



Constable David McGrath

David Edward McGrath

Murdered police constable

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Constable David Edward McGrath, son of Patrick and Bridget (nee O'Neill) was born at Garden Flat, near Maryborough, on 21 February 1873. He joined Victoria Police in January 1900 after working as a fireman. Throughout his career he lived and worked in inner city areas: North Melbourne, St Kilda, Bourke Street West and Russell Street.

Just after 2am on Friday 1 October 1915, McGrath and four other policemen responded to reports of a burglary in progress in the office of the Typographers Society at the Melbourne Trades Hall. Upon arrival they pursued the burglars and in the gunfire that ensued, McGrath was shot dead.

There were rumours that Squizzy Taylor was behind the burglary, although there is no known evidence to support this claim. One of the burglars, John Jackson, was convicted of McGrath's murder and was hanged at the Old Melbourne Gaol less than four months later. He was the last person to be executed in Victoria for the murder of a policeman.

McGrath's funeral was an impressive affair. The cortege left the Russell Street Police Barracks parade ground through a guard of honour of five hundred policemen and forty firemen. On Russell Street, a large crowd gathered to watch the hearse, followed by another vehicle laden with floral tributes. There followed five hundred policemen and many dignitaries, his wife and two young daughters as well as members of the Trades Hall Council and other supporters. The many vehicles in the funeral procession proceeded to the sounds of the Police Band playing the 'Dead March'. It then moved along Lygon and Bell Streets to the Coburg Cemetery where another crowd, including police and troopers, had assembled.

McGrath and his wife Annie Josephine (nee Hare), whom he married in 1901, are buried together in the Roman Catholic section of Coburg Cemetery.

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The above information is based on research conducted in 2011-2012 and is presented in good faith by the Friends of Coburg Cemetery. Should family members wish to upgrade existing monuments within this cemetery please email enquiries@gmct.com.au