

Royal Western Australian Historical Society's
Annual Pioneers Memorial Service
on Sunday 10th June 1990 at St Bartholomews Chapel, East Perth Cemeteries,

Commemorating Anthony O'Grady Lefroy

Citation by Mr Bob Lefroy

The Lefroys are of Huguenot origin, and it was to escape religious beliefs with which they did not agree that Antonie Lefroy left France for England about 1587.

The first Lefroy to come to Western Australia was Henry Maxwell, who arrived in the early part of 1841 and immediately leased and bought land near York. He eventually gave up farming, returned to England in the mid to late 1840's, but came back to the Colony in 1854 to take up a Government appointment.

It would appear that his enthusiasm for the place rubbed off on Anthony O'Grady and Gerald de Courcy when he visited Ireland around 1840. These two arrived in the Swan River Colony aboard the ship "Lady Grey" on 4 January 1843. Unable to go to Maxwell Lefroy's York property, they went to the Burges family at "Tipperary", also near York, where they paid fifty pounds each to secure experience in farming under colonial conditions.

By the early part of 1844 the brothers, had left Tipperary and were renting a property at Springhill. Two years later they were well established and looking for more land, which they eventually found at Walebing, twenty miles to the north of Dom Salvado's newly established mission at New Norcia.

Soon Anthony O'Grady Lefroy was to pursue an early aspiration for a government job. "My reasons" he wrote "for seeking a Government appointment ... are these - our Capital is too small to engage us both. De Courcy likes a settler's life and could as well by himself as with me work the Capital we have. In town, I could be of much use in the management of our affairs when I had time to give to our own business.."

The break he was looking for came in December 1849 when he received an appointment as Private Secretary to Governor Fitzgerald. O'Grady was a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin University and it was recognised that his exceptional qualifications would be of great benefit to the Colony. Appointment then followed appointment. In 1851 he became Clerk of the Legislative Council and of the Executive Council. His work proved so satisfactory that in 1856 he was appointed Colonial Secretary, a position he held until 1890, when the Colony was granted Responsible Government. Another appointment was that Acting Colonial Secretary, a position he held from 13 July 1875, until 20 August, 1877. He was on the Board of Education in 1858 and by 1876 had become a Justice of the Peace, a Director of the W.A. Building Society and a member of the Committee of the Weld Club. In 1878 he was shareholder (1850) in the Galena Mining Company near Northampton and Paymaster of the Pensioners' Board.

O'Grady became engaged to Mary Bruce in April, 1851, when she was aged 15 years and 8 months and he was 36. This no doubt raised a few eyebrows, but they were not married until 3 June 1852, when she had attained the age of 16 years and 10 months, and one must assume that this satisfied the social standards of the period. They lived on a block at the corner of St. George's Terrace and Mill Street where the Capita building now stands. Their first house was a modest one for that area, a single storey structure where all their family were born. About 1870 this dwelling was replaced by a very elegant two storey building, constructed of locally baked

brick with a shingle roof.

Anthony O'Grady Lefroy died on 21 January 1897, leaving his widow, one son, Henry and three daughters, Mary, Dorothea and Emily. A comment made at the time of his death stated that:
"Few men have left a more lasting and favourable impression on the Colony than Anthony O'Grady Lefroy".

There are about 37 descendants of Anthony O'Grady Lefroy and Mary Bruce - male and female - living in Western Australia who carry the Christian name of Bruce, with a total of some 50 who are direct descendants.