

**George Robert ARMYTAGE &
Michael COSTIGAN**

George Robert ARMYTAGE

New South Wales Police Force

Constable

&

Michael COSTIGAN

New South Wales Police Force

Constable

Shot – Murdered

Bourke

11 September, 1877



Grave of Michael COSTIGAN

On Tuesday 11 September, 1877 Samuel Getting, a barman at the Royal Hotel in Bourke, was speaking with Constable Michael Costigan in the bar of the hotel. The constable had just paid Getting for his room and board, and after having a drink and chatting with the barman for a short time, he left the bar. Getting, for some unknown reason, also left the bar about that time and went to his room in the hotel, where he took possession of his rifle. He then left his room and walked to the front of the hotel, where he saw Constable Costigan and Constable George Armytage standing on the verandah, having a conversation. He immediately shot both constables from behind before running into the street and attempting to reload his rifle.

Sub Inspector James Keegan, who was nearby, noticed people running toward the river, and when he asked what was happening he was told that Sam, the barman, had shot two of the police and was running away with a loaded gun in his possession. He then saw Getting running along the bank of the river with a gun in his hand, being chased by several people. The inspector

then went towards these people and told them to move away from Getting so he could speak with him. He then followed Getting for a short distance along the river until he stopped and waited for the inspector to approach. The inspector then spent some time talking with the offender and trying to get him to surrender, all the while edging closer as he spoke. At a later inquest, the inspector described what happened next.

"I rushed at him, being at this time between 10 and 15 paces from him. The ground was very muddy, and there was a gully between us. I got my hands upon him being beneath the gun, and we both stumbled and nearly fell. He again got a few paces from me, turned round, took deliberate aim, and shot at me. He called to me to keep back. I knew I was shot, but it did not weaken me, and I still went forward. He then raised the gun, holding it by the barrel, and struck me on the head. I put up my arm to ward off the blow, and it bruised my

arm very much and cut my head. He struck me several times, and I at length secured the gun. He then ran parallel with the river for a few yards, and as I followed him he suddenly plunged into the river, and kept his head beneath the water until he was drowned. He went but a short distance into the river. That is his body I have recently seen lying in an outhouse. He had plenty of opportunity of shooting me at first had he so desired, but he did not attempt to do so until I sought to arrest him. When he shot at me, one shot struck me near the eye, two shots went into my coat, two entered my chest, and two others grazed it. The Deceased...was a man of very good character and very good behaviour, and I can ascribe no motive for his acts. He said he had no intention of doing what he did, and that he had loaded the gun to go out for some duck shooting."

Constable Costigan was born in 1853 and joined the New South Wales Police Force on 11 September, 1873. At the time of his death he was stationed at Bourke.

Constable Armytage was born in 1855 and joined the New South Wales Police Force on 4 May, 1877. At the time of his death he was stationed at Bourke.

Grave Location/s:



ARMYTAGE: 30 06' 03S / 145 56' 12E
Old C of E, Bourke



COSTIGAN: 30 06' 05S / 145 56' 14E
Old Catholic, Bourke



Location of Old Royal Hotel

32 Mitchell St, Bourke, 2840

GPS: -30.088854, 145.936134

```
[google-map-v3 shortcodeid="c60e122b" width="350" height="350" zoom="12" maptype="roadmap" mapalign="center" directionhint="false" language="default" poweredby="false"]
```

```
maptypecontrol="true" pancontrol="true" zoomcontrol="true"
scalecontrol="true" streetviewcontrol="true"
scrollwheelcontrol="false" draggable="true"
tiltfourtyfive="false" enablegeolocationmarker="true"
enablemarkerclustering="false" addmarkermashup="false"
addmarkermashupbubble="false" addmarkerlist="-30.100831,
145.936668{}2-default.png{}ARMYTAGE Grave"
bubbleautopan="true" distanceunits="km" showbike="false"
showtraffic="false" showpanoramio="false"]
```

```
[google-map-v3 shortcodeid="5a188eaf" width="350" height="350"
zoom="12" maptype="roadmap" mapalign="center"
directionhint="false" language="default" poweredby="false"
maptypecontrol="true" pancontrol="true" zoomcontrol="true"
scalecontrol="true" streetviewcontrol="true"
scrollwheelcontrol="false" draggable="true"
tiltfourtyfive="false" enablegeolocationmarker="true"
enablemarkerclustering="false" addmarkermashup="false"
addmarkermashupbubble="false" addmarkerlist="-30.101053,
145.936520{}1-default.png{}COSTIGAN Grave"
bubbleautopan="true" distanceunits="km" showbike="false"
showtraffic="false" showpanoramio="false"]
```

```
[google-map-v3 shortcodeid="1beba92f" width="350" height="350"
zoom="12" maptype="roadmap" mapalign="center"
directionhint="false" language="default" poweredby="false"
maptypecontrol="true" pancontrol="true" zoomcontrol="true"
scalecontrol="true" streetviewcontrol="true"
scrollwheelcontrol="false" draggable="true"
tiltfourtyfive="false" enablegeolocationmarker="true"
enablemarkerclustering="false" addmarkermashup="false"
addmarkermashupbubble="false" addmarkerlist="-30.088878,
145.936137{}hunting.png{}Port of Bourke Hotel / Old Royal
Hotel" bubbleautopan="true" distanceunits="km"
```

showbike="false" showtraffic="false" showpanoramio="false"]



<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/101455389?searchTerm=constable%20m%20bourke&searchLimits=>

John Vance BLAIN

John Vance BLAIN

New South Wales Police Force

Regd. # 2481

Rank: 1st Class Constable (Foot
Policeman – not mounted)

Description: 5' 11.5" tall, blue eyes,

fair hair, fair complexion. Single.
Previously a farmer. He was Protestant.

Stations: Darlinghurst

Service: From 26 December 1874 to 20
June 1877 = 2+ years Service

Awards: a valuable gold watch and chain
for the gallant capture of a convicted
burglar, named Wright

Born: ? ? 1850 in Ireland

Event date: Thursday 22 March 1877

Died on: Monday 11 June 1877 @
Woolloomooloo

Cause: Assault with a Police Baton &
other assaults

Age: 26

Funeral date: Tuesday 12 June 1877 @
2.15pm

Funeral location: Graveside

Buried at: Rookwood Cemetery

Memorial location:



A record of his brave conduct for arresting and bringing to justice a notorious burglar at whose hands he received such savage injuries as to ultimately cause his death



[alert_red]**JOHN is NOT mentioned on the Police Wall of Remembrance**[/alert_red] * **BUT SHOULD BE**

Just after 4pm on Thursday **22 March, 1877** Constable **Blain** was on duty in **Bourke Street, Woolloomooloo** when he saw two men carrying a “bundle” in **Forbes Street**. He called on them to stop, however they ignored him and ran off, quickly pursued by the constable. One of the men then stopped and threw himself at Constable Blain, whose baton unfortunately had dropped to the ground during the chase. As he grappled with one offender, another took up the dropped baton and struck the constable

several severe blows to the head, inflicting terrible wounds. Blain bravely held his ground however, and succeeded in **handcuffing** one of **his assailants** before staggering a short distance to the home of **Dr Pattison**. The doctor assisted the stricken Blain and also quickly sent a message to the police for assistance.

Constable Williamson (**possibly Williams**) soon attended and spoke to Constable **Blain**, who told him that he had arrested and handcuffed one of his attackers before walking to the doctor's home. **Williamson** then attended the site of the incident where he indeed found one of the offenders (**John Wright**) lying handcuffed and bleeding in the street. The courageous Blain had in fact **arrested one of his own murderers** (a rare accomplishment), as his injuries were **to prove fatal**.

Prior to his death the ***Mercury*** newspaper of Friday **23 March, 1877** reported the story of **Constable Blain's encounter** with the offender **John Wright** and his unknown accomplice.

The article indicated that *"The constable who was so **barbarously assailed** is suffering greatly from the wounds he received. His extraordinary courage and resolution in securing the man in the manner he did is worthy of lasting record."*□
And thus it is.

His headstone at Sydney's **Rookwood Cemetery** reads: "A record of his brave conduct for arresting and bringing to justice a notorious burglar at whose hands he received such savage injuries as to ultimately cause his death".

The constable was born in **1850**, and at the time of his death he was stationed at **Darlinghurst**.

[divider_dotted]

The Sydney Morning Herald

Friday 16 March 1877

“SERIOUS ENCOUNTER WITH A BURGLAR.

Some time on Thursday night the premises of Mr **J C W Hinsch** of **160 Pitt Street**, were broken into, and a number of Crimean shirts and other goods valued at about £20, were stolen. Shortly after 4 o'clock yesterday morning, **Constable Blain** who was on duty in **Bourke Street, Woolloomooloo**, saw two men carrying a bundle in **Forbes Street**. He called upon them to stop but as they took no notice he gave chase, and gained upon them. One of the men threw himself down in front of the constable who fell upon him. In running after the men the constable's **truncheon** dropped out of his pocket, and the second man took it up and struck the constable **several heavy blows** inflicting very severe wounds on the **back of the head**. The constable, though stunned by the blow, bravely grappled with the man, and after a most desperate struggle succeeded in over-powering and handcuffing his assailant. Becoming weak from loss of blood he had just sufficient strength to reach the **residence** of **Dr. Pattison**, when he fainted from exhaustion. **Dr Pattison** sent information to the police that a constable was at his house who had been **nearly murdered** in the street. **Constable Williams**, who soon arrived in obedience to the summons, found **Blain** lying on a sofa bleeding from wounds on his head, and scarcely able to speak. Eventually he learned from him that a man whom he had captured was handcuffed in the street, and on proceeding to the spot indicated, he found the man lying and bleeding from the head. He was conveyed first to the **Infirmary**, and afterwards to the **Darlinghurst Police Station**.

Later in the day **Detectives Wilmott and Camphin** found one blanket and 31 Crimean shirts in a sack on a piece of waste ground near **Judge Street, Woolloomooloo**... The constable who was

so barbarously assailed is suffering greatly from the wounds he received. His extraordinary courage and resolution in securing the man in the manner he did is worthy of **lasting record.**"

Then on Saturday **16 June, 1877** the Australian Town and Country Journal reported the death of Constable Blain, including the following information.

"It will be remembered that, a short time ago, the Inspector-General of Police, on behalf of various citizens, presented **constable Blain** with a **valuable gold watch and chain** for the gallant capture of a convicted burglar, named **Wright**, who brutally assaulted that officer when being arrested for the burglary at the premises of **Mr. J. O. W. Hinsch**, in March last. Wright was sentenced to **six years hard labour.**

Blain, who was assaulted on the head with a **policeman's baton**, recovered somewhat from the effects of the affray; but **three weeks ago** was **again brutally assaulted by some roughs in Oxford-street.**

About a **fortnight ago** he went into the **Infirmary** for medical treatment, and **typhus fever** setting in, he expired early on **Monday morning.** It is alleged that his death was caused by the effects of the **beatings** he received. It is said that a **foul drain under the bedroom** which **Blain** had occupied, in **Stanley-street**, was the cause of his taking ill. **Blain** had been **about three years in the Force.** He was **unmarried.** His grade was **first class constable;** and he was a young man of superior intelligence and some promise, and a most efficient officer."

The constable was born in **1850**, and joined the New South Wales Police Force on **26 December, 1874.** At the time of his death he was stationed at **Darlinghurst.** His headstone at Sydney's Rookwood Cemetery reads: "A record of his brave conduct for arresting and bringing to justice a notorious burglar at whose

hands he received such savage injuries as to ultimately cause his death". He is not listed in the official New South Wales Police Honour Roll.

[divider_dotted]

The Sydney Morning Herald **Tuesday 12 June 1877**
page 1 of 10

DEATHS:

BLAIN. – **June 10**, at the Sydney Infirmary, John Vance Blain, aged **26**.

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/13387308#pstart1437955>

[divider_dotted]

The Sydney Morning Herald **Tuesday 12 June 1877**
page 10 of 10

THE FRIENDS of the deceased Mr. JOHN VANCE **BLAIN**, late of the **Sydney Police**, are respectfully invited to attend his Funeral ; to move from the **Infirmary** THIS DAY, **Tuesday**, at a quarter-past 2 o'clock, to the Necropolis.

JAMES CURTIS.

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/13387287>

[divider_dotted]

MONUMENT over the Remains of the late Constable JOHN VANCE **BLAIN** – SUBSCRIPTIONS received in aid of the above at the **Central Police Station.**

J. WALTER SMART.

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/13390255>

[divider_dotted]

Constable Blain's Funeral,

Yesterday afternoon, the remains of that efficient and lamented young police officer, **constable Blain**, were interred at **Haslem Creek Cemetery**. The funeral was attended by the **Inspector General of Police (Mr. Fosberry)**, **Inspector Read**, **Sub-Inspectors Waters, Anderson, and Johnson**, and a large number of his fellow officers. The procession, as it moved through the city, attracted general attention, and considerable regret was expressed at the untimely end of a promising a young officer. The members of the force, as may be seen from an advertisement, intend erecting a monument over his grave.

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/108196448>

[divider_dotted]

Monument to Constable Blain.

It is satisfactory to learn that there has been a prompt and generous response to the proposal for a monument over the remains of that distinguished but unfortunate police officer, Constable Blain. It will be remembered that Blain had a desperate encounter with a burglar who had broken into Mr. Hinch's establishment in Pitt-street, and that he received such severe injuries as accelerated, if they were not mainly

the cause of his death shortly afterwards in the Infirmary. The Inspector-General and his officers and the whole force accorded his remains every honor by following them to the grave ; but they thought something more ought to be done, A suitable monument over the grave was proposed, and the matter having been taken in hand by Mr. Smart, J.P., the necessary funds were subscribed in the course of a few days. We have been shown the design of the monument together with the inscriptions, and it deserves to be said that the selection has been dictated by good taste and judgment.

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/108200225>

[divider_dotted]