

Bendigo The Right Fist of God

Reviewed by Jim Evans

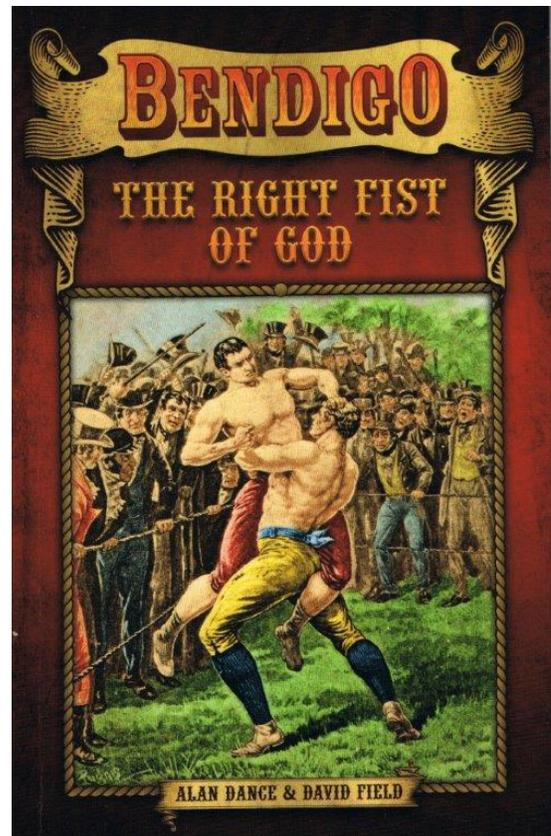
There have been many names for 'Bendigo', as is evidenced by the T-shirt designed by Bendigo Historical Society member, David Mulqueen, for the first Post Office Gallery Exhibition, curated by Sandra Bruce in 2010. Amongst these names is that Bendigo is a corruption of 'Bandicoot', to 'Around the Bend I go', to the official names, Castleton and Sandhurst. However, the one name that comes back is the name the goldfield had always been known as – Bendigo - which, since 1891, is the official name of the city.

Where did the name 'Bendigo' come from?

This is a frequently asked question from newcomers and visitors to the city.

Surprisingly, there is a strong connection to a city in Britain, called Nottingham and it is here that British writers, Alan Dance and David Field, have discovered William 'Bendigo' Thompson. The authors donated a copy of their book, titled 'Bendigo - The Right Fist of God' to the Bendigo Historical Society. In the foreword to their book the authors state that the work is a novel based around a true story of one of England's greatest sporting heroes, William Abednego Thompson, the bare-knuckle boxing champion of England. The corruption of his middle name to 'Bendigo' became the name of the city on Bendigo Creek. There is a long history of books using real people and events in fictionalized accounts, including Colin King's 'A Vintage Death', based in Heathcote and Bendigo.

The most famous portrait of 'Bendigo' Thompson, is an engraving by Charles Hunt in 1846, which is in the collection of Judy and Reg MacDonald. The latter was the Editor of the Bendigo Advertiser. The engraving shows Thompson in a classic south-paw fighting pose and it was no wonder that lads who were handy with their fists were nicknamed 'Bendigo'. In case you had not heard of him, famous



author, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle tried to make sure with the lines from his 'Bendigo's Sermon', quoted in the introduction to 'Bendigo The Right Fist of God'

: "You didn't know of Bendigo? Well that knocks me out! Who's your board school teacher? What's he been about? Chock-a-block with fairy tales Full of useless cram, And never heard of Bendigo The Pride of Nottingham!"

The authors tell a fascinating tale from the historical context, to 'Bendigo's' birth, as one of triplets, to his success as Champion of All England and later as a man of God. For further information contact the Bendigo Historical Society.