

Butcher murders for gold

Murderer's Hill 1862

On 15 December 1862 Thomas Evans set off from Donnelly's Creek. He was carrying seven ounces of gold and three letters from miners to be delivered to friends or relatives in Melbourne.

Travelling with him was a local butcher, James Kennedy. Whilst resting at Cooks Restaurant (later known as Porters halfway House) Kennedy met up with his friends Harvey and Johnston. The three then continued on ahead of Evans on their journey.

Later that same day other travellers remarked that they had heard a distressed voice a short way up the track. Assuming a robbery the men did not interfere. Miners raised the alarm after two months with no response to their letters. Evans' body was located close to Cooks

Restaurant. The letters were still in his pocket but the gold was missing.

Suspects included other travellers, a local larrikin, the brother of the deceased and two German cooks. One had been seen wearing the deceased's boots afterwards. All were eventually cleared based on alibis or had left the country.

The case went cold until three unnamed men

on death row in New Zealand confessed to the Gippsland murder among other Victorian crimes.

A London born bachelor, Evans had spent 10 years in Victoria. He was 37 when murdered. He was buried not far from the Cooks Restaurant on 9 February 1863.

His memory is perpetuated by the naming of Murderer's Hill.

Extract from Police missing person poster:

"Thomas Evans: 5 feet, 10 inches. 35 to 37 years. Sallow complexion, dark hair and whiskers, no moustache, clean shaven, lost nearly all of his front teeth. Wore moleskin trousers, diggers boots, dark cloth cap with peak, light coloured jumper..... police description. Travelled to Melbourne for family reasons."

Source: Steenhuis, L., 2001, 'Donnelly's Creek: From Rush to Ruin of a Gippsland Mountain Goldfield', Helyar, N., Rodgers, J.G., 1994, 'Lonely Graves of the Gippsland Goldfields and Greater Gippsland'.

Take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but footprints.



Artwork: Grave of Thomas Evans, McEvoy's Track by Andrea G. Rogers from J.G. Rodgers, J.G., Helyar N., 1994, 'Lonely Graves of the Gippsland Goldfields and Greater Gippsland'