

## Burgess, William Henry (1847–1917)

by E. R. Pretyman

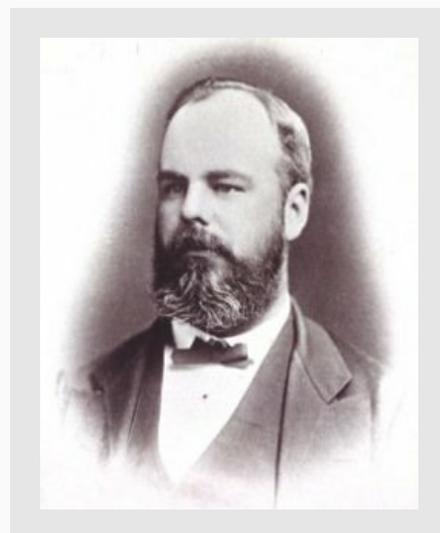
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William Henry Burgess (1847-1917), grocer and parliamentarian, was born on 21 May 1847 at Hobart Town, son of William Henry Burgess and his wife Sarah Ellen, née Preston. William Henry senior, born on 31 May 1821 in Hobart, son of Henry and Mary Ann Burgess, intended to become a master builder and began work as a carpenter but about 1845 he entered the grocery business. In 1846 he was joined by Hugh Sunderland Barrett and they traded as Burgess & Barrett, grocers and general provision merchants. On 6 June 1846 he was married at the Wesleyan Chapel in Melville Street, and in 1852 built Tasmanian House, a three-storied residence and shop at the corner of Liverpool and Murray Streets. After Barrett died on 26 January 1871 Burgess continued to manage the rapidly growing business. With high repute for perseverance, industry and integrity he retired in 1874. He died on 10 November 1878 from injuries when thrown from a vehicle and was buried at Cornelian Bay.

William Henry junior was educated at the High School, Hobart, and on 27 May 1869 at the Wesleyan Church in Melville Street married Ann Baily Turner. In that year near his father's grocery he began a department for the sale of glass, china and crockery. Later as a partner he joined his father and the firm became known as W. H. Burgess & Co; he became its manager when his father retired. Believing that civic administration in Hobart needed improvement he offered himself as an alderman. He was elected in 1876, was made a justice of the peace in 1878 and became mayor in 1879. In that year Charles Pasqual Chiniquy, a priest expelled from the Roman Catholic church, caused great disturbance when he applied for the use of the Hobart Town Hall. The premier, [William Crowther](#), notified Burgess that he was responsible as mayor for the public peace. The City Council supported the right to liberty of speech and decided to enforce law and order with their own resources. Burgess recruited 150 volunteers to act as special constables, but when violence seemed imminent Governor (Sir) [Frederick Weld](#) and his Executive Council decided to call out the volunteer corps. Two buglers were stationed at the Town Hall to give the alarm, but Bishop [Daniel Murphy](#) appealed to his flock and Chiniquy addressed a capacity audience without interruption. This was perhaps the most remarkable military episode in the otherwise peaceful history of Hobart.

In January 1881 William Henry junior was elected to the House of Assembly for West Hobart. He was colonial treasurer in the ministry of [Sir Adye Douglas](#) from August 1884 to March 1886 and under Dr (Sir) [James Agnew](#) until he retired in March 1887; he retained his seat in the Executive Council until 1917. In March 1891 he was one of the seven Tasmanian representatives at the Federal Convention in Sydney. Under popular pressure he was again induced to enter parliament and was elected for Denison in 1916. Among his other offices he was consular agent for France, a director of the Bank of Van Diemen's Land until it failed in 1891, warden of the Hobart Marine Board in 1908-17 and master warden in 1910-14, a member of the Volunteer Force, local president of the Trinity College of Music and member of the Royal Society. He was known for his cordial and sympathetic nature, for his prudence, vision and readiness to help any good cause. He died at his home, Millliara, Battery Point, on 1 May 1917.

His son, William Henry Tertius, was born at Hobart on 2 March 1870 and educated at the High School. He went to London to work for Joseph Tetley & Sons, then one of the largest tea houses in the world. He was trained as a specialist in the art of tea-tasting and at 21 was made responsible for most of Tetley & Sons' purchases of tea. In 1893 he returned to Hobart and joined the family firm. In 1899 he married Marion Hudson Turner. He was keenly interested in many local organizations but did not seek prominence in them. He was warden of the Hobart Marine Board



*William Henry Burgess* (1847-1917), by J. W. Beattie

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### Life Summary [\[details\]](#)

#### Birth

21 May 1847  
Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

#### Death

1 May 1917  
Battery Point, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

#### Occupation

- colonial militia (Australia)
- company director
- federationist
- local government councillor
- local government head
- Member of Lower House
- produce merchant

in 1927-33 and master warden in 1931. He was consul for France, vice-president of the Hobart Chamber of Commerce and at his death on 19 October 1933 was managing director of Burgess Brothers Pty Ltd.

Edward James, son of William Henry senior, was born on 6 January 1849 and educated at the City School under H. M. Pike. After serving his articles he became a surveyor under the Real Property Act in 1870, was active in the construction of the Sorell Causeway across Pittwater and associated with the civil engineers, Sorell & Davies, in connexion with the building of the main line railway between Hobart and Launceston. In 1872 he went to New South Wales where he was employed by the Railway Department both in field work and as a draftsman. As a licensed surveyor he spent some twelve years in the Riverina and laid out the townships of Hillston and Cargelligo. On 27 December 1877 at the Wesleyan Church, Melville Street, Hobart, he married Julia Burgess Barrett. He returned to Tasmania in 1884, joined William Henry junior in partnership, and the firm then became Burgess Brothers, merchants and general importers. With his brother as a director he was associated with the Elwick Railway Co. Ltd, which built a spur line to Elwick Racecourse. He became a justice of the peace in November 1886 and a warden of the Hobart Marine Board in 1890-91 and 1896-97. With his wife as the honorary treasurer he was a committeeman of the Victoria Convalescent Home at Beltana (Lindisfarne) from 1898. He was a trustee of the Melville Street Methodist Church from 1894 and a member of the general committee of the Hobart Savings Bank from 1905 until his death on 14 February 1924 at Bowerabine, Moonah; his wife predeceased him.

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