



Coroner's Court of Western Australia

RECORD OF INVESTIGATION INTO DEATH

Ref 19 /20

*I, Evelyn Felicia VICKER, Coroner, having investigated the disappearance of **Kate Campbell HAYTHORNTHWAITE** with an inquest held at the **Coroner's Court, Court 2, Kalgoorlie Court House, Hannan Street, Kalgoorlie, on 18 February 2020**, find the death of **Kate Campbell HAYTHORNTHWAITE** has been established beyond all reasonable doubt, and the identity of the deceased person was **Kate Campbell HAYTHORNTHWAITE** and that death occurred on **on or about 26 January 1968 at Boulder** in the following circumstances:*

**Counsel Appearing:**

Senior Constable Craig Robertson assisting the Coroner.

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## INTRODUCTION

At approximately 8.35 pm on Friday 26 January 1968 Kate Campbell Haythornthwaite (Mrs Haythornthwaite) separated from her friends, Veronica Tregallis (Mrs Tregallis) and her daughter Kathleen Dowson (Mrs Dowson) on Lane Street Boulder, after declining to catch a taxi to her home at 77 Oroya Street, Boulder. Mrs Tregallis and Mrs Dowson watched Mrs Haythornthwaite set off down Lane Street to the corner of Piesse Street where she turned left to continue on her way home. Mrs Haythornthwaite was never definitively seen again, although there is a possible sighting of her approximately two hours later by two young men who had a fleeting glimpse of an older female near the intersection of Vivian Street and Lane Street, also walking in the direction of Oroya Street. That possible sighting only adds to the mystery surrounding the disappearance of Mrs Haythornthwaite in the late evening of 26 January 1968.

The inquest into disappearance of Mrs Haythornthwaite was held in Kalgoorlie where Mrs Haythornthwaite still has extended family and friends 52 years later who are anxious for some clarity concerning her disappearance. The documentary evidence comprised the brief of evidence as Exhibit 1 Tabs 1-35, the Public Notice of Inquest dated 10 January 2020 as Exhibit 2, the belated and largely unexplained discovery of 14 photographs taken at 69 Chaffers Street Boulder, on 1 March 1995 at about 3 pm, as Exhibit 3, and a photograph of Mrs Haythornthwaite in her best dress with her handbag provided by her family as Exhibit 4. A memorandum written by Senior Constable Robertson of his conversation with Desmond Nazzaria on 12 November 2019 became Exhibit 5. An uncertified copy of births in the District of Dalesford, Victoria, became Exhibit 6.

### **Long Term Missing Persons Project (LTMP)**

In 2017 it was confirmed there were a number of files relating to the long term disappearance of people who had been in Western Australia at the time of

their reported disappearance. Some of the disappearances occurred at a time when there was no or limited jurisdiction for a coroner to examine the circumstances of a suspected death.

Section 23(1) of the *Coroners Act 1996 WA* (the Act) allows the State Coroner to direct an investigation into a suspected death in certain circumstances without a body, for the purposes of allowing a coroner, under section 23(2), to establish beyond all reasonable doubt that death has occurred. The investigation must be by way of inquest and will attempt to clarify how the death occurred and the cause of the death. This effectively brings the suspected death into the ambit of s 25 of the Act and allows registration of the death under the *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1998*.

The reported number of LTMP made it unrealistic for the Office of the State Coroner (OSC) to absorb those matters into the already long outstanding inquest list in a timely manner. A plan was proposed for a project to clear the backlog of LTMP files once it had been determined the matters fitted the circumstances set out in s 23(1) of the Act. That is, the State Coroner or delegate had reasonable cause to suspect the person had died and the death was a reportable death (s3 of the Act).

In 2018 approval was given for a coroner to work exclusively on the LTMP cases, on a part-time basis for twelve months, as a separate listing from the OSC general inquest list. This followed a pilot project of four inquests conducted in 2018.

In 2019 a coroner was appointed for that project with the support of an in-house Coronial Investigation Squad (CIS) police officer as Counsel Assisting (CA).

Work on the files indicated a number of the disappearances related to specific areas of Western Australia, such as the Kimberley around Kununurra or Broome, and Albany. For these matters it was decided that, while there is

always a preference for inquests to be held in the communities to which they relate, especially for Indigenous communities where there is an emphasis on oral history, resources would not be effectively utilised for all matters to be heard in the place of disappearance. Instead matters where the disappearance occurred in places out of the Perth metropolitan area were considered from the perspective of the best availability for relevant witnesses.

In the case of Mrs Haythornthwaite it was apparent there was a lot of interest from the family of Mrs Haythornthwaite, and friends who still lived in the Kalgoorlie/Boulder area. It was preferable to hear as much evidence as possible whilst in Kalgoorlie, with the addition of videolinks with witnesses no longer in the area.

The anticipated outcome of the LTMP project was that by June 2020 the majority of outstanding LTMP matters would be resolved and that future missing person files would be dealt with in the normal course of the OSC's usual business.

## **THE DECEASED**

Mrs Haythornthwaite was born on 17 November 1895 in Victoria as Kate Campbell Johnston,<sup>1</sup> this made Mrs Haythornthwaite 72 years of age at the time of her disappearance which is four years older than her family had believed her to be. There is an uncertified copy of Mrs Hathornthwaite's birth registration on file<sup>2</sup> which confirms her date of birth, but records her given names as Katie Campbell. All later records use Kate Campbell. There was no information heard during the course of the hearing as to how Mrs Haythornthwaite came to be in Western Australia. Mrs Haythornthwaite married Richard John Haythornthwaite at Boulder on 4 March 1922 and had 3 children. Two sons, Richard and Ronald, and a daughter, Marjorie. The family lived at 77 Oroya Street Boulder.

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<sup>1</sup> Ex 1, tabs 24, 25, 26

<sup>2</sup> Ex 6

Mr Haythornthwaite died on 2 July 1940 and Mrs Haythornthwaite remained at that property until her disappearance in January 1968. The area in which they lived changed over the years from a busy, mining town precinct to a more subdued suburb with many of the surrounding homes becoming derelict or abandoned. By January 1968 there were few residents on the adjoining properties which were rapidly becoming industrialised.<sup>3</sup> Today the area is largely semi-industrial. There were many old and abandoned mine shafts in the areas surrounding the residential properties dating back to when Boulder was the centre of the Goldfields boom.

Clearly Mrs Haythornthwaite had a quite definite social group of friends as well as a large and extended family by the time of her disappearance. She was described by all as a responsible person with a defined set of routines as to her day to day living.<sup>4</sup> Despite her age Mrs Haythornthwaite was independent and quite settled in her routine. She worked as a cleaner at the Boulder Shire offices and her week days started with her walking to work to start cleaning at 5.00 am. She stopped work at approximately 8.00 am and generally by 8.30 am she was having tea with her closest friend, Mrs Nazzari<sup>5</sup> on Dwyer Street, before returning to her home in Oroya Street for lunch with her dog and cockatoo. She also had chickens she cared for.<sup>6</sup> Mrs Haythornthwaite had a social life which included a drink at one of the many local hotels in Boulder where she was relatively well known. There is no indication she ever caused a problem,<sup>7</sup> and it was a normal feature of life in those times.<sup>8</sup>

Mrs Haythornthwaite also spent time with family,<sup>9</sup> which was large with lots of grandchildren. The fact Mrs Haythornthwaite was well loved was

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<sup>3</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.16

<sup>4</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.14, 76

<sup>5</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p 85 Exhibit 5

<sup>6</sup> Ex. 1, tab 9

<sup>7</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.13

<sup>8</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p 72, 79

<sup>9</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p 64, 72, 77

demonstrated by the number of family and friends who came to court, some 52 years after her disappearance, to try and make sense of the mystery of her disappearance. As the court was told her son Ronnie, now deceased, spent the rest of his life trying to find out what had happened to his mother.<sup>10</sup>

Mrs Haythornthwaite walked everywhere, declining lifts even from family, as she went about her daily life and routine. She had no enemies that anyone was aware of and did the best she could with what she had. She was fit for her age with no known medical issues. Although she had a fall on 12 January 1968 outside the Broken Hill Hotel, she suffered no known ill effects from her fall and medical opinion believed it unlikely that event would have caused her an issue two weeks later, without some prior sign of difficulties.<sup>11</sup>

At the time of her disappearance Mrs Haythornthwaite was described as 68 years of age<sup>12</sup> (she was actually 72 years of age according to her birth certificate),<sup>13</sup> 158 cm tall of slim build with grey hair, blue eyes and fair complexion. There were no x-rays, dental records, DNA or fingerprints available for future identification purposes.<sup>14</sup> Many years later her grandson, Ronnie Haythornthwaite Junior (Mr Haythornthwaite) provided DNA in the hope it could assist in the event any remains were ever located which could potentially belong to his grandmother.<sup>15</sup>

## **DISAPPEARANCE**

On the morning of 26 January 1968 Mrs Haythornthwaite went to work as usual at the Boulder Town Council and left about 8.00 am. She went to her friend Mrs Nazzari's house at about 8.30 am where the two women had

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<sup>10</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.87

<sup>11</sup> Ex. 1, tab 9; t. 18.2.2020, p.14

<sup>12</sup> Ex 1, tab 32

<sup>13</sup> Ex 1, tab 26

<sup>14</sup> Ex 1, tab 32

<sup>15</sup> Ex 1, tabs 2, 33

morning tea, until at about 12.30 pm they decided they would visit the small goods store on the corner of Dwyer and Hamilton Streets to buy bread. Hamilton Street intersects with Oroya Street so this was on Mrs Haythornthwaite's way home.

Google Map depicting the route which Mrs Hathornwaite would have taken in her day to day routine

Having bought their bread the two women decided to go to the Main Reef Hotel on Dwyer Street for a drink. It was a very hot day. The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) records for that day records a temperature of 105 degrees fahrenheit for Boulder (over 37°C), with no rain fall.<sup>16</sup>

Once at the Main Reef Hotel the two women met Marlene Darcy (Mrs Darcy) who also lived on Dwyer Street, and the three of them drank beer before leaving the hotel at about 1.00 pm with Mrs Haythornthwaite observed to be

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<sup>16</sup> Ex. 1, tab 2, p. 2 of the Report of Sergeant Rollo dated 21/2/1968; t. 18.2.2020, p.15

walking south on her own towards Oroya Street. Neither Mrs Nazzari or Mrs Darcy saw Mrs Haythornthwaite again.<sup>17</sup>

When Mrs Haythornthwaite arrived home she found her dog, which she had left inside due to the extreme heat, had shredded a newspaper all over her kitchen floor. She later told her friend, Mrs Tregallis, she was too tired to clean up the mess and had left the paper on the floor intending to clean it up later that night.<sup>18</sup>

Mrs Haythornthwaite then left her home again about two hours later to go and collect her fortnightly wages from the Council offices. By now Mrs Haythornthwaite had changed from her work clothes into her best which comprised a very pale blue dress with white spots and she was carrying a bag of some description. It was estimated Mrs Haythornthwaite collected her wages of \$9.50 at about 3.45 pm that afternoon before going shopping and meeting with Mrs Tregallis at the Grand Hotel on Burt Street, Boulder, at about 5.00 pm. The two women sat in the hotel beer garden and at approximately 7.00 pm Mrs Tregallis' daughter, Kathleen Dowson (Mrs Dowson) joined the two women and had a drink with them, when her shift as a waitress ended that day. Mrs Dowson had bought fish and chips for all of them to eat from the hotel kitchen and the three women remained on the hotel premises until approximately 8.30 pm.<sup>19</sup>

The three women then left the hotel and walked along Burt Street until they came to the intersection with Lane Street where there was a taxi rank. Mrs Tregallis and Mrs Dowson tried to persuade Mrs Haythornthwaite to take a taxi home as they thought she was slightly unsteady on her feet, however, true to form Mrs Haythornthwaite refused to take a taxi and told her friends she could walk home quite safely. Mrs Tregallis and Mrs Dowson then watched Mrs Haythornthwaite walk south down Lane Street until she reached

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<sup>17</sup> Ex 1, tab 9

<sup>18</sup> Ex. 1, tab 9

<sup>19</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.10

the intersection of Lane and Piesse Street where she turned left alongside the Shamrock Hotel and presumably continued on her way home. Mrs Tregallis and Mrs Dowson never saw Mrs Haythornthwaite again.<sup>20</sup>

In evidence Mrs Dowson gave slightly different evidence with respect to times and detail than she had provided to police at the time of Mrs Haythornthwaite's disappearance. I have no doubt this is a matter of memory over time and some of Mrs Dowson's recall was probably based on her memory of routine events over time rather than the specifics of that night. I am satisfied Mrs Dowson's evidence in court was consistent enough with the information she gave police at the time to allow me to prefer her detail of times at the time of Mrs Haythornthwaite's disappearance, rather than her recall in February 2020. This is not unusual.

Mrs Dowson was quite clear her mother, Mrs Tregallis, and Mrs Haythornthwaite had been friends for a long time and by the time Mrs Dowson was working at the Grand Hotel they had established a regular Friday night routine of meeting at the Grand Hotel at approximately 5.00 pm every Friday evening to socialise.<sup>21</sup> Mrs Dowson recalled Mrs Haythornthwaite's behaviour on that evening to be, as far as she could recall, perfectly normal. She certainly did not know of any ill effects that may relate to the fall on 12 January 1968 about which she did not know. As far as she was concerned Mrs Haythornthwaite appeared precisely as she always did when she had a drink with Mrs Tregallis at the Grand Hotel on Friday evenings while Mrs Dowson was working.<sup>22</sup>

Mrs Dowson believed she was approximately 19 and half at the time Mrs Haythornthwaite went missing, however, if Mrs Dowson's evidence of her birth date as November 1946 is accurate then she would have been 21 in January 1968. This is not significant, but does indicate how credibility and

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<sup>20</sup> Ex. 1, tab 9

<sup>21</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.54

<sup>22</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.61

reliability may be completely different issues when attempting to recall precise details of a routine occurrence.

In evidence Mrs Dowson believed they had left the Grand Hotel later than 8.30 pm, however, in 1968 she was quite clear, as was her mother, the group of three women had left the Grand Hotel at approximately 8.30 pm. One of them had noted the time on the town clock as being 8.35 pm as Mrs Haythornthwaite walked down Lane Street towards Piesse Street.<sup>23</sup> I am satisfied the group of women left the Grand Hotel at approximately 8.30 pm with Mrs Haythornthwaite's last sighting by Mrs Tregallis and Mrs Dowson at approximately 8.35 pm in the vicinity of the intersection with Piesse Street.

Mrs Dowson recalled they had all left together to walk down Burt Street, crossed over to the taxi rank on Lane Street and that at the time Mrs Haythornthwaite may have been a little bit tiddly, as she believed her mother was. There was no indication this was anything untoward.<sup>24</sup>

Mrs Haythornthwaite's family in court were somewhat aghast that their understanding of the evidence was an implication Mrs Haythornthwaite was adversely affected by alcohol. As said in court I have not taken that to be the situation, rather it was usual in those days and people thought nothing of a couple of glasses of beer. Indeed Mrs Nazzari's son advised CA that in his view he had a memory of Mrs Haythornthwaite, as did his mother, enjoying a beer although he had never seen Mrs Haythornthwaite drunk.<sup>25</sup>

Mrs Haythornthwaite's grandson, Mr Haythornthwaite agreed he was aware Mrs Haythornthwaite had a drink occasionally with Mrs Nazzari, but commented he did not know anything about a regular Friday evening drink with Mrs Tregallis.<sup>26</sup> However, all the family were in agreement

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<sup>23</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.74, Ex. 1, tab 9

<sup>24</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.74

<sup>25</sup> Ex. 5; t. 18.2.2020, p.84

<sup>26</sup> t. 18.2.2020, pp. 71-72

Mrs Haythornthwaite was quite private about her life, which she loved, and was fiercely independent.<sup>27</sup>

Audrey Sacconi (Mrs Sacconi), Mrs Haythornthwaite's daughter in law's sister, commented that much of the evidence the family had heard in court in 2020 about Mrs Haythornthwaite's daily routine involving hotels was unknown to the family, and indeed seemed to have a rather a more negative view of the evidence than my own. While accepting Mrs Haythornthwaite consumed beer, the evidence to my mind, is more indicative of a morning cup of tea with Mrs Nazzari.

Mrs Sacconi agreed Mrs Haythornthwaite was a person of routine and she could recall Mrs Haythornthwaite going to her family factory every Friday, before lunch time, to sit with Mrs Sacconi's son, Paul, who was only two years of age. It is unclear as to how this evidence, unknown to the police at the time, fits with Mrs Nazzari's scenario of what she did with Mrs Haythornthwaite that specific Friday. The timing is unclear but Mrs Sacconi's evidence is Mrs Haythornthwaite was carrying a bag, not the bag seen in exhibit 4, and Mrs Sacconi could recall seeing tins of dog food in the bag which would imply Mrs Haythornthwaite had done her shopping at the time she visited the factory on Burt Street.<sup>28</sup>

However, Mrs Sacconi also stated her sister was on holiday on that specific Friday and not at the factory, although she then went on to say Mrs Haythornthwaite would *"say hello to my sister, and after she would go with her little bag with her dog food in it, not very much else, I don't think"*.<sup>29</sup> While I am of the opinion this is a classic example of confusing the specific with the routine I suspect it also reflects the reality that on that specific Friday Mrs Haythornthwaite altered her routine and visited the factory to sit with

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<sup>27</sup> t. 18.2.2020, pp. 72, 77, 80

<sup>28</sup> T. 18.2.2020 pp 64, 67

<sup>29</sup> t. 18.2.2020 p. 64

Paul later in the day, sometime after lunch rather than before.<sup>30</sup> No information was recorded from Mrs Saccani in 1968.

It is possible it was after Mrs Haythornthwaite had collected her wages from the Council offices and done her shopping on her way to the Grand Hotel to meet with Mrs Tregallis, who recalled seeing dog food in Mrs Haythornthwaite's bag while they were having their drinks at the hotel.

Mrs Dowson's evidence was on that evening in the Grand Hotel Mrs Haythornthwaite was carrying a small bag which was not a shopping bag and she did not notice any shopping. Mrs Tregallis, however, when questioned by the police in 1968 was adamant Mrs Haythornthwaite had shopping in her bag, which would not seem to be the bag shown in exhibit 4, which contained dog food, biscuits and possibly some other articles.<sup>31</sup>

Mrs Saccani confirmed she did not notice anything in Mrs Haythornthwaite's behaviour while at the factory which would indicate she was suffering any ill effects from an earlier fall.<sup>32</sup>

Mrs Saccani stated the bag in exhibit 4 was not the bag she saw Mrs Haythornthwaite with on that Friday when she went to see Paul. The bag she saw was not the bag in the photograph, but she agreed with Mrs Tregallis the bag she saw had dog food in it although she recalled that as before lunch whereas, Mrs Tregallis had seen Mrs Haythornthwaite with dog tins at the Grand Hotel that evening.

This further persuades me Mrs Saccani may be mistaken as to the time of day she saw Mrs Haythornthwaite on that particular Friday. I am sure dog tins were a routine purchase for Mrs Hathornthwaite on a Friday, but on that Friday she purchased them after lunch.<sup>33</sup> Overall, I think it likely

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<sup>30</sup> T 18.2.2020 p. 65

<sup>31</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.61, Exhibit 1 Tab 9

<sup>32</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.93

<sup>33</sup> t. 18.2.2020, pp.80-83

Mrs Haythornthwaite had seen Mrs Saccani and Paul later on the afternoon of 26 January 1968, after she had purchased her shopping, perhaps after receiving her wages. She had then gone to meet Mrs Tregallis at the Grand Hotel by which time she was carrying a shopping bag, or at least a bag large enough to contain her shopping, and not the handbag seen in exhibit 4.

I am satisfied on that Friday evening Mrs Tregallis, Mrs Dowson and Mrs Haythornthwaite left the Grand Hotel at approximately 8.30 pm and walked to the taxi rank on Lane Street. There Mrs Haythornthwaite, as usual declined to take a taxi home and Mrs Tregallis and Mrs Dowson took a taxi in the opposite direction to go to their homes. They were last aware of Mrs Haythornthwaite with a bag containing shopping turning left off Lane Street onto Piesse Street which would have been her normal way home. I am also satisfied that is the last definitive sighting of Mrs Haythornthwaite of which we know.

Mrs Dowson recalled she did not realise Mrs Haythornthwaite had gone missing until sometime the following week, possibly the Monday or Tuesday, as a result of Mrs Haythornthwaite failing to attend for work.<sup>34</sup> Mrs Dowson said her mother was saddened by the loss of her friend and could think of no reason as to why she may have gone missing.<sup>35</sup>

### **Possible Sighting Later That Night**

On the evening Friday 26 January 1968 two young men, Philip Rowe and Paul Stokes went to the Vieway Drive-in theatre to watch a show. Mr Rowe was driving and Mr Stokes lived on Vivien Street at the corner with Lane Street. Mr Stokes believed it was approximately 11.15 or 11.30 pm when they drove home from the Drive-in theatre down Lane Street, and as Mr Rowe turned left into Vivien Street to drop Mr Stokes off, the headlights picked up a lady, walking further down the road in the bush. "*A short lady I thought she was*".<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.59

<sup>35</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p. 62

<sup>36</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.44

Mr Stokes explained that Lane Street more or less ended at the intersection with Vivien Street and that beyond that intersection there was mainly bush. That was where they had seen, or rather glimpsed a lady as the headlights caught her as they turned. Mr Stokes advised the court Lane Street effectively ended and the road deteriorated into tracks. Later that continuation through Lane Street turned into the new Kambalda Road, as opposed to the continuation of Hamilton Street which had been the road to Kambalda. He recalled that in about 1968 drivers intending to get to Kambalda would go down Burt Street, turn into Hamilton Street or down Lane Street and then turn left towards Hamilton Street.<sup>37</sup> He stated effectively all the roads then ran into what became the Kambalda Road. Mr Stokes explained that in the evenings there would not be very much traffic and most of the hotels, other than those with special dispensation, closed at 11.00 pm. The area beyond the corner did not have houses and is now quite industrial.<sup>38</sup>

Mr Stokes said although he knew Mrs Haythornthwaite by sight he did not know her well and although his mother knew her, he could not say with any certainty the lady they had seen briefly in the headlights was Mrs Haythornthwaite. He did not recognise her as Mrs Haythornthwaite at the time. He had seen her in the street walking, but was not sure exactly where she lived. Mr Stokes recalled seeing the lady straight ahead of them as they turned into Vivien Street, in the middle of the bush walking through. He believed she was wearing a light coloured or white dress and as the headlights swept over her, she appeared to turn and catch hold of a post before realising the vehicle was not coming towards her and continuing on her way.

Apparently the two young men commented it was rather late for someone to be walking and an impression she may have been unsteady on her feet, although it could just be that the ground was uneven.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p. 44

<sup>38</sup> t. 18.2.2020 p. 50

<sup>39</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.49

At the time the two young men thought nothing further about what they had seen until sometime later they heard the publicity about someone going missing. The two boys then had a discussion between themselves about whether it was a possibility they had seen someone and that someone was the missing Mrs Haythornthwaite. Mr Stokes worked with Mrs Haythornthwaite's son, Richard and he heard she was missing through the mine site. The boys did not believe it was Mrs Haythornthwaite they had seen, rather that it could have been. Mr Rowe had discussed the sighting with his mother on the evening it happened and they had come to the conclusion it was fairly close to hotel closing time and that whoever it was they had seen could have been on their way home from a hotel.<sup>40</sup>

Neither Mr Rowe nor Mr Stokes were certain the sighting of an elderly female in the bush beyond the intersection of Vivien and Lane Streets was Mrs Haythornthwaite, although they believed the person in question was carrying something like a shopping bag and was wearing a light coloured dress. Police believed the clothes in which Mrs Haythornthwaite had last been seen by Mrs Tregallis and Mrs Dawson would look as the boys described, fleetingly, in car headlights.

No person ever came forward with any information as to having seen Mrs Haythornthwaite between 8.35 pm and 11.30 pm on 26 January 1968.

On the morning of Monday 29 January 1968 Mrs Haythornthwaite did not turn up for work at the Boulder Council offices. Nor on Tuesday 30 January 1968. When Mrs Haythornthwaite still had not attended work on Wednesday 31 January 1968 Mrs Lowry, an employee of the council, rang Mrs Haythornthwaite's son, Ronald, and asked about her absence. Ronald visited 77 Oroya Street to find Mrs Haythornthwaite's dog, distressed on the verandah without food or water, her pet cockatoo dead and her chickens

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<sup>40</sup> Ex. 7 Report of Sergeant Rollo dated 21.2.1968

without food or water. The kitchen floor was littered with torn newspaper and Mrs Haythornthwaite was nowhere to be found. Ronald went to the police.<sup>41</sup>

## **INVESTIGATION**

Sergeant Rollo of the Boulder Police immediately went to Oroya Street with Constable Morey and Woman Constable Doherty and searched the house and surrounds thoroughly. There was no sign of Mrs Haythornthwaite or any clue as to what had happened to her. The torn newspaper was explained later when Constable Keeley traced and interviewed Mrs Tregallis and Mrs Dowson who had unwittingly been the last people to have contact with Mrs Haythornthwaite.<sup>42</sup>

While the weekend had been hot, the beginning of the week had seen rain and by Wednesday 31 January 1968 it was thought any tracks would have been destroyed. There was no sign of any recent activity around the house.<sup>43</sup> Having satisfied himself there was nothing to assist their enquiries at Mrs Haythornthwaite's home, Sergeant Rollo and Constable Doherty returned to the police station and checked local hospitals and means of transport for any information, while Constable Morey extended the search of the area surrounding Mrs Haythornthwaite's home. Police began to trace her known movements and interview witnesses including hotels along Mrs Haythornthwaite's route home. Nothing was revealed.

It was established she was been seen at about 8.35 pm on Friday 26 January 1968 walking down Lane Street, before turning left onto Piesse Street on her presumed way home. Due to the information provided by Mrs Tregallis at the time I am satisfied Mrs Haythornthwaite did not reach her home that night or, again. The papers had not been cleared up, her shopping was not located and all her animals had not been cared for. The state of her home indicated that whatever happened, happened that night and she had every intention of

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<sup>41</sup> Ex 7 Report of Sergeant Rollo dated 21.2.1968

<sup>42</sup> Ex 1, tab 9

<sup>43</sup> t. 18.2.2020 p.95

being home that night to care for her pets, but did not get the opportunity to do so.

The Missing Person Report (MPR)<sup>44</sup> stated Mrs Haythornthwaite had last been seen wearing a blue nylon dress with white buttons and carrying a tartan shopping bag. Later descriptions clarified it was likely to be her best, probably only, pale blue dress with white spots, and buttons, and white shoes, but added a handbag.<sup>45</sup> However, all the descriptions from Boulder Police who interviewed witnesses indicated a shopping bag. Despite Mrs Dowson's conviction in 2020<sup>46</sup> that Mrs Haythornthwaite was carrying a red vinyl handbag, I am satisfied that was a composite memory from another or many other occasions. The fact both Mrs Tregallis and Mrs Saccani described a shopping type bag, not the one in exhibit 4, containing articles (Mrs Tregallis) including dog food (Mrs Tregallis and Mrs Saccani)<sup>47</sup> despite the apparent difference in timing between Mrs Tregallis' evidence at the time<sup>48</sup> and Mrs Saccani's evidence at the inquest,<sup>49</sup> I believe that of Mrs Tregallis to be the more reliable in view of the contemporaneous nature of her evidence. It is also more consistent with Mrs Nazzari's account and the information Mrs Haythornthwaite collected her wages before 4.00 pm, but did not meet Mrs Tregallis until 5.00 pm at the Grand Hotel as was their routine.<sup>50</sup>

Thereafter, police, family and the community committed themselves to extended search of the area including the use of Aboriginal trackers, lasting until 18 February 1968. It included media releases locally and investigations in the Perth Metropolitan area. When Ronald Haythornthwaite reported a possible sighting by Mr Rowe and Mr Stokes to police the two boys were extensively interviewed and Mr Rowe's motor vehicle was inspected for possible damage, without result. Due to a suspicion Mrs Haythornthwaite

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<sup>44</sup> Ex. 1, tab 3

<sup>45</sup> As in exhibit 4

<sup>46</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.61

<sup>47</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.80

<sup>48</sup> Ex. 1, tab 9

<sup>49</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.82-83

<sup>50</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.54

may have been struck by a motorist all panel beaters in the area were questioned, but nothing was ever located which could explain what may have happened to Mrs Haythornthwaite. To this day Mr Stokes is not certain the lady they saw in the headlights was Mrs Haythornthwaite.<sup>51</sup>

It may well have been, but the issue of where Mrs Haythornthwaite had been and what had happened between 8.35 pm and 11.30 pm that night has never been reasonably answered. She clearly had not been home.

The period of time over which the search continued satisfies me Mrs Haythornthwaite's body, if in the area, was concealed. There would be no reason for Mrs Haythornthwaite to have accidentally fallen down a mine shaft on her way home at 8.35 pm if something untoward had not occurred. She knew her way home and had not lost her way before. Paul Saccani stated the current Superpit had, over time, overmined much of the area where old mine shafts may have concealed Mrs Haythornthwaite's body which may, in future, be exposed by continued growth of the Superpit.<sup>52</sup>

If it was Mrs Haythornthwaite in the car headlights at 11.30 pm it is likely something had already happened to her, but the two young men did not register any concern other than the fact Mrs Haythornthwaite was possibly startled by the car headlights.<sup>53</sup> She may well have been in a confused condition, but we will never know. Police at the time believed it most likely Mrs Haythornthwaite had been struck by a passing motor vehicle and her body later concealed. That still would not explain the lost time of two hours if the later sighting was Mrs Haythornthwaite, or why she was approaching her home from the opposite direction

Certainly there was nothing as a result of the search which revealed any indication of what may have happened to Mrs Haythornthwaite and I

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<sup>51</sup> t. 18.2.2020, pp. 43-52

<sup>52</sup> t. 18.2.2020, pp. 100-101

<sup>53</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.96

acknowledge both her sons continued to search for some explanation as to what had happened to their mother until their dying days.<sup>54</sup>

Her grandson is similarly very anxious to understand what happened.

### **March 1995**

Information from the family of Mrs Haythornthwaite provided to CA before the inquest indicated Kalgoorlie Police had been involved in a back yard dig at 69 Chaffers Street, Boulder, on 1 March 1995. The family had been told a male had confessed he had been involved in Mrs Haythornthwaite's death and the burying of her body. CA asked for assistance from police archives and while no file relating to the dig was recovered, a set of 14 photographs dated 1 March 1995 at that address was.<sup>55</sup> CA was able to identify the police officers depicted in the photographs. Some of those officers have now left the police force and others are quite senior. No police officer had any recollection of the dig and the family stated they were never provided with any information other than the fact the dig had revealed nothing more than chicken bones.<sup>56</sup>

Glenn Haythornthwaite (a grandson) and his cousin Geoff attended the dig at 69 Chaffers Street, but were not allowed to observe the actual dig. As far as they were told only chicken bones had been found.<sup>57</sup> Glenn Haythornthwaite had fairly close connections with the Gold Stealing Squad located in Kalgoorlie in 1995 due to his business as a gold buyer. He felt he had never received satisfactory explanation from the police as to the purpose, or origin of the information, concerning the dig.

One of the police officers in the photographs, now retired, later recontacted CA to say that as a result of CA's query he had referred to his police journal for that date. He confirmed his police journal revealed an asterisk for 1 March

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<sup>54</sup> t. 18.2.2020 p. 87

<sup>55</sup> Ex. 3

<sup>56</sup> t. 18.2.2020 p 105

<sup>57</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p.104

1995 and the name Haythornthwaite, with no other information. He had been stationed in Kalgoorlie at the time. I thank retired police officer, Brian Cunningham for confirming for the family there had been a dig. Unfortunately Mr Cunningham could recall absolutely nothing of the event despite the entry in his police journal which did not trigger his memory or provide any other information.

CA continued with his attempts to provide the family with further information, but has been unable to do so. There appears to be no file related to the photographs, and while the photographs do depict some bones inquiries with Dr Buck confirm they appear to be chicken bones. In order to retrieve information Dr Buck would need the police file reference number, which we have been unable to provide.<sup>58</sup> I doubt there is other skeletal remains information or that also would have been photographed at the time.

There is also memory from the family of two other matters which we have been unable to clarify. There was some confusion to do with dates,<sup>59</sup> however, Leslie Haythornthwaite believed the event to have happened in 1995 due to her memory of her employment at that particular time.<sup>60</sup> It concerned the location of a wedding ring.

The police had located a wedding ring and shown it, allegedly, to Ronald Haythornthwaite who died in 1987. The police enquired whether it belonged to his mother. He was unable to answer that question, but suggested they ask his sister, Marjorie. Marjorie provided the police with both a photograph of her mother and confirmed the wedding ring was not the wedding ring belonging to Mrs Haythornthwaite.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> t. 18.2.2020 p. 107

<sup>59</sup> t. 18.2.2020 p. 104

<sup>60</sup> t. 18.2.2020 p. 88

<sup>61</sup> t. 18.2.2020, p. 86

The other feature which the family believed may identify their mother should her remains ever be found was a gold chain which unfortunately never has been located.

### **HAS DEATH BEEN ESTABLISHED?**

I am satisfied beyond all reasonable doubt Mrs Haythornthwaite is deceased. Further, I am satisfied Mrs Haythornthwaite died at 72 years of age on or about 26 January 1968 somewhere in the vicinity of Boulder. I am sure had Mrs Haythornthwaite been alive on Monday 29 January 1968 she would have attended work.

All the evidence indicated Mrs Haythornthwaite was a responsible, independent, person of character and routine. She organised her life into defined activities relating to her family and her every day work and social interaction. She clearly had a close circle of female friends with whom she interacted on at least a weekly basis. Her interaction with Mrs Nazzari appears to have been on most days and the police were satisfied Mrs Nazzari did not see Mrs Haythornthwaite on the evening of 26 January 1968 after she started on her way home.<sup>62</sup>

The fact Mrs Haythornthwaite had collected her wages as usual that Friday afternoon and likely gone shopping in the intervening time before she met Mrs Tregallis at 5.00 pm at the Grand Hotel is supported by Mrs Tregallis' recollection Mrs Haythornthwaite had biscuits and dog food in her bag, which Mrs Tregallis had never described as a handbag. One of the big supermarket chains had shopping bags with a red and green tartan motif. It is possible the tartan shopping bag occasionally referred to in the papers was one of those but later became confused with Mrs Haythornthwaite's vinyl bag carried by her on other occasions.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ex. 1, tab 9

<sup>63</sup> Ex 4

I accept Mrs Saccani's evidence Mrs Haythornthwaite's visited the factory every Friday to sit with her son Paul for a few minutes before going on her way, but believe on this Friday it was likely to have been after she visited the Main Reef Hotel with Mrs Nazzari, rather than before 1.00pm. Mrs Haythornthwaite appears to have been carrying the same bag and shopping with her at the time she met with Mrs Tregallis at the Grand Hotel.

I am satisfied at the time she left Mrs Tregallis and Mrs Dowson on Lane Street at the taxi rank Mrs Haythornthwaite had consumed beer, maybe a little more than usual, but it was very hot. She was perfectly capable of making her way home. I am satisfied that was her intention due to her explanation to Mrs Tregallis as to why her dog was outside on the verandah, it was her intention to return home and clear up the mess from earlier in the day. I am absolutely satisfied Mrs Haythornthwaite would not voluntarily have left her dog chained on her back verandah with no food and water had she intended to be particularly late home.

I am satisfied Mrs Haythornthwaite was set enough in her ways for her to have intended to return home that Friday evening to take care of her animals and spend her weekends as she normally spent her weekends.

I have no doubt that had Mrs Haythornthwaite been alive but unable to attend work on Monday morning she would have notified her employer of her inability. I am quite satisfied by that time something untoward had happened to Mrs Haythornthwaite and she was no longer alive.

## **MANNER AND CAUSE OF DEATH**

While I am satisfied beyond all reasonable doubt Mrs Haythornthwaite died on or about late evening of 26 January 1968, I am unable on the evidence to determine what happened to Mrs Haythornthwaite.

I am of the view it is extremely unlikely Mrs Haythornthwaite died of natural causes. There was no indication there was anything wrong with Mrs Haythornthwaite. Mrs Tregallis, Mrs Dowson, Mrs Nezzari and Mrs Sacconi all indicated her behaviour had been perfectly normal when they saw her during that Friday. Although the information with respect to delayed head injuries has altered over the years it is unlikely Mrs Haythornthwaite would have survived from 12 January to 26 January 1968 with a slow bleed, without some indication her cognition was not as sharp as usual. There is no indication that was the case on the evidence of the people who had interaction with her on 26 January 1968.

While it is possible the person seen in the headlights was Mrs Haythornthwaite in a confused state there is no explanation as to what may have happened to her over the previous two hours to have taken her from her presumed route down Piesse Street to Hamilton Street to Oroya Street, and home, to appear in the opposite direction down Lane Street towards the corner of Vivien Street. One way home would see her approaching her home from the north-west, the other route would have her approaching her home from south-west with there being absolutely no explanation as to why that should be. If it was Mrs Haythornthwaite something untoward had already happened to her and she was attempting to get home. Had that been the case, but she did not make it, I believe her body would have been located, unless there was a second untoward event.

Consequently I am of the view something happened to Mrs Haythornthwaite on her route home, but before she reached her home via the Hamilton Street route.

It may be that whatever happened to Mrs Haythornthwaite was accidental, however, I am satisfied that accidental or not her body was actively concealed. There would be no reason for her to accidentally fall down a mine shaft on her normal route home. I also believe had the event been a medical emergency and she had somehow stumbled down a mine shaft, there would have been some evidence of her passage or some indication of her shopping bag or clothing. So while I am unable to determine what happened to Mrs Haythornthwaite, I am satisfied it happened during the night of 26 to 27 January 1968 in the vicinity of Boulder and her body was in some way concealed.

I make an Open Finding as to the death of Mrs Haythornthwaite.

## **CONCLUSION**

I am satisfied Mrs Haythornthwaite, although a private person and not demonstrative of her affections towards her family,<sup>64</sup> was a well loved family member and the mystery of her disappearance still haunts her grandchildren 52 years later.

I am satisfied Mrs Haythornthwaite was a fiercely independent and largely contented person in her life. She built herself a routine which enable to her enjoy her life with what she had.

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<sup>64</sup> t. 18.2.2020 p. 77

I am satisfied that on Friday 26 January 1968 Mrs Haythornthwaite went to work as normal and called in to see her friend Mrs Nazzari on her way home.

I am satisfied the two women occupied themselves until approximately 11.30 am when they went to the shops to buy bread and thereafter, due to the heat of the day, decided to attend at the Main Reef Hotel for a drink where they met another friend before they all left at approximately 1.00 pm.

I am not clear as to whether Mrs Haythornthwaite then visited Mrs Saccani at the factory or that occurred later in the afternoon. I am satisfied, however, she returned home sometime after 1.00 pm to discover that her dog, which she had left inside due to concern for its well being in the heat, had shredded a newspaper. Mrs Haythornthwaite was tired and did not wish to clean up the mess, but clearly intended to do it that night as she later told her friend, Mrs Tregallis.

I am satisfied that some time after 3.00 pm Mrs Haythornthwaite put her dog on the back verandah until she returned home. She walked to the council offices to collect her wages and then went shopping. I believe she was wearing her pale blue dress with white spots, but was carrying a shopping bag. Whether her vinyl bag was inside in the shopping bag I am unable to comment, but it may explain some of the discrepancies in the evidence.

I am satisfied Mrs Haythornthwaite then bought dog food for her dog and biscuits and other items before she either, went to the factory and saw Mrs Saccani, or went straight to the Grand Hotel where she met Mrs Tregallis at 5.00 pm. I am satisfied the two of them stayed there until Mrs Dowson finished her shift at 7.00 pm and they ate fish and chips at the hotel before leaving and going to the taxi rank in Lane Street.

I am satisfied Mrs Haythornthwaite, as usual, declined to use a taxi to get home and said goodbye to the other two women who caught a taxi in the opposite direction. Mrs Haythornthwaite was last seen walking down Lane Street, her normal route home on a Friday evening, intending to go home via Piesse and Hamilton Streets to Oroya Street.

I am satisfied Mrs Haythornthwaite did not stop at either at the Shamrock Hotel or other hotels located on her route home,<sup>65</sup> but did not return to 77 Oroya Street that night, or ever again. No trace of Mrs Haythornthwaite's clothing or the shopping bag have ever been located and the newspaper was still on her kitchen floor. Her animals were in a condition which indicated she intended to return home, but had never arrived.

Something clearly happened to Mrs Haythornthwaite before she reached her home. If it was Mrs Haythornthwaite the two boys saw two hours later at the opposite end of Lane Street it would imply more than one untoward event prevented her from reaching her home, and concealing of the evidence of those events was not accidental.

I am satisfied the police in the form of Sergeant Rollo and his staff including Constable Keeley searched diligently with all the means at their disposal to locate Mrs Haythornthwaite. She was never found and the police were concerned something untoward had happened at that time. An accidental event and concealment of her body would not explain two sightings with two hours between events.

There is no indication Mrs Haythornthwaite would never have contacted her family again if she had been in a position to do so.

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<sup>65</sup> Exhibit 1 Tab 9 transcript 18.2.2020 p. 7

I am sorry I have been unable to clarify for Mrs Haythornthwaite's family the mystery surrounding her death. It was very clear during the evidence her family have puzzled over and been unable to completely come to terms with the death of their loved mother, and now grandmother.

E F VICKER  
**CORONER**

2 June 2020