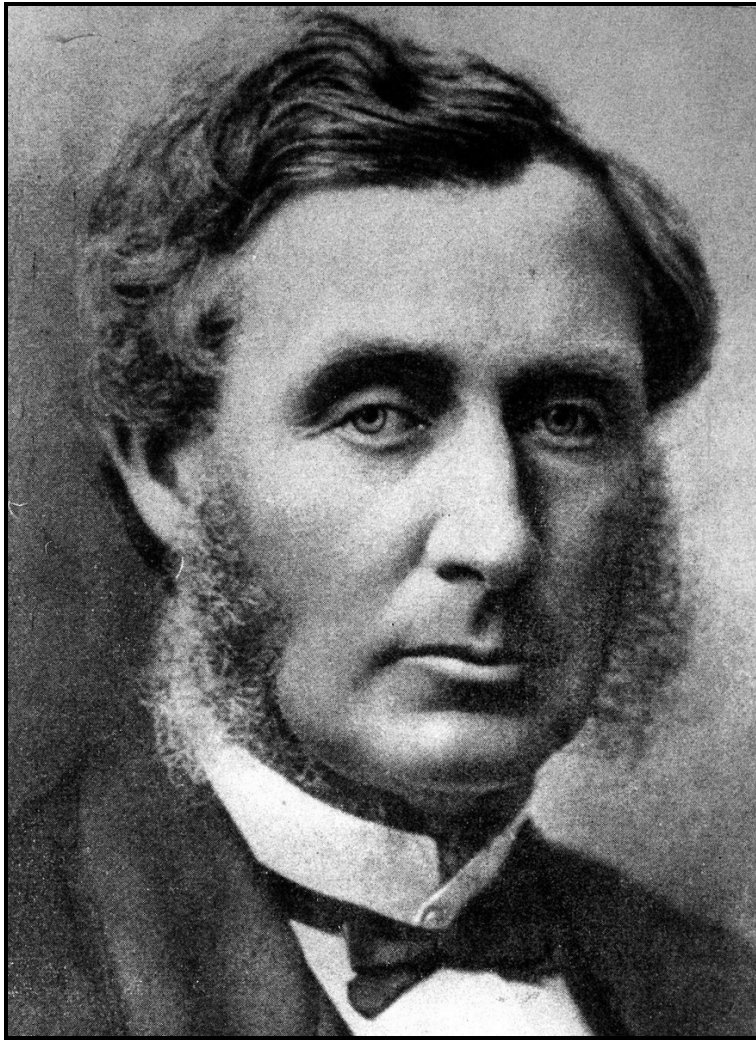


# THOMAS SUTCLIFFE MORT PIONEER in FOOD REFRIGERATION

By Brian Roberts, CIBSE Heritage Group

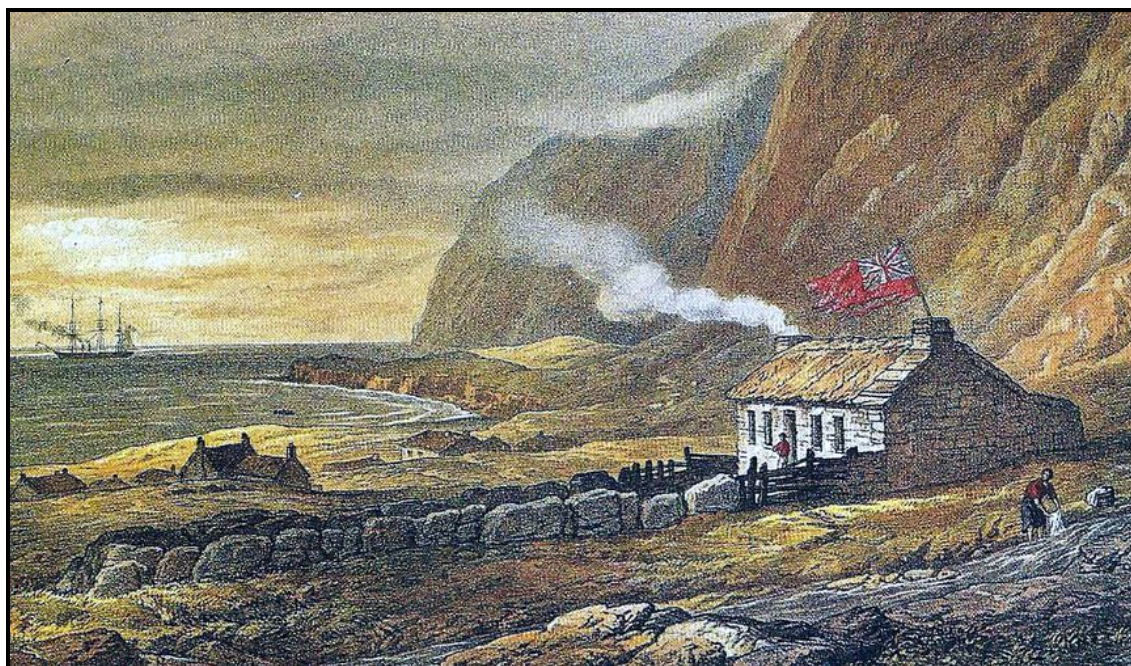


*Thomas Sutcliffe Mort, 1816-78*

Thomas Mort was born on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1816, at Bolton in Lancashire, England and brought up in Manchester where he received a sound and practical education as the second son of Jonathan Mort. On the death of his father, he and his elder brother William, both clerks, struggled financially. However, when Thomas was offered a position in Australia he seized the opportunity, arriving in Sydney on the ship *Superb* in February (1838 according to one report, but in 1837 according to his memorial plaque).

## THOMAS SUTCLIFFE MORT

The voyage to Australia took some four months in challenging conditions.



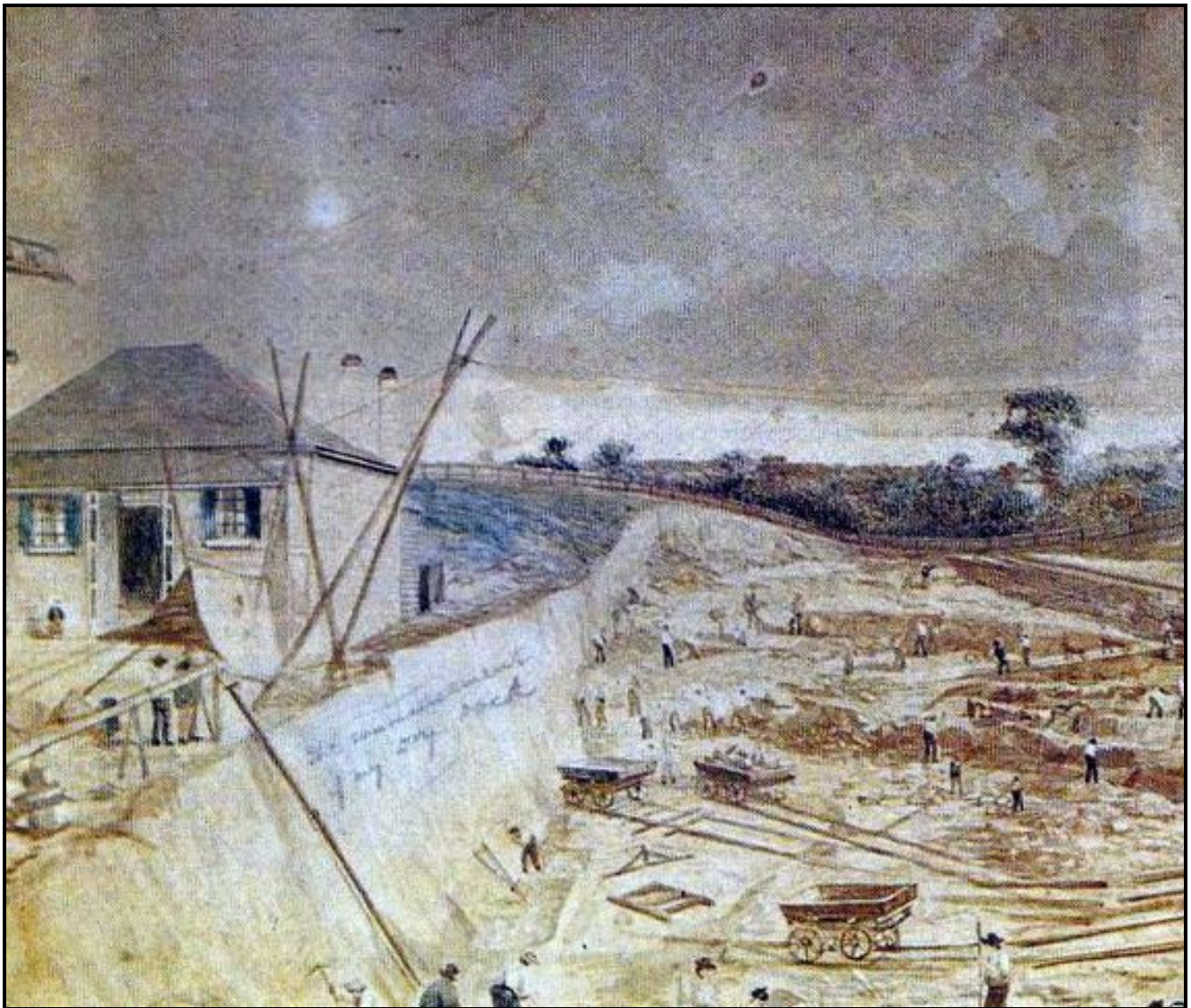
*Tristan da Cunha, where Mort's boat party was stranded for three days in November 1837*



*Sydney Cove at the time of Mort's arrival, showing immigrants disembarking and being rowed ashore (Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales)*

## THOMAS SUTCLIFFE MORT

Mort became a clerk, gaining extensive experience in local and international commerce. He married in 1841. In September 1843, he set up as an auctioneer in general and wool sales. He prospered by specialising in sales of wool alone, but went on to auction both livestock and property, providing finances and expenses to purchasers. In the 1850's, he arranged for farmers to consign wool through him for sale in London. He became associated with a number of businesses and became Sydney's leading auctioneer. He also opened a dry dock at Waterview Bay. Mort's wealth multiplied several times over in the 1850's and he was particularly successful in land speculation, eventually owning 38,000 acres. After a visit to England in 1857-1859, he went into farming in a big way and became involved with the mining of copper and coal, and improved his dock facilities where he had interests in a company assembling imported railway locomotives.



*Mort's Dock at Balmain, under construction in 1854*

## THOMAS SUTCLIFFE MORT

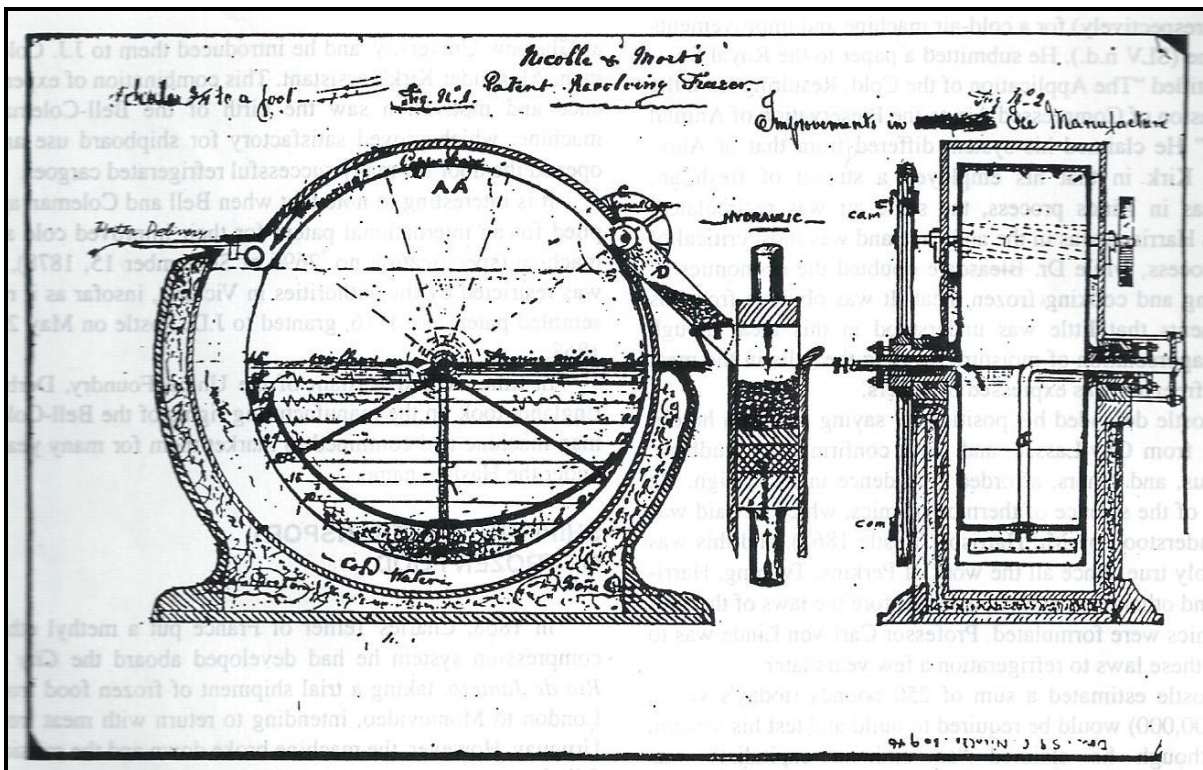
Mort was an entrepreneur not an engineer, but in the mid-1860's he realised the enormous potential in refrigeration for the storing and transportation of meat, butter and milk. From 1866 until 1878, he financed experiments by the French engineer Eugene Dominique Nicolle to design and produce refrigerating machinery suitable for use in ships, trains and cold-storage depots. Although their machinery was never used for shipping frozen meat, Mort and Nicolle developed commercially viable systems for the New South Wales Fresh Food and Ice Company formed in 1875. These were used in "a slaughtering and chilling works at Bowenfels in the Blue Mountains, a cold store at Darling Harbour, milk depots in the Southern Tablelands, and refrigerated railway vans for meat and milk." It has been reported that Mort spent over £100,000 on these projects, his returns being negligible.



*Eugene Nicolle and his family*

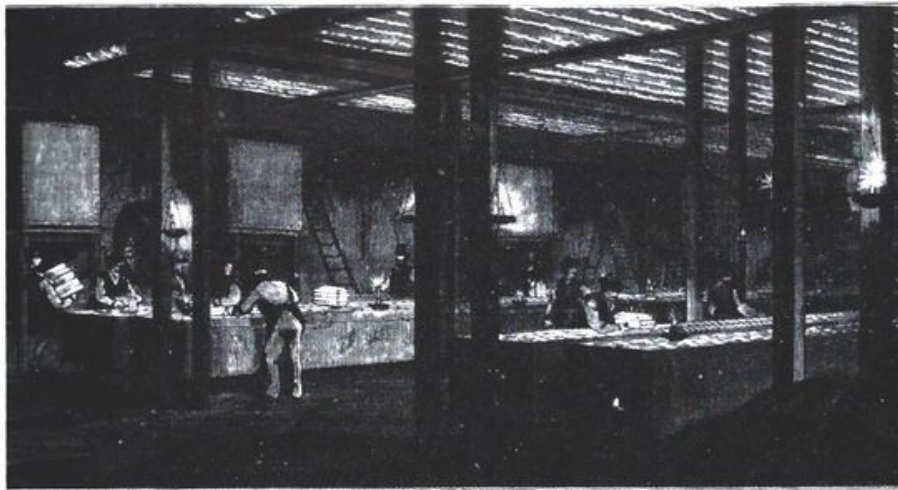
Nicolle was born in 1823 in Rouen, France, arriving in Australia in 1853. He registered, with his partner Richard Dawson, his first ice-making patent in 1861. The next year, Nicolle, Dawson and the Wilkinson brothers bought the Sydney Ice Company from James Harrison and Peter Russell with the franchise to use Harrison's machine in New South Wales. This was to eliminate competition with his ammonia absorption machine. He tried unsuccessfully to raise finance for its use on ships, but in 1866 he teamed up with Thomas Mort to establish the successful adoption of refrigeration in the food industry. Nicolle died on 23 November, 1909.

# THOMAS SUTCLIFFE MORT

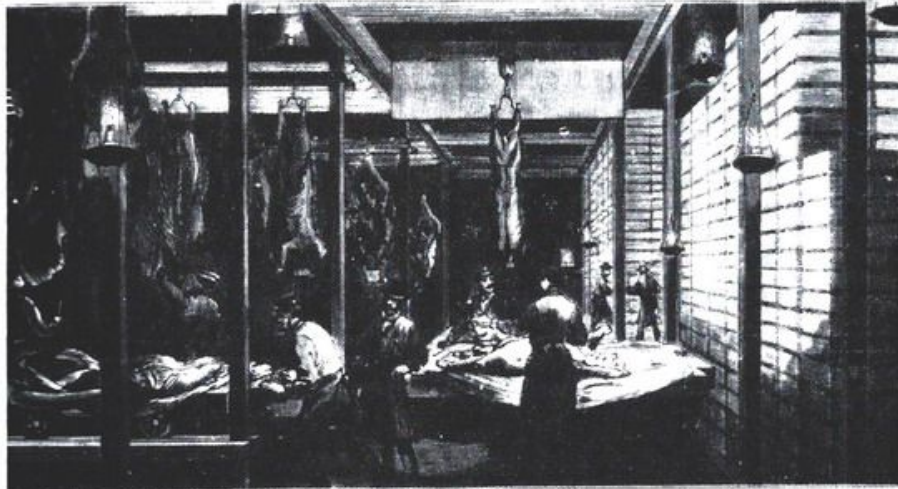


Nicolle and Mort's Revolving Freezer

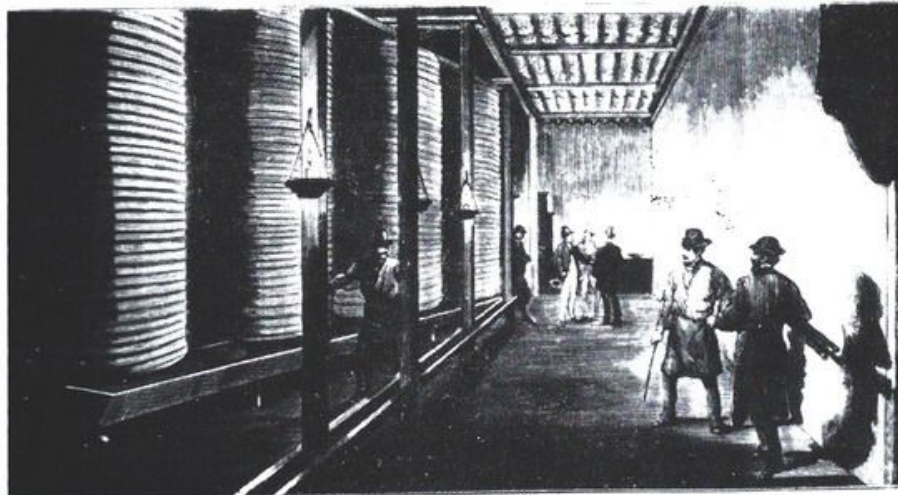
# THOMAS SUTCLIFFE MORT



THE ICE-MAKING ROOM.



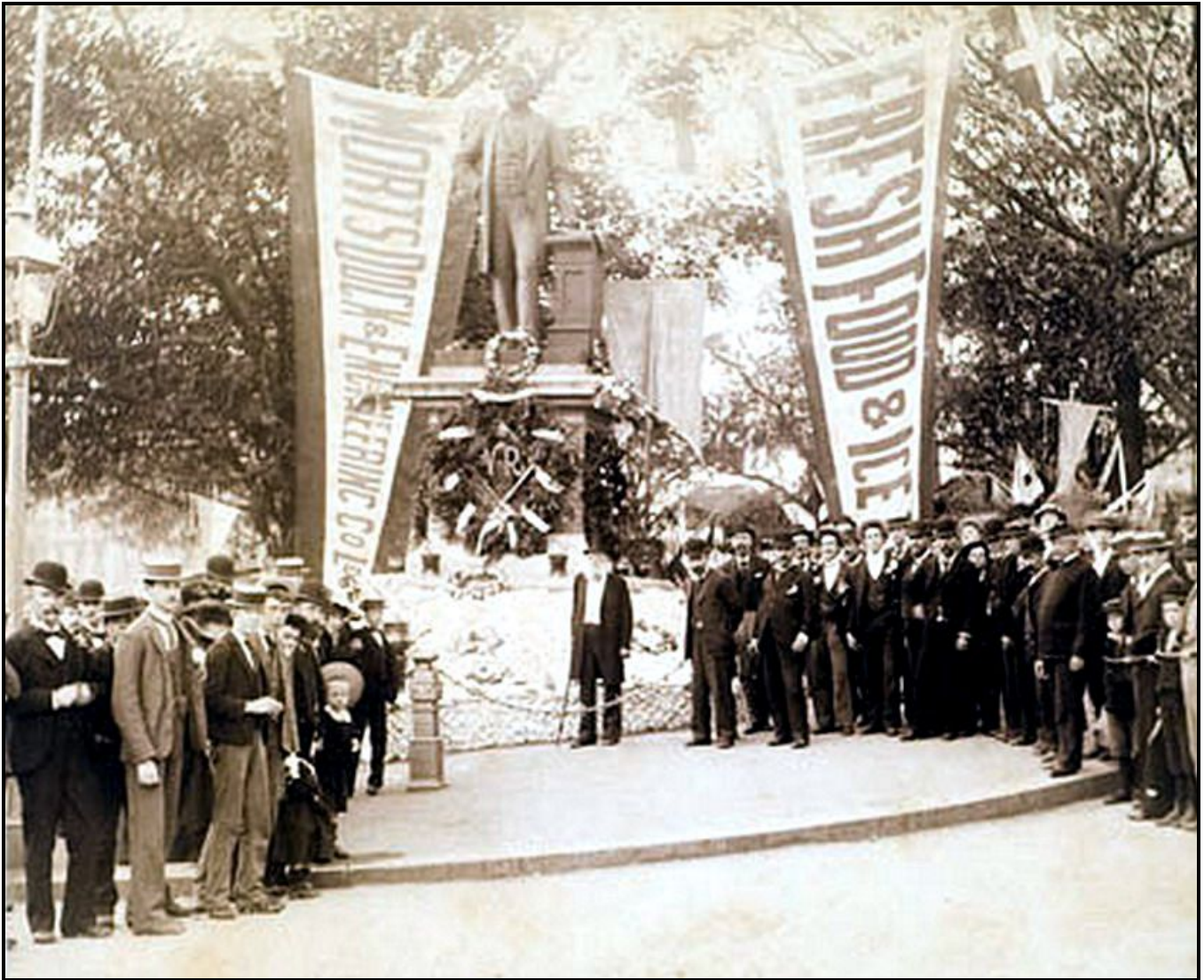
THE COLD & FREEZING ROOM.



MILK-PRESERVING ROOM.

*Mort's Freezing Works at Darling Harbour began operating in 1875  
From the top: The Ice-Making Room, the Cold & Freezing Room,  
and the Milk Preserving Room (From Illustrated Sydney News, 27 May, 1876)*

## THOMAS SUTCLIFFE MORT



*Unveiling Mort's statue*

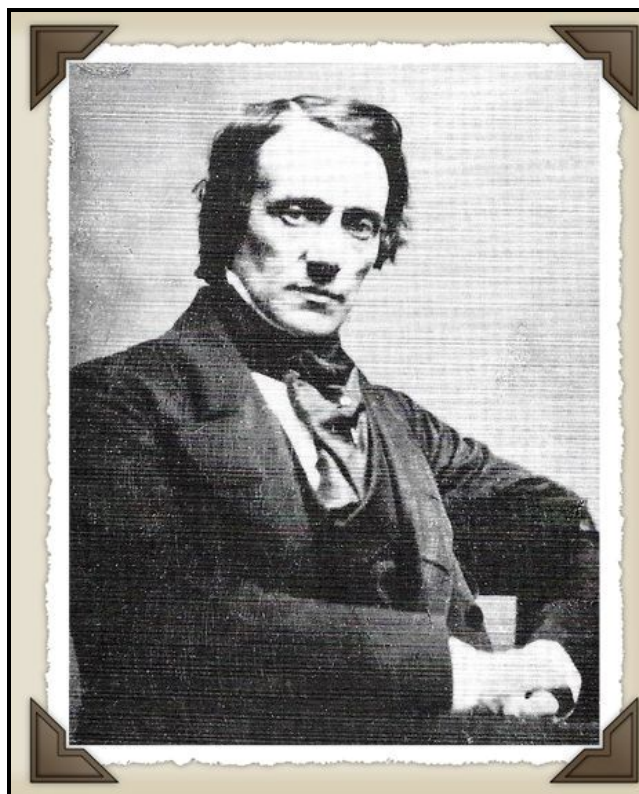
He viewed these investments as a community service and it was by the community that he was appreciated. He died on 9 May 1878 from pneumonia at Bodella where he was buried. At the time of his death he was spoken of as “the greatest benefactor the working classes in this country ever had.”

“On 14 May, a meeting of working men in Sydney resolved to show the esteem and respect in which they held his memory, as a result his statue, sculpted by Pierce Connolly, stands in Macquarie Place” (in Sydney).

THOMAS MORT ALBUM



*Brother Henry Mort*



*Brother William Mort*



## THOMAS MORT ALBUM



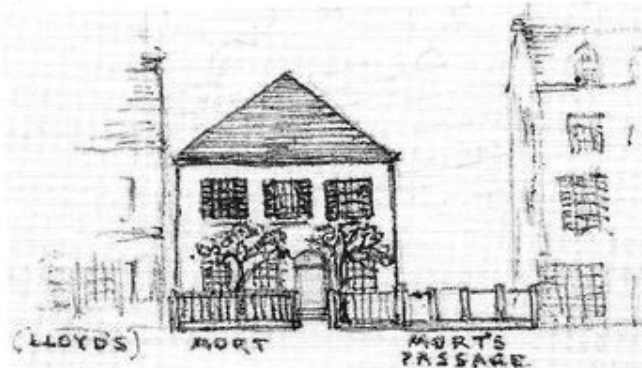
MORT (LEVICKY)

Eirene Mort's sketch of Thomas Mort's first office in George Street.  
(By courtesy of the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales)



S. LYONS ASPINALL BROWN J.W. GOSLING

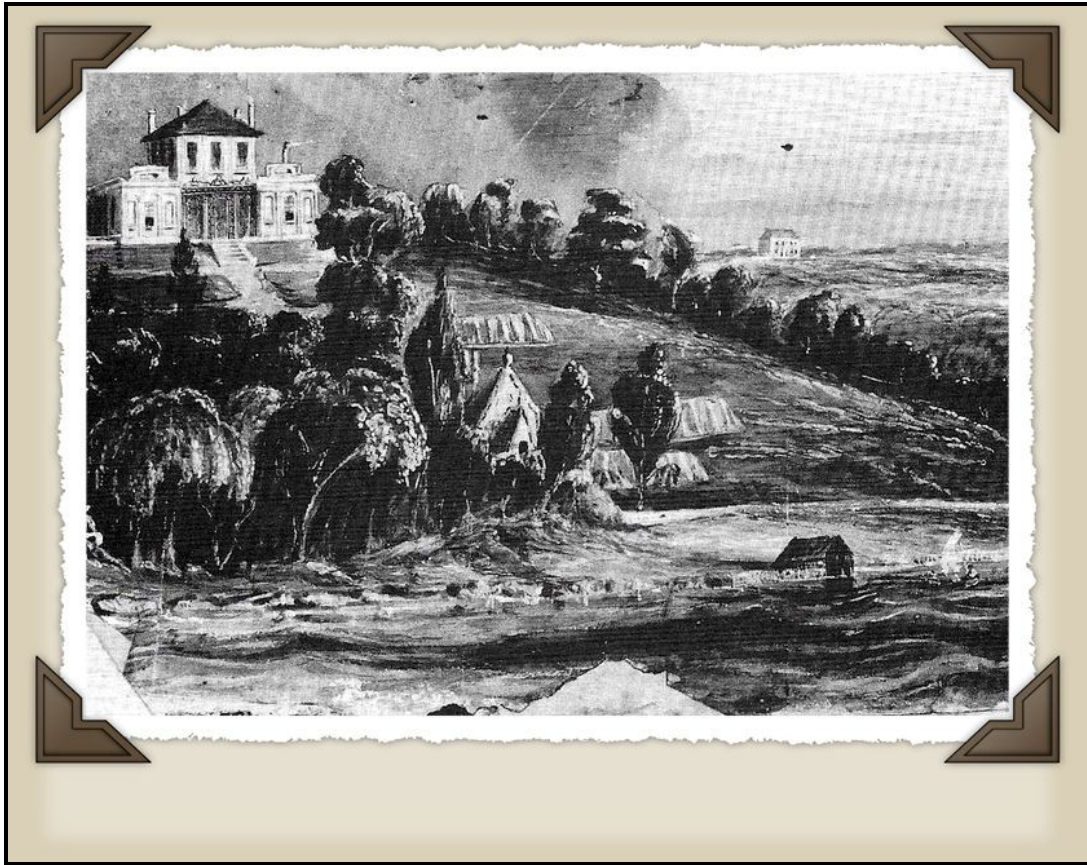
Aspinall and Browne's offices, Charlotte Place, Grosvenor Street. Thomas Mort's first place of employment in Sydney, sketched by Eirene Mort.  
(By courtesy of the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales)



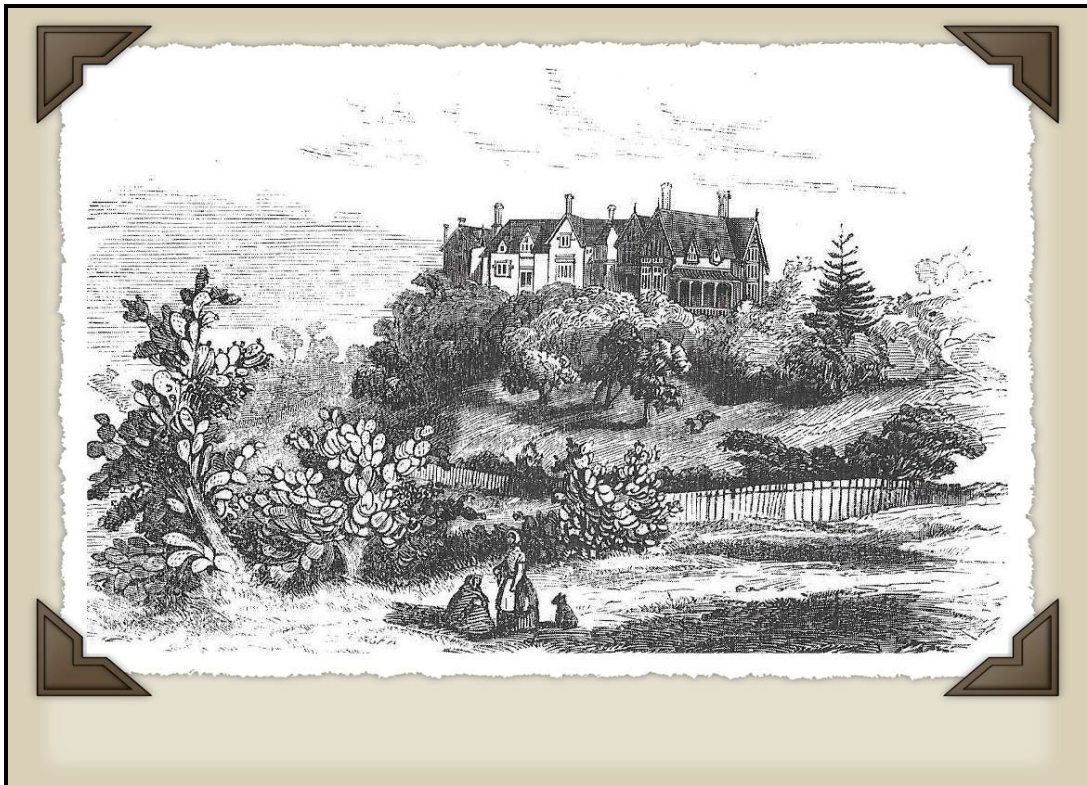
(LLOYDS) MORT MORT'S PASSAGE

Thomas Mort's first home in George Street, where Theresa gave birth to James Laidley Mort in the living quarters above the small office. (Sketch by Eirene Mort reproduced by courtesy of the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales)

THOMAS MORT ALBUM



*"Mona" at the time of Thomas Mort's occupation in 1844*



*Mort's "Greenoakes Estate" in 1857*

THOMAS MORT ALBUM



*Mort Family Group  
(l-r standing) sons Robert, Edward, William  
(seated) Annie, Marianne (Macaulay), Alice  
(foreground) Ernest*

THOMAS MORT ALBUM



*Mort in 1858*

THOMAS MORT ALBUM



*Photograph of Mort, used to model his Macquarie Place statue in Sydney*

THOMAS MORT ALBUM



*"Foreshore of Double Bay," possibly by Thomas Mort*



*A 1988 painting of Mort's Cottage*

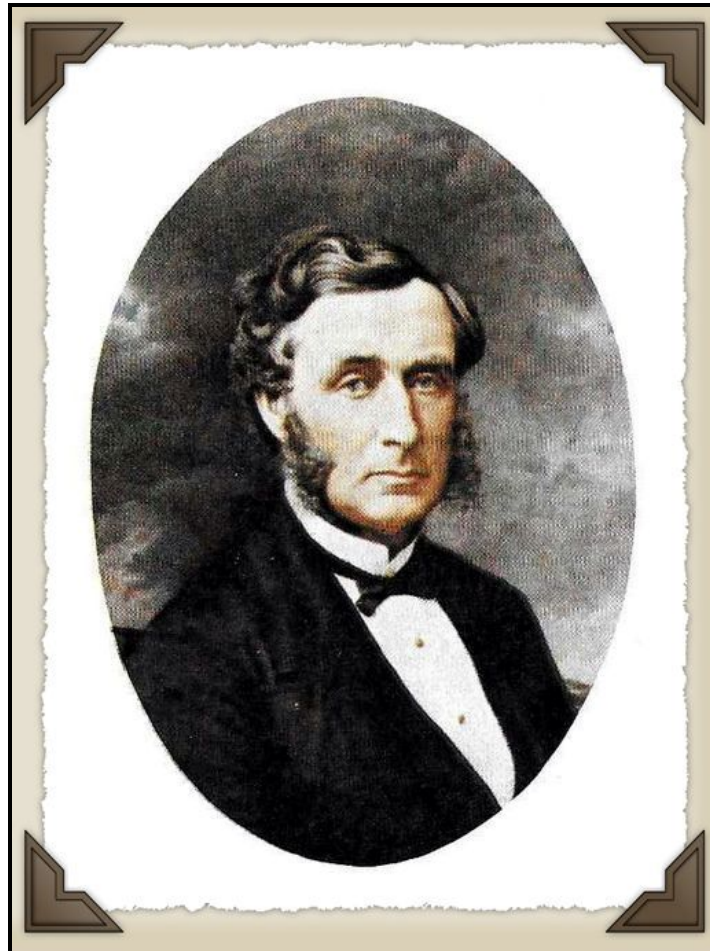
THOMAS MORT ALBUM



*Mr and Mrs Thomas Mort*

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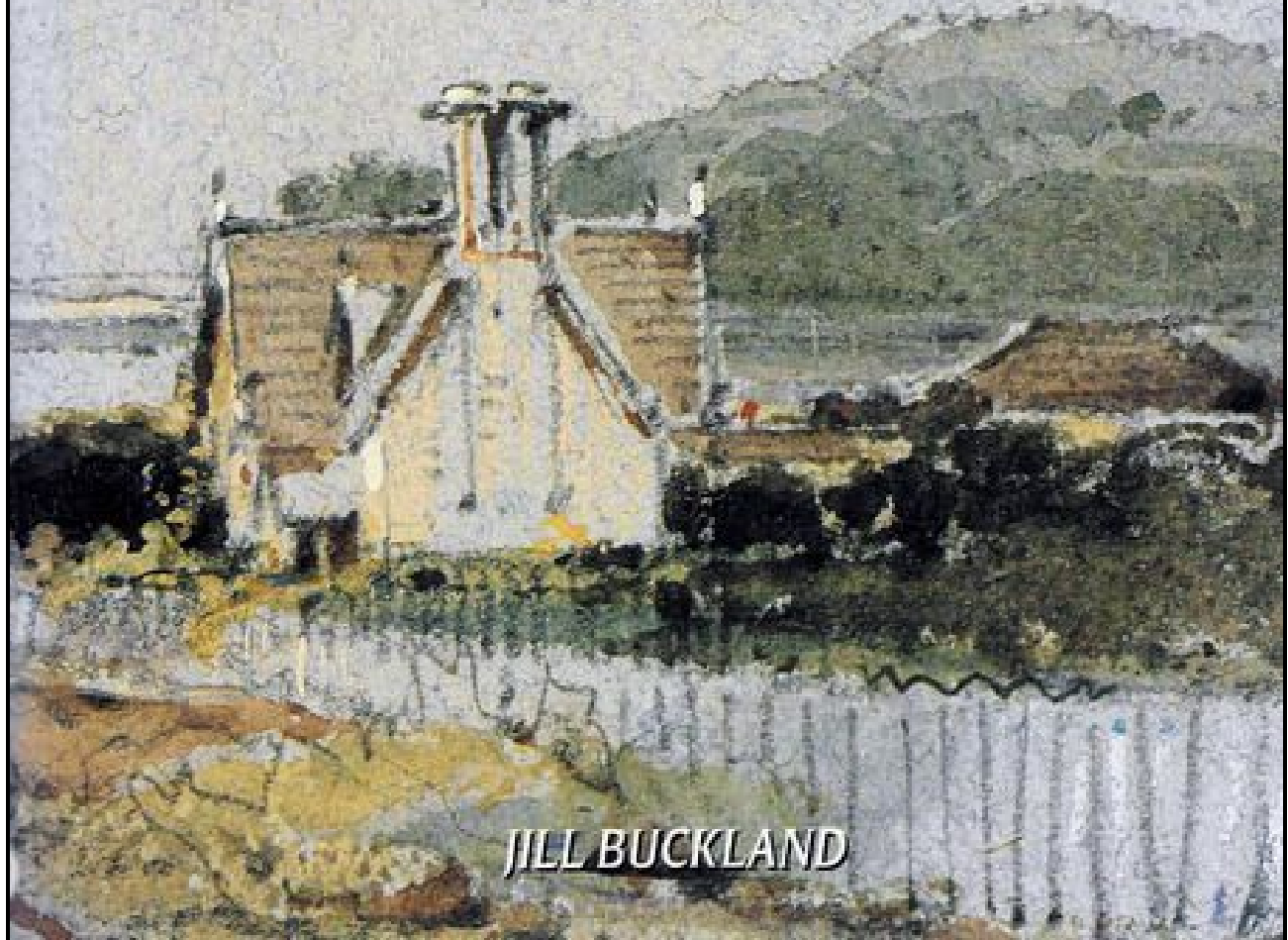


*Thomas Sutcliffe Mort, 1816-78, "Merchant and Pioneer of Darling Point"*



# Mort's Cottage

IMPRESSIONS OF SYDNEY PEOPLE  
AND THEIR TIMES  
1838-1988



JILL BUCKLAND

1988

# AIRAH JOURNAL


Australian Refrigeration Air Conditioning & Heating

July, 1997 Volume 51 No. 7

SPECIAL ISSUE

## 50 Years of the Journal

*The*  
**REFRIGERATION**  
*Journal*



*Official Journal of* THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF REFRIGERATION (INC.)

INSCRIPTION ON THE  
BRONZE PLATE, WHICH IS  
IN COMMON BLOCK  
LETTERING BEARS:

THOMAS SUTCLIFFE MORT  
Born England 1810  
Arrived Australia 1847  
Died Australia 1878

A founder of Australian  
refrigeration.

A founder of Australia's  
Industry.

One who established the  
West-End-ter.

The first to make expert  
at sea-water, from process  
by refrigeration and to pro-  
vide data for the registers  
of the world's shipping.

A founder of the Aus-  
tralian Mutual Refrigerated  
Society and founder of  
every movement for the  
good and welfare of his  
fellow citizens who in 1871  
had erected this monument  
to his memory.



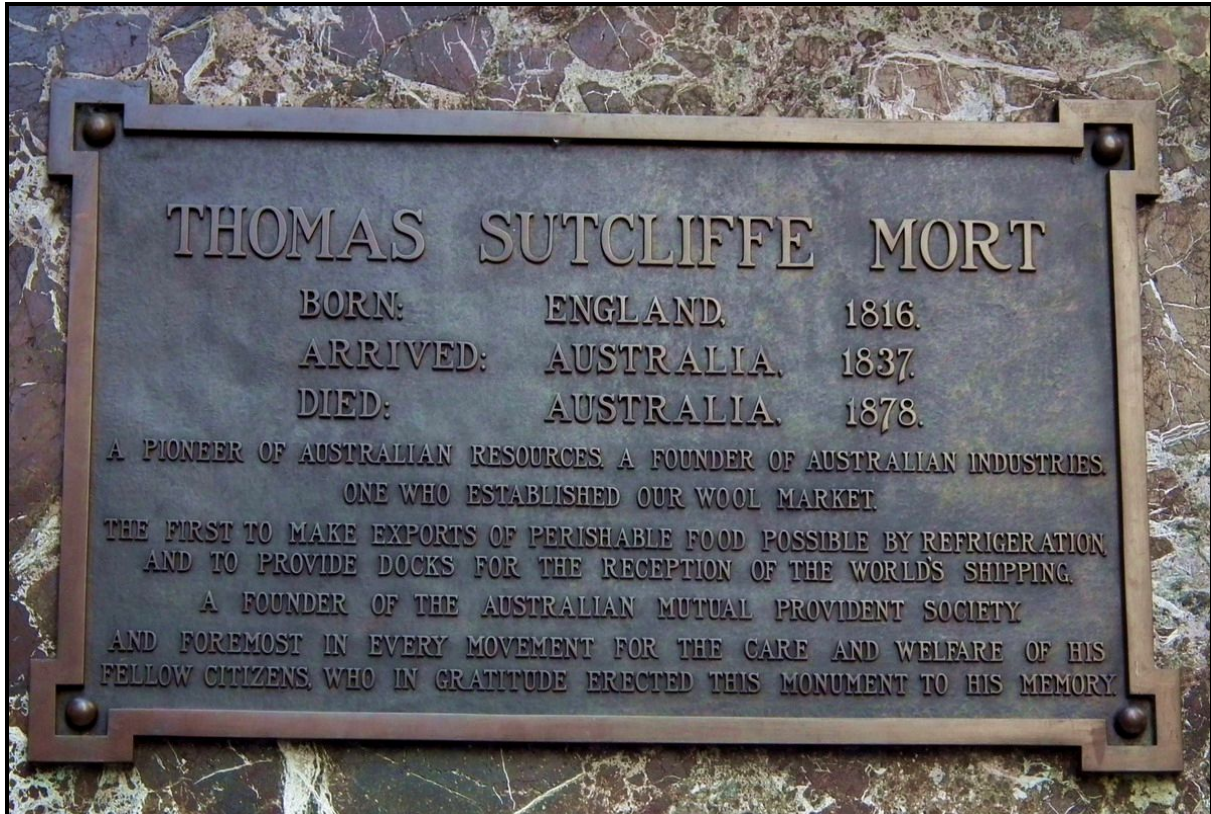
THOMAS SUTCLIFFE MORT

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JULY, 1997

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## EPILOGUE



*Mort's Statue in Macquarie Place, Sydney*



*Mort's Macquarie Place statue*