## **CASSERLY, Thomas**

Thomas Casserly was the youngest son of the late Colour-sergeant John Casserly, of the 12th Regiment, and was born at Victoria Barracks, Sydney, in 1864.

Thomas was a pupil teacher at Fort Street School when 13 years of age, and remained with the Education Department for some years. He resigned to take a position on the clerical staff of the Railway Department.1

On 1st July 1892, in St. John’s Church, Vacy, in the Hunter region of N.S.W., Miss Jean Morcom, the youngest daughter of Mrs. Morcom, of Vacy, was united in wedlock to Mr. Thomas Casserly, of Beecroft, Sydney.2

Children of the marriage were:

Clarice A. McL, born 24th May 1893, at Copeland-road, Beecroft [died 1893]

Ruby J. R., born 24th May 1893, at Copeland-road, Beecroft (twin girls)

Eileen Doris, born 28th December 1895, at Beecroft

Marguerite B., born 1898, district of Helensburgh

Thomas L. M., born 1908, district of Newtown3

In November 1893 it was announced that Mr. Casserley, an old Parramatta boy, now fills the honourable position of stationmaster at Beecroft.4

By early 1894 Messrs. Chidgy Bros., of Balmain, had the contract at about £155 for the erection of a stationmaster’s residence at Beecroft. By all appearances the new structure was not considered very imposing.5

In October 1894 the assistant to Mr. Casserly was removed from the railway station, as the Department did not consider the position was required. During the previous month some 465 tons of goods were received at the Beecroft railway station.6

In May 1895 he was involved in proposing of an Oddfellows Lodge at Beecroft. Thirty names of intending members were received, and negotiations were under way for a medical officer.

In June a visit was made by a number of officers from the Grand United Order of Oddfellows Lodge, Sydney, and a branch of that Order was approved for Beecroft. Some 25 members were enrolled, the officers elected being as follows :- T. Casserly, N.G.; Arthur Maher, V.G.; Fred Mason, F.S.; Andrew Whyte, E,S.; A. E. Midson, T. F. Bullard, O.G.; and W. Way, I.G. Dr. Walters, of Pymble, was appointed the lodge doctor.

Mr. Casserly received credit for the establishment of the lodge, as it was principally through his energetic efforts that it was established.7

In August 1895 there was a daring robbery at the station house. The office had been broken into and the safe burst open and between £6 and £7 taken, as well as several documents, including the deeds of Mr. Casserly's Copeland Street property. An examination of the safe showed that a hole had been drilled through the top, through which it is supposed dynamite was inserted. Both the locks on the door were blown off. It was supposed the bursting of the safe took place at about 5.20 a.m., when a noise like the report of a blast was heard by Mr. Casserly (who lives about one hundred yards away) and other residents. No notice was taken of the noise as it was thought perhaps it was made by the shunting of the goods train.

Later that month Thomas Casserly received notification from the Postal Department appointing him as Postmaster in lieu of receiving office master, the Department having decided to convert the receiving office into a post office on the 21st August. The Railway Commissioners was also making a move to increase the office accommodation at the station which at that time was considered far too small.8

In September 1895 Thomas Casserly, stationmaster, was notified that his removal is likely to take place shortly from here to Heathcote on the Illawarra line. The removal would mean promotion.

By mid-October nothing further in the matter had been notified, so that Mr. Casserly believes now that his desire not to leave us will be satisfied. ‘Mr. Casserly is a very great enthusiast in the newly formed lodge of Oddfellows, and he is very anxious not to leave Beecroft until he has seen its membership reaching 50.’9

One week later it was announced that Mr. Casserly, the Beecroft stationmaster, had been appointed to take charge of the Heathcote station. A pleasant little re-union, in the nature of a surprise party, was held at the house of Mr. Casserly.

Some 20 or 30 ultimate friends gathered together to bid the popular officer, and his equally popular lady, good-bye; and a most enjoyable evening was spent.

Mrs. Casserly and other ladies presided at the pianoforte, and Miss Manor treated the company to a graceful exhibition of step-dancing.

Mr. Glynn, Hornsby stationmaster, said he had known Mr. Casserly a few years as an upright, honest, and honourable man, respected by all. He deserved great credit, too, as the founder of an Oddfellows' Lodge in Beecroft. In Mrs. Casserly their friend had a good helpmate.

Mr. Lovell, of Beecroft, had known Mr. Casserly all his life, and was very sorry he was going away. He was always a most obliging officer, especially to the working classes.

Mr. Nicholls, Carlingford stationmaster, had always worked very amicably with Mr. Casserly, and could bear out what had been said about him, and that he was equally obliging to rich and poor.

Mr. Maher, of Beecroft, said Mr. Casserly was a very good man, and it would be difficult to fill his place, especially in the lodge he had founded.

Mr. Attwell said the ladies were all broken-hearted because Mr. Casserly was leaving the district. All curly-headed boys were terrors with the ladies! (Much laughter).

Mr. Thompson, Eastwood stationmaster, expressed the regret of the district at losing Mr. and Mrs. Casserly. He (the speaker) was well acquainted with, and had the greatest respect, for Mrs. Casserly's family. He must also say that although they lost a friend in Mr. Casserly, they would gain one in the newcomer (Mr. Attwood).

The health of Mr. and Mrs. Casserly was then enthusiastically drunk, with musical honours.

Mr. Casserly, in responding, said that he had always tried to do his duty, though, as most of them knew, when one went out of his way to be obliging, his efforts were not always appreciated. He was sorry to leave the district, and no promotion would have tempted him to do so, had the dwelling been less inconvenient. In fact, he had at first refused the offer of removal. He had done his best for the lodge, whose members had responded by placing him in the highest position they could in the local branch of their society.

The toast of “The Press” was proposed by Mr. Glynn, and responded to by Mr. T. C. Walker, of the Cumberland Free Press. More music and songs followed, and the company broke up about 11 p.m., after singing “Auld Lang Syne,” with the traditional joining of hands.

Mr. Casserly left Beecroft for Heathcote, his new charge, and his duties, were undertaken by his successor, Mr. Attwood, from Belmore.10

On 25th February 1899, at the residence of her son-in-law, Thomas Casserly, at Heathcote, Margaret Morcom, formerly of Vacy, and sister of the late John McLauchlin, West Maitland, died aged 78 years.11

In July 1899 Thomas Casserly was issued with a provisional Crown Grant, Vol. 993, Fol. 106; Land: 3 roods 16 perches, being allotments 22 and 23, section 4, situated in Copeland-street, Field 2 of Mars, near Beecroft, parish Field of Mars, county Cumberland, the proof of loss of the original Crown Grant and other particulars required by the Real Property Act having been supplied.

[This was in regard to the loss of the original deed stolen from the Beecroft station safe in August 1895.]12

In June 1927, Thomas Casserly’s eldest brother, John Thomas Casserly, died. It was a family of six sons, three of whom have died within the past 11 months. The youngest son, Mr. Thomas Casserly, Cavendish-street, Stanmore, was the sole survivor.

Thomas was an executor of his brother’s will.13

In July 1937 Thomas Casserly died. He was stationmaster at Erskineville when he retired 10 years previous.

He was a member of the Petersham Council since 1925, and Mayor of Petersham in 1929.

He was the founder and first president of the Railway and Tramway Salaried Officers' Association and served on the Railway Appeals Board for some years.

He was a Past Master of Lodge Kilwinning Orient, Newtown.

He was survived by Mrs. Casserly, three daughters (Mesdames Silvester, Livingstone, and Reynolds), and one son (Mr. Tom Casserly. Jun., assistant manager of the State Theatre).

Attendees at the funeral included members of the Marrickville Bowling Club, officers and brethren of Lodge Kilwinning Orient, No. 14, U.G.L., N.S.W., and principals and companions of the Newtown Royal Arch Chapter No. 55, S.G.C. of N.S.W.

He was cremated at Rookwood Crematorium.14

On 23rd June 1949 Jean Cook Kathleen Casserly, widow of Thomas Casserly, died at 166 Power Street, Hawthorn, Victoria. She was survived by her three daughters and one son.15

**Bibliography**

1 NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages; Sydney Morning Herald, Sat 31 Jul 1937

2 Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser (NSW), Sat 2 Jul 1892

3 NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages; The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser, Sat 3 Jun 1893; Daily Telegraph (Sydney, NSW), Fri 25 Jan 1895

4 Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 4 Nov 1893

5 Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 24 Feb 1894

6 Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 13 Oct 1894

7 Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 18 May 1895; Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 15 Jun 1895

8 Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 3 Aug 1895; Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 17 Aug 1895

9 Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 14 Sep 1895; Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 12 Oct 1895

10 Cumberland Free Press, Sat 19 Oct 1895

11 Maitland Weekly Mercury (NSW), Sat 4 March 1899

12 New South Wales Government Gazette, Fri 28 Jul 1899; Australian Star (Sydney, NSW), Sat 29 Jul 1899

13 Sydney Morning Herald, Thu 9 Jun 1927; Government Gazette of the State of New South Wales, Fri 2 Sep 1927

14 Sydney Morning Herald, Tue 27 Jul 1937; Morning Herald, Sat 31 Jul 1937

15 Sydney Morning Herald, Fri 24 Jun 1949

**NOTE**: Additional information contained within Beecroft Cheltenham History Group book ‘Beecroft and Cheltenham, the Shaping of a Sydney Community to 1914’.