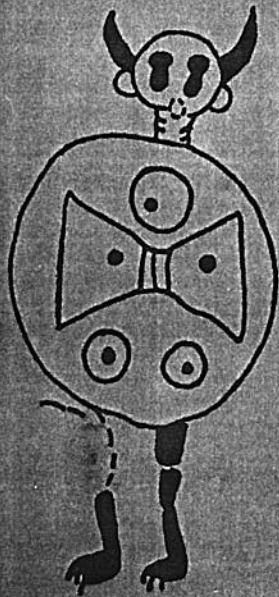


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*As is clear from the above catalogues, the vast majority of non-European human remains in at least those English collections which have been examined here (especially, it appears, the Duckworth Collection) are only provenanced in the most general way, and are of unknown individuals. Thus, there is presumably little hope that anything in the future will serve to identify the (unnumbered) bought skull in the Horniman Museum which is "said to be Eskimo, but perhaps American Indian or English". However, there are a few instances where individual case histories are available. The one that follows is somewhat ironical insofar as the current whereabouts of the individual concerned is still not established.*

## The Posthumous History of William Lanne

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William Lanne died of "choleraic diarrhoea" in Hobart, Tasmania, on March 3rd 1869 (*HM* 4.3.69) and his body was removed to the dead house of the General Hospital the same evening (*HM* 20.4.69).

Dr William L. Crowther (Honorary Medical Officer at the General Hospital) had been trying for some time to acquire the skeleton of a Tasmanian Aborigine to send to his friend William Flower, Conservator of the Royal College of Surgeons of England (*HM* 19.3.1869). He had previously asked permission from the Colonial Secretary, Sir Richard Dry, for the body of another Tasmanian, but his request had been denied and the body given instead to the Royal Society of Tasmania. On the death of Lanne, Crowther again applied to Dry, as did the Royal Society. Dry, faced with two applications and mindful that the Royal Society had claimed the previous Tasmanian skeleton, asked J.W. Agnew, Secretary of the Royal Society, to waive his claim over Lanne in Crowther's favour. This Agnew flatly refused, writing that the Royal Society's right to Lanne's body was "altogether paramount to that of any other scientific institution in the world" (*HM* 19.3.1869).

Dry conceded to the Royal Society but promised Crowther no hindrance "should any future opportunity present itself of securing a skeleton for the Royal College of Surgeons from among the graves of the aborigines without violating the feelings of individuals or of the community" (*HM* 8.2.1869).

Suspecting trouble, Dry gave strict orders to Dr George Stockell, House Surgeon at the General Hospital and leading member of the Royal Society of Tasmania, that Lanne's body should be protected from mutilation (*HM* 27.3.1869). Stockell instructed a Hospital messenger, James Ware, to guard and protect Lanne, and informed Charles Seager, the Hospital House Steward, of the Colonial Secretary's orders (*HM* 13.3.1869).

It was widely assumed throughout Hobart that Lanne would be given a decent burial and that, at some time in the future, his "so valuable a skeleton would not [be] permitted to remain in the grave" (*HM* 8.3.1869), and would be dug up, with decency, for preservation at the museum of the Royal Society (*HM* 9.3.1869).

However, at about 4 o'clock on Friday, March 5th, Stockell met Crowther in the street. According to Stockell, Crowther said he wanted Lanne's body, to which Stockell responded by informing him of the Colonial Secretary's orders, and telling him he therefore could not have it. Crowther answered that the Colonial Secretary had promised Lanne to him long ago and repeated that he

would have the body, and might dig it up after burial. Stockell told him that the Royal Society had the best claim to it, to which Crowther replied that he, Stockell, was "a fool to keep it in a paltry place like Tasmania, when it ought to be sent to a place like London" (HM 13.3.69). They then parted, agreeing that Stockell would take tea with Crowther between 7 and 8 o'clock that evening. Stockell then returned to the Hospital dead house at about 6 o'clock, where Lanne was lying unharmed, before returning home.

At approximately 7 o'clock the same evening Dr Crowther and his son, Alfred William Crowther, arrived at the Hospital. They took the key and a candle from Mr Seager's office and were seen by him and by James Ware (the messenger sent to guard Lanne) entering the dead house. A few minutes later, Crowther sent for Williams, the "wardsman at the General Hospital", and asked him to find the Hospital Barber, John Sughrove. Sughrove went into the morgue and, on his own account, stayed for no more than five minutes while he helped Dr Crowther move a white man's corpse. He also stated that at no time had he seen the Crowthers near Lanne's body. James Ware, however, testified that Sughrove had remained in the morgue for the same length of time as had the Crowthers (HM 15.3.1869). Further, Williams (1869) stated that he had looked through the key hole of the morgue and seen Dr Crowther, his son, and the barber leaning over a body, although he could be sure whether the body was that of Lanne or was that of a schoolmaster named Ross.

Dr Crowther and his son were seen leaving the dead house empty handed at about 7.30 p.m. by Seager, Ware and Sughrove. Ware testified that Sughrove was also empty handed.

Meanwhile, Stockell had arrived at Crowther's house as agreed. Crowther was not there and had left no message, although Crowther's wife assured Stockell that he would return at any minute. After waiting for half an hour, Stockell left Crowther's house and, suspecting the worst, made his way to the Hospital. Being informed by the gatekeeper that Crowther had preceded him, Stockell hastened to the dead house, arriving there at 9 o'clock. He fetched the key and a candle from Mr Seager, entered the dead house, and went straight to Lanne's body, where it was immediately evident that Lanne's head had been tampered with. There was blood on the coffin and Stockell quickly ascertained that a slit had been made in Lanne's skin behind his ear, his skull extracted, and that of another man placed inside the empty scalp. Having removed the substituted skull, Stockell established that it was that of a white man, whose body now lay headless in the adjoining dissecting room. An angry Stockell then replaced the white man's skull in Lanne's scalp, and made an unsuccessful search of the building for Lanne's skull before locking the morgue and returning home.

At about 10.30 that same night Williams, looking from a ward window, saw Dr Crowther, accompanied by his son, leaving the hospital grounds with "something under his arm". The next morning, according to Williams, a greengrocer reported that he had seen movement in the creek at the back of the Hospital during the previous night. Seager (HM 13.3.1869) readily testified that it would have been easy to throw anything over the back wall of the Hospital, to a confederate stationed in the creek, and it was subsequently commonly believed that this was the method by which the Crowthers had secreted away Lanne's skull.

The following morning (Saturday 6th March) Stockell communicated Crowther's actions to J. W. Agnew and Morton Allport (a leading member of the Royal Society of Tasmania, who was later to become a major supplier of Tasmanian skeletons to Europe—providing two to the Royal College of Surgeons of England [including the skeleton of Bessy Clark, one of the last surviving "pure-blooded" Tasmanians], one to the private collection of Joseph Bernard Davis in London, one to the Anthropological Society of London and one to the Royal Museum in Brussels). Agnew and Allport, fearing that Crowther would endeavour to take the whole skeleton, requested that Stockell should secure Lanne's hands and feet for the Royal Society, which he did in the presence of Mr Graves. In his defence for these actions Agnew stated that after the removal of the head "can the removal of the feet and hands be regarded as the slightest consequence? If a barbarian shatters a valuable vase, is it blameworthy if some of the fragments are removed, in order that he may not have the satisfaction or profit of putting them together?" (HM 19.3.1869). Lanne's depleted body received no further mutilation until after his burial on the afternoon of the same day, Saturday the 6th of March.

Rumours had already spread that Lanne's body had been mutilated, and a number of gentlemen requested that his coffin should be opened "in order to satisfy their minds that the ceremony of burial was not altogether a 'vain show'" (HM 8.3.1869). Inspection of the body seems not to have alarmed the gentlemen present, and the coffin was screwed down and sealed. It was draped with a black opossum skin rug, upon which were placed two spears and waddies wrapped in a Union Jack, and then carried into St David's Churchyard by four of Lanne's friends, followed by over 100 mourners.

After the coffin had been buried, Dry gave orders that a police watch should be placed over it, but these orders were not carried out. George Stockell and his men resurrected Lanne's coffin and, having removed his body, left the substituted skull in the coffin and reburied it, leaving the grave in a "perfectly decent and proper order" (HM 12.3.1869). Later, Crowther's party came to the cemetery and, discovering that they had been robbed of

their prize, left the grave empty, with part of the coffin visible, a skull lying on the surface and the surrounding ground "saturated with blood" (*HM* 8.3.1869).

Next day the news that Lanne's body had been taken spread across the town, and several hundred people, including Sir Richard Dry and the Attorney General, Mr Dobson gathered at the cemetery (*HM* 8.3.1869). According to *HM* (8.3.1869) "had [the actual coffin been removed] a search warrant would have been issued at their instance, as executors of 'Billy Lanne', with instructions in the event of any portions of his body being found in the course of its execution, that they should be taken possession of". However, as the coffin was still in the grave nothing was done "as it is doubtful whether any legal property in the body exists" (*HM* 8.3.1869).

Following a Ministerial Enquiry conducted by the Colonial Secretary with the Attorney General and Treasurer present, Dr Crowther was suspended as Honorary Medical Officer and, subsequently, Crowther's son was suspended as a pupil of the hospital (*HM* 9.3.1869).

Meanwhile, Crowther and Charles Seager had been trying to trace Lanne's body. According to an advertisement (entitled "Et tu, Brute") placed by Crowther in *HM* (12.3.1869), Crowther had been informed (on 7th March) that a wheelbarrow, containing a sack filled with "something heavy", had been seen the night before proceeding towards the General Hospital from the area of the cemetery. This was corroborated by Williams' evidence (1869), which records that Stockell and the Hospital Gardener had wheeled Lanne in a barrow into the old Hospital. On the Monday morning Crowther and Seager had located the wheelbarrow in the Hospital yard covered with blood. Crowther surmised that Lanne had been secreted into a part of the old female Hospital at the back of the General Hospital, and had followed a trail of blood which led to an old disused room. A man employed in washing out the bloody trail told Crowther that Lanne's body had indeed been taken to the disused room where it had been worked upon during the Sunday. Crowther was also told by an eye witness that Stockell had been working in this room most of Sunday on "removing the flesh and sending it away" (*HM* 12.3.1869). Williams records seeing Stockell and a number of others cutting up Lanne that night in a morgue (whether in a disused morgue in the old Hospital or in the morgue in the General Hospital is not stated). When Crowther asked that the door should be opened, he was told that the key could not be found.

Later the same day Crowther returned to the scene accompanied by his son, the police superintendent and a detective. After forcing his way past the Hospital gate Crowther arrived at the same locked door, where he was confronted by Stockell, who denied him access. Crowther then broke down

the door and although Lanne's skeleton was not in the room the men "there discovered a charnel house: the bones had been removed, but masses of fat and blood were all over the floor and upon a large box which had been used as a table" (*HM* 12.3.1869). According to Williams, Stockell had removed the remains of Lanne's body to a location underneath the mess room window, and subsequently what remained of Lanne (presumably after Stockell had taken the skeleton), was placed in a cask which was buried in the old Campbell Street Cemetery.

A later enquiry into the mutilation of Lanne's body (*HM* 13.3.1869) sat for two days but both Crowther and his son refused to attend, on the grounds that they had been prejudged at the previous Ministerial Enquiry, where their attendance had not been requested. The enquiry was terminated when requests for the scope of the commission to be enlarged were refused (*HM* 17.3.1869).

In one final attempt to get Crowther on the witness stand, and in response to Crowther's own printed accusation (in *HM* 12.3.1869) that Stockell had been responsible for taking Lanne's skull, Stockell was officially prosecuted; in court, however, Crowther refused to answer any relevant questions on the grounds that he might incriminate himself, and his son refused to appear. Stockell was acquitted (*HM* 16, 3.1869).

So ended all official enquiries into the the mutilation of William Lanne. Public outcry was loud, not only because of the indecent treatment of the body of the 'last' male Tasmanian Aborigine, but also because it was now clear that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal bodies were indecently treated in the dead house, and were subjected to the publicly hated practice of dissection (*HM* 12.3.1869).

What then happened to William Lanne's remains? Williams (1869) reported that Stockell had a tobacco pouch made from Lanne's skin, while Ryan (1981: 217) says that other scientists took his nose, ears and a piece of his arm, and that his hands and feet later appeared in the rooms of the Royal Society. Ellis (1981: 153) cites Abbie (1964) as proof that Lanne's hands and feet were received by the Tasmanian Museum. However, in fact, Abbie (1964) lists the details of the W.L.Crowther collection in the Tasmanian Museum as "articulated left hand", a "partly dissected hand" and "articulated right and left feet", and claims that they are of "probable European origin" (Abbie 1964: 55).

According to Ellis (1981: 140) there are no records of the receipt of Lanne's incomplete skeleton by the Royal Society, although Allport told W.H. Flower that Lanne's remains were in this Museum (letter from Allport to Flower 24.12.1871). If Williams (1869) is correct, at least some of Lanne's remains may lie buried in a cask in Campbell Street Cemetery.

Allport believed that Lanne's skull was in the hands of Crowther's son in England (letter from Allport to Basil Field 11.7.1872), while Ellis (1981: 140) quotes Agnew (1888) as proof that Lanne's skull had been received by the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. However, Agnew does not state that the skull was so received, merely that the skull had been "forwarded" to the College (Agnew 1888: 479). Moreover Fred (as opposed to Charles) Seager was interviewed in 1912, and claimed to have helped Stockell reduce Lanne's body to a skeleton. He reported that Crowther had "taken Lanne's head and, placing it in a seal's carcass, sent it to England. But the packing had been done so badly the stench was unbearable and the carcass was thrown overboard during the voyage" (Ellis 1981:153).

Certainly, Lanne's skull is not entered in either Flower's Catalogue of the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons (1880) or in the second edition compiled by Stewart in 1907. However, neither are the "certain odd bones of Tasmanian Aborigines" that W.L. Crowther's grandson, Sir William Crowther, claims his grandfather sent to Flower (Crowther 1976 in Ellis 1981:173), making it a possibility that Flower never gave these remains to the Royal College.

Ellis (1981: 153) also cites Turner's description (1908: 366) of a skull held at the Edinburgh University Anatomy Department (catalogue no: xxx.2), as proof that Lanne had reached Britain. The skull had been in the collection of E.M. Crowther's father (William L. Crowther) and "it was believed to be the skull of one of the last of the aborigines, and indeed possibly that of William Lanne, the last male to survive" (Turner 1908: 366). However, the original record for the skull (see next section, below) does not provide conclusive proof of its identity and, much more recently, W.W. Howells identified this same skull as female (Howells 1989: 97).

It is clear that 163 years after his death, and the subsequent mutilation of his body, the location of William Lanne's remains are still not certain (and see the following section). As remarked by *HM* 27 .3.1869, "Whether [Lanne's skeleton] will ever be brought together again in this world is a question which remains to be solved".

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