

## Hill, Richard (1810–1895)

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Richard Hill (1810-1895), pastoralist and politician, was born on 22 September 1810 at Sydney, the third son of William Hill, emancipist butcher, and Mary Johnson. Educated at Wood's school and by William Timothy Cape, he was apprenticed as a carpenter. In the late 1820s he managed William Charles Wentworth's Vaucluse estate and later was agent for his city property. At St Philip's Church on 27 January 1832 he married Henrietta, daughter of Francis Cox, emancipist, and sister of Wentworth's wife. In 1842 he took over the Carpenter's Arms from his brother George, and like him was a butcher with his own slaughter-house. About 1848 he took up Mungyer, 76,000 acres (30,757 ha) on the Liverpool Plains, and in 1849 he and his brothers visited the Californian goldfields. In about 1839-60 he owned a large orchard, The Orangery, on the Lane Cove River and was often rowed to it by ten Aborigines; it was described by George Bennett in *Gatherings of a Naturalist in Australasia* (London, 1860). Hill set up a boiling-down works to provide manure, exported oranges to the Victorian goldfields and at its peak the orchard's profits were £50 a day.

A magistrate from 1855, Hill sat on the committees of several agricultural and horticultural societies and was a councillor of the Agricultural Society of New South Wales. In the early 1860s he went to New Zealand and took up a large run near Invercargill. On his return he acquired three runs on the Lower Macquarie, including Butterbone; they were largely managed by his sons. From 1866 he was a director of the United Insurance Co.

Hill was 'nurtured in politics' by Wentworth. In 1868-77 he represented Canterbury in the Legislative Assembly. Active and vigilant, Hill's imagery was 'most amusing, being purely Australian'. Fond of ornithological jokes, he described (Sir) James Martin's 1871 coalition as 'five kookaburras mixed up with one rosella—the Robertson rosella making the rest acceptable'. He mostly associated with other native-born politicians like Richard Driver and Edward Flood. In 1867 he tried to prevent the dismissal of William Duncan and in 1874 with William Bede Dalley and Driver urged the governor to release the bushranger, Frank Gardiner. In 1872 he helped to organize Wentworth's public funeral and in 1880 was appointed to the Legislative Council and a commissioner for the Sydney International Exhibition. In 1882 he was a commissioner for fisheries. Hill was a close friend and correspondent of Sir Henry Parkes and in 1887 told him 'knowing that you are a Good Catholic; & with a loving desire to eat fish on Friday's I have much pleasure in sending you a very fine Schnapper'.

From boyhood Hill spent much time hunting and fishing with Aborigines whom he regarded as his 'sable countrymen'. He found the Aborigine 'the life and soul of the party, full of humour, an excellent mimic' and a hunter with no superior in the bush. In 1881 he was a councillor of the Aborigines Protection Society and in June 1883 as a founding member of the Aborigines Protection Board helped to get a parliamentary grant for them. In 1892 with George Thornton he published *Notes on the Aborigines of New South Wales*. An Aboriginal boy lived with him all his life.

Survived by ten sons and one daughter, Hill died at his Bent Street home on 19 August 1895. He was buried in the Anglican section of Waverley cemetery beside his wife who had died on 27 September 1892. His estate was valued at £132,000.

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from Queenslander

The Hon. Richard Hill, M.L.C., whose death at midday on Monday was announced in our issue of yesterday (says the S.M. Herald of 21st instant), was one of the few remaining links between the old Australians and the present generation. He was born in Elisabeth street, city, in September, 1810, and was therefore, at the time of his death, in his 85th year. He married Miss Henrietta Cox, a sister-in-law of William Charles Wentworth, and in his early days he resided at Vaucluse. For over half a century he lived in the cottage in which he died in Bent-street, city, and for many years before he resided there the cottage was occupied by his mother-in-law, who built it. Mr. Hill was a widower, his wife having died about three years ago at the age of 80. He had eleven children—ten sons and one daughter—all of whom are living. He also leaves two sisters—Lady Cooper, wife of Sir Daniel Cooper, and Mrs. Durham. Deceased always led a quiet, unobtrusive life, and mixed very little in political or public matters. He practically never experienced a day's illness in his life, and was of strong physique. He was an extremely temperate man, almost a teetotaller, and was a non-smoker.

Mr. Hill took a keen interest in the welfare of the aborigines, and did more for them than perhaps any other man in Australia. In his early days he was much interested in sport, and thus became very closely associated with the blacks. For many years he was a member of the Aborigines' Protection Board, and, up to the time of his death an aboriginal boy lived with him. He would never allow any one but the blackboy to accompany him when he went out for a drive.

When a comparatively young man he took a great interest in horticulture, and had one of the finest orchards of the day in the Lane Cove district, near what is now known as Pymble. At this time he lived at Vaucluse, and was rowed across the harbour each morning by ten aboriginals, and then walked four miles to his orchard. Mr. Hill's orchard was noted all over Australia, and a description of it, with illustrations, appears in the late Dr. Bennett's *Gatherings in Natural History in Australia*. The oranges grown by Mr. Hill were renowned, and the orchard was a splendid paying concern. At the time of the gold rush in Victoria large quantities of oranges were exported by him, and the profit of the orchard at one period amounted to as much as £50 per day. Apart from the business aspect of the industry he manifested a great interest in horticulture as a pleasure, and made it one of his particular studies. Several of the men employed by him in those days are now wealthy men, owning large properties.

About thirty-five years ago he sold his orchard, and devoted himself to the squatting industry. He took up station property in the south island of New Zealand, near Invercargill, but sold out some time

afterwards. He then purchased a station in New South Wales known as Buttabone, on the Lower Macquarie, which he owned at the time of his death.

Although he did not take a very active part in politics, he at one time represented the electorate of Canterbury in the Legislative Assembly, and was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1880. In the early days he was a staunch supporter of Mr. William Charles Wentworth, and an opponent of Mr. Robert Lowe, afterwards Lord Sherbrooke. At one time he was one of the Fisheries Commissioners, and for thirty years he was a director of the United Insurance Company, which position he held at the time of his death.

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