

Frederick William, Percy and Kate Foster

1861 Census, 6 High Street, Newport, Isle of Wight, Hampshire

William F Foster	Head	25	M.R.C.S.Eng. & L.S.A.	Hambleton, Hampshire
			Genl. Practitioner	
Sarah Foster	Wife	22		Carisbrooke, Isle of Wight
Minnie	Sister	6		Hambleton, Hampshire
Annie Cooper	Servant	25	General servant	Arreton, Isle of Wight
George Sheppard	Servant	25	General servant	Hambleton, Hampshire

1871 Census, 6 High Street, Newport, Isle of Wight, Hampshire

William F Foster	Head	35	Gen. Practitioner & Town Councillor	Hambleton, Hampshire
Sarah Foster	Wife	33		Carisbrooke, Isle of Wight
Fanny Foster	Daughter	9	Scholar	Newport, Isle of Wight
Stanley Foster	Son	3		Newport, Isle of Wight
Maud Foster	Daughter	6 mths		Newport, Isle of Wight
Fanny A Foster	Sister	20		Hambleton, Hampshire
Archer J Foster	Nephew	5		Ashford, Kent
Mary Morgate	Servant	20	Cook – domestic	Ropley, Hampshire
Fanny Blake	Servant	19	Housemaid-domestic	Arreton, Isle of Wight
Jane Bussell	Servant	17	Nursemaid-domestic	Arreton, Isle of Wight
Thomas Saunders	Servant	25	Dispenser	Cowes, Isle of Wight

Hampshire Telegraph - 12 January 1870

Isle of Wight

Newport

The Extraordinary Fatality At Newport. – An inquest on the bodies of the three children of W. F. Foster, Esq., surgeon, who have died during the past week under the alarming circumstances previously mentioned in our columns, was opened at Mr. Foster's house on Friday, before F. Blake, Esq., coroner. The names of the children, stated in the order in which they died, are Frederick William, aged four years and four months; Percy, aged 14 months; and Kate, aged six years and six months. The Coroner briefly stated the reasons which had induced him to institute the present inquiry, and the jury then inspected the bodies, which presented no external appearances of an unnatural character. – Henry Waterworth, Esq., Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, then gave evidence at considerable length. On Sunday morning, about eight o'clock, he was called to see the deceased, Frederick William Foster, whom he found in bed, very prostrated and pulseless, and with countenance pale, and rather livid. He learnt that the child was quite well up to the middle of Saturday, when it was seized with vomiting. He prescribed, and saw the child about ten o'clock the same evening, when it was rapidly sinking. He could not ascertain from the father that it had taken anything of a deleterious character. On his second visit he found the child suffering from tetanic spasms, and it died about a quarter of an hour later. The tetanic spasms would be the result of some irritation of the nervous system. It appeared to him that there was some unnatural cause existing for the symptoms and death of the child. His opinion was that the child's blood had been poisoned in some way. The symptoms pointed to the action of some irritant poison or morbid agency, but in opposition to this theory he might mention that if any active poison had been taken in sufficient quantity to cause death, the symptoms would have been more violent and continuous. On Tuesday morning he was called to see the deceased child, Percy Foster, who, he was told, had shown

similar symptoms. The child did not then seem very ill, and he saw no cause for alarm. His attention was then called to the other deceased child, Kate Foster, who, he was told, had been sick since tea. He saw them both again at eleven o'clock. The little girl was worse, and more prostrated. At half-past twelve he saw them again, in company with his son, who volunteered to remain in the house, as Mr. Foster was attending a patient. The girl was again much worse; pulse feeble; and continued sickness. The baby (Percy) was in its cradle, and he noticed that its breathing was unnaturally quick. At five o'clock on Wednesday evening his son called him up, and he went to Mr. Foster's house. The baby was then very much prostrated; the little girl seemed to have rallied. They had a consultation, and decided to call in Dr. Castle. The baby was seized with tetanic spasms, though not so violent as in the other case, and it died about seven in the morning. They had hopes of the other child during the day, but towards evening she got weaker, and died about a quarter to twelve on Thursday morning, death having been preceded by the tetanic spasms of the limbs, which was noticeable in the other cases. The symptoms in all cases were so similar that he had no hesitation in stating that they were produced by the same cause, and in his opinion the symptoms pointed most decidedly to the action of some irritant poison. – Dr. Castle deposed to being present at the death of the baby (Percy), and he knew that the child died from profound shock to the nervous system excited by irritation of the alimentary canal, but what caused this irritation he did not know. He had never seen any natural disease exhibiting the train of symptoms. A *post mortem* examination would, in his opinion, show certain effects, and further investigation – analysis of the viscera – would be necessary to arrive at the cause. After the death of the baby, he saw the little girl, whose appearance, with other reasons, led him to the conclusion that she survived the immediate shock, and was suffering from secondary fever, which in all probability would carry her off. He last saw her at ten o'clock on Wednesday night, when she was gradually sinking, and she subsequently died as Mr. Waterworth had stated. – Mr. Stratton, on behalf of Mr. Foster, stated, in reply to observations by jurors, that cough mixture was the only medicine the children had taken for some time previous to their death, and Mr. Foster was strongly of opinion that the symptoms described by Mr. Waterworth and Dr. Castle were not produced by any food the children had taken. The two surviving children had been fed on exactly the same diet, and they were now perfectly healthy. – The Foreman said that statement would relieve the minds of the public of many disquieting apprehensions, as there were rumours abroad that the deaths of the children resulted from their having taken something deleterious in their food. – The jury were unanimously of opinion that a *post mortem* examination was necessary, and it was thereupon directed to be made by Mr. Waterworth and Dr. Castle. – The inquest was then adjourned. – The Foreman, on behalf of the jury, expressed their sincere sympathy with Mr. and Mrs. Foster in this most distressing bereavement. – The inquiry again commenced at 7 p.m. the same evening, when Dr. Waterworth deposed as follows: Since I gave evidence this morning I and Dr. Castle, assisted by my son, have made a *post mortem* examination on the bodies of the three children. We found in all three of them decided marks of inflammation in the stomach and small intestines, where were more or less of the symptoms we expected to find. The marks in some cases were so decided as to lead us to the conclusion that they were caused by some irritant poison, but I am not prepared to say what particular poison. No natural disease would have produced such effects, and we discovered no natural disease of any importance. The organs, with the exception of those I have mentioned, were comparatively healthy. –By a juror: If there were poisons in the bodies an expert analyst would be able to detect it. –By the coroner: Any irritant poison would be likely to produce the same symptoms and the same appearances. We took from the body of each child the stomach, a portion of the small intestines, a kidney, and the liver. We placed them in three separate sealed jars, with a small quantity of fluid from each stomach, besides some other matter, which was placed in a small glass bottle. – Dr. Castle, in answer to the coroner, said he agreed with Dr. Waterworth's evidence in every particular. –Dr. Foster, the father of the deceased children, was next examined, and said he had two other children, a girl between seven and eight years old, and a boy two years and three months old, and that all the children had been taking a cough mixture, which he had prescribed, consisting of a mixture of squills, syrup of poppies, and ipecacuanha. He thought that the eldest boy, Willie, and the boy who is now alive, took the same mixture. He next gave the names of the inmates of the house, described the food of which the deceased children had partaken,

and said that no irritant poison was kept in the house, or within reach of the children in the surgery. The cook occasionally went into the surgery for some preparation to clean the copper utensils. A number of questions were put to the witness by the jury with the object of ascertaining if the deceased children had eaten any mistletoe or holly berries, or any colouring matter off any Christmas toys or ornaments. –Lucy Glasspool, the nurse, was examined at considerable length as to the food, &c., that the children had eaten, and to the medicine which they had taken, but nothing particular was elicited. – The examination was adjourned at half-past ten o'clock p.m. until ten o'clock on Tuesday morning. –The three children were buried at the Newport cemetery at nine o'clock on Sunday morning. They were in separate coffins, but placed in one grave.

Hampshire Telegraph - 15 January 1870

Isle of Wight

INQUEST ON THE BODIES OF THREE CHILDREN AT NEWPORT

The adjourned inquest as to the cause of the deaths of Frederick William, Percy, and Kate Foster, was resumed at Dr. Foster's house at ten o'clock on Tuesday morning. After the jury had assembled, the coroner, F. Blake, Esq., said he had received by post that morning a letter from the Secretary of State, stating that he had authorised the employment of Dr. Alfred Taylor to make an analysis of the bodies of the three children, and he requested that those portions of the bodies which had been placed in sealer jars should be sent to Dr. Taylor, at Guy's Hospital. Agreeably with these instructions, Mr. Superintendent Grapes was immediately despatched to London in charge of the three jars marked Nos. 1, 2, and 3, together with two glass bottles containing the remains of some of the cough mixture, which had been prescribed for the children. –Thomas William Saunders deposed: I am dispenser to Mr. Foster. I was with him first in that capacity for a year and ten months, and then left for about four months, when I returned about two years and five months ago and have been in his employ ever since. During both those periods I have dispensed the greater part of his medicines. I had been employed about 15 months in dispensing medicines in Dr. Wilkins's surgery many years ago, but there was an interval of about four years between the time I left Dr. Wilkins's and my first coming to Mr. Foster's. Four or five days before the deceased child, Willie, was taken ill, Mrs. Foster asked me to make up some medicine for him and his younger brother Stanley and Kate. I had previously made up medicine for the children at Mrs. Foster's request. On this occasion she asked for a cough mixture. I made up the mixture from the prescription produced, which is my own handwriting. Syrup of poppies, one drachm and a half, two elixirs, 30 minims of ipecacuanha wine, one and a half drachm of tincture of tolu, and one drachm of simple syrup, water to make, with the other ingredients, one ounce and a half mixture; dose, one teaspoonful every four hours. I made up a mixture from that prescription, and put a label on the bottle with, I believe, the name of "Willie". The label was washed off. I also put the name of Willie on the prescription. After making the mixture I took it to the kitchen and there left it. I don't remember what day that was, but it was in the week that Willie was taken ill. Mr. Foster, who had seen the prescription, said he would alter Kate's and he wrote out the other prescription now produced. It consists of ipecacuanha wine, 1 drachm and 15 minims; syrup of poppies, 3 drachms; chloric ether, 15 minims; compound tragacanth powder, 50 grains; simple syrup, 3 drachms; water to make one ounce and a half mixture; a teaspoonful every four hours. I made up the mixture from the prescription, and I believe Mr. Foster wrote the label, which I put on the bottle. The name "Kate" was on it. On the same evening I made up a third bottle of my original prescription, to be taken by Willie and Stanley alone. That was made on Friday evening, as Willie was taken ill on Saturday. –By the foreman: There was plenty of light. I believe I looked at the label of every bottle before using any of its contents. I don't remember having dispensed any poison that day. –By the Coroner: After making up the mixtures on the Friday morning I believe I took them into the kitchen. It

was about six or seven o'clock. Perhaps the children took some that evening. I am not sure they did. – The Coroner and jury, accompanied by the witness, Mr. Foster, Dr. Waterworth, and Dr. Castle, then proceeded to inspect the surgery, and very carefully observed the relative position of the bottles. Witness continued; The bottles of drugs which I have just pointed out to the jury are in the same position as they were when I made up the mixtures. The two bottles, one containing a solution of the arsenite of potash and the other a tincture of Indian hemp, both marked "Poison," are on a shelf immediately over the two bottles containing ipecacuanba wine and paregoric elixir. Every one is liable to mistakes; but I believe that I am clear of having taken anything from one of the bottles marked "Poison," instead of from the bottles underneath. It is my usual habit—and I don't think I departed from it—never to take anything from a bottle, without looking at the label. I don't remember ever having dispensed medicine for a bottle without looking at the label. The bottles containing ipecacuanha wine and paregoric elixir have been in the same place ever since I have been employed in the surgery. They are bottles which I have been in the habit of using almost daily throughout the winter months. Notwithstanding my long familiarity with the position of the bottles, I invariably look at the labels before using them. I never knew the bottle containing arsenite of potash to have been placed by mistake on the shelf where the ipecacuanha wine is. I usually stand at the shelf and put the bottle back directly I have used it. –By Mr. Stratton: The bottle containing arseniate of iron, which is in the shape of a powder, is in a different part of the surgery from these bottles, I don't recollect that there are any other preparations in the surgery containing arsenic. –By the Foreman: The arseniate of iron is near the tap. The servants never go there for water. It is not near any of the ingredients mentioned in the prescriptions. The servants sometimes go to the surgery, when I am not there, and take vitriol for cleaning copper. It is on the same shelf as the arsenite of potash, but there are about eight bottles between them. The cook generally takes the vitrol. I never knew any of the other servants to do so. All the servants have access to the surgery. By the Coroner: On Saturday afternoon, about two o'clock, I heard that Willie was sick. He came into the surgery between ten and eleven o'clock in the morning of that day, as he was often in the habit of doing when I was there. He seemed alright then, and cheerful. Nothing was given to him in the surgery. If he had taken anything from the bottles I must have seen it. He did not remain more than a few minutes. That was the last I saw of him till he was dead. He died on Sunday morning, and after his death—I believe it was about five o'clock in the evening of the same day—both the bottles which contained the mixtures made up on the previous Friday evening were brought to me in the surgery by the groom, George Sheppard. He said they wanted some more medicine for Stanley and Kate. He was not in the habit of bringing empty bottles to the surgery, and he did not say why he did so on that occasion. The bottles were empty when brought, and the one which contained the mixture for Willie and Stanley was washed out and the label washed off. This was not done with the other bottle. Willie and Stanley's bottle was a three ounce bottle, containing 24 doses, and Kate's was half the size. No parts of the contents of either bottle had been thrown away at my request or suggestion. I don't recollect hearing of any being thrown away until Sunday evening, when I heard the nurse say that Fanny (Mr. Foster's eldest child) had poured away part of the mixture that Willie had been taking. When the groom brought back the bottles, I put up another mixture from my original prescription for Stanley, in an ounce-and-a-half bottle, and one for Kate in the bottle she had had before. By the Foreman: I don't know whether both Willie and Stanley drank out of the mixture I made up on Friday evening. I was not present at the time when any of the mixture was taken by the children. By the Coroner: On the Sunday evening, after making up the two bottles of mixture I took them to the kitchen and stood them on the dresser. The gas was burning when I put them up, and I believe, but I am not positive about it, that I looked at the labels when I put up those two mixtures. I dispensed all the cough mixtures for the children. About a fortnight or three weeks before Percy, the baby, was taken ill I put up a mixture from the prescription produced, which Mr. Foster gave me. It contains the following preparations—Ipecacuanha wine, 50 minims; solution of the acetate of ammonia, three drachms; simple syrup, half-an-ounce; paregoric elixir, 45 minims, water to make one ounce and a half mixture. Mr. Foster has some of the same mixture now in the surgery. On Saturday last the nursemaid brought down the bottle containing about half of the last mixture made for Percy, and she was going to throw it away, when I said "Stop, give that to me, I want it for Mr. Foster." I afterwards gave it to Mr. Foster. There is

also a small portion left of the mixture which Kate was taking, when she was taken ill. I believe that was brought into the surgery and put on the counter by the nursemaid on the day after Kate's death. I poured away the greater portion of it, and put the bottle out of Mr. Foster's sight, because I thought it would upset him if he saw it. That was my only reason. On Friday evening Mr. Foster came and told me to seal down the medicine which was left. I said that I had poured it away, and put the bottles out of sight. I had not at that time had Percy's brought to me, when I gave Mr. Foster Percy's bottle on Saturday morning I gave him at the same time the bottle containing the small remains of Kate's cough mixture. I now remember that on Saturday morning, when the nurse brought me the remains of Percy's mixture, she told me Fanny had thrown away part of Willie's mixture, and she gave that as a reason for intending to throw away Percy's. –The Foreman: Have you missed any poison from the surgery? –Witness: Yes. On Thursday night and Friday morning I went through my day-book to see what quantity of arsenite of potash I had used for private patients since the 5th of August, when I had six ounces put into the bottle, which was quite empty before. I added to that a calculation from memory of what I used for a parish patient, and which would not be entered on the day-book, and I ascertained the quantity remaining in the bottle. I have found that I had used 4 ounces 7 drachms and 35 minims, and all now left is 6 drachms, leaving a deficiency of 2 drachms and 28 minims. –The foreman stated that every time the preparation was measured out in small quantities there would be a loss. –Mr. H. M. Wavell expressed a similar opinion. –By the foreman: It is quite possible that I might have used some of the arsenite of potash for other club or parish patients besides the one I have mentioned. If four unremembered mixtures containing two scruples each had been put up it would account for the deficiency. –By Mr. Stratton: The nitrate of potash, some of which is included in Percy's prescription, is kept in a drawer. Mr. Foster went out of the island on the 7th of December, and was absent nine or ten days. Mrs. Foster went with him. All the five children were left at home, and during that time they were, so far as I know, in their usual state of health. Mr. Knapp, who was then, or had been, Mr. Waterworth's assistant, was staying at Mr. Foster's house, attending to his practice. About a week after Mr. Foster left home, Mr. Knapp came to the surgery and produced a bottle containing liniment, and marked poison. He asked me what it contained. I asked him why he wanted to know; he said "Willie had been drinking it." I told him it contained strong aconite, glycerine, sulphurous acid, and camphor liniment, which I had dispensed for the children's chilblains from one of Mr. Foster's prescriptions. I put up an emetic by Mr. Knapp's direction, and after it was administered I went to the nursery and saw Willie, who seemed all right. The emetic had not acted, and we gave him another, which did act. I took the remainder of the liniment from Mr. Knapp, and I believe it is in surgery now. I saw Willie again in the evening when he seemed to have recovered. He did not appear to have suffered from it afterwards. No other liniment was sent from the surgery, nor anything else that would be likely to cause injury. I live in the house, and sleep over the surgery. The only thing in the shape of sweets kept in the surgery are santonine lozenges, which the children cannot reach. By the Coroner: I never said I knew something which I would not tell till after the inquest. By the Foreman: I am not able to give an opinion as to the probably cause of death. I have never heard the servants speak unkindly to the children—they seem very fond of them. I have not heard any of the servants recently use unkind expressions to Mr. and Mrs. Foster. I always considered it a very happy household. –The enquire was then adjourned for an hour.

On the re-assembling of the jury, Mr. Saunders, the dispenser, requested the coroner to inform him who had said that he knew something which he should not tell till after the inquest? The Coroner said it was not for a witness to ask him questions. He had heard the matter mentioned, and he thought it was his duty to put the question to the witness. He might add that he was quite satisfied with the answer which Mr. Saunders gave. –The Foreman: I think the jury are quite satisfied with Mr. Saunders's evidence altogether. –Mary Norgate, the cook, was then called, and deposed: I have been eight months in Mr. Foster's service. I remember the day on which Frederick William was taken ill. I heard of it in the afternoon. He was in the kitchen with me in the morning. He was often in the habit of doing so. He seemed quite well, and had nothing to eat or drink in the kitchen. His lunch was sent up to him after he had left, which consisted of jam bread. The housemaid or I spread the jam, which was home-made. They

had had some from the same jar a great many times. I did not see him again from the time he left the kitchen till dinner time, when I was called into the dining-room on account of his being sick. I next saw him when I went to bed; he was then in bed. I did not see him take any medicine. The baby, Percy, breakfasted in the kitchen on the following (Tuesday) morning. He had bread and butter and coffee, as usual. Between breakfast and dinner I believe he was in the nursery. I don't know whether he dined in the kitchen or the nursery. In the morning, before dinner, the nurse brought the baby down for his bottle, and he then seemed very well. He was sick just after dinner, and he had some cold mutton and bread crumbs. I cut it up, and the nursemaid put some soup over it to moisten it. All in the house had some of the same mutton and pea-soup. –On Saturday morning the nurse came down for the jam bread and took it to the nursery. I believe that the two little girls were in the kitchen at the time I went up with the nurse. Before Willie went in to dinner on Saturday, he was in the kitchen, where he was sick, and I asked him what he had eaten to make himself sick. He said “nothing, but my lunch, I ate mine and Stanley's too.” All the jam bread spread that day was eaten. None of the jam has been used by the children since that Saturday. They had lunch every day, except Sunday. Mrs. Foster generally gave instructions about what kind of lunch the children were to have, and she sometimes cut it up herself, and when she did not give instructions I gave what I thought best. The lunch generally consisted of bread and butter, jam bread, or cake. I was sometimes in the habit of carrying a saucer into the surgery, into which I poured a little vitriol from the vitriol bottle, which I always found in one place. I took it whenever I required it, but Friday was the day I invariably went for it. If the dispenser was present, he gave it to me, if not I took it myself. I only took a small quantity each time, which I immediately mixed with brick dust, and which I used for the purpose of cleaning the kitchen copper utensils, and I never left any of it with the children's reach. I have not seen any mint drops about the house, as the children at Christmas were only allowed chocolate sweets, nor have I in my bedroom liniment or artificial flowers. The walls of the bedroom in which some of the children slept were covered with green paper. Never heard anyone speak unkindly of the children, and I was very fond of them. I do not know anything about the medicine. Mr. Saunders does not use the kitchen fire for preparing medicines, as he has a fire place in connection with the surgery. –Fanny Blake and Lovedy Glasspell, the nursemaid, were also examined. –George Sheppard, groom to Mr. Foster, deposed: On Sunday evening, January 2nd, I received from Miss Minnie Foster two medicine bottles. She told me to give them to Saunders for more medicine. The dispenser put up some mixture for the two children, Stanley and Kate, while I was there. He took them to the kitchen. I did not notice the bottles from which he took the ingredients. I have not said that if it could be shown that the children's deaths were caused by design, I could point out the person who did it. I never said anything to this effect. –Mrs. Foster, mother of the deceased children, deposed: I have frequently desired Saunders to make up mixtures for the children before the time Willie was taken ill. All the children except the eldest girl had been taking medicine. On the Friday or the Saturday on which Willie was taken ill I think a bottle of the mixture was made for Kate, Willie, and Stanley, Percy having a separate bottle. Up to the Saturday morning all the children were healthy, with the exception of their coughs. On that morning Willie breakfasted with us. He was running about with me till about ten o'clock, when I sent him to the nursery. He was well then, and very cheerful. I believe on that morning I directed one of the servants to spread some jam-bread for the children. I think I was in the kitchen when it was done. I saw no more of Willie till dinner time, when he was called to dinner. He was rather behind, and came sauntering into the room, and was sick almost directly. I took him to the back door to give him a little air, and he was soon after sick again. He came back to the dining room, where he was sick again. I thought it was just possible he had taken an overdose of medicine, and I went and got the bottle to show it to Mr. Foster. I remained with him during the night. There is a drawer in my pantry containing nails and string, which Willie was fond of getting to make whips with. There is a box of beetle poison at the back of the drawer, but Willie could not have gone to the pantry on the Saturday after he was sick. The box has been in the drawer about a twelve month. I have never seen it opened for many months until this afternoon. The quantity in the box is less than when I last saw it. Willie might have got to the drawer on Saturday morning and on other occasions without being noticed. The other children have also been to the same drawer, but not so frequently as Willie had. On the Sunday afternoon I told my elder daughter to go to the nursery and tell

Lovedy to pour away Willie's medicine, wash the label off the bottle, and ask Saunders to put up some more for Stanley. My reason for doing this was that Stanley was the youngest, and I thought he should have mixture which was not so strong. I don't remember whether I gave any of the mixture to Percy on Sunday, Monday, or Tuesday. On Tuesday morning Kate and Percy both seemed well, with the exceptions of their coughs. Kate remained in the nursery that morning, and I believe she had jam bread for lunch, with Minnie and Stanley. She dined with us. She had a small piece of cold mutton and rice. She ate heartily of cold plum pudding. After dinner Percy was brought to the parlour, and seemed as lively and happy as ever. The nurse then came for him and took him to the nursery. About half-an-hour afterwards I was sent for. I found he had been sick, and I brought him down. While we were at tea Kate had an attack of coughing, which ended in her being sick. I don't remember if she had any cough mixture that day. She sometimes helped herself to the mixture which she measured with a teaspoon. It was very sweet and they liked it. All the servants appear to be very fond of the children, and I have great faith in them all. I am quite at a loss to suggest any cause of the deaths of the three children. —The enquiry, which had lasted eleven hours, was adjourned to Monday week.

Hampshire Telegraph - 29 January 1870

The Fatality Amongst Children—Verdict of the Jury. — On Tuesday morning the Coroner, F. Blake, Esq., received Dr. Taylor's report of the analysis of the stomach, &c., of Dr. Foster's three children. Two hours afterwards he called together the jury and the medical gentlemen who attended upon the deceased, and read to them Dr. Taylor's report of the analysis with the letter accompanying the report. The Coroner, before reading the report, said the jury could not properly give their verdict today, as they had adjourned until Thursday morning, but he considered it his duty to let them know, as soon as possible, the results of the analysis. The coroner and the jury again met within the Council Chamber at ten o'clock on the morning of Thursday last. Drs. Waterworth, Castle, and Foster were present. Dr. Taylor's report is very elaborate, we can only give a summary of it. The livers, kidneys, and spleens presented no appearance of disease or of any morbid changes. —*William Foster:* The mucous or lining membrane of the stomach was much reddened, as if from inflammation, but there was no effusion of blood beneath the membrane. It was examined by a magnifying glass, but no mineral or vegetable substance and no food of any kind could be discovered upon it. The coats of the stomach were firm, and no ulceration or corrosion of the lining membrane was visible, such as is usually produced by mineral or metallic irritant poisons. The portions of the intestines sent were reddened in patches as from inflammation. —*Percy Foster:* At the larger end of the stomach the coats were thin, softened, and dissolved, as from *post mortem* solution, which is not unusual in the case of infants dying suddenly. There were no marks of inflammation about it such as would be produced by irritant poison, and there was no appearance of disease. In one part of the small intestines there was a state of intus-susception, or locked bowel—i.e., one portion of the intestines being inverted into another portion, leading to strangulation and partial stoppage of the bowels. Above this point the coats were reddened and inflamed. —*Kate Foster:* The mucous, or lining membrane, presented several patches of redness, but there was no effused blood beneath. The coats were firm, and there was no softening, hardening, abrasion, ulceration, or perforation. The intestines presented some small patches of redness, which might arise from inflammation, but there was nothing to indicate the direct action of a powerful irritant poison, likely to cause death in 24 or 30 hours. —The learned professor next described at length the various tests or processes resorted to in order to discover the presence of poison in the stomachs and intestines, as also the chemical analysis of the contents of the phials, &c., and concludes as follows: --The conclusions which I draw from this examination and analysis are: 1.—That the appearances seen in the stomachs and intestines of William and Kate Foster are such as might be produced by the action of an irritant poison like arsenic. 2.—That it is impossible from these appearances alone to say whether they were caused by irritant poison or natural disease, and, therefore, no opinion could be safely expressed in the absence of a chemical analysis of the viscera. 3.—That the only certain

distinction between the effects of poison and disease in these doubtful cases is this: If the inflammatory redness depended on the irritant poison, such as arsenic, it would be inevitably found, either in contact with the parts inflamed or deposited in the substance of the liver, spleen, and kidney. Although it may be removed from the stomach and bowels by vomiting, purging, or other causes, it would still remain in and be detected in the substance of the liver and kidney, as a result of absorption and deposition in these parts while the person is living. If not present in these organs in a case in which death has taken place within 24 or 30 hours, it may be fairly assumed that arsenic could not have been the cause of the appearances, or of death. These remarks apply equally to other mineral or metallic irritant poisons, which could produce the appearance of inflammation observed on the stomachs and intestines of these children. 4—Having found that there was no arsenic or other irritant poison in the viscera of the children, I am of the opinion that the appearances seen in the stomachs and intestines of William and Kate Foster were not caused by irritant poison, but by natural disease. This view is corroborated by the fact that there was no effusion of blood in the stomachs and intestines, such as is commonly observed in irritant poisoning, and so far as the case of Kate Foster is concerned there was neither blood nor poison in the evacuation passed by her. 5.—These observations, so far as the chemical analysis is concerned, apply with equal force to the case of the infant Percy Foster; but there was in this child a diseased condition of the bowels (intus-susception) which is sufficient to account for the inflamed appearance of the intestines and for death. The stomach did not in this case present any of the appearances usually caused by arsenic, which destroys life in 30 hours. Inflammation of the bowels is one of the effects of the disease under which the child was labouring. Had it been caused by arsenic or other irritant poison of the like nature, some traces of it would have been found in the parts inflamed, especially as there was partial obstruction of the bowels. There was no poison either in these parts or in the liver and other organs, and the child had not survived long enough to allow of the entire disappearance of the poison. —The general inference which I draw from this investigation is, that the three children died from natural causes, and not from irritant poison.” —The Coroner said, thinking it might aid the jury in giving their verdict, if it could be ascertained what disease could conduce to the symptoms which resulted in the sudden deaths of the children, and to further this end he has written to Dr. Taylor, and requested him to give the jury the benefit of his opinion. Dr. Taylor, in compliance with that request, had sent a supplementary report, which he would read. The Coroner, after reading the report, requested Drs. Waterworth and Castle, who had attended upon the deceased children during their illness, to give their opinion upon the supplementary report. —Dr. Castle said he could not put any confidence in Dr. Taylor’s opinion, as expressed in the supplementary report, about the probably disease which so suddenly and mysteriously carried the three children off. Dr. Taylor was a most eminent analyst, but he could not say he was equally eminent as a physician; and although they would all bow to his opinion that the children did not die from the effects of poison, yet he could not agree with him as to the cause of the extraordinary and similar symptoms which resulted in the deaths of the three children within so short a period of each other. He was decidedly opposed to Dr. Taylor’s opinion as the infant Percy having died from intus-susception of the bowels, as the child had had frequent evacuations during his illness. Dr. Castle further stated that he had been 30 years in practice, and he could solemnly say that he had never, during that period, known any person, young or old, attacked with any disease which produced the same symptoms which preceded the deaths of Dr. Foster’s children. —Dr. Waterworth entirely coincided with Dr. Castle. —The jury, after having deliberated alone for about half-an-hour, returned the following verdict: “The jury are of the opinion that the deceased children did not die from the effects of poison, but the disease which caused death is not conclusively shown by the evidence.”

*Transcription and research by Ian Roach for the Friends of Newport and Catosbrooke Cemeteries ©
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