

Benjamin ALLEN (1836-1919)

'Trade Wind' migrant records Benjamin as being aged 21, single, CE, could read, Staffordshire, collier. He was sponsored by J L Stewart of Hobart Town. Benjamin was discharged from the Quarantine Station, Impression Bay to New Town on his own account on 29 March 1858.

Benjamin William ALLEN was born about 1836 in Kingswinford, Staffordshire, England. His parents were George Allen (1795-1873) and Maria nee Whitaker (1810-1875). Benjamin was one of seven children. In the 1851 England Census the family were living in Brierley Hill, Kingswinford, a rich coal mining district. Benjamin's two older brothers, James and William were also coal miners.

Benjamin was sponsored by Mr J L Stewart of Hobart Town. Stewart was a Hobart Alderman but had to relinquish this position after he was declared insolvent in July 1861, four years after Benjamin arrived in Tasmania. By this time Benjamin had already left Tasmania and was a coal miner at the Lower Indigo Mine, Mount Pleasant in New South Wales. While there, he was commended for rescuing a fellow miner.

Benjamin then joined the gold rush in about 1866 to a tiny settlement, known as Emu Creek in New South Wales. The settlement was renamed Grenfell to honour the late John Grenfell, Gold Commissioner at Forbes, who had been shot and killed by bushrangers. Grenfell is situated about 211 km north of Canberra and 364 km west of Sydney.

Benjamin married Harriett Wilmott on 4 February 1872 in Grenfell. Harriett was born about 1847 in Keynsham, Somerset in England and her parents Thomas (1822-1882) and Mary Ann nee Jenkins (1827-) were living in Grenfell. Benjamin and Harriett had seven children in Grenfell between 1872 and 1881. After returning to Hobart by 1886 two more children were born. The second youngest son, Ernest Henry (1886-1917) was Killed in Action in France at the age of 31.

Benjamin was a prominent citizen in Grenfell. He was a shareholder in the Engel's Gold Mining Company in 1873, subscribed to the Grenfell Public Hospital in 1876, was one of 128 persons to petition the Colonial Secretary in Sydney for the name of Emu Creek to be renamed Grenfell. Benjamin also purchased 1 acre, 3 roods, 4 perches in the township of Grenfell.

The oldest son, George Thomas Allen of 212 Bathurst Street, Hobart wrote to the Mayor of Grenfell in April 1924 in reference to a 'Back to Grenfell' reunion. He recalled having fond memories of living in Grenfell. He said his grandfather was Thomas Daniel Wilmot, who lived at the One Mile. The Allen family lived in Main Street, between Still's Hotel and McGee's Hotel, opposite the old Oddfellow's Hall. As there was no railway at the time everything was carried by horse or bullock team. His father, Benjamin, had a dray and went to Harden with loads. He made reference to his cousins, the Wartons [? Wilmott] and Lawsons who lived in Hospital Hill, on the road to Cowra. The Lawson family were famous due to being the birthplace of Henry Lawson, one of Australia's most prolific authors who excelled at both

short story and verse. Henry Lawson's parents were part of the Grenfell gold rush in in 1866 and Henry was born there on 17 June 1867.

After returning to Tasmania Benjamin continued working as a miner in Jerusalem. In 1890 he became a shareholder in the Jerusalem Coal Mining Company. He was seriously injured at the mine the same year by a piece of iron falling on him, a distance of 20 feet, while working in the shaft, injuring his nose and chest (*Mercury*, 19 August 1890, p2). In later life he was a labourer residing in 22 William Street, West Hobart. Only one daughter (Adelaide Maude Cope 1883-1969) and a son (George Thomas 1872-1946) remained living in Tasmania. Other living children resided in Victoria.

Benjamin died at his son's residence, 247 Argyle Street, Hobart on 30 October 1919, aged 85. Harriet, his wife, died on 9 April 1908 at her residence in William Street, almost eleven years earlier.

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