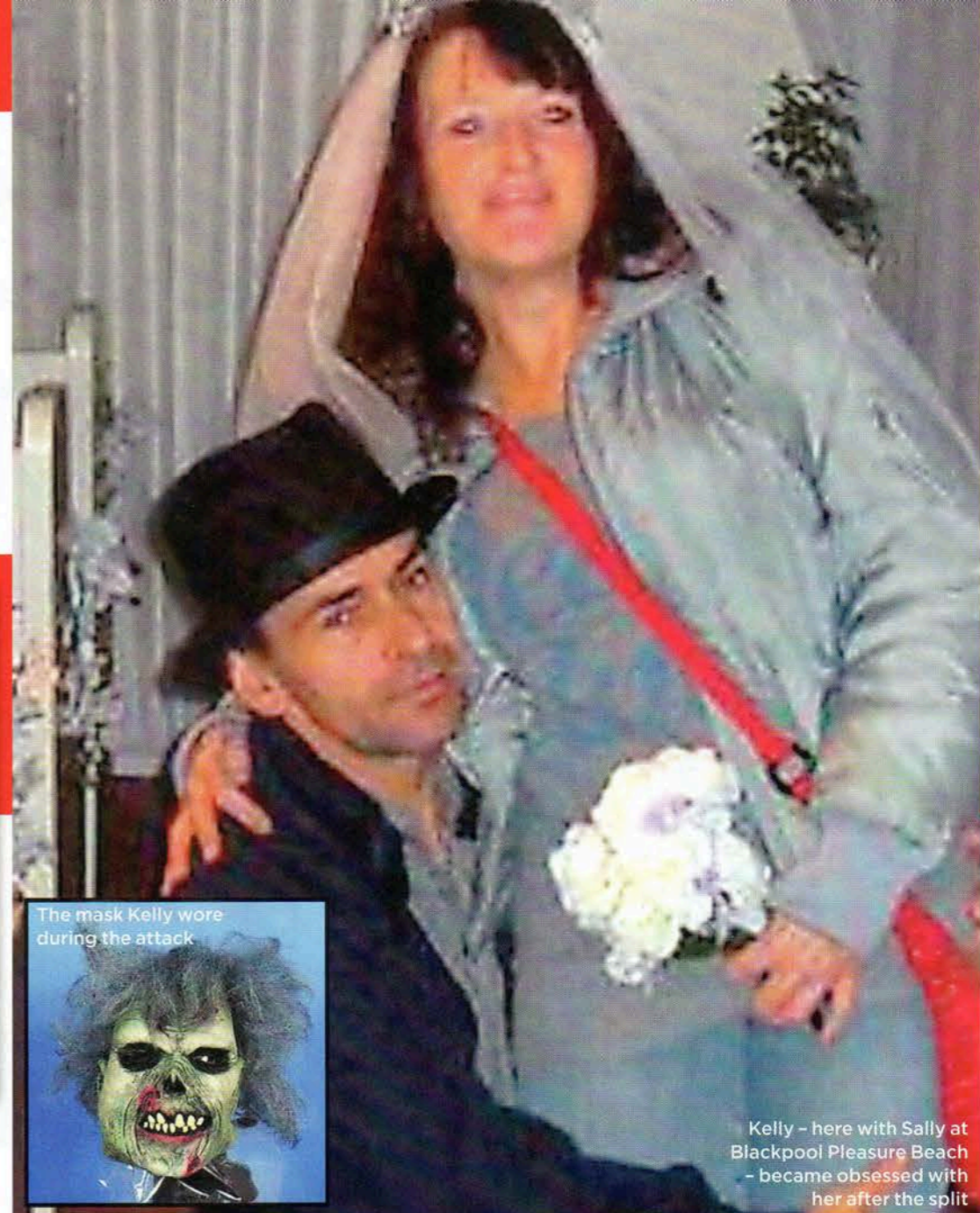
Afterwards, he headed upstairs and launched a 10-minute attack on Martin, killing him too.

One of Sally's daughters leapt from a first-floor bedroom window as she fled from Kelly, severely injuring herself.

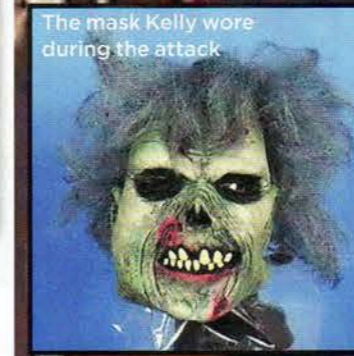
Kelly then left in his car and, horrifyingly, called Margaret as he drove, to arrange a shopping trip. She remembers: "He sounded normal, but he must have been covered in blood. Knowing that makes me sick."

Later that day, Kelly was arrested at his flat and admitted everything. He was charged with double murder and GBH with intent – relating to Sally's daughter's injuries. Police broke the news to Margaret.

"At first, I assumed they'd made a mistake," she says. "I started to shake uncontrollably. I felt absolute horror – total disbelief anyone could do these things, let alone my own son."



The mask Kelly wore during the attack



Kelly – here with Sally at Blackpool Pleasure Beach – became obsessed with her after the split

"Michael called me from the police station and kept saying: 'I'm sorry, so sorry...' I felt angry – I wanted to shout: 'What have you done?' But instead, I said: 'Are you alright?' I knew I had to stand by him, no matter what.

says: "I went over and over it. I blamed myself – after all, I'd brought him up. How had he turned into this monster? And when I thought of the hell Sally's family must have been going through, I couldn't bear it."

for his sentencing, admits: "He had to be punished. He killed two people and took a mother away from her children."

Yet Margaret still visits him. She says: "I can't give up on him. He says he can't remember the attacks and doesn't know why he did it. Psychologists say he isn't mad, but he couldn't have been sane in that moment. It's the only explanation. I've been through hell – but I know Sally's family's pain is much worse."

Sally Cox's sister, Joanne Fletcher, 32, says: "I hope Kelly rots in hell. He's taken my sister and my nephew and I hate him for what he's done. He's destroyed our lives, just because he couldn't handle a break-up."

By Amanda Revell Walton and Emily Retter

'It would be easier to turn my back on him, but I'm his mum'

"It would be easier for me to turn my back on Michael. But I wouldn't deserve to be called a mum if I walked away from him."

And Margaret, who visited Kelly before his court case,

Kelly pleaded guilty to two charges of murder and one of GBH with intent in April 2011, and was sentenced to two life sentences and a further 10 years for GBH, to run concurrently.

Margaret, who was in court



Sally was bludgeoned to death with an axe



Sally's son Martin was also killed by Kelly in a sickening 10-minute attack