



Refugee Charged With Murder

BODY CONCEALED IN FIELD

Farm Worker's Tragic Death

Chippenham Division Police Officers were on Monday night investigating the death of an elderly farm worker. Mr. Henry Neal of Norton, near Malmesbury, whose body with a wound in the head, was found by his son in the late evening concealed beneath straw and grass in a field on the farm where he worked.

Mr. Neal, who was 69 years of age, was employed by Capt. F. W. Hartman of Cowage Farm, about three miles from his home. He left home for work at 7 a.m. On Monday, and during day was engaged on hedging and ditching in fields near a small copse. He normally left work at 5 p.m., and when he failed to return home at the usual time his family became anxious. His youngest son, Mr. Harry Neal, reached home about eight o'clock and on learning that his father had not returned he went in search of him and made the tragic discovery.

Mr. Harry Neal told a reporter that his father sometimes did a bit of extra work for a neighbouring farmer, Mr. Irvine, so he went there first to make inquiries. He was not there however, and Mr. and Mrs. Irvine accompanied him across the fields to search for his father.

SON'S DISCOVERY

"We found his chopper and one of his hedging gloves at the place where he had been working," he said, "and there was also a pool of blood. Some distance further on I found a heap of straw and dried grass by the side of the ditch, and I could just see father's

coat. He was almost covered. He had a wound in the back of the head, and was dead. It appeared that he had been dragged some distance from where he was struck. His dinner bag was by his head, and his axe was beside him".

Mr. Neal summoned the Police and a doctor, and an investigation was immediately opened by Supt. A. W. Sadler and Inspector H. Edwards, who were joined on Tuesday by the Assistant Chief Constable, Mr. W. T. Brooks. A native of Hullavington, Mr. Neal had lived in the locality all his life, and is described by acquaintances as a most inoffensive man. He leaves a widow, five sons, and three daughters.

MURDER CHARGE

At a special Police Court at Malmesbury on Thursday afternoon, Horst Israel Ferber (aged 19) who was lately lodging at Green Lane, Sherston, was charged with the wilful murder of Harry Neal, and after formal evidence had been given by Supt. A. W. Sadler, he was remanded in custody until April 30th.

The Superintendent said that on Monday, about 11.30 p.m., he saw the dead body of Harry Neal, of Norton, in a ditch in the fields attached to Cowage Farm, Foxley. At 1.30 a.m. On Thursday he saw the accused in custody at

Tetbury Police Station. He conveyed him to Chippenham, and there took possession of all the property found on him. At 3.15 a.m. The same morning he charged and cautioned Ferber with the wilful murder of Harry Neal.

On this evidence the Superintendent asked for a remand, which was granted.

Mr. W. T. Clarke (Malmesbury), who appeared for the accused, applied on his behalf for a certificate of legal aid in respect of the Police Court proceedings, and this was granted.

It was mentioned that the Police had asked for a test of the accused's blood to be made.

Ferber, who is a German, of Jewish appearance, was wearing a new grey suit supplied to him by the Police. He spoke no word throughout the proceedings.

INQUEST OPENED

Immediately following, the inquest on Mr. Neal was opened by the Wiltshire Coroner (Mr. Harold Dale), the accused being present in the custody of two Police Officers.

Harry Neal, of Norton, son of the dead man, said his father was 69 years of age and was employed as a farm worker. Witness last saw him alive on Sunday night.

Dr. W. Winch, Malmesbury, said he was called about 9 p.m. On Monday to Cowage Farm. In a field he saw the body of a man in a ditch. There were obvious head injuries which had caused death.

Asked by the Coroner if he wished to question the witnesses, Ferber shook his head, and the inquiry was then adjourned until the conclusion of the criminal proceedings.

THE ARREST

Ferber was arrested just inside the Wiltshire border on Wednesday night after extensive searching and beating of the well-wooded countryside by the Police, military and Home Guard. He was taken first to Tetbury (Glos.) Police Station. Among the Home Guards who helped in the search was Ronald Smart, son of Mrs. Smart of Sherston, at whose house Ferber has been lodging. Ferber came to Sherston about two years ago and worked for about a year for Mr. Baker, Pinkney, before going to work for Capt. Hartman.

Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser 18 April 1942

WILTSHIRE MURDER CHARGE

Horst Israel Ferber, the 19-year-old German-Jew who is accused of murdering Henry Neal, a Norton farm worker, appeared on remand before the Malmesbury Magistrates on Thursday, and was again remanded for a further week.

Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser 02 May 1942

MALMESBURY MURDERED

Found "Guilty but Insane"

Horst Israel Ferber, a 19-year-old German Jewish refugee, was tried at Winchester Assizes this week, before Mr. Justice Charles, on a charge of murdering Harry Neal (69), a fellow working man, at Foxley, near Malmesbury on April 12th.

Mr. J. D. Casswell, K.C., prosecuting, said that Neal and Ferber were seen working together on a hedge. Ferber was holding a heavy axe. That night Neal did not return home, and his son found him dead in a ditch terribly injured about the head. The old man's socks had been removed. A track led from where the body was found to the hedge where Neal and Ferber had been seen working. A tobacco tin, a pair of socks, a belt and a purse, all of which, it was alleged belonged to Neal, were found on Ferber.

Giving evidence on his own behalf, Ferber said he was born in Cologne. He came to England from a concentration camp in July 1939. While at that camp he suffered some beatings.

Ferber, having given his version of the events of April 12th, said, in reply to his counsel, that he knew nothing of the murder of Harry Neal.

Several medical witnesses gave evidence for the defence.

Dr. Eric Strauss, of Wimpole Street, London, psychologist and mental specialist, said that if Ferber committed the crime, he must have done it in a state of post epilepsy.

The Judge: Which means not that he did not know that what he was doing was wrong, but that he did not know he was doing it ?.

Dr. Strauss: Yes.

The hearing of the case opened on Tuesday and concluded on Wednesday. On Thursday His Lordship summed up, and the accused was found guilty but insane, and ordered to be detained during His Majesty's pleasure.

Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser 18 July 1942

OPC note: Horst Ferver died 1951, aged 29 years.