

Murder records

MURDER.

£1,000 REWARD.

Home Secretary's Office,

Brisbane, 3rd January, 1899.

His Excellency the Governor, with the advice of the Executive Council, has been pleased to direct that a Reward of One Thousand Pounds (£1,000) be paid for such information as may lead to the apprehension and conviction of the person or persons who, at Gatton, on the night of Monday, the 26th December ultimo, murdered Michael Murphy, Norah Murphy, and Ellen Murphy, and that a Pardon be granted to any person concerned in the crime, not being the principal offender, who may give such information.

J. F. G. FOXTON.

DR2794 - Reward Notice for information about the murder of Michael, Norah and Ellen Murphy at Gatton, 1899

Research Guide to murder records
at Queensland State Archives

Research Guide to murder records

Queensland State Archives (QSA) is the official repository for Queensland Government records selected for permanent retention because of their continuing value. The archived public records are from state government departments, state courts, local government authorities and statutory authorities. The records are in our facility at [Runcorn, Brisbane](#), and open records are available for viewing in the Reading Room, free-of-charge.

Murder files are subject to a restricted access period ranging from 65 to 100 years. Access is granted at the discretion of the responsible agency, such as Queensland Police Service.

The main finding aid for records held at QSA is the [Queensland State Archives' online catalogue](#) (known as ArchivesSearch).

The following citation abbreviations are used throughout our catalogue:

ITM	QSA Item (describes the item)
PR	Physical Representation (generally the original or microfilm copy)
DR	Digital Representation (for a digital image)
S	Series ID (for a series of records)
A	Agency ID (for the creating or responsible agency).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that our catalogue contains images, names and voices of people who have died.

Police records

The Queensland Police Service murder files consist of police investigations, newspaper reports and general correspondence about murders, attempted murders and the arrest of murder suspects. The files are mainly about murders committed in Queensland.

Warning: These records contain material of a graphic nature which can be upsetting and confronting.

Police Department

Murder Files (Administrative)

1/1/1884–2/4/1992

[S4190](#)

these files document police investigations and may include newspaper articles, general correspondence about murders, gazette notices and details of the arrest of murder suspects. Files primarily concern murders committed in Queensland and each murder is allocated an individual file number. When murders were committed in other states or overseas, and investigations were carried out in Queensland, a separate file was created. Files are listed by name of the victim. When the victim has not been identified, or the victim's name has not been given (eg. many interstate files do not give the victim's name), the file has been described as unknown. This series may also include attempted murder files.

Murder Files (Investigative)

1/1/1932–1/1/2000

[S5023](#)

These files document police investigations and may include newspaper reports, general correspondence, attempted murders and the arrest of murder suspects. The files concern primarily murders which have been committed in Queensland, with each murder being allocated an individual file number. Where murders have been committed in other states or overseas, and investigations have been carried out in Queensland, a separate file has also been created. Files have been listed by name of the victim. Where the victim has not been identified, or the victim's name has not been given (eg. many interstate files do not give the victim's name), the file is described as unknown. These files contain more detailed personal information than the administrative murder files.

Regional District Murder Files

1/1/1955–31/12/1962

[S14878](#)

These files were created by the Far Northern Region, Cairns District Office. These files document police investigations and includes newspaper reports and general correspondence relating to murders, attempted murders and the arrest of murder suspects.

Regional Office Murder Files

13/7/1927–2/4/1991

[S4511](#)

These files were created by the Metropolitan North Region, Brisbane City District Office. They document police investigations and general correspondence relating to murders, attempted murders and the arrest of murder suspects. The files concern primarily murders which have been committed in Queensland, with each murder being allocated an individual file number. Where murders have been committed in other states or overseas, and investigations have been carried out in Queensland, a separate file has also been created. The files have been listed by name of the victim. Where the victim has not been identified, or the victim's name has not been given (eg. many interstate files do not give the victim's name), the file has been described as unknown. Documents contained in the files include batch reference sheets, laboratory reports, criminal offence reports, charge sheets, prisoner reports, property reports, newspaper articles, photographs of the suspected perpetrator, committal reports and missing persons' notifications.

Register of Murders

25/12/1890–28/08/1895

[S18403](#)

This series consists of a register which records certain murders in North Queensland under the headings 'Murders mentioned by Mr. Browne M.L.A.' (1893–1894) and 'Mackay murders' (1890–1895).

The 'Murders mentioned by Mr. Browne M.L.A.' includes name of murdered person, place, date, name of suspected person or murderers and result. Dates of the murders listed are 6 Dec 1893–13 Feb 1894. The 'Mackay murders' includes name of murdered person, place, date, name of suspected person or murderer and result. Murder files may also be found among other police records.

Name Cards (Card Index of Surnames, Business Names and Locations)

Circa 1/1/1940–Circa 31/12/1992

[S17548](#)

These cards are used to find administration files in S39.

Administration Files

1/1/1870–23/8/1999

[S39](#)

This series comprises correspondence and other papers created by the various divisions at the Executive, Regional and District levels of the Police Department. It documents some of the major functions of the Police Department between 1870 and 1996. To find administration files, search Name Cards (Card Index of Surnames, Business Names and Locations), S17548.

Files relating to broad police activities/series, such as missing persons, murder, police motor vehicles, may include correspondence and memorandum, proformas for gathering evidence, evidential statements, reports, press clippings, extracts from printed materials and other discussion papers, photographs, transcripts of hearings and trials, criminal history records, crime statistics, information and policy circulars, test and investigation results, invoices for services rendered by different sub-departments, receipts, warrants and summons. Among the papers comprising the 'N – General' series is a self-indexed notebook compiled by the Homicide Squad titled *Unsolved Queensland Murders*. The 'K' and 'N' series also contain papers (or originals) records relating to inquests. Correspondence, case files and records from other Government Departments also appear frequently among the depositions and papers relating to 'C', 'N' and other series. The most relevant records in this series are [ITM352190](#) - [ITM353667](#), [ITM353868](#), [ITM369169](#) & [ITM369170](#).

Police Department, Criminal Investigation Branch

Index to Criminal Files

4/9/1933–28/5/1974

[S17025](#)

This index is used to find files in Criminal Files, S10354. This index is in the form of an item registration sheet which lists the name of the person suspected of the crime or charged with the crime, date range of the file, file number and QSA previous system location number. This index was created by QSA and does not represent the complete series.

Criminal Files

4/9/1933–28/5/1974

[S10354](#)

To find files in this series, search Index to Criminal Files, S17025. This series comprises police files for criminal cases about murder, rape, assault, incest, carnal knowledge and unlawful killing. Each file lists the name and aliases of the suspect, police enquiries, modus operandi forms, the particulars of the person arrested and the police in charge of the case, newspaper articles, police reports concerning the victim and statements of the police, witnesses and suspect/s. Some files contain a rough sketch of the crime scene, and a police photograph of the suspect when arrested and charged. Some files also detail previous offences committed by the suspect and, if convicted, the date when the suspect was released from prison. It appears, from the file

numbers represented, that the files have been selected from the series of criminal files and do not represent the complete series.

Police Department, Police Service Commissioner's Office

Card Index

Circa 1/1/1910–30/6/1970

[S7439](#)

This series is used to find letters in the 'M' series of General correspondence, S16865.

Name Cards (Card Index of Surnames, Business Names and Locations)

Circa 1/1/1940–Circa 31/12/1992

[S17548](#)

This series is used to find letters in General correspondence, S16865. The cards list correspondence received on a wide range of matters including naturalisation, reports of crime, appreciation of police, stolen property, correspondence from police across Queensland and other states, crimes committed, arrests, accidents, traffic accidents, deaths, suicides and other incidents. Details may include name of person who has corresponded or committed an offence or involved in an accident. The file numbers on each card refer to Police Department files including: C - Crime, T - Traffic, S - Police Station etc. The majority of these files are not held by Queensland State Archives.

General Correspondence

1/1/1861–31/12/1987

[S16865](#)

These general correspondence files form the 'M' series of files from the Police Commissioner's Office. They consist mainly of reports by police officers and related correspondence. They cover a wide range of activities involving or affecting the Queensland Police Force including the employment of black trackers, proceedings brought against medical officers and bogus doctors, the discovery of human remains and visits to Queensland by royalty and other distinguished persons. These files have been given subject-based file titles. Each file title has been allocated a file number with a 'M' suffix. Subsequent files on the same subject are numbered progressively, e.g. 153M - Rations to prisoners - Brisbane District, 1906-1959; 153M1 - Rations to prisoners - Brisbane District, 1907-1952. To find general correspondence, search Card Index, S7439 and Name Cards (Card Index of Surnames, Business Names and Locations), S17548.

Note that S7439 and S17548 are closed for 65 years.

Queensland Police Gazettes

The complete full-text of the *Queensland Police Gazettes* for the years 1864–1945 are digitised and available for researchers to search on the Reading Room computers. These PDF files are searchable by keywords.

Indexes to Police Gazettes

1/1/1887–12/12/1971

[S930](#)

These indexes are used to find Queensland Police Gazettes in S798. However, the separate volumes may also contain their own indexes. The Indexes to the Police Gazettes are alphabetical by year for the period 1897 to 1960. Names are indexed alphabetically and, in the later indexes, can be grouped according to where they were located in the police gazette. For example, under the 'A' index will be an alphabetical list of people with surnames starting with A under the heading of Apprehensions, followed by an alphabetical list of people with surnames starting with A under the heading of Complaints and so on. Where changes to police staff were not included within the alphabetical index, these details will be found after the alphabetical entries for 'Z'. Each name indexed has a corresponding page number in the police gazette for that year where more information can be located.

Queensland Police Gazettes

22/7/1864–17/10/1997

[S798](#)

To find relevant police gazettes, search Indexes to Queensland Police Gazettes, S930. Police Gazettes contain details of matters reported to police throughout Queensland and include information about persons apprehended, prisoners tried at the District and Supreme Courts, complainants, deserters from His Majesty's service, escaped prisoners, persons suspected of committing offences, prohibited immigrants (ships' deserters), personnel changes in the police force, wife and child deserters, missing persons, prisoners discharged from custody, summons and warrants. In addition to the standard gazette, the Police Department also produced photo supplements of individuals wanted on various charges and photographic weekly wanted lists. The bound Police Gazettes may also contain copies of the Photographic Supplements or Weekly Wanted Lists for that year. If they do not, check the item list to see if the Photographic Supplements and/or the Weekly Wanted Lists have been bound separately. The separate volumes may also contain their own indexes. If there is no separate, cumulative index, search the Police Gazette for the required year because these volumes often contain indexes.

The Gatton murders

Michael, Nora and Ellen Murphy were murdered in Moran's paddock near Gatton on 26 Dec 1898. The offender/s were never brought to justice and the case has become one of Australia's most mysterious crimes.

Gatton Murder File

1/1/1962–31/12/1973

[S9191](#)

This correspondence comprises reports on letters from the general public and interviews concerning the elderly person's recollection of the events surrounding the murder.

Register of In-Letters (Gatton Murders)

28/12/1898–20/2/1899

[S9192](#)

This register was the controlling register for correspondence sent to the Inspector of Police at Gatton during the investigation of the Gatton murders, and it was the controlling register for the correspondence in the Gatton murder files; Gatton Murder Files, 1895–1916, S9189. However, this material was rearranged into List of Files in Gatton Murder Papers, 1895–1973, S9190 by the Police Department, Criminal Investigation Branch. Details include date; progressive, former and subsequent numbers of the letters; name of writer; subject; and file titles.

List of Files in the Gatton Murder Papers

1/1/1895–31/12/1973

[S9190](#)

This series is used to find Gatton murder files, S9189. These pages list the file titles used by the Police Department for the Gatton murder papers.

Gatton Murder Files

1/8/1895–30/6/1916

[S9189](#)

To find files in this series, search list of files in the Gatton murder papers in S9190. These files comprise the records of the investigation by the Criminal Investigation Branch of the Police Department and contain the depositions taken at the Magisterial Inquiry held at Gatton between 24 Jan 1899 and 24 Mar 1899. They contain reports, telegrams, and correspondence for the police and the general public, who put forward numerous theories and solutions to the case.

Index to Outgoing Correspondence (Gatton Murders)

5/1/1899–7/4/1899

[S9193](#)

This series records outgoing correspondence of the Inspector of Police based in Gatton during the investigations into the Gatton murders. Details given include date, page number in letterbook, name of addressee and subject of letter.

Murder file - Michael Murphy, Norah Murphy, Ellen Murphy

22/12/1906–27/3/1985

[ITM667126](#)

This murder file number 1232N is in [S4190](#), Murder Files (administrative).

Newspaper Cuttings (Gatton Murders)

1/1/1898–31/12/1899

[S9196](#)

This collection of newspaper cuttings on the Gatton murders was compiled from the *Telegraph* and *Brisbane Courier* newspapers by the Police Department.

Photographs pertaining to the Gatton Murders

1/1/1898–31/12/1899

[S17688](#)

This collection of photographs has been compiled from contemporary newspapers and magazines, together with a photograph of the reward and one of Murphy's grave.

Police Duty Return for Extra Men at Gatton Police Station

27/12/1898–4/1/1899

[S9195](#)

The extra duties referred to relate to investigating the Gatton murders. Details include registered number, district number, name, rank, nature of duty, remarks, and date.

Register of Inward and Outward Letters (includes Gatton murders)

27/12/1898–9/1/1899

[S9194](#)

The details in this register include date, name of writer, subject, and how disposed of. Outgoing letters are recorded by their register number and subject.

Other sources of information

This guide is not an exhaustive list of records of murders held at QSA. Court records may contain information about criminal cases such as murders. When researching court and police records, be aware that a murder can also be listed under the following criminal charges:

- attempted murder
- manslaughter
- unlawful killing
- willful killing
- willful murder.

Searches in [ArchivesSearch](#) using keywords such as apprehensions, appeals, Associate's notebooks, criminal files, criminal histories, criminal jurisdiction, exhumations, indictments, inquests, human remains, Judges Notebooks may be worthwhile.

Also, for further information about Police Gazettes, refer to the [Research Guide to Police gazettes](#).

Need more information?

Check our online catalogue [ArchivesSearch](#).
Phone us on (07) 3037 6777 or you can [email](#) an archivist.