

**TUCKFIELD MEMORIAL TABLET.****THE UNVEILING CEREMONY.**

A unique ceremony, unfolding some of the most interesting pages of Geelong's early history, took place at the Yarra-street Methodist Church yesterday afternoon, when a memorial tablet erected by the Larpent survivors to the memory of the late Rev. Francis Tuckfield, was unveiled. There was a fair gathering of descendants of the Larpent survivors and their friends, and the Rev. W. Williams presided. On the platform were also the Revs. J. W. and John Tuckfield (sons of the late rev. gentleman), Mr. Jas Oddie and Mr. G. M. Hitchcock. The tablet, which is erected on the southern wall of the building, is worked in Mount Sommers white freestone, and is of Gothic design. It consists of a moulded sill, supported on three ornamental corbels, relieved with carving. Richly moulded columns and ornamental jambs support the arch, which is relieved with tracery and decorated with neatly carved bosses and enrichments, the whole being surmounted by a decorated finial. The inscription tablet is of Carrara marble, and the inscription is engraved in church text and old English lettering, which blends harmoniously with the surroundings. The design and workmanship have been prepared and carried out by Mr. Joseph Smith, of Ryrie-street, and he has succeeded in adding a decided ornament to the interior of the sacred edifice. The inscription reads as follows:—"On the 28th June, 1849, the good ship Larpent arrived in Corio Bay from London, having fever on board. The late Rev. Francis Tuckfield, then pastor of this church, visited the ship and saw the state of the passengers. As good Samaritans, he and his noble wife generously received a number of the sick into their home, and in divine ways strewed on their path garlands of faith, hope and charity. At the 56th anniversary of their landing, the surviving passengers advised the erection of this tablet to record the Christly act.—James Oddie, Benjamin Bonney, passengers; William Williams, Pastor, 1906."

Having opened the meeting with prayer, the Rev. W. Williams said it was an occasion of peculiar and uncommon interest. It was not often they unveiled a memorial tablet in any of their churches, and it was not often they had to call to mind the deeds of men who had been so long in the presence of God; as the late Mr. Tuckfield had. That they were congregated for that purpose was due chiefly to Mr. Jas. Oddie, and the records of the church were enriched by the placing there of the tablet to Mr. Tuckfield's memory.

Mr. Jas. Oddie, who has been the live spirit in all Larpent doings, said it was 56½ years ago since the event took place that they were there to celebrate. On March 28th, 1849, the ship Larpent left the Thames, and arrived off Point Henry exactly three months afterwards. She brought emigrants, and was the first of three ships sent under the enterprise of Dr. Lang. His object was to establish a Protestant population in the country,

and there were 220 passengers all told on the Larpent. Fever broke out during the passage, and thirteen stalwart emigrants were carried off. When the ship arrived fever was rampant. They were consigned to Dr. Thomson, but one of the first men to board the ship was the Rev. Francis Tuckfield, of the Yarra-street Wesleyan mission station. He generously threw his house open to the afflicted people, and he and his noble wife nursed them to convalescence. Mr. Oddie was a good deal affected with emotion when he related his run of ill-luck in the loss of his wife and child within a period of three weeks, at the end of which he was smitten with fever. The late Mr. Tuckfield assisted him to regain convalescence by placing the mission horse at his disposal, and could vividly remember the rides he had to Barrabool Hills and Indented Head. All round Mr. Tuckfield acted as a true philanthropist. The movement for the erection of the tablet was the outcome of a notion carried at their last reunion at Mack's Hotel. Incidentally, he referred to the efforts made by all denominations in Canada to assist the emigrants, and said that 56 years ago the same thing was done by the Rev. Francis Tuckfield, without any assistance or organisation whatever. It was a credit to the Methodist Church that such a thing was done. It looked a long time to go back to an event of 56 years, but in the unveiling of the tablet there was an element of considerable worth—it was an expression of gratitude and appreciation from the surviving passengers of the Larpent. Most of them knew what it was to come to a strange country, and what it was to be met as they were; and they were thankful to be able that day to testify to their feelings towards the late minister. Mr. Oddie then removed the Union Jack from the tablet, the inscription on which was read by the Rev. W. Williams.

The Rev. J. W. Tuckfield said he was exceedingly delighted to meet the survivors and their friends, and trusted that he realised the sanctity of the occasion. It seemed to him that his parents who worshipped there long ago were there again with him. He could not possibly express his feelings, but would utter the one expression, "Thanks." He was thankful to Mr. Oddie, and mentioned that he had the good fortune to be in Mr. Oddie's Society Sunday school class in Ballarat. He had the highest respect for Mr. Oddie, who was an affectionate and faithful leader. He had always manifested the same loving feeling and he was especially thankful to him for his prominent part in placing the beautiful tablet in the beautiful and historic Yarra-street church. To the other passengers, the Rev. Williams, and the trustees, he was also thankful. The references to his late father's philanthropy and kindness had not been exaggerated. He was a brave and noble man, who had opportunities when he landed to obtain large areas of land, but he was content to go on in the work to which he was called. His mother was a noble and pious woman, who underwent many risks

called. His mother was a noble and pious woman, who underwent many risks at the lonely mission station. Their actions of kindness which had been referred to were only samples of many such acts, the performance of which was their habit. His parents were amongst those heroic pioneers whose names should be handed down from one generation to another. Reverting to his father's history, the speaker stated that he preached in Melbourne on July 21st, 1838, and in Geelong on the following Sunday. In 1840 he preached at the opening of the Yarra-street Church, and in 1848, when Geelong was made a separate district from Melbourne, he was appointed Wesleyan minister for the district. After reading extracts from an old diary kept by his father, one entry in which stated that his class of scholars with an average attendance of 43, had learned 2883 Bible verses in a month, the speaker stated that his father came to spend his days as a supernumerary in Geelong in 1860. Four years after he took up active work again, and went down to Portland, where he died.

The Rev. John Tuckfield, another son, also spoke and thanked the Larpent survivors for their great kindness. They had revived scenes of the past which would otherwise have been buried with the dead. After so many years it proved to him that there was true gratitude in their hearts. From the "Tasmanian Review" of 1838 he read the extract that by the barque Seppings, from London, came four Wesleyan missionaries, including Mr. Tuckfield and his wife. He hoped the tablet would teach them the beautiful lesson of love to their fellow creatures; the lesson of loyalty in Britisher welcoming Britisher; and the lesson of true Methodism grasping the hand of Methodists as they came to this country.

The Rev. W. Williams formally acknowledged the gift on behalf of the church. The late rev. gentleman was of the fine type of whose character and deeds they had no fear of examination. In the tablet they had a record of one of the great pioneers of the church in this country. He complimented Mr. Smith on his workmanlike job, and thought it did him very great credit.

Mr. G. M. Hitchcock, secretary of the church trust, also spoke briefly, and said Mr. Tuckfield was a man who had added to the Glory of God, and the progress of true religion throughout this land.

Amongst those present were Mr. Benjamin Bouney, one of the promoters of the movement, and Mr. W. Higgins, son of the late Mr. Wm. Higgins, who was a Larpent passenger.