

## William Birch

**Waranga Chronicle**

**3 and 10 September, 1874**

Yesterday afternoon a shocking accident happened, by which a fine little fellow, aged seven years, son of a miner named Burch, met with his death. It appears that the little fellow, after leaving school, went to a lad named Simpson, who is engaged driving a dray for J. Hawking, a puddler, residing at Nuggety Gully, and while accompanying the dray to the machine he must have tripped and fell under the wheel, for when seen he was lying across the track. He was picked up and taken home, but died before reaching there. An inquest will be held to-day.

*(Waranga Chronicle, 3 September, 1874)*

### INQUEST

An inquest was held by Deputy Coroner Heily, at Darby's Rushworth Hotel, on the 3rd inst., on the body of the boy William Birch, who was killed on the day previous.

The following is the more important portion of the evidence:—

Thomas Simpson, being sworn, deposed: I am a miner and resident of Rushworth. I was at work at a surface cutting at Nuggety Hill for John Hawking. At about 3 o'clock in the afternoon the boy Birch came down to the claim. When the dray was filled he accompanied me to the puddling machine. As we went along, I had to check him from flipping the horse with a whip. I checked him twice on the road down to the machine. As we approached close to the puddling machine, I went a short cut to adjust a stick on the edge of the machine which prevents the dray, when tipped, from backing into the machine, while the horse with the boy went round an old heap of tailings, the usual track.

On my turning round to see if the horse was coming on all right, I saw on the off side, just behind the dray wheel, the boy Birch lying on the ground. I ran back, stopped the horse, and went to help the boy. He lay doubled up, half on his side and half on his back, right across the off wheel track. When I raised him up he seemed bent in two. He asked me to lay him down again. I saw a boy named Johnston, who came and remained by the lad while I ran for his mother and other help. The boy was, I think, just dead on my return. I then gave notice to the police.

By the Jury—At first no froth or blood came from deceased's nose or mouth, but it came afterwards. I have no doubt in my own mind how the accident occurred. At the turn, the boy must have got to the off side of the dray to escape my notice, and tripped in a bush which was close to the wheel track, and falling forward the dray's wheel passed over his chest from the left side, then across his right shoulder, and as it came off his body grazed his face.

William Johnston gave evidence similar to the latter part of Simpson's, and also that he had spoken to Birch, and asked if he felt much hurt, when the deceased said "yes," and died almost immediately afterwards.

The injuries to the walls of the chest were extensive, the limbs and other natural organs were also ruptured and crushed.

Verdict, "accidental death."

*(Waranga Chronicle, 10 September, 1874)*