

The John Glass Cramond window



We tend to take our lovely stained glass windows for granted. There are 21 memorial windows in the Church, and each one has a history to it.

For example, have you looked lately at the “Good Shepherd” stained glass window in the north transept of the Church? It’s in the centre, with a memorial to Sarah Ann Gough on one side and Agnes Deborah Thom on the other. It has the following inscription:

“I am the Good Shepherd”.
In memory of
John Glass Cramond
For many years an Elder
And Session Clerk of this Church
Presented by J and A. T. 1928

Like many of the windows, this was originally in the Armadale Presbyterian Church. It was relocated to the Kooyong Road Church when the Denbigh Road Church was closed.

John Glass Cramond (1831 - 1910) had a long connection with the Armadale Presbyterian Church. I’ll refer to him as JGC. There’s a booklet in the Church office that sets out a lot of information about JGC and his family. The booklet is dated 1981 and was prepared by Mildred Owen, one of JGC’s grand-daughters. This window was presented by Mr & Mrs John Tallent in 1928.

JGC was born in 1831 in Scotland, and sailed to Australia in 1852. The trip took 4 months, and he arrived at the height of the gold boom. However, JGC heard many disconcerting stories from men returning from the goldfields and decided that gold was not for him. Instead he opened a general store in St Kilda (where he was the district’s first postmaster). There, he met up with James Dickson, who he had known in Scotland and had also, unbeknown to JGC, come to Victoria. Together, they opened a store in Lonsdale Street, but after a trip to Warrnambool, JGC was so convinced of the potential of the fertile and rapidly expanding Western District that they moved to Warrnambool in 1855 and commenced a 30 year partnership trading as Cramond & Dickson.

The business flourished and JGC married Frances Heard (originally from Devonshire) in 1859. JGC was a councillor for 8 years and was mayor when Warrnambool was proclaimed a Town in 1883.

In 1884, JGC wanted to move forward and returned to Melbourne with his large family (they had 14 children in all, although 2 died in infancy). James Dickson continued to manage the Warrnambool business. The business continued in the Dickson family until 1974 when James Dickson’s grandson, David retired and sold the business after 119

years of continuous trading. In Melbourne, JGC became managing director of Ball & Welch. The family settled in "Merville", a large mansion in Orrong Rd.

During this time JGC did much to assist in the establishment of the Armadale Presbyterian Church, and was one of the first Elders.

As a result of the "land boom and bust" of the 1880s, JGC sold a large piece of his land off High Street, naming the dividing roads Airlie Avenue, Kelvin Grove and Kelvin Court after places in his Scottish homeland

JGC and Frances celebrated their Golden wedding anniversary in 1909, and it seems that the festivities at "Merville" were indeed memorable. The booklet describes this event in detail, down to details of the outfits worn by many of those who were present.

However, within a year Frances had died of shingles. She had never forgotten her

connection with Warrnambool, and was buried in the Warrnambool Cemetery. JGC is said to have lost the will to live after her death and died of diabetes on 30 December 1910. He, too, was buried at Warrnambool. "Merville" was sold in 1911, and the family went their own ways.

Many of the family were present 17 years later, on 4 March 1928, when the "Good Shepherd" window was unveiled at the Denbigh Road Church. They had travelled from places such as Sydney, Warrnambool and Western Australia. John Tallent, who unveiled the window at the dedication had started working with JGC in 1884 as an employee of Cramond and Dickson, and apparently became a good friend of JGC over the years.

The window was designed by Brooks, Robinson & Co, and the dedication service was conducted by the then Moderator, Right Rev David Millar.

-- Graeme Harris

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