

An Unusual Piece of Evidence 1952

Pieces of evidence can be gathered from a crime scene or through a criminal investigation. Anything that connects a murderer to their victim, identifies the sequence of events or the murder weapon, is evidence, and is coveted by Police investigators. It can take any form - even a stuffed dog!

Athol Henry McCowan, a 23 year old taxi-driver of Southport, was murdered on May 22, 1952. Peter was the murderer's dog and a silent witness to the crime. Police obtained descriptions from witnesses of the suspect, his motor vehicle and his dog. After an intensive Australia-wide investigation, Arthur Ernest Halliday was arrested in Sydney on November 13, 1952. He was then extradited to Brisbane to face charges for the wilful murder of McCowan.

Peter's Story...

Peter had been left with Halliday's sister, he died of a tick infection before Police found him. As he was an important part of the prosecution's case, Peter was mounted by a taxidermist for his court appearance. Peter was identified by witnesses as the kind of dog seen at the crime scene and it is said that Halliday was surprised to see the stuffed dog and admitted ownership of Peter before he could stop himself!! By using Peter as evidence, the prosecution effectively linked Peter to Halliday at the crime scene, Halliday to Peter as owner and then Halliday to the murder of McCowan. Arthur Ernest Halliday was convicted of the murder and was sentenced to life imprisonment at Boggo Road Gaol.

Although Peter was not the only piece of evidence utilised in this case he was certainly the most unusual one.



Athol McCowan



Arthur Halliday



'Peter'