

George Campbell EPG last Gaoler Roundhouse Prison.

At the west end of High St Fremantle sits an icon, the Roundhouse. Built by 18 January 1831 it is now one hundred and seventy five years old. Because the history of the area had a great influence on our state, what stories those walls could tell.

After 1850 the Pensioner Guards had a

part to play in the history of this historic building as they guarded the convicts who built the Water Police station and the Police Station at the foot of the steps. I suspect they also built the second courthouse in 1851 and later, in 1876, the lighthouse on Arthur's Head. The commissariat was built under the supervision of the Pensioner Guards.

George Campbell (Gaoler):

At the age of forty-five George, as an Enroled Pensioner Guard, arrived on the 24 October 1850 on the second convict ship (Hashemy) with his wife Mary (Margaret) and three children, George 12, William 5 and Christine 2. William had received medical attention during the voyage.

George's military history commenced when he enlisted on the 30th May 1825 at the age of seventeen as a private in the 79th Regiment spending 21 years 74 days in the army. He was pensioned on 10th August 1847, aged 41 years. His records show that he was 5'7" tall with a dark complexion. On his arrival in Fremantle he and his family would have been quartered in the old warehouse in Essex St., South Beach (the site of the Esplanade Hotel today). George Campbell had been a gaoler in a small country prison in Glasgow, Scotland, and had no trouble joining the Colonial Police Force on 20th August 1852 as a Police Constable at Arthur's Head Police Station. In those days, a constable's entitlement was only one room at the Police Station for all of his family. In due course, he was to help Laurence Welch in his duties as gaoler as Welch's health was fading quickly. By the 1st October 1854, George Campbell took over as gaoler at the Fremantle Roundhouse moving into quarters in the Round House.

substituted lashes. Punishment was often carried out below the steps of the Round House. The front of the Roundhouse is the gaoler's reception rooms; the gaoler's quarters are very small.

By 1838 the Roundhouse was regularly overcrowded, on occasions it held forty two to forty three prisoners, natives, seamen, indentured servants, ladies of the night, sealers and whalers, so in 1838 Rottnest native prison was established. This did relieve Fremantle.

In 1840 the stocks were introduced but only lasted a decade. Perth prison was an unsecured lockup. When the convicts arrived after 1850 a bell was placed on the steps of the Roundhouse and rang at 9:50 at night to get the ticket of leave men off the streets of Fremantle otherwise if it wasn't obeyed you were thrown inside for the night.

George Campbell became goaler and his wife, Mary became the matron of the Prison, for in those days the matron was the gaoler's wife. Her job would have been unpleasant .

It was Campbell's task to see prisoners were on work parties, keep them quiet at night, an onerous task on its own. His job was never finished. In 1856 the convict prison at Fremantle was finished and convicts from Essex St Fremantle moved

The Roundhouse and Arthur's Head:

The Roundhouse was the first Public building in Western Australia. It has eight rooms for prisoners. Originally it was only intended for short-term prisoners, and was only meant to have two prisoners to a room. Seven rooms were used continuously; one was used as the dark room for prisoners who were also put on bread and water as punishment. This room was also used for inmates who had mental problems. It was lined with jarrah boards to stop inmates hurting themselves. The longer-term prisoners were sent to Tasmania. The authorities and magistrates at Arthur Head law precinct often gave shorter terms but

the Round House today). The prisoner called Campbell a damned scoundrel and commenced a violent assault against him in court by striking him on the face. Had it not been for the immediate assistance of Sergeant Hicks who was a most powerful man the consequences might have been more serious. The gaoler's conduct throughout was most **mild, firm and correct**. The prisoner was then sentenced to three years hard labour in irons and 100 lashes, a very hard sentence indeed. The prisoner being a ticket-of-leave would have served this sentence at the convict prison in Fremantle.

A Move to Albany

In 1858 the importance of the Round House was becoming less. Campbell was appointed gaoler of Albany Prison on £95 per year and his wife, Mary was the matron on £5 per year. His conveyance to Albany would have been by coastal sailing ship. In 1862 the Police was under the charge of Sergeant William Finlay a Pensioner Guard's son from the Scindian. One of Campbell's duties would have been to transfer long-term prisoners to Perth prison by stagecoach, along the track from the sound. It was also one of his duties to help keep the town safe from the fighting of sealers, whalers and seamen.

On one occasion, 30 November 1862, a theft occurred at Campbell's quarters at

in. On completion of both these buildings as prisons it took the importance of the Round House as a main prison away and in 1858 George Campbell was transferred to Albany Prison. George Campbell was the last of the Gaolers for the Round house. The Round House closed in 1886.

George Campbell's day in court.

On the 8 December 1855 a ticket-of-leave man was bought before the magistrate at Arthur's Head after he had abused Campbell at the Round House. After the magistrate sentenced the prisoner to seven days in the dark cell on bread and water (the dark cell is still at

the gaol. £15 in gold was stolen from his sitting room. He complained to the Resident Magistrate and bars were ordered to be placed across a window.

He was appointed as Assistant Superintendent of Rottnest Island but this move was squashed by the magistrate and Campbell remained at Albany until he retired on the 1 February 1876 receiving a pension of £33.5.0 per annum.

George Campbell, ex soldier, Pensioner Guard, ex Gaoler, died 19 March 1886, aged 81.

Although George Campbell was a gaoler he puts the Pensioner Guards squarely at the Round House and adds to the story of that icon and the history of Western Australia.

Les Green.

References:

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Broomhall. F.H The Veterans, a History of the Enrolled Pensioner Force 1850-1880 Hesperian Press 1989 Page B44.*

Footnote:

Les Green is a descendant of Pensioner Guards and works as a volunteer guide at the Round House, Fremantle every Tuesday 10.30 to 3.30. He is always pleased to meet other descendants.