

Sir Alexander Onslow

Third Chief Justice of Western Australia 1883-1901

One of the most prominent, yet least understood, of Western Australia's leading citizens of the latter 19th century was Sir Alexander Campbell Onslow (1842-1908), the Colony's third Chief Justice. This biography offers a new and measured assessment of his character, work and legacies. Descended from an ancient Shropshire family his career as lawyer commenced on his call to the English Bar in 1868. After 10 years of modest Bar practice, he married and, seeking a consistent income, applied for a Crown appointment overseas. Offered only the Attorney-Generalship of British Honduras (Belize after independence) he accepted and endured years of harsh conditions leaving him with a persistent tropical disease. Most of his lawyer colleagues, from the Chief Justice down, were incompetent and corrupt. Yet Onslow worked diligently, trying to restore the rule of law, promote true justice and protect the disregarded interests of the Mayan ("Indian") natives.

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