

15/03/1899

EVIDENCE CHARLES GILBERT

Charles Gilbert, licensee of the Brian Boru Hotel, Gatton, deposed that on Tuesday, 27th December, a man named William M'Neill, between 9 and 10 o'clock, came up to the hotel and said, "Charlie, where is the police station?"

The three Murphy's are lying dead in a paddock.

As M'Neill was getting on his horse he understood him to say that "it must have been an accident, as the horse was dead also" he was excited.

He asked him where it was, and he said the second hill from the town, on the left-hand side.

This was hardly a correct idea, because it was the third hill.

M'Neill was shown the police station, and he rode off.

He harnessed his horse and started away with men named James, Davitt, and Wilson. M'Neill and Sergeant Arrell, on horseback, passed them on the way. These were at the sliprails of Moran's paddock when they came up.

The sliprails were on the ground, across the entrance.

There were wheel tracks turning off the road into the paddock, the turn being gradual. He did not notice that the track "wobbled."

They got out of the buggy and the other two dismounted. M'Neill was looking at the rails, and said when he got there first the sliprails were up, but when he came out he left them down. He noticed the rails, and saw that the cart had been driven over them. He could not see marks on the rails.

The rails were not lifted up while he was there. The first two rails were about 2in. apart; the third one was 4in. or 5in. away.

The latter was furthest from the road.

He looked at the ground between the rails and saw there was no wheel track between the rails, so that the track was broken from the first rail to the last.

Sergeant Arrell and M'Neill led their horses along the track.

They followed the track for about half-a mile and came upon three bodies, a dog-cart, and a dead horse.

When he went near the bodies he had no doubt a murder had been committed. He recognised the bodies as those of Michael, Norah, and Helen Murphy. They examined first the body of Norah, and he noticed a wound on her head and that her hands were tied.

Her clothes were drawn up, and the legs up to the knees were exposed. The hat was fastened by a hat pin, and lay a little to one side. She was lying on her right side on a rug evenly spread out, the head being off the rug.

Her body was about eight or nine yards from the others. There were no signs of a struggle near Norah's body, or footprints.

The ground was of a sandy, soft nature, with no grass upon it. Tracks ought easily to be seen upon it.

Helen's hands were tied with a pocket-handkerchief, but her clothes were not disarranged. Michael lay with his back towards her.

The conditions gave him the impression that the bodies had been laid there after death.

On examining the horse he saw a bullet wound in the forehead.

The reins had been pulled through the saddle rings and were lying loose under the animal's head. In the trap there was a waterproof mackintosh, buggy cushion, and a red cloak.

In Michael's hand there was an empty purse. A strap was lying across his thigh. He could not swear that the purse shown him was the same as that in Michael's hand.

He went all round to see if he could find any tracks, and saw nothing except two or three hoof prints about twenty yards in the direction of the sliprails from where Norah's body lay. Wilson drew attention to these. They appeared to have been made by a light shoe or racing plate.

The tracks could not be followed; they were made in a clear spot, where a log had been burnt.

He did not notice anything round Norah's neck.

He saw M'Neill talking to the sergeant; but did not hear anything that he said.

The tracks of the horse struck him as having been made by a horse grazing. He did not think the marks could have been made by hoofs recently trimmed and without shoes.

He formed the impression that Norah's body had been placed after death where it was.

As he drove in his buggy he could discern the wheel tracks quite plainly.

The bodies were afterwards removed to the Brian Boru Hotel.

He took some interest in racing. The only person in the district that he knew who used racing plates was a man named McEwan, and he believed he used them on race days. He did not think McEwan had any horses contesting at the Mount Sylvia or Burnside races on Boxing Day.

18/10/1899

It was not true that when the doctor arrived there was a crowd of people in the room where the bodies were lying.

The room had been locked, and the key given to Arrell.

The scene of the murder was covered with leaves, and was not easy tracking ground.

***Footnote:** Notice he has changed his opinion of the grounds suitability for tracking.

Back To Gatton Murders Homepage

<http://www.gattonmurders.com/page1.php>