

Bushranging at Wheeo

SMH

24 January 1861



Troopers after Bushrangers

**From our own Correspondent.
GOULBURN CIRCUIT COURT-AUGUST 4th 1851.
Before his Honor Mr. Justice Dickinson.**

Martin Murphy, late to of Goulburn, was arraigned on an information, which charged him with feloniously assaulting and putting in bodily fear one James Christie, at Wheeo, on the 25th June; he, the said Martin Murphy being there and then armed with a musket, and stealing from the dwelling of the said James Christie half sovereign and a bullet mould, the money, goods, and chattels of the said James Christie, and one coat and comb; the goods and chattels of James Christie, the younger.

The prisoner pleaded not guilty, and was undefended. It appeared from the evidence offered by the Crown that early on the morning of the 25th June. Mr. Christie, who is a farmer, who lives at Wheeo, met the prisoner and another man close to his (Christie's) house.

The prisoner gave him in charge to his comrade, who compelled him to return home. Both the prisoner and the other man were armed, the one had a single and the other a double- barrelled gun. As soon as they entered the house, the prisoner and his accomplice ordered Christie and the family, consisting of a number of females, to sit down on the sofa. The prisoner then said, "We have caught you nicely this morning". Christie replied, "but can you get out of it". Murphy replied, "If we are out of it you shall suffer". Christie again urged that he had no money in the house, but his daughter, who was much alarmed, said there was a little in the box. She went into one of the bed rooms, followed by the prisoner, who shortly afterwards returned with half a sovereign and some silver.

Addressing himself to Christie, he understood that he (Christie) had £90 secreted about the place for the purpose of purchasing some land, and that unless he gave it up they (he and his comrade) would take his life. "Christie said there was no more money about the place, but the prisoner, not being satisfied with the assurance, told him to say his prayers, for he had only a few minutes to live.

Under the impression that Murphy intended to shoot him, Christie knelt down and prayed with his family. While they were praying the prisoner and his comrade kept their firearms pointed at him. After they had done praying, Christie got up; the prisoner then asked him again if he was prepared to give up the money. On, Christie again telling him that he had none in the house, Murphy ordered him to kneel down a second time, that he might shoot him; but this order Christie did not obey. All this while the prisoner kept a pistol pointed at Christie's head: his daughter-in-law, who was present, was so much terrified that she fainted away.

The prisoner asked who she was, and on being told that she was the daughter of Mr. Brown, of Jerrawa, he said he would not have frightened her so much if he had known that before, as her new her father well and her father knew him well, and respected him. The prisoner then again went into the bedroom and brought out a coat and comb belonging to prosecutor's son, also a bullet-mould and a canister with some powder in it belonging to prosecutor himself. When they were leaving, Murphy asked for a prayer book, and on one, and some hymn books, being brought, he made the prosecutor swear on them that he would not say anything about their having been there for two hours after their departure. They then went away.

The Attorney General having closed the case for the Crown, the prisoner was asked if he had anything to say in his defence: he replied he had nothing to say. His Honor having summed up, the jury returned a verdict of guilty. Sentence postponed.

Martin Murphy, (the last prisoner) was indicted for assaulting, in company with another, and, putting in bodily fear, John Heffernan, at Garrunda on the 1st May last, the said Murphy being there and then armed, and for stealing in the dwelling house of the said John Heffernan. A cheque of the value of 8/-, one bridle and one coat, the money, goods, and chattels of the said John Heffernan. The prisoner pleaded guilty. Sentence postponed.

Martin Murphy was again indicted for that he did, on the 6th of July last, at Bargo, feloniously assault and put in bodily fear John Keane, he, the said Martin Murphy, being then and there armed, and from the person of the said John Keane did then and there steal three 3/-bank notes, five 1/-bank notes, one pocket book, the moneys, goods, and chattels of the said John Keane. The prisoner pleaded not guilty. It appeared that Keane lives at a place called Billybong, near the Murrumbidgee; that on the day mentioned in the information he was returning home from Sydney after selling some cattle there. He had twenty pounds in notes in a pocket book in his hat. When within a half a mile of the Sydney side of Bargo lock-up, the prisoner and another man passed him on horseback Keane was on horseback also. They enquired the distance to Stonequarry, and than rode on in that direction. Keane had not proceeded far before he was over taken by the prisoner who was then by himself; on coming up

he pointed a pistol at Keane, and ordered him to dismount and give up his money; Keane having obeyed the first part of the order, he was told to kneel down and take off his hat. Under the fear that the prisoner intended to shoot him, Keane handed him the pocket-book out of his hat which contained the notes. The prisoner then swore him to secrecy. After getting the pocket-book, Murphy made Keane turn out his pockets in order to see if he had any fire-arms, and finding that he had none, he said he would take the horse, which he did, but after lending it across the road, he let it go again. The prisoner was apprehended a few days afterwards at Campbelltown, by Constable Nicholson; he had put up at Forbes' Hotel there, and had paid his fare to Sydney by the mail. On searching him, three £5 notes and five £1 notes were found on him, also, the lining of a pocket-book. The latter was produced in Court, and Keane swore that it resembled the lining of the pocket book which had been taken from him by prisoner, £9 14s. were also produced in court, and the deficiency between that sum and the amount taken from the prisoner was accounted for by a statement that the Campbelltown Magistrates had ordered the fares of the prisoner and the constables who escorted him to Goulburn, and the fares of the latter back to Campbelltown to be paid out of the money found in the possession of the prisoner. There was also a pistol, box of cups and some powder found on the prisoner when he was apprehended. The prisoner said nothing in his defence. The learned Judge having summed up, the jury without retiring, found a verdict of guilty. Sentence postponed.

Martin Murphy was then arraigned on an information which charged him with unlawfully, maliciously, and feloniously wounding William Archer, at Wallah Wallah Scrub, on the 12th June last, with intent to commit murder.

The offence being a capital one, Mr. Purefoy, at the request of his Honor, watched the case on behalf of the prisoner, it appeared that Archer is a constable in the Binalong police, and that while proceeding on horseback towards the Crookwell, on the 12th June last, he overtook the prisoner and another man, who were also riding. Archer rode in their company for about a couple hundred yards, and on parting with them the prisoner said to him "that is a nice pony you are riding. Archer said, "It is," at the same time turning head over his shoulder: he then observed that the prisoner, who was about five yards behind, had a pistol pointed at him: Archer immediately pulled up, and turned round and faced him; he said, "Is that what you are going to do."

The prisoner told him to get off the pony or he would make an example of him. Archer then put his hand in his left breast to get his pistol, and while he was doing so the prisoner fired at him: the discharge took effect on the fore right arm, one of the bones of which it consisted entering about the elbow, two others about halfway between that place and the wrist, another passed over the shoulder tearing the blue shirt which the constable wore at that time.

When Murphy observed that Archer was wounded, he called out to his companion "Shoot the b---r, shoot him. This person then drew a pistol from his right hand pocket and cocked it. Archer then put spurs to his pony and galloped off. The prisoner then called out "shoot the b---r" While the constable was making the best of his way off, he heard the prisoner's comrade galloping after him. After riding about two hundred yards, Archer

turned round with a pistol in his left hand, to face his pursuer. The prisoner then called his comrade back, and the two galloped up a range and were soon out of sight.

The constable proceeded to Mr. Gibson's station on the Illawarra, that night, and after fomenting his arm, succeeded in extracting one of the shots, which proved to be with are usually called swan drops. On the following day he went to Yass, where he was attended by Dr. Wake, who extracted another shot from the point of the elbow, a third shot was still in the arm, having worked in amongst the sinews.

Mr. Purefoy cross-examined Archer at considerable length: the witness stated that he had seen the prisoner occasionally during the last eighteen months; that when he met him in the Wallah Wallah scrub he did not know there was any charge against him. Dr. Allan Campbell, a legally qualified medical practitioner, who happened to be in court at the time of the trial, was requested by his Honor to examine Archers arm, and state to his opinion as to the nature of the wounds. The witness, after examining them, stated that they might have been inflicted by shots from a gun, and he was satisfied, the cuticle had been penetrated. Mr. Purefoy addressed the jury for the prisoner, having great stress on the improbability of the prisoner intending to commit the grave offence with which he was charged; and in support of his position, pointed to that part of the evidence in which Archer stated that Murphy had recalled called his companion when he was in the act of pursuing the constable: had he intended to take life, it was very easy, from Archer's evidence, for him to have done so. The jury, after retiring for, short time, found the prisoner guilty of the minor offence. Sentence postponed.

William Nicholls was arraigned on information which charged him with stealing, at Yass, on the 14th July, one bridle and saddle, the goods and chattels of William Alchin. The prisoner pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to be worked on the road for three years.

Martin Murphy who had been found 'guilty on several information's, was then called up, on the prayer the Attorney- General, to receive, sentence. The depositions taken against in the case of John Heffernan having been read, he said that Grant, who had been found guilty as the joint perpetrator of this offence, was innocent, the robbery having been committed by him (Murphy) and his comrade. The prisoner was then sentenced to fifteen years hard labour on the roads, for robbing James Christie; and in consideration of the length of time the prisoner would have to serve for that offence, the mitigated sentences of seven years hard labour for robbing Heffernan, and of three years imprisonment in Darlinghurst gaol for robbing Keane, were passed upon him ; each sentence to commence at the expiration of the previous one, making in all twenty-five years.

The Attorney-General declined to press the judgment of the Court on the other convictions, considering that the ends of justice would be met by the sentence already passed.

SMH
24 January 1861

TELEGRAPHIC MESSAGES.

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENTS.

Goulburn.
Monday, 6 p.m.

On Thursday last Gilbert, Hall, and Dunn robbed a farmer named Christie near Wheeo, from whom they took a quantity of stores. On Saturday they stole three horses from Mr. Warn at Crookwell; two of them have since been recovered. The same day they stole Jerrawang and Peacock, racehorses, from Willoughby's, in the same neighbourhood.

SMH
27 Jan 1865
BUSHRANGING NEAR GOULBURN

(From the Goulburn Herald, January 25th)

On Wednesday last Ben Hall, Gilbert, and Dunn paid a visit to Mr. W. Ford's inn, near Tuena, and took £10 in cash. They also robbed three Chinamen of some £15 or £20, and then left.

On Thursday they visited Mr. James Christie of the Lost River, near Wheeo. Mr. Christie is a farmer, and keeps a small store. They took a miscellaneous assortment of goods from him, with which they loaded a pack-horse. Mr. Christie's loss is about £40 in groceries, drapery goods...

What the bushrangers didn't know was the Harriet Christie had seen them coming and had taken a purse containing £63 pounds (a considerable sum in those days) and had thrown it into the wheat fields adjacent to their shop. She must have hidden it well because they didn't find it for six months.