

Bendigo Cemetery



The grave location for Thomas (Tom) HUSTLER is recorded in Section C4, grave #1378. It is an earthen grave, just 2 graves to the left of the Rowcliffe grave which has a headstone.

Tom HUSTLER was admitted into hospital on Monday, the 12/01/1863.

He died next day on the 13/01/1863, aged 49.

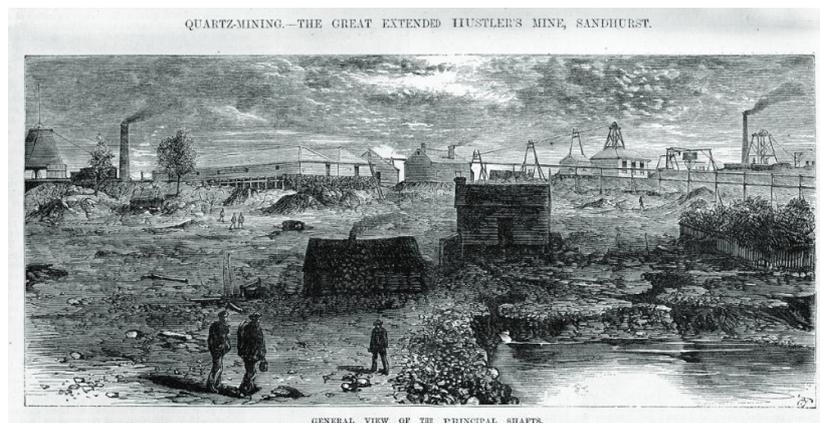
He was buried in the Bendigo Cemetery on Thursday, the 15/01/1863.

His interment number being #1378.

Mining at Hustler's Hill

Hustlers Reef Reserve, set on Hustler's Hill, site of the earliest quartz mining activity on the Bendigo Field in 1853.

It is the location of two of Bendigo's most successful mines,
– the Great Extended Hustler's and its Tribute Company No 1, continuously and successfully mined until 1921,
and subsequently developed as an informal recreation area by the local community.
Great Extended Hustler mine was also the site of the worst mining accident on the Bendigo Gold-field in 1904.



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*Thomas Hustler**"ONE ARMED HUSTLER."***The Bendigo Independent (Vic. : 1891 - 1918) Sat 29 May 1897 Page 2**

AT THE BEEHIVE - by MOSQUITO. {a writer in the Independent}

His Christian name - or it might be more appropriate in this connection to say, his front or given name - was Thomas, I believe - Thomas Hustler. Hustler he was by name and hustler by nature. Though he had but one arm, he could hustle around with the bravest and boldest and roughest of the Bendigo diggers and quartz pioneers of the glorious roaring "fifties".

Those were the grand days - when shanties were as common and plentiful on the hills and gullies as tombstones now are in the cemeteries. Enquiries were a day or two ago being made through the Bendigo press for the whereabouts, of one Hustler, a gold mining pioneer.

I suspect that in some English village or parish - what countryman or townsman was Hustler? - there are some poor relatives of this man sending out these enquiries in the forlorn hope that, waiting all these years for them in Australia, there may be an unclaimed fortune. If so it is a forlorn hope of the forlornest.

There are few - perhaps not half a dozen - left alive in Bendigo, or in communication with Bendigo, who remember the discoverer and baptismal sponsor of the afterwards Australasian-wide famous Hustler's Reef. Of the pioneer party of six or eight friends - all young and vigorous men in those days - who worked alongside of old one armed Hustler when he first came to Bendigo, only two survive - our hale, kindly and cheerful old friend Major Stribley in Bendigo and (in Melbourne) our genial and good-natured Mr Latham (of Latham and Watson). The Major tells me that Hustler was an older man than any of their own party. From the major's description of him, I gather that he was a very fine sample indeed of "The Legion That Never was Listed".

Compiler's comment:

Rudyard Kipling's poem "The Lost Legion"

The poem is about the adventurers and explorers who went off on their own without official aid or encouragement to unknown places from a variety of motives - greed, curiosity, religious mania among others - to make their fortunes or lose their lives.

That is, he was about as rough, as hard-swearing, hard-drinking, hard-working, hard-living, hard-handed, hard-muscled sample of courage and recklessness as was then to be found on the diggings. He was evidently "a man, with a past". But where he came from or how he came, Hustler's was not one of those angelic, open natures that invited confidential interviews from friends. The man had evidently had a rough and trying time of it before he appeared on Bendigo.

He came here with an old woman as a companion - a very counter-part of himself, and as much, of a mystery as himself. In their tent when they weren't growling, they lived a **Darby and Joan** life, and there was generally a drop in the bottom of the old black billy, that wasn't made of tea, and then "Old Tom Burnett" and their pound a bottle brandy - horribly poisonous stuff, you can imagine - seldom ran dry for two consecutive days. Somewhere or somehow Hustler had lost his left arm. It had been whipped off, clean as a whistle, close up to the shoulder.

Compiler's comment:

Darby and Joan is a proverbial phrase for a married couple content to share a quiet life of mutual devotion. First mentioned in a poem in 1735.

I have seen on Extended Hustler's Company's scrip and on the company's official memorandum forms, a figure of a one armed digger. It was placed there at the suggestion of the late Robert Carr, Joseph Millin, John Hechle, Thomas Hawkey or other of the Hustler's Reef identities, in testimony of the one armed man's pioneership of the line. "How did he work so hard." I asked the major, "if, as you say, he only had one arm. Did he have a hook on the other?" "Hook! no!" replies the major. "Hustler didn't want a hook, and if he did, there was no place to fix it to, the arm having been taken off quite up to the shoulder. He could use his one arm as well as the best of men could use their two, and a great deal better than most of them. By usage and necessity the power of the two arms seemed to have been forced into his remaining arm. It was muscled in ridges, strong as an ordinary man's leg.

Pick, hammer, shovel, axe, he could use with any man on the reef, wielding them to some purpose with that wonderful strong arm of his." "His arm was like a branch of a tree," the writer observed, "that had been lopped off by a prunor, and the strength of the two branches then went into the remaining one." "Something like that, I suppose," continued the major. "You should have seen him one day break up a big boulder of quartz. It was as big across as a footbridge. The men had blasted it out and levered it out in an open cutting where they were working on the side of the hill.

They were chip, chip, chipping at it, and by degrees were working it into the shape of a big billiard ball, or rather into the form of one of those 300lb cannon balls which in my military days I used to read of the Turks shying at the Knights of St John in the siege of Rhodes. While they were nibbling and chipping away at it, Hustler came up. He treated them to some of his customary verbal explosives strong enough almost to have blasted the rocks asunder.

Taking a hammer from one of the men he set to work on it. It was a sight to see him - that one-armed past master of the art of stone-cracking. He welted and welted with his one arm, fair on the block of quartz. Blow upon blow descended in the same spot, though not a flake flew, and there was nothing to show that his blows were not being thrown away.

After about ten minutes of this, however, there was a slight movement of the rock. Hustler followed it up, the rock began to open, and by the end of the ten minutes the big boulder that had baffled three men and six hands for two days fell crumbled to pieces before the strength and expert skill of the one man with the one hand. If you'd been there you'd have enjoyed it. Hustler could crack stones."

"Was Hustler rich at any time?" the major was next asked. "No, no, was the reply, "whatever he made, he and his old woman and their companions managed to get through in time for the next lot."

"Somewhere about 1858 Latham bought him out for £500 and that was the most money that I think Hustler ever had at one time. After selling out to Latham he continued to work and drink about the reef, but did no more good. In something like in twelve months, and when the last of the £500 was gone, Hustler was taken seriously ill. They took him to the Bendigo Hospital and he died there. It was some time in 1861 or 1862."

“I remember well that he left no money, for the Hustlers Reef people and others made a subscription amongst themselves and buried him. The record of his death has since been sought for in the archives of the Bendigo Hospital. But there is something wrong with the books, as there is no entry of it there. But I am positive that he died in the hospital about 1861 or 1862, as I contributed to the funeral expenses.”

And I suppose that Major Stribley is the most reliable living witness as to what became of Hustler, the pioneer, of this wonderful in the past and again to be wonderful Bendigo reef. What a mystery, however, was this rough, ready and uncouth pioneer - a mystery where he came from, or what he did or how he did it, before he came here, missing a hill full of wealth, brandy, carriages and horses and palaces or the delights of a thousand shanties, by only a few feet, and “old Tom” dying so little cared for that the hospital clerk of those days was perhaps having a drink when he should have been making an entry of the dead man’s death in the Hospital's dead house book.

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Reflections by Mr W C Stribley

with some corrections for MOSQUITO of the Independent.

The Bendigo Independent (Vic. : 1891 - 1918) Thu 3 Jun 1897 Page 3

TOM HUSTLER OF HUSTLER'S REEF.
STURDY, INGENIOUS, SELF RELIANT AND ONE-ARMED.

Mr W C Stribley, an old and respected Bendigo pioneer, now residing at Gladstone Street, Quarry Hill, writes: - I can remember Tom Hustler in the commencement of 1853 on the Third White Hill. He came there on an afternoon with three or four others in a box dray. It was painted all over red. Just before they came up to my tent they stopped, and Tom threw out a tent, sway and tools, and the men in the dray went off towards Bendigo. At knock-off time I offered to lend him a hand to get his tent up. It was declined with thanks. He told me the party he came with did not like the look of the locality and had gone further on.

There were very few working about at the time. He seldom spoke to anyone. He was then a man near forty, very quiet, sober and industrious. He had a hook on the lame side, and no “old woman” was with him then. He used to wheel a barrow from his claim with wash dirt to the water hole and wash it. He never required help. He had about a dozen small buckets. He would send them all down the hole and fill them. Then he would come up, and with a rope with a hook on the end to fish for them, one at a time until he had got them all up. I have seen him use his teeth and hand to pull up a bucket. I have also seen him use a fork windlass and he then handed with his hook. I believe he did very well.

I left the Third Hill and went down on the Flat to live. I was working on the Sixth Hill when an accident happened. Two men were killed not far from our claims. They were married men and their families lived in New Zealand. Their other mate was the late "Paddy" Watson (J B Watson). He went to put the billy on and get the tucker ready for dinner. When he went to call them he got no answer; they were both killed. They had a big heap of wash dirt in the paddock. It would go 4oz or 5oz to the load. It was sold by auction. There was rain the day before the sale, so some pipe clay was thrown over the pile to hide the gold. It was sold for £20.

It gave him a good start, Tom Hustler came to buy, but was persuaded by the chaps around not to bid, but to give the "young follow" a chance. No one thought of the widows and orphans in New Zealand. The next and last time that I saw Tom Hustler he had a wife or "woman" and he was keeping a produce store in Irishtown, a little above the Gas Works Hotel. I heard then that they both imbibed (*meaning take in liquids usually alcoholic beverage*).

In looking this over I find that I have omitted to mention that Tom Hustler made a lot of money "surfacing" on the Third Hill. He employed four or five men. This was after I left the Hill. Some of the surface would go over 1oz 10dwt to the load. I afterwards heard from one of the men that Tom's style of getting his men to work hard was to stop them with, "Smoke-o boys," give them a nip of grog, and say to them, "We can easily make up for the lost time." So they did, for after a very short spell they would rattle the stuff through in double quick time. When they began to fag, "grog oh!" and a suck of the pipe were again proscribed by Tom, and the "long tom" was manned again. Grog and pipe were repeated four times a day.

All this was before Tom Hustler started reefing. He was but a short time in Irishtown. He had been away from the Hills a long time when I saw him last. I have written this to let you know that Tom Hustler made money on the Third Hill, and at that time knew how to take care of it.

and

The Bendigo Independent (Vic. : 1891 - 1918) Sat 5 Jun 1897 Page 2

The sketch that was published about Tom Hustler, the rough, plucky one-armed follow, who opened up the afterwards celebrated Hustler's Reefs, appears to have interested our "old hands" and some of our young fellows, too. One young follow has dropped on a White Hills identity, locally known as "Louey." Louey is an old man now, an Italian, who arrived here early in 1852. But his memory is still clear as a bell. My young friend has "interviewed" him for me, and he reports the results which are not uninteresting, (It will be observed that there is strong presumptive evidence that two black men and a white man (a barber, a preacher and a storekeeper, respectively) were the original discoverers of gold on the Hustler Reef, or at least got specimens from the discoverer. These specimens came into Hustler's hands by purchase, and he thus became the opener up of the famous reef.)

My young co-adjudicator writes: - Mr Louis Mason states he arrived in Melbourne, from Italy, in, the fifth week of 1852. He stayed in Melbourne for a fortnight and then came to Golden Gully. He worked in different the gullies and then went to Ballarat; being away three months.

He returned to Bendigo and camped in a gully known as Maiden Gully, situated between the Second and Third White Hills. (The railway line to Heathcote runs through the Second White Hill.) He pegged out a claim and it was here that he met with Tom Hustler. Tom was camped only five yards away. He was there before Louis. This was nearing the end of 1852. Louis worked with his mates and got very good gold, while Hustler worked by himself. He says that Hustler was a very retired sort of man, just bidding them the time of the day, not entering any person's tent and no one going near his. He was thought by the diggers to be a miser and was never known at that time to take a drop of drink. Louis relates that in this time, a man used to parade the diggings with an old black kettle full of brandy, calling to the diggers, "Do you want me?" and the diggers answering in the affirmative he accordingly came forward and poured them out a nobbler, the cost of which was 2s.

These measures were taken in order to evade the law, but the man was eventually caught and suffered a rather stiff fine. When this man came around, though Hustler was working within 20 yards of Louis and his mate's claim, Louis never saw him take a nobbler.

In the very last days of 1852, or beginning of 1853, Louis was asked by an Englishman named Harrison, who then kept a store just below the Suburban Hotel on the White Hills road, and by two American Negroes; one named Dunlop, a barber by trader and the other was known as "Bill" - Louis forgets his proper name, but his occupation was that of a parson - to buy a claim of theirs, they offering to part with it for one ounce of gold apiece. They showed several rich specimens but it being a quartz reef, Louis would not accept the offer, though he was often pestered with the sellers. Eventually they persuaded Hustler to buy the claim. Hustler then left for his new claim and Louis did not see him again for some time, though he frequently heard of him as doing exceptionally well.

A little over thirty years ago he went to the first rush at the back of the Bull's Head Hotel, and one of the first persons he met there was Hustler. He said to Hustler, "Good day, Tom," and Hustler greeted him also with a good day. Louis then said, "How are you getting on, Tom?" to which Hustler replied, "I'm cooked, Louis." Louis said that Hustler nearly cried; and he then enquired "How's that?" Hustler said he had made £60,000 since coming on to Bendigo, but owing to a law suit over the claim, and a woman with whom he had picked up, clearing out with his money he was penniless.

He begged a pipe of tobacco from Louis. He was then dressed in mole trousers, a blue shirt, similar to the ones now worn by the old men in the Benevolent Asylum, and a felt hat. The next that Louis heard of Hustler was his death in the hospital. To the best of his belief he died penniless. Hustler, he is certain, was buried in the White Hills cemetery (*Editor - in fact Tom was buried at the Bendigo Cemetery*), but in what year he cannot say. He also believes that Hustler was in the Benevolent Asylum before he went into the hospital.

Louis further states that he is sure that Hustler had some money when he left White Hills, and that he was at that time a very careful man. He would work hard all the day that there was anything in the way of amusement going on, in fact, he was never known to take a holiday and was therefore thought to be a miser. There was a circus at the White Hills all that winter, and it was patronised by thousands of diggers. But Hustler stayed in his tent every evening that it was there. The circus had no seductions for him. If "Dr" Wall or "Tim" English, storekeeper of Long Gully, were alive, they could bear out those statements. Harrison before the claim was sold, took out a ton of quartz, and engaged "Tom" Barrow, father of the late Mr John Barrow, of the All Nations Hotel, Williamson Street, to take it to Melbourne.

Harrison then took it to London and had it treated, clearing £50 after all expenses had been paid. When Louis first knew Hustler in 1852 he, as before stated, was very reserved, and though often seeing him did not hear him use any strong language. He was a fine man to work, and though he had only one arm he could sink a six or seven feet hole very easily. He had a rather novel way of using his tools. For instance, if he were using a shovel, he would place the end of the handle against the armless shoulder - the left - and with his right hand he would throw the dirt over his head. He believes that Hustler lost his arm through a blasting accident in the old country, and, judging by his speech, he would say he came from Lancashire or Cumberland.

In the same connection Major Stribley writes: -

"My dear Mosquito, - I find that you have made a few mistakes in your notes published last Saturday, regarding my old friend Thomas Hustler. The fault, however (if any), may be mine, for you well know that when you look back at what occurred 40 years past, the horizon is rather misty. I now beg to state that I first met Thomas Hustler during the year 1854, at Hustler's Reef. His age then was 40 years, and I was just out of my teens. During the year 1857 or 1858, he sold his share in the reef, and so far as I know, had no further interest in Hustler's Reef. During the next three years I have no knowledge of him, but on January 13, 1863, he died in the Bendigo Hospital and was buried at the Back Creek Cemetery (enclosed is a certificate from Mr G Redpath, the present sexton).

Your very clever article may lead one to think Hustler was a very intemperate man. But such was not the fact. I admit that at times he "indulged." But usually he was a very good fellow, kind and always ready to assist any unfortunate miner who was ill or in distress. [The entry in the cemetery books, which settles a point raised by our Italian White Hills friend, says; - "Thomas Hustler, 49 years, died in Bendigo Hospital. Grave No 1378 C4. Church of England. Date January 15, 1863. G Redpath, Sexton, Bendigo Cemetery.]

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and

The Great Extended Hustlers Mine was also the site of Bendigo's worst mining accident in 1914 with 7 men killed.

Details of the accident can be read [here](#).

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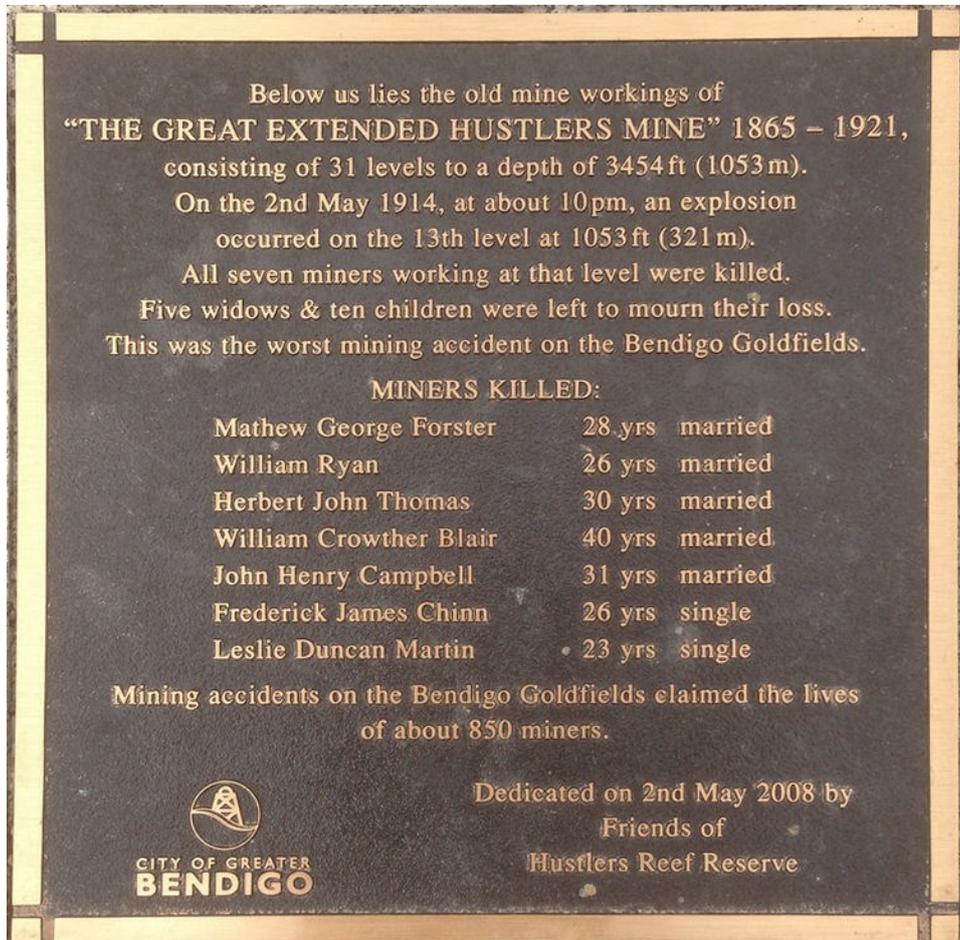
and

Two of the Miners: **John Henry Campbell and Matthew George Forster**

At about 10 pm on 2 May 1914, a huge explosion 320 metres underground killed seven miners at the Great Extended Hustler's Mine in Bendigo. It was one of Victoria's worst mining disasters. Although the explosion's cause has not been confirmed, a lit candle might have been left near an explosives magazine. The victims left five widows and eleven children. One contemporary report called Bendigo a 'bereaved city', and the citizens subsequently raised £4000 for the widows and children.

Among the dead were John Henry Campbell, thirty-one, and Matthew George Forster, twenty-eight. Both men left a widow and two young children, one of whom reportedly asked, 'Have you seen my daddy?' Around 1500 people attended their burials, including Bendigo's mayor and town clerk. Their graves are of rough marble and fenced in barley twist iron. Other victims were buried elsewhere. A modest memorial to the Hustler's Mine victims is at a reserve at the site, but local historians have called for a memorial wall to the estimated 900 miners killed in the Bendigo region.

Stones and the plaque in the Hustlers Reserve in North Bendigo.





Compiled by Pat & Ian Belmont
in August 2020
Bendigo Pioneer Notes