

## WALTER PADBURY 1820 – 1907



Walter Padbury was born in Stonesfield, Oxfordshire on December 22, 1820. Walter had 3 brothers and 2 sisters. Walter came to Western Australia in 1830 with his father when he was just 10 years of age, aboard the *Protector*. It was intended that once Walter's father had acquired accommodation and a job that other members of the family would then travel out to Australia to join them. However, Walter's father died of pneumonia only a year after their arrival and Walter had been left in the care of a couple who had also travelled on the *Protector* with the Padburys. They stole the money Walter's father had left them to care for Walter, and they disappeared. Young Walter was left to fend for himself, working as a carpenter's assistant, in a hotel, as a shepherd, drover, and also a stock agent. Walter was a good saver and he was able to purchase a property not far from Toodyay.

He married Charlotte Nairn, and he set about building an empire that was to make him one of the richest men in the colony. In 1849 he returned to England to bring out the rest of his family. He was just 29 years old.

Walter Padbury was the first pastoralist to take up land in the North West in 1863, but with low wool prices and the loss of one of his ships, he was forced to abandon the enterprise after only 3 years. When he decided to bring his stock back from the North West his stockman was so good at his job that he actually returned with more stock than he left with, with many of the ewes giving birth on the way.

In 1864 Walter was elected to the Perth City Council, representing the Swan River district in the Legislative Council from 1872 to 1878.

In 1865 Walter acquired the ship *Bridgetown* and he used it to trade goods to India, Singapore, and London. In order to extend his trading operations he bought more ships, successfully trading until 1890 when too much competition caused Walter to withdraw. In 1871 Walter was elected to the First Victoria Plains Road Board, and in

1875 he became President of the Agricultural Society, a position he held again in 1885.

Walter and his wife Charlotte retired to England in 1877-8, but found they missed Australia and they returned 3 years later to spend the rest of their lives in their adopted home.

In 1883 Walter was appointed as a Justice of the Peace and a year later he became the Chairman of the Guildford Municipal Council.

In 1895 Charlotte Padbury died and was buried in the East Perth Cemetery.

In 1898, at the age of 78, Walter Padbury established the Peerless Flour Mills Ltd at Guildford.

During his life Walter was known as a kind and generous man and when he died in 1907 with no heirs, his vast fortune was left to be divided among several churches and charities. The Walter Padbury Memorial Church at Moora was built in his honour in 1910.

Walter Padbury stands out as an example of what can be achieved with a modicum of good luck and a lot of very hard work.

### **THE DEATH OF A VERY OLD COLONIST- EULOGY FOR WALTER PADBURY 1907**

Yesterday evening there passed away one of the very oldest of Western Australian colonists in Mr Walter Padbury, whose death took place at his residence, St George's-terrace, at 7.30 o'clock. The deceased gentleman had been confined to his room for only two or three days. He was out for a drive as late as Saturday afternoon last. His general health had been failing, however, for the last five or six months, and the end was not unexpected. He had been attended by Dr. Tratman, and latterly, in his absence, by Dr. Harvey.

Mr Padbury, who was in his 87th year, came to Australia 77 years ago. He was born at a village called Stonestill, near Woodstock, in Oxfordshire. He arrived at Fremantle in a small barque called the Protector in February 1830. The Swan Settlement, as it was then called, had only been in existence a few months, the original settlers having come out in the Parmelia in June 1829. Mr Padbury's father

died in the month of July following the landing, and the boy of 10 years was left a stranger in a strange land. At 16 years of age, after following a variety of occupations, he went shepherding at Tipperary, just below York. There he worked for Burges Brothers, and his wages, as he used to relate, were ten pounds a year, which he had to take out in wheat, the value at that time being 12s. per bushel. There was practically no money in those days, and there were no banks. Living was somewhat rough, and bread was made from flour which was ground by hand in a steel mill. Mr Padbury, to use his own words, plodded on in the York district until he was in a position to send to England for his mother and the rest of the family to come out and join him. Thereafter his prosperity gradually increased with the development of the land of his adoption.

Mr Padbury was never an ardent politician, although from his position as a leading resident in the State he was compelled to take part in many public movements. Before the granting of Responsible Government he sat as an elected member in the Legislative Council for five years. After that he went to England for two years, but the climate of his native land did not agree with him after his long residence in a sunnier country, and he was glad to get back to the (to him) more congenial surroundings of Perth. He was a somewhat extensive traveller, having visited all the Eastern States except Queensland, and he also spent some time in the United States and the principal countries of Continental Europe.

The deceased gentleman was at one time, and for many years, in the Perth City Council, and also for a number of years, chairman of the Guildford Council. But his career was more particularly on the land, and in the capacity of a pioneer. He was one of the first white men to open up the North-West district. As far back as 1863 he went North-West, beyond Carnarvon, and subsequently made two trips in sailing vessels, carrying livestock on each occasion. He retained his interest in the north-western portion of the State to the time of his death. He was also, at the time of his demise, vice president of the Royal Agricultural Society, of which Society he was president in the years 1874, '75, '76 and '85. He took a great interest in the work of the Society, as he did also in Church work and in charitable institutions generally. To these last he was always a liberal subscriber. For many years he conducted a general store business in Hay-street under his own name, but subsequently the firm was known as that of Padbury, Loton and Co., the second partner being Mr. W.T. Loton, M.L.C. Of his kindly, considerate, and generous acts, not only to institutions, but to persons in distress of whatever kind, many stories could be told.

Among his many undertakings was the construction some eight or nine years ago of the Peerless Roller Flour Mill, at Guildford. The structure is a fine and imposing one, and is known throughout the length and breadth of the State. The mill covers four acres of land, and has a storage capacity for from 20,000 to 25,000 bags of grain, including the granary. The building and appurtenances cost over 6,000 pounds, and are situated at what is known as Padbury Siding, between Woodbridge and Guildford.

The wife of Mr. Walter Padbury predeceased him by several years. it is announced for the information of relatives and friends that the interment is to take place at 3 o'clock to-morrow (Saturday) afternoon.

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