

# THE GRAVE OF *Charles W. Stansmore*

**Victorian born Charles Stansmore was a member of David Carnegie's 1896 expedition from Coolgardie to Halls Creek. Members of the party included Carnegie, Stansmore, Joe Breaden, Godfrey Massie and guide Warri.**

After enduring five months struggling across some of the most difficult and waterless country in Australia, the party arrived at a beautiful pool on the Margaret River on 28 November 1896. It was an oasis, with a seemingly unlimited supply of excellent water with plentiful fish and wildfowl, making a welcome addition to their diet.

On November 30, the main party travelled along the foot of Ramsay Range, while Stansmore climbed up the range looking for game. It was agreed that they would meet up at the end of the range.

Upon hearing a shot, the men thought that Stansmore had been successful. After waiting at the meeting point for 1½ hours there was still no sign of Stansmore. Warri went to investigate. Badly shaken, he returned saying Stansmore was dead. Carnegie rushed to the scene and found that Stansmore had been shot through the heart. His rifle appeared to have accidentally discharged when he slipped, and the butt of the rifle struck the rocks.

Carnegie and his men were devastated. Stansmore had been a wonderful

companion during the long and arduous journey and now, when the party was almost within sight of Halls Creek, he lay dead on the rocks at Ramsay Range.

Burying Stansmore, Carnegie wrote 'We buried him between the rocks and the river at the foot of a large gum tree. No fine tombstone marked his grave, only a rough cross, and above him I carved his initials on the tree C.W.S. 30/11/96'. At a later date, Stansmore's family sent a bronze plaque to Warden Cummings at Halls Creek, asking for it to be fixed above the grave.

In 1985, Dr Bill Peasley, an expert on David Carnegie's travels found a map drawn by

Carnegie among records held by Carnegie's family in Scotland. It showed the grave site - this was a Eureka moment for Bill.

Peasley returned to Margaret River with Jim Tough from Halls Creek, and they went in search of the grave. Using Carnegie's map, they pinpointed a large gum tree but there weren't any markings on it, only a bulge on one side. While passing a metal detector over it a distinct ping was heard. Cutting into the tree about three inches they discovered Stansmore's bronze plaque.



*Tree over Charles Stansmore's grave after removal of plaque, 1985.  
Photo courtesy W J Peasley*

The plaque was slightly convex, eighteen to twenty inches square and almost half an inch thick, it read:

IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
CHARLES WILLIAM STANSMORE  
OF CAMPERDOWN VICTORIA  
DIED NOVEMBER 30TH 1896  
AGED 35 YEARS



# THE THINGS YOU SEE!

WITH (TRUTHFUL) PHIL BIANCHI



◀ **Charles Stansmore.**  
*Photo courtesy  
David Carnegie*

I've been a good friend of the late Dr Bill for years and even 30 years after this find he quivered when he described his feelings at the time of the discovery. Never, in his wildest dreams, did he believe the plaque or grave would be found.

The plaque was taken to Halls Creek for safe keeping while a decision was made about its future. Eventually a decision was made that a cairn, with the plaque fixed to it, be built over the grave. The cairn and plaque were fixed in place in 1986. When Peasley again visited the site in 1996, he was dismayed to find significant erosion had taken place and there was a real risk the grave, cairn and plaque would be washed away. Once Peasley had established that there were no legal issues with moving the grave, and the family had given permission for the relocation, he returned and moved the grave to a point above high floodwater level at the eastern end of the Ramsay Range.

While digging up the remains Peasley found metal toe and heel caps from Stansmore's boots. Could these have caused Stansmore to slip and accidentally shoot himself? The remains were buried in a clearing and a concrete slab built over them, with the original bronze plaque

embedded in the slab. Then for further protection a white metal rail fence that had been pre-cut, was installed around the grave.

Charles Stansmore had rested in his grave for nearly 100 years before nature decided to intervene. By transferring the remains to high ground, Peasley and his team had prevented them and the bronze plaque from being washed away by floodwaters and being lost forever.

I had been endeavouring to visit Stansmore's grave for many years, only to be thwarted on each occasion by Margaret River still being in flood after the wet season. I was finally successfully in 2019. Anyone wishing to visit Stanmore's grave needs to gain prior permission from Margaret River Station. Do the right thing and ask.

Stanmore met his death by accident, however through good fortune his grave was relocated by Dr Peasley before it was lost forever.

**Stansmore's grave.**  
*Photo courtesy Alan McCall*

