

September 22, 1910.

From the Resident Magistrate,  
Port Hedland – on leave

To the Hon. The Premier, Perth.

The murder of Mrs. Dost Mahomet at Karachi  
The future custody of her five children.

I have to inform you that I was well acquainted with the late Mrs. Dost Mahomet, whose murder in India has horrified both my wife and self. I do not think she would have gone there had I not been leaving on long service leave which I am present enjoying. She took her departure from Port Hedland the same day as I left but by another steamer, and expressed to Mrs Browne and self her conviction that she would meet her death by foul means in India, but it was imperative for her to go as she had no money and her brother in law (Jourack), the executor of her husband's will practically forced her to do so as he had refused to advance her monies from the deceased husband's estate, and her only friends and counsellors (my wife and self) were leaving for long holiday.

I have before me the Western Mail of August twentieth last, and am rejoiced to read therein that demand has already been made to the Indian government “for the safe custody of the five children pending further enquiries.”

I hope that the matter will not be allowed to rest at that stage but that the children should be brought back to Australia. Mrs. Dost Mahomet expressed to Mrs. Browne and me her wish that in the event of her death in India her sister, Mrs Rihll of Poondina, Port Hedland should have the sole custody of her children, and it was her intention to make her will with provision to that effect, but whether this latter was ever carried out or no I cannot say.

After a residence in India and Ceylon I know the miserable life of slavery that waits the three girls of this family, who will be married at a very early age, early in their “teens”: indeed one, the eldest was already promised to a Beloochi fully twice her age.

Dodwell Browne R.M.  
(on leave)  
Rahins -  
Castlebar  
Ireland:  
September 22. '10:

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Resident Magistrate's Office  
Port Hedland.  
December 5<sup>th</sup> 1911

The Commissioner of Police.

Perth

Sir,

I have to acknowledge the receipt with many thanks of your letter dated 28<sup>th</sup> ultimo with reference to the safe return to this State of the five children belonging to the late Mrs. Dost Mahomet.

The police here, following out your instructions, have interviewed Mrs. Rihll, their aunt who lives now at Poondina, and that matter I understand goes forward to you by the same mail that takes this.

Whatever may be determined on as regards the future movements of these orphans I trust sincerely you will use your influence to prevent them ever coming back to this part of the State, for their presence here would only raise the ire of the Indian aliens resident in this district, and more bloodshed I fear, by way of revenge, would be the result.

I have the honor to be,  
Sir  
Your obedient servant,

Dodwell Browne  
Res. Magistrate  
Port Hedland.

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Western Australia  
From District Medical Officer  
Port Hedland.

4 November 1913.

The O. C. Police  
Port Hedland.

I am afraid I cannot add much to this file which will prove of assistance. I knew the parties well but with their troubles I cared to have as little as possible to do or even to offer advice which I was repeatedly asked by the late Mrs Dost Mahomet. Matters connected therewith I could plainly see were in the most hopeless jumble. I knew that Jourak was made Executor under his brother's will. I was given to understand by Mrs Dost that his estate was to be divided equally amongst her children. Jourak took charge of the camels and went to Wyndham, and continued to work them up there, vide my wire to U.S. Law, 23 Feb, 1912.

Dodwell Browne

Dist. Med, Officer,  
Port Hedland.  
4 November 1913.

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COMMENT FROM TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH Ameer Dost, AKA Arthur "Dusty" Doust  
Q: What did Dr Browne tell you about it?

Ameer: Oh, I talked to Dr Browne about the murder and he said it was a terrific, disgraceful business what they done to him. And he said, "I held your father's tongue out," he says, "for a long time, I don't know how he lived as long as he did, because his brains were protruding through his skull."

In a report of the trial of William and Harry Grigo for the murder of Dost Mahomet, "The Broome Chronicle and Nor'West Advertiser," reported in Saturday 26 June 1909, page 2, that "Dr Dodwell Brown", the Government Medical Officer and Resident Magistrate at Port Hedland remembered being summoned to Dost Mahomet's house on 7<sup>th</sup> April. The newspaper writes, "When he got there he saw a small knot of persons on the verandah; saw Dost sitting on the ground supported by some Afghans; there was blood on the left side of his face; he was quite unconscious and breathing heavily, had him shifted from verandah and examined him closely by the aid of a lamp; on his scalp there was a large contused swelling on the left side, and a smaller one on the right side; in the centre of each swelling there were scalp cuts; there were some wounds round the eyes; on the left eyebrow there was a horizontal cut an inch in length; coming down from the swelling to the left eyebrow there was a straight depression on the skin downwards and forwards; he had a big black eye; both lips were puffy and swollen as if hit ... the pulse was full and slow, and he seemed half choking in his breathing; placed him on his left side, and blood commenced to pour out of his mouth and his left nostril; blood was continuously flowing from him; was not there when he died; saw the body two and half hours after; [Dost] was a splendidly built man, muscular and powerful; performed a postmortem on him; examined his head and there was gaping wound." The report then described how fractured pieces of the skull of the deceased was examined in court.

Dr Browne gave evidence that Dost was an honourable man, obliging and courteous and he "had the greatest respect for him; he was quite a peaceful same man; during the camel strike at Port Hedland he gave his word of honour that no force would be used against the men who continued to work.

Cross examined Dr Browne continued: "Had seen Dost about the camel strike previously, and sent for him again and reiterated my advice of peace; was not frightened that Dost would get into trouble; was really afraid that some Afghans would use weapons and that Dost would be drawn into it; known Willie Grigo and often stopped and spoke to him; respected him as a steady, hard-working young fellow; he had an idea of starting in business, and he was always anxious of getting on; he came to me for advice as to how he could further his interests on the Pilbara goldfields; Willie Grigo is about 23, and Harry about 17; declined to say Harry was a powerful man unless he examined him (at the request of Mr Moss, the younger accused took off his coat and bared his arms); in the hand of a powerful man the wood produced could have battered a man's head to pieces, but it would depend on the force used; it would take the whole strength of a man to cause the injuries shown on the skull..."

Dr Browne added he had lived in Colombo but had never come across a man running amok.