

Cemetery Conversations



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF ST. KILDA CEMETERY INC.

THE TRUELOVE TRIAL: CHARLIE REVISITED

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- THE TRUELOVE TRIAL: CHARLIE REVISITED ...CONTINUED** 2
- COUNCILLOR AND COMMANDER: JAMES BURSTON** 2
- CLOSING THE ST. KILDA CEMETERY: SURVIVING THE SCARE OF '68 ...PART II** 3
- FORTHCOMING TOURS** 4
- LETTER TO THE EDITOR: TOUTING** 4

The history of the St. Kilda Cemetery is inextricably linked with the name of Charles St. George Truelove (1850-1909). His rise from cherubic choirboy to Secretary-Manager is one of great mirth. Born at Somers Town, London in 1850, the son of John Truelove, butcher and Ann née Williams, young Charlie was blessed with an “angelic face and sweet childish voice” and often sang privately to Queen Victoria. Before being appointed Secretary-Manager in March 1883, he was choirmaster with the All Saints’ (Anglican) Church in East St. Kilda, a position which he continued to hold for many years. The story went that “some good friend decided that Charlie would make a good manager for a cemetery”, and the next 22 years were arguably the most colourful, if not, controversial in the Cemetery’s history. As we noted in the June 2005 issue of *Cemetery Conversations*, Truelove oversaw a dramatic increase of the cemetery funds by some questionable practices.

Now cherubic Charlie was no crook. Compassionate, cunning and cavalier, controversy continually courted Charlie until the law caught up with him. His downfall was the Order that came into effect on 1 January 1901 that discontinued the sale of new gravesites. Complaints were frequently made to the Trust until pressure from the Department of Health compelled them to

investigate. You see, Truelove had thought it a sound business practice of issuing multiple rights-of-burial to the same grave to total strangers. As *The Argus* reported;

“On one occasion, the coffin had been brought to the gravesite before it was discovered that the space had already been filled.”

At the later Departmental Inquiry by Dr J A Norris, evidence was heard by a grave digger, David Winbanks, that Truelove had instructed him on several occasions to throw out the bones when it was found the grave had already been used. These and “frequent complaints of a lesser nature” led to the Departmental inquiry.

It was Friday 8 September 1905 and Norris’ audit was in earnest.

“Can you explain this irregularity, Mr Truelove?”, asked Norris to Charlie who was at his side. “Oh!”, replied the Secretary, “I will tell you all about that tomorrow”, and nothing more was said on the matter.

But there was no tomorrow for cunning Charlie absconded. Disguised as a German, he sailed for Cape Town on the ss. *Narrung* and thence to

England. It was not until 23 October that an application was made for a warrant for his arrest, but by then Truelove was out of the country. So, for the next 15 months, nothing was heard of his whereabouts until the Detectives received a report from England about Charlie and the clergyman...

“Assistance!” exclaimed the clergyman to Truelove, who was by now destitute. You see, Charlie had pleaded his case in the hope of some divine assistance.

“I can give you no other assistance”, continued the priest, *“other than to counsel you to return to Australia, and face the charge against you”*.

Charlie heeded the clergyman’s advice who also paid for his passage back to Australia. But Charlie got off at Fremantle and for several weeks nothing was heard of him. As he explained later, *“on reading the attack made upon me by the Opposition in Parliament, I longed to return from Perth from Melbourne”* and so on Wednesday 23 January 1907, he announced to the Detectives in Melbourne his departure on the steamer *Kanowna* and he sailed under the name of “Goode”.

Truelove’s arrival two days later in Melbourne was one of

(Continued on page 2)

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THE TRUELOVE TRIAL: CHARLIE REVISITED

(Continued from page 1)

amusement. There to help Detectives Brett and Carey identify Charlie was the local monumental mason Hubert Tope (c1838-1914), who was instrumental in uncovering the irregularities that landed Charlie in a spot of bother.

"If anyone knows Truelove, it is I", Tope would tell the detectives eager to enforce the longstanding warrant for his arrest.

But while the Detectives and

Tope waited patiently in the vicinity, Charlie waltzed straight past them! You see, Charlie was no longer the *"beardless, prosperous-looking person, fresh complexioned, and slightly corpulent"* that Tope was looking for, but a red-bearded man and for the next half hour, the Detectives couldn't find Charlie and Charlie couldn't identify the Detectives! So after Charlie had enough of the curious game, he then decided to pay some friends in Richmond a visit before heading home to his wife, Marie Elizabeth Goode

née Broadbent (1865-1944) and young daughters in St. Kilda. Having spending some hours at home without a care in the world, in the afternoon Charlie paid His Majesty's police force a visit at South Yarra where he was a welcome guest and surrendered himself.

He was formerly charged *"in that in September 1905, he feloniously steal, take, and carry away the sum of £53/0/5"*.

...to be concluded.



(above) Charles Truelove (1850-1909)

(Source: Smith, J., "Cyclopedia of Victoria" (1904) Vol II p208. Image kindly supplied by Shirley & David Joy)

Char. Truelove

COUNCILLOR AND COMMANDER: JAMES BURSTON

The death of Major-General James Burston, which occurred early yesterday morning at his residence, Carrical, Mason street, Hawthorn, will be regretted by a large number of friends. Major-General Burston was a native of Kilmore, having been born there on May 1, 1856. He came to Melbourne in 1868 and two years later commenced business as a maltster with his father, and eventually became a partner in the firm, which later was converted into a limited liability company, of which he was managing director. Major-General Burston had interests in various commercial and financial institutions, and was for many years president of the Melbourne Permanent Building Society and vice-president the Universal Permanent Building Society, which subsequently united. He was at the time of

his death chairman of the Bank of Victoria.

Major-General Burston began his military career as a very young man. He received his first commission as lieutenant in the Volunteer Infantry on August 11, 1879, obtained his captaincy on January 23, 1885; and his majority on January 1, 1889. He was promoted to lieutenant-colonel on July 1, 1895, and assumed command of the regiment in which he had served as a recruit. The Second Battalion reached a high state of efficiency under his command. When the Commonwealth took over defence, Lieut-Colonel Burston was appointed officer commanding 6th A.I.R. In March, 1905, he was placed on the unattached list, but was again in uniform in 1908. Promoted to colonel, he held various commands till March,

1914, when he was placed on the unattached list. On the outbreak of war he offered his services, was given the command of the Seventh Brigade, and was promoted to Brigadier-General. He went to Egypt and subsequently to Gallipoli. Later he was appointed commandant of the Mudros Base Camp, and was invalided to England. In July, 1916, he returned to Australia. He retired from the military forces last January, with the rank of Major-General.

Major-General Burston took no part in politics, but entered the City Council unopposed, representing Latrobe Ward, in 1900, and was Lord Mayor in 1908-09 and 1909-10. He retired from the City Council in 1912. He leaves a widow, three sons and three daughters. (Source: The Argus 5 Mar 1920 p6)



(above) Grave of Major-General James Burston at the St. Kilda Cemetery (Meth "B" 0497) who died on 4 March 1920.

"Not slothful in business—fervent in spirit—serving the Lord"



CLOSING THE ST. KILDA CEMETERY: SURVIVING THE SCARE OF '68

*Part II from the Aug 2009 issue
of Cemetery Conversations...*

Cr. Tullett, who was also a trustee, moved the first resolution, which “strongly and emphatically protests against the closing of the St. Kilda Cemetery, as being not only prejudicial to their interests, but offensive and hurtful to their feelings in the highest degree”. Tullett went on to warn the crowd that “unless some strong action was taken now, the memorialists, who were gentlemen of great influence and high standing, would make another effort to get the cemetery closed”. Tullett’s motion was seconded by Mr T Robertson who made his feelings clear when he accused those of trying to close the Cemetery of buying “...their land cheap because it was near a burying-ground, and now they strove to enhance the value of their possessions by an outrage upon humanity. He warned them not to override the humanity of St. Kilda”.

The meeting was attended by a supporter of the petition who tried to move a motion “to obtain the opinion of two or three scientific men as to whether [the] Cemetery is not, or likely to become, dangerous to the health of the locality, and report on the subject”.

He went on to suggest the Caulfield racecourse as a more suitable site. The Mayor pointed out that the onus was on memorialists to prove the St. Kilda Cemetery was unhealthy.

Mr J Wilberforce Stephen expressed his desire to “see in the resolution a declaration that the meeting did not believe the present Cemetery unhealthy”. Stephen stated that people might object to funerals or to be near a cemetery, but reminded that the dead often had a mollifying effect on the living. He concluded his voice by saying “cemeteries were not able to receive half so many dead as they might, because of the miserable differences which caused a portion to be made between the ground belonging to half a dozen denominations” and asked why the land should not be simply divided between Catholics and Protestants.

Mr Ford, who resided near the Cemetery, produced a bottle of water taken from the Cemetery drain and challenged anyone present to find fault with its taste, colour or smell.

At the Prahran meeting held eight days later, some 150 persons attended which was presided by the Mayor (Mr Young). Cr. Lacey told the

meeting that;

“...the only argument advanced in favour of closing the Cemetery was, that it was unhealthy, but no proof had been brought forward to substantiate the statement. A medical commission would be of no use, because their opinions would differ, and they had already got two diametrically opposite opinions from the medical men”.

Lacey then moved a motion that;

“...this meeting has heard with alarm and indignation of the attempt that has been made to induce the Governor in Council to close the St. Kilda Cemetery, by means of a petition, signed by many persons not now resident in the district, by some who are now deceased, and by many not residing in the immediate neighbourhood, some of whom reside three-quarters of a mile or upwards from the Cemetery, and by others not residing within the boroughs of either St. Kilda or Prahran”. In seconding the petition, Mr H J Clarke said it was not the Cemetery, but the dog-kennels in East St. Kilda that was injurious to health.

...to be concluded.

“Mr Ford, who resided near the Cemetery, produced a bottle of water taken from the Cemetery drain and challenged anyone present to find fault with its taste, colour or smell”.



FORTHCOMING TOURS

Old Favourites and New Finds

Sunday 28 February 2010 at 10.30am

Tour leader: Geoff Austin. Come and explore the St. Kilda Cemetery on our first tour for 2010.

 Funerary Symbols and
Cemetery History

Sunday 14 March 2010 at 2.00pm

Tour leader: Kay Rowan.

 The Boer War

Sunday 11 April 2010 at 2.00pm

Tour leader: Glen Turnbull.

General tour details:

All tours of St. Kilda Cemetery leave from the main entrance gates on Dandenong Road, St. Kilda East.

Tour cost: \$10.00 for adults (except where indicated).

Members of the Friends of St. Kilda Cemetery and children (under 18 years) are free.

Bookings: Reservations for all tours are essential.

Numbers are limited.

Book now on (03) 9531 6832 to avoid disappointment.

Tours usually run for about 90 minutes.

Tours are offered in all weathers, so please dress appropriately for the conditions. There is little shelter or shade within the cemetery. Tours proceed at a leisurely pace, and keep to the safest paths, but those who may have difficulty walking on uneven ground should use their discretion.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: TOUTING

Four months to the day before William Walter Tyrell Stanford died on 2 June 1880, his letter of complaint was published in *The Argus* newspaper.

“Sir,—Some years back I had occasion to complain to the trustees of the St. Kilda Cemetery of the influence exercised by their sexton in all that concerned monumental work. I then furnished the trustees with a list of sums of money taken by him from one mason to whom he had given monumental work. I showed that he had, under the pretence of assisting people, induced them to entrust the obtaining and erection of monuments to his judgment. When I made this known to the trustees, they, without calling on me to further prove my allegations, wrote to inform me that steps had been taken to prevent the recurrence of what I complained of, and that in future I need not fear any undue influence being exercised to my disadvantage. In fact, I was given to understand that the trustees had forbidden the sexton to interfere in any matters connected with the Cemetery beyond his bare duty as sexton, and that a repetition of the conduct of which I complained would cause his dismissal. For a long time after this I took little notice of the sexton or his doings, although I knew that many hundred pounds worth of work was continually passing my door to the St. Kilda Cemetery from the yard of the mason with whom he had been associated, situated at the extreme end of Carlton. But recently I have discovered that the sexton was in the habit, not only of following the visitors

likely to require a monument or headstone, but, failing by this means to negotiate job, he induced them to take to their home a large portfolio of monumental photographs, thereby lessening the chance of any other person getting a commission unless they closed with the sexton's terms, which terms I need hardly detail. This and other matters coming to my knowledge, I again made it known to the trustees, from whom I received the following reply:—‘That as some of my previous charges had been found incorrect, they (the trustees) required a statutory declaration before they could again entertain any charges against their sexton, Mr. Carey.’ I therefore made and sent the required declaration, and was further requested to furnish particulars on or before the 9th of December last. This also I did, and although I have since sent in other evidence, and have offered proof by the ladies and gentlemen themselves, I have not been able to learn if any steps are being taken to put a stop to this disgraceful toutting. This is a subject which concerns the whole of the monumental trade, and I think it is only fair to desire that this business should regulate itself.

I trust, therefore you will not deny me the means, through your paper, of giving publicity to this matter, particularly when the trustees, who boast of their pretended impartiality, pass such complaints by so lightly.—

W. STANFORD, Monumental Mason, Windsor, Jan. 28.”

(Source: *The Argus* 2 Feb 1880 p6)

