

## PERSONAL

## DEATH OF CAPTAIN T. S. ROWNTREE.

Much regret was expressed yesterday in shipping and commercial circles when the news of the death of Captain Thomas Stephenson Rowntree was received in the city. The deceased gentleman was a very old and respected resident of Balmain, with which suburb he had been connected from its earliest settlement. Captain Rowntree was born at Sunderland, Durham, on July 7, 1818, and was therefore in his 84th year. He was brought up to the trade of a shipwright. At the age of 20 he went to sea as a ship's carpenter, and four years afterwards his capacity and skill obtained for him the command of a vessel in the West of England trade. During the next eight years he was engaged in the Mediterranean and Baltic trades. It was about this time that considerable attention was being directed to the new fields for enterprise opening in Australia, and the discovery of the early rich goldfields proved a strong incentive to large numbers to look to these shores in search of fortune. Captain Rowntree saw the opportunity offered to him by this rush, and had a vessel built for the Australian coastal trade to run between Sydney and Melbourne. She was fitted for passengers, and was called the *Lizzie Webber*, 206 tons register. With a full list of passengers the little vessel entered Hobeon's Bay and arrived at Melbourne on December 4, 1854, after a voyage of a little over three months. At Melbourne, however, an unforeseen trouble awaited the enterprising captain. The whole of his crew deserted for the diggings, which shortly before had broken out at Ballarat. After some delay the vessel was manned by diggers, mostly sailors, who desired to return to Sydney. The *Lizzie Webber* continued to trade between Sydney and Melbourne for some months afterwards, until an enactment was passed in Victoria prohibiting ships of over 200 tons from going alongside the Melbourne wharf, and the vessel was brought to Sydney and sold. She was probably the first to anchor in Waterview Bay, at Balmain, where the captain and his family landed. He purchased the old Strathearn Estate, at Balmain East, and cleared the ground near the foreshore for constructing a patent slip. At that time there was only one slip in Sydney. After consultation with the late Thomas Sutcliffe Mort, Captain Rowntree joined with him and several others as partners, and in February, 1854, the foundation stone of the dock was laid in the presence of Governor Fitzroy and Lady Fitzroy. This great public undertaking was carried on in the face of considerable difficulties, as owing to the heavy rush to the diggings the rates of wages were almost prohibitory. But notwithstanding difficulties the work was completed and the ship *Ganges* and a Russian prize were docked within 12 months from the time of commencing the work. By agreement with Mr. Mort Captain Rowntree left the dock about 1860, taking his interest with him. He at once commenced business on the premises which he occupied up till the time of his death, and built several screw composite steamships. In 1864 he left Sydney for New Zealand in his own vessel, the *Caroline*, and on his arrival at Hokanga he secured a place called Hauraki and commenced operations in saw-milling. Here he continued shipping timber and kauri gum to Sydney until 1869, when he returned with his family to this city. While in New Zealand he was commissioned to report on the best site for a graving dock at Auckland. On his return to Sydney he commenced ship-building and repairing at Waterview Bay, where, amongst other vessels, he built the *Annie Ogle* and the schooner *Douglas*. In 1872 he purchased the floating dock and premises next to the gasworks in Darling Harbour, where he carried on a large business. Eight years afterwards this property was purchased by the Gas Company, and Captain Rowntree removed his dock to his old establishment at Waterview Bay, where he carried on a lucrative business.

His career in this city was a most active one. As far back as 1863-4 he was a member of the old Marine Board in this port. As the constructor of Mort's

Graving Dock he leaves a lasting monument to his memory. He was prominently connected with the progress of Balmain for over 40 years. He, with others, founded the municipality, and for some time represented the borough in the council and occupied the mayoral chair. He was also instrumental in founding the local School of Arts in 1850. From 1858 to 1864 he was closely identified with yacht racing. He was the possessor of seven handsome trophies won by his boats—*Annie Ogle*, *Lenna*, and *Leisure Hour*. With the first named he won the champion yacht (sea) race, gaining a valuable trophy and 300 guineas. The deceased was the first to run a ferry service between Mort's Dock and the city in 1852-3. He was a justice of the peace for nearly 40 years, and occupied the position of returning officer for many years for his electorate.

The deceased leaves a widow and seven children, including Messrs. T. S. and C. S. Rowntree, Mrs. Bandle (wife of Mr. S. Bandle, chairman of the Stock Exchange), and Miss Rowntree. The funeral will leave the deceased's late residence, Northumberland House, Balmain East, to-morrow morning.