## **SKELLETT, Thomas Henry Brown**

Thomas H. B. Skellett was born in 1855, at Polesworth, Warwickshire, England, the son of John Lancelot (1825-1907) and Jane (nee Brown; 1827-1895) Skellett.

He arrived in Sydney, Australia, as a boy, with his parents, on 6th January 1860, on board the vessel *Albert*.

The Skellett family consisted of John, wife Jane, and children: Fanny Sarah, 11; Thomas H., 4; Alfred David (born Coville, France, in 1858), 2; & Septimus (10 months).

His father, John Skellett, was once superintendent of the railway being built from Paris to Cherbourg in 1857. Lord Brassy had chartered a sailing ship to bring his staff to the colony to build the railways of the State, and Mr. Skellett’s father was placed in charge of the timber work of the line from Campbelltown to Picton, the section from Campbelltown being opened 1st September 1862, while that of Menangle to Picton was completed on 1st July 1863.**1**

On 5th March 1878, Thomas Skellett, of Mittagong, married Gertrude Martha Adelaide Sivier, in the district of Sydney.

Gertrude (born 22nd September 1859, Sydney) was the youngest daughter of the late Captain T. J. Sivier, of Sydney.**2**

Children of the marriage were:

Gertrude Amy, born on 18th January 1879 at 151 Forbes-street, Woolloomooloo.**3**

Lancelot Henry, born 24th November 1886, at Waverley

In 1885 Thomas Skellett was living in Ebley-street, Waverley, and was assistant examiner in the Railway Department.**4**

The family then lived in Thornleigh for some years.

In February 1895 he was elected honorary treasurer of the Hornsby-Carlingford Horticultural Association.**5**

The family came to live in Beecroft in 1895.

In December 1895 Mrs. T. (Gertrude) Skellett, of “Devonia,” Beecroft, who had been seriously ill for some time past, was reported to be much better.**6**

In July 1896 Mrs. Gertrude Skellett died at her residence. It was remarked that her ‘kindness and good nature endeared her to all with whom she came in contact.’ She was survived by her husband, a son and a daughter.**7**

The following month Thomas Skellett was elected a committee member of the Beecroft Tennis Club.

In January 1897 he was elected to the committee of the Beecroft Progress Association. He was on the committee the following year.**8**

In April 1898 he was elected clergyman’s churchwarden at St. John’s Church, Beecroft, and again the following year.**9**

At a Thornleigh benefit concert in August 1898, ‘T. Skellett, who was in good voice was responsible for two songs for which he received quite an ovation.’ On previous occasions in Thornleigh he had sang at concerts and would do so in the future at various functions in Thornleigh.**10**

Thomas was elected Treasurer of the Beecroft Progress Association in 1899. Thomas Skellett continued his involvement with the Beecroft Progress Association well into the new century.**11**

On 24th April 1901, he married, at St. Jude’s Church, Randwick, Mrs. Fanny Brown, of Randwick.

Fanny Brown was born Fanny Fletcher in Lancashire, England, in 1857. She had a son, Arthur Fletcher Brown, from her marriage to A. R. Brown.

Fanny had written a poem dated 24th November 1900, in celebration of the coming Federation celebrations.

Thomas, then Chief Cashier in N.S.W. Railways, is described as being for many years a resident of Beecroft, associated with most of its institutions.**12**

Also, in 1901 Thomas Skellett engaged Cheltenham architect Joseph Seale to design the two-storey brick house, ‘Chetwynd’, at 138 Copeland Road in a conservative style and with a slate roof. Contemporary features were the stucco trim on gables and chimneys and a small ‘bulls-eye’ window on the upper front wall.**13**

On 17th June 1907, his son, Lancelot Henry, aged 21 years, died at “Chetwynd,” Copeland-road, Beecroft, after an illness of about one year. The deceased was well liked by reason of his kindly and courteous disposition. He was for a time employed in the electrical tramways department.**14**

[Thomas’ father, John Lancelot Skellett died on 23rd August 1907 at Glebe.]

In October 1912 the Beecroft village fair was opened by Mr. Skellett.**15**

In 1913 he was a vice-president of the Beecroft Musical and Dramatic Society, along with a Mr. A. C. Dobbie.**16**

In 1914 his stepson, Arthur Fletcher, only son of the late A. R. Brown and Mrs. Brown-Skellett, of Beecroft, was married to Amy Moore, ‘Shrublands’, Beecroft. Thomas Skellett was then Chief Cashier of Railways.**17**

In 1916 he was elected as one of three churchwardens at St. John’s Church, Beecroft.**18**

On his retirement from the post of Railway Cashier after 50 years’ service in 1920, a newspaper article refers to him as ‘the man who handles twelve millions a year’, along with a personal photograph and one of the Railway Cashier’s Room (Thomas seated in foreground).**19**



On 7th April 1920 occurred the death of Gertrude Amy Skellett, only daughter of Thomas H. Skellett, of “Chetwynd,” Beecroft.**20**

On 4th April 1933 Thomas’s wife Fanny died at Beecroft. There were no surviving children from this 2nd marriage, just Arthur Fletcher Brown from her first marriage.**21**

In January 1939 Thomas Skellett, aged 84 years, died suddenly at his home, 4 Copeland Road, Beecroft. He left a brother, Mr. A. J. Skellet, also of Beecroft, and a sister, Miss Amy Skellett, of Sydney. His remains were cremated at Rookwood Crematorium.

He is buried at Old Church of England, Rookwood, in section AAA Row 9.**22**

**Bibliography**

1 The Picton Post, Thu 9 Jan 1936; The Sydney Morning Herald, Thu 19 Jan 1939; Ancestry.com

2 Australian Town and Country Journal, Sat 16 Mar 1878; Evening News, Thu 21 Mar 1878; Ancestry.com

3 The Sydney Morning Herald, Fri 24 Jan 1879

4 Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners’ Advocate, Tue 25 Aug 1885

5 The Cumberland Mercury, Sat 16 Feb 1895

6 The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 14 Dec 1895

7 The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 4 Jul 1896; The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 11 Jul 1896;

8 The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 1 Aug 1896; The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 16 Jan 1897

9 The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 23 Apr 1898; The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 15 Apr 1899

10 The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 27 Aug 1898

11 The Daily Telegraph, Tue 31 Jan 1899

12 The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 27 Apr 1901; Beecroft and Cheltenham the Shaping of a Sydney Community to 1914, page 262; Ancestry.com

13 Beecroft and Cheltenham The Shaping of a Sydney Community to 1914, page 137

14 The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 2 Feb 1907

15 The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 26 Oct 1912

16 The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 1 Nov 1913

17 The Sydney Morning Herald, Sat 31 Oct 1914

18 The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 27 May 1916

19 Sunday Times, Sun 4 Jan 1920

20 The Daily Telegraph, Thu 8 Apr 1920

21 The Sydney Morning Herald, Sat 8 Apr 1933

22 The Sydney Morning Herald, Thu 19 Jan 1939; Ancestry.com

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