

THOMAS GREENFIELD

Edited talk by Jan Hunter (presented at A&DHS General Meeting, February 2016 and reprinted from A&DHS Bulletin No 565)

Have you walked past the foundation stones of the old Town Hall recently?

When did you last have a look at the Dight Memorial water fountain in the Botanic Gardens?

Have you stood in the shade of the walnut trees and watched the rugby?

The name, Thomas Greenfield connects those three places.

Thomas Greenfield, a monumental mason, came to Australia from England in the early 1880s. His mother Jane, and a sister Annie, seem to have arrived at around the same time. They came to Albury very soon after their arrival but Annie died "an untimely death" in 1886, aged 27.

By 1884 Greenfield was in partnership with Leo Ballantine working from 489 Kiewa Street, in the vicinity of today's WestEnd Plaza. They also had a workshop in High Street Wodonga. Very early in the partnership, Ballantine & Greenfield were praised for their monumental work over the graves of local residents in the Barnawartha and Wodonga cemeteries.

Thomas and Nurse Eliza Jane Smith (known as Lizzie) were married at St Luke's Church of England Wodonga in 1888. The *Wodonga Sentinel* reported that it was a quiet wedding and "in the afternoon the couple travelled to Beechworth." The couple first lived somewhere in Olive Street.

Twin sons, Thomas and Charles were born in 1899 but died seven months later from bronchitis. Greenfields built a house in North Street around 1900 but Lizzie died of tuberculosis in 1901, having been ill for some time. She left a six week old son, Alfred Francis, known as Frank.

Greenfield owned land behind his house in North Street as well as land the eastern side of Alma Street which was known as Greenfield's paddock. At one stage, part of this land was offered for share cropping and it is assumed that the prize winning orchard was on this land also. He exhibited every year in the Albury Show, the Albury Horticultural Shows and St Matthew's Flower shows. Greenfield was not averse to dropping in a dozen perfect plums or apples to the Banner newspaper's office, which would result in a comment like "well known orchardist, Thomas Greenfield's fruit is pest free this year."

Thomas exhibited and won prizes for a virtual nursery catalogue - peas, onions, pumpkins, plums, quinces, oranges, 'English Stalks,' sweet peas, cherries, 5 varieties of apples, and bottled fruit.

Under the front of the North Street house were cool store rooms with unsupported stone shelves for his fruit and vegetables. Geoff Colquhoun and his family lived in this house for over 50 years and as expected they used the under house rooms for general storage. The outdoor toilet was connected to the sewer but an indoor toilet was added with different owners.

Thomas was active politically and socially from the time he arrived in Albury. He served on the jury between 1886 and 1922, he was on the platform of visiting parliamentarians giving

a vote of thanks in the 1890s and he was a member of the Albury Free Traders and Liberal Association. When hearings were held concerning the proposed Federal capital, Greenfield testified at the Albury sitting that Table Top sandstone and Hawksview granite were world class, but none-the-less he bought his supplies from further afield as it was cheaper. Greenfield succumbed to pressure to stand for a vacancy on the Albury Council in 1903. He stood with Dr Kennedy for the Reform Party. In an election speech he said he “did not want to go into council to assist in the slip-shod, go-as-you-please and come-and-have-a-drink management that had prevailed for some years past.” Perhaps that appealed to the public for Kennedy and Greenfield were elected.

However, when standing again in 1904 Thomas was unsuccessful.

There were changes in Greenfield’s business arrangements. In 1907 the Ballantine & Greenfield partnership was dissolved and a long term employee, T T Molloy, took over the site in Kiewa Street. Greenfield set up an office, a workshop, and display centre on the corner of Englehardt & Kiewa Streets, later the site of the Hume Shire Offices. Thomas displayed stone from Denmark, Sweden and Norway and a massive monument in Malsbury bluestone with a Celtic Cross caused press comment.

Greenfield married Eliza Margaret Ann White of *Stonehurst* Bungowannah in Melbourne, in 1912. Not long after their marriage the new Mrs Greenfield won a prize for exhibiting and milking a cow at the local show and she joined Thomas in exhibiting flowers, poultry, eggs, asparagus, potatoes and bottled fruit. She was reported as a “finished needlewoman” for her “ever useful apron” exhibited at Holbrook. There were no children from this marriage.

Thomas always seemed to have plenty of work. A memorial tablet was erected in memory of Fireman Bernard Gowing who was killed in the Boer War. It is still in the Civic Fire Station, Kiewa Street Albury. Greenfield usually donated the foundation stones for churches including St David’s Presbyterian Sunday School, St David’s church and St James’ Anglican in Lavington. He designed the George Edward Mackay Memorial Fountain for a Show Society stalwart. He erected the Charles Dight Memorial Fountain in the Botanic Gardens which was designed by William Powrie and has recently been completely refurbished by AlburyCity.

The advent of World War I brought more work for Greenfield from all around the district. The memorial tablet for Lieutenant Colonel J W Simpson (MC), of the Albury Grammar School was designed and erected by Thomas inside St David’s Presbyterian Church. He also erected the obelisk outside the church (now a Uniting Church) as a memorial to those of the church who served.

Another aspect of Thomas Greenfield’s life was his active involvement with St Matthew’s Church of England. He served on the parochial council and was parish auditor in the early twenties. He was active in the formation of the St Matthew’s Men’s Club which was aimed at maintaining the physical, spiritual and moral welfare of young men living in boarding houses. It was open to all denominations. Thomas also was an active member of the local British and Foreign Bible Society.

After WWI finished St Matthew’s wanted a memorial for the Anglican men who served and those who died. Greenfield went to Melbourne to view various memorials in that city and he submitted plans to the church in Albury. There was a great deal of discussion before a design was finally chosen. The call went out for names to be submitted so that Greenfield could cast these in bronze on the faces of the obelisk.

The dedication was a grand affair in April of 1922. The monument was moved to the rear of the church after the fire in 1991 and is now part of QE11 Square.

The Albury Pioneer Cemetery holds many gravestones designed and erected by Thomas Greenfield. The grave of James Fallon, Albury's first mayor is a splendid example. Designed by friends of Fallon and in collaboration with Ballantine & Greenfield it takes the form of a Celtic Cross, sculptured from pure white Sicilian Marble on a bluestone base of 5'6" high. Into the base are six marble panels stating that J T Fallon died May 1886. All over the monument stands 12'6" high. The grave was refurbished and repaired in 1997 by the staff, students and parents of James Fallon High School under the guidance of stone mason, Mr Frank Spagnolo.

Another elaborate memorial is for Robert Rand of Mahonga station, erected c1884. The draped urn was a common symbol in funerary art and generally is thought to represent the ancient custom of storing the ash remains in an urn and the draped cloth seems to represent the veil between this life and the next. Draped material was used in many symbols of mourning.

Greenfield died in 1927 aged 72 after a protracted illness. Thomas had escaped death in his twenties, when he nearly drowned in the Murray near Kelly's Point. He was rescued by a fellow swimmer, Charles Manns, a wheelwright. At 68, Greenfield cut his finger on a jagged kerosene tin chook feeder. The finger was later amputated, but that same year he still won prizes for his produce. He later spent some months in bed with a leg injury but went back to work after surgery in Melbourne. His business continued to advertise until the early 30s, operating under the name of Barklamb Bros trading as Greenfield's Ltd

The photo will bring back many memories for Albury people. These are some of the tiny houses built for munitions workers in 1942 by the government. They began at the North St Bridge near the present John King Park and continued into Alma Street. Because of the walnut trees remaining from Greenfield's orchard they were promptly nicknamed "The Walnut Shells."



Greenfield Park was designated for public recreation in 1949 and is now the site of the rugby ground, Greenwells Fishing Club and Albury Racing Pigeon Club. The remaining Greenfield trees are being cared for and replaced if necessary by AlburyCity as befitting their heritage status.

The legacy of Thomas Greenfield, born in England in 1855 and who died at North Street Albury in 1927 is all around Albury. The leaves and green sward of the park named after him and the tablets and memorials of his work, remind us of a community minded citizen, a church goer, an avid horticulturalist and a craftsman and artist in stone.