

Thomas William Shepherd (1824-1884)

## Monograph on Thomas William Shepherd, Botanist and Author

by Louise B. Johnson

Thomas William (TW), the first child of Thomas Shepherd and his second wife Jane Susan née Henderson, was born in Worthington, Sussex on 11 March 1824 and was not quite 18 months old when the family set out on the *Rosanna*, a barque or a brig, for New Zealand in August 1825. The Shepherds arrived in Port Jackson in late February 1827 where Thomas senior established the Darling Nursery on some 28 acres, later a land grant.

TW was educated at The Australian College established in 1831 by Scotsman Reverend Dr John Dunmore Lang with a comprehensive curriculum: English, history, arithmetic which included book keeping and 'mercantile correspondence', mathematics, geography, Latin, Greek, French, Italian and German.<sup>1</sup> While at school TW 'became the editor of a manuscript newspaper in connection with the school'.<sup>2</sup>

The Australian Floral and Horticultural Society was formed in May 1838 and Robert Henderson, then managing the Darling Nursery, was elected vice president.<sup>3</sup> The society held its first exhibition of shrubs, flowers, fruit and vegetables in September 1838 and prizes were awarded in each category. Second prize was awarded to 'Thomas Shepherd' for his daisy, for a shrub *Spirixis* and for his strawberry.<sup>4</sup> This is the fourteen year old TW. The Darling Nursery was well represented: Robert Henderson won several prizes and 'D. Shepherd' (likely the 12 year old David, TW's brother) won a prize for his shrub.

On leaving school TW worked

"in a merchant's office in Sydney, but this not agreeing with him he went up the country and took to pastoral pursuits, where he found congenial employment though then only 14 years of age. He was first employed in the Ovens River in 1839; at Dr. Cropper's on the King River, he cleared and ploughed land which he put under 10 acres of wheat, the first in that [area]. He returned to Sydney by Port Phillip, and after he had obtained the age of 21 years, he took charge of the Darling Nursery."<sup>5</sup>

By 1840 TW had become a member of the Australian Floral and Horticultural Society and is listed as a member in the annual reports for the years ended 30 June 1841 and 1842.

In 1846 having attained his majority and management of the nursery, TW's name was on the 'list of gentlemen presented' to the Governor at the annual ball held at Government House on 25 May 1846 to celebrate Queen Victoria's birthday.<sup>6</sup>

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1 *The Sydney Gazette* 3 January 1832 page 1; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/2204310>

2 *The Town and Country Journal* 6 December 1884 page 1165; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/71021016>

3 *The Monitor* (Sydney) 9 July 1838 page 2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/32160627>

4 *The Monitor* (Sydney) 21 September 1838 page 2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/32161321>

5 *The Town and Country Journal* 6 December 1884 page 1165; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/71021016>

6 *The Australian* (Sydney) 26 May 1846 page 3; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/37157349>

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Around this time, William Sharp McLeay (son of Alexander McLeay) a keen botanist introduced him to Augustin de Candolle's work *Flore française, ou descriptions succincte de toute les plantes qui croissent naturellement en France* co-authored with de Lamarck and published in 1815. It prompted TW to start work on his own extensive botanical catalogue.

The Australasian Botanic and Horticultural Society formed in June 1848 and precipitated the demise of the old Floral and Horticultural Society, which had concentrated its activities on holding flower shows.<sup>7</sup> The new society had as its object 'the promotion of Botanical and Horticultural Science, and the encouragement of the manufactures and productions of the colony', and it met periodically at the Botanic Gardens.<sup>8</sup> TW signed up as an early member and at the society's first exhibition in October that year he received a medal for 'best collection of 3 Auriculas' and received 10 shillings.<sup>9</sup>

Also in 1848 the Experimental Silk Institution was established by James Beuzeville, a Londoner who arrived in Port Jackson on 2 May 1848, and the Governor agreed to be the patron of the new institution. TW had been selling mulberry trees since 1846 together with the offer of free silkworm eggs in any quantity, and he subscribed to Beuzeville's venture for three years at £1 1 shilling per year.<sup>10</sup> However by late 1849 from want of the necessary funds, Beuzeville was forced to abandon the venture and investors lost their money.<sup>11</sup>

In late 1848 TW arrived in Adelaide, joining his brother Patrick Lindesay who had trekked overland with a mob of horses, and there is notice of uncollected mail for TW in Adelaide in October.<sup>12</sup> The brothers were still in Adelaide in the new year and at a cricket match between Adelaide and Sydney teams, the Overland team was beaten. 'The bowling of Mr. T.W. Shepherd was very indifferent: he gave his place to his brother, whose style proved more effective'.<sup>13</sup> These two brothers were still playing cricket together as members of the Darlington Cricket Club in 1860.

Of his South Australian trip, TW would later write:

"Some years ago I visited South Australia, at which time she was not much talked about as an agricultural colony, and the farms, of course, were fewer and farther between. On this occasion I frequently saw wheat crops growing in the forest, amongst the trees [and] the owners of these crops were Germans; and they explained to me that the trees were left standing to shade the wheat from the too powerful rays of the sun."<sup>14</sup>

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7 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 22 February 1849 page 2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/28646429>

8 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 22 June 1848 page 1; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12906555>

9 Australasian Botanical and Horticultural Society *First Annual Report* [unpaginated].

10 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 11 September 1848 page 1; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12911339>

11 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 28 November 1849 page 2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12911012>

12 *The South Australian* 3 October 1848; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/71612572>

13 *The South Australian Gazette* 11 January 1849; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/195936925/22341351#>

14 *Native Plants, and the Agricultural and Pastoral Resources of Australia No.6* by T W Shepherd; *Magazine of Science and Art* (Sydney) 1858 Volume 1 pages 251-253 at 253.

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By 1850 TW was busy at the Darling Nursery: there was a range of fruit and forest trees, shrubs, flowering plants and vegetable seeds for sale, as well as indigenous plants and seeds.<sup>15</sup>

The *Catalogue of Plants Cultivated at the Darling Nursery, Sydney, New South Wales ... with a Complete Alphabetical Index; Forming a Reference to the Whole* by TW was published in August 1851. The cover states 'upwards of 2,500 species and varieties' are included and the catalogue itself is followed by TW's six page essay *A Few Practical Remarks on the Cultivation of the Orange and the Olive in Australia*.<sup>16</sup>

The Preface begins:

"In preparing the following Catalogue of Plants for the Press, it occurred to me, that, by a small additional outlay, it might be rendered useful as a book of reference to those of my fellow-colonists who take an interest in the study of plants and horticulture.

The rapid progress which this delightful and useful science has made, within the last few years, renders the publication of some work of easy access ... very desirable.

Although there are, doubtless, many scientific gentlemen in the colony more competent for such an undertaking than myself, yet a beginning must be made; and it is in the hope that this beginning, small though it may be, may be quickly followed by more complete productions from the pens of those better qualified, than I have ventured on the task.

It must be observed ... that the Catalogue is nothing more than a nurseryman's list ... it, however, includes nearly all the cultivated, ornamental, and fruit-bearing plants, at present in the colony.'<sup>17</sup>

The catalogue was priced at 1 shilling 6 pence and was well received, being

"most acceptable to those who are engaged in horticultural pursuits. It is arranged on the natural system employed by Dr. Lindley in his Vegetable Kingdom, and includes the names and habits of about 2000 of the cultivated, ornamental, and fruit-bearing plants now in the colony ... No work conveying so much information in so condensed a form has been published in the colony".<sup>18</sup>

At the Australasian Botanic and Horticultural Society show in February 1855 TW received accolades for his shrubs and flowers at its flower show. However by 1855 there were concerns amongst commercial nurserymen of unwarranted competition by the Botanic Gardens with allegations of gifts to well-placed citizens who then had no need to purchase from commercial ventures. (This was also Thomas Shepherd's *bête noire* over two decades before, referred to in his *Lectures on Landscape Gardening of Australia* of 1836).

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15 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 14 May 1850 page 1; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12917913>

16 National Library of Australia: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/34663185>

17 *Catalogue of Plants Cultivated at the Darling Nursery* 1851, Preface; NLA <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-613487115>

18 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 19 August 1851 page 3; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12929573>

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Due to his ongoing disappointment with the Botanic Gardens' conduct, in January 1855 TW initiated the formation of the Horticultural Improvement Society of New South Wales.<sup>19</sup> Notices setting out the prospectus of the new society were published in April 1855 and Rule 2 stated that the objects of the society were 'the development and encouragement of Horticultural and Botanical Science';<sup>20</sup> so there was no real difference between the two societies: it was simply a political manoeuvre.

The Horticultural Improvement Society first assembled on the evening of 15 May at the Mechanics' School of Art in Pitt Street. The Governor was named president, Sir Charles Nicholson M.L.C., Chancellor of Sydney University and Sir Thomas Mitchell the explorer vice-presidents, David Shepherd the treasurer; and TW, his brother Patrick Lindesay, Robert Henderson and Frederick Creswick were listed as members of the 24 member council.<sup>21</sup> The meeting 'was numerously and influentially attended'.<sup>22</sup>

TW gave a long address which covered the topics of horticulture and botany.

"I have often pointed out to bushmen, the wild mustard alluded to, and other wild plants fit for food ... It has happened more than once in my rambles through the interior of this colony, that I have had to depend, for days together, in a great measure upon the indigenous productions of the bush, and not unfrequently had recourse to their medical properties."<sup>23</sup>

This presaged his forthcoming series of papers on native plants.

The Society had its first formal meeting on Tuesday evening 3 July 1855 at the Royal Hotel, George Street. The 'attendance was unexpectedly large and comprised a considerable number of ladies, whose presence not only graced but added considerable interest to the proceedings'.<sup>24</sup> TW delivered a paper 'on the hybridization of plants [that was] listened to with great attention'.<sup>25</sup> It was published in full in the *Herald* several days later.

In late July 1855 a Select Committee of the Legislative Council was 'appointed to inquire into and report upon the management and conduct of the Botanic Gardens',<sup>26</sup> following a petition by nurserymen to the Council. The sitting members appointed to the Committee were Thomas Barker, Charles Cowper, Stuart Donaldson, Daniel Egan, Captain Phillip Parker King, James Macarthur, cousins George and William Macleay, James Wilshire and George Robert Nichols, Esq., solicitor, who was the chairman. Seven witnesses were called including TW who gave his evidence on 15 September; it was long and detailed.

Asked by Nichols to state his grievance as to the Botanic Gardens' activities, TW replied:

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19 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 16 January 1855 page 5; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12964407>

20 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 9 May 1855 page 2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12969024>

21 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 15 May 1855 page 2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12969303>

22 *The Empire* (Sydney) May 1855 page 4; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/60177159>

23 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 17 May 1855 page 3; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/28641202/1501521>

24 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 5 July 1855 page 8; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12971332>

25 *The Empire* (Sydney) 4 July 1855 page 5; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/60165991>

26 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 25 July 1855 page 5; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12972081>

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“The too free distribution of plants and seeds, both among the Colonists, and among people in other countries ... I think the distribution ought to be confined, so far as regards other countries, to Botanical Institutions only”.<sup>27</sup>

Asked by George Macleay if he, TW, knew whether Charles Moore, the Director of the Gardens, received an equivalent collection of plants from England for those he sent there, TW said:

“I could not say distinctly, that I know, but my belief is that he does not. If a detailed account were kept of each plant sent, and each plant received, it would be easy to ascertain whether a proper equivalent were returned or not ... I never saw a case come here, that was worth, in London, £20; and I have seen a case sent away, worth five times that amount.”<sup>28</sup>

Asked whether the system of plant exchanges could be better managed if a catalogue of all the plants in the Botanic Gardens were published: ‘Yes, and I think it a great disgrace to the country, that no catalogue has been published before.’ Macleay then queried that there was no catalogue in existence: ‘I believe not; there is none accessible to the public’.

Nichols asked TW if he thought that the previous superintendence of the Gardens by a committee was a desirable arrangement: ‘I think a Committee could direct the management of the Gardens much better than any single individual, and that it would be much better for the Director himself, as it would relieve him of a great responsibility’. And as to whether such committee should be checking expenditure: ‘I think that, in the management of the Gardens, as of all other public institutions, there should be some check upon the expenditure’.

Asked by Captain King whether he, TW, had ever heard of any injurious interference, on the part of the Committee, with the management of the Gardens, TW replied: ‘No ... the only complaint that I ever heard, with respect to the Committee, was, that they did not interfere enough’.

Then asked by Nichols if he would ‘favour the Committee with any other suggestions as to the management of the Gardens’, TW said:

“I think unless they are carried out on some different principle they are wrongly named; they ought not be called Botanic Gardens, when they are not so. In my opinion, the exchanges of plants with other countries, should be subservient to scientific purposes exclusively. This being the case, trade would not be interfered with; and, if by this means all desirable plants could not be procured for the Gardens, money might be voted for the purpose of purchasing them ... Some of my customers, professedly, buy from me only such as cannot be procured from the Botanic Gardens.”<sup>29</sup>

As to whether TW knew of instances where nurserymen have refused to give specimens of rare plants to the Gardens: ‘No, I think not; I think, generally speaking, Nurserymen have

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27 Parliamentary Papers: *Management of the Botanic Gardens Report 1855 with Minutes of Evidence* page 19.

28 *ibid.*

29 *ibid.*, page 20.

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been very liberal to the Botanic Gardens'. More liberal than the Director, Charles Moore, had been to them?

"Yes; for myself, I may say, that I have given fifty times more than I have received. Another branch of our trade is the sale of cases of plants to people leaving the Colony; many people, when going to England, like to take a case of plants with them, and they naturally go to Nurserymen to select them, but I know of many instances where the Government Gardens has gratuitously supplied people ... [an] instance which annoyed me very much, I may mention; a person, who was a stranger to me, and whose name I do not know, called upon me, and bargained with me for a case of plants, about thirty pounds worth, to take home. He came to me a few days after, and said, it was very lucky he had not quite completed his bargain, as he had got a case from Mr. Moore for nothing."<sup>30</sup>

It would be some three months before the Committee's report was delivered.

About eighty members met for the Horticultural Improvement Society meeting in September 1855 and TW presented an introductory paper on native plants, a 'very interesting and extensive subject'.<sup>31</sup>

At the Society's meeting on 2 October, TW 'read a second paper of a highly interesting character, "on the native plants and the pastoral, agricultural, and horticultural resources of Australia"'.<sup>32</sup> It was paper No. 1 (of a series) and was both broad and detailed.

"On one occasion I succeeded ... in crossing from a station on the Lachlan River to one on the Murrumbidgee, the distance being about one hundred miles, and my only companion an intelligent aboriginal native of the place, whom I had induced to accompany me as a guide. My reasons for securing the services of this black fellow were twofold. First, because Australian blacks are generally infallible in their knowledge of places which they have seen before, and almost always make the most correct guides, and this particular one had been my unerring faithful guide and amusing companion on former occasions; and second, because in this instance I not only desired his assistance as a guide, but also as a commissariat officer; for owing to the scarcity of provisions at the station from which I took my departure as well as the neighbouring ones, added to the fearfully wet and soft state of the country, I was unwilling to carry much grub, as bushmen call their food, and his assistance in securing a calf, a kangaroo, or an opossum, as well as finding the eggs of wild fowl, of which there was an abundance, would in the event of detention be of essential service."<sup>33</sup>

The same month, October of 1855, the Society's first public exhibition took place in the Botanic Gardens 'and we are happy to say that it went off with a success that forms a happy augury for its future progress and permanent stability'.

"The society was initiated at the close of last year by a few gentlemen, who, believing that some energetic means were required to give an impetus to practical horticulture, and to diffuse a more general and correct knowledge of its scope and principles than have hitherto prevailed,

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30 *ibid*, page 21.

31 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 5 September 1855 page 5; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12978634>

32 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 3 October 1855 page 5; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12977820>

33 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 4 October 1855 page 2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12980760>

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determined, if they met with public support, to establish a society, the main object of which should be public instruction ... A meeting of persons friendly to such a society was accordingly convened, and if not very influentially attended, it was respectable in point of numbers [and] about twenty or thirty gentlemen were enrolled as members, and a secretary and treasurer having been appointed these members formed the nucleus of the present very flourishing and promising institution ... According to a rule of the society, on the first Tuesday of every month, evening meetings of the members and subscribers have been held, numerously attended, and at which many very interesting papers, which have for the most part appeared from time to time in this journal, were read, and much useful and instructive discussion took place ... At the present time the Society numbers close upon 200 members and subscribers, and it is probable, from the success of yesterday's exhibition, that number will be doubled before the Institution is a year old.

"The Exhibition, including flowers, shrubs, and plants of every description, vegetables, fruits, articles of commerce, and specimens of art, was on a very extensive scale. The arrangement of the specimens was exceedingly good ... There could not have been less than 6000 persons present at the Exhibition ... the fine band of the 11th Regiment was in attendance [as was] the German band ... At noon, the gardens were visited by the President of the Society, his Excellency the Governor-General, and Lady Denison. His Excellency was received by the Vice-president of the society, Sir Charles Nicholson, and the members of the council of the society."<sup>34</sup>

Prizes were awarded across all categories and TW received a gold medal for 'the plant in flower', an *Ageratum* Mexican; second prize for 'rare and new plant, not in flower' (unspecified); second prize for a 'collection of plants suitable for landscape embellishment'; a prize for best six Geraniums 'in pots ... a very brilliant and good collection' and for best collection of native conifers; first prize for best twelve roses, and for the best 18 flowering shrubs (unspecified). TW's exhibits were 'varied and beautiful; his flowering shrubs, roses, geraniums, and cut flowers were highly creditable'.<sup>35</sup>

In December 1855 the Legislative Council's Select Committee's report on the Botanic Gardens was tabled;<sup>36</sup> it outlined several areas of deficiency which included 'the absence of any complete system [of] naming or classifying the plants and trees', and that the accounts 'appear also to have been kept in a very unsatisfactory manner'.<sup>37</sup>

The findings prompted some discussion in the press. The report

"on the management of the Botanic Gardens hardly affords a subject for lengthened comment. The establishment appears ... to have been more than ordinarily free from reproach; and except from the occasional carping of some minute philosopher, eager to ventilate his little stock of scientific knowledge ... The particular subject of complaint appears, from the evidence [given by] Mr. Shepherd, an extensive nurseryman in this city, to have been 'the too free distribution of plants and seeds, both among the colonists and among people in other countries, nurserymen,' and so forth. We find, on a further perusal of this witness, that new and rare plants are exported from this establishment – which, it will be remembered has an extensive nursery

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34 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 19 October 1855 page 8; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12983066>

35 *ibid.*

36 *The People's Advocate* (Sydney) 22 December 1855 page 4; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/251547399>

37 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 5 December 1855 page 3; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12978674>

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attached to it – not only to public institutions, but also to private growers in the mother country. The witness is himself an exporter; he finds that the government nursery interferes with his private trade, and he naturally makes complaint of the unequal competition. The duty of the Director of the Botanic Gardens appears to be to supply new and rare plants, upon the terms of receiving in exchange other specimens of an equal character in point of novelty and rarity, and the witness complains that, under the present management, these terms are not duly complied with; the specimens being received by no means equal to those exported, and the latter being such as are not producible by private growers. The committee do not, we observe, examine the Director as to his principle of exchanges, and as to the reason why a catalogue of plants is not kept ... and the conclusion at which the report arrives is therefore based upon the accusing evidence.<sup>38</sup>

The above which was unattributed was likely given to the *Herald* by Charles Moore or by a colleague. The ‘minute philosopher’ implied TW, noting the pun on ‘minute’.

TW’s reply was published three days later.

“SIR, as the original promoter of the inquiry into the management and conduct of the Government *Botanic* (?)*[sic]* Gardens ... perhaps you will not deem a few words from me, respecting your leader in Tuesday’s issue, out of place or presumptuous ...

“The complaint which set the Legislature in motion you admit was justifiable, and that it was quite proper to grant the commission of inquiry, but you condemn the conclusions arrived at in the report ... I do not intend now to defend the report, or to criticise your criticism, although there are ample grounds on which I might do so ... but [I] merely wish to call your attention to the fact, that in your remarks you have entirely overlooked the only really important part of the subject, namely, the aid to science which a properly conducted institution, such as this mismanaged garden, well managed, might be made to afford.”<sup>39</sup>

The letter continues with less import and is signed ‘T. W. Shepherd’.

The Governor, Sir William Denison, wrote his comments on the Committee’s Report which were tabled in Parliament; the Legislative Council recorded that the Committee’s recommendation that a better system of keeping the accounts of expenditure should be adopted ‘will receive immediate attention, and care will be taken that as little injury as possible is done to the interests of individual nurserymen’.<sup>40</sup> Of the inquiry it was noted that there ‘seems to have been some unnecessary acrimony displayed, and a little disposition to magnify trifles, but the [Botanic Gardens] comes out from the ordeal relatively unscathed’.<sup>41</sup>

At the February 1856 meeting of the Horticultural Improvement Society attended by about forty or fifty people, TW gave his third paper on native plants.<sup>42</sup>

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38 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 11 December 1855 page 4; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12976941>

39 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 14 December 1855 page 3; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12977667>

40 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 17 December 1855 page 4; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12983206>

41 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 11 December 1855 supra.

42 *The Empire* (Sydney) 7 February 1856 page 4; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/60173429>



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Shortly after this, TW spent some three months on Norfolk Island courtesy of the Governor. Some time before, the Pitcairn Islanders had petitioned the British government to move them from their island, some 3,000 miles north east of New Zealand, to Norfolk Island because of their miserable conditions and a rapidly decreasing population; there is also reference to a lack of fresh water. In 1855 the British government agreed to their request and the remaining convicts were removed from Norfolk Island. 'Governor Denison hired a vessel, the *Morayshire*, for the sum of £4,478 19s 6d, to convey the Islanders and their goods and chattels to Norfolk Island',<sup>43</sup> and it left Port Jackson on 20 February 1856.<sup>44</sup> It arrived at Norfolk Island and offloaded stores and TW was left there. The *Morayshire* then proceeded to Pitcairn Island 'arriving on the 22nd April and ... succeeded in taking on board all the inhabitants with their goods and chattels ... The vessel left Pitcairn Island on the 3rd May [and] Norfolk Island was reached on the 7th June'<sup>45</sup> and left for Port Jackson on 26 June and arrived in August with TW aboard. TW would later give a report of his botanical trip at the Horticultural Improvement Society.

After his return from Norfolk Island, TW was asked 'by several influential gentlemen' to put his name forward as the candidate for election to the NSW Legislative Assembly for South Riding in County Cumberland in November; in his first press statement TW informs the public that 'his political principles are liberal' and that he is not attached to any political party.<sup>46</sup>

Days later his manifesto was published, set out under eight points: 1st, (relating to the constitution) that the Clergy Exclusion Clause should be repealed and that the electoral districts should be remodelled 'on a basis combining the extent of population with a due regard to the separate yet kindred interests of classes';<sup>47</sup> 2nd, he would set up Elementary schools throughout the colony for the education of all children; 3rd, religious bodies should not generally be supported by government; 4th, regarding the ongoing issue of the sale of Crown lands he made some preliminary comments; 5th, he supported the concept of elected local municipal councils; 6th, he would support legislation that would 'make the administration of public justice more certain'; the 7th related to regulation of the gold fields whereby he envisaged there should be few restrictions on the miners but a reasonable tax on their findings; and 8th, commercial freedom was very important.

Notwithstanding his forthright position, one newspaper quipped that rather than run for parliament 'We are – in all conscience – obliged to advise Mr. Shepherd to attend to his nursing and nursery'.<sup>48</sup> TW continued to campaign until the day of the poll when he publicly withdrew his candidacy, graciously standing aside for the Finance Minister who

43 *Settlement of the Pitcairn Islanders on Norfolk Island* by F. M. Bladen; *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal* 1906 Vol 2 Part 1 pages 1-7 at 7; <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-591723172>

44 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 21 February 1856 page 4; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12977196>

45 *The Shipping Gazette* (Sydney) 11 August 1856 page 165; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/161108758>

46 *The Empire* (Sydney) 15 August 1856 page 1; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/60252084>

47 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 18 August 1856 page 6; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12986058>

48 *The Freeman's Journal* (Sydney) 16 August 1856 page 2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/115562691>

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had lost his seat and was forced to seek endorsement elsewhere.<sup>49</sup> It was TW's first foray into politics.

The annual general meeting of the Australasian Botanic and Horticultural Society was held in September 1856, and Mr Shepherd (likely TW) attended as a member. The matter of a union with the Horticultural Improvement Society was raised. It was stated by a member of both societies that the Horticultural Improvement Society was not established as a rival.

“Mr Shepherd also stated that the Horticultural Society was originated because the objects of the Botanic Society were never carried out. The other society was nothing more than an exhibition society, and was not intended to be anything else.”<sup>50</sup>

The Governor, Sir William Denison, in the chair and as representative of both societies, admitted that while it might be said the Australasian Botanic and Horticultural Society had failed in not carrying out all its formal objects, he believed the Society still aimed at fulfilling of those objects and that ‘they desired to unite cordially with the Horticultural Improvement Society for the purpose of carrying out its rules’.<sup>51</sup> A sub-committee from each society would be established to formulate a code of rules and regulations under which the joint society could work advantageously. The motion was put and passed.

At the October meeting of the Horticultural Improvement Society where about 50 people attended, TW presented a paper *On the Botany of Norfolk Island* which was printed in full in the *Herald* the next day.

“At our last meeting I promised to write a paper on the botany of Norfolk Island, from which place I had recently returned, after a somewhat prolonged visit, undertaken for the purpose of procuring a collection of its more interesting indigenous vegetable productions, as well as investigating its botanical and horticultural features generally.

This opportunity I had long desired, and at length obtained through the kindness of the worthy president of this society, his Excellency Sir W Denison, who granted me permission to accompany the expedition despatched from Sydney, for the purpose of removing thither the people of Pitcairn's Island, as that place had been deemed to limited in extent to much longer afford a comfortable subsistence to its rapidly increasing population.

I landed at Norfolk Island in March, and remained there nearly three months, during the whole of which time I occupied myself in the scrubs, and penetrated to almost every nook and corner. The season was not that best adapted for the purpose, being autumn, when few plants are in bloom, but this was not such a disadvantage as in most cases it would have been, for the island had been previously well (botanically) explored, by those well known travellers Backhouse and Cunningham. Although comparatively few of the plants have been introduced to cultivation, either here or in Europe, yet from the descriptions of those botanists, most of the plants may be recognised, even when not in bloom.”<sup>52</sup>

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49 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 4 November 1856 page 8; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12988681>

50 *The Empire* (Sydney) 12 September 1856 page 2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/64976298>

51 *ibid.*

52 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 8 October 1856 page 5; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12987714>

## Thomas William Shepherd (1824-1884)

His paper broadly addresses the natural environment of the island, noting that 'it is the distinctiveness of the flora ... that makes it so interesting to the botanist'; on approach

"the voyager is at once struck with the idea of a pine island, for at first sight nothing but pines can be seen [but on] closer inspection this appearance wears off, and when the jungle is once entered, it is no easy matter to find them ... The largest trunks that I saw measured from thirty to forty feet in circumference; the height of these could not satisfactorily be ascertained, for at an elevation of from 120 to 130 feet, from the earth, the tops had gone ... Some of these topless trees must have been from 250 to 300 feet high".<sup>53</sup>

His paper ends:

"I would wish to observe that in all the papers which I have had the pleasure of reading at your meetings, as well as in all that I may hereafter read, it has been and will be my endeavour to avoid all matter unintelligible to the majority of our members, at the risk of criticism, which I know I thereby incur; for I know that in a young country like this, where men of science are not plentiful, I shall be of more service to the country by the course which I have adopted, – although it would have been more easy to myself, and perhaps I should have obtained more credit, had I adopted a different course".<sup>54</sup>

Following his father Thomas's example, TW will be informal but informative. Also at this meeting, TW was appointed one of three members of the sub-committee that would liaise with the sub-committee of the Australasian Botanic and Horticultural Society to determine the rules of the proposed amalgamated body.<sup>55</sup>

On the evening of 23 October 1856 at a special meeting of the Horticultural Improvement Society convened for such purpose the members voted to amalgamate with the Australasian Botanic and Horticultural Society, whose members also met and voted to dissolve itself preparatory to the formation of the amalgamated body.

TW read his second paper *On the Botany of Norfolk Island* at the November meeting of the Horticultural Improvement Society and it was published the following day. The paper covered some things omitted from the first regarding the Norfolk pine and then covers other flora including ferns, New Zealand flax and the cabbage tree (a palm). Frederick Creswick gave a paper on the *Cultivation of Liquorice*.

A combined meeting of the members of the two horticultural societies met on the evening 8 December 1856 at the School of Arts and the Governor presided. After his address, three motions were put: that each society be dissolved and that the name of the new society to be agreed upon; a set of rules for the new association; and that the Governor be president and a 24 member council be elected. The motions passed unanimously and a ballot was held for the new council: TW received the most votes of 66; also voted in were his brothers David and Patrick Lindesay, and Frederick Creswick. Charles Moore, the Director of the

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53 *ibid.*

54 *ibid.*

55 *The Empire* (Sydney) 23 July 1857 page 2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/64987232>

## Thomas William Shepherd (1824-1884)

Botanic Gardens and sometimes chair of the Australasian Botanic and Horticultural Society, who had come under scrutiny during the Botanic Gardens inquiry including a query as to his qualifications, was not elected although it's not clear if his name was put forward (he is listed as a member in the first annual Report).

J Cox and Co's *Australian Almanac for the Year 1857* includes a paper *The Pastoral Resources of Australia*, a compilation of remarks 'extracted from papers read before the members of the Horticultural Improvement Society of New South Wales, by Mr. T.W. Shepherd'.<sup>56</sup>

The new society was called the Australian Horticultural and Agricultural Society and its first meeting took place on 28 January 1857 where the Governor gave a long address. TW attended and proposed a new member. But by the next month the new society

"cannot yet be said to have got into full working order, and it will require all the temper, attention, and quiet perseverance of those members who have been elected as its first Council, to dissipate the prejudices, which are felt in some quarters, and to remove the obstructiveness which is offered in others, to the success of this amalgamation".<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps the council was working quietly behind closed doors trying to resolve issues that were a legacy of the two former societies. It was also high summer and the new Society's exhibition was on full show in the Botanic Gardens. But the display

"of flowers and fruits was much inferior to that of former exhibitions, a fact attributable to three causes – a lack of competition, to the recent inclement weather, and the advanced period of the season. The attendance of visitors, however, was numerous and brilliant ...

"The amalgamation of the two societies has, it is said, not been effected with entire cordiality; accordingly many persons, who formerly took an active interest in the proceedings of their respective societies, have, it is much to be regretted, declined to act in the new society. These feelings, however, will doubtless soon be allayed, and the society it may be hoped will have a long and prosperous and extensively useful career."<sup>58</sup>

TW chaired the second meeting of the new Society in early March and about 30 people attended, and although this 'was much larger than at either of its former meetings',<sup>59</sup> it was certainly much less than the 'sixty or seventy persons' who attended the second meeting of the old Horticultural Improvement Society in August 1855.<sup>60</sup> About 40 people attended the April meeting of the Society at which TWS read his fourth paper *On Native Plants, and the Pastoral, Agricultural and Horticultural Resources of Australia* and a 'long, interesting and animated conversation followed the reading'.<sup>61</sup> TW also exhibited a 'very beautiful new fern' *Ophiglossum pendulum*.

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56 Pages 60-65 at 60; National Library of Australia digitized <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-2915245755>

57 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 27 February 1857 page 5; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12992649>

58 *The Empire* (Sydney) 27 February 1859 page 5; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/60275514>

59 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 5 March 1857 page 3; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12992868>

60 *The Empire* (Sydney) 8 August 1855 page 4; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/60164745>

61 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 8 April 1857 page 5; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12993894>

## Thomas William Shepherd (1824-1884)

A public meeting held in late April 1857 in the Lyceum Theatre in York Street was convened to consider the matter of protection to colonial industry which was a live topic. The meeting was attended by the Mayor, several MPs and the Solicitor-General, and there was a full house. TW was a speaker and he said he was a protectionist 'but only a little way'; his speech was received 'with cheers and groans'.<sup>62</sup>

The fifth paper *On Native Plants* dealing with pastoral resources was read by its author at the Society's June 1857 meeting.

"In the march of improvement, agricultural science has not kept pace with other branches of knowledge, such as, for instance, as astronomy, mechanics, chemistry, &c.

"From infancy trained to a profession which involved the practical study of soils, climates, and other phases of nature, I have not neglected to observe, examine, and study the capabilities and agricultural prospects of the Australian colonies [and] my pursuits having led me to travel over the greater part of New South Wales and Victoria, as well as to a considerable extent over South Australia and Tasmania, I think that I am entitled to be considered competent to give an opinion [and] I have arrived at the conclusion that each and all of them are capable of agricultural development ... so as to preclude the importation of bread stuffs ..."<sup>63</sup>

It's not clear when TW visited Tasmania; in September 1847 he sent 16 cases of fruit by ship destined for Port Phillip and Launceston, and perhaps he travelled with them. At this time he had recently assumed management of the Darling Nursery and it may have been an opportunity for him to travel with his fruit to meet the merchants who were buying Shepherd and Co produce. There is also record of TW in Hobart 'on his return from [Norfolk] Island' in 1856.<sup>64</sup>

The first issue of *The Sydney Magazine of Science and Art* was published in June 1857 under the combined patronage of the Australian Horticultural and Agricultural Society and The Philosophical Society of New South Wales for the purpose of publishing topical papers.

The *Herald* gave a short review:

"It is not precisely what the friends of science and art could have wished; but the magazine is so limited in its capabilities for the introduction of literary matter, that little was left room for, except a record of the proceedings of the two societies, which alone make science and art their objects".<sup>65</sup>

The *Empire* in a much longer review noted that the Magazine would

"be more appropriately designated if it were styled "Transactions" of these societies, inasmuch as it is almost entirely devoted to records of their proceedings and to the publication of papers read at their meetings. We will not, however, quarrel about the name, but will heartily

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62 *The Empire* (Sydney) 29 April 1857 page 4; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/60274531/5973556>

63 *The Sydney Magazine of Science and Art* (1858) Volume 1 Issue 12 pages 227-229 at 228.

64 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 4 February 1861 page 3; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/13052129>

65 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 23 June 1857 page 5; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/28631983/1496276>

## Thomas William Shepherd (1824-1884)

welcome the new journal, with a hope that it may [have a] longer life than monthly publications in this city have hitherto."<sup>66</sup>

At the July 1857 meeting of the Horticultural and Agricultural Society, TW

"in excuse for not reading the paper on Native Plants (one of a series), which other duties had not allowed him to prepare, read a short paper in defence of the deductions arrived at by him in his previous papers on the same subject. The paper was very interesting, and, as it had reference to the political economy of the colony ... Considerable discussion took place on the subject, which was, indeed, one of more than ordinary interest."<sup>67</sup>

By mid 1857 the new Society had 500 members as stated in its first annual report; included in the list were the three Shepherd brothers, their brothers-in-law John Aitken, Robert Henderson, William Joshua Wilson and his father Felix; Thomas Barker (a trustee of Thomas Shepherd's estate) and Frederick Creswick.

TW's sixth and last paper on *Native Plants* was given at the August 1857 meeting. At this meeting TW also 'showed the fruit of the tapioca; a plant from which arrowroot, starch, &c., can be manufactured in large quantities'.<sup>68</sup>

Mid the following year (1858), at the annual general meeting of the Horticultural and Agricultural Society, TW was again elected a member of the council, as was his brother Patrick Lindesay.

In a review of the first full year of the publication of *The Sydney Magazine of Science and Art*, the *Herald* noted that the papers given by the 'horticulturalists and agriculturalists are more desultory, but often interesting and practically useful; those of the Messrs. Shepherd are especially valuable'.<sup>69</sup>

However, as a monthly publication *The Sydney Magazine of Science and Art* may have been doomed from the start. Its limitations were outlined in the *Empire*: it only published the transactions and proceedings of the two societies who patronised it and did not include other papers on science and art (although the prospectus stated it would); the scientific papers were no longer printed in newspapers (due to the exclusive arrangement with the publisher Waugh) and that if the findings of these societies, which were definitely of usefulness to the broader community, wished to remain 'under public cognizance, there can be no medium in this country one-twentieth part so effective as the daily press';<sup>70</sup> and there were advertisements. The Magazine lasted just two years and it folded without fanfare after issue 12 in June 1859.

Also in June 1859, TW of 'Chatsworth, Penrith' was appointed a magistrate, as gazetted.<sup>71</sup>

66 *The Empire* (Sydney) 17 June 1857 page 5; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/64983718>

67 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 8 July 1857 page 5; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12997817>

68 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 5 August 1857 page 4; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12998913>

69 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 27 September 1858 page 8; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/13020816>

70 *The Empire* (Sydney) 17 June 1857 page 5, supra.

71 NSW Government Gazette 16 June 1859 page 1430; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/228717941>

## Thomas William Shepherd (1824-1884)

On the evening of 6 July 1859 TW gave a paper on landscape gardening which appears not to have been published (probably due to the recent demise of *The Sydney Magazine of Science and Art*), however *The Empire* published a lengthy review.

“Mr. Thomas William Shepherd read a short paper on landscape gardening, confining himself, however, to a mere introduction of the subject, for the reason that he regarded it as too comprehensive for full treatment on one occasion. He referred to our destitution of those charming embellishments in which the homes of the English people were so characteristically enveloped, and argued from our manifest want of taste in the same direction the absence of a proper rule by which to appreciate landscape effect in laying out pleasure grounds. He quoted a recommendation of essentials to competency in the matter of effective landscape-garden construction and management. These involved the qualifications arising out of a certain amount of training in measurements and their calculations, in aid of the laying out of the grounds advantageously, together with a good general knowledge of horticulture, with a view to the adequate distribution of ever-recurring or continual verdure, and a sound taste for the beautiful, in order to heightened effect. Mr. Shepherd promised to treat the subject more fully at the next meeting, when he would endeavour to show the means of carrying out the practical details of landscape gardening in England [and] he had no doubt that, so soon as a taste for this description for fine art should be brought about, there would be found among us a very sufficient amount of skill to subserve it. To show, however, that it was a matter on which public spirit wanted rousing, he referred to the University, the grounds attached to which were in the hands of an ordinary gardener, under instructions from the architect, for want of means to lay them out with due taste and skill, whilst some thousands were being expended in the decorations of the building.”<sup>72</sup>

In late July 1859, TW was again elected a member of the Horticultural and Agricultural Society council, the number of members had increased to 580, and at the August meeting he gave his promised paper on ‘ornamental cultivation’, the details of which there seems to be no record. A further paper on ‘ornamental and landscape gardening’ was postponed in September due to the fact that ‘there were only seven members in attendance [and the paper was] deemed worthy of a larger audience’,<sup>73</sup> and it was again deferred in October.

In the new year of 1860, attendance at Society meetings petered out and the Society seems to have operated mainly as an exhibition venue.

Perhaps to compensate, by 1860 TW was becoming more vocal in the press. Two of his papers were published in Victorian newspapers: *Practical Remarks on the Cultivation of the Orange* and *Practical Remarks on the Cultivation of the Olive* in November 1860, neither of which appeared in the local press perhaps due to publishing arrangements in Sydney.

In early 1860 the NSW Legislative Assembly ‘passed a resolution authorising an expenditure of a considerable sum of money for the purpose of encouraging the cultivation of flax’, which prompted TW’s letter to the editor of the *Herald*. TW agreed it was important to support local agricultural progress but on this issue he was adamant

<sup>72</sup> *The Empire* (Sydney) 6 July 1859 page 8; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/60406075>

<sup>73</sup> *The Argus* (Melbourne) 15 September 1859 page 5; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/5688116>

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that, unless it was proposed to manufacture linen and impose import duties on comparable product, the venture would be unprofitable based on labour costs. At that time, the average weekly wage of an agricultural labourer in Ireland was 6 shillings, amounting to £9 12 shillings per year which was liable to be reduced by absence from work due to inclement weather, illness or holidays. But

“the price of labour in this colony, for what may be taken to be of a similar quality, although I believe it is generally inferior, is £35 to £40 a year, with house and rations, furnished at a cost of say £25, a year or more ... say, altogether, yearly £60, and not liable to reductions for absence caused by weather, illness, or holidays. The prices quoted are the very lowest, and the labourers inferior ... It follows that the labour cost of production for a given quantity of marketable flax would be more than six times as great in this colony as it would be in Ireland.”<sup>74</sup>

There were continual problems getting appropriate farm labour to work at Chatsworth and by early 1861 only ‘about twenty acres [had] been cleared and trenched for nursery purposes’.<sup>75</sup> The subject of immigrants and labour requirements was contentious at the time (plus ça change) and TW was again prompted to write a long letter to the editor of *Herald*. It read in part:

“Those who think that the large amount of unemployed labour which now exists in and about our towns denotes a superabundance of labour look from one view, and those who hold an opposite opinion from another, both being seemingly correct. In the country districts it is extremely difficult to procure suitable agricultural labourers. Therefore, country residents who see and feel this difficulty believe labour scarce, while town and even gold-fields residents, who are continually coming in contact with privation and want, believe very naturally that labour is superabundant. It seems strange that such an anomalous state of affairs should exist – that labour should not flow like water where there is room for it ...

The unemployed of our towns and cities have frequently been stigmatised as ‘lazy vagabonds and loafers,’ by those who have been seeking for labour in the country. Such an assertion I have no hesitation in pronouncing a libel, so far as the great majority are concerned. Within the past four or five years I have seen hundreds of able-bodied men seeking employment out of Sydney, and unable to obtain it; they were not accustomed to the work required. What could they do but return to Sydney and earn a scanty livelihood by odd jobs and charity ... The most of our unemployed are people who should never have been brought here in such numbers. They have been reared in towns, and cannot well accustom themselves to a country life. If they could their labour would be worth less than of those brought up to it ... Our agriculture languishes; our vineyards perish; our everything that requires the labour of husbandry is either dying away or at a stand-still ... No unsuitable or inferior labour ought to be imported at public cost. It would be more wise to pay them to remain at home than to burden the country with their maintenance.”<sup>76</sup>

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74 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 30 April 1861 page 2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/13065986>

75 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 21 May 1861 page 10; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/13068190>

76 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 15 May 1861 page 2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/13057165>



Following a letter in April 1861 to the editor of the *Herald* written by a recently arrived gentleman who wrote to suggest that tea cultivation should be taken up by the colonists, TW wrote to the editor again. He pointed out that

“the subject has been before the public before ... in the shape of samples prepared for use, and exhibited at a horticultural exhibition fifteen or sixteen years ago. The samples alluded to were grown and prepared at the Darling Nursery, Sydney. They comprised two samples, of about two pounds each. One was ... a choice sample from young leaves ... On trial by several connoisseurs it was pronounced first-rate and equal to the highest priced tea then to be obtained in Sydney. The gathering and drying of this sample would, at the present price of labour, cost 20s. per lb. The other sample was made from fully developed leaves [and] it was really an inferior article ... and at the present price of labour, could be [produced] at about 1s. per lb.”<sup>77</sup>

Yes, the climate in the colony was right for the tea plant, many gardens had it growing ‘freely as if indigenous ... but no colonially-grown tea can be [manufactured] until labour that now costs one pound, can be obtained for one shilling’.<sup>78</sup>

For the upcoming election in early 1865, TW again ran as a candidate in the seat of Nepean and delivered a lengthy manifesto under various headings. For religion, he did not support extended State aid; the education system needed restructure; full support of free trade; direct taxation should be introduced; police force then too expensive; no further loans for public works until balanced with revenue; support for municipal (local) councils; district courts should be monitored to ensure no abuse of process; a better system of emigration was needed, especially to reduce the arrival of paupers; the system of free selection was ‘spoilt in detail’; volunteering should be encouraged and a militia should be formed; economics should be part of State education; pilotage and harbour fees should simply reflect the true cost of these services; last, that squatter’s runs should be assessed and taxation imposed when leases expire.<sup>79</sup> He was not elected, but would run again four years later.

Via a formal settlement deed dated 4 February 1865, TW left the Shepherd and Co partnership leaving younger brothers David and Patrick Lindesay to carry on the business. Under the agreement TW received £1,500 and he also relinquished any further equity in the Darling Nursery Chippendale estate which was still in the process of being sold.<sup>80</sup> TW was about to turn 40, was not married and never did marry which no doubt gave him a certain freedom to work and invest as he wished. At the time his address was Shepherd Street, Darlington. The settlement figure of £1,500 seems very modest. The brothers had purchased the combined Chatsworth estate of about 1,300 acres for £3,605 although it was heavily mortgaged for £6,000. However only a small part of the 28 acre land grant in

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77 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 26 April 1861 page 2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/13063525>

78 *ibid.*

79 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 30 November 1865 page 2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/13101598>

80 NSW Registrar General’s Book 91 No.873 Indenture dated 4 February 1865.

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Chippendale had at that time been sold and allotments were gradually sold over the next quarter century; given the proximity to central Sydney the land value continued to rise so to relinquish any further interest in this seems curious. It seems TW just wanted out.

In late 1869 TW again put himself forward as the candidate for Nepean. He did not consider it necessary to air his views on political matters, saying that he was well known to the electorate for many years 'as a useful public man' and that his principles were unchanged.<sup>81</sup> He was unsuccessful on the ballot and it was his last foray into politics.

Samuel Bennett who published the *Australian Town and Country Journal*, the first edition of which came out on 8 January 1870, engaged TW to write a regular horticulture and gardening column. His first column (unattributed) appears in the first issue and it is short, succinct and practical. There are four headings (in order): Kitchen Garden, Orchard and Fruit Garden, Flower Garden, and Field Operations. 'Kitchen Garden' begins:

"Very little sowing or transplanting can be done, if the weather continues hot and dry this month, but on the occurrence of seasonable rains, peas, beans, turnips, carrots (of the early born variety), lettuce, parsnips, radish, parsley, and all herbs; cauliflowers, brocoli [sic], &c., may be sown for succession."<sup>82</sup>

In his columns, TW

"distinguished himself by his plain directions for planting for the field, flower, fruit and kitchen gardens. These directions for every month in the year attracted considerable attention, and as they were based on actual experience of Australian climates they became of standard value.

"Mr. Shepherd's knowledge was especially valuable to colonists when things differed so much from that which was useful in England. Of late years he took up and prepared valuable papers on forestry, and the effects of deforestation in regard to rainfall."<sup>83</sup>

The NSW *Medical Gazette* of October 1872 published TW's paper *Notes on the Genus Eucalyptus*. It was a long paper, especially on the differences between the NSW blue gum and Tasmanian blue gum, which begins:

"On more than one occasion we have remarked upon the exceedingly diverse chemical contents and properties characterising the different species of this very extensive genus of Myrtaceous plants ... The very valuable and varied therapeutic properties which European authorities appear to have discovered in ONE species, of *very narrow and localised limits*, has caused quite a sensation amongst our people during some months past. There seems to be no reason to doubt that the valuable properties spoken of have really been proved to exist in a species, and, although not equally reliable, that that species, which has been under notice and test, is the *Eucalyptus globulus* or the *Hobart Town blue gum*, a tree occurring somewhat gregariously; inhabiting only a limited geographical position on the southern side of the small island of Tasmania ..."<sup>84</sup>

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81 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 7 December 1869 page 1; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/13196566>

82 *Town and Country Journal* 8 January 1870 page 8; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/70456921>

83 *Town and Country Journal* 6 December 1884 page 21; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/71021016>

84 *New South Wales Medical Gazette* 1872-1873 Volume 3 pages 7-9, 53-58 at page 7.

## Thomas William Shepherd (1824-1884)

In time, TW became the agricultural editor of the *Australian Town and Country Journal*.<sup>85</sup>

In 1880 TW became a lodger and boarder at Miss Elizabeth Hayton's house 'Norwood' on Campbell Street, Milson's Point, a large four storey Victorian mansion facing the harbour.<sup>86</sup> TW seems never to have purchased his own residence but perhaps saw property as a means for investment and income; he was the mortgagee of several properties.

Stemming from his long interest in native plants, TW began to attract notice in the early 1880s regarding his support for the use of *Euphorbia pilulifera* as a remedy for asthma.

In early 1881 *The Australian Town and Country Journal* published a long article on *Euphorbia pilulifera*, and although the article is not attributed, it was more than likely written by TW.

"It is a small trailing herb, in habit not unlike the verberna. It is a common weed about Rockhampton and other parts of Eastern Queensland, including Brisbane [and] that although a common weed it is now scarce, because it has been so eagerly sought after, and gathered, for the use of persons afflicted with asthmatic affections [*sic*]. That it is really valuable in these complaints seems beyond doubt. Medical practitioners are not the most likely people to bear testimony in favour of a plant so readily procured, and which can be prepared for use by everyone, and yet in this instance they have been necessitated to do both."<sup>87</sup>

On publication, his paper was well received and caused a flurry of correspondence to the editor with questions which he dutifully answered, usually just signed 'S' (Shepherd) at the end.

In September 1882 *Castner's Monthly and Rural Australian* journal published TW's letter to its editor.

"Having been all my life engaged in botanical pursuits and studies, it was quite natural that I should be at once attracted by anything in the shape of new discoveries, or new features relating to objects belonging to the vegetable world, and more especially to plants indigenous to my own land – that land, and those plants to which my studies and researches have been by far the most extensively devoted. It is not, therefore, surprising that on the very first intimation of an Australian herb being discovered to possess valuable medicinal properties, and that herb a *Euphorbia*, of a genus and family of plants furnishing more potent, and perhaps more important, and more used medicinal remedies than any other genus or family of plants in the whole realm of vegetable organisation ..."<sup>88</sup>

In his letter TW explains how he came to use *Euphorbia pilulifera* to relieve an asthmatic condition which he had been 'vainly combatting for a period extending over ten or twelve years'.<sup>89</sup>

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85 *Records of Australian Botanists* by J H Maiden, *Royal Society of NSW Journal* 1908 Volume 42 page 119.

86 National Museum of Australia postcard; <http://collectionsearch.nma.gov.au/object/30979>

87 *Town and Country Journal* 19 March 1881 page 20; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/70953809>

88 18 September 1882 pages 247-248 at 247.

89 *The Gundagai Times* 26 September 1882 page 4; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/123469668>

## Thomas William Shepherd (1824-1884)

Then in January 1884 Sydney's *Evening News* published, under heading 'T. W. Shepherd's Queensland Asthma Herb',

"We have been requested to publish the following testimony as to the virtues of this now celebrated remedy, so long and so successfully advocated by Mr. T. W. Shepherd in his capacity of botanical and agricultural editor of THE TOWN AND COUNTRY JOURNAL".<sup>90</sup>

Shepherd and Co sold the native plant as 'T. W. Shepherd's Asthma Herb'.

TW died at his sister Jane's residence 'Fernbank' in Ashfield on 27 August 1884, (her husband John Aitken had died in 1871).

There were several informative obituaries. The first to press was the *Evening News*:

"We have to announce with regret, the death of Mr. T. W. Shepherd, of East St. Leonards, the well-known botanist. For a considerable time past Mr. Shepherd had suffered [acutely] from an internal affliction, and a short time since underwent an operation, from which he appeared to derive some benefit, but the effects of his ailment were never completely removed, and he gradually sank during the past few weeks ... The deceased gentleman was a man of sterling character and of the utmost unswerving integrity. For the last twelve years, until his health broke down, he had been a regular and valued contributor to the agricultural and botanical columns of the TOWN AND COUNTRY JOURNAL."<sup>91</sup>

The *Mail* lamented that:

"The ranks of botanists and horticulturists, which we regret to say are not well filled, last week suffered deplorable diminution through the death of Mr. Thomas William Shepherd, a gentleman who, during a useful career of three score years, rendered good service to this colony. The late gentleman was, for many years connected with journalism in this city. He was a man of thoroughly practical ideas, and was ever willing to render what aid he could to his fellow-scribes."<sup>92</sup>

The *Town and Country Journal* itself published a long and detailed obituary (with some biographical errors). It recorded the loss of a man who

"has been known in this colony for upwards of a quarter of a century; and his removal from us at a period when he was devising projects for scientific farming and forest culture may be regarded as a public calamity ... for many years past he was a zealous contributor to our horticultural magazines and public periodicals, bringing into notice industrial plants of great value to the country, and urging upon the colonists generally, the advantages of forest culture. Few persons in the colonies have written more extensively on these subjects, and have done more to advance the interests of the community by recommending the cultivation of select plants adapted to the soil and climate of N. S. Wales ... Being a correspondent of Baron F. von Mueller and Dr. Woolls, he rendered some assistance also to the development of our flora ... whilst it is well known he added a new medicine to the pharmacopœia by proclaiming the virtues of *Euphorbia pilulifera* ... Those who were acquainted with Mr. T. W. Shepherd, recognised not only his ability as a

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90 *The Evening News* (Sydney) 16 January 1884 page 7; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/109874007>

91 *The Evening News* (Sydney) 28 August 1884 page 2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/107267315>

92 *The Sydney Mail* 6 September 1884 page 486; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/163267129>

## Thomas William Shepherd (1824-1884)

botanist, but his powers of observation, and that so far from wishing to hide his talents under a bushel, he was ever ready to communicate to all within his influence information of a beneficial character.”<sup>93</sup>

Baron Ferdinand von Mueller arrived in Adelaide in 1847 aged 22, was appointed Government Botanist of Victoria in 1853 and director of Victoria’s Royal Botanic Gardens from 1857 to 1873. His magisterial work *Fragmenta Phytographiae Australiae*, published in 1858, was written entirely in Latin. The entry for *Dendrobium shepherdii* includes ‘In silvis ad Illawarra, ubi Dendrobio teretifolio ... aliisque Orchideis epiphytis adsociatum. T. W. Shepherd’.<sup>94</sup> Mueller also attributed the discovery of *Pimelea heterophylla* (a rice flower) to TW: ‘Ad Illawarra Novae Cambriae australis in silvis. T.W. Shepherd’.<sup>95</sup>

William Woolls was an Englishman who arrived in Sydney in 1832 aged eighteen and was appointed assistant master at The Kings School, Parramatta where he developed a keen interest in Australian botany. He was the author of *Lectures on the Vegetable Kingdom, with special reference to the flora of Australia* (1879), *Plants Indigenous in the Neighbourhood of Sydney* (1880) and *The Plants of New South Wales* (1885), and numerous articles and papers. In 1862 Woolls wrote a long letter to the editor of the *Herald* about his recent peregrinations to Bent’s Basin (near Wallacia) and to Cobbity for botanical research; he noted that in Bent’s Basin in addition to the two species *Dendrobium speciosum* and *Dendrobium linguaforme*:

“There is a third species also, which, I think, is that described under the name of *D. Shepherdii* in the first volume of Dr. Mueller’s *Fragmenta*. The flowers are small and solitary, and the leaves somewhat fleshy and semi-terrell. Mr. Shepherd found this species in the woods at Illawarra, associated with other epiphytes; and Dr. Mueller gave the specific name in honour of the discoverer.”<sup>96</sup>

In his Will of 26 April 1884 TW, ‘Botanist Agricultural Horticultural and Botanical writer and editor of the Australian Town and Country Journal’, appointed his sister Jane Aitken his executrix (sole) and he devised his four allotments of land on the Gibraltar Estate, Bowral to his unmarried niece, Mary Alma Aitken. He bequeathed £50 to his former landlady Eliza Hayton because ‘she has given me every satisfaction in the way of attending to my wants and especially during two protracted periods during which I was almost helpless’ and in addition he allocates up to to £50 to pay her legal fees incurred in a dispute in the Supreme Court (*Dibbs v Hayton*) over a lease of foreshore land probably in front of her residence ‘Norwood’. His estate was valued at less than £650.

TW appears in several published records of botanists: Joseph Maiden’s *English and French Botanists* of 1908 and *Records of Australian Botanists* in Journal of the Royal Society of NSW (1908) Volume 42; *A Biographical Index of Deceased British and Irish Botanists* by James Britten

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93 *The Town and Country Journal* 6 September 1884, *supra*.

94 Frederick von Mueller *Fragmenta Phytographiae Australiae*, 1858 page 190.

95 *ibid* page 187.

96 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 8 October 1862 page 3; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/13235199>

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and George Boulger of 1931 and the *Dictionary of British and Irish Botanists and Horticulturists* by Ray Desmond of 1977.

According to one acquaintance 'Mr. Shepherd was one of Nature's gentleman. He was thoroughly [staunch] in friendship, and had a most unassuming, kindly disposition.'<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *Town and Country Journal* 6 December 1884 page 21, *supra*.