

Murder inquiry launched

A MURDER inquiry is under way after an elderly couple were found dead in their home by a close relative on Friday.

West Midlands Police said Guiseppe Massaro and his wife Catarino were both pronounced dead at the scene but have not yet revealed how they died.

Their car, a black Peugeot 307, registration PK56 VRW, was missing from their address and found later on in Tithe Croft, Wednesfield.

Police said they are looking into whether its disappearance was linked to the double murder.

Detectives have been carrying out house-to-house inquiries along the street.

A post mortem examination was due to be carried out shortly.

Cyprus property deals leave Scots facing ruin

THOUSANDS of Scots face financial ruin after entering dubious property deals in Cyprus.

Now a Scots MEP has launched a scathing attack on the Cypriot government and branded the island a no-buy zone.

Exclusive
By Euan Duguid

Edinburgh-based Alyn Smith, a former lawyer, has received a flood of complaints from worried buyers.

He will release a guide this week to buying property across the EU — and is urging Scots not to buy property in Cyprus AT ALL.

The moves come after his repeated efforts to address a number of problems on behalf of

constituents have been met with a wall of silence by the Cypriot legal and political hierarchy.

Last night Mr Smith, who branded the Cypriot government's failure to even reply to his letters as a 'serious breach of protocol', said there's been a 'massive' increase in constituents getting into dire straits with property deals.

These include one Scots couple who told us they are set to lose their home in Scotland as their debts mount in the holiday isle (see panel).

Mr Smith said, "Loads of folk have come to me for help and some stories of exploitation and fraud are pretty hair-raising but there is little I or anyone else can do.

"When it all goes wrong they don't understand the language, they don't understand the law and they don't understand the problems they are in. There are people in real financial bother."

Mr Smith's office estimates 40,000 overseas UK buyers, including thousands of



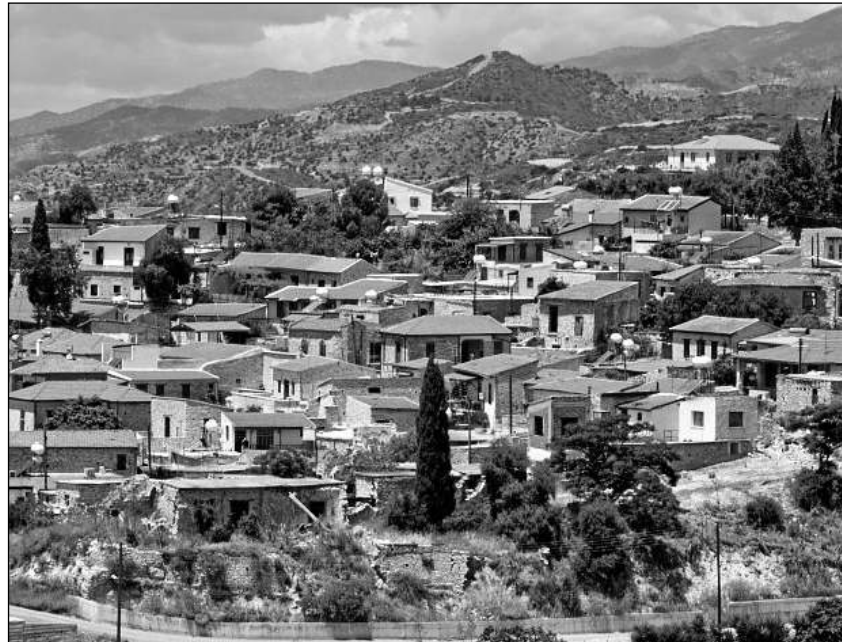
■ Alyn Smith.

Scots, are awaiting formal legal ownership of their properties in Cyprus, despite having paid in full and received the keys.

The SNP MEP says Title Deeds, which are officially referred to as "Certificates of Registration of Immovable Property", are the most important evidence of property ownership, but few people have been receiving them.

He added, "There is a clear conspiracy on the part of the Cypriot lawyers that they will not help you out. The Cyprus courts are not dealing with anything with any urgency."

Other problems include huge hidden



■ Dream homes in the Cyprus sun are turning into a nightmare for some.

costs associated with gaining access to water, telecoms and electricity.

Nigel Howarth, an independent property advisor in Cyprus says the most serious problem is people buying property — oblivious that it's on mortgaged land. Mr

Howarth says if the developer fails to repay the mortgage then the bank can reclaim the property — and sell it on the open market to recover the debt.

Last year, Mr Smith raised a question in the European Parliament on the subject of

Cypriot legal and property rights. He has also written to the President of Cyprus, Demetris Christofias, asking for his assistance in the matter.

After two letters and six months the MEP has yet to hear from Mr Christofias and now advises Scots considering buying property overseas to look elsewhere.

He added, "People should steer clear of the place."

We contacted the Cypriot Government and the Cypriot Embassy in London. No one was available for comment.

■ For more details visit www.alynsmith.eu

Could lose family home in Scotland

One couple from Stirlingshire, who wish to remain anonymous, say their mortgage for a one bedroom flat they bought to rent out was signed by a Cypriot solicitor in 2007 — but they were not informed interest would start applying from then on.

Today, the property remains a building site rather than a home — a year late.

With mortgage payments, now in the region of £1500 a month, set to

begin in November, despite the property not being ready to rent out, the couple, a tradesman and office worker, say they are on the brink of losing their family home here.

"We both work full time and have two children. We could lose our home in Scotland because of this. The builders in Cyprus have also threatened to come to the UK and seize our assets if we don't pay. It's a nightmare."

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Knifed at same spot as friend killed

A FRIEND of murdered student Reamonn Gormley was knifed yards from where Reamonn was killed.

Now, Stephen Cummiskey has thrown his weight behind the political campaign by a former Justice of the Peace to bring knife crime to the forefront of Scottish politics.

Incredibly, the attack on the teenager last month happened just weeks after, and yards away from the location of, the murder of Glasgow University student Reamonn in Blantyre.

Stephen says his community is being blighted by knife crime.

He was returning from a night out at Hamilton races when he was stabbed in an unprovoked attack on March 27. A man approached him asking for a cigarette before plunging a knife into his side.

Stephen said, "It might sound funny but at first I

thought he had punched me. It was when I got up the road I realised I'd been stabbed.

"My brother then took me to accident and emergency where I was treated.

"Luckily, it wasn't too serious but I'm one of the luckiest ones — it's my 18th birthday this weekend but I could easily not be celebrating.

"If you grow up in this part of the world you have either been stabbed yourself or know someone close who has been stabbed. It's that big a problem.

"Knives are carried by a lot of young people with no real sense of the damage that they can do. Something needs to be done."

Caroline Johnstone (48), a former Justice of the Peace who is standing as an independent candidate in the forthcoming Scottish Parliament elections on the

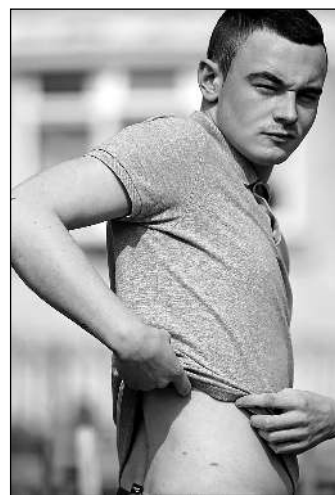


■ Reamonn Gormley.

issues of knife crime, slammed the acceptance of violence.

The mother-of-four, who is running for the Rutherglen seat that takes in parts of Blantyre, said, "There are people who see stabbing or being stabbed as a badge of honour — it is time we distanced ourselves from that."

Caroline, originally from Northern Ireland, quit her job to set up campaign group Hearts Matter after the murder



■ Stephen shows his wounds.

of Reamonn. She said, "For me, that was the final straw.

"As a country, we can't afford to continue losing people like Reamonn, who would have given so much to society."