



North Sydney

Heritage Leaflet 26

COMMODORE GOODENOUGH

James Graham Goodenough was born in Surrey, England, in 1830 and joined the Royal Navy at 14. Within a few years he was serving Britain's imperial interests as far away as the Pacific and off the African Coast. He made the Navy his career and was appointed Commodore of the Australian Station of the Royal Navy in 1873 with *HMS Pearl* as his flagship. This position gave him command over the Pacific region including Australia. He played key roles in a number of historic events in the South Pacific such as the Deed of Cessation between the Chiefs of Fiji and the British. As Commodore of the Australia Station, Goodenough was also responsible for the maintenance of law and order among British subjects in the Pacific and between colonists and Indigenous people.

In 1875, he conveyed Sir Arthur Gordon to Fiji as the newly appointed Governor. Goodenough continued on to the New Hebrides to settle a dispute with the Santa Cruz Islanders. The British were attacked and Goodenough was hit by one or more arrows. He died of tetanus aboard the *HMS Pearl*.

Goodenough's body was returned to Port Jackson and he was buried in the cemetery of St Thomas's Church of England, North Sydney, with two of his men who were killed in the same action. The burial in North Sydney was apparently at Goodenough's request. In time, the Commodore and his men would be among several maritime figures interred there during the 19th century and early 20th centuries. Goodenough joined Captain Owen Stanley, a friend of St Thomas' Rector WB Clarke, buried in 1850, the Harbour Master Merion Moriarty who died in 1864 and the marine surveyor JTE Gowlland buried in 1874. Several others followed.

A devout Christian and a humanitarian, Goodenough epitomised the ideal of the Victorian public man. His death was reported across the world. The *New York Times* of 25 August 1875 printed a short account titled 'Commodore Goodenough Shot with a Poisoned Arrow'. The subsequent funeral service at St. Thomas' Church, North Sydney elicited profound expressions of grief. The following description of the ceremony appeared in the *Illustrated Sydney News and NSW Agriculturist and Grazier* on 18th September 1875:

It was one of the most numerously attended funerals which have been witnessed for many years in the colony. All the public offices were closed at noon and business at many of the leading establishments in the city out of respect for the memory of the deceased officer. In accordance with the Commodore's own request, arrangements were made to inter the bodies in the little cemetery at St Leonards. Steamers commenced to ply across the water at an early hour and before long a dense concourse of people, numbering several thousands, had assembled on Milson's Point... The Commodore's body was Bought across in his own gig, towed by a little steam launch and followed by the state barge of his Excellency the Governor, who was accompanied by Mrs. Goodenough and the Commodore's two little boys.

The contemporary newspaper illustration (*right*) shows the Goodenough monument at St Thomas' Cemetery shortly after it was erected. It featured a cross in the Celtic-style atop a pedestal faced with inscribed marble tablets which recounted the circumstances of Goodenough's death, noting 'He sailed away to die, refusing to allow a single life to be taken in retaliation'. The inscription around the base expressed the sense of fatalism and duty that steeled Victorians against the untimely death of loved ones: 'In his last days God was abundantly glorified, having revealed Himself to His servant in great love, his death a triumphant victory'. The modest headstones of the crewmen also killed, Edward Rayner and Frederick Smale, were placed either side. The compound was bordered by a chain held up with bollards and crossed anchors.



The monument is still a prominent feature of St. Thomas' Rest Park, the reserve that was created on the site of St. Thomas' Cemetery in the early 1970s. The graves have been restored and interpretive signage added to this significant monument. St. Thomas Rest Park is located at 200 West Street, Crows Nest.

Goodenough's memory was further preserved in 1876 with establishment of the Goodenough Royal Naval House in Sydney by public charity to continue his welfare work for naval men. A bay and island on the Papuan coast were also named after him. A commemorative stained glass window was installed in St Thomas' Church, a bust by Prince Victor of Hohenloe was executed and placed in the Painted Hall at Greenwich and another by the renowned local artist Achille Simonetti was displayed in the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

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