

# THE Daily Telegraph

## Man hanged for Gun Alley murder gets justice at last

Daily Telegraph

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By Kelly Ryan

May 28, 2008 12:00am

**ALMOST a century after he went to the gallows protesting his innocence, a man convicted of one of the nation's most heinous child murders is to be given a decent burial.**

Colin Campbell Ross was posthumously pardoned after an extraordinary examination of facts found he was wrongly convicted of killing a schoolgirl in Victoria's Gun Alley murder.

In a case of many firsts, the condemned man's family and the dead girl's surviving relatives signed a petition of mercy to have Ross's conviction overturned and his name cleared.

Victorian Attorney-General Rob Hulls announced yesterday that the unprecedented pardon had been granted - 86 years after Ross was hanged.

It followed an inquiry by three judges of the Trial Division of the Supreme Court, who found there had been a miscarriage of justice.

Most pertinent was the new conclusion that strands of hair - used for the first time for forensic comparison in the Ross trial and which helped convict him of murder - did not come from the victim.

Ross was 28 and running a city wine bar in 1922 when the naked body of Alma Tirtschke was found in a lane off Bourke St. She had gone missing near Ross's saloon while running messages for her aunt.

In a climate in which Melbourne was baying for the blood of the girl's killer, Ross was charged, convicted and hanged within four months.

Clearly relieved after believing for decades she was related to a murderer, Ross's niece Betty Everett yesterday promised her late uncle a family burial at last.

"My dearest wish is that we will be able to lay his ashes with his family and let him rest in peace now his innocence has been proven," Ms Everett said.

She said her family had spent decades trying to live down Ross' reputation as a child killer.

"It was something I kept inside. I never told anybody about it, it was something that I just carried myself and I didn't want anyone to know."

Ms Everett joined Bettye Arthur, a relative of Alma Tirtschke, who also revealed deep family anguish over the killing and conviction.

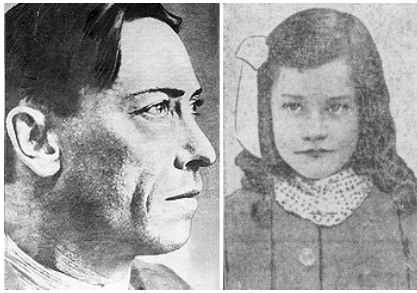
The petition follows publication of the book *Gun Alley (Murder, Lies and Failure of Justice)* by Kevin Morgan,

which raised real doubts about the Ross conviction.

Ross was hanged and buried at the old Melbourne Gaol and his remains were later transferred to the grounds of Pentridge Prison.

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The truth at last ... Colin Ross, hanged for the Gun Alley murder, and killed schoolgirl Alma Tirtschke (right)

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