



REMEMBRANCE PARKS
CENTRAL VICTORIA

White Hills Cemetery



A compilation of Obituaries for burials at the White Hills Cemetery
Sourced from the National Library of Australia's (NLA) Trove Web Service

Sarah McDONALD

Sarah was murdered on 1/08/1860 aged 50 years, by her husband John.
There is no headstone and the grave location was not recorded.

*

Sarah McDONALD

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Fri 3 Aug 1860 Page 2

THE MURDER AT IRONBARK

Sarah McDONALD

We have ascertained the following additional particulars in connection with the murder of Mrs M'Donald by her husband on Wednesday night, at Ironbark.

It appears that about half past seven o'clock their son, a lad about sixteen years of age, was in the tent, which is situated just below the Redan Reef, at the time his father and mother were present. He states that, his mother was on the bed, and his father was kneeling on her, and jumping up and down in a frantic manner, with a knife in his hand, and saying that he would have her life. The lad tried to take the knife out of his hand, but was not strong enough, his father giving him a blow on the head with his fist. He did not see whether his mother was stabbed at this time. The boy then caught hold of a piece of wood and struck at his father with it. The man then ran after the boy for some distance outside, but could not overtake him, or the chances are he would have done him some injury with the knife he had in his hand. The boy states that he shortly afterwards returned and peeped into the tent, when he saw his mother sitting on a stool, and his father kicking her.

He went to get assistance from his cousin, who lived close by, and in a short time he returned with him. This man, named James M'Donald, states that when he went

to the tent, the woman was lying "in a heap" on the floor, but whether she was dead then or not he was not aware. M'Donald was sitting on a stool, and he states that he said "I have killed her." The cousin being frightened to lay hands on him went for more assistance, and when he returned with another man towards the tent they saw M'Donald running away in the direction of the Redan Reef.

Without attempting to follow him, or to look in what condition the woman was, they came into the Camp and gave information to the police. When some of the latter went out they found the woman lying in the tent quite dead. No clue was obtained of M'Donald until yesterday, when he was traced from the place of a person named Lowden, in Eaglehawk Gully. He had gone to Lowden's place shortly after the murder, and it seems he changed his clothes there, taking away those he had on, and which were stained with blood. He told Lowden that he had murdered his wife, and that he was going to give himself up to the police after he had seen his two children, the youngest of them, a little girl, living with Mr Todd, of Bridge Street.

Nothing more was heard of him until he was arrested yesterday afternoon by Constable Clune, near the Chinaman's sawpit, between the Jackass Flat and the Geelong Store, at the foot of Ironbark Gully. He will be brought before the Coroner at the inquest, which will be held today at ten o'clock, at Harney's Bendigo Hotel, the body having been removed into the Camp. The cousin, James M'Donald, has also been arrested as an accessory after the fact, the Superintendent of Police not being satisfied with his explanations in reference to allowing the husband to escape after he got assistance.

*

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Sat 4 Aug 1860 Page 2

THE LATE MURDER AT IRONBARK. INQUEST ON THE BODY

Yesterday morning at eleven o'clock, the District Coroner, Dr Roche, summoned a jury at the Bendigo Hotel, for the purpose of inquiring into the circumstances touching the death of Mrs M'Donald, who was found murdered in a tent in Ironbark Gully, about half past seven o'clock on Wednesday evening. John M'Donald, the husband of the deceased, was in the custody of the police; The jury, after being sworn, proceeded to view the body, which was lying in a shell in one of the stables belonging to the camp, and, without the slightest exaggeration, it was one of the most horrible spectacles that could be presented to the sight, in fact the face scarcely appeared to have been that of a human being, so disfigured was it with cuts, bruises, and stabs. After the jury returned, the following evidence was given:

Alfred M'Donald (who said that he could neither read nor write, but believed that if he told a lie on the present occasion that he would go to hell) having been sworn, deposed that he was the son of the prisoner, and resided at Ironbark Gully. The deceased was his mother, and wife of prisoner. Deceased was confined in the

watchhouse on Tuesday night, but came home on Wednesday at noon, in company with prisoner and James M'Donald. Deceased was sober but prisoner was drunk, and James M'Donald partly drunk. Until two o'clock, prisoner and deceased were quarrelling, when witness and James M'Donald left. Returned at six o'clock that evening, and found prisoner still drunk, but deceased was absent.

Deceased shortly after came in, and appeared to have been drinking. Witness left, and in less than a minute heard deceased cry out. Ran in, and found deceased lying on her back, and prisoner kneeling on her chest. Prisoner had a knife in his hand (the one now produced). Endeavoured to take the knife from prisoner, but he struck witness against the fireplace. Deceased got up, but prisoner knocked her down again, and jumped on her stomach with the knife in his hand. Witness ran out and brought in a piece of wood, with which, he struck prisoner three or four times. Prisoner then turned to witness, but he ran out. Saw deceased come out of the tent, when prisoner returned, and caught deceased when about twenty yards off the tent. Prisoner knocked her down and kicked her frequently, and dragged her into the tent. Prisoner then ran after and threw stones at witness.

After prisoner returned, saw deceased leave the tent. Deceased told witness that she was going for some beer. Deceased returned with the beer. Witness was afraid to go in to the tent, and went away, but after the lapse of an hour returned and found the tent in darkness, except the light arising from the fire. Looked in, and saw deceased sitting on a stool and prisoner beating her about the head with his fists. Witness ran for his cousin James M'Donald, who refused to come. Witness went away, and remained all night at the store in Ironbark. Returned the following morning, and found deceased dead. Prisoner was in the habit of getting drunk, and when in that state always quarrelled with deceased, but when sober they never quarrelled. The iron rod now produced was used to stir the fire. Did not know what deceased and prisoner were quarrelling about.

By a juror: Did not see prisoner with the rod when he was beating deceased, nor did he see prisoner stab deceased. Did not know that deceased was in the habit of using bad language to prisoner.

James M'Donald, miner, living Ironbark Gully, said he was first cousin to prisoner. On Wednesday morning called at prisoner's tent, and he with prisoner and his son went to work, but prisoner desired his son to remain and endeavour to hear so nothing of his mother, who had not been at home the previous night. Prisoner thought deceased was in the watch house, and witness advised him to inquire there. We went to work till half-past nine, when we went to Sandhurst and found that deceased had been in the watchhouse all night, and appeared at the Town Hall and was fined 1s for being drunk. Saw deceased at the Town Hall, and witness paid the 1s fine. Witness, prisoner, and deceased returned to Ironbark after having a glass of brandy each. Witness and prisoner had had a glass each previously.

After our return we had two quarts of beer. Left them about noon. Went to Bendigo twice during the afternoon. At half past 6 o'clock prisoner's son wanted witness to go to the tent and try to make peace, as prisoner and deceased were quarrelling. Witness refused, as he had frequently interfered before without effect. Between seven and eight o'clock witness passed prisoner's tent, and heard prisoner and deceased at high words; about 8 o'clock went to prisoner's tent, and saw deceased lying on her back, and her face covered with blood; found deceased's head quite cold; prisoner was sitting on a box, and after saying, 'I have killed her' ran out of the tent; gave an alarm, and returned with some neighbours to the tent, and found that a rug had been thrown over deceased during his absence; witness and others then gave information at the Camp of the murder; prisoner had called deceased in the course of the day, a "w...e" and a drunkard; deceased denied that she was a w...e; had seen the deceased with black eyes, but could not say how they occurred; deceased was a native of Glasgow, and between 50 and 60 years of age; though prisoner was drunk, witness still thought him capable of knowing what he was doing.

The Court adjourned for half an hour. On re-assembling.

Alexander Cameron deposed that he is a puddler, residing at Ironbark Gully, and lives within 150 yards of prisoner's tent; heard prisoner and deceased quarrelling very much about 6 o'clock on Wednesday afternoon; deceased screamed loudly; witness went to interfere, and found deceased lying on a heap of tailings; and prisoner endeavoured to get her up, and witness concluded, they were friends again; witness saw the prisoner's son about 9 o'clock at the store, who requested him to go to the tent; found prisoner on his knees, leaning over deceased, who was lying on her back; on speaking, to prisoner, he said he was doing nothing to deceased; without knowing that anything was the matter with deceased, he advised them to go to bed, and then left. Did not see deceased again until this morning.

When witness entered the tent heard deceased murmur something, but could not tell what. There were marks of blood on prisoner's shirt sleeves. Prisoner and deceased were in the habit of getting drunk; when they were sober no couple could live on better terms. Witness was of opinion that prisoner was so drunk that he was incapable of knowing what he was doing. William Hobby, a miner, residing about fifty yards from prisoner's tent generally corroborated the evidence of the previous witnesses, but said that he heard deceased say to prisoner, "If you will give me your hand, and not beat me anymore, I will go into the tent," or words to that effect.

Ellen Taylor, wife of Robert Taylor, storekeeper, Long Gully, said that prisoner came to the store about ten o'clock, and had a pint of ale. He was sober, but trembled much. Remarking that the shirt sleeves of prisoner were covered with

blood, he said that he had fallen down on the ranges. On the following morning, discovered blood on the pint pot used by prisoner. John Lowden deposed that he is a miner, residing at Eaglehawk Gully. About six o'clock on Thursday morning prisoner, whom he has known for two years, called and asked for a drink of water, and requested a shirt and trousers, as those he had on were bloody. Witness gave him a shirt and pair of trousers, and prisoner then said he had murdered his wife. Prisoner went away, and witness gave notice to the police.

Police Constable Thomas Clune apprehended prisoner near the Sydenham Gardens. Prisoner acknowledged that he had murdered his wife. Augustus Benjamin Weiss, mounted police constable, deposed that from information he had received, he went to prisoner's tent in Ironbark, on Wednesday, and found deceased lying on her back, covered with a rug. Deceased was bruised and stabbed in several places. The door was bespattered with blood. Underneath a cupboard was a quantity of human hair and blood. Searched the room, and found the rod of iron and knife produced.

Edward Hunt, doctor of medicine, deposed that on Thursday afternoon he went to prisoner's tent, and found the body of deceased lying on the ground, with the legs doubled underneath. There was a pool of blood near deceased; the clothes of deceased were saturated with blood; the face was much bruised; the right hand middle finger was broken; the left hand was injured also; the right cheek had been stabbed, and the upper part of the forehead was cut; the left ear had been cut through; on the right side of the head the scalp was divided, and torn away about two and a half inches in length; this wound appeared as though it had been caused by some blunt instrument, such as a heavy boot with nails in it. The knife produced would inflict the incised wounds. The face was covered with marks of abrasion. There was scarcely any portion of the face, and a large part of the head, that had not received some injury. The legs and chest were, more or less, covered with bruises. Witness opened the head, and found a coagulum (*meaning a coagulated mass or substance*) of blood lying between the scalp and skull.

The scalp in some places was quite detached from the skull. The brain presented the usual appearance of health of a person of the age of deceased. At the base of the brain there were about two ounces of blood and serum. On opening the chest, three of the ribs on the right side were fractured in two places, and the fifth, sixth, and seventh broken. The lungs and heart were healthy. The cause of death was due partly to the effusion of blood and serum at the base of the brain, partly to debility from loss of blood, and the shock from the injury received. The effusion of blood and serum might have been caused by the external violence. Had no doubt that the injuries described were the cause of death. The effusion of blood could not have been caused by a fall. There was an utter absence of all those signs which indicate death arising from strangulation.

This was the whole of the evidence, and the prisoner being asked by the Coroner, after the usual caution; that whatever he said would be taken down in writing and used against him at any future proceedings, if he had anything to say, replied in a low tone that "he knew nothing about it." The Coroner briefly recapitulated the evidence, pointing out to the notice of the jury the more prominent facts, and concluded with saying that if they considered the evidence sufficient, it would be their duty to find a verdict of wilful murder against the prisoner, as there was nothing in the case to warrant any other verdict than that, or acquittal.

The Jury, after half an hour's consultation, returned, a verdict of "Wilful Murder" against the prisoner, who was fully committed for trial at the present Criminal Sessions.

*

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Fri 24 Aug 1860 Page 2

SUMMARY OF LOCAL NEWS.

In addition to the trial of Nial for the murder at the Big Hill, there was another trial for a brutal murder, committed at Ironbark, within a mile of the heart of the township. A man named M'Donald brutally murdered his wife, with whom he had lived a number of years. Although from the evidence adduced, it was pretty clear that the unhappy criminal was under the influence of drink when the fearful deed was committed, the evidence of the murder was clear and conclusive, and the man was sentenced to be executed. He has been forwarded to Melbourne for execution.

A youth named Michael Barrow, sixteen years of age, whose parents reside in Bridge Street, received a sentence of two years imprisonment for the manslaughter of a young man named Sylvester Joseph Emanuel. Some words had arisen between the parties over a game at billiards in Abbott's Hotel, and young Barrow following Emanuel into the street had thrown two stones at him, the second one of which fractured his skull, causing his death a few days afterwards.

The man named John Thomas, who shot a man named Gabriel Garrett, was sentenced to three years on the roads.

There were several other cases of stabbing with intent, &c, showing a large increase of crime in the district for some little time back.

*

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Wed 5 Sep 1860 Page 2

EXECUTION OF M'DONALD.

The man M'Donald, lately convicted of the murder of his wife, under circumstances of peculiar atrocity, at Ironbark Gully, Bendigo, was executed yesterday morning, at the Central Gaol. He was attended to the last by the Rev Messrs Ramsay and Hetherington, who represent him as having been a man of

uncommon intelligence, possessing a clear and correct knowledge of scriptural views and quite prepared to meet death. His appearance on the morning of execution somewhat confirmed this view, for, on emerging from the cell, he appeared tolerably calm, averted his face from the spectators, and seemed to be continually praying. The usual burial service was not read, as M'Donald continued praying with his spiritual advisers till the moment when the drop fell. Owing to some maladjustment of the rope, the poor fellow suffered much and long; nor did his struggles cease till nearly, if not quite, four minutes from the moment of suspension.

From the prison books it appears that he represented himself as having arrived in the colony in 1850, free, having been a native of Glasgow; but in his confessions to the rev gentleman who attended him, he told of sixteen years Vandemonian experiences, during which he met his wife, and, after some period of cohabitation, married her. He attributed his crime to intemperance. In 1854 he said he suffered from delirium tremens for the first time, and was then imprisoned for fourteen days by the police as a dangerous madman. Since that time, he had had frequent relapses into drunkenness, and had as many as six attacks of delirium tremens during the present year. It was during one of these that he killed his wife, of which crime he remembered nothing, and heard of it for the first time from his own little girl, who came to see him at the lockup.- Argus

*



Compiled by Pat & Ian Belmont
in December 2017