



The President of the Medical Society of Victoria in 1855 was Dr. William Mackie Turnbull Lic R Coll Surg Edin 1840 M.D. Univ Edin 1841 FRCSE 1841 M.D. Univ Melb 1858 (a.e.g.)

The name Turnbull has been found in Scottish history for a very long time. There are many stories explaining the origin of the Clan: the most fascinating says a Scottish Borders man William of Rule “saved Robert the Bruce from a bull.”

They were cattle herders from the border area of England and Scotland. The Turnbull Clan are now spread around the world with many members of note, in all fields of life.

Scottish migration to Australia and New Zealand associated with the Highland Clearances favoured areas similar to their homeland. In Victoria they settled in the areas north of Port Philip into the Western District of Victoria. In New Zealand, Scottish migrants favoured both the North and South Islands which certainly resembled their homeland. There was many Turnbull’s travelling to New Zealand and Australia on the early immigrant ships.

William Mackie Turnbull was born in Edinburgh to John Turnbull, the Chamberlain of Edinburgh and merchant, and Euphemia Mackie in 1820. William attended Edinburgh University, graduating just before his 21st birthday. The University of Edinburgh medical school lists his thesis: *Gulielmus Mackie Turnbull Scotus: On Uterine Haemorrhage*.

In May 1842, he was a ship’s surgeon on the vessel of the New Zealand Company, *London*, which sailed from England to Wellington New Zealand. His ship’s medical log documented his medical attendances on the voyage and his frequent frustration. This medical log has, latterly, formed the basis of the book *No Simple Passage* by Jenny Robin Jones. On reading this book, we must remember it occurred nearly two hundred years ago and comparison with today should not be entertained. His diaries and papers are maintained by the National Library of New Zealand.

He practiced medicine in New Zealand for some years and is mentioned in literature about the early days of Lower Hutt. He was a surgeon in the Hutt Militia at the time of the First Māori War 1845-6. After an earthquake near Wellington in 1848, he moved to Victoria Australia where he had relatives.

He married Euphemia Turnbull, his cousin, in 1851 in the Presbyterian Church in Lonsdale Street Melbourne. Her mother Margaret (Hislop) Turnbull was a widow who migrated to Melbourne in 1844 with her children.

Another medical Turnbull migrated Scotland to Victoria earlier. He was Dr. Adam Turnbull senior. Adam Turnbull (1803-1891) graduated in 1824: from Edinburgh University: his Thesis: *Adamus Turnbull Scotus: De Nervosum Connexu*.

He did not stay in Victoria but travelled to Hobart Town in 1825. Medicine was not his main occupation and through his life he was a landowner, a politician and then a religious minister. His son Adam junior and Adam's son George moved to live in Hamilton Victoria on the land. The squatter's run in the Western District of Victoria *Winninburn* was owned by all three. They were one of the earliest settler families in the area. There was a family connection with Adam Turnbull's family. William's wife Euphemia moved to live with them after her husband died. She died and is buried in the Hamilton Cemetery in 1907.

The Victorian government registration of medical practitioners commenced in 1851-1852. Victorian Government Gazette of 1852 published a list of medical men who had submitted their names and qualifications to the Medical Board of Victoria. The first record of William Mackie Turnbull's medical registration in the state of Victoria was on the list.

In 1856 he resided in 101 Spring Street Eastern Hill Melbourne and in 1862 moved to 34 Russell Street. When he vacated his Spring Street home, the Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital was established at the site. Strangely enough today, if you walk along Spring Street and turn left into a small lane at the rear of Princess Theatre – the name is Turnbull Alley.

The 1850's in Melbourne was a developing time with men of his medical skills being valued members of the community and coordinators with government to deliver essential services for the community. His medical specialist skill was in the field of Obstetrics – following the topic of his thesis. He was a member of the Philosophical Society of Victoria and of the Royal Society of Victoria. He belonged to the Medical Society of Victoria, becoming its President in 1855. He was a member of the Medical Board of Victoria and became the first elected Honorary Physician of the Lying-in Hospital in April 1858. In 1861 he was one of the MSV deputation to the Melbourne University Council to discuss the establishment of a medical school, in preference to a proposal for MSV to found one.



His wife Euphemia Turnbull was an active, community-minded citizen. She was on the Ladies Committee (Board of Management) of the Lying-in Hospital, having the honour of being a vice-president and president of the Committee. Many early towns in the Colony had caring women such as Mrs Turnbull, who recognised and organised social assistance for women and children in need in the community. She was one of the founders of Melbourne Ladies Benevolent Society.

In the book *“Carers. Carers, Advocates and Reformers”* Edited by Jacqueline Healy from the Medical History Museum University of Melbourne, writer Jane Trembath wrote of Euphemia’s philanthropy and care. These services set a precedence for social programmes for women and children today.

As for the activities of William with the Medical Society of Victoria He offered advice on the purity of the water of Yan Yean Melbourne’s water supply, infectious diseases that were endemic at the time, the recognition of medical degrees and formulating a criterion for registration, hygiene requirements for hospitals. The catch word of the day was “Medical Reform.”

Dr William Mackie Turnbull died young at the age of 47 in 1867. It is said he died of “consumption”. Euphemia died in 1907 in Hamilton where she was living near Dr Adam Turnbull’s family.

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