

*Murder file 80/84*

The Detective Inspector,  
NEWCASTLE, 2300.

Resume of investigations re the murder of Richard SLATER, 69 old, pensioner at Birdwood Park public toilet, King Street, Newcastle, on 19 December, 1980. Offender Jeffrey MILLER, 22 old, subsequently charged with this murder on 1 September, 1982.

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1. Shortly after 1pm on 19 December, 1980, Richard SLATER, 69 old, of [REDACTED] Cooks Hill, was found lying on the cement floor of the Gents toilet block, Birdwood Park, off King Street, Newcastle, by Mr. Kenneth Archer and a Franciscan Brother, Brother Maseo. At this time, Mr. Slater was in a semi-conscious condition, suffering from severe head injuries and bruising to the body. It was also noticed that Mr. Slater's trousers were pulled down below his waist.
  2. Both Mr. Archer and Brother Maseo then went to a nearby motor workshop and requested an employee to telephone both ambulance and police officers to attend the toilet block regarding the injured male person. Police attached to Newcastle and Ambulance Paramedics attended the toilet complex and Mr. Slater was then conveyed to the Royal Newcastle Hospital by ambulance, where he was admitted in a serious condition.
  3. Detective Sergeant R. R. Clark, now attached to Bathurst Police Station, commenced initial investigations regarding this incident, assisted by Detective Senior Constable G. J. Clausen of the Newcastle Scientific Section. From the initial investigation, it appeared at that time that Mr. Slater may have been assaulted and robbed of his money whilst in the toilet block, as Mr. Slater could not be interviewed because of his condition, and the fact that a small black clasp type purse in which he always carried his money, was missing from his person when he was found; at this time the purse has yet to be located.
  4. Mr. Slater on his admission to hospital, was treated by Dr. Alfred Bennett, a resident Medical Officer, and was found to be suffering from the following injuries:-
    - Large lump on right side of skull.
    - Large lump in front of left ear.
    - Swollen and lacerated left ear.
    - Severe bruising and considerable swelling to both eyes.
    - Contusions to face.
    - Bruising to chest area.
- Following Mr. Slater's initial treatment by Dr. Bennett, his care and treatment was then referred to the Surgical Registrar, Dr. Newton, who also consulted Dr. Bookallil, a Neuro-Surgeon, and also Dr. Walker, a Cardiologist, who all examined Mr. Slater on 19 December, 1980.
5. For a period of 24 hours following Mr. Slater's admission to hospital, his condition appeared stable and did not cause any undue concern to the attending medical staff at that time. However on 22 December, 1980, Mr. Slater's condition suddenly deteriorated and he died during a cardiac arrest at 5am that day.

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6. At 10am on 22 December, 1980, Dr. L. J. Banathy, Regional Forensic Pathologist, performed a postmortem examination of the deceased person Slater at the Newcastle City Morgue. The opinions resulting from that examination by Dr. Banathy are expressed as follow:-

"Traumatic brain damage was the main cause of death, however the deceased had pre-existing myocardial infarctive changes. It is assumed that the shock caused by the trauma, precipitated another infarctive change which contributed to the death."

7. Investigations conducted by Newcastle detectives at that time, revealed that on 19 December, 1980, Mr. Slater left his home at Cooks Hill approximately 11.45am with the intention of travelling to the city in his motor vehicle to purchase groceries and lottery tickets. It was also ascertained that when leaving home, Mr. Slater was in possession of approximately \$30.00 in notes and coins which were contained in a black coloured clasp type ladies purse which he always carried. Mr. Slater had then driven to the vicinity of Birdwood Park where he parked his vehicle in King Street. He then walked to the Newcastle Co-Operative Store in Hunter Street, where he purchased two lottery tickets from an employee, Miss Lesley Winkworth, some time between 12 mid-day and 12.30pm on 19 December 1980.

8. It would appear that after purchasing the lottery tickets, Mr. Slater then walked back towards his vehicle and whilst crossing through Birdwood Park, was taken short and entered the toilet block to relieve himself, because he suffered from a prostate condition and it was difficult for him to travel any distance without urinating. It was at this time Mr. Slater received the injuries which subsequently caused his death.

9. At the time Mr. Slater was found in the toilet block, his trousers had been pulled down past his waist and there was no money on his person, however the two lottery tickets he had previously purchased, were found in his shirt pocket. The money purse he always carried was missing and has not been located.

10. Efforts to interview Mr. Slater were unsuccessful because of his serious condition and Mr. Slater gave only vague and varying accounts of his movements on that day to medical staff at the hospital.

11. Birdwood Park Toilet Block is situated in parkland area off King Street, Newcastle, midst a city business area and is a renowned meeting place for the homosexual element of this area at all hours during the day and night.

12. Intensive investigations following this incident resulted in numerous homosexuals, transvestites and other persons being interviewed. Sydney Homicide Squad detectives also assisted local police in this inquiry. This incident attracted major coverage in local newspapers and television.

13. This crime was also circulated vide Crime Report No.14 and National Edition 81/10. The State Government also

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posted a reward of \$50,000.00 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the offender responsible for this murder.

14. Investigations continued for many months regarding the murder, with police interviewing numerous persons. However these inquiries failed to reveal any useful information which would assist this inquiry.

15. On 18 June, 1981, an Inquest into the death of Mr. Slater was held at the Newcastle Coroner's Court before Mr. R. Meehan (Coroner). The Coroner's finding on that day were:-

"Mr. Slater died on the 22nd December, 1980 at the Royal Newcastle Hospital, and that he died from the effects of a Traumatic Brain damage and Myocardial Infarction, following his admission to that Hospital on the 19th December, 1980, after having been found in Birdwood Park, King Street, Newcastle on that date suffering from certain injuries, but as to the circumstances of his receiving those injuries, the evidence adduced, does not enable me to say."

16. Investigations continued regarding this unsolved crime and on 27 August, 1982, a prisoner [REDACTED] 1219, 18 old, and former associate of a person Jeffrey Miller, supplied Detectives Inkster and Wilson with valuable information which indicated the person Miller was responsible for the death of Richard Slater.

17. As a result of the information supplied by [REDACTED] 1219 and [REDACTED] 1219, [REDACTED] 1217, [REDACTED] 1218 and [REDACTED] 1216 were interviewed. Lengthy records of interview were obtained from them in which they indicated that they had not been completely honest with the investigating police in the initial stages of this inquiry in the latter part of 1980. They also indicated that the person Jeffrey Miller who was in their company on the 19 December, 1980, did in fact enter the Birdwood Park toilet about 1pm with the intention of "cracking it with a poofter".

18. Inquiries at that time as to the whereabouts of Miller, revealed that Miller was serving a sentence for Stealing at the Cessnock Corrective Centre and was due for release in March, 1983.

19. On 1 September, 1982, Detectives Inkster and Wilson in company with Detective Sergeant McDonald, travelled to the Cessnock Corrective Centre and spoke to the prisoner Jeffrey Miller, born [REDACTED]. Later that afternoon, Miller was escorted to Newcastle Police Station where he was further interviewed in relation to this murder inquiry and following that interview, was charged with the Murder of Richard Slater.

20. Jeffrey Miller appeared at the Newcastle Court of Petty Sessions on 2 September, 1982, in relation to the charge of Murder. Bail was refused and a remand was obtained for a committal hearing set down to that Court on 10 December, 1982.

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21. On 10 December, 1982, Miller appeared at the Newcastle Court of Petty Sessions where the committal hearing was heard before Mr. Meehan, S.M., and Miller was committed for trial to the Newcastle Supreme Court sittings commencing on 28 February, 1983. At this hearing, Miller was represented by local solicitor, Mr. Bannister, who instructed Mr. Callaghan, Q.C.

22. Following the committal proceedings, an application for a No Bill was lodged by the defence Counsel. This application was considered by the Attorney General, who on 18 March, 1983, filed a No Bill to the charge of Murder against Jeffrey Miller.

*J.R. Inkster*  
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NEWCASTLE, 21/6/83.