



# Newsletter of the Friends of St Kilda Cemetery Inc.

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## Committee

### President

Gabriel Hermes 0451 831 102

### Secretary and Tour Leader

Claire Barton

### Treasurer

Robin Douglas 0407 542 607

### Committee member

Robert Heath

Geoffrey Paterson

### Newsletter Editor

Geoffrey Paterson 0448740195  
gkp@netspace.net.au

## Contact Us

- St Kilda Cemetery is on the corner of Dandenong Road and Hotham Street, East St Kilda
- Email: [info@foskc.org](mailto:info@foskc.org)
- Mail: PO Box 261  
St Kilda, Vic. 3182
- Web: [foskc.org](http://foskc.org)



Residents and Friends  
of St Kilda Cemetery

## Tours

Please email above or phone Gabriel Hermes on 0451 831 102

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## President's Word

This is another fascinating newsletter that you are receiving for your enjoyment.

We are still restricted under the present rules so there are no tours yet. However, the Committee is working behind the scenes preparing and meeting by internet. It is quite a novel experience and thanks go to our new committee member Robert Heath for his ingenuity. The next page introduces each Committee member.

On behalf of the Committee I wish you all good health and be safe.

**Gabriel Hermes**

## Our Patron



Sam Hibbins, the State Member for Prahran, has lived in the Prahran electorate for over 10 years and currently lives in Prahran with his wife and two children.

Sam holds the portfolios of Transport, Education and LGBTI Equality for the Victorian Greens. In 2014, Sam made history by being one of the first-ever Greens MPs elected to the Victorian Parliament lower house and was re-elected in 2018. Sam was a local government councillor from 2012 to 2014, as one of two Greens elected to the City of Stonnington. On council, he worked to secure sustainability programs, better bike infrastructure, more open space and advocated for better public transport.

Sam previously worked in social services and holds a Post-Graduate Diploma in Social Policy and Research. He grew up on a hobby farm in Hastings on the Mornington Peninsula and then in Frankston, where he attended Frankston TAFE.

You will often find Sam out and about on Chapel Street, getting coffee or browsing secondhand book stores. Sam is a commuter cyclist and his interests include football, cricket, *Star Wars* films and running.

**Annual General Meeting, 15 August at 2.00pm**  
**Members will shortly receive meeting details.**

# Introducing the Committee

## **President Gabriel Hermes**

I was born in Alexandria Egypt, educated in Della Salle College where I learned Egyptian and French history. After the 1957 Suez crisis, we lived as refugees for three years in Genoa Italy, went to school and learned Italian history and art.

We arrived by ship in Melbourne in 1959 and stayed in the Bonegilla Camp, eventually worked at Assumption College Kilmore, and met Aboriginal people for the first time. We later travelled to Melbourne, worked as a despatch boy at Moores Reads Store in Prahran, then transferred to sales, eventually being promoted to furniture buyer for three stores. I worked for the company from 1962 until its 1974 closure. I was invited by Mr Frederick Moore to give a talk on behalf of the company to the Prahran Historical Society.

I was hooked on history, I joined the PHAS committee and eventually became the President. Most of my life I lived and worked in Prahran with Waltons and Paterson stores. During that period I gave talks on the Garden of Eden, Noah and the history of the Prahran Market. I retired from tram driving after 36 years, and for the past four years I have been a FOSKC member. I just simply like History.

## **Secretary and Tour Leader Claire Barton**

Hi, am a former East St Kilda resident, but have now lived in South Caulfield longer. A former junior at Dame Zara Holt's shop *Magg* in Toorak, I ended my working life being known as Claire of Clegs – dress fabrics in Little Collins Street. Since then I have become involved with the local historical society, and spend my time researching history of former owners of little known mansions in Glen Eira or St Kilda, that may be useful for a tour. I research unknown, deceased people of social interest in St Kilda Cemetery for future tours, and between that, do my family history research.

## **Treasurer Robin Douglas**

Born and raised in Brighton but from about the age of 14 years I have lived in Parkdale and Beaumaris. Graduating from Royal Melbourne Technical College with a Diploma of Building Construction, I subsequently worked for 35 years, mainly as a building estimator, before eventually running my own small commercial/industrial construction business. After retiring, I joined my wife's family seedling nursery as office manager. Now nominally retired I have maintained an interest in the nursery, which is operated by my elder son, doing part-time book-keeping. When not working, I volunteer with the local U3A, enjoy a round of golf and waste a lot of time on genealogy; the occasional discovery of a new ancestor keeping me enthusiastic. St Kilda Cemetery contains the remains of some of the Douglas family and the Ellis family, a branch of my wife's family.

## **Committee member Rob Heath**

I got interested in history as a secondary school student in Ballarat. I studied law and history at university where Don Garden and others stoked my interest in Australian and local history. I now work as a barrister – but I enjoy getting involved in all sorts of history projects. I like looking into and writing about VFL history – my last piece described the work of the legal team that saved the Footscray Football Club in 1989. A few years ago, Tony Wilson and I made a documentary about *The Galahs* – the team of VFL footballers that travelled to Ireland in 1967 under the leadership of Harry Beitzel (*the Big H*).

I enjoy wandering around cemeteries, and investigating the tombstones and monuments. I think this interest came from a fascination with the graves of Chinese Hawkers in one corner of the Warracknabeal Lawn Cemetery (and how different they were from the graves of Lutheran wheat farmers). My favourite cemeteries are St. Kilda (of course!) and the one at the back of the National Mosque in Malaysia where the first person buried was Tun Dr Ismail, the former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia and a former Registrar of the Wimmera Base Hospital in Horsham. I shall look forward to seeing you at the FOSKC tours in the future.

## **Committee member and Newsletter Editor Geoffrey Paterson**

I am a native of Camden (South Caulfield) and a retired geography teacher in the Education Department. I am interested in different aspects of Caulfield and Melbourne including houses, strip shopping centres, transport, and churches. I look forward to learning more about St Kilda through the Friends. I also look forward to your Newsletter contributions.

# A legal zoom into St Kilda Cemetery

**LAWWEEK**  
18-24 MAY 2020

Presented by  
VictoriaLaw  
Foundation

On Friday 22 May 2020, 110 participants joined the Friends of St Kilda Cemetery (FOSKC) and The Victorian Bar on Zoom to hear about four prominent Victorian legal figures. FOSKC Committee member Rob Heath's introduction was followed by presentations in which four members of the Victorian Bar spoke on a past legal identity. Each presentation is summarised below and may be listened to at <https://vimeo.com/422294272> Articles on James Purves and Archibald Michie appear on pages 4 and 6. The bracket numbers show the starting time for each lawyer.

## James Liddell Purves

Presented by Matthew Harvey SC (2:00)



James Liddell Purves was born 23 August 1843. He attended schools in Victoria and England, and Trinity College Cambridge.

He was called to the English Bar in 1863 before returning to the Victorian Bar three years later where he developed a large and successful practice, taking silk in 1886. To his contemporaries, Purves' success lay in his cross-examination powers, worldly wisdom, forensic ability and gifts as an advocate.

He was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1872 and was an enthusiastic supporter of Federalism. He was also racehorse owner, champion shot, and yachtsman,

He married Anna Lavinia Grice in 1875 but she died in childbirth. Four years later he married Eliza Emma Brodribb with whom he had five children. Purves died on 24 November 1910. He is buried at Church of England Compartment B Grave 0255.

## Sir Archibald Michie QC

Presented by Daniel Aghion (12:40)



Archibald Michie was born in London in 1813. He became a barrister in London in 1838 and two years later in New South Wales. Michie and wife Mary spent several years overseas before arriving in Melbourne in 1852. He served in the Victoria Parliament

from 1852 to 1872 where he was Minister for Justice and Attorney-General.

Michie was a highly successful barrister, had a quick eye for weaknesses in an opponent's case, successfully defended pro bono two of the thirteen Eureka rebels, and in 1863, became Victoria's first QC.

Michie was also a lecturer, arts patron, author, and early supporter of artist Eugen von Guerard. He served as Agent-General in London between 1873 and 1879 and was knighted in 1878. He died on 21 June 1899 and is buried in Compartment B Grave 15 of the Church of England section.

## Sir Thomas à Beckett

Presented by Gayann Walker (22:05)



Sir Thomas à Beckett, born 1836 in London, came to Melbourne in 1851 where he started his legal education. In 1857 aged 20, he went to London to study law, before returning in 1860.

He was appointed judge of the Supreme Court on 30 September 1886 where he served until his July 1917 retirement. He was a very popular judge described as an ornament of the Victorian Bench. He may also be seen as a judicial activist who decided cases on more of a feeling as to correct outcome as opposed to what legal authorities indicated was correct. Indeed, he may have courted some controversy as shown, for example, in the case of *In the will of Thomas* (1915 VLR41) which the Court of Appeal overturned (1915 VLR 141).

Knighted in 1909, he was father of five children and husband to Isabella, daughter of Archibald Michie. He died on 21 June 1919.

## Alfred Deakin

Presented by Charles Shaw SC (31:10)



Alfred Deakin was a remarkable Australian: tall and handsome, an orator of astonishing power, elected to the Victorian Parliament aged 22, he made a considerable contribution to the federation as three-time prime minister.

He enrolled at the Bar in 1877, but was not an enthusiastic practitioner and had little work. At this time, he was writing for *The Age* and his association with publisher David Syme led to his being elected a member of parliament between 1880 and 1890.

Deakin returned to the law in the 1890s and participated in some interesting cases. He was appointed the first Commonwealth Attorney-General and, as first law officer, was the driving force behind the Judiciary Bill to establish the High Court .

Deakin died on 7 October 1919 and is buried in the Baptist Compartment A, Grave 91.

# James Liddell Purves QC

by Matthew Harvey SC

It is Friday morning, 12 October 1894. A medium sized man, wearing suit and sporting a silk hat, is walking down Collins Street towards his Chambers. Suddenly, a large man approaches, saying: "Put up your hands, you ruffian." The medium sized man, unfazed by the challenge, responds: "Who are you speaking to?" The two men, adopting the boxer's stance, shape up. The large man is Dr O'Hara, a highly regarded Melbourne surgeon. The medium sized man is James Liddell Purves QC, an eminent silk at the Victorian Bar.<sup>1</sup>

O'Hara delivers a ferocious right to Purves's head. Undeterred, Purves delivers some heavy blows to O'Hara's chest and shoulders. The story now becomes unclear, either O'Hara punches Purves on the nose and then delivers one to his jaw or Purves trips on the asphalt, but in either event Purves falls to the ground, his nose bleeding, flat on his back in Collins Street. He is lifted from the kerb, taken into a nearby drapery store, cleaned up and brushed down. Despite this incident, within half an hour or so, Purves is appearing before the Supreme Court in a shipping matter.

Some years earlier, Dr O'Hara had given evidence in a proceeding that he had charged a fee of 500 guineas for surgery. Purves had asked him in cross-examination whether the fee was excessive. Dr O'Hara answered that he had once been paid 1,000 guineas for an operation. In his address to the jury, Purves said that the surgeon had not said whether the 1,000 guineas was paid "for a legal or an illegal operation".<sup>2</sup> This evoked the rebuke of the trial judge and the enmity of Dr O'Hara.

What does this incident say about James Liddell Purves? It is perhaps best answered by Purves's words in an interview he gave later that afternoon: ". . . a public man never knows what is going to happen to him in this free country. A politician or a lawyer is always sure to offend someone, if he does his duty fearlessly and honestly . . .". Without a doubt, Purves was a robust, energetic and fearless advocate at the Victorian Bar and beyond. He was motivated by a sense of public duty, which

was given full vent by his involvement in the Australian Natives' Association.

On 23 August 1843, James Liddell Purves was born in Swanston Street, Melbourne. He was the eldest son of James and Caroline Purves. His father was an old colonist from Berwick-upon-Tweed. Purves attended school in Melbourne. At age 12 he travelled with his parents to England. There he attended various schools and, eventually, Trinity College, Cambridge.<sup>3</sup> He spent a number of years on the Continent becoming proficient in French and German and in losing his money gambling.<sup>4</sup> In 1863, he was called to the Bar of England. In December 1866, on returning to Australia, he was admitted to the Victorian Bar.<sup>5</sup>

I would like to say that Purves was a studious lawyer. But he was not. Despite this, he developed a large and successful practice, taking silk in 1886. Alfred Deakin ascribed his success to his powers of cross-examination, his worldly wisdom and his remarkable gifts as an advocate. Another contemporary described Purves as a man of pre-eminent forensic ability, saying:

What a splendid presence he had! And what personality! There was something magnetic about the great "J.L.". His rich, sonorous voice, so full of expression; his dare-devil manner; his insight into character; his keen and trenchant humour – all contributed to making him a popular and successful advocate.<sup>7</sup>

To appreciate Purves's skill as a cross-examiner, one should look at his performance in a dispute over a will in 1891. Purves was briefed for John McMeckan who sought to upset the will of his uncle, who, on his death, left an estate worth £120,000. One of the issues at stake was whether the uncle, in preparing his will, was under the undue influence of one of his nieces, Miss Grace Mackie. Miss Mackie gave evidence to disprove the allegation of undue influence. Purves's cross-examination of her reads:

Purves: How old were you when you came to Victoria?

Mackie: About 20.

(pause)

Purves: Is that a lady's answer or a truthful answer?

Mackie: A lady's answer (laughter).

Purves: Then you were more than 20?

Mackie: Yes (laughter).

Purves: What was your age when you came to Victoria?

Mackie: 25 (laughter).

Purves: Why did you tell me a wanton falsehood and say you were 20?

Mackie: Because I was 20.

Purves: And the rest?

Mackie: Yes (laughter).

Purves: Why did you did tell me a falsehood?

Mackie: It just occurred to me.

Purves: What do you mean?

Mackie: It wasn't particular.

Purves: Do you mean that it wasn't relevant to the Court case?

Mackie: Yes. Not of any consequence.

Purves: Do you say that you would imperil your soul for something of no consequence?

Mackie: No. I beg your pardon.

Purves: It isn't my pardon. It is something far beyond me or anyone else in this Court. Why did you tell me that lie?

Mackie: I cannot say.<sup>8</sup>

Purves seizes on this surprising first answer from Miss Mackie and, by using humour, ultimately has her admitting that she had lied to the Court. His agility and guile as a cross-examiner are plain.

Purves was elected to the Victorian Parliament but never excelled as a parliamentarian. But Deakin speaks glowingly of Purves as a promoter of the cause of federalism. This arose from his involvement in the Australian Natives' Association.<sup>9</sup> During the 1890s, Purves would make rousing speeches, advocating an independent federation of Australian states.

On Friday, 7 March 1890, Purves delivered a speech at a branch meeting of the ANA at the Brunswick Town Hall. In that speech he said:

The pioneers of this continent were a brave and generous people, the descendants of a brave and generous race. But the descendants are equal to their forefathers and to their brothers across the seas. All I advocate for Australians is equality. The present ties that bind us to the old country are merely the silken ties of affection and blood . . . they might become as weak as thread, or as strong as iron chains. If we are equal as men with Britishers, we should have equal rights but no colonial born man, no matter what his position might be, can take his place amongst the statesmen of the Empire. That ought to be put an end to. That is intolerable, considering that we have a right to maintain perfect equality with those who rule over our destinies in England. The only way to ensure that equality – is that there should be federation – a united Australia.<sup>10</sup>

Imagine that sonorous voice, imagine the cheering crowd. This was a man who could advocate a cause passionately and eloquently.

As to his personal life, in 1875, Purves married Anne Lavinia Grice. They had a son, James, but Anne died soon after childbirth. In 1878, Purves married Eliza Emma Brodribb. They had two sons and three daughters.

Purves was a great sportsman. He was well known in Victorian sporting circles as an owner of racehorses, a champion shot, a player of lawn tennis and a yachtsman.

In the course of his career, Purves was briefed in most of the major pieces of litigation in Victoria from 1890 to 1910. His success came to an end when he died suddenly on 24 November 1910.

The next morning, Sir John Madden, Chief Justice of Victoria, expressed the Court's regret at Purves's passing and praised him for his extraordinary gifts in assisting the Court. Sir Edward Mitchell KC expressed sincere appreciation of the Chief Justice's speech.

But I don't want to finish, dwelling on the death of this extraordinary man. Instead, I will finish with one story. Purves was not a paragon of virtue. One day, he was involved in a case in which he called as a witness the keeper of a well-known brothel, Purves asked her for her name and address. The witness replied: "Oh, Mr Purves, you know my address." Purves replied: "Yes, I know your address. But my learned friend would like to know it and so would the gentlemen of the jury; and perhaps his Honour would like to have it on his notes."

## References

See page 8.



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The Friends of St Kilda Cemetery thank Scotsburn for their kind assistance.

# Sir Archibald Michie Victoria's first Queen's Counsel

by Daniel Aghion

## Background

Sir Archibald Michie QC, buried at St Kilda Cemetery, was a thoroughly modern man. Michie was born in London in 1813, the son of a merchant. He first became a barrister in England in 1838, and then in New South Wales in 1840.

## Early years

Michie was an early activist against transportation of convicts. In 1849 in Sydney, he spoke at a rally against the practice. His efforts assisted in ending transportation the following year.

Together with his wife Mary, he returned to England but soon afterwards they migrated to Canada, then back to Sydney and finally in 1852 to Melbourne. They arrived only one year after the colony was proclaimed.

The Michies were close to the A'Becketts, a leading legal family of the day. Michie was friends with the first Victorian Chief Justice, Sir William A'Beckett; when first arriving in the colony, he served as associate to William's brother, the solicitor Thomas Turner A'Beckett; and Archibald and Mary's daughter Isabella married Thomas' son Thomas junior, who became Sir Thomas A'Beckett a judge of the Supreme Court of Victoria.

## Politics

Michie served as a member of the Victorian Parliament from 1852 to 1872, and was at times minister of justice and Attorney-General.

Michie's political views were at the forefront of progressive thinking of the time. He was a staunch supporter of both Victorian and Australian independence from mother England. He even spoke in favour of a motion that, if Great Britain were to declare war, the Australian colonies should be permitted to remain neutral.

In 1858, on a debate to extend the voting franchise to every male person over the age of 21 years – not just property owners and those with miner's licences – Michie was the only parliamentarian to argue that the vote should be extended to females as well. He said that "he knew many women

who were in every respect much better fitted for the exercise of any franchise than many of the members of the male sex".

But he could also be frustratingly inconsistent. One of the big issues of the day was freedom of trade. Michie sometimes voted with the free traders and other times with the protectionists. When challenged on this inconsistency, Michie said "Tariffs are not Protectionism, provided that the tariff is appropriately low".

But Michie's time as a politician was not continuous. In 1863 for example, Michie lost the seat of St Kilda. Gavan Duffy, later Premier of Victoria, said that it was because Michie neglected his electorate.

## Law

If Michie neglected his constituents, he certainly did not neglect his clients. He was a highly successful barrister and at his peak earned 8,000 pounds a year, an enormous sum of money.

In 1855, together with other leading barristers of the day, he volunteered without fee to defend the 13 Eureka rebels who had been charged with high treason. One of Michie's two clients, John Manning, was a reporter at the *Ballarat Times*. He reported on the government attacks on the miners' stockade and is described as Australia's first war correspondent. They were both acquitted, along with almost all of their co-accuseds.

It sounds like Michie did not have much work to do in the Eureka trial. A contemporary report recorded that the first acquittal came early. It was cheered in the Court and in the streets, and it was obvious what verdicts the jury would deliver for the rest of the accuseds. The defence barristers apparently wandered off into other courts to attend to more profitable business, and had to be called back to the Eureka trial to criticise evidence that the barristers cheerfully admitted they had not even been in Court to hear! They knew they could rely upon the jury to acquit the remaining accuseds – and the jury did.

This is not to downplay Michie's skill. He was a brilliant barrister. He was said to

have “a quick eye for the weak points in an opponent’s case”, a humorous style, and “a clever knack of raiding a laugh at the expense of a witness whom he wished to disconcert”. It is hardly surprising that, in 1863, he became Victoria’s first QC.

But if Michie had a fault, it was that he could be too severe in his cross-examination. In one insurance case, the plaintiff was a handsome young woman and widow of a young naval officer who had been well known in the colony. A modern barrister would describe a witness like that as uncross-examinable. A fire occurred in her house, and Michie’s client – the insurer – refused to pay. So she sued.

Michie cross-examined the plaintiff so heavily that she burst into tears in the witness box. It was no surprise when the jury delivered a verdict for the woman, against the insurer.

In 1873, Michie bought a building at 73 Chancery Lane and established it as chambers for a number of barristers. It was named *Michie’s Building* – modesty was obviously not one of Michie’s traits. Chancery Lane still exists, and is now known as Little Collins Street, between Queen and William Streets – behind the new RACV Club. Chancery Lane around that time was home to a warren of lawyers, but also Graham’s slaughterhouse and the Victorian Cream and Butter Company. The butter company in particular used to pour tons of buttermilk waste into the surrounding laneways daily. The butter company’s excuse was that if they kept the water running it would wash away, and buttermilk only smells if you let it lie around in stagnant pools! But that was the Melbourne of Michie’s time.

### **A person of arts and letters**

Turning to his personal interests, Michie was a lecturer, an author, a patron of the arts, and a man of modern cultural tastes. One of Michie’s particular interests was phrenology – the examination of the skull to determine human behaviour, especially to diagnose criminal tendencies. Although long since discredited, the study of phrenology was at the time considered a thoroughly modern form of scientific analysis, in that it treated certain parts of the brain as controlling specified personality traits. It was a precursor to psychiatry and psychology, and formed part of a reformist movement to demystify and explain

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criminal behaviour. So the reasoning went, if a person’s head (and therefore their brain) contained certain physical features, then (a) their criminal behaviour was not a matter of personal choice, but an accident of birth; and (b) the person was capable of reform by retraining to behave in a socially acceptable behaviour.

He was inspired by John Stuart Mill – the leading English philosopher of the time, and was friends with Charles Dickens – the great author. In Australia, he was an early supporter of the great Australian naturalist painter Eugene von Guerard. In 1866, Michie purchased and gifted a painting to the National Gallery of Victoria *Spring in the Valley of the Mitta Mitta with the Bogong Ranges*. This was the first of von Guerard’s paintings to enter a public collection, and it was the modern art of its day.

Michie was even part-owner of a newspaper, the *Melbourne Morning Herald* and *General Daily Advertiser*. Michie may have been a brilliant speaker, but he was a terrible business manager, and he sold out within two years at a huge loss. Nonetheless, the paper survives to this day – albeit in significantly modified form – as the Melbourne daily *Herald Sun*.

### **Later years**

From 1873 to 1879, Michie served in London as agent-general for Victoria and was knighted for his service. He then returned to Melbourne and practised as a barrister, but it is said – with “no flashes of the old fire”.

In his retirement, he wrote for the newspapers including the *London Times* under the byline “Letter from Melbourne”.

### **Death**

Michie died on 21 June 1899 at St Kilda, aged 87. Michie had lived in Alma Road, at the intersection with Hotham Street and just across the road from St Kilda Cemetery. The house is still standing. On Michie’s death, he did not have far to travel to be interred.

### **Joan Rosanove QC**

Sir Archibald Michie was Victoria’s first QC, and obviously, Victoria’s first male QC. We had to wait until 1965, more than 100 years later, to see the appointment of Victoria’s first female QC, Joan Rosanove.

There is insufficient time in this presentation to consider the life of this formidable barrister, who at her peak was said to handle

1 in 8 of all of the divorce cases in Victoria. It would be a remarkable coincidence if St Kilda Cemetery were the resting place of Victoria's first female QC as well. But sadly, it is not to be. Joan died at Frankston in 1974 and was cremated.

But there is a connection to St Kilda, nonetheless. Joan's grandfather, David Braham, is buried at St Kilda Cemetery. He was a lawyer too, and his time in Melbourne coincided almost exactly with Michie's. I have no doubt they knew each other and crossed professional paths regularly. Braham is interred in the Jewish section in the south-western corner of St Kilda Cemetery, just across the road from Michie's old house in Alma Road.

In that indirect way, St Kilda Cemetery has a connection to Victoria's first male QC and to its first female QC as well.

### References

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*The Argus*, 23 June 1899, p. 6: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/9519634>

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*Australian Dictionary of Biography*: Joan Mavis Rosanove <http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/rosanove-joan-mavis-11560>

*Australian Dictionary of Biography* David Braham <http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/braham-david-20712>

### James Liddell Purves from page 5. References

- 1 A detailed description of the incident, including an interview with each pugilist, is in *The Argus*, 13 October 1894, p. 7.
- 2 *The Argus*, 13 October 1894, p. 7.
- 3 *The Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 5, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1974 (ADB); *The Argus*, 25 November 1910, p. 6; *The Age*, 25 November 1910, p. 7.
- 4 A. Deakin, *The Federal story*, Robertson & Mullens, Melbourne, 1944, p. 5.
- 5 *The Argus*, 25 November 1910, p. 6; *The Age*, 25 November 1910, p. 7; ADB.
- 6 Deakin, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- 7 P. Jacobs, *Famous Australian trials and memories of the law*, Robertson & Mullens, Melbourne, 1942, pp. 129-130.
- 8 Jacobs, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.
- 9 Deakin, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- 10 This is the author's reconstruction of a speech in *The Mount Alexander Mail*, 10 March 1890, p. 2.
- 11 ADB; and *The Age*, 25 November 1910, p. 7.
- 12 Deakin, *op. cit.*, p. 6; A Dean, *A multitude of counsellors*, F. W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1968, p. 146.
- 13 *The Argus*, 26 November 1910, p.18.
- 14 Dean, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149.

## Recent Arrivals

The Friends have recently received these publications.

- *Brighton Historical Society Journal* No 191, Autumn 2020.
- Malvern Historical Society, *Local history news*, Newsletter 85, May 2020.
- *Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society eBulletin*, March 2020, April 2020, and May 2020.
- *Royal Historical Society History News* Issue 348, June 2020.
- *St Kilda Historical Society Newsletter*, April 2020.

The deadline for the September Newsletter is 9 August. Please send **your** contribution to [gkp@netspace.net.au](mailto:gkp@netspace.net.au)

# HM Gooch 1839–1905

## Mayor of Prahran

Presbyterian  
Compartment A  
Grave 98

by Claire Barton



Henry Mansfield Gooch JP was born in Sydney, and educated at The Kings School, Parramatta. In 1855, he came overland with a mob of horses from the borders of New South Wales and Queensland selling them at the Bendigo diggings. Ten years

later, he made another trip with 2,000 head of cattle and remained in Victoria.

Gooch joined the firm of Knight Bros., of the Australian Wine Company, to which he succeeded in 1868, and which he successfully conducted up to his death. He was a household name, associated with the leading social circles, and gained a wide knowledge as an expert on wines.

He was one of the promoters of the successful Intercolonial Wine and Fruit Exhibition held at the Victorian Exhibition buildings in 1884. As a wine expert he had judged at all exhibitions and agricultural shows over 25 years.

In January 1891, he was elected a council member of the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria where he was instrumental in getting a handsome pavilion erected at a cost of £500 for the display and sale of wine, instead of being sandwiched between the eggs and the butter and bacon.

A member of HM Gooch and Co., wine merchants, he entered the Prahran City Council in January taking the place of Henry Osment who had retired, and occupied the position of Mayor from 1899 to 1904.

As Mayor, he completed two years in the chair during which time some of the most stirring history of our city was made. No-one more proudly rose when the news reached Australia of the relief of Mafeking. Again in May, Councillor Gooch was Mayor during the Victorian visit of the Duke and Duchess of York.

For 14 years he was a member of the

Agricultural Society of Victoria and was one of the managers of the Alfred Hospital. An ardent lover of sport, for 14 years he was a treasurer of the East Melbourne Cricket Club, of which he was made a life member for services rendered, and of which he was also Vice President. He was also president of the Victorian Swimming Club in St Kilda. During his residence of 25 years, his only migrations were from St Kilda to Prahran and vice-versa and he took an exceptionally warm interest in social matters. He was the honorary secretary of the great opening of the Victoria Gardens, Prahran on which thousands of children were entertained. He was also secretary to the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, while his name will always be remembered as an organiser of return balls to the various Mayors of Prahran. His service as an organiser to the Prahran Dog and Poultry Society was gratefully cherished by its members and the public. Henry Mansfield Gooch was a courteous citizen, an intelligent legislator and well known in commercial circles.

Six months before his death, he was thrown from his buggy while driving to his vineyards at Christmas Hills, and it was found that this ultimately led to his death, as his heart had become affected. He died at his residence *Larundel* in Irving Road Toorak. He left a widow and son, H. Percy Gooch.

### References

*Prahran Chronicle*, 8 August 1891, p. 2.

*Prahran Chronicle*, 13 May 1905, p. 3.

### Friends of St Kilda Cemetery Inc AGM [A0038728J](#)

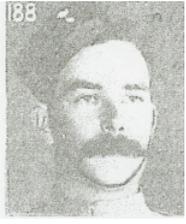
The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 15 August 2020 at 2.00pm at the PMI, 39 St Edmonds Road Prahran.

Dr Judith Buckrich will speak on the History of Greville Street Prahran and some personalities buried in the St Kilda Cemetery.

Members will shortly receive more details. Questions to Gabriel on 0451831102.

# Robert James Byers

by Gabriel Hermes



Robert is buried with his whole family in Independent Compartment C Grave 423.

The first to be buried were his parents Anne Jane Byers (née Coppin) who

died 8 October 1917 age 70 while his father William Byers died on 22 December 1919 aged 76. Robert James' wife Catherine Mary (née Raisbeck) unfortunately died aged 46 on 7 February 1933. Eight years later, Robert James died on 19 August 1941 aged 65. He is buried alongside his wife.

Byers Senior with his wife Anne boarded a ship for Melbourne around 1875. Between 1874 and 1887 they had five daughters and three sons. One of them was Robert James Byers born in Prahran on 20 August 1875 (Reg. 25060 birth index) of the Presbyterian faith. He enlisted at the age of 16 in militia service with the Williamstown Battery, Victorian Garrison Artillery, serving between 30 January 1891 and 7 October 1895. He was then a big boy just over 5'8" tall, weight 166 pounds, and chest just over 40 inches.

The Boer War started in 1881 when the English Army were defeated by the highly mobile Boer mounted troops. The first wave was raised by the Australian colonies in 1899 in response to the war. Some 15,000 Australian men and women joined the force to fight in South Africa. Most were born between 1870 and 1880.

Robert aged 24 enlisted on 25 October 1899 with the First Victorian Contingent (Service Number 98). Whether Robert answered the patriotic call of Mother Country England, was in for the adventurous life, or liked army life, we really don't know.

The Victorian Contingent boarded the SS *Medic* at Port Melbourne on the 28 October. They sailed for Cape Town

nearly a month later arriving on 26 November. They soon went into action in Pink Hill where Robert was shot through the legs on 22 February 1900 and became a prisoner of war. He was released from Pretoria four months later on 6 June and left Cape Town on 13 December aboard the SS *Orient* arriving in Port Melbourne on 5 January 1901. He was soon discharged from the army and was awarded the Queen's South Africa Medal and three clasps. The medal was instituted by Queen Victoria in 1900 for military and civilian personnel who served in the Second Boer War.

Robert Byers in 1906 married Catherine Mary Raisbeck (Reg. 5839 R). While living in Kyneton, they had three children: Marjorie Lillian (1908-?) Leonard James (1912-1962) and Eric Robert (1915-1960), who all lived in Melbourne.

Robert was in Citizen Military Force as a Drill Instructor from 1910 to 1914. When World War 1 started, Robert enlisted in army on 3 February 1917 and served in the Light Rail Operations Division. He left Australia on the 29 February arriving in England on 26 April, and from there he was taken to France on 29 June. He was promoted to Second Lieutenant on the 16 October and to Lieutenant on 11 January 1918.

Robert remained in France on active duty until he left on the SS *Orient* for Australia on the 21 June 1919. He arrived on 13 August, was discharged from the army two months later, but remained as a Lieutenant, Reserve of Officers, until 1 July 1922 when he was 47 years old. He retired from the army on 19 August 1935 aged 60. During the period as a reservist he was in business as a tailor in High Street, East Prahran.

Robert James Byers must have been a fascinating and well-travelled man.

## References

Electoral rolls 1926 Latrobe Melbourne 1903-1980). Ancestry. Australian War Memorial. Southern Metropolitan Cemetery Trust.

# History of the *SS Medic*

by Gabriel Hermes

We write the life story of soldiers but we never wonder about the fate of the ships that carried them into the war zone. This article considers the *SS Medic* which carried Robert James Byers to the Boer War.

Feature	<i>SS Medic</i>	<i>MS Spirit of Tasmania 1</i>
Tonnage	11,985	29,607
Speed	13.5 knots	30.8 knots
Length	173 metres	194.3 metres
Width	19.3 metres	25 metres
Power	coal	diesel
Cargo	Meat	500 cars
Passengers	320	1,400

## 1898–1914

But first, let us see how the *Medic* compares to the modern-day *Spirit of Tasmania*.

The *SS Medic* and her sister ship *SS Afric* were built in 1898 by Harland & Wolff in Belfast. Her maiden voyage, on 3 August 1899 from Liverpool to Sydney via Cape Town, was the White Star Lines' first scheduled voyage to Australia. Her return trip in September 1899 saw her pick up the 1st Victorian Contingent of men and horses in addition to soldiers from Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia.

The *Medic* returned to commercial service in January 1900 with William Murdoch the second officer in charge for the run from Liverpool to Australia. William came from a seafaring family dating back to about 1800, his father was a master mariner, and he was ready for the sea from age 14. While doing the run to Australia in 1903 on the *Medic*, he met, and later married in Southampton, passenger and school teacher Ada Banks. Promotion finally came his way and his professional approach to his work led him to the First Officer on the new RMS *Titanic*. On the fateful night of 15 April 1912, William Murdoch was on the bridge when he was told that there was an iceberg just ahead and it was too late to avoid it. At 39, William Murdoch, the professional First Officer, died with his ship.

## First World War

With the start of World War 1, the *Medic* continued in commercial service but



*SS Medic* Leaving the Pier in Melbourne  
State Library Victoria Accession H42234  
Rose Sterographic Card.

also carried troops. In this latter role, it was designated His Majesty's Australian Transport, or HMAT 7. In 1914, one soldier on board was John Simpson-Kirkpatrick of Simpson and his donkey fame (killed 19 May 1915). From 1917 until 1919, the ship operated on the Liner Requisition Scheme.

In late 1918, the *SS Medic* was carrying reinforcements for the European front when peace was declared. This was a period when Europe, America and New Zealand were facing a Spanish Influenza epidemic while Australia was free from this terrible disease.

*SS Medic* with 1000 troops and personnel was sailing in the Pacific when it received a message from HQ to turn back as the replacement troops were no longer needed in Europe. The *Medic* turned back to Wellington port in New Zealand to refuel. However, the ship's captain was not informed by New Zealand authorities that their country was in the middle of an epidemic.

Upon arrival the captain allowed the nurses and the officers to visit the city while the soldiers remained on board. On returning to the ship they brought with them the deadly flu, which spread among them. Upon arriving in Sydney, everybody was very sick, the ship was flying the yellow flag of infestation, and they were all transported to the quarantine hospital. Some survived others did not.

## Between the Wars

In June 1928, the *Medic* was sold to N. Bugge in Tønsberg, Norway and converted into a mother whaling ship by Grayson, Rolls & Clover Docks in Birkenhead. She

# Book Review



Richard Broome, Richard Barnden, Elisabeth Jackson and Judith Smart. *Melbourne's twenty decades*. Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Melbourne, 2019. ISBN 9781875173082 148 pages.

*Melbourne Twenty Decades* is an attractive, informative and easy to read book that provides ready access to a vast array of black and white photographs and maps.

It is the work of multiple contributors. In addition to the four editors, the introductory text for each chapter is authored by these well known historians – Jill Barnard, Richard Broome, Michael Cannon, Graeme Davison, Don Garden, John Lack, Andrew Lemon, Andrew May, Seamus O'Hanlon, Judith Smart, and Charles Sowerwine. A further team of 14 contributed the captions.

The book starts by considering Aboriginal Melbourne and some maps and images of early Melbourne before surveying the twenty decades to the 2020s.

Each chapter title encapsulates the particular decade. Some are more positive as in the *Emerging Town* for the 1840s, *Elegant City* for the 1870s, *Thriving City* in the 1920s, while the 1960s is a *City Transformed*. Other titles reflect a different side to Melbourne as in the Depression decades of the 1890s and 1930s.

Each chapter has six pages with the first page being a summary of the decade. The following pages contain black and white images that reflect life in Melbourne in that decade. Some pages contains one photograph while others have two. The landscape format and large 251mm x 279 mm page size permit a larger and more readable photo size.

Photographs show a range of themes including streetscapes, buildings, retail, recreation and people. I found images encouraged me to both compare the little-known past with the present, as in photos of the Yarra as a working port, and to refresh my memory of central Melbourne, as in Foy and Gibson's building in Swanston Street.

I like this book as it combines a range of images *in one place* with succinct and readable text and captions. In addition, the final section names the source of each photograph.

This book has a place on your coffee table. It is also useful for teachers and students looking into Melbourne's history.

**Geoffrey Paterson**

## **SS Medic continued**

was renamed the *Hektoria*. The conversion into a whale factory gave her a stern ramp which enabled whales to be pulled into the ship and cut up. Before this, the whales were pumped with air and flensed alongside of the ship. *Hektoria* operated in the Southern Arctic Oceans.

In September 1928, she sailed from New York under the Wilkins-Hurst Antarctic Expedition with the South Australian-born photographer, explorer, war correspondent and aviator, Sir George Hubert Wilkins (1888–1958). Four years later, the ship was sold to Hektoria Limited later becoming part of Hector Whaling.

## **World War 2**

On the outbreak of war, the *Hektoria* was requisitioned as a whale oil tanker. In September 1942, while sailing in an

Atlantic convoy it was damaged and was subsequently torpedoed and sunk. One crewman died, while 84 members and the captain were saved.

So ended the 44-year career of the ship that transported Robert James Byers to the Boer War. The U-boat captain Karl Huse that sunk the *Hecktoria* in September 1942 was killed in action 1943 age 27.

## **References**

SS *Medic*. Accessed from <http://www.brandis.com.au/genealogy/gendata/ssmedic.htm>

SS *Medic*. Accessed from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS\\_Medic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Medic)

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