

Bendigo Cemetery



Notes for William Denovan and his mother Margaret, Grave #10706 in section D3.



William Denovan led a long and active life. He was a miner, reformer, politician and public servant.

The story of his Resignation in November 1892 and internet links to further reading.

A [2nd biography](#) reported in the paper *Bendigo Independent*.

During a **monster meeting** at Sandhurst, called for by DWC Denovan and others on July 8 1854,

with upwards of 1500 miners present, 4 four resolutions were moved. The topics were similar, covering miners rights and Chinese Immigration, working and mining conditions. A link to this speech is [here](#).

Images:

DENOVAN_D3_437.JPG

to

DENOVAN_D3_437C.JPG

In affectionate remembrance of
MARGARET DIXON
DENOVAN
who departed this life on July
7th 1888
Aged 79 years
"Beloved by all who knew her."
Erected by her son



2nd side. . . .

Sacred to the memory of
WILLIAM DIXON
CAMPBELL DENOVAN
who entered the new life on the
13th July 1906, Aged 77 years
"And with the morn those angel
faces smile
Which I have loved long since
and lost awhile."



The following people were buried in this grave #10706 Sect D3 as per cemetery records.

10706 DENOVAN Margaret Dixon 7/07/1888 8/07/1888 79 yrs
18945 DENOVAN William Dixon Campbell 13/07/1906 15/07/1906
76 yrs

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Margaret Dixon DENOVAN

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Mon 9 Jul 1888 Page 2

DEATH.

DENOVAN. - On the 7th instant, at the residence of her son, corner Ophir and Old High Streets, Golden Square, Mrs Margaret Dixon Denovan, of old age. Aged 79 years. Beloved by all who knew her. Friends at a distance will please accept of this intimation.

Copiler's note: **intimation** meaning - *the action of making something known, especially in an indirect way.*

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Obituary for Margaret Dixon Denovan

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Mon 9 Jul 1888 Page 2

DEATH OF MRS DENOVAN.

On Saturday morning at half-past eight o'clock an old and greatly respected resident of Bendigo breathed her last, Mrs Denovan, mother of Mr W. D. C. Denovan, town clerk.

The deceased lady, who was 79 years of age, had been in failing health for a considerable time, but it was only very recently that her end seemed near at hand. She was attended by Dr Macgillvray, while her son and several of her friends did all that affection and tenderness could suggest without avail, and she died at the hour mentioned. With the exception of two days of unconsciousness at the close, she preserved all her faculties unimpaired to the last.

Mrs Denovan had resided on Bendigo almost from its earliest days. She arrived in Victoria from Scotland in 1853, a cabin passenger by the ship Hurricane, and came out with the late Rev Dr Cairns and his family, with whom she resided for a short time after her arrival.

She joined her son on the Bendigo diggings towards the latter end of the same year, our much respected townsman Mr J H Abbott, bringing her and a lady relative up together in a covered spring cart, the party camping out one night in the

celebrated Black Forest, when stick-ups were the order of the day. Her son only heard of her departure for Australia four weeks before her arrival in the colony, and they did not meet until Mr Abbott landed her safe and sound in front of the place where she has resided ever since at Golden Square. She was then an active, handsome, woman in middle life.

Shortly afterwards when her son was digging for gold, she opened a store, and did very well for some years, until the heyday of the diggings was over, when by reason of increasing years and losses, her son persuaded her to give it up, which she did, shortly after he resigned his seat in Parliament.

Since 1862 she has lived in retirement with her son, who surrounded her with every comfort within his power, and made her declining years and days of peace and happiness. The deceased lady was of the old school, genuine and kind hearted to all, almost keeping open house to everyone.

Her dinner-teas will be long remembered by hundreds who partook of them, and though her kindly, honest face will be seen no more amongst us, she will never be forgotten by the wide circle of friends who were privileged to know her, and who now mourn her loss. The deceased lady, though very retiring, was much respected by old and young of this community, and was of a cheerful, genial, and happy disposition, which no doubt tended to prolong her days. We feel assured all will sympathise with Mr Denovan in his bereavement.

The late Mrs Denovan was a native of Dumfries, Scotland, but was brought up in Edinburgh, where her son was born. She remained a member, of the Rev Dr Nish's congregation to the last, and she and the rev gentleman were great friends. Mr Denovan has a very fine likeness of his late mother taken by Messrs Bartlett Bros, of this city, when she was 75 years of age. It will be a pleasant memento of her now that she, at the ripe age of 79, has been gathered to her fathers.

The funeral took place yesterday, and, notwithstanding the short notice, was attended by a large number of prominent citizens, including the mayor and Cr Harkness. The services at the house and at the grave were read by Dr Nish, and the funeral arrangements were carried out by Mr Farmer.

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William Dixon Campbell DENOVAN

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Sat 14 Jul 1906 Page 5

DEATH OF MR W D C DENOVAN.
A PIONEER GONE TO HIS REST.

At 10 minutes past 12 o'clock yesterday Mr W D C Denovan, one of Bendigo's staunchest pioneers, passed peacefully away at Osborne House. He was in his 77th year, and death was due to a chronic internal complaint.

The demise of Mr Denovan was not unexpected. For some years he had enjoyed but indifferent health and during the past 12 months appeared to be rapidly failing.

About seven weeks ago he was compelled to take to his bed, owing to an attack of dysentery, and gradually became weaker. His medical attendant Dr Atkinson, bestowed on him every attention, and called Dr Hugh Boyd in to assist, if possible, in prolonging Mr Denovan's life. A trained nurse was also engaged, and everything possible was done by his friends for him.

The veteran's physical strength, however, was worn out, and he sank painlessly and peacefully until death freed his spirit. He was conscious to the last, and passed away with friends around his bedside. The late Mr Denovan was never married, and leaves no relatives, except two nephews, but a large circle of friends, who cherish his memory, having held him in the highest esteem for his probity and sterling worth.

Since the death of his mother, 18 years ago, Mr Denovan resided at Osborne House, and, at his request, was allowed to die in what he regarded as his home, instead of being treated in a private hospital. William Dixon Campbell Denovan was born in Edinburgh on 20th December, 1829.

His father, Francis Garden Denovan, was for some time British Consul at Copenhagen (Denmark), and was subsequently consul at Edinburgh for several foreign States, including Denmark, Brazil, and various German States. The subject of this notice received his education principally in private schools in Dundee.

At the age of 18 he opened a school at Cupar (Fifeshire), and conducted it until the tales of the gold discoveries in Victoria reached him. The school was promptly closed, and young Denovan, then in his 23rd year, embarked on the ship *Mobile* at Liverpool in July, 1852, and sailed south.

Three months later he landed in Melbourne, and proceeded post haste to the Mount Alexander diggings. But he even decided to push on for Bendigo, and on 14th February, he, with four other young men, full of hope and energy, pitched camp upon a wild looking spot at New Chum. By noon next day the new chums had obtained their diggers licenses, and proceeded feverishly to work.

To permit the departed pioneer to tell his own story, we cull from interviews with him appearing in the "Bendigonian" of 7th August, 1900, and succeeding dates, in which Mr Denovan says:-

"My first move from our original camping ground was to a bark hut with a chimney, an aristocratic residence in those days, which cost me £3/15/, and it was situated near where the Golden Square bridge now stands.

At that time we used a fallen log for a bridge. I used to work mostly in Golden Gully, and in the flat leading down from the Shenandoah to what is now High Street.

Originally the Bendigo Creek, opposite the Exchange was a most picturesque stream, whose banks were covered with grand old native trees and undergrowth. The stream itself wound in and out, describing a very tortuous course, and looked for all the world like a silver serpent coiled in the grass.

In 1855 or 1856 the Government constructed a new creek from above the Golden Square bridge to King's bridge, on the Epsom Road, and all the curves and bends were wiped out.

The commissioners, police magistrates, and others lived on Camp Hill. The old buildings are still standing and are now used as homes for the boarders attending the High School. The one next to the rocks was occupied by Mr Panton, the chief commissioner."

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Soon after Mr Denovan arrived on Bendigo he realised that a very strong feeling of resentment existed amongst the miners against the diggers' tax, under which they had to pay 30 monthly for a license to dig for gold. Largely attended mass meetings were held by the miners, in which Mr Denovan took a prominent part.

At a meeting held at Golden Gully he made his first effort at public speaking, strongly protesting against the tax. Meeting followed meeting, a strong committee, known as the anti-license committee, of which Mr Denovan was elected a member, was formed.

The protest culminated in a monster mass meeting, held on the 21st August, 1853, on what is now the site of All Saints' Pro-Cathedral. "At that meeting," said Mr Denovan, who was present, "Dr Jones was in the chair. I took part in the proceeding, along with George Edward Thomson, restaurant keeper, and subsequently a solicitor of Bendigo, Captain Brown, Dr Wall, Mr E N Emmett, Mr Grube, Mr Ferrars (secretary), Mr Alfred O'Connor, Dr Owens and many others.

The feeling of the meeting was at fever heat, for the diggers had determined to shake off once and for all the burdens that oppressed them so. Resolutions were passed to hoist the red ribbon, and pay no more license fees. I will never forget the cheer that went up from the thousands of throats. It seemed like one huge sigh of relief. A few moments after there was a wild stampede to the stores for the purchase of red ribbons.

Three quarters of an hour after the meeting not a piece could be bought on the gold-fields for love or money. Hundreds of diggers not possessing the beloved piece of color walked about that afternoon looking feverishly around for some substitute to replace the unpurchasable token.

Suddenly one of their number suggested red shirts, and again the stores were besieged, shirts bought, cut up, and distributed among the crowd. **Yes! Saturday, the 21st of August, 1853, was a red letter day, or, I should say, a red ribbon day, in the history of Bendigo.**

"Not long after this I met for the first time the late Mr Angus Mackay, who had recently arrived from the Ovens. We became great friends. He and I became closely associated in reform movements on the gold-fields for many years afterwards. I saw in him a superior man, one who thought before he spoke, and I was often thankful to him for his counsel."

The persistent agitation of the miners for the reduction of the gold license tax led to its reduction from 30/ to 13/4 per month, and a festival was held by the miners on the spot near the site of the present hospital to celebrate the concession.

The Chinese, in the first years of the gold-field, constituted a considerable proportion of the population, and in 1854 an agitation was inaugurated to prevent, if possible, their wholesale influx.

Mr Denovan, who at this time was recognised as one of the leaders of the diggers, headed the agitation. At a public meeting held on 24th June, he brought under the notice of the meeting the alarming influx of Chinese into the colony, which, if not stopped, would lead to serious disturbances.

He spoke strongly on the subject, stating that unless the Government would take measures for stopping this immigration, or graduating it, so as not to interfere with the interests of the resident population, the diggers themselves would be compelled in self-defence to take the law into their own hands, and drive the whole of the Chinese off the diggings.

The 4th of July would soon be here. It was a day sacred to our American kinsmen, and it would remind British subjects of the duty they owed to themselves

and their wives and families in this matter if the Government refused to come to their aid. The speech appeared in the "Bendigo Advertiser" and "Bendigo Times," and Mr Denovan was reported in these papers, and in the "Argus" as moving a motion to the effect "that the diggers should rise on mass on the 4th July and drive the Chinese off the gold-field."

Naturally very great excitement prevailed throughout the district on the subject. Mr Denovan stated that the reports published of what he had said were not accurate, so far as the direct resolution was concerned, but the authorities became so alarmed when the eve of the fourth arrived that at 11 o'clock at night Mr Denovan was taken by constables before the police magistrate, Mr M'Lachlan.

He admitted using strong words regarding the Chinese in the course of his speech, but declared that no attack on the Chinese on the following day was intended. The police magistrate was satisfied, and at a public meeting on the following day, Mr Denovan made a temperate speech on the subject, and no disturbance occurred. Sometime afterwards a capitation tax was imposed on the Chinese, and subsequently a residence tax, which latter, however, pressed so unfairly on the poorer Chinese that Mr Denovan himself went to a great deal of trouble to have it abolished, his efforts being successful." WDC Denovan, along with many others, was involved in many meeting, sometimes called monster meetings, with upwards of 1500 miners present. An example of a meeting here.

Thatcher, the comedian of the fifties, indicates the prominent part Mr Denovan played in those strenuous times in the lines:-

*"A word with thee, ambitious Denovan:
All hail, thou monster-meeting man."*

"In answer to many appeals to me from many of the diggers of Bendigo," says Mr Denovan, "on the 26th August, I convened a public meeting for the purpose of considering what steps should be taken to secure the entire abolition of the license tax, to obtain representation of the gold-fields in Parliament and the opening up of the lands to the people.

The diggers carried resolutions in favour of the above objects, and a committee, consisting of Dr Wall, Messrs Emmett, C Howard, Dixon, Mackay, Meaton, Armstrong and Denovan, was appointed to conduct the movement. This movement was at once enthusiastically taken up by Ballarat and several other of the gold-fields, and finally spread to all of them.

On the 5th September, the day after the arrival of Sir Charles and Lady Hotham on Bendigo, a meeting of some 10,000 diggers was held in front of the Criterion hotel, and a petition to his Excellency was numerously signed, praying for the redress of the grievances aforesaid.

The Governor received the representatives of the miners in a most courteous manner, and promised that he would take their complaints into consideration, and that he would make the tax as light as possible for them.

However, it was a great disappointment to all when the next session of the Legislative Council was opened, and his Excellency's speech was read. There was no mention of the diggers grievances in it." The utmost indignation was expressed, and the extremest disappointment felt at the Governor's inaction.

A Goldfields' League was formed to continue the agitation. The hatred of the Government system increased till it culminated in the Eureka outbreak on 3rd December. On the day previous to that eventful date a public meeting was held in Bendigo, at which Mr Holyoake, a Ballarat delegate attended and spoke. He asked Bendigo to unite with Ballarat in having the whole of the goldfields' management changed, the license tax repealed, and the necessary revenue raised by an export duty of 2/6 per ounce on gold.

Mr Denovan was appointed to proceed to Ballarat with the delegate to assure the miners there of the hearty co-operation of the Bendigo miners.

The two men left for Ballarat on 3rd December, Mr Denovan walking and Mr Holyoake riding. Arrived at Guildford on the following morning, they learned from the lips of a trooper of the slaughter and defeat of the miners at Eureka.

The delegates were greatly shocked by the terrible news, but pushed on to Creswick to learn more of the incident. They found that martial laws was proclaimed at Ballarat. They therefore decided to push on no further, but decided to part, Mr Holyoake proceeding to Geelong and Mr Denovan returning to Castlemaine, where he addressed a mass meeting of miners.

Returning to Bendigo on foot, Mr Denovan received a great ovation, it having been repeated that he had been arrested at Ballarat. Mr Denovan continued to work zealously in conjunction with the league, and very soon the whole of the miners' grievances were redressed.

On 28th July, 1855, Mr Denovan was elected a member of the first Sandhurst Mining Court. This body in due course was replaced by the Mining Board. At this time Mr Denovan was engaged in press work, being Bendigo correspondent of the "Ballarat Times." The proprietor of that journal, thou a tri-weekly, was thrown into prison, and Mr Denovan going to his aid, brought out the first daily issue of the paper on 1st January, 1856.

Subsequently he launched on his own account a weekly news-paper, called the "Nation and Ballarat Advertiser." It met with great favour, but the expense of its publication was too great for Mr Denovan, and he reluctantly relinquished it.

Returning to Bendigo towards the end of 1856, Mr Denovan was appointed gold buyer for the Bank of Victoria. In the following year his office was destroyed by fire, and he once again turned to mining pursuits.

He was one of the original members of the Land League formed to support the miner and man of small means in their endeavour to obtain the land, instead of the squatters and big men having the monopoly. Leagues sprang up in many parts of the colony, with the result that radical alterations in the land laws were secured, monopoly was largely abolished, and the population of the colony increased.

In 1860 Mr Denovan managed the British Steam Puddling Co, at White Hills, but it was not a success, and was abandoned. The crowning point of his early career was reached when, in 1861, he was returned to the head of the poll as one of the two representatives of the Sandhurst Boroughs in the Legislative Assembly.

This election took place on the 10th August, 1861, the candidates for the two seats being Messrs W D C Denovan, J J Casey, R F Howard, T Carpenter and J Henderon. The voting was as follows:-

W. D. C. Denovan ... 1557

J. J. Casey ... 1151

R. F. Howard ... 1142

T. Carpenter ... 238

J. Henderson ... 22

(Mr Howard petitioned against the return of Mr Casey, and secured the seat.)

The mining community was so elated at the victory that it paid all Mr Denovan's election expenses (£147), and subscribed an honorarium of £280. Finding that his limited means would not permit him to continue in the House, he resigned in July, 1862. During his short career in Parliament Mr Denovan was instrumental in securing a vote of £6000 to reward discoverers of new gold-fields.

He also acted as chairman of a select committee appointed to take evidence on the practicability of supplying Castlemaine and Bendigo with water from the River Coliban. The committee recommended the survey of the proposed route of the aqueduct, and Mr. Denovan subsequently secured a vote of £2000 for the survey. The Coliban was not undertaken, however, till Mr J F Sullivan's advent to office as Minister of Mines.

In after years when Mr Angus Mackay did so much to bring about the completion of this great water scheme, Mr Denovan rendered able assistance, in conjunction with many other citizens, who took an active part in seconding Mr Mackay's efforts.

After acting as editor of the "Bendigo Evening News" for two or three years, Mr Denovan in 1867 became a stock and share-broker, and was one of the

founders of the local Stock Exchange. On 20th May, 1870, Mr Denovan received from the members of the Loyal Liberal Association, of which he was one of the founders, and at the time secretary, a recognition of the esteem in which he was held by the members in the shape of a gold chain, locket, and seal. "To him, indeed," stated the Bendigo Advertiser on the following day, "in a great measure is owing the building up of one of the strongest political associations in the colony. He has been its life to him is due in a great measure the vigour of its action."

In the following years he was fortunate in mining speculation, and became worth at least £10,000, but lost it again.

In 1877, he was elected a member of the City Council for Sutton Ward, and in 1879 he was presented with a purse containing £307 as a reward for his great services to the district. In September, 1879, Mr Denovan was appointed town clerk, and held the appointment for 13 years, discharging the duties of the office most zealously and successfully.

In 1892 his health was so broken that the City Council granted him seven months' leave of absence. He decided to visit his native land, but the citizens would not allow him to leave without tendering him a parting banquet. Mr R Burrowes MLA presided, and Mr Denovan was presented with a set of studs made of Bendigo gold. On his return his health not having improved, he tendered his resignation as town clerk.

This was regretfully accepted, and the council, on behalf of the ratepayers, presented him with an illuminated address expressive of appreciation of what he had done to the district, and also an honorarium of £100. The officers of the corporation tendered him a dinner, and presented him with a handsome cabinet as a token of esteem.

Since that time Mr Denovan has lived quietly. He has continued to sit as a member of the Stock Exchange, and on occasions of public rejoicing and of national demonstrations in which that body took part Mr Denovan was usually selected as one of the speakers. During the exciting period of the South African war he gave utterance to loyal and patriotic sentiments in a manner which showed that he still retained something of the power by which he retained his hold over audiences in the early days.

In concluding his series of interviews with our representative in 1900, Mr Denovan said:-

"I think I am justified, as the recognised leader on Bendigo for the abolition of the license tax etc, in saying that the results of our labors have proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the population of the gold-fields was true and loyal, and has shown by its admirable

conduct since its right to be placed on the same equality of footing with all classes of her Majesty's subjects in Victoria.

In the movement on Bendigo, even at this distance of time, I have to acknowledge my deep indebtedness to the able coadjutors who united with me in bringing about the reforms which have now been so long established among us.

Most of these gentlemen have been gathered to their fathers, but they assisted in laying the foundations, and in building up the representative institutions of our young country on such a broad basis as will last, I trust, until time shall be no more."

Mr Denovan was always interested in literary pursuits.

Though a member of the Presbyterian Church, he was a spiritualist by belief, and in 1882 published a comprehensive work, entitled, "The Evidences of Spiritualism." He also wrote a story, which appeared in the "Australian Journal," entitled "The Heir of Crawford Abbey." He contributed largely to the daily press on various subjects. He was for a great number of years a member of the Masonic craft, having joined the Zenith Lodge in 1866.

He was appointed to the various offices, and became Worshipful Master of the Lodge. During the last two years he occupied the position of chaplain to the lodge, while the rank of Past Senior Grand Deacon was conferred on him. Recently he became a special member and chaplain of the newly-formed Sandhurst Lodge, but was laid aside by illness before his installation took place.

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Resignation of the Town Clerk.

Mr Denovan steps down due to ill health.

Bendigo Advertiser Tue 15 Nov 1892 Page 2

It will fall somewhat in the light of a surprise to the citizens this morning to learn that Mr W D C Denovan, the well known and highly respected town clerk, has sent in his resignation. We are led to understand that Mr Denovan on his return from his tour through Europe found that the state of his health would prevent him from continuing in his old position, the more especially as his arms were no better, he being a victim to the complaint known as writer's cramp, and that he found his right arm almost disabled by reason of the accident which befel him on board the Arcadia on the 12th of May last, and from which he is still suffering.

After mature consideration, Mr Denovan, finding that he could no longer do his duty as formerly to the council, tendered his resignation to the mayor, the hon J H Abbott, yesterday morning. The reasons given by the town clerk for this step are, we understand, the state of his health, and the fact of his right arm being almost

disabled, thus preventing him from carrying out his clerical duties. The mayor, we hear, did his utmost to prevent Mr Denovan from taking this step, but while thanking the mayor for his kindness, Mr Denovan stated that his resolution was unalterable. Mr Denovan has been town clerk of Bendigo for a little over 13 Years. His relations with the council and the citizens have always been of the most pleasant character, and we believe we are justified in saying that he regrets very much being compelled to sever the tie between them and him. The mayor has convened a special meeting of the City Council for Friday next at half-past three o'clock to consider and deal with the resignation.

Mr Denovan has since the early fifties been a prominent figure on Bendigo. In 1853 and 1854 he took a leading part in the anti-license agitation, and later on, in 1861, he was elected to Parliament as one of the representatives in this district. He, however, resigned the position in July of the following year. Referring to Mr Denovan, Mr Geo Mackay in his book **History of Bendigo** says:-

"In July, 1862, Mr W D C Denovan resigned his seat in the Legislative Assembly, stating that without independent means or a remunerative profession in Melbourne a man could not represent a country constituency in Parliament as he would like to do. This was at a time when there was no such thing as payment of members, and before Bendigo and Melbourne were connected by rail.

Mr Denovan's Parliamentary career was so brief that little can be said concerning his legislative services. During his occupancy of the seat, however, he had rendered material aid in the water supply question, and was chairman of a select committee appointed to take evidence on the practicability of supplying Castlemaine and Bendigo with water from the Coliban. The committee recommended the survey of the proposed route of the aqueduct, and Mr Denovan subsequently secured a vote of £2,000 for the survey. The Coliban was not undertaken, however, until Mr Sullivan's advent to office. Mr Denovan's first claim to be recognised as a public man on Bendigo was one in the early days, when, as one of the leaders of the anti-licensee movement and the agitation in favour of representation of the goldfields in Parliament, he laboured heartily and energetically. He was little more than a youth then, and though he may have been chargeable with a few errors of judgement, his sincerity in the cause he espoused was undoubted.

A good proof of this was his popularity, which was evident from the high position he occupied on the poll when he stood for Parliament in 1861, and again in 1879, when the public made a singular demonstration in favour of his appointment as town clerk.

Mr Denovan did not offer himself for Legislative honours again; but, he took a keen interest in politics, and was one of the leading spirits for many years in the Bendigo Liberal Association, an organisation which possessed great weight in the district. He was connected with the press in Ballarat and Bendigo, and served for a brief period as councillor for Sutton Ward previous to his election as town clerk."

Already the name of Mr Denovan's probable successor has been speculated on. Mr W Honeybone, who for the past twenty years has occupied various positions in the Town Hall, and who, during Mr Denovan's absence, has satisfactorily filled the position of acting town clerk, will be a certain candidate. The name of Cr Bailes has also been mentioned as a likely candidate.

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Further reading on W.D.C. Denovan
William Dixon Campbell Denovan (1829-1906)

William Dixon Campbell Denovan (1829-1906) was a miner, reformer, politician and public servant. He was born on 20 December 1829 in Edinburgh, son of Francis Garden Denovan, shipbroker and sometime consul at Copenhagen, and his wife Margaret. He was educated at Inverarity, Forfarshire (Angus), and Dundee. At 18 he started his own school, hoping thereby to study at the University of Edinburgh and enter the Presbyterian ministry, but ill health made him abandon the project.

Denovan migrated in the Mobile to Melbourne in 1852 and in February 1853 went to Bendigo where his mother joined him. He became a miner and as a radical republican was soon prominent in the Red Ribbon Movement and Goldfields Reform League, serving on its deputations, speaking at mass meetings which he helped to organize and drafting petitions for abolition of the licence tax. He also advocated the forcible ejection of Chinese miners but later canvassed for removal of their oppressive residence licence tax. By 1854 his zeal for reform had won him prominence as a goldfields leader and election as a diggers' representative at the Gold Fields Commission. His evidence explained the spread of poverty as individual miners were replaced by monopolistic companies, emphasized the diggers' right to representation in the Legislative Council and the need to unlock the land for smallholders. In 1855 he was elected to the first local mining court at Bendigo but soon moved to Ballarat where he was associated with the Times and Star and in 1856 began his own weekly, the Nation and Advertiser; it was short lived and he returned to Bendigo. He became a gold buyer for the Bank of Victoria but was burnt out in 1857. He then helped to found the Land League and became its honorary secretary, as usual following mining pursuits in his spare time.

After much persuasion Denovan accepted nomination, and was elected in August of 1861 for Sandhurst in the Victorian Legislative Assembly. He headed the poll and the mining community paid his election expenses and provided an annual honorarium. In the assembly he generally supported the Heales ministry, and helped to secure grants for discoverers of gold and for surveying the Coliban channel to supply Bendigo and Castlemaine with water, but complained that parliament was no place for a poor man jealous of his independence and resigned in 1862. For about two years he edited the Bendigo Evening News and became a share broker in 1867 and a founder of the Bendigo Stock Exchange. In the next decade he won and lost a small fortune in mining speculation. He was given a purse of 307 sovereigns at his election to the City Council in 1877 and served with distinction as town clerk in 1877-92.

For years Denovan was honorary secretary of the Bendigo Liberal Association and remained a radical. In every crisis he was a willing public speaker, writing his speeches but delivering them oracularly without notes. He anticipated Henry George as an advocate of single tax with the State as sole landlord. By 1862 he had won renown as a spiritualist and in 1871 he formed the Bendigo Energetic Circle of free thinkers. His 700 page Evidences of Spiritualism: Lectures, Addresses, and Record of the Spiritual Phenomena, Culled from the Writings of Eminent Authors, Mediums, Magazines, and Newspapers Connected With the Great Spiritual Movement of My Time; With Copious Memoranda of My Own Investigations and Experiences as to the Truth of These Things (Melbourne, 1882) was probably then the best summary of the beliefs of Australian spiritualists. He contributed to many newspapers and as 'Dixon Campbell' wrote 'The Heir of Crayford Abbey', published in the Australian Journal, February 1887. He was also a prominent Freemason. After his mother died in 1888 he visited Britain. In retirement he continued his interests in mining and spiritualism until he died at Bendigo, aged 76 and unmarried, on 13 July 1906.

Source - this source did not have an active internet link in 2020.
<http://www.bendigo.ws/Bendigo-History/Bendigo-People/William-Dixon-Campbell-Denovan.html>



Compiled by Pat & Ian Belmont
 in March 2020
 for the Bendigo Cemetery Obituaries & Notes