

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

SIR FREDERICK BARLEE

Papers, 1876-1884

Reel M594

**Mrs M.C. Barlee
Bramley Lodge
Ashwell, Hertfordshire**

**National Library of Australia
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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Sir Frederick Palgrave Barlee (1827-1884), the son of the Reverend Edward Barlee, was born in Worlingworth, Suffolk. He worked in the Ordnance Department at Chatham and Woolwich and in 1851 took up an appointment as storekeeper and barrack master at Sierra Leone. He was private secretary to the governor in 1853.

In 1855 Barlee married Jane Oseland and two weeks later they sailed to Western Australia, where he took up the position of Colonial Secretary. He remained in the post for twenty years, serving under three governors: Captain Arthur Kennedy, John Hampton and Frederick Weld. He was ex officio a member of the Executive Council and the Legislative Council and was involved in every area of the government. He represented Western Australia at the Intercolonial Conference in Sydney in 1873. He travelled widely and was active in many organisations and causes, including the Anglican Church, the Swan River Mechanics Institute, the Workingmen's Association, and the Roebuck Bay Pastoral and Agricultural Association. He supported the introduction of representative government in Western Australia.

In 1875 Barlee went to England on extended leave. The Colonial Office was anxious to prevent him from returning to Perth and in 1876 he was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of British Honduras. He returned to England in 1882 and then made a short trip to Western Australia. He was knighted in 1883. In 1884 he was appointed Administrator of Trinidad, but died shortly after his arrival.

In 1878 Barlee's brother William, who had been an Anglican curate for many years, became vicar of Cringleford, a few miles from Norwich. His brother Charles (1822-1882) had emigrated to Australia in 1839 and was a journalist, novelist and short story writer. His sister Catherine, who was married to the Reverend James Allen, emigrated to Western Australia in 1876.

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Letters from Sir Frederick Barlee to his brother, Reverend William Barlee, 1876-84

Note: The letters were all written after Barlee left Australia and they contain only occasional references to Australia or to his siblings who were living in Australia.

1. Letters from Barlee (London) to his brother, Feb.-Nov. 1876 (5 letters)

The letters refer to a summons to see Lord Carnarvon, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, a possible Indian appointment, offers of two positions which he had declined, the determination of the Colonial Office that Barlee should not return to Western Australia, family matters, and his acceptance of the governorship of British Honduras.

2. Letters from Barlee (Belize) to his brother, May 1877-Aug. 1882 (61 letters)

The letters deal inter alia with Barlee's voyage to British Honduras, his first impressions of the colony, the climate, social events, tours of the colony, his Spanish studies, gardening, the receipt of a box from Perth (June 1877), the Legislative Council, race relations, the resignation of Lord Carnarvon (1878), a journey on horseback to the border with Guatemala, British politics, a visit by the Bishop of Jamaica (1879), mail contracts, visitors at Government House, a possible transfer to another colony, a memorial to the Secretary of State criticising Barlee's administration (1881), the support of Lord Kimberley, the publication of official papers on the administration of British Honduras, and Barlee's impending departure. The letters also contain many comments on his brother's letters, events in the Diocese of Norwich, news of their siblings Catherine and Charles in Australia and Barlee's opposition to his sister Louise going to Australia.

3. Letters from Barlee (London, Bournemouth) to his brother, Sept. 1882-May 1884 (39 letters)

The letters refer to Barlee's decision to visit Western Australia, family news, British politics, his knighthood, meetings of the Royal Colonial Institute, social events, vice-regal appointments, the neglect of men in the Colonial Service by the Secretary of State, Lord Derby, Barlee's meetings with Sir Robert Herbert, Anthony Trollope's book *Australia*, the treatment of Australian Aborigines by

early European settlers, Barlee's asthma attacks and his need for a warmer climate, his stay at Bournemouth (March 1884), the war in the Sudan, the appointment of Sir Henry Loch as Governor of Victoria, and the unexpected offer to Barlee of the post of Administrator in Trinidad (April 1884).

4. Letters from Barlee (Trinidad) to his brother, June-Aug. 1884 (3 letters)

The letters refer to Barlee's continued illness on the voyage to the West Indies, the beauty of Trinidad, the effects of the fall in sugar prices, his inspection of public buildings, and serious asthma attacks.

Diary kept by Sir Frederick Barlee, January-August 1884

The Letts diary mostly contains brief entries. They are more detailed, however, in May 1884, following Barlee's appointment as Administrator of Trinidad, and record his meetings with Lord Derby and Colonial Office officials and his preparations for his departure. The entries in June-July also record in some detail his activities in his first weeks in Trinidad, before he succumbed to his final illness. The last entry is dated 4 August 1884, four days before his death.