

THE CHARGES AGAINST SERGEANT STEELE.

29th May 1882



At 11 o' clock yesterday morning the board appointed to investigate the charges of reckless shooting at the Glenrowan attack that were advanced by witnesses before the Police Commission against Sergeant Steele, held a second and final meeting at the old Treasury building.

All the members (Messrs. E.P.S. Sturt, C. Mollison, and T. D. S. Heron) were present. Superintendent Sadleir said he arrived at Glenrowan at half past 5 on the morning of the attack. Sergeant Steele was on the ground when he arrived. The firing spoken of by the

witness Reardon was originated by the outlaws and replied to by Mr. Hare's men.

When Reardon said that that firing took place at about a quarter to 7 he was certainly wrong. It was pretty dark at the time, and could not have been more than 20 minutes to 6. Was acquainted with Sergeant Steele since that officer first came under his charge in 1878. In his opinion Steele was a steady and reliable man.

To Sergeant Steele - Saw Mrs. Reardon's shawl at Glenrowan. There was only one hole shown in it. Remembered Sergeant Steele making an official report, in which he declared that he had fired at the boy Reardon under the belief that it was either Dan Kelly or Steve Hart in disguise.

Never heard that Constable Arthur had evinced sympathy with the Kelly's . Mr. Nicolson, late assistant commissioner of police, knew Sergeant Steele for about seven years. He was one of the most efficient and reliable officers in the force. He was of a remarkably cool disposition.

To Sergeant Steele - An adverse report has been made against Constable Arthur, but witness had always found him a good, steady man. In the district there was a great hatred of Sergeant Steele on the part of the outlaws and their friends. Constable Phillips was a very unreliable man, and was on two occasions recommended for dismissal.

Robert Cawsey, constable, accompanied Sergeant Steele from Wangaratta to Glenrowan. The party was challenged by Senior constable Kelly and Constable Arthur, who were lying down behind a log. Sergeant Steele took up a position behind a tree at about 20 yards from the house.

If Constable Arthur said that witness received instructions from Senior Constable Kelly, and not from Sergeant Steele, such assertion would not be correct.

When they arrived on the ground the moon was sinking behind the hills and threw a dark shadow over the place.

Distinctly remembered Sergeant Steele calling out to Mrs. Reardon in an encouraging tone of voice, "Run quickly, and you won't be molested." Sergeant Steele then fired two shots, but they were certainly not directed at the woman. She was walking on his left rear at the time. Never heard in the barrack room that Sergeant Steele deliberately fired at the woman. Was positive Constable Arthur retreated before Ned Kelly when the bushranger made his appearance.

What Arthur said in his evidence, that Ned Kelly was lying on the ground when Steele fired at him, was not true. Heard Constable Phillips say in the barrack-room that he would swear the leg off an iron pot to get the price of a hansom cab out of the Kelly Reward Fund.

Robert Graham, constable, was present in the Benalla barrack- room a day or two after the Glenrowan affair, when Sergeant Steele accused Constable Arthur of cowardice. Arthur made no reply. If Arthur swore that he was not present on that occasion it would not be true.

Never heard Constable Arthur accuse Steele of firing recklessly at men women, and children during the attack on the Glenrowan Inn.

To Constable Arthur -In the barrack- room jocular remarks were frequently made amongst the men one saying to the other,
You ran away, and other similar chaffing observations.

To Mr HERON - Was not aware, of his own knowledge, that Arthur was intimate with the Reardons. William Moore, constable, remembered hearing Steele calling out to the woman. "Throw up your hands, come this way, and you won't get hurt."
Could not see the woman on account of the kitchen intervening. Recognised the voice that called out as Sergeant Steele's

To Mr. HERON - During the Glenrowan affair Steele was as cool and collected as he was at that moment. At the time that Steele challenged the woman there was firing from the direction of the black trackers.

It was impossible for Arthur to have said to Sergeant Steele, "I'll shoot you if you fire again at that woman" without witness hearing him. Witness was nearer to Arthur than Steele, and any words uttered by Arthur must have been heard by him.

Charles C. Rawlings said he was a farmer living eight miles from Glenrowan. Was present during the whole of the affray, and at 10 minutes past 5 went to stop the approaching Beechworth train. The moon was then descending in the horizon, and the scene of the affray was enveloped in darkness.

Subsequently observed the woman coming out of the house with a child in her arms. A voice challenged her. He recognised the voice as that of Sergeant Steele. When Steele fired the two shots the woman was completely out of the line of fire. Witness subsequently saw Mrs. Reardon at the railway station and she then said, "Thank God, I'm not hurt."

On being informed by the chairman that he was at liberty to make any statement he thought proper, Sergeant Steele was sworn, and gave a retrospect of the Glenrowan affray from his arrival until the capture of Ned Kelly. He solemnly declared that the idea of firing at the woman never entered his mind. On the contrary, he encouraged her to come on, and directed her to an opening in the fence through which to effect her escape. His shots were directed at a crouching figure that refused to answer his challenge.

He twice challenged this figure, and as a flash came from the verandah in close proximity to the crouching man, he came to the conclusion that one of the outlaws was making a determined effort to escape. It was at this suspicious figure his fire was directed, and not at any defenceless woman or child. To have such an accusation brought against him after his untiring efforts to run the Kelly gang to earth, he could not but regard as the utmost ingratitude.

The CHAIRMAN intimated that the board would deliberate, and in all probability forward their report to the Government in the course of the afternoon.