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The Coroners' Page

Stories of the hard working Coroners of Sandhurst

This story was found in the pages of the Advertiser on TROVE and tells a story of the hard working coroner,

Mr Robert Strickland in conducting 4 inquests and travelling 90 miles over two days, by buggy.

Remember this was in 1882 and the roads were not very good.

Mr Robert Strickland was appointed as acting-coroner in 1877 on the retirement of Dr Pounds, and as a police magistrate in 17/01/1887.

And in July 1888, Robert Strickland, gets full support from a Bendigo Advertiser's editorial regarding more support to for fill his duties on the bench and in PM inquests.

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Mon 4 Sep 1882 Page 2

Story 1 **Work for the Coroner.**

During the past few days the coroner has, unfortunately, had an unusual amount of work. Four inquests were held within the past two days. On Saturday morning he proceeded to Axedale, where he held an inquest on the body of the woman who was found drowned in the Axe Creek. Thence he went to Strathfieldsaye, and held another inquiry, also concerning the death of a woman.

Returning to Sandhurst he commenced a third inquest (also a woman), the inquiry not terminating until nearly ten o'clock at night. Early yesterday morning Mr Strickland proceeded to Muskerry, a distance of about 30 miles from Sandhurst, and held the fourth inquest, returning to Sandhurst the same evening. The coroner, besides journeying over 30 miles on Saturday, travelled by buggy nearly 60 miles yesterday.

The four inquests for:

1. Bridget CONNELLY (Int #8490) - Bridget was buried in Bendigo Cemetery.
2. Ann BURKE (Int #8493) - Ann was buried in Bendigo Cemetery.
3. Eliza PRESTON (Int #8491) - Eliza was buried in Bendigo Cemetery.
4. Thomas Peters who is believed to have been buried at Axedale.

Buggy transport in 1882

Examples of buggy transport in 1880's.

Horse drawn buggies was a primary mode of short distance personal transportation, especially between 1815 and 1915. At that time, horseback riding in towns and rural areas was less common and required more specific skills than driving a buggy. Though buggies required at least crudely graded main roadways, but horses could go almost anywhere, there was a growing use of buggies for local travel, but stage coach lines and railroads were used for longer trips.

Buggy transport could still be very dangerous and the number of accidents and deaths from buggy use on poorly made roads is shown by the large number of inquests into these events.

Until mass production of the auto-mobile brought its price within the reach of the working class, horse-drawn conveyances were the most common means of local transport in towns and nearby countryside. Buggies cost around \$25 to \$50, and could easily be hitched and driven by untrained men, women, or children. This provided all-weather passage within and between larger towns.

By the early 1910s, the number of automobiles had surpassed the number of buggies, but their use continued well into the 1920s and 1930s in country locations.

More examples



More examples of buggies from the 1880's.

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Mon 11 Jun 1883 Page 2

*Another example of the work and travelling for our coroner Mr Robert Strickland, can be seen in this story in June 1883, during a time of many mining accidents. This period was also chosen for the compilers' essay called **The Price of Gold**.*

Our worthy coroner, Mr Robert Strickland, has unfortunately, since the occurrence of the lamentable accident at the Ellenborough mine, had a pretty busy time, and on Saturday and yesterday he was again called on to exercise his functions on no less than three occasions.

On Friday afternoon the whole of his attention was devoted in making a preliminary investigation into the cause of the death of the young woman Sarah Fahey, who died suddenly under somewhat mysterious circumstances. At twelve o'clock the following day the inquest on the body, which lasted until three o'clock in the afternoon, has commenced, and at five o'clock he opened the inquiry on the fatal accident at the Royal Huster's mine. In this case the jury decided to adjourn until next Tuesday, but the coroner was perfectly willing to go on.

Yesterday Mr Strickland had to proceed to Axedale, where he hold an inquiry into the cause of the death of the wife of a farmer named Pascoe, residing at Tooleen. On Tuesday the inquest on the mining accident will be resumed, and on Monday next the further evidence in the case of Sarah Fahey will be taken, so that taking into account what may occur in the interim Mr Strickland's well-known hand-writing will be kept pretty prominently before the officials in the Crown Law Department.

Bendigo Advertiser Mon 21 Jun 1858 Page 2
JURISDICTION OF THE CORONER

Story 2 **How far should the Coroner travel?**

In our issue of yesterday appeared a report of an inquest held by the Coroner, Dr Roche, at Pinegrove Station, on the Terrick Plains, on the body of a hut keeper named Frederick Tilbury. The unfortunate man had been in the employment of Mr Hassell, the proprietor of the station, and on the 2nd instant was missed, and nothing was heard of him until the following Wednesday, the 9th, when his body was found about half a mile from the station, partly devoured by native dogs or cats. There was some suspicion as to the cause of death, in consequence of a bottle of strychnine belonging to Mr Hassell on the premises presenting the appearance of having been used, but from the medical evidence it would seem that death was the result of inflammation of the lungs aggravated by exposure to the cold.

From the appearance of the body at the inquest, however, the death of the unfortunate man must have occurred very soon after his disappearance, and as it is very unlikely that he should not have known where he was, when within half a mile of the station, it seems pretty certain that he had not lost his way in the bush, and that his death was sudden and not accelerated by exposure. We see nothing in the evidence which would lead us to conclude that the deceased was in a bad state of health at the time of his disappearance, and whether under all these circumstances death was likely to have been the result of inflammation of the lungs we leave to medical men to decide. Some remark was made at the time the case was reported, to the effect that great neglect had been evinced respecting the absence of deceased, and that no regular search had been instituted.

The verdict of the jury exonerates those concerned from this charge. But there are other circumstances attending this case worthy of notice. The body was found on the 9th, and information was sent to the Magistrate of Echuca, which is about twenty three miles distant, which it appears he received on Friday the 11th. That official dispatched a trooper to the place with instructions to the effect that if he thought the case required investigation, he should send for the Coroner at Sandhurst, some sixty miles off.

The trooper sent a message to Runnymede, at Barrows', on the Campaspe, whence another messenger was sent to Sandhurst, who arrived about five o'clock on Saturday evening. Dr Roche, the Coroner, had been kept pretty actively employed for several days previous, and he was unable to start until Monday morning last for the place, whence he returned on Thursday evening. Thus the man was dead about a week before his body was discovered, and the body lay another week before an investigation was hold upon the case, although within twenty-three miles of a magistrate at Echuca.

The Sandhurst Coroner, too, is called for four days from his post here, in the midst of a large population, to attend a case sixty miles off, when there is no absolute necessity for his presence. A magisterial inquiry would have been quite sufficient; and if the Echuca Magistrate had gone himself, instead of sending a trooper, the case would have been investigated on the Friday, two days after the finding of the body. As to dragging off the Coroner from Sandhurst, for four days at a time on such unnecessary missions, it is somewhat too much of a good joke, which, it is to be hoped, will not be repeated.

It would be interesting to know what are the limits of the Coroner's jurisdiction, and whether he is supposed to hold inquiries in cases which occur at such a distance. A radius of sixty miles forms a somewhat extensive district to perambulate upon public duty; and if the Sandhurst Coroner is supposed to be responsible for all the cases in this district, we think the sooner the arrangement is amended the better.

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Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Mon 24 Nov 1884 Page 2

Another example of the work load and travelling distance for our Sandhurst coroners, in this case, Mr R Strickland. This time it is in 1884.

Story 3 No Sinecure.

Mr R Strickland's office of coroner, which he holds in addition to that of police magistrate for an extensive district, is **no sinecure**, judging from the urgent demands for his services which have been made during the past couple of days. On Friday he returned from a tedious journey after the performance of his magisterial duties at Boort and Durham Ox, and on Saturday morning he proceeded to Echuca by the 4.45 train to hold an inquest on the unfortunate man Michael Walsh, who was killed in a row with John Rogers on Friday afternoon. When on the way to catch the early train Mr Strickland was informed by a pressman of the supposed murder case at Janeville, and after completing the Echuca inquest, he received a telegram from the Tarnagulla police, stating that as Mr Carr PM, had met with an accident at Dunolly, his attendance at Janeyale was impossible.

Subsequently another telegram was received from Castlemaine by Mr Strickland, informing him that a boy had died suddenly there, and that as Mr Nicholson PM was absent, there was no stipendiary magistrate obtainable. Mr Strickland arrived in Sandhurst by the seven o'clock train from Echuca, having first telegraphed to Janeville, instructing that the body of the supposed murdered woman should be examined by a doctor, and then coffined, and that he would hold an inquest at nine o'clock this morning.

In the case of the sudden death at Castlemaine a magisterial inquiry was directed. Yesterday afternoon Mr Strickland proceeded by buggy to Janevale, and will have travelled by road and rail upwards of **400 miles** within the past six days, as well as put through a considerable amount of business.

Editor's comment: The paper describes the coroner's position as **No Sinecure**. This word **sinecure** means a position which involves little work or no work, but for which the person is paid.

Bendigo Advertiser Mon 2 Aug 1880 Page 2

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD.

An a last Story **A little humour from Mr Strickland**

At an inquest held at the Back Creek on Friday last the jury, aired the usual grievance as to non-payment for their services, when Mr Strickland assured them that he had done all he could in that direction, and mentioned that Mr M'Intyre during the last session had brought the subject before the House.

A lively discussion then started, when one of those present said it was "wrong to send to Parliament a young man like Mr Quick, who had" . . .
"Order, order," cried the coroner, " I cannot allow politics in this court; we have nothing to do with the quick, but with the dead."
"Then Berry them," gasped out the exasperated juryman.

Mr Strickland was observed to lean quietly over the papers before him, taking the depositions, but was heard by "our own" to groan out, just above a whisper, "Oh, this is awful! That man will be of Service to his country yet."

Comment:

Berry was the name of the Victoria Premier.

Bendigo Advertiser Thu 15 Nov 1855 Page 3
Setting up the office of a Distinct Surgeon in early Bendigo.

Story 4 **Where's the Doctor?**

Since the office of District Surgeon has ceased to exist on Bendigo, we hear that the police are in some instances placed in a dilemma, which it appears to us some provision should have been made for by Government. We allude to obtaining medical assistance, in cases of accident, for needy sufferers. A man without money or friends in the neighbourhood, even his name unknown, meets with a fatal accident. The police are called in, and find the man in *articulo mortis* (meaning: at the point of death).

As a matter of duty they summon the assistance of the nearest medical man, who attends him for a longer or shorter period as the case may be. On death taking place, the Coroner steps in and holds an inquest, and the body is buried by Government; but no provision is made for the medical officer, and he naturally looks for payment to the person who called him in. The knowledge of this is apt to prevent that promptness in obtaining medical aid in many cases, such as drowning &c., so frequently the means of restoring suspended animation, - in fact, to throw obstacles in the way of the police discharging one of the most important of their duties, which ought not to exist.

Bendigo Advertiser Fri 17 Feb 1888 Page 2
VIEWING THE BODY.

Story 5 **"sitting on the body"**

The custom of the "viewing" by juries of the bodies of unfortunate persons, touching the causes of whose deaths it is necessary to hold coronal inquiries, is one of questionable value. If a body found in suspicious circumstances can be shown to a jury in the place and in the position in which it has been discovered, it is probable enough the evidence given at the inquest will be rendered more intelligible. But as jurors are not supposed to be medical experts, it is quite possible they may not draw correct conclusions from the appearance of the dead persons; and, at any rate, they are bound to return a verdict in accordance with the evidence laid before them, and there is always medical evidence.

We imagine that the reason for insisting upon the viewing of the body is that it constitutes a formal part of the evidence, the fact being thereby made patent to the jury that the person, into the causes of whose death they are to inquire, is really dead. Thus it may be considered a necessary provision of Coroner's Quest law. The ancient phrase "sitting on the body" doubtless gave rise to the impression that the jury must keep the body in view during their investigation, or that it must, at least, lie in their immediate vicinity.

As, however, many inquests, or very important parts of them, are held after the bodies have been buried, it is apparent that such an impression is utterly erroneous. It is enough that the jury should be satisfied that a death has actually occurred. They are then informed by the coroner that that death is to form the subject of their inquiry. Having obtained this evidence and official instruction, it can be a matter of only the very smallest importance whether the corpse lies in the same room, or house, or street, as that in which the inquest is held, so far as the result of the hearing of the case is concerned.

Why, then, we would ask, was the body of the late Mr Charles Cutts removed from his residence to the Vine Hotel, in which the inquest was held? We contend that there was not the smallest necessity for the removal; and, under that conviction, we protest against any repetition of such a proceeding as being calculated to deeply lacerate the feelings of the families of the deceased. In this instance a cruel additional shock was given to the already half broken hearts of the two grief and horror stricken daughters of our late respected fellow citizen. We say emphatically that such a wound should not have been inflicted upon them.

It was unnecessary; it was contrary to the dictates of humane feeling and common sense, and we think any lawyer will say that it was not an absolute requirement of the law. If it is, the law should be altered. If it is not, coroners should be instructed to respect the natural susceptibilities of relatives, and especially when they consist of lone and defenceless women. One of the daughters of the deceased has been for some time in a very weak state of health, and her sister and herself have been subjected to several heavy family afflictions.

In the hour of their supreme sorrow, therefore, their privacy should have been intruded upon officially as little as possible, and with the utmost delicacy.

Bendigo Advertiser Fri 25 May 1883 Page 2
OUT DOOR RELIEF

Story 6 Plain Speaking - Death by Starvation

On Tuesday last an inquest was held on the body of a man, 66 years of age, of the name of Thomas Laurie, who had been found dead in a hut at Splitter's Gully, Whipstick. From the evidence adduced it appeared that he had been thirty years in the colony, that he was admitted to the hospital about four or five years ago suffering from an ulcerated leg, and that he was discharged as incurable, and has ever since been receiving out door relief from the Benevolent Asylum. About a week or so since he was attacked with a painful fit of illness, and was kindly attended by a neighbour named Gamble, a miner, who, finding that he got worse and was in a very weak state on Monday, applied to the Eaglehawk police to obtain admission for him to the hospital. On Tuesday, Constable Foley went to his hut and found him dead.

Dr Thom, who made a post mortem examination of the body, deposed that the left leg was in a state of gangrene, and had been subject to chronic ulceration, the treatment of which had evidently been neglected, and that the cause of death was exhaustion, produced by the gangrene of the leg and poor living. "A verdict," it is stated, "was returned accordingly and such was the end of this poor old colonist. Similar cases have occurred before, to which we have called attention in the hope that some steps would be taken to prevent these old men from perishing miserably.

That of poor George Sexton, an old Bendigonian, who was found dead in a hut at the head of Long Gully last July, will be in the remembrance of many of our readers. In October last another old resident of the district, William Ancell, who was about 73 years of age, was also found dead in his hut in Devonshire Gully. It was shown that both these men had died from exhaustion consequent on poor living - starvation it is called where plain speaking is dealt in. Not very long after Ancell's death another man of the name of Thompson perished similarly. A great deal of correspondence took place in reference to these cases, and as we have said above, we commented upon them ourselves, with the result that the board of management of the Asylum very indignantly, repelled the suggestion that a little more care and vigilance on the part of the authorities of that institution might have saved these destitute persons and some others from the miserable ends to which they were brought.

A report was supplied to the board showing that there were 82 men of what was termed the Ancell class receiving out door relief, at the rate of 2s. 6d. per week, or 5d. a day. Thomas Laurie, doubtless, was one of the 82, and at the time referred to - October of last year - it must have been known that he had been pronounced to be an incurable cripple. Yet it was considered sufficient, it would appear, to afford him relief to the extent of a penny three farthings a meal, supposing he had three meals a day. As for clothing, bedding, and shelter, he had to find them as best he could. This was a man with a confirmed disease who required something more than a supply of food barely sufficient to keep soul and body together. Surely as the authorities of the asylum were aware of his condition, something more than ordinary attention might have been paid to his wants.

The institution has any amount of money to expend on bricks and mortar, and yet refuses, in spite of all re-monstrances, to devote a little more of its wealth than it does to the assistance of suffering flesh and blood. We have urged before that an eye should be kept on the four score of aged and helpless men receiving the pitiful dole called "out door relief," and we must again say it is not to the credit of the institution that this is not done. We were told in October last that 28 Chinamen were receiving out door relief. How many of these are there left?

How many of them have died, as Wah Quock did in the hospital on Tuesday from destitution and exposure to the weather?

This unfortunate received relief from the asylum three weeks ago, but nothing further seems to have been done for him until he was taken by a constable in a dying state to the hospital on Monday.

It has been said by the committee that "if they were to employ fifty persons to hunt up cases of distress they would still miss some." Being of this opinion, they will do nothing in the way of hunting up any cases, or of looking after those which are known to them. At any rate instances are of repeated occurrence in which those in receipt of out door relief are left to

perish for want of the common necessities of life. This is no mere assertion of our own, but can be proved from the records of the coroner's court. Ought this state of things to be suffered to continue?

If the institution is saved a considerable expenditure by the refusal of these persons to accept its shelter, surely something might be spared for the purpose of saving them from death by disease, exposure, and want.

Bendigo Advertiser Fri 21 Jan 1898 Page 2
DEATH OF DR J J THOM. - died Thur 20 Jan 1898

Story 7 This person was buried in St Kilda (taken by train on Friday 21 Jan 1898) but gave great service to Bendigo as a doctor.

Eaglehawk, 20th January. (From Our Correspondent.)

The death of the well known medical practitioner, Dr Thom, of Eaglehawk, was as unexpected as it will be sincerely regretted. The news which was circulated in the town in the forenoon that he had been stricken with an apoplectic seizure and had not many hours to live, caused a feeling of genuine sympathy on all hands, and when the worst fears were realised at about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, his friends found it hard to realise that the genial doctor who but the day before was in attendance upon his patients would be seen alive no more.

Dr Thom had for many weeks past, however, had a premonition that all was not well, in fact since an unfortunate accident about 12 months ago his health has cause him some anxiety. So devoted, however, was he to the exigencies of a large practice that he could not be induced to seek recuperation by a holiday until a few days ago, when Dr Penfold impressed upon him the necessity of immediate rest. This he had decided upon, but the unfortunate seizure of today supervened. The immediate cause of death was pressure of blood on the brain and heart affection. He was seized whilst in his bed early in the morning, and never rallied.

The deceased gentleman has, during nearly 30 years residence in Eaglehawk been most assiduous and attentive to the practice of his profession, and in this connection his loss will create a regrettable gap in the medical faculty of the district. During today numbers of patients kept calling at the surgery for medicine and treatment, and were much startled by the unexpected news of his sudden demise. One old gentleman, father of a grown up family, almost fell when told the news, and with tearful eyes remarked, "What shall I do now". He has attended my whole family from infancy upwards." The doctor, besides, was noted for his kindheartedness, although it was sometimes accompanied by a somewhat brusque exterior. His unostentatious liberality was, however, fairly well known, and no genuine appeal was ever made to him and unsatisfied.

As a well known tradesman remarked today, "Many a bag of flour and potatoes had been put on my cart at Dr Thom's order and delivered to people in want." He was a native of Edinburgh, being a son of the Rev John Thom. He was educated at Edinburgh, and qualified himself for the practice of his profession. He practised in Michigan, U.S.A., for five years, being in America during the troublous (*full of difficulty or agitation*) times of the great civil

war. From thence he came to Australia in 1870, and at once came to Eaglehawk, where he has been a well known figure ever since.

He was medical officer to all the local friendly societies, and the Neangar Branch of the A.N.A. at its meeting this evening, on the motion of Mr Smalley, decided to forward a letter of condolence to the relatives. His brother, Mr R B Thom JP and sister resided with him, the doctor being a bachelor and aged 63 at the time of his death. The burial will take place at the St Kilda Cemetery, where a brother is already buried. His friends are invited to follow his remains to the Eaglehawk railway station this morning at 10 o'clock.

Bendigo Advertiser Wed 26 Jan 1898 Page 4

The Late Dr Thom. - At the council meeting today the mayor moved that a letter of condolence be forwarded to the relatives of the late health officer (Dr J J Thom). He spoke feelingly of the deceased's efficiency as health officer and skill in the medical profession. Cr Clark seconded the motion, and referred respectfully to the death of Dr Thom, whom he appreciated as an officer of the borough, a medical man and a private citizen. By his decease the poor of the district had lost a good friend. Crs Kneebone, M'Cormick, Brown, Loudon and Curtain spoke in similar terms, and the motion was unanimously carried.

Another doctor who gave great service to Bendigo and the region was Dr J. C. M'Kee. His demise overseas at an early age brought sadness to the residents of Eaglehawk.

Bendigo Advertiser Wed 12 Apr 1899 Page 3

DEATH OF DR J C M'KEE

He died overseas in Manila when aged 40.

News of the death of Dr James Charles M'Kee was received by wire last night by Mr R M'Nair of Eaglehawk. The news reached Melbourne by cable to Mr Agnew, a very old friend of the doctor, from Mrs M'Kee at Hong Kong. The cable stated that the death occurred at Manila.

It will be well within the recollection of Eaglehawk residents that Dr M'Kee was, about Christmas, 1897, compelled to relinquish practice and seek treatment in Melbourne for an affection of the liver. He returned to Eaglehawk slightly benefited in health in January following, and carried on his practice for a few weeks, but had to return to Melbourne owing to the severity of his ailment.

After this his condition became most serious, and his death was on several occasions considered merely a matter of hours by those in attendance upon him. Possessed of a lion heart, however, the doctor managed to temporarily baffle the effects of the terrible ordeal through which he passed.

Writing on one occasion at the time of the federal elections as returning officer to his substitute here, Dr M'Kee scribbled a short note in pencil to the effect that he was apprehensive that that would be the last communication he would have strength to send.

To the surprise of Eaglehawk residents, and even his medical attendants, however, he was soon afterwards able to go out walking and driving, and in January last he was in Eaglehawk making arrangements for the sale of his property in Victoria Street.

The ravages which disease had made in the once handsome strong man were then plainly evident, but the doctor spoke hopefully of his ultimate recovery, even hinting that he might yet again resume practice in Eaglehawk. On 14th March he left Melbourne on board the China steamer Changsha as ship's surgeon, intending to take a three months trip to China and Japan and islands on the route.

After stopping a week in Sydney the voyage was continued, with the result that he died at Manila, the date not being mentioned or any further particulars given.

Dr M'Kee was a native of the North of Ireland, and came to Victoria in 1880. He practised at his profession in Heathcote for a few years, and came to Eaglehawk in 1884.

He rapidly made friends in Bendigo, Eaglehawk and the surrounding districts, and quickly rose in popularity, which, added to the reputation which he won for medical skill, soon gathered round him a most lucrative practice in Eaglehawk and the country districts.

He was always an interested participator in any movement of public importance, and successfully contested an election for a seat in the Borough Council - a position which he occupied for a short time until some misunderstanding caused him to resign.

He was elevated to the office of W.M. of the local Masonic Lodge, and also filled other positions of honor in Eaglehawk, and Bendigo with credit. He was surgeon-major to the Bendigo militia, and usually took part in their manoeuvres when in possession of good health. The doctor was ever an enthusiastic patron of sport. When football was in the zenith of its popularity he was president of the Eaglehawk Club, and as a supporter of the club had no superior.

He occupied for about 10 years the position of returning officer in the Eaglehawk electorate, an honour which was conferred upon him on the resignation of Mr H Kirkwood. When he left Eaglehawk he was health officer and public vaccinator, and during many years he was returned at the elections of honorary surgeon to the Bendigo Hospital, an institution in which he took the liveliest interest.

He was 40 years of age in January last. Deceased was universally liked, being the possessor of a genial, kindly nature. His large heartedness was well known, and innumerable instances of his charity and kindly regard for the wants and troubles of others could be cited.

Both the deceased and Mrs M'Kee during a lengthy residence in Eaglehawk endeared themselves to the residents, and the news of the death will be received on all hands with surprise and genuine regret.

Bendigo Advertiser Thu 18 May 1865 Page 2
CORONERS AND THE PRESS.

Story 8 **Mr Mackay wins for the Press**

As the course recently adopted by Dr Pounds, the coroner of this district, in refusing the usual facilities to the press in obtaining information respecting inquests, involved an important public question, Mr Mackay, one of the proprietors of this journal, waited on the Minister of Justice, on Thursday last, to lay the matter before him, and have an authoritative expression of opinion upon it. Mr Howard, member for Sandhurst, made the formal introduction, and was present at the interview.

Mr Mackay stated that two or three weeks ago Dr Pounds, the Coroner of Sandhurst, refused to allow the reporters of the press to see the depositions taken at inquests, or to give any information respecting them, although previously he had allowed this, and had even put himself to considerable trouble to give the press information.

When refusing the usual facilities to the reporters, he was said to have remarked that he had done all in his power to oblige the newspapers, and yet the editor had allowed abusive letters about him to be published. Now he Mr Mackay, repudiated the idea of any favour in the matter, and contended that the press had a right to obtain from Coroners all necessary information about inquests. It was for the public interest that such information should be obtained.

In important cases reporters attended inquests, but in the great majority of cases this was unnecessary, and indeed impossible, seeing that inquests were often held at such a distance. In cases of death by accident the required information could be put in a few words, but this information might be very valuable to friends of the deceased, who otherwise would know nothing about the death.

The usual custom in Melbourne and elsewhere was, that reporters called at stated times upon the Coroner, or at his office when he had one, and were allowed to extract from the depositions the required information. That custom was so general that it had come to be regarded as a privilege of the press to have this information given to it.

The Minister of Justice did not consider that any right was established. The information was afforded merely by courtesy, and could not be insisted upon by law. A good deal of discussion took place upon this point, Mr Mackay contending that general custom was itself a law, and that there were many things proper for officials to do which there was no law to make them do. It was in the public interest that the usual facilities should be afforded.

The Minister of Justice said that he was very often asked to do things ostensibly for the public interest which in reality were for private interests, and gave some illustrations of this. Mr Mackay said he left him to judge whether the present application was on public or private interests. He contended that the allowing of fair facilities for obtaining the required information was in the public interest, that custom all but universal had shown this, and that the refusal would be no injury to his journal if it applied to all journals.

He begged to point out to the Minister of Justice the position public journals would be in if coroners were allowed to give and withhold at pleasure the information sought for.

Coroners might be unworthy men, and might act in a disgraceful manner. It might be necessary in the public interests for a public journal to make strictures upon the conduct of a Coroner as upon that of other Government officials. But a journal could only do so at the risk of being denied access to information given to rival journals. Why should it make this sacrifice to discharge a public duty? The probable result would be that, except in some extraordinary cases, Coroners would enjoy an immunity from censure.

The Minister of Justice replied, that surely the Coroner should have some discretion in the matter, and that in cases where the ends of justice might be defeated or the public interests involved by the premature publication of the evidence taken at an inquest, he should have the power to refuse the evidence to the Press. Mr Mackay replied that he did not deny the right of the Coroner to do so in the furtherance of the ends of justice, but the Press would reserve to itself the right to criticise its exercise. In nine cases out ten publicity furthered the ends of justice. The Minister of Justice: "Well, but there's the tenth case." Mr Mackay: "The Coroner can have the benefit of that."

After some further discussion, the Minister of Justice stated that if he understood the application to be that the Press should have access to the evidence taken at inquests, except in such cases as the Coroner might consider it better in the public interest to withhold it, he could not see what objection could be made to it, and that, though a matter of courtesy, he thought every reasonable opportunity should be afforded the press for giving publicity to the information respecting inquests, and he would write to the Coroner to that effect.

Mr Mackay said that was all he asked and he was quite satisfied if access could be had to the Coroner's office at reasonable hours for the information required, when the Coroner did not think that its publication would do any harm. Having thanked the Minister of Justice for his courtesy, he then, with Mr Howard, withdrew. The delay in the publication of the foregoing particulars has arisen from the necessity of communicating with Mr Howard respecting the general accuracy of the report of the interview with the Minister of Justice, which that gentleman endorses. It will be seen that in a case in which we are ourselves interested such corroboration is desirable, if not absolutely necessary.

We publish the particulars of this interview because the subject is of general interest, and the decision arrived at by the Minister of Justice, confirming the general custom, is of special value to journalists. Our metropolitan contemporaries can probably afford to do without any authoritative expression of opinion on the subject, but there are many districts in the colony in which Coroners do not feel restrained by the pressure of public opinion from resenting the remarks of free-spoken public writers, and from using the little brief authority in which they are dressed for the gratification of their spleen, or the indulgence of their caprices (*meaning a sudden and unaccountable change of mood or behaviour*).

Bendigo Advertiser Fri 10 Mar 1882 Page 2

A Peculiar Burial.

Story 9 A Sorry End.

Respect for the dead did not prevail in a recent burial of a child in the neighbourhood of Huntly, if a story which reaches us is correct, and we are assured that it is. A contract had been let to an amateur undertaker to convey the coffin in a cart to the cemetery. On the day of

the funeral a considerable quantity of intoxicating liquor was consumed, after which the cortege left on its way. On arriving at the cemetery it was found that the corpse had been left behind. A hasty return was made for it, but when it was eventually brought into the cemetery, it was found that no grave had been dug. The coffin was then laid down by the fence until the grave digger was communicated with, and eventually the remains were consigned to their last resting place.

And this is civilization.

Peculiar is an adjective meaning different to what is normal or expected; strange.

Bendigo Advertiser Mon 25 May 1857 Page 3

This story from the Bendigo Advertiser in May 1857 is giving Dr Roche a little niggles about the detail and length of inquests he conducts.

Story 10 Editorial Comment on the coroner DR ROCHE

The Fatal Affray at Back Creek.

The inquest upon the body of the late Stephen Downey will be resumed today, at noon, in the Criterion Hotel. Jurors, witnesses, and others concerned, will therefore, do well to be punctual in attendance. We beg leave to express a hope that our worthy Coroner, Dr Roche, who, in his commendable desire to do ample justice in such cases, is in the habit of prolonging inquests to a tiresome and unnecessary length, will perceive how the very fact of heaping up evidence, and fine drawing it, has a directly diverse tendency to that at which he aims, and that he will avoid all superfluous prolixity, and bring the case to a concise, intelligible, and speedy close.

Full story of this murder inquest for Stephen DOWNEY can be seen [here](#).

Bendigo Advertiser Wed 27 Feb 1861 Page 2 **HOW THE CORONER TREATS JURIES.**

Story 11 More Editorial Comment on the coroner DR ROCHE

DR ROCHE has a marvellous facility for getting into scrapes, and doing things in the various official capacities that he is called on to fill, which the impartial observer must condemn. We ascribe this in a great measure to the fact that this gentleman holds so many public offices that the various duties have quite bewildered him.

Why the authorities have heaped so much upon him, we cannot understand; and why, when they see the result of their folly, they do not relieve him of at least half of his appointments, is equally puzzling.

There is not a Mining Board election that he has not made a mess of, and the folly of the Government in allowing him to retain the position of Returning Officer is incredible. "We trust that this occasion will, at all events, be the last on which this community will be annoyed with his blunders. There may be some excuse for his making a mess of a business not in his line, but there is none for his bungling the functions of Coroner. In this capacity, at all events, he may be considered at home, and to understand perfectly well what are his duties

and his responsibilities. Now did he discharge his duty in a proper manner when he locked up the jury at Kangaroo Flat on Monday night?

Can any intelligent and impartial person say that the Coroner was justified, under the circumstances, in thus committing such an infringement upon the liberties and the valuable time of twelve respectable citizens? To Dr Roche it may seem a small thing to lose a whole night - to be kept away from one's family and business. Surely it is enough that the law demands the time and the attention of every citizen, and that he is subjected in certain emergencies to such a penalty as that now inflicted, without being also liable to it merely at the whim of an impulsive and unreflecting official.

Dr Roche took upon himself the responsibility of locking up this jury. Now, was he justified in doing so? We refer the reader to our report of the case in yesterday's issue. The jury, shortly after having retired, sent for the Coroner and informed him that they had agreed upon a verdict of manslaughter. This verdict he would not receive, because, as the report says, "they could assign no reason for coming to the conclusion!"

He then went on to inform them that if they found that the death of the deceased was caused by the prisoner, they must return a verdict of wilful murder. Did any one ever hear grosser nonsense uttered even by a Coroner? The jury was consequently again locked up, and after the Coroner had frequently visited them, enforcing his views and persuading them to return a verdict of wilful murder, eleven of the jurymen came round to his views, or said they had come, and one held out for the original verdict. The Coroner then ordered them to be locked up all night. Now is not this monstrous?

Is a Coroner allowed to bully or cajole a jury out of a verdict they have agreed upon, and if not successful with every jurymen, to lock them up for a whole night? In this case they had agreed upon a verdict, which was a perfectly intelligible one, and what business had the Coroner to endeavour to have it changed, and still more to punish the jury because he was not quite successful in his efforts?

If a Coroner is allowed to do such things, what is the use of going to the trouble of impanelling a jury. It is a mere farce - the inquiry is a sham, and the jurymen are merely a parcel of dummies, or at best only required to register the opinions of Mr Coroner Roche. We do hope that the jury will not act as juries have hitherto done on occasions when just complaints have been made against Dr Roche but that they will forward a complaint to the Government of the Coroner's gross conduct on this occasion.

Mr Gunn, the jurymen, who held out, deserves the utmost credit for his spirit and determination.

Bendigo Advertiser Tue 5 Mar 1861 Page 3

Letter to the Editor.

In support of the Coroner Dr Roche

Sir, - I see in the papers a great outcry against our worthy coroner, Dr William Augustus Roche, concerning the inquest held on the body of Mrs Coles. Is it possible that twelve

literate men could possibly understand the distinction between murder and manslaughter, as well as a gentlemen who has the honour of being:

- a duly qualified medical practitioner,
- a Territorial Magistrate,
- the oldest Coroner in the colony,
- Registrar of Births and Deaths,
- Public Vaccinator,
- Commissioner for taking Affidavits,
- Curator of Intestate Estates,
- Returning Officer for Mining Board,
- Deputy-Returning Officer for North-Western Province,
- Returning Officer for Sandhurst Boroughs,
- Guardian of Minors,

&c.; it is madness to suppose so. Who so bold as to question the legal acumen of the great William Augustus?

This notes are also shown on the murder page of Martha COLES.

Coroners' Fees.

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Fri 14 Apr 1871 Page 3

Story 12 The following are extracts from some supplementary regulations recently made by the Governor-in-Council respecting the duties and remuneration of coroners:-

"No coroner or deputy-corer shall be entitled to a fee for any inquest or adjournment thereof concerning the death of any person, nor for any adjournment of an inquest concerning any property destroyed or damaged by fire, if in the opinion of the Minister, there was not good and sufficient cause for such inquest or adjournment as the case may be.

Where the Minister is of opinion that upon the holding of any inquest medical evidence has been called in or a post mortem examination ordered by any coroner or deputy-corer without sufficient cause, such coroner or deputy-corer shall not be entitled to a fee for such inquest."

SHOULD JURIES BE PAID FOR SERVICE AT AN INQUIRY.
Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Wed 1 Nov 1876 Page 2

Story 13 **A letter to the Editor about payment of Juries.**

CORONERS' JURIES.

(To the Editor of the Bendigo Advertiser.)

Sir,- I look on it as a flagrant injustice to the public that a man may be stopped at any moment by a policeman and ordered to attend at a certain time and place to inquire into the cause of death, &c, but at the same time admit that such inquiries are necessary and urgent; but a man's time must always be considered his money, and if a policeman or coroner has a right to demand it, there should be a fixed price set on it. But as coroners' inquests are at present managed, the jurors are simply forced by an imperious law to cast aside their own interests entirely, and devote their time and energy to the elucidation of a problem they seldom understand.

For we will suppose a post mortem examination has been made, and the doctor in his evidence delivers a long harangue in describing the state of the viscera and other technicalities that leaves the jury, or nine-tenths of them, about as wise as to the state described as they were before they heard his evidence; but then the coroner almost puts the verdict in their mouths by assuring them that the doctor's is the most important evidence, and points to such and such as the immediate cause of death.

But to return to the payment of jurors. There can be no more fitting time to press the matter than the present, when a jury has already met twice, and are to be in attendance again on Monday next to consider the circumstances connected with the late fatal accident at the Albion Company's claim, in Kangaroo Gully, and on their last sitting were in the jury room from nine am till fully nine pm, with the exception of half-an-hour's respite, to enable them to go and get refreshments where they could.

So if a "good man and true" has no money in his pocket, and is detained at an unusual time, he must be "content to consider the occasion of a coroner's inquest as a "Banyan Day"; and as we are on the subject of Mr Mason's death, I must say it appears to me that a jury of business men, who could be readily obtained on Kangaroo Flat, would be more suitable to investigate a mining accident than a mixed one of business men and miners; for, although I know the miners of this neighbourhood to be as honest and honourable as any other body of men, it must not be forgotten that they are almost entirely dependent on managers and directors for their employment, which means their bread.

- Yours, etc, CHARLIE CANTHARADIS.

Compilers Note: The meaning of a "Banyan Day": A sea term for those days on which no meat is allowed/served to the sailors: the term is borrowed from the Banyans in the East Indies.

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Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Thu 13 Oct 1887 Page 2
CORONERS JURIES AND THEIR PAY FOR SERVICE AT AN INQUIRY.

Story 14 **Change of law - number of juryers from 12 to 5 and to be paid.**

"It has long been a matter of complaint that coroners' juries are not paid for their services."

This statement, which will admit of no contradiction, was made by the Attorney-General on Tuesday in moving the second reading of the Coroners' Juries Law Amendment Bill. In order to admit of payment which would otherwise make a serious addition to the estimates, it is provided in the bill that the number of jurymen should be reduced from twelve to five in ordinary cases.

The pay proposed was to be five shillings a day, except in exceptional circumstances. Mr Wrixon said it was thought if a high rate of payment were given it would lead to the creation of a class of men who would look out for this kind of employment. When inquests extend over only a short time the pay was to be at the rate of one shilling an hour. The reduction in the number of jurymen is a proposal to which objection will be taken, by very few, for five or six intelligent men are quite sufficient to arrive at correct conclusions. Any addition to that number is apt to lead to confusion through perplexing, and often frivolous and vexatious differences of opinion.

In some cases fifteen or sixteen jurors are empanelled, and it seldom happens that in such cases public satisfaction is given by the verdicts. It is open to question whether a coronial inquiry would not be better conducted without a jury. In mining inquests, if the coroner had the assistance of a couple of experts, he would be able to give satisfactory verdicts; and in ordinary cases, in which there are no suspicious circumstances, he would be quite capable of acting alone.

As an hon. Member pointed out a large number of magisterial inquiries are held throughout the country, and prove quite satisfactory. Of course there are cases in which there should be a sworn jury, but in no case can it be an advantage to have so many as twelve men and over. Five or six men are quite enough.

Whilst admitting the correctness of the old saying that two heads are better than one, we cannot concede that 12 are better than 5, or 16 better than 12. There may be safety in a multitude of counsellors, but there is often a great deal of contradiction, and, as a consequence, a great deal of delay.

It was thought safer a few years ago to increase the number of members of our Lower House, but the result has not shown that there has been any gain. We believe it would be a wise step to reduce the number very considerably. At any rate there can be no question a coroner would discharge his duties quite as well with five as with twenty jurymen. Much valuable time is often lost and much difficulty experienced in getting a jury together. These evils would be greatly lessened by a reduction of the number. Therefore, this provision is one that may be hailed with satisfaction.

As to the rate of pay, it was agreed in committee that a minimum should be fixed at four shillings for any time up to four hours, and one shilling for every hour over that time. Even this seems to be too little. Men, whose time is valuable, will be as difficult to catch as ever,

whilst men who are not very eligible will probably throw themselves in the way when they know that an inquest is on.

CORONERS - Should they be removed from the System of Justice in Victoria.
A story written in 1878 about the possible removal of Coroners from the legal system.

and

New rules were approved by State Parliament in 1902,
for an inquest to held without a jury. [Link to that 1st inquest in Bendigo.](#)

The Bendigo Independent (Vic. : 1891 - 1918) Wed 12 May 1909 Page 3
OBITUARY.

DEATH OF DR HINCHCLIFF.
A MILITARY VETERAN.

Story 15 **This well known and highly respected doctor deserves his place of the Coroners Page.**

About midday yesterday one of Bendigo's best-known and highly respected citizens passed away in the person of Dr Edwin Hinchcliff. For the past few months the doctor has been in a bad state of health, and his friends could see his system was slowly breaking up. However, he was about the city as lively as ever, and made little of his trouble. Death took place at the residence of Dr Jackson where the deceased had been residing for the past few months.

A few days ago the doctor was confined to his room, and since then he has not been seen about. Dr Hinchcliff was a native of Homefirth, near Leeds, in the west of the County of Yorkshire. In the early days he came out to Australia and spent some time with his brother who was a surgeon in the western district of Victoria. After this he went back to the old country, and commenced to study for the medical faculty. He graduated at the Edinburgh University and quickly obtained the degree of doctor of medicine.

So popular was he among the students that they elected him president of the medical society. This also showed that he was a man of marked ability. After successfully going through all the courses at the University, Dr Hinchcliff came out to Australia in 1862, as one of the resident medical officers in the Melbourne Hospital. Eleven years later he left this institution and became resident surgeon to the Bendigo Hospital, in succession to a fine old citizen - Dr McGillivray.

For a few years he remained there, giving every satisfaction, and then commenced a private practice in View Street. Shortly afterwards he had a very serious illness, and was incapacitated for some time. He left the profession and took a long rest. He again got into harness and became one of Bendigo's best and most careful doctors. He was one of the first medical officers appointed to the militia, and was surgeon to the old troop of cavalry, the Prince of Wales's Light Horse. Afterwards he joined the militia, and quickly rose to the rank of surgeon - colonel - a rank which only one other man rose to in Victoria.

Years ago he retired from the active list, and went into the reserve, but on Hospital Sundays and other special occasions he was often seen in the bright red uniform. When the American Fleet visited Bendigo the doctor was highly delighted, and showed the sailors the various beauties of the town. In sporting circles Dr Hinchcliff was well known, and for many years was president of the Sandhurst Football Club. He regularly attended the matches, and up to last year his face was familiar. He was against roughness, and often remonstrated with players for breaches. The Bendigo Jockey Club found him an efficient surgeon, while he also held similar positions for other bodies. In the Masonic craft he rose to a high place while he was connected with other public bodies, and was also a member of the Sandhurst Club.

During the day flags could be seen hanging at half mast on several of the buildings. For many years Dr Hinchcliff lived in View Street, in the house now used as the parsonage to the All Saints' Church. The church authorities leased the ground in View Street for building purposes, and the doctor went to reside in McKenzie Street. When the doctor gave up his profession he went to stay with his brother-in-law Mr Cunningham, editor of the Argus.

Dr Hinchcliff was married to Miss Jackson, sister of the Messrs Jackson, ironmongers, of View Street, and she is still living. The funeral will leave the residence of Dr H E Jackson for the White Hills Cemetery at 3 o'clock this day.

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The Bendigo Independent (Vic. : 1891 - 1918) Sat 15 May 1909 Page 6
LADIES' COLUMN of Friday, May 14th.

It is with the deepest regret and sympathy that we hear of the sudden yet not unexpected death of Dr Hinchcliff. He will be greatly missed by all his old friends and companions, and not by them only. He was such a familiar figure to so many, he was so well known in the streets, walking down town, accompanied by his two little dogs, hailing his friends here, stopping small children there, that Bendigo won't seem homelike without him. He was one of those well-known men that are like land-marks to us, and when any traveller now away, returns home, Dr Hinchcliff's absence will be noticed at once. Lately, of course, he has not often been able to get about much, but it is not very long since I saw him going down View Street with the faithful little moses in close attendance, and little did I think it was the last time I should see the cheery doctor.

All the real Bendigonians seem passing away, and more than ever can we say with the poet - "Friend after friend departs, Who has not lost a friend? There is no union here of hearts, That finds not here and end." The doctor lies in the White Hills cemetery, that cemetery (Bridge Street cemetery) that now is closed to all but those who have relatives already buried there, the first cemetery where most of the pioneers lie. And his friends sent the last token of love in the many flowers that covered his coffin, prominent amongst which were red roses, for those were his favourite flower. And now the kindlier custom is growing of sending the favourite flower, not of keeping to the orthodox white wreath. So it is sadly that we say what must be said to all - Vale Dr Hinchcliff.

- Yours truly,
VIOLET.

The Bendigo Independent (Vic. : 1891 - 1918) Thu 13 May 1909 Page 3**OBITUARY.****DEATH OF WILLIAM WEBB.****AN OLD IDENTITY AND PROMINENT BUSINESS MAN.**

Story 16 **This well known and highly respected business man and as a JP working on the Bendigo City Court, deserves his place of the Coroners Page.**

Following closely on the death of Dr Edwin Hinchcliff come the announcement, yesterday morning, that Mr William Webb JP, had passed away at his residence, Queen Street, at 6.30 o'clock, aged 75.

The late Mr Webb was born in London in 1834, and in early youth entered the office of a large mining and engineering firm. In 1860 he turned from the life of a clerk in the old land, and sailed for Australia, which offered a larger and brighter sphere for an ambitious young man. On arriving in Melbourne, he entered the office of William Degraves and Company, millers, of Melbourne. They also had mills in several of the country districts, including Kyneton and Bendigo.

After 12 months in the metropolis he was sent to take charge of the firm's Kyneton mill, and subsequently was given the controlling hand over two mills in that district. For two years he discharged his trust satisfactorily, and was then promoted to manage Degrave's mills in Bendigo. (The mills were on the site at the corner of Williamson and Hargreaves Street now occupied by Messrs John Watson and Co, James Andrew and Co, and Stewart Scott and Co).

In 1870 (on the great commercial failure of Mr Degraves owing to losses in land and wheat speculations), Mr Webb made an extensive tour through India, China, Japan, and the Philippine Islands. In the following year (1871) he returned to Bendigo, and with others took over the milling business of Degraves and Company. He then managed the business till 1878, when it was sold. The fine mill now standing on the corner of Queen and Williamson Streets was then built. The mills were equipped with machinery of the latest type, and it was then ahead of most mills out of Melbourne.

The deceased, who was of very retiring habits, devoted almost entirely to business with a little literature for study and recreation, was gazetted as a justice of the peace in 1892. In that respect his name became widely known to the public. For several years the bulk of the coronial work of the city was done by him. He must have held hundreds of inquests. He was very handy in his office at the corner, and the number of times he signed his name in his capacity of a justice of the peace was very considerable. Beyond being a justice of the peace, however, he did not figure prominently before the public.

In his earlier years, however, he interested himself in Masonic matters, and was one of the five who founded the Zenith Lodge. He was one of those who wrote to England for the articles of constitution. He also served on the directorate of several mining companies, and about 1871 was the legal manager of several short-lived mining companies, the principal of which was the St Kilda Company, which had a bit of ground somewhere at Golden Gully.

During the last three years Mr Webb's health failed him, and lately his condition grew worse from week to week from a general breaking up of the constitution. The immediate cause of death was heart failure. He was never married, and very little is known of his

relatives. His mother died in the Ballarat district many years ago, and there was a brother who resided up country, and left a son and daughter. Mr Webb, however, it is understood, seldom saw his nephew or niece. They are believed to be his only relatives in Australia.

Mr C P Davis, of Mount Camel Station, near Heathcote, arrived in Bendigo last night. Mr Davis was Mr Webb's most intimate friend and chief partner in the milling business. Further enquiries last night as to Mr Webb's relatives threw little enlightenment on the matter. There is something known of a nephew, but whether he is still alive, or where he is, could not be ascertained. The will of the deceased will not be read till after the funeral, and of course, no particulars were yesterday obtainable as to any bequests there may be, or who is to benefit under its provisions.

Mr Webb was much liked by the police. He was ever ready to sign documents for them, and often at midnight when they required his signature it was obtainable. They have forwarded a beautiful domed wreath, to be placed on the grave.

At the Bendigo City Court yesterday morning, Mr R B Anderson JP, said: "The Latin quotation, '**De mortuis nil nisi bonum**' (*meaning Say nothing but good of the dead*) is very old, and very good in its way, but I am bound to speak of my late and lamented friend, and often times colleague, Mr Webb, who died this morning, at 6.30 o'clock. Although the police court may not be the place to eulogise citizens, he being a magistrate for nearly twenty years (and having taken my place when I have been away in Melbourne and other parts I must express the regret my colleague and myself had on learning of his death."

Mr Frank Cohen said: "On behalf of the legal profession, as I happen to be the only member present, I wish to express extreme regret at hearing this very sad news. His worship says that this is not the place to eulogise our late departed friend, but we all know the splendid way in which he always carried out his duties as a Justice of the Peace."

Mr R H Down, clerk of the court, said: "I wish to add a few words to what has been said. It has always been a pleasure to me to do anything for Mr Webb. He was extremely painstaking, and a thorough gentleman. When you say a man is a Christian gentleman, you cannot go any higher than that."

The funeral will leave No 72 Queen St at three o'clock today (Thursday) for the Bendigo cemetery.

AN OLD IDENTITY AND PROMINENT DOCTOR. OBITUARY.

Death of Dr William Augustus ROCHE.

Story 17 **This well known and highly respected doctor and was a Territorial Magistrate and Coroner working the district of Sandhurst and wider area.
He deserves his place of the Coroners Page.**

The death of Dr Roche, one of the earliest Bendigonians, occurred at Townsville, Queensland, on 12th October, 1876. Dr Roche was the first coroner and curator of intestate estates for the district, having been appointed in 1853.

He held the position for about 10 years, and afterwards was appointed surgeon on Echuca line of railway during its construction by the contractors, Messrs Collier, Barry and Co. Shortly after the completion of the line he left for Queensland, and settled at Townsville, where he practised as a surgeon.

He died at the age of 49.

William Roche, an old Bendigonian, who arrived early on the gold-field. During a meeting called for by DWC Denovan and others on July 8 1854, with upwards of 1500 miners present, he gave a support speech to Denovan which was a most humorous speech. A link to this speech is [here](#).

Back to: Murder & Other Stories