Thomas Achilles Townshend [6A14]



Eva Carmichael shortly before her marriage in 1884



Eva later in Life



Tom Pearce (nee Thomas Richard Millett) sometime after 1878



Loch Ard Gorge



Loch Ard Gorge



Glenample Station today



1814 McCabe Gold Watch - The Carmichael Watch



Extract from the *Address for the Open Day for the Carmichael Watch*
at Flagstaff Hill Museum, Warrnambool, Victoria, Australia on 4th December 2011
by the great grandson of Eva Carmichael, Richard Townshend [6A57]

The McCabe gold watch was originally intended as a gift from the Corporation of the City of Dublin to mark the visit of the Prince Regent, later King George IV, to the city; however 'the King had failed to send for it' and it was subsequently purchased by Dr Evory Carmichael for a hundred guineas. When he emigrated to Australia in 1878 he kept the watch as a small valuable item that could be sold in case financial hardship. Research provides evidence that valuable items were often carried on such voyages in small waterproof canvas bags, which might explain the superb condition of the watch and the lack of damage from seawater.

It is hard to imagine that in the panic of the Loch Ard striking the reef off Mutton Bird Island, that Rebecca Carmichael, Eva's mother, had the presence of mind to stow the watch securely in the folds of her waistband, showing clearly that it was something of value to be saved, even as the terrible sounds and images of death, disaster and destruction, were all around her. Remarkably few bodies were recovered after the wreck and it was absolute chance that Rebecca, still fully clothed and wearing her cork life preserver, along with her oldest daughter Raby, were washed into what was then known as "Caves Gorge", later named Loch Ard Gorge.

A rescuer discovered the watch when Rebecca's body was pulled from the sea and subsequently returned to Eva who gave the watch to her husband, Thomas Achilles Townshend about six years later upon their marriage; it is his name that is inscribed inside the case.

When Thomas died in 1923, eleven years before Eva's death in 1934, the watch passed to their eldest son, Philip Achilles Kingston Townshend [6A25], who had narrowly escaped an awful death in Flanders, during the First World War at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in 1915. When Philip died in 1950 the watch passed to his second wife, Rosy who, indifferent about the watch's historical significance, took it upon herself to sell it at auction without offering it first to Philip's sons, Patrick Philip Townshend [6A50] and Robert Vere Townshend [6A51].

On hearing that the watch was about to disappear into private hands, Robert Townshend rushed to the auction in time to place the winning bid, thus returning it to the family. The watch was seldom seen in the following forty odd years and remained well hidden in the Townshend family house in Suffolk, England.

Towards the end of his life, Robert knew that it would be difficult to be fair about passing on the watch to subsequent generations and insisted that the watch finally go to auction. It would have been easy to have mounted a campaign against this idea but, after much soul searching, it was realized by all Robert's sons that the watch's true value was with the Australian people who would appreciate its significance as being a part of one of Australia's best known and romanticized shipwreck stories.

The watch was sold at Sotheby's in Melbourne on 26th October 2011 for $17,000 to the Flagstaff Hill Maritime Museum.