

MEDALS (Non-Military) - AUSTRALIA**Lot 616**

POLICE: 1896 'HEROIC CONDUCT' Gold medal (18ct, 31mm x 44mm), obv. monogram initials 'MPN' within shield, rev. 'PRESENTED TO/CONSTABLE/Maurice Patrick Normoyle/-in recognition-/of his heroic conduct/IN ARRESTING SINGLE HANDED/a murderous Afghan/armed with an axe in the/main street Fremantle/-3rd DEC 1896-', suspension loop at top. Superb! *Ex Dr Alan Nicholson.*

Excerpts from *The West Australian*, 4 Dec 1896, courtesy of Trove:

"On the morning of Thursday. December 3, 1896, the citizens of Fremantle were going about their respective affairs much as usual and with no sense of impending doom..... Some few may have noticed a tall, muscular Afghan (Jumna Khan) striding along the pavement.....next to an opened case of axes in the doorway of Church and Co.'s shop. The sight and the act were almost simultaneous. In a stride he had seized an axe and turned outwards, no longer a man but a maniac. He had gone amok! Leaning against a verandah post of the shop was William Griffiths, a wharf laborer, who was waiting for a mate. With a leap the Afghan was on him, and almost before the unfortunate lumper had time to look round the gleaming axe and smashed on his head.... Griffiths fell into the water channel a dying man..... A stalwart few made for the 'Ghan. But before these last could reach him he claimed another victim. Thomas Henderson, an elderly man..... Looking over his shoulder he saw the frenzied Afghan rushing on him with uplifted axe. Henderson tried to run but in his excitement tripped and fell. As he did so, John Pell, a blacksmith, sprang to his assistance. Pell was just a shade too late. He got his hands to the axe handle and managed to deflect the blow, but it fell on Henderson's left shoulder, neatly cutting through the shoulder blade. It was this second blow which brought Constable Normoyle into action.

Normoyle was on his beat in High-street,....he saw a commotion outside Church's shop and heard shouts. Quickening his pace, he next saw the Afghan running at Henderson and swinging an axe in menacing fashion. When Henderson was stricken, Normoyle broke into a run. The movement brought him into the 'Ghan's vision, and he came furiously at the constable, freely swinging his blood-dripping weapon..... But Maurice Normoyle was young, vigorous and of stout courage. Also, he was no mean athlete in those days. As he ran towards the Afghan he coolly measured the distance - and his chances. As the axe swept down on him the constable stepped back and then ducked forwards to get inside his assailant's reach. Quick as he was the Afghan was quicker. He aimed a half-arm blow at Normoyle, who instinctively raised his hands and caught the handle, turning the blow aside. It was a near thing, for the axe-head KNOCKED HIS HELMET OFF!

With a dexterous pull and twist Normoyle brought the 'Ghan to the ground, promptly falling on him and securing a 'holt'. By this time help was at hand..... Dr. Hope had been called to Griffiths, but a cursory examination showed that the poor fellow was beyond human aid. His head was BATTERED ALMOST TO A PULP by the fearful blow he had received and he died within a few minutes of reaching the hospital. Thomas Henderson, the other victim, was also removed to the hospital, where it was found that the left shoulder blade had been completely severed. Henderson recovered, but did not live long, the shock having been too much for a man of his advanced years..."

Jumna Khan was tried for the murder of Griffiths, his plea of insanity did not sway the jury, who after eight minutes of deliberation returned a verdict of guilty. He was sentenced to death and hanged in April 1897.

Through the donations from the local community, a large portion having been donated by the wharf lumpers, Mr. F Wheeler, Jeweller, was commissioned to produce the gold medal. It was displayed for two weeks in his shop window, Main St, Fremantle and then forwarded along with a cheque to the Commissioner of Police to present to Constable Normoyle.

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