

# William Anderson Weymouth (1841 – 1928)

William Anderson Weymouth was born in Launceston, Tasmania, on 24 September 1841. His grandfather, Dr William Weymouth (1788–1856), originally from Devon, England, was a surgeon in Portsea before leaving on the *Charles Kerr*, with his wife Mary Ann Salmon and nine of their twelve children, for Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania). Arriving on 18 November 1835, he set up a medical practice in the township of Perth, near Launceston. One of his sons, also named William (1818–1863), arrived in Launceston the following year and became a clerk in the Post Office. On 25 November 1840, in the Tamar Street Chapel, he married Catherine Hubbard.

William Anderson Weymouth, the first of William and Catherine's ten children, was born in Launceston on 24 September 1841, but lived most of his life in Hobart, where he was educated at Robert Giblin's school in Melville Street. In 1853 he was apprenticed to the mechanical staff of the *Examiner* in Launceston; he served his time and then joined the literary section. In August 1863 his father, on his way to visit a son in New Zealand, was drowned when the brig *Creole* was wrecked in a storm shortly after leaving Launceston. The following year William Anderson Weymouth returned to Hobart. In 1867 he relinquished his association with the press and applied to become a teacher, but accepted an insurance company's offer instead, and eventually completed fifty years' service in that field, first as Hobart agent and later as resident secretary, for two allied companies. On 25 March 1869, he married Phoebe Thompson. Lorne, their large home on Forest Road, accommodated their growing family of fourteen children, and was later run as a boarding house by their unmarried daughter Grace. It remained the family home until her death, and its sale in 1957.

Weymouth devoted his spare time to his life-long natural history interests. In 1887 he began collecting bryophytes and lichens – perhaps inspired by botanist Leonard Rodway, who had settled in Hobart in 1880 to practise dentistry, and with whom he later collaborated; they were both members of the Royal Society of Tasmania. Weymouth sent lichens to overseas experts, including the Italian, Jatta, whose 1911 catalogue of species included *Ochrolechia weymouthia*. He also corresponded and exchanged mosses with notable European bryologists Brotherus, Burchard and Levier, and Naylor Beckett in New Zealand. During the 1890s the Royal Society of Tasmania published several of his papers about Tasmanian bryophytes.

He continued his bryological interests in his later years, and died at his home in Hobart on 24 May 1928, in his 87th year. His wife had died twelve years earlier, but twelve of his sons and daughters survived him. He made a considerable contribution to the knowledge of Tasmanian bryophytes, and his extensive collections are in herbaria at Hobart, the British Museum, Vienna and Naples. However, he is best remembered by the epiphytic moss genus *Weymouthia*, named by Finnish bryologist Viktor Brotherus, in 1906.



## ***Weymouthia mollis***

Mosses in this family are usually epiphytic. The *Weymouthia* genus is represented by two species in Australia, Lord Howe Island, New Zealand, the Juan Fernandez Islands, southern Chile and adjacent border areas of Argentina. *Weymouthia mollis* (Latin *mollis* 'soft' or 'tender') forms soft, pale green to fawn veils, which can reach over a metre in length, hanging from branches in lowland to subalpine rainforest. The shoots, which are about 1.5 mm wide, are more slender and are of softer texture than those of the more robust *Weymouthia cochlearifolia*, with which it is sometimes associated. The leaf is about three times as long as wide, and is channelled rather than concave. *Weymouthia mollis* festooning stunted, gnarled trees of Taranaki/Mr Egmont kāmahi forest is one of the characteristics giving rise to the popular name "goblin forest".