

*Buried in the Bendigo Cemetery - Who was he?*  
**The Hon ROBERT CLARK MLA**  
Goldminer, Journalist, Local Government Head, Trade Union Leader and  
Politician

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Bendigo Cemetery



Family grave for Robert CLARK:

Images in the data

CLARK\_D5\_122.JPG

CLARK\_D5\_122A.JPG

CLARK\_D5\_122B.JPG

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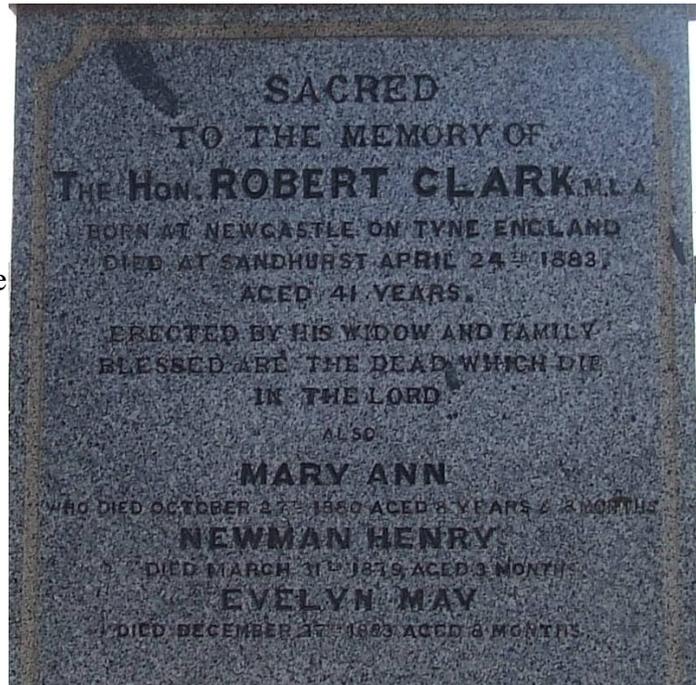
The following people were buried in this grave #7101 Sect D5 as per cemetery records.

- 7101 CLARK Amy 30/09/1878 2 yrs
- 7272 CLARK Newman Henry 31/03/1879 1/04/1879 3 mths
- 7806 CLARK Mary Ann 27/10/1880 28/10/1880 8y 8m
- 8728 CLARK Robert 24/04/1883 25/04/1883 41 yrs
- 8966 CLARK Evelyn May 27/12/1883 29/12/1883 8 mths

**Bendigo Advertiser Tue 24 Apr 1883  
Page 2**

Obituary for MR ROBERT CLARK,  
{To the Editor.}

Sir, - The time has now come for the citizens, and working classes in general to show in some practical manner the high esteem and respect they had for the late hon Robert Clark by some recognition of the valuable services he rendered to the citizens, miners, mechanics, railway employees; in fact to all classes of the community in the colony. We have lost our best friend; Sandhurst has lost one of its best public men, whose highest ambition was to advance the interest of the citizens, and in some measure help to build up our city and the institutions therein.



I need not recount his noble and self-denying deeds; you and your contemporaries have done this in your excellent obituary notices of the honourable gentleman, who was a good statesman, a philanthropist, and a patriot, ever seeking to ameliorate (to make things better or easier) the conditions of the working classes, and raise their social status.

Sir, the lamentations for the loss of the deceased gentleman by the miners will not soon be forgotten.

Fellow citizens and fellow workmen, let us one and all rise to the dignity of our manhood, and show to the world that the name of the lamented hon Robert Clark will live in our memories; and his noble deeds on our behalf will not be forgotten by us, who admired his sterling integrity, mental powers, and moral worth; by opening a public subscription throughout the colony amongst the working classes and others for the purpose of erecting a monument, and giving something substantial to his widow and bereaved family. I would be most happy to co-operate with my fellow workmen in carrying out the above.

Yours, etc,  
ANTHONY STUBBS.

P.S. - I am requested by a large number of friends to request the hon Angus Mackay to compile memoirs of the deceased gentleman, and write a preface to the same, and publish it in book form; proceeds, after expenses of printing, to go to the fund which we hope to raise.

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*FUNERAL OF THE LATE HON ROBERT CLARK.*

**Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Thu 26 Apr 1883 Page 3**

Yesterday afternoon the mortal remains of the late hon Robert Clark were committed to their last resting place in the Back Creek Cemetery. Words can but faintly express the evident grief and sadness which pervaded the entire community, and which was particularly manifested along the route which the funeral procession took.

Never before in the history of the city has a gentleman of great public worth been cut off in the prime of life, when he was attaining the summit of his usefulness to those he served; and never before was there such universal gloom and sadness, or such a demonstration of respect exhibited for the departed. There were strong hearted men at the funeral yesterday who wept as for the death of some near relative, and women, too, were uncontrollably grieved when the thought of some well remembered kindness, in the felicity of which they had shared, came to their recollections.

The whole city appeared to mourn for one who had been a well-trying and faithful servant. Long before four o'clock, hundreds of people had gathered around the residence of the late hon gentleman, in Waterloo Place, and before long the streets and approaches were almost completely blocked with the throng of people and vehicles. The funeral arrangements were in the hands of Mr Farmer, and were admirably carried out.

Mr Robert Strickland, as one of Mr Clark's most intimate friends, took a great deal of the trouble associated with the processional arrangements and the reception of visitors at the house out of the hands of the relatives of the deceased, a kindness which was duly acknowledged and appreciated.

The coffin in which the remains of the late hon gentleman were enclosed was elegantly mounted. Upon the lid was the inscription:-

"The spirit shall return unto God who gave it."  
Robert Clark,  
Died 24th April, 1883.  
Aged 41 years.

The lid was a folding one, and a portion of it was left open, in order that friends of the deceased gentleman might be permitted a last opportunity of viewing his once familiar features. Several hundred people availed themselves of the privilege before the lid was closed.

The funeral procession did not move until sometime after the hour advertised. The members of the No 1 Sandhurst Fire Brigade, under Captain S Lanigan headed the procession. Next in order followed the Temperance Brigade under Captain Reid, the Long Gully Brigade under ex-Captain Woods, the Golden Square Brigade under Captain P Hurst, and the Sandhurst City Brigade under Captain Chapman.

After the fire brigades came about 500 miners walking four abreast. At the rear were Mr J Sneddon, President of the Miners' Association; Mr J H M'Coll, secretary of the Miners Accident Society; Mr W G Blackham, chairman of the Mining Board, along with other members of the same bodies mentioned. Mr Morris Collmann, M.M.B., who was Mr Clark's companion-in-arms in the "eight hours for miners movement," between the years 1865 and 1871, occupied a prominent place in the procession of miners.

After these came the Revs W L Blamires and A Powell in a buggy. It was intended that the various clergymen attending the funeral should precede the hearse, but the only other besides the gentlemen just mentioned, was the Rev Dr Nish. The other reverend gentlemen who attended the funeral, among whom the Rev J T Cory may be mentioned, travelled in conveyances following in the wake of the hearse and mourning coaches.

The hearse was an open one, and displayed the coffin to view, the lid of which was completely covered with wreaths of flowers. Some of these were of a most beautiful description. Two of them were sent from Melbourne, and most of the others from friends and admirers of the deceased gentlemen in the district. Those who were to bear the coffin to the grave walked on each side of the hearse, each bearing a staff.

There were two mourning coaches containing the deceased's near relatives, viz, Mr William Clark, Mr John F Stephenson, brothers of Mr Clark, the deceased's four sons, Joseph, Robert, William, and Andrew; Mr Henry M'Dowall and Mr John Bradley.

The next conveyance contained the mayor (Mr A Harkness), Cr Bayne, Cr D C Sterry MLC, the hon Thomas Bent MLA for Brighton, and Mr G R Fincham MLA for Ballarat. In the conveyance which followed, there were Dr Quick and Mr H M'Coll, Ms.A, Crs Hayes, Bailes, Joseph, and Delbridge, and Mr W D C Donovan, town clerk. Dr Jackson was absent in consequence of illness.

The Mayor of Eaglehawk was unable to be present in consequence of the funeral of the unfortunate miners Andrews and Dennis at Eaglehawk, but the Eaglehawk Council was represented by Cr J J Hall and Mr Tolhurst Town Clerk. Cr George Willan was also present in another conveyance. Accompanying Cr Hall and Mr Tolhurst was Mr Robert Strickland.

The hon Robert Burrowes MLA, followed in his own buggy, and after him came a conveyance containing several of the directors of the Co-operative Store Company, of which Mr Clark was the chairman. The directors present were Messrs David Grant, George Willan, William Piner, Anthony Hall, and Peter Smalley, and Mr Thomas Cattran, manager.

The members of the committee of the Mechanics Institute, of which Mr Clark was for many years a most energetic member, together with the secretary of the institution, Mr D T Rogers, were also present in a conveyance. After these came a number of conveyances, containing the leading citizens, who were represented almost to a man. The number of vehicles following the hearse numbered about 160.

It must be mentioned that the Rev J H Ingham, who would have attended the funeral and assisted at the ceremony at the grave, was engaged in the funeral of the miners at Eaglehawk.

The cortege wended its way down Waterloo Street, thence along Barnard Street, into View Street, down View Point, up Mitchell Street, across the railway by the Mitchell Street bridge, thence along the Cemetery road to the gates of the cemetery. When the melancholy procession started there was a very large crowd assembled in the vicinity of the hon. gentleman's residence, and all along the route, a distance of about two and a half miles, the streets were lined with thousands of people.

In places the crowds were extremely large, notably at Charing Cross and at the railway bridge. The places of business on the route were closed, and there were various other marks of respect for the memory of the deceased gentleman. The Warden Court and Treasury were both closed. The windows and verandahs of the buildings on the road were used as points of vantage from which people viewed the procession. Previous to reaching the railway bridge, several vehicles left the ranks for the purpose of reaching the cemetery before the crush, which was sure to ensue, took place.

The funeral was certainly the largest that has ever been accorded to any citizen of Sandhurst. After the members of the fire brigades, and the 500 miners and others, and the hearse, there were fully 160 conveyances, and when the hearse was crossing the railway bridge, the last of the cortege was leaving the deceased gentleman's late residence in Waterloo Place, nearly a mile and a half away. Signs of sorrow were everywhere visible, and as the procession passed along the street, a truly mournful silence was maintained.

From the time the funeral procession left Waterloo Place until it reached the cemetery gates, the fireball at the look-out tower was tolled at regular intervals of half a minute.

When the gates of the cemetery were reached, the members of the various fire brigades were marched to the grave, around which they formed themselves in a large open square. There was a tremendous throng round about, several thousand people having congregated before the funeral came in sight.

A few minutes later, the procession entered the cemetery gates. The coffin had been taken out of the hearse, and was borne on the shoulders of the following gentlemen, mostly miners:- Mr John Reed, Mr Geo Hobbs, Mr Geo Smith, Mr Thomas Evans, Mr David Park, and Mr H Pengelly. The pall bearers were the Mayor and Town Clerk, the Hon D C Sterry MLC; the Hon Robert Burrowes MLA; Dr Quick MLA; and Mr J Sneddon, president of the Miners' Association.

The coffin was preceded by the Revs W L Blamires, A Powell, and Dr Nish, and was followed by the relatives of the deceased and Mr Strickland, and Messrs Fincham, Bent, and M'Coll, MsLA; Crs Byne, Hayes, Bailes, Joseph, and Delbridge, of the Sandhurst Council; Crs Willan and Hall, of Eaglehawk; and Mr Tolhurst, Town Clerk of Eaglehawk. After these came the general body of citizens.

As the solemn procession entered the gate the Rev W L Blamires commenced to read the burial service of the Wesleyan Church, which closely resembles the beautiful service of the Church of England, commencing with the impressive words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life".

The coffin having been placed by the side of the grave, the Revs Blamires, Powell, and Dr Nish stood at the foot and the relatives at the head. The members of Parliament and the mayor and members of the City Council took up positions on either side.

The Rev W L Blamires then resumed the service with the words, "Now is Christ risen from the dead." After the coffin had been lowered and the solemn and impressive words "ashes to ashes, dust to dust" had been pronounced Mr Blamires delivered the following address:-

"In the interment of the mortal remains of Robert Clark we have only buried the inferior part; the nobler is with God. The casket might be broken, but the jewel remains intact. The clay tenement has returned to its original dust, but the spirit inhabitant is with the Lord.

I am at some disadvantage in speaking of Robert Clark, as my acquaintance with him was much more intimate from eleven to fourteen years ago than recently. But I have known him to be a father and husband at home, kind and sympathetic, loving and just.

Therefore he will be mourned over acutely and greatly by that family from which he has been surrendered. As a public man he has served the community in the Mining Board, in the City Council, and in Parliament, and I believe, proved himself a patriotic and philanthropic citizen. He had especially at heart all movements for the benefit of the working classes and always had an open hand, kindly council, and sympathising would for any one in distress.

Robert Clark had a moral warfare to wage, and whilst I would not wittingly speak any harm of the living or dead, more than what is absolutely required, I nevertheless think that some of you have hindered him in that moral warfare. I am glad that some of you have helped him in it. The social customs of conviviality so rife among certain classes had crippled his right arm for the fight.

To those who have helped him in that warfare, the remembrance of it will be sweet today. Robert Clark has helped others - some in this crowd personally and privately. But he has served the whole people of the land, and are you to let the memory of good deeds die.

No! you will cherish his name kindly to his surviving family. What form so ever your kindness may take, it ought to show that you esteemed a noble minded man. Robert Clark had a soul to save as you all have, and whilst I am aware that there are persons representing different phases of religious belief in this assemblage, I, for one, believe that the salvation of the soul is to obtained only through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I come to His cross myself, and exhort others to do so.

From the very best evidence before me, I believe that Robert Clark rested in his Saviour in life's last hours, gaining a victory over death and the grave, and an entrance into Life. He should pray that God's great consolation may be with the bereaved widow and children, and with the other members of the family, hoping also to meet the family, and all who served Christ faithfully here below, in the home and Heaven of our God."

During the reverend gentleman's delivery of these observations the most solemn silence was maintained. The Rev A Powell then read the remaining portion of the service, commencing "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," after which the Rev W L Blamires delivered a short prayer for the relatives of the deceased, and closed with the benediction.

After the immense crowd had thronged around the open grave to have a last look at the coffin which contained the remains of a tried and trusted citizen, a second lid was placed over the coffin, and the grave filled in.

As the ceremony at the grave was being concluded, the shades of evening were closing fast upon the scene. The tremendous crowd of quiet mourners turned upon their homeward steps, and thus the last act in the history of Robert Clark, a public benefactor, the memory of whose services will live in the hearts of the present living till their dying days, terminated.

Mrs Clark and the family desire to acknowledge how deeply sensible they are of the especial mark of respect paid to their late lamented relative. It must also be stated that Hallas's Band offered to play the "Dead March" at the funeral; but Mrs Clark, while thanking them for their kind offer, said that Mr Clark, while alive, had been averse to anything of the kind on similar occasions.

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**Other notes**

Clark, Robert (1841 - 1883)

Source: Australian Dictionary of Biography Online Edition

CLARK, ROBERT (1841-1883), trade union leader and politician, was born on 8 November 1841 in Northumberland, England, son of Joseph Clark, a Newcastle coal-miner and quarryman, and his wife Catherine Burden, nee Pearson. His father died and at 12 Clark left England with his mother, brother and stepfather to join the Ballarat gold rushes. Soon afterwards he moved to Sandhurst (Bendigo) where he worked in company mines. He received no formal schooling, except for two weeks at night school in Ballarat, but read widely in the politics and literature of his time. From early 1861 he tried his luck in the Otago gold rushes in New Zealand, but returned to Sandhurst empty handed. There, on 26 June 1862 at the Wesleyan parsonage he married Sarah Jane Kernaghan, which proved a more productive enterprise; they had eleven children.

Clark deplored the drudgery and hardships of life for miners. In 1864 he began to campaign for an eight-hour day. He gave up mining in 1870 to become a part-time journalist and a mining agent. By 1872 he had formed the Bendigo Miners' Association, which won for its members a reduction in working hours, and in 1874 he helped to form the Amalgamated Miners' Association of Victoria, of which he became president. His abiding faiths as a unionist were that miners need strength through unity and that owners and miners have a common interest which can be revealed by negotiation; faiths which were perhaps implicitly contradictory but which in practice led to many successes.

In 1872 Clark was elected to the City Council where he badgered the entrenched elders into improving water supplies and assisting local education. He became a justice of the peace in 1873, mayor of Sandhurst in 1875-76 and president of the Sandhurst Mechanics' Institute in 1877.

Clark's political career began in 1867 when he joined the Bendigo Liberal Association, of which he became vice-president in 1870. He entered the Legislative Assembly for Sandhurst in 1877, and announced his support for (Sir) Graham Berry's Liberal ministry. Immediately, he succeeded in amending a mines bill to make an eight-hour day compulsory for all miners. He supported bills to permit mining on private property and payment of members, opposed the teaching of religion in state schools, and advocated property taxes. He also fought for specific local benefits for the Sandhurst district. Above all Clark defended the assembly as the supreme legislative body in parliament. When Berry failed in his clash with the propertied interests of the Legislative Council, particularly in an embassy that he sent to London to appeal for help, Clark withdrew his support from the government.

Clark's local popularity received a fillip in 1879 when he successfully led a Bendigo miners' strike against wage reductions. By his careful attention to public relations and his readiness to negotiate he won general support for the miners, even from the government and several newspapers. Both in parliament and outside Clark paid great respect to the press and always sought its sympathy. In the 1880 elections he was returned to the assembly with an increased majority, despite his desertion of Berry.

The Service government took office in March 1880, and Clark became minister of mines and water supply. However, nothing was achieved. Within five months Berry toppled Service from power. Clark returned to the Opposition. In long and relentlessly logical speeches he condemned Berry's ambivalence over reform. Otherwise he spoke mainly against the Chinese, and in favour of a bill to legalize trade unionism.

In his prime Clark fell suddenly ill. He died at Sandhurst on 24 April 1883. Five hundred miners, marching four abreast, led the funeral procession of 160 vehicles. At the graveside the Wesleyan minister lamented: 'Robert Clark had a moral warfare to wage ... The social customs of conviviality had crippled his right arm for the fight'. The Bendigo Advertiser more charitably stressed the credit side of his pioneering work, as a working-class politician and union leader, in a tribute to his 'keen perception of the wants of his fellow men'.

#### Select Bibliography

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and information about Robert Clark

#### **Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Wed 25 Apr 1883 Page 3**

THE LATE HON. ROBERT CLARK.

When the intelligence of the death of the hon. Robert Clark spread about the city and district yesterday morning, a deep and universal doom settled on the entire community. Although among a few of the hon. gentleman's more intimate friends it was well known that there was no hope of his recovery, and this feeling was generally shared in, there were not a few who were hopeful that Mr Clark's hitherto excellent constitution would aid a recovery. When, however, it is borne in mind that the deceased gentleman had little or no sustenance during his illness, and that during the four weeks he suffered intense pain, without experiencing the relief afforded by a single hour of unconsciousness, it will not be wondered at that his constitution strong as it was, was unable to bear the fearful strain any longer. As it was, his medical attendants were surprised at the wonderful way Mr Clark bore up during the last few days of his illness.

Yesterday the municipal offices were closed out of respect to Mr Clark's memory. The committee of the whole council appointed to discuss the details of works in the loan proposal of Cr Joseph met in the morning, but adjourned in consequence of Mr Clark's death. The

Union Jack at the hall was hoisted half mast, an example which was followed at the Masonic Hall and numerous other business places throughout the city.

We learn that it is intended that Mr Clark's eminent services to the city are to be recognised by the erection of a monument to his memory. Already the matter has been taken in hand, and in a few minutes yesterday over £50 were subscribed. A meeting will be held in a day or two, and in all probability it will be decided to erect the monument in some prominent place in the city. A number of prominent members of the mining class also expressed an anxiety to manifest their high appreciation of Mr Clark's services in a similar manner, and under the circumstances, the movement will probably assume stupendous proportions in a few days.

By the general wish of the citizens, Mrs Clark has consented to allow a public funeral to take place, and it has been fixed for four o'clock this afternoon, in order to allow the miners of the district an opportunity of being present. The Mayor and members of the City Council will join in the cortege, and will meet at the Town Hall at half-past three o'clock this afternoon.

By an advertisement in another column, signed by the president, vice-president and secretary of the Bendigo Miners' Association, the miners of Bendigo are requested to walk in the procession. Similar notices have been issued to the members of the Sandhurst No. 1 Fire Brigade, Sandhurst City Fire Brigade, Temperance Brigade, and Golden Square Brigade, as well as to all sister brigades, to attend the funeral in uniform.

Captain Sibley has issued an order to the Sandhurst Troop PWVVLH cancelling the mounted parade, in order to allow members of the troop to attend the funeral. Mr Clark's remains will be interred in the Wesleyan ground at the Back Creek Cemetery, where two of his children already lie buried.

### **Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Tue 24 Apr 1883 Page 2**

#### **DEATH OF THE HON. ROBERT CLARK**

The melancholy intelligence of the death of the Hon. Robert Clark will be received with deep and wide-spread feelings of sorrow and regret. After a painful illness, extending over four weeks, this lamented gentleman expired at half-past twelve o'clock this morning, at his residence in Waterloo Place. The loss to the community will be deeply felt, and it will be difficult to find a man sufficiently capable in all respects to replace him. Mr Clark was possessed, not only of great natural ability, but of an amount of energy and industry, brave perseverance, and practical experience, which rendered him a most valuable member of any deliberative body, whether legislative or municipal. Everyone who enjoyed his private friendship will lament his too early departure for "the undiscovered country."

To his family his death comes as a blow hard indeed to bear, for a kinder husband or father is not to be found among the most amiable and warm-hearted of men, and after a lifetime of immunity from sickness or physical suffering of any kind, the fact of his being struck down in the prime of life must be felt by his relatives from its suddenness and unexpectedness as a most sad affliction.

There is not a soul in the community who will not sympathise deeply with Mrs Clark and all the members of the family of the lamented deceased. Many owe him a deep debt of gratitude, and it will be admitted by all who knew him that he was generous to a fault. Whenever it was in his power to do, we will not say a political supporter, but any friend, or any person requiring and deserving assistance, a good turn, he would take any amount of trouble to

render the service asked of him. As a man of a most kindly and genial disposition, of warm, benevolent, and charitable tendencies, Robert Clark was one above all praise.

He had his faults, as who has not? But his many excellent and amiable qualities, when thrown into the balance against them, outweighed them all; and after his terrible and prolonged sufferings in his only and fatal illness, the consolation comes to his relatives and friends of the high and confident hope that the released spirit, now freed from all earthly blemish, is at peace. Yet he will be deeply deplored, for we have lost in him a man of extraordinary talent, of superior merit, and, above all, of a kind and good heart.

Mr Robert Clark was born at the town of Walker, in Northumberland, on the 8th of November, 1841, so that he was only 41 years five months old at the time of his death. His father, who was engaged in coal mining at Newcastle, died while his sons, Robert and William, were yet young. His mother married again subsequently. The family came to Australia in December, 1854, and went to Ballarat in 1855, where their stepfather was engaged as a miner, and the two sons in fossicking. Mr Clark was never at school in his life, except a fortnight in a night school in Ballarat.

He devoted all his spare time to improving himself, however, and was naturally apt. He came to Sandhurst with his brother in 1860. In 1861 he went to New Zealand with his brother. On his return, in a few months time, he married Miss Kirnighan, his present wife. He left for New Zealand a second time with his brother in 1865, and again returned after a few months.

When he first came to Sandhurst he worked as a stamper-feeder at the Hercules mine, when the late Mr D Macdougall was mining manager. He was subsequently engaged at Huntly, and later on at the Comet mine. For several years previous to 1870 he worked at the Hustler's mine under Mr Robert Carr, and he left this claim because, after a six months trial of the eight hours system, which he had been advocating, they reverted to the old system of nine hours.

#### MR CLARK AND THE EIGHT HOURS' QUESTION.

At the close of the summer of 1864-5, and during several years that succeeded that season, the attention of readers of the BENDIGO ADVERTISER was compulsorily directed to letters bearing the signature "R.C." Upon the face of these productions it was evident that the writer was a man of no ordinary intelligence. His identity remained concealed, except from those with whom he was more immediately connected, for some considerable time, but the rapidity with which the "Eight Hours for Miners' Movement," the cause which the youthful correspondent espoused in the majority of his literary productions, began to take up a position of prominence, at length revealed the identity of the writer. "R.C." or Robert Clark, was in those days in possession of those very traits of character, that same energetic disposition, and indomitable perseverance, which have earned for him so much distinction in his legislative capacity, and stamped him as the best local representative that Sandhurst ever possessed.

He had been born and cradled in a mining district. He had gone to work at an early age and had made an early acquaintance with the hardships of a miner's life and the precariousness of his occupation. He had also observed the drudgery which was the lot of the miner, and he resolved that if ever he had the power he would remove the miners' grievances. Always possessing a thirst for knowledge that would benefit himself as well as direct him in the way to benefit his fellow man, he began to study the character of trade organisations, and subsequently sought the assistance of Mr Morris Collmann, a gentleman who is well known among the miners of to-day.

With honest Morris Collmann, he decided to work out some plan by which the hours of labor for the miner should be reduced from ten hours to eight. One of his first acts was to interview Mr Angus Mackay, who was not then a Member of Parliament, for the purpose of seeking advice as to the proper course for him to pursue in his undertaking.

Mr Mackay advised Mr Clark to write to the press on the subject, and promised to take up the cause of the miners in the columns of the ADVERTISER. Although Mr Clark had never written to a newspaper before, he followed this advice. This letter was followed by others, which were supported by a series of articles in the leading columns of the ADVERTISER.

On the 2nd of July, 1856, a public meeting of miners and others was held in the large room at the Shamrock Hotel to adopt measures for the establishment of the eight hours' system in the mines of the district. The proceedings of the meeting were marked by great earnestness and unanimity, and a committee, consisting of Messrs Blair, Sheppard, Hobson, Johnson, Collmann, Clark, Leeds, Dalzeel, and Messrs J J Casey and J Halfey, Ms L.A., was elected. After this the movement seemed to be on the wane for a time.

The cause of this will be discovered in the following paragraph which appeared in the ADVERTISER in June, 1866:

"About twelve months ago the miners of Bendigo held a meeting and elected a committee to take measures for establishing the eight hours' system in the mines. The committee attended to their work for several months, holding public meetings throughout the district and endeavouring to prevail on mining managers to adopt the system. In a number of cases the managers conceded a little by adopting a nine hours' system.

One of the most active members of the committee - Mr R Clark - having gone to New Zealand, the committee almost sank into oblivion for about eight months, but he having returned to Bendigo lately a fresh impetus has been given, and it was resolved by friends of the eight hours' system to resuscitate the committee and make renewed efforts to establish the system. It was thought that the best way to bring the matter before the public was to hold a soiree, which was to be considered a testimonial of the gratitude of the miners to the members of the committee for the exertions made on their behalf."

This soiree was held on the 23rd of June, 1860, in the Oddfellows' Hall. There were 500 people present, and Mr J J Casey MLA, occupied the chair. Mr Crawford proposed a vote of thanks to the eight hours' committee for their exertions in promoting the movement, a motion which was seconded by the Rev Mr Hill. Mr Collmann responded as the president of the committee. In a speech which Mr Robert Clark then made, the miners were enjoined to unite. "To obtain their object (he said) it was absolutely necessary that there should be union amongst the miners; let a union, therefore, be established, and every man have his name enrolled, and called on to promise to do his utmost to promote the movement.

If each miner in the district were to contribute but sixpence a week there would be a large fund to work upon. A union would not cause strikes, but it would tend to equalise labor and capital. Individual miners could do a great deal to promote the system, but when all were united their powers would be great. He trusted miners would take the matter up. If they did not, how could they expect others to do it? Let them do it heartily and unitedly (*meaning working together*), and the good end would soon be attained. Meetings should be held and committees formed throughout the district.

Already the spirit of concession had been shown by the masters, and advantage should be taken of it. They wanted no strikes, but they must be prepared to meet the emergencies, and, therefore, the union was desirable. Powerful sympathies were on their side, and he felt sure the press would lead the cause to glorious results. Let the miners assist, and the movement would soon be established. Only employ right means, and the full accomplishment of their hopes would be realised."

These were words characteristic of the man that uttered them. He did not wait for extraneous aid, he did not trust to some outside champion for the attainment of those results so ardently desired by the eight hours' committee. A miner, never remiss in attending to those duties pertaining to his employment - a miner, an honest hard working miner, never receiving censure, never deserving any, trusted and respected by his employers—he fought daily with dogged persistency for the eight hours for his fellow workmen.

He carried on the war not only in Sandhurst, but also in Stawell, Clunes, Ballarat, Blackwood and other places. The history of the eight hours' movement is well known since then. Eleven years later, in 1877, Robert Clark was returned to Parliament to attain the consummation of his well-directed energies, and his untiring devotedness to the cause, in having the well-merited honour of proposing in the House eight hours for the miners, not alone of Bendigo, but of the colony.

Since then he manifested a similar zeal in the successful efforts made to secure a similar boon for the engine-drivers, and for railway employees and other classes in the community, Mr Clark's name has been so inseparably connected with the eight hours' movement, that the existence of this system, amongst the mining population especially, stands prominently forth as a monument to his memory, and towers in immensity as invaluable testimony to departed worth. As champion of the eight hours' system amongst miners on Bendigo, Mr Clark's name will endure for ages.

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#### MR CLARK COMING TO THE FRONT.

In 1867 Mr Clark became a member of the Bendigo Liberal Association, a powerful organization which had been established some years previously, out of the committees which had been formed for the return of, first, Mr W D C Denovan, and, secondly, Mr Robt Strickland to parliament. This was an association which was in existence long before the establishment of the Loyal Liberal Association in Melbourne, a body with which it would have nothing to do. The Bendigo Liberal Association exercised a truly powerful influence over electors, and invariably returned its nominees to Parliament.

Mr Robert Clark became a prominent member of the organization, and on the 26th of April, 1870, was elected as one of the vice-presidents. Mr Wm Gunn was the other vice-president: Mr T J Connelly was the president, and Mr W D C Denovan honorary secretary. Subsequent to this, Mr Robert Clark was acting-president of the society for some time. He had at this time ceased to be a miner, and had occupied a position on the Bendigo Evening News for a period. He had also secured a seat on the Mining Board, where his knowledge of the requirements of the mining community made him a very useful member.

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#### ELECTED TO THE CITY COUNCIL.

From the time that Mr Clark was successful his efforts in connection with the eight hours'

system, in the latter end of 1871, it was apparent that he was a coming man. In August of the following year he was returned unopposed to a seat for Barkly Ward in the City Council, the late Mr Harry Hattam being similarly honoured for Sutton Ward.

It was about this time that the City Council attempted to purchase the Bendigo Water works, and complete the Coliban scheme, an attempt which was fortunately frustrated. When Mr Mackay was Minister of Mines in 1873, and whilst he was combating the many serious difficulties caused by the egregious blunders committed in the earlier period of the construction of the work, the City Council actually passed a resolution to prevent the Government from purchasing the Bendigo Waterworks, and had it been carried into effect, the result would have been that the prosecution of the Coliban works would have been stopped. A worse thing than this it will now be admitted could not have happened. Mr Clark and the late Mr Hattam were the only members of the council who opposed the resolution.

It may be remembered that Mr Clark held meetings at Long Gully and in the Town Hall, and the popular feeling was evidently so strong against the course taken by the council, that the resolution was rescinded, and an amendment previously moved by Mr Clark, to the effect that the Government should be supported in its intention of carrying out the Coliban scheme, and purchasing the Bendigo Waterworks, was accepted. What would be the position of the city and district at this day if the Government had not taken over our local water supply?

The water from those sources would have been totally inadequate to our wants, and we should have been in continual dread and danger of a disastrous scarcity. We should certainly not have had the large population now permanently settled here, and the endeavours to develop our resources would have languished almost ruinously.

Great credit was due to the Francis Government, of which Mr Mackay was Minister of Mines, and to Crs Clark and Hattam, for contending against the suicidal policy of City Council. The city would have been put to the expense of no less than £500,000 to carry our local scheme to completion, including reticulation; and after all this outlay, we should have been without the enormous and inestimable advantages of the supply from Malmsbury.

The Government paid the City Council £44,965 for the Bendigo Waterworks, and took over a debenture liability amounting to 60,000, making the total amount of purchase £104,965. Since then the sum of £137,000 has been expended by the Government upon the works, including reticulation, but not races, and £28,800, interest on debentures, having been paid. On other portions of the Coliban scheme since the purchase of the local works, the money paid by the Government has amounted to £170,000, making a total of £446,765. To this must be added £15,000 per annum for interest at five per cent, and also the cost of maintenance.

At the time Cr Clark entered the Council, he made great efforts to get the money from the bank at cheaper rates. Eventually in 1873 tenders were called, and the lowest tender sent in was that of the National Bank, which offered to allow the money at 5 per cent. The Bank of Victoria, which had previously charged 8 per cent, was so annoyed at this that it actually offered the money for nothing at all, and for two years the council had the use of the money without interest.

It will be remembered that great difference of opinion existed as to whether the Central State School should be erected in the Camp Reserve. In the City Council the proposal was objected to by all the members except Mr Clark, and when the question was remitted to the citizens

and a poll was taken, his view of the matter was confirmed by a vote of more than two to one. Mr Clark was the first councillor who advocated the asphaltting of the footpaths, a work which the then "boss of the council" as he has been called, the late Mr Macdougall, objected to tooth and nail, and prevented from being carried out for a long time.

Mr Clark's name has been identified with almost every useful work that the council can lay claim to having performed during the past ten years. In 1875 he was elected mayor, a position which he filled with credit to himself and to the city. Previous to this, Mr Clark had taken a deep interest in the Education Act, introduced by the Francis Government; indeed at the general election in 1874, he unsuccessfully attempted to enter Parliament for Stawell, as a supporter of that Government.

Mr Clark was one of Mr Angus Mackay's warmest supporters and was that gentleman's champion among the miners at all times preceding 1877, when he decided to enter the political arena himself.

When Mr Mackay was Minister of Mines in the Francis Government and introduced the Regulation of Mines Statute, he invited Mr Clark and Mr Taylor, of Clunes, to go to Melbourne and offer suggestions. They did so, and Mr Mackay received some of the most valuable suggestions in framing a measure for which the miners promised their grateful thanks for all time. In 1871, when an attempt was made to reduce the wages of the miners, Mr Clark was again to the front as champion of the class to which he had belonged, and offered firm and decided resistance to the efforts made by the mine owners.

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#### MR CLARK'S MAIDEN SPEECH.

Mr Clark made his maiden speech in Parliament on the 10th of July, 1877. It was most fitting that this speech was upon the "Regulation and Inspection of Mines Bill," introduced by Major Smith as Minister of Mines in the Berry Ministry. It was in this very speech that Mr Clark urged the extension of the eight hours' system to the mining class. On the following night he moved an amendment in the bill granting the boon, and this was carried, thus making the eight hours' system compulsory in all mines.

Was not this a fitting termination of Mr Robert Clark's labors in the eight hours' question? Mr Clark had at length been placed in the position of obtaining for his former companions in arms that very boon for which he had striven for so many years.

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#### MR CLARK AS A SPEAKER AND A WRITER.

As a public speaker Mr Clark possessed a vigorous and telling style. He was also earnest and impressive, and improved very much after his entry into Parliament. He soon developed an unmistakable ability to express himself in a pleasantly concise manner in taking language. He was an excellent debater, and commanded attention at gatherings of all kinds. On such occasions he invariably had something interesting to say, and when at meetings was always to the fore with suggestions of a valuable and practical nature.

In the House he was always patiently likened to, as he invariably had to offer advice of a practical character on whatever subject was under discussion. By metropolitan pressmen he was unanimously considered the most rapid speaker in Parliament. Indeed, when Mr Clark warmed a little on the subject upon which he was speaking, he would puzzle the most rapid

reporters. At yet at times Mr Clark rose unmistakably to genuine eloquence.

Mr Clark frequently contributed to the press, and many articles of his composition, descriptive, and otherwise have appeared in this paper. As he was as a speaker so he was as a writer, many of his efforts in a literary direction being well worthy of perusal. We believe that he was in the habit of contributing "Chit chat" articles on the proceedings in Parliament to the Clunes Guardian.

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#### THE MINERS' WAGES QUESTION

Mr Clark was for many years president of the Amalgamated Miners' Association, the headquarters of which was at Creswick. He was also president of the Sandhurst branch of the Miners' Association, and, when in 1870, an attempt was being made by a number of the mine owners in the district to lower the rate of the miners wages from £2 10s and £2 5s per week to £2 2s, Mr Clark took a determined stand against such an iniquitous proceeding. The employees in a number of the mines struck work, and continued for several weeks to receive payment from the Miners' Association.

Numbers of the tradespeople and others contributed to the fund, and Mr Robert Clark continued for some time to regularly contribute £2 a week to the fund. Monster meetings were got up, and Mr Clark as the president as the Miners' Association occupied the chair at them. It will be remembered how Mr Clark was supported by Mr Angus Mackay and Mr John M'Intyre, the members for Sandhurst at the time, Mr Burrowes, Mr Sterry, Mr Blackham, Mr Collmann, and a number of other leading gentlemen, whose sympathies were largely with the working' miners. The mine-owners eventually gave way, and the strikes were at an end.

From their commencement to their termination, Mr Clark, in common with the other gentlemen who were with him in the matter, advocated moderate measures to attain the end in view. His wise counsels prevailed, and during the whole of the few weeks over which the strike lasted, no incident of a disagreeable nature was recorded. On the 7th August, 1882, Mr Robert Clark was presented by the old Miners' Association with an illuminated address, in recognition of the hon gentleman's services to the miners through many years, and particularly during the strike of 1879.

Mr Angus Mackay was present on that occasion, and in the course of a speech which he made he spoke as follows of Mr Clark:

"Mr Clark and myself met there that evening as very old friends. (Applause.) They met there having been friends before even he himself had been in Parliament. He mentioned this because he remembered a youthful correspondent whose earnest zeal in the cause he was then taking up made him very anxious to become acquainted with him. Later on when he came forward for honours himself he found who this gentleman was, and he found no more honest and energetic supporters of the principles he then enunciated than Mr Robert Clark and his late respected friend Mr Harry Hattam. (Applause.)

Therefore, his friendship dated back to a long period. No man with any feelings of gratitude could forgot such disinterested services rendered on his behalf, and he felt glad to see Mr Clark forward himself, and the elected of Sandhurst. Mr Clark had proved himself one of the most useful of members, and was particularly deserving of the gratitude of the working men of Bendigo.

He mentioned this because he felt that Mr Clark was well worthy of the honour being done him that night. He had his faults like everyone else, but when they weighed the balance fairly in their own minds they would conclude that his faults were slight when compared with his many high qualities. (Applause.) He was one of those men who based everything on work, and had always had some good question to put forward, something that would benefit the miners of Bendigo and of the colony."

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#### MR CLARK'S LAST ILLNESS.

Just before the last general election it will be remembered that Mr Robert Clark was so ill with bronchitis that the services of Dr Macgillivray had to be secured. Under careful treatment Mr Clark was enabled to enter upon his election campaign. He spoke at St James' Hall on the night of the 12th of February, and the hon gentleman's voice showed signs of giving way after he had just spoken for one hour. Just previous to Easter, Mr Clark felt considerably unwell, and sought various changes.

In Easter week he went to Mount Hope, where he and his brother have some farm property. Although he received the kindest treatment while there, he appeared to derive no benefit, and on the 29th of March Mr Clark returned to Sandhurst, and immediately took to his bed. He was suffering acutely from bronchitis and inflammation of the stomach. In fact the latter malady was so bad that the hon gentleman could retain nothing on his stomach.

On the Saturday following, Dr Baumgartner and Macgillivray held a consultation, and enjoined absolute quiet. He continued in a very precarious state until the 13th April, when he passed a very bad night. He improved a good deal on the morning of the 14th April, but suffered a severe relapse in the afternoon. Drs Macgillivray and Baumgartner held another consultation, but Mr Clark, who again showed signs of improving, relapsed again on the 16th inst. It was about this time that it became known Mr Clark had an abscess on his liver. This subsequently burst.

On Friday, the 20th April, Dr Hinchcliff was summoned, and held a consultation with Drs Macgillivray and Baumgartner. They arrived at the conclusion that pneumonia had set in on the lungs, and Dr Hinchcliff expressed the opinion that there was no chance of the hon gentleman's recovery. During Friday the Rev R C Flockart, of the Wesleyan Church, Forest Street, to which body the hon gentleman and his family belongs, was constantly at Mr Clark's bedside. Yesterday morning Mr Clark became suddenly worse, and suffered most intense pain during the whole of the day. His medical attendants held out no hopes of his recovery.

Last night it was apparent to all of Mr Clark's relatives that his end was approaching. His wife, two eldest daughters, and two eldest sons, along with Mrs Stephenson (his mother), Mr W Clark and Mr John Stephenson, were summoned to his room, and remained during the remainder of the night. He was sensible to the last, and almost his last words were in response to spiritual consolation offered by his brother.

At twenty minutes past 12 o'clock the spirit of the greatest friend the miners of Bendigo ever had was borne on the swiftly flowing river, through the dark and dreary ocean, to its long home beyond the grave, amid the grief of the sorrowing relatives who witnessed the last.

Mr Clark possessed a thoroughly genial good nature, and was a general favourite among all

classes. He often remarked that he had no sooner gained an election than he commenced to canvass for the next. He was a man who rigidly kept a promise. Any one that asked a favor of Mr Clark in his representative capacity could rest well assured that the matter was in trustworthy hands. Mr Clark never forgot his first friends, and was not above speaking to anybody. He would greet the Man who earned his bread by the sweat of his brow as cordially as he would a prince.

Nearly everybody spoke of him as "Bob Clark," which was almost the only name which his old friends, the miners would call him by. Mr Clark was far too good natured. He was frequently, since his elevation to Parliament, plagued by visitors, and during the time the miners strike was on, he was thoroughly besieged, as many as seventy persons waiting around his residence on a morning. But his good nature would not let him say a hard word to any of them. He would listen patiently to all they had to tell him, and either offer advice, or promise to take the little affair in hand.

Mr Clark leaves a wife and nine children, the eldest of whom, Miss Clark, is about 20 years of age.

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