

BRIEF HISTORY OF RIVERS BEEHCROFT DICKINSON

Rivers Beechcroft Dickinson was born near London on February 3rd 1831.

He was educated for 8 years at the largest of the endowed grammar schools of King Edward VI, Christ's Hospital. He then continued his studies privately for the next 2 years.

At 17 he was appointed Junior Assistant Master at another endowed school at Brewood in Staffordshire.

At 18 he joined his father who had entered into a partnership as a manufacturing chemist at Bury in Lancashire. Whilst there he continued his studies for 3 years as a non-resident undergraduate of Trinity College Dublin. At this time Trinity College was apparently the only national university conferring a degree in Arts after 3 years examinations at Dublin.

However, before taking out his degree in Dublin, he joined his family in moving to Melbourne. They arrived on the clipper ship "Arrogant" in April 1853. Rivers Beechcroft had a letter of introduction to Bishop Perry (Cof E Bishop of Melbourne) and 100 pounds in his pocket given to him for his services in connection with the old parish church at Bury by one of the "cotton lords" of the district, Mr. Richard Walker.

He was immediately appointed by Bishop Perry as lay-reader under Dean Macartney for the large district of Broadmeadows. It covered some 600 square miles.

After a year he was transferred to the district of Phillipstown (now South Brunswick) and Flemington.

In 1855 when aged 24 years he was appointed to the Curacy at St. Peter's East Melbourne. It was during this time that he performed the marriage of W.A.C. a Beckett and Emma Mills — apparently quite a scandal at the time owing to their very different class origins. It was their very talented artistic daughter, Emma Minnie who later married Arthur Merric Boyd. Thus Rivers Beechcroft played a very important part in the begetting of a very famous family.

In 1856 he was made the minister of the united districts of Emerald Hill and Sandridge (later South Melbourne and Port Melbourne) and had built there St. Luke's Church Emerald Hill (still standing in all its Bluestone splendour but largely obscured by supermarket progress.) A large vicarage was also eventually built beside the church and both are classified by the National Trust He was vicar there for 51 years until he retired in 1907. In 1870 he finally took a B.A. degree through Melbourne Uni and a M.A. in 1872. In that year too he was made a Canon of the then Cathedral of St. James.

He married Matilda Patterson. Four of their 7 children survived to maturity. (The 3 eldest died in childhood within 3 weeks of each other due to a scarlet fever epidemic) He later had 2 more children by a 2nd marriage.

Rivers Beechcroft died aged 91 years in 1922.