

An Adelaide Gaol Execution

Thomas Blyth

Executed 9 January 1930

The sentence of death passed on Thomas Blyth for the murder of his wife was carried out at Adelaide Gaol on 9 January 1930. He walked to the scaffold in silence. Just before the hood was fitted over his head he said, "There is only one thing I regret and that is that I did not get Warren."

Mr Warren was a [former] friend who had recently lost his wife.

Blyth had suggested to Warren that he should move into their home for a while but the arrangement soon soured when Blyth suspected his wife and Warren of having an improper relationship. The marriage became further strained and their eighteen year marriage ended when Mrs Blyth moved out, taking her 14 year old daughter with her to live in Wattle Street, Malvern.

Blyth bought a revolver, telling the salesman that he wanted to shoot stray cats. Blyth shot his wife Sarah at a house in Wattle Street, Malvern a few days later on 30 September 1929. After the shooting he went to the nearby Cremorne Hotel to look for Mr Warren.

Unable to find Warren, he continued on to his Goodwood home where police found him in a drunken sleep a short time later.

Thomas Blyth was a 39 year old tramways employee who had always been a heavy drinker. It was some time before he was sober enough to be interviewed over the shooting but police only required a few minutes of questioning before there was sufficient evidence to charge him with murder.

When Blyth came to trial Mr J B Kearney, the defence council, attempted to procure an acquittal on the grounds of temporary insanity through drunkenness but the jury brought in a verdict of guilty of murder with a recommendation for mercy. The judge, Mr Justice Piper, told the court that he agreed with the verdict reached by the jury and would forward the recommendation for mercy to the authorities. Blyth then received the mandatory death sentence before contemptuously blowing a kiss to the court as he was lead away.

The Court of Criminal Appeal dismissed the appeal against Blyth's conviction and death sentence. The court was of the opinion there were no symptoms of insanity and there had been no miscarriage of justice.

On 7 January 1930 Executive Council, presided over by the Deputy Governor, Sir George Murray, considered the recommendation for mercy and a petition containing 1400 signatures requesting a reprieve. They decided that the law would take its course.

On 9 January 1930 the legal process was completed when Blyth went to the gallows in the New Building unrepentant for his crime and showing no remorse.

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