

Constable Robert George Christie Police Constable in Gatton.

Christie read a report to the Commission dated 24 April 1899 which he had addressed to Inspector Urquhart, but he had not submitted. Part of which reads as follows:

**Q.** *(By the Chairman)* I understand you want to give us some information with regard to the Gatton murders?

Yes. With your permission I would like to report of certain facts, which came to my knowledge during the course of my inquiries into the Gatton murders.

Tell us when you got there and how you came to be connected with it at all?

I went to Sydney, New South Wales, to escort a prisoner to Queensland. I arrived in Brisbane in March last, and got a fortnight's holiday. I spent my holiday at Gatton, and on the 7 March Inspector Urquhart employed me to make inquiries with reference to the Gatton murders.

**Q.** Then are you not in the Queensland Police Force?

**A.** Yes; but I am doing plain-clothes duty at Gatton at present.

**Q.** Were you first employed on plain-clothes duty on the 7 March?

**A.** Yes. "Headquarters Gatton Special District, 24 April 1899, re Clarke's man, Thomas Day."

**Q.** *(By Mr Unmack)* To whom is that addressed?

**A.** Inspector Urquhart.

**Q.** What is the date of the report?

**A.** 24 April 1899.

**Q.** Is that among the papers?

*The Secretary:* That has not been sent in.

*Witness:* I will give my reasons why I did not send it in: I was afraid to send it in.  
*[Witness then read his report as follows:]*

*[Re Clarke's man-Thomas Day.]*

Headquarters, Gatton Special District, 24 April 1899.

Constable R.G. Christie, D44, reports that on the 24<sup>th</sup> instant he interviewed Mr A.G. Clarke, butcher, of Gatton, with reference to a man named Thomas Day, who was in Clarke's employment at the time of the Gatton murders. Mr Clarke informed the constable that on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December last he met Day on the Tent Hill road, near his Clarke's shop, and employed Day, who commenced to work for Clarke on the following day, the 16 December. Day told Mr Clarke that he came from New South Wales, and came by Laidley to Gatton. He worked for Mr Clarke from the 16 December until the 10<sup>th</sup> day of January last. His work consisted of looking after the coppers at the slaughter yard, and carting meat into Gatton to Mr Clarke's butcher shop, which is situated in the township. Day slept in a skillion-room adjoining Mr Clarke's stables, adjacent to the main road and

not far from the scene of the murders. Mr Clarke informed the constable that during night-time, whenever he had occasion to go to Day's room he always found Day with his clothes and boots on, and lying in bed on top of the bedclothes and always easily awakened. The least knock at the room Day would hear it and come out, and he always kept the door and window open at night. Mr Clarke considers Day was a bad character, and after the Gatton murders Clarke distrusted Day, and while working about the boilers at the slaughter yard Clarke had an impression that Day would throw him into the boilers, and on account of this Mr Clarke used to send Day to do other work away from the boilers, and kept his eye on him. On Boxing night Mr Clarke was letting off fireworks from eight o'clock to a quarter to 9 pm. Since then, Clarke thinks it strange that Day did not put in an appearance to see the fireworks going off; in fact, Mr Clarke did not see Day from dusk on that evening until the following morning. Clarke states that he is sure Day was not deaf. It appears that a day or two after the murders the police brought Day into Gatton and took a statement from him. About this time Mr Clarke saw bloodstains on a blue jumper belonging to Day, and said to Day, "You had better not wash that jumper; the police might want to see it again." Day took no heed to this warning, but a day or two afterwards washed and boiled the jumper twice, and scrubbed it with a scrubbing-brush. One day afterwards Day said to Clarke, "You ought to join the force-you would make a better detective than any of them." and gave Clarke great abuse. Mr Clarke said in his opinion the bloodstains in question were not caused by carrying meat, as they were distinct spots or splashes and shiny appearance. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of January, Day gave Clarke one weeks notice that he was going to leave, and on the 7<sup>th</sup> he abused Clarke, and wanted to get away, and on the 10<sup>th</sup> he again asked to let him go, and began to abuse Clarke, and used bad language to Clarke's children, and Clarke let him go, and that was one day before the notice had expired. The constable interviewed Florrie Lowe, who states that she did not know Clarke's man, Day, previous to the murders. The constable also interviewed Mrs Carroll, of Gatton, who stated that on the night of the Gatton murders she was coming into Gatton from the Mount Sylvia races in a spring cart accompanied with her son John, who is about sixteen years old; when passing Moran's paddock, about 8.30 pm, the three Murphy's-Michael, Norah, and Ellen-were driving in a trap about ten or twelve yards [*nine to eleven metres*] in front of her, going in the direction of Gatton; when near the sliprails leading into Moran's paddock she saw a man walking along the road towards them; he passed by the Murphy's trap quite close, and when passing her cart she said to her son John, "This is a footman coming." "Yes," John replied as the man passed the cart; "that is Clarke's man, mother." The constable has been informed by Mr Burnett, fruiterer, Gatton, that when he was coming along the Tent Hill road at night-time, between the 15 and 26 December, he had on two occasions met Day on the road near Moran's paddock and spoke to him, but Day made no answer.

Day was a stranger in the Gatton district, and if he arrived in Brisbane from New South Wales in the early part of December probably he is the swagman that passed Wilson at Oxley on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December last.

R.G. CHRISTIE, Constable No. 503.

Inspector Urquhart, Police Station, Gatton.

Q. *(By the Chairman)* You say you did not send that report in?

A. No, sir.

Q. Why?

A. I had my reasons for not sending it in.

Q. Did you show it to Inspector Urquhart?

A. No.

Q. *(By Mr Unmack)* Tell us your reasons for not sending it in.

A. On the 24 April last me and Sergeant Arrell had a conversation with Detective Head. Head says, "How is things now, Christie?" I said, "In my opinion there is only one man in it-Clarke's man." He said, "What rot." Sergeant Arrell says, "Well, it looks very suspicious." Next morning I was sitting in the police office. Detective Head came in and said to Inspector Urquhart, "I want to speak to you, sir." Inspector Urquhart said, "Very well," and went out into the police yard with him. They had a conversation, and Head then went away. Inspector Urquhart said to me, "Where is Sergeant Arrell, Christie?" I said, "He is inside, sir."-He said, "Tell him I want him." Sergeant Arrell came into the courthouse, and Inspector Urquhart said, "You've got a lot to say about this man Day, Arrell. If I hear any more about this, man Day out of this you go." He said, "The idea of you criticising the work of better men than yourself!" I had then just completed my report, which I have just read, and I walked up the street, and a short while afterwards Inspector Urquhart followed me up the street. He said, "Look here, Christie, I don't want you speaking about this man Day." I said, "I have simply made inquiries about him, sir. I spoke to Detective Head about him last night, and that is all I have been talking to about him. I do not see there is any harm in speaking to the detectives." He said, "Well, If I hear any more about this, Christie, I will make it hot for you if I get you talking about this man." He said, "You are a strange man; you have a lot of ideas in your head." I said, "Well, sir, I do not work on a one-man system; I work on several; and I consider that man is in it." And I explained several points, which were in my report. He said, "What rot, Christie; he is only a mere boy; he could not commit that crime; he is a beardless boy." I said, "If he is only a beardless boy, Bob King, at Clarke's place, told me he was thirty years old, and weighed between thirteen and fourteen stone [*eighty-two and eighty-nine kg*]." Inspector Urquhart said, "Bob King is a damned liar if he told you such a thing." I was afraid to send in my report through him threatening me.

Q. *(By Mr Garvin)* Why did you not send it to the Commissioner?

A. Because I thought I would get into trouble.

Q. You could have sent it to the Commissioner?

A. Not direct-it is against the rules. I consider that I would have got into serious trouble in had sent it direct to the Commissioner. I was working direct under Inspector Urquhart, who was in charge of the Gatton special district at the time.

Q. Did you ever express a wish to send this information to the Commissioner?

A. No, because I thought I would get into trouble if I wrote such a thing. I considered that they had made a blunder, and wanted to hush it up. The detectives made a blunder in the first place, and wanted to throw cold water on it. That was the reason for trying to keep me from making inquiries in the matter. The detectives were all against me making inquiries against this man.

Q. That is what you mean by making a blunder with regard to Day?

A. Yes. I say they made a blunder. They did not have his jumper analysed; and Bob King, who works at Clarke's place, told me it was saturated with blood, and there were distinct spots and splashes all over the jumper. Detective Toomey said it was only on the sleeve, but Bob King told me it was all over the body, and in his opinion it did not appear as if he got it off the cattle. Besides, he never had anything to do with killing the sheep or cattle; he was only employed pottering about the boilers.

Q. (*By Mr Sadleir*) Were you still continued in the same employment by Inspector Urquhart in plain clothes?

A. I am working under Sub-Inspector Galbraith and Inspector Urquhart. I am stationed there to make inquiries *re* the Gatton murders. I do not know whether-I have not got any definite instructions whether I am to go in uniform or plain clothes.

Q. Are you a single man?

A. Yes.

Q. Had you mentioned to Mr Galbraith anything of the substance of that report?

A. No.

Q. You are supposed to give him all the information you collect?

A. Yes. I made a report to Galbraith.

Q. To what effect?

A. About certain information I collected.

Q. About the Gatton business?

A. I thought it might refer to that.

Q. Did you report to Galbraith that you still suspected Day?

A. No; because I was afraid to mention that to him for fear that I would be dismissed, if I did so.

Q. I am speaking of Sub-Inspector Galbraith. Did you mention that to him?

A. No.

Q. You are under the impression that Day was concerned in this murder?

A. Yes; but I had no opportunity of informing Galbraith of this.

When I am attached to a station, I must submit everything to the sub-inspector. It was only last month that I was transferred to Gatton.

Q. (*By Mr Dickson*) Under what sub-inspector were you working?

A. Sub-Inspector Galbraith, since 1 September.

Q. You are working under some authority at Gatton?

A. Yes; Sub-Inspector Galbraith.

Q. Do you not take any notice of Sergeant Arrell?

A. He sees all my reports.

Q. Have you spoken to him on this matter?

A. Yes, and he is of the same opinion as myself.

Q. You spoke to Arrell in September?

A. Yes, and we decided to let the matter drop—we were frightened to make a report on it; but when I saw the Royal Commission was appointed I thought I would have a good opportunity to ventilate the matter.

Q. (*By Mr. Sadleir*) It appears to me that you are running on one line that Day is the man?

A. Yes, I came to that conclusion.

Q. He is the only man you wished to sheet the crime home to?

A. Yes. On the morning of the discovery Day went into a shop kept by Annie Smith, and asked for a razor. He took the razor and put it in his pocket, without asking whether it was a good one, and he had a clean shave.

Q. What sort of a beard had he? A. A stubbly beard.

Q. Why did he shave?—To disguise himself?

A. Probably.

Q. What did he want the razor for?

A. To commit suicide if he was charged.

Q. That is your opinion?

A. Yes.

Q. (*By Mr Garvin*) How long have you been in the Police Force?

A. Six years.

Q. (*By Mr Sadleir*) That's your idea of the evidence—that Day intended to commit suicide?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you wonder at Mr Urquhart swearing at you, when you gave him information of that sort?

A. I never expressed myself to Sub-Inspector Urquhart in this way. I only came to this conclusion a few days ago.

Q. (*By Mr Dickson*) Sub-Inspector Urquhart spoke to you?

A. I had several conversations with Sub-Inspector Urquhart.

Q. Had you spoken to Sub-Inspector Urquhart about Day?

A. Yes.

Q. And to Sergeant Arrell?

A. Yes.

Q. What did you tell Mr Urquhart?

A. That I considered Day was connected with the crime.

Q. (*By Mr Garvin*) Did you give any reasons?

A. Yes; because blood was found on his clothes.

Q. (*By Mr Dickson*) Was Day's shirt taken possession of and examined?

A. As far as I know, it never was. I learned that they took a mere statement from Day, and they never traced him up. He was never traced, and he might have been the murderer.

Q. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of April, the day you wrote this report out, did you know where Day was?

A. No.

Q. Have you found out since where he was?

A. No.

Q. (*By Mr Garvin*) Why do you think this man was concerned in the Oxley murder?

A. Simply because I have learnt he arrived in Brisbane from New South Wales on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December, and the Oxley murder was committed on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Seeing he stopped a day in Brisbane, it would just leave him time to get into Oxley on the 10<sup>th</sup> or the night of the 10<sup>th</sup>. He arrived at Gatton on the 14<sup>th</sup> and informed Mr Clarke, when he employed him on the road, that he was camped in the show ground, pointing to the Gatton show ground.

Q. What would be his object in murdering this boy?-Did you come to any conclusion as to what his object was?

A. I did not say he ever murdered the boy.

Q. How did you connect him with Oxley?

A. There is a swagman supposed to be passed by Wilson at Oxley on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, and he was supposed to have handed him something. It was probably a revolver.

Q. You think Wilson handed the swagman something?

A. It might have been a revolver, as the cartridge corresponded both at Oxley and Gatton. Both cartridges corresponded with each other.

Q. Did you make inquiries at Gatton whether this man had been seen with a revolver?

A. Yes, I did. No one knew anything about him. He never associated there with anyone. He hardly spoke to the man who was working along with him.

Q. Did you inquire if he had been seen out?

A. Yes, I did:

Q. What was the result?

A. They said he was seen. The man appeared to be a bad character.

Q. Have you thought what would be his object in committing these murders?

A. For lust.

Q. For lust?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you not aware he met the girl Miss Lowe at the sliprails single-handed before these people came up?

A. Yes.

Q. Why did he not attack her?

A. He knew two men had passed, and he would not get off. They might catch him up.

Q. Do you not think he ran a terrible risk in tackling a big man like Murphy?

A. He might leave her, and take the chance of someone else coming along and getting a better opportunity.

Q. Do you not think he ran a terrible risk in stopping a trap having in it a big, strong, able man like Murphy, if lust was his object?

A. He could decoy them in. He could pretend he had a mate 'possum shooting and the gun exploded, and decoy them down to convey the man up. He might have said, "You can leave the ladies here; it is all right," and it is only natural the girls would say, "We will go down and see what we can do with the poor fellow."

Q. That is your theory?

A. Yes, and when he jumped out he would say, "Here he is," and when he stooped down to see he would shoot him. The girls would be frightened and run away, and he would knock them over the head, and he would have them to himself.

The man Wilson, mentioned by Christie, was Edward Liton Carus-Wilson. Who in 1898 was a schoolteacher in Ipswich. Wilson was charged in the South Brisbane Police Court in April 1899 with the murder of a fifteen year old boy named Alfred Stephen Hill at Oxley on 10 December 1898. Hill, had left his home at the Brisbane suburb of Nundah, on the afternoon of 10 December 1898 to visit his uncle at Redbank Plains. He never arrived and was reported missing as a missing friend by his father. Police deduced that Hill was last seen near Oxley at about 5 pm on 10 December. On 7 January 1899 his decomposed body and the carcass of the piebald pony were found in the bush at Oxley about 350 odd metres off the main Brisbane-Ipswich road. Both had been shot through the head and nearby were found a live .380 cartridge and a spent .380 cartridge case. It appeared that the motive for the crime was the concealment of an unnatural offence committed on the boy.

Claude Wilson his crippled eleven year old crippled son stated that at Ipswich his father had shown him a revolver and cartridges in a leather case. He said that as he and his father approached Oxley on the afternoon of 10 December 1898 he saw a boy riding a piebald horse in the bush beside the road. He said that his father left him sitting in the cart while he climbed through a fence and went into the bush. After some time he heard the report of a revolver and soon afterwards his father came out of the bush and told him he had shot a hawk.



EDWARD LITON CARUS WILSON.

Claude Wilson also stated they then met a swagsman and his father conversed with him in low tones for a good while. Stating that he saw his father pass something to the swagman, he and his father then went on to the Oxley Hotel where they stayed the night.

His father categorically denied any knowledge of the crime and ultimately the Crown did not proceed against him?

Constable Christie actually believed that Wilson had shot the boy Hill at Oxley late in the afternoon of 10 December 1898 and shortly afterwards passed the revolver to a swagman whom Christie supposed was Thomas Day.

According to Christie's theory, Day then used the revolver in the Gatton sixteen days later.

There is a possibility that Christie may well have been right.

Also the book Rienzi that Day is supposed to have been seen reading was written by Edward Bulwer Lytton the uncle of Edward Liton Carus-Wilson.

Indeed a .380 calibre firearm was used in each case, however revolvers and rifles of that bore were in common use at the time.

At the scene of both murders a spent .380 cartridge case was found. It is not impossible that the same defective weapon used in both murders.

Christie's theory is interesting, and cannot be entirely dismissed.

It would account for Days access to a firearm while he was in Gatton. If true it would be possible that Day, could simply have had the revolver secreted in his swag and afterwards disposed of it immediately or shortly after the commission of the Gatton murders.

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