

THE PORT ARTHUR MASSACRE WAS MARTIN BRYANT FRAMED?

*In the 10 years
since the massacre
at Port Arthur,
Tasmania, the
authorities continue
to ignore concerns
that there is no hard
evidence to
implicate Martin
Bryant as the
gunman.*

Part 1 of 3

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Australians reacted with horror and outrage when, on the evening of Sunday 28 April 1996, they learned that over 30 people had been murdered and many others injured in an orgy of violence at the Port Arthur Historic Site (PAHS), Tasmania, one of the nation's most venerable historic sites, and at adjacent locations.

The alleged perpetrator—a young Caucasian male with long blond hair, named Martin Bryant—was apprehended by police the following morning after he emerged from a burning tourist guest house, Seascape Cottage, which was located a short distance from Port Arthur.

Bryant instantly became the most vilified individual in Australian history and was rapidly enlisted in the serial killers' hall of infamy as the world's second-most-lethal gunman. However, the case—which never went to trial—is full of clues, direct and indirect, to suggest that Bryant, a 29-year-old man with an IQ of only 66, was framed.

However, even today, the case is regarded by most people as so delicate that it is considered insensitive to discuss it at all—a perfect means of perpetuating a cover-up, if ever there was one.

Martin Bryant's guilt: the problem of lack of evidence

Strikingly absent from the recent media coverage of the 10th anniversary of the most traumatic event in modern Australian history was evidence to support the official claim that Martin Bryant had been responsible for the massacre.

The matter of whether Bryant had really been the perpetrator was only touched upon in an interview with Bryant's mother, Carleen Bryant, that was published in the *Bulletin* of 4 April 2006:

"She likes to talk about her boy's hair. It's another reason she thinks he has been framed. 'He had beautiful, shampooed soft hair.' Carleen wants to set the record straight. 'The guy who did it had dark, greasy hair and pocked skin. My Martin has lovely soft baby skin.'"

The writer of the report, Julie-Anne Davies, of course does not raise the subject of whether Carleen Bryant has any evidence to support her claims, simply observing patronisingly that Mrs Bryant "lives in a state of denial". As I will show in this report, however, it is Julie-Anne Davies who is living in a state of denial—as are all Australians who think that Martin Bryant was responsible for the tragedy. There is simply no hard evidence to support this belief.

Most Australians, when confronted by the heretical idea that Bryant might not have been the gunman, respond in knee-jerk fashion: "Of course he was! People saw him do it!" In fact, it has never been proven that Bryant was the man "people" saw do it. It was the police and the media, not the eyewitnesses, who identified Bryant as the gunman.

As we shall see, only two eyewitnesses have ever specifically identified Bryant as the perpetrator, and both of them gave their statements a month later—after they had been influenced by the publicity given to Bryant in the media.

If you ignore the media propaganda and study the details of the case, what becomes readily apparent is that there is no evidence that Martin Bryant—alone and to the exclusion of all other young men with long blond hair—executed the massacre. What's more, there are compelling reasons to believe that Bryant could not have done it. As Carleen Bryant told the *Bulletin*, "He didn't have the brains". Above all, he didn't possess the shooting ability.

Bryant's physical appearance

• Age

Of the 40-odd persons who survived the shootings inside the Broad Arrow Café, only a few provided physical descriptions of the gunman. In these, his estimated age is 20 or less. Karen Atkins of Sydney told the *Australian* (29 April 1996) that, very soon after the shootings, she had spoken to a woman who had met the gunman in the café. According to this woman—who can be identified as Rebecca McKenna, on account of the content of the conversation she had with the gunman—he was: "...a young fellow, about 18 or 19. He looked like a surfer. He arrived in a Volkswagen and he walked into the cafeteria carrying a tennis bag."

This description could perhaps be dismissed on the grounds that it is second-hand. However, it tallies with the description given by Carol Pearce. According to Pearce, the gunman, whom she passed on her way into the Broad Arrow Café, was: "...between 18–20 years of age; he had really blonde [*sic*] hair which was collar length; it was fairly straight with a bit of a wave in it. He was clean-shaven, he was average in height and build." Pearce's description is invaluable, as it was given on 28 April 1996, the very day of the massacre. Like the woman to whom Atkins spoke—Rebecca McKenna, as mentioned above—Pearce therefore could not have been influenced by the media campaign of vilification against Martin Bryant. No picture of him had as yet been published.

The same age-range is specified by former RAF officer Graham Collyer, who was shot in the throat inside the café. In his untainted witness statement taken on 7 May 1996, Collyer described the gunman thus: "He seemed somewhere about 20. He had long blonde [*sic*] bedraggled hair, about 3–4 [inches?] below the shoulder. He looked like he might have had a lot of acne. A pitted face. He had scraggly trousers; I don't remember what colour." Collyer is a valuable witness because, in his statement from a second interview on 8 May, he noted: "I still haven't seen anything in the media about the person who shot me. I have been sedated or sleeping since the shooting."

On 10 May, Jim Laycock, who was the co-owner of the Port Arthur Motor Inn at the entrance to the PAHS, told police that the man was in his "low twenties". Another witness, Joyce Maloney, told the police: "I thought he was about 18–22 years old, only a young lad." Betty Daviess described him as a "young male person".

Of the individuals who gave their statements to the police before the barrage of images of Martin Bryant appeared in the media, Carmel Edwards, who held the door open for the gunman as he left the café to eat his lunch on the balcony, and Justin Noble, a member of the New South Wales police force who said he saw the gunman exiting the café after the shooting, gave the oldest age

estimates. Edwards described him as "22–23 years old". Noble described him as "20–25 years of age".

Thus no actual witness to the shootings at Port Arthur cited an age above twenty-five. The only witness who did so (Justin Noble) cited the figure as the top end of the range, and would be equally comfortable with twenty. It would therefore be accurate to say that all actual witnesses said that the man was in his late teens or early twenties.

Yet at the time of the massacre, Bryant was a few days away from his 29th birthday and could not reasonably have been mistaken for anyone under about twenty-seven. This much is clear from a photograph which shows Bryant together with the woman we have been told was his girlfriend: Petra Wilmott. Since the pair reportedly only became romantically involved in February 1996, the photograph had to have been taken within three months



Photo A: This photograph of Petra Wilmott and Martyn Bryant had to have been taken within three months of the massacre.

of the massacre. Despite its poor quality, it shows Bryant's face unframed by hair, and so gives a very good idea of what he looked like at the time. It's obvious from this picture that Bryant was by no means "a young lad". [See photo A]

It is also obvious that those who saw the gunman at close distance and who gave their descriptions before anything about Bryant's appearance had been made public are to be considered by far the most reliable. The only eyewitnesses who estimated the gunman's age in the upper 20s are witnesses like Yannis Kateros, who only saw him from a considerable distance, and most of them gave statements to the police a week or more after the shootings when the matter of Bryant's age had already been established by the media.

Kateros, who gave his statement on 10 May, estimated the shooter's age as twenty-eight. Is it only a coincidence that this is the same age the media were citing for Bryant?

• Facial features

But there were more than years separating Bryant and the Port Arthur gunman. Only one witness, Rebecca McKenna, got a good look at the man's face. (Most witnesses saw very little on account of the long blond hair.) Although there are major problems with her statement—what kind of physical description omits a reference to the person's age?—McKenna's description of the gunman's appearance makes disturbing reading for anyone who thinks that he could have been Bryant:

"I would describe this male as follows:- Approximately 173 cm tall. Slim build. Blonde [*sic*] hair, past his ears, wavy with a part in the middle. Unshaven dirty looking.

"His eyes appeared to be blue... He appeared to be German looking. His eyebrows appeared to be blonde [*sic*] and bushy. He appeared 'dopey' looking, his eyes appeared to be bloodshot. His facial skin appeared to be freckley [*sic*] and he was pale. His face seemed skinny and withdrawn. His ears were fairly large..."

It is interesting that while McKenna's account of the man's conversation was widely quoted—he talked about European WASPs and Japanese tourists—her description of his face was not. Perhaps this is because in no photo does Bryant seem to have bushy eyebrows or prominent ears (indeed, his ears seem to be on the small side). Bryant's most memorable facial characteristic is, in fact, a broad nose with a somewhat bulbous tip—a feature which is obvious from the photos, but never mentioned by any witnesses.

Although McKenna's description is uniquely detailed, it is at least partly corroborated by that of Graham Collyer who, as we saw, stated that the shooter's complexion was acne-scarred. However, Bryant's complexion is perfectly smooth, as all available photographs show. In particular, the photos taken at Richmond by Petra Wilmott three days before the massacre show a healthy, ruddy face.

McKenna's description of the gunman's height is certainly odd: she makes an estimate of the gunman's height that gives an exact figure ("approximately 173 cm"). It would be interesting to compare this most precise "estimate" with Bryant's real height, except that nowhere on record can one find his height specified. If McKenna's figure of 173 cm is correct, though, this would surely raise questions about whether McKenna had been influenced by police during the course of giving her statement.

• **Hair**

Another problem for the official story is raised by Bryant's hair. The photos taken at Richmond show that it was wavy throughout, not "fairly straight with a bit of a wave in it" as Pearce stated. Yet most witnesses said that the gunman's hair was straight, with a wave only at the bottom. Witness statements fluctuate between those that said his hair was collar-length and those that stated that it went down to his shoulders.

The aforementioned photos of Bryant taken at Richmond raise questions about his hair colour. According to one witness, a Mr Woods, the gunman stood out by virtue of his "white surfie hair and clothes". Yet in the 25 April 1996 portrait of Bryant that was featured on the cover of *Who Weekly* magazine on 2 November

1996, Bryant's hair is very clearly brownish with blond highlights and streaks. **[Photo B]** Further doubts about the whiteness of Bryant's hair are raised by the news footage showing Bryant arriving at the Royal Hobart Hospital. In frames from this video footage—the last images of the accused man ever captured—it is apparent that he had brownish hair with blond streaks, rather than white or "really blond" hair. (It is also obviously collar length.) **[Photo C]** One possibility is that the real gunman had simply peroxided his hair in an effort to emulate Bryant's hair, which may have looked white or blond in very strong sunlight.

Bryant identified as the gunman?

In terms of the allegation that the witnesses have identified Bryant as the man they saw shooting at the PAHS, the most serious difficulties are raised by Jim Laycock in his statement. Laycock is of outstanding importance in this case, as he is the one and only witness who observed the gunman in the act and actually knew Bryant. In his police statement, Laycock—who, as noted earlier, got a good enough look at the man to be able to estimate his age ("low twenties")—said that he "did not recognise the male as Martin Bryant".

He stated only that he saw "a blonde [*sic*] headed person" shoot Zoe Hall and take Glenn Pears captive.

Another witness, Yannis Kateros, said he had never seen the gunman before. Yet Kateros had lived at Port Arthur since 1991, and, according to Laycock, Bryant had visited the PAHS on about a dozen occasions in the five-year period between about 1991 and 1995.

At least two other witnesses have also stated that Bryant was not the gunman. These are PAHS Information Centre employee Wendy Scurr, who, according to one report, saw the gunman inside the centre immediately prior to the attack, and Vietnam War veteran John Godfrey, who was waiting outside the centre when the shooting commenced. Godfrey viewed the gunman twice. He saw him drive by and saw him put a bag into the boot of his car. "In my opinion the picture I saw in the newspapers was not the same person," he stated in his police statement taken on 7 June

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Photo B: Close-up of the Martin Bryant photo, headlined "Australian Psycho", on the cover of *Who Weekly* (2 Nov 1996)



Photo C: Video still photo (left) of Martin Bryant arriving at Royal Hobart Hospital on the morning of 29 April 1996.

1996. Wendy Scurr has changed her mind on the subject; she no longer believes that Bryant was the man she saw that day.

So when people tell me that everyone knows that Bryant "did it" because people saw him doing it, I tend to wonder which witnesses they can possibly be referring to. To my knowledge, the only witnesses who positively identified Bryant as the gunman were Linda White and Michael Wanders, both persons whose statements were taken a full month after the shooting, after they had been exposed to plenty of media coverage about the case.

On 27 May 1996, White viewed the 14 May police photoboard and decided: "Photograph no. 5 in this folder [i.e., Bryant] is the male who shot us near Port Arthur." However, White's only reason for selecting photo no. 5 seems to have been because of the fact that, in this photo, Bryant appeared to be wearing a top that was "very similar" to that worn by the gunman. "It could even be the same top," she said.

Unfortunately, White's statement is of no value whatsoever. An identification can scarcely be based upon an item of clothing, which can obviously be worn by another person. (Indeed, someone seeking to impersonate Bryant would have taken care to acquire an item of his clothing, or at least a very similar item.) What's more, no previous witness recalled the gunman wearing the same top as that worn by Bryant in photo no. five. White was clearly basing her identification entirely upon a photo she had seen in the media.

As for Michael Wanders, in his statement taken the same day as White's, he picked Bryant out from the police photoboard as "the person who shot at Linda and I on 28/4/96". Unfortunately, Wanders's identification is also of no value. On 28 April 1996, he told the police: "I would not be able to identify the person who shot at us." In his statement a month later, he admitted that he hadn't been able to "get a good enough look at the male to see how old he was or what he was wearing". His statement suggests that, really, all he had seen was a male with long blond hair. Yet, somehow, his original statement did not deter him from picking Bryant out from the police photoboard a month later as the man who had shot at him. It is hard to credit the positive identification

of Bryant a month after the attack by a witness who, on the day of the attack itself, told the police explicitly that he would not be able to identify the gunman.

White's and Wanders's statements prove one thing: not that Bryant perpetrated the shootings, but that the laws prohibiting media organisations from publishing photos of accused persons before they have been tried are sensible ones which ought always to be rigorously enforced.

In view of the fact that no serious efforts were ever made to prevent the media from publishing photos of Bryant, the question has to be asked whether the police ever wanted the gunman properly identified, or whether they colluded with the media in the release of these photos in a deliberate effort to taint the pool of witness testimony. Certainly, they seem to have done their best to avoid placing Bryant together with eyewitnesses in the same room. Graham Collyer, who was on the same floor as Bryant in the Royal

Hobart Hospital on the day his witness statement was taken, was never given the opportunity to look at him. On this occasion, a positive ID could have been obtained in a matter of minutes, if the police officers taking his statement had really wanted one.

In this regard, it is striking that none of the witnesses who showed a tendency *not* to identify Bryant as the gunman was given the opportunity to pick him out from the police identity board—even NSW police officer Justin Noble, who said that he thought he could identify the man if shown a photo of him taken from the appropriate angle. The fact that Noble was never asked to view the police photoboard implies that Tasmania police anticipated a negative response.

A related issue is the uncertainty that surrounds the matter of the gunman's clothing. In no context of which I am aware did the allegations against Bryant ever raise the matter of the items of clothing that the gunman had been seen wearing. It is striking that there is no consistent evidence as to the colour of the gunman's clothing; one can only wonder whether witness statements were tampered with to prevent a clear picture from emerging, for fear that it would raise the question of whether there was any proof that Bryant had ever owned the items.

It is only when one realises that Bryant has never been positively identified as the PAHS shooter that one begins to understand why a court trial was never held. If a trial had been held, the authorities would have been in an extremely awkward position if some witnesses had either denied that Bryant was the man or expressed serious doubts about the identification. That a trial was avoided means that such problems were never permitted to arise. It is hard not to see why the legal strategy took the form of coercing Bryant into pleading guilty to all 72 charges against him—a process that took seven months—rather than risk the case going to trial.

Lack of Bryant's fingerprints or DNA at Port Arthur

Martin Bryant is adamant that he never visited the PAHS on the day of the massacre. Most Australians—if they knew of this denial at all—would probably dismiss it as a lie. A fact that should deeply unsettle them is that

neither Bryant's fingerprints nor his DNA has ever been found at the PAHS. This much has effectively been conceded by Sergeant Gerard Dutton, officer in charge of the Ballistics Section of Tasmania Police, in an article he wrote about the case which was published in the December 1998 *Australian Police Journal*.

There is no good reason why no evidence of this kind exists. An obvious source of fingerprints and DNA would have been the food tray (with a can of Solo soft drink, a plastic Schweppes cup, food items and eating utensils) that Rebecca McKenna saw the gunman eating from immediately prior to the shooting. We know that the tray was recovered by the police, because it is shown in a police training video that turned up in a second-hand shop in September 2004. Although the tray would have contained fingerprints, thumb prints, palm prints, saliva, sweat, skin and possibly hair from the shooter, there is no evidence that it yielded anything that came from Martin Bryant. The only reason we have heard nothing about

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forensic evidence of this kind, surely, is that none of it incriminated him.

It is true that Damian Bugg, QC, is on record as giving the impression that a sample of Bryant's DNA was found on a large knife that is suspected of having been used to murder David Martin at Seascapè Cottage, a few kilometres from the PAHS. Bugg said that the knife was subjected to a "very refined test" which allegedly yielded "a DNA sample which was unable to be identified initially but it has now been identified as being consistent with that of Martin Bryant". (The public has never been told what the source of the DNA was—whether it was blood, for example, or some other substance. If it was Bryant's blood, this would imply that Bryant was a victim rather than a villain.)

It is, however, a mystery how Tasmania Police came by this knife. According to the official story, the knife was found inside a Prince sports bag that was discarded by the gunman inside the Broad Arrow Café. However, after the gunman exited the café, several witnesses looked inside the bag and none of them observed a large knife there.

What's more, "Jamie", the perpetrator of the subsequent siege at Seascapè Cottage (by the way, the official claim is that Bryant was "Jamie"), mentioned having a large combat knife in his possession during the course of a phone call with police interrogator Sergeant Terry McCarthy on the evening of 28 April. If this is the knife Bugg is referring to, then it could only have emerged from the Seascapè fire in a condition that rendered it useless for forensic purposes.

The mystery over the knife may explain why Bugg's terminology verges on the devious. The DNA on the knife, he tells us, is "consistent with" that of Martin Bryant. However, DNA either is or is not a match. If the DNA matched Bryant's, Bugg should have been able to say so. The term "consistent with" is semantic sleight-of-hand designed to encourage the misperception among those who know nothing about DNA testing that the DNA had been Bryant's. In fact, the term "consistent with" means little in this instance. It could plausibly refer to DNA sequences found in every one of us. It is entirely possible that the DNA sample to which Bugg is referring is also "consistent with" both your DNA and mine!

In any case, it is obvious that the presence of Bryant's DNA on the knife would do nothing to prove that he was the Port Arthur shooter. Even if his DNA had been found on the knife, and we were so rash as to draw the conclusion that the presence of his DNA proved that he had killed David Martin (which of course it doesn't), this does not constitute evidence that Bryant was the Port Arthur shooter. The man who did stab David Martin could have been party to a conspiracy to frame Bryant. He could have stabbed both David Martin and Martin Bryant with the same knife, for instance. If so, the relevant question is whether anyone else's DNA was on the knife, in addition to that of David Martin and Martin Bryant. The real killer's DNA could have been all over the knife, but we will never know because Tasmania's Director of Public Prosecutions was only interested in telling the public about a sample that was "consistent with" Bryant's DNA.

Everything to do with the knife is extremely suspicious indeed. Since David Martin was murdered by being shot twice rather than by being stabbed, the sole point of stabbing him would seem to have been to plant a sample of his blood on the knife. The only reason for "Jamie" at Seascapè to specifically inform Sergeant McCarthy that he had a large combat knife in his possession would have been to provide a link between Martin Bryant and the murder of David Martin. So Jamie appears to have been trying to frame Bryant. This is very hard to explain if we believe that Bryant was himself Jamie. Why would Bryant have wanted to incriminate himself? And even if Bryant had been perverse enough to want to incriminate himself by leaving the knife he had used to stab David Martin some place where the police would be able to find it later, why did he subsequently deny murdering him?

Abundant examples of Bryant's fingerprints and DNA should have been retrieved from the Volvo driven by the gunman into the Port Arthur Historic Site, but no such evidence was recovered from the vehicle—a circumstance that seems most difficult to explain.

Nonetheless, there is an explanation—one that, understood in its true light, amounts to evidence that the yellow Volvo used by the Port Arthur shooter was not Bryant's.

A little-known fact about the case is that the Volvo was left in the open air, at the tollgate, for the night of 28–29 April. (It was still there at the tollgate at 9.00 am on 29 April, when Peninsula resident Michael Copping, a witness to movements of the Volvo on 28 April, saw it while on his way to collect PAHS worker Steven Howard from Port Arthur. By the way, Copping didn't identify Bryant as the driver, although he said in his statement of 10 May that he had known him "through casual contact".) With the vehicle's rear passenger-side window missing (the gunman presumably removed it as a means of minimising the noise/blast effect of shooting from the driver's seat), fingerprints and DNA inside the vehicle would have been vulnerable to the effects of night moisture. In fact, according to police, the overnight moisture eliminated all traces of fingerprints and DNA.

The question inevitably has to be asked of why the police did not take due care to ensure the preservation of whatever fingerprints and DNA were inside the

car. At this stage—and recall here that Bryant was not taken into custody until the morning of 29 April—fingerprints and DNA inside the car represented essential proof of the perpetrator's identity. As darkness descended on the Tasman Peninsula on 28 April, the only reason to connect the massacre to Bryant was a passport that reportedly had been found inside the Volvo at around 4.30 pm by a detective. At this time, the fingerprints and DNA from the Volvo therefore represented the most reliable means of determining whether the greatest homicidal maniac in Australian history had really been Bryant (as the presence of the passport suggested) or someone else. It would have been absolutely critical to preserve them in as perfect condition as possible for use during future criminal proceedings.

The fact that a major portion of the evidence required for the purpose of identifying the perpetrator vanished overnight invites only one sound conclusion: the police *wanted* it to vanish.

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Unless the police had a reason *not* to want the massacre connected to Bryant (and I know of no evidence that would invite such a possibility), the outcome is consistent with only one conclusion: Tasmania Police did not want evidence to survive that would have proven that Bryant had *not* been the person using the car that afternoon. The Port Arthur shooter therefore has to have been someone other than Bryant whose identity the police were anxious to protect.

Bryant's "gunmanship"

For many people, the most important reason to doubt that Bryant was the killer is on account of the latter's impressive gunmanship. In 1998, *Wound Ballistics Review* pointed out that the Port Arthur incident: "...is unique in relation to the wounds for several reasons. Twice as many people were killed as injured (the reverse normally being true)."

What's more, the Broad Arrow Café gunman managed to shoot the first 19 out of 20 people dead with single accurate shots to the head, fired from his right hip. Some researchers maintain that Bryant, who was an amateur shooter with virtually no shooting experience whatsoever, would have entirely lacked the skills to carry out such a feat. A powerful case has been made to this effect by Perth researcher Joe Vialls (now deceased), based on the fact that amateur shooters generally achieve a much lower KIR (killed-to-injured ratio) than did the Broad Arrow Café shooter. In an enclosed space like the Broad Arrow Café, targets would have to be shot in a careful sequence with split-second timing to maximise the kill rate. Yet the Broad Arrow Café gunman managed a kill rate well above that required of a fully trained soldier—an impossible task for a man like Bryant, with an IQ in the mid-60s and his total lack of military training. Vialls concluded that the shooter was a military-trained marksman who would probably rank among the top 10 or 20 shooters in the world.

Brigadier Ted Serong, former head of Australian forces in Vietnam, was just as impressed. In 1999, Serong—who explained that his eyes had first been opened by the "astonishing proportion of killed to wounded"—told Melbourne newspaper the *Age*:

"There was an almost satanic accuracy to that shooting performance. Whoever did it is better than I am, and there are not too many people around here better than I am."

One reason why most members of the general public have accepted the official story that Bryant was the gunman is that they possess a greatly exaggerated idea of what amateur gunmen are able to do. Not only do amateurs tend to injure many more persons than they kill, they are usually overpowered before they have completed their sinister work. By contrast, the Port Arthur gunman was a thorough professional who was at all times in perfect control. Vialls wrote:

"The shooter in the Broad Arrow Café at Port Arthur demonstrated all of the qualities of a trained counterterrorist marksman but made no amateur mistakes. Always in motion and point-shooting from the right hip with devastating accuracy, he

killed twenty of the occupants with single shots to the head and wounded twelve more, firing a total of only 29 rounds. Using known techniques reported by witnesses, he ensured his own safety from attack by turning on the spot and staying outside grappling range. It was an awesome display of expertise, even by special forces standards."

However, we don't have to take the word of people like Vialls and Serong who never saw the Port Arthur gunman shoot with their own eyes. According to eyewitness (and victim) Neville Quin: "He [the gunman] appeared to be the best-trained army guy I've ever seen; his stance was unbelievable."

Also important to consider is that, according to most witnesses, the Broad Arrow Café shooter shot from his right hip. Not only is Bryant left-handed, he told police he had never fired a gun from his hip. We should believe him. It is doubtful that anyone except a highly trained professional shooter could.

Weapons and ammunition used at Port Arthur

The prosecution claims that Bryant perpetrated the massacre using two firearms, a Colt AR-15 semi-automatic .223 mm rifle and a Belgian FN-FAL semi-automatic .308 mm SLR (self-loading rifle), both of which were recovered from Seascapes Cottage after detectives went over the burned-out site on the afternoon of 29 April 1996. However, it is not clear whether these were really the weapons used at Port Arthur. Both were recovered in a badly damaged condition which effectively ruled out ballistics testing.

However, the matter is complicated by the fact that the earliest newspaper reports do not mention a Colt AR-15. No eyewitness mentions it either. Graham Collyer said that the weapon used by the gunman inside the Broad Arrow Café "looked like a standard SLR service semi-automatic". This description is more consistent with the FN-FAL than the Colt AR-15, although it is this latter weapon that we are now told was the weapon used inside the café.

The day after the massacre, the *Examiner* reported that police had found a .223 mm Armalite M16 at Port Arthur. Nothing has been heard since about the weapon that was found that day inside the PAHS. Then, on 1 May 1996, the *West Australian* told the public that the two weapons used had been a 5.56 mm Armalite AR-15 and a Chinese-made SKS .762 mm assault rifle. It is

interesting that it took only two days for the Armalite M16—a prohibited import—to disappear from the public record, to be replaced by a weapon which could be legally bought and sold in Australia. From this point onwards, the SKS became the weapon most frequently referred to in the media as the weapon "Bryant" had used. Then, finally, the SKS was dropped altogether and its place in narratives of the massacre was taken by the Belgian FN-FAL. To me, these intriguing shifts look like shifts from the real murder weapons to weapons that could be connected to Bryant, if only because, like him, they also emerged from the Seascapes inferno.

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— Brigadier Ted Serong, former head of Australian forces in Vietnam.

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In any case, there is no evidence that Bryant procured either of the weapons to which the massacre has officially been attributed.

No one has even been proven to have sold the weapons to Bryant, and no theory exists that would explain how he came by them if he did not buy them from gun dealers. A similar mystery surrounds the ammunition used at Port Arthur.

Although Hobart gun dealer Terry Hill admits to having sold Bryant three boxes of Winchester XX 1½-oz shotgun shells (code number X12XC) on 24 April 1996—four days before the massacre—this is not ammunition which was used at Port Arthur. If Hill—or anyone else—sold Bryant the ammunition that was recovered from the crime scene, then Tasmania Police ought to have been able to prove it. The fact that they have never traced the origin of the ammunition (or, at least, have never revealed its origin to the public) surely means that it cannot be connected to Bryant. It is, after all, extremely hard to believe that Bryant, with an IQ so low that it would put him in the bottom one or two per cent of the

population (as established by psychiatrist Ian Joblin in June 1996), could have managed his purchases of guns, ammunition and everything else involved in the case so successfully that the police have utterly failed to establish the origin of so much as a single item. It is far easier to believe that the police simply do not want us to learn who procured these deadly items and how.

Narratives of the Port Arthur massacre also contain mention of other items which allegedly belonged to Martin Bryant. These items consist of a video camera and a yellow Volvo left at the PAHS tollgate, together with items found inside it: a full 25-litre drum of petrol, a 10-litre drum of petrol containing seven litres, a grey video camera bag, lengths of sash cord rope, two pairs of handcuffs and three packets of Little Lucifer fire starters. Not one iota of proof has ever been provided to prove that Bryant owned any of these items (not even the Volvo, which could have been an identical model to Bryant's, rather than Bryant's unique vehicle). What's more, no one is on record as having admitted to selling Bryant any of these items. Although Bryant could easily have purchased Little

Lucifer fire starters inconspicuously, it is unlikely that he could have bought large drums of petrol or two pairs of handcuffs without attracting attention.

Concerns about lack of evidence against Bryant

The lack of evidence for the identification of Martin Bryant as the Port Arthur shooter is a matter that should concern all Australians today. Only a few determined individuals have been brave enough to raise the matter in public. At a meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Forensic Science Society held at Griffith University in Queensland in 2002, Ian McNiven raised the subject of the lack of forensic evidence incriminating Martin Bryant.

The presenter, who was apparently Sergeant Gerard Dutton, of the Ballistics Section of Tasmania Police, grew angry and had university security threaten McNiven and effectively evict him from the meeting. McNiven was not wrong to raise the question of the lack of hard evidence against Bryant.

In an interview with the *Bulletin* of 4 April 2006, Tony Rundle, who became premier of Tasmania six weeks before the

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massacre, effectively admits that the evidence in the public domain is insufficient to support the official determination that Bryant had been the gunman, except that he tries to explain the fact away:

"Rundle still wonders whether the recovery might have been hastened if Bryant had stood trial. At the time the view was a trial could do no good for the victims and their families. 'Now I think maybe that wasn't the case. If all the evidence was heard, then maybe it would have provided some closure and stopped the proliferation of conspiracy theories that sprang up over the years,' he says."

A question to Mr Rundle: given that a great many Australians are sceptical of the claim that Bryant was responsible for the Port Arthur tragedy, can it ever be too late to release "all the evidence"?

If he is so concerned by the proliferation of "conspiracy theories", perhaps he should contact Fiona Baker, executive producer of the popular TV program *Forensic Investigators*, which deals precisely with the subject of how the police use evidence to identify suspects. So far, Baker has not done a program on Port Arthur. I'm sure

she would be delighted to make her program a vehicle for the first public presentation of the evidence for which Australia has been waiting for 10 years.

Continued next issue...

Author's Note :

I wish to thank Mr Noel McDonald, author of *A Presentation of the Port Arthur Incident* (2001), for his valuable work in scrutinising the case and, in particular, for culling some extremely significant information from the witness statements. Most of the unattributed information in this article is sourced from his book.

— Carl Wernerhoff

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Carl Wernerhoff is the pseudonym for a Sydney-based conspiracy researcher with a particular interest in the history of political assassinations and orchestrated tragedies such as the Port Arthur and Columbine massacres. He has a PhD in History and currently works as a teacher. He recently released an e-book, *What's Going On? A Critical Study of the Port Arthur Massacre*. It can be downloaded (free of charge) from <http://www.ourmedia.org/user/95839>.

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