

The murder of Constables Cahill and Power 1867

Constables Power and Cahill were murdered at the MacKenzie River Crossing while escorting a consignment of bank notes and bullion from Rockhampton to Clermont. When the escort left Rockhampton in late October 1867, John Thomas Griffin, Rockhampton's Gold Commissioner, had decided to accompany it. Soon after the escort left Rockhampton, the officer in charge, Sergeant Julian, accused Griffin of trying to poison him and refused to go any further. This left Power and Cahill to act as escorts.

On arrival at the Crossing, Griffin stayed in the local Inn while the troopers camped close by. The next morning the Inn keeper said he had heard shots during the night, but Griffin dismissed this as the troopers shooting at dingoes. Griffin left for Rockhampton, but did not visit the troopers' camp before departing. A few days later the bodies of the two Constables were found at the Crossing by a bushman. Sub-Inspector Elliott, Detective Kilfedder, Bank Manager Hall, Dr Salmond, Sergeant Julian and the prime suspect Griffin, left Rockhampton without delay for the Crossing. Dr Salmond examined the bodies and declared that Power and Cahill had been poisoned and then shot in the head. Griffin was suspected of committing the crime and was immediately arrested and taken back to Rockhampton as a prisoner.

It was established during the investigation that Griffin was heavily in debt and had actually taken money from the bank bags before the escort left Rockhampton. Griffin's trial on charges of murder and robbery started on 16 March 1868. Despite an impassioned plea of innocence by his council, the verdict was guilty and he was sentenced to death. Griffin later confessed to the crime. He was hanged at Old Rockhampton Jail on 1 June 1868.



Constable Patrick Cahill



Constable John Power