



MAGISTRATES COURT *of* TASMANIA

CORONIAL DIVISION

Record of Investigation into Death (Without Inquest)

*Coroners Act 1995
Coroners Rules 2006
Rule 11*

I, Simon Cooper, Coroner, having investigated the death of Dale Eric Godfrey

Find, pursuant to Section 28(1) of the Coroners Act 1995, that:

- a) The identity of the deceased is Dale Eric Godfrey;
- b) I am unable to determine the circumstances in which Mr Godfrey died;
- c) I am unable to determine the cause of Mr Godfrey's death; and
- d) Mr Godfrey died between 1 March 2013 and 11 February 2019 near the East-West Fire Trail, Wellington Park, Tasmania.

In making the above findings I have had regard to the evidence gained in the comprehensive investigation into Mr Godfrey's death. The evidence includes:

- An opinion of the forensic pathologist who examined the remains;
 - A report from a forensic anthropologist;
 - A forensic biology report dealing with DNA identification;
 - Relevant police and witness affidavits;
 - Medical records and reports; and
 - Forensic and photographic evidence.
1. On 11 February 2019, human remains, subsequently identified as being those of Mr Godfrey, were found by a party of bushwalkers near the East-West Fire Trail in the Mount Wellington Park. The walkers did not disturb the remains, but took photographs and obtained a grid reference for the location before reporting the discovery to police.
 2. Forensic service, search and rescue specialists and detectives from the Criminal Investigation Branch attended the scene the following day. They found abandoned camping equipment and various items of rubbish and clothing. A backpack was found. In the backpack was a wallet which contained identification and paperwork in the name of Mr Godfrey.

3. A number of human bones, including a skull with a majority of teeth intact, were found in the general area, spread over a radius of about 20 metres. The spread of bones was consistent with animal interference.
4. The scene was forensically examined and photographed before the bones were collected and taken to the mortuary at the Royal Hobart Hospital. At the Royal Hobart Hospital, the bones were examined by Dr Donald Ritchey, an experienced forensic pathologist. He was unable to establish a cause of death. The remains were also examined by Dr Anne-Marie Williams, a forensic anthropologist. Dr Williams concluded that the remains were those of a middle-aged adult male of Caucasian ancestry. Subsequent DNA analysis carried out at the laboratory of Forensic Science Service Tasmania satisfies me that the remains were those of Mr Godfrey.
5. The investigation into the circumstances of Mr Godfrey's disappearance (and death) indicates that he was last seen by his daughter in February 2013 at Lucaston. At that time, he told her he had been evicted from his home, that he had made no other arrangements to find a new place to live and was intending to "go bush". Mr Godfrey told his daughter he would contact her in three months. She never saw her father again.
6. A taxi driver was subsequently identified as having dropped Mr Godfrey to the Springs on Mount Wellington on 1 March 2013. There is no evidence of Mr Godfrey being seen alive after that date.
7. I note that Mr Godfrey had a history of mental health difficulties, symptoms of which included suicidal ideation. It may be that his death was suicide, although nothing was located at the scene where his remains were located to suggest that this was so. Similarly, it may be that his death was due to misadventure or natural causes – however the evidence does not enable me to make a finding in this regard either.

Comments and Recommendations

8. The circumstances of Mr Dale Godfrey's death are not such as to require me to make any comments or recommendations pursuant to Section 28 of the *Coroners Act 1995*.
9. I convey my sincere condolences to the family and loved ones of Mr Godfrey.

Dated 20 April 2020 at Hobart in the State of Tasmania.

Simon Cooper
Coroner