

[Draft letter apparently written by Dr George Fordyce Story (1800–1885) to Mr WT Noyes (Police Magistrate), and later published in amended form in *The Courier* (Hobart), Friday 7 March 1856, page 2]

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Kelvedon 4th June [?] 1856

Seeing the remarks made by inquest held at Swansea upon the body of Jms [James] Miles who died from the bite of a snake at the Hunt Quarry Marshes Kearney's Bogs

Respected Friend

Seeing the remarks an attack on thy character made by the Member for Glamorgan in the Legislative Council – regarding an inquest held a Swansea upon the body of a man named Miles who was reported to have died from the bite of a snake – I beg to make the following statement considering that if blame is to fall upon any one it must be myself. I allude to the Inquest held upon a man named Miles who was bitten by a snake at Kearney's Bogs.

Having been informed by the Chief Dist [District] Constable of the Report that a man had died from the bite of a snake at Kearney's Bogs it was considered impofsible [impossible] (it became a matter of consideration as to whether obtaining) a Jury in such an Inquest could be obtained in such an out of the way place with so few public lands within miles of the place where the accident, ~~and there being no possibility [possibility] of getting and that matter being deemed impossible [impossible]~~ the question therefore arose how could the body be conveyed to Swansea as the road was inaccefsible [inaccessible] for carts.

Taking with me a Constable and a horse & having authority from the Coroner to examine the body, I proceeded to the spot Constable's Hut on Kearney's Bogs and leaving the horses there was conducted about 5 miles to the Hut where the body lay. As it was necefsary [necessary] in order to verify the statement of those who said the man died from the bite of the snake, I was obliged to examine all the Cavities of the body and

Ph.D candidate
Univ. of Sydney

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and by this means the viscera became so displaced, and from the heat of the weather decomposition was proceeding so rapidly, that I saw it was impossible [impossible] to convey the body on horseback with the viscera remaining in their cavities, and therefore proposed to the companions of the man Miles to destroy them by fire, which they readily consented to but notwithstanding this precaution and all the care I took with the body, it became very offensive and injurious to those conveying it.

In the whole matter I acted upon my own responsibility. I knew full well the difficulty not to say unprofitability of removing a body such a distance and over such a rough road, after the a postmortem examination had been performed. ~~It was necessary [necessary] that the examination should be effected before removing the body from the place that I might either verify be satisfied of the truth of the report or in case it was untrue steps might be at once taken to bring the proper & sufficient evidence before the jury.~~

~~I have often experienced~~

~~First [?] from decomposition going on rapidly the weather being very warm, so that if I had waited until it arrived at W. Pt [Waterloo Point] I would not have satisfied myself so well of the first most [?] appearance of the Viscera &~~

It was necessary [necessary] an Examination should be performed before the removal of the body to W. Pt [Waterloo Point].

1st because the decomposition which was proceeding rapidly ~~would have rendered the appearance obscure~~ and the conveying the body such a distance over such a road would have rendered the appearance of it extremely ~~very~~ obscure.

2nd It was necessary [necessary] at once either to verify the truth of the report of the cause of the man's death ~~of the man or if it~~ in case it proved untrue that such steps as were necessary might be taken on the spot.

I need say nothing further on the subject. I ~~did~~ acted to the best of my judgement in the matter and ~~do not feel believe that I acted~~ not improperly *mens mihi consci recti* [Latin ~ my mind and conscience are right]

and care I had taken

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3rd/1/55

Seeing the remarks made ~~by the~~ in a committee of the Legislative Council by the Member for Glamorgan, respecting an ~~man~~ Inquest held at Waterloo Point upon a man named Js [James] Miles who died suddenly at the Hunt Quarry Marshes Kearney's Bogs from the bite of a snake. I beg to make the following statement considering that if blame is attached to any one it must be to myself.

Having been informed by the Chief District Constable that a man had died suddenly from the Bite of a snake at Kearney's Bogs I waited upon the Coroner and as it was considered impossible [impossible] to obtain a jury in such a remote spot, where so few inhabitants could be found within many miles of it, the question arose how could the body be brought to Swansea over a road impassible [impassible] for Carts and of such a distance as 23 miles.

~~However taking with me a Constable & Horse I proceeded to Constable Hut & having left the horses there were conducted to the Hunt Quarry Marshes about 5 miles in order to see the body body to the place where the body lay Hunt Quarry Marshes above 5 miles distant to the quarry.~~

However the next morning being accompanied by ~~taking with me~~ a Constable provided with a Horse & proceeded to the Constable's Hut at the Bogs & having left the Horses there ~~pro~~ was conducted to the place where the body lay about 5 miles distant.

Being obliged to make a careful examination of the whole of the cavities of the Body, the viscera became so much displaced, & from the heat of the weather decomposition was proceeding so rapidly that I said it would be impossible to convey the body to Swansea on Horses with the viscera remaining in their cavities and therefore proposed to the Companions of the deceased to destroy them by fire rather than burying them, as they might be exhumed by vermin, to which they readily consented, ~~yet, notwithstanding this precaution and all the care taken to envelope the body in sheets and clothes furnished by the persons living with Miles, it became very offensive and dise before reaching W. Pt. [Waterloo Point]~~

And having prepared the body and enveloped in various sheets [??] furnished by the ~~people~~ persons with whom ~~living with~~ Miles lived, I laid in a Hut ~~until morning~~ for the night & the following morning it was placed on [??] & brought by the Constables to the Police Office, but with all the precaution [??] of the body before it reached its destination it had become very offensive.