



## SIR WILLIAM CHARLES WINDEYER – FORMER CHANCELLOR (1895–96) AND VICE-CHANCELLOR (1883–86)

One of the first 16 graduates of the University of Sydney in 1856, Sir William Charles Windeyer was a Fellow of Senate of the University from 1866 to his death in 1897. Senate elected him Vice-Chancellor from 1883 to 1886, and then Chancellor from 1895 to 1896.

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### PROFILE

(1834 - 1897)

MA Sydney Hon LLD Camb

**Fellow of Senate 1866 - 1897, including election by Senate as**

**– Vice-Chancellor 1883 - 1886**

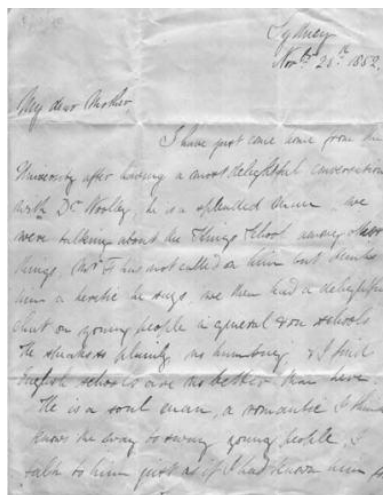
**– Chancellor 1895 - 1896**

### His early years

William Charles Windeyer was the only child of Richard Windeyer and his wife, Maria Camfield, and was born in London on 29 September 1834. He arrived at Sydney in 1835 as an infant with his parents, and was educated at William Timothy Cape's Elfred House Private School and later at the King's School, Parramatta.

### His student days at the University of Sydney

William was 18 when he gained a scholarship and was admitted in the first cohort of students to the University of Sydney in 1852.



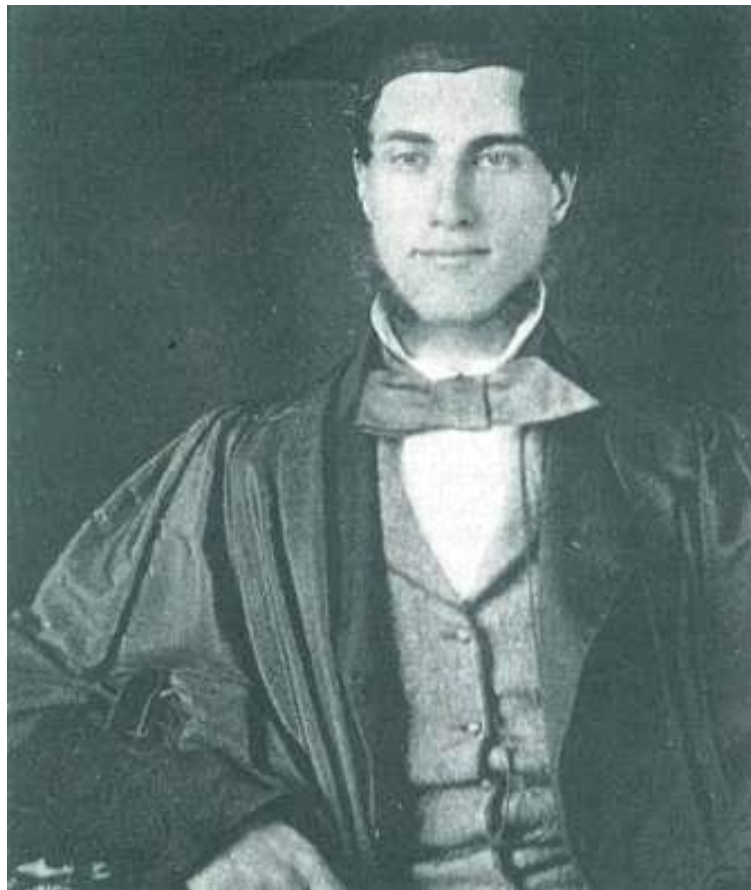
In a letter to his mother dated 25 November 1852, Windeyer wrote: "My dear Mother, I have just come home from the University after having a most delightful conversation with Dr Woolley, he is a splendid man. We were talking about the Kings School among other things ... He is a soul man, a romantic I think, knows the way to sway young people. I talk to him just as if I had known him for years ....", University of Sydney Archives.

During his course he gained the following:

- Dr Woolley's Prize for the best English Essay in 1853
- First class honours in Classics in 1853 and 1854
- the University Classical Scholarship in 1854
- the Wentworth Medal (for the best English Essay) in 1854 and 1855
- First class honours in Logic in 1855
- First class honours in Moral Philosophy in 1855

Windeyer ran the 'Sydney University Magazine'. His uncle John Thompson described him at this time as 'rather a favourite with us all – very impulsive, original & independent' (from the ADB biography).

He graduated Bachelor of Arts in 1856 (it is accepted that he was the first graduate) and Master of Arts in 1859.



William Charles Windeyer, *image, University of Sydney Archives*



A young William Charles Windeyer, *photo, University of Sydney Archives.*

### **His career**

Windeyer had a distinguished career in politics and the law.

Windeyer read law in the chambers of E Broadhurst and was admitted to the Colonial Bar in 1857. He was also a law reporter on Sir Henry Parkes's Empire newspaper and was supported in politics by Parkes. He was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1860, being the University's first elected representative in that body.

As well as maintaining his legal practice, Windeyer served in several government administrations in the 1860s and 1870s. In 1876, Windeyer was elected to the Assembly as the first member for the University of Sydney. In 1878-79, he was Attorney-General in the Parkes-Robertson coalition, where he successfully introduced many significant bills as a private member, including the Patents Act and the Married Women's Property Act. On his resignation from parliament in 1879, he was appointed to the bench of the Supreme Court.

He developed an abiding interest in education. He was a strong advocate for the extension of free and secular education, which resulted in increasing numbers of matriculants for the growing University. He was strongly committed to higher education for women.

He was knighted in 1891.

He retired from the bench and in 1897 accepted a temporary judgeship in Newfoundland but died of paralysis of the heart on 12 September at Bologna, Italy.



Portrait of Sir William Charles Windeyer as judge of the Supreme Court of NSW (between 1879 and 1897), *picture, nla.pic-an23530049*.



William Charles Windeyer, *photo from the Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, call number P1 / 1858, digital order number a4454010*.



William Charles Windeyer in 1890, *photographic portrait G3\_224\_1759, University of Sydney Archives.*



William Charles Windeyer, *photo G3\_224\_2060.7, University of Sydney Archives.*



William Charles Windeyer, *artist A J Forster, oil on canvas; Presented by Lady Windeyer, University Art Collection, reproduced with the permission of the University of Sydney.*

### **His membership of Senate**

A Fellow of the Senate for over 30 years (1866-97), he was elected Vice-Chancellor from 1883 to 1886 and Chancellor from 1895 to 1896.

Prior to that, from 1855 to 1865, he was Esquire Bedell at the University, and in 1891 he was founding chairman of the Women's College within the University.

The Senate report for 1897 recorded: "Sir William Windeyer was the first graduate of the University, and he rendered valuable service during his tenure of office as a Fellow of the Senate from 1866 to the time of his death. He was Vice-Chancellor of the University in 1883, and he succeeded Sir William Manning as Chancellor in 1895, resigning that office in 1896, in consequence of his extended absence from the Colony.

The Senate passed the following resolution on 11 October 1897: That the Senate desires to place on record its sense of the great loss which the University has sustained by the death of the Hon. Sir William Charles Windeyer, MA LLD, and its sympathy with his widow and family in their bereavement."



William Charles Windeyer in Chancellor's robes, *photographic portrait G3\_224\_1756, University of Sydney Archives.*



Chancellor William Charles Windeyer (1895 - 1896), photo, *The Sydney Mail*, 27 April 1895, Google News Archive.

*The biographical notes on the Chancellors contain information derived from a variety of sources including: Australia's First: A History of the University of Sydney, University News, University of Sydney Archives and Lawlink NSW: Law and History.*