

William McDonald

Rushworth Chronicle

21 February, 1890

A very sad fatality happened to an old resident of Rushworth, Mr William McDonald, last Monday. Between 5 and 6 o'clock on the evening in question the townspeople were greatly shocked upon learning that Mr McDonald had expired on the road home from Mt. Pleasant Creek.

It appears he was working on a contract with his horse and dray there, and on Saturday last had occasion to go to Elmore to get his horse shod. When returning to the camp at night the wheel of the dray passed over a stump, and as McDonald was lighting his pipe at the moment he lost his balance and was thrown violently out and fell on his head. His hand becoming entangled in the reins he was dragged some little distance.

A lad named Alfred Lapeyre accompanied him, and having made him as comfortable as circumstances would permit, left him at his request to go to the camp for assistance.

McDonald remained out all night, and early on Sunday morning he was removed to the camp. He kept in bed all day. Wishing to be taken home to see the doctor, he was lifted into a dray on Monday morning, but when about twelve miles of the journey had been traversed the unfortunate man expired.

A magisterial inquiry was held before Mr Wolton Wigg, J.P., next day, and the evidence of Dr Reid, who made the post mortem examination, disclosed the fact that death resulted from a fractured skull.

Deceased, whose age was 43, leaves a wife and six young children totally unprovided for, the rumour that his life was insured we are sorry to say proving incorrect.

He was a man who has had good opportunities of doing well in life, but somehow or other things always went against him. For many years he occupied the position of storeman in Mrs Mumford's store, and succeeded so well there that he commenced business on his own account, building the store now owned by Messrs Brocklebank and Co. He, however, soon got into difficulties, and had to give up business.

In February last McDonald was elected a member of the Sandhurst Mining Board, and as this district's representative he watched the interests of the miners to the best of his ability. He was also a prominent member of the Grand United Order of Oddfellows, having joined the lodge when formed at Rushworth.

A number of residents showed deceased their last token of respect by following his remains to their last resting place, the Rushworth cemetery, members of the Lodge occupying a prominent position in the solemn procession, and six of the brethren acting as pall bearers.

The Rev. Mr Swindells, Episcopalian minister, read the burial service, Mr E. Muhlhan also conducting the very impressive funeral obsequies on behalf of the order. Very general sympathy is felt for the widow and family in their sad bereavement.

A magisterial inquiry, touching the death of Mr William McDonald, who died suddenly on Monday last whilst being brought to Rushworth from Mount Pleasant Creek, was held by Mr Wolton Wigg, J. P., at the Court House, Rushworth, on Tuesday, when the following depositions were taken:—

Albert Lapeyre, deposed: I am the son of Augustus Lapeyre, and reside with him at Rushworth. On Saturday last, 15th inst., the deceased, William McDonald and I were driving in a dray to Elmore, arrived there at 4 p.m. At 8 p.m. on the same evening we left Elmore to return to Mount Pleasant Creek. During the afternoon deceased had some drinks, and on the way home he had more at Revill's Hotel. He stayed in the hotel for about half-an-hour, and then we started again for home. He was intoxicated when he left Revill's.

About two miles from the hotel deceased was sitting in the dray on the tailboard, which was fixed across the dray as a seat. He was trying to light his pipe, when the wheel went over a stump and he was thrown out of the dray on his head. He was thrown out on the near side. His arm was entangled in the reins when thrown out, and he was dragged along the road for a short distance.

I jumped out of the dray and caught the horse by the head, stopped him, and then backed him. I released deceased's arm, which was cut with the reins. He asked me to hold up his head for a few minutes, which I did. I asked him if he had any pain. He said, "No, I am not hurt." I then put his coat under his head and covered him up with bags. He then told me to go home with the horse and come in the morning for him. I then went home to the camp at Mount Pleasant Creek. I got home very late—after midnight—and in the morning I left again about 6 o'clock to go to him. Another man, named James Hilburn, went with me in the dray.

Deceased was still lying in the same position as when I left him. We tried to lift him up, and he said, "Don't pull me to pieces." We got him into the dray, and took him to the camp. We took him out of the dray and put him to bed. He remained in bed all day Sunday. He could not use his arms or legs.

On Monday morning my father and James Hilburn put him into the dray to take him to Rushworth. I never saw him alive after that time. There was nobody else but myself and deceased present when he was thrown out of the dray.

Augustus Lapeyre, deposed: I am a contractor and reside at Rushworth. I have seen the body of the deceased, William McDonald, to-day. Deceased was employed by me as a carter. He left the camp on Saturday last to go to Elmore to have his horse shod. He took the last witness, Albert Lapeyre, with him. McDonald did not return that night, but my son came home alone some time after midnight. From information my son gave me I sent him and James Hilburn to look after deceased on Sunday morning. About two hours afterwards they returned with him. Deceased seemed to be in a very bad state of intoxication.

I spoke to him, and he answered me quite sensibly. We lifted him out of the dray and put him to bed, where he stayed till Monday morning. On Monday morning he said he would

like to go home to see the doctor. He said he felt right enough. We lifted him into the dray, and started to drive him to Rushworth. He died about 12 miles from the camp, at a place called Wanalta. I then came to Rushworth and informed the police.

Alexander McDonald deposed: I am a miner and reside at Sandhurst. I have seen the body of deceased, and recognise it as that of my brother, William McDonald. Deceased was about 39 years of age, and was born in Scotland. He leaves a wife and six children.

Roderick Bowden deposed: I am a police constable, stationed at Rushworth. Between 4.30 p.m. and 5 p.m. last evening, from instructions received from Senior-constable Bennett, I went to the residence of Augustus Lapeyre about two miles from Rushworth, and there in a dray I found the deceased whom I identify as William McDonald, a resident of Rushworth. I then brought the body to deceased's own home in Rushworth. There were marks on the right arm, on the eyebrow and left ear.

Robert George Reid deposed: I am a legally qualified practitioner, residing at Nagambie. I have this day made a *post mortem* examination of the body of William McDonald. On dividing the scalp I found traces of dust and dirt in the hair. The scalp was very much congested, and on removing the skull I found the membranes of the brain also very much congested. On dividing the membranes covering the outer side of the brain I found the brain very much congested and a large effusion of bloody fluid. The substance of the brain was congested all through. On removing the brain and dividing the membranes covering the base of the skull, I found two fractures leading out of the opening through which the spinal cord passes, these fractures being sufficient to cause the man's death. I consider the cause of the man's death to be a fracture of the base of the skull, probably caused by a direct fall on the head.

The finding was in accordance with the medical testimony.

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28 July,

The prompt manner in which the Rushworth Brass Band have announced their intention to hold an open air concert for the widow and family of the late Mr Wm. McDonald is highly commendable and praiseworthy, and richly merits the appreciation of the public. That this will be given in a practical manner next Sunday on Growler's Hill we have not the slightest doubt.

The performance commences at 3 o'clock and concludes at 4.30. All wishing to enjoy good music and at the same time assist in a laudable object should muster on the occasion.