

FATAL OCCURRENCE.—It is our painful duty to have to record the violent death of Mr James Kirwan, of Cooma, Maneroo. Someday last week—the particular day we have not been able to ascertain—a groom in the employ of Mr Kirwan, armed with a double-barrelled pistol, was about to fire at a gentleman named Cunningham: when the circumstance having been made known to Mr Kirwan, he rushed towards the groom for the purpose of arresting the deadly instrument from his hands; the man maddened either from the effects of drink or from some other cause fired off the pistol, the contents of which entered Mr K.'s heart, whose death was almost instantaneous. The Rev. R. Walsh, of Queanbeyan, started early on Sunday last for the purpose of attending his funeral. Mr Kirwan was much respected by persons of every grade, not only in the district in which he resided, and where he met his death, but also in every part of the colony where his character was known. The following is another, and by far a more probable account of this tragical affair:—Mr Kirwan had called for his horse, and his groom, whose name is John M'Spadden, was in the act of bringing it when Cunningham called to the man to bring his horse too. The groom replied that he would go to his hut and get the key of the stable and then give him a horse. He went in, came out again with the key in one hand and a double-barrelled pistol in the other; he fired deliberately at Cunningham, but luckily the ball struck a metal button of his coat and glanced off; the man then went into his hut and locked the door. Mr Kirwan, on hearing the report, rushed out, and on being made acquainted with the circumstance, endeavoured to force the door of the hut open. The door gave way; the groom appeared on the threshold, and in this instance fired a gun at Mr Kirwan, the ball of which entered his heart, and he instantly expired. The tragedy does not end here. The man comes out of his hut, leans against the door-post, rests an axe against his leg, and commences to recharge his gun. Two men endeavoured to approach him, but he threatened one of them with a great oath that he "would serve him the same as he had served that b——r, pointing to the dead body, and that he had it in for him the last eighteen months." No one amongst those assembled dared to approach him; although there was a chief constable and two other policemen there, they allowed the man to escape, and the last that was heard of him was, that he was in the Murrumbidgee ranges.—*Goulburn Herald, October 16.*

Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Reviewer (NSW : 1845-1860)
Saturday 23 October 1852



James Kirwan, snr

THE COOMA TRAGEDY.—The murderer of the late Mr James Kirwan (John M'Spadden) is still at large, having successfully eluded the hot pursuit immediately instituted after his flight from the scene of his atrocious crime. In addition to the reward offered by Government for his apprehension, the sum of fifty pounds has been subscribed by residents in the neighbourhood of Cooma, to be appropriated in like manner. M Spadden was seen in Queanbeyan shortly after the murder, but previous to the report of the dreadful deed reaching that township. He was then armed with a double-barrelled gun, and it is supposed he has started for some one of the south em diggings.

Saturday 6 November 1852

FIFTY POUNDS REWARD.
NOTICE.—The above sum of fifty pounds has been collected in the neighbourhood of Cooma, and lodged in the hands of the Bench of Magistrates, to be paid to any person or persons who shall apprehend and lodge in any of Her Majesty's Gaols John M'Spadden, (for whom a warrant has been issued), charged with the murder of Mr. James Kirwan, of Cooma, Innkeeper, on Friday, the 8th instant.

By order of the Bench of Magistrates,
ROBERT DAWSON,
Clerk of Petty Sessions.

Court House, Cooma, October 18.

DESCRIPTION.

Name—John M'Spadden; native place, North of Ireland; trade or calling, Oatler or Gardener; emigrant; age, about 40 years; height, about 5 feet 7½ inches; hair, brown; whiskers inclining to sandy; long nose; heavy eyebrows; stout body; dress when last seen, a light moleskin jacket, no waistcoat, regatta shirt, moleskin trousers, and old cabbage-tree hat; had a gun in his possession and ammunition.

The Sydney Morning Herald
Tuesday 16 November 1852