

Records of the Walter Campbell Memorial Trust

Report on a CSU Regional Archives Summer Research Scholarship Project 2003-04

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The records of the Walter Campbell Memorial Trust extend to some 12 metres (29 type 1 boxes and 8 Albox photograph albums). Measured against other collections of Australian private records they are both a large and a significant collection. The records (which date from c.1882-1977) were acquired and preserved by Walter Campbell (1897-1972), the only surviving male among the children of the pastoralist Frederick Campbell of *Yarralumla* (1846-1928) and his second wife Christina, née McPhee, whom he married in 1889. Walter, like his father, was an outstanding personal record keeper, and conscious of the value of the correspondence, diaries, legal documents, photographs, colour slides and memorabilia that had been retained by his parents and his siblings Charles and Kate.

Walter's wife Muriel was also a good record keeper. After Walter's death, she established a charitable trust in his memory. The Trustees of the Walter Campbell Memorial Trust, who retain title to the records, were keen that they should be deposited in the Riverina because of Walter's long-association with the region as the principal shareholder in the family property *Cooimbil* near Carrathool.

The Campbell family in the colony of New South Wales

The Campbells were one of the most prominent families in the mercantile and pastoral development of New South Wales. Robert Campbell (1769-1846), a partner in the firm of Campbell, Clarke & Co. of Calcutta, arrived in Sydney in 1798, and built storehouses, a wharf and an imposing residence known as *Wharf House* in the area now called Campbell's cove. His two eldest sons, Robert (1804-1859) and John (1802-1886), succeeded him in 1827. After Robert's death, John continued as the principal of Campbell & Co. His nephew Frederick (Walter's father, invariably known as Fred *en famille*) joined the firm in 1864, but three years' later left to

manage a family property, *Duntroon* in the Queanbeyan district. In 1876 John sold Campbell & Co and *Wharf House* to the Australian Steam Navigation Company. The federal government resumed *Duntroon* in 1912; the homestead is now the officers' mess at the Royal Military College.

Frederick Campbell and family

Frederick Campbell was born with a hare-lip and a cleft palate—deformities that seriously affected his speech. Somewhat reclusive, he was a prolific correspondent; more than four thousand of his letters are held in microform at the Mitchell Library in Sydney.

Fred was twice married. His first wife Frances, née Wright, died in 1880, shortly after the birth of their second (but only surviving) daughter, Sybil Jean. In 1889 he married Jean's governess, Christie McPhee (d. 1933), the daughter of a Scottish crofter who had migrated to Queensland. Christie was an active member of the Women's Liberal League of New South Wales, and president of its Queanbeyan branch until 1913. Letters and publications among the records document her political activities and her campaign to get the Waratah adopted as Australia's national emblem. She and Fred had four children, Charles, Kate Walter and Jack. Jack contracted polio and, after a long illness, died suddenly in 1917, shortly before Charles was killed in action with the Royal Flying Corps, near Cambrai in France.

Christie could not come to terms with Charlie's death. Despite having an account of the circumstances of his death from his friend and fellow officer, F.W. Lowen, she continued to hope that someday he would be found alive. Fred arranged to hold Charlie's share of the family's assets in trust for a period of fifteen years, after which it would be distributed to various charities. Among Walter's papers is a small notebook containing copies of Christie's correspondence over many years with Lowen, and a map showing the approximate place where Charlie died. There also is a portion of an account of Walter's trip to France to see Charlie's grave. Christie and Kate, soon after hearing of Charlie's death, left for Egypt where Walter was stationed with the 6th Light Horse Regiment. All three then travelled to France.

Walter and Muriel Campbell

Walter Malcolm Campbell was born on the 28 October 1897, the second son and third child of Fred and Christie Campbell. He was educated at King's College, Goulburn

and went on to work as a jackeroo on one of his father's many stations. In 1916 Walter enlisted and was posted to Egypt to join the 6th Light Horse Regiment. Soon after returning home in 1919, he bought a property near Brungle, between Tumut and Gundagai, which he named *The Glen*. In June 1934 he married Muriel Smith, the nurse whom his sister Kate had engaged to take care of her children. They had met when Kate spent the previous Christmas at *The Glen*. In 1958 Walter and Muriel moved to 30 Simpson Street, Tumut. Eleven years later they moved to a flat in Gilbert Street, Manly. Walter died in Manly Private Hospital on the 22 October 1972.

Walter was well known in the Tumut district for his generosity. This was extended to the many swagmen, who, when travelling nearby, could obtain food if they called at *The Glen*, as well as new clothes, blankets, and tents. In a letter to the editor of the *Gundagai Independent* after Walter's death, a neighbour described him as "one of nature's gentlemen ... it was easy to guess where the many large sums of money, donated by anonymous, came from". Walter was carrying on the family tradition of contributing money where it was needed and helping those less fortunate than himself.

Walter and Muriel were conscientious correspondents. Their own letters (presently restricted) are numerous. The collection also includes Walter's diaries (1920-1972), which cover the period from when he bought *The Glen* until the year he died. Each entry itemises the day's expenses, letters received and replied to, and details his and Muriel's activities, as well as the work his employees were undertaking on his properties. Only during the last few years of his life was there a decline in his detailed record keeping. For these years, Muriel's diaries, while not quite so detailed or regular, do give an overview of their life in Sydney. Prior to settling in Manly, they generally visited Sydney four or five times a year, which allowed Muriel (a Christian Scientist) to attend meetings in Mosman. The collection includes a number of related items, among them Muriel's annotated edition of Mrs Eddy's *Science and Health*.

Walter was a prolific photographer. His images range from black and white contact prints to colour transparencies documenting his and Muriel's travels. There is a photo album in the collection that is one of the very few albums in which the photographs have been identified. It has his name in the front and the date 1917, and perhaps is his first excursion into photography. Many of the photographs in the albums appear to be Walter's own, although there are a number that document Kate's life in India as the wife of an officer in the Rajputana Rifles. Walter's photographs are

especially evocative, offering glimpses into family life on the Campbell's various properties and at *Garcia*, their house on the waterfront at Rose Bay.

Cooinbil Ltd

Fred Campbell was a large and successful landowner. His many properties included *Yarralumla*, which fronted the Murrumbidgee and the Molonglo Rivers and was resumed by the federal government in 1913, *Red Hill* near Adjungbilly, and *The Grange* at Sutton Forest. His largest property was *Cooinbil* near Carrathool. By 1912 it extended to some 60,000 acres of freehold and, with livestock and improvements, was valued at £135,000. Cooinbil Ltd was incorporated in 1913. John Reid, the overseer, was appointed manager, and Fred's eldest son, Charles, company secretary. Fred was managing director and retained a controlling interest. His children all held shares in the company, as did the Anglican Diocese of Riverina (which John Campbell had helped to found with an endowment of £10,000). In 1960 John Reid's son Noel succeeded his father as manager, serving until shortly before the property was sold to Don Armstrong in 1976. A large number of series of company records is included with the records of the Walter Campbell Memorial Trust.

Problems in arranging and describing the records

In the limited time available it was necessary to focus on identifying the major series and getting them into some sort of order. The numerous series of *Cooinbil* records—minutes, correspondence, reports, etc.—extending over about 30 years were all just mixed in together. Upon seeing the sheer amount of things in the collection, the first problem I faced was deciding where to start and how to organise everything. Some of the letters were in bundles, in a vague sort of order of belonging, so they were somewhat easier to arrange. I had planned on sorting through these properly, but for now they are just in a rough order according to dates.

Identifying people and places in the photographs was a very big job.

Throughout the weeks I learned to recognise many people from names on the backs of identified photos and I was able to ascertain the likely identities of people in those with no details marked on them. However, there are still several albums of people and places that have no identity. Nearly everything was identifiable as belonging to someone so deciding what things belonged to whom only presented a slight problem

but dates and background information helped when there were no names, or names of people I had never come across.

If it had not been for Walter's diaries and letters, I would not know much about him and his family. There have been books written about the first three generations of the Campbell family, Robert, Charles and Frederick, however, everything I know about Walter, Muriel, Charles, Kate and her family came from the items in the collection. If Walter had not been so reliable in keeping his diaries and the family's letters, the amount of information about them would have been very limited.

Related accessions of Campbell family records

The Mitchell Library at the State Library of New South Wales has copies of Frederick Campbell's letter books on 4 microfilm reels. It also has Robert Campbell Snr's business papers and letters. The National Library holds the financial papers of Robert Campbell (Tertius) and a diary belonging to Marianne Campbell, wife of George Campbell.