

Organised Crime links to mystery crimes? by John Anderson, Ng Liu and Jenny Veith

Fires, martial arts and mystery men - it reads like summary of a Hollywood blockbuster, but events in Sydney's southwest yesterday still have no clear explanation.

Police continue to deny that they are 'baffled' by the criminal antics of the group of men and women involved in the as-yet-unexplained car accident in Suburb yesterday.

The incident began tragically when a red Ford Laser coming southwards along Road Rd span out of control. Witnesses suggest that the driver, whose identity is as yet unreleased, may have been using her mobile phone while in control of the vehicle. The hatchback glanced along several parked cars before rolling into oncoming traffic and striking two cars heading northwards. Both the driver and passenger of the southbound vehicle were killed instantly.

On any normal day, things would have ended with that single devastating event. However, according to police and witnesses, this

was no ordinary day.

It is difficult to get a coherent story from the statements of the onlookers. The streets were not crowded, but people were going for lunch in the nearby deli, and the light traffic was steady. Yet it is difficult to establish the exact events that followed.

What is certain is that the second northbound vehicle struck was driven by a young caucasian man named John Brighton. Brighton has been sought by police since the suspicious deaths of 3 residents of Drake's Rill in eastern Gippsland earlier this year.

Brighton has been linked to other illegal activities and with other individuals known to police. Listing his associates begins to take on a surreal tone - university students, business men, itinerants and so on.

It is not just a collection of disparate professions which stand Brighton's associates out, it is also their fates and behaviours. Several associates or linked individuals have disappeared in suspicious circumstances, or have been declared dead, only to reappear later, involved in illicit, or

near-illicit activities.

And the set of events played out yesterday in our streets are akin to this pattern.

Also spotted at the site were: Dominique Lalor - previously missing for the better part of a year and believed dead until events in Drake's Rill in October; 'Thomas' - adorned with a waist-to-head dragon tattoo and cosmetic contact lenses, connected to Melbourne's 2000 millenium riots, and to Drake's Rill; and Mathias Rourke - an individual to whom Victorian police have, rumour would tell you, dedicated an entire filing cabinet of mysterious and suspicious events an individual.

Police have not released a formal statement regarding the events, but even publically available evidence makes it clear that none of the individuals have a clear conscience. And despite having each of the above in custody after the accident, police are yet to explain how each of them was able to free themselves and escape without trace from emergency vehicles conveying them to hospitals in Sydney's inner suburbs.



John Brighton

- driver of second struck car in yesterday's accident
- linked to deaths in Drake's Rill
- linked to kidnapping on NSW/Vic border
- linked to gang attacks on homeless in Melbourne



"Thomas"

- assaulted crashed red Laser with rubble from crash
- allegedly assaulted several eyewitnesses in incident
- assaulted and injured police and emergency workers while escaping custody
- linked to deaths in Drake's Rill
- linked to kidnapping on NSW/Vic border
- linked to NYE riots



Mathias Rourke

- allegedly sabotaged crashed vehicle and started petrol-fueled blaze
- linked to kidnapping on NSW/Vic border
- disappeared in 1999, believed dead by police and associates
- family links to shipping and import businesses
- linked to deaths and disappearances in Melbourne over 3 years



Dominique Lalor

- linked to NYE riots
- father disappeared in 1979
- found unconscious on the accident scene
- linked to kidnapping on NSW/Vic border
- linked to suspicious drug-related deaths in 1998
- disappeared in 1999, believed dead by police
- linked to deaths and disappearances in Melbourne over 3 years

Are these individuals also connected?



Melissa Lindridge

* believed dead, killed with family during Millenium riots in Melbourne * linked to suspicious deaths in Drake's Rill



"Moonflower"

* linked to drug deaths with Lalor * linked to Ahrens



"Kim"

* linked to kidnapping on Vic/NSW border * associate of 'Thomas' and Brighton



Mikal Ahrens

* linked to death of several businessmen in Vic * linked to drug deaths with Lalor * 'died' in Sydney riots, 1999

Reasonable people have to start asking themselves about the links between these individuals. For instance, what is the relationship between Rourke, the sole heir to a wealthy business and an astute businessman of his own, and 'Thomas' an apparent itinerant?

Although no official statement has been released, anonymous police sources have suggested that the Australian Federal Police have covertly requested to assist state police forces in the apprehension of Brighton, Rourke and associates, purporting that they are part of a larger organised crime group. Although Federal police declined to confirm or

deny this rumour, speculation is rife that the senior police officials believe that the group is centred around drug production and distribution through out Australia.

Mr Peter Farmer, of the Australian Institute of Family Research, said that it was common for larger drug operations to be made up of many minor dealers. "I wouldn't be surprised to see hundreds of thousands of dollars to pass through the hands of these corruptors of our children. We have been trying to convey the message that each of these so-called lesser drug merchants are not rascals, but the employees of serious criminals."

If not part of a drug cartel, exactly what inspires this varied group of people to act together? The links between them are undeniable - some mundane, like simultaneous attendance at Melbourne University, long term living arrangements together and some less so, like their propensity to disappear for long periods of time under suspicious circumstances.

Police have promised a full statement by the end of the day, and like the release of the latest cinema hit, it promises to at least entertain, if not enlighten.