



WILLIAM GREGG
DIED 5 MAY 1901

IN MEMORIAM
ARTHUR LOVELL GREGG
DIED 12 AUGUST 1903.
AGED 21 YEARS & 6 MONTHS
ALSO
ELEANOR ROSETTA GREGG
DIED 4th NOV. 1916.
"PEACE, PERFECT PEACE"
"RELEASED ARE THE PURE IN HEART"

William Gregg was a flamboyant merchant-adventurer, who founded what was to become one of Dunedin's best-known firms. For decades Gregg's Coffee Club, in its distinctive tins, was a national institution, and his products, proudly proclaiming their quality and purity, won over 50 medals in exhibitions here and in Australia.

Born in Ballymena, Northern Ireland, the son of a farmer, Gregg emigrated as a lad to Australia, setting himself up as a coffee and spice manufacturer in Ballarat, Victoria. He was presumably drawn by the gold rush to Dunedin in 1862, setting up shop in Moray Place and then 33 Princes Street. At first primarily a merchant who also roasted and ground coffee in his Rattray Street mill, he developed a growing line of products in the 1880s at Pelichet Bay. Eventually the whole enterprise was to shift to Forth Street. He married Eleanor Lovell in 1865, apparently very happily, and by 1884 presided patriarchally over hospitable Dale House in Queen Street, earlier Bishop Nevill's home, with its fleet of four servants. A 'splendid father', he took pains with his nine children's education. His more retiring wife had wealth of her own, which helped bail him out of trouble when his speculations in gold shares, and slap-dash accounting, bankrupted him in 1894. He had 'too many irons in the fire', buying land up and down the country, running a chicory farm, manufacturing starch, wax vestas and sulphates at Pelichet Bay.

Nothing daunted he somehow managed to buy back the slimmed-down firm, and even persuaded the sober Australian firm of Robert Harper to extend him credit. It became an incorporated company in 1897, with Gregg as managing director. It made steady profits but, again, branched out into improbable areas such as cigarettes, whose packaging bore a remarkable resemblance to the popular Vanity Fair variety.

Gregg remained something of a buccaneer to the end, but in his last years struggled with sickness, finally dying of apoplexy on 9 May 1901 at age 65. He was buried in Dunedin's Northern Cemetery.

Always genial and courteous, and too sanguine for his own good, he nonetheless laid the foundations of a large, sound merchant firm with manufacturing as a side-line. Labour relations always seem to have been good at Greggs. The ups and downs of his career, and the rough edges to his character, mirror the rumbustious nature of the frontier society he loved so much.

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