

BRAVERY RECOGNISED MEMORIAL ARCH

GUMERACHA WELL TRAGEDY

Stirring incidents connected with the Gumeracha tragedy of 1928, when two men sacrificed their lives in a gallant attempt to save one who had been overcome by gas in a well, were recalled on Saturday afternoon.

A large crowd witnessed the unveiling ceremony of a memorial arch, erected in front of the Gumeracha Town Hall.

Story of Bravery

On December 31, 1928, Mr. Farley descended the well on his property at Gumeracha to repair a defect in the pumping plant, situated about 30 ft. down the well. Soon after, a terrific explosion in the well occurred and cries for help were heard. Mr. W. Crook, an employe of Mr. Farley, descended the well in a gallant endeavor at rescue. He was overcome by gas while down the well. Mounted-Constable George T. Smith next descended on the same mission, but he was also overcome and was dead when recovered.

The fourth resident to attempt a rescue (Mr. Don Nosworthy) was, after a few minutes, hauled to the top in an unconscious condition. Mr. F. Schulze, a local baker, went down and located the body of Constable Smith. Mr. F. J. Fry then attempted a rescue, but further efforts were prevented until the arrival of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, who with proper appliances recovered the bodies.

The details of the tragedy and the bravery displayed evoked widespread interest and admiration, and it was decided to commemorate the event.

Honoring Brave Men

The arch, which is constructed of Murray Bridge red granite (polished), is handsomely constructed. In unveiling it Mr. J. B. Randell said everybody who knew the details of the occurrence honored and respected the heroes—the men had lost their lives in their efforts to save others. He hoped the edifice would stand as a reminder to generations who follow of the gallant men who gave their lives to save their comrades.

The arch bears the following inscription:—In memoriam. George Thomas Smith and William Crook, also George Farley, for whom they died. December 31, 1928.

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Mr. Randell presented Mrs. Smith, widow of Constable Smith, with a gold medal in recognition of her late husband's bravery. A presentation was also made to Mr. D. O. Crook, son of Wm. Crook.

Married that Evening

In presenting Mr. Nosworthy with a medal, Mr. Randell said although the ceremony was of a sad nature there should be a certain note of gladness for the recipient as he was to be married that evening. Medals for presentation to Messrs. F. Schulz and F. J. Fry were held over, as these two men were unable to be present.

The medals, inscribed similarly, have on one side the recipient's name, and on the other—"Presented by public subscription in recognition of personal bravery. Gumeracha well disaster. December 31, 1928."

A letter conveying sympathy was read from the Attorney-General (Hon. H. Homburg).

The cost of the arch was £203, and the expense of striking medals and providing a night lighting scheme to throw the arch into relief, will bring the total cost to £227.

The following comprised the committee responsible for the memorial:—Messrs. J. B. Randell (chairman), E. J. Powell, sen., E. H. Hannaford, M.P., V. A. Lee, L. R. Monfries, T. J. Hannam, J. J. Hynes, T. G. Clark, T. Bleeze, and Dr. L. D. Cowling (secretary and treasurer).