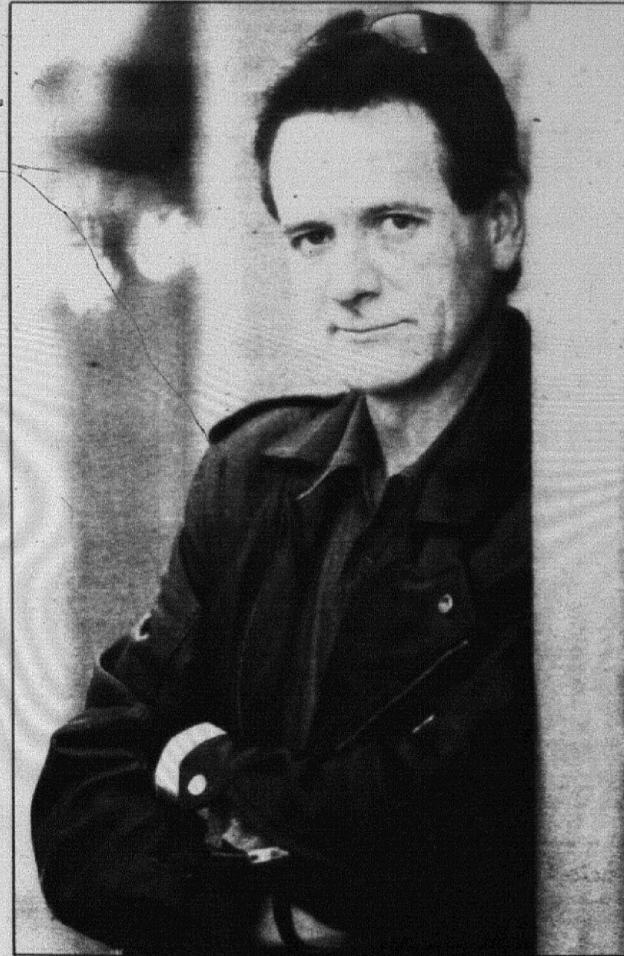


# 7-year murder mystery

Picture: DAVID TEASE

# 'Please find my lover's killer'



● A brave stand ... Wayne Davis yesterday appealed for public help in finding the murderer of his gay lover.

By BRETT MARTIN

Wayne Davis has broken his long silence over the brutal murder of his lover, Bill Rooney.

The TAFE teacher and environmentalist yesterday called on Wollongong's gay and straight communities to help police find the killer.

Police on Tuesday reopened the investigation into the 1986 Crown Lane murder. William (Bill) Anthony Rooney, 32, died of head injuries six days after being found unconscious between a shed and a brick wall in the laneway on Valentine's Day, February 14, 1986.

Wollongong police patrol tactician Inspector David Ainsworth, who headed the original inves-

tigation, has appealed to anyone with knowledge of the incident to contact police.

Mr Davis yesterday said he fully supported Insp Ainsworth's efforts.

"It's 7½ years and we are still none the wiser as to who did it and why they did it," he said.

Mr Davis believed early police action was lax because the death involved homosexuals.

"The night Bill died I was staying with friends — if I hadn't I could well be in jail now for Bill's murder," he said.

"The police initially were very keen to pin it on me — that was traumatic. Had I been home alone that night I could very well still be in jail.

"It would have been an easy solution. The

police weren't that interested — it was just another 'poofta'.

"However I do believe Dave Ainsworth is serious and I respect him for it."

Mr Davis said a pall of fear descended over Wollongong's gay community after Bill Rooney's unsolved murder and unrelated attacks and rapes of men, since found to have been committed by Mark Anthony Scerri.

Scerri terrorised Wollongong during the late '80s. His brutal attacks on both gay and straight men only ended in 1987 when Insp Ainsworth charged him with a range of sexual assaults.

Scerri now is serving a 16-year prison term. He is eligible for parole in 2001.

"At that time we had a growing and healthy

gay community in Wollongong. Healthy in the sense that people were prepared to stand their ground and say I am a gay man or woman and I'm not going to be harassed," Mr Davis said.

"The result of Bill's death was instantaneous. A couple of young gay men went stupid and wanted to set up vigilante groups to track down the basher. The majority slammed the closet door shut.

"It's really only been the last couple of years that the gay community has started to stand up again."

Mr Davis paid tribute to his 'life partner' and revealed the pain he still suffered over the death.

"Bill died on our fourth anniversary," he said.

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# Help solve murder, victim's lover pleads

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Bill Rooney had been an extraordinary man — intelligent, kind and friendly, Mr Davis said.

“He also didn't take backward steps — he would stand his ground. I can recall a number of occasions in Wollongong where people had threatened either him or me, or both of us, because we were ‘pooftas’ and he would say ‘no way’.

“He always won those encounters because the mongrels that call you ‘poofta’ or ‘faggot’ are weak themselves and if you stand your ground with them then they go to water.”

Mr Davis said he was speaking out now because it was time to lay Bill's memory to rest — and that couldn't be done until his murderer or murderers were caught.

“If he had died of AIDS or a heart attack or a car accident it would have been easier,” he said.

“Although I am through the process of griev-

ing and have come to terms with the loss I have led a lonely life since his death.

“I loved the man and he was taken from me and I have been grieving him for 7½ years. If that's not an honest reaction, what is?”

Mr Davis has conducted his own one-man investigation. For years he searched Wollongong trying to find out what happened.

“For the first two or three years (after Bill's death) I actively sought information,” he said.

“That put me in some tricky situations. — I

was told on several occasions to keep my mouth shut.

“I've given that away now but I still want a result — if anyone of the straight or gay communities does know anything they should go and see Dave Ainsworth. I trust him.

“I am taking the risk of doing this story, standing up and saying I am gay and proud of it, because I want that peace of mind — I want to know what happened to Bill.”