

Allison Baden-Clay (with husband Gerard) "was getting stronger," her friend Alison Lord tells WHO, "and Gerard probably didn't like that."



Allison and husband Gerard with their three daughters in an undated picture. "She had so much to offer them; she just loved them," said Allison's mother, Priscilla Dickie.

NO GOODBYES

Allison Baden-Clay's daughters "woke up the next morning to find their mum missing forever," said Allison's father, Geoff Dickie, in his victim-impact statement on July 15. "They did not have a chance to say goodbye."

Baden-Clay with his three daughters at Allison's funeral in Brisbane on May 11, 2012. He was charged 33 days later.

Gerard Baden-Clay **GUILTY!**

You took away THEIR MOTHER

The once-admired real-estate agent is found guilty of killing his wife, leaving a community in shock and three girls without their parents



Allison's parents, Priscilla and Geoff Dickie, outside court on July 15: "We as a family will grieve her tragic death forever," they said in a statement.

'OUR JUSTICE'
 "We are relieved we finally have justice for Allison," said the Dickie family in a statement on July 15. "It has been a long wait over the last two years, and this result today marks the beginning of our long journey towards healing."



Friends and family released yellow balloons after the verdict. Allison, whose favourite colour was yellow, "took everything in her stride, and that is an incredibly brave person," says friend Alison Lord.

During her final days, Brisbane mother-of-three Allison Baden-Clay was desperate for a sense of closure. Her husband, Gerard Baden-Clay, a real-estate agent running his own Century 21 franchise, had been in a long-term affair with a former colleague, Toni McHugh, and though he had promised his wife the affair was over, there was still much healing needed. Opening her diary on April 18, 2012, in her home in Brookfield, a leafy suburb in Brisbane's west, Allison set out questions to pose to her husband in the coming days: "Did [Toni] ever say—I feel bad because you're married?" she wrote. "Were you prepared to live with the guilt if I hadn't found out? Do you regret the whole thing or just being caught?"

If she were trying to understand the mindset of her husband, his actions would soon make the matter chillingly clear. On July 15, Gerard Baden-Clay, 46, was found guilty of the murder of his wife of 14 years, bringing an end to a sensational trial that lifted the curtain on a failing

real-estate agent and womaniser who dominated and tormented his wife before turning to murder for his own gain. Crown prosecutor Todd Fuller, QC, told the Supreme Court in Brisbane that Baden-Clay, who has been sentenced to life imprisonment, killed Allison, 43, in a violent struggle during which he was left with damning scratches on his face, visible for all to see from the day he reported her missing on April 20, 2012. "You took a devoted, loving mother from her

three girls, blighting their lives," said Justice John Byrne. "The impacts on Allison's family have been grave."

Her parents, Priscilla and Geoff Dickie, who now care for the Baden-Clay children, girls aged 7, 10 and 12, "are relieved and it provides some bit of closure to them," Det Supt Mark Ainsworth, who led the murder investigation, tells WHO. "Their life is beginning, looking after three young ones." Said Priscilla in her victim-impact statement on July 15: "The girls will never see their mother again, not just now, but ever. They want her to put them to bed. A life sentence without love. They miss her terribly and cry for her every night."

As do Allison's many friends in Brisbane. "Allison actually loved Gerard; it was a fatal flaw," her friend Alison Lord, 51, tells WHO. "But he was cruel; everything was about him and nothing was about her."

While mystery still surrounds how Allison, whose body was found by a canoeist on a Brisbane creek bank on April 30, came to her death on the evening of April 19, Baden-Clay's motives were evident to the jury. The prosecution argued that Baden-Clay killed his wife to be with his lover, Toni McHugh, and later hoped to use

his wife's life insurance payout to settle his debts, which ran to more than \$500,000. "I will be separated by 1 July," wrote Baden-Clay to McHugh in an April 1 email. Ten days later, he wrote: "This is agony for me too ... I love you. Leave things to me now."

Those words now have an ominous ring. On her final day alive, Allison had her hair done at a local hair salon in preparation for a real-estate conference the next day, which McHugh was also to attend. She returned to the bustling family home in Brookfield, where she put their daughters to bed. Baden-Clay told police that later that night, the couple undertook a "session," as prescribed by their marriage counsellor, where Baden-Clay was required to listen to his wife's feelings about his infidelity. Baden-Clay says that the last time he saw Allison, she was on the couch watching the Nine Network's NRL *Footy Show*. He went to bed at 10 PM. Claiming to be a heavy sleeper, Baden-Clay said: "I have no recollection of her coming to bed that night."

The evidence told a different story. At 1.48 AM, Baden-Clay's phone was put on its charger, which suggested he was awake at this time. And the scratches on his face were the likely result, according to experts, of the former accountant being involved in a struggle with his wife (Baden-Clay said the cuts were caused by a blunt razor, not fingernails). Said Priscilla: "God bless my daughter for leaving those scratch marks on Gerard's face."

Baden-Clay also had cuts on his hand (he attributed them to an accident while changing a light bulb) and an abrasion on his chest which he said was from a caterpillar bite. However she died, the killing was "efficient and effective," said prosecutor Fuller, who speculated Allison was suffocated. "What can be going through the mind of a person who's carrying that

act out, other than the intended outcome?"

Once he had achieved that end, Baden-Clay set about disposing of Allison's body. Based on the six different species of plant material found in her hair, which were also found growing at the Baden-Clays' rented property, he dragged his wife's body out the back of the house and into the rear of her Holden Captiva, where investigators found a small amount of Allison's blood. Baden-Clay then drove the body to the Kholo Creek Bridge 13km away and pushed her body down the embankment, before returning home to play the part of the worried husband. "My wife isn't home," he said in a triple-0 call to police, "and, um, I don't know where she is."

It was one more lie in an already tangled web of deception, which police took pains to unravel. It soon emerged that Baden-Clay was not only in a relationship with McHugh while married to Allison, he admitted to two additional extra-

marital encounters, one of which took place while he was having the affair with McHugh. On May 1, 2012, the day after Allison's body was found, Baden-Clay made inquiries about his wife's life insurance. "This was a man having to deal with consequences of his own actions," said Fuller. "Perhaps he felt he had no other choice."

And his actions took away a mother who "epitomised what a good person was," Alison Lord tells WHO. "She was full of goodness and she had no ego. She always did the right thing." Especially by her kids. After enrolling one of her girls in a speech and drama class just weeks before she died, "She said, 'I really want my girls to have a voice when they grow up,'" recalls Lord. "And that's how I will remember what she was living through. I don't think she felt she had a voice because of Gerard. We feel that Allison got her voice back today."

■ *By Michael Crooks. Reported by Emma Martin and Rachel Syers*

"He was cruel; everything was about him"
 —friend Alison Lord



Baden-Clay is believed to have dragged his wife from the back of their Brookfield property (above) to her car. Allison's hair was found with plant material from the property.



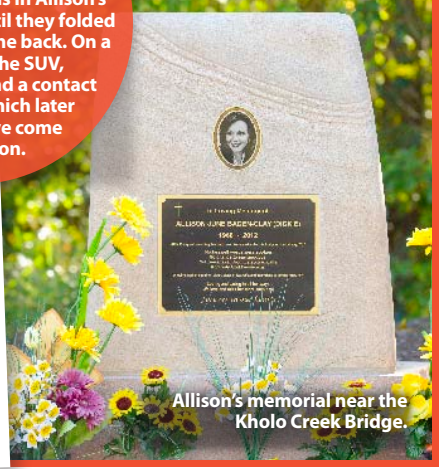
Experts testified the scratches on Baden-Clay's face were caused by fingernails, not a razor.

Baden-Clay said he was bitten by a caterpillar which led to a red abrasion on his chest.



Allison's body was found by a canoeist on the muddy banks of Brisbane's Kholo Creek.

MURDER EVIDENCE
 At first, police did not find anything suspicious in Allison's Holden Captiva, until they folded down the seats in the back. On a rear panel of the SUV, investigators found a contact blood smear which later proved to have come from Allison.



Allison's memorial near the Kholo Creek Bridge.