

## John Kiley

Rushworth Chronicle

14 September, 1888

A disastrous fire occurred at the Whroo Inn on Thursday night, the 6th inst., resulting in the death of a contractor named Kiley, who had put up there for the night.

The remains, which were not recovered till next morning, presented a dreadful spectacle.

Mr Neilsen, the owner of the premises, which were not insured, estimates his loss at £100.

MAGISTERIAL INQUIRY.

An inquiry was held by W. Wigg, Esq. J P., at the Whroo Inn, Whroo, on Saturday morning last, touching the cause of the death of one John Kiley, a contractor, whose remains were found in debris of a building, which had been consumed by fire on Thursday night previous. The following was the evidence taken:—

Elizabeth Pope deposed — I am in the employ of Mr Neilson, Whroo. I have seen the remains of the deceased. About half-past seven on Thursday evening he came to the hotel for tea. He afterwards sat in the kitchen reading the paper till about ten o'clock. He then left to go to bed. I was sleeping in a room opposite the deceased's. About 12 o'clock I heard a roaring noise, and saw flames. I called Annie Neilsen, and told her to call her father. Mr Neilson came out, and we tried to extinguish the flames. I did not know if the man was in the room or not at the time of the fire. I did not see the remains till next morning, when I heard that a man had been burned to death.

Neil Neilson deposed—I am an hotelkeeper, residing at Whroo. The deceased, John Kiley, came to my place on Thursday evening and had tea. He was perfectly sober. He retired to bed about ten o'clock. He got up again, and asked to be shown the road to Cameron's sawmill, as he said he intended making an early start. He then retired again. I and the rest of the household retired to rest shortly after.

At about twelve o'clock I was awakened by my daughter calling out that the house was on fire. I found that the four bedrooms, one of which deceased occupied, and which are detached from the house, were on fire. I tried to break open the door, but the flames were too strong for me, as it was impossible to approach within five or six yards. They all tried to extinguish the flames. After saving the barn I looked about for the man, but could not find him. The four bedrooms were entirely burned. About half-past twelve when I was searching for the deceased I got a stick and was poking about the ruins with it when I discovered something that I supposed was the remains.

At daylight I found the body in the ruins, and went to Rushworth and gave information to the police. The deceased was quite a stranger to me. The deceased told me during the evening that he had bought a horse from John Gaynor, and that Mr Cussen had advanced him the money and accepted his bill at four months. The premises that were burned were not insured.

The man's description is as follows: — About fifty years of age, sandy whiskers, dressed in grey tweed coat, dark trousers, and black hard brim hat. He was a native of Ireland. There

were no other persons sleeping in any of the four bedrooms but the deceased. I can only account for the fire by deceased either smoking in bed, or upsetting the candle. He was smoking when I left him.

R. L. Fedden deposed — I am a Solicitor residing in Rushworth. On Wednesday, the 5th inst., John Kiley and Mr Cussen came to my office. Cussen informed me that he had arranged with Kiley to let him have a horse belonging to John Gaynor, that he would pay for it, and that Kiley would give him a bill and stock mortgage on the horse described as a bay gelding with white feet, and branded G on the near shoulder, together with another horse, dray, and two sets of harness. I drew up the bill and mortgage, and Kiley signed them. Kiley informed me that he was a carter working at the Goulburn Weir. The description of the horse given by Kiley corresponds with the horse now in the stable.

Constable Foers deposed that in consequence of information received, he went to the Whroo Inn on the morning of the 7th inst. I then saw the charred remains of a body lying on a bedstead in the remains of a building that had been burned down. The body was lying on its back. The arms and legs were burned off, and could not be recognised. On searching about the debris I found three shillings in silver, and a Waterbury watch. I assisted to put the body in the coffin. From the description given of the deceased, I must have seen him at the Cricketers' Inn, Rushworth, on the evening of the 5th inst. I have made inquiries, but cannot find out anything about the deceased.

A verdict of accidental death was returned.

*As shown, the newspaper was dated 14 September, 1888. The Interment Register at Whroo cemetery lists a John Kelly in September 1888, but notes that there were multiple spellings. Kiley and Kelly seem likely to be the same man.*

*The plaque in the cemetery shows a John Kelly dated 19 July, 1865, so obviously a different man.*