11/03/1899

EVIDENCE THOMAS JOSEPH RYAN

Thomas Joseph Ryan, labourer and drover, residing at Gatton, said he took a trip to Esk with cattle on the Friday before Christmas.

He got drunk in Esk, and got as far as Buaraba station on the return journey on Christmas Eve. He arrived at Gatton at 11 o'clock on Christmas Day, and got drunk.

He knew nothing from the afternoon till he found himself in bed on Boxing morning. He heard he had been taken home by a constable in the afternoon.

He went up to the hotel to look for the horse he had on the previous night, but failed to find it. He went home about dusk, and went to bed, and did not get up till 8 o'clock the next morning.

Inspector Urquhart: If any one says they saw you out that night, what then? -It would be a falsehood. Continuing, he said that on Boxing Day he wore black clothes and a felt hat. He did not get his horse till the following day, when Denny Coleman brought him up to the hotel in the afternoon. He heard that Paddy Dwyer had taken him on Christmas Day, and had on Boxing Day gone to the Burnside races.

The horse was not shod.

On Tuesday afternoon he went to reserve and got a horse, and rode out to the Five-mile. There he saw a couple of young fellows, one of whom was M'Call; the other was a stranger. He noticed nothing peculiar about them. He had not said that he had seen them jump out of the grass, and that he thought they were the murderers. He did not say they gave him a bit of fright.

He did not say one of the men was Denny Coleman; he knew different. He had known the Murphy family for about eighteen years.

Inspector Urquhart: And how long is it since you had a row with Mrs. Murphy? -We only had a bit of a row about five years ago, I think.

And what was the row about? -I had no row with her. The row was all on her part. I thought it took two to make a row.

What was the row about? -About the daughter.

What daughter? -Mrs. M'Neill.

What was the row over? -She didn't want me to go with her daughter, I expect.

Were you going with her? -Yes.

For how long? -About seven or eight years.

What do you mean by "going with her"? -Well, keeping company.

Were you engaged to her? -No.

And Mrs. Murphy objected? -Yes; that is the secret of it, as far as I could learn.

And how did you learn it? -From different people; from the daughter.

When you did see her after, Mrs. Murphy told you not to? -Oh, yes; several times.

How long is it since you last saw her to speak to? -At a funeral.

When Mrs. Murphy had the row with you about Polly Murphy-as she was then did you give her up altogether? -No; I did not.

Sent her letters? -Yes.

Who took them? -I generally posted them.

Sometimes you didn't? -Yes.

Who took the others? -Generally the brothers and sisters.

Did Norah? -I am not sure; but I sent one by Helen.

Did you ever send any by Norah? -I don't think so.

How long did that continue? -I only remember sending one by Helen.

Did the others ever refuse to take any more? -No.

Were they in favour of your keeping company with Polly? -I always thought so.

What did Michael think of it? - I never had anything to say to Michael on the subject.

Did you ever have a long conversation with Mrs. Murphy on the subject? -Never.

Did you ever say you would have Polly in spite of all? -Not in spite of all.

What did you say? -I said when I wanted her I would not ask Mrs. Murphy.

What did she say to you? -I don't remember.

Something pretty strong? -I expect so. I didn't take any notice of her. I was writing at the time. I didn't recognise her in the matter.

Why not? -I thought the daughter was old enough to look after herself.

When did Polly give you up? -Never, so far as I am concerned.

How was it she married another man?-We stopped corresponding, I suppose.

Who stopped? -Both of us. She did, for that matter. We never had any row.

Didn't you follow Mrs. Murphy along Tent Hill road once? -No. I passed her on the day we had the row.

Where? -This side of Logan's.

You were not following her? -I was not. She might have thought I was.

Why should she think so? -I could not say.

Had you given her any reason? -No.

Did she ask anyone to protect her? -I could not say. I heard afterwards she did.

Who was it? -Jimmy Logan.

Did you see her going into the house? -I saw her going that way.

Were you going to the Murphy's? -No.

Did you ever say you would be revenged upon her for taking Polly away from you? -No; she didn't take her away from me, so I didn't want to be revenged upon her. I didn't ask you for reasons. -I am only saying so.

Have you been friendly with the family since? -Yes, all except the old lady. I never met her.

Where were you going to when you met her? -To Burns's.

When did you first hear of the murder? -About 9 o'clock on the morning of the 27th December.

Did you go to the place? -No.

Did you go to the funeral? -Yes.

Have you any idea who committed the murder? -No.

Had you ever any? -No.

Or any suspicions? -No. If I had I would gladly give them.

Do you know any enemies the Murphy's had? -No.

You know nearly everybody in the district? -Yes.

Is it true you ever chased Mrs. M'Neill when she was Polly Murphy, along the road on horseback? -No.

Are you quite sure about your movements on Boxing night? -Yes.

You were not more or less drunk? -No (laughing), I was not drunk on that day.

It is nothing to laugh at.

There are several persons who saw you out? -I was not out that night.

Were there any others with you in the house? -There were my father and mother.

Were they in the house? -I could not say if they were there all the time.

You are not quibbling about the night? I ask you about all night.

What time was it that you went into the house? -About 6 o'clock. I had no tea or anything.

What time did you come out next day? -About 8 o'clock.

And you say between those hours you were in the house all the time? -Yes, in my own room.

Could anyone see in your room? -Yes.

Did anyone see? -I cannot say. At 10.30 my father went to bed.

You were up then? -No, I was in bed.

That was the time your father came home drunk? -Yes.

And you struck him? -No, I did not. I did not get up.

Did you know your mother was up at 12 o'clock that night? -I could not say, I am sure.

Do you know she was out at 5 o'clock in the morning? --I expect she was. She is generally up about that time or a little after.

Will you swear you were not talking to somebody on Mortimer's (hotel) veranda at half-past 8 on Boxing Night? -Yes.

Were you out at 4 o'clock on the Tuesday morning? -No.

Not for any purpose whatever? --No. I did not get out of bed till I got up for good.

Before you went to Esk, had you been working on your father's farm lately? -Yes.

And what are you doing just now? -Cutting and making hay.

When was it cut? -On Tuesday. Continuing, he said no crop had previously been taken off the land this year. The crop was lucerne, but it was bare about Christmas time, owing to dry weather.

When it was bare like that it was good tracking ground? -Yes, I dare say.

Did you ever see a track in that paddock of a horse with one shoe on? -No; I never looked.

Did you ever see a footmark in the paddock? -I may have done so.

With no heel on the boot? -No, sir; I didn't notice it.

Making across the paddock to the creek? -No.

Did you see where a panel of the fence had been taken down and put up again?-No. The horses and cattle are taken down through the sliprails to water.

Did you take them down? -Yes.

Were you there on Boxing Day? – No.

Were you there the day after Boxing Day? --No.

When were you there? -I could not remember.

Did you pass the farm on the day after Boxing Day? -Yes; three times.

Was anyone there? -Yes a relative of Dick King, of Spring Creek.

Do you keep any spare clothes at the farm? --No, unless it is a pair of boots.

What time did you go to bed on Boxing Night? Was it before the mall train came in (8 o'clock)? -Oh, yes.

Where did you have the words with Mrs Murphy? -At Mortimer's Hotel.

Since the murder have you been out to where the murder was committed? -Yes.

Continuing, he said the first time was a few days after the murder. He was with the Brand Inspector, who wanted to go in. He did not know where the spot was; but there was a track to it. He saw the bodies at the hotel when they were removed to there.

Back To Gatton Murders Homepage

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