

*Transcription of the article in the Border Watch (Mount Gambier, SA: 1861 - 1954), Thursday 24 May 1934, page 5: -*

WRECK OF THE "LOCH ARD." An Epic Story DEATH OF EVA CARMICHAEL.

The following obituary notice, published in many English papers of April last, will recall many memories to those who are old enough to remember the incident surrounding the person mentioned herein, says the "Casterton News":

TOWNSHEND-On the 8th April, at her residence, Bedford, England, Eveline Victoria, widow of the late Thomas Achilles Townshend, C.E., - of County Cork, Ireland, in her 74th year. Mrs. Townshend. was the Eva Carmichael who, with the late Tom Pearce, were the only two survivors on the ship Loch Ard, which was wrecked near Port Campbell on 1st June, 1878.

The story of Eva Carmichael and Tom Pearce is now a classic. Years ago, when the first. State school "Royal Reader" was the medium through which the budding premiers and derelicts of this age imbibed their knowledge. The youngsters used to learn much more picturesque and actual knowledge of their own country than is available now-a-days, and much more of real English (of its date) than is afforded to the present scholar. The story of the Loch Ard, which dates back to 1878, is now vividly recalled, and the more so because of the above death notice. A most interesting brochure from Port Campbell gives the story of the wreck. of the Loch Ard, and the whole history of Eva Carmichael and Tom Pearce. The official account of the wreck reads

"1878, June 1, iron clipper of 1,623 tons, Capt Gibbs master; wrecked; on Mutton Bird Island one mile east side of Sherbrook River. The two survivors, Miss Carmichael (a passenger) and T. Pearce. (member of- the crew) were washed through the mouth of the gorge which now bears the name of the ill-fated ship. The impact of the ship upon the rocks was so violent that the deck was torn clean off the hull. When the divers examined the ship which was located by the masts, they were surprised to find that the hull was missing. It now lies in 70 fathoms. Here is something of the original story. It is told by Mr. W. C. Till of Princetown who was on the spot in 1878. He says: -

"In June, 1878, about 5. o'clock in the evening, as George Ford and myself were mustering sheep on the coast about a mile west of Glenample homestead, we saw a man coming along the track from Port Campbell, and as we were travelling slowly with the sheep the stranger soon came within speaking distance. Ford reined in his horse and said: 'Hulloa, mate, what's the matter?' Tom Pearce, who it turned out to be, answered: "There has been a terrible wreck between two and three miles back there, and as far as I know, only one lady and myself are saved, out of 52 people on board" Pearce in the next breath said: "For God's sake can you get some help for the lady, as she has only one; article of clothing on, and I am afraid she will perish with the cold if left much longer."

Ford then asked him to come with him to the house to get something to eat and get some clothes, as he (Pearce) had no boots, and only a guernsey and a pair of trousers on. He had a cut on the side of his head and looked as though he had lost a lot of blood. He however, refused Ford's offer to take him back to the house, saying: "I will go back at once and tell Miss Carmichael I have got help, and after explaining the place of the wreck as well as he could, he started to walk back, after being reassured that we would follow as fast as we could. We told Mrs Gibson, the owner of Glenample, our story. At first, Mr. Gibson was inclined to be doubtful, but as soon as Mrs. Gibson heard the news she said: "Oh, don't lose a moment. I will make up a parcel of blankets and something to eat while you are getting the horses." By the time we were ready to start it was getting dusk. We did not lose much in time in getting to the wreck from the description Pearce gave us. Mr. Gibson, with his intimate knowledge of the coast, was able to ride straight to the gorge.

By the time we reached the scene of the wreck, it was quite dark. After securing our horses, we scrambled down the cliffs as we could. When we got to the beach we were met by Pearce, who was very agitated, and, the first words he said were: "She's gone, and I am afraid when she found herself alone she had done away with herself somehow." After searching the caves and amongst the pile of wreckage with no trace of her, Pearce collapsed. Mr Gibson covered him with a blanket and said: "Let him rest, he is dead beat." Mr Gibson then turned to me and said: "You go back and get the other men on the station to come down and bring all the lanterns you can get; also bring a buggy in case we find anyone."

When I got back to the house I delivered my message and to the man Mr. W. Robertson, of Port Campbell, Mr. W. Shields, of Princetown (riding), and Mr. McKenzie, of Glenample, and with a boy driving a buggy, returned. By the time we arrived back at the wreck it would be about 10 o'clock p.m. Mr. Robertson called out from the top of the cliff, and almost at the same instant Ford called out, from below: "I have found her." As Robertson scrambled down the cliff Ford was in the act of removing Miss Carmichael from under a bush, which was growing in the gorge. She was quite helpless and had to be lifted up, and was unable to speak. Soon a good fire was got going with piles of wreckage on the beach, and Miss Carmichael soon recovered, and was able to take a cup of coffee. Pearce was then aroused and brought to the fire, and after he was given something to eat, was able to tell his story of how he had rescued Miss Carmichael, placed her in a cave, and subsequently set out in search for aid which, as Mr Till states, duly came.

Pearce said: "Initially he thought of Miss Carmichael lying in that cave made me make an effort to get help, so I started to walk along the coast, but having no boots on, progress was slow. I was very thankful when I met the two young fellows, Geo. Ford and W. Till, driving the sheep." Miss Carmichael gave a brief account of her family. She said that her father was a doctor, and was coming to the colonies with the intention of settling in Sydney. The whole of her family (with, the exception of one brother) had perished, and all they possessed was lost. She spoke in glowing terms of Tom Pearce for the gallant way he had swam out to her assistance. She said, "I am sure I would not be sitting here alive if it had not been for him getting me to the shore, giving me brandy, and taking me to the cave out of the bitter cold."

Pearce, at the time of the wreck, was 19 years of age: Miss Carmichael being in her 19th year also. Tom Pearce married the sister of Robert Strasenburg, apprentice on the Loch Ard who lost his life when the vessel was wrecked. At the time of his death in 1908. he was captain of the, R.M.S.P. Trent. His son, Tom Pearce junr., lost his life on the Loch Venacher, and his only surviving son, Robert, D.S.C., who served many, years in the Loch line, is at present third officer of the T.S.S. Hobson's Bay. The passing of the other figure in this maritime epic is recorded above. Eva Carmichael died on 8th April, 56 years after her experience.