

# Daniel and Hannah Wansbrough

## by Frank Dawson (a descendant)

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My great-grandparents, Daniel and Hannah Wansbrough, arrived at Fremantle in the ship 'Drummore' in February 1831. This was just 20 months after the first settlers arrived in June 1829 and the infant colony was still struggling for existence.

Daniel Wansbrough married Hannah Prangle in Maddington Parish Church in May 1830. Hannah was the daughter of a labourer on the Wansbrough estate and was illiterate. She eventually overcame this handicap and her son Eli, a police constable stationed at Pinjarra, was later to record in his diary on 8 July 1874 the 'Perth mail brings me what I shall term a literary marvel, in a letter from my mother - the first she wrote in her life!...in a tolerably good readable schoolgirl sort of hand'.

Both Daniel and Hannah were 20 years of age when they arrived in Fremantle. Daniel was one of a group of indentured servants to William Tanner who settled at Upper Swan. The basic conditions of the indentureship were that the servant would work without wages until the equivalent of the ship fare was reached and would be sustained in keep by the employer. However, while the latter condition could easily be observed in England, it proved to be a very difficult matter in a new colony in a strange land. It is not surprising, therefore, to read in a letter from William Tanner to his mother (in England) dated 19 June 1831 that 'I have given up the indentures to Cooks family, to Dyers and to Wansbroughs'. This occurred only four and a half months after arrival in Western Australia.

It appears that from June 1831 Daniel and Hannah were cast on their own resources. Censuses of 1832 and 1837 show Daniel as working for Mr JR Phillips on his farm named 'Maddington Park' on the Canning River. Then, in 1843, he is recorded as being a mariner in the Perth district. In those early days water transport was of prime importance.

From 1852 onwards he was engaged in farming operations in the York district. In that year he took up a small area of 40 acres on a tillage lease of 1/6d (15 cents) per acre. In subsequent years he gradually acquired more land, initially on lease and then on a purchase basis, until he eventually owned 450 acres. This farm, situated 12 kilometres southwest of York, was named 'Maddington' no doubt in memory of the Parish in Wiltshire. The property remained in his possession until 1892.

Prosperity attended his farming career and in later years he and Hannah retired to Perth to live in Murray Street. Hannah died in 1893 at the age of 83 and Daniel survived another five years in good health. He was 88 years of age when he died in 1898. Both are buried in the same grave in East Perth Pioneers' Cemetery and their headstone bears the epitaph '*We follow their example, as they followed Christ's*'.

The couple had a family of 10 children, 8 sons and two daughters, and all except the youngest lived through to maturity. In order of birth they were John (1832), George (1834), Mary (1836), James (1838), William (1840), Rosanna (1843), Eli (1846), Henry (1848), Joseph (1851), and Thomas (born and died 1854).

All except Mary married and had children, so today there are many descendants scattered throughout Western Australia, with some living overseas.

Many of these descendants have achieved prominence in civic, professional, commercial and sporting life in this State. It is manifestly impossible within the compass of this article to do justice to all by naming them. However an exception may perhaps be made in the case of two who made it to State

Parliament. These two gentlemen were Charles Prangle Wansbrough and Arthur William Wansbrough, the elder two sons of Joseph and Matilda who lived in Beverley. Charles was the Country Party Member for Beverley 1914 - 1917 and 1924 - 1930. Arthur was the Labor Party Member for Albany 1924 - 1936. Despite their different political philosophies both brothers are reported to have remained on friendly terms in Parliament. In addition, Arthur had two features named after him; one was Wansbrough railway siding (now not in existence) between Cranbrook and Tambellup and the other is Wansbrough Walk in the Porongorups Ranges.

As an item of perhaps general interest, I mention that my grandparents, James and Mary Wansbrough, ran a two-storey boarding house in York in the 1890s. This boarding house is now known as Settler's House. Later when the Goldfields Railway had been constructed through Northam, they moved there and took over Benson House from Mary's parents which also operated as a boarding house. Benson House was in Fitzgerald Street on a large site now occupied by other businesses.

The lives of Daniel and Hannah are probably typical of those of the early pioneers who struggled through difficulties and hardships to establish what is now a prosperous state.

***Edited by Celebrate WA***