

Marian Poskitt was murdered in 1949 by Dennis Neville, this is a copy of 3 newspaper articles of the story. Marian was my Grandmother's cousin. According to www.capitalpunishmentuk.org Neville was hanged on 2nd June 1949 at Armley, Leeds



Dennis Neville

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1949

DEWSBURY YOUTH ACCUSED OF MURDERING GIRL

Alleged To Have Said To Police "I Did It"

DENNIS NEVILLE, aged 22, glazier's mate of 40 Manor Road, Westtown, Dewsbury appeared before a special sitting of Dewsbury Borough Court on Monday charged with the murder of Marian Poskitt, 21 year old weaver of Low Road, Dewsbury Moor, who had been found strangled on St Matthew's Cricket Field on Sunday morning. Neville was remanded in custody until next Tuesday March 1st.

Superintendent Arthur Iveson stated that at 11.20 am on Sunday morning Harry Hardwick (28) of 13 Eastwood's Yard, Granville Street, Dewsbury was walking with his welsh collie dog "Monty" in Watergate. He was about to release his dog in St Matthew's Cricket field when he saw near a wall what he believed to be a pile of rag. On closer investigation he found it to be a woman. Parts of her clothing were missing. Hardwick immediately reported the matter to the Dewsbury Borough Police.

Det Sergt. H. Wynn went to the field and found the girl's body (later identified as that of Marian Poskitt). There were injuries to her throat and face. It had been stated upon medical examination that when the girl was found she had been dead up to 12 hours.

At 4 pm – only 4 ¼ hours after the body had been discovered – Neville was brought to the Dewsbury Central Police Station and told he was being detained in connection with the the girl's death. He was asked to account for his movements and replied "I did it" Later, when charged, he said "I have nothing to say". The 'News' understands that Neville attended Sunday morning Mass at St.Pauline's Roman Catholic Church and was taken into custody from the home of his brother Joseph at Hume Street, Batley.

"Murder Squad" Called in

There were about 30 people in the public gallery and Neville's brother and sister were also in the courtroom on Tuesday. Neville appeared in court in khaki trousers, a khaki open-necked shirt and blue battle-dress blouse. While in the dock he looked straight ahead and spoke only to request legal aid. The magistrates granted a certificate for legal aid.

The West Riding Murder Squad, comprising Chief Superintendent J. Wallace, Superintendent T. Bowman were called in to assist Superintendent A. Iveson of Dewsbury Borough Police Force who was in charge of the investigations. Chief Constable F. E. Pritchard, who has been ill for some weeks, was unable to attend Dr. D. E. Price, Home Office pathologist, arrived on the scene of the crime within an hour of discovery and took away parts of the girl's clothing to the Forensic Science Laboratory at Wakefield.

Although it has been reported that Mrs. Annie T. Lay, of Thornhill Road, heard "Terrible screams in the night" her next-door neighbour, who was awake till 2:30am with her baby, did not hear anything at all.

The field, an unlit and dark area is off a lane known by local inhabitants as New Road, leading from West End Place to the woollen mill of Messrs. E. Fox and Sons. The body was found at the foot of the 30 ft. embankment which carries the main Leeds-Huddersfield Railway line. It is understood that several couples were seen in the vicinity on the night the crime took place.

Inquest Adjourned

Coroner C.J. Haworth formally opened the inquest on Marian Poskitt on Tuesday morning and, after hearing evidence of identification and medical examination, adjourned the proceedings until Tuesday, May 3rd. A jury of eight men with Mr. Eric Whitworth as foreman, was present. Mr. Joseph Fredrick Poskitt, the dead girl's father, said she left her home, No. 32, Low Road, Dewsbury Moor at about 7.40 pm on Saturday February 19th. He had identified the body found in St Matthew's Cricket Field as that of his daughter..

FATEFUL "19th"

For those people who scoff at the superstitions attached to the lucky or unlucky numbers, here is a rather disquieting sequence of events.

Just 21 years ago on the 19th day of the month Mr Joseph Poskitt's father sailed as an emigrant for Australia. Mr Poskitt was married on the 19th and their first child was born on the 19th also. Now their second daughter, Marian, has been murdered on the 19th day of February.

Det Sergt. Harold Wynn said that in consequence of something he had heard he went to St. Matthew's Cricket Field at 11.35am on Sunday morning. He saw the body of a girl lying in a recumbent position and said it could have been seen by anyone from the path.

Dr E. G. Mahony, police surgeon, said he saw the body in the field at about 12.15 pm. The body had not been moved before he arrived and he considered the woman had been dead for over 12 hours. He was of the opinion that she died from strangulation and "it would not be putting it too strongly to say there was evidence of violence". Her left cheek and lips were very swollen and there was blood around the mouth and nose.

P.C. P. Horsfall, Coroner's Officer, said that in company with Dr. Mahony and Det Sergt. Wynn he had seen the body in the field and was present when it was identified by Mr Joseph F. Poskitt as that of his daughter.

The Coroner was told that a man named Dennis Neville had been charged with the murder of Marian Poskitt.

Passion For Dancing

In an interview with the dead girl's father and mother, Mr and Mrs Joseph Poskitt, at their red-brick council home in Low Road on the Sunday afternoon, a news reporter was told that Marian had a passion for dancing. She had left home shortly after tea to meet a young man at a Westtown public house. Marian usually came home about 11pm but, although she had not returned at midnight, her father and mother thought she had stayed at the home of the young man and were not apprehensive.

I went to the Dewsbury Moor W.M.C. As usual this morning", her father said. "while there I happened to hear a rumour about a young woman, I became very troubled and thought it might be Marian. I went home to my wife and told her what I had heard". She said "lets got to the Police Station". We both went down and we were later told the dreadful news about our daughter being strangled..

Marian's father is a miner at Normanton and she is the second of four daughters. She was invalided out of the women's Land Army four years ago and had been employed as a weaver at Messrs Wormalds and Walker's, Britannia Mill, Dewsbury. She had attended St. John's Church and School, Dewsbury Moor and also Templefield Senior Girls School. The news understands that she had known Neville since she was 16 and she had been "keeping company" with him for about six months.

Former P.O.W.

Dennis Neville joined the Army in 1941 when he was only 15 and served for three months before being discharged because he was too young. He joined up again in 1943 and after being reported "missing, believed wounded" in Normandy on June 13th 1944, was announced over the German radio to be a prisoner-of-war.

Neville attended St. Paulinus' Roman Catholic Church and school and was a member of the C.Y.M.S. Before joining the Forces he worked for Messrs George Strauss Ltd, waste merchants, Wellington Road, Dewsbury and had recently been a glazier's mate at the Standard Patent Glazing Company, Dewsbury.

His brother Pte. Thomas Neville, was killed in Burma during the war and another brother Joseph Neville (Batley) was in the Navy.

The Funeral

Four uniformed policemen and three plain clothes men were present at the funeral on Thursday at Dewsbury Cemetery, where a large crowd of women sightseers- some carrying babies, others with babies in prams – gathered to witness the graveside burial service.

Rev. Peter Spivey, curate at St John's Church, Dewsbury Moor, conducted a funeral service in the cemetery chapel.

Four taxi-cabs carried family mourners and intimate friends. They were : **Mr and Mrs J. F. Poskitt**, father and mother; Mr and Mrs A. Walker, **Miss Joyce Poskitt** and **Miss Freda Poskitt** sisters and brother in law; Mrs H Scott, Mrs J. Smith, **Mrs B. Singlewood**, **Mr and Mrs W Singlewood**, Mr and Mrs L Firth, uncles and aunts, **Mrs N Rollinson**, **Mrs E Wilcock**, Mr J Scott and Mr W Scott, cousins.

Workfriends from Messrs J. Walker and Sons Ltd Low Mills, Dewsbury Moor, where the dead girl was formerly employed as a weaver, were also present.

Among the many wreaths and bunches of flowers were a simple cross of daffodils, violets and snowdrops from “ mam , dad, sisters Joyce and Freda” ; workmates and staff of Britannia Mills, Dewsbury , J. Walker and Sons Ltd, Low Mills, neighbours of Beckett Nook and “dads workmates at St John's Colliery, Normanton”.

SATURDAY, MARCH 19, 1949

DEWSBURY YOUTH COMMITTED TO ASSIZES ON MURDER CHARGE

“Left Strangled Girl on Cricket Field, Did Not Know If She Was Dead or Not”

WITHIN a few hours of the alleged murder of Marian Poskitt (21), weaver of Low Road, Dewsbury Moor, in St. Matthew's Cricket Field, Westtown, Dennis Neville (22), glazier's mate of 40 Manor Road, Westtown, was stated by the prosecution at Dewsbury Borough Court on Monday to have taken his mother and sister a cup of tea and attended Mass at St. Paulinus' R.C. Church.

He was remanded in custody to stand trial at the next Yorkshire Spring Assizes.

Twenty-four witnesses were called by the prosecution, and a considerable amount of medical evidence was produced. Mr. E.G. McDermott appeared for the Director of Public Prosecutions and Mr. E. J. T. Matthews represented Neville.

The public gallery of the court was filled mostly of women, some of whom had arrived at the court over an hour before the proceedings were due to begin. Neville appeared in a Khaki shirt and, as in his three previous appearances on the charge, he looked straight ahead and merely stated he had “nothing to say”.

Opening the case for the prosecution Mr. McDermott said that Neville was charged with alleged murder of Marian Poskitt some time between the night of Saturday February 19th 1949 and early Sunday morning February 20th. Neville had known the girl for eight or nine years and had been associating with her for the past four years. At the time of her death the girl was pregnant and had been worried about her condition. Neville had arranged to meet her on the evening of February 19th at the Clarence Hotel. He went, however, to the Westtown Inn where he saw Marian Poskitt's mother who told him that Marian had gone down to the Clarence Hotel. He was alleged to have replied “all right, I'll go down there”. Some time later he went down to the Clarence Hotel 200 yards away and met Marian Poskitt. He sat beside her, bought her a drink and introduced her to a certain Mildred Sleight. He asked Poskitt if she wished to remain there or go. She said she wanted to go and they left the hotel.

Neville was seen later by a Michael Grogan in the “Stag and Pheasant” situated about 20 yards from the “Clarence”. He left there and caught a bus to Dewsbury and was next seen at the “Duke of Leeds” where he met a Thomas Cocking with whom he later visited the “Crown and Cushion”. At the “Crown and Cushion” Neville met Martin Hopkins and they later went to the Galleon Ballroom. Both Neville and Poskitt were seen at the dance hall and after the dance an Audrey Newsome saw Neville and Poskitt walking together in Northgate in the direction of Westtown. “That you may think”, said Mr. McDermott, “was the last time Marian Poskitt was seen alive by anybody except Neville”.

The following morning a Mr. H. Hardwick took his dog for a walk in St. Matthew's Cricket Field, where he saw the body of a woman lying on the ground. Her face was covered with blood. He informed the Police and Detective Sergt. Wynn and other Police officers arrived on the scene shortly afterwards. The girl had died somewhere between 9.30 p.m. on February 19th and 3.30 a.m. on the 20th.

A post mortem had been held and the cause of death found to be Asphyxia due to manual strangulation, and possibly shock from the fractured jaw bone contributed to her death.

“Sunk My Fingers Into Her Throat”

On the same Sunday morning, Neville took his mother and sister a cup of tea and went to church. Later he was questioned by the Police and after his clothes and body had been examined was told by Det.-Sergt. Wynn that there was reason to believe he knew something of Marian Poskitt's death. He is then alleged to have said “I did it. Forget what I told you. I will tell you the truth now”. He made a statement as to his movements from public house to public house. He said Marian Poskitt had seen him at the Galleon Ballroom and had asked him to take her home. They walked through Dewsbury along Watergate, climbed under the railings of St. Matthew's Cricket Field and went as far as the railway embankment. The alleged statement continued.

“We talked for a while then I took hold of her neck in my right hand and sunk my fingers into her throat. She laid back without making any sound. She was still breathing, I thumped her on the jaw and also in the throat with the side of my hand”.

“I did not know whether she was dead or not when I left her lying there about 1 o'clock”.

“I was not drunk and knew what I had done. I do not wish to disclose my reasons for doing this or what else happened between us. I am responsible for her death”.

The alleged statement added that when Neville went home he noticed blood on his hands and clothing. He washed his hands and brushed the bottoms of his trousers. Mr McDermott said traces of blood had been found on Neville's clothes and the only clothes brush found at his home gave a positive reaction for blood when tested.

“In fairness to Neville”, concluded Mr McDermott, “I must say that P.C. Mitchell, of the Borough Police Force, on duty in Bond Street, Dewsbury, about 12.10 a.m. , says he saw a man whom he thought was Neville. There will be some evidence, a fair amount , to show that on that night Neville was not wearing a coat. He was wearing a blue pin stripe suit. You may therefore think that P.C. Mitchell was probably mistaken with regard to the man he saw in Bond Street”.

“I'll Go To Her”

Mrs Beatrice Poskitt of 32, Low Road, Dewsbury Moor, mother of Marian said her daughter was 21 years of age, had known Neville since she was 16 and had been keeping company with him for a long time, at 8 p.m. On Saturday February 19th, she went to the Westtown Inn with her husband, where she saw Neville. She told him that Marian had gone down to the Clarence hotel to meet him at 7.30 p.m. He said “All right, I'll go to her”. She had not seen him after that. He was wearing a blue pin striped suit but no hat.

Mrs Alice Neville, of 40, Manor Road, Westtown, the accused's mother, said her son left home around 8 p.m., but did not say where he was going. He was wearing his navy blue suit but his raincoat was left in the passage at home. Mrs Neville said she left home about 9.20 p.m. And got back about 11.30 p.m. Or maybe later. Dennis was not in and she went into his room and made his

bed. She retired and heard him come in but did not know what the time was because she had been asleep by that time.

Vincent Sheffield of the West Riding Constabulary, stationed at Batley said that on Sunday, February 20th as a result of a message he received he went to no. 19 Hume Street, Batley (the home of Mr. Joseph Neville, the accused's brother) where he saw Neville. When asked for his name he replied "I am Dennis Neville. The constable said he cautioned him and told him he was going to take him to Batley Police Station, Neville replied "oh I see". He was taken to Batley Police Station.

Harry Hardwick, Dairyman of 13 Eastwood's Yard, Ashworth Road, Dewsbury said he left home at 11.30 am on Sunday February 20th to take his dog for a walk. He went into St. Matthew's cricket field and saw the body of a woman lying in the field. He immediately phoned the Police and returned to the field with Det. Sergt. Wynn and Police officers

Mr Joseph Frederick Poskitt, miner of 32 Low Road , Dewsbury Moor said his daughter Marian had been associated with the accused for 3 years. He had been walking out with her. Mr Poskitt had identified the body found in the field as that of his daughter.

Det Sergt. Harold Wynn of Dewsbury Borough Police Force said that at 11.35 am on Sunday February 20th due to information received he went to St. Matthew's cricket field, Westtown, where he saw the body of a woman lying on her back near the boundary wall of the railway embankment. Her neck and face were bruised and bloodstained. She was fully clothed except for her skirt and knickers. Her skirt was on the grass between the back of her head and her right hand and her blouse was open at the front. A brown leather purse was lying beside her right knee and her blue head scarf was on the ground between her thighs. Det Sergt. Wynn said that he found the girls hair slide about 30 feet from the body and he also found an Iodine Locket 20 feet from the body.

Wall Splashed With Blood

The body was lying obliquely to a dry stone wall approximately 5ft 8" high. The head was about 5 ft from the wall and the feet 7ft from the wall. There were what appeared to be splashes of blood on the wall and in the crevices of the wall covering an area of about 7ft. Det Sergt. Wynn said he returned to the Police Station and saw the accused at 4pm in the presence of Super Intendants A. Iveson, J Wallace, T. Rushworth and T Bowman and Inspector Walton. Neville answered a number of questions with regard to his movements on Saturday evening and later gave permission for Doctor D. E. Price to examine his body and Mr. L. C. Nicholls to examine his clothing.

When told by Det Sergt. Wynn that there was reason to believe that he saw Marian Poskitt after leaving the dance hall and that he was responsible for his death. Neville is alleged to have said "I did it" and after being cautioned made his alleged statement. When charged with the offence he replied "nothing to say".

Doctor David Ernest Price, Home Office Pathologist at the Forensic Science Laboratory, Wakefield said he went to St Matthew's cricket field at 12.15 pm on Sunday February 20th He saw the body of a young woman lying in the field and was present later when the body was identified by Mr J. F. Poskitt as that of his daughters.

Blood was stated to have been running from the nose and mouth of the body and there were many small Haemorrhages to the skin of the forehead. The eyes were puffy and swollen and other external injuries included 6 marks compatible with nail marks (red and curved) on the left side of the neck and similar marks in corresponding position on the right side of the neck. There were also 5 nail marks in the region of the adams apple, and bruising on the root of the neck and certain lines

extending onto the right breast. With regard to internal examination Doctor Price found that Poskitt was not Virgo Intacto, that there was a fracture of the lower jaw and the head was fractured in 2 places. There was no injury to the chest and the organs of the abdomen were healthy. She had been pregnant between 12 -16 weeks. Dr Price considered that she had probably died between 930 pm on February 19th and 2.30 am February 20th.

Dr Price also examined Neville between 4.20 and 5pm on February 20th. He found a scratch a quarter of an inch long on Neville's right hand and a faint blood stain on the outer side of his left thigh. There was no evidence of injury in the latter area. The Dr considered that the injuries to Poskitt's jaw could have been caused by blows from a blunt instrument and were consistent with having been caused by a fist.

Mr Lewis Charles Nicholls, M.sc, F.R.I.C., Director of the Forensic Science Laboratory, Wakefield said he found 3 blood stained areas on the grass beside the body and splashes of blood on the wall behind, over an area of 10 ft by 4 ft. It was human blood of group "O". Later the same day he said he went to Dewsbury Police Station and saw the accused Neville.

Blood Found on Neville's Clothing

The front of the sleeves of Neville's jacket were extensively spotted and smeared with blood there was also blood on other articles of his clothing, in particular around his trouser bottoms. The stains appeared to have been brushed. The blood on the clothing was human but owing to the produce of interference material he unable to prove the group. Mr Nicholls said he took nail scrapings from the accused which gave a positive reaction of human blood. There was seminal fluid on the clothing of both Neville and Poskitt.

Doreen Whitwell, of 89 Laversell Street, Denby Main, Doncaster who has been employed as a weaver at Wormalda and Walkers, Britannia Mills since 1947 said that Marian Poskitt worked at the mill and they were friendly. She knew Marian was very worried about being pregnant and had been with her when she bought medicine for her pregnancy.

Police Constable Gerrard Ronald Mitchell of Dewsbury Borough Police Force said that at 12.10 am on Sunday February 20th he was on duty examining property at the rear of Messrs Marks and Spencers store in Bond Street. He saw a man walking up Bond Street from the direction of Northgate and the man was wearing a Fawn raglan type raincoat without a belt. A street lamp was shining from Northgate. As a result of questions by Inspector H. Shaw and Sergt. Alan Reid he went to see Neville in his cell, P.C. Mitchell said he recognised Neville as the man he had seen in bond street.

The Mayor (Councillor W. West) presiding, said that the magistrates had found that there was a case to answer. Neville replied he had nothing to say.

Mr E. J. T. Matthews on Neville's behalf pleaded "not guilty" and reserved his defence.

A defence certificate to include 2 counsel was granted and the magistrates decided that the £10 10s cost of the prosecution should be paid out of public funds.

SATURDAY, MAY 14, 1949

DENNIS NEVILLE SENTENCED TO DEATH

Execution Provisionally Fixed for June 2nd

Dennis Neville (23), glazier's mate of 40 Manor Road, Westtown, Dewsbury, was at Leeds Assizes on Tuesday found guilty of the willful murder of Marian Poskitt (21), weaver of 32 Low Road, Dewsbury Moor, and sentenced to death by Mr Justice Finnemore. Thursday 2nd June has been fixed as the provisional date for his execution.

When the jury of nine men and three women returned their verdict after an hours retirement, Neville, who dressed in navy blue battle-dress blouse and trousers, stood motionless and did not appear to be affected by the decision. Asked if he had anything to say, Neville replied in a strong. Clear voice "Nothing to say, sir".

There were about 100 in the public galleries, including many from the Dewsbury district.

Mr H. B. H. Hylton-Foster K.C. with Mr Geoffrey Veale appeared for the prosecution and Neville was defended by Mr Ralph Cleworth, K. C. and Mr J Parris.

During the trial, which lasted nearly 2 days, there was no dispute as to Neville having killed the girl, but the defense submitted that there were sufficient grounds of provocation to ask the jury to return a verdict of "not guilty of murder", but "guilty of manslaughter".

Two eminent Leeds psychiatrists called by the defense, said that they had formed the opinion that Neville suffered from schizophrenia (split personality), but the medical officer of Armley Gaol said Neville had not shown no signs of the disease and in his opinion was not suffering from Schizophrenia.

No plea of insanity was put and the prosecution submitted that the provocation in the case would have caused a normal reasonable person to lose control and do the terrible things the accused had done. If they did, then they should bring a verdict of manslaughter. On the other hand, however, if they did not, then it was their duty to find him guilty of murder.

Prosecution's Case

Opening the case for the prosecution Mr Hylton-Foster recalled how the body of Marian Poskitt had been found by Mr Hardwick near the railway embankment in St. Matthew's Cricket Field on Sunday Feb. 20th.

Mr Foster said the accused, Neville had known the girl for 6 years and had been walking out with her for the past 3. He had left home at 8 pm on the evening of Saturday February 19th and shortly afterwards had seen Poskitt's mother in the Westtown Inn. She had told him that her daughter was waiting for him at the Clarence Hotel about 200 yards away. He went to the "Clarence", met Marian Poskitt, bought drink for her and himself and later left her there, telling her to wait. Afterwards, Neville visited various public houses in Dewsbury and finally went to the

Galleon Ballroom, where he saw Poskitt again. When the dance was over at about 11.30pm, both Neville and Poskitt were seen by an Audrey Newsome in Northgate, Dewsbury. That was in all probability the last time Poskitt was seen alive by anyone except Neville.

On the following Sunday, Neville was interviewed by the Police. He was told that there was reason to believe he knew something about Marian Poskitt's death. After certain questions had been put, Neville is alleged to have said "I did it, forget what I told you I did it, I will tell the truth now. He made a statement which included the following sentences.

"We talked for a while and then I took hold of her neck in my right hand and sunk my fingers into her throat. She laid back without making any sound. She was still breather. I thumped her on the jaw and also in the throat with the side of my hand. I did not know whether she was dead or not when I left her lying there at 1 am. I was not drunk and knew what I had done. I do not wish to disclose any reasons for doing this or what else happened between us. I am responsible for her death".

In opening the case for the defense Mr Ralph Cleworth said that the defense was that the accused was provoked into committing this act of violence upon the girl. Defendant was charged with murder and Mr Cleworth said he did not intend asking the jury to find him not guilty of any defense at all but to find, within limitations of the law, that the accused was provoked into doing the act and was not guilty of murder but guilty of manslaughter. He was proposing to call medical evidence before them to prove as a fact that the prisoner suffered from a disease of the mind – an anxiety Neurosis. What might not be provocation for a normal person might be provocation to a man in his state of mind. He was asking them to say that the defendant was a reasonable man affected by a complaint. Mr Cleworth pointed out that no weapon was used, only the man's hands.

Neville's Evidence

In court Neville said he was born on April 19th 1926. He was taken prisoner by the Germans in June 1944, and remained a prisoner of war until liberated in May 1945. Neville said he was treated "pretty roughly" by the Germans. When he had refused to work for them they had used physical violence. They had hit him with rifle butt and the boot, mainly in the ribs. He had also been given solitary confinement and had spent Christmas 1944 in solitary confinement in a cold cell. He was there for three or four days and received no food or drink. Longest periods of solitary confinement he had been subjected to were from 7 to 14 days at a time.

Neville said he was repatriated and given liberation leave. When he arrived home he found that his mother and father had separated and learned for the first time that his brother, Thomas, had been killed in Burma. The latter news came as a great shock to his as he was very fond of Thomas. He had broken down and cried at the time.

Shortly after this he had been called to see his father who had been involved in a brawl. He saw him in the street and he appeared to be either unconscious or dead. "There was a man named Cardle there", continued Neville, "and he said he would put me in the same place as he had put my father if I was not careful".

Subsequently the case was brought to the very court (Leeds Crown Court) and Neville had given evidence in the case. The man Cardle had been acquitted. When questioned by Mr Cleworth as to Neville's opinion of the verdict, Neville replied "I believe he was murdered".

Neville said he became very bitter against Cardle who lived only two to five minutes walk away from his house in Manor Road, Westtown. Whenever he saw Cardle the scene of the accident – or crime – was brought back to him. On the night that Marian Poskitt met her death he had seen Cardle in the Stag and Pheasant.

In Mental Hospital

After these events he was unable to settle down in the Army. He was taken to see a psychiatrist and spent some time in the mental hospital. He was discharged from the Army in 1947 and received a per cent disability pension. Since then, Neville told the court, his health both physically and mentally had deteriorated, in June 1948, he was advised by a doctor to become an in patient at a mental hospital but refused because "it would have meant leaving his mother and two young sisters on their own". In consequence of that he was allowed to become an out-patient for treatment at Leeds General Infirmary. He was given pills because he could not sleep properly.

Neville said he had known Marian Poskitt for eight or nine years but he had not been courting her. He felt that her attitude to him was "that she was running after him". He agreed that she was keen on him and wanted to marry him, but he did not want to marry her.

"Just before Christmas 1948", continued Neville, "she told me she was pregnant. She said a man called Ronnie was responsible and thought it had happened some time in November. She said she had met him on a train coming from Huddersfield to Dewsbury and that intercourse had taken place somewhere in Mirfield".

Since that conversation had taken place and February 19th he had seen Poskitt three or four times. He admitted that intercourse had taken place once previous to the night she had died.

Neville said he had arranged to meet Poskitt at the Clarence Hotel on February 19th but had not intended to go. He had gone to the Westtown Inn and seen her parents. Her mother told him Marian was at the Clarence and he had said "oh alright, I will go to her". He got to the Clarence Hotel at about 8.35pm, met Marian Poskitt and bought her a glass of beer and a pint for himself.

"I told her to wait there and then I left", said Neville, "I did not intend to return. I went to the Stag and Pheasant, where I saw Cardle, the man who was responsible for my father's death. Later I visited other licensed houses in the town and next Marian Poskitt at the Galleon Ballroom.

"I did not come out of the ballroom with her, but saw her after the dance had finished in Wellington Road. She called me over to her and asked me to take her home. I agreed to do this and

we went from Wellington Road, Along Bradford Road, into Northgate, to Westgate up Daisy Hill and Nelson Street, and back into Wellington Road. We went down the passage-way at the back of the Corporation Depot and walked along the riverside as far as St. Matthew's sports ground. We climbed under the railings and sat down in the field and talked for a while. Then intimacy took place. Marian Poskitt was a consenting party and she removed her own clothing.

Sarcastic Grin

“After intercourse”, continued Neville, “she said even if I was not responsible, I was going to be held responsible for the child. I told her she had already explained that the man 'Ronnie' was responsible for her condition, she replied that even so I would be held responsible. First of all I did not take much particular notice, but she kept on being aggravating, grinning and making me feel very small, it was a very sarcastic grin- more of a sneer, she gave every possible indication she would carry out her threat, she used words to the effect of 'you will pay for this'.

The argument lasted for about 10 minutes to a quarter of an hour”, he continued, “I cannot remember the actual sequence of events which followed. I did not intend to do her permanent injury, I knew I had hurt her seriously, I hit her in the face and put my hand on her throat, then I left her and went home, I covered the bottom part of her body up. In my opinion when I left her she was still breathing”.

When Neville got home he noticed some blood on his hands and washed them with soap and water. He went to bed and slept properly that night. In the morning he got up at about 8am and at 9.30am went to Mass. He saw some blood on his trouser bottoms and had tried to brush it off with a stiff clothes brush. After church he returned home and later went to visit his brother in Hulme Street, Batley.

It never occurred to him during the Sunday that the girl was dead, he realised, however that something was wrong when the Police came. He had been pretty dazed and when questioned by the Police had not intended lying at all, and the answers he gave at first were the result of his dazed condition. What he had said in his written statement was the truth.

Det Sergt. H. Wynn, Dewsbury Borough Police Force, gave evidence of interviews with Neville and details of the actual scene of the crime. He agreed that the position of the girl's skirt and part of her underclothes was consistent with her having removed them herself. Defendant had never been told how she met her death but he had been able to tell them.

Dr David Ernest Price, Home Office Pathologist, at the Forensic Science Laboratory, Wakefield, gave evidence of deceased's injuries and said she had been pregnant between 12 and 16 weeks.

Neville Cross-Examined

Cross-examined by Mr Hylton-Foster, Neville said that after he had seen Cardle in the Stag and Pheasant he gone to the duke of Leeds, the Crown and Cushion and some other public houses.

Mr Foster: after that you decided to go to the Galleon Ballroom to amuse yourself?- Yes.

The distress you experienced seeing Mr Cardle that evening was not sufficient to prevent you from going to the dance hall?

I went to the dance hall to fight the distress caused by seeing Cardle.

After Marian Poskitt told you that she was pregnant you took her out three or four times, intercourse took place in January, and you went to her home on the Sunday before her death? - certainly , I had got used to the idea.

Neville then submitted that if a girl was “going for you”, you needed to be a good man to keep away from her, “The temptation was put on a plate”. So to speak.

Mr Foster: On the night she met her death, when she asked you to take her home, did you expect intercourse to take place? – No

By the time you went down to the Waterside? – No

When you went into St. Matthew’s cricket field? – Not in a position to expect anything.

What did you go to St. Matthew’s cricket field for – No one would object, went to sit down and talk.

At midnight in February? – We had no real object in going there.

Why did you go into the cricket field? – to sit there, that was the whole idea of going into the cricket field.

Were you willing then to have intercourse – I think so, yes.

Do you believe this girl wanted you to marry her? – Definitely, sir.

She told you that you had to be responsible for the child? – that’s right, sir, I did not think much of it at first, I told her the whole idea was impossible.

Irrespective of that, she told you that you would be held responsible – yes, I told her not to be silly but she carried on about it.

Was the girl sitting down all this time? – I could not tell. I told her to get dressed and “lets go home”. I went a few yards away from her.

At that time she was sitting down? – I went back , she was sitting down and I sat down.

Why did you sit down again? – It was not a fit place to leave a girl at that time of night. She started again and in the actual sequence I do not know what happened.

Did you seize her by the throat? – Yes

Did you sink your fingers into her throat then? – I cannot possibly describe the real sequence of the happenings.

You must have got hold of her throat with both hands? – According to the evidence, yes.

Intended to “Slap Her Face”

You must have got hold of it more than once? – Yes

You must have held on until she could not breathe and gone on holding on? – According to evidence, yes.

Neville could not say whether he hit her before or after that, or how many times he had hit her.

You are a powerfully built man? – that counts for nothing.

How was it that the wall was splattered with blood over an area of 10ft. by 4 ft. – It is puzzling to me, sir.

Can you help us to find out how her blood was flung to the wall? – No, sir.

You said you did not intend doing any permanent injury to her? – I had it in my mind just to slap her face.

Do you mean to say you broke her jaw in intending to slap her face? – No, sir.

Was the girl alive or dead when you left her? – In my opinion she was definitely alive.

Did you tell the police that you did not know whether she was dead or alive? So far as you were aware she could just stay there and die? – I did not think she was so seriously injured.

Did you look at her face? – Yes

You then went home to bed and did not think about getting help for her. If it is true, the reason why you killed this girl, why did you not give the details earlier? – I did not wish the girls name to be dragged through the mud.

Chivalry to the girl prevented you giving the details? – Not chivalry but sheer respect for the girls parents.

Did you realise what you had done? – Yes, but I did not realise the seriousness of the case. I knew I had assaulted her but she was definitely alive when I left her.

“Split Personality”

Dr. Samuel Leviten, of Alwoodley Lane, Leeds, consultant psychiatrist at the Ministry of Pensions Hospital Chapel Allerton, and consultant psychiatrist to the Ministry of Pensions Regional Board for Yorkshire, said that in his professional capacity he had had occasion to examine Neville for a disability pension.

He first examined him on March 12th 1948, when Neville gave details of his army career – those which he had given in evidence. Neville had been diagnosed as suffering from schizophrenia, more popularly know as split personality, while abroad in the army.

On March 12th he complained that people were continually nagging him, he had constant headaches and was sleeping very badly. He said he disliked noise and crowds, and in his manner appeared timid, nervous and frightened. He was reserved, emotionally unstable and although of good intelligence appeared dull and slow witted. He was introspective and self-absorbed. He had difficulty expressing himself freely and had little self-confidence.

The doctor found him to be very anxious in manner and formed the opinion that Neville was in a state of anxiety which he diagnosed in reality was Schizophrenia.

Doctor Leviten said he examined Neville again on June 24th, 1948, for the purpose of seeing what treatment he needed. On this occasion, Neville complained that he had frightening impulsive feelings. He felt tense anxiety and was uncertain of himself. Among people he said he was nervous, even though he realised people did not mean to do anything to him. He was unable to sleep well and had disturbed nights. He was tremulous in manner and unable to mix with people.

Neville said he had a feeling as if he had to get rid of something and did not know what that something was. He had repressed aggressive feelings and anti-social feelings and was depressed, having difficulty adapting himself.

Dr. Leviten said he had recommended that Neville should be admitted to a hospital for medical treatment. Because it would have meant leaving his mother on her own he was allowed to become an out-patient at Leeds General Infirmary for mental treatment.

Easily Irritated

On April 27th, 1949 Dr. Leviten said he examined Neville in prison. He still showed slight evidence of anxiety. In manner he was calm and appeared to be resigned, but beneath it was a resentful, easily irritated and intolerant manner.

Talking to him upset him and he evaded discussion and arguments because he said he felt if he became involved in an argument he would have to do something to stop the person he was arguing with. When the latter occurred he had a queer sickly feeling and he had to concentrate on making the person shut up.

Dr. Leviten said that Neville had told him "When I heard my brother was dead nothing seemed to matter and after my father was killed I felt as if the whole world had failed. Then nothing really did matter; I seemed changed after that". With reference to the man Cardle Neville said "If justice were done he would be in the same position as I".

Mr. Justice Finmore: Do you think owing to the condition you found in 1948 he was a man more easily upset and likely to lose control than a normal person? - Yes, sir.

Another psychiatrist, Dr. Andrew Braithwaite, with 30 years experience said he had examined the prisoner independently and formed the opinion that he was suffering from schizophrenia.

Mr R Cleworth K.C. (defending). In your opinion would this man know what he was doing when he attacked the girl that night? Dr Braithwaite: I think he would not be able at the time to evaluate the effect of his actions.

Cross-examined but Mr Hylton-Foster the doctor said that , in his opinion Neville, when he attacked the girl, would be acting automatically and his reason would not enter into the matter at all

because of the condition of his mind. In reply to further questions he said that at the time of the attack one half of the accused would know what he was doing but the other half would not clearly realize what was happening.

Prison Doctor Saw No Signs of Schizophrenia

Mr. Hylton-Foster then called Dr. James Walker, Medical Officer of Armley Gaol. Dr. Walker said he had Neville under his supervision since February 21st and had acquainted himself with the case. He had formed the opinion that when Neville did whatever he did on the night of February 19th he knew what he was doing. he knew he was doing wrong. Neville had not shown any signs of schizophrenia while at Armley, in fact he had shown remarkably little of the anxiety state considering hi past history. While in prison Dr. Walker added, Neville had behaved normally, worked very well, was fairly cheerful and associated with others in custody.

Cross-examined by Mr. Cleworth, Dr. Walker admitted it was quite possible that being away from the home environments and vicinity of the man Cardle had been responsible for the change in Neville.

Mr Cleworth: Having regard to the accused's condition and the fact that he lived near Cardle, what is your view as to how he would act on provocation? - I think he would be prone to react more explosively and impulsively than an average person.

Dr Walker said Neville had punched another prison patient who had used his toothbrush but had later apologized both to the hospital officer and the man he had struck. He appeared to be genuinely sorry for it.

Summing up for the defense, Mr Cleworth asked the jury for a verdict of manslaughter. He said he was not asking for pity or sympathetic result which the evidence did not justify but an honest and satisfactory verdict, no more and no less.

A man was held responsible by law continued Mr Cleworth, for the natural and probable result of his actions. :did this man intend to do such harm to the deceased girl, Marian Poskitt, such harm as maybe reasonably expected to result in her death?"he asked. "my defense is that he did not and could not have so intended". He was not asking for a verdict on the grounds of insanity but for a manslaughter verdict on grounds of provocation.

Mr Hylton-Foster, summing up for the prosecution, asked the jury not to allow themselves to be deflected from the real points at issue by sympathy for the accused. The fact that he had been a prisoner of war, had lived near the man Cardle, and that he had lost his brother and father should not enter into the case."It is so frighteningly easy" said Mr Hylton-Foster "To come along after the violence has been carried out and justice has caught up with you to say ' have pity on me, I am not normal, I can't have people arguing with me"

He told the jury the must ask themselves "was the provocation sufficient to deprive a normal reasonable man of his self control?" If it was not, then the verdict must be "guilty of murder".

Judge's Summing Up

Mr Justice Finne more, in his summing up, directed the jury not to consider the actual person on trial. They had not to say whether the provocation alleged in the case caused the man (Neville) to lose his self control and so commit the crime. That was not the test; the test was would the alleged provocation in the case cause a reasonable man to lose his self control and do the terrible things he (Neville) had done? The reasonable man was what the jury thought was a reasonable man. Provocation must be grave enough for a reasonable man to lose his self control. His lordship pointed out that the defense was not that of insanity. Mr E. J. T. Matthews, who represented Neville at the preliminary hearing at Dewsbury, was present at Court.