

James Kerr

Waranga Chronicle

19 August, 1875

MAGISTERIAL INQUIRY.

A Magisterial Inquiry was held before Deputy Coroner Heily, at the Cricketers' Inn, on Sunday, to ascertain the cause of the death of James Kerr, who was found dead on the previous day.

J. H. Roberts sworn, said: The deceased came to my store on Wednesday last and asked for work as a ploughman. I gave him a job ringing timber till I got horses. I went to see him on Saturday and found him hanging to a rafter in the hut, dead. I gave information to the police. There are two more men working on the farm, but they do not reside on the ground. The door of the hut is closed with a latch that can be opened from either side. The deceased took food with him when he went to the farm. He said he had sons at Geelong and Ballarat. He remarked the hut was very lonely, and just the place for a man to hang himself in. I said if that is the case you had better not stop here.

Thomas Wootton deposed: I am a publican residing at Rushworth. The deceased came to my hotel on Wednesday last. He asked for a glass of rum, and requested me to put some poison in it. He said he wanted to die, as he was tired of life. He came back and asked if a bottle of brandy would kill him. I told him to go to work and drive such thoughts out of his head.

Constable Rule deposed: From information received I went to Mr. Roberts' paddock on Saturday afternoon, and found the deceased suspended by the neck from a rafter in the hut. I cut him down. The body is the same as now before the jury. I searched around and found a letter from the deceased's son at Ballarat. I also found £8 18s on his person. The deceased could have taken his head out of the rope had he stood upright. There were no marks of a struggle having taken place.

John Bradley stated as follows: I identify the deceased as James Kerr. He worked for me at Kyabram up to the 10th inst. He was in the habit of knocking down his money and then fretting very much afterwards. I have heard him say after a spree that he had a good mind to do away with himself. He has not been drinking lately. I never thought him very sane.

The following verdict was returned—"That the deceased, James Kerr, was found dead by strangulation in a hut at Mr. J. H. Roberts' paddock, near Rushworth, situated in the parish of Moora, on the 14th inst., and from the evidence adduced the deceased was of a melancholy and desponding temperament, and had premeditated self-destruction for some time previous, and that no doubt remains on the minds of the jury but that the life of the said James Kerr was destroyed by himself of his own free will."

Footnote: The list of interments at Rushworth cemetery includes a Kerr, without a given name and without a gender. It may be James Kerr, this burial place being the closest to the location of the man's death.