The Murder of Mary Anne Hogg

Ken Clarke July 2013

Camberley in 1906 was a smart town, with an ever increasing population due in no small way to the arrival of the railway in 1878, and its popularity with the retired military, which was advertised in various magazines, especially in India. It owed its existence to the Staff College, which had opened in 1862, and had started with the name of Cambridge Town, after the Duke of Cambridge, the then Commander in Chief of the British Army, but due to confusion by the post office with Cambridge, and wrongly delivered mail, the name was changed in 1877 to Camberley, thus ending the confusion.

Many of the local shops prided themselves on personal service, and many items were delivered to homes by boys on bicycles, thus continuing the type of service many had been accustomed to whilst in the army. Although the population was only 5,249 the year before, it warranted 24 public houses and a wide variety of clubs and organisations that one could join, including the Temperance Society, The Girls Friendly Society, and the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Society, as well as the usually sporting clubs.

Detached house were being sold for £2,350, while a pair of semi detached villas were on offer for £800 the pair, with a 4% mortgage rate. Life was good, and the air was healthy, so what happened to make Camberley the subject of newspaper headlines up and down the country?

It occurred in the London Road Camberley, at a house called "Heathfield" which was a little way out of the town in the Bagshot direction. It had been leased from the owner, a General Digby Barker for a period of 4/5 years, and the occupants were a pair of half sisters, Mary Anne Hogg, who at the age of 68 was 14 years older than her half sister Caroline Grinnell. They shared the same father, a London physician John Hogg, who had married twice. He had married Mary Elizabeth Roberts, by whom he had 5 children, and in 1845, after her death, he had married Susan Mary John, and they produced Caroline Gwinnell in 1853, whilst living at 51 Gower Street.

"Heathfield" stood in an acre of ground, and had a large stable and coach house attached, as well as two entrance gates. It was a large house, and, unusually for Camberley, they did not employ any servants, just an occasional woman helper, and a gardener, who was employed one day a week. The must have been seen as a rather odd couple in the tranquil town, as Mary, tall and slim and Caroline, rather short and portly often spent many hours walking on the near-by common, sometimes as late as midnight, while during the day they could be seen sitting on the banks opposite their house. Mary often would be seen wearing an old fashioned dolman Ulster, and was always carrying a string worked bag. A dolman is a hussar's coat worn like a cape, and an Ulster is a long loose overcoat, usually with a hood. That is some of the background so let's continue with the events of Monday the 11th June 1906.

About 4pm on that day the caretaker of the adjoining house, was horrified to see the younger of the two women at the door with an ugly wound to her throat, and covered in blood. She

cried out for Mrs Wilding, and the caretaker could only say, “Dullatur”, the name of the house three doors away. She was seen running to the house shouting,”I’m murdered, I’m murdered”. On her arrival Mrs. Wilding telephoned for Doctor Rayner, and also the Nurses Home.

The good Doctor attended along with three of his colleagues, and did what they could for her injuries, which consisted of a very severe would to her throat, which was bleeding profusely, and a bruise to her temple. Nothing intelligible could be obtained from her, apart from the occasional, “My sister, oh my sister, we are being murdered” and “A man, a big man”. When she arrived at the house the errand boy was sent to “Heathfield” to inform the sister of the injuries to Caroline, but as the boy got to the house he could not make anyone hear, so on pushing the front door he saw a woman lying on the floor. Upon seeing this he ran away, absolutely terrified.

A neighbour, Colonel Lonsdale Hale, accompanied by a local coachman then attended the house, and on entering found Mary Anne Hogg lying on the floor in a little room to the left of the entrance hall. She was lying on her face surrounded by blood and had a terrible wound to her throat, and an ugly bruise on the side of her head. Her clothes were covered in blood and there was a part of a large hammer by her side, the other part being at the end of the room. Mr. Woodley, the coachman went to the police station, and P.C.’s Holdaway and Brown attended at once to commence investigations.

This is some of the details of what they found at the scene, there were bloodstains leading to one of the bedrooms, where they discovered a bowl of water where someone had rinsed their hands, and a cloth in which they dried their hands. There was no blood in any of the living rooms on the ground floor, and in the kitchen and scullery the walls were smeared with blood. The back door was wide open, and although they made a thorough search of the area, no trace of any knife or sharp object that could have inflicted the wounds on the throats of the injured couple. In the upstairs rooms it was noticed that there was a great deal of disorder, and numerous amounts of jewellery and rings, but it was not possible to tell if anything was missing.

To quote from a newspaper report, “On examination of the deceased the hammer dropped from her hands, and this causes the supposition that it was placed there after death. Now it is practically certain that had she been holding the hammer at the time before death, she would, in her death agonies, have clutched it more tightly”. The Doctors who examined both of the sisters came to the conclusion that the wounds could not have been self-inflicted.

One fact that came to light was that the women had ordered a carriage to take them for a drive that afternoon at 4.30pm, but at 2pm a note was sent to the carriage proprietor to the effect that it was now no longer required. The note read, “Mr. T. Martin, the proprietor, High Street. Miss Hogg is not able to drive out at 5 o’clock on Monday. Heathfield. London Road”. A butcher’s boy had delivered it. All the press reports were united in one aspect, and that was in describing the sisters as an eccentric couple. They had arrived in Camberley some 18/19 years ago and had lived not far from where they are now. Some years after they went to

Japan, and returned about three years ago. One report states that there were no two better-known figures some five or six years ago in Yokohama, than the two ladies. Apparently they surprised many locals with their eccentric dress habits, and they were reported to have large interests in many Japanese companies. They always stayed at the Grand Hotel, and never spoke to anyone at dinner, had no friends, and did not attend any garden parties, balls or any other entertainments. It was reported they rarely spoke to each other, a strange couple indeed, to say the least.

The opening inquest was held on the 13th June at The White Hart in Frimley, and after viewing the body, and evidence from Col. Hale it was adjourned to the 25th June.

At the adjourned inquest held in the newly opened court house evidence was heard from the pathologist, Professor Pepper, who described the injuries to Caroline. She had a fractured skull, and there were 5 wounds to her head, all caused by a claw hammer, which had been wrapped in cloth at the time. Her throat wound was very deep, and began on the left side of the neck, and passed obliquely upwards to the right side, getting deeper as it reached the latter side. Great force must have been used. He thought the blows to her head would have rendered her insensible, and then her throat had been cut. That would explain the absence of any cuts on her hands, thus indicating a struggle.

Col. Hale gave evidence, as well as other doctors who had attended, and also police officers. Caroline was again too ill to attend, so the proceedings were adjourned again, but just before this Col. Hale introduced some light hearted comments, when he said that he hoped that the plans of "Heathfield" would be passed on to the gentlemen of the press, so that they may see the loneliness of the house. I protest against these remarks in the London papers, the lonely house murder, the lonely village and all that. The Coroner, Mr. G.F. Roumieu then remarked, "But the reports would not look so well without the lonely house, Colonel, amid laughter.

On Tuesday the 10th July, again at the court house the inquest resumed with great interest as Caroline was now well enough to attend and give her evidence. The Chief Constable, Captain Sant was there, as well as two detective sergeants from Scotland Yard, who had been sent down to assist in the investigations. As well as local paper representatives, there were others from the London papers, which had devoted much space to the happenings in Camberley.

This first witness was John Henry Cumnor, a builder's labourer, who had been working on a house in The Avenue on the 7th June, when he had to leave for another job in Gordon Road. He placed all his tools in a wheelbarrow, and on reaching Gordon Road discovered the hammer missing. Later the same day he ascertained that his brother had taken the hammer whilst at The Avenue job. He was then shown a hammer by Sgt. Mears, which he confirmed was his, although he did not have any knowledge of the pieces of merino that was wrapped around the hammer.

Next to be called was Caroline Gwinnell Hogg, dressed in deep black, with a heavy black veil and accompanied by a nurse and another woman. She was described as pale and ill looking, and spoke in a faint voice, which was quite inaudible to the jury. The questioning by the Coroner then began.

"What time did you get up on the day in question?" "It was late, between two and three".

"Did you see her during the Monday morning or in the early afternoon of the 11th?" "Yes, she came into my bedroom between two and three".

"What time had you arranged to go for a drive?" "Between five and half past".

"Did she say anything about getting up?" "No, she went downstairs". She had told her sister that she, Mary, had a headache and had put the carriage off as she did not think it was fine enough to go for a drive.

She then got dressed and afterwards heard a slight exclamation in the hall, which she thought was her sister's voice, and started to come downstairs. At the top of the stairs she encountered a man who said,"I want money". I said "The money is downstairs". He was dressed as a sort of bricklayer, with his sleeves tucked up. He had a net over his face, she could not describe the colour of his trousers, but his face was red, and his eyes were dark.

"We both rushed down together, but I cannot tell you who went first. I think I got in front of him, and that he followed me. I saw my sister in the garden in front of the house with blood streaming from her face. I was going towards her when he felled me down; he struck me with the hammer".

"What happened?" "My sister came in from the garden. I fell to the ground close to the clock. I heard my sister exclaim "Oh". I think he had stunned her.

The Corner then asked her if she had gone to the dining room, to which she responded in the negative. He then said to her that she had made a good many statements to different people, and quoted from one she had made to Inspector Fox, "I went to the dining room to find m sister, is that right?" "I went towards the dining room door, but the man struck me close to the clock. It was when I was by the clock that I saw my sister?"

Mr. Roumieu was now beginning to get a little confused with her evidence, and said, "What I want to know is this. You have made so many different statements and I remind you, you are on oath now. I want to see which is correct. Did you run into the garden?" "Yes, we all went into the garden".

"What, all three of you?" exclaimed the Coroner. "Yes, as far as the doorstep, I rushed to the gate to get assistance. I do not know what happened to my sister". After further questioning by the Corner and the jury she was given permission to leave the court, which prompted the headline "Sister's graphic but contradictory evidence" in one of the papers.

The pathologist, Professor Pepper was then called, and stated that the injuries to the deceased could have been inflicted by another woman. In reply to a question from one of the jury members concerning the fact that Caroline had seen her sister in the garden with blood streaming from her face he said, "I have heard her evidence, and, as a medical man I should say her statement is not that all reliable". Another jury member said, "You consider Miss Caroline Hogg's evidence is somewhat inconsistent?" His reply, "Yes".

The jury, not surprisingly reached their verdict in a short space of time, wilful murder, but there was insufficient evidence to show by whom it was committed. Apart from the local papers there was much written in the various daily papers as well, including the Lloyds Weekly, in which it stated that Mary Anne did most of the work in the house, as Caroline would appear to have been quite stout, and had to have her shoes fastened by one of the maids, when they had one in the house. They did shop locally, but appeared to disagree on the quantities to be purchased.

Mary Anne left all her belongings to her sister Caroline, and when the will was administered on the 11th December 1906 it amounted to £5,293 5s 1d net. Her funeral took place on the 17th June and her coffin was transported to Frimley Station, where it was taken to Waterloo, and then onto Highgate Cemetery in London, where she was interred in the family vault, which already contained the remains of her father and brother.

Finally we look at what happened to Caroline after the awful murder of her sister. She went to live in Japan, and on the 18th September 1921 she died in Yokohama General Hospital, with the Grand Hotel as her residence. Her will, made on the 10th June 1915, whilst in Yokohama was proved on the 22nd June 1922, and probate was granted to Cato Benjamin Aall, who was the main beneficiary to the net amount of her belongings, which was £8,647 19s 6d. One significant fact is that she was not buried in the family vault in Highgate Cemetery.

Having read all the papers on the murder, and digested them I would venture an opinion that Caroline was guilty, her inconsistent evidence and her unreliable account of events were important enough for the Coroner and the pathologist to comment on. Unfortunately I could not locate the police file relating to it at all, or any of the old day books, so had to rely on the press reports, which as well know are not always 100% accurate. At the conclusion of the case Captain Sant stated that he would not call on Scotland Yard for assistance again, and he never did,

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