

William Govan

(a.k.a. William McFarlane)

Mclvor News

2 August, 1861

Whroo correspondent, July 31

I am sorry to record a most melancholy occurrence which took place at the White Hills, on Sunday, July 28. William McFarlane, a miner, about thirty years of age, having been in the employ of Messrs Law and Darrock [Darroch] for some months as engineer, was discovered by a Chinaman (about four o'clock in the evening) hanging to a sapling about 400 yards from his employers' machine, and about twenty yards from the public road, who immediately gave notice to Messrs Arthur and Reese, storekeepers, who with several friends proceeded to the spot, and found the body hanging with the feet resting on the ground, but quite dead and cold.

The unfortunate man has been for about three weeks drinking to excess, and has upon several former occasions suffered severely from 'delirium tremens,' which there seems no doubt was the case at the time; he appears to have taken off his boots, which were found on the spot, and to have formed a line by tearing his shirt into stripes [strips?].

A scrap of paper, scarcely legible, having some reference to the event, was found (supposed to be written by the deceased) lying at his feet.

Whroo correspondent, July 31

Yesterday [July 30] a magisterial inquiry was held on the body of William Govan, aged 33, a native of Ellensborough, in Dumbartonshire, Scotland, who was found hanging to a sapling on Sunday afternoon, at the White Hills.

The inquiry took place at the Victoria Hotel, Whroo, before J. T. Lewis, Esq., J.P., and the Superintendent of Police. The above information with regard to age, name, and country, was obtained from a paper in the handwriting of the deceased, found close to the body.

The deceased was always known there as William McFarlane, and has been on this goldfield the greater part of five years. Nothing further transpired as to the cause of the fatal catastrophe. The funeral took place in the Whroo cemetery on Tuesday afternoon.

Sydney Morning Herald

12 August, 1861

A miner, known as William McFarlane, but whose real name appears to be William Govan, committed suicide at the White Hills, near Whroo, on Sunday week.

He had been drinking for some time previously, and it is supposed destroyed himself while in a state of temporary insanity. He had formed a rope, with which to commit the same, by tearing his shirt, and wrote his name and the place of his nativity on a piece of paper, which was found at the foot of the tree from a branch of which he suspended himself.

The interment register for Whroo cemetery, and the plaque in the cemetery include a William Goven, not Govan, buried 1861, and therefore one of the earliest burials following the gazette entry creating the cemetery in 1860.