

## ***Missing Women And Psychic Charlatans***

On January 27, a 45 year old mother disappeared in mysterious circumstances while walking her dog in the North of England. At the time of writing, the police have just reported finding a body in the River Wyre. Because of the circumstances of Nicola Bulley's disappearance, the case generated massive publicity. The police ruled out foul play early on, something that was met with severe criticism. The suggestion that she fell in the river was difficult to swallow because in the first place even clothed as she was she could surely have made it to the bank; the river is [less than a metre deep](#) where she is supposed to have fallen in. Also, disturbingly, her phone was found on a bench. This leaves three possibilities:

she faked her disappearance for some reason

she was kidnapped

she committed suicide.

The information released by the police recently suggests the latter, difficult though it is to credit.

Tragedies like this often lead to enormous speculation which can distract from or even inhibit police investigations. In this case, so-called TikTok sleuths are said to have descended on her village. There is though another kind of distractor, who fortunately is usually ignored by the police, the so-called psychic.

Perhaps the most notorious such psychic was Sylvia Browne, whose [most notorious failed prediction](#) was that Amanda Berry had been murdered. This was made in front of a TV audience in 2003. Amanda's mother went to her death believing that, but although this was indeed a modern horror story, ten years later Amanda turned up alive along with two other girls who had been held captive by a monster named Ariel Castro.

The psychics were not out in force for the Nicola Bulley case, but one who was made a truly bizarre prediction. Alluding to her as Ni-COLE and Ni-CO-la, self-styled Psychic Medium Mara told her 3.57 thousand YouTube subscribers that Nicola was dead, that her death was painful, but she will return to her family as a butterfly or dragonfly. If one can put that down to the flowery imagery of the astral plane, the same cannot be said for the

cause of death. She could have been attacked by a bear, or an alligator [“because she was by water”](#).



Try not to laugh, most of her audience take her seriously. Sadly, some psychics have also been taken seriously by police officers. One who did was Joe Kozenczak, a dogged Illinois detective who worked on the Gacy case in 1978. John Gacy murdered over thirty young men and boys. During the investigation, Kozenczak consulted a local psychic, and appears to have genuinely believed her mumbo jumbo. She was portrayed by Margot Kidder in [the dramatisation](#) *To Catch A Killer*.

Kozenczak's was a classic case of self-deception, because the person really responsible for Gacy's arrest was Joe Kozenczak on account of a classic policeman's hunch. It is unlikely that any police officer working on the Nicola Bulley investigation placed any faith in psychics, but they better watch out for that alligator.

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