**Murders at Pennant Hills 1906**

**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Saturday 18 August 1906, page 11**

Dreadful Double Murder at Pennant Hills.

Attempt to Murder a Constable.

Two Homes Rendered Desolate.

A Ghastly Crime by a Chinaman.

The news that a double murder had been perpetuated at Pennant Hills by a Chinaman, who had taken possession of a house, turning the inmates out, spread with, the rapidity of lightning from station to station along the Northern line on Wednesday evening, and caused a great commotion. The greatest excitement prevailed at both Pennant Hills and Thornleigh, the scene of the double tragedy being about mid-way between the Thornleigh and Pennant Hills Railway Stations, and only a few hundred yards away from the railway line.

Information that the Chinaman had been overpowered and arrested also spread very quickly, and there was a large crowd of excited people at the Pennant Hills station as the 6.42 p.m. train Hornsby to Strathfield steamed in, it being taken for granted that the prisoner would be conveyed by that train to the Ryde lockup. The surmise proved correct. Bareheaded and securely hand-cuffed, the Chinaman (who had given the name of Charlie Tye, or Tie) was march-ed between first-class Constable Wade and Constable Allen, of Hornsby, into a second-class carriage, the moment the train came to a standstill. In the short interval between that and the starting of the train in continuation of the journey this particular carriage was the centre of marked attention, all present crowding round in their eagerness to get a view of the fiend in human form, who, in cold blood, had taken two young lives in the most violent and atrocious manner possible.

The scowling faces of the spectators showed only too plainly their abhorence of the awful crimes, of which more than one in the gathering had been eye witnesses. Except for the fact that he was hatless and obviously excited, and that he was handcuffed and guarded by two armed policemen, there was nothing in the Chinaman's demeanour to call for special attention — nothing to indicate that only a short time previously he had fought with the ferocity of a demon, howled with the savageness of a wild beast, and by almost a miracle had been baulked in an attempt upon the life of Constable McDonald. He had apparently bowed to the inevitable, and was fast relapsing into that condition of stoical indifference so characteristic of his race.

The prisoner gave no trouble after the “darbies” had been slipped upon his wrists, and the journey from Pennant Hills to the Ryde lockup was entirely without incident. Left behind at the Pennant Hills railway station was Constable McDonald, who had still numerous duties to perform, as a preliminary to the inquests that would necessarily have to be held next day. When seen there by “The Argus” representative, his right hand was covered with blood. He was just as he had come out of the fray, and made light of the fact that a piece had been taken clean out of his hand at the joint of the little finger by the keen edge of the tomahawk, with which the Chinaman had committed the murders, and with which he had made a desperate attempt on the constable's own life. With the warm blood still trickling from his hand, McDonald continued his duties, and in company with “The Argus,” visited the homes of the stricken families, viewing the bodies of the murdered boys, also the scenes of the ghastly crimes, and making other calls which were necessary to piece together the narrative of that shocking afternoon's work.

The victims were both sons of well-known residents, the first being Albert Gordon Pettet, aged 9 years, and ninth son of Mr. Thomas Crick Pettet, dairyman, of The Esplanade, Pennant Hills. The second victim was Horace Henry Aiken, aged 16, son of Mr. William Aiken, orchardist, of Pennant Hills, whose fine brick residence almost opposite Eaton's Hampden Hotel, has, for many years, been a familiar land mark. Mr. Pettet, who has a family of 12, has been a resident of the place for upwards of 20 years, and Mr. Aiken is also a very old resident, both families being widely known.

The murderer is also known in the district, having some years back been employed as market gardener by Mr. Hughes, of Dundas, in which capacity he was, known to many as a hawker of vegetables. For the past ten months, according to his own statement, he has been employed at Riverview College on the Lane Cove River, and left there on Sunday last. How or where he came to Thornleigh no one appears to know, but he says he camped in the bush at Thornleigh on Tuesday night.

His appearance in Thornleigh seems first to have been noted by Mr. Calvert, licensee of the Royal Hotel, who, in a casual way, observed him about a quarter to 5 o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, coming from the direction of Mr. Garratt's, where he had been on a visit to a countryman in service there. He was making for the Thornleigh railway station, and carrying a parcel which, no doubt, was the murderous tomahawk wrapped up in paper. It was his swaggering manner that attracted Mr. Calvert's attention. At the station he attracted the attention of Mr. Dime, the stationmaster, who also casually noticed the parcel, though he had no idea what it contained. This was about five minutes to 5 o'clock, and the Chinaman purchased a second single ticket to Sydney. He had a mate with him, a countryman, for whom he also purchased a second single ticket for Sydney, and laughed and joked with the station master, who, knowing something of Chinese terms, counted out his change by the Chinese method. His mate asked for a “come-back” (return) ticket after the single ticket had been issued, but Mr. Dime refused the request, as the train was about due.

Almost immediately afterwards, the stationmaster was conscious of a commotion on the platform, where about a dozen men had assembled in readiness to embark on the incoming train. Statements differ as to what did actually happen, but Mr. Dime said that the Chinaman's mate had left him, retiring to the other end of the platform, where he boarded the train, and went on to Sydney. The Chinaman (the murderer) rapidly crossed the line with the tomahawk in his hand, and, scaling the bank with the agility and rapidity of a monkey, disappeared by St. Joachim's Church in the direction of Pennant Hills.

What had happened on the platform was this: John Hockley, aged about 21 years, and employed at Pollard's slaughter-yards, was standing against one of the awning posts, when he was suddenly attacked with the tomahawk by the Chinaman, who struck him one or more vicious blows. He was about to strike again when one of the by-standers interfered, and the Chinaman made off as described. Hockley, dazed and bleeding from a wound over the eye, which afterwards proved not very serious, made for the Royal Hotel, where he had a wash, after which he seemed to consider there was not very much the matter with him. When he made the unprovoked attack upon Hockley, the murderous Chinaman might have been secured then and there, and the subsequent murders prevented; but fate willed it otherwise. It was a case of “what's everybody's business is nobody's business.” Some wanted to know what Hockley had done, and all wanted to catch the train, and if a thought was given at all as to what should be done, it was that it was the duty of the police to pursue the Chinaman, and not that of civilians.

The stationmaster, after attending to the train, despatched Arthur Welsh, post boy and messenger, to inform Constable McDonald of the occurrence; but the lad, knowing that Constable Allen (of Hornsby) was in Duffy's lane, or its vicinity, collecting the rolls (having seen him on his rounds), went to him. On his return with Constable Allen news of the appalling murders had reached Thornleigh station. Constable Allen went post haste on his bicycle to Mr. Hines's house Stevens-street, where the murderer was reported to have ensconsed himself; and Welsh went, in quest of Constable McDonald, whom he found at Mr. Epthorp's. McDonald, getting on a bicycle, soon joined Constable Allen, and the maddened crowd, who had by this time congregated outside the house, of which the murderer was in sole possession.

THE FIRST MURDER.

After leaving Thornleigh station in the manner described, the Chinaman seems to have escaped notice, until he was in the very act of murdering his first victim, poor little Albert Gordon Pettet, who at the time was returning from Blitchford's, whither he had gone by his father's orders with milk, which he had carried in a small “billy-can.” The little chap had reached the gully in Stevens street, about a couple of hundred yards or so from Hines's residence, on his return home, when he met the murderer. The street, it might here be explained, is a street in name only, there being little beyond the fence on either side of it to distinguish it from the surrounding bush. It is to all intents and purposes part of the bush. Though this atrocious murder was witnessed by Thomas Pollard, who lives some distance off the road, and chanced to be working in his garden at the time, strange as it may seem, he was not at the moment aware of the fact. He saw the two figures in the distance, and did not even know one was a Chinaman. He saw the little victim running away (doubling back), saw him overtaken and a blow struck, and also, saw the little fellow fall; but nothing at that moment was further from his mind than that an appalling murder had been committed within the scope of his vision. Soon, after that, though, his attention was attracted by terrified screams from the vicinity of Hines's house on the hill above him, and on proceeding there with others he learned of the shocking murder of “Tos” Aiken, whose hacked, mutilated and still bleeding remains met his horrified gaze. Then he went with others to the gully, to find there a similar ghastly spectacle, in the remains of little Albert Gordon Pettet, alongside of whose still form the billy-can lay, as it had dropped from his nerveless grasp. THE SECOND MURDER.

The murder of Horace Henry Aiken, generally known as ''Tos'' Aiken, who was a carter in the employ of Mr. Turner, the new Pennant Hills grocer, was committed in full view of Mrs. Hines and her 5 daughters, Elizabeth, Elsie, Esther, Ethel, and Nellie, ranging from 11 to 26 years of age, within a few yards of their door in fact. Not long before the deceased had served them with groceries. He had his cart in the middle of the road, and was seated on it when Miss Hines noticed the Chinaman. “He had his hand behind his back,” she said, “and was walking quickly.” He went straight up to young Aiken and said something which she could not hear. Aiken stooped down, as though listening, and the Chinaman then struck him a blow on the back of the head. Aiken fell to the ground, and Mrs. Hines called out to him, “Run, Tos; run for your life, Tos!.” She and her daughter screamed out, “Murder! murder!” The deceased scrambled up somehow, and made as if to get under the fence dividing the road from William Thompson's place opposite, but the Chinaman rushed upon him and chopped him with the tomahawk as though he were chopping wood.

“Oh, it was awful!” said the girl, who shuddered at the thought of the terrible scene she had witnessed. No sooner had the Chinaman settled his second victim than he faced round, and, to use Miss Hines's own words, ''came at us with his tomahawk streaming with blood in his hand.'' Mr. A. G. Hines, who is a carpenter, was away from home, so that the women were all alone. They rushed pell-mell into the dining room, and had the presence of mind to bolt the door, which is moderately stout, and fastens with an ordinary iron bolt. The murderer attempted to break in, but failed.

By this time the screams of the terrified women had brought assistance. Men came from a wedding feast, and from other quarters, and the Chinaman took refuge in Mrs. Hines's bedroom, which opens, in common with, the other rooms, on to the long verandah, and the door being at the time open. He locked himself in, and the women escaped from the house by the back window of the dining room, and joined the besiegers. This was how matters stood when Constable Allen, and then Constable McDonald, appeared on the scene. Some forty or more people had assembled, and if ever a man was near being lynched, that Chinaman was.

At the end of the bedroom is a small window, and this was soon shattered by stones, aimed by the crowd at the murderer — large pieces of rock, some of them. He was struck between the shoulders by one well-directed stone. It was after that that the murderer did a remarkable thing. He lit a fire under the bed, with the evident intention of burning down the place, and himself perishing in the flames. The room was practically gutted. The whole of the clothing it contained, estimated by Mr. Hines at £30 worth, was destroyed; but the murderer's intention of burning the house down — if he had any such intention— was frustrated, and those outside succeeded in quenching the flames by dashing water in through the open window.

When the police arrived, it was felt that decisive and immediate steps must be taken to secure the murderer, as darkness would not be long in coming, and then the task would be fraught with greater danger than the capture of a desperate criminal by daylight would entail.

Constable McDonald called upon him three times to surrender, and come out, but he refused, saying, “You come in; I kill you, too.” This he repeated several times, striking the walls with his tomahawk to emphasise his words.

PLUCKY CONSTABLES.

The plan decided on then was that someone should burst the door open. Constables McDonald and Allen meanwhile occupying a position on either side of it, ready to strike him down should he make a rush for liberty, or run amok. C. Aiken, a relative of the murdered youth, undertook the task of bursting in the door with a long, stout pole. McDonald had his revolver ready for instant use, and would have shot the Chinaman down had the necessity arisen. The bolt of the door gave way in the wooden fastenings, as the result of Aiken's efforts with the pole, and the next instant the courageous constable, McDonald, was in the room, closely followed by Constable Allen.

The murderer was known to be in the corner of the room behind the door, where he could be seen from the window, and McDonald endeavoured to jamb him in by pressing the door upon him. The door, however, would not go back far enough — a circumstance which almost cost McDonald his life. The desperate man made a fearful blow at the constable aiming at his face with the blade of the tomahawk. Quick as lightning the wary constable put his head aside and by almost a hair's breadth the tomahawk missed its mark, the handle coming down on his shoulder with stinging force. He closed and struck the Chinaman at the same time, but by another movement of the tomahawk the Chinaman succeeded in inflicting a wound on the constable's right hand. Constable Allen was quick and caught the tomahawk from behind, but he could not wrench it from the Chinaman's grasp.

The man fought like a fiend, and yelled with the ferocity of a wild beast. For some minutes a terrific struggle took place, the strength of the desperate man being phenomenal. Eventually, however, the handcuffs were fastened securely on his wrists, and then he gave no further trouble. He was taken to the Pennant Hills station, and thence by the 6.42 p.m. train from Hornsby to Ryde.

The dead bodies of '''Tos'' Aiken and Albert Gordon Pettet were taken to their respective homes, where they were examined by Dr. Liddell, of Beecroft, who gave it as his opinion that death must have been instantaneous in each case.

A distance of about 200 yards separated the corpses when found. Aiken was lying on his face, and had no less than seven wounds, four on the back of the head, each one of which had penetrated through the skull into the brain, causing brain matter to exude, a gash on each shoulder, the keen blade having penetrated his clothing and sunk deep into the flesh, and another on the leg. Pettet had a gash extending from the lobe of the right ear to the cheek bone, the whole width of the tomahawk blade, and a considerable depth, while the skull had been severed right across.

The scene at both homes was heart-rending, and both families have the sympathy of the entire district. This is the first occasion upon which the Ryde lockup has been used for the confinement of a murderer. The prisoner slept for a while after being lodged there. He conveyed to the police that it would be better for him to be dead, and several times he asked them to shoot him. He also said he knew “Tos” Aiken well, that he was a good fellow, and that he was sorry, but it couldn't be helped.

In explanation as to why he had killed him, he said: “Something, went wrong here,” indicating his forehead.

Incessantly he would laugh merrily; then he would ask to be shot by the police. He also said he had knocked his head on the cement floor, and conveyed the impression that he might possibly attempt self-destruction by knocking his own brains out during the night.

Asked if he had had a good sleep, he said it would be better for him to sleep under the ground (meaning the grave). He gives the impression that he is now feigning madness.

When seen by an “Argus” representative in the cell about 11.30 p.m., he was lying on his back, still hand-cuffed, with the blankets tucked under his feet, as though he knew how to make himself comfortable.