

Royal Western Australian Historical Society's
Annual Pioneers Memorial Service
on Sunday 9th June 1996 at St Bartholomews Chapel, East Perth Cemeteries,

Commemorating The Three Wives of George Randell.

Citation by Betty Randell

We are here today to honour the three wives of George Randell - Jane Hyde, Mary Louisa Smith and Lucy James (nee Francisco). Jane Hyde was baptised in 1830 at Bransgore in Hampshire.

Her father Joseph was a butler, and her mother Elizabeth was also in service. Jane married George Randell at the Baptist Chapel at Milford near Lymington on the 8th of April 1850, when they were both aged 19 years. She knew of his dream to go to the Colony of Western Australia - to get away from England where, in 1850, there did not seem to be the opportunities for an ambitious young man who wanted to make his way in the world, George's father had been a Cordwainer - that is a shoe maker who works in very fine quality Spanish leather from Cordova - but George had not followed in his father's footsteps. Instead, he became a blacksmith but had some knowledge of carpentry. Surely there would be a place for them in Western Australia - "especially for a young man who had such an astute business mind and was prepared to work very very hard. This was to be their "Great Adventure."

The young couple sailed from Plymouth in April 1850 aboard the "Sophia" - the ship being under engagement to Her Majesties Colonisation Commissioners. Also onboard was George's older brother Samuel Henry who was to meet his future wife on the "Sophia" -her name was Agnes Ashcroft. We can try to imagine the thoughts which must have gone through their minds as they left England's shores - knowing that they would probably never see their parents, families and friends again. Exactly three months later they arrived at Fremantle, and had to leave the last link with Home, and to be greeted, by a great sandy expanse. Did they have feelings of regret then? There would have been sad partings from newly found friends they had made on the long voyage, and there could maybe have been some relief in parting company from many other passengers on the ship who were girls from the Holborn Poorhouse in London, who seemed to have caused so much bother during the long voyage. They also continued to make trouble once ashore, particularly down in Fremantle. Unfortunately I have not been able to find out just where the young couple lived when they first arrived in Perth, but it is known that they attended services at the Wesleyan chapel and George acted as their librarian. Later they attended services at Trinity Congregational Church in St. George's Terrace, with Henry Trigg and his small band of worshippers. Henry had been the founder, but other outstanding men who were to dominate the church for the first twenty years were Thomas Smith, Frederick Glaskin, Edmund Birch and George Randell.

George meanwhile, was working very hard and building up his shipping business on the Swan River. There was an added incentive to succeed as Jane had presented her husband with a son George William born in 1854 - and he would later marry Maria Ann Buggins from an old pioneering family. The young couple were finally blessed with six sons, one of them Alfred Henry Randell marrying the first-born daughter of William Golding, convict 191 of the "Mermaid", who is buried here in the East Perth Cemeteries, with his in-laws, the McMullins. Another of their sons Edwin Hyde Randell who died at the age of 45 was also buried in this cemetery, as was their infant son Samuel Davis Randell. Despite the difference in their ages, Henry Trigg and the young George Randell were very good friends, and the younger man confided in him in all matters. In later years, George liked to tell the story of Henry, who was

from Gloucester in the West of England, telling of the time when Robert Raikes, the founder of Sunday Schools, on one occasion placed his hands upon Henry's head.

The boats on the Swan River were the special pride and joy of George and Jane. How lovely they looked sailing along the placid waters of the Swan. They would load up with goods at Fremantle, and then commence their trip to Perth Water; some of the goods would then go by lighters on to Guildford. Some of the vessels owned by George over the years were, The City of Perth, The Enchantress, Friends, Advance, Transit, Tribune, Florence, and the dear old Lady Stirling, which appeared to be the favourite. She used to leave Perth Jetty at William Street, at eight o'clock in the mornings, carrying passengers and cargo to Fremantle, and she was always well patronised. What a spanking sight she looked when they had her painted red and white, with a black band just below the deck. She was always very popular for Sunday school picnics. George employed many ticket of leave men on the boats, and the majority of them proved to be good workers.

Jane had been at George's side throughout the struggling years, happily raising her sons, regularly worshipping at Trinity, and industriously working for the good of the church. She was an expert needle woman, and the success of the bazaars was largely due to her efforts. Sadly, George's beloved Jane died in 1868 in her 38th year, and was buried here in this cemetery at East Perth. Perhaps no other lady did more important service to the early life of the church.

In the book History of Trinity Church, mention is made of deciding to look into the proper conducting of "our cemetery" ie the Congregation Section of the East Perth Cemeteries. There being no document showing title to the cemetery, it was voted that "means be used at once for securing a proper title deed, and that it be made over in trust to Messrs. G. Randell, E. Birch, P. Glaskin, H. Saw, J. Dyer, and T. Smith".

Nineteen months later, George Randell married his second wife, Mary Louisa Smith, the daughter of his great friend at Trinity, Thomas Smith. Thomas held George in high esteem, and was later to make him Executor of his Will. Mary presented George with three children, Laura Jane, Ernest Arthur and Ella Lenore. Mary's father, said to have been born in Lincolnshire, was a prominent builder and carpenter in Perth - a widely respected old Colonist. He married Sarah Strickland in Perth in 1842, and she was the daughter of Robert Strickland who arrived on the Hooghly in February 1830 with his wife and family. Mary Louisa passed away in 1874 at the age of 29 years, and her little daughter Ella Lenore was to follow at the age of 10 months. They too were buried in the East Perth Cemeteries, as was Mary Louisa's father Thomas Smith. Mary Louisa's son Ernest Arthur Randell was a very talented cricketer, and because he had a partly withered right arm, he became a left-arm slow bowler. He was always known as Penny Randell. It seems he used to talk to Fred Glaskin on his way home from school in the Terrace, and Glaskin liked to call out to him - "Randell - Candle. Well candles sell for a penny a pound, so I'll call you Penny" One day Penny was playing against the team from Paddington in NSW, and he took nine wickets for eight runs. Apparently for years the W.A.C.A. tried to get the ball that had been used so effectively from him to be on show at the ground, but the family would not agree and urged Penny to keep the ball for the family - and they still have it. Penny's sister Laura Jane married the well known pastoralist Ross Anderson, from the Le Grey River, and they lived at the beautiful property called Illareen at Katanning.

Saddened by the loss of two wives and children, George Randell decided to retire from business - he had become a wealthy man, and felt he would like to commence a new career as a civic leader. He had an astute brain, and felt it was now time to do something in return for Western Australia. The boats were then left in the hands of Randell, Knight and Company - the partners being Messrs. G. Randell, G. Knight. R. Sholl and W. Laurence. George had been a member of

the Perth City Council as early as 1870 and Chairman of the Perth Municipal Council in 1874. Now he was to be elected to the Legislative Council for Perth in 1875-77. Never a physically robust person, his health at this time gave concern to his family and friends, and he decided to go back to the old country for two years to try and regain his health. Prior to leaving Perth however, he arranged for his lovely home at the western end of St. George's Terrace to be used for the formation of The Perth High School. His departure also involved his resignation as Deacon, Trustee, Treasurer and Sunday School Superintendent at Trinity. After two years away, he felt well enough to return to Perth, and fortunately he kept a diary during the voyage of six weeks on board the "Indus". He tells of coming into Albany harbour after dreadful gales, and having to slide down a rope over the stern of the ship to get into a boat to take him ashore. On his return from England, he was offered by Governor Robinson, a seat as nominee member in the Legislative Council, which he accepted and held until the general elections under responsible government in 1890.

In 1881 he married for the third time. The lady was the widow Lucy James (nee Francisco, proprietress of the old Freemason's Hotel on the corner of William Street and St, George's Terrace - the site of the present Palace Hotel. Lucy had been the wife of Colonel Edwin Senior James, and he too was buried in the Church of England Cemetery at East Perth. One of their sons, Walter Hartwell James, was later to become a Premier of Western Australia. George once remarked of Walter - "being a step-son of mine had certainly been no hindrance." There was probably much amused comment when George and Lucy married at The Church in Fremantle. George was a strict teetotaller, condemning drink as "a curse" and Lucy was the proprietress of the Freemason's Hotel. In the Hillman Diaries is the entry - "It is reported this morning that Randell is going to marry Mrs James of the Freemason's Hotel, and this will be the Hon. Member's third wife. I think Mrs James is a fool for her pains, but I suppose the honour of becoming wife of an M. L. C. was too much for female vanity to resist". At the time they were married, George was 50 years old, and Lucy aged 41.

It has been very very difficult for me to find out much personal information about the first two wives, especially Jane Hyde, the great grand-mother of my husband. These women married, produced their children, and then died at quite an early age. Luckily, there is more information on Lucy, whose father Alexander Francisco was a prominent man down in Fremantle. He had the store and post office in High Street. When Lucy's first husband's health started to decline, she ran the Hotel with great energy and ability, which obtained for her the name of being one of the most capable business women in the Colony, she was always delighted to associate her name with many religious and charitable works, and was held in high esteem- She had a large circle, of friends amongst the Colonists, and was foremost in works of benevolence, which she performed quietly, she held a very special place in the musical circles of the Colony, especially in Perth and Fremantle. At a very early age she displayed a great talent for the piano, and thoroughly devoted herself to the study of her favourite instrument. Lucy was regarded as one of the leading pianists in the Colony, and there were very few concerts performed where her name was not mentioned as principal accompanist", She was one of the leading members of the Minstrels of the West, the predecessor of the Musical Union - and invariably was the principal and often, the only, pianist. She too had known great sorrow in her life with the deaths of young children. She and Edward James had lost a young son aged 4 years named Selby Francisco James, who died at the Freemason's Hotel in September 1873. Then their 12 year old daughter, Louisa Kate James had died from Cholera whilst visiting her Uncle in Madras in India. Lucy and George were to have sixteen years together, before her health started to fail. Who would have guessed that this busy lady was suffering from heart disease? On the advice of her physician, she visited Fremantle for a change of air and scene, and for some weeks was residing in the house of Mr W.A. Saw at North Fremantle, and this is where died. George Randell and all the family were at her side. Lucy was buried in the Congregational Cemetery at

East Perth on the 25th January 1897, sadly her little son Francisco was probably in the Church of England section. George Randell himself did not die until the 2nd of June 1915, but he had undoubtedly made arrangements for the remains of his first two wives and their children to be re-interred with him in the Randell plot at Karrakatta. This was done several weeks after George was buried, and their remains rest alongside his. It was comforting to see that Lucy's coffin was exhumed from East Perth Cemetery in July 1922 and buried in the Anglican section at Karrakatta, and also in the casket were the remains of her first husband, Edward Senior James.

Although George Randell was not buried in East Perth Cemetery, mention could be made here of his enormous contribution to the Colony. Besides his business ventures, he was a member of the Perth Town Trust from 1870 and Mayor of Perth 1884-85. Elected to the Legislative Council for Perth 1875-77, and nominated member from 1880. He was a member of the first legislative assembly 1890-92, becoming Colonial Secretary and Minister for Education and Post and Telegraphs.

As Minister for Education, he gave strong political support to the new Inspector-General Cyril Jackson and they worked hard to modernize W.A.'s state school. He was the first chairman of Committees and a Governor of the Perth High School. Education had always been dear to his heart, and he himself, showed all the triumphs of self education. He liked to tell people he had been self-educated in the University of Work, and in his retiring speech to the Council he "confessed his extreme difficulties in not having had that professional education with which to contend against the gentlemen who were lifts opponents in the upper chamber. The Editor of the Gazette frequently permitted his office humourist to lampoon him under the title of "Classical George" - just because of his keen support for higher education in the Colony. He was sometimes described as a Conservative of Conservatives, but many councilors regarded him as a steady brake on the wheel.

Perhaps the special joy of his life was his 60 years association with Trinity Church, holding every office. There were also the 26 years spent as Treasurer of the British and Foreign Bible Society. These are just a few of his accomplishments; it would be possible to go on and on. When George died at St. Omer's Hospital in West Perth at the age of 84 years, his old Lord John Forrest, wrote from Melbourne to George's step-son Sir Walter James, saying "He was in my opinion, one of our very best men - an upright, honourable man, with all his ideas and instincts in the direction of right and justice. He has gone down to his grave in the fullness of age in peace". On his gravestone at Karrakatta are the following words - "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. Mark the perfect man and behold the upright. For there is a happy end to the man of peace".

It is good to think that the steps of his three wives were ordered by the Lord. Jane Hyde, Mary Louisa Smith and Lucy James whom we have honoured today, stood at George Randell's side throughout all those years, and I am proud and happy to have been able to give a talk on these three pioneer women. I thank you.