

Vivid memories of Parker – Hulme murder return to gardener’s son

By Tony Simons

THE DEATH of 84-year-old Anne Perry, who was convicted in 1954 of one of Canterbury’s most notorious murders, has brought back some vivid childhood memories for Mt Pleasant resident David Bolam-Smith.

Juliet Hulme, as she was known then, and her best friend Pauline Parker murdered Parker’s mother Honora Parker at Victoria Park on the Cashmere Hills.

David Bolam-Smith, 45, died after being hit about 20 times with a brick.

Bolam-Smith’s father worked at Ilam Homestead, where the Hulme family lived, and he knew the two teenage girls.

Thomas Bolam-Smith (known as Bolam because there were two Toms in the family) was the full-time gardener at the homestead at the time Hulme (aged 15), and her best friend Pauline Parker (aged 16) were plotting the murder.

“I was just 9-years-old at the



PAST: Anne Perry, formerly known as Juliet Hulme, died in the United States aged 84 on April 10. She was a teenager when convicted of helping to murder her friend’s mother on the Port Hills.



PHOTO: CHRISTCHURCH PUBLIC LIBRARY

time,” said Bolam-Smith.

“But I still remember us sitting around the dinner table at our house in Burnside Rd (Memorial Ave) discussing my father’s gardening work for the Hulme family.”

After the murder and when the girls were charged, Bolam-Smith remembers the talk around the table and the shock of it all

happening.

“My parents didn’t say much after that, perhaps because they didn’t want to upset us,” said Bolam-Smith.

But perhaps they remained quiet because the Hulme family circumstances were scandalous for the time.

“I actually think my parents talked about the murder and

the trial privately out of our ear shot,” said Bolam-Smith.

After the trial, it is believed Hulme’s father, Dr Henry Hulme, 46, was forced to resign his post as rector of Canterbury University College, not just because of the trial, but also because of the scandal of the affair his wife was believed to be having with

Walter (Bill) Perry, who also lived in the homestead at the time.

Testimony at the murder trial stated Perry’s relationship with Hilda Hulme was known to her husband and even accepted by him.

After Juliet Hulme was released from prison, she moved overseas, changed her name to Anne Perry and later became a crime writer. The two girls also became the subject of the 1994 Peter Jackson film, *Heavenly Creatures*, starring Kate Winslet and Melanie Lynskey.

At the time of the murder, Bolam-Smith and his family lived in a house on Burnside Rd. It was an unsealed road leading to the airport and the nearby Ilam Homestead, owned by Canterbury University College (Canterbury University), was a semi-rural property on the very outskirts of the city.

The Hulme family lived there and it was used by the college for entertaining. It was described as beautiful and renowned, with an idyllic, spectacular garden setting.

In evidence during the trial, Juliet’s mother, Hilda described the place as big and old-fashioned with grounds planted in shrubs.

She told the court she knew from Juliet’s diary that the two girls had a secret place in the garden they called the temple, but they kept it to themselves, and she had no idea of its significance.

“I don’t think my father knew anything about that,” said Bolam-Smith.

“At least he never mentioned it to us.”

Bolam-Smith’s father died in 2011 after a long career as an award-winning gardener and garden designer, and after working for a number of companies, including Associated British Cables, and at the Cracroft Estate.

His wife, Bolam-Smith’s mother, Dora is now 106 and still remembers the turbulent time.

“I was talking to her on Friday about Perry’s death (on April 10) and she remembers it clearly,” said Bolam-Smith.

They have both seen the film *Heavenly Creatures*.

“It was a bit weird trying to connect it to my memories of the time,” said Bolam-Smith.

“My memory and the film’s interpretation don’t exactly match, but my mother said she thinks it will be a lasting record of what actually happened.”



CASE: Pauline Parker and Juliet Hulme on their way out of a preliminary court hearing at Christchurch in 1954.

The clearest memory Bolam-Smith has of the time was being told by his father they hit Pauline’s mother with a rock.

“I remember wondering what would happen to them and

where would they go? From a child’s point of view, that was an awful thing to do.

“The fact that two girls could have done that to the mother,” he said.



VIVID: Thomas Bolam-Smith in 1967 at the Associated British Cables factory in Hornby where he won a garden award. Below – Thomas worked at Ilam Homestead where the Hulme family lived.



•To read how the Parker – Hulme murder case was reported at the time, visit www.tinyurl.com/Parker-Hulme