

FROM THE PARISH ARCHIVES

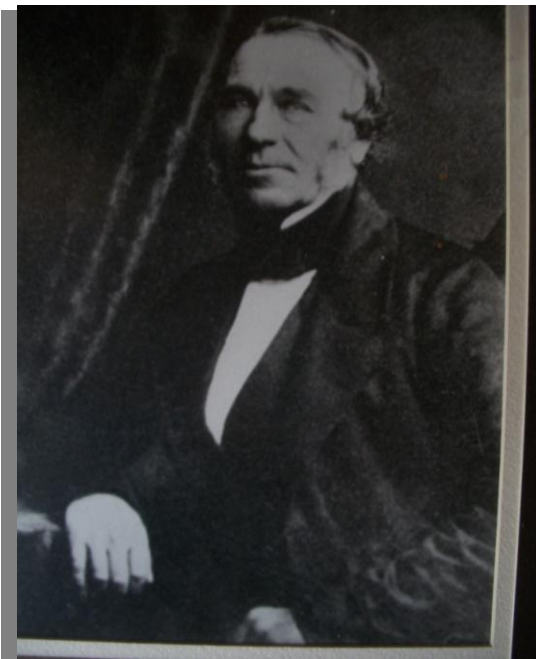
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Henry Dendy

Welcome to the fourth edition of "From the Parish Archives". We hope that you will enjoy reading about the history of the Parish. This is especially so with the 150th anniversary in 2011. This version was slightly revised in September 2011.

The "From the Parish Archives" aims to be factual. However, any opinions expressed are personal and may not be necessarily shared by other parishioners.

Geoffrey A Sandy, Parish Archivist and Parish Historian.



A photograph of Henry Dendy (left). This and one of the Dendye Coat of Arms are hanging together in Dendy House. Both are enlargements from a small photograph of one held by Mrs Phyllis Donaldson of Morwell a great grand daughter of Henry.

Introduction

Most of you are aware that we have a building referred to as Dendy House. Currently it mainly houses our office and the clergy. Until 1958 when the "new" vicarage was opened it was the house of the vicar and his family and was known as the parsonage. It is now named in honour of Henry Dendy who was an important laymen instrumental in the building of the Church and who gave great service to the life of the early worshipping community in Eltham and beyond. The parsonage was opened in 1873.

This issue examines the life of Henry Dendy and in particular his great contribution to our Parish. Acknowledgement is made of the following secondary sources that supplement our Archives. Weston Bate (1983). *A History of Brighton*. Melbourne University Press and the Australian Dictionary of Biography – Online Edition, <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/AS10124b.htm>

Background

Henry Dendy was born on the 24 May 1800 in Abinger in County Surrey England. His father Samuel was a farmer of considerable property. His mother Sarah nee Hampshire died when Henry was three. His father died in 1838 and at that time Henry was a brewer in Dorking. He sold the farms he inherited in 1840 and decided to emigrate to the Port Phillip District. Victoria was not yet a colony.

He had acquired in England the "right" under a short-lived scheme known as Special Survey to purchase eight square miles of land or 5120 acres for the price of only one pound per acre. He was the only person in England to do so. The scheme was to entice free settlers of some substance from Great Britain to the recently opened –up Port Phillip District to develop marginal lands. However, by 1841 land around Melbourne was selling at a price 10 times what Dendy paid.

His arrival generated great concern to the officials as the price differential was now so great. When Dendy attempted to exercise his right in Williamstown the Superintendent La Trobe and Governor Gipps, himself far off in Sydney Town, prevented it. They told Dendy he could only acquire land beyond the five mile limit of Melbourne.

Henry Dendy – Brighton 1842-1844

Henry Dendy is often described as the founder of Brighton. The decision to force him beyond the 5 mile limit saw him choose "wasteland" in what is now called Brighton. On taking possession of the land in 1842 a surveyor was commissioned to draw up plans for the Brighton Estate. House sites were sold with the seafront the most expensive. A two storey mansion on the seafront called Brighton Park was built for Henry Dendy himself. He played a primary role in founding the forerunner of St Andrews Church of England with a grant of 10 acres from himself and four others and was a leading layman. Brighton Grammar was also build on the land.

Late in 1842 Dendy received the second part of the Special Survey, emigrant workers, 139 in total including children, from England whose passage was paid by the crown. However, Dendy had few agricultural jobs for them. They had put there trust in Deny but he largely failed them although he did attempt to resettle them in the area so they became pioneers like him.

The depression of 1843 saw the demand for land fall and with it land sales. Dendy's bad debts accumulated. In April 1845 Dendy was declared insolvent although he and his wife retained Brighton Park through his wife's ownership as dowry. Dendy attempted to return to brewing in Geelong through 1846 to 1848 but it was not enough to retain the property. The mansion was sold in 1848 and he lost stock and other goods. Dendy tried squatting at Christmas Hills (1843-1853) and sheep farming at Upper Moira (1835-1855). The latter was the most successful and when sold it enabled Dendy and his wife to return to England. The Dendy's were in England for a year before returning to the colony to farm sheep near Werribee and then to a Flour Mill at Eltham.

Henry Dendy – Eltham 1857-1861

Henry Dendy moved to Eltham with his wife Sarah and son Henry Jnr. in 1857. It would appear he owned a cottage and the Flour Mill. He quickly became a well-regarded member of the local community. When a Public Meeting was held in May 1860 to plan the establishment of a Church of England in Eltham, Henry Dendy was called to the Chair unanimously. He was also elected treasurer when a committee of nine men (no women in those days) were elected. On the 9th of July Trustees were elected. They were Henry Dendy - Chairman and Treasurer of the Church committee, Henry Stooke - JP, Chairman of the Eltham Road Board, John Lindsay

Beale - of St Helena, Thomas C B batt and Alfred Armstrong – Civil Engineer and Mining surveyor.

Henry Dendy, as he had done in Brighton, donated the land, half an acre, on which St Margaret's Church and Dendy House stand today. On December 1 1860 he consigned the land "to be used by the Ministers of the United Church of England and Ireland having for the time being the Spiritual charge of the Ecclesiastical Parish or District connected or to be connected with the Church of England known as the parish of Eltham..." And, what was the land to be used for? The Trustees was to use the land for the purpose "for the erection of a parsonage house for the Ministers". The parsonage was completed circa 1873. And was mentioned previously it is now known as Dendy House. The land was also to be used for "erection thereon a Church and School house under the said Church of England and for no other purpose or purposes whatsoever".

The building of the Church at Eltham differs from what may be considered the norm for most other Victorian churches. The laity had it built and then sought from the Diocese a Vicar. There is no doubt that Henry Dendy was leader of this group and exercised project management of the church building. Early meetings are concerned with fund raising and it was the practice to list the subscribers and their donations in money and kind monthly on the door of the temporary church used for worship. Despite some usual problems associated with the effectiveness of groups composed of differing personalities the project progressed well. February 1861 is a key date when tenders were called for the building of the Church. The foundation stone was laid 4 April 1861 and the Church was dedicated and opened on the 12 December 1861.

Henry Dendy - Eltham 1862 -1867

During the 1862-1867 period Henry Dendy continued to exercise leadership in the Parish as Chair of the Trustees and various positions on the Church Committee. Although the church building was opened there were still many "finishing" things to be undertaken such as the purchase of a door mat, scrapers and wire guards for the church windows and the setting of stone and for spouting. Dendy was involved in the appointment of Dixon Bertram Lay Reader to take Divine Service in the new Church as no Vicar was yet appointed He had responsibility to ensure Bertram's stipend was raised and was no doubt involved in the agreement between the Trustees and George Stebbings for Bertram's occupation of the Stebbing's house. In 1863 he was involved in the appointment of another lay Reader that served until Robert Mackie was appointed Vicar by the Bishop. No doubt Dendy, with Bertram, would have worked to ensure the smooth running of the Sunday School.

Henry Dendy was instrumental in working with Bishop Perry and the Diocese after Perry had notified the Eltham Church of the appointment of its first Vicar Robert Mackie. After a short time the appointment was recognised as disastrous for the "new" Church and Dendy was prominent in putting the case why Mackie should be removed from it. After a "secret" meeting with the Bishop travelling to the "wilds" of Eltham to meet with Dendy and the other prominent laymen the resignation of Robert Mackie was duly announced. This was the subject on Volume 3 of *From the Archives*.

Again Henry Dendy in 1866 was still a prominent leader in the Church and organised the welcome, settling in and ensuring an acceptable stipend for the new Vicar J Hollis. There seemed to be some difficulties with the latter however. It is interesting that the archival records for 1867 are non existent but resume in 1868. It is recalled that 1867 was the year Henry Dendy sold the Mill and moved to Gippisland.

Henry Dendy - the Man and his Legacy

Others have made judgements about Henry Dendy the man and his legacy. This has largely been based on the Brighton experience where as mentioned previously he is described as the "founder" of Brighton. However, perhaps the history is skewed because historians and others have researched Brighton so much. They say next to nothing of his time in Eltham.

The fact is Henry Dendy spent about five years in Brighton and left it bankrupt. He spent more time in Eltham and more time in Gippsland than in Brighton. He was 10 years in Eltham before he sold the Flour Mill in 1867. It is interesting that Heritage Victoria partly view our church building as significant because of "*the connection of the building with Henry Dendy, founder of Brighton*". A pioneer in Brighton he was but for a short time. In fact historians suggest that pioneering was not Dendy's intention. He wished to take up land in the settled area of Melbourne but was forced to Brighton by the authorities. He came into a fortune more by luck than planning. Once in Brighton he sought the life and trappings of an English county squire gentleman. Just as quickly the fortune was lost again and we may suggest because of a lack of planning.

Henry Dendy sold the Flour Mill at Eltham to raise funds for his copper mine venture in Gippsland. He moved to Gippsland but the venture proved to be unsuccessful. He had been Director of the Thomson River Copper Mine. In later life he lived with his son in Walhalla who drove the engine at the Long Tunnel gold mine. Henry Dendy died in Walhalla 11 February 1881 and is buried there in an unmarked grave.

Conclusion

However, through poor in business he appears to be a man of good character. We can point to his efforts he made to settle the emigrant families, his endowment of land to the Church in Brighton and later at Eltham. We can consider his loyal and dedicated service to the Eltham Church and the local community in a leadership role over many years. His leadership is well illustrated during the time of estrangement between people and vicar and Church and Community during the time of Robert Mackie. He continued to serve the Parish and was instrumental in gaining support for a Church building and its design and construction despite suffering the loss of his wife Sarah who died 18 February 1860 at age 57 years. She is buried at the Warringal Cemetery. In a letter from Walhalla in 1876 to his old friend A B Andrew Henry inquired about Eltham and sent his regards. Historians record the words of one of his emigrants John Booker concerning Henry Dendy "a good, honourable, kind master, but no businessman".