



Bendigo Remembrance Park - Notable Graves Tour

4. GEORGE EDWARD THOMSON

Born: 3 Oct 1826 Coupar Angus, Perthshire, Scotland

Died: 17 Jan 1889 Sandhurst, Victoria, Australia

Date of Burial: 18 Jan 1889

Arrived in Melbourne in 1852

Miner & miners' advocate involved in the Red Ribbon Agitation. Advocated for 'moral force'. Newspaper Founder & Editor of the Digger's Advocate and Solicitor.

Located in Section E4
Grave number 5624
Interment number 10928

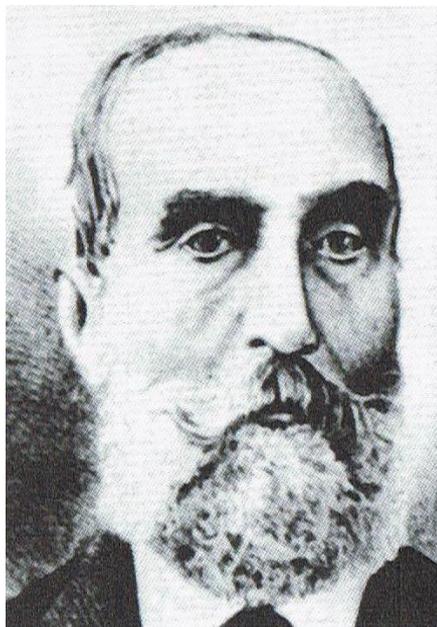


Image sourced: The Red Ribbon Rebellion, Decade of Dissent. Geoffrey Hocking, page 24

Australian Dictionary of Biography
<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/thomson-george-edward-4716>

Bendigo Advertiser (Trove link) Friday 18 January 1889 page 3. **Obituary**
<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/88559137/9073304>

THE BENDIGO ADVERTISER (PUBLISHED DAILY.)
SANDHURST, FRIDAY, JAN. 18, 1889 Page 2

DEATH OF MR G. E. THOMSON.

WE have to mourn the loss of another old fellow-citizen and friend, the transition of whom to that life "whose portal," as Longfellow says, "we call death," took place yesterday morning. Mr George Edward Thomson was one of the oldest Bendigonians who had been spared for nearly forty years to speak from personal experience of the now almost forgotten scenes of the early digging days.

As an historical authority on the strange and exciting incidents of those times the deceased gentleman had no peer, his memory having been wonderfully retentive. As a prominent orator in the agitation which, had for its object the attainment of the privileges of a free British community, for the denizens of the goldfields chiefly, and for the colonists generally, he could speak with unerring precision, both as to facts and dates, of the eventful story of the struggle which culminated in the famous Eureka tragedy.



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No man who engaged in the goldfields contest with the ruling powers exerted himself with more energy or greater judgment than Mr Thomson, and we may safely say that it was in a very great measure due to his judicious action that no outbreak of a violent character took place Bendigo, and we may also observe that if all the leaders of the incensed diggers had acted with the coolness and prudence displayed by him, the sad scene of bloodshed at Ballarat would certainly have been spared. Rightful concessions only were sought; there was no demand for anything more than the fair and equitable rights of British subjects; and Mr Thomson was one of those who was convinced the ends desired could be attained by a persistent adherence to a legitimate course.

The agitators were most undeservedly stigmatised as rebels; but if it were possible for such a state of things to prevail in these days, there would not be one in the colony worthy the name of man who would not be such a rebel as were those with whom Mr Thomson was associated and for whom he was acting in, the capacity of a leading spirit. Their demand simply was that they should be governed in a constitutionally British manner.

The views of the goldfields' population were forced on the attention of the Government by our departed friend in a manly, temperate manner, both with his voice and pen, and any show of turbulence was at the same time strongly interpreted by him. Displaying great tact in council and immense vigour on the platform, he commanded at once the respect of his colleagues and the confidence of the masses.

No word that could be called revolutionary escaped his lips, and when other speakers trenched on anything like seditious ground, they met with swift correction at his hands. As an orator he was in his prime at that period, and not only could his clear and resonant voice make itself heard, so that no syllable of his utterances was lost, upon vast assemblages of men, but his arguments were so conclusive and convincing, and his language so conclusive, that he never failed to impress his hearers with the correctness of his views; and none but those who were prejudiced in favour of the Government failed to acknowledge the righteousness of the cause he advocated.

His calm and firm temperament, his sincere earnestness and great ability, rendered him a pillar of strength and enforced the admission that he was verily "a man of the people." In his death one of the last remaining links binding the present with the past of the goldfields has been destroyed. It is to Mr Thomson and some other men like him that we are indebted for the initiation of constitutional Government, and the establishment of the free institutions which we now enjoy. We do not claim for him that he accomplished single-handed the liberation of the people of this country from harsh and arbitrary rule, but it is unquestionable that his influence went a long way towards the attainment of the objects of the agitation in which he took conspicuous and vigorous a part.

It has often been regretted that he never entered Parliament, for his just and well balanced mind, his eloquence and judgment would have rendered him a most valuable representative, whilst his talent fitted him for high office in the State. He has always commanded the esteem and respect of his fellow citizens, many of whom will deplore his sudden and unexpected end. But he seems to have passed away quietly and peacefully,



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even as one weary of lengthened labor lapses into the rest of sleep. For some years his friends have noticed with sympathy and sorrow the evident failing of his physical strength; but his mind retained its power and vigour to the last, and he died as he had lived a clear-sighted and able man. Although never given to making a wide acquaintance or to the seeking after popularity, he had many friends and enjoyed the good opinion and respectful feeling of all who knew him. As one who did the State some service in his time, and that of an invaluable kind, he is deserving of the lasting regard not of the people' of Sandhurst only but of the whole colony.

The race with which he was contemporaneous in the days when an extraordinary condition of things called his genius into active exertion is fast becoming liable, through the effects, of declining years, to arrest at the bauds of the "fell sergeant, Death," (*from Hamlet*) and cannot expect very much longer to elude his apprehending grasp.

They will feel this fresh gap in their ranks, and will stand with truly sympathising feelings at his grave; but the race that is succeeding them owe a deep tribute of gratitude to the really noble and patriotic mind which has at length escaped from its mortal bonds, and we would ask, in remembrance and recognition of its earthly work, that the honour which was justly its duo should be awarded by the community generally, and that the name of George Edward Thomson should be held by them in kindly and grateful estimation.

The grave for George Edward Thomson

George THOMSON died in 1889 and is buried in the same grave as John Thomas SANDERS who died in 1875. John Sanders was appointed first Deputy Registrar in Bendigo for Births, Deaths and Marriages in 1853 when registration became compulsory by law on 1 July 1853. Unfortunately George Thomson is not named on the headstone for this grave. In fact, there are two headstones on the grave, facing each other. Both headstones were erected by John Sanders's daughter Maria Alice Sanders in 1899.

The grave for George Thomson & John Sanders



Image from RPCV records