

## Rudall, James Thomas (1828-1907)

James Thomas Rudall (1828-1907), surgeon and ophthalmologist, was born at Crediton, Devon, England, son of James Rudall, naval paymaster, and his wife Penelope, née Mackay. After apprenticeship he studied at St Thomas's Hospital, London (L.S.A., M.R.C.S., 1854; F.R.C.S., 1857). In 1854 in H.M.S. *Talbot* he took part in the Arctic search for Sir John Franklin. After working at St Pancras Infirmary and practising in London, in 1858 he sailed for Port Phillip as surgeon in the *Queen of the Seas* and arrived on 14 July. His 1858 diary, which includes the voyage, gives valuable details of the medical practice of the time.

In Melbourne, Rudall at first entered general practice, including autopsies for the coroner and at the Yarra Bend Asylum. He was on the honorary surgical staff of the Melbourne Hospital in 1865-75, and briefly next year was hospital pathologist. In 1887-1901 he was an honorary surgeon at the Alfred Hospital and was a consultant till 1907. He pioneered a number of surgical operations in Australia, including amputation of the hip, surgical relief of Oesophageal stricture and tracheostomy for diphtheria.

He was an examiner in pathology and physiology of the University of Melbourne and in 1866-1901 honorary oculist to the Victorian Asylum and School for the Blind. He was also an honorary surgeon to the Deaf and Dumb Institution. Rudall was one of the few Australian members of the Royal Ophthalmic Society, and he became first vice-president, then president, of the Melbourne Ophthalmological Society on its formation in 1899. In his later years Rudall's practice was largely confined to diseases of the eye, and also of the ear, nose and throat.

Rudall was elected a member of the Medical Society of Victoria in 1865 and served on its committee. He was a founding member of the Victorian branch of the British Medical Association in 1879, a member of the first council, later vice-president and president in 1884-85. In 1881 he represented the branch during a tour of America and Europe. He was a councillor of the Royal Society of Victoria in 1869-90 and also held office in the Medical Benevolent Association.

A musician of ability, he was vice-president of the Melbourne Liedertafel in 1880 and president in 1882-85. He lived in the era of von Mueller's encyclopaedic documentation of new Australian species; in dedicating a new species *Myriocephalus rudalli* to him, von Mueller described him as – "Dr J. T. Rudall, a most skilled and expert doctor and one who brought great strength to medical investigations by the best use of microscopical study".

With F. Mueller's help he had translated from the German and published in Melbourne in 1869 J. L. C. S. van der Kolk's *The Pathology and Therapeutics of Mental Diseases*. He gave evidence to the royal commissions on asylums for the insane and the inebriate (1886) and charitable institutions (1892).

Rudall retired in 1901 for health reasons and died of cardiac and cerebral vascular disease on 4 March 1907. On 10 October 1862 he had married Georgiana Gordon Scot (1830-1910). Of their seven children, James Ferdinand (1864-1944) became an ophthalmologist and honorary medical officer to the Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital.

Rudall contributed over sixty papers to medical journals, mostly Australian, including several translations of important European articles. An accomplished and innovative surgeon he was a founder of ophthalmology in Australia and a leading pathologist. An energetic worker for the welfare of the many institutions with which he was connected, he remained dignified in controversy, and retained a human interest in a brandy and cigar.

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Sources: Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol.6, 1976; "Doctor in the Garden", John Pearn, 1990; "Founders of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology in Victoria", Ronald Lowe, History, Heritage and Health conference, Norfolk Island, 1995.

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