

MURDER OF BAIRD AND BAIRDS BAY

(By J. D. SOMERVILLE.)

Agreeing to meet near Baird's station, the boat party sailed for Venus Bay. Thence per land to Bairds station where about 48 natives were met. It should be particularly noticed that these officers walked along the inlet running inland from Cape Radstock. This seems to indicate that no name had been recognised for the bay at that time.

"From their ignorance of the English language, unashamed in their birthday suits and other peculiarities it was certain, said the Investigators, that their intercourse with Europeans, if any, had been most limited. Not the slightest evidence was procured to implicate any of these natives with the murder, so the Investigating whites and the natives parted "exchanging a variety of amicable salutes," agreeing to meet at a point on Anxious Bay to regale the natives with flour. The scene of the affray between the police and the natives was visited, when it was found that only one native had been shot. The body was disinterred and in the skull was found a small hole similar to that which would have been made by a musket ball, entering the head from behind, but had not passed through, diligent search failed to reveal its whereabouts. The original police party and the two "gentlemen" had stated they had searched the vicinity after the natives had decamped but saw no signs of any killed or wounded. According to the Investigators "this appears to us very unaccountable." The Investigating party reached Anxious Bay and found the Yatala there but only 14 of the natives who promised to meet there, some being deterred "partly by fatigue and partly by the fear of passing through the runs of settlers, which we regret to find can seldom be done by the natives with impunity."

Flour was supplied and the natives addressed through the interpreters, and they were "given to understand," stated the Investigators, "that we were extremely anxious to be on friendly terms with them, but that they would be, equally with the whites, protected or punished by the law according to their deserts "; further they were informed that Pulgulta would be re-leased unless found guilty. Anxious Bay was left on January 5th, the intended visit to Port Lincoln had to be abandoned owing to strong northerly winds, so Port Adelaide was reached on Monday, January 7, 1851. In summing up the Investigating Officers after reviewing the whole episode offered the opinion that "Police Constable Dewson and his party were justified in firing at the natives in defence of their own person," but "at the same time it may be questioned to what extent they, by heedlessly galloping up to the natives, in the first instance brought themselves into a position of danger and whether the arrest of the prisoner could not have been effected by a more cautious proceeding." The solution of the question must after all be problematical. They lay the blame for the murder primarily on Baird in that he settled "himself down nearly forty miles from the nearest station, in the very centre of a tribe of natives known to be hostile to Europeans, with 2,600 sheep, himself and one shepherd constituting the whole establishment," and they said "he acted most imprudently."

These two investigating officers (the Commissioner of Police and the Protector of Aborigines), so much concerned in the administration of justice to the natives felt it "incumbent upon them to bring under His Excellency's notice the untiring zeal, activity and perseverance of Corporal Geharty who appears to have left no stone unturned to discover the murderers of the late Mr. Baird," and had "induced three of them (natives) to return with him to Port Lincoln" to gain their confidence, and they hoped ere long he would succeed in bringing the criminals to trial. "Such association with the Port Lincoln people might be expected to prevent similar aggression in the future." My researches have not shown whether the culprits were arrested, nor what happened to Poolgulta. As said above, it was not intended to write up this episode, but the Editor more or less forced my hand. There is much satisfaction in quoting the investigating Officers' opinion of Geharty, for in subsequent years he has been accused of slaughtering the natives at a place called Waterloo Bay.

If such an atrocity had been perpetrated, it must have occurred during 1849 or 1850 and could not have escaped the attention of Schurmann the interpreter, the Commissioner of Police and the Protector of Aborigines. Had the Waterloo Bay tragedy occurred it is most certain that Messrs. Pinkerton and Stewart would have been concerned in the affray. They were with P.C. Dewson when the native was shot in November 1850 and when they had every opportunity of venting their revenge, if any, on the natives for the murders of the preceding three years; yet the Investigating Officers, by most diligent search and enquiries could only find that one native had been killed. This does not speak of the action of a party who in company with others would round up the natives and shoot and drive them over the cliffs. On 10th

February 1857, A. Borthwick took up 85 miles of country under lease No. 554 and its location is shown as Cape Radstock.

If my memory is not playing me false, the site of this run was around Calca Hill as we now know it. Quoting the location as at Cape Radstock seems to indicate that Beards or Bairds Bay was not known officially in the beginning of 1857, even if known locally as such. In 1857, Hack left Adelaide via Port Lincoln for Streaky Bay to explore the N.W. country, but actually it turned out to be the exploration of the Gawler Ranges. He did not comment on the Port Lincoln and Streaky Bay section of the journey but on his plan he shows, by a line, arriving at Venus Bay and then more or less following the coastline and following along the bay, which on his map, he shows as 'Beards Bay'; passing through 'Cal-ca ' and crossing the ' Northwick Range.' Here we have the present form Calca which the police had rendered as ' Kolka ' and ' Kalka.'

The range should surely have been shown as "Borthwick" who had six months earlier taken up a run there. Hack met Geharty somewhere on the journey and was much impressed with his capabilities and knowledge, and asked permission to accompany the explorers but the request was not granted. So altogether they became friendly and must have discussed local affairs, past and present. Other than Borthwick, as far as records go, there were no other pastoralists in the Calca district when Hack passed through. In 1858, Geharty returning from an exploratory trip northwards of Streaky and Fowler's Bay, stated that on July 11, 1858, he was at "Kakla." In 1850 he evidently referred to the same place as "Kolka." (Conclusion next week.) Mr. S. V. Gilford, of Port Lincoln, left by plane last Monday morning to report for duty with the R.A.A.F. Mr. Jack Taplin, who was on the R.A.A.F. reserve, received his call to report for training and left by the Minnipa on Friday evening: He was a member of the railway clerical staff at Cummins and was previously in the Port Lincoln office.