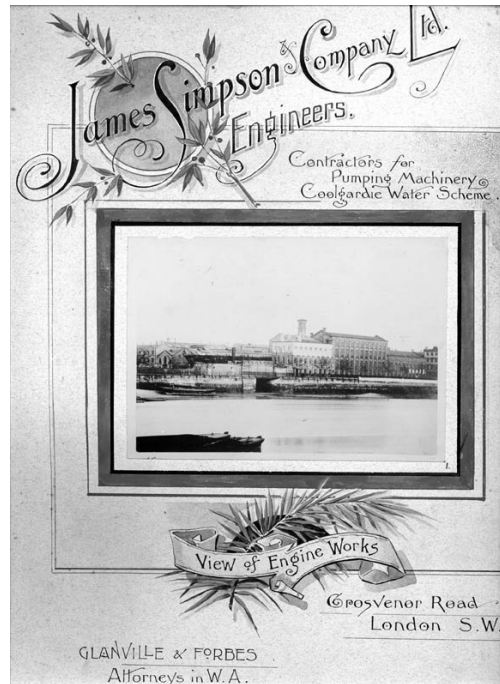


Cover of Coolgardie Water Supply Scheme commemoration album, c1903



Description

This is the cover of an album commemorating the Coolgardie Water Supply Scheme. The Scheme was opened in 1903 to pipe water to Western Australia's arid gold fields. The photograph on the album cover shows the engineering works in London that supplied some of the pumping equipment for the Scheme. The cover carries the text 'James Simpson and Company Ltd. / Engineers. / Contractors for Pumping Machinery / Coolgardie Water Supply Scheme. / View of Engine Works / Grosvenor Road / London S.W. / GLANVILLE AND FORBES / Attorneys in W.A.'. The album measures 15 cm x 11 cm.

Educational value

- The Coolgardie Water Supply Scheme was designed and built by the Western Australian Government to overcome shortages of fresh water in the state's eastern gold fields. Rich discoveries in the early 1890s had resulted in a gold rush to the arid interior and a guaranteed supply of water had become a necessity. People were dying from dehydration and diseases that had spread in the insanitary conditions, and water was necessary for developing the gold fields.
- The Scheme was an ambitious engineering feat because at the time water had never been lifted so high nor pumped so far (about 560 km). The Scheme, which pumps water from the better-watered coastal area, operates to this day.
- The commemorative photograph album was presented to Sir John Forrest, former premier of WA, who had been instrumental in gaining state parliamentary approval for the Scheme.
- The contract for the Scheme's pumping machinery, worth £242,750, was let in March 1900 to James Simpson and Co, the only firm prepared to supply both boilers and engines. It was for the supply of 20 sets of pumps weighing a total of 3,556 t, to be distributed over eight pumping stations. The company is identified in the text on the album cover and the photograph shows its engineering works



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in the industrial heart of London.

- The London factory proved insufficient for the volume of business and in 1901 James Simpson and Co set up new engineering works at Newark-on-Trent. The company manufactured only half of the Worthington pumps used in the Coolgardie Water Supply Scheme however, with the remainder of the pumps being manufactured in the USA.
- Installation of pumping machinery commenced in January 1901, James Simpson and Co having agreed to completely erect the equipment in the arid Western Australian bush and have it in full working order within 27 months of signing the contract.
- One of the founders of the company, James Simpson the Elder, was an eminent 19th-century civil engineer and a contemporary of engineers of the stature of Telford, Stephenson and Brunel. At the peak of his career, Simpson the Elder became president of the Institution of Civil Engineers.

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