

MORANG

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.) [Walter Thomas]

There died at Somerton, at his son's residence, on the 23rd March, a very old colonist in the person of the late John Cockerell, who for nearly 50 years carried on the business of a blacksmith and wheelwright in the Plenty district. Mr. Cockerell first arrived in Victoria when a lad of only 15 years of age, being then on board a whaler. The vessel he was in called at Portland, then often spoken of as Henty's Settlement, and after staying a short time sailed for New Zealand, where Mr. Cockerell was for some time. Returning to Tasmania in the early forties, he came again to Victoria, this time to permanently settle in it. He worked for some time for the then well known firm of Roberts and Ferguson, of Hoddle Street. Whilst there he married Catherine, the youngest daughter of the late Mr. John Grierson, a retired officer in the British Army. In 1853 he came to the Plenty, opening business as a wheelwright and blacksmith near the old Plough Inn, which was situated on Mill Park, 12 and half miles from Melbourne. From there in 1854 he came to the Yan Yean district, at first working for his father, the late William Cockerell, but after a short time he opened out for himself at the cross-roads where the Bridge Inn now stand, his premises being just opposite the hotel. Here for many years he did a splendid business. Being a first-class tradesman, especially in heavy work, in the early days orders for bullock wagons, drays, etc., came from all parts of the colony, and indeed from Tasmania and New South Wales; also, he had the good fortune for a long time to have as his wheelwright Mr. Charles Johnson, of Morang, who was as justly celebrated for his good woodwork as Mr. Cockerell was for his iron work. Mr. Cockerell, at the time of his starting business at Yan Yean, was ably assisted by his brother-in-law, the late Moses Thomas, of Mayfield, Morang, who bought the land on which the deceased started business, first of all for Messrs. George and John Grierson, who in their turn sold out to Mr. Cockerell, who, assisted by Mr. Thomas, was thus able to purchase one of the best blocks of land in the Yan Yean district. After many years of hard work the deceased fell on troubled times; he lost his home, then his wife died, and from that time he lost heart, and the business passed out of his hands into his son's, George, who now carries it on. Mr. Charles Draper, J.P., of Arthur's Creek, now owns the land. Latterly Mr. Cockerell lived with his youngest son, Charles, at Somerton, where he passed quietly away on the 23rd March. He leaves a family of six sons and five daughters, all grown up and settled in life to mourn his death. The deceased had a mania for patents, and many inventions he tried to perfect but with doubtful success. He was undoubtedly very ingenious, but seemed unable to perfect the many inventions he tried. Peace to his soul, say I, and yet another link of the sadly broken chain of the associations connected with the early history of the colony gone. The early settlers now alive are very few, and fast disappearing altogether. Mr. Cockerell, in his prosperous days, was of a very hospitable nature and many were those who could testify to the generous nature of his hospitality; but mining speculations and patents were the cause of his downfall. Let us trust he has gone where he will find peace and comfort and know neither pain or tribulation. his remains were buried beside his wife in the Melbourne Cemetery on Monday 26th ult., and were followed to the grave by mourning friends who knew him well.