

of the Peace serving on the Bench in Rugeley until his death.

For the last twenty years of his life Frederic moved to The Hollies in Church Street, Rugeley, close to his birthplace and his sister Mrs. Alice Jane Wetherall. He continued to serve as a school trustee and even became a school manager at Colton until well into his 70's.

He died on the 17th. January 1921 at the age of 78 and was buried in Rugeley Cemetery. His gravestone bears the inscription: - "Traveller and tourer abroad. A worker for others at home"- a fitting memorial for a very interesting man who left an invaluable photographic legacy to both Colton and Australia.



F. Bonney approx 1911.

References.

Robert Lindsay 'The Bonney Photographs' Published 1983 (By Western Readers P.O. Box Dubbo 2830 New South Wales).

Reference Libraries at Rugeley, Canberra, Sydney and Perth.

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The Parr Family.

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Pictures.

Colton History Society collection.

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Colton History Society

The Life and Times of Frederic Bonney

The family background of Frederic Bonney.

Frederic Bonney was born in Rugeley in 1842 and was the seventh child of the Rev. Thomas Bonney and his second wife Eliza Ellen nee Smith. On his mother's side Frederic descended from a yeoman family named Pegg. They had held lands in Colton from at least the mid 1500's. His maternal grandfather Edward Smith inherited Old Wood, Parchfields and Newlands from his uncle John Pegg. Edward added to the family wealth whilst working in Manchester before returning to live at Crossley Stone in Rugeley.

Frederic's father, Rev. Thomas, was educated at Cambridge and became headmaster of Rugeley Grammar School and Vicar of Pipe Ridware. As headmaster he educated his younger brother Charles, who then went on to gain lasting fame by emigrating to Australia and becoming one of the celebrated pioneering overlanders who drove cattle on new routes

down to Adelaide. He returned for four years to England and it is then that possibly the young Frederic and an older brother met their Uncle Charles. The two brothers then went on to follow in his footsteps and make challenging and distant careers also out in Australia.

Frederic Bonney's Life.

Frederic was educated at Marlborough School and in 1865 travelled to Mount Murchison sheep station close to the settlement of Wilcannia that had been founded in 1859 on the Darling River in New South Wales. He went to join his older brother Edward who may have been there from the settlement's beginnings. Frederic established a base at Momba, some 50 miles to the north in the Paroo River basin. The 100 plus photographs in his Australian collection and the notes that he made, give a vivid account of his life and enjoyment during his 16 years in the outback. The remote homesteads at Momba and

Mount Murchison and the supply centre at Wilcannia and Bourke are all recorded by him, contrasting with the shots he also took of the expanding cities such as Adelaide and Sydney; their tropical gardens and the natural beauty of the inland wooded areas.

Photography appears to have been his passion and he took many pictures of the settlers and the indigenous Aborigines. He took photographs of activities around the sheep stations: gathering and processing the wool and taking it by bullock wagons to the steamboat pulled barges ready for conveyance to Adelaide.

His brother Edward is reported in the 1870's to have taken charge of the Post Office at Wilcannia and this fits in with the fact that we know at this time a son of Charles Dickens was appointed as manager of Mount Murchison, presumably replacing Edward. Earlier Dickens' son had been an overseer at Momba and he appears there in one of Frederic's photographs.

During 1881 or soon after Frederic made a farewell trip further into the interior. Some of his photographs record this trip. Some of Bonney's most lasting and telling studies were of the Aboriginal people, their languages

and customs. He was perhaps the first person to photograph them extensively. In turn they gave him a name. They called him "Yellow Bird Egg".

Soon after he and Edward returned to England. In 1883 Edward died and was buried in the churchyard at St. Augustine's, Rugeley. Later that year Frederic read a paper that he had written on "Some Customs of the Aborigines of the Darling River New South Wales" to an audience in London. For this research he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

In the late 1880's Frederic moved into Colton House which he rented from the Horsfall family until 1902.



Hall of Colton House.

He took many beautiful photographs of Colton, its inhabitants and its surrounds. These now form an invaluable photographic record of the village

in the closing years of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th. A photograph of the infant class at St. Mary's school, Colton with their teacher was recently found to have the date 15th July 1898 plus all their names on the back in his handwriting!

Frederic was very active in his retirement years in England. He was a keen gardener and served as a church warden at St. Mary's Church in Colton. He was a school trustee and took a great interest in the school. He helped organise village activities for the children such as skating, picnics and the May Queen celebrations, all of which he photographed.

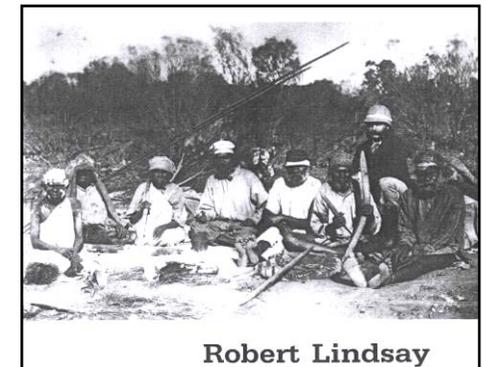


May Day celebration.

In 1923 his sister Mrs Alice Jane Wetherall sent his collection of Australian photographs and notes to the Sydney Anthropological Society. Their historic value as some of the first photographs taken of Aborigines in New South Wales

and the life of the early white settlers was soon acknowledged and the collection was transferred to the Mitchell Library in Sydney and the Canberra National Library.

In 1983 Mr. Robert Lindsay, Head of Wilcannia Central school, in New South Wales, wrote a book based on this collection of Bonney's photographs. He was assisted locally in his research into the family by Don Brown of Rugeley library



Robert Lindsay

The book was about the life of Bonney whilst he lived and worked in Australia. He used Bonney's photographs and notes to illustrate for school children what life was like on the early sheep stations and also to give them some insight into the life of the Aborigines.

Bonney was the first chairman of the newly formed Colton Parish Council and also became a Justice