

A poem on the back of an HMS Excellent Whale Island menu, for his farewell dinner as the Gunnery Commander for a Naval Gunnery Long Course. He was known as "Father" by the Lieutenants on the course because he was rather bald at an early age.

## **Campbell Clouston**

### AVE ATQUE VALE

The Sea Lords in their office, at the Admir-al-ty pile,  
Were sitting round a table and not one was seen to smile,  
For the Press had told the Nation and the Press it cannot lie,  
That the might of England's Navy was surely passing by.  
That aeroplanes and Zeppelins from heights unknown before,  
Could send our greatest warships to the ocean's rock -strewn floor,  
So the Sea Lords sent for "Father" and they told him **all** they knew,  
And despatched him down to Whaley to see what HE could do.

Then up spoke "Father" boldly when at Whaley he'd arrived,  
He introduced new ratings and an A. A, school contrived.  
Of his work now justly famous, let no more be said than this,  
That at English mother's kneesides, before the good-night kiss,  
Our youth is inculcated with the gems that freely ran,  
From the dome, now slightly hairless, of that most ingenious man,  
And our "birdmen", erstwhile boasting of the triumph of the Air,  
Now disconsolately mutter this lamentful little prayer,  
"O 'Father', 'Father' Clouston, to you we airmen pray,  
From the death of your designing - deliver us this day" R.T.G

*The irony of this poem cannot be lost, Campbell's life was lost to the power of warplanes.*

**Letter from Gwyn Clouston to Nellie Cox\***

**About the death of her husband,**

**Commander J. Campbell Clouston, Royal Navy**

**(31<sup>st</sup> August 1900 - 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1940)**

**Beechers Croft**

**Rogate**

**Petersfield**

**Hants**

August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1940

Dearest Aunt Nellie,

Here at last are the enlarged snaps - I have picked up my pen so many times to write to you but each time hadn't the courage because I knew it meant writing about Campbell.

I don't know if you have heard how his death happened but I will tell you in case you haven't heard details-

The Isis hit an uncharted rock off Norway so was to be in dock for some little time, so Campbell asked for a temporary job. He was sent to Dunkirk to superintend the evacuation. He was on the end of the jetty for 6 days & nights with apparently little or no sleep - Then on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June they thought all was finished so he came back to Dover. On arriving there they discovered it would mean some going back for one more night - so he volunteered to go and finish it. It was on the way back to Dunkirk that the RAF launch that he was in was attacked by 8 planes & sunk by a near miss from a bomb. I heard from a Lt Wake who was in charge of a second launch & who went to try to pick Campbell & his men up - But the machine gunning and bombing was so intense that Campbell ordered the second launch to go on as best he could & to leave them in the water. Lt. Wake said that had they stopped they would have been an easy target also his boat was riddled with machine gun holes & so the extra weight of the men would have sunk the lot.

I can't tell you all the wonderful tributes I have had from all kinds of men. I am keeping their letters & will show you one day.

Lt Wake had spoken to one of the two survivors from Campbell's launch & he assures me that the end was quite quick and says that Campbell was encouraging & assisting his men to the very end.

Everything is just a huge blank at the moment but the only bit of comfort I can find is that he had always longed to do something really worthwhile for the Navy, the country & to tell me about - & he must have known that he had done so - also his last days wd be completely happy & he is all right and safe now. I also thank God he wasn't badly disabled as he just couldn't have borne that -

We have had the most wonderful 4 ½ years & no one can take that from us.

Dane & Nannie & I are staying with my sister now, fairly indefinitely. Its very nice and peaceful here - Mrs Clouston writes asking us to go to Canada but I just feel I can't just yet - unless things got really bad for Dane here - It would all be such a constant reminder of Campbell out there - Also I don't want to leave Mother just yet. Did she tell you that Daddie died just a fortnight before Campbell was killed? It was a mercy in a way as he was so terribly ill at the end but even so the loss is there just the same.

I wonder if Mother told you too that I'm having a baby at the beginning of December? I'm really very pleased, as it would have been awful for Dane being an only child without a father either.

I saw Bill [Clouston] the other day - his ship was bombed so he had a few days leave - he's hoping for a ship of his own now - I was staying with some friends in Bucks, & he came down & stayed in a pub near for a few days which was nice of him. He was looking awfully well in spite of the grueling time they had had.

Dane is the picture of health, so brown & getting so tall - These snaps were taken when he was 18 months old - he'll be two in Sept. Nannie's on holiday just now so I'm looking after him & its such fun and he's being quite angelic.

With lots & lots of love & I do wish I could see you

Yours ever

Gwyn

*\*Transcript of a letter written from Rogate recently given to Dane by Lorne Campbell. \*Nellie Cox was Lorne's grandmother and Campbell's Aunt. She was a sister of Campbell's mother, Evelyn (Towzer) Clouston (nee Campbell). Another sister, Catherine, was grandmother of Henry Keown-Boyd, who is planning, as is Lorne, to be present at the Party to Remember Gwyn and Campbell on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2003 at Ascott. Henry's father, Sir Alexander Keown-Boyd is the first cousin of Campbell mentioned earlier in connection with Campbell and Gwyn's visit to Alexandria.*

*Campbell is commemorated on the Rogate Village War Memorial and his name is read out there every Remembrance Sunday. His grave is in northern Germany. The graves of Gwyn/Mrs Clou, of her parents Paul and Lillian (nee Willan) Vanderpump and of her sister and brother in law, Grace/Gray and Bill Bodkin, who sadly had no children but were very dear to Dane and Moray, are all in the North East corner of Rogate graveyard.*

## **Tributes to Campbell**

### **From Freddie Parham (later Admiral Sir Frederick Parham, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sea Lord) - 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1940.**

"I knew old Campbell so well, and I was so awfully fond of him, and - like many, many, others - did admire him and look up to him so tremendously.

He went out, of course, in just the sort of way that a man like him would go out; but the Service has lost one of the finest fellows it has ever possessed or is likely to possess. I have lost someone I was really proud to think of as a friend

### **From Kathleen Parham (Later Lady Parham)**

"I feel I have lost a great friend - Perhaps it is something - everything maybe - to have caught the reflection of his spirit - soaring - adventurous - striving - all of those things."

### **From Hugh Cobbe - 16<sup>th</sup> June 1940**

"A fine man, a great comrade and an exceptional officer have been lost to the Navy who will sadly miss him, both professionally and as a messmate.

All those who knew him held him in the greatest esteem for his ability in the Service, in which I am sure he would have risen to high rank.

That he laid down his life almost on the completion of his greatest task and at a moment when, through his courage and hard work, to a very large extent, the BEF [British Expeditionary force] had been safely evacuated must be in some measure a consolation for his great loss"

### **From Jimmy Livingstone - 15<sup>th</sup> December 1940**

"Dear Bungy,

Campbell's end was just what one would have expected - fine and grand. For your part, one can't but feel that after doing 6 days and nights at Dunkirk he'd done more than his share & that he might have rested on his laurels. His experience and type were so valuable to the RN that one wishes he could have remembered that - though of course had he done so, he would not have been Campbell.

I hope the second has now arrived safely, though I don't happen to have seen the announcement in the Telegraph. Children are a great responsibility and a very wonderful comfort when great grief comes. I'm so glad you've got two and I know what a good Mother you'll make. That thought crossed my mind more than once in the past, when I've seen you "zooming" down a mountain-side - with visibility nil - leaving me dithering at the top. Why that performance should have made me think you'd make a good Mother is beyond me - but it did!

PS. Janet says that she's seen the announcement & that it's a son! Hurrah & Hurray" - [Moray!]

**From Joan Kitcat - 18<sup>th</sup> June 1940**

"Perhaps you would like to know that I had already heard an amazing account of an unknown Naval Commander at Dunkirk, whom I now realise must have been Campbell. It was the Sub, of the Wolsey who told me all about it, and what wonderful things this (to him) unknown officer had done. He said at the end "He was the greatest and the bravest man I've ever seen"

**From Kenneth (Hamilton?)**

" The loss of an old and dear firm friend may seem slight compared to yours, but it is worth realising that there are hundreds who feel as I do. Campbell's fearlessness and ability roused, as they always will, some opposition but it can be truly said that no one who knew him did not like and admire him.

I have for many years thought of him as an almost unique example of the warm human qualities and the unmistakable spark of greatness combined in one man. He was, in fact, a great man and in a few years would have been so recognised; I hope his child will understand this one day"

**From Cecil Foster Hall - 14<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

He and I were in the Mediterranean together, (and got promoted at the same time), and then had nearly two years together in the "Bureau" at Whaley, so I got to know him well. He had an amazingly quick brain and 100% more energy and drive than is given to most people.

**From "Punch" (?)**

"..we who were there, and I spent six days round and about that festering graveyard, appreciated his courage and magnificent work, which stood out so high above anyone else's.

The last time I saw him he was standing on the pier, directing operations with as little concern, as if we were berthing at Portsmouth."

**From Kenneth Harkness - HMS Fearless - 16<sup>th</sup> June 1940 - to Bill Clouston**

"I was always one of your brother's greatest admirers and was shocked beyond measure to hear that he met his end at Dunkirk. It was typical of the man that he had to be up and doing, even during the well-earned rest that goes with a refit.

Personally I think he might well have secured a fourth stripe [as a Captain] at the end of this month. With his rare combination of brains and forceful personality, he was a certainty for early flag rank. My name means nothing to his widow, but I would be glad if you would say how much he was appreciated by his contemporaries. My wife knew him too and will be very distressed when she hears.

**From Jimmy Livingstone - 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1940**

"Like many others, I suppose, I enjoyed meeting him at Kitzbuhel that winter: there was something about him that was so direct and fine. When you told me of your engagement, you may remember I was very enthusiastic because I knew he was an exceptional man. In fact I can't remember anyone I liked so much on

such short acquaintance. From several different Naval sources, I hear how brilliant he was at his job and also intellectually in other things entirely".

**From Marjorie Hamilton - 15<sup>th</sup> June 1940**

"Kenneth was helping in the evacuation & heard then of the marvellous work done by your husband. He was terribly upset at the fate which he feared had befallen him. He was so full of admiration for "Clou" as he affectionately called him. He told me repeatedly, since he left Isis, that your husband would do great things if only he got a chance and if he was spared.

**From J. Noel Pelly - June 12<sup>th</sup> 1940**

"My first thoughts are for you in your personal loss of a magnificent mate who was a Man's man - The Navy, I know, will feel his "Crossing over" as on all sides he was considered as one of the most promising future leaders - His heart and soul have been in the Service"

**From Rosalind Pelly (Noel Pelly's wife - A second cousin and great friend of Campbell's - Oenone Nelmes' (née Pelly) and Stewart Pelly's mother - a generous Godmother to Dane.) Campbell himself was Godfather to Oenone, who is planning to be present on September 13<sup>th</sup>) - June 12<sup>th</sup> 1940**

"Gwyn dearest,

...I think life gave him everything that he wanted - didn't it? (I know there was that one blot of anxiety & worry over the grounding of his ship - but then you were there to mitigate that) - you know. His in the old days was always a questing, a seeking -- in regard to life generally. [sic] I remember him saying long ago at Devonport that one was never completely satisfied - completely happy (or words to this effect). Then life did give him everything which matters - you - your perfect happiness - (your understanding of him - & sense of fun together) - a son to carry on his name - his work - the opportunity he had longed for - to fight for England & lastly - & cruellest for us - the ultimate highest & the realisation of his ideals - to die for his country. I know your answer at once & what rushes to my mind = the tragedy - so much happiness & to have it cut off like this. But Gwyn we mustn't let ourselves breathe tragedy in connection with him - I think his life was glorious fulfilment don't you. It had turned out all he hoped for - he had it in full - he did all he wanted & he has gone ON in the fullness of his life here - knowing no disillusionments - no old age, no weakening of abilities. Apart from leaving you & Dane & doing & achieving yet more himself. - I believe don't you it is what he would have chosen.

How thankful one is & always has been for you - you made life so perfect with your understanding & all you brought him (what I had told him love could and should be & he didn't believe it then) I remember his saying in the garden that time you stayed with us here. "You were perfectly right - Ros - it does go on getting better and better - it is all perfect" "