

Murder at Work Point Barracks

At approximately nine o'clock on the morning of Monday, August 1, 1910, Gunner Thomas Allan, a skilled marksman, pointed his Ross rifle out of the window of his barracks room at Work Point Barracks and then, taking careful aim, shot and fatally wounded Captain Peter Elliston, the Commanding Officer of No. 6 Company, R.C.G.A.

Allan, a veteran of 15 years service in South Africa, India, Jamaica and Malta, was a hardened alcoholic and drug user. Long a disciplinary problem, Allan had recently been sentenced to 21 days detention for drunkenness, 10 of which had been remitted on King George's general pardon on his accession. Brooding over what he saw as unfair treatment, Allan blamed Captain Elliston personally, and had repeatedly made threats against him, being heard by Bombardier Corrigan to say soon after Reveille that morning, "I've a bullet for him and it will find its billet."

Gunner Bryan witnessed the shooting in the mirror while shaving, and then, from the window, observed Allan go up to his victim, look down at him, then turn on his heel and walk away. Elliston was rushed to the surgery, but died at approximately 10 o'clock.

Allan, meanwhile, had left Work Point and made his way up to Esquimalt Road and St. George's Inn at 765 Esquimalt Road. There he was served a strong drink of



Having killed Captain Peter Elliston with his Ross rifle, Gunner Thomas Allan calmly walked out of the front gates of Work Point

Barracks on Monday, August 1, 1910. (Harriet Westby Collection in the Esquimalt Municipal Archives)

brandy by the proprietress, Mrs. Griffiths, and rested for a few moments in the reading room. By this time a general hue and cry was underway, with armed soldiers, city and provincial police engaged in a full scale search. Feelings against Allan were high, as Elliston

was a popular officer, and the general feeling was "dead or alive." By the time search parties arrived at St. George's Inn, Allan had fled.

Allan was eventually found cowering in the grass across the road from the St. George's Inn at about 11 o'clock by Trumpeter

Trimbey and Gunner Smith. Allan surrendered peacefully. He did not appear to be overly remorseful, stating later, "Oh, yes, I know. I understand. I didn't mean to kill him. I only intended to maim him. I'm sorry I killed him, but he has used me very mean at different

times. I might just as well be dead as suffer this way. My health is awful poor. I am in misery all the time. Too much drink is all the cause."

To Be Continued...

Articles researched and written by Archives staff and volunteers