

HENRY ARTHUR PRINGLE'S ALBUM OF ILLAWARRA PHOTOGRAPHS

1880s-1890s

By Dr J Davis

A rare family photograph album containing images dating from the 1880s to the 1890s was recently offered for auction. It had been in the possession of Henry Arthur Pringle's granddaughter, Margaret Cairns Terry, of England. Sadly, news of the album only emerged days before the auction which, unfortunately, gives institutions little chance to make arrangements to secure it. A story was published in the *Illawarra Mercury* on June 25, 2011 – just one day before the auction at John William's Auction Rooms in Ralph Street Alexandria in Sydney.

Prior to the publication of an article entitled "Snap up a piece of history" by Michelle Hoctor, all that was known in Illawarra about the man who turned out to be the album's original owner was his surname (Pringle) and that he was somehow involved in one of the local mines. As it turns out, however, this Henry Arthur Pringle was a rather significant fellow. Indeed, Pringle almost passes for local nineteenth century vice-regal aristocracy – the son of a Cambridge M.A. no less and also related, by marriage, to both the Illawarra Osbornes and the MacCabes. The fact that he could afford a high quality camera in the 1890s is also itself clear evidence of a considerably elevated local status!

In 1892 our HENRY A PRINGLE married MAUD Alice MACCABE (born 1871 in Wollongong) who was the daughter of FRANCIS (FRANK) PETER MACCABE and JANE MACCABE. Importantly, Maude Alice MACCABE was the sister of the hero of the Mount Kembla Mining Disaster (Major Henry Osborne MACCABE born 1856) to whom a monument was erected smack in the middle of Crown Street, Wollongong.

So who was the original owner of the album of photographs? Well, Henry Arthur Pringle was born (in of all the possible unlikely places) at Hope in what is today Canada in 1864. At that time, however, Hope became part of the Colony of British Columbia when the new British possession was created on 2 August 1858.

The child, who would later become Mine Manager at Corrimal, was the son the Reverend Alexander David Pringle and grandson of David Alexander Pringle. The Illawarra Pringle's father was something of a pioneer himself.

It was late in the year 1859 that Reverend Alexander St. David Francis Pringle arrived in Hope - today about a 90 minute drive from Vancouver. On December 1 of that year, he founded the first library on the British Columbia mainland. Within two years, he founded Christ Church (Anglican).

Remarkably, Christ Church is today the oldest church on the B.C. mainland still holding services on its original site.

Married to a woman called "Mary Louisa" (surname unknown) the Reverend had seven children. The first daughter was born about 1857 in "Upwell, Norfolk, England and the second in Middlesex. A son, Charles David Pringle, was born in 1862 in British Columbia and our Henry Arthur Pringle was also born there in 1864.

When the Reverend Pringle arrived in British Columbia the Cariboo Gold Rush was in full swing, and thousands of single men gathered in mining camps. The Vicar decided there was a need for access to reading material and set about raising funds for a building to accommodate and provide "respectable and readable newspapers of various nations and politics, together with all the standard reviews and periodicals". On December 1, 1859 the Fort Hope Reading Room and Library was opened. The faith that moves mountains presumably always carries an ice-pick!

And so it was that the Rev. Pringle became involved in raising funds for his church and, apparently, rolled up his sleeves from time to time to help with its construction. His son would grow to become a mining engineer and so the father may have been a practical type as well.

A letter by the Reverend Pringle at the time stated: " My dearest Father, ...The accounts of gold are almost incredible. The amounts taken out are such as to give confidence to everybody and everything. Hope, meanwhile is nearly deserted, and next spring may be quite so, but thanks to the kindness of my friends at home and the friends of our Church here, I have something now to give my residence a point and character in Christ Church. We shall benefit ere long in this change for the better. It is however very cheering to see our nice little Church universally admired, standing ready for consecration on Nov.1 complete. Yes, I have now hopes of having it painted outside this year. Half the church lot is cleared, grubbed and fenced. The church is seated, I have now got the materials to oil and varnish the whole of the interior and best of all there will be no debt on the church or myself.

The Reverend Alexander St David Francis PRINGLE had been born in 1828, in India and christened on the 17th March. He gained an: M.A. from Caius College, Cambridge and was Vicar of St.James, Norwich (1865 – 1872), Curator of Upwell, Norfolk (1855 - 1858, Chaplain Paddington West (1858 – 1859, Chaplain to the British Province of Columbia, Hope, British Columbia (1859 - 1865). Reverend Pringle was resident at Bishop Bridge Road, Thorpe, Norfolk, England in 1871 and then Vicar of Blakeney, Newham, Gloucester. While his son was Mine Manager at Corrimal, the father lived at the Vicarage, Blakeney, Gloucestershire, England, in 1891, and Church Square Cottage, Awre, Gloucestershire, England in April 1901.

The Sojourn in British Columbia must have been tough as the Reverend Pringle came over from England in 1859 alone. He wrote to his father and his wife (Mary Louisa Pringle) about the journey from England and his situation in Hope, BC. Mary Louisa later joined her husband in B.C. Pringle travelled around and about Hope and conducted services from a tent in neighbouring communities such as Yale - at a location where the Church of St John still stands today.

But back in Australia at this time the estates of Francis Peter MacCabe and Michael Cawley made up most of what is today called "Russell Vale". The MacCabe Estate was on the western side of what is today the Princes Highway under the escarpment and the Cawley Estate was on the eastern side nearer to the sea.

Francis MacCabe was born to Dr James and Margaret (nee Russell) MacCabe in Dublin in 1817. At the age of 16 Francis joined the Ordnance Survey of Ireland and trained as a surveyor. In 1841 he was granted an appointment with the Surveyors of England to go to New South Wales.

Francis embarked on the ship "Florentia" on the 6th June 1841 arriving on 26th October 1841. He worked in a variety of locations in Australia before settling in the Illawarra.

MacCabe was one of the great 'surveyor-explorers' of Australia - so named because they were actually surveying unexplored territory. MacCabe had made a significant contribution by linking a survey of the Murray to other colonial border surveys. MacCabe's work is also noted for the number of Aboriginal place names he put on his map - encouraged in this by Mitchell, the NSW surveyor-General.

In January of 1853 Francis reported for duty in the Wollongong area where, soon after, he met Jane Osborne who was the eldest child of Henry & Sarah Osborne of Marshall Mount. Francis & Jane were married at St Luke's Church at Brownsville on 28 November 1855.

During 1855 the couple built and moved into "Russell Vale" house. Francis' mother's maiden name was Russell and it is possible that the name of the house and later the estate was named after her. Francis and Jane had 14 children during the course of their marriage.