

Missing
Constable Thomas Ryan
Policeman goes missing under mysterious circumstances
at White Hills in January 1886.

Headline news and a massive search conducted for his body.
Nothing found but Chinese gold thieves suspected.

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Sat 9 Jan 1886 Page 3

STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE OF A CONSTABLE

The usually quiet hamlet of White Hills was thrown into a state of considerable excitement yesterday when it became known that Constable Ryan, of the White Hills police station, had been missing since Wednesday evening last. From inquiries made by our representative, it appears that Mr Ryan visited the Sydenham Gardens on Wednesday afternoon, when the Sandhurst Gun Club held a pigeon shooting match. Towards evening he had several drinks. He returned home about seven o'clock, and had tea and a short sleep. He appeared to be quite sober. He told his niece and another young girl that he was going out for the evening, and left the station with the intention of going as usual over to the Chinese Camp to see that everything was quiet there.

**Went missing
Wednesday
evening
6/01/1886**

On the road over Mr Ryan met another niece, a Mrs Meagher, who resides near the Bridge Street railway crossing. He took her home, and afterwards visited the Chinese Camp, where he was seen by several persons up to ten o'clock, when he left and went in the direction of the police station. This was the last time, so far as we can discover, that he was seen. From the camp to the police station there are two roads. One, which the constable generally took in the daytime is much shorter than the other, past Mr O'Dwyer's residence, but numerous holes and the Bendigo Creek must be crossed. The other, the safer way, is past the cemetery, and thence through the hamlet. The constable is supposed to have taken the shorter cut, and either fallen into one of the waterholes or into the creek. At any rate he has not been seen or heard of since.

Towards Thursday evening, as he did not appear at the police station, information was sent to Constable Hayes, of Long Gully, who, we understand, is his nephew, and that officer at once made inquiries in the

locality. As nothing definite, however, could be learnt, the matter was reported to Superintendent Ryall, and at four o'clock yesterday morning a search party was instituted under Senior-constable Barry and Constable Hayes. During the day they were joined by Constables O'Connor, Forrestal, O'Farrell, and Dunne, and a number of civilians. These persons scoured all the country between the Chinese Camp and the police station, and dragged several dams along the route which would most probably be taken by the constable on his way home. Up to a late hour last evening, however, no trace of the unfortunate man had been discovered. The search will be continued this morning.

It is argued that as there was very little rain up to the time he was last seen going home on Wednesday night (6/01/1886), there could not have been much water in the creek. So that had he fallen in there he must either have been disabled or smothered in the silt.

During the night and early next morning, however, in consequence of the continued heavy rain, the body would either be carried down towards Huntly or else completely covered over. During the afternoon crowds of persons were to be seen near the camp eagerly asking if there were any tidings of him. Sub-inspector Ryall also manifested much interest in the matter, and visited the locality several times during the day.

Mrs Ryan, who on Tuesday went on a visit to some friends in Melbourne, was yesterday telegraphed to, and returned home by the 7.45 pm train. She was naturally very much affected by the strange disappearance of her husband, who, being of a very methodical nature, would never leave the station for so long a time together. There does not appear to be much room to hope that the worst has not happened.

Constable Ryan was one of the oldest officers in the police force in the colony. He was sixty two years of age. He joined the Irish Constabulary about the year 1847, but came to the colony in the early days when he entered the colonial service.

He has been located at the White Hills for over twenty years, during the whole of which time not a single complaint has been heard against him either by the public or his comrades, all of whom held him in the highest respect. He was of a very quiet demeanour, but firm in all his actions, and was the means of making White Hills one of the most orderly and well conducted parts of the city. He had no children, and is believed to be in very comfortable circumstances.

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Mon 11 Jan 1886 Page 2

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF CONSTABLE RYAN

The search continues

The excitement caused by the sudden disappearance of Constable Thomas Ryan, of the White Hills Police Station, continues unabated. From an early hour on Saturday morning Senior-constable Barry, Constable Hayes, and a number of other persons were busily engaged searching the locality between the Chinese Camp, where the constable was last seen, and the police station.

As the grappling irons which were used on the previous day in dragging the dams were not suitable for use in the deep holes, Senior-constable Barry had a number of others, of different styles, made. Instructions were also sent to Huntly for Mounted-constable Couche to have the creek searched in the direction of Sandhurst. This was done, but without avail, and towards dusk the searchers were reluctantly compelled to cease work. On Saturday evening Mr Barry telegraphed to the Constable at Goornong to examine the creek towards Huntly.

Dams and creeks dragged

Yesterday afternoon a monster volunteer search party was organised by Senior Constable Barry, assisted by a number of other policemen in plain clothes, and Detective Sainsbury. About four or five hundred persons met at the Chinese Camp at two o'clock, and at once the party divided themselves into a long line, so that all the water holes, the Bendigo Creek, and all the country between the Camp and the police station might be thoroughly searched.

After fruitlessly covering that part of the locality, the party turned their attention to the ground between the Sydenham Gardens along Holdsworth's Road, back to the Camp, but here also they were equally unsuccessful. The searchers were followed by a large number of men, women and children, who manifested great interest in the proceedings, and the finding of a Chinaman's old hat or the decomposing remains of a dead dog in some of the holes was sufficient to raise the excitement to fever heat. Up to six o'clock, however, when the majority of the searchers had given up for the day, not the slightest clue to the unfortunate man's whereabouts had been obtained. A large number of those on the ground yesterday freely expressed the opinion that the Chinamen were answerable for the disappearance of the constable.

When Senior-constable Barry entered one of the Chinese huts the crowd thought that there was something about to be brought to light, and immediately the place was rushed, and very soon almost completely

pulled down. The principal Chinamen, knowing that suspicions were cast on their countrymen, wanted the police to search the camp, but owing to the number of people about, and the feelings expressed against the Celestials, it was not considered advisable to do so yesterday.

Some persons living in the locality strongly suspect one of the Chinamen, but there is nothing to connect him with the disappearance of the constable up to the present. Superintendent Ryall, who, it may here be stated, was stationed on Bendigo with Constable Ryan in the early days, has ever since his disappearance evinced the utmost concern in the matter, and was on the ground yesterday afternoon assisting in searching the different dams.

Mrs Ryan, who for some time past has been in delicate health, is naturally almost completely prostrated by the suspense caused by the uncertainty as to what had happened to her husband. It is stated that the constable had several pounds on him when last seen, but there does not appear to be anything definite known about it. The search will be resumed today when the police starting from the Chinese Camp will proceed in the direction of Ironstone Hill. It is to be regretted that the services of the black trackers were not obtained as soon as the man was missed. Constable O'Farrell has been temporarily appointed to take charge of the White Hills Police Station.

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Tue 12 Jan 1886 Page 2
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF CONSTABLE RYAN.

The Chinese camp is searched thoroughly

The disappearance of Constable Ryan on Wednesday evening last is still enshrouded in mystery. In fact those who have been searching for him ever since say that there is now more uncertainty as to his whereabouts than when they commenced. At first it was imagined that he might possibly have gone "on a spree," but when he did not return, his friends thought that in the darkness he must have missed his way and fallen into one of the water holes while going home to the police station after leaving the Chinese camp.

These having all been thoroughly but unsuccessfully searched and dragged, it was conjectured that the unfortunate man had been waylaid and murdered by some of the denizens of the Chinese camp. In fact, to such an extent was this idea carried that, as stated in our last issue, it was only by the prompt and firm steps taken by the police, that the camp was not destroyed on Sunday afternoon. In fact had the body been recovered

near the camp under suspicious circumstances, no matter how slight, several men told the police they would have set fire to the huts and burnt the Chinamen out in spite of everybody.

So it was more in order to allay this feeling on the part of the public than in the hope of finding any traces of the missing constable that the police decided on Sunday evening, to make a thorough search of the camp next day. Accordingly a party, consisting of Senior-constable Barry and Constables Hayes, O'Farrell and Arundel, accompanied by a representative from this journal, visited the Camp shortly after seven o'clock yesterday morning, where they met James Ah Poo, the Chinese interpreter, who escorted them through the various huts, shops and other habitations.

Meeting a Chinaman in the principal thoroughfare in the Camp, they asked him where Mr Ryan was, to which the Celestial replied, "Chineeman welly solly, Mr Ryan no here. Devil take him away in rain into bush. Plenty devil in China me think some here too." This idea may have arisen from the Chinaman's superstitious nature, or it may have been a ruse to get the police to go away without searching. The leading Chinamen in the Camp stated that Mr Ryan was greatly respected by the residents in the Camp, and that there was not the slightest probability of his having met his death there. The party, however, were bent on carrying out their purpose, and at once proceeded to closely inspect every house in the camp. The Chinamen then lent the police every assistance in prosecuting their search.

In some of the places the inmates were not yet out of bed, but on being told by Ah Poo what was the matter they willingly got up and threw open their doors. Up one thoroughfare and down another went the party, closely scrutinizing every hole and corner, gardens, etc, but all to no purpose. When they came to the cross street, in which, opposite some gambling shops, the constable was last seen, the constables took more than ordinary pains in inspecting the places. The women and Chinamen who were the last persons to see the constable in the Camp, repeated exactly the same story they had previously told. Mr Ryan had met them near there, and asked them if a certain Chinaman was about, but where he went to after that none of them could say.

When searching the garden behind one of these shops the police came across a suspicious looking mound of earth apparently new, about seven feet in length, thrown up along side of a dilapidated old house. Spades were at once obtained, and after about ten minutes hard work by the constables the earth was turned over, showing that the Chinamen had

told the truth in saying that the earth had been thrown up there when a gardener had been digging a cabbage bed a few feet away. The Chinese mad-house and other places, where the body was most likely to be secreted, were carefully scrutinized, but after spending a couple of hours without finding the slightest trace, the party gave up all hopes of recovering the body there.

They then dragged all the holes between the Chinese Camp and Ironstone Hill, but were as unsuccessful there as at the previous places. As the drags were not long enough to reach across the dams, it was at first intended to obtain a boat from Lake Weeroona, but on sounding the depth, it was considered inadvisable to carry out the idea. On the suggestion of Senior-Constable Barry, a number of lads were prevailed upon to strip and paddle in the various dams, by far a better plan for searching than by means of a boat and grappling irons.

The youngsters appeared to rather enjoy the search in the first three or four dams, but after that they got sick of it, and it was only partly by wheedling and partly by threatening from Constable Arundel that they were induced to stick at the work until nearly six o'clock in the evening, when they were paid off by Senior-Constable Barry. A youth named Craven, an employee in the electric telegraph office, also gave the searchers considerable assistance during the day. No trace of the missing man was, however, obtained. It is intended to search the creek towards Huntly again today.

The police and the friends of the unfortunate man express their gratitude to those persons who so kindly assisted in the search on Sunday afternoon.

A review of all the facts.

Weekly Times (Melbourne, Vic. : 1869 - 1954) Sat 27 Mar 1886 Page 7
The Mystery of White Hills.
(By Our Own Reporter)

TRAGEDY IN REAL LIFE A Pathetic Story

A review of all
the facts

The solution of the mystery which has so long surrounded the disappearance of Constable Ryan, at the White Hills, a scattered little settlement on the outskirts Sandhurst, promises to disclose one of the most cruel unprovoked, and tragic crimes yet chronicled in the brief history of the colony; but there are still one or two links wanted to complete the chain of evident which is necessary to the document. There is, however, already a

material chain of evidence in the hands of the police which, notwithstanding the few missing links, points unfortunately, to the conclusion that a most horrible murder has been committed, and it is impossible to review the details of the pathetic and distressing story without being impressed with the great amount of truth contained in the reflection that fiction, after all, is nothing more than a mere plagiarist upon facts, and a very indifferent one at best. The circumstances surrounding the mystery are familiar to the residents of Quartzopolis, and may be easily narrated, but as the rest of the colony has, up to the present, only been afforded a skeleton outline, a review of the whole of the facts of the case will not be uninteresting.

Taking a bird's eye view of the facts, and compressing them into the briefest possible space - as all birds' eye views should be - Constable Thomas Ryan, a petty officer of police, of thirty years' standing, the whole of which service had been spent within the boundaries of the Sandhurst district, suddenly disappeared from the face of the earth on the night of Wednesday, the 6th of January last, at the Chinese camp, within a mile of his own home, and within two miles of Pall Mall, as if mother earth had opened and swallowed him up, and the persistent and untiring efforts of the police and a community of people, have been unsuccessful, during the last ten weeks, in discovering the slightest indication of his whereabouts.

At first it was thought that the unfortunate fellow had, whilst attempting to cross the dangerous and uneven country lying between the Chinese camp and the White Hills police station, fallen into an abandoned shaft, or an unworked digger's hole, thousands of which surround the rough track, and had disappeared beneath the loose mulloch and debris, which is usually to be found at the bottom of these pitfalls; but after a careful search the first impressions gave way to the conviction that he had met with foul play, and the investigation was, rather late in the day, turning in that direction. The result of the investigation shows some little of the dangers and difficulties, the majority of which are generally unknown to the public, to which the police are subject, even in the populous districts of the country.

THE DISAPPEARANCE

It appears that on the night of Wednesday, the 6th of January last, a night that will be remembered by many for a long time as the darkest probably that has ever been seen in the Sandhurst district, Thomas Ryan left his quiet home, shortly before 9 o'clock, at the White Hills, dressed in rough plain clothes, for the purpose of escorting his niece, Mrs Meagher, who lived in a little cottage near the Kerang railway line, at the foot of the hill on which the squalid habitations of the Chinese are clustered together, safely to her home. He had been on duty at a pigeon match, which was

fired off at the [Sydenham Gardens](#) during the afternoon, and was so much under the influence of drink that he had to be driven home; but he recovered so rapidly after tea that when setting out on the fateful expedition he offered to be as "sober as a judge."

They walked along the road which runs by the cemetery, and when passing the hut of Thomas Spellacy, an "old hatter," who, in his years of decrepitude, has taken to less laborious tasks than digging for a livelihood, Ryan called out, as was his custom, "good night," and received the usual response from his old crony within. Spellacy and Ryan had an understanding between them for years that, in consequence of the danger which attended late visitations to such an unhealthy and uncertain quarter, the latter should never pass the hut when going to or fro without saying something, and the compact was kept inviolate for nearly seventeen years, until the 6th of January last, when he failed to return from his nocturnal inspection of the camp.

On reaching Mrs Meagher's gate, Ryan bade her good night, and saying he would have a look round the Chinese Camp, before going home, immediately disappeared in the darkness. This was about half-past 9 o'clock, and it was uncommonly dark, so much so indeed that Ah Quee, one of the "oldest inhabitants," was afraid to walk two hundred yards out of the camp to his own hut, until his mate brought a lamp to fetch him, and Constable Hayes, at Ring Gully, had frequently to stoop down and feel the footpaths, whilst patrolling his beat in the main street, to make sure that he was on the sidewalk. The next that is heard of Ryan's movements is that he was seen by Mrs Emily Goon Wing, the European wife of a Chinese labourer, living on the western extremity of the camp, standing, shortly before 10 o'clock, on the intersection of the main street and the road leading up from Mrs Meagher's cottage.

Seeing her at the door, he said "Goodnight - does Ah Toy come about the camp at all now?" and knowing his voice, she replied, "No, Mr Ryan; I have not seen him about for some months."

Shortly afterwards he asked Mary Jane Wilson, a woman of bad repute, living near the second Joss house, a similar question, and receiving a like reply, passed on up a narrow lane, near the end of which he "passed the time of day" with Ti Chung, an itinerant lottery ticket vendor, with whom he had a brief but unimportant conversation. He was last seen standing at the top end of a narrow bye-way within three doors of a hut occupied by Hong Kee, Ah Wong, and Wing Ching Young, rag and bone gatherers, who own a horse and cart between them, and spend their time picking up

unconsidered trifles around and about the country lying between the triangle of Sandhurst, Castlemaine, and Heathcote.

It was generally suspected amongst the police that these men had been concerned in a recent extensive robbery from the Loyal English Company at Huntly on 15th Nov 1885, and it was equally well known that the indefatigable Ryan spent many a weary night out in the open, watching for a clue to help in finding the buried treasure, and he was at the same work on this particular night.

As far as can be ascertained, he was never seen again alive, but one of the women of the camp has now admitted that sometime during the night, and when it was thought that he had left the camp, Ryan suddenly appeared at her door and asked her to lend him a lantern to light him on his way home, but she did not comply with the request, not having anything of the kind in the place at the time.

Whether this is true, or whether it is merely a ruse to divert attention, cannot be at present ascertained, but it appears very strange that so important an incident should be altogether forgotten for ten weeks and then suddenly remembered when the search for the missing man appeared to be most keen. Ryan left her door, and the ground opened and swallowed him up, but the particular locality has yet to be discovered, and there is now little doubt that the police are on the eve of making that discovery.

A DEN OF THIEVES

The rickety old habitation in which the three Chinamen already referred to lived is one of the dilapidated in the camp, which is composed of nearly 120 huts, and has a population of nearly 100 Chinamen, of almost every known class, clan and occupation under the sun.

Description of Chinese Camp

The huts are of every conceivable size, and are closely packed together, and proverbially dirty, close, and disagreeable. The particular hut in question stands near the western end of the camp, at the corner of a small lane, and fronting the second street in the bad smelling little settlement.

It is 54ft long 12 ft wide, and is composed of slab walls and bark roofing, but the timber has rotted away to a considerable extent, and is fast falling into decay. It is subdivided into five compartments, the first being used for the storage of bags and bottles, the second and third being bedrooms, with a small passage running into a little kitchen, whilst the fifth was

entirely given up as a stable to shelter the one sparsely fed and bony animal that they possessed. Hong See, Ah Wong, and Wong Ching Young were frequently absent from their hut, and their movements were always mysterious and uncertain, but they were all in the hut together when Ryan was last seen alive, standing within ten yards of their front door. Their movements are interesting and important to the story.

RYAN'S ANTECEDENTS

There is no questioning that Ryan was entirely engrossed in and devoted to the duties of his office, and the best possible corroboration is found in the fact that he served in the Sandhurst district for thirty years, the last seventeen of which he has spent as watch-house keeper at the White Hills.

He was well off, and was highly respected by all with whom he came in contact, with the exception, perhaps, of a few vindictive criminals, who had suffered for their wrong doing through his instrumentality. He was particularly friendly with the Chinese, and whilst making inquiries about him in the camp on Friday 19th inst, every inhabitant of which he knew intimately, I was frequently informed by "Childlike and bland" almond eyes that "Mr Ryan all same Chinaman's father." Indeed, it was well known that Ryan frequently put his hand in his own pocket to assist impoverished Chinese, and that he often obtained for them opportunities of trying their luck elsewhere when they had gone to the end of their tether in that district.

He was a most energetic and trustworthy constable, and he has been as familiarly known in the district as was the veteran Sergeant Dalton in those dark days when he was such a scourge to larrikinism and crime of every description in the metropolis. He was sixty two years of age, and leaves a wife, with whom he has lived in peace and harmony for nearly forty years, to mourn his loss.

She is left well provided for, but is so terribly struck down by the unexpected shock that she has been in a most wretched plight ever since her husband's disappearance. She states that she has lain awake all night long ever since the occurrence, except when exhausted into a fitful, feverish sleep, expecting to hear him walk in as usual and bar the door, and she cannot believe that he has gone forever.

Ryan was in receipt of £12 a month, with light and fuel and quarters, and possessed, in addition to this, three houses in Sandhurst, for which he received a rental of about 30s a week. The police station at Back Creek is

Ryan gets
rent for use
of his own
home

his private property, being rented from him by the Government. He was entitled by age and service to retire on a pension of £113 per annum, with the option of accepting a lump sum compensation of £465.

THE SEARCH

Ryan was not missed until 11 o'clock on Thursday morning, the 7th January, and it was not till near nightfall that the information was circulated. Mrs Ryan was absent in Melbourne for a few days for medical treatment, and as Ryan did not put in an appearance at breakfast the servant and a young niece of his went to his room at 11 o'clock to call him, and found to their surprise that the bed was undisturbed, and had not been slept in during the preceding night.

They communicated the intelligence to Mrs Meagher, who made inquiries about the camp, but failing to get any tidings of him, sent to Constable Hayes at Long Gully, who at once entered upon a search, which had been vigorously pursued by Senior-Constable Barry and Constables Hayes, and O'Farrell, under the direction of Superintendent Ryall, and occasionally with the assistance of Detectives Mahoney and Sainsbury, for ten weeks without any actual result. On the following morning the three Chinamen left the neighbourhood of Sandhurst, and did not return for some time, when they were trapped in a little swindle which promises to throw a good deal of light upon Ryan's disappearance.

The whole country for miles round was examined minutely, and the six deep shafts on Tyson's abandoned reef were explored by Erickson and Cleel, divers who were taken up from Melbourne for the purpose. The work of examining these shafts was very difficult, and occupied a long time, but they were thoroughly searched. Altogether some 5,000 shafts and diggers holes of various descriptions, varying in depth from 10 to 150 feet, were searched, but without any trace being found of the missing man, and attention was then devoted to the creeks and scrub lands for miles around. Some thirty dams, from the gasworks in Bridge street, at the north eastern outskirts of Sandhurst, to Epsom, a distance of four miles, were first dragged, and then numbers of boys were employed for days together diving and wading in the muddy water.

At one of the dams belonging to a Chinaman, lying within three hundred yards of the camp, which covered an area of three acres, the police cut a race and let the whole of the water escape. The whole length of Bendigo Creek and its tributaries from the gasworks to Goornong, a distance of twenty five miles, was carefully searched, the first six miles having been

pierced with iron rods, whilst the bed of the creek in the vicinity of the camp was turned over almost as carefully as if the searchers were engaged trenching for special garden purposes.

The ranges between Sydenham gardens and Ironstone Hill, containing about three square miles of scrubby bush, from which the heavy timber had long been removed, only leaving light brush and undergrowth, varying from 8ft to 20ft in height, was traversed by thousands of searchers, and the police especially examined the lower end of Eaglehawk Flat, the lower end of California Gully, the range between Long Gully and California Gully, and Long Gully itself from the Cambridgeshire Hotel to where the gully enters the Bendigo Creek, near the White Hills Cemetery. The Whipstick scrub yet remains to be searched, but as it is twelve miles distant from the camp there is little prospect of finding the body there.

A LIKELY CLUE.

**Gold theft at
Huntly**

On the night of the 14th November last the whole of the copper plates, containing about £60 worth of gold on their face, were stolen from the battery of the Loyal English Company at Huntly, six miles away, in a northerly direction, from the Chinese camp; and although it was reported next day, nothing could be learnt to lead to the discovery of the thieves.

It is now known that Ryan had information placed in his possession a few days after the robbery which placed it beyond question that Hong Kee, Ah Wong, and Wong Ching Young were concerned in the robbery, and that he was determined to sheet it home to them if he possibly could. He kept them under surveillance, and turned their place over in their absence, but could not find the stolen plates, without which of course it would be useless to proceed against the heathens So he waited patiently for a new development or a new move on their part, and stopped out late and early in his anxiety to sheet the thing home to them. On the other hand, they were ever wary, and probably kept as strict an eye upon him and his movements.

Ryan disappeared mysteriously on the 6th of January, and on the 28th of February following Hong Kee and Ah Wong sold half the stolen copper plates, without the gold which they originally contained, to a marine store-dealer, named Rohs, in Sandhurst, as old copper at 4d per lb; but it was not till the 12th instant that Detectives Mahoney and Sainsbury discovered the fact.

They immediately arrested the two men, and whilst they were being removed some extraordinary blood stains were found on the bottom

**Chinese men
arrested**

boards, near the head of their cart. One of these stains was about half the size of a human hand, and appeared as if it had first accumulated in a pool, and then by the motion of the cart scattered and ran away down between the nearest open crevice.

On being questioned, Ah Wong at first said that the blood stains had been caused by his having been hit on the head by a stone thrown at him by larrikins, but he afterwards altered his mind, and said it was caused by a cut hand, which he had some weeks ago, and quite recently he explained that the blood had come from a cut over the eye, which he got accidentally, but where he does not explain. The curious part of these explanations is that, after a most careful examination, no trace of either wounds or cuts can be found on Ah Wong's body, and he has frequently asked, since hearing that the blood stained boards taken from the cart had been sent to the Government analytical chemist for examination, whether Mr Johnson could distinguish between the blood of a Chinaman and persons belonging to other nations.

On being brought before the police court, charged with the robbery, both prisoners were remanded, and Hong Kee was then admitted to bail. He immediately washed the shambling old cart from stem to stern, so the police assert, and gave quite a tone of flashness to its still rickety appearance. Whilst searching in the hut during the time that the two Chinamen were in gaol, Detective Mahoney discovered a long bladed knife with stains of blood upon it, and he at once conveyed it along with the blood stained boards to the Government analyst, the result of whose examination has not yet been made public.

Whilst in Sandhurst I saw Hong Kee driving the old cart, loaded with bags and rags, up Bridge street, in the direction of the marine store; and by the courtesy of Mr Sheegog, the governor of the Sandhurst gaol, I saw Ah Wong in the awaiting trial wand. He was lying stretched out on the flat of his back in the shelter shed, but jumped up when we entered the yard, and looked surprised at the visit, with which he did not at all appear pleased.

The third Chinaman supposed to be concerned in the copper-plate robbery, named Wong Ching Young, was arrested at M'Ivor on Thursday, and brought down to Sandhurst on Saturday by Constable Sainsbury and Alick Ah Goon, who is occasionally employed as interpreter by the police department.

A Possible Contingency

There is a considerable amount of anxiety shown by the people of Sandhurst as to the fate of poor Ryan, and should it be discovered that he has been murdered there is little doubt that they will burn the Chinese camp to the ground.

Mount Alexander Mail (Vic. : 1854 - 1917) Fri 26 Mar 1886 Page 2
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF CONSTABLE RYAN.

New police report

Early last month Senior-Constable M'Hugh, who has the reputation of being one of the best informed and acutest members of the force, was despatched from Melbourne to investigate the circumstances connected with the disappearance of Constable Ryan. He was in Sandhurst for several days, and quietly made a number of enquiries, but without leading to a definite result.

On his return to Melbourne he sent a very full report, recounting all that was known of Ryan's movements just before he was last seen, and advancing theories to account for his disappearance. Senior-Constable M'Hugh says that the following could have happened:-

- (1) that Ryan deliberately absconded;
- (2) that he became insane and wandered;
- (3) that he committed suicide;
- (4) that he was murdered;
- (5) that he fell into a hole or into the Bendigo Creek.

The first assumption cannot be entertained at all, the second and third are improbable, and there was no motive of any kind to be discovered to lead any one to suppose that he had been murdered. M'Hugh concludes, therefore, that he fell into a hole or into the creek.

He says:- "Ryan was drunk on the day before, and he was drunk that day. He was an old man, and not very strong, but still kept up the spree. I am of opinion, from what I learned about him on other occasions that he got more drink from the woman Mrs Wing (wife of Goon Wing, a Chinese) after he visited the camp (on the night he disappeared).

The night was dark, rainy, and slippery, and in trying to reach home he fell into one of the ten thousand holes between the camp and the station and was covered by a fall of earth, or else he fell into the creek and was carried down by the flood on Thursday, or buried in it by the silt and tailings. He may have lost his way even if sober, and wandered in the opposite direction to that he intended going, and may have fallen into the

Tyson Reef shafts and be there still. Everything is in favour of the view that he lost his life by losing his way in his attempt to return home on that pitch-dark rainy night."

Until more definite information is obtained, the higher officers of the force are inclined to endorse M'Hugh's opinion.

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Mon 29 Mar 1886 Page 2
THE LATE CONSTABLE RYAN.

The search continues

Probate
application

Inspector Kennedy, of the detective department, and the local officers, are still busily engaged in prosecuting inquiries in the hope of unravelling the mystery surrounding the disappearance of Constable Ryan in January last, but no definite information can yet be given with regard to the results of their investigations. Notice is given by advertisement elsewhere, that after the expiration of fourteen days from the 27th inst, application will be made to the Supreme Court, in its probate jurisdiction, that probate of the last will and testament of Thomas Ryan, deceased, may be granted to John P Carolin, the sole executor named in and appointed in the will.

advice from
onlookers

An "Old Bendigonian," writing in the Age, says:
"Having known the missing Constable Ryan for a period of thirty years, I am absolutely certain that he neither made away with himself nor did he fall down any of the abandoned shafts about Tyson's reef, each of which Ryan knew as well as the Melbourne police man knows the *trottoir* of Bourke Street. In the search for him, however, it seems to me that one of the easiest modes for the disposition of the body (concluding that there has been foul play, of which there is little doubt) has been overlooked.

I refer to the over shifting sea of sludge and quartz tailings which exists at the rear of the Chinese camp, and in which a body once buried would only be recovered after diligent and most searching investigation, for every day would but add its help to hide for ever the evidence of crime from the world's eyes."

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Wed 22 Apr 1896 Page 3
The Disappearance of Constable Thomas RYAN

AN OLD MYSTERY REVIVED

The interest in the mysterious disappearance of Constable Ryan, an old and respected member of the police force, on the night of 6th January, 1886, has been revived. It will be remembered that on the date mentioned

the deceased, who was in charge of the police station at the White Hills, attended a pigeon shooting match at the Sydenham Gardens.

In the evening, after having tea, he visited the Chinese Camp at Ironbark presumably for the purpose of making inquiries about some Chinamen who were suspected of having stolen some gold from the Loyal English claim at Huntly. He was seen in the camp about 10 o'clock at night, but from that time not the slightest trace of him has been discovered. Rain set in that night, and continued for two or three days, so that any efforts to track him were rendered futile. The camp was literally turned upside down, the dams and holes in the neighbourhood thoroughly dragged, and every likely corner where the body might have been hidden carefully searched, but without avail, and after the lapse of a few months the occurrence gradually dropped out of public notice until eventually the mystery was almost completely forgotten. A suspicion was prevalent at the time that the deceased had been murdered by Chinamen, but there was no tangible clue to support the suspicion.

This feeling was revived last week during the hearing of a case in the Police Court in which three Chinamen were charged with having assaulted a fellow-countryman. It was asserted by counsel engaged for the complainant that there was a society amongst the Chinese called the "Gee Hing," the members of which were bound to secrecy, and it was hinted that that organisation could throw some light on the disappearance of the unfortunate constable. These statements were regarded in a very serious aspect by the authorities, and Detective Macmanamy, of Melbourne, was instructed to make inquiries into the truth or otherwise of the assertions. That officer accordingly came up to Bendigo, and assisted by Plainclothes-constable Haigh, thoroughly probed the matter to the bottom. It is understood that his report, will be to the effect that while there is undoubtedly a secret society, there was not the slightest proof of the members having any connection with the disappearance of the constable.

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Mon 10 May 1886 Page 2
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF CONSTABLE RYAN.

CLAIRVOYANTS AT WORK.

Clairoyants

During the last month or so matters have been rather quiet with reference to the mysterious disappearance of the late Constable Ryan at the White Hills about five months ago. Within the last few days, however, the interest in the matter has been revived in consequence of two clairvoyants from Melbourne having undertaken the self imposed task of, if possible, finding the remains of the unfortunate constable.

success in
the past ??

By request of the parties interested we will state that the clairvoyants disown any connection whatever with spiritualism, which they denounce in very strong terms. The Rev J H Harle is connected with the South Yarra Christian Hall, and is a strong advocate of scientific mesmerism. The other member of the party is Mrs M A Hart, (no connection with the "Rev" Helen Hart) a clairvoyant practising in the Eastern Arcade, Melbourne.

Their story is that having been successful in a number of their cases, and seeing in the newspapers an account of the mysterious disappearance of the constable, they thought they would take a trip to Sandhurst, at their own expense, and endeavour to elucidate the mystery surrounding this case. They took the case in hand, as Mr Harle says, simply as an experiment on behalf of the science of mesmerism. If it should prove a failure they will be the losers, and on the other hand, should they be successful, it will mean a big victory for mesmerism, and the £100 reward will go to make up the expenses they have incurred.

Their modus operandi is for Mr Harle to mesmerise Mrs Hart, and while she is in this "sleep" she is able (so it is claimed) to read the thoughts of others, and also to solve mysteries like the present. While in this state she conveys her ideas to the mesmerist, and he acts accordingly.

Their story is that while in Melbourne, Mrs Hart was put into one of these "sleeps" and minutely pictured the missing constable, Mrs Ryan, Superintendent Ryall and other people. The rev gentleman and Mrs Hart arrived in Sandhurst by the last train on the night of Tuesday the 27th of April, and on the following day proceeded to the White Hills police station, where she at once identified Mrs Ryan, and subsequently Constable Ryall.

They took lodgings at Mr Parker's house, which is in the vicinity of the police camp. On Thursday, the 29th, Mrs Hart was put to sleep, and having traced the constable to the Chinese camp, and fixed on houses at the camp whose occupants, they alleged, knew something about the disappearance, the two clairvoyants, accompanied by a policeman whose presence had been requested for protection, set out for the camp. Mrs Hart picked out the tenements occupied by the two women, who were the last who are known to have seen Constable Ryan alive. In the house of one of them Mrs Hart was again put to sleep, and while under the influence of the mesmerist she stated that after having been murdered, the body of the constable had been placed in a cellar, but subsequently put into a cart and taken down the creek by Chinamen.

She was confident that the body had not, as had been stated, been carried down by the flood. They returned to Mr Parker's and while in another sleep Mrs Hart told Mr Harle that the body was in a paddock on the lefthand side of the creek, the palings on the fence round the paddock having a lot of auger holes in the top of them. Accompanied by Mrs Ryan's brother, Mr Harle went along the bed of the creek, and when near Epsom, Mrs Ryan's brother discovered a paddock surrounded by a fence, which accurately answered the description of the place referred to by Mrs Hart.

On Wednesday last, Mrs Hart, while in a sleep, stated that she could distinctly see an old long rickety cart, on two wheels and carrying the constable's body, being driven along the road and into the creek down to the paddock previously referred to. As there are a number of old abandoned shafts in this paddock, which is about four or five acres in extent, and belongs to Mr Trezise, there was some doubt which particular one contained the constable's body. Consequently on Saturday morning Mrs Hart was taken down to the paddock, and after having been put to sleep, directed Mr Harle along a path to a shaft a short distance away from the fence. She pointed out the spot where, she avers, the Chinamen laid down the body, close to the side of the shaft. Here, she states, she is unable to trace it further, and consequently is positive that it must have been placed in the shaft. This shaft was sunk in 1871 by a Mr William Myers, a resident of the locality, who states that it is between 40 and 50 feet deep, and has a drive in it running east. It is now, however, nearly full of water. Mr Harle had a harpoon made and fixed on to some gas pipes, and by means of this and some hooks attached to a rope endeavoured to find out whether or not the body was in the shaft.

His efforts, however, proved unavailing up to Saturday evening. The only way in which the question can be settled definitely is by pumping out the water. This work would be done by several men who live in the locality, if they were guaranteed their expenses, if on baling the water out it was found that the body was not there.

The operations of the clairvoyants have been closely watched daily by numbers of the residents in the locality, who are pretty evenly divided in their opinions as to the legitimacy of the proceedings. As one of the onlookers remarked- "The clairvoyants say that the body is in the shaft, and we are unable to say that it is not there." In narrating their proceedings since arriving in Sandhurst, the clairvoyants made several mistakes as to the dates on which they stated they first visited the locality,

and on this being pointed out to them, Mr Harle said they had not at the time taken any particular notice of the days.

And now perhaps several incidents ought to be narrated, which, leaving aside any questions as to by what means the clairvoyants have fixed on this particular shaft, to a certain extent point to it as a most likely place for the body to be hidden in, supposing that the constable has met his death by foul means.

The paddock is situated, as previously stated at Epsom. The Whipstick road runs along one front- ago, while another unformed road passes along the side at right angles to the Whipstick road. The unformed road terminates in the Bendigo Creek, which flows round past the other side of the paddock, and on this side is the fence containing the palings which have the auger holes in them. There is a surveyed road from the White Hills cemetery past Mr Goyne's residence down to the Whipstick road. It is a singular fact that at about one o'clock in the morning that the constable was missed, a cart was heard passing down the surveyed road towards the Whipstick road.

Mrs Sanderson, a widow, states positively that on the night in question she was lying in bed awake, listening to the rain, when she heard a horse and cart passing. As during the whole eleven years that she had been living in that locality she had never heard a cart passing at that hour in the night, the occurrence at once struck her as being something unusual. About two hours afterwards, or just before daybreak, she heard the cart returning, and her curiosity being aroused she got up out of bed. By this time however the cart was out of sight, but she could tell by the sound that it was going along the road towards Jones' Shamrock Hotel, as if to return to Sandhurst by the main Huntly road instead of the way it came. The members of the Delbridge family are also positive that they heard a horse and cart being driven past their place in the direction of the paddock about the time mentioned by Mrs Sanderson. They account for the fact that they were awake on that night owing to the death of the late Mr Delbridge.

The supposition that the horse and cart were driven down the creek is further corroborated by the fact that on the following morning Mr Matthews and his son, who live in the locality, had occasion to cross the creek at this point on their way into Epsom, when they noticed the tracks of cart wheels in the bed of the creek, the cart having evidently been turned round opposite Mr Tresize's paddock. Mr Matthews' attention was drawn to the fact as it was something unusual, and he also fixes the day by the late Mr Delbridge's death.

The police state that they were aware some weeks ago of the cart having been heard proceeding along in that direction, but nothing turned on it. With regard to the particular shaft which has been fixed upon, another rather singular incident has been pointed out. At the side of it there is a large heap of gravel, which has been there since the shaft was sunk. There appears to have been about a couple of loads taken away from it at a comparatively recent period, when or by whom the owner is unable to say.

When dragging the hole on Saturday, it was found on putting down the rods, that instead of the lime and slush which may reasonably be expected to be there after lying unworked for 15 years, there is a thick layer of gravel, presumably that taken from the heap at the side of the shaft.

What further action will be taken today is undecided, as no one seems willing to bear the expense of baling the water out of the shaft.

On Saturday afternoon another sensational report was circulated about the city to the effect that a hat had been picked up in the creek by a lad, and had been identified as one worn by Constable Ryan at the time of his disappearance. A hat was found, and as it bore the number, 735, it was, of course, naturally concluded that it was the missing constable's, and that that was his number.

On the hat being taken to the White Hills police station, however, it was found that although the hat was something like the one worn by Constable Ryan it was not his. The figures stamped on it appeared to have been affixed by the manufacturer.

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Thu 12 Aug 1886 Page 2
THE RYAN MYSTERY

Application for money from widows' and orphans' police fund

Search no
longer active

The wife of the late Constable Ryan, who disappeared some time ago at White Hills, near Sandhurst, has (writes our Melbourne correspondent) made application to the police for the amount to which she is entitled through her husband's loss, and the widows' and orphans' police fund will supply her with about £80 as nearly 600 police are enrolled, and each gives half a crown. The search for Ryan's body has been given up, but the police are convinced that it must be buried near the Chinese Camp at White Hills.

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Fri 19 Aug 1887 Page 2

CONSTABLE RYAN'S WILL

**Letters of
administration**

Our Melbourne correspondent states that the will of the late Constable Thomas Ryan, of White Hills, Sandhurst, who so mysteriously disappeared in January, 1886, was mentioned in the Equity Court yesterday morning. An application was made for probate to the will of the deceased in May, 1886, but it was refused on the grounds that it was made too early. Since then it has been found that there is an informality about the will rendering it invalid, in as much as the two witnesses to the instrument did not witness the execution at the same time. As the next of kin of deceased had expressed his determination to contest the validity of the will it had to be abandoned. Today Dr Quick applied on behalf of the widow for letters of administration. His Honour who said that satisfactory evidence had been adduced as to the death of the testator, granted the application.

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Fri 11 Jan 1889 Page 2
OBITUARY

Obituary for Mrs Johanna Ryan

Obituary

Mrs Johanna Ryan, relict of the late Constable Ryan, whose mysterious disappearance at White Hills a considerable time ago is familiar to our readers, died at her residence M'Crae Street, yesterday. The funeral takes place today to the White Hills Cemetery at 3.30 pm.
