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My brother was conned and murdered by a man he loved Psychopath Ben Field weeded his way in to pensioner Peter Farquhar's affections, then stole his estate, writes *Cara McGoogan*

When Ian Farquhar buried his brother, Peter, in 2015, it felt premature. Peter might have been 68, but Ian was sure he had another 20 years in him. He had recently published his third novel and, after a vow of celibacy in his younger years – to overcome the tension of being both gay and a devout Baptist – he had met the love of his life.

"Ben can love me – a miracle if ever there was one," Peter wrote in his journal in 2013, about then 22-year-old Ben Field. "I can't believe this has happened."

In the months leading up to his death, Peter had been out of sorts, but doctors couldn't pin down a cause. His death was recorded as accidental, the result of alcohol intoxication, but Ian knew his brother hadn't been an alcoholic.

Almost two years later, the police knocked on Ian's door: they suspected that Peter could, in fact, have been murdered. The main suspect? Ben Field.

"I have been an investigator for most of my life, as a customs officer," says Ian, 68. "But I would not have guessed the depth of this man's deprivation. Peter was his perfect victim."

It marked the start of a two-year investigation into Field, and two associates, for multiple counts of fraud and murder – culminating in a four-month trial last year. Peter's death, and that of his neighbour, Ann Moore-Martin, came to be known as the "Maids Moreton murders", after the Buckinghamshire village in which they lived. The case shocked for its intricacy and scale – all a result of Field's psychopathy and narcissism.

"We call it the 'Midsomer Murders' because it has a bit of everything," says Mark Glover, principal investigator for Thames Valley Police's major crime unit.

"The relationships, the church, the poisoning, the recordings, Peter's journals. It shows Ben for the evil man he is."

The harrowing tale is now the focus of a Channel 4 documentary, *Catching*

a Killer. By chance, the filmmakers had been embedded in the major crime unit on another story when the call came from Moore-Martin's niece, Ann-Marie Black, to say she was suspicious of Field – with whom her aunt had started a relationship. With unprecedented access to the investigation from the start, the result is a blow-by-blow dissection of murder.

When we meet at Ian's west London home, not far from where the brothers grew up, he is surprisingly mild-mannered as he recounts the tragic tale. He and his wife, Sue, 63, laugh fondly when remembering Peter's quirks. Destined to teach literature, Peter had read voraciously and dressed in a collar, tie and sports jacket from the age of 12. At secondary school, he became a lay preacher for the local Baptist church, which he kept up throughout his life. "He was five years my senior, but he might as well have been 10," says Ian. "When he was in his early teens, he somehow managed to arrange it so that I needed extra lessons. He would give me homework."

Peter taught at Manchester Grammar then the public school Stowe, where he is fondly remembered. In an obituary, the broadcaster Michael Crick, a former pupil and friend, wrote: "For some, he became almost like a second father."

But aged 58, Peter retired to write

'Peter started to get ill. What we didn't realise was that Ben was causing it'

novels and lecture in poetry at Buckingham University. "It was a big change," says Ian. "We felt he was a bit lonely."

So when two precocious young men, Field and his friend, Martyn Smith, approached him after a lecture, he "was really pleased", says Ian. "Ben was a particularly clever fellow. Peter helped him with essays and introduced him to significant literary figures at other universities."

Both became lodgers at Peter's home, and when Smith moved out, Field moved into Peter's bed. As a sign



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of his devotion, Field became a warden at the local Baptist church and the pair underwent a betrothal ceremony.

Ian thought the relationship “strange” and confronted Field, asking: “Why are you sharing a bed with my brother?” Field replied he wasn’t gay, but that he loved Peter. “My brother was sensitive and I didn’t want him to be hurt,” says Ian. But he buried his suspicion, because “Peter started to get ill and Ben was looking after him. What we didn’t realise was Ben was causing all the trouble”.

Peter fell down the stairs, became

forgetful, and started having hallucinations. Field scared him by suggesting he could have a rare form of cancer, and lied to the doctor about his alcoholism. He also gaslighted him – deleting the contacts from his phone, and hiding possessions to add to his confusion. Peter was tested for dementia, but it came back clear. He was eventually admitted to a nursing home – where he returned to full health.

Soon after he returned home, Peter died. “He was close to recovery,” says Ian. “Or so we thought.”

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Meanwhile, Field had struck up a sexual relationship with a neighbour: 83-year-old Moore-Martin. In February 2017, she too was admitted to hospital and her niece phoned the police. Around the same time, a local lawyer reported that Field had added his name to both Moore-Martin and Peter's wills. So began the investigation. "It was the

Long case: investigator Mark Glover



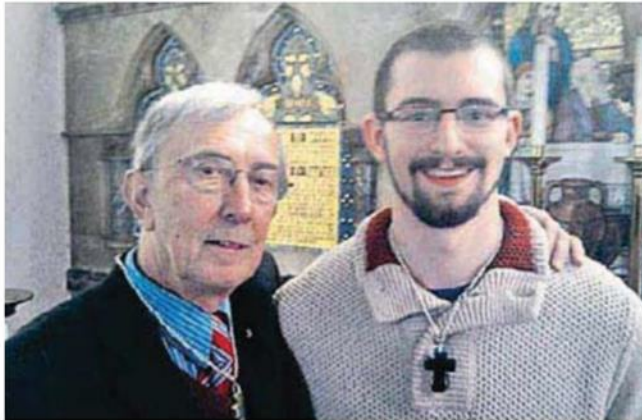
longest-running case I've worked on – once in a career," says Glover. "I knew from the beginning it was going to be challenging."

Police seized thousands of pieces of evidence that took more than a year to sift through.

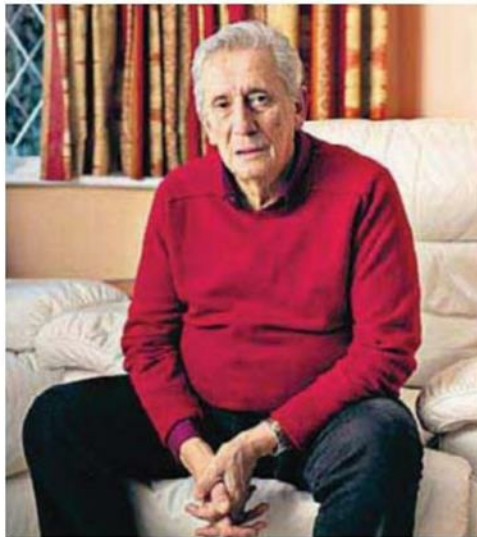
Field had documented every stage of his cruel plot – writing diary entries such as "2015: end Peter". On his phone, there were videos of him taunting Peter and pictures of messages he had scribbled on mirrors for his

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Peter Farquhar and Ben Field at their betrothal ceremony, above. Peter began hurting himself in falls, below. Left, a message written by Field for Ann Moore-Martin; Peter's brother, right



he's developed as a result of the trauma. In November 2018, Field was finally charged with both murders.

Ian and Sue sat through the whole trial, updating family and friends on WhatsApp. The toughest part was Field's evidence, which lasted for three weeks. "He was proud of himself, telling the jury what a clever boy he was," says Ian. "It was psychopathic. He really enjoyed doing what he did to Peter. You can't believe how angry you can get. We fortunately have faith, which helps us deal with that."

Glover agrees, saying: "Peter suffered a great deal and I think Ben took pleasure from doing it."

In a show of empathy, Ian reached out to Field's parents, striking up a tenuous friendship. "Just to say, 'We're all in this together, a little bit. We've all had a dreadful time,'" explains Ian.

'If you have a single relative, maybe getting older... check everything'

"They were the saddest sight," he adds. "They came to court thinking it was a fraud case, only to discover all this about their son. Ben's mum was devastated - she could hardly look up. His dad just sat there. He was a respected Baptist minister and he's lost it all."

He had similar contact with Moore-Martin's family, who chose not to take part in the documentary.

In August 2019, Field, now 29, was found guilty of murdering Peter Farquhar, and defrauding him and Moore-Martin (who ultimately died of natural causes) of more than £225,000. He was sentenced to 36 years in prison. Smith, who had been accused of murder, conspiracy to murder, fraud and burglary, was acquitted of all charges. Field's younger brother, Tom, was also acquitted on one count of fraud.

If the police hadn't caught him when they did, Field could well have struck again. In his notebook, police found a list of "100 clients" who he could "use", including his own parents.

"Peter wasn't some fool who had been conned," warns Ian. "If you have a single relative, maybe getting older... check everything."

victims. One note to Moore-Martin, purportedly from God, said: "Leave the house to him... Do not leave it to Ann-Marie."

The diaries revealed that Field had poisoned Peter with psychoactive drugs, including diazepam, but the police needed forensic evidence - so they asked if they could exhume his body.

"We thought about it long and hard," says Ian, whose brother was buried with that of his mother. But he wanted answers, so agreed. "They did it really quietly, at night. It was like something

from an old horror movie." Caught on film, the exhumation makes for disturbing viewing - no more so than when the police cut a lock of Peter's hair. "A grisly thing - you wouldn't want to do it," says Ian. "But from our point of view, it left a lot of positives."

Tests revealed that Field had poisoned Peter, before giving him a fatal dose of alcohol and smothering him. "It wrecked me for a day or two," recalls Ian. "I wasn't very good to be around."

He has recently started seeing a physiotherapist to help with neck pain

PA HEATHCOTE ON VALLEY FOR THE TELEGRAPH

Catching a Killer: A Diary From the Grave is on Channel 4 on Monday at 9pm

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