

James Russell Thomson

Died on 26th May 1886 aged 68 having caught a cold at the sea coast in February and neglected his health for too long to find relief from Dr s Whitcombe and Bradford

He was a native of Airdrie in Scotland and came to Australia in 1852 with D Gillies and L. Campbell, arriving on Christmas day. He had enlisted in the army in 1819 aged 17 and served in many parts of the world. He subsequently bought his discharge and worked in an office in Scotland? Post Office.

They went to the Ovens diggings in 1853 at Reedy Creek near Beechworth, meeting with fair success. During their time they successfully subdued a mob of lawless men who had held the diggings in a state of fear. They left for Ballarat later that year having heard of immense gold discoveries, and opened two good claims on the Canadian. They also worked in a mine at the site of the present Base Hospital. (*In 1857, the Hospital rejected a scheme whereby Mr Hyde and party be allowed to sink, on certain conditions, in exchange for a 2.5% commission and a promise that, when abandoned, the ground be left in the same condition as on entering. It was then approached by Gillies of the Great Republic Mining Co who proposed to supply a donation of 3 Pounds a week on condition that no other company be allowed to sink on the reserve , a part of which lay within the parallels of the Great Republic Mining Co.*) He was one of the first to follow up the leads into deep ground, a strong and vigorous man and a daring and successful miner. He was a shareholder in several mines in Redan He took a determined and prominent part in the search for Scobie's murderer and was a sound adviser and able worker in the events that led up to the Eureka rising.. He became less involved in general when deafness overtook him, supposedly associated with his work in the mines.

He was member of the Ballarat club and remained a friend of the now Premier D. Gillies He made a fortune and lost it. He was described by Noble Wilson as a man of engaging disposition, only to be known to be liked. He was truthful, patriotic and well read, taking a great interest in literature and used well the knowledge he had gained.

Died 1886 aged 68 yrs,

In his will he set aside a substantial amount for the purchase of Statuary and other ornamentations for the Botanical Gardens (3700 pounds,) and 2 paintings to the Art gallery.

The Trustees purchased The Flight from Pompeii 1500 pounds.(advertised a few years before for 4000 pounds) and the statues Susannah, Ruth, Rebecca and Veiled Modesty for 2500 pounds. With the remainder the statue of William Wallace was bought, the work of Percy Ball. at a cost of 1000 pounds. The acquisition was appropriate in view of Thomson's Scottish heritage. The unveiling was performed in the presences of Nevett, Noble Wilson and his old friend Thomas Stoddart. The reduced attendance was considered in part to the wintry weather but, the "Courier" criticised the Council for the lack of a Council supported agenda and publicity.

At the subsequent banquet chaired by Noble Wilson it was suggested that a marble bust be acquired and placed opposite that of Thomas Stoddart but, as Wilson pointed out, there was not a single portrait available to make that a practical suggestion.

Following his death, his trustees arranged with the Ballarat Council for it to take on the responsibility of the grave as Thomson was a bachelor and had no known descendants. The trustees provided 10 pounds to be invested so that the Council could arrange for a man to attend the grave yearly for 10/-. This was agreed to and took place for a number of years but at this time the grave requires some restoration suggesting that this action no longer occurs.

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JAMES RUSSELL THOMSON

- Born 1818. Airdrie. Scotland
- Enlisted in Army, served in many parts of the world, then in Post Office.
- Arrived Australia 1852 with D. Gillies (later Premier Victoria) and L. Campbell.
- Ovens Diggings in 1853 ("subdued a mob of lawless men") then to Ballarat.
- As a miner one of the first to follow up leads in deeper ground. Successful.
- Share holder in several mines in Redan
- Took a determined and prominent part in the search for Scobie's murderer.
- A sound adviser and able worker in the events that led to Eureka Rising.
- Became deaf, made a fortune and lost much of it.
- "Truthful, patriotic and well read, a man of engaging disposition."
- Died 1886 at 93 Doveton St. Nth. Cause of Death - Cirrhosis of the Liver- 3 weeks, Dr Morrison.
- In his will set aside 3,700 pounds for the purchase of statuary for the Gardens.
- Trustees purchased "Flight from Pompeii" 1500 pounds.
- "Susannah" "Ruth", "Rebecca" and "Veiled Modesty" 2,500 pounds
- With the remainder Trustees bought "Wallace", the work of Percy Ball.