

The Port Fairy Gazette

Thursday, November 11, 1943

THE LATE MR THOMAS G. GUYETT

DEATH REMOVES PORT FAIRY'S
LEADING CITIZEN.

A BOROUGH RESIDENT FOR 37
YEARS.

Vale Thomas George Guyett! There is not one citizen in this thickly-populated area of the Western district, but more particularly those who are domiciled in Port Fairy and its environments, who does not lament with more than passing sorrow the demise of one of the finest citizens who has ever graced our midst. Port Fairy has been in existence for over a century; it has revered and honoured many men who have left their impressions on the footprints of time, but it is very doubtful if there have been more than a very few who have left behind such outstanding monuments to their worth and to their citizenship as has the late Mr Guyett, whose death was briefly referred to in our issue of Monday last. Port Fairy—in fact, the whole of the Western district—has been distinctly honoured by his life work and by the numerous spheres of influence with which he was associated and to which he gave such yeoman and unselfish service. No one can ever say that his life was not one of usefulness, made more so by his enduring grit and diligence, whether in adversity or prosperity, and major and minor undertakings, both in his business connections and his association with organisations and institutions, were faced and completed with that meticulous care, perseverance and interest that characterised every action of this grand citizen. His reward will be of a permanent nature as his memory will live for years in the affection of all who met and knew him, and Port Fairy and the surrounding districts will always have tangible assets to his great worth as a citizen.

Thomas George Guyett was born on October 29, 1860, at Sydenham, in the County of Kent, England, and

it was only a fortnight prior to his death that he had celebrated his 83rd birthday. It is rather astonishing to record that only a short while previously he became a great grandfather. He married Miss Lillian Blackwell at Hawkhurst (Kent) on May 6th, 1884, and the young bride and bridegroom sailed from England on May 24th of that year. The sailing ship, "Melbourne," which brought them to Melbourne, arrived there on August 14, 1884, 84 days out from the old country, and on the return trip was wrecked, and nothing more was heard of her. Numurkah, in northern Victoria, was the first town in which Mr and Mrs Guyett elected to start their co-operative journey through life, and it was in this centre that he opened a small business. The land boom shortly afterwards hit this State, and the late Mr Guyett tried his luck in various parts of the State. It was in 1887 that his ability became really recognised, and he was entrusted with the important and responsible position of accountant and manager for the firm of Messrs Phelan and Sons, builders and contractors, of Maryborough. This position of trust, in which he acquired considerable experience of the trade, was only the stepping stone to far greater accomplishments, and, fired with ambition—a hall-mark in his character all his life—he began in the early part of this century to look round for new spheres of activity. Port Fairy residents were fortunate that he chose this place for the main ambition of his life—the purchasing of a business. It was in 1906 that he completed negotiations for the acquisition of the building and contracting business of Messrs Ednie Bros., in Sackville-street. Maryborough, however, always held an attraction for Mr and Mrs Guyett as it was here that nearly all their children were born.

Since the year 1906, with his business acumen and integrity and an indomitable spirit, the late Mr Guyett—later with the assistance of his family—built up one of the most progressive and influential businesses in the Western district. It meant hard and painstaking work, but he never complained, and as he watched his

ambitions being realised, how proud and satisfied he must have been. Expansion of his business rewarded this man of enterprise, and, as other property was acquired, the name of Messrs Guyett and Sons became a household word, the business reflecting the confidence of its owner in the future prosperity and solidity of Port Fairy. The firm meant a lot to the town, its growing list of employees taking up residence and rearing their families here. The late Mr Guyett continued active control as managing director of Messrs Guyett & Sons, Pty., Ltd., until about a fortnight before his death. Some 12 months ago, he underwent a serious operation, and, to the delight of his numerous friends, he made a complete recovery. The hundreds of congratulatory messages and personal compliments that he received on his restoration to health were an indication of the high regard in which he was held. His death was due to a rather sudden heart illness. The town is considerably poorer by the passing away of one who justly earned every kind sentiment that was ever expressed concerning him.

Despite his active and progressive business life, the late Mr Guyett never lost sight of his duties as a citizen, and it can safely be asserted that, had all the enterprises he was identified with ever come to fruition, this town would now be designated as a city. It was he who in the main was responsible for the establishment of the Glaxo factory and its contingent industries in Port Fairy, as he took the leading part in all the preliminary negotiations which enabled the only Glaxo factory to be established in this centre. The permanent water supply for Port Fairy always had a staunch supporter in the deceased, and this progressive move was brought into existence due, in no small measure, to his enterprise. He was also instrumental in making the leading moves in the proposals to establish the Aringa cement industry and a beet sugar factory in the district, and although the negotiations did not materialise in the way that townspeople would have wished it was no fault of the late Mr Guyett. He was associated with the Belfast and Koroit Steam Navigation Co. as a director, and in the past two years held the onerous position of liquidator to the Company (now in voluntary liquidation). The Outer Ports

Commission, which had for its objective the development of Port Fairy as a first-class harbour, had great help from the deceased, and for many years he held executive office in the Progress Association and numerous other organisations in the town. For a time he was a member of the hospital committee and this institution, as well as every other one in the town and district, found him a generous benefactor. He took a leading part in the "Back-to-Port Fairy" movements, and his work with others was the means of raising hundreds of pounds for local organisations. The returned men always found him a sympathiser with their cause, and he was a member of the Dads' Association. When the agitation for the Port Fairy-Macarthur railway was in full swing he devoted considerable time, thought and activity in the efforts to have the line constructed and had the satisfaction of knowing that the Parliamentary Standing Committee recommended that the line be constructed, but it was never advanced further. The late Mr Guyett was an indefatigable worker for the Higher Elementary School here, and he was one of the men who successfully agitated for better educational facilities in Port Fairy. He was a member of the School Committee for years.

It is only possible in this eulogy of his worth to epitomise the remarkably outstanding citizenship of a man who gave all he could to the moves for the development of the town which he loved so much. His opinions on any matter were respected by all, and his criticisms of any organisation, always welcomed, were tempered with a subtle humour. There was no one who once having made his acquaintance or friendship was not the richer, mentally, for it. What a wonderful example his life has set for the younger generation of this town to follow, and anyone who emulated it would be a Christian in the truest sense of the word. He was a devoted adherent of St. John's Church of England, occupying a high and honoured place in the controlling body, and it was in the main due to his generosity and ideas that many of the internal and external embellishments of this beautiful church have been enhanced.

The late Mr Guyett was a Justice of the Peace for years and occupied the position of chairman of the

Bench of Justices at the local Court. It is understood that he was the oldest J.P. in the State.

A worth-while life has closed, and, in any compilation of the history of this fine old town, the name of Thomas George Guyett must figure prominently. It is up to those who remain to see that the lead which he gave in bringing Port Fairy to the forefront will be followed in a marked degree by those who claim to be citizens. The good that the late Mr Guyett has done throughout his long, honourable and active life will live after him. No man deserves more eloquent testimony to his worth.

Mr Guyett's life partner died about 14 years ago, and about eleven years ago, he took a trip to Canada and the Old Country to revisit the scenes of his boyhood days. It was while in England that he re-married and the widow survives.

A family of nine—six sons—John Blackwell (Warrnambool), William Bertram (Port Fairy), Albert Edward (Rockhampton, Q.), Norman Francis (Geelong), Ernest Paul (Port Fairy) and Leonard Alfred (Sydney)—and three daughters—Lilian Victoria (Warrnambool), Violet Alice (Mr Dryvynsyde, Vancouver, Canada) and Beatrice Kate (Melbourne)—are left to mourn the loss of a devoted and understanding father. To them the sympathy of the whole community is extended. One son (George) died many years ago at Port Fairy.

IMPRESSIVE SERVICE AT ST. JOHN'S.

In the church of St. John's where the late Mr Guyett had worshipped so often and which he loved so much, the beautiful casket was surrounded by a wealth of floral tributes. The impressive service, prior to the funeral, was conducted by the Rev. J. P. Blennerhassett, with Miss Wright at the organ. Testimony to the deceased's life of unselfishness was paid in an eloquent and moving tribute by the reverend gentleman. Death had taken away one of their best churchmen and citizens, said Mr Blennerhassett, a man whose life was filled with many noble qualities. His life in their Church had been marked by his holding many positions, including the Superintendency of the Sunday school, representative of the Synod and a church warden. His business life had been marked by energy and

acumen. He had lavished great devotion on his church, and many actions were known only to him, said the speaker. He was a man of charity, a man of proved ability, but, above all, a man of love. Strangers felt his personality, and his family knew what a good and loving husband and father he was. Wherever he could do good he did it, and it could be said for the late Thomas Guyett that a man such as he who loved God could not hold it within himself. Every such man must be missionary minded, and nothing gave him greater pleasure than to bring someone, especially the young, in contact with God. He took a great personal interest in the younger people. They had all lost someone whom they all loved.

After the singing of the hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light," and "For All the Saints (who from their labours rest)," the coffin was borne to the hearse by past and present employees of Mr Guyett. "The Dead March" was played, and in the fairly large congregation there was hardly anyone who was not visibly affected at the loss of this fine

THE FUNERAL.

Every business place in the town closed for a few minutes, as the hearse, followed by a car laden with floral tributes from organisations, friends and admirers, passed along the main street and past the business establishment of Messrs Guyett and Sons, Pty., Ltd., where business activities had ceased for three days as a mark of respect to the man who had built it up. Many cars containing representatives of all businesses and institutions in the town followed the mortal remains to the Port Fairy cemetery where the interment took place. The mourners came from all parts of the Port Fairy and Warrnambool districts, a fine tribute to the worth of the deceased and the respect which he enjoyed. The Rev. J. P. Blennerhassett officiated at the graveside, and the coffin-bearers (present and former employees of the firm) were: Messrs R. Costello, J. Costello, L. Russell, F. Williams, E. Sproal and G. Spencer. The pall was supported by Messrs N. M. Simmons, A. J. Stephen, F. W. Pettin-gill, W. U. Riddell, J. C. Holden, M. Crowe, J. Gavin, W. J. Crow, E. W. Youl and W. J. Murfett. The floral tributes from firms and organisations included wreaths from Messrs E. L.

Yenken and Co. (Melbourne), The employees of Messrs Guyett and Sons, Pty., Ltd., St. John's Vestry, Port Fairy Blind Auxiliary, Port Fairy sub-branch R.S.S.I.L.A., Methodist Ladies' College (Hawthorn) and the Staff of the Bank of Australasia (Rockhampton).

A TRIBUTE.

The following is taken from to-day's Anglican Church Notes:

"We Church people are proud and thankful to have had a man like Thomas George Guyett in our midst. He has done his work and has been called to rest at the age of 83 years. He has for many years been Synod Representative of the Port Fairy Parish, Honorary Lay Helper, Church Warden, Sunday School Superintendent, and member of the Central Council. He was a most regular worshipper at St. John's and drew from God that strength which made him gracious in life and a blessing to all who knew him. His devotion to the Church and his fine citizenship are well known, and his going will leave a gap hard to fill. His wife and family have the sympathy of all Church people, and, indeed, of all townspeople. May He Rest In Peace.

TRIBUTES BY DIGGERS.

At the November meeting of the Port Fairy sub-branch of the R.S.S. I.L.A., Mr Routledge, the hon. secretary, stated that, on behalf of the Branch, he had conveyed to Mr W. B. Guyett the sympathy of the Branch on the death of his father. The late Mr Guyett, said Mr Routledge, had been a friend of the diggers in the last war, and been a wonderful help to them in many ways. He had arranged for a floral tribute to be sent and representatives to attend the funeral.—Mr Bolton said that deceased had been a member of the Dads' Association, was a fine citizen and the father of several diggers of the last war. He moved that a letter of sympathy be forwarded to the widow and family.—In seconding the motion, Mr H. Chapman said that Mr Guyett was a good Christian, a fine churchman and an exemplary citizen.—Supporting the motion, Mr J. Tieman recorded instances of the generosity of the late Mr Guyett who on one occasion had bought Armistice Day poppies for the whole of his staff.—The motion was carried.