

Mary and norma bell



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Betty Bell gave birth to her daughter Mary Flora Bell in 1957 in the north of England. At eleven years old Mary Bell was already a murderer. Despite her young age, Mary enjoyed the satisfaction of killing something so small and helpless, she almost killed her victims in a 'playful' manner, as she cut their hair and made them 'baldy'. I have decided to do my study on Mary and Norma Bell (no relation) and have used a number of sources to research their crimes, this included www.crimelibrary.co.uk and a book called "When kids kill".

I will discuss Mary's background, the crimes she committed and how she committed them, the trial and how she was punished by the law. I will also write about her family life and upbringing and see how this may have affected her and encouraged her to kill. I will look into how Mary and Norma would have been treated by the law today if they had committed the same crime and I will find out if the same methods would have been used to catch them today as in 1968. Betty Bell gave birth to Mary in Newcastle, England on 26 May 1957, Betty kept Mary's father a secret, but it was clear that Mary was not conceived out of romance or love.

Betty was anxious to get rid of her daughter, she would drop her off with relatives, yet she would always come back despite the family's pleas to let them keep her. Mary's brief childhood was a nightmare of abandonment and drug overdoses. At one point Betty took Mary to an adoption agency, giving her to a distraught woman who wasn't allowed to adopt as she was moving to Australia. At two years old Mary was refusing to bond with others, she was already acting cold and detached. Mary never cried when hurt, and began lashing out violently.

At one stage in 1961 - at kindergarten - Mary's teacher witnessed Mary putting her hands round the neck of another child. When told not to do that, she said, " Why, can it kill him? " She was lonely and was often teased; she kicked, pinched and hit the other children, and told " tall stories" all the time. But perhaps the greatest tragedy of all was Betty's abusive use of Mary during her prostitution. Mary Bell killed Martin Brown, a four year old toddler, on 23 May 1968. He was found at 11. 10 pm abandoned in a derelict house with saliva and blood running from his mouth.

Next to his body laid an empty bottle of tablets. After the murder Mary convinced Norma to go back to the murder scene with her, when they got there Martin Browns body had already been discovered. When the police would not let her into the building, she went to tell Martins mother that he had had an accident. The tragic death of Martin Brown had been blamed on the fact that the structures ought not to have been left standing so long. On Monday morning, May 27 the teachers at the Day Nursery, on Woodlands Crescent, arrived to find the school ransacked.

The most disturbing discovery was the four scribbled notes left behind: " I murder SO That I may come back," " fuch of we murder watch out Fanny and Faggot" " we did murder Martain brown Fuckof you bastard" " You are micey Becurse we murdered Martain Go Brown you Bete Look out there are Murders about By fannyand auld Faggot you Screws" On that Friday Mary and Norma were caught breaking into the Nursery as a new alarm system had been installed. They denied breaking in the first time. Released into custody of their parents, a date was set for them to appear before a Juvenile Court.

On 31 July 1968 Brian Howe, another toddler, was found dead. It was plain that the death of the three year old was definitely not an accident. It came to seven o'clock and Brian's mother had had no hope looking for the young toddler and decided to call the police. The police searched and found Brian's body a little after 11 pm. He was found fully clothed covered in grass; he had the characteristic marks of strangulation on his neck. His body also had several light stab wounds including cuts to the genitals. A pair of broken scissors lay near by.

The body was inspected and the came to the conclusion that the tentative way in which the cuts had been inflicted strongly suggested that it had been the work of a child. Mary and Norma were both interviewed along with over a thousand other children. The police recall Norma as not being peculiar and she did not mention seeing Mary on the day that Brian had died. The police also recall Mary's home as being a 'cold shell with no emotion. ' Mary and Norma's stories were very similar.

DC Kerr interviewed Norma again and this time she added that she had been with Mary from 2. 30 pm until 5. 0 pm 'but as far as I know, Mary ... just went into her house' she stated. Mary was interviewed again and her story also changed in small details and, gradually, things were mentioned that she ought not to have known if she had been telling the truth. Mary mentioned the scissors, which had not been mentioned in any of the press reports; this meant that if she was not the killer herself, Mary Bell must have at least seen Brian's body before his discovery. By 4 August the police had eliminated everyone but the two Bell girls. Meanwhile, guilt or fear had had their effect on Norma.

She broke down in tears; she was later interviewed by Chief Inspector Dobson. It was still only a version of the truth but it was the closest to what actually happened than anything either girl had said before. Mary told her she killed Brian, and brought her to see his body at the blocks. Mary told Norma " I squeezed his neck and pushed up his lungs that's how you kill them. Keep your nose dry and don't tell anybody. " I knew he was dead. " His lips were purple". Mary ran her fingers along them. She said she had enjoyed it.

Norma's story shocked the police, who wasted no time in picking up Mary Bell at 12: 15 that night. She appeared to see herself in a sort of scenario of cops-and-robbers film: nothing surprised her and she admitted nothing. " Norma's fourth statement changed again. She had been with Mary and Brian the day that Brian was killed. Norma stated 'Mary put her hands round Brian's neck and then she said to me 'My hands are getting thick, take over. ' Norma then said she ran away. Police investigated Brian's body again to see if the marks on his body matched Norma's statement. They found that a razor blade had been used to cut a letter 'N' in Brian's belly; it had later been changed to the letter 'M'. Two days later Brian's body was buried. Chief inspector Dobson watched Mary.

As the tiny coffin was brought out she laughed and rubbed her hands together. He now realised that Norma's statement was true and Mary needed to be arrested. The two girls were told that they were being charged with the boys' murder. Norma cried out, 'I never, you know. ' Mary's response was, ' that's alright with me. ' Mary sat, about to be taken to court to face a murder

charge, and she sang. Oh you are a mucky kid, Dirty as a dustbin lid, When he hears the things you did, You'll get a belt from your Da.

During the trial Mary commented: 'Murder isn't that bad. We all die sometime anyway. ' Over the next few weeks the image of Mary as the demon child grew. Norma, on the other hand, was viewed as the innocent friend who was simply misfortunate to come under the influence of a heartless psychopath. They both denied any responsibility for Martin Brown, but the conviction was obvious - Mary would get either manslaughter or murder. Although there was more sympathy for Norma, it was still unclear how severe her punishment would be.

When the time came for the closing arguments, the prosecution characterized Mary as a fiend. Poor Norma was herself a victim. The jury took under four hours to return with the verdict. Norma was thrilled when she was found 'not guilty' of Manslaughter on both counts. Mary was found 'guilty of Manslaughter because of Diminished Responsibility' in both deaths. Justice Cusack pronounced a sentence of 'Detention to life' while Mary cried uncomforted by her family. Norma later received three years probation for breaking and entering the Woodlands Nursery, and placed under psychiatric supervision.

There was no connection between the two murders, as shown in the table below: This shows that Mary did not have a motive for her murders and that they were not planned. I do think that if Mary had not been caught then she would have carried on killing. Whereas criminals of the late 1960's had little chance of being caught due to lack of equipment to prove they caused that

crime. The James Bulgar case proves that forensics have changed since then. Two ten year old boys killed a four year old toddler but were caught very quickly due to a lot of evidence.

The boys were seen on CCTV cameras with the young boy and the fingerprints that were at the scene of the crime were tested and matched the two young boys. The equipment of today could tell the exact time that James was killed and how the wounds were caused on his body. They were both found guilty and held at Her Majesty's Pleasure. This was due to the evidence they had. In comparison to Mary and Norma Bells case the scientific equipment has developed so much since the 1960's that criminals of today would have a hard chance not being caught.