

The following is about Henry and Anne Camfield's life in Albany.

*The following has been taken from Albany, A Panorama of the Sound, by Donald S. Garden. Pages 69 & 70.*

The next Resident at Albany was Henry Camfield (1799-1872), a companion of the Henty family who had arrived with them at the Swan in October 1829. Camfield shared in the Henty's exploits in early Swan River, and in their disillusion. He too acquired land near Perth, later visiting Van Diemen's Land and Portland, spending much of the time until 1839 wandering between the colonies and settling in none. Much of Camfield's restlessness appears to have been caused by loneliness. In his early years he relied heavily on letters from his family in England. He seems to have had a great need for the love and affection of a woman, and unsuccessfully pursued a number of young ladies. He eventually found much to love in the person of Annie Breeze, an orphan girl who had come to the colony as governess to a missionary family. A very large in women, in later years she was estimated to weigh at least eighteen. Marriage provided Camfield with the security and stability he desired, and he entered and rose quickly through the public service. In 1842 he became Collector of Colonial Revenue, in 1845 Post Master General at Perth, and in July 1848 took up the Resident at Albany post. Camfield has been criticised more than any of the other Residents at Albany, in part unjustly. His letters to the Government indicate that he was a man of considerable probity and clear-headed consideration, though at times too unwilling to rock the boat and confront problems. He possibly lacked the drive and administrative capacity of some of the other Residents. His obituary described him as 'peculiarly retiring and unassuming' and one Albany resident remarked that Camfield held no opinions of his own but was led by those around him.' Another called him 'Our excellent Resident' but on reconsideration noted



*Mr. Camfield [is] a good Christian, but not well fitted for [a] public official post, which required discernment, decision of character and a degree of presence to ensure consideration and respect from those who oppose themselves.*

*The following has been taken from Albany, A Panorama of the Sound, by Donald S. Garden. Pages 148—151.*

One place which many visitors in the 1850s and 1860's made a point of seeing, and which they found more impressive, was Albany's school for Aborigines. The school commenced in 1852 under the auspices of J. R. Wollaston and Anne Camfield. It was much the same in its intent as the school run by John McKail in the 1840s, its aim being to remove Aboriginal children from their parents so they could be trained in the attitudes and behaviour of British civilisation. It was run along the lines of British industrial schools, and offered a basic training in 'useful' skills, such as sewing and cooking for girls. Plans for the school were first laid in 1851, and the Government granted 60 acres of land near Middleton Beach. Money to operate the school was also promised, but no one both willing and qualified to run it was available. Eventually Anne

Camfield agreed to take the children into her own home and to superintend the school until better arrangements could be made. In mid 1852 the Camfield's had moved into a new home next door to the parsonage, portion of which was untenanted, and they agreed to receive six girls to start the school on a formal basis.

They wanted children between two and five years of age, who were to be indentured to the Government for a period of ten years. By November 1852 five girls and a boy had been obtained, with some difficulty, indentured to the Resident, and were being clothed, boarded and instructed under Mrs Camfield's supervision.

About 1854 a building was erected on the Middleton Beach site with assistance from the Government and the Society for Propagation of the Gospel. A married couple were found to run it, but no funds could be acquired to operate the school, and the building was never used. It became a white elephant on the hands of the Government and could



not be got rid of until about 1861. Rather than allow the school to collapse, the Camfields agreed to continue running it in their own home. In 1852 Mrs Camfield purchased land between Serpentine Road and the Perth Road, near the present Camfield Street, and there the Camfields built their own home, Annesfield, and moved the school. In 1857 they built a separate school-room near the house consisting of a classroom, an attached kitchen, and sleeping accommodation for up to eight children and an assistant. (Named Camfield, it still stands in Serpentine Road. Annesfield was burned down in 1909.) The rest of the children continued to live in the Camfields' house. Over the years the number of children grew, by 1858 twenty-three having been admitted, five of whom had died. By 1868 fifty-five children had been taken in, eleven of

whom had died. The high death rate is partly explained by the fact that many of the children were also seriously ill before being admitted

Running the school became Anne Camfield's life's work and she became widely admired in the colonies and England for her efforts. Consequently it was common for visitors to Albany to walk up the York Street hill to pay a visit to the school. There they could admire clean Aboriginal girls being taught domestic work, repeating prayers, and carefully writing out religious tracts. If they were lucky they might hear the star pupil, Bessie Flower, play the piano. Most of the visitors were impressed by the visit, and donated accordingly. One remarked that 'Mrs Camfield seems a benevolent motherly sort of person and no doubt has been actuated by true Christian feeling in the work'. If they had encountered a group of Aboriginals on the jetty before making their way to the school, they would have been even more impressed by the contrast, and would probably have agreed with Mrs. Camfield's own sentiments when she said, 'There is not in nature, I think, a more filthy, loathsome, revolting creature than a native woman in her wild state. Every animal has something to recommend it, but a native woman is altogether unlovable.

By the late 1860s the school was running down and the numbers of students declining because there were few Aboriginals in the district and because Mrs Camfield was finding the task too great for her advanced years. In March 1871 the children were moved to Perth where Bishop Hale was fostering a new native school.

Impressed though they generally were by the Camfield School, the saving grace for Albany as far as most visitors were concerned was a walk to the top of one of the mounts. Such a venture, which most travellers seem to have made, almost balanced out the poor impression given by the quietness of the town. It introduced them to the profusion of wildflowers found in the bush, which surrounded Albany, the variety of whose beauty and perfumes kept them busy throughout the walk. Once the top of the hill was reached there lay before them the beautiful and majestic views of the waters of the Sound and surrounding coastline. By the time the now weary travellers had made their way back down the hill to the town and caught a boat back to the waiting steamer, usually with a bunch of wildflowers in hand, Nature's contribution had enhanced their impression of Albany. Two famous world travellers assessed as follows; firstly Anthony Trollope in 1872

*Albany itself was very pretty, with a free outlook onto a fine harbour, with bluff headlands and picturesque islands. The climate is delightful. The place is healthy. I was assured the beer brewed there was good. The grapes were certainly good ... But I was told that even at Albany there were squabbles and faction and that the rose colour of the place did not prevail always. And then, though grapes grew there, and other fruits, and some flowers, I could not find anything else growing, The useless scrub covered the stony hill-tops close up to the town, The capital was distant 260 miles, and between it and the capital there was nothing. The mails came and went once a month. At each of my visits to Albany the mail excitement existing - I fancy that I saw the best of Albany, and that would be rather dull between mails.*

In 1885 James Bonwick commented

*In all our world-wide wanderings, we confess this appears to us the most attractive for its climate and its floral charms. With just enough rainfall and abundant sea breezes, with the geniality of latitude 35<sup>o</sup>, with absolute absence of malaria, the location is almost an Eden of delight, when the spring flowering shrubs are blazing forth their splendour."*

The following has been taken from *Albany's Nineteenth Century Buildings* .Revised By Judith Swain & Joan Blight .Page 21

The two-storeyed house of 1852, which stands on the corner of Crossman Street and Serpentine Road, was built for Albany's Government Resident Henry Camfield and his wife Anne. Anne was a wealthy heiress and she purchased the double allotment. Crossman Street did not exist at that time.

The Camfields were very interested in the welfare of aboriginal children: various European diseases, such as measles and smallpox, had decimated the local tribe. Henry and Anne at first took the children into their own home but when numbers increased they built another two storey house, Annesfield on the corner of the block now bisected by Crossman Street.

On Anne's retirement to Perth in 1872, after Henry's death, Camfield was sold to local merchant NW McKail in 1889. In 1896 Father Facundo Mateu bought it for a Christian Brothers' College. During this period the top storey of Annesfield was destroyed by fire. Local surveyor Metcalf and family resided in Camfield for many years.

Camfield is constructed of colonial bricks. The original roof was shingles but it is now covered with corrugated iron.

The building is privately owned and is heritage listed by the National Trust of Australia (WA).

*The following has been taken from the Register of Heritage Places – 2001*



*Camfield House* is a brick and iron residence, constructed in 1858 as a residence and attached schoolhouse for Albany Resident Magistrate Henry Camfield and his wife Anne.

In 1855, Anne Camfield paid £21 for Albany Suburban Lot 46, which adjoined “*Annesfield*”. The land had an area of approximately 3.5 acres (1.4 ha). The Camfields constructed *Camfield House* on the allotment. The house appears to have been built in two stages and was occupied by the Albany Native Institution run by Anne Camfield from the time of construction until 1871.

In 1889, Anne sold *Camfield House* to Nathaniel William McKail for £750. The Camfields had raised a £250 mortgage on the property with the estate of John McKail, Nathaniel’s father, in April 1872, which was still outstanding.

In 1896 *Camfield House* was purchased by Father Facundo Mateu, Catholic Parish Priest for Albany

And then in 1898 *Camfield House* was sold to the Christian Brothers for £1,227.

In 1910, Albany merchant Charles Herman Neumann (Newman) purchased *Camfield House* and is credited with naming it ‘*Camfield House*’, to distinguish it from “*Annesfield*”. He is also believed to have been responsible for re-roofing the building with iron over the shingles and creating a verandah along the length of the single-storey residence. The addition of the dormer window on the upper floor of the schoolhouse was most likely

done at the same time. The addition of the bay window in the lower floor is less obvious but possibly dates from the same period of renovation.

In the 1920's Suburban Lot 46 was subject to sub-division on Plan 4697 and the north-eastern half was sold separately in 1923. In May 1925, *Camfield House* on approximately 1.5 acres of land was purchased by Rita Stephens Medcalf. (Wife of surveyor Ferdinand George Medcalf). She raised a mortgage of £1,000 with Charles Neumann at time of purchase.

The property was subject to further sub-division in 1952 when three lots numbered 24-26 were created at the rear fronting Crossman Street. The lots were sold and a new title issued for *Camfield House*, which was then situated on 3,415 sq. metres of land. Rita died on 24 September 1964 and her husband Ferdinand and son Ian inherited the property. In 1969 Ferdinand died and title passed solely to Ian.

In 1973 current owner Ray Athol Stephens, business manager, acquired *Camfield House*. The Stephens lived nearby on Crossman Street and *Camfield House* was rented out for a number of years until Ray's son, Ross Stephens occupied the place with his family.

## FINDING HENRY CAMFIELD

*By Jenny Summerbell*

About ten years ago two magnificent portraits in ornate frames appeared high up on our local auctioneer's wall. I was amazed to find out later that my sister had bought one of them, but for the frame only, she told me, as she wasn't interested in the actual portrait itself. As it happened though, when she tried to remove the portrait, the frame and the glass shattered into pieces! All was going into the rubbish bin, but my sister did ask me first if I would like to have the portrait as she knew that anything historical was of interest to me. Not that we knew the historical value of the find.

As there was nothing to indicate who this person was, I called him 'Richard' and was amazed to find that the portrait was not painted, but chalked. From his clothing, it was obvious that it must have been drawn in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is not known at this time where the portrait of the lady ended up, but I still have a vivid memory of what she looked like. For ten years 'Richard' had pride of place in the spare room and was admired by all who saw him.

Owing to a change in our circumstances my husband Eddie and I decided to approach the Albany Historical Society regarding volunteering our services and because of this realised that we should learn something of the history of Albany. I borrowed the book 'Albany – A Panorama of the Sound from 1827' by Donald S. Garden from the library and on reaching page 68 was stunned to see a picture of "Henry Camfield in his later years". Although much older, the likeness to our 'Richard' was too close not to be him! There was also a picture of his wife Anne (nee Breeze) on page 149, but she did seem quite a lot different from the memory of the portrait in the auction, but it was ten years ago.

After approaching Julia and Malcolm at the local history section of our library, Malcolm gave me the name and address of Mr Arthur Swift JP in Perth who he knew was a descendant of Henry Camfield.

I posted off to him a copy of the photograph taken of the portrait and asked him what he thought of it.

He replied immediately, agreeing that he was sure it was his Great Great Grand Uncle and was absolutely delighted that I had thought to contact him. He estimated that the portrait was dated about 1840 and the one in 'Panorama' was about 1870.

Arthur and his wife Jill visited Eddie and I not long afterwards and we gave the portrait to them as we considered that Henry should be returned to his family, where he belongs. In return they have given us lots of information on Henry, his family and his life – and we have gained some very nice friends. It is strange how things turn out and we believe "Meant to be."

**The following information was supplied by Arthur Swift, Great Great Nephew of Henry Camfield.**

Henry Camfield in 1841 was now 42 years old, no longer a farmer, he started working in the Revenue (Tax) Office, this was the start of a Government career that was to last many years.

He was appointed Collector of Colonial Revenue in 1842, Postmaster General at Perth 1845, Government Resident (Magistrate) at Albany 1848, Departmental Treasurer at Albany 1854, JP 1856. During his time as Government Resident at Albany (known then as King Georges Sound) he advocated the use of Aborigines to be appointed as Police Constables.

Some problems were also encountered with the Chinese population at Albany who worked as domestic servants, Camfield - Gentleman that he was, chose to resolve conflict with friendly humanitarian actions. He was not cutout to be a Lofty Distant Resident, care, kindly thoughts pervaded most of Henry & Anne's actions and they were referred to as the 'Sainted Couple'. Charity was of more importance to them than humouring the prominent local families. For as long as they could get away with it. It is said that Henry disliked confrontation and unfortunately it often came up.

The Camfields were happiest when their duties enabled them to care for Aborigines; they always made sure the Natives got help in the way of rations and medical care during their Residency.

Lack of accommodation for the sick worried the resident and he organised petitions and wrote official letters over this matter. Despite this a hospital was not built in Albany until the late 1800's

The Camfields when they moved to Albany in 1848 to take up the Residency became core people in the founding of the new parish of St John the Evangelist (Anglican) church [Henry's church in Burrswood, Kent, UK was also called St John the Evangelist]. It is rumoured that he may have influenced the naming of St Johns, Albany. St Johns was the first church consecrated in Western Australia (in 1848). The couple are described in the history of St Johns Albany WA as deeply committed believers; they devoted their talents to the growth and nurture of their church.

Plans for an Aboriginal school, for chronically sick and orphaned children aged two to twelve years were first aired by Archdeacon John R Wollaston, in 1851 to be located in

Albany. But he was unable to find Teachers or Wardens to run what he called his 'Native Asylum'; Anne Camfield volunteered to take the first intake of pupils into her home. Anne and Henry had no children of their own and there was room in their home next to St Johns Rectory, also due to her past experience and the Camfields being Sunday school teachers, she felt she could help.

The Camfields later built a home & schoolroom at Albany on the corner of Serpentine Road and Crossman Street, the home was called 'Camfield'. Three family friends assisted in the teaching/housekeeping roles: Ellen Trimmer, Ellen Wells and Samuel Mitchell.

The funds to run the school came from private donations, the Government, but much came out of the Camfields own pockets - they also fully supported two of the children. It became the 'Done' thing in the 1850's - 1860's to go to the 'Native Asylum' when in Albany and the school had notoriety throughout the Australian Colonies and UK. Much good work was done and approaching 200 young Aborigines were assisted.

Henry Camfield resigned his Resident's position in 1861, but stayed active Judicially, at Church and at the Native school. The Camfields chose to stay on in Albany and were described in these days as being 'Pillars of the Local Society'. We have another glimpse of Henry from Bishop Hale's diary in 1866: "Going to prayers, I asked Camfield to conduct them just as usual. He does it most devoutly, his voice a most impressive one".

Also in 1866 Henry Camfield was appointed a Synod Member on Perth's Anglican ruling body, other notables who helped Bishop Hale were: J S Roe, F Lochee, Loftie, Edward Stone, J G Bussell, C Wittenoom, F P Barlee, George and Luke Leake, Dr Viveash, Dr Waylen, William Knight, Sir A C Campbell, Judge A P Burt and Samuel Moore.

The 'Native Asylum' ran initially as a temporary measure by the Camfields lasted for twenty years and closed in 1871, mainly due to the failing health of Henry Camfield, and the last eighteen pupils were transferred to Perth, WA.

Henry Camfield passed away in 1872 aged 73 years from heart disease and exhaustion; he was buried alongside his great friend & associate Rev, John R Wollaston at Albany Pioneer Cemetery on Middleton Road, near Dog Rock. A marble plaque is fitted to the wall near the pulpit in St Johns Church, Albany as a memorial to Camfield, it reads:

*To the memory of Henry Camfield JP for many years Resident Magistrate At King Georges Sound, who died 11<sup>th</sup> October 1872 aged 73 years This tablet is erected by the inhabitants of the district as a mark of their Respect and esteem.*

After the School at Albany closed and after her dear husbands death Anne Camfield was at a crossroads in her life, she was 57 years old.

The real love of Anne Camfield for the children is shown in a number of ways, Bessie Flower (her most prominent & successful pupil) when a child is described as "never happier than when she can sit by Missie, [pet word for Mistress] & put her little hand in Missies". The affectionate letters written by the grown-up girls to Mrs Camfield. Also the delight for Anne Camfield to be near the orphanage in Perth so as to be near her old pupils, all these things add up to give a picture of a truly affectionate and motherly woman.

There is a bronze statue and plaque celebrating Henry Camfield in Burswood heritage Gardens.



The plaque reads:

Henry Camfield was the first settler in this area, in 1829. He symbolizes the struggle of the typical English Gentleman to survive the totally different environment experienced in the early days of the 'Swan River Colony'. He named the area "Burrswood" after his family home in Kent, which he was never to see again. He endured great difficulties & when his first three crops failed he faced starvation. The pose of the sculpture in which Henry leans on his spade, wiping the sweat from his brow, was inspired by an excerpt from a letter home;

"We are told we shall get our subsistence by the sweat of our brow, but I never read we shall SWEAT, strive to get on honestly & STARVE ... how many have suffered out here; many more may, perhaps, myself amongst the number".

From 1848 until his death in 1872, he lived in Albany, where he held the position of Resident Magistrate. He was remembered with respect for his Peculiarly retiring and unassuming manner.