

CHRISTCHURCH SHOOTING

Police victim ruled a suicide case

Marc Greenhill

The death of a disabled gunman shot by police in Christchurch has been ruled a suicide.

Shayne Richard Sime, 42, was shot dead by police on June 23, 2009, after opening fire from his Wadhurst Place home in Burnside about 8pm.

In findings released yesterday, Coroner Peter Ryan said a neighbour was hit by shotgun pellets but not seriously injured.

At 10.30pm Sime, confined to a wheelchair because of a spinal disease, moved onto the front deck of his house, firing at armed police and wounding one in the face.

Police then opened fire, hitting Sime five times and killing him instantly.

Judge Ryan said it was his view that Sime decided during the standoff to provoke police to shoot him.

Sime indicated to the police negotiator that there was "no going back", the coroner said.

The negotiator asked, "So there's nothing you want to live for?", to which Sime responded, "No".

Shortly after, Sime went out his front door and fired at police, "thus provoking AOS [armed offenders squad] members to return fire".



Investigation: Shayne Sime was shot dead by police in June last year after opening fire from his Wadhurst Place home in Burnside.



The coroner said he did not believe Sime set out to be shot by police, but became "overwhelmed" by the events.

"Shayne realised he only had two choices - surrender and face a prison sentence or commit suicide," he said.

Sime told the negotiator that going back to prison was not an option.

"Shayne had the option of ending his life by his own hand, but for reasons known only to him he did not exercise this option," the coroner said.

Earlier in the evening, Sime sent a text message to his mother, saying: "Prob get shot".

There was no evidence indicating

why Sime began his shooting spree, the coroner said.

He had been drinking with a neighbour at his home, and following a discussion about firearms, Sime fired his .308 calibre rifle at a street light.

The neighbour left and Sime began firing the rifle and a shotgun in the neighbourhood.

Police recorded that more than 100 rounds were fired during the evening.

Judge Ryan said that Sime had also suffered a head injury in 1990 after being struck with a billiard cue.

The injury culminated in a brain haemorrhage which had affected him since.

"Despite regular exercise, the prognosis for his condition was poor with the level of his disability increasing over time," the coroner said.

The coroner permitted the release of details of Sime's suicide, finding that it was in the public interest "because this death occurred at the hands of police while carrying out their duties".

The names of the four police officers who fired shots were suppressed.

An Independent Police Conduct Authority report cleared police of wrongdoing, but questioned why Sime was given a firearms licence.

Mother shocked

Shayne Sime's mother was "surprised and shocked" by the coroner's suicide verdict.

An emotional Chris Goodman, 64, said she had not known what to expect from the coroner's report, but "I didn't think it would be that".

"I was surprised and shocked to hear that, even though I knew all the circumstances... it was a shock to see it written down in black and white."

Goodman accepted the coroner had explained how he reached his finding.

She said she had been upset since receiving the report on Tuesday, but she hoped to find closure now.

"It's all over now and I can go and get on with my life."

Goodman has two daughters. Sime was her only son.

"He was a very much-loved son, so that's what I think about and I've got a lovely photo of him sitting in the lounge with a great big smile on his face."



CORRECTION

A recent front page of The Press, on police checks of Christchurch's buses, showed a pink "unsafe vehicle" sticker beside a separate photograph of a Leopard bus being checked. This might have suggested to readers that the Leopard vehicle was unsafe. That was not the case; the bus was passed fit to continue. No Leopard buses received a pink sticker in the checks.



Nipped: Steve Moffatt, left, and Steve Gurney have called off their Mt Cook climb. Photo: JOHN BISSET

50 DAYS ADRIFT

Teens put to sea in pursuit of love

Michael Field

Somewhere on the tiny atoll of Fakaofa is the face that launched a tiny outboard-powered dinghy.

Three lovesick teenage boys rescued after 50 days adrift in the South Pacific have reached dry land, gaunt, ill and lucky to be alive.

Samuelu Peleha (also known as Sam Perez) and Filo Filo, both 15, and Etueni (or Edward) Nasau, 14, disappeared from Tokelau's Atafu Island on October 5.

An extensive search by a RNZAF Orion failed to find them, but on Wednesday a New Zealand fishing boat spotted the trio in their tiny aluminium dinghy, which they had stolen to sail to the neighbouring atoll Fakaofa in search of a girl who had caught their eye.

They drifted 1300 kilometres off course and survived on just a few coconuts and a seagull before tuna boat San Nikunau picked them up.

They arrived at the Fiji Navy base in Suva yesterday and needed to be assisted ashore.

They were all on IV drips and one boy appeared to collapse into an ambulance before being taken to Suva's Colonial War Memorial Hospital, where they remained last night.

A New Zealand High Commission spokeswoman, who met the boys off the boat at 3pm yesterday, said they did not say a word on emerging.

"They were just really weak and they looked relieved to be on land."

Extended family members of the trio, resident in Suva, visited the boys in hospital.

Tokelau - a nation of 1200 people on three atolls - is celebrating the rescue, but the trio will face hard questions when they return home to Atafu atoll.



Rescued: Samuelu Peleha, 15, Etueni Nasau, 14, and Filo Filo, 15, photographed on the tuna boat San Nikunau after drifting for 1300 kilometres over 50 days.

Photo: TAI FREDRISSEN

Locals familiar with what happened said the ill-fated adventure was sparked during an island sports competition, hosted by the boys' atoll, Atafu, in October.

Among the visitors was a girl from neighbouring atoll Fakaofa, who captured the eye of one of the boys. She sailed home after the tournament, leaving the boys to mourn her departure.

Some time after midnight, emboldened with alcohol, they decided to take the island's newest small boat and head to their true love, 200km to the south.

They had a couple of sacks of

coconuts, some beer and a fuel tank.

Their cousin and Atafu representative, Kuresa Nasau, said nobody saw them go but it would not have been thought unusual if they were spotted.

"Young kids go out fishing all the time, nobody questions that."

"They were seen at midnight and nobody suspected they were going to take off."

San Nikunau first mate Tai Fredricsen, of the Bay of Islands, said it was a miracle the tuna boat found the boys.

"We saw a small vessel, a little speedboat on our bows, and we

knew it was a little weird," he said.

The boys started waving so the vessel pulled up beside them, he said.

"I... asked them if they needed any help they said, 'Very much so'. They were ecstatic to see us."

The boys were skinny but in good physical health.

"They are in incredibly good shape for the time they have been at sea."

"Somehow they caught a bird... They ate it, that is what is recommended."

The boys had started drinking seawater in the few days before they were

rescued and probably would have only survived for a few more days, Fredricsen said.

Nasau said he had heard the rumours about the late-night love quest and the boys would have some questions to answer when they got back.

"I heard there was some alcohol involved. I will investigate but all I was concerned was their safety."

The boys will head to Samoa when they are well - hopefully tomorrow - where they will have to wait for the next boat home on December 16.

Frostbite ends expedition

Retro fashions may look stylish on urban pavements but they don't cut the ice - so to speak - in mountain climbing.

Coast to Coast veteran Steve Gurney and adventurer Steve Moffatt have stopped their climb on Mt Cook after Moffatt - clad in hobnail boots and a tweed jacket - suffered frostbite.

His climbing companion, Gurney, 47, was wearing the latest high-tech gear.

The pair were following in the footsteps of early mountaineers Marmaduke Dixon and George Mannerling, who, for a decade from mid-1886, spent most summers exploring the Mt Cook region.

In 1889, the two men made an attempt to be the first to climb Mt Cook, but were forced to turn back 200 metres from the summit - about 100m higher than their modern-day imitators reached.

When Moffatt, 60, woke up with sore feet and discovered he was suffering from frostbite on four or five toes, they called off the climb.

"You don't get frostbite and continue, you go and get it checked out," said Gurney.

Gurney said he was very concerned for Moffatt.

Moffatt said Mannerling and his partner climbed for 23 hours, possibly the reason they did not end up with frozen toes. Moffatt - a flower grower and adventure-racing competitor from Halswell - was examined and told his toes should recover within a month. NZPA

IN BRIEF

Driver killed in Nelson

A teenager died and another was injured after the car they were in rolled in central Nelson. Senior Sergeant Murray Hurst said the accident occurred on Atawhai Dr about 4.30am yesterday. The driver, 17, died at the scene. The passenger, 18, who crawled from the wreckage, had serious chest injuries. Hurst said speed was likely to have been a factor. Tasman district specialist crash investigator Simon Burberry said the vehicle smashed into a car parked on the right-hand side of the road.

Keno numbers

The numbers in draw No 7408 were: 2 3 4 7 14 26 33 35 40 43 45 47 48 57 60 62 64 66 69 71. Draw number 7409: 7 8 10 15 18 21 23 32 34 47 50 53 55 57 60 61 67 68 72 80.



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