



The Knobkerrie Killing

by Clifford Williams

A knobkerrie, also variously spelt knobkerry or knobkierie, is a wooden stick with a round or oval shaped knob at the end used as a club by South African tribesmen notably the Zulu. A knobkerrie features on the coat of arms of South Africa. Eighty-five year old Captain Charles Frederick Barrett had such an item hanging on the wall of his house in Belmont Road, Portswood, Southampton. The knobkerrie was a gift given to him by the author H. Rider Haggard who Captain Barrett had met in South Africa when he was a young man.

There is speculation that the knobkerrie was the original club of the great Zulu Umslopo-gaas, Haggard's character of fiction and, some say, a real person whom Haggard himself had met. Today that knobkerrie is in the collection

of an army Captain; he had been separated from his wife for several years, his wife being twenty years his junior. He had been living at 11 Belmont Road, a four



THE MURDER SCENE



THE MURDER WEAPON

of artefacts held by the Hampshire Constabulary History Society as a murder weapon. On the morning of January 16th 1959, Captain Barrett was found lying on the floor in his bedroom gravely injured about the head. There was blood on the switch of a table lamp "as if a blood stained hand had been used to switch the light on". The knobkerrie was found by Southampton Police Detective Inspector Robert Masters under the bed. It was blood-stained at the head and on the shaft, and the shaft was broken and splintered. Captain Barrett was taken to the Royal South Hants Hospital where he died later that day. The knobkerrie which had hung with other trophies in the hall of the house had been used to kill him. Southampton Police at once started a murder investigation. Charles Frederick Barrett was a retired

bedroomed semi-detached house in a then respectable residential area of Southampton for about ten years. For the past five years John Gerrard Finn, a dock worker, had rented two rooms in the house. Captain Barrett employed a housekeeper, Mrs Mary Theresa Tatum who had the use of a furnished flat in the premises, and who cooked and cleaned for Captain Barrett. Mrs Tatum started her employment with Captain Barrett in November 1958, and for the first couple of months, her husband Michael George Tatum and their baby were living together in the house. In December 1958, Mr. Tatum got a job as a fitter with the Firestone Tyre Company in Southampton docks but the job only lasted three weeks as he was dismissed from his employment due to the unsatisfactory references received. Just prior to him being dismissed, the Tatums argued over the proposed buying of a motor-car. Mrs Tatum thought about going back to her native Scotland and she mentioned this to Captain Barrett on Saturday 10th January 1959. Captain Barrett did not want to lose her services and decided to speak to Mr Tatum and ask him to leave the house. Mrs Tatum also left the house on Saturday 10th January and went to stay with her brother at 107 Mansel Road, Southampton, returning to 11 Belmont Road the following Thursday 15th January. John Gerrard Finn worked shifts in the docks. On Thursday 15th January, he was working on a night shift and left the house at 7pm. When Finn left the house, Captain Barrett was in his sitting room watching television. Finn returned home the



following morning at 7.30am, entering the garden of the house by the back way by Westridge Road. Finn noticed that the conservatory door and window, and also the house door leading from the conservatory to the house, were open. This was most unusual. Finn entered the house and went into the passage when he heard a peculiar snoring noise. At first he thought Mr Tatum had returned. He went upstairs and noticed that Captain Barrett's bedroom door was wide open, and the light was on. He entered the bedroom and saw the Captain lying on his stomach on the floor, his head was covered in blood. Finn then called Mrs Tatum from her bedroom door. He then went and phoned the police.

Police Constable Bushrod arrived and found Captain Barrett seriously injured but still alive. He was eventually moved by ambulance to the Aldridge ward in the Royal South Hants Hospital. Detective Sergeant Harry Ancill and Detective Inspector Masters went to 11 Belmont Road and made a thorough examination of the house. There seemed to be no forced entry. The draws of a writing desk in the corner of a front ground floor room had been pulled out and a weapon was missing from a number of war trophies displayed in the hall of the house. The bedroom in which Captain Barrett had been lying was thoroughly examined. There was a very large pool of blood on the floor near the foot of the bed. There was also a quantity of blood on the bed clothing, bedside table and also smears of blood on the built-in wardrobe near the table. In addition, a china urine bottle was heavily blood-stained and partially broken, with one of the broken pieces on the bed, and another piece under the bed. Under the bed was a knobkerrie. There were no fingerprints found at the scene. The detectives interviewed Mrs Tatum and Mr Finn and then Detective Sergeant Ancill together with Detective Sergeant O'Sullivan started to look for Michael George Tatum. Captain Barrett died that afternoon and on Saturday 17th January, a post-mortem examination was carried out by Doctor Goodbody. The examination revealed three fractures of the skull on the right side. At 2.45pm on Friday 16th January, Michael Tatum was located in Tennyson Road, Southampton. He was taken to the Police Headquarters and found to have in his possession a wallet containing £7 and a purse containing two keys. One of these keys was the key for 11 Belmont Road.

Tatum tried to explain his movements saying that on the evening of 15th January, he'd been in the Royal Oak public house until about 9.45pm, he then went to another public house where he

met a man called Derek. When the pub closed, Tatum said that Derek took him to his house somewhere in the Swaythling district. When asked about the £7 which was in his wallet, Tatum said Derek for no reason at all had given him £8 when at the house. Tatum went on to tell the detectives that he thought Derek was "a queer" and that he (Tatum) had promised to go to Derek's house on the Sunday. The detectives then took Tatum in a police car to visit places he said that he had been the previous evening. First they went to the Royal Oak public house in Lodge Road. Outside the Royal Oak, Tatum sat in the police car while the detectives asked the licensee and his wife one at a time to see if they recognised Tatum. At first the licensee said that he had not seen Tatum in the bar the previous evening but the licensee's wife said that she had seen him.

She then changed her mind stating that she'd been confused when looking into the car. Tatum was then asked to show the detectives the public house in which he had met Derek. Tatum directed the detectives along Portswood Road to the Wagoner's Arms. At the Wagoner's Arms, both the licensee's wife and a customer who had been in the public bar the previous evening looked at Tatum in the police car and were both convinced that he had not been in the premises the previous evening. Tatum was then taken back to Police Headquarters where he changed his story saying that he had gone to Donald Russell's house at 96 Portswood Road after they had been drinking in public houses in the centre of the city. Tatum said he left Don's house at 12.30am and it was then that he met Derek who was by his motor-car. Tatum insisted he had been to Derek's house. The police went to see Donald Russell and Trevor Toghill and they confirmed they had been out drinking with Tatum the previous evening. Tatum had in fact borrowed some money from Donald Russell.

They said that Tatum left Don's house at 11.40pm. Donald Russell then said that at 10.30am the following morning (16th January) Tatum had come to his house and refunded the money that he had borrowed, stating that he had been paid. Tatum was kept in Police Headquarters that night and throughout the following day. Tatum changed his story a number of times and eventually admitted to being in Captain Barrett's house when the fatal assault took place. However Tatum claimed an associate committed the assault. No other evidence of any other person being involved was found in the assault and Tatum was charged with the murder.



Tatum's address was given as 36 Cambridge Road. Southampton. He was found guilty at the



Hampshire Assizes in Winchester and sentenced to death. His appeal to the Court of Criminal Appeal was dismissed in April 1959 and he was executed at Winchester Prison. Tatum was one of the last persons to be hanged at the Gaol. The last criminal hanged at Winchester was Dennis John Whitty in 1963.

ROD ELWOOD **POLICE PRINTS**

I keep a large stock of police oriented prints, pictures and other ephemera. I have many antiquarian originals that cover most aspects of policing. These include the subject matter of

Courts,

Prisons, Magistrates, CID, Dogs, Mounted Police, Women Police, Transport, cartoons, Vanity Fair etc. I have also acquired a good selection of miscellaneous pictures that include photographs of

almost all the original London

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The AA versus Surrey Constabulary: **The advent of the Motor Car and speed-** **ing in Surrey 1900-1910** **Luke Franklin** **Archives Officer Surrey Police**

It seems that a day does not go by without hearing a complaint from the motorist about the 'tyrannical' regime of speed enforcement on the roads of the UK. The arrival of speed (or safety) cameras over the last 10 years has greatly increased the ability of the Police to detect the speeding offences of the British Motorist, despite the numerous signs warning of a 'safety' camera ahead. The older motorist would hark back to a time when freedom ruled the roads. However, historical records strongly indicate that this is not the case. Since the advent of the motor car during the early 20th Century speed enforcement on the road met with uproar from the motorist and battles on the road and in the press between the motorist and the local constabulary. In the midst of this struggle, the Automobile Association (AA) was formed to fight on behalf of the growing motorist gang. For the first time the Constabularies of the UK would have to enforce the law against the upper classes and their new love of the motor car.

The Origin of Policing

The formation of uniform police during the early to mid 19th Century was largely the result of a growing urban working class and an increasingly fearful middle and upper class, alarmed at the apparent rise of crime and disorder. Despite initial unwillingness to fund a new and expensive constabulary, local boroughs saw the need to set up a police force to combat what they saw as growing unrest amongst the urban poor that seemed to manifest itself in the form of the chartist movement and increasing attacks against property. The reaction of the working classes to the new police force was hostile since the duties of the new force was limited to dealing with petty offences such as drunkenness, theft and fighting-crimes mostly committed by working people. Many amongst the working classes objected to police tactics during marches and demonstrations, especially chartist marches that often led to rioting. In contrast it was unusual that a member of the upper class would ever encounter the police.

The beginnings of motoring legislation

During the 19th century the upper class elite had legislated to control much of the leisure activities of the working classes, leaving its own, similar pursuits alone: the obvious examples being the prohibition of cruel sports involving animals, except fox-hunting, beagling and shooting, and the prohibition of street betting and gaming while similar behaviour, in more genteel surroundings or on the race course, was permitted. However, concern about excess speeding by affluent motorists began to fill the correspondence columns of *The Times*, reaching parliament by the early 20th century, forcing anti-motorist legislation to be passed. This was the Motor Car Act 1903 which set a speed limit of 20 miles an hour.

The Automobile Association

According to Hugh Barty-King in his History of the AA, "police trapping had grown to such proportions by the time of 20th century broke the motoring fraternity regarded themselves as the victims of organised persecution". It was in Surrey along the Ripley road between Guildford and Ripley that Police