

John LeRoy

Rushworth Chronicle

10 September, 1953

THE PASSING OF AN ERA Final Chapter Written in the Story of Whroo

With the death last Friday, [4 September] of John LeRoy, who with his wife and brother-in-law comprised the last remaining inhabitants of the Whroo township; and the decision of the Waranga Shire Council a few days earlier to close the town's last public utility – the Water Trust – the old township of Whroo, just south of Rushworth, has taken another, and probably final step towards extinction.

The establishment of Whroo followed the discovery of gold in the district in 1853. With successive rich finds the township grew to carry a population of more 2000 people, and possessed five hotels, and businesses and stores of all descriptions.

One of the rich finds resulted in the establishment of the famous Balaclava Hill mine, so named because the date on which gold was discovered there was later found to be the date of the battle of Balaclava, October 25, 1854. Gold valued at £150,000 came from this mine alone.

Over the past half century Whroo has steadily declined as the mines became deeper, and finally uneconomic to operate, until today only a few houses, and a dilapidated Church and Mechanics' Institute remain.

John LeRoy was born in Whroo in 1869 (the year in which the *Chronicle* was established). He was educated at the Whroo school, became a student teacher there, and later taught at South Yarra, Clear Lake, and Moora.

He married Miss Mary Pettifer, and returned to Whroo, where he conducted a grazing property.

Despite his extremely short stature, he was a keen sportsman, and won fame as a footballer, cricketer, and gun-shot in his younger days.

The failure of various mining ventures brought many Whroo families to poverty, and it was typical of Mr LeRoy's kindness and modesty that few of them ever found out that it was he who left parcels of food and other necessities on their doorsteps when their need was greatest.

More than 50 cars brought mourners to the Whroo cemetery last Sunday when Mr LeRoy was buried. The funeral was conducted by the Rev. V. Williams.

ONLY 2 LEFT IN GHOST TOWN Rushworth, Friday

The population of the old mining town of Whroo, just south of Rushworth, was reduced to two with the death of Mr. John Le Roy.

He, his wife, and brother-in-law were the last remaining inhabitants of this ghost town.

In its early days Whroo had a population of 2,000, five hotels and a thriving business centre.

One of the richest finds resulted in the establishment of the famous Balaclava Hill mine, so named because the date on which gold was discovered there was later found to be the date of the battle of Balaclava, October 25, 1854.

Decline

Over the past half-century Whroo has steadily declined as the mines became deeper and finally uneconomic to operate, until today only a few houses and a dilapidated church and mechanics' institute remain.

John Le Roy was born in Whroo in 1869. He was educated at the Whroo school, became a student teacher there and later taught at South Yarra, Clear Lake (near Horsham) and Moora.

He married Miss Mary Pettifer, and returned to Whroo where he conducted a grazing property.

Sportsman

Despite his extremely short stature, he was a keen sportsman and won local fame as a footballer, cricketer and gun shot in his younger days.

The failure of various mining ventures brought many Whroo families to poverty and it was typical of Mr. Le Roy's kindness and modesty that few of them ever found out it was he who left the parcels of food and other necessities on their doorsteps just when their need was greatest.

More than 50 cars brought mourners to the Whroo cemetery on Sunday when Mr. Le Roy was buried.