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Gippsland Times (Victoria, Australia)

Monday 27 August 1883:

DEATH OF MR JOHN CAMPBELL

The somewhat sudden death of Mr **John Campbell** of Glencoe, leaves a gap in the rapidly narrowing circle of old Gippslanders, which can scarcely be filled, and which cannot fail to excite heartfelt sorrow and sympathy with his bereaved family from one end of the province to the other. "Men drop so fast", it is said "that few know so many alive or dead" and the thought applies with special force to the familiar name of good old John Campbell, of Glencoe, for he was in the best and most practical sense the ready friend and helper of every one to whom his large hearted kindness could lighten a burden or mitigate a sorrow ; while by all sections of society he was deservedly regarded and greatly respected,

He was a man of singularly genial and - till late years- of cheerful disposition; kind, charitable, and generous, in thought as well as in act, and withal of such a liberal mind that no one ever appealed to him in vain, in case of real distress, for any help that it was in his power to afford. In the early days of Gippsland, when that horror of travellers the Latrobe Morass, which formed and still forms a portion of the approach from the southern to the northern part of the district, and which then had neither bridge nor causeway, not a few wayfarers who were strangers to the morass and its dangers owed their safety and their escape from the loss of cattle and horses to the timely aid and skilful guidance of John Campbell, of Glencoe, as he was familiarly called; while during times of flood on more than one occasion he nearly lost his life in his unremitting labours, on behalf of neighbours and strangers indiscriminately, to prevent the destruction of life and property by the onrush of the raging storm waters. It will be remembered by many of our readers that during the great flood of February 1863, when no less than seven persons were drowned in the punt lane, on such an occasion as that just mentioned, Mr Campbell had to swim for his life through the capsizing of a frail boat in the Heart Morass, on the north side of the punt lane road; being exhausted he clung to a tree bush, and when rescued after a considerable interval he was insensible, and so benumbed with cold that the one hand which grasped the sapling with a death-like grip, was permanently injured, and he never recovered more than the partial use of the wrist. Since the long causeway was built, and the old punt replaced by a bridge, the dangers and difficulties of the morass crossing have been considerably, mitigated, but a massive silver salver, for many years in Mr Campbell's possession, and now doubtless treasured by his family as a precious heirloom, records in its inscription the thanks of the residents of the neighbourhood, for his invaluable services rendered to travellers.

The deceased gentleman was a liberal patron of our local institutions, while churches, schools, and charitable establishments came in for a substantial share of whatever funds he could allot to benevolent purposes. He was one of the earliest members of the Gippsland Lodge of Free masons, a member of the Agricultural Society, and of the Turf, Rowing, and Yacht Clubs, and for some years president of the Calodonian Society, in the formation of which he took an active and prominent part, and in whose welfare he always evinced a warm interest, much to the satisfaction of his Gaelic friends, and of all our local sons of old Scotia. In John Campbell has passed away from society here, another of the old familiar faces, which, in the early days of Gippsland settlement, formed one of a considerable circle of genial friends and kindly neighbours - days we mean when disputes and disagreements were few and far between, and when as has been well remarked, "we seemed all like one family."

For the rest, of John Campbell it may truly be said his very failings 'leaned to virtue's side,' and that, open, candid, and always generous and charitable in his dealings with everyone, "his heart was the constant companion of his hand and his tongue the artless index of his mind". While none of his old friends can ever forget him, his memory will live long in the recollection of the very children who throng our thoroughfares, and all will devoutly breathe the prayer that one whose life was largely ordered according to the Divine standard of "doing unto others as he would have others do to him" may, through the boundless love of the Great Eternal, have found a place among those many mansions "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest".

As a very old colonist the following sketch of his life, for the particulars of which we are indebted to a member of his family, may prove interesting to our readers. John Campbell, of Glencoe, was born in the island of Tiree, Argyleshire, Scotland, in 1815, and was the oldest son of a family of three sons and ten daughters, his father, Duncan Campbell, being a well known farmer and grazier in Argyleshire. Shortly after the death of his father, his mother (still remembered in Gippsland) sailed for New South Wales in the ship "British King", commanded by a Captain Paton, whose home by the way, has been at Glencoe for the last ten or twelve years, and who still lives there, Mrs Campbell with her family arrived in Sydney on the 1st of March, 1839. The newly formed district of Port Phillip, as Melbourne was then called, was now exciting some attention as a desirable place for settlement, and thither some of the Campbells wended their way, Mr John Campbell among them. He was now in his 25th year, and on arriving in Melbourne he very soon found employment on a station at Mount Macedon or in the neighbourhood, where he remained about a year, and so satisfied his employer (a Mr Wills it is believed) with him that he wanted to bind Mr Campbell to his service for a term of years under a very lucrative offer. He however returned to Melbourne where he obtained temporary employment till he could see a suitable chance of making a good start in the new world. That chance offered in a few months in the establishment by Messrs. Turnbull, Howden, Brodribb, Norman R Macleod and others of the "Port Albert Company" an association of merchants and traders for the purpose of providing tools provisions and stores of all kinds for the settlers in the recently discovered south eastern district of New South Wales afterwards named Gippsland after Governor Sir George Gipps. Mr Campbell left Port Phillip in the barque "Singapore" which was laden with stores of every description obtained by the company from Tasmania. He was in charge as storekeeper and on arrival of the vessel at Port Albert, Messrs Turnbull continued for many years, and which in a modified form continues to this day under Mr Howden's proprietary at Port Albert. It was in the early summer of 1841 that Mr Campbell arrived at the Port. He remained there about two years, finding the place anything but a desirable one for residence, owing to the frequently hostile attitude of the blacks, whose spears came at times unpleasantly close, so close indeed that on one occasion he barely escaped with his life, a flint-headed spear being thrown so violently as to penetrate the door of his hut and lodge in the opposite wall, only a few inches above his head as he was lying upon his bed.

He had made up his mind to leave the locality, but before doing so he gave his sable friends of the Tarra tribe of Sydney aborigines a parting salute, in the form of so practical a character that they quickly dropped the sport of spearing white fellows as being "not welly good" and decidedly attended with some risk to their own skins. He had got from the wreck of the Clonmel steamer--whose boilers were for many years a prominent object on the Port Albert beach - a seven pounder ship's caronade. This he loaded, and in the absence of the regulation cartridge, charged it with pebbles, a few bullets, and some nails, and pointing it for the blacks camp fired it, just at sundown, when they were camped for the night, his object being

intimidation, not slaughter. It was heavily charged, and the noise of the explosion, the smoke, and the contents striking trees said bush all round and far beyond them, so scared the black fellows that with a yell they bounded into the scrub, abandoning weapons and tucker too, and were not seen in the neighbourhood for some time afterwards, and when they did return they were less warlike in their attitude and conduct.

At the end of 1842, or beginning of 1843, Mr Campbell left the Port, and in company with some of his shipmates, among whom were Dr. Arbuckle, who afterwards took up Mewburn Park, and Mr Alexander Macdonald, who settled at Armidale, he pushed his way with a couple of horses and a bullock dray towards the northern district. He camped on the Tarra rivulet the first night, and early next morning was surprised and alarmed, not at first recognising it, at the sound of a blast from a bugle! Springing to his feet, he seized his gun; and presently saw advancing - doubtless guided to his tent by the smoke of the camp fire - no hostile body of natives as he supposed, but two or three country men, all Highlanders, the leader, being the late Mr Angus McMillan, whom he knew in Scotland, and who had also his way through Gippsland southward, from Numblamungie and Nuntin, and who was now making for the sea coast. About Christmas 1843 he obtained a license for the grazing area of Glencoe, and the station has remained in his possession, though of late years considerably reduced in area by selection, ever since.

In 1849 he was married by the only clergyman then in Gippsland, the Rev Willoughby Bean, Church of England minister at Tarraville, to Miss Susan Jane Graham McNaughton, a sister of his nearest neighbour at Dutson. By this estimable lady who survives him, he has had three sons and three daughters. The sons died in infancy, but his daughters are still living, the second, Annie, being married in October last, to Mr George Coulson her cousin. His last illness commenced on Friday week, on which day he was suddenly seized with a shivering fit at about 10 o'clock in the morning. His regular medical attendant, Dr. Macdonald, was quickly summoned, and on the symptoms becoming alarming on the following Tuesday, Dr. Forbes was also called in. All that medical skill, careful nursing, and unremitting attention could do was done, but without avail, and it became only too evident to his family on Thursday last, that the end was rapidly approaching. The Rev Mr Login with Mrs Login visited, him, and his daughters, his son-in-law and nephew, were summoned from Melbourne. They arrived just in time on Friday night to see him and be recognised, for between nine and ten the following morning, (Saturday), he peacefully breathed his last, passing away without suffering, though quite conscious to the end. The news of his death quickly spread, and the vessels at the Latrobe wharf displayed their flags half mast high, while the putting up of shutters the shops and business places in Sale on the busiest day in the week indicated that a notable resident and a general favourite had taken his departure to the unknown world. The funeral takes place to-morrow, and will be followed by sorrowing, friends from the remotest portions of the district, as well as by relatives and friends from Melbourne.

[transcription by Jean Little from <http://www.trove.nla.gov.au/>]