

Eureka Hotel Ballarat

Oct 16th 1854

To the Police Magistrate Ballarat

Sir, Inflammatory placards have been posted about the Diggings, to get up a meeting, on the ground where James Scobie was murdered, near to my House, to enquire into the best method of convicting the murderer of the said James Scobie, and to demonstrate public feeling as to the manner in which the case has hitherto been conducted.

I have been informed that the meeting alluded to, is to be got up for the purpose of Riot and violence upon any person and House, and that the main investigator of the whole matter is a person keeping a store on the Gravel Pits under the name of the "Ballarat Stores" a notorious Sly Grog Shop! Dr. Mount is the person who gave me the first intimation that such was the case, advising me to be on my guard as they intended to set Fire to my Place – Since I have been told by many persons that it would be advisable to use great efforts in getting the assistance of the authorities as it was expected that some thousands would congregate, and that there was a feeling against the House, by persons who had heard the lying rumours that had been spread - and the great probability would be an attack by the whole mob upon me and the House, particularly if intoxication should exist to any extent.

I therefore request that a strong force of protection may be present at 12 o'clock Tomorrow to see that the Law is in no way violated.

I spoke to Capt. Evans today on the subject and he kindly promised to be present at 11 o'clock with a Body of Police but as the matter assumes a very serious nature I consider it my duty to acquaint you of every thing, in order that no discredit may afterwards be reflected upon me, and alas that I may fully expect the protection of that I ought to have.

I am Sir, Your Obt. Humble servant James Bentley

The Police Magistrate

Ballarat

Important

Date 17 Oct

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Police Magis: Ballarat reports destruction by the populace of the public house kept by Mr. J. F. Bentley. Court House Ballarat

October 17th 1854 3 o' clock PM – Sir,

Having this moment returned from urgent business at “Buninyong” To which place I was summoned after the discharge of my magisterial duties at Ballaarat; I learn to my horror & astonishment that a large hotel has been burnt and an enormous amount of property destroyed in the most violent and desperate manner, without the usual preliminaries of the riot act having been read and in the very face of the military & Police. –

Not having been present myself owing to my absence at Buninyong I can only speak from general reports but can easily contemplate the fatal consequences (if these facts are true) and at the present moment that may ensue.

I shall merely add that on receipt of the enclosed letter yesterday evening I applied to captain Evans Inspector of Police to afford every assistance in his power and also commenced with “Lieutenant Broadhurst” commanding a detachment of the 40th Rgt. at this place. The former officer told me that five policemen would be more than sufficient for the purpose. The latter that all his force were always ready when called on.

I sent this dispatch by an old and tried servant of my own whom I have known for twenty years.- He was in personal attendance on “Sir Charles Hotham” whilst he was at Ballaarat; and has been a close eye witness to all procedures.

I remain Sir your most obedient Servant John Dewes police magistrate