

**DEATH OF MR GEORGE SMITH, J.P.**

**SUDDEN DEMISE AT DUNOLLY. DETAILS OF A NOTABLE AND HONORABLE CAREER. ALLUSIONS ON THE BENCH AND AT MEETINGS.**

A widespread and profound feeling of regret was occasioned in the City yesterday morning by the announcement that Mr George Smith, J.P., had died suddenly at Dunolly. For some considerable time past Mr Smith had been suffering from asthma, and a few days ago he went to Dunolly, believing that a change of air would have a beneficial effect. He stayed at the Bendigo hotel during his visit, and, according to the information received in Ballarat, was found lying dead in his bed yesterday morning. It is surmised that the cause of death was an affection of the heart, from which the deceased gentleman had suffered. Mr Smith was 68 years of age, and leaves a widow and adult family. Two of his sons are engaged in the metropolis, another was associated with him in business in this city, and the third is in England, where he holds an important position in connection with a prominent firm of seedsmen and nurserymen. Immediately upon the receipt of the news of Mr Smith's death flags were hoisted at half-mast at the City Hall, the Old Colonists' Club, the Hospital, the Benevolent Asylum, and other public buildings, and throughout the day general and sincere expressions of regret were heard, for the deceased gentleman had been one of the pioneers of the city and one of its most highly respected and valued citizens.

**Mr Smith's Career.** The deceased gentleman was a native of Warwick, England, and was born on the 27th November, 1828. He was educated at King Edward's school, Warwick, a very old institution, founded by Edward, Earl of Warwick. Upon completing his education, he chose the occupation of a nurseryman, and accordingly was apprenticed to Mr Deakin, head forester and gardener at Eastnor Castle, the seat of Earl Somers, in Herefordshire. Later in life, in order to enable him to gain a more thorough insight into botany and the laws governing the successful cultivation of plant life, he became a student at the Kew Royal Gardens, and under the director, Sir William Hooker, he gained much valuable experience. For four years he had charge of a department in the Royal Gardens at Windsor Castle, the residence of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, but he at length resolved to relinquish that responsible position and emigrate to Australia. Reports of the richness of the Victorian goldfields had fired his ambition, and in 1853 he left England, arriving in Melbourne in February, 1854. He came at once to Ballarat, and pitched his tent on that portion of the field which now comprises Ballarat East. Digging operations were followed at Eureka Lead, the Gravel Pits, Red Streak, Magpie Lead, and other places in the goldfield with varying success until 1860, when Mr Smith determined upon abandoning the uncertain quest in which he was then engaged in favor of his former calling. That determination was speedily carried out, and Mr Smith commenced business as a nurseryman and seeds man. As the city progressed so did Mr Smith's operations extend, and his plantations increased correspondingly with the growth of his business. A tract of land was purchased in proximity to Lake Wendouree, which at that period in the history of Ballarat was only a swamp, and by untiring energy, patience, perseverance, skill, and knowledge a nursery was formed and maintained, equal to any in Victoria in the variety and quality of its productions, and constituting one of the most beautiful spots in Ballarat. Mr Smith kept himself in touch with the leading botanical and horticultural authorities of the world, and was ever on the alert for the opportunity to introduce to Victoria new and rare varieties of plant life. So thorough was his success that the high repute of the Royal Exotic Nurseries, Ballarat, was, through the favourable report of visitors, known all over the colonies. His conservatories abounded in every description of tree, shrub, and flower known to horticulture, and he was ever willing to considerately impart knowledge and information to amateur florists and others to whom the subject was interesting. For a lengthened period he was the valued contributor of "Horticultural Notes" to The Star at regular intervals, and his exceptional knowledge of his subject enabled him to impart a fund of valuable information in an interesting form. In this connexion a pathetic interest attaches to the last contribution from his pen in this issue of The Star. As a member of the Ballarat Horticultural Society and of the council of the Agricultural and Pastoral Society, of which latter body he was for a number of years vice-president, he did much to advance horticulture and agriculture in this district, and the technical advice which he gave as to the laying out of the botanical gardens, the planting of the street trees, and the cultivation of the water commission's reserves ensured for him the lasting gratitude of

all citizens who recognise how much these works have enhanced the attractiveness of the city. Some years ago on the nomination of Baron von Mueller, he was elected a fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society of England, an honor which he well deserved. In all matters relating to the progress or welfare of the city he took a very deep interest, and he was untiring in his efforts to advance the interests of Ballarat and its inhabitants. In 1871 Mr Smith was elected to the City Council, and whilst a member of that body he was instrumental in obtaining many reforms, and in advancing numerous permanent municipal works and improvements of which the citizens have since reaped the benefit. Whilst a member of the City Council Mr Smith represented that body on the Ballarat Water Commission, and here also he aided in carrying out a number of important works in connection with the reticulation of the City. He was a member of the Exhibition Commission from its inception prior to the first exhibition held in Ballarat in 1878, and in connection with that and each of its successors he was indefatigable in his labours. Mr Smith was a liberal and consistent supporter of the charities, and he devoted a great deal of his time to the government of the several institutions. For many years he occupied a seat on the board of management of the Ballarat Hospital, and on three different occasions he held office as president. For several years he was a member of the committee of the Benevolent Asylum and Orphan Asylum, in the progress of both of which he manifested the liveliest interest. Just as in private, Mr Smith was one of the most trusty and estimable of friends, whose word was his bond, so in the discharge of his public functions he was distinguished by a probity, conscientiousness, fidelity, high sense of honor and duty, and steadfastness of purpose in the carrying out of all that he undertook to do, that were most honorable to him, and exemplary to and worthy of emulation by others. The deceased gentleman was also a prominent member of the local Masonic body, the Commercial Club, and the Old Colonists' Association. In 1888 he was gazetted a justice of the peace for the southern bailiwick, and in that capacity he earned the respect of all by his strict impartiality and unimpeachable rectitude. Mr Smith was a prominent member of the Wesleyan denomination in Ballarat, and was one of the founders and principal members of the Jubilee Wesleyan Church at Wendouree. He took an active part in the establishment of the Wesleyan Church at Brown-Hill, and in 1868 laid the foundation stone of that building.

**References by the Magistracy.** Shortly after the business at the City Police Court had commenced yesterday morning, Mr C. C. Shoppee, J.P., entered the court and handed to Mr Leader, P.M., the chairman of the bench, an announcement of the death of Mr Smith. Mr Leader, after conferring with his brother magistrates, said he had been desired by the bench to express their deep regret at hearing the sad news of the death of their late colleague. Mr Smith had been a magistrate for a number of years, and was highly respected by all classes in the community, and especially by his brother magistrates. If it had not been for the attendance of the Crown Prosecutor and a number of witnesses, whom it would not be right to inconvenience, he would have asked for the adjournment of the court out of respect to the memory of Mr Smith. Mr J. B. Pearson, on behalf of the legal profession, expressed deep regret at the news they had received. Mr Smith had been one of a fast diminishing band of pioneers, who not only laid the foundation of commerce in these parts, but who formed the magistracy and conducted the Courts of Petty Sessions— courts which, he was pleased to say, had been happily free from any of the scandals or unpleasant characteristics which had been present in other parts of the colony. Mr Smith was a man who was fearless and just, the highest qualification anyone connected with the administration of justice could exhibit. The Exhibition Commissioners were to have met last evening, but upon assembling at the office they decided to adjourn out of respect to the memory of their deceased colleague. Feeling reference was made to the deceased gentleman, whose upright demeanour and genial disposition had endeared him to his fellow commissioners, and those present joined in their expressions of condolence and sympathy with the bereaved family.

**Tribute by Hospital Subscribers.** At the special meeting of subscribers to the Ballarat Hospital, held last night, the president (Mr A. Miller) referred in kindly terms to the memory of the esteemed gentlemen. When the poll for the elections to the committee was opened, he remarked he had heard a report as to Mr Smith's death, but as it lacked confirmation, he let the name remain on the ballot paper. Every subscriber, when about to vote, was told of the lamented occurrence, so that many votes which he would otherwise have received were not recorded in his favor, but no less than 98 gentlemen remarked that they could not strike his name out, so that there were 98 tributes to his memory. But for the sad event, he added, he was perfectly certain that Mr Smith would have occupied, as he frequently had done, the highest position on the poll. (Hear, hear.) Mr Smith had been a resident of Ballarat since the early fifties, he had been connected with the Hospital since its inception; he was present at the laying of the foundation stone, and was always a most enthusiastic and energetic worker. He was a thorough gentleman in every sense of the word, and it was pleasant to meet with him. The City's loss

was a great one, for the deceased gentleman was ever generous and public-spirited. As a city councillor and a business man he was known to all, and the feeling of regret at the lamented death of one so manly and charitable would be wide-spread. The president's remarks were generally endorsed, and it was understood that the committee would forward a letter of condolence to the bereaved widow and family.

**Tribute by the Town Council.** Town councillors at their meeting yesterday joined in sympathetic references to Mr Smith's death.

The mayor in his report said:—" I regret to record the unexpected and lamented death to-day of an old townsman and an ex councillor of the city, as well as a member of several of our charitable institutions—Mr Geo. Smith. He was a prominent citizen for many years, and zealous in the interests of the city and town." These expressions were unanimously endorsed.

**The Funeral.** The remains will be brought to Ballarat from Dunolly today, and in accordance with the wish of the deceased gentleman's widow the funeral will be a private one.