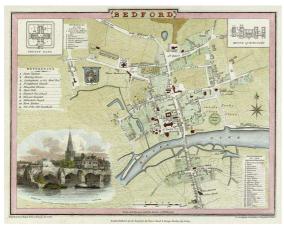
## Extra, Extra Read All About It

## From our correspondent Jenny Davidson

Thomas Woodward Hill charged again.

"A writ was served on Thomas Woodward Hill, registered publisher of the *Brisbane Courier*, at the instance of the Attorney-General this morning, charging him with unlawfully, wickedly, and maliciously printing and publishing a false and scandalous libel concerning the members of the Legislative Assembly." <sup>1</sup>

As the Brisbane Newspaper Company couldn't pay his bail that day, Thomas spent a night in gaol.<sup>2</sup> To survive those lonely, dark hours he cast his mind over his long life.



Bedford engraved by J. Roper after G. Cole published  $1806^3$ 

Thomas's late father, Joseph Hill, formerly the actuary of the County Savings Bank in Thomas's home town of Bedford, England, <sup>4</sup> would have supported his son's stance, although Joseph would have been horrified at his circumstance. Susanna, Thomas's mother, died many years ago.

Hopefully I'll survive the night and see daybreak tomorrow. The dank Brisbane gaol was a long way from the comparatively sophisticated town of his youth. How would John Bunyan have rated this accommodation, compared with Bedford gaol in the 1660s? God willing, I

will emerge in a day, rather than the 12 years that John languished in his cell: plenty of time to write *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Thomas Woodward,<sup>5</sup> Susanna Hill's father, taught at one of the schools in Bedford in 1791,<sup>6</sup> so the family prioritised education and his grandson Thomas attended the Bedford Grammar School,<sup>7</sup> the former Harpur Free School, in St Paul's Square. My years at school prepared me for life—but not this!

At an early age, Joseph started teaching Thomas his own trade: printing.<sup>8</sup> Later, the youngster worked as a compositor on the *Bedford Mercury*.<sup>9</sup>

The fourth son in a family with eight children, <sup>10</sup> Thomas happily set sail for Australia on the *Mary* in 1839. Australia promised adventure to my twenty-two year old mind. Some passengers, including Thomas, had paid four times the cost of travelling in steerage, so that they could disembark at the Cape for a few days to refresh themselves and eat some decent food. However, a rude shock awaited them there: "disembarkation denied"— what a brutal introduction to the real world!<sup>11</sup>

Thomas's first job in Australia involved setting type on the *Colonist*, a paper owned and edited by the Rev. Dr John Dunmore Lang in Sydney. Two fellow compositors were Robert Smith, a printer in the Government Printing Office in Brisbane in 1884, and James Swan, who, in the late 1840s, published the *Moreton Bay Courier*, which he bought shortly afterwards. This became the forerunner of the *Brisbane Courier*, the reason for Thomas's imprisonment.

Moving away, if only mentally, from my present predicament and back to happier

times; the *Sydney Herald* took over the *Colonist.*<sup>15</sup> Seventeen months later the title changed to the *Sydney Morning Herald.*<sup>16</sup> Businesses changed hands often in the 1840s.

Experience Thomas gained working on Sir Henry Parkes's the *Empire* in Sydney and on the *Bathurst Free Press* proved useful later. <sup>17</sup> By 1853 he had moved on to the *Argus* in Melbourne. <sup>18</sup> After a year, the *Melbourne Morning Herald* paid his wages. <sup>19</sup> Printers in early Australia had a nomadic life—perhaps this gave rise to my bachelor state.

One of Thomas's older brothers, Samuel Woodward Hill, had also migrated to Australia, and likewise found employment as a printer in Melbourne at this time.<sup>20</sup> However, Samuel had unfortunately started drinking too much and appeared in court a couple of times.<sup>21</sup>

In 1857 I uprooted myself again and moved across the Tasman to Nelson, New Zealand, to help print another *Colonist*. This position kept Thomas in New Zealand long enough to serve as a juror and to vote. <sup>23</sup> Sometimes these duties are seen as nuisances but they were signs of civilization in the burgeoning settlement in the South Island, eager to show its equality with Wellington in something other than degrees of latitude.



Nelson, New Zealand<sup>24</sup>

After a while, sunnier climes appealed and Thomas arrived in the new colony of Queensland the week before Christmas 1859.<sup>25</sup> By the New Year, the title of principal overseer for the composing room of the Moreton Bay Courier belonged to him. 26 Thomas's abilities attracted the attention of Theophilus Pugh, editor of the paper, who contracted to print the first Queensland Government Gazette in late 1859 with his assistance.<sup>27</sup> What a job that became: not enough type, waiting forever for corrections; a good thing that Theophilus' political leanings prevented his receiving the first permanent position as Government Printer.

The working hours of a printer allowed little time for socialising. Although a well-dressed, handsome man,<sup>28</sup> Thomas didn't marry till his forty-fifth year. Oh, that happy day in 1861 when I married Agnes in the Wharf St Baptist Church<sup>29</sup>—just thinking of her lights up this dingy cell.



Wharf Street Baptist Church 1859<sup>30</sup>

The chance meeting in 1860 outside his office at the corner of Charlotte and George Streets changed Thomas's life.<sup>31</sup> The recently widowed mother of three children lived just a couple of blocks further down Charlotte Street.<sup>32</sup>



*Brisbane Courier & Queenslander* staff in front of Courier Office, corner of Charlotte & George Streets, Brisbane, 1879<sup>33</sup>

In 1864 they moved to Petrie Terrace, on the edge of the city, living in a six-roomed house, on Petrie Terrace itself, at its southern corner with Cricket Street.<sup>34</sup>

Even though a low-set home, its elevated position on the ridgeline, 110 feet above sea-level, gives us fresh air and lovely views eastwards over parkland towards Wickham Terrace and westwards to the mountains. The front verandah provides a delightful place to relax, especially on hot afternoons after work. If only the building opposite was a private house rather than a public-house. A brisk walk down Swan St to Countess St, around the corner into Roma St, past the railway station then into George St and along to Charlotte St delivers me to my office in the city in fifteen minutes. The same station of the city in fifteen minutes.



Thomas Woodward Hill's house on Petrie Terrace at the top of Swan St ca. 1882<sup>38</sup>

Agnes and her children,<sup>39</sup> Singapore-born Emily, Adelaide-born Frederick & Sydney-born Ellen, all approved of their new house and Thomas welcomed the joys of fatherhood and the contentment gained

from living in the same place. We've lived there for twenty years now. After a while we added a new member to our family: Cockey, a tan and black Scotch terrier, whom thieves stole in 1869.<sup>40</sup>

Sadly, their marriage produced no children, perhaps due to their both being in their forties when they married. Agnes had lost her first son in 1850, when he was only seven hours old, 41 so further pregnancies worried her at this age. We devoted ourselves to rearing Agnes's surviving children from her first marriage. My ready-made family grew up quickly.

Frederick and I enjoyed the Queensland vs. New South Wales cricket match at the Green Hills Cricket Ground, down Swan St, in June 1864. Alas, even though Queensland had twenty-two players to the visitors eleven, they still lost. Ah, that takes me back to my schooldays playing cricket; as well as football and hockey.

Schooldays finished and working life commenced in the early teens so, sadly for the family, Frederick left home when just sixteen. By January 1868 he worked as the Station Master at Grandchester telegraph office.45 After a short stint back in Brisbane, he departed for Nebo, near Mackay, in 1870 and later lived in many places in North Queensland. Perhaps Frederick inherited his Master Mariner father's wanderlust: not that I can talk! A telegraphist, brilliant lives Normanton, on the Gulf of Carpentaria, with his wife Margaret and their six children.46

At least both the girls—well, mature, married ladies now, still live nearby. Emily suddenly married James Treleaven in 1867 at the tender age of nineteen.<sup>47</sup> Thankfully, Ellen waited till she turned twenty-four before marrying John Tait in 1879<sup>48</sup>.

Agnes and I soon found our lives busy helping to care for our ten grandchildren living in Brisbane, starting with Frederick Rains Treleaven in 1868.

Emily, Frederick & Ellen showed their appreciation of Agnes and Thomas's nurturing by the number of grandchildren who bear their names. Emily named her son, born in 1880, Thomas Woodward Hill Treleaven. Talk about overdoing it!

Repositioning my six foot one inch frame<sup>49</sup> in this cramped cell, I fondly remember whiling away the time playing draughts at work, in years past. 50 The opportunities for that disappeared once Thomas became the official publisher and printer of the Brisbane Courier and the Queenslander in 1867.<sup>51</sup>

However, I mustn't think about work or I'll never get to sleep-though work does provide me with a good lifestyle and enough money to invest in property.

As a land owner, ethical, rather than borderline legal, property deals matter to me. The Directors of the Queensland Building Society No. 1 expressed surprise at finding Thomas a strident advocate for honesty and transparency in their dealings, but as the son of the former Secretary to the County Savings Bank in Bedford,<sup>52</sup> Thomas expected adherence to correct procedure.<sup>53\*</sup> The organising committee trying to establish a primary school in the Petrie Terrace-Milton area in 1867 also found that he expected the correct accounting of monies.<sup>54</sup>

I purchased land at South Brisbane and Oxley in 1868<sup>55</sup>: partly as an investment for my old age and partly for our future grandchildren. Will I reach old age?

The Queensland political climate of the last decade or so has made publishing a litigious profession. Although threatening letters from the Crown Solicitor arrive sporadically,<sup>56</sup> the editors continue to enlighten the public regarding the real state of affairs in the colony, thereby enraging the government. When I was charged with contempt of court in 1881,57 the case ended in my having to make a grovelling apology to the Supreme Court and now, just three years later, the authorities have detained me overnight. Freedom of the press carries a price tag. What thoughts are racing through Agnes's mind tonight? When will daylight come? How much longer do I have to stay here?...

Postscript: After three days in the Queensland Supreme Court, Thomas received, on the recommendation of the judge, a verdict of not guilty from the jury. In 1889 the section of the Constitution Act of 1867 (Old) pertaining to his case was repealed. This was a landmark court case for freedom of the press. On that lonely night in 1884, Thomas would never have imagined that his name would be mentioned at the Presiding Officers and Clerks Conference in Perth in 2006.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 1884 'OUEENSLAND.', The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 21 March, p. 8, viewed 18 April, 2013, http://nla.gov.au/nla.newsarticle13558155.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> 1896 'THE HISTORY OF THE "COURIER.".', The Queenslander (Brisbane, Qld.: 1866 - 1939), 27 June, p. 1223, viewed 18 April, 2013, http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article20449357; I could not determine the actual date of his night in jail. <sup>3</sup> Bedford in 1806,

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