

Thomas J. Campbell Bridge

Image: The old bridge.

The Thomas J. Campbell Bridge

In 1969 Gin Gin celebrated the opening of a new traffic bridge with great fanfare. The Thomas J Campbell Bridge, spanning Gin Gin Creek, just north of Gin Gin on the Bruce Highway, was officially opened on Wednesday 19 March 1969 by then incumbent Minister for Mines and Main Roads, Mr R Camm. It replaced the previous flood prone low level bridge which was opened in 1926.

By the early 1960s the Bruce Highway through the Kolan Shire had been constructed and money became available for the upgrading of bridges along the route. The old low level bridge was showing its age, and the approaches to the bridge had become quite hazardous. Traffic levels had also increased considerably – from 180 to 900 vehicles a day between 1950 and 1969.

Work began on the new bridge in mid-November 1967 and was expected to take about a year and cost approximately \$240,000. Central Constructions Pty Ltd of Sydney were contracted to build the bridge, and were under the supervision of the Bundaberg district office of the Main Roads department.

Six 80 foot (24.3m) spans made up the bridge and to ensure it was as flood proof as possible it was built 50 feet (15.2m) above the creek bed. The old bridge was only 17 feet (5.1m) above the creek bed and 33 feet (10m) below maximum flood level.

Twenty six inches of rain received over eleven days in January 1968 resulted in a flood which submerged plant and cement stores on site and held up construction of the bridge. The flood level was recorded at about 16 feet (4.8m) above the level of the old bridge. However, despite this, the work was completed without undue delay and the bridge opened to traffic (although the approaches hadn't yet been sealed) on 10 December 1968.

The Official Opening and Naming

In 1968 Kolan Shire Council made application to the Mains Road Department to have the bridge named in honour of Councillor Thomas J Campbell, who had served on Council for almost 50 years, forty as Chairman. Cr Campbell was still serving as Chairman when the bridge officially opened, and was present at the special ceremony. In his speech he commented that he was proud to have the bridge named in his honour.

The ceremony was attended by dignitaries Cr Campbell, Mr Camm, Claude Wharton MLA and the Main Roads Commissioner. Several hundred locals including many school children also attended to watch the ceremony, and to cross the bridge in a motorcade.

ARTS BUNDABERG



Thomas James Campbell, MBE

Thomas James Campbell was born in Bundaberg in 1898. He was educated in Mt Perry and Gin Gin until 1913–1915 when he attended The Southport School. After leaving school Thomas returned to the Gin Gin area and worked on his grandfather's property, Wonbah station. In 1923 he purchased his own property, Kolonga station, and married Marjorie Hannah Svensen, whose father was the then Norwegian Consul in Queensland. They had four sons and one daughter.

In 1921, at the age of 23, Thomas became a member of the Kolan Shire Council and nine years later he was elected Chairman. He served as Chairman for 40 years from 1930 until his retirement in 1970. Active not only in Council, Thomas also served as a member and/or Chairman of the Queensland Local Government Executive, the Bundaberg and Burnett Local Government Association, the Wide Bay Burnett Regional Electricity Board, and was a foundation member of the Burnett Joint Health Board.

His contribution to his community did not end there. Thomas was Patron of the Returned Servicemen's League (RSL), significantly involved in the establishment of the Gin Gin – Mt Perry Ambulance centre, a life member of the Show Society, a long term president of the Gin Gin Cricket Association, member of several lodges, and was a foundation member of the Gin Gin Bowls Club.

For his tireless service to his community and its local government he was awarded the MBE in 1964. Thomas passed away at Gin Gin on Thursday 2 August 1973 and was interred at the Mt Thompson Crematorium, Brisbane.

Peta Browne

Bundaberg Library

Photos supplied by Gin Gin Library and are in the Picture Bundaberg collection.

References:

Bundaberg News-Mail, various issues, Nov 1969–Aug 1973.

Mullett, Joy. 1979. *Centenary Shire of Kolan 1879–1979*. Kolan Shire Council, Gin Gin.