

## Policing in the Greta District 1850-1903

Noeleen Lloyd, Greta 22 February 2020

This story started with a photo, and some trees. For a long time, I had looked at what is now an iconic, well known, but ultimately mislabelled photo of the Greta Police Station.

The photo that you are now looking at on screen, was initially named by Ian Jones in the first edition of his ‘Ned Kelly a Short Life’ as ‘Greta Police Station – Curlewis Street, Greta’. In later editions it was labelled as ‘Adam’s Farmhouse-Greta’. It is a photo of Senior Constable Robert Graham at Greta, taken from his collection – at what was to become the *second* police station site in the district.

I was intrigued, where exactly was this site? – no one could tell me. In fact, many people argued with me, some still do, – that there was only ever one police station in Greta - the one on the banks of the Fifteen Mile Creek at what is now Greta West.

The Adams Farmhouse photo has been on my ‘things to chase up list for years’, and I needed not only to identify the site – but understand why it was there. That meant understanding policing in this district as a whole – from the beginning to the end. Why? It is because it’s all part of the puzzle and I can’t leave any puzzle alone, it’s simply not in my nature.

I never thought that I would become so heavily invested in researching and writing about the Police. After all, I’m a Quinn Lloyd Hart descendant, and my Great Grandfather was one of, if not the main, Kelly Gang Sympathiser and supporter.

What many of you may not know is that Thomas Peter Lloyd, cousin of Ned Kelly and oft known as the Fifth Gang member, would have a son, Thomas Patrick Lloyd, and he would join the Victorian Police - that’s my Great Uncle Tom. To this day, each generation of Lloyd – Hart descendants, has had at least two, if not more serving members.

All are proud of their heritage, but proud to serve. They know their history, they are proud of it, but they are well able to uphold the law, as they swear to do when they take their oath. I like to think that they were, and are, all good people, but they are just that, people.

I say this because I want to reinforce that this is the way it has always been - the Police Force is made up of people, some good, some bad. Some are very good at their job – others not. It was the same in the 1800s. Some of those that are well known to this story were ill-suited and nearly all were untrained – we know their names well. Others went about their jobs in a thorough manner, their names almost lost to time. You will hear much more and in greater detail about what it was like to be a Policeman in the 1800s from one of our other speakers after lunch. I want to talk to you about Greta, and its own story – and tell you about some of the men (and women) who lived at the police stations.

So, let me take you back in time to when Greta was just being settled, the 1850s. Land was opening up. The time of the Squatter was coming to an end, and land was being selected and farmed.

The Parish, and subsequently, township of Greta, had been part of the Fifteen Mile Creek Run, and as we now know, the township developed along the Creek near the ‘Fifteen Mile Creek’ Crossing – creatively named because it was fifteen miles from Benalla.

The township had not been surveyed until 1852, but we do know that before this, there had been a coach changing station and other residences. Buildings were also in the area from an earlier time which included one that supplied ‘refreshments’ (let’s call that the unofficial pub). There was a blacksmith shop, and some type of store near the crossing. All the necessities for a community were beginning to be in place,

On the 1 January 1853, the Victorian Government brought into law The Police Regulation Act (1853). This was the start of the Victorian Police Force, and before this the Colony of Victoria was policed by as Historian Robert Haldane writes ‘*an assortment of autonomous police forces, including the Native, Border, Mounted and Melbourne and*

*County of Bourke police.....Drunks, emancipists, and men from the working class predominated in the police ranks, their status and pay were low, and there was a high turnover of personnel'. Not a glowing reference.*

With the newly legislated Act, Police Districts were formed, stations opened. Greta, along with Benalla, Beechworth, Wangaratta and later Oxley, fell into one large district known as 'Ovens'. The main Courts were in Beechworth and Wangaratta. Any trouble at Greta, and officers would be sent from any of the surrounding stations.

Those travellers who pulled in at Greta were on their way to the Ovens Valley Goldfield. –

An advertisement appeared in The Argus on 29 June 1853

**OVEN'S ROAD** –*Travellers are informed that and after the 1st of July next, good accommodation, first rate wines, spirits and refreshments will be supplied at the new township of Greta, formerly known as the Fifteen Mile Creek – offering stabling etc....*

The first official hotel was in business! This was the 'Goldseeker's Inn, owned and operated by Ambrose Holoway'.

So, it is really no surprise that one of the first police encounters we hear about is a robbery of the Inn by a Bushranger in 1856, three years after it was opened...

Yes...we have our first 'Bushranger' in the district. Who is it you ask? Well, the paper reports him to be a '*notorious ruffian*'...and, what's more, he's an Irishman to boot – a native of Belfast, by the name of Hamilton. At about 7pm on 25 August, Hamilton presented a loaded pistol at the ostler's head and made off with a prize black filly. He was late apprehended at Kilmore, but not before wrestling with a detective and trying to steal his revolver.

A few weeks later, 'Billy the Puntman' is charged with robbing the mail en route from Greta to Wangaratta and stealing one of the pack horses. Known as 'John White' or 'John Hyde', he is sentenced to twelve years hard labour by the Beechworth Court. 'Billy the

Puntman' met an untimely death - he died in custody en route to Pentridge to *'take up his sentence'*. Being escorted from Benalla with fifteen other prisoners, *'several daring escape attempts were made on the way down'*. On the night of the 26 October another attempt was made at Kalkallo – several prisoners sawed through their chains and escaped through a hole in the wall before being discovered. The inquest states that 'Billy the Puntman' ate his breakfast the next day, but then vomited and died. The inquest returned a verdict that they agreed with the findings of the post-mortem – poor old Billy had died from *'congestion of the brain and its effects'*. No indication was given as to how he might have got that congestion.

In both these instances, there were no local Greta police – as mentioned earlier the matters must be referred to Beechworth, Wangaratta and Benalla – Benalla being the head of the Ovens District.

As more settlers arrived and the community of Greta and the surrounding district grew, everyday life was not without its share of trouble or police involvement – and it is well known that my own Clan, the Quinns and Lloyds, had their share of police interactions in the years before there was a dedicated Police presence in the town. Among them, the Senior and Junior Tom and Jack Lloyd, the Quinn brothers, and many extended families. It would later come to include Ned, Jim and Dan Kelly who had arrived with their siblings and Mother Ellen, to live with their Lloyd cousins in Greta. This was before Ellen selected land at Lurg. All their exploits are well documented, numerous and sometimes very violent. We cannot, do not, and must not deny it. There were many touch points between the Clan and the police from before the Force's inception, much well known, talked about and debated, others less so.

What does gets overlooked when we speak about policing at Greta and the district is that it was not all about managing the deeds of the Quinn's, Lloyds and Kelly's -

There were of course many other more 'mundane' incidents' that did not involve the Clan, and they can be overlooked, because of the

infamy surrounding the Clan families. That infamy aside, there were many other incidents that involved police and other Greta residents – drunkenness, refusal to pay bills, arguments over property, accidents, assaults, deaths, suicides. Police were also responsible for the inspections of ‘licences’ for everything, including land selection, hotels and theatrical venues.

Once again, at this time, all of this was the responsibility of Officers from neighbouring stations.

Through 1867-69, the Councillors of the Oxley Shire, supported by the local Parliamentary Member waged a long running written, and public, campaign, to the Chief Commissioner of Police, Frederick Standish, requesting that a police station be established in Greta. They cited an ‘*urgent need for police presence*’. Initially, in Feb 1868, the Commissioner states that there will be a police station ‘as soon as authority for the necessary expenses can be given’, by October of that year he is ‘*directing the officers from neighbouring stations to visit as often as possible*’. Pressure was applied at a higher level in Parliament, however, it takes a full year before we hear that Superintendent McCullagh from Benalla and Senior(Snr) Constable Duggan had visited Greta for the purpose of selecting a site.

On 16 May 1870 a memo from Chief Commissioner Fredrick Standish to Superintendent Green of Kilmore reads:

*‘Senior Constable Hall, at present in charge of Broadford will be instructed to proceed to Benalla on his way to Greta where he will be placed in charge of the Station. I have specially selected him for duty at that station as Greta is the very hot bed of criminals – Ex Pentridge men and cattle stealers and I have every confidence that the zeal and activity that he has always displayed will be of service to the Department’.*

Edward Hall # 569 and John Archdeacon #2311 were the first officers at the newly formed Greta Police Station in September 1870. They set up shop in the only premises available – a building rented from Mr Liddle near the Fifteen Mile Creek.

Hall is well known for his brutal and overbearing manner, reprimanded and rewarded throughout his career. An overbearing and 'zealous' man in every fibre of his being.

Two incidents stand out during his time at Greta. Little more than a month after the station opened, a young Ned Kelly, pursued by his two Quinn uncles, Pat and Jim, sought refuge at the station. A fracas ensued and whilst Pat Quinn was being handcuffed his brother beat Hall viciously about the head with his stirrup iron, knocking him unconscious. The two then turned on Constable Archdeacon who is said to have been beaten so badly he was 'almost killed'. Constables were sent from Wangaratta to search for the brothers – Pat was found at his sister Ellen's and surrendered after being pursued through the bush, Jim surrendered himself the next day. Jim received three months hard labour

Hall recovered, and as we know, about six months later he was involved in another fracas with young Ned, only this time it is he who assaulted Ned, beating him about the head with his service revolver after first trying to subdue, handcuff and shoot him. He hit Ned 'four or five times' with his service revolver in self-defence. Ned was left unconscious, bleeding from the nose and mouth – the scars on Ned's head will be visible on his death mask. Hall was reviled and rewarded at the same time – sent to do a job, but unliked in many places.

Little is known about Constable Archdeacon; he was dismissed from the force in December of that year. He deserted his wife and children, advertisements appear seeking his whereabouts to attend the Quinn's trial in Beechworth, he does not appear. A warrant is issued for wife desertion. He is eventually found in New South Wales (NSW) and remanded for trial in Melbourne, at some point he did, however, return to his family and have more children.

Hall is replaced by the infamous Ernest Flood in September 1871, another person that needs little introduction, and who is well known to the story. Flood was often in trouble – there is plenty of evidence and it is well known. However, it is Flood's Junior Officer, Mounted Constable John Duff whose name was nearly lost to time. Duff was a

conscientious young man, but whose life would end tragically at Greta – he became only the fourth burial at the Cemetery that had opened in March that year.

Duff went out on routine patrol on the morning of 11 November, at around 2.30 that afternoon his horse was seen galloping riderless passed the station. Duff's lifeless body was found 400 yards away with his neck broken – the horse had bucked, thrown then dragged him. Duff's body was taken back to the station where it remained until he was buried 2 days later. His grave remained unmarked and unnoticed in the corner of the Cemetery until the Police Historical Graves Committee arranged for a headstone and rededication ceremony in February of last year. His family was in attendance 148 years after his death.

The Greta Police Station was a leased building, on the banks of the Creek, it had no foundations and was prone to flooding. Official correspondence speaks of water being ankle deep in the yard – and seeping into the floor of the rooms and the walls crumbling.

There were repeated discussions re finding a new site – it never eventuated, and only 'single men' were to be stationed there after Flood complained of the health of his wife and child.

After Constable Duff died, his body remained at the station, think about it, in a room for two days, in November heat. Flood requested that the room in which Duff's body had lain, be repapered, as the body had been quite decomposed, and the smell seeped into the walls – it was agreed to – reluctantly and in no great haste.

A new building was to be built for the married quarters and the stables. But the site remained the same – leased from Robert Liddle, who owned the store. The original building was still used for single man's quarters.

Over a dozen officers passed through the Station. There were the well documented events that relate to the Kelly story, but there were the others too, the endless patrolling, the keeping of reports, the filing of notices. Seeking stock food for horses, maintaining their health.

Officers were fined for not getting reports in on time, loss and damage of uniform, tack, many petty things.

The officers were also the first point of call when people died, through natural causes or misadventure. There were cases of both adults and children drowning, suicides, house fires and accidental burnings, horse and buggy accidents and in one case a child being killed when a cupboard falls on her. They attended, examined the bodies, wrote reports – all without training - and no follow up.

The events at the home of the Kelly Family at Eleven Mile Creek in April 1878 would change the landscape of Greta in general and Policing for ever. It is well documented that the Officer in Charge of Greta, Anthony Strahan, was away and a young Constable named Fitzpatrick called, when he should not have, at the Kelly home, alone, to serve a warrant on Dan Kelly.

The ensuing events would set off another, more catastrophic chain of events that would lead to the tragedies of both Stringybark Creek in October 1878 and Glenrowan a further 18 months later– because that's what they both were. Tragedies.

One of the Police Search party that was to go into the Wombat Ranges looking for Ned and Dan left the Greta Police Station on 25 October 1878, led by Senior Constable Shoebridge, accompanied by Senior Constable Strahan and Constables Thom and Ryan. All who had been stationed at Greta and other local areas – and were said to know the Kelly's and the area's well. They were to meet the other se Search Party that had left Mansfield, made up of Kennedy, Lonigan, Scanlon and McIntyre at Hedi.

History has recorded the events of those days and the work continues to ensure that the sites of both the site of the Police Camp and the Tree where Michael Kennedy died are correctly identified and preserved. This work is being done by Greta locals in collaboration with police descendants. That is fitting.

The focus of the Greta police would turn mainly to the '*hunt for the outlaws*' – but everyday policing must continue.



One of the most contentious events around the district as the new year of 1879 dawned, was the arresting of the Sympathisers, in homes, paddocks, in streets and even on a Railway Station. Those named were charged via the new '*Outlawry Act*'. In Benalla, Captain Standish had gathered Officers from the local districts and stations, and asked them to name those considered 'Sympathisers'. They would be detained for months on end, on no evidence other than that they were known to be family, friends and associates of the 'outlaws'. Each week they were brought before the Bench in Beechworth, some released, some remanded again and again for 3 and a half months. This period of time has given me perhaps the quote I love the most - Tom Lloyd Snr sending a warning telegram to the boys '*Turn the four bullocks out of the paddock*' – it means – put them on the hoof, let them run, it's not safe to be near home.

Despite the constant search, resources were stretched thin, and in 1879, the Greta Station was broken up and the two Officers, Strahan and Ryan left for other postings. Strahan was the first to go, being redeployed on 21 January to '*Special duty re Outlaws*', and Ryan closing the station and being deployed to Benalla on 21 July. The building was no longer required for police purposes. It would never be used for police purposes again and in a twist of fate or serendipity would live out its purposeful life as the Greta Post Office – owned by – descendants of both the Quinn and Kelly family

Greta remained without a police presence – did that mean that there were never any present? Of course, it didn't, it was now the focus of the '*hunt for the Outlaws*'. It meant that they would ride through, and around and everywhere that they could. It also meant that they did not attend unless they were called.

It was a hostile environment in Greta if you were a Police Officer during those times and it was certainly deemed too dangerous for Officers to remain there. The officers would still be involved in documented events including arrests of Quinns, Lloyds and Kellys, the Sympathisers, the constant directed and documented '*watching of the criminal class*', arresting those involved in stock theft, assaults

and deaths by misadventure. This would include the tragic death of John Lloyd at the hands of Tom Lloyd Jr during a ‘*show of strength*’ during a hard-drinking session at O’Brien’s Pub in April 1879. Now, only a few weeks after being held as a ‘Sympathiser’, Tom was arrested and charged with manslaughter, although acquitted, he was obviously, deeply bereft. There are reports that he tried to twice take his own life.

On 12 May 1880, the Oxley Shire Council wrote to the Chief Commissioner of Police, requesting that the Greta Police Station be reopened, stating that they always believed that it had been a mistake for it to be closed. They also wrote ‘*We must bring under your notice that recently a number of thefts have taken place in that neighbourhood of mouldboards and wheels of ploughs and other articles*’.

Then came the Glenrowan siege, reports were rampant that it was too dangerous for police to be anywhere near Greta in the immediate aftermath – especially when there was talk of wanting the bodies of Dan and Steve back. Ned was in prison awaiting trial and sentence. The district was a ticking time bomb. Literally. There was talk of revenge. Of bloodshed. Emotion, Grief and anger was talking.

The decision was made to reopen the Greta Police Station. It is often asked why the Police rented rooms at Bridget O’Brien’s Hotel?

Remember – they never owned the previous Police Station, and it was not available. Rooms were to be rented until a more suitable location was established.

On 28 September 1880, four men rode into Greta. The Officer in Charge was Constable Robert Graham, he had with him Constables, Canny, Allwood and Hewitt. These names differ to what you will find in ‘*A Short Life*’, but I assure you the Police Muster Rolls have been verified and I am providing the correct names. As I mentioned earlier, the police barracks had only been rented in the previous years so in either a stroke of genius or madness, the new police station was set up in O’Brien’s Hotel. What better place to be literally ‘on top of everything’ -as the rooms were on the first floor above the bar.

Constable Graham had not been the first choice to head up the Station, although he had been deployed during the hunt and was at the Siege, and he had an impressive Service Record. Senior Constable John Kelly had refused, stating that it was '*the worst place in the Colony and almost suicidal*' – I don't believe he could have been any clearer in his refusal.

Graham was walking a fine line, the district was awash with emotion, he had instructions from the Acting Chief Commissioner Nicholson to deal with any offence immediately and strongly, and on the other hand, was supported by Inspector Sadlier, who had managed to avoid all out war when he allowed Dan and Steve's bodies to be returned to the families. Sadleir wanted a law-abiding district; he didn't want a second outbreak.

So it would seem to me that the hiring of rooms in the local pub, where you are supporting the community, mixing with the locals, listening to them, hearing everything and being on hand to intervene early, could be seen as a masterstroke, not just 'blind luck'.

However, the success of this all was lay squarely with Robert Graham.

What were they policing in this turbulent time post the Kelly outbreak – post what the families saw as a tragedy at Glenrowan, what is still seen as a tragedy? For all the families who lost a loved one, and whose lives were forever changed, Glenrowan was a tragedy. Just as the events at Stringybark Creek were a tragedy, there were no winners in this - it was not a game.

Ned was hanged on 11 November 1880.

Graham and his men handled the grief of the family without incident and with some sensitivity. He left them alone.

He clearly understood that the need for land and being unable to select, would continue to create unrest, and undercurrents of an outbreak would continue whilst this lay over their heads. '*Give the Sympathisers land*' was Robert Graham's advice, judge them on their merits.

In February 1881 Ellen was released from goal and returned home, to her selection where she tried to return to her life amongst the family.

Suddenly, the 1881 Kelly Reward Board and Royal Commission into the Victoria Police Force was convened. Old wounds, accusations of traitors and spies were aired.

When the Royal Commissioners visited Greta, and Ellen, at her home on the Eleven Mile Creek, in May 1881, the papers made much about her appearance and that of 14-year-old Grace. Let's just take a minute to ponder on how it might have felt for a woman with two teenage daughters and three younger children to have a party (all men) comprised of three 'two horse wagonettes' arrive at your home. The party included the Commissioners, their scribes, journalists and other 'hangers on'. You've just been released from prison 2 months earlier, two of your sons are dead, you can't pay your selection costs - and these men crowd you and your daughters asking you to tell them '*how they had been treated by the Authorities*'.

The uneasy peace was about to explode... Graham reports that '*another outbreak is imminent*' – he has heard them talking in the bar at the hotel, Tom Lloyd Jnr, Jack McMonigle, the McAuliffe's and others. What to do?

The story of Robert Graham and Father Egan meeting with Ellen, publicly and more than once is said to have directly prevented another outbreak. The time for bitterness and sadness was over, there must be no more loss.

But it wouldn't stop the 'behind the scenes games.' Ellen would be forced to give up her selection later that year and move in with Tom and Maggie. Police Correspondence show repeated efforts by Inspector Montford of Benalla to be '*rid of the Lloyds and the Kellys from the district*'. Tom and other sympathisers built a hut on the Lloyd farm, on the Fifteen Mile Creek for Ellen, she lived there until she was able to get her selection back, by paying her fees. The local police were instructed to find out if Tom Lloyd really owned the land and if they could '*rid him of it*'. The police reserved Ellen's Eleven Mile Property for '*police purposes*'.

Things would eventually settle, as they do with time, more police would move into the district. Many who had no part in either the hunt for ‘the outlaws’ or been present at the Siege. Men who would be able to come with ‘a clean slate.’

From 1881- 1903 the Greta Police Station operated from a different site than their original one at Greta. Robert Graham would move there with his new bride Mary Kirk. He would leave Greta in July 1883, his job well and truly done.

A dozen men would man the station across the ensuing years before it was closed in 1903 – some married, some not. There would be some terrible and tragic events that they would witness in the community. The murder of 10 year old Ellen Lloyd in 1890, child deaths from burnings, scold and misadventure. Farm and buggy accidents, serious and often fatal. These men knew everyone they attended to.

Michael Purcell would spend the longest of all the officers, arriving in June 1890 and leaving in May 1903, two of his sons that were born at Greta fought in WW1 and are named on our Honour Board. He would be the last Officer at Greta. The pleas to keep the station would fall on deaf ears this time – it would never reopen.

What we don’t hear a lot about in the story of policing is about the women - the wives of these men who were stationed in remote and isolated areas.

I admit to being initially guilty of not giving them much thought – but as I said earlier, policing had never been high on my radar. However as soon as I started researching, my thoughts quickly turned to these women.

On Service Records the only thing that is recorded is single/married. Police correspondence files give marginally more, as members were required to request permission to marry. If you are lucky you might find the name of their intended – if not, then I would be sent off down another set of rabbit holes – much the same as Alice in Wonderland. I had to rely on the primary sources of the Births, Deaths and Marriages – checking and rechecking as many published biographies are simply

incomplete or incorrect. I make no apology for stating that. This then led me to chase the families. In some cases, I have been fortunate enough to correspond with descendants and talk about their ancestor – both the Police member and his wife.

From my research and discussion with the Police Historical Society, I understand that the wives would more than likely have been with the officer at the station – unless they chose to live somewhere else. However, they would come in handy at the station as the cook and cleaner – they would also play another vital role – they would be there to search any female prisoners who came into the cells.

We know little of Edward Hall's wife, she is relegated to one line in his Service Record

*\*\* single through death of wife 31.10.1885.*

At this time Hall would have overseen the Ballarat Station.

A search of the records tells us about Hall himself, but nothing about his wife Margaret McNamara, whom he married in 1876. There were no children

Flood was a married man and his wife, Mary Burns, was with him at Greta. As I've stated, she is mentioned in correspondence on several times – due to the poor conditions that she and her child are living at the Police Quarters. We know that Flood is alleged to have fathered Annie Kelly's second child. The first two of 1885 Ernest Flood's children with his wife were born here at Greta. It is not a long bow to draw that the same midwives who helped the other district women would help the police wives – because who else was there? Women had, and still have a habit of being able to look past the extraneous and minister to each other

Never is that more evident in a story that has been passed down through the family of Constable Hugh Thom's Family. A story that was shared to me by his Great Granddaughter – and was told direct to her. Hugh Thom has a reputation for being a 'slovenly' and 'lazy' police officer, and his record talks of his uniform being unkept and 'dirty'. The only known photo of him to date has allowed that

narrative to continue and the snap inspection of Superintendent Nicholson and his ensuing report followed him to his dying days and indeed through every subsequent written document.

The photo you are now looking at (private photo) shows Hugh Thom as very elegantly dressed older man surrounded by his family. His great granddaughter told me that her great Grandmother, Mary would leave food parcels around the area for Ned and the boys whilst Hugh was on his rounds -their first son Hugh Walter was born at Greta in September 1876.

Having given you the description of the police quarters earlier, can you imagine what it would have been like to give birth and have a wee babe in those quarters?

Anthony Strahan was sent to take charge at Greta in February 1878, Strahan had a defacto wife Catherine Tanim, with whom he had a daughter in 1868 Catherine had stated that she and Anthony were married at Avoca in 1867, however searches by the Strahan family of all available records show this is probably untrue. Strahan was transferred to Beechworth and later Eldorado, it is not known whether Catharine and their daughter went with them, and by early 1871 he was in a relationship with Marion Evans, who would give birth to an illegitimate child (Anthony Oliver) in December of that year. They would not marry until a full year later.

Marion was the child of two convicts transported to Tasmania in the late 1830's. It is interesting that she would marry a policeman, and one that had been in the Royal Irish Constabulary. Her mother had been transported aged 16 years for 14 years, charged with larceny in 1840. It's not hard to believe that Marion had some empathy for if not sympathy for other women who had similar backgrounds.

When Strahan arrested Ellen Kelly after the events at Eleven Mile Creek, she was brought to the Greta station – Ellen had not long given birth to her youngest daughter Alice; Marion cared for the baby for a few days before Ellen was moved to Beechworth. The Strahan family tell of Marion and Ellen becoming close and that it was Marion who

took clothes and food into the Beechworth prison for her and the baby.

If a single man oversaw the station, then a local woman might have the opportunity to be employed as the cook and cleaner. The Officers might also be married, but they needed permission to have their wives at the station and could be reprimanded and/or dismissed for not seeking it – as happened to one of the Constables at the Fifteen Mile Creek Station - despite his colleague stating '*he wasn't bothered by the ladies' presence*'.

The Fifteen Mile Creek police station was opened in 1881. Four men took up residence in a building on Mason's Run' near Middle Creek. This was in direct response to reports that there was unrest amongst the 'Sympathisers'. Inspector Montfort had recommended that this station be opened, he also took on board and enacted the Royal Commission's recommendations that regular patrols around the roads of the district occur.

Montfort reported regularly on his efforts to '*clean up the district*' and rid it of the '*criminal class*', members of the Clan – he just couldn't let that go.

This station would remain open for three years, and whilst it started off with four men, it dwindled to just one, Constable Michael Leahy, before closing in May 1884. By the time it was closed, Fifteen Mile Creek was being described as a '*white elephant*' in the press.

Nothing remains to show us exactly where the station was exactly located –just a paddock and a rough location – more work to do.

Which leads me back to that Photo of the Adams Farmhouse. Where was that site? I had some thoughts, so did a few others, we had some 'possibilities' and 'probabilities. I knew where the Police Reserve was - where they kept the horses. I just didn't know the site of the Farmhouse.

At the same time that the Fifteen Mile Creek Station was closing, questions were being asked why the current Greta Police Station was four miles from the hotel and espousing that the site seemed to have



been selected for the sole purpose of ... *'guarding the Wesleyan Chapel and the State School.'*

It was this piece of writing that let me know I was on the correct track, because that's the Crossroads as we know it today. I found a reference to Adams Farmhouse being removed, and that all enquiries should be made to Mr William Sinclair. That was great – but frustrating, as I knew I was so close – you know it, you can almost taste it, but it's just out of reach. I knew that I had the right paddock – all 600 acres, but that's a big area.

I went back to the papers and the Public Records Office of Victoria, searching...

It was a trip to see the then 94 year old Gordon Sinclair that sent me looking at trees. Gordon died last year, but when I spoke to him eighteen months ago his mind was crystal clear. He couldn't recall where the police station might have been, nor did he know of anything called 'Adams Farmhouse' – but over a cup of tea, he did tell me that when they rode their bikes to school, they always called the rise 'Adams' Hill'.... that was nearly my Eureka moment. I sent a text off to Adrian Younger, who said – *'I bet you I know where that is – I'll meet you there'*. We stood on the side of the road – looking at trees with a photo in hand – it looked ok, and as he has taught me, trees don't lie, but what proof did I have?

It is at this point that I must give a massive shout out and thank you to Ralph Stavely, who pointed me in the correct direction to find Correspondence relating to all things Police. For anyone who has spent time researching primary documents, you know it's not far from the truth to say that you can feel like your eyes are bleeding when you've finished. You can also get very, very side-tracked by all the 'other' information contained in files. When you order a file at the Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV) – it is very often a box of documents. Trawling through the whole box for your information is not only time consuming and labour intensive, but for a bonafide sticky beak like me it is a treasure trove of things that have absolutely NOTHING to do with what you are looking for.

The day came that I was once again reading and turning pages over, when I some found correspondence from George Adams regarding the lease on his property at Greta for ‘police purposes’. I started to get excited – you aren’t allowed to dance around the PROV. It categorically spoke of the leased farm in 1882 – ok, well that was good, I had some proof....

That was great.... through more files, a few more breaks and cups of coffee....

Then in one of the last files for the day, scrawled in red pen.....

...’*A NEW PREMISES ERECTED BY MR ADAMS*’...

and a letter from George again, this time from 1889, stating that if the Chief Commissioner would guarantee that the Police Force would rent it for ten years... he would build a new station....and I had my Eureka moment... Because George not only included a diagram of the building he wanted to build, but a map of where he would place it. This was my fist pumping jumping up and down moment. I think I did stop breathing as I turned the page over and saw the diagram.

We had been correct in our ‘most probably’ and our field work, but here was the documented proof.

The new police station would be built on the corner of the Crossroads at Hansen – what is now the Greta Crossroad, near the Cemetery.

Thank you, George Adams, thank you for being so precise and pedantic and wanting to secure a lease – because that’s our proof of where the station was. Undeniable.

Here’s the first diagram I saw that made my heartbeat faster (doesn’t take much does it)

The picture you see on the screen is the site of where Adam’s Farmhouse was - nothing is left, except those trees, the police had operated out of it from 1881-1889

George built a new station, there was a haggle over the price and the number of years for the lease, but...he still built it.

This picture is the second Greta Police Station, albeit added on and modified since 1903.

There you have it. One mystery solved, but only part of the jigsaw.

This work is not complete, the more I dig, the more questions I find, the more I need to know. What am I going to do with this, well that's a thought for the future and maybe, with some collaboration I'll get something published. I deliberately didn't touch Glenmore/Hedi and Moyhu today, although there are many overlaps – otherwise would have been talking all morning.

Thank you for your time, I hope I've been able to give you a greater insight into the policing of this district, and the rich history and heritage that it holds.

Today, descendants of gang members and sympathiser families work alongside police descendants in an attempt to 'get history correct'. There is no animosity and we agree that there has been tragedy, loss and grief on both sides. We hold no grudges towards one another. We are not accountable for decisions made by our Ancestors. We are accountable for our own deeds and the words we speak and write about this story, which whilst it belongs to the families, it belongs to Australia and indeed the world, we can and must co exist. We must get history correct. That's what we are attempting to do with days like today.

The last thing I want to say – is please remember that these properties sit on private lands, and there is NO permission, nor will there be any given for people to go onto or into them. Take photos from the roadside – once again thank you.

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