

A Story from the Adelaide Gaol

An Unsolved Crime – (The Knightsbridge-Kensington Murder)

Saturday night, the 2nd January 1909.

Police Constable Hyde, aged 35 years and a member of the force since 1903, was on his nightly rounds of the Kensington District. It was just after 9.00pm.

Constable Hyde was feeling tired as earlier that day he had played in the local cricket match. As he walked along Shipsters Road alongside the Marryattville Hotel, he stopped and spoke to the publican's wife. The woman asked Constable Hyde "Can you see those three men under the tree on Kensington Road?"

Hyde replied "Yes I am keeping a eye on them."

Looking from across the roadway, he could not see their faces clearly. He could only distinguish the outline of the men in the moonlight,. They appeared suspicious to the Constable

The men wore overcoats and they had their hats pulled down over their faces and yet the weather was quite hot and humid with rain threatening. They were arguing amongst themselves. Two of the men were berating a third about being late. The language was indecent and could be heard by persons in the vicinity.

Constable Hyde began walking towards the men. As he got near them, they immediately left the cover of the tree they had been standing under and walked several yards to Eastry Street (now Tusmore Ave). Constable Hyde walked up to the three men and said that he wanted to talk to them. They turned from him and two of the men started running along Eastry Street.

Constable Hyde reached out and grabbed the third man as he prepared to run. A struggle began and the man called out to his fleeing companions, "Help me!"

One of the men stopped running and turned and came back to the fence line in Eastry Street. The second man on reaching the fence line drew a revolver and fired 2 shots towards the Constable.

Constable Hyde began to feel for 'something in his own pocket'.

The struggling man thought Hyde was trying to get his gun out, but when he realized Hyde was not armed, he called to the other two men "He only has a pipe, no gun."

Constable Hyde had a tobacco pipe in his pocket. He wanted it to appear that he was armed.

The man who fired the shots rested his arm on the fence post, took aim and fired a third bullet.

The man who had been struggling with Constable Hyde broke free and ran over to join the other two men. One of the men shouted to Constable Hyde "I will shoot you, you ----!" and fired three more shots. One hit Constable Hyde, the other 2 shots narrowly missed two people sitting on their front verandah in

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Ringmore Road. The men then ran towards Cooper's Paddock and began jumping fences.

A young man, Mr Shuttleworth, came out of his house and into the back yard to see where the noise of the shots had come from. One of the fleeing men thought that he was trying to intercept them and fired a shot at him. Luckily, it missed.

The fleeing men ran along Statenborough Street heading east towards the nearby hills.

Meanwhile assistance came quickly to Constable Hyde.

Mrs Schuettze and her cousin were first on the scene and by a quirk of fate, the constable was known to her. They had grown up together at Port MacDonald in the south-east of the State.

Constable Hyde was lying on the ground with a bullet wound in the cheek. He recognized her and tried to sit up and spoke "Alice, what is that blood on you? Can I have a drink of water?"

Several shopkeepers came forward, one was sent to the nearby police station to get Constable Drenckhan who was in charge of the station. The Constable told the messenger to ring a local doctor, Doctor Borthwick. Constable Drenckhan then hurried to the scene. The messenger also rang the Norwood Police Station telling them what had happened.

Mrs Schuettze, a trained nurse, began giving first aid to the stricken constable. The wounded constable was placed on a window shutter to be used as a stretcher and was taken to the nearby police station. Shortly after, a police ambulance arrived and the wounded policeman was taken to the Adelaide Hospital. Mrs Schuettze accompanied him. He regained consciousness briefly but then fell back into unconsciousness.

The news of the shooting had reached the City Police Office where 30 men who had just come off shift were sent in cabs to Marryatville. Detectives Whittle, Sullivan, and Allchurch were in charge.

The police then began searching the paddocks around the scene of the shooting and the roadway where the shooting occurred. A mask, 2 hats, and 2 overcoats were found nearby. And across the street from where the constable had fallen, a revolver was found.

At 5.00am on the Sunday morning a tracker arrived on the scene. He tracked the three men over fences and several roads towards the suburban Burnside area, but gave up at the foothills due to rain that had fallen during the night.

That morning another coat was handed to police. It had been found above Burnside Village in the foothills.

Mounted police began scouring the foothills at Beaumont, Burnside and towards the Magill area.

Meanwhile, doctors had operated on Constable Hyde who was still in a critical condition and unconscious. He had been shot in the face.

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His mother had been sent for at Port MacDonald, also his brother, a City Policeman.

It was thought the three men had intentions of robbing the Tramways Office, hence the long overcoats in an attempt to disguise themselves. The police advised people to keep an eye out for three men travelling together, although they may have separated since their escape.

Constable Hyde had been stationed at Marryatville the previous year where he had taken the late Constable Ring's place. (Constable Ring had been shot and killed 12 months previously by Joe Coleman at Glenelg.

Descriptions of the wanted men were sent out. The descriptions were: one man, aged approximately 25-30 years, five foot eight inches tall, dark complexion and a moustache; the second man, aged 25-30 years, about five foot eight inches tall, fair complexion and a moustache; the third man, age about 27, about six feet tall, a strong build, ruddy complexion.

One witness, a Mr Williams from the Tram Office, stated that early in the evening a man wearing a long style Military overcoat, came into the office to get two half crowns change from half a sovereign. He, the man, had taken a very good look around the place, sizing up what and who was in the office.

It became evident later that the shooting was not meant to happen. As the men were possibly going to attempt to rob the Tramways Office. A robbery gone wrong!

Other witnesses gave police details about the men's behaviour leading up to the shooting. Several had heard two of the men arguing with the third in dreadful language, saying that he was late. That was when Constable Hyde had begun walking over to the men to talk to them about their behaviour, and find out what they were 'up to' and at the same time try to see their faces in the semi darkness.

Police spent the next several days interviewing witnesses and scouring the surrounding areas. The newspapers ran a story about the shooting in great detail.

Several other details emerged from the investigation. Several weeks earlier on Dequetteville Terrace on the city limits, two women were held up at gunpoint by three men. The women screamed and the assailants fled when a crowd began to gather. And on the night of December 27th, when Mr Smith of Dulwich disturbed burglars at his home, they fired 6 shots at him in their flight. It may have been the work of the three wanted men.

It was established by police that each night after supper Constable Hyde whilst on his rounds would check on a horse in a stable in Eastry Street. He had a half share in this horse with a Mr Correll.

On the night of the shooting Constable Drenckhan had been patrolling in Bishops Place and hearing gunshots had returned to the station. A young lad on a bicycle came in and told him what had happened.

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Then another man came in and the Constable told the messenger to ring the local doctor and the Norwood Station.

Constable Hyde died on the Monday without regaining consciousness. His mother and brother were with him.

On the Tuesday, Doctor Ramsay Smith held a Coroners Inquest into the shooting. Doctor Ramsay Smith, the well-known City Coroner, was a no-nonsense man. He had, on past occasions, been very critical at Inquests. If the criticism was warranted, he pulled no punches.

One question he asked was, "Why was the constable not armed?" The answer given was that on night duty the constables were armed, but Constable Hyde had not taken a station firearm with him as they were old horse cavalry revolvers and were too big and cumbersome to carry around. Although Constable Hyde did have a personal, smaller firearm, he was not carrying it on the night.

Doctor Ramsay Smith brought in a verdict that the deceased met his death through a bullet wound inflicted by a person aided by two others, and that one could infer that they were abroad that night for illegal purposes. Constable Hyde was murdered by persons unknown.

The police put all they had into trying to track down the men. Reports came in of several men seen walking along the River Murray bank heading up country.

Constable Hyde's funeral left his brother's house in Power street on the Wednesday, escorted by the Police Band, Mounted Troopers and Foot Police. The funeral procession walked to the Catholic Section at West Terrace Cemetery via Carrington Street.

Over the next few weeks reports came in of men moving through the river towns.

It was thought at one time that the men may have been from Broken Hill, as at that time there was a strike at Broken Hill and many men were out of work. At that time Adelaide had a rash of burglaries. Various city and suburban establishments had their safes blown open.

Late in February it was reported that two men had been arrested in Sydney for stealing from a dwelling at Randwick. The Sydney police believed the men may have been implicated in the Adelaide shooting. Bail was refused until the authorities could check details supplied by the Adelaide police.

The men were later cleared from the lack of evidence.

The killers of constable Hyde were never caught. They have taken their secret to the grave. By estimating their ages and possible life span it is possible that one or more could have been alive until the 1960s.

Someone, a friend or relative, may know the answer.

In November 1909 a plaque was unveiled at the scene of the shooting in Eastry Street. Inscribed with the Constable's name and details, this plaque was until the 1980s near the front gate of a house in Eastry Street (now

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Tusmore Avenue).

Later the house was demolished and the plaque was put on the wall of a shop which was built on the site, back from the roadway.

Originally, a tree was also planted and a metal surround placed around the tree. The plaque was fixed to the metal surround and when the house was built the surround and tree were removed. The plaque was fixed to the front gate post, then to the shop front wall.

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