

The Unsolved Murder of Keith Lyon

Keith Lyon was 12 years old when he was murdered on 6th May 1967. Keith was stabbed to death on his journey to buy something to add to his geometry set. He was murdered on a bridal pathway in Happy Valley, a large field on the outskirts of Brighton, between affluent Ovingdean and the village of Woodingdean.

Keith was the eldest son of band leader Kenneth Lyon and his wife Valda. Kenneth and Valda died without know who had murdered their son. Keith is survived by his brother, Peter, who was 7 years old at the time the murder.

No one has ever been brought to account for causing his brutal death.

The Murder of Keith Lyon



Keith was 12 years old when he was murdered. Keith attended Brighton and Hove Grammar School, and was wearing his school uniform at the time of his death. He

Keith was stabbed 11 times in the back, chest and abdomen. The weapon was said to be a serrated kitchen knife.

Keith's body was found by a 16 year old girl, out walking her dog at 4.15pm. Keith was lying by the

bushes. She raised the alarm. It was noted that the pockets of Keith's trousers had been pulled out and his four shillings and keys were missing.

Witnesses

'Witnesses described a group of youths scuffling near where his body was found'.

'Two women living nearby saw what they later described as four boys 'sparring' and apparently involved in a scuffle by some bushes on the path'

'A bus driver reported seeing two youths in an 'agitated' state on his bus to nearby Whitehawk'

Investigation at the time



The news of an innocent child being stabbed to death ensured that a highly visible police investigation took place. Soon after the murder, the surrounding area was sealed off. The police set up an incident room within a local primary school, and officers from across Sussex were drafted in.

A large magnetic mine detector was brought over from Aldermaston; a heavy magnetic roller. This could pull metal objects from the ground. However, the alleged murder weapon, a blood stained knife, was discovered and handed in by some schoolboys, close to the rear of Fitzherbert School.

Evidence suggested that someone had tried to wash blood from their hands and clothes in a local public toilet block – a public lavatory that 'only a local would have known of'.

The Brighton Dog Section was drafted to help seek the murderer, to no avail. The Police took great interest in local 'beatniks, tramps and rough sleepers'.

A day after the murder a wax dummy was used in the area to help to jog the memories of potential witnesses. This didn't elicit any further information.

A few days after Keith's murder a rumour spread that Keith had been stabbed by a youth or gang of youths. The Police announced that they would fingerprint local boys. They hoped that boys evading the fingerprint process would help to highlight the murderers.

Coroner's Report

In December 1967 the Police advised the Coroner that:

75,000 house visits had taken place
2000 written statements had been taken
17 schools had been visited
1900 school children were interviewed
6000 finger and palm prints had been taken
726 items of clothing were examined, 361 pieces were to be sent for forensic tests.

The blood on the steak knife that had been recovered by the schoolboys showed the blood type was the same as Keith's.

The Jury returned a verdict of murder by person or persons unknown.

One year on

On the anniversary of Keith's death in 1968 his father offered a £1000 award to anyone giving information that would lead to the arrest and conviction of the killer.

New Information in 1974

Detective Superintendent Jim Marshall announced in January 1974 that that new information about Keith's Murder had come to light that 'opens a new line of enquiry'. A special squad of detective began to re-interview dozens of people, though this renewed effort came to nothing.

Mislaid evidence



The alleged murder weapon and other items relating to Keith's case were mislaid, seemingly after the reinvestigation in 1974. The knife was only found again by workmen in the basement of Brighton Police Station in 2002.

Rumours

Rumours of inter-school rivalries abound. Keith went to a well-regarded 'posh' school, and his uniform could have marked him out as a target.

Police are informed that a family abruptly emigrated to Canada, though they do not know who those people are, or whether there is a murder suspect within that family.

'Apparently in the Keith Lyon case there was some suspicion directed at a gang of lads from Fitzherbert (school), in Woodingdean. No evidence of course'.

Notable Local Cases

Michael Trower went missing from Hove in 1966. His skeletal remains were discovered in 1967, on the outskirts of Brighton in a shallow grave.

"The boy played truant a lot and failed to turn up at school when he went missing in 1966. His remains were found in January the following year. He had a large skull fracture but it was impossible to determine whether he had been sexually assaulted. That said, it was known Michael frequented amusement arcades and piers and he associated with known paedophiles."

Michael's murderer has never been found.

Vishal Mehrotra vanished in 1981. He was eight-years old. His remains were discovered in 1982 by pigeon shooters in remote marshland near Midhurst.

Vishal's murderer has never been found.

Later suspect 'to be questioned'

Three men have been arrested in connection with Keith Lyon's murder. I can't find a report of who these three people are.

Brian Field (aka Brian Lull - born December 1937) –convicted of Roy Tuthill's sexual assault and strangulation in Surrey in 1968 may since have been questioned in connection with the deaths of Keith Lyon, Michael Trower and Vishal Mehrotra. Brian would have been 30 at the time of Keith Lyon's murder – he worked for the Milk Marketing Board, so travelled often.

Unanswered Questions

Using up to date forensic technology – is the blood found on the alleged weapon actually Keith's? At the time, the blood was found only to be of the same 'type'.

It is notable that only school aged boys were fingerprinted - if Keith's murder took place today,

would the investigation take into account other suspect types?

What was the new information that led to a new investigation using a 'new line of enquiry' in 1974?

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Timeline

6th May 1967 - Keith Lyon is murdered and discovered. Based upon rumours of a schoolboy scuffle, extensive evidence is collected from local schoolboys.

May 1967 - It is alleged that a local family emigrates to Canada. Police do not know who they are.

December 1967 - Coroner determines murder by person/persons unknown

May 1968 - Kenneth Lyon offers a £1000 reward for information leading to a murder conviction on the anniversary of Keith's death.

January 1974 - New informations leads Police to follow 'New lines of enquiry'.

After January 1974
- Alleged murder weapon is 'misaid'

2000 - 2001 Keith's case is mentioned and 'new leads' on Crimewatch - a £10,000 reward is offered by Sussex Police 'DI Bill Warner advises two people came up with the same name of a person'.

2002 - Police announce the loss of the alleged murder weapon - later exhibits from the murder enquiry are found by workmen in Brighton Police Station - leading to fresh DNA tests.

2006 - Three men are arrested and released. Police announce DNA breakthroughs and appeal for information.



Woodingdean, Keith Lyon's body found (1967)

Waterhall, Michael Trower's remains found (1967) (went missing in 1966)

Mickleham, Roy Tuthill's remains found (1968)

Midhurst, Vishal Mehrotra's remains found (1982) (went missing in 1982)

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