

MURDER 1932 - MAORIBANK

Evening Post newspaper 16 April 1932

Child Murdered Upper Hutt Tragedy Body Found in Scrub Young Man Arrested

Missing since yesterday morning Vera Margaret Forster aged 4½ years, was found last night lying dead in some bushes near her home at Maoribank Upper Hutt. The back of her head has been terribly battered apparently by a piece of blood stained iron piping which was found near the body.

Early this morning Hoarce Frank Livermore a labourer aged 20 who lived with the dead girl's parents was charged with the murder of the child.

The little girl was the youngest child of Mr and Mrs James Valentine Forster who lived in Cruickshank Road Maoribank about two hundred yards east of the Main Road. She was missing at 11.15 am yesterday and her anxious parents notified the police at 2 o'clock. Constables C Joss and C F Stewart organized parties comprising of some forty men to look for her and the search continued until 9 o'clock when her body was found. The discovery was made by James Wyeth and Frank Jones two Upper Hutt youths at a spot on the other side of the road from and practically opposite the Forster home about five hundred yards away. The hilly and bushy nature of the country thereabouts explains why the girl was not found earlier, despite the intensive search. Dr M B M Tweed of Upper Hutt, examined the body as soon as it was found, and later he and Dr F W Kemp also of Upper Hutt, made an examination at the local police station, to which the body was removed.

Police Work Quickly

Senior Sergeant H H Butler who is in charge of the Hutt Valley police district, and Detective W McLennan of Petone, arrived at Upper Hutt at 10.15 pm, and at 1 am Sub Inspector R Ward and Detective E C Jarrold from Police Headquarters in Wellington, reinforced them.

Livermore had been detained soon after the finding of the body, and at 2 am today he was charged with the murder of Vera Forster. Sub Inspector Ward and Detective McLennan took him to the city, and he appeared in the Magistrate's Court before Mr T B McNeil, SM, this morning. After the charge had been read to the accused, Sub Inspector Ward applied for a remand until 2nd April. No objection was raised by counsel for Livermore, and the remand was granted. Livermore is a single man, and was employed by Mr Forster as a labourer. He has lived with the Forster's since last September. Mr Forster keeps a poultry farm, and is employed by Mr J T Benge. Both Mr and Mrs Forster are natives of England, and they have resided in the Upper Hutt district for the past eight years. The murdered child was the youngest of four, there being another daughter and two sons.

The pipe with which the crime is presumed to have been committed is approximately two feet in length and an inch and a half in diameter. Detective McLennan and Detective Jarrold continued their investigations in the district to-day.

(Reference Papers past website Evening Post newspaper 16 April 1932)

Evening Post newspaper 08 August 1932

Upper Hutt Tragedy - Little Girl's Death - Supreme Court Trial

The trial was commenced in the Supreme Court to-day, before Mr. Justice Reed and a jury of Horace Frank Livermore a labourer aged 20, on a charge of murdering Vera Margaret Forster, aged 4½. The dead body of the girl, with her head badly battered, was found by members of a search party, lying in some bushes, at Upper Hutt on 15th April last. As soon as the jury had been empanelled his Honour informed them that until the conclusion of the trial they would be

kept together, and any messages they wished to send to their homes would be delivered by police officers. The trial is expected to last at least two days, but the probability is that it will run into a third day.

Defence of Insanity

At the conclusion of his outline of the Crown's case, the Crown Prosecutor said that the facts were simple. The accused in his statement had admitted that he killed the girl. He understood that, a defence of insanity would be set up, that at the time of the girl's death the accused was insane. At the moment he would say no more about that, except to point out that the law was that everyone was presumed to be sane until the contrary was proved. It was on the defence to satisfy the jury affirmatively that the accused did the act with which he was charged when he was insane within the meaning of the Crimes Act. He would deal with the matter more fully at a later stage. Two counsel appeared for the prisoner, who when charged, pleaded not guilty in a clear voice.

Crown's Case

The evidence for the Crown heard to-day followed the lines of that given at the preliminary hearing in the Magistrate's Court in June. The deceased girl lived with her parents in Cruickshank road, Upper Hutt. Mrs Forster ran a small poultry farm Livermore lived with the Forsters, and as a result of injuring his back in a fall from a horizontal bar he was unable to do heavy work. It was arranged that he should stop at the farm and not do any work and that he should pay Mrs Forster 15s a week for board. Evidence was given that the girl Vera used to follow Livermore around and that he had complained about her being a nuisance. It was alleged that about a week before the girl's death Livermore remarked one night that Vera would be better off dead. Mrs Forster said 'Oh Horace how can you say such a cruel thing? She has not done you any harm'. It was alleged that Livermore replied 'Well, it would be one less to keep anyway'. On another occasion it was alleged Livermore said that if Vera died he would pay half her funeral expenses. Mrs Forster said she did not take these remarks by Livermore seriously, because the accused, she said was in the habit of saying things like that. Livermore was depressed at times, and behaved rather strangely. The evidence showed that on the day of the tragedy, Mrs Forster, between 10.30 and 11 o'clock in the morning saw Livermore and Vera close together in the fowl run. That was the last time she saw Vera. alive. The girl's body was found about 9 o'clock at night about 25 yards away from the house. She had, received very severe head injuries and a piece of heavy iron Pipe with blood stains on it was found near the body.

Accused's Statement

The Crown Prosecutor read a statement made by the accused in which he allegedly admitted murdering the girl. The accused in his statement, said 'I did it on the spur of the moment to keep her quiet'. He had, he said, asked her to go up, the hill with him, and while there interfered with her. She said she would, tell, and he found an iron bar and hit her with it seven times, then picked her up and dropped her down the bank, without waiting to see whether she was dead. He had done it to prevent her telling what he had been doing. The accused went on to refer to the injury to his back, and said that the Forster's had always treated him kindly. Throughout the time Mrs Forster, mother of the dead girl, was in the witness-box, Livermore, sitting alongside a warden in the dock, kept his head bowed. Mrs Forster said that several times Livermore seemed dull and stupid his manner suggesting that he had a weight on his mind he could not throw off. Replying to counsel for the accused, Mrs Forster said that in the weeks immediately, prior to her daughter's death, she noticed a marked change in Livermore's behaviour. He was often, depressed, particularly when he was not working, and seemed to have formed a dislike for no reason at all against witness.

Weird Stories

Mrs Forster said she thought Livermore had an idea that he would make money from writing books. She had seen two stories he had written. They were rather weird, and she did not think they were of any value. Replying to other questions, Mrs Forster said that one day Livermore came up behind her with a piece of wood in his hand and said "One crack with this and you would be dead". That was about three or four weeks before the tragedy. Livermore often used to say that he himself would be better off dead, and things like that. His Honour asked witness whether any of the stories were available. Counsel for the accused said he thought there was one in existence, and he would endeavour to have it produced. Other evidence was given by James Valentine Forster father of the dead girl, James Forster a brother, and John Thomas Bengel grocer of Upper Hutt

(Reference Papers past website Evening Post newspaper 08 August 1932)

FORSTER family tree

- 0- James Valentine FORSTER born 1889 England died 03 January 1949 married 1916 New Zealand Louisa Bethia HARRIS born 29 May 1888 England died 22 November 1978 New Zealand
- #James Valentine FORSTER married 1916 New Zealand Louisa Bethia [sic] HARRIS reference RGO NZ marriage registration 1916 folio website 1916/1447
 - #James Valentine FORSTER Methven labourer & Louisa Bethia FORSTER Methven married 1919 Ashburton Electoral Roll
 - #James Valentine FORSTER Upper Hutt labourer & Louisa Bethia FORSTER Upper Hutt married 1928 Otaki Electoral Roll
 - #James Valentine FORSTER Main Road Upper Hutt labourer & Louisa Bethia FORSTER Main Road Upper Hutt married 1935 Otaki Electoral Roll
 - #James Valentine FORSTER Main Road Upper Hutt labourer & Louisa Bethia FORSTER Main Road Upper Hutt married & James Edmund FOSTER Main Road Upper Hutt labourer 1938 Wairarapa Electoral Roll
 - #James Valentine FORSTER Main Road Upper Hutt labourer & Louisa Bethia FORSTER Main Road Upper Hutt married 1946 Otaki Electoral Roll
 - #James Valentine FORSTER died 1949 Upper Hutt New Zealand reference RGO NZ death registration 1949 folio 605 website 1949/17122 age 60 born about 1889
 - #Louisa Bethia FORSTER Main Road Upper Hutt widow & Beatrice Eva May FORSTER Main Road Upper Hutt spinster 1949 Otaki Electoral Roll
 - #Louisa Bethia FORSTER 27 Plassey Street Havelock North widow 1949 Hastings Electoral Roll
 - #Louisa Bethia FORSTER 30 Taita Drive married & Beatrice Eva May FORSTER 30 Taita Drive home duties 1957 & 1963 Hutt Electoral Roll
 - #Louisa Bethia FORSTER 30 Taita Drive widow & Beatrice Eva May FORSTER 30 Taita Drive spinster 1969 & 1972 Hutt Electoral Roll
 - #Louisa Bethia FORSTER 30 Taita Drive Home duties & Beatrice Eva May FORSTER 30 Taita Drive Home Duties 1978 Eastern Hutt Electoral Roll
 - #Louise Bethia FORSTER died 1978 Upper Hutt New Zealand reference RGO NZ death registration 1978 folio website 1978/43367 born 29 May 1888
 - #James Valentine FORSTER died 03 January 1949 age 60 years – Louisa Bertha FORSTER died 22 November 1978 age 90 years both buried plot location 43 / 4 Taita cemetery Lower Hutt New Zealand (James buried 05 January 1949 Church of England)
- 0-1- James Edmund FORSTER born 10 December 1916 New Zealand died 1997 New Zealand married 1938 New Zealand Sylvia Kathleen JONES born 01 June 1913 New Zealand died 2002 New Zealand

- #James Edmund FORSTER born 10 December 1916 reference RGO NZ birth registration 1917 folio website 1917/13157 parents Laura Bertha [sic] and James Valentine Forster
- #Sylvia Kathleen JONES born 1913 reference RGO NZ birth registration 1913 folio website 1913/3513 parents Elizabeth and Sidney Joseph Jones
- #James Edmund FORSTER married 1938 New Zealand Sylvia Kathleen JONES reference RGO NZ marriage registration 1938 folio website 1938/15398
- #James Edmund FORSTER died 1997 New Zealand reference RGO NZ death registration 1997 folio website 1997/45929 born 10 December 1916
- #Sylvia Kathleen FORSTER died 2002 New Zealand reference RGO NZ death registration 2002 folio website 2002/22152 born 01 June 1913
- 0-2- Beatrice Eva May FORSTER born 19 October 1918 New Zealand died 1995 New Zealand (never married)
- #Beatrice Eva May FORSTER born 19 October 1918 reference RGO NZ birth registration 1918 folio website 1918/92 parents Louisa Bethia and James Valintine [sic] Forster
- #Beatrice Eva May FORSTER died 1995 New Zealand reference RGO NZ death registration 1995 folio website 1995/55504 born 19 October 1918
- 0-3- Kenneth Ernest FORSTER born 12 June 1922 New Zealand died 1978 New Zealand married Olive Jessie Alma surname unknown born 22 February 1919 died 1996 New Zealand
- #Kenneth Ernest FORSTER died 1978 New Zealand reference RGO NZ death registration 1978 folio website 1978/46418 born 12 June 1922
- #Olive Jessie Alma FORSTER died 1996 New Zealand reference RGO NZ death registration 1996 folio website 1996/34643 born 22 February 1919
- 0-4- Vera Margaret FORSTER born 1928 New Zealand died 08 August 1932 Upper Hutt New Zealand (tragically died young never married)
- #Vera Margaret FORSTER died 1932 Upper Hutt New Zealand reference RGO NZ death registration 1932 folio 2619 website 1932/
- #Vera Margaret FORSTER died 15 April 1932 age 4 ½ years buried St John's churchyard Trentham Upper Hutt
-

Horace Frank LIVERMORE

- 0- Horace George LIVERMORE born April 1875 Brentford Middlesex England died 14 August 1930 Pahiatua Wellington New Zealand married 1899 Elizabeth REID born
- 0-0- Horace Frank LIVERMORE born 1912 Lower Hutt New Zealand
- #Horace Frank LIVERMORE born 1912 Lower Hutt New Zealand reference RGO NZ birth registration 1912 folio 3877 website 1912/12977 parents Annie Brown and Horace George Livermore
- #Horace Frank LIVERMORE alias Johnston - Hamilton - 14 August 1929 - theft (3 charges) and unlawfully using a bicycle – convicted without penalty on each – NZ – labourer – 1912 – 5 feet 2½ inches – fair – brown – grey – medium – F P (see Police Gazette 1929 page 180) reference NZ Police Gazette 1929 page 585
- #Horace Frank LIVERMORE – Wellington – 10 August 1932 – murder – death (commuted to imprisonment for life – New Zealand – labourer – 1912 – 5feet 3 inches – sallow – brown – hazel – medium – slight build (see P.G. 1931 page 129 and photos 1929 page 64) – reference NZ Police Gazette 1932 page 1932 Return of persons dealt with at Supreme Courts
-