The Camfields: "The Comforts of Civilisation" in Early Colonial Western Australia

Joan Groves

Edith Cowan University
Edith Cowan University

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study.

The University does not authorize you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following:

- Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.

- A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. Where the reproduction of such material is done without attribution of authorship, with false attribution of authorship or the authorship is treated in a derogatory manner, this may be a breach of the author’s moral rights contained in Part IX of the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth).

- Courts have the power to impose a wide range of civil and criminal sanctions for infringement of copyright, infringement of moral rights and other offences under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth). Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
The Camfields: ‘The Comforts of Civilisation’
in early colonial Western Australia.

By Joan Groves

A dissertation submitted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Bachelor of Arts (History) with Honours

Edith Cowan University
Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences

Date of Submission: 2nd June 2006
USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
Abstract

This thesis explores and examines in some detail the lives of a little known Anglican missionary couple in early colonial Western Australia. Henry Camfield and Anne Breeze came to the Swan River colony separately: Henry as farmer-settler and Anne Breeze as governess. They married, moved in the higher echelons of Perth society and later went to Albany where Henry took up the position of Government Resident. Subsequently they both became involved in raising and "Christianising" Aboriginal children in an institution known as Annesfield. While some prominence has been given to a well-known pupil of that institution, Bessie Flower (later Cameron), little has been written about the Camfields. This research places the Camfields, particularly Anne Camfield, more prominently within Western Australian colonial historiography.

Confusions in the secondary literature over the details of the lives of the Camfields led to a closer examination of their characters and motives and their worldview. It is the purpose of the work to see how closely the thinking of the Camfields reflected the ethos of nineteenth century evangelism in Britain. That ethos, according to Hall in *White, Middle Class and Male*, influenced numerous aspects of Victorian cultural life, so much so that evangelical values came to be seen as Victorian values. At the same time, Anne Camfield stepped outside the constraints imposed upon middle class women prescribed within that model. She corresponded with government officials in her own right and contributed to Florence Nightingale's inquiry into the conditions of Australian Aborigines. Her views on Aboriginal people frequently melded with the belief of her contemporaries in the superiority of white civilisation and the necessity for the Aboriginal people to be integrated within that civilisation, although she displayed a shrewd insight into the problems of such a course of action. Her sympathy and affection for children contrast with the detachment displayed in her official correspondence, as do her comments on traditional Aboriginal women contrast with her injunctions to her pupils to remember and respect their parents.

The Camfields were devout in their adherence to the belief that all should be saved on this earth for participation in a life to come. Although tempered by their intimate relationships with the children living within their home, their ideology was initially that of the dominant colonial hierarchy. Their entire world was shaped by a powerful Christian ideology that was willing, even determined, to incorporate "the
other' within it and could accept no alternative existence: a determination that continues to resonate, in one form or another, within western society today. With the growth of the colony, however, changes in attitude towards Aborigines altered the nature of mission work. As religion became more pragmatic, the Camfields’ vision faded into obscurity.
I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

(ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis; or

(iii) contain any defamatory material.

I also grant permission for the Library at Edith Cowan University to make duplicate copies of my thesis as required.

Joan Groves

2nd June 2006
I would like to thank my two supervisors, Professor Peggy Brock for her direction, and Dr Penelope Hetherington for facilitating access to copies of the Camfield Letters. I would also like to thank the Albany Local Studies Collection section of the Albany Library for their interest and assistance.
Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction to the study ............................................ 7
Chapter Two: The Missionary Impulse ........................................... 11
Chapter Three: The 1840s: The Kingdom to Come ...................... 19
Chapter Four: The Comforts of Civilisation ............................... 32
Chapter Five: 'A Mission to the Heathen' .................................. 44
Chapter Six: Conclusion .......................................................... 55
Bibliography ............................................................................ 59
Chapter One – Introduction to the study.

The original intention of this thesis was to examine the mission school and orphanage for Aboriginal children known as Annesfield, which existed between 1852 and 1871 at Albany. The Roman Catholic mission effort at New Norcia under Bishop Salvado and the work of the Wesleyan John Smithies are both well known. Annesfield, run by Henry and Anne Camfield for nineteen years under the auspices of the Anglican church appears to have been relegated to several pages in Garden’s history of Albany and an unpublished work by a local historian.1 Other historians have found Annesfield worthy of reference but apart from general agreement that the school in its day was noteworthy, and the education of the children of an unusually high standard, the details of its beginning, operation and ending were obscure and often conflicting.2 There was little information about the Camfields, and what existed was laudatory although uninformative.

My reading of Western Australian historiography ranged from Battye and Colebatch to Crowley and then Stannage’s People of Perth and New History of Western Australia.3 This was to balance early celebratory portraits of colonial life against more recent attempts to give an overview of the last one hundred and seventy five years or so of Europeanisation. Through this process it was possible to view changes in historiography. Two problems arose: the apparent lack of material on Annesfield, and the question of interpretation.

I began my research tracing the limited references available on the Camfields and Annesfield held by the Battye Library. I gained access to a complete copy of the

Windeyer collection of Camfield letters.\(^4\) This source broadened the focus of the thesis, since such early primary material with its rich detail could not be ignored. Henry and Anne Camfield revealed their daily life and their religious beliefs in their letters, against a background of a tiny community replicating British culture in the Australian bush. Reading of nineteenth century literature on Western Australian life focussed on the Wollaston journals (both Picton and Albany), *An Australian Parsonage* and much of Canon Burton’s work including his transcript of Mrs Mitchell’s diary and extracts from Hale’s diaries.\(^5\) For comparative Protestant mission efforts in the early colonial period, the work of Guistiniani, King, Mitchell and Smithies was researched all of which gave insight into the religious milieu of the early colony. The links between religion, the dominant hierarchy and state policy were visible and it became possible to reconstruct the worldview of the colonists. Reading newspapers of the day showed the varying attitudes to Aborigines and how religion itself was used as a tool to justify behaviour towards them.

Religious belief underpinned much of official policy towards Aborigines: they were regarded at the very least as ‘souls to be saved’. Evangelism was that strand of Protestant Christianity the most determined to save souls; it also gave rise to the Victorian ideal of middle class domesticity and respectability, so admired in Western Australia. A study of Hall’s *White, Male and Middle Class*, revealed that colonial Western Australian attitudes towards Aborigines mirrored British attitudes elsewhere towards “coloured” peoples.\(^6\) This was both in early, initial willingness to see slaves as brothers deserving equal access to the afterlife, the “Kingdom to Come”, and then later in attitudes of superiority to inferiority.

It was theorised that evangelism motivated Anne Camfield (nee Breeze), since she had come from a moneyed Staffordshire family to Western Australia as a governess. Further details of the background of Henry Camfield were obtained by internet contact.

---

\(^4\) The Camfield family letters, Battye Library Microfilm Reel 5916A (originals part of the Windeyer Collection in the Mitchell library).


with a descendant of the Camfield family through the Kent Historical Society. The London Guildhall Manuscript Library provided information on Anne Breeze’s engagement as governess to the Reverend Mitchell’s family. The Anglican Church of St John where Henry Camfield, John Wollaston, Bishop Short and Archdeacon Hale exchanged their views on plans for the “civilising and Christianising” of the Aborigines was visited during a trip to the Albany. The Albany Local Studies Collection provided some material on early Albany. This peripheral research led to the State Records Office to study original correspondence from the Resident Magistrate and the Protector of Aborigines at Albany, to the Colonial Secretary’s office, and correspondence outwards from that office, as well as ecclesiastical correspondence.

Robin’s biography of Bishop Hale, who replaced Wollaston as head of the Anglican Church in Western Australia, provided some information regarding Annesfield. At times this seemed to conflict with primary sources, particularly regarding the reasons for the closure of Annesfield. Further research at the Battye Library and the State Records office, made it clear that policy towards “civilising and Christianising” Aboriginal children could not be separated from the wider changes in community and religious attitudes. From the Camfields’ arrival at Swan River to their retirement, the European population had grown and diversified. The Camfields themselves, once intimate friends with the colony’s early rulers, became “old colonists” living in isolation.

The thesis is an investigation into both the early lives of the Camfields and the establishment of Annesfield. It details prior Protestant mission efforts, and locates Annesfield and its pupils in the environment of the times. It argues that the Camfield’s interest in Aboriginal children and their dedication to the Home they ran for nineteen years grew out of their evangelical Christian beliefs. The Camfields could truly be described as middle class, deriving their income from neither pastoralism nor labouring, but the civil service. Their involvement with the “Christianising and civilising” of Aboriginal children was tempered by their childlessness and affection for children. The school existed in the era of convictism when government bureaucracy and ecclesiastical structures developing in Perth ordered events in Albany, although the town remained geographically isolated from the capital.

In charting the lives of the Camfields, both at Perth and Albany, and their involvement with Aboriginal children and the mission school, it is hoped to contribute to a more nuanced portrait of early colonialism. The next chapter introduces the reader to many of the aspects of the evangelical movement in Britain and its connection to both the anti-slavery movement and Victorian domestic ideals. The third chapter explores the Camfields’ life at Perth in the 1840s, when privation existed side by side with the pretences of town life. Chapter Four gives a broad picture of King George’s Sound, the effect of Europeanisation on the Aboriginal people and the efforts to maintain British culture in a township of fifty houses. Chapter Five *A Mission to the Heathen* focuses on the institution of Annesfield itself, its establishment, operation and its so-called removal to Perth, which was in fact the end of a particularly novel experiment in integration. In allowing the sources to speak for themselves, it has been the purpose of the work to highlight a number of values that seem intrinsic to Western Australia. The connections to English beliefs and thinking, the determination to replicate a way of life left behind, as a defence against the isolation, are apparent. There was the dominance of a small, elite hierarchy who were able to imprint their will and values on a larger population because of that isolation. And there was an early recognition by a few, that the land had been usurped and its original inhabitants deserved acknowledgment of prior ownership.
Chapter Two - The missionary impulse.

When Anne Breeze married Henry Camfield at the new church in Middle Swan in December 1840, the gay floral decorations on their boat and the celebrations of a small and select number of guests, obscured the reality that this was a union of two mature people who shared a dedication to practising Anglicanism. In the case of Anne Breeze, it was that devout and restrained form of the Established Church, Evangelicalism. Henry at forty one had only the previous year been thinking of “making love” to a “fair friend” at the Cape. But when he declined to join in the shooting of Aborigines caught stealing flour, and insisted on the due processes of the law, Henry’s friend felt he had impugned her brothers and regarded them as “guilty of blood”. The young lady also thought Henry was too religious and his letter to her Mama was not answered. Henry sadly wondered what was the point of amassing riches when he had no children to provide for. But within months he was writing of the “Breeze that wafts my boat to Guildford” where the Reverend William Mitchell lived with his family and the children’s governess, Anne Breeze.

At thirty years of age, Anne Breeze had left England on the Shepherd in 1838 bound for the settlement at Swan River on a missionary enterprise in which Mitchell was engaged by the Colonial Church Society to continue the work of Louis Guistiniani amongst the Aborigines. Whereas Guistiniani had been somewhat too enthusiastic for colonial comfort about ameliorating the condition of the natives, the Reverend Mitchell, who had experience from his work in India, was of a gentler nature. He was nevertheless an evangelical and it was from evangelicalism, either that of Dissent, or within the Established Church, that the missionary impulse sprang. For women who also longed to work in the field, the same evangelicalism saw their fit and proper role as being within the home, either as wives or daughters. No matter what longings women might have to travel abroad and join in the great task of Christianising and civilising the heathen, it was not considered a suitable task for them. However, during the 1830s, in the turmoil and excitement of the anti-slavery struggles engendered by evangelism,

---

1 Henry Camfield to sister Eliza (Bessie), 19 November 1839, The Camfield family letters, Battye Library Microfilm Reel 5916A (originals part of the Windyey collection in the Mitchell Library).
2 Camfield to sister, 29 August 1840, Camfield letters.
some women either joined relatives or took up teaching positions as a means of entering the mission field. Records of the Colonial Church Society show that the Society acknowledged that Mitchell would be accompanied by “Miss Breeze, a lady who will make herself useful in the religious instruction of the children in the neighbourhood of the mission house”.  

Henry’s letters to the Camfield family, both before his marriage and in the early months afterwards, give some indication of his wife’s background and beliefs. There is too, a hint of her future work. Anne is “good, very religious, much respected by the wise... of an amiable temper and a sound understanding”.  

Although by now an orphan and officially a governess, Anne Breeze was from the new middle classes of the Industrial Revolution. Her father was “a large manufacturer of pottery in Staffordshire”.

In the first half of 19th century industrial Britain, Staffordshire was an area with mines, iron works and potteries where traditionally whole families might be employed. Employers had great influence over the patterns of working class life, often supporting church and chapel while opposing factory reform legislation and employing very young children as late as the 1860s. In the late 18th century the area had been visited by John Wesley and had seen a number of fiery revivalist meetings. Evangelical Sunday Schools sprang up, giving many hundreds of children their only opportunity to become literate, and Dissenting evangelical religion in Staffordshire sent missionaries overseas as early as 1815. For those at home, meetings to raise money for missions abroad were one way of gaining knowledge of the exotic heathen, “an extremely important source of information about the outside world as well as entertainment in rural areas”.

Whether Anglican or Dissenting, evangelicals all were enthused and enthralled by the missionary endeavour to bring Christianity to “the heathen”.

Evangelism arose in the late 18th century as a reaction against a lax society in which the established church was falling into decay and religion was seen to be only

---

5 Camfield to sister, 14 October 1840, Camfield letters.
6 ibid., Camfield to father, 11 June 1841.
practised nominally. While one strand centred on John Wesley and later Methodism, another remained within the Anglican church and developed around a group known as the Clapham sect. Anglican evangelicalism was high-minded and according to Hall, sought security in the life of the family and home at a time when England was undergoing the rapid change of industrialisation. It valued hard work, pious living, the daily practice of religion and the conversion experience. Hall suggests that much of what we now categorise as “Victorian values” was already in place in the 1830s but had initially arisen with evangelicalism’s emphasis on the home and the role of women as guardians of the religious and moral life of the family. Women were expected to be educated in order to be help-meets to their husbands, family life featured daily prayers and self examination and Sunday Schools were considered an important means of spreading the word of God. Anne Breeze showed early in her engagement that she maintained a certain firmness of purpose regarding behaviour, for Henry wrote just two months before their marriage, that “she keeps me at arm’s length” and “at present I am not permitted to see her in private”. Soon after their marriage the pair were teaching Sunday School in Perth, walking into town from the cottage near Henry’s property at Burrswood.

In its early formative period, evangelicalism had been somewhat distrusted by both the aristocracy and those churchmen who feared there was an intention to disestablish the Church of England. Needing the political support of the upper classes and the new middle classes in the fight against the slave trade, and in spite of their insistence on reform both within the church and within the human heart, Anglican evangelicals rejected radicalism and continued to look to the aristocracy for leadership. This was particularly so after the 1790s: the French Revolution, with its anti-clericalism, horrified the English. At a time when Tom Paine’s Rights of Man was stirring the artisan class any suggestion of reform brought with it hints of both radicalism and atheism. Hall describes Anglican Evangelicalism as becoming a bridge between “the old ruling groups and the aspirant middle classes”. Evangelicals were therefore comfortable in acknowledging the rights of the upper classes even as their

10 Catherine Hall, White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 78.
11 Camfield to sister, 14 October 1840, Camfield letters.
12 ibid., 11 June 1841.
14 Hall, 80.
religion shaped the values of the respectable middle classes. Anne and Henry Camfield lived quietly and attended no parties but still mixed with the ruling hierarchy in tiny colonial Perth, in spite of the fact that before marriage Henry was struggling on 50 pound a year and owed £300 to William Henty.\textsuperscript{15} Anne continued to visit her friend Margaret Irwin at Henley Park, the property of Perth's military commander Frederick Chidley Irwin; and Henry, with some satisfaction, wrote of his wife that "her friends are some of our most estimable ladies".\textsuperscript{16}

Henry, musing on his unfortunate visit to the Cape before he met Anne Breeze, had reflected upon the wrongs done to the Aboriginal people, acknowledging that "we drive them from their fishing ponds (sic), kill their kangaroos and deprive them of their country", adding that he felt a "great affection" for the fellows.\textsuperscript{17} His concern seems to have been shared by his wife, for when influenza broke out among the Aborigines camped near the house in December 1841, Henry wrote "we give them gruel it seems to do them good".\textsuperscript{18} The action reflects the evangelical attitude to the welfare of the indigenous peoples, somewhat in contrast to the harsh attitudes generally held towards the poor both in England and the colony. For in the reaction against the French Revolution, those evangelical missions to the poor, which had taken the place of previous aristocratic philanthropy, re-directed their energies abroad. "Respectable evangelicals increasingly avoided public association with or significant private support for home missionary activities."\textsuperscript{19} Support for the poor at home in any form not only smacked of reform but was also seen to be compounding the problem of their very existence. According to Thorne, "Malthusian anxieties about overpopulation encouraged the view that however well meaning, interventions in the operation of a free market would bring calamitous results....[T]he politically correct response in times of distress, however difficult it might be to maintain, was to do as little for the poor as possible".\textsuperscript{20} Home missionaries pleading the needs of the English poor, suggested they were as heathen as the indigenous peoples abroad. The tables were then turned on them with the argument that "even if British heathens were more degraded than their foreign

\textsuperscript{15} Camfield to sister, 1 May 1840, Camfield letters; ibid., to father 28 June 1840.
\textsuperscript{16} ibid., Camfield to father, 11 June 1841.
\textsuperscript{17} ibid., Camfield to sister, 19 November, 1839.
\textsuperscript{18} ibid., Camfield to father, 28 December 1841.
\textsuperscript{19} Thorne, 246.
\textsuperscript{20} ibid., 242.
counterparts, their degradation was the reward of their own perverse moral choice and thus neither susceptible to nor deserving of missionary redress".  

The differing and often conflicting beliefs between evangelicalism and conservatism about the treatment of indigenous peoples and towards the non-indigenous poor, as changing and contradictory as they were, can be traced in a colonial culture which drew its inspiration from Britain. The concern for Aboriginal welfare displayed by men such as Guistiniani, Smithies, King and Salvado, at a time when the labouring classes also struggled to survive, can be seen within this context. Initial Evangelistic perceptions of black people during the anti slavery struggles were also translated and reflected in the hopeful expectations of the same men and others within the community. When later a second generation, born in the colony, hardened their attitudes towards Aborigines, this too mirrored evolving English perceptions of the “Negro” during the anti-slave campaigns and later as emancipated peoples.

Evangelism, believing in religious rather than political solutions, had framed its arguments against the slave trade and later slavery itself in terms of a moral argument. Hall has written that in the 1830s “an emancipationist position was effectively an orthodoxy within respectable middle-class society in England”. The kneeling slave, seeking British help “represented the belief in the civilisational equality of the negro, the potential of the negro to be raised from the state of savagery, through childhood to manhood”. Similar belief about Aborigines were expressed early in the 1840s by the Swan River Methodists who requested a missionary be sent out from England, pleading that there were “no heathens more worthy than those in the Swan River Colony”; they were also “quick and intelligent and not beyond salvation”. In her discussion of Baptist missions to the Jamaican slaves, Hall identifies a number of issues that have parallels in Australian colonialism and the treatment of Aborigines. There is, for example, her comment that “at the heart of the Baptist missionary enterprise was a profound ambivalence – a belief in brotherhood and spiritual equality combined with an

21 Thorne, 250.
23 Hall, 208.
24 ibid, 208.
assumption of white superiority”. “Whiteness” during the anti slavery struggles of the 1830s meant “pity and care for lesser peoples, the authority through public campaigns to exercise that concern”. But to be in the superior position of being able to order knowledge sanctioned by religion, it became necessary to identify what it meant to be white. The distinguishing characteristics were those possessed by neither the slave nor the slave master. “Whiteness” had come to mean “order, civilization, Christianity, separate spheres and domesticity, rationality, modernity and industry”. Indeed all those characteristics which missionaries in the Swan River endeavoured to imprint upon indigenous people, from the neat farms at Wanneroo under the Reverend John Smithies in the 1840s, to the little iron bedsteads for Aboriginal children in Anne Camfield’s house at Albany in the 1850s.

Hall argues that the period between the 1830s, when the evangelical anti slavery movement came to be seen as part of what the English middle classes stood for, and when the struggle was at its height, and the 1860s after emancipation, brought changes in the nature of racism. Through the experiences of missionaries and the colonial born, those who were not white began to be portrayed as increasingly different and less than deserving of equality. Hall suggests that there were too many contradictions in the missionary ideology: increasingly the emphasis was on the superiority of white men. Following the realisation that “black people might choose to be different”, there developed “a more aggressive biological racism, rooted in the assumption that blacks were not brothers and sisters but a different species, born to be mastered”.

In suggesting the motives of Henry and Anne Camfield for their later work at Annesfield in Albany as springing from Evangelicalism, I have theorised that colonial Western Australia drew upon English thinking, in turn influenced by events in other colonies. It was possible to maintain a devout religiosity and draw upon evangelism, yet still maintain and support laws that showed little understanding or acceptance of cultural difference. Irwin, a friend of the Camfields, is credited with the formation of the evangelistic Western Australia Missionary Society in 1835, which later became the Colonial Church Society. On a return visit to England, he had gathered money and supporters for the establishment of a mission at Swan River “to the Aborigines and the

---

26 Hall, 214.
27 ibid., 212.
28 ibid., 212.
29 ibid., 249, 209.
more destitute of the Settlers".  

Irwin as military commander had frequently led military parties in pursuit of Aborigines who had broken laws of which they had no knowledge and had presided over executions in his role as Lieutenant Governor. The behaviour of Perth’s small elite, of which Irwin was part, smacks of hypocrisy. Certainly Hall argues that the “early purity” of evangelical religion later became “priggishness, conventionality, hypocrisy and conservatism”. Both Hall and Halévy have commented on how widespread was the influence of evangelical religion and also its connections with the middle class. Halévy describes it as “the growth of a spirit at once philanthropic and conservative”, a useful description in view of the slow rate of change in the treatment of poor and working class children.

Evangelicals did not necessarily speak with one voice. Chadwick has described them as being “as various as Tractarians” but holding in common a number of principles, including their willingness to tolerate other Protestant sects. Halevy describes them as “belonging to the Calvinist tradition. But...of a very mild variety...not theologians but men of emotion and action”. Rosman suggests that they were driven by much the same motivations as everyone else, and “though scorning the world, they apparently sought after its riches and the respect of the great”. Yet Hall argues in her chapter “Victorian Domestic Ideology” that evangelical values became Victorian values, that “Evangelicalism has been described as ‘the religion of the household’ and that “The household was seen as the basis for a proper religious life”.

In the early married life of Henry and Anne Camfield, at Holme cottage near Henry’s property at Burrswood, we see glimpses of an evangelical home life. From the beginning, they intended to live quietly, taking great delight in their garden and home grown vegetables. Anne wrote that, except for a monthly visit to the Temperance Society, of which he was secretary, Henry spent his evenings at home with her for he “wishes and endeavours to have his home ordered and governed by Christian

---

31 Hall, 78.
34 Halévy, 436, 437.
36 Hall, 84.
principles". This reflects the emphasis evangelicalism placed upon the home and family as centre of religious life.

When Anne visited Burrswood in the spring, lamenting that the property had often been let while Henry travelled, she wrote to her sister in law that things would be different now. "[Y]ou know I am a clog to his foot, he cannot run away, nor indeed he has no wish, and I am sure you would all be pleased to see how thoroughly domestic he is". The Camfields, in their years at the Swan River colony, mixed with the elite of a small but growing society. Their friendships held them in good stead and Henry progressed steadily through the civil service: against a rough-hewn background they fulfilled the Victorian ideal of devotion and respectability.

---

37 Anne Camfield to sister-in-law, 16 September 1841. Incorrectly listed as being from Henry Camfield. Camfield letters.
38 ibid.
Chapter Three. The 1840s – the Kingdom to Come.

In the 1840s the Swan River colony was still struggling. In the June before his marriage, Henry Camfield believed he too was struggling to survive. The little house on his Burrswood property was “shaky”, he had failed to sell his grant “Clayton” at Guildford and the income from renting out most of Burrswood was only fifty pound a year, making it difficult, since he lived so close to town, “to keep up appearances in dress”.\(^1\) His fortunes improved considerably when he was asked to fill a position in the government Revenue Office, during the incumbent’s absence due to illness, and he wrote in the same letter to Bessie that he had proposed to Anne Breeze.\(^2\) In one sense Henry’s becoming “a Queens man” formalised his place within that group of well-to-do and well-connected citizens who comprised Perth’s ruling elite. His early arrival in the colony in October 1829 on the ship chartered by the Hentys, the *Caroline*, meant he was already acquainted with fellow passengers such as the influential William Mackie, and Alfred Stone.\(^3\) Mackie was cousin to Frederick Irwin, the military commandant of the settlement, and Anne Breeze, living at Guildford before her marriage, was a frequent visitor to Irwin’s property, Henley Park, to see her friend Margaret Irwin.\(^4\)

The settler population of Western Australia was still very small in 1838 with 2,132 people spread from King George Sound to Moore River.\(^5\) Within this small number those educated people who could claim connection to prosperous families in England, and who came as first class passengers, with capital and stock, formed a social class distinct from the larger number of labourers and indentured servants who travelled with them. There might be variations of wealth or changed circumstances through misfortune, nevertheless they recognised each other as members of “the higher class” as Irwin termed it, often remembering details of each other down through the generations.\(^6\)

The Reverend William Mitchell, for example, dutifully recorded the birth dates of Bessie Cameron’s children, born in Victoria some thirty years later, since Bessie had

---

\(^1\) Camfield to father, 23 June 1840. The Camfield family letters, Battye Library Microfilm Reel 5916A (originals part of the Windeyer collection in the Mitchell Library).
\(^2\) ibid., Camfield to sister, 14 October 1840.
\(^4\) Mrs Mitchell’s Diary 1838-1840. Copied from the original by Alfred Burton. Battye Library, B/MIT, 19, 23, 35.
\(^6\) George Fletcher Moore, *Diary of Ten Years Evenful Life of an Early Settler in Western Australia*
been a pupil at Anne Camfield's Aboriginal school, and Anne had been governess to his own children. Such was the inter-connectedness of a group that had been knitted together by sharing the long voyage from England, and in encounters with the new and strange. Knowledge of families at home, and the ability to send letters back to England strengthened and affirmed the social hierarchy as news was exchanged and passed on. In the case of the Irwins, Mackie, the Mitchells and now the Camfields, there was also firm adherence to the established state religion, the Church of England. The Anglican Church and social elitism existed in a symbiotic relationship with authority. Those who came to the Swan River had grown up in a country where the church was privileged and synonymous with authority. If in the new colony, "the nominally Anglican labouring classes appear never to have attended church, except to be married, buried or baptised", the propertied class clung to the connections between church and state. The Church of England catechism reinforced social order, teaching children, "To order myself lowly and reverently with all my betters".

There was too the association with authority. The Anglicanism transplanted to the Australian colonies was "intimately connected with the English elite. Traditionally colonial governors and their civil and military staff, were Anglicans. So too were leading figures in professional, business and financial circles." Many may have used the church only for the rituals of major events in life but their world was still viewed as shaped by Christianity, with God directing all activity from above.

The Camfields, living within this worldview shaped by Christianity, found explanation for difficulties and support in sorrowful times, with their belief that the world was based on a solid foundation. Their family letters frequently end with a call for blessings from God. Anne wrote to Bessie (Eliza) that "illness and other adversities, are often blessings which we have to be thankful for". Such beliefs carried conviction when there was no other explanation for suffering and hardship, and they could be sustaining. Anne continued "when my Father & Mother forsook me then the Lord took

---

7 Mitchell notes. Royal Western Australian Historical Society.
10 Anne Camfield to sister in law Bessie, 8 January 1846 on the occasion of Camfield senior's illness, Camfield letters.
me up for he raised up many friends for me, and up to this day His goodness and mercy have followed me".11

In earlier times on the Swan, long before he had met Anne Breeze, Henry too had mused over the difficulties in life. He wrote to his brother William in 1830 that after a year’s hard work he was no further forward. His plants had withered in the summer and his land had been flooded in the winter, moreover he had opened his last barrel of biscuit ten days ago.12 But he stoutly declared “we must not charge Our Merciful Father as the cause of all this and say the land is barren” but rather remember “it is our duty to bow, with due submission”. He then concluded that people, perhaps even himself, could just as easily have died in England. Henry’s convictions faltered when he learnt of William’s death but he rallied, remembering “we ought not to be ‘too full of care of this life’, but to put all our trust in Him who is above”.13

Henry had shared the voyage to the Swan with the Henty brothers. Whereas the entire Henty family planned to emigrate, sending James, Stephen and John ahead to investigate the new country, Henry arrived alone.14 He left behind an ageing father, his older brother William, owner of Burrswood which had been in the family almost a hundred years, and four sisters, only one of whom was married. Henry like many other younger sons went abroad looking for better prospects, perhaps even hoping to increase the family’s fortunes. He wrote that he was entitled to grants of about 7,000 acres of land in return for the capital, stock and servants he brought with him.15 Together with James Henty, Henry joined the governor’s party in exploring the Canning River land earmarked for Thomas Peel. The land was thrown open for selection within days of Peel’s failure to arrive by the designated date and was swiftly allocated to others.16 On the 13th November 1829 Henry was assigned one thousand acres on the Swan.17 He called the property Burrswood after the family home: the name remains, the spelling amended, in the same area today. In July 1830 he was granted an additional 1,186 acres on the Helena known as Clayton Farm. Later he joined the Governor’s party

---

11 Ibid.
12 Camfield to brother, 8 September 1830, Camfield letters.
13 Henry to his sisters, 7 February 1832, Camfield letters; personal communication from G. Camfield, 12 September 2005; Bassett, 317.
14 Bassett, 39.
15 Camfield to father, 18 November 1829, Camfield letters.
16 Bassett, 107; Bonnie Hicks, “Henry and Anne Camfield” (Battye Library, 1964), Ch. 2, 3. Hicks implies Camfield was granted land on the Canning but both Bassett and Camfield’s letter 18 November 1829 refute this.
17 Michael J. Bourke, On the Swan: A History of the Swan District Western Australia (Nedlands WA:
exploring the York area, returning bare footed, and joking about finding himself “in a
ticklish situation”.\footnote{Camfield to father, 8 February 1831, Camfield letters.}

The period between Henry’s arrival at the Swan in 1829 and his marriage to
Anne Breeze in 1840 is documented both in his letters and through his friendship with
the Henty family, recorded in \textit{The Hentys: An Australian Colonial Tapestry}.\footnote{Bassett, \textit{The Hentys}.}

It was a connection formalised when Henry’s sister Susannah Matilda (Matilda) Camfield
married William Henty in England. Throughout the 1830s Henry Camfield travelled,
mostly with the Henty brothers. He went to Van Diemen’s Land, Portland Bay and
Sydney. The Hentys, cutting their losses, left the new colony one by one, seeking better
prospects and urged Henry to do the same. Living with the Hentys “as one of the
family” and writing to his father from Launceston in 1833, Henry explained that
although the land was much better than at the Swan, for him the same problem arose:
lack of capital. He considered returning to England, but waited for news of the sale of
the family farm; his own Burrswood was rented out, and he had begun borrowing
money, even opening an inn in an attempt to survive.\footnote{Camfield to father, Launceston, 9 April 1833, Camfield letters; The inn was called the \textit{Brewer’s Arms} see Geoff Spiller, \textit{Micro-Breweries to Monopoly and Back, Swan River Colony Breweries 1829-2002} (Western Australian Museum: 2003), 15. It does not seem to have provided any income, given Henry’s continuing financial difficulties.}

Those who arrived with insufficient means to feed and clothe themselves for several years at least could not
soon make a living in the poor soil and harsh climate of the Swan.\footnote{Camfield to sisters, 7 February 1832, Camfield letters.}

Henry still managed to travel a great deal, very possibly on borrowed money, to
Launceston in 1833, Sydney and Portland Bay in 1834.\footnote{ibid., Camfield to father, 9 April 1833; Bassett, 296.}

He returned to the Swan for several years before further trips to Launceston and Portland Bay in 1837. He lived
with the Hentys, and in Sydney with Charles Windeyer, who found him an easy and
welcome companion, “a most estimable man... parting from him was a real grief”.\footnote{Bassett, 407, 410; Charles Windeyer to son Richard, 7 July 1834, Camfield letters. Incorrectly listed as being from Henry Camfield to William Camfield.}

\textsc{Henry Camfield has been described as “unrobust and wistful”, “vacillating in
everything”, and lacking authority.}\footnote{Bassett, 409; Bassett, 333; Canon A Burton, coll., \textit{Wollaston’s Albany Journal}, (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1975), 54,55.} His obituary said he was “peculiarly retiring and
unassuming".25 A broader picture would acknowledge the “dead shot” who ate crows and cockatoos while working from dawn to dark at Burrswood, and the explorer who crossed Bass Strait several times, landing at Portland Bay to ride the western plains of Victoria with the Hentys. He was an amiable, albeit religious young man from a close and affectionate family, and had a gentle sense of humour. The Hentys urged him to settle in Tasmania, and Windeyer wished he would stay in New South Wales, but Henry returned to the Swan. It was as if he somehow turned away from both the bustle of Sydney and the vigorous, ceaseless expansion of the Henty family enterprises. If Henry vacillated over his future, he was constant in his love for his family, his equanimity in hard times and his sense of duty and fairness. His belief in his church and God was firm and he had a great tolerance towards Aboriginal people. Even in the early days of 1832 when settlers were warned to carry arms Henry acknowledged “from first to last I have been friendly with them. I would never hurt them, only in the most extreme case would I now, for the same Almighty God made black and white.”26

It is not possible to draw on a family background to discover the character of Anne Camfield, nee Breeze. A search of Pigot’s 1828/29 Staffordshire Directory discloses three manufacturers named Breeze, but little else.27 Glimpses of her can be obtained through her letters to Henry’s family and passing references from other people. A photograph held in the Battye Library shows her as a doughty matron, in voluminous Victorian ruffles.28 No doubt it represents as little of her character and life as does the picture of an elderly Henry Camfield, thin faced and tousle haired, shown in Garden’s Albany, a Panorama of the Sound.29 During the short period between arrival at the colony in 1838 and her marriage in 1840 Anne is often depicted in Mrs Mitchell’s Diary as being unwell or away at Henley Park, although occupied in between with domestic tasks. Maria Windeyer, Henry’s sister, commented somewhat tartly “I can hardly picture him with a wife, a big one too!”30 Anne Camfield overcame her headaches and ill health, and gained in strength, both in body and mind as the years progressed. Bishop Parry wrote of her later that in 1873 she was “tall, immensely stout about 65 but

26 Camfield to sister, 6 June 1832, Camfield letters.
28 Battye Library 1022B.
29 Garden, 68.
30 Maria Windeyer (Camfield’s sister) to father, 23 May 1841, Camfield letters.
active". There is too the description of her by Grace Brown, driving a phaeton and pair from Albany to Perth, with the last two young children from Annesfield: a long and difficult journey in the 1870s. But if Anne Camfield grew into the archetypal Australian “bush woman”, in the 1840s she trembled for Henry fighting the bushfire and then having to cross the river at night. Maintaining correspondence to Camfield senior in England she dutifully wrote the latest news: Henry’s advance in salary (he was now postmaster general) and her own new god-daughter, the Irwin’s latest baby. She commences the letter with a sombre reflection on death and resurrection with biblical quotation, and ends it with a lively account of the antics of their new parrot that “will bear no confinement” and fights its way through the house.

Anne addressed William Camfield as Father in her letters, writing when his grand-daughter came to live with him “a child is often the source of much cheerfulness”. But two years later she asked him to pass Bessie a message: “tell her that her hopes and what we would have hoped are not likely to be realised. We are become quite reconciled feeling sure that if it had been for our real good they would have been gratified.” The Camfields were happy in their marriage, secure though not wealthy in the service of the government; their needs were modest and they had many friends. But they were not to have children of their own. Anne was aware when typhus struck in 1846 that they had much to be grateful for. Visiting a friend, she went to the house to find the woman, having buried her daughter three weeks earlier and had “a cancer extracted from her breast” the day before, now received her with husband and son in the same room, too ill to move. Anne reminded Bessie:

How true it is “That it is better to go to the House of mourning than to the House of feasting” for there we see the vanity of setting our hearts on any thing earthly; and learn to seek a better country, where Christ himself has gone before to prepare mansions for those whom he has redeemed by his blood. May God give us all grace to become of the number.

31 Battye Library MN 134.
32 Brown papers 1471A/35-40, RWAHS.
33 Anne Camfield to father in law, 14 February 1845, Camfield letters.
34 ibid., 14 February 1845.
35 ibid., 27 April 1843.
36 ibid., Anne Camfield to sister in law, 19 May 1846.
The consolation of a better life in Christ’s mansions was probably, in Anne Camfield’s eyes, reserved for Protestants. The toleration of evangelicals for other Christians did not extend to Roman Catholics. In the same letter Anne laments the arrival of an “inundation of Jesuits from Ireland who are practising their subtle arts” and “six Sisters of Mercy” who immediately began to draw pupils away from the Protestant schools. She regrets that the Colonial Chaplain is indifferent and all Perth would probably fall under the newcomers “devices” if it were not for the Wesleyans and Independents. At this time there were already six Anglican and one Wesleyan clergymen in the state for a total white population of around four and a half thousand. As approximately only 300 were Roman Catholics, this would have seemed an “inundation” to the Protestant majority. The Catholics however, had arrived in such numbers because they intended to establish missions to the Aborigines. Their leader, Bishop Brady, had the belief that there were about two million of them awaiting conversion.

Protestant mission efforts had begun with the Anglicans in the 1830s when the military commandant Irwin, on leave in England, instigated the formation of a missionary society. The aims of the society, at that time called The Western Australian Missionary Society, were to minister to both the Aborigines and “the more destitute of the Settlers”. Irwin regarded the Aborigines as being in a state of “gross heathen darkness”; there is no suggestion here of that “belief in brotherhood and spiritual equality” that Hall described as characterising much of the evangelical mission abroad in the 1830s. The Reverend Dr Louis Guistiniani who subsequently arrived as missionary in the employment of the society is cited as intending to “proceed on the plan pursued by the Moravian Brethren”. This involved the setting aside of a land grant at Middle Swan, presumably for the eventual establishment of a Christian village of Aborigines. A vegetable garden was established and cattle raised, but we know little of how many Aborigines were associated with this effort, or whether they were adults or children. As Guistiniani also held church services for settlers and became embroiled in bitter public disputes, it is hard to believe that his efforts were very successful, despite

38 Aveling, New History, 582.
39 Bourke, 120.
his strong defence of Aborigines generally and his attempts to protect them. His commission was withdrawn after two years when Judge Mackie and the Advocate General Moore made charges of unworthy conduct against him to the Western Australian Mission Society.\textsuperscript{42}

The Reverend William Mitchell replaced Guistiniani and was accompanied by Anne Breeze, as we learnt earlier. Both Stannage and McNair and Rumley have described Mitchell’s efforts amongst the Aborigines as ineffectual and state that it was left to Guistiniani’s catechist, Abraham Jones, to recommence missionary work with the start of a school for Aboriginal children at Guildford in 1841.\textsuperscript{43} However, records of the mission society, provisionally dated 1842 when it had become the Colonial Church Society, show that Mitchell was in fact the superintendent of the school run by Abraham Jones, and that “Some of the native children are under instruction by Mrs Mitchell, and have made satisfactory progress”.\textsuperscript{44} The school started with twenty-one children: their numbers were soon halved by an influenza epidemic. The children were placed in employment with local settlers during the day; and were given school work at night. The Protector of Aborigines suggested that this was one of the reasons why the school was not progressing, together with the children’s irregular attendance due to the “scattered position of the neighbourhood”. He could not see this changing, “especially with regard to the boys, who are employed in herding stock, or other outdoor occupations”.\textsuperscript{45} There is some confusion as to when this school ended. Bourke claims it closed around 1843. Green states that it lasted until the mid-1850s, but with an average attendance of only six, and collapsed due to increasing Aboriginal resistance to European ways and education.\textsuperscript{46}

An Anglican mission commenced in Fremantle in 1842 after the arrival of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel missionary, the Reverend George King. Like Guistiniani and Mitchell, he was expected to devote his time both to the needs of white settlers and the conversion of the Aborigines. King opened a native school for very young Aboriginal children, at which he and his wife taught. He stated that he “went

\begin{itemize}
\item Bourke, 124.
\item ibid., 134
\item Guildhall Library, Manuscript 15718/3,738.
\item \textit{Perth Gazette}, 14 January 1843.
\item Bourke, 155; Neville Green, \textit{Broken Spears} (Cottesloe WA: Focus Education Services, 1984), 151.
\end{itemize}
personally among the Blacks, and collected eighteen children ranging from five or six years of age to about ten". He felt that although their spiritual needs came second to the white settlers, the Aborigines were "but still, members of the human family, and as such, fit subjects of that gospel which Christ came to be preached to every Nation and to all people". The children lived in a house bought specifically for the purpose with a matron to look after them. Although King’s reminiscences of his time in Western Australia display an exaggerated sense of his own importance in church affairs, he showed surprising perception into the difficulty of teaching Aboriginal adults:

The scarcity of human food in the bush now that the European Colonists have taken possession of their hunting grounds, renders the habits of the Natives so extremely erratic, that the same tribe, or the same individual will seldom come within the reach of a European for more than one or two days at a time, and to follow them through the bush, even if the teacher were exclusively devoted to the bush mission, would be impracticable.

He believed that “civilisation and spiritual enlightenment” for Aboriginal people were possible if they were separated from “the wandering tribe” and “educated in the same manner as our own children”. Accordingly the boys were taught trades and the girls needlework, with the aim of their being able to maintain themselves and one of the boys “acquired the trade of shoemaking as perfectly as apprentices generally do”. King was soon baptising children and bribing potential adult husbands to give up their claims to the little girls who had been promised to them in marriage. The school at Fremantle may well have succeeded if it had operated over a longer period, but when King left the colony in 1849 due to ill health, the school seems to have closed. A number of other factors possibly also contributed to King’s decision to resign. The Anglican Church in Western Australia was not yet organised under the direct control of a bishop although the newly arrived Reverend John Wollaston was beginning to recognise the problems caused by this. He also noted that two mission societies, the Colonial Church Society and the Society for Propagating the Gospel were competing for donations from the Swan River settlers.

---

48 ibid.
49 Picton Journal, 258-259.
Barley and Green claim the children from King's school were sent to Albany to Mrs Camfield. However the superintendent of Annesfield, the Rev John Wollaston, made no mention of Aboriginal children from Perth in his first report to the Anglican Bishop Short of Adelaide in May 1853. Wollaston indicates that the children came from the surrounding area as "prejudices on the part of adult natives have been gradually subsiding, and, at this date, I have more applications for admission than I can receive."

Prior to King's work at Fremantle, the Wesleyans in Perth had commenced missionary work amongst the Aborigines with the arrival of the Reverend John Smithies in 1840. Their attention was focused on children as, like King, they concluded it would be too difficult to engage with the semi-nomadic adults. The Wesleyan attempt has been described by Barley as "The most sustained early missionary endeavour" and it is true that over a period of time larger numbers of Aboriginal children than at either Fremantle or Guildford were given a rudimentary education. The Wesleyan Native School began in Perth, then transferred activities to farming at Wanneroo and later to York, surviving for around thirteen years. Smithies' school began with enormous support from within the Dissenting community. Early arrivals in the colony, the Wesleyans had been ten years without an ordained minister and were eager evangelists. One of their families, the Clarksons, was connected to the anti-slavery movement in England, and by marriage to Sir William Wilberforce. Initially the new mission effort was given land in the city by the government and money towards the cost of employing the native interpreter Francis Armstrong as teacher. How the children were obtained is not clear, but possibly their parents sent them. They were housed at night at Armstrong's, and went out to work for a few hours each day, employed as servants by approved settlers. A report in the *Perth Gazette* of January 14, 1843 on work amongst the Aboriginal people during the previous year states "Of the progressive improvement of the juvenile natives of the Perth School, I am enabled to make most creditable mention. Many of the pupils evince great aptitude for learning". There were 28 children at the school at that time, ranging from age 5 to 16, in contrast to the pupils "of

---

50 Barley, 30; Green, *Broken Spears* 156.
51 Wollaston tried to obtain the children from Fremantle but they were sent to Wanneroo -- see John J Brown "Policies in Aboriginal Education in WA 1829-1897", UWA MA 1979.
53 Barley, 26. By contrast the later, and lesser-known work of the Camfields lasted nineteen years.
54 McNair and Rumley, 2.
very tender age” at the Reverend King’s school. There were problems inherent in turning young adult men and women into both disciplined school students and menial workers in white households so Smithies’ set up farming activities at Lake Goollelal in the Wanneroo area.\(^56\) He hoped by doing this that the mission would also give agricultural training to the older students and attract Aboriginal people moving in their traditional patterns from north to south through the area.

The story of Smithies’ lengthy struggle, ending in failure, is well documented in *Pioneer Aboriginal Mission*. Like King, the reasons for failure were in all likelihood multi-factorial. The dual role of pastor to both settler and Aborigine was exhausting for the missionary. European-introduced illness killed Smithies’ students, as it did Abraham Jones’ pupils at Guildford, causing Aboriginal parents to avoid the schools. Both Smithies and King waited long months for answers to their requests for additional staff and money from their mission societies back in England and suffered from a sense of isolation.\(^57\) Settlers, while willing to visit the schools and claim amazement over the progress of the students were, nevertheless, in the main indifferent to religious aspirations for Aboriginal people. The Reverend John Wollaston, indefatigable Anglican churchman, wrote that fellow clergymen King and Mitchell, like himself, were complaining of “the neglect and indifference of the people and the straitened means of their own support”.\(^58\) The Wesleyan community may not have been indifferent, but their numbers were limited: even in the late 1840s according to Stannage, 70% of Perth’s population was Anglican, and Smithies wrote in 1846 of “the total absence of any encouragement in our undertaking from friend or foe”.\(^59\) Shortage of money had harassed King; Smithies, with his larger experiment, continually struggled to pay the wages of his farm supervisor, then experienced further difficulty when government aid was reduced when Irwin was acting Governor in 1847.\(^60\)

Governor Hutt, in office when Smithies had arrived in the colony was, according to Stannage, a member of the Aborigines Protection Society and an “evangelical Clapham sect member”.\(^61\) He was tolerant towards religions other than his own and

\(^{55}\) *Perth Gazette*, 14 January 1843.

\(^{56}\) McNair and Rumley, 85.

\(^{57}\) ibid., 150; King notes Battye PR 7568.

\(^{58}\) *Picton Journal*, 139.

\(^{59}\) Stannage, *People of Perth*, 149;

McNair and Rumley, 112.

\(^{60}\) ibid., 120.

moreover was under instruction from the Home Office to "promote religion and education amongst the native inhabitants of our said Territory". When he granted land in the centre of the city to the Wesleyan mission and gave some financial support, he offended that conservative Anglican social hierarchy consisting of Judge Mackie, Advocate Moore, Commandant Irwin and the Colonial Chaplain Wittenoom. They were men who, before becoming colonists, "had been moulded by the unreformed Church of England", that is the old High Church Party who saw evangelistic religion as a threat to the order of society. Soon after Smithies arrived in the colony, Wittenoom attacked Dissenters from the pulpit and the Executive Council demurred over granting Smithies a stipend. Irwin continually opposed any assistance from Hutt to the Wesleyans, and during 1847 when he was acting Governor, displayed "overt antagonism".

We do not know how Henry and Anne Camfield negotiated the differences between Anglican conservatives such as Irwin, and the newer evangelistic thinking of Hutt. Governor Hutt had been "a sincere friend of Henry" Anne wrote to Bessie, when Hutt was leaving the colony in 1846. In January of the same year she had written "His Excellency has just been so polite as to send me a cage for Polly she has had the run of the house she will not like it yet I have been afraid of strange cats". At the same time, the Camfields were also close friends to the Irwins. Mrs Irwin stayed at Holme cottage, and Anne in turn stayed at Henley Park, the Irwins' property. On one occasion when Henry was sick and refused to take leave, Irwin intervened with the Governor to order him to take leave, and the Camfields spent a week at Henley Park while Henry recuperated. There may be grounds for suspecting that Irwin used his influence again under similar circumstances in 1847. Hutt's replacement, Clarke, had died after a short time in office and Irwin was again acting Governor.

In July 1847, Henry Camfield was appointed to the position of Resident Magistrate at Albany at a salary of 200 pound per year. It was an appointment of some prestige and the Inquirer railed at the action "the public good is to yield to self-interest" and demanded to know why an existing resident of Albany could not take the post. But closer examination of the Inquirer's position shows that in a general revision of the

---

62 McNair and Rumley, 40.
63 Stannage, People of Perth, 38.
64 McNair and Rumley, 151.
65 Anne to sister in law, 19 May 1846, Camfield letters; ibid., 8 January 1846.
66 ibid., 23 October 1843
public service, the appointment had already been declined by Mr Cowan, and Henry’s removal from the post office was for the benefit of one E. Courthope, “for whom all these changes have been made". 67 The Camfields were to leave immediately for a situation that would be expensive, for “he will have to entertain any stranger that may come and being no clergymen he will be called on for any duties that may be required”, Bessie wrote. Even more surprising, “Mrs Henry tells me they have taken no servant with them to Albany, and they are not likely to get any but a native there”. 68 The Camfields were moving to a new life where their beliefs could be put to a most practical purpose.

67 Inquirer, 7 July 1847.
68 Bessie to Maria Windeyer, 18 October 1847, Camfield letters.
Chapter Four - The comforts of civilisation.

Albany in the late 1840s was an isolated outpost of Empire. Perth was an overland journey of 260 miles away following an indifferent track often through thick bush. The coastal journey to Fremantle, beating against the westerly winds, could take days as ships were delayed by storms around the twin capes of Naturaliste and Leeuwin. Originally established as a military outpost in 1826, and referred to as King George’s Sound, the town struggled on in desultory fashion. It had a fine harbour and was strategically situated on the route from London to the eastern colonies. Land in the surrounding Plantagenet county was being expropriated for pastoral grants, but in the township itself, poor soil meant little food was grown. The small European population of between 240 and 250 people was predominantly male. Garden describes it as being a “top heavy society”.¹ It had gained a reputation for quarrelsomeness and several Resident Magistrates before Henry Camfield had become embroiled in lengthy disputes.² An observer of the day, writing to the Inquirer, noted that Albany was “struggling with its unfavourable position, the impolitic high price of land, and, as is reported, a revenue altogether disproportionate to its expenditure”.³

Henry Camfield, as representative of Her Imperial Majesty’s government, was at the peak of this hierarchical, inward looking group of British colonists. In spite of the vast southern ocean before them and the thousands of unexplored miles of bushland at their backs, or perhaps in defence against the isolation, the Europeans transplanted their culture and sought to strengthen it in a town of only fifty houses.⁴ Distance was no deterrence to proper government, with directions and requests exchanged in a constant flow of letters. The gaol contained those Aborigines who had not yet learnt that they had lost sovereignty to their land. The state continued to be buttressed by Anglicanism and a substantial church was finally completed in 1848, being the first to be consecrated in the colony. Garden’s description of the struggles to obtain the most prestigious pews in the new St John’s (those nearest the front, and closest to the Resident), belie his claim that Albany society in the 1830s and 40s was more or less egalitarian.⁵

² ibid., 69, 105.
³ *Inquirer*, 13 September 1848.
⁴ IRS 39N, Albany Local Studies Collection.
⁵ Garden, 92.
It is not within the scope of this paper to give an all encompassing account of traditional Aboriginal life in the south of Western Australia at the time of Camfield’s residency. Nairne-Clark described in 1842, in a lengthy polemic on behalf of Aboriginal people, a way of life still intact and which he had observed in 1838. He estimated the number of people, in different groups including the Murray-men and the Waal men, as around 2,000 living in the area up to a 100 miles inland from the coast between Point D’Encastreaux and Cape Riche, with 100 living within twenty miles of the Sound. Le Souef, in agreeing with this figure, estimates that the King George Sound area supported about 10 people per 100 square miles, a considerably smaller ratio than at the Swan River itself which was 25 per 100 square miles. That there was some sort of relatively peaceful co-existence between original inhabitants and newcomers (at least from the European point or view) has been ascribed to the fewer numbers of European settlers compared to the Swan River. But by the late 1840s three factors were impacting heavily upon Aboriginal living patterns. There were the European diseases such as influenza, which had commenced in Barker’s time in 1830, and continued to spread from the ships now stopping at Albany for supplies. With the development of an export trade in kangaroo skins from the area a major food source for “the New Hollander” was being rapidly decimated. The ongoing slaughter with guns and dogs left the carcases behind “abandoned to the wild dogs, or the natives”, creating new patterns of movement and contact, with kangaroos becoming more difficult to hunt simply by spear. Dog licences were introduced and Camfield granted them to the Nyungar for hunting. Huge packs of dogs were then kept, with kangaroo skinners trading skins for puppies raised and fed by Aboriginal women, and in an unequal relationship, exercising “great cruelty” to the Aborigines. By 1853 hundreds of dogs had to be poisoned.

---

7 Sue Le Souef, 52
8 Green, Broken Spears, 235.
9 Captain Lort Stokes, Inquirer, 13 September 1848.
10 Outwards Correspondence, Colonial Secretary’s Office, Series 2528, Consignment 346/033, 3 January 1851. State Records Office of Western Australia.
11 Inwards Correspondence, Colonial Secretary’s Office, 255/77, 8 April 1853. State Records Office of Western Australia.
12 ibid .. When Trimmer poisoned dogs, he did so with the consent of the Nyungar; the kangaroo skin trade was often the subject of correspondence from the sub guardians to the Colonial Secretary’s Office.
The third factor impacting upon the lives of Aboriginal people and closely connected to disruption of food supplies was their seizure and imprisonment, often for long periods, for transgressions, of which they were unaware, against European law. The increase in European control can be marked by the ongoing requests by the Protector of Aborigines to the Colonial Secretary’s Office in Perth for finance for “forage for a horse”.13 The pursuit of those firing the land (as they had always done) or taking sheep to roast, might take days, but was inexorable. The resulting imprisonment and transportation away from their country were particularly harsh punishments for Aboriginal people. Henry Camfield, writing to Perth on behalf of a solitary native prisoner awaiting trial, was aware that “confinement to a native is a very severe punishment”.14

The ability to exert control over vast areas of countryside and peoples was remarkable considering the distances involved and the size of the European population, still only 5,606 in the entire colony in 1850, 306 of whom lived in Albany.15 But evidence of the growing bureaucracy may be seen in the constant reference to file numbers and dates of correspondence and in the requests for permission to purchase quite simple items needed for everyday tasks.16 His Excellency the Governor monitored all activity closely. Why was there a decrease in the numbers of white females in Plantagenent county between 1849 and 1850 he asked Henry?17 Would His Excellency allow a young Aboriginal child to leave Annesfield and live with kindly, respectable settlers who had known her relatives asked Anne Camfield in 1858?18

Henry Camfield as the Resident Magistrate was at the centre of this bureaucratic traffic between government and the community. He welcomed the dedicated Anglican clergyman Wollaston who had been officially appointed to the chaplaincy at Albany, arriving in July 1848. Henry, along with Peter Belches and John Phillips, the Inspector of Natives, had already guaranteed 25 pound per year towards Wollaston’s income, as required by the Colonial Secretary’s office.19 The Camfields were no doubt delighted to have an official clergyman to conduct services, and Wollaston in turn was pleased to

13 ibid., 346/034.
14 CSR 179/51, 17 May 1848.
16 CSR 231/123, 2 November 1852.
17 346/033, 7 March 1851.
18 CSR 451/59, (?) October 1859.
19 346/027, 3 March 1848.
renew acquaintance with the Camfields, although he privately wrote that Henry lacked the necessary authority for his position.\textsuperscript{20}

It is difficult to assess the degree of intimacy between the Camfields and the cleric, John Ramsden Wollaston. They were associated closely through church affairs: Henry was in charge of offertory monies and read prayers; he was in charge of the parish during Wollaston’s absences when he became Archdeacon and went on archdiaconal tours.\textsuperscript{21} During the visit of the Bishop Short of Adelaide to consecrate St John’s in October 1848, Wollaston’s son and daughter stayed overnight with the Camfields, since beds were short.\textsuperscript{22} Given such regular contact it might be expected that Wollaston’s references to the Camfields would hint of familiarity, even affection and they do not. However Wollaston was often spare in his commentaries and this may be the explanation.

What the Camfields, Wollaston, and the visiting Bishop Short and his Archdeacon, Mathew Hale, had in common was their religious ideology. Hale was educated at Cambridge as Wollaston had been. Moreover he was only three years younger than Anne Camfield, and although not born in the manufacturing districts where evangelism raged, drew inspiration from the abolition of slavery in 1833. Although Hale was never “a party man”, he was “trained in and remained sympathetic with the evangelical school of clergy”.\textsuperscript{23} He had once approached the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel for mission work in the West Indies. This mutual interest in mission work was very possibly the reason for his continuing correspondence with Anne Camfield which lasted until both were in their eighties.\textsuperscript{24}

There was also a shared conviction that Aboriginal people had abilities which contradicted “the commonly perceived notion in England of their low position in the physical and intellectual scale”, as Bishop Short wrote to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.\textsuperscript{25} Both Wollaston and Anne Camfield believed that the participation of Aboriginal people in “the comforts of civilisation” depended upon their

\textsuperscript{20} ibid., 54, 55.
\textsuperscript{22} Canon A. Burton, coll., \textit{Wollaston’s Albany Journal}, (Nedlands: University of Western Australia press, 1975), 69.
\textsuperscript{24} Robin, 186.
\textsuperscript{25} Burton, \textit{Albany Journal}, 74.
conversion to Christianity and education. This could only be commenced with young children, a view held by the leading Anglican in the western half of the country, Bishop Short of Adelaide. Wollaston already had two “half-caste” children in his Sunday School in 1848 and the Bishop made a point of baptising them himself. These children, whom Short describes as “brought up in the nurtures of the Lord by the disinterested kindness of persons unconnected with them except by the tie of Christian love”, Robin claims were sponsored by Anne Camfield, with the implication also that she was bringing them up.

It is difficult to gain a clear picture of Aboriginal life in Albany and the immediate surrounding area in the years between 1847 when Henry Camfield arrived, and 1852, the official date for the beginnings of Annesfield. Statistics from the 1848 census show that throughout the entire Plantagenet county, sixty Aboriginal people, male and female, were employed either full time or part time. The same census estimates the total Aboriginal population in the county as four hundred and fifty, but Plantagenet county was not the largest section in the area covered by Nairne-Clarke’s calculations. It is not possible therefore to make any correlation between his 1838 observation of numbers and the government census ten years later. Certainly the Aboriginal way of living was changing. Wollaston refers to a native who had been employed for many years in the town and wore a uniform when he attended church services. At the time he had engaged an Aboriginal pupil from King’s school at Fremantle as his house servant. But as early as the 1830s the then Resident, Sir Richard Spencer had employed Aborigines as labourers and by the 1840s Aboriginal people were working seasonally in the whaling industry. The _Perth Gazette_ in 1850 gives a somewhat patronising description of them using their wages from whaling to

---

26 F T Whittington, _August Short, First Bishop of Adelaide_. (London 1887) State Library of South Australia, 92, 93. Short wrote to Governor Fitzgerald that “the first effort must be to detach the young natives from connections with native customs...and isolated from each other, as well as from family connexions(sic)”. 
27 Burton, _Albany Journal_, 72; Robin, 34. Robin (41) also claims Short wrote to Governor Fitzgerald referring to Mrs Camfield’s work, citing Whittington 92-3, but that source makes no mention of Mrs Camfield, nor does she refer to such early work herself; Harris too seems to have drawn upon this for his account of the beginnings of Annesfield. John Harris, _One Blood, 200 years of Aboriginal encounter with Christianity: a story of hope_ (Sutherland NSW: Albatross books, 1990), 261,262; 
28 Cameron & Jaggard, 116. 
29 Nairne Clark estimated there were 2,000 Aborigines between between Cape Riche and Point D’Entrêcasteaux from the coast to 100 miles inland in 1838. _Inquirer_, 23 February 1842. 
30 Burton, _Albany Journal_, 110, 166. 
31 Garden, 82, 83.
build huts, decorate them and then hold a great feast, all in the European manner. At this time, Henry Camfield wrote to his sister Bessie, "the natives in the settlement and neighbourhood have a desire to improve themselves. They say "we have been long time fool, but in two or three years, all the same as white man", adding, "Anne is very interested in the sable race". Mrs Chester, an early Albany resident, too recollected the whaling with "lots of blacks and their dogs standing around" and that in her 1840s childhood "The natives swarmed around the town and used to come corroboreeing about the houses". In the same period, "natives" stole handfuls of flour through a hole broken in their wattle and daub cottage wall. This was a time when the European community lived on a very restricted diet: "there were no shops...rations were drawn".

Garden has written that the Aboriginal population around Albany started to decline in the 1830s through contact with European diseases. The reason they succumbed he suggests, was "probably because they lacked resistance...and because they were weakened by malnutrition caused by having developed excessive dependence on a limited range of European foods, particularly sugar and refined flour". Since at that time flour was only handed out every two months, it is unlikely that a dependency great enough to cause malnutrition was created. A more likely scenario is that as some Aboriginal people were attracted to the town and adopted a more sedentary life, traditional food sources already under pressure, were insufficient. Kangaroos were rapidly disappearing from areas of European occupation and illness prevented some from participating in food gathering. Food supplies were a constant source of difficulty for both Europeans and Nyungars. In the 1830s and 1840s "little fresh food was grown" and no fishing done. On Christmas Day 1848 even the celebratory handout of flour to the Aboriginal people was cancelled, to the dismay of Phillips, the Inspector of Natives. The shortage of flour is mentioned often in official correspondence and the Governor became "astonished" at the "indolence" of the agriculturalists. By 1852 the Perth Gazette reported that an express message declared "the inhabitants were out of

---

32 Perth Gazette, 29 November 1850.
33 Camfield to sister, 15 November 1850. The Camfield family letters, Battye Library Microfilm Reel 5916A (originals part of the Windeyer collection in the Mitchell Library).
35 Garden, 81.
36 ibid., 97.
37 346/029, 12 January 1849.
provisions”. 38 The *Perth Gazette* reported in April 1852 that an express message had been received: “the inhabitants were out of provisions. 39

In this environment it would be easy to attribute the Camfields’ decision in 1852 to take Aboriginal children into their home as a charitable act, a rescue of desperately hungry children. Philip Chauncy, government surveyor, who lived near the Camfields’ for several years, wrote in *Aborigines of Victoria* that a “trivial incident” was the immediate cause of the origin of Annesfield and Anne Camfield’s long involvement with Aboriginal children:

In June 1852...the natives one day went off on a bush excursion, leaving Kojonotpat – a solitary, naked little girl, about three and a half years old – to wander about the settlement at Albany. She came to our gate for breakfast every morning, saying, “Me very hungry,” and at length we mentioned the circumstances to Mrs Camfield, our near neighbour, who took her in, and soon afterwards obtained the consent of her mother to keep her.40

Hasluck seems to have based his account of the origins of Annesfield on this incident, writing in his paper that the “inmates” were “gathered in from the coloured waifs of the town and district”.41 Hicks also subscribes to this view, stating “Archdeacon Wollaston had been appalled at the number of abandoned and mistreated Aboriginal children”. In her history of the Camfields, Hicks, citing Millett stated that after Kojonotpat, “[Mrs Camfield] extended her benevolence towards others until by degree, she collected around her a school”.42 Green states that Annesfield began with Anne Camfield’s “compassion for an orphaned part-Aboriginal child”.43 Kojonotpat (Matilda) was neither at that time orphaned, nor was she “part-Aboriginal”. Anne Camfield’s own words describe Kojonotpat’s sister Bessie being taken in because “she was the daughter of a very faithful old native servant, who died believing in Jesus Christ”.44 The talented and later well-known Elizabeth Flower (Bessie) had no European ancestry and in several of

38 346/034, January – June 1851.
39 *Perth Gazette*, 23 April 1852.
41 Hasluck u.d. Battye library PR7592 (?1930s.
43 Green, *Broken Spears*, 156.
her letters as a young adult to Anne Camfield, asked that Anne “give my love to my poor dear Mother”.

Apart from the ‘mistreatment’ theory, Archdeacon Wollaston has generally been credited with the establishment of what was to become Annesfield after being inspired by Hale at Poonindie, and with Anne Camfield coming to the rescue when premises and staff were not obtainable. A reading of the sources, however, shows that Wollaston and Hale had similar time frames. It also suggests that Anne Camfield was at least an equal instigator of the plan to “promote the civilization and Christian education of native children”. Hale began a missionary enterprise for adult Aborigines at Poonindie, South Australia in late 1850. At the same time, Wollaston himself was writing to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in England that he was in contact with the government about the commencement of a native school. Given the immense difference between the European population in South Australia and that in the west, and consequently colonial revenues, the delay of two years in the re-commencement of Anglican mission work in the west is understandable. Wollaston knew of Hale’s work: his son George was assisting Hale, and by June 1851 Wollaston had selected 60 acres of land at Middleton Bay. He had Governor Fitzgerald’s support and a hundred pounds to commence work on the land. His focus on children came from his belief that Aboriginal children learnt English easily and it would be impossible “to convey our ideas on religious truths to the adults in their native tongue”. The motives expressed in this letter are a curious mixture of religious zeal and earnest intentions. As European law was being used to judge, and often hang, Aborigines, so it was felt they should have access to education in European ways. He also described his plan as an act of duty to be carried out by those to whom “God has given the lands of the heathen in possession.”

In August 1852, several months after Kojonootpat had gone to live with Anne Camfield, Wollaston wrote to the Colonial Secretary:

Mr & Mrs Camfield have recently removed into a House, a portion of which remains untenanted, and is to be let for ten pounds a year. The House formerly offered to me has

---

45 Green, *Albany Region*, 121, 123.
46 Burton, *Albany Journal*, 109; Green goes so far as to state that she “sought the assistance of Archdeacon Wollaston to provide for the needs of an increasing number of orphaned and mixed descent Aboriginal children”, *Albany Region*, 82.
47 Robin, 47.
50 *ibid.*, 110-112.
passed into other hands. Mrs Camfield has volunteered to receive six native girls for a limited time, provided there is no interference from any one at Albany except myself, if it is likely to be the means of leading to a permanent establishment.

He then goes on to budget, in detail down to the last chemise, for the establishment of "the native school" boarding six children. He states that Mrs Camfield has no servant, but that he has included a yearly wage of £10 for her companion Miss Wells, since they will be both involved with the work, along with his own wife and daughter. "T[h]e most difficult point of all" Wollaston wrote, would be "the consignment of Children to our care". The venture must be explained to the "natives" in terms of the Governor's wishes and the children formally surrendered for a stated time. Also, "I think the most hopeful way of getting the Sound natives to fall in with the plan, wd (sic) be to commence, if possible, with Children from another district". Interestingly Wollaston states: "The age Mrs Camfield stipulates for, in wh (sic) I entirely agree, is between two & five years, & the period of their consignment to the School not less than ten". 51

Anne Camfield then set the terms for the beginning of what became Annesfield. Her requirement for such very young female children may have been connected to Kojonotpat's age. Also Anne, now in her forties, was still childless. Philip Chauncy lived opposite the Camfields in his two-year period in Albany and his wife was a "Miss Mitchell one of the little girls under the care of Miss Breeze: now my old woman" wrote Henry Camfield in 1850. All were delighted to be living so close together – and the Chancys had "a lovely little girl of 1½". 52

Anne believed like Wollaston, that it was a duty to "effect the salvation of the Aborigines" since "The overruling hand of God directed us to the occupying of this land". She had a firm belief in the abilities of the Aboriginal people and the Camfields adopted a little boy themselves "so as to bring him up in a more refined way...thereby to test his abilities as a native". (Bessie Flower was taught the piano in order to be a companion to this gifted child, who died aged ten). 53 The children developed an affectionate relationship with the Camfields as evidenced by the 1860s letters of Bessie Flower, and Chauncy's account of visiting Rachel Pepper (Warndekan) who, even

51 CSR 240/176, 177.
52 Camfield to sister, 15 November 1850, Camfield letters.
53 Votes & Proceedings 1871, 23.
though married and living in Victoria, wept over a daguerreotype of Mr Camfield.\textsuperscript{54} As the years passed several white children “orphan or deserted by the mother” were also taken into the school. Bessie Flower during her journey to Gippsland, referred to one of them, writing that she had bought a “mug for Louisa to drink her water at the table”.\textsuperscript{55} This was Louisa Jane Williams, born in 1861 and formally adopted by the Camfields.\textsuperscript{56}

Wollaston wrote in May 1853 to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel that his request to Lord Grey for financial assistance for the “Native Institution” had failed. The Albany Town Trust had refused help as well, until he had collected six children to commence with, so Wollaston had turned his attention to this and was pleased to report nine children were “admitted” to the institution since November 1852. He now had “more applications for submission than I can receive”, a phrase which has been seized upon by those subscribing to the “mistreatment” theory.\textsuperscript{57} How the children were collected and admitted to what was in effect, a social experiment, is revealed in correspondence from J. Phillips, Inspector of Natives at Albany, to the Colonial Secretary’s office.

\begin{quote}
I have been requested by the Resident to procure six Native Girls under four years of age for a school as yet I have only been able to procure three the Natives do not like parting with their children.\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

That he was unable to fulfil the exact requirements of the Resident (and Anne Camfield), is shown by Wollaston’s list in his above report. Of the nine children, five were over the specified age and two were boys. Nine children under the age of eight, including infants, and a nine month old baby, would have created an enormous amount of work in an age without household appliances and with limited food supplies, suggesting that a degree of love and devotion from the women-folk \textit{was} involved. One female infant had already died, an indication perhaps that the children surrendered were those thought by the Aboriginal people to be the most vulnerable. Wollaston reported that three had been orphaned by the recent influenza and two were still “infants in arms”.\textsuperscript{59} Arthur

\textsuperscript{54} Green, \textit{Albany Region}, 121-126.  
\textsuperscript{55} ibid., 121.  
\textsuperscript{56} Battye Pioneer Index 1841- Registration No. 5625.  
\textsuperscript{57} Burton, \textit{Albany Journal}, 196.  
\textsuperscript{58} CSR 231/123, 2 November 1852.  
\textsuperscript{59} Burton, \textit{Albany Journal}, 197.
Trimmer, the new Protector of Natives, referred to the influenza in Albany in his report of April 1853, noting that seven natives were sick and unable to care for themselves.\textsuperscript{60} Wollaston believed he was concerned with "orphan children and half-castes", who if European, would have been abandoned and alone.\textsuperscript{61} He failed to see that coercion was involved in his "collecting children" and demonstrated no understanding of Aboriginal kinship systems and obligations. Trimmer received directions to ensure the separation of the children from their kin. He reported to the Colonial Secretary "I have taken means to prevent the natives from having any intercourse with the children under Mr Camfield's charge."\textsuperscript{62} Arthur Trimmer, son-in-law of Lady Richard Spencer, a leading Anglican and widow of a previous Resident Magistrate, was father of Ellen Trimmer, now helping Anne Camfield for board of 2/6d a week.\textsuperscript{63}

Anne Camfield exhibited the same determined viewpoint. Her comments included in the 1853 report to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, show a developing concern and affection for the children who had only been in her care a few short months. Nevertheless she retained an obtuseness regarding Aboriginal culture. In her 1868 report on Annesfield, which was published both in the Church of England magazine and later in the \textit{WA Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings of 1871}, she stated:

\begin{quote}
The objection many people make, that it is cruel to take their children from them, is not a solid one; because the children, left to the parents' management, or non-management, soon cast off all submission, and all care or love for the parents, so that when the latter become old and helpless, they are almost wholly neglected.\textsuperscript{64}
\end{quote}

But Anne Camfield did not believe, like Bishop Short, that all connections with family should be severed. Although the children were "indentured", that is they were under her control for ten years, she wrote that parents saw their children "whenever they like, and their children are taught to treat them with kindness and consideration."\textsuperscript{65}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[60] CSR255/77, 8 April 1853.
\item[61] Burton, \textit{Albany Journal}, 166.
\item[62] CSR 255/83, 10 May 1853.
\item[63] Garden, 74; N. W. McKail, \textit{Albany Reminiscences}. IRS 17N, Albany Local Studies Collection; Burton, \textit{Albany Journal}, 198.
\item[64] \textit{Church of England magazine}, Vol. VII, No. 1, May 1868, Battye Library; \textit{WA Legislative Council Votes and Proceedings 1871 2\textsuperscript{nd} session}, 25.
\item[65] CSR 240/176, (?!)16 August 1852.
\end{footnotes}
Anne Camfield’s every day involvement and affection for children were coupled with her missionary zeal and absolute determination that they should be integrated into white society. It is, however, not possible to write about the personal Anne and Henry Camfield, since the Camfield letters after the early 1850s are few. Although Henry can still be discerned, earnestly fair minded, in his capacity as Resident Magistrate, Anne, the young woman revealed in the letters from the Swan River colony, is no longer visible. There is only the official correspondence of a determined mother-figure.
Chapter Five - A Mission to the Heathen.

Although the Camfields are only visible at a more formal level through official correspondence during the 1850s, their missionary efforts were framed within the atmosphere of a large family.¹ By December 1853 in his account of expenditure to the Colonial Secretary’s Office, Wollaston wrote that of the ten children received, in spite of medical attention, “two sickly infants have died, suffering from weakening of the Digestive Organs, a very common complaint among the Natives”.² Government requirements for funding were that ten children be maintained, and influenza raging, some of the children were orphans and very young. The oldest child was Rhoda Tanatan at 8 years of age.³ Ellen Wells, Ellen Trimmer and Anne Camfield, helped by Mrs Wollaston and her daughter Sophy, cared for the children.⁴ The numbers slowly increased over the years but remained relatively small: in 1858 there were 15 or 16; in 1863, 20 and when Annesfield closed at Albany in 1871, seventeen children were transferred to Perth.⁵ By 1858 when the Inquirer published a lengthy description of activities in the house, five children, including Kojonupat, were dead, as was their Anglican mentor, the Reverend John Ramsden Wollaston.⁶

The children continued to live in close contact with the Camfields.⁷ In 1858 Camfield House was built.⁸ In 1861 a Mr Smith was employed as schoolmaster for the new school with the building extended in 1863 to provide accommodation for him and his wife.⁹ Hale noted how extensive the buildings were, but that the Camfields left their

² Inwards correspondence, Colonial Secretary’s Office CSR269/125, 127, 24 December 1853. State Records Office of Western Australia.
⁴ CSR 240/176, (?)16 August 1852. Ellen Wells was Anne Camfield’s companion; Gospel Missionary, 3.
⁶ WA Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings 1871, 2nd session, 27.Kojonupat died “from inflammation of the lungs consequent on a cold”, that is, pneumonia.
⁷ CSR269/127, CSR269/125, 24 December 1853; CSR298/folio indecipherable 29 August 1854. Wollaston’s sixty acres at Middleton Bay, with fruit trees and a cottage was never used.
⁸ Heritage Council assessment documentation 2001, 1; Inquirer 18 August 1858 report mentions a schoolroom.
⁹ CSR470/16, 4 May 1861 indicates that an additional schoolroom was built; CSR470/26, 1 August 1861; CSR531/16, 8 November 1863 and reply CSR531/17.
own home unoccupied and lived in the institution building. The colonial government of Western Australia provided the greater part of the money needed to maintain Annesfield, beginning with £100 towards development of the Middleton Bay grant and £100 for the upkeep of the children. Wollaston’s initial budget was therefore scrupulously careful, allowing only for such basic foods as flour, rice, sugar, meat and potatoes at an estimated cost of 8d. per day per child. There were constant appeals for money to the Society for Propagation of the Gospel in England, and donations were received from sympathetic colonists. The Camfields themselves supported two children entirely in 1854 and paid for the “animal food”.

The first 200-pound was sanctioned in a private conversation between Wollaston and the Governor, emphasising the close relationships among the small ruling hierarchy. Later the amount of money was formalised by being placed on the official government estimates. After nineteen years the amount expended for maintenance of the children had reached 1/- each per day, and at various times, wages were paid to various staff, none of whom seem to have stayed very long. The Camfields and Miss Trimmer were the mainstays of Annesfield and the Camfields contributed financially. Hale noted in 1864 “they have again expended a considerable sum from their own private means upon the building”. In 1863 they paid for Rachel Warndekan’s clothes and her steamer fare to Victoria for an arranged marriage, and until 1861 they worked without payment.

Details given by the *Inquirer* of the “useful domestic works” being taught to the girls were calculated to appeal to those hard working colonists who viewed Aboriginal life styles as feckless, as was the emphasis on the simplicity of the education given, and the depth of religious knowledge acquired. There are glimpses of a happy, intimate atmosphere with descriptions of the children’s antics, their pet dog, and the preparations for Rhoda’s coming wedding. A copy of fourteen year old Rhoda’s thank-you letter shows maturity and education of a high standard: years later Bessie Flower’s letters exhibit similar characteristics. There was book reading and a piano, which suggests

---

10 Extract from Hale’s diary: IRS390M, Albany Local Studies Collection.
11 CSR240/176, 16 August 1852.
13 CSR298/158, 30 July 1854.
14 Extract from Hale’s diary: IRS390M, Albany Local Studies Collection.
15 CSR531/I0, 4 August 1863.
16 *Inquirer*, 18 August 1858; Green, *Albany Region*, 121-126.
that the education given was far beyond the Inquirer's reported "reading and writing, and a little arithmetic". 17

In 1860 Governor Kennedy, unpopular for his efforts to bring efficiency to the civil service, sent several stinging letters of rebuke to the Resident Magistrate of Albany for his somewhat relaxed attitudes. 18 After the second one, Henry Camfield asked for leave of absence and was refused. The old familiar intimacy of the elite was changing and Henry immediately, in his usual courtly language ("I would not have given him the unpleasantness of a refusal to me if I had known it would be inconsistent with his duty to grant it"), resigned his post. 19 Henry worked on until the new Resident Magistrate arrived and was then retained as an Assistant Magistrate at £50 per annum, and as Superintendent of the Native Institution at a salary of £50 plus forage for a horse, or £100 per year. 20 Annesfield in a sense had become a government institution. An account for goods was sent to the colonial secretary's office and additions were approved, for which the Anglican clergyman Meade, was designing a plan "for it to be creditable as a government institution". 21 A headmaster and mistress were hired for £150 for a year. 22 The Camfields had already asked for children to be sent to them from other areas and in October 1862 Anne Camfield responded to a government request to take in older children. She wrote that although they had done so in the past, there was "too much of the native in them", however "[I] am rejoiced with the prospect of increased numbers which your letter affords". 23 By now Anne Camfield was on the official pay roll, and writing letters in her own right. The wife of the hired headmaster had not been "interested in natives" so Anne had continued in the role of schoolmistress. When Ellen Trimmer resigned temporarily, Henry asked that Anne receive her salary. Frederick Barlee, the colonial secretary wrote against the margin of the letter "Mrs Camfield...has all along been the real mistress, and devotes her whole time in the...(illegible) and education of the native children. She will make a good use of the salary, which cannot be in better hands". 24

17 Votes & Proceedings, 1871, 23.
19 CSR459/94, 4 September 1860.
21 CSR470/16, 4 May 1861.
22 CSR470/26, 1 August 1861.
23 CSR495/18, 3 October 1862.
24 CSR495/7, 9 April 1862.
There were other changes throughout the 1860s. The Colonial Secretary now made tours of inspection throughout the state. Bishop Hale, unlike Wollaston who had lived close by, could only visit from Perth occasionally, although he stayed with the Camfields when he did, and wrote of them with affection. Annesfield became known beyond the small European society in Western Australia by virtue of the change in shipping at Albany, as steam ship routes were established, and interstate travel became easier. But for the Aboriginal people, increased shipping, the spread of pastoralism and greater numbers of Europeans impacted on their lives with ever-harsher effects. Aboriginal women were being kidnapped. The new Resident Magistrate urged the Executive Council to make it a criminal act “for either black or white to take or retain a native woman contrary to the consent of her husband...such an Act would remove a main cause of much violence and cruelty”. Illnesses struck the Albany region: scarlatina in 1860 killed 29, reported Trimmer: “the best and the youngest” with more dead in the country. This may have been the episode of which Anne wrote in her report when listing the various deaths. Sarah and a baby died when there were “sixteen in bed at this time, together with the young lady who was my chief help besides another poor lady in the house who was mentally afflicted”. As Annesfield grew in reputation, potential converts to Christianity declined in numbers. Anne Camfield lamented that as “the school progresses favourably...it does not increase in numbers. A bad influenza is exercised over the natives in the Bush to prevent their bringing their children in to us”.

Further north, deliberately removed from unhealthy European contact, Bishop Salvado was requesting that the remainder of the Roman Catholic mission land, almost a 1,000 acres of which had been accidentally sold, be reserved for twelve or fourteen years. He had already asked for, and been granted, a £100 per year towards “civilizing the natives”. Salvado’s work in training adult Aborigines for agriculture was gaining more favour with the colonists than the Camfields’ education of children, although according to Stannage, Salvado separated men from their wives, and children from their parents. He was also known to have used physical violence towards those who

26 Executive Council Minutes, Consignment 1058 WAS1620, 1 July 1862, 204.
27 Trimmer to Camfield 6 October 1860. IRS/335M/40, Albany Local Studies Collection. Copy, original in State Records Office.
28 Votes & Proceedings, 1871, 27.
29 CSR531/10, 4 August 1863.
30 Consign. 1058 WAS1620, 26 November 1861, 162; 22 April 1861, 122.
absconded from employment. 31 By comparison, Anne Camfield, when confronted by “distressing circumstances”, wrote of “many sorrowful hours and anxious nights...and many a weary disappointment”. The Camfields believed in integration and from time to time also took in European children who were not supported by the government. 32 The greater emphasis on Annesfield as an institution in the 1860s does not appear to have changed their relationship with the children who lived with them. Henry Camfield wrote in 1861 in answer to a government query on the various allocations of money, “We have at no time had girls old enough to do the washing, cooking...by themselves”. 33 This indicates that although all the children were involved in household work, they were not solely responsible for tasks.

Childhood as we know it today was a developing concept, particularly for children of what would now be called the “working class”, who formed the greater part of the population. Young children under twelve in England had died in the mines in the late 1830s, and been gaoled and whipped for theft at the Swan River Colony. 34 In the early 1850s children still swept chimneys in England and in colonial Castlemaine, one eight year old girl was sent to court for stealing a necklace from her employer. 35 In Staffordshire, the pottery manufacturers strongly resisted improvements in working conditions for children until 1864. In Perth, Honor Scattergood’s five young children were starving in 1862. While Honor was granted 1/- per day to keep the family, it was suggested that both she and her nine year-old daughter could supplement this tiny amount by working. 36 Annesfield’s children went out into the world at the end of their ten year indenture period, either to marry or to support themselves in employment, and some of them like Rhoda, were quite young. But at least they had a childhood, although it was European. As well as church attendance, school lessons and household tasks, there was laughter and gift-giving. They even seem to have had pocket money to buy

33 CSR470/29, 31 Aug 1861.
34 George Macaulay Trevelyan, English Social History: a survey of six centuries from Chaucer to Queen Victoria. (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1978), 479; Phyllis Garrick “Children of the Poor and Industrious classes in Western Australia, 1829-1880” in Childhood and Society in Western Australia, ed. Penelope Hetherington (Nedlands WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1988), 16.
tiny presents for birthdays “they will spend their only penny to procure one”.\textsuperscript{37} The children called Anne and Henry “Missie and Martie” and Bessie Flower’s letters during her journey to Victoria in 1867, show that the atmosphere was still open and informal. She wrote that Nora’s baby had disturbed her sleep so much “I often wish I could pitch him overboard”.\textsuperscript{38}

Young women were sent from Annesfield to Victoria to marry educated Aboriginal Christian men as early as 1863 when Rachel Warndekan left by steamer to join her future husband Nathaniel Pepper of Ebenezer Mission. In the same letter that Anne reported on this event to the colonial secretary’s office, she commented that “[T]he half castes are much better appreciated and we have less difficulty in disposing of them nor yet of the boys either half caste or black. We have good accounts of those who are in service”.\textsuperscript{39} The Camfields had encountered the problem of integrating young Aboriginal women into white society. Some had married Europeans, including ex convicts, when they left Annesfield, but to be an unmarried female worker in a white household was, according to Anne, to be sent to “almost certain ruin”.\textsuperscript{40} There was no specifically reserved area upon which Aborigines could set themselves up as farmers and live as a community. Anne Camfield lamented that there were no “Institutions for adult natives and half-castes, where they have farms on which these people can find profitable employment”. She addressed the issue of finding either suitable husbands or employment for educated young women, by sending some of them to missions in Victoria or South Australia.\textsuperscript{41}

It is ironic that a time when Annesfield became well known and was attracting interest and donations, Aborigines were increasingly viewed only as a “problem” to be solved. The European population in Western Australia had slowly increased to over 20,000 in 1864.\textsuperscript{42} Traditional Aboriginal life in the south west, fractured by disease and the imposition of European law, with its gaolings and executions, was collapsing. The interest and curiosity of early settlers in a unique and different life style to their own had gone, replaced by arguments over solutions to the “problem” of what was now a

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Inquirer}, 18 August 1858.
\textsuperscript{38} Neville Green comp., \textit{Aborigines of the Albany Region 1821-1898. The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australia Vol.VI.} (Nedlands WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1989), 121.
\textsuperscript{39} CSR531/10 4/August 1863.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Votes & Proceedings}, 1871, 26.
dispossessed, suffering minority. The cost of any government aid came under scrutiny, as did methods of "Civilising and Christianising" Aborigines, still an outcome desired by most colonists, and Salvado's methods seemed more popular than those used at Annesfield. After Hale gave a series of lectures on Poonindie, one letter to the Inquirer responded that Aborigines should not be taught reading or writing, only how to "cultivate the ground", continuing the complaint that there was a shortage of labour. 43 Then there were snide attacks from a Protestant clergyman about the cost of Annesfield, vigorously defended by the Anglican James Brown. 44 Racism was also gaining greater strength. European ancestry had always been viewed as superior; now the belief grew that children of mixed ancestry were superior to those of purely Aboriginal ancestry. A correspondent to the Church of England magazine, noting that of Annesfield's twenty children, eight were "half-castes", recommended that numbers, particularly those of "half-castes" should be increased: "God has granted to them a stronger intellect and seated it in a more robust body". 45

Florence Nightingale, who among her many other interests, was an investigator of the social sciences, had invited contributions to her paper on native peoples. Salvado wrote at length about his own methods and Nightingale supported him, denigrating education for Aboriginal people and stating "Show him his duty to God. And teach him how to plough". She believed of Aborigines that "very few of the human race are lower in the scale of civilisation than these poor people" and unfortunately, Anne Camfield's brief comments also included in the paper were used to reinforce this position. Anne wrote that native women in their "wild" state were "filthy, loathsome, revolting...altogether unlovable". 46 Since Anne also insisted that the school's children were taught to respect their parents and were able to see them whenever they wished, we cannot interpret her meaning beyond suggesting that it applied to physical appearance and status rather than moral characteristics. Both Anne and Henry were regarded as knowing a great deal about Aboriginal people and Bessie Flower's letter asking that Anne give her love to "my poor dear mother", shows that Anne was in close contact with them. 47 If in an era of British ascendancy, it appeared that the distinctions

43 Hale diaries 1848-1875, 13 September 1865, 84; Inquirer 24 November 1865.
44 Inquirer, 1 January 1868.
46 Florence Nightingale, extract "Sanitary statistics of native colonial schools and hospitals" Battye Library PR 4000.
47 Green, Albany Region 123.
of race never left Anne Camfield, it is possible there were differences between the Camfields’ behaviour at home, and Anne’s statements made for the benefit of an increasingly unsympathetic public, who might also be a source of financial support.

The affection which Bessie lavished on Anne in her letters, calling her “dearest more than mother”, and Henry’s gentle teasing about Bessie’s birthday cake, show a familiarity not visible in public documents. Anne’s report, first written in 1868, speaks with detachment about “natives” and refers to “a little black girl” (Bessie) adding, “We have had many equal, and one or two decidedly superior to B__”. Yet when the Camfields took three months leave to go to Sydney, visiting Henry’s sisters, now all in Australia, Anne’s letter on her return showed the changes that had taken place in their lives. There are no religious homilies: the concerns of Annesfield take equal place with affection for her nieces and nephews in Sydney. “I would write an account of our children and how glad they were to see us but that I am so tired with writing and having visitors all day that I am almost asleep.” The letter is full of practicalities – money had “poured into our lap” and would Mary send a sewing machine by the next steamer as “I have so much winter clothing to make for the children”.

In 1868, while Bishop Hale was absent in England, Annesfield seems to have come under close examination by churchmen and others. Apart from criticism of the cost, and the demand for an annual report, it was also suggested that a combined Protestant committee should run it. The editor of the Church of England magazine entered the fray and was immediately attacked by another correspondent for daring to suggest that “any Native Mission under the united guidance of the ‘various Protestant Communions’ must be ‘unsuccessful’.” Then in May the report on Annesfield was published in the Church of England magazine. This did not prevent a discussion in August in the Legislative Council about the cost of running the school, now estimated at nearly £700, with the question raised: had operations been as favourable as expected? Governor Hampton’s reply was revealing. Although most members supported continued expenditure, the Governor, no friend of Hale’s, stated that he thought

---

49 Votes and Proceedings, 1871, 25.
50 Anne to Mary Windeyer, Henry’s niece, 5 June, 1865. The Camfield family letters, Battye Library Microfilm Reel 5916A (originals in the Mitchell Library).
51 Inquirer, 1 January 1868.
52 Inquirer, 12 February 1868.
expenditure would not appear on the estimates next year, that Mr Camfield was “not desirous of continuing the establishment” and most damning of all:

this institution was not so much of a success as was thought; and he was sure the result of its operations, with so large a grant of public aid, fell very far short of what was contemplated. 54

What did success mean? In Anne Camfield’s terms it meant Europeanisation, although Anne was aware that the process of “civilisation” would take several generations, and urged patience. Her report had listed with pride the accomplishments of those who had taken their place in white society as workers, either as farm labourers, married women, or mission teachers. She alluded to “failures” such as “Ellen” who, on being sent to the eastern states, as were many other Annesfield graduates, had succumbed to “evil passions”. 55 In short, the attaining of respectability would have been much the same as among the white labouring classes. However Annesfield’s children were costing the government money and as colonial coffers emptied with the end of transportation, “failures” were emphasised and “successes” down-played. The situation was exacerbated by an increase in Protestant denominations: the Church of England could no longer assume it would be privileged in receiving financial assistance from the government.

In June 1870 Bishop Hale caused a flurry of excitement by declaring his intention to resign and go to Albany to take over the chaplaincy there, since Annesfield, we now read has “fallen into a condition requiring a fresh start”. 56 Some years later Hale wrote that this was “upon the occasion of the late Mr Camfield’s illness”. 57 Several historians have incorrectly attributed the illness to Mrs Camfield, as explanation for the closure of the Albany school. 58 Hale’s actual letter of resignation gives two reasons for his decision. His hope of “preserving the Native Institution there from the extinction which seems now to be impending over it”, and the fact that he is approaching sixty and finding episcopal duties onerous. Although the Camfields were

54 Perth Gazette, 12 August 1868.
56 Hale papers Notebook 5209/9A, 1854-1875, extracts of letters to his daughters Amy and Mary. Battye Library, also CSR661/143 8 June 1870.
57 Letter from the Lord Bishop of Perth concerning the support of Aboriginal Native Children in the Establishment under his care. WA Legislative Council Votes and Proceedings, no. 2, 1873-75.
58 For example Robin, 147 states Hale visited Albany early in 1870 for this reason. He was in fact investigating allegations of MacSorley’s drinking — see CSR661/91 14 February 1870. Camfield was present at the inquiry; see also Green, Albany Region, 83 and John Harris, One Blood, 200 years of Aboriginal encounter with Christianity: a story of hope (Sutherland NSW: Albatross books, 1990), 268.
ageing (Anne was three years older than Hale), the motives behind the transfer of Annesfield’s children to Perth in March 1871 were far more complex. In August 1870 the Colonial Secretary Frederick Barlee, now the second most powerful man in the colony, was at odds with Bishop Hale over Barlee’s support for Governor Weld.\textsuperscript{59} Weld was a Roman Catholic and determined to financially assist Roman Catholic schools.\textsuperscript{60} Yet Barlee was a staunch Anglican, a member of the Perth Diocesan Society. The August issue of the \textit{Church of England magazine} published a paper on “Native and Half-Caste Missions”, followed by a report of what had taken place at the Diocesan Society meeting, a meeting attended by Perth’s powerful Anglican elite.\textsuperscript{61}

The paper referred to the state of the Albany institution after its years of working for the one end, the salvation and improvement of “natives”, and posed the question as to future mission efforts. Should a Poonindie-like institution be established, which would be economical, or an institution of our own, that is, one in our own locality?\textsuperscript{62} The Diocesan meeting, thankful Hale had withdrawn his resignation, discussed the issue at length, with much hand-wringing at past remission. Hale responded to Barlee’s comment that no doubt he had “well matured plans of operation” by pointing out the economic advantages of focussing on children, and stated of Annesfield, “I am very sanguine that the institution will again bear fruit”. However a Mr Knight shrewdly noted:

the increased interest that would attach to an Institution more central than Albany, which he considered lost much in public sympathy and support from its remoteness and isolation.

He continued that this evil “could be lessened to some extent by boarding and lodging some native children at the orphanage”. Hale was appointed to take charge of all monies donated to a new subscription opened up for mission work, and a late amendment saw Barlee appointed equal administrator.\textsuperscript{63}

Hale had made many protestations about the continuance of the Albany institution. But it appears likely that he bowed to general feeling, and more particularly Barlee’s insistence, and in an effort not to further inflame the relationship between himself and Barlee, made a compromise decision that would see the closure of

\textsuperscript{59} Robin, 69.
\textsuperscript{60} Robin, 126-7.
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Church of England magazine newspaper} No. 4 Vol. IX, 5, 7.(previously the \textit{Church of England magazine}). Battye Library.
\textsuperscript{62} ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{63} ibid., 7.
Annesfield but the continuance of Anglican mission efforts. Barlee would have inspected Annesfield again in August when he visited Albany on his way to the Eastern States. In all probability it was Hale who communicated the decision to the Camfields when he also visited Albany in August 1870, since Henry Camfield, in the same month, wrote somewhat plaintively to the Colonial Secretary’s office:

It appears that there exists a strong feeling of belief in the minds of many persons, that a Native Institution is not likely to excite much interest amongst the Colonists nor to be adequately supported, unless it be carried on nearer to Head Quarters and on this account, the children now under our care, are about to be removed to Perth.....

Henry Camfield was now completely deaf, resigning as a magistrate because he could not properly hear evidence. He was no longer to be the official Superintendent of the Native Institution: the Camfields, no longer part of the ruling hierarchy, but merely “old colonists” were to be without income. Could a pension be granted for thirty years of government service, asked Henry?  

65 CSR658/1-2, 26 August 1870.  
66 ibid.
Chapter Six – Conclusion.

In March 1871 the children from Annesfield were removed to Perth. They were placed in temporary accommodation close to existing orphanages and later moved to Middle Swan. The Camfields had been without income for several months, wages having ceased in December 1870. Although Hale was to be in charge of the new “native institution”, he knew little of Annesfield’s finances and wrote to the Colonial Secretary requesting details, since he “was not very sure how the matter stands financially”. Nineteen years earlier, Wollaston in his initial budget for the mission, had even costed the price of children’s chemises.

Other changes had taken place since 1852. Attitudes towards Aborigines had changed and it is surprising Annesfield received government money for as long as it did. The second generation of settlers had less toleration than the first for Aboriginal people and no qualms about dispossessing them from the land. Pastoralism had spread northward from Perth following the journeys of the Gregories in the 1840s and those Aboriginal people who stood in the way of this advance had become “another resource to be exploited, or... wild animals to broken and tamed”. In 1864 when Panter, Goldwyer and Harding set out from a small settlement at Roebuck Bay in search of further grazing land they were attacked and killed by local Aboriginal people at La Grange Bay. European retribution, led by Maitland Brown, was savage and Perth provided heroes’ funerals for the three men. Hale, while not approving of the enormous funeral train, was aware of how Aboriginal people had become “the enemy”. During the same period in the south west, disease and the impact of British law had fractured tribal groupings and Aboriginal people were no longer seen as a major threat. Under these conditions the government continued to pay for the social experimentation begun with Wollaston. Annesfield was under the auspices of my Lord Bishop, a

1 *Inquirer*, 5 April 1871. The children were accompanied by Miss Trimmer.
3 CSR 685/1, 9 May 1871.
4 CSR 685/4, 5 May 1871.
popular and influential churchman, it was a long way from the capital, and it could be labelled "the anodyne we apply to our consciences".

In Perth, Bishop Hale continued pricking those consciences throughout the 1860s, writing letters of defence to the paper, giving his lectures on Poonindie, and collecting donations for Annesfield.

The Camfields hoped their students would integrate into white society. In this regard they maintained the ideals of their intimate friend, Governor Hutt. Hutt, arriving in 1839 full of "reforming zeal", instituted a number of programs for the "civilisation" of Aboriginal people, and hoped that they would "gradually be absorbed into and become one people with their intruders". Since at that time there was a high demand for labour, the colonists looked to his programs to provide more workers. By the 1850s, after the arrival of convicts, shortage of labour was no longer the pressing issue it had been. The need for labour therefore cannot be seen as a major factor in the continued government support for Annesfield's education and training of children. Rather it was the notion of making Aboriginal people "useful members of society", that is, civilising them, along with the Camfields' "Christianising".

It has been argued that in the 1830s, reports to the British Government regarding the ill treatment of indigenous peoples had led to the appointment of people such as Hutt, with the intention of improving conditions. This was also the era of the anti-slavery movement and evangelistic missionary work. In Britain in the 1850s and 1860s, as in Western Australia, the mood changed. "New voices were coming to the fore, a new colonial discourse with its own form of racism and its own polemic on Englishness was emerging". The strongest voice was that of Carlyle who "insisted on immutable racial difference and constructed that difference hierarchically: black men must always be ruled by white". In defining what was English, race and colour were identifiers of what was not English. In Western Australia, as the European population grew, the identification of who belonged to the dominant group, and who did not, paralleled these...
attitudes. There was a rising swell of support for biological racism in Britain in the 1860s culminating in the debates surrounding Governor Eyre of Jamaica. Perth's *Inquirer* reflected a similar form of racism in 1870. A report of Hale's resignation in order to rescue Annesfield being withdrawn adjoins a column reporting on a Professor Hume at the Town Hall. A huge crowd attended Hume's lecture on "health", introduced by the Colonial Secretary. Hume illustrated his discourse with displays of various Aboriginal skulls, pointing out that they showed an absence of "hope" — "a peculiarity of the race". He then showed a "half-caste" skull, "which indicated much greater development of the region in explanation, and lastly that of a European which showed comparative perfection".

The Camfields ideology did not change with the times. Although recognised outside Western Australia, they became as marginalised at home as the people they defended. They remained exponents of the "cultural racism" of the 1830s. Their attachment to evangelical Christianity gave them the certainty that their own culture was superior to all other others and they failed to recognise any value in Aboriginal culture. At the same time, unlike the biological racists, they continued to insist that Aboriginal people had the capabilities of European people given the same opportunities. They tempered their religious superiority with compassion and genuine affection for children and as such presented one of the kinder faces of evangelism. They may be included in the small number of people, always a minority, who from initial British colonisation onwards, recognised that an injustice had been done to the original inhabitants and attempted to redress it within the constraints of the era.

Henry Camfield died of "aortic failure" in October 1872 and was buried next to the Reverend John Ramsden Wollaston at Albany. His estate was less than three hundred pounds: his years of earthly service had not given him the financial rewards hoped for when the *Caroline* arrived. Anne Camfield moved temporarily to Perth with her adopted daughter, Louisa Jane, staying with senior Anglican clergy, and then

14 Hall, *Middle Class*, 209, 249. Edward John Eyre, known in Western Australia for his crossing of the Nullarbor from South Australia in 1841, had become Governor of Jamaica. His savage reprisals against an uprising of ex-slaves at Morant Bay in 1865 saw him acclaimed in Britain as "an English hero".

15 *Inquirer*, 22 June 1870. Hale's resignation as bishop "to see to the well-being of the Native Institution", was much acclaimed.

16 *Inquirer*, 22 June 1870.

17 Hall, *Middle Class*, 207.

18 Duplicate Register of Death 6363. State Records Office of Western Australia.

19 Consignment 3403. 1873/427. However St John's Church in Albany records his service with a plaque.
seems to have returned to Albany. Hale wrote in 1875 that on a trip to Albany he “went up to Mrs Camfield’s cottage to breakfast”. Louisa Jane married in Albany in 1880 and moved to Adelaide. Anne Camfield also moved to South Australia and died there, aged 88. It is not known if she corresponded with any Annesfield pupils, particularly Bessy Cameron, after leaving Albany. She continued corresponding with Bishop Hale until they were both in their eighties.

The Camfields had lived quietly in Perth, Henry writing in 1841 “we give no parties, nor ever go to any”. Nevertheless they were accepted into the small group that comprised Perth’s ruling hierarchy. They were friends of the military commander Colonel Irwin, and of Governor Hutt, and Henry’s early arrival in the colony had given him acquaintance with influential people such as William Mackie. In a period when Anglicanism was the religion of the upper classes, their devoutness was a major factor in social acceptance.

In Albany they continued to live quietly. Their marginalisation came about partly through their geographical isolation. They had chosen to continue their mission work after Henry’s resignation as Resident Magistrate in 1860. But in spite of the steamships calling in on their way to the eastern states, Albany remained small. While Hale regarded them with affection, the Camfields were no longer friends of the governor or members of the ruling hierarchy. With the increase in Perth’s population, Anglicanism’s privileged position was being challenged in the 1870s as support grew for other Protestant sects and Roman Catholicism. Society had diversified and class structures become more layered, even in Albany. Although the Camfields were in fact early representatives in colonial Western Australia of the middle classes, their hopes and ambitions were not so much concerned with earthly position as with position in the life hereafter.

---

21 Hale diaries 309A, 207. 5 November 1875.
22 South Australian index of deaths registrations 1842-1915, book 233, 115. State Library of Western Australia; Consignment 3403 1897 /049 She left her Staffordshire inheritance of not less than 1200 pounds to Louisa “absolutely for her own separate use free from all marital debts and control”.
24 11 June 1841 Henry to father. The Camfield family letters, Battye Library Microfilm Reel 5916A (originals part of the Windeyer collection in the Mitchell Library).
25 Donald S. Garden, Albany: a Panorama of the Sound from 1827 ((West Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Australia, 1977), 170. The population was only 515 adults in 1871.
26 Garden, 166.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Battye Library:

Anne Camfield, photograph. Battye 1022B.
The Camfield family letters, Battye Library Microfilm Reel 5916A (originals in the
Mitchell library).
Mrs Mitchell’s Diary 1838-1840. Copied from the original by Alfred Burton.
Notes by the Rev. George King, LL.D., in connection with his work in Western
Australia – 1841- 1849. PR 7568.
Battye Pioneer Index 1841- Registration No. 5625.
Church of England magazine Vol.2-10, 1863-70.
Church of England magazine newspaper No. 4 Vol. IX.
Hale Diaries, 1848-1875. Typescript by Canon A Burton, Battye 309A.
Hale papers Notebook 5209/9A, 1854-1875, extracts of letters to his daughters Amy
and Mary.
Nightingale, Florence. “Sanitary Statistics of Native Colonial Schools and Hospitals”,
(?) 1865. PR 4000.

London Guild Hall Manuscript Library:

Annual reports of the Commonwealth and Continental Church Society 1838-1847 Vol.
3, MS 15718/3.

Albany Local Studies Collection:

IRS/314M/3.
Extract from Hale’s diary: IRS 390M.
Colonial Secretary’s Office, 21 January 1861, IRS 390M. Original in State Records
Office.
Trimmer to Camfield 6 October 1860. IRS/335M/40. Original in State Records
Office.
Size of Albany, Robert Stephens collection. IRS 39N.
McKail, N.W. Albany Reminiscences. IRS 17N.

Western Australian State Records Office:

WA Legislative Council Votes and Proceedings 1871, 2nd session.
WA Legislative Council Votes and Proceedings, no. 2, 1873-75. Letter from the Lord
Bishop of Perth concerning the support of Aboriginal Native Children in the
Establishment under his care.
Executive Council Minutes 1862. 1058 WAS1620
Inwards Correspondence, Colonial Secretary’s Office, State Records Office of Western
Australia. Acc. 36.
Outwards Correspondence, Colonial Secretary’s Office, State Records Office of
Western Australia. Consignment 346 Series 2528.
Royal Western Australian Historical Society:

Brown papers 1471A/35-40.
Mitchell papers

Internet sources

The Christian Heritage of Stoke-on-Trent:
www.thepotteries.org/spiritual_history.html.

Pigot & Co.’s Directory of Staffordshire:
www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/bicentenary/cambridgeshire.html;

Personal communication

Camfield, G. 12 September 2005. G. Camfield@lse.ac.uk

Scholars’ Theses


Unpublished Works

Newspapers

Inquirer and Commercial News.
Perth Gazette.

Secondary Sources:


Cameron, J. M. R. and E.K.G. Jaggard, editors. *Western Australian Readings*. Western Australia: Churchlands College, 1977


Garrick, Phyllis, "Children of the Poor and Industrious Classes in Western Australia, 1829-1880". In *Childhood and Society in Western Australia*, ed. Penelope Hetherington. Nedlands WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1988.


