In the north-eastern corner of Beenleigh Cemetery is a tall imposing memorial which bears an inscription that it was "Erected by the Working Men 1888". On each of the four sides of the plinth it bears a name and particulars, taken in order of date, as follows:

1. John Amos, of Channel Islands. Drowned at Yatala, 24th February 1888, Aged 34.

A casual inquiry elicited the information that they were thought to be flood victims. I knew that a flood in the Albert River in 1887 had had fatal consequences for a number of people, but was unaware of any flood in that river in 1888, of any note. Also the deaths being spread over a period of fifteen days (1888 was a leap year), it would have to have been a very long period of flooding or series of flood surges certain to have been recorded and remembered, the way the 1887 flood is, by the people of Beenleigh.

The story I had been told seemed inconsistent with fact. For over a year the doubts I had nagged at me. Finally out of sheer curiosity I obtained copies of the death certificates of the people concerned.

They reveal, again in order of date, that:

(i) John Amos, a labourer aged 40 years, was drowned accidentally at Yatala on 24 February 1888 and buried in Beenleigh Cemetery on the same day. He was born in the Channel Islands and had been in Queensland for about one year. A coronial inquiry into his death had been held by James Savage, Esq., J.P., on 27 February 1888. The official record

1. Registrar-General, Queensland 1888/2393/1144.
makes him six years older than the age shown on the memorial.

(ii) Henry Cumming, a labourer, aged 19 years, was drowned accidentally at Albert River Railway Bridge on 6 March 1888 and buried in Beenleigh Cemetery on 7 March 1888. A coronial inquiry into his death had been held by James Savage, Esq., J.P., on 8 March 1888. Cumming was born at Toowoomba, Queensland.² The memorial confuses the date of burial with the date of death.

² Registrar-General, Queensland 1888/2394/1145.
(iii) Andrew Michaelson, a shipwright aged 48 years, had died at Yatala on 8 March 1888. A native of Schleswig Holstein, Germany, he had been resident in Queensland about sixteen years. He had suffered for several years from heart disease. A coronial inquiry into his death had been held by John H. Hinchcliffe, Esq., J.P., on 12 March 1888. He was buried in Beenleigh Cemetery on 9 March 1888. Again the date of burial is confused with the date of death.

In view of his origins one wonders whether the spelling of his name on the memorial is after all correct and that officialdom anglicised it in the public records.

(iv) William Sydney Crisp, a bridge carpenter, aged about 48 years, was found drowned in the Yatala River on 12 March 1888. He was buried in the Beenleigh Cemetery on 12 March 1888. A native of Epsom, Surrey, England, he had been in Australia for twenty-two years. A coronial inquiry into his death was held by John H. Hinchcliffe, Esq., J.P., on 13 March 1888. The date of death was fixed as 10 March.

That all four deaths had resulted in coronial inquiries indicated a common element of disaster. The obvious next step was to examine the inquiry records and find out how death had claimed each of the victims. One common factor emerged immediately; all the deceased had been engaged in bridge building works. Before going into the details, I would like to digress for a while into the archaeological bypath which has given this paper its title—"The Lethal Bridges".

When I found that they had all been engaged in bridge building the phrase "every bridge must claim a life" flashed into my mind. I then vaguely remembered, as a child, hearing an old man, whose name even I cannot remember, saying this when someone had been killed in an accident on a bridge, also unremembered, which was in course of construction. Now why would he have said this? It must have been one of those old sayings passed down by verbal tradition, with substance behind it, but its beginnings lost in the mists of antiquity.

3. Registrar-General, Queensland 1888/2400/1151.
4. Registrar-General, Queensland 1888/2401/1152.
Once again curiosity nagged at me. There was no help for it but to seek out the rationale of why “every bridge must claim a life”. The answer had to lie in some form of human sacrifice associated with the building of bridges—that much was obvious.

The sacrifice of his fellow men by *homo sapiens* for ritual purposes of one sort or another is a very ancient practice. Early Sumarian kings went to their graves accompanied by a retinue of courtiers, soldiers and servants, who apparently died quite willingly so they could serve their lord in the hereafter.5

Egyptian pharaohs celebrated military victories on their return to Thebes by personally sacrificing to Amon selected prisoners of war of high rank.6

As man became an agrarian settler, rather than a food collecting nomad, the assurance of his crops became of supreme importance. Fertility rites involving human sacrifice with the subsequent scattering of fragments of the victim on the fields were pursued for thousands of years.7

The literature on the subject is vast, but all I wanted was enough evidence of human sacrifice in connection with the erection of man-made structures, and bridges in particular, to make my point. Man must have progressed to the stage of urbanisation where he wanted to erect large and lasting structures which he wanted to sanctify and protect to ensure their endurance. A glimmering of this appears in Sir Mortimer Wheeler’s description of the vast long barrow (a third of a mile in length) underlying the iron age fortress of Maiden Castle in Dorset, England. The barrow was erected in the neighbourhood of 1500 B.C. and an elaborately mutilated human skeleton was found under its eastern end.8 Assumedly a sacrifice, for the protection of the barrow, made by its neolithic builders.

Sir James Frazer’s monumental study in magic and religion which he entitled “The Golden Bough”9 seemed a likely source and sure enough he furnished the evidence I wanted.

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7. An instance of this appears on pp. 166-167 of Margaret A. Murray’s *The Splendour that was Egypt* (Sidgwick & Jackson, London, 1949). The practice was widespread in the ancient world and Egypt was only one country where it occurred.
In the chapter headed "Perils of the Soul" Frazer says, "In modern Greece, when the foundation of a new building is being laid, it is the custom to kill a cock, a ram, or a lamb, and to let its blood flow on the foundation stone, under which the animal is afterwards buried. The object of the sacrifice is to give strength and stability to the building. But sometimes, instead of killing an animal, the builder entices a man to the foundation-stone, secretly measures his body, or a part of it, or his shadow, and buries the measure under the foundation-stone; or he lays the foundation-stone upon the man's shadow. It is believed that the man will die within the year. The Roumanians of Transylvania think that he whose shadow is thus immured will die within forty days; so persons passing by a building which is in course of erection may hear a warning cry, 'Beware lest they take thy shadow!' Not long ago there were still shadow-traders whose business it was to provide architects with the shadows necessary for securing their walls. In these cases the measure of the shadow is looked on as equivalent to the shadow itself, and to bury it is to bury the life or soul of the man, who, deprived of it, must die. Thus the custom is a substitute for the old practice of immuring a living person in the walls, or crushing him under the foundation-stone of a new building, in order to give strength and durability to the structure, or more definitely in order that the angry ghost may haunt the place and guard it against the intrusion of enemies."  

According to Frazer human sacrifices appear to be most commonly offered at thoroughfares such as gates and bridges where the ghostly warders may be deemed especially serviceable in keeping watch on the multitudes that go to and fro.  

Moving to south-east Asia he relates how the Siamese crushed three men to death under an enormous beam in a pit at the gateway when a new gate was made or an old gate repaired in the city walls of Bangkok.  

It is also said that the Burmese similarly bound a man and crushed him to death under each of the massive teak posts of the gateways of Mandalay.  

The sacrificial humans were charged to guard the gates committed to their care and to warn if enemies or rebels came to assault the city.  

In the Bima District of Sambawa Island in the East Indies it was customary to bury a child under each of the palace door posts. When the gates were set up the children were...
killed, their bodies stripped of flesh and the bones laid in the holes in which the door posts were to be erected. There could be a relationship between this ritual and the Maiden Castle long barrow skeleton.

Moving back again to the west Edith Durham says of blood offerings: "While I was living in Scutari it was still usual to sprinkle blood upon the foundations of a new building. A sheep or a lamb, or most often a fowl, was killed on the spot, and the blood being duly sprinkled, the animal was the perquisite of the workmen, who naturally kept up the custom.

In ancient days the life offered was sometimes human. Tradition tells that when the Serb rulers rebuilt the fortress of Scutari in the fourteenth century a young woman was walled up alive in it. For six years the builders strove to build it, but at night the wicked "Vila" (an evil female spirit or demon) pulled it down, and at length told Kralj Vukashin (father of Marko Kraljevitch) that he could only succeed in building the fortress if his wife, or the wife of either of his two brothers, was immured in it. The wife of Uglesh, the second brother, was the victim, and the fortress was finished (Karadjitch Ballads, vol. ii).

A similar tale is told of the building of the bridge at Vishegrad in Bosnia; and the tradition was strong in the minds of the people. An Austrian engineer in the Herzegovina told me that about 1898 a bridge was built over the Lim. The work was bad, and before long one side gave away. A second engineer was employed to repair it. He miscalculated and made it crooked, and again it fell. A third engineer was sent to rebuild the whole. But meanwhile the tale spread that the bridge was bewitched; that it could be rebuilt successfully only if a maiden were bricked up alive in a buttress; and that the Austrians were about to seize a girl for the purpose. A panic and great local excitement arose, and it was only with some difficulty that the people were persuaded that nothing of the sort was intended and the builders enabled to work without danger of attack and complete the bridge. The strength of the belief makes one suspect that other cases of immuring must have occurred between the fourteenth and the end of the nineteenth century.¹²

Thus it seems that once upon a time every bridge did in

fact claim a life, or was entitled to a life in the eyes of its builders to ensure its endurance and the safe passage over it of those who used it as a thoroughfare. Who knows that there may be still in parts of the world peoples who carry on this practice. However, by 1888 the Beenleigh Divisional Board and the Queensland Railways were operating in a society which would have frowned, to say the least, upon any resort to the ancient practice of human sacrifice to ensure the stability of the bridges they were building. On the other hand, at the risk of endowing them with anthropomorphic qualities, the bridges themselves had and have no such inhibitions and the mortality rate amongst bridge builders has continued to be high. There have been worse disasters on giant bridges, but the comparatively small road and rail bridges over the Albert River at Yatala would have set up, in my view, something of a record for their size as regards the lives they claimed between them, directly or indirectly, during that period of fifteen days between 24 February and 9 March 1888.

Up to 1888 travellers by road from Beenleigh to Yatala and points south had to cross the Albert River by ferry punt. The need for a road bridge had long been canvassed. Finally on 26 November 1887 the Logan Witness announced that on 18 November the Beenleigh Divisional Board had signed a contract with Mr. R. Fraser to construct a road bridge over the Albert River at Yatala. Fraser was to complete the bridge in four months from 21 November.13

On 24 December 1887 it was announced that the State Works Department had approved Fraser's tender and appointed Mr. Alexander Raff as supervising engineer to superintend the construction of the Yatala bridge.14

On 4 February 1888 it was reported that the Beenleigh Divisional Board had sent a letter to the "works office" (sic) asking for the grant of £1,000 made by Mr. Miles for the Yatala road bridge.15 Presumably this was William Miles, who was a member of the Griffith ministry up to its fall in June 1888.16

Thus far there had been little drama associated with the Yatala road bridge, but it was at hand.

In recounting the events which follow I have used to the greatest possible extent the format of the depositions made before the respective coroners.

15. Ibid 4th Feb. 1888, p. 3 (a).
On Friday, 24 February 1888, at 10 a.m. John Amos and Archibald Currie were working on the pile engine that was being used for the construction of the Yatala road bridge. They were easing girders off the pile engine with crow bars. They were at work some twenty-two to twenty-three feet above the surface of the Albert River. Currie, feeling he was in a safer position to use the bar, asked Amos for the bar he was using. Amos said “Never mind, I’m all right.” Currie told him to look out as he was standing on the wrong side of the bar to use it with safety. Amos took the bar, somewhat carelessly, to ease the girder and overbalanced. He fell off the pile engine, clear of the punt bearing it, and into the river. Currie did not think he struck anything in his fall. Currie gave an immediate alarm. He saw Amos rise to the surface. Dennis Grogan, a labourer, and Archibald McGregor contractor (apparently a sub-contractor of Fraser’s) both went to the rescue. Grogan, who was working on the bridge heard the splash caused by Amos falling into the river and then the “man overboard” alarm. Grogan ran along the plank from the bridge to the pile engine, then clambered down the pile engine to the punt and dived into the river. On his second dive he caught Amos by the back of the neck of the shirt he was wearing and was bringing him to the surface when he was hit on the eye and arm by a boat with such force he had to let Amos go. He managed to catch hold of the boat. When McGregor heard the “man overboard” alarm he looked down from where he was work-
ing on the bridge, saw a hat floating on the river and then nearby saw the face of Amos emerge from the water. Amos was trying to paddle with his hands. McGregor sang out to Grogan, "Jump Dennis, I'll be after you". He tried to pull his boots off, but could not, so jumped in literally boots and all. The fall into the water stunned McGregor for a second or two; he came to and saw Grogan emerge from the water and then dive again. He also saw Captain Burke sculling a boat straight for him and put up his hand to fend off the boat from hitting him on the head. He next saw Captain Burke holding Grogan by the shirt at the back of his neck. He asked Grogan, "Where is he, Dennis?" and Grogan replied, "He is gone." McGregor remained in the water clinging to the boat to see if Amos would rise again but he did not.

Grogan said he had seen Amos about a minute before the accident when he asked for a bar. Grogan told him where there was one and Amos went off to a point about forty feet from where Grogan was working. Grogan heard the splash immediately afterwards.

McGregor, for whom Amos was working, said he had seen Amos at work with the bar and called at him to stop jobbing with the bar the way he was. McGregor turned to get a bar to go and do the job of easing the girder himself when he heard the splash caused by Amos hitting the water.

Currie saw everything that happened from the pile engine. He said that Burke could not see the two men in the water at the time the boat struck Grogan.

Constable Archibald William Butterworth, stationed at Beenleigh, was informed about 11 a.m. that a man had been drowned at Yatala. He went there at once, saw McGregor and asked him to lend him a man and a boat. Currie and Butterworth then commenced to drag the river bed with grappling irons. Grogan later relieved Currie. They continued dragging until nearly 3 p.m. when they recovered the body which was identified by all present as that of Amos. Constable Butterworth observed no bruises about the head. He had the body conveyed to the Beenleigh Court House where it was viewed by Mr. James Savage, J.P., who then gave an order for burial. No time was wasted and the burial took place in the Beenleigh Cemetery that same day.

An account of the tragedy appeared in the *Logan Witness* the following day which stated that Amos struck a plank as he was falling and must have been hurt, as he could swim. The *Logan Witness* also gave Amos’ age as thirty years.

Mr. James Savage conducted a coronial inquiry on Monday, 27 February 1888 and found that the deceased had been drowned accidentally on 24 February 1888.

The *Logan Witness* gave an account of the inquest on the following Saturday and this time published Amos' correct age (forty years), but somehow the age thirty-four years was placed on the memorial when it was erected. It was also stated that Captain Burke was not to blame as he could not see from the boat where Grogan came up.19

This Captain Burke was the founder of the later well-known coastal shipping company of John Burke and Sons Limited. At the time he was running the *Louisa*, which he had only recently acquired from Honeyman and Sons, in the then active Moreton Bay and adjacent rivers trade.

The road bridge had claimed its life and in fact did not claim any more. However, some yards upstream a more massive structure was also in course of erection—the south coast railway bridge over the Albert River at Yatala. It was not a humble wooden structure built on timber piles driven into the bed of the river. It was an iron lattice girder type of bridge resting on iron caissons sunk into the river and excavated from the inside until their own weight carried them down on to the bed rock. The water was kept from intruding by compressed air held in by an air lock through which the workmen entered and left the caisson and through which the spoil excavated from the river bed was removed. The Yatala and Coomera railway bridges were vital links in the taking through of the railway line from Beenleigh to Southport and Nerang. It was hoped that the line would be ready for through travel to Southport by Christmas 1888.20

The construction of the railway bridge at Yatala had been without incident, but this situation was to alter drastically over a period of five days.

On Tuesday, 6 March 1888, Henry Cumming, a nineteen-year-old labourer and John Stephen Rowe, another labourer, were working at 8.20 p.m. on the railway bridge at Yatala. Cumming was standing upon a staging about five feet below Rowe and about four or five feet above the river. They were engaged in shifting rails from a cylinder of the bridge to

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18. Queensland State Archives.
   (a) JUS/R3. Register of Coroners' Inquests depositions received 13th July 1886-18th Feb. 1889.
   (b) JUS/N155-234.
20. *Ibid* 31st Mar. 1888, p. 3 (c) and (d).
the staging by means of an overhead travelling crane or winch, which was being operated by William McLean. Rowe was putting the rails in a sling which the crane then travelled to Cumming who delivered them on to a platform where their weight helped the caisson about which the platform was built to sink more readily into the bed of the river. McLean was operating from a position about forty feet above Cumming. Rowe put five or six rails into the sling for removal. When the crane heaved the rails up Rowe saw they were not "fairly balanced" so that one end of the load went down and all the rails shot into the river. Rowe thought that Cumming was afraid the rails and chain would hit him so he jumped into the Albert River for safety. McLean saw the rails slipping and Cumming trying to get clear of them; he believed that Cumming ran off the end of the staging by mistake and went into the river. Rowe jumped in after Cumming and called for a boat which came at once. It was dark at river surface level and Rowe could not say whether Cumming came to the surface again or not.

Whilst the search for Cumming continued word was sent to the police at Beenleigh. Mounted Constable John C. F. Higman received the information about 9 p.m. and went immediately to the scene. He obtained a boat and with the aid of others dragged for the body with grappling irons. In the meantime a diver, Charles Brown, also employed on the bridge work, searched for the body. About 1 a.m. on 7 March he found the body at the bottom of the river. With one hand Cumming was grasping a log. The *Logan Witness* says one hand was firmly clasped to a snag and the other touching a pier pile. It would appear that Cumming's own panic had drowned him. When he reached the bottom of the river he clung convulsively to the snag he happened to touch and with the other hand against the pier pile he wedged himself into the position in which he was found. Constable Higman mentions presumed grappling iron marks on the back of the neck, but the *Logan Witness* says that Dr. Nichols (the railway doctor) found no mark on the body and concluded it was simply a case of drowning.

Mr. James Savage, J.P., conducted the coronial inquiry on 8 March 1888, but in the meantime had allowed the body to be buried in the Beenleigh Cemetery on 7 March. The evidence of Rowe, Brown and McLean indicated that there was adequate lighting provided for the men to work in safety at night and that all the equipment in use was good quality.
material. Mr. Savage found that Cumming had drowned accidentally.22

Mr. James Savage, J.P., who had conducted the first two inquests was a prominent early resident of Beenleigh. A word about him would not be out of place.

James Savage was the eldest son of Rev. J. A. Savage, and was born in 1838 in Derbyshire, and removed, when an infant, with his parents to Yorkshire, where he received his training as a merchant. He arrived in Brisbane in 1862 and for six months lived in Maryborough. He then opened a store in the Valley (presumably Fortitude Valley, Brisbane) which he kept for over four years, and then settled in Beenleigh, where he opened a store. Mr. Savage erected the first house in Beenleigh in 1868 and on 27 July 1874 was appointed a Justice of the Peace. He was president of the School of Arts, the State School Management Committee and of the Agricultural Society and took an active interest in all matters connected with the welfare of the district.

He was for some years a member of the Beenleigh Divisional Board, of which he was chairman for the year 1885-1886. He was also chairman of the Waterford Divisional Board in 1887. Mr. Savage married in 1874, an English lady, and had five sons and two daughters.23 He died on 27 April 1923 and was buried at South Brisbane Cemetery.24 Descendants are still conducting the store he founded in Beenleigh, whilst others are prominent accountants in Brisbane.

The next two inquests were presided over by Mr. John Hobson Hinchcliffe, J.P. Evidently the justices worked on a roster system. Mr. Hinchcliffe was another Beenleigh notable.

Facts about John Hobson Hinchcliffe are not as conveniently assembled as are those about James Savage. He was born in Bradford, England, in 1837 and came to Brisbane in 1863. On 24 April 1864 he married Matilda Woodhouse in Brisbane. He had had journalistic experience and in fact had learned shorthand from Sir Isaac Pitman himself. He owned a selection known as “Broomhill” on the Logan River. He was in the district prior to 1871, for in that year he was appointed foundation secretary of the Agricultural

22. Q.S.A. (a) JUS/R3. (b) JUS/N155-235.
24. Information furnished by Mr. Stanley A. Savage, a grandson.
Society of Southern Queensland (now Beenleigh Show Society (Inc.)). Then in 1879 he took over The Logan and Southern Districts Advertiser, which he carried on under the name of The Logan Witness from the printery in George Street, Beenleigh. Hinchcliffe was still publishing and editing the newspaper in 1888 when the events this story deals with took place. He had been made a Justice of the Peace on 19 September 1879. He died at South Brisbane in 1907.25

Now we will deal with our next victim Andrew Michaelson (or Mikkelscen). Officially he was found dead in bed at Chardon's Yatala Hotel, but the railway bridge killed him just as effectively as if his death had occurred whilst he was actively working on the bridge.

At his inquest Peter Franz Chardon, the licensee of the Yatala Hotel, told the Coroner how he had known Michaelson for about three months and that the deceased had been working on the Yatala railway bridge. Michaelson was under the impression that he was suffering from indigestion and had often put his hand to his chest. However, he worked regularly.

He had attended Cumming's funeral on Wednesday, 8 March. Then he had worked that night and again on Thursday until 4 p.m. Chardon was sitting on the bridge and saw him come out of the air-lock cylinder and go with his two mates to the public house. Chardon followed a few minutes later and found Michaelson lying on his back on the hotel verandah, with Mrs. Chardon and one of his mates putting hot water flannels on his chest. He complained of excessive pain in his chest. Chardon recommended some pain killer (unspecified) and brandy, which Michaelson took, and then they put a mustard plaster on his chest. Michaelson said he felt a little easier and Chardon sent him into a room to change his dirty clothes; he then laid on the bed. About 6.30 p.m. he had a little curry and a cup of tea. About 10.30 p.m. Chardon asked him to go to another room as the one where he was was occupied by another man. Michaelson said he could walk but said he did not think he could go on to his night spell as he did not feel well. He walked into the other room and Chardon saw him in bed. Char-

don’s son, William James Chardon, occupied the other bed in the same room. Chardon did not again see Machaelson alive. He was dead about 11.5 p.m.

Chardon Junior told how after closing the public house on the night of Thursday, 8 March, he went to his bedroom with Michael Cahey. He did not know that one of the beds was already occupied. He lifted up the curtains to see who it was and Cahey, who was alongside him, said “Why that man is dead.” William Chardon then went and told his father who sent him to report the matter to the police at Beenleigh. Constable A. W. Butterworth was on duty and reported that on Thursday, 8 March, about 11.30 p.m. William Chardon came to the police barracks at Beenleigh with information of the death of Andrew Michaelson at the Yatala hotel just previously. The Senior Sergeant had sent Butterworth down to Yatala. The constable had looked at the body in the bedroom but found no traces of foul play or that the death was from external causes. Michaelson was laid quite calmly with his hands at his side; it had not been a “spasmodic” death. Butterworth sent a message to the railway doctor at Coomera and next morning he met Dr. Nicoll at Yatala. The doctor said he could not tell the cause of the death without opening the body. Butterworth was instructed to let Dr. Nicoll hold a post mortem if it was found necessary and he authorised him accordingly. The body was taken to another room and was opened in Butterworth’s presence by Dr. Nicoll. The doctor said there was a congestion of the lungs. The railway contractors buried the body in Beenleigh cemetery on Friday, 9 March 1888.

Dr. James Robert Nicoll, M.B., C.M., stated he was a registered Queensland medical practitioner when the coroner examined him on 19 March 1888. He resided at the main railway camp at Coomera and had come up in response to a police message to examine the body of Andrew Michaelson at the Yatala hotel on the morning of Friday, 9 March. The joints were rigid. The eye pupils were natural. The front of the body was pale but the back parts were purple. When he opened the body he found the left side of the heart was hypertrophied in its lying (sic? lining) membrane and an extensive deposit of atheroma at the base of the main artery and on its similar undervalves there were similar deposits. The right lung was inherent (?adherent) to the chest wall. Both the right and left lungs were gorged with dark coloured blood and frothy fluid. The liver and spleen were much congested. The kidneys were similarly loaded with blood and presented the appearance known as granular degenera-
tion. The stomach was also much congested and contained about a pint of dirty browish fluid which smelt of beer. Dr. Nicoll considered death was due to failure of the heart's action, the heart being weak from the disease already described.

Mr. Hinchcliffe accordingly found that the cause of death was heart disease.\textsuperscript{26}

Michaelson's physical condition had been such, that he was the last person who should have been working in compressed air. As a layman I may be guilty of presumption in saying that he seems to have died from a condition similar to the bends experienced by a deep-sea diver, who is brought too rapidly to the surface. In Michaelson's case the process had taken several months to come to a head; his already weakened heart had been rebelling for some time against the air pressure changes. He had attributed the condition to indigestion. He was also, according to Chardon, separated from his wife; they had split up in December 1887. Then there had been the shock of Cumming's death on 6 March followed by his funeral on 7 March. But effectively it was the bridge which had killed him.

The last actor in our macabre story now comes on to the stage.

On 13 March 1888 Mr. John Hobson Hinchcliffe conducted a coronial inquiry into the death of William Crisp (William Sydney Crisp) whose drowned body had been found in the Albert River on 12 March 1888.

Crisp was a bridge carpenter employed on the construction of the Yatala railway bridge. George Wilson, a fellow worker, said he had seen Crisp at Andrew Michaelson's funeral on Friday, 9 March, when he was in good health. He did not see Crisp go home from the funeral, but next saw him about 4 a.m. on Saturday, 10 March, on the north side of the Albert River when Wilson was crossing the bridge to call up a mate to go to work. Crisp had on the clothing he wore to the funeral and was on the ferry punt. Wilson did not see Crisp again. At 8 p.m. on Saturday he heard Peter Chardon saying "Old Billy Crisp is missing" so said when he (Wilson) had last seen him. Wilson did not know if Crisp had had any drinks after the funeral.

Michael Callaghan said he had seen Crisp in Beenleigh about 9 p.m. on Friday, 9 March, and that he too did not see him having any drink. He was on the 12 midnight to 4 a.m. shift on the railway bridge. At the latter time he heard

\textsuperscript{26} Q.S.A. (a) JUS/R3. (b) JUS/N153-140.
Crisp on the ferry punt but nothing further. On Sunday morning, 11 March, he heard that Crisp was missing.

Charles Dale, engine driver, said that he was working on night shift at the Yatala railway bridge on the punt Albert on the night of 9-10 March when about 4 a.m. on Saturday, 10 March, he heard a voice crying out "Punt, ahoy!" He asked who was there and the voice said "It's me." Dale recognised the voice as that of William Crisp. He said he wanted to get over the river. Dale told him to go up to the ferryman and wake him up. Crisp said "I will." Dale did not notice how he was dressed, but thought he was sober by his voice. He did not see or hear Crisp again. He heard on Saturday night about 9 p.m. that Crisp was missing.

On Monday morning, 12 March, Callaghan saw a body floating in the Albert River. The body which was that of Crisp was tethered with a light rope and the police were notified. Mounted Constable Higman came to the scene and with the aid of Robert Fraser, the road bridge contractor, brought the body out of the river and took it to a shed on the river bank. The body was dressed in tweed "trousers", black coat, white shirt and a flannel, a pair of watertight boots and not wearing a hat! Constable Higman undressed, examined and washed the body. Dr. Alfred Sutton, M.R.C.S. (England), L.S.A. (London), a local practitioner, who said he was duly qualified and registered to practise in Queensland was called in to examine the body. He said the body was that of a well-nourished man of about forty-five years of age. The body bore no marks of violence to cause death. It was swollen, the skin was blue and the skin of the hands very much wrinkled. The appearance of the body led the doctor to the conclusion that the cause of death was drowning and the body was alive when it went into the water.

Constable Higman gave evidence that Crisp's body was buried in the Beenleigh cemetery on 12 March 1888 and that the police had been unable to find out how the deceased had got into the river.

Mr. Hinchcliffe found that the deceased had been drowned in the Albert River on 10 March 1888.27

The Logan Witness on 17 March 1888 adds nothing to the matter except to state that Crisp was quite sober when seen on Friday evening, 9 March, and when he was found to be missing it was thought that he had gone to Brisbane.28

27. Q.S.A. (a) JUS/R3. (b) JUS/N153-141.
It was obvious that everyone first thought that Crisp had been to Michaelson’s wake, but the evidence tended to show he was sober. So how he came to be on the ferry punt at 4 a.m. the next morning and how he came to fall into the river and drown, must probably forever remain a mystery.

Thus the tale of disaster comes to a close. The bridges had claimed their lives and in the case of the railway bridge it had been an extremely greedy bridge.

The road bridge was replaced in 1929 by another, which whilst still in use for local traffic, has now in turn been replaced by the modern pre-stressed concrete bridges over the Albert River at Yatala bearing the four-lane Pacific Highway between the cities of Brisbane and Gold Coast.

With the closure of the south coast railway line south of Beenleigh in the 1960’s the Yatala railway bridge fell into disuse and was finally removed in 1970.

The bridges are gone; one wonders whether the “angry ghosts” still remain.